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Female Marines move closer to combat

Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Services

WASHINGTON – Military women, particularly soldiers, will see more than 14,000 new job or assignment opportunities because of policy changes the Defense Department announced Feb. 9.

The changes are included in a report the department submitted to Congress, based in part on findings the Military Leadership Diversity Commission reported in March 2011.

“The Department of Defense is committed to removing all barriers that would prevent service members from rising to the highest level of responsibility that their talents and capabilities warrant,” according to the report’s vision statement.

A Pentagon news release accompanying the announcement quotes Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta as saying women have proven themselves in and out of battle.

“Women are contributing in unprecedented ways to the military’s mission,” he said. “Through their courage, sacrifice, patriotism and great skill, women have proven their ability to serve in an expanding number of roles on and off the battlefield.

“We will continue to open as many positions as possible to women so that anyone qualified to serve can have the opportunity to do so,” the secretary added.

The biggest barrier the Pentagon is lifting is a 1994 policy prohibiting women from jobs, such as tank mechanic and field artillery radar operator, that take place near combat units. With that bar removed, more than 13,000 Army jobs will be available to women soldiers for the first time.

The second change is an “exception to policy” that will allow the Army, Navy and



Photo by Cpl. Colby Brown
Sgt. Kimberly Nalepka, a Coral Springs, Fla., native, speaks to a teacher about the day’s lesson plan at a local school April 30, 2011. Nalepka is team leader of the Female Engagement Team in Garmsir, Afghanistan, where 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, operates. Nalepka and her team regularly visit medical clinics and schools in the area. The FET’s purpose is to interact with the female population in the local community and help identify the needs of the women in the area.

SEE COMBAT PAGE 3

New message enforces old rules: hazing not tolerated in Corps

Gunnery Sgt. Bill Lisbon
Public Affairs Chief

The Marines’ top general issued an updated order Feb. 1 re-enforcing the Corps’ zero tolerance of hazing and emphasizing all Marines will be treated with dignity and respect.

The new order reiterates that although hazing can take many forms and occur at any rank it is always unacceptable.

“I want to be clear to all Marines that hazing has no place in a disciplined and professional military force,” said Gen. James F. Amos, commandant of the Marines, in a Corpwide message published Feb. 2.

The previous order,

published June 18, 1997, came after an amateur video of Marines being hazed surfaced and was broadcast by national news media in January 1997.

The video, shot in 1991, depicts Marines “blood pinning” fellow Marines with insignia directly into their skin as part of an unauthorized hazing ceremony at a paratrooper school at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Hazing includes any conduct where Marines suffer or are exposed to unauthorized activities that are cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning, or harmful, said Amos.

According to the order,

some Marines may confuse hazing with the tradition of certain military ceremonies and develop initiations or rites of passage they believe promote loyalty or tradition.

Some examples of hazing are initiations or congratulatory acts that involve physically striking another to inflict pain, piercing another’s skin or encouraging another to drink heavily.

Amos charged leaders at every level to “be ever vigilant for signs of hazing within our ranks.”

On Parris Island, recruits receiving training on the Corps’ hazing policy during their first

SEE HAZING PAGE 3



The Boot archive
On April 12, 1949, the first female recruits trained at Parris Island graduated as Marines as shown in this April 23, 1949, coverage in The Boot.

Female Marines celebrate 69 years

Lance Cpl Michael Rogers
Staff Writer

Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island honored the 69th anniversary of continued female service in the Marine Corps, Feb. 13.

The historic day was celebrated with traditions started by the Women Marines Association and new traditions from 4th Recruit Training Battalion.

This annual celebration marks the accomplishments of women in the Marine Corps and the furthered progression toward equality, said Sgt. Maj. Robin Fortner, 4th Bn. sergeant major.

“We didn’t even fire weapons in the ‘70s,” said Rhonda L. Amtower, national president of the Women Marines Asso-

ciation and retired lieutenant colonel. “We took classes in makeup and etiquette.”

Women were first allowed to serve in the Marine Corps in 1918 by order of the secretary of the Navy. These first female Marines were only allowed to hold clerical duties. On July 30, 1919, orders were issued that separated all women from the Corps.

It wasn’t until Feb. 13, 1943, that women returned to service in the Corps with the establishment of the women reserves. Since then, females have served continually beside their male counter-

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NEWS BRIEFS

Notice to boaters

Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island is scheduled to conduct extended live-fire training Tuesday and Wednesday from 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. The marsh and waterways in the range impact area to include Archers Creek, Ribbon Creek and Edding Creek will be closed to boater traffic.

For questions regarding firing times and waterway closures, please contact the Weapons and Field Training Battalion Range Control at 843-228-3170.

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parts. "There have been so many broad and amazing changes," Amtower said. "We're not 'women Marines,' now. We're just Marines."

For 69 years, female Marines have continued to prove their place in the Corps and have continually excelled in many jobs once reserved solely for men. These changes toward equality are something that all Marines, female and male, can be proud of.

"There is a misconception that this celebration is just for females to enjoy," Fortner said. "Every Marine can take honor in the changes and milestones we've reached." Previous celebrations consisted of a 5-kilometer run, dubbed the "Molly Marine Run," and a speech from a guest of honor. This year's celebration included more than 10 additional events that took place throughout the day.

flag raising-ceremony, a ribbon cutting-ceremony to showcase a display commemorating female recruit training and female Marines, a dinner hosted by the battalion and several guest of honor speeches.

One of the more unique events for this celebration was the filling and burying of a time capsule to both symbolize and actualize the importance of remembering the past.

"The time capsule is an idea we came up with to capture history in this time right now," Fortner said. "We've afforded the opportunity to all the ladies that came today to put something in the capsule that resonates with their time."

Inside the time capsule, Marines from all generations have stored photos, uniform items, letters and even the rare light blue T-shirts of past female training battalions. The capsule is scheduled to be opened Feb. 13, 2023, the 80th anniversary of women's continuous service in the Marine Corps.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers
Fran Wilson, retired lieutenant general, adjusts a historic female uniform during the dinner celebration for the 69th anniversary of continuous service of women in the Marine Corps at the lyceum, Feb. 13.

"This anniversary marks women Marines holding a permanent place in our military," said Lt. Col. Maria A. Marte, 4th Bn.'s commander. "This is something we can all be proud of."



Photo by Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers
Sgt. Maj. Robin Fortner, sergeant major of the 4th Recruit Training Battalion, and Marines bury a time capsule in celebration of the 69th anniversary of women's service in the Marine Corps at the battalion, Feb. 14.



The Boot archive
On March 5, 1949, The Boot showed more new female recruits arriving via train at Port Royal, S.C.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Michael Rogers
4th Recruit Training Battalion's color guard dips the Marine Corps flag during the celebration of the 69th anniversary of women's continued service in the Marine Corps at the lyceum on Feb. 13.



Marines Blog: Females get one step closer to combat

Lance Cpl. Chelsea Flowers
Marines Blog

For the last several years women have fought and died in combat zones in the wars in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Although not serving in infantry units, female medics, military police officers and intelligence officers have been ushered onto the obscure front lines of combat to aid ground troops. Now, the Pentagon is proposing new regulations to reflect this existing reality.

The Pentagon passed a new ruling Feb. 9 to lift some of the restrictions on positions that women can hold, putting them closer to the front lines.

The topic of women serving in combat roles has been one of great controversy. For the past several

years the lack of clearly defined front lines have forced women into imminent danger. Although never assigned to infantry units, women still provide support from the air, deliver supplies and provide medical assistance to units at the forefront of combat.

"Women are contributing in unprecedented ways to the military's mission," said Leon Panetta, secretary of defense. "Through their courage, sacrifice, patriotism and great skill, women have proven their ability to serve in an expanding number of roles on and off the battlefield. We will continue to open as many positions as possible to women so that anyone qualified to serve can have the opportunity to do so."

Officials say the new ruling will open up more positions such as communications, intelligence and logis-

tics at the lower battalion level, not just the combat brigade level. This means that women won't have new jobs, but will be allowed to work closer with units whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground.

The policy changes will not go into effect until after 30 days of continuous session of Congress later this spring.

Although infantry roles will still not be open to women, if the new ruling passes, it leaves open the possibility for future changes in that direction. Only time will tell.

Editor's note: Marines Blog is the official blog of the U.S. Marine Corps and is maintained by Marine Corps News at the Defense Media Activity. For more blogs, visit <http://marines.dodlive.mil>.

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Snipers ignorant of 'SS' Nazi connection says commandant

Gen. James Amos

Commandant of the Marine Corps

WASHINGTON — On Feb. 9, I was made aware of an internet photo depicting Marines posing with a flag containing a Nazi symbol. I want to be clear that the Marine Corps unequivocally does not condone the use of any such symbols to represent our units or Marines.

The local command to which the Marines in the photo were assigned investigated this issue last November. They determined that the Marines in the photo were ignorant of the connection of this

symbol to the Holocaust and monumental atrocities associated with Nazi Germany.

To ensure the Marines involved fully understood the historical use of the SS symbology, a formal instructional class was prepared and delivered by unit leadership.

In order to ensure that all Marines are aware of the Marine Corps' position on this issue, I have directed that:

- My commanders investigate the prevalence of the use of SS or other unauthorized symbols within the reconnaissance and sniper communities.

- The sergeant major of the Ma-

rine Corps immediately detach from his current duties in Washington, D.C., and personally meet with every senior staff noncommissioned officer and Marine from our sniper and reconnaissance communities to reinforce my message and expectations.

- The commanding general of our training and education command review the current sniper school curriculum to ensure it contains prohibitions on the use of the SS symbol and other inappropriate symbols.

On behalf of the Marine Corps and all Marines, I apologize to all offended by this regrettable incident.

HAZING

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weeks of boot camp, and drill instructors hold guided discussions on the topic as well.

Hazing destroys Marines' trust and confidence in their comrades and leadership, undermining readiness and unit cohesion, said Amos.

"It does not promote loyalty, does not build esprit de corps and does not prepare Marines for combat," said Amos.

Incentive training during recruit training, however, is authorized under strict guidelines.

The new order now directs leaders to provide legal, medical and counseling assistance to the victims of hazing.

"The strength of our Corps will always be based on the mutual respect and dignity with which those of us who claim the title "Marine" treat each other," said Amos. "It is that enduring faithfulness that has carried the U.S. Marine Corps to success for over 236 years and will continue to do so, long into the future."

The new order, Marine Corps Order 1700.28A, can be downloaded from <http://www.marines.mil>.

COMBAT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Marines to openly select positions at the battalion level in jobs women already occupy.

The current policy, also set in 1994, bars women in jobs such as intelligence, communications and logistics from assignment at units smaller than a brigade. Nearly 1,200 assignments will open to women soldiers, sailors and Marines under the exceptions.

As the law requires, the Defense Department will not implement the new policies until Congress has been in continuous session for 30 days, which should happen later this spring.

The report notes the policy changes reflect conditions already common in the past decade's wars, where attacks can occur without warning and battle lines can shift to formerly "rear echelon" areas.

"The dynamics of the modern-day battlefield are nonlinear, meaning there are no clearly defined front line and safer rear area where combat support operations are performed within a low-risk environment," the document's authors wrote.

Pentagon statistics show 144 military women have been killed and 865 wounded in combat and noncombat incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some 20,000 of the 205,000 service members currently serving in Afghanistan are women, and they make up about 280,000 of the more than 2.3 million troops who have served in operations over the past decade.

The 1.4 million-member active-duty force now serving includes about 205,000 women.

The report notes the changes will expand career opportunities for women, provide a

greater pool of troops from which combatant commanders may draw, reduce the operational tempo for male counterparts by increasing the number of service members available to support direct combat forces, improve consistency in assignment policy, and give field commanders more flexibility in meeting combat-support mission requirements.

Pentagon Press Secretary George Little told reporters the policy changes follow an extensive review that involved input from all the services.

"We believe it is very important to explore ways to offer more opportunities to women in the military," he said.

Little said the department will continue to look for ways to increase opportunities for military women. He acknowledged most of the positions involve the Army, as the nation's primary ground force.

"Most positions in the Air Force are already open to women," Little said. "The vast majority of positions in the Navy are already open to women, so most of these positions do involve the United States Army."

The report states that 99 percent of all Air Force positions, officer and enlisted, are open to women. The figure is 66 percent for the Army, 68 percent for the Marines, and 88 percent for the Navy.

The 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule identified five elements affecting women's military service: direct ground com-

bat, berthing and privacy, collocation, long-range reconnaissance and special operations forces, and physically demanding tasks.

The report addresses two of these with full or partial policy changes, and addresses the others by stating department officials are working to establish gender-neutral job standards.

"This will mean a thorough analysis of job-related physical requirements ... expected of service members," the report reads. "These standards will help determine which specific positions presently excluded under the

special operations and physical standards criteria are suitable for general assignment of both genders."

The report's authors acknowledged there are "practical barriers that require time to resolve to ensure the services maximize the safety and privacy of all service members while maintaining military readiness."

The secretary directed the services to report results, six months after the policies take effect, on their implementation of the new assignment standards and their progress developing gender-neutral physical standards.



Photo by Cpl. Bryan Nygaard

Lance Cpl. Dan Schergen, a metal worker with Support Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, and a native of Valparaiso, Ind., welds a bolt into place during the construction of a bridge near Combat Outpost Rankel in the district of Garmsir, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Jan. 29.

No bridge too far: Combat engineers increase mobility in Afghanistan

Cpl. Bryan Nygaard
2nd Marine Logistics Group

GARMSIR, Afghanistan - During the last week of January, 55 Marines of Bridge Platoon, Alpha Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, traveled nearly 80 miles through the central portion of Helmand province in order to reach Combat Outpost Rankel, a small base located in the district of Garmsir, Helmand province.

Their mission consisted of removing a medium girder bridge and replacing it with a more permanent and cost-efficient structure that would increase the mobility of the Marines and Afghans in the area.

However, getting to the bridge site was half of the battle. The Marines convoyed

from Camp Leatherneck to Rankel in armored vehicles carrying more than 100,000 pounds of construction equipment and building materials, on roads that were often unpaved. The convoy was held up several times by stuck vehicles and threats from possible improvised explosive devices. As a result, the convoy took nearly five days to reach a destination that would normally take 30 minutes by helicopter.

The Marines, many of whom were packed tightly together while wearing their body armor, slept sitting up inside of the armored vehicles, while others stood watch in the gun turret.

"It sucks, but after a while, you kind of get used to it," said Lance Cpl. Rodolfo Lopezosa, a combat engineer in Bridge Platoon and a native of Edinburgh, Texas. "You go to sleep for a few hours, you

wake up, you get all the energy drinks you can, and you're good to go. You'll be good for the day."

After finally arriving at Rankel, the Marines bedded down for the night and headed out to the bridge site early next morning.

The site was only a few minutes' drive from Rankel and is near an observation post occupied by Afghan National Police. The bridge was built over a large creek, enhancing the mobility of the Marines of India Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, who operate out of Rankel.

Before breaking ground on the site, the Marines used minesweepers to clear the area of any possible IEDs in order to make it safe to work and maneuver heavy equipment. Once the area had been deemed safe, the Marines unloaded their tools and began working.

First, sections of earth were removed on both sides of the ditch with an excavator. Marines followed up by using shovels and pickaxes to break up some of the harder ground and then used a tractor to finish it off. Using a dirt tamper, they leveled off the ground in order to begin laying the concrete footers that served as the bridge's foundation. Once that was finished, the Marines hooked cables up to the footers, which weighed several hundred pounds, and used an excavator to pick them up and set them in place.

While the majority of the platoon was working, several of the Marines provided security. They kept an eye on the area while standing in the gun turrets of the armored vehicles that were surrounding the bridge site. Their day was spent waving off farmers who were herding their sheep and camels through the area.

Lance Cpl. Jesus Penagraves had spent the entire ride down to Rankel in the turret of an armored vehicle. Whenever he felt tired or sleepy, Penagraves would look toward the bridge site, where his fellow Marines were working nonstop.

"One of the things that went through my mind was, 'Man, it must suck working out there,'" Penagraves said, a native of Houston. "I'm just standing up in the turret, and I'm tired. Imagine how they're doing while they're working. They got it rough. They're doing all the manual labor."

Stiff winds cooled the Marines off as they worked through the night, using the

headlights on the heavy equipment, the Marines were able to move the rest of the bridge into place. By dawn the next morning, the bridge was almost complete.

Once the Marines were finished constructing the bridge, they quickly went to work disassembling the medium girder bridge that was already in place. The parts of the bridge will be sent back to Marine Corps Logistics Base Albany, Ga., where they will be sent out to different engineering units to be used for training purposes.

"You're looking at a major difference," said 1st Lt. Matt Paluta, platoon commander and a native of Cincinnati. "We put in a permanent structure for \$60,000 and took out a temporary bridge that costs a couple million dollars. To pull that off with the quality of workmanship that we did ... our attention to detail was never lacking. We made it a quality product for both the Marines of [3rd Bn., 3rd Marine Regiment] and for the Afghan people."

Many Afghans from surrounding villages had expressed to the Marines that they did not like the old bridge because its high pitch in the middle prevented them from seeing the ground on the other side. One Afghan, an elder from one of the villages, expressed his gratitude for the new bridge.

"He said he really appreciates the bridge," Paluta said. "He said they need a really good quality bridge. He was grateful for the Marines' hard work."

Staff Sgt. Brian Glory, platoon sergeant for the platoon, has deployed to Iraq twice and remembers how much easier it was to move from place to place to complete a mission.

"It was a lot simpler to me. It was a simpler way of life," said Glory, a native of Tulsa, Okla. "There was an infrastructure. There were roads. Here there is nothing. There's absolutely nothing. We saw that on the way here. We moved through open desert with 100,000 pounds plus of equipment. It's just ridiculous."

"In my eyes, this is an engineer's war," Glory said. "The mobility issues in this country are horrible. Combat engineers are a force multiplier. We enhance the mobility for these units to be able to go in and establish a foothold [in] whatever area they are trying to go to. That's really Bridge Platoon's mission at this point: enhancing the mobility of whatever unit we need to."

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The Parris Island Tax Center is now offering free tax refund service to all active-duty service members, retired service members, family members and Department of Defense workers until April 20. The tax center is located within the Depot Law Center.

Walk-in appointments are available during working hours and Saturdays. Scheduled appointments are only needed when requesting specific times and after working hours.

New budget request keeps Navy, Marines 'expeditionary'

Karen Parrish
American Forces
Press Service

WASHINGTON – The Navy and Marine Corps will be leaner and smaller, but still rapidly deployable under the fiscal 2013 budget request President Barack Obama sent to Congress, Feb. 13, the Navy's budget chief said.

The sea services will trim spending by \$58.1 billion by the end of fiscal 2017, said Navy Rear Adm. Joseph P. Mulloy, the Navy's deputy assistant secretary for budget. The Navy's proposed fiscal 2013 budget is down \$9.5 billion from fiscal 2012.

"We think all of our investments here are aligned to the strategic priorities and goals as set out by the president," Mulloy said.

As required by the Budget Control Act, the Defense Department budget request includes \$487 billion in spending cuts for fiscal years 2013 to 2017.

Marine Corps active and reserve end strength in fiscal 2013 is 236,900 under the proposal – 2 percent less than fiscal 2012. In fiscal 2017, the end strength will be 221,700, an 8.3 percent reduction from fiscal 2012.

The budget request sets Navy active and reserve end strength for fiscal 2013 at 385,200 – 1.7 percent less than fiscal 2012. In fiscal 2017, the end strength will be 376,600, a 3.9 percent reduction from fiscal 2012.

"The Navy has come down almost 6,000 people over the last 10 years," the admiral noted.

Marine Corps end-state reductions, like the Army's, are in line with planned troop reductions in Afghanistan, he added.

The Marine Corps will eliminate an infantry regiment headquarters, four active and one reserve infantry battalions, an artillery battalion, three active and one reserve tactical air squadrons, and a combat logistics battalion.

Mulloy said sailors and Marines will lose "not a dollar" under the budget request, though pay increases will slow after 2014.

In force structure changes through fiscal 2017, the Navy will eliminate seven cruisers and two dock landing ships. Next fiscal year, the service is slated to add seven and drop 11 from its list of

combat-capable ships.

The Navy will gain a nuclear attack submarine, a transport dock, a dry-cargo ammunition ship, a littoral combat ship, two joint high-speed vessels and one mobile landing platform. The service will retire one aircraft carrier, six frigates and four cruisers.

Mulloy noted Navy officials don't expect the fleet size to change much over time, though the number of ships will drop slightly for a few years.

"We're forecasting that in 2017, we'll have the same number of ships that we have now," he said. "We have 37 ships under construction ... and nine more ships to award this year."

Mulloy acknowledged the budget request call for delaying several Navy and Marine Corps programs and postponing some purchases. Operations and maintenance are essential, he said, and too-deep force cuts carry unacceptable risk, so "where do you take the cuts?"

Navy planners and leaders looked at long-term programs as the best source of cost reduction, he said, adding "The real driver here was, 'What do we need to have?'"

The proposal delays for two years the planned "SSBN-X" ballistic missile submarine program, which will develop a replacement for the Ohio-class submarines.

The Ohio-class subs will begin to reach the end of their service life in 2027, according to Navy officials. A two-year delay in

developing the multibillion-dollar replacement, which will form part of the nation's nuclear triad, represents an "acceptable risk," officials said.

The Navy also proposes reducing procurement of joint high-speed vessels from 18 ships to 10, and a scheduled MV-22 Osprey purchase by 24 aircraft through 2017.

The Navy will also slow buys of two joint strike fighter variants, deferring until after 2017 purchase of 69 of the aircraft.

The service will terminate its Medium-Range Maritime Unmanned Aerial System, as Navy officials said other unmanned systems show demonstrated capability.

Spending for Navy and Marine Corps green-energy initiatives will remain fairly steady, Mulloy said, calling them a key component for the department for "tremendous tactical reasons."

For Marines on the ground and ships and planes afloat, minimizing fuel transport and fueling operations means reducing risk, he noted.

"Everything you can do to [reduce] energy use and drive the same tactical output ... is important," Mulloy said.

The Navy and Marine Corps' emphasis on renewable energy ensures more "safety for personnel and efficiency for our forces," Mulloy added.

The budget proposal will mean "a leaner, smaller force, but we're still rapidly deployable and expeditionary, and we're manned and led with the highest quality of individuals," he said.

Papa paints company pride



Recruits with Papa Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, paint a new design outside the company barracks for the celebration of 69 years of continuous female service in the Marine Corps.

Facebook spotlight on Alpha Co.

For more visit www.facebook.com/ParrisIsland



Recruits with Alpha Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion shot at the Indoor Simulated Marksman Trainer, Feb. 14 during their time on the rifle range.

The simulated M16-A4 rifles use compressed air to give recruits a feel for firing the weapon and an idea of what they need to work on for a better score.

Once used to give reserve units a chance to qualify, recruits now use the ISMT as a chance to put what they learned to the test before their week firing on the range.



Parris Island Marine Band member earns award for musical excellence



Staff Sgt. Alan Phillips, acting enlisted conductor and a trumpet player for the Parris Island Marine Band and native of Long Island, N.Y., received the Finley R. Hamilton Outstanding Military Musician Award, Feb. 1, for more than nine years of service in Marine bands.

This national-level award is presented to service members who play in a military band and not only display excellence in solo and ensemble performances, but show leadership ability and the potential for future outstanding service.

Phillips was nominated for the award in December 2011 and has been stationed with the band at Parris Island for two years.

Marines support Thai Marines in mechanized raid

Cpl. Garry Welch
31st Marine Expeditionary Unit

HAT KLAD, Thailand — More than 140 Marines with B Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, which served as the battalion landing team for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, executed a mock mechanized raid with more than 50 of their Royal Thai Marine counterparts in Thailand Feb. 11.

The bilateral raid was conducted during Exercise Cobra Gold 2012 and designed to improve interoperability between U.S. and Royal Thai Marines.

During the exercise, Marines of the 31st MEU took a supporting role by providing suppressive fire on the target area from the Royal Thai Marines left flank.

Doing so allowed Royal Thai Marines the chance to demonstrate and even teach the U.S. Marines their own tactics employed during a mechanized raid as they assaulted the objective.

“Everything went really well,” said Cpl. 2nd Class Teerasak Grearam, a fire team leader with the Royal Thai Marine Corps. “This is the first time training with U.S. Marines for a lot of us, and I think we were able to learn a lot about how they operate, and show them how we operate. I consider being able to train with our U.S. brothers a valuable experience.”

The purpose of the exercise was to instill confidence in the participating Marines, which helps improve interoperability

erability between the two countries, said Cpl. Tyler T. Wildeman, a squad leader with the company. The exercise was not easy though, as there were still challenges to overcome in order to complete the mission successfully.

“The language barrier was hard to get past,” Grearam said. “But we did it and the rest of the training was good. Being able to get past the language barrier was beneficial because it allowed us to work together more effectively.”

Although the Marines of the 31st MEU were not the attacking force, many believed being able to see their Royal Thai Marine counterparts in action was beneficial.

“My Marines benefit from this bilateral training because they see a different side to it,” Wildeman said. “Rather than just living in our small circle of training, it opens them up to a wide variety and wide field of view to the training.”

Wildeman went on to say that training so closely with the Royal Thai Marines allows them to get to know one another better, and understand what each side is capable of.

“We’ve all got our attributes and our downsides,” Wildeman said. “So we can always learn a little bit from them, and they can do the same from us. I’m very confident in our abilities to take this training and apply it to a real-world situation, and whether they’re U.S., Royal Thai, or Republic of Korea Marines, I feel very comfortable

working alongside them.”

Exercise Cobra Gold 2012 demonstrates the resolve of the U.S. and par-

ticipating nations to increase interoperability and promote security and peace throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



Photo by Cpl. Garry Welch

Marines with B Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, which acts as a battalion landing team for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, exit an amphibious assault vehicle and move into position to provide supporting fire during a mechanized raid in Thailand on Feb. 11. The Marines were participating in the bilateral raid during Exercise Cobra Gold 2012.



Photo by Cpl. Johnathan Wright

An amphibious assault vehicle with the company hits the beach during a raid.

