

Marines FROM THE TRENCHES

In this edition, *Marines* takes a look at Marines on the move. They negotiate hills in Djibouti and navigate big water in small rafts. They build scale models of battlefields and otherwise hone their ability to “close with and destroy” their enemies. And no matter where they are, Marines always manage to make the best of it. They’ve adopted local four-legged friends as mascots and moved to a new duty stations in “18-wheel recruiting ads.” These are just a few stories of Marines doing what they do best – moving in, around and *From the Trenches*.

Marines Practice Land Navigation on Commando Course

Story by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell
ARTA PLAGE, Djibouti

> Cpl. Peter M. Maloney, a training noncommissioned officer with Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, uses a Global Positioning System to assist Marines while participating in land navigation training April 27. Maloney and other Marines with U.S. Marine Forces Central Command-Djibouti, participated in the training to hone their skills while deployed to the Horn of Africa.

Photo by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

Scout snipers from U.S. Marine Forces Central Command-Djibouti trekked across the hills and mountains here to hone their skills on a French Foreign Legion Commando land navigation course April 27.

The Camp Lejeune-based Marines attached to Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines, hiked miles in the hot African sun to find previously plotted points.

The desert and mountainous areas on the southwest coast of the Gulf of Tadjoura proved much different from the flat lands around Jacksonville, N.C.,



> A map and compass, said to be the most useful pieces of equipment when it comes to land navigation, are used to determine an azimuth during land navigation training.

Photo by Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

where Camp Lejeune is located.

“I’ve never been out on terrain like this,” said Lance Cpl. Steven A. Tannetta, scout observer. “It was a great experience.”

At the oceanfront starting point and temporary command post, the Marines were divided into teams of two and given maps, protractors, and eight-digit grid coordinates for four points in the rocky landscape surrounding them.

Some of the points were on hilltops between 240-360 feet above the sea-level starting point, and the course was much larger than any other land navigation courses on which they had trained.

“This has to be the most physically-demanding course I’ve ever been to,” said Sgt. Taylor A. White, a team leader for the platoon.

“Not only was it rocky, but it was really hot,” added Tannetta, a Boston native.

Land navigation is important to being a scout sniper because the team must be able to navigate to and from each mission. The teams are very independent and must be able to rely on one another to make it back to their return point safely, said White a Charlotte, N.C., native.

“This is an excellent learning experience for the guys,” said White. “(Land navigation) is not just a skill used by scout snipers, it’s an essential survival skill for every Marine.”

The Marines also brought a commercial global position system with them. GPS uses satellites orbiting the earth to pinpoint coordinates of the persons using the system. Although the Marines



didn’t use the tool for navigation, they used it to check the work they did using maps and compasses.

“GPS is an awesome invention and extremely useful, but the tried-and-true method of using a map and compass will always be better,” said White. “They will

never lose signal or run out of batteries.”

Though the Marines had less than three hours of sleep the night before due to security guard duty, they were glad to receive the training.

“Everyone needs to know how to get from point A to B,” said Tannetta.

“This training might be able to get me out of a jam someday.”

Big Job Calls for Small Boats

Story by Lance Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson
NAVAL AIR STATION FORD ISLAND, OAHU, Hawaii



It requires a great deal of skill and responsibility to safely move Marines from ship to shore in a small raft, and the monthlong Coxswain's Skills Course here helps ensure the Marines attending it get all the training necessary to make them successful.

The coxswain is the boat operator and is positioned at the stern, or rear, of the small craft. He is responsible for all Marines on the craft and for maintaining the boat's speed during movement.

"The coxswain is responsible for anything that happens (in his craft)," said Capt. Jeff Broaddus, assistant officer in charge of the Amphibious Raid Branch of Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Pacific at Naval Amphibious Base,

Coronado, Calif. "It doesn't matter if a first sergeant is on that boat. He will listen to the coxswain and follow his orders, regardless of rank."

Lessons such as these were pounded into the brain housing groups of 22 Marines from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, before they completed the course April 17 and gained the secondary military occupation specialty of small-boat coxswain.

"Leadership is a huge part of this course," said Broaddus. "These [Marines] are privates, privates first class and lance corporals who are all taking on the roles of noncommissioned officers."

1/3 will deploy with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in Okinawa, Japan, later this year. The training is essential to

◀ **Marines from Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, make their landing onto the ramp of the USS Boxer during the last day of a Coxswain's Skills Course at Naval Air Station Ford Island, April 17.**

Photo by Lance Cpl. Michelle M. Dickson

ensuring the battalion can complete any mission the MEU commander calls on them to do.

To participate in the small-boat coxswain training, which also taught the Marines how to conduct coordinated night-illuminated attacks, and to navigate and handle the craft in surf, Marines must hold an infantry MOS and be at least a third-class swimmer.

"A couple of guys seemed pretty nervous at first," said 1st Lt. Robert Merrill, executive officer for Bravo Co., 1/3.

"Over time, though, they all got the hang of it and put out really well."

To round out the training, the Lava Dogs of 1/3 traveled to NAS, Ford Island, for an exercise. The Marines practiced launching combat rubber reconnaissance rafts from and returning to the USS Boxer.

"In real-life situations, this is what they are going to have to do," said Sgt. J.R. Parker, course director for the coxswain's course. "We practice this a lot so the Marines feel comfortable with their job."

With the training complete, there will now be Marines to man the 18 rafts attached to the MEU. Each is trained to handle the responsibility of navigating rough seas during the intense operations

General's Gift to Squadron Lifts Spirits, Boosts Morale

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.
AL TAQQADUM, Iraq

For centuries, the dog has been known as "man's best friend." So it came as no surprise when the arrival here of an 11-week-old puppy named Melissa, softened the hearts of the battle-hardened "Rhinos" of Marine Wing Support Squadron 374.

"I believe all Marines, in their hearts, are dog lovers," explained Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, commanding general, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. "So it's easy to have compassion for a dog who is out in the middle of a war zone. I felt that maybe a dog would pick their spirits up and be something the squadron could identify with and get a touch of home."

The arrival of Melissa as a gift however, was quite unexpected, said Lt. Col. David R. Leppelmeier, commanding officer, MWSS-374, Marine Aircraft Group 37.

"I received an e-mail from Gen. Amos back in April saying that he was going to bring me something, but I really had no idea of what was going on," said Leppelmeier, a 44-year-old native of Babylon, N.Y.

The "something" Leppelmeier didn't know about, almost turned out to be a personality mismatch for MWSS-374, said Amos.

"My original intention was to give (Melissa's mother) Luci to Lt. Col. Leppelmeier as a squadron mascot," said Amos, "because he'd lost two Marines (earlier) and the unit was right in the middle of a pretty tough mission."

But, Luci was a stubborn and independent dog, raised in the rough streets of Baghdad. So, the 3rd MAW commanding general changed his mind and instead presented the squadron with Melissa, Luci's sole surviving pup from a litter of five.

Amos kept Luci.

Luci came to the general after working with Army Special Forces on the streets of Baghdad, the general said. Over a period of time, she began following the soldiers on patrols. She is credited with

saving their lives a couple of times when she sniffed out ambushes and barked to alert them.

When the soldiers pulled out, they wanted to leave Luci and her pup in good hands.

"When (3rd MAW) went into Baghdad to drop off some wounded Marines, Luci and the pup were brought out to the airplane and we took both dogs back to Al Asad (Iraq) with us," he said.

The general's plan to send Melissa to Al Taqqadum was quickly put in motion.

"We fly in and out of Taqqadum on a regular schedule, so it was pretty simple for us to piggy-back the puppy on a flight and present her to Lt. Col. Leppelmeier," said Amos.

Melissa's positive impact on the squadron has been very noticeable, said many of the "Rhino" Marines.

"Having Melissa around keeps my morale high," said 24-year-old New York native Lance Cpl. Pamela O'Donnell, operations clerk, MWSS-374. "She's just a happy addition to the family and she brings a smile to everybody's face."

"That puppy is absolutely incredible," said Staff Sgt. Sandra D. Magallanes, wire chief, MWSS-374, a Cody, Wyo., native. "She's intelligent and she's a fighter."

Perhaps no Marine is as smitten with the precocious pup as her commanding officer-turned-adopted father.

"I know that having her around has changed the atmosphere around the unit,



▲ **New squadron mascot, Melissa, anxiously awaits the return of her adopted father, Lt. Col. David R. Leppelmeier. Melissa was a gift to the 'Rhinos' of MWSS-374 from 3rd MAW commanding general, Maj. Gen. James F. Amos.**

Photo by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

because everybody knows she lives here in the compound and everybody pets her. She might get in their way sometimes or gnaw at their feet, but no matter what, Melissa is the one little distraction that reminds them of their pet at home," said Leppelmeier.

"Melissa is great. She knows how to play me like a fiddle," he chuckled. "She's really changed my whole world

"Leadership is a huge part of this course."

Intel Analysts Mold Battlefield Terrain

Story by Sgt. Joseph A. Lee
SEUNG JIN RANGE, Republic of Korea

➤ Sometimes small is better, as this scale-sized model of Nightmare Range, Republic of Korea, proves. Marines of Headquarters Company, 3rd Marine Regiment used the scaled terrain model during the review of several exercise movements, allowing commanders to visualize the movement of armor and troops in a three-dimensional aspect.

Photo by Sgt. Joseph A. Lee

Planning military operations can be a complicated endeavor for a Marine commander – dealing with multiple moving elements and coordinating attacks between air, land and sea elements. Extreme contours in the land can add to the difficulty of moving ground elements, if commanders are left to read and operate solely on the complicated contour lines of a topographical map.

Fortunately, the commander of 3rd Marine Regiment has another tool to use for the Korean Integrated Training Program here, provided by three intelligence analysts of Headquarters Company.

These Marines can build exact scale terrain models to replicate any area of operation, from mountainous terrain to urban environments, to aid the commander in planning his operation.

“Our mission is to study the weather, the enemy and the terrain in order to reduce the commander’s uncertainty,” said Coon Rapids, Minn. native Cpl. Kevin Graving, an intelligence analyst for Hq. Co., 3rd Marine.

“We design the terrain model so that the commander can literally walk through his area of operations, allowing him to foresee potential problems in the attack in the planning stage,” Graving said.

The analysts reduced the 8 square miles of Nightmare Range to a 320 square foot “sand box” with different colors of sand to designate waterways and roadways.

Lance Cpl. Joshua Sticklen is one of the intelligence analysts who helped build the terrain map of Nightmare Range. He said he is proud of the detail they put into the model and likened building models to building elaborate sand castles on the beach.

“We build the model one grid square at a time,” said Sticklen. “You have to pay close attention to the contour lines in order for everything to match, but once it does, it looks incredible.”

The accurate representation of this range took approximately four days to complete, Sticklen said. But the satisfaction of the completed project was well worth the time spent.

“It’s really nice to see your work being used by the commander,” said Lance Cpl. Mark Belliston, the third intelligence analyst to work on the project. “The (Republic of Korea Marines) also compli-



mented us on our work, which makes us feel like we really accomplished our task.”

Allowing the commander to view his area of operations on a smaller scale, and allowing him to physically walk through the movement of troops and mechanized units is more than just a convenience – it can save lives.

“An accurate terrain map provides us with the ability to see how our operation will be executed in a remarkably similar environment,” said Col. J.J. Patterson, commanding officer of 3rd Marines. “This can help us see and avoid problems before they happen.” **M**

➤ A worker from Lowcountry Storage and Moving loads the household goods of a Marine making a permanent change of station into a tractor-trailer covered with Marine billboards in Laurel Bay. The ‘moving billboards’ have a lifespan of approximately five years, giving the Marine Corps more value for their marketing dollars.

Photo by Cpl. Micah Snead

Larger than life recruiters stopped in Laurel Bay to pick up the belongings of a few moving Marines and help them do it in style, May 27.

These recruiters don’t do pull-ups, but they can carry more than any other Marines.

Since October 2002, the Corps has enlisted the aid of 80,000 pound, 70 foot long recruiters in the form of 1,000 tractor-trailers, decked out on all sides with Marine Corps graphics.

“The truck was moving from the East Coast to West Coast, so we thought it would be nice if some Marines’ gear could catch a ride,” said Frank Martin, quality assurance chief, Traffic Management Office, here. “These trucks are an impressive sight and we don’t see them much around here, so this was a treat.”

The five-year program to cover the trucks with recruiting banners reached its peak when the 1,000th tractor-trailer with Marine Corps graphics rolled off the assembly lines in March. The Marine Corps pays for the materials and application of the new paint jobs while private trucking companies donate the free space as a public service.

“It’s really a campaign used for public

Rolling Billboard Visits the Tri-Command

Story By Cpl. Micah Snead
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION BEAUFORT, S.C.



service awareness about the Marine Corps,” said Capt. Maxwell Boucher, paid media officer, Marine Corps Recruiting Command, Headquarters Marine Corps. “We can have our graphics, icons and symbols out there where key influences and folks in our target market can be inspired about their Marine Corps.”

With an estimated 204 million vehicles in the United States, the 18-wheelers have the opportunity to reach vastly larger audiences than door-to-door recruiting and phone calls, according to the MCRC.

“The ‘rolling billboard’ campaign continues to assist our recruiting efforts by increasing awareness about opportunities for young men and women to serve in the Corps,” said Maj. Gen. Christopher Cortez, MCRC commanding general. “The colorful Marine images on the sides

of these 1,000 tractor-trailers are seen daily by untold thousands of prospective applicants and their families as the vehicles travel throughout the nation.”

Drivers of the trucks also report positive reaction to the “Corps-on-wheels” concept.

“The other truckers going by honk their horns and give me the thumbs up. A lot of them are former Marines, I hear it over the CB,” said John Peterman, a driver for Bar-Nunn Trucking. “Drivers will pass me on one side, then slow down and pass on the other side to see the whole truck.”

The Tri-Command area may not see one of the trucks again for a while but its brief appearance was enough to make an impact.

“Even while it was pulling through Laurel Bay, people were stopping and staring,” Martin said. “For people who

“It’s really nice to see your work being used by the commander.”