

The Eagle & The Crescent

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Transition to Self-Reliance

Sept. 23, 2005

5th CAG completes its tour of duty



Cpl. Tom Sloan

A city street in Ar Ramadi is bustling with happy Iraqi children as Marines with 5th Civil Affairs Group, 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, present them with gifts of soccer balls, clothes, dolls and wristwatches. The 5th CAG was relieved by 6th CAG at Camp Blue Diamond Wednesday.

Capt. Julianne H. Sohn 2nd Marine Division

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, AR RAMADI, Iraq -- The Marine Corps' first provisional civil affairs unit concluded its tour of duty Wednesday after a relief in place ceremony here.

The 5th Civil Affairs Group, which was established in November 2004, spent the past seven months in the predominately Sunni Al Anbar province, working with the local and provincial officials to facilitate governance and economic development.

"The tour was, without a doubt, the most rewarding experience in my 33-year Marine Corps career," said Col. Steve McKinley, commanding officer, 5th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division. "We brought together 200 Marines from across the Corps and accomplished a mission that was most difficult and challenging."

The reserve unit is now passing this mission on to the 6th CAG, another provisional civil affairs group.

The 5th CAG began its mission on March 10, operating in a province where its newly elected provincial council had

not yet met. Al Anbar also did not have a governor or any official city councils.

The CAG detachments worked closely with the local and provincial leaders to facilitate and aid the local governments, assist in job creation and help rebuild critical infrastructure in cities like Ar Ramadi, Fallujah and Hit.

Today, the provincial government has certified official city councils in almost all of the major cities in Al Anbar, and it has established the Provincial Reconstruction Development Committee, which plans, prioritizes, selects and monitors reconstruction projects in the province.

"I think the current situation in Al Anbar is getting better every day," said McKinley, a Richmond, Va., resident. "We've come a long way, but we have a long way to go. Through the hard work of the 6th CAG, I'm sure things will continue to improve."

The 5th CAG started its tour of duty as a major subordinate command of Multi-National Force – West and brought its flag under 2nd Marine Division in July.



Over the course of its tour, the CAG completed more than 270 civil affairs projects worth about \$12.7 million. These projects included reopening the Ramadi Glass and Ceramics Factory, which is the second largest employer in the province.

According to McKinley, there were two things that were significant to the 5th

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FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
 DUST			
Low: 74F High: 104F	Low: 71F High: 101F	Low: 72F High: 104F	Low: 71F High: 100F
Sunrise 0653D Sunset 1900D	Sunrise 0654D Sunset 1859D	Sunrise 0655D Sunset 1857D	Sunrise 0655D Sunset 1856D
11 LUM 67 %	11 LUM 57 %	11 LUM 48 %	11 LUM 38 %

By Gunnery Sgt. Steven L. Saxton

Camp Fallujah MWR Events

Tonight: R&B Night at 9:30 p.m.
Saturday: 10k/15k Fun Run at 7:30 a.m.
Sunday: Softball Tournament at 8 a.m.
Tuesday: Horseshoes at 4 p.m.
Wednesday: Pool Tournament at 8 p.m.
Thursday: Arm Wrestling Contest at 8 p.m.

AT THE MWR GYM

For more information, contact the MWR supervisor at crystal.nadeau@halliburton.com.

A message to The Eagle & The Crescent readers

To the readers of The Eagle & The Crescent: Many of us have been frustrated that the international news media is not telling the full story of what is happening in Iraq. A recent NY Times article notes that editors have taken notice and will endeavor to provide a fuller picture of what is happening in Iraq. However, the II MEF (FWD) Web site, The Eagle & The Crescent, and other in-theater publications continue to be an effective means for folks back home to learn more about the successes of the men and women of II MEF (Fwd).

To help expand our reach, we ask that you send TE&TC to your friends and families and ask them to pass it along to others. In addition, we ask that you put a link to the II MEF (FWD) public website on your e-mails. These two simple actions will help spread the word about the sacrifices, dedication and hard work of our Marines, Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen and our collective efforts to accomplish a challenging but worthwhile mission. Thank you all for your service and your continued support.

Col. Dave Lapan
Director, II MEF (FWD) Public Affairs
cepaowo@cemnfwiraq.usmc.mil

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

Maj. Gen. Stephen T. Johnson, Commanding General
Sgt. Maj. Gary W. Harris, Sergeant Major

Public Affairs Director...Col. David A. Lapan
Deputy Director.....Maj. Neil F. Murphy Jr.
Public Affairs Chief.....Master Gunnery Sgt.
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Combat Correspondents...Sgt. Christi Prickett
Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre
Lance Cpl. Evan M. Eagan
Lance Cpl. Joshua C. Cox

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Chaplain's Corner:

Attitude really is everything

Chaplain (Cmdr.) Alan M. Hansen
II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)



What one thing is often missing for many people who want more out of life and the situation they find themselves in? It is positive attitude! In my experience I believe one's attitude makes the difference in turning a bad situation into a learning and growing experience.

I recall that Dr. Viktor Frankl, renowned Jewish psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor wrote, "The last of human freedoms is the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances." Perhaps it was his attitude that gave force within himself to live through the horrors of his circumstances.

The apostle Paul also knew something about bad circumstances and adversity when he wrote, "But this one thing I do, forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead" (Philippians 3:13). Paul was declaring a positive attitude will help us approach the circumstances of life, knowing God has purpose and design to our lives. As with Paul, adversity abounds in most of our

lives, however I am confident a strong and positive attitude will enable us to be "more than conquerors" in life and faith.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll once wrote, "The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home.

"The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past... we cannot change the fact people will act in a certain way. We cannot change

'The last of human freedoms is the ability to choose one's attitude in a given set of circumstances.'

Dr. Viktor Frankl
Jewish Psychiatrist

the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude... I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it."

In my experience as a chaplain and counselor, those people who approach life with

a positive attitude seem to deal with the difficult times of life with more grace and come out on the other side stronger and better.

My encouragement to you this week is for you to transform your life and soar to new heights through a small adjustment in your personal attitude. A positive attitude will unleash your incredible potential as we all do our part in this Global War on Terrorism.

4th CEB improves and rebuilds defenses

Cpl. Ken Melton
2nd Marine Division

HIT, Iraq -- Following an attack on Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment's forward operating base, engineers with 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, rushed to repair the base's defenses.

Arriving less than an hour after the attack began, they immediately assessed the situation, made plans to improve defenses and started to work on the damaged FOB.

"Most of the damage was caused by the [Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device] which detonated right outside our entry control point," said Sgt. Howard J. Cook III, an engineer squad leader and Richmond, Va., native. "We replaced some of the barriers and rebuilt the guard posts, but besides that, the rest of the damage was minimal.

"We were able to repair all the main defenses within 24 hours and even improve some of them."

The attack was one of three that targeted the firm bases in the city. Company I's FOB was hit by three rockets, small-arms fire and an SVBIED.

The insurgents killed eight civilians and damaged a bridge near another firm base.

"I feel that we have been drowning the insurgents and they have started attacking out of desperation," the 25-year-old said. "We have been reducing their weapons and taking their safe havens, now they're just trying to find a way to hurt us, and they're failing at that too."

The engineers, along with the infantryman of 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, found dozens of caches and destroyed them since being deployed here this past spring.

The engineers played a pivotal part in designing and constructing the firm bases in the city.

The fact the bases survived the attacks is a testament not only to the infantryman who fought from them, but also demonstrated the great skills the engineers had in setting up the defenses.

"Our defenses saved a lot of troops lives today," said Cook, a 1997 West Point High School graduate. "With some help from these guys, we repaired the original defenses and added on to the

original design." The infantrymen, along with the small team of engineers, worked to improve defenses over the next couple of days and lay down a new scheme of barriers that will provide further protection for the base.

'Our defenses saved a lot of troops lives today.'

Sgt. Howard J. Cook III
4th Combat Engineer Battalion

"We want to leave here knowing that our defenses were better than they were the last time," said Cook, a 2001 Virginia Military Institute graduate said, "even though last time the defenses stopped a full-blown assault."



Cpl. Ken Melton

Marines with 4th CEB, 2nd Marine Division, deliver dirt so they can repair damage from an attack by insurgents on, Forward Operating Base Hit, home of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, 2nd Marine Division.

Lawyers keep fellow Marines' minds in the fight

Lance Cpl. Wayne Edmiston

2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD)

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq -- When many people think of lawyers, they often think about professionals working in their penthouse offices on the top floor of a high-rise office building in a big city.

For the Marine attorneys of the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD), their penthouse office is the inside of a tattered, Iraqi structure lined with sandbags and surrounded by barbed wire.

These attorneys are officers and Marines serving forward deployed right alongside the Marines and Sailors here.

The Marine attorneys of Camp Taqaddum are here to provide legal assistance to the command as well as to the individual Marine and Sailor.



Lance Cpl. Wayne Edmiston

Capt. Julio W. Valdivieso (left), Capt. Ethan J. Steward (center), and Capt. Brendan M. Wolf, are pictured in front of the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate here Sept 19. These attorneys are serving forward deployed right alongside the Marines and Sailors here.

“We are here to provide assistance to Marines so they can stay in the fight,” said Capt. Julio W. Valdivieso, a judge advocate with the OSJA.

Other services the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate provides are landlord tenant assistance, immigration, domestic law, powers of attorney, consumer issues and wills, according to Capt. Brendan M. Wolf, the deputy staff judge advocate of 2nd FSSG (FWD) and an Erie, Pa., native.

“We work to help Marines with their [legal] affairs in the [United States],” Wolf said.

Even though they serve the FSSG as attorneys, their primary concern is being a basic Marine first. The lawyers are basic platoon commanders before they even pick up their case files and are ready to tackle that mission at a moment’s notice as well, said Capt. Ethan J. Steward, trial council for 2nd FSSG (FWD).

“We are Marines first and attorneys second,” Steward, a Portland, Ore. native said. “It’s all about the Marine with a rifle and providing for the completion of the mission.”

“Before handling law we are trained to lead any Marine into battle as officers,” Wolf said.

The patriotic roots of the OSJA Marines’ overrun the thought of making the large amounts of money in the private sector.

“Serving our nation and my fellow Marines is more important than making money,” Valdivieso said.

“The Marine Corps was a great way to serve my country,” Steward said. “The Marine Corps holds the same values of honor, courage and commitment I wanted to have as an attorney.”

Even though the Marine attorneys are proud, they overcome many challenges placed before them in a deployed environment.

The time change is something that is hard getting used to, commented Steward.

“If I need to call a creditor in the United States for a Marine in Iraq, I need to stay up all night to be able to reach that creditor during the business day,” Valdivieso, a Somerset, N.J., native explained, referring to the eight-hour time difference between Iraq and the eastern United States. “We pretty much are lawyers working 24-hours a day.”

For the Marine attorneys of the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD), they agree the thing that attracted them to the Marine Corps was being able to serve.

“It’s all about the opportunity of being a part of something bigger than yourself,” Wolf said. “The Marine Corps optimizes that.”

Today's 'Warriors' remember 'Warriors' past

Cpl. James D. Hamel

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

AL ASAD, Iraq -- On their second combat deployment in as many years, the "Warriors" of Marine Light Attack Squadron 167 decided to pay respect to the Marines who came before them and reinforce the traditions that make the squadron special.

To do this, the squadron decided to change the external markings on its helicopters to emulate those the squadron had in Vietnam. It's a fitting tribute to a history that began in a combat environment.

Commissioned on April 1, 1968, at Marble Mountain Air Facility Vietnam, HMLA-167 was originally a Marine light helicopter squadron because it only flew the UH-1 Huey.

In those days, the tail of the Warriors' aircraft carried a red and black check-

erboard pattern to distinguish them as property of the squadron. The logo was changed years after the war, but thanks to a couple of artistic leathernecks, it's back.

"We're trying to bring the history of the squadron to the Marines," said Lt. Col. Lawrence E. Killmeier, the commanding officer of HMLA-167. "It gives our guys a little deeper appreciation for squadron history."

That appreciation is important, he continued, because it sets a standard for the Marines to follow.

"It makes the squadron unique. Knowing the history of the unit makes you

strive that much harder," he said.

Corporals Jason P. McMillan and Gary W. Rose, both airframe mechanics, were tasked with painting the helicopters. Like their commanding officer, the two see the value of honoring the squadron's traditions.

"I was honored to do it," Rose said. "It's my way of paying respect to those in Vietnam

who had it a lot harder than we do here."

"It's where we came from," agreed McMillan. "Our squadron was founded in war."

Rose and McMillan spend approximately six hours completing the artwork on each aircraft.

They've completed six of the squadron's nearly 20 helicopters.

"It's a lot of work for the airframe guys," Killmeier said. "But, they're doing a great job."

It's work that hasn't gone unnoticed. Killmeier said that many members of the squadron during the Vietnam era are excited about the newly displayed respect shown to the past.

Sergeant Maj. Mark W. Pauley, the squadron sergeant major, said tradition is what sets the Marine Corps apart, and he's proud that despite the war and hard work, his Marines have kept that in mind.

"These Marines deserve all the credit. There's a pride in this squadron and it all goes back to tradition," he said. "Mission accomplishment comes before everything. But we never forget where we came from."

'Knowing the history of the unit makes you strive that much harder.'

Lt. Col. Lawrence E. Killmeier
Marine Light Attack Squadron 167



Cpl. James D. Hamel

Corporals Jason P. McMillan and Cpl. Gary W. Rose proudly display their artwork painted on an AH-1 Cobra helicopter. The two artists are airframe mechanics for Marine Light Attack Squadron 167, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), and have been working on aircraft decorations with the squadron's traditions in mind.

TOWs ‘Supergrunts’ take on insurgents

Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

AL AMARIYAH, Iraq -- The Marine convoy was moving fast down the dusty, black road toward Al Amariyah one recent afternoon when it came up on civilian vehicles speeding toward the group of humvees.

“Let them have it Murph,” yelled Sgt. Chris Serber, 28, team leader, as Cpl. Ryan Murphy, 27, heavy machine gunner, fired a flare from the top of their vehicle to clear a path.

These Marines, anti-tank gunners of Tube-launched, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided missiles, are one of the combat units leading the charge against insurgents here. With their wide range of military expertise in tactics and weaponry, the men of TOW Platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, combining infantry-style operations with vehicle mobility, consider themselves the original ‘Supergrunts.’

“We set up a combined arms platoon that integrates mounted and dismounted

forces,” said 1st Lt. Sean D. Gobin, 30, of Richmond, R.I., platoon commander, TOW platoon. “This gives us [greater] mobility and flexibility when conducting operations against the enemy.”

Originally envisioned during the Cold War to counter large formations of enemy tanks, considerable changes to TOW platoon began in July 2004. The anti-tank gunners reoriented their unit based on the combat experiences from the initial phases of Operation Iraqi Freedom when the adversary threat was coming less from armored vehicles and more from tactics used by irregular enemy units.

Currently, the platoon consists of two sections and is divided into three teams. Each team has a fire team of dismounted infantry Marines and at least one humvee, with heavy weapons, able to provide increased mobility and greater fire support.

Marines in the unit with specialized training perform a wide variety of tasks ranging from field communications to combat engineer tasks. Those with the specialized training in turn train their



Manning an M2, .50 caliber heavy machine gun, Sgt. Bryson Alexander, 21, squad leader assigned with TOW Platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, keeps watch over his field of fire Aug. 29.

team members, giving the platoon its multi-role versatility.

“We have learned to be diversified in multiple combat roles,” said Murphy, of Springfield, Vt. “This is a new kind of warfare against a new kind of enemy.”

Their abilities have produced results. Since deploying to Iraq in March, the platoon has knocked out at least three insurgent IED teams and a suspected mortar team transporting heavy weapons and ammunition.

“There are no frontlines here, but we are [one unit of Marines] that go and chase after them,” said Serber, of Gladstone, Mo., of their task in tracking insurgents. “We have adapted to the enemy’s guerrilla war tactics.”

The insurgents may attempt to strike again, but TOW platoon and Marine units similar to them will continue their pursuit of the enemy.

“The reason we were able to stop these guys was because of how the platoon is organized and improved tactics,” said Gobin of their success against insurgents.

Added Serber, “When we [were able to think] outside the box, those tactics have succeeded.”



Photos by Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

A pair of humvees assigned with TOW Platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, leave a trail of dust behind as they drive across a stretch of the Iraqi desert Aug. 29.

Sailor carries on family tradition

Petty Officer 2nd Class Scott R. Beutler
30th Naval Construction Regiment

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Not only does Petty Officer 2nd Class Doug Newman, master-at-arms, bring a wealth of experience to the U.S. Navy Seabees, he continues to carry on a family tradition of military service dating back to World War II.

Although choosing a different branch of service than his forefathers, Newman, who is currently assigned to the 30th Naval Construction Regiment (FWD), will continue the tradition of military service.

Newman's grandfather served in the Army during World War II and the Korean conflict. His father Ronald J. Newman, who retired from the U.S. Army as a colonel, served the country during Vietnam.

"My family is a military family," Newman said. "Family heritage has been to serve their country in a time of need and I felt this was the opportunity, this was my calling."

His prior battalion, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 17 was deployed to Iraq in August 2004. Because he wasn't activated at the time, Newman just missed that call to duty. This time around, he jumped at the opportunity to deploy with the 30th NCR (FWD) to fill a critical need.

"I have a lot of loyalty to my battalion, a lot of loyalty to my battalion commander, a lot of loyalty to my detachment and I felt like I wouldn't be an effective Seabee Military Instructor if I had not had the opportunity to deploy in a contingency. I believe strongly in the mission. I didn't want to feel like an armchair quarterback at home watching news, sitting in a comfortable air conditioned room on the couch while the real heroes are out there [in Iraq]."

The Navy gained relevant skills when he enlisted into the reserves. The skills he gained as a police officer in Florence, Ariz., which he brought to the Navy, normally require years of military training to achieve.

"If you try, you can apply almost everything that you learn as a civilian police officer to the master-at-arms rate and vice versa," he said. "That's why I feel like I am in such a good position."

His military training and training as a police officer for the Florence Police Department has prepared him for the best and worst of combat operations. Specialized training that he has been able to incorporate into his military duties include being a Special Weapons and Tactics officer for three and a half years.

"There is a lot of dynamic training that goes along with that," he said. When not performing his military duties, he is assigned to the FPD Tactical Training Unit, which teaches officers tacti-

cal procedures and techniques, weapons handling, and dynamic skills for officer safety. As Newman states, "obviously, in a contingency operation, those [skills] can apply to what Seabees do, particularly stress inoculation, learning how to perform in a stressful environment."

Newman is very proud to be supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom. His goal is, "to do the best I can, to help the mission, to be in direct support of the mission. I personally want to do the best I can and I want to help the people around me. I want to augment my command. I want to help the 30th NCR (FWD) not only achieve its mission, but the goals that go above that: obviously, help the Iraqi people and enforce the foreign policy of my commander in chief."

When he completes his tour, he hopes to take whatever he learns in Iraq back home to his police department and help train police officers who aren't reservists or haven't deployed to Iraq and augment the Homeland Security Department.

"Primarily, the bottom line is the Navy Reserve and the Seabees have been so good to me. [I'm] proud to be here," said Newman.

"One of the main reasons why I volunteered was 9/11 had a solemn affect on law enforcement, [it was] felt pretty hard by fellow officers, even though they (NYPD) were on the East coast, and I felt it was my duty and obligation as a police officer to volunteer for this. I believe in the Global War on Terrorism and in memory for them is one of the big reasons why [I volunteered]. So remember 9/11."



Petty Officer 2nd Class Scott R. Beutler

Petty Officer 2nd Class Doug Newman, master-at-arms, of 30th Naval Construction Regiment (FWD), is proud to be supporting the Iraqi people. Thirtieth NCR (FWD) is forward deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Enduring hardships, building character

Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP SMITTY, Iraq -- The Marine Corps is made up of people from all classes, races, creeds and walks of life. Before joining, Lance Cpl. John R. Morris was the guy next door, the son of a small business owner, from a self-described, "upper-middle-class" background.

Then, the Chapel Hill, N.C., native joined 'The Few, The Proud,' where experiences took him from the hardships of boot camp and the Iraqi battlefield to lessons in character and a life-long camaraderie amongst fellow Marines.

"As long as I can remember, I've always wanted to be in the military," said Morris, rifleman and anti-tank gunner assigned to TOW Platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. "It was one of those things I've always felt like I've had to do."

Modest, humble and a bit shy around strangers, the 20-year-old was an avid

reader of military fiction books and a baritone player for his high school band during his teenage years.

"I had friends who had graduated [high school] earlier who were over here the first time, coming back and they were telling their war stories," said the 2003 graduate of C.E. Jordan High School in Durham, N.C., of friends he knew who served in Iraq before him.

As the first phase of Operation Iraq Freedom began winding down during the summer of 2003, Morris began 13 weeks of boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, S.C.

"I was the quiet guy, I don't think the drill instructors knew my name three-fourths of the way through," said Morris, who could have easily been on a college campus orientation tour that summer. "It was a culture shock going from being able to hang out with your friends at night and doing whatever you wanted to do."

Less than two years after graduating

from boot camp, the 'quiet guy' is finishing up a seven-month combat tour in Iraq.

"The good thing about our platoon is that everybody knows everyone else's job," said Morris of the versatility of his unit with the various weapon systems they employ in the field.

The Iraqi war veteran and others in his platoon pulled security for humanitarian operations, conducted weapon sweeps for insurgent weapons caches and carried out patrols, raids and ambushes in the desert terrain of Iraq.

Morris and his teammates also faced the same threats others have confronted in Iraq—enemy small-arms fire, mortars, rockets and bombings.

"We were driving down the road and this old man stepped out in the middle of the road to wave us down," describing one mission he remembered. "So we stopped, got out of our vehicle, and ran up to go talk to this old guy as our driver kept pushing forward. The old man started making explosion noises and arm and hand signals like that. When I turned around an [improvised explosive device] went off where our vehicle and I had been 10 seconds before."

Despite being a bit shaken at the time, Morris doesn't regret being here.

"There are times that I still can't wait to go home, but for the most part being out here is what I joined the Marine Corps to do," said Morris of his time in Iraq. "I'm glad I got the experience."

For Morris, the relationships forged in the face of danger and hardship strengthened the bonds between the Marines of TOW Platoon.

"I think, seeing other people's units, I feel like we are the closest unit in the Marine Corps," said Morris. "We are all like brothers, we all get along, everyone is everyone's friends and it's the closest group of friends I've ever had in my life."

Morris and the rest of his unit are scheduled to rotate back to the states in the fall. The rifleman plans to attend college after completion of his service in the Marine Corps.



Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

A rifleman and anti-tank gunner, Lance Cpl. John R. Morris, 20, of Chapel Hill, N.C., poses next to a humvee belonging to his unit, TOW Platoon, 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division.

Caught in the Spotlight

CAMP RIPPER, Al Asad, Iraq -- Staff Sgt. Charles E. Sexton, a Florida state trooper, is thousands of miles away from the humidity and the long stretches of highway in the Sunshine State.

Sexton, a reserve Marine and camp security chief, recently deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Lehigh Acres, Fla., native is responsible for the Marines who guard Camp Ripper's entry points. He also supervises their training in anti-terrorism and force protection measures. It's something he does not take lightly.

"Being out here doing this is just as dangerous as anything back in the states," said Sexton. "Except we rely heavily on our instincts and continually change our methods in operating procedures to keep potential insurgents on their toes."

He made the decision to be among "The Few, The Proud" when he was 30. Sexton was also able to go into military police.

The 1983 Colquitt County High School graduate's experience as a state trooper garnered the attention of his instructors

who often asked him to share his experiences.

Sexton discovered that his civilian law enforcement training was very similar to what the Marines undergo to become military police. This helped him along the way.

"I stayed ahead of the game because of my prior experience," the 2002 Park University, St. Louis graduate said. "The professionalism and the way we handled day-to-day situations mirrored each other."

The Florida Highway Patrol has been



Staff Sgt. Charles E. Sexton

very supportive of its military members said Sexton.

When he left his fellow state troopers this past spring to help his fellow Marines in the Corps, he knew his vast experience would play a heavy part in operations here.

"During our searches back home we would plan for weeks before setting up any entry or vehicle control points," said Sexton.

With his experience in this field, he usually advises his superiors when it comes to making security changes. He even played an integral part in the design and decision making of Camp Ripper's new entry and vehicle control points.

He looks forward to being able to go home to celebrate his 20th wedding anniversary, knowing that he did his part in the success of the mission.

"I feel that I personally helped make this base more secure," Sexton said. "I wish I could do more, but I hope that the difference I made in this country is as much as I could do back home."

CAG, from Page 1

CAG's tour. The first was how the unit was able to move forward and continue the mission after the death of Maj. Ricardo Crocker, a civil affairs team leader, said McKinley. The other was to see the 5th CAG – a unit of more than 180 Marines that did not meet until January – become a team.

The unit pulled Marines from both reserve and active-duty units. The majority of the Marines were a part of the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, which is headquartered in Baltimore.

"I was impressed with the various skill sets that everyone brought to the table – that and how we learned to pull together in such a short amount of time," said Lt. Col. Bob Grass, a 5th CAG operations officer. "When you think of how this unit was made up of individual Marines from units and various reserve components across the U.S."

The 5th CAG will retire its colors in November of this year.

"I hope that the 5th CAG will go down in history as a unit that came together to join the fight on terrorism and got the job done," McKinley said. "It was always about the mission. We accomplished this through hard work and a common goal."



Sgt. Ryan S. Scranton

Colonel Steve McKinley, left, commanding officer, 5th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, shakes hands with Col. Paul W. Brier, commanding officer, 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, after a relief in place.