

OKINAWA MARINE

APRIL 11, 2008

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III MEF welcomes new sergeant major

Lance Cpl. Ryan Wicks
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMPHANSEN — Sgt. Maj. Ronald Williams passed his duties as III Marine Expeditionary Force sergeant major to Sgt. Maj. Daniel Fierle during a post and relief ceremony at the parade deck on Camp Hansen April 4.

Williams, who served as the III Marine Expeditionary Force sergeant major since March of 2006, was retired during the ceremony and plans to continue living in Okinawa.

“I did the best I could for 30 years,” Williams said. “I would like to thank everyone who helped me along the way.”

Fierle came to III MEF after serving as the Marine Corps Base Hawaii sergeant major.

“To the Marines and sailors of III MEF; I look forward to meeting you and being your Sgt. Maj.,” said Fierle.

Fierle enlisted in the Marine Corps in November 1978.

After graduating recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., he was assigned to the First Tank Battalion, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

In January 1980, he was assigned to Brigade Service Support Group 1, 1st Marine Brigade and completed three deployments with Marine Amphibious Unit Service Support Group 31.

In 1984 he was assigned to Marine Air Group 24, 1st Marine Brigade where he served with Marine Air Base Squadron 24 and Marine Air Control Squadron 2.



Williams



Fierle

SEE **POST** PG 6



Marines of 2nd Platoon, Motor Transportation Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 4, make their way back from the beach to their cabin at Okuma Recreation Facility March 29. The Marines reunited on Okinawa last month when medically retired Cpl. Tim Jeffers, who was severely wounded by an improvised explosive device in May 2006 during the platoon's first tour, welcomed them back from their second Iraq deployment.

The Untouchables

In the spring of 2006, a tight platoon of motor transportation Marines from Okinawa were torn apart by a tragedy that left one of them horribly wounded. Last month, the Marines reunited here. This is the first chapter in their story.

— STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. ETHAN E. ROCKE —

The last time Tim Jeffers was on Okinawa, he had legs.

That was in February 2006 when Jeffers, then a corporal assigned to 3rd Transportation Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, as a motor transport operator, left the island for Iraq's Anbar Province.

Jeffers was three months into a seven-month deployment the day he dismounted the lead security vehicle in a convoy, took a few steps off the road during a security sweep and had his life changed forever.

His platoon mates watched from the ground that day — the haze of dust and smoke still permeating the battlefield — as a medevac helicopter gulped up their friend, shot back in the direction the convoy

came from and disappeared over the horizon.

It was the beginning of a long journey for Tim Jeffers — one that, more than two years later, brought him back here. He came back, he says, for family — the family he was taken from that day in Anbar.

Before Iraq

Jeffers arrived on Okinawa in August 2005 and was assigned to 2nd Platoon, Motor Transportation Company, 3rd TSB (the battalion has since been redesignated as Combat Logistics Battalion 4).

He joined the Marines in 2002 as a reservist but volunteered for active duty in 2005. He was 18 when service in the Corps attracted his interest.

“I wanted a challenge, and the poster looked cool,” Jeffers says with a chuckle.

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INSIDE

IT TAKES TWO

III MEF Commander makes changes to liberty buddy policy

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CORPS PROCESSORS

Counter/Human intelligence Marines train on interrogation, adapting to foreign cultures

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THE FORGOTTEN BATTLE

Marines travel to Peleliu Island to learn about those who fought and died in bloody World War II struggle

. 14

KANDAHAR PROVINCE, Afghanistan | A Marine with 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit escorts an armored vehicle outside a base April 1. Photo by Cpl. Randall A. Clinton



AROUND THE CORPS

FOR MORE MARINE CORPS STORIES AND PHOTOS, VISIT [HTTP://WWW.MARINES.MIL](http://www.marines.mil)



FALLUJAH, Iraq | Seaman Bryce P. Moheit watches a child do a handstand during a patrol March 11. Moheit is a hospitalman with K Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 1. Photo by Lance Cpl. Grant T. Walker



GOUBETTO, Djibouti | Navy Lt. Sara Nelson (center) examines a patient during a medical/civic action program March 30. Nelson is assigned to the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Jeremy T. Lock



ABOARD USS NIMITZ, Pacific Ocean | Marines assigned to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 clean an F/A-18A Hornet on the flight deck of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier March 29. Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Eduardo Zaragoza

Place virtue, courage, honor over American idolatry

Cpl. Carrie Booze

As I flipped through the pages of popular entertainment and tabloid magazines that littered the dentist's office, I couldn't help but notice the types of people society reveres.

There are entire publications, Internet sites and television channels devoted to tracking celebrities, many of whom today's youth consider to be role models.

Since joining the Marine Corps, I have developed a new opinion of who is worthy of being celebrated.

Real celebrities can't be found walking down the red carpet or accepting an Oscar. They aren't being chauffeured around in limousines or spending their days relaxing in spas. They are the thousands of men and women who selflessly serve this country every day in the military.

The people worth looking up to are individuals like Cpl. Jason Dunham. While he and other Marines were manning a checkpoint in Karabillah, Iraq, an insurgent leapt from his car and attacked Dunham. When the insurgent dropped a grenade, Dunham threw himself on top of it to shield his fellow Marines from the blast, giving his life for his country. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of

Honor for his selfless action.

Real celebrities are the soldiers from the Army's 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, who engaged in Operation Red Dawn with the assignment to kill or capture Saddam Hussein. The soldiers courageously hunted and captured Hussein in Adwar, Iraq.

A person to idolize is not the MVP who scored the winning touchdown in the Super Bowl, but someone like Sgt. Maj. Bradley Kasal.

During Operation Al Fajr, Kasal absorbed a grenade blast, took enemy fire and refused medical attention as he tried to save the lives of his wounded Marines inside Fallujah's "House of Hell."

The recruiters and drill instructors who dedicate their lives to finding and making Marines are real celebrities for ultimately securing our country's freedom.

It disgusts me every time a "legitimate" news station

interrupts with breaking news about another famous person being charged with driving under the influence. It's as if the news station is oblivious to the fact that our country is currently at war.

Rock stars' drug-induced deaths are commemorated on the news, while the service members who spend their days in the sweltering heat and the blistering cold, protecting America's freedom, are anonymous as they live and die.

Service members are rarely covered on the evening news unless they get into trouble. Society seems to be more concerned about movie stars than they are about the progress we are making overseas.

By sensationalizing media's celebrities, we are only feeding the problem; and, if we stop embracing the tabloids, we can end the demand and focus on more important issues.

Booze is a combat correspondent with Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego's Chevron newspaper.



Sempertoons

Created by Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



- ENGINEERS -
JackHammer Qual



FACT CHECK

WEARING UNIFORMS AFTER ACTIVE DUTY

Q: Will I be allowed to wear my uniforms once I have left active duty?

A: Perhaps. According to Marine Corps Order P1020.34G, paragraph 11,004, some non-active duty personnel are allowed to wear uniforms. These include retired officers and former Marines who served during a time of war and were honorably discharged. For a full listing of those who can wear the uniform and when, please refer to the order.

**TO SUBMIT AN OPINION OR EDITORIAL, E-MAIL US AT
OKINAWAMARINE.MCBB.FCT@USMC.MIL**

OKINAWA MARINE

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Winner, 2006 DoD Thomas Jefferson Award
Best Tabloid Format Newspaper

BRIEFS


RANGE HIGH SCORES
**Week of March 31-
April 4**
Special Detail (Rifle)

Sgt. S.R. Patereau 31st MEU 342

No Pistol Detail**LAW OF WAR CLASSES**

The Staff Judge Advocate and Legal Service Support Section will hold two Headquarters Marine Corps-approved two-day law of war classes and unit-level blocks of instruction, provided by a Marine Corps University Mobile Training Team.

The classes will cover the four Geneva Conventions, detainee operations, rules of engagement, targeting and war crimes.

The classes are scheduled for April 14-15 at the Camp Foster Globe and Anchor enlisted club and for April 17-18 at the Camp Hansen Lifelong Learning Center.

The unit instruction sessions are scheduled for April 15 at the Camp Foster Community Center, April 16 at the Camp Courtney Theater and Camp Kinser Surfside, and April 17 at the Camp Hansen West Chapel.

The classes and sessions are scheduled to run from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. each day.

For more information, contact Staff Sgt. Terrance Leggett at 645-3011.

OVERSEAS HOUSING ALLOWANCE SURVEY

The Per Diem Travel and Transportation Allowance Committee is conducting the annual OHA Utility/Recurring Maintenance Survey from April 15 to May 14.

All uniformed service members who have resided in privately leased quarters and have received OHA for at least six months are required to participate.

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete, and can be found at <https://www.perdiem.osd.mil/oha/survey/aproha.html>.

For more information, contact CWO4 Michael Easley by phone at 645-7199.

KUWAE PRESCHOOL REGISTRATION

Kuwae Preschool, located in building 6047 on Camp Lester, is having its annual open house registration May 3 from 8 a.m. until noon.

Kuwae Preschool offers a half-day developmentally-appropriate education program to Status of Forces Agreement persons' children ages 3 to 5 years old. To register, the children must be toilet trained and satisfy the age requirement no later than Oct. 31.

Documentation required for registration includes the child's passport, current shot records and an updated picture.

For more information, call 645-8419.

NOSCO ART AUCTION

The Naval Officers Spouses Club is holding an art auction May 10 at the Camp Butler Officers Club. The auction will feature contemporary and traditional Japanese artwork and authentic oriental rugs.

For more information, call 646-8287.

TO SUBMIT A BRIEF, send an e-mail to okinawamarine.mcbb.fct@usmc.mil, or fax your request to 645-3803. The deadline for submitting a brief is noon every Friday. The Okinawa Marine reserves the right to edit all submitted material.



III Marine Expeditionary Force Commanding General Lt. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer and III MEF Sergeant Major Sgt. Maj. Daniel Fierle salute the colors April 4 during the III MEF post and relief ceremony at the Camp Hansen parade deck. Photos by Lance Cpl. Ryan Wicks

POST FROM PG 1

In September 1988 he was assigned to 1st Maintenance Battalion, 1st Force Service Support Group. In July 1990, he was assigned to Brigade Service Support Group 7 and on August 12, 1990 deployed to Southwest Asia in support of operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

In July 1990, he was assigned to Brigade Service Support Group-7 and deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

In October 1991, he attended Drill Instructor School at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif. and served as a drill instructor and chief drill instructor with 2nd Recruit Training Battalion and Weapons and Field Training Battalion.

In October 1994, he was assigned to the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit and deployed to Somalia in support of Operation Restore Hope.

Fierle became a sergeant major in June 1999 and was assigned as sergeant major for 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion. He deployed to Southwest Asia with 3rd LAAD in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In August 2003 he was assigned as Training Center sergeant major, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif.

Fierle posted as Marine Corps Base Hawaii sergeant major from May 2006 to March 2008.

His personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal and Combat Action Ribbon.



Former III MEF sergeant major Sgt. Maj. Ronald Williams speaks April 4 during the III MEF post and relief ceremony at the Camp Hansen parade deck. Williams retired during the ceremony after 30 years of Marine Corps service.

III MEF commander modifies liberty buddy policies for Japan**Lance Cpl. Corey A. Blodgett**

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — Lt. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, the commanding general of III Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Bases Japan, recently modified the orders that govern liberty policies for all service members attached to Marine units in Japan.

The changes require all service members be issued liberty cards and all service members E-4 and below be accompanied

by a liberty buddy during off-base liberty.

The changes are outlined in the Liberty Buddy Order – MCBJ/III MEF Order 1050.5A and the Off-base Liberty Card Program – MCBJ/III MEF Order 1050.6A.

All service members assigned to MCBJ or III MEF and serving in Japan will be issued either a red or gold liberty card. Service members E-6 and above will normally be issued a gold liberty card unless commanders determine a period of observation

is necessary. Liberty cards are transferable within MCBJ and III MEF commands and service members should keep their cards when transferred from one unit to another.

The intent of the changes to the orders is to reduce off-base liberty incidents involving service members, according to both orders.

The changes to the orders took effect April 5. The orders can be viewed in their entirety at <http://www.mcbbutler.usmc.mil>.



Marines of 1st Engineer Platoon, Bulk Fuel Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group and Bangladesh Army soldiers of the 9th Engineer Battalion, 55th Infantry Division build a school in the town of Mongla March 14. The school was destroyed by November's Cyclone Sidr, which caused nearly 3,500 casualties and destroyed crops, homes, businesses and schools. Some estimates suggest a total of \$450 million in damage. Photos courtesy of 9th ESB

9th ESB rebuilds schools in Bangladesh

Lance Cpl. David Rogers

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP HANSEN — When category IV cyclone Sidr devastated Southern Bangladesh November 15, the U.S. military responded with disaster relief efforts including the deployment of Okinawa's III Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Four months later, 40 Marines and sailors with 1st Engineer Platoon, Fuel Company, 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group, continued those relief efforts alongside 100 Bangladesh Army and Navy service members by rebuilding two schools March 6 – 30.

The construction project was part of the III Marine Expeditionary Force Bangladesh Interoperability Program, a joint effort focused on helping Bangladeshi communities rebuild

from the storm that killed an estimated 3,500 people and caused an estimated \$450 million in damage.

The platoon was assigned to the town of Mongla in the southwest corner of Bangladesh. In January, an advanced party of Marines was sent to survey the conditions of two Islamic schools, known as Madrasahs, which were identified for repair. The team found little to survey.

"The buildings were gone," said platoon sergeant Gunnery Sgt. David Dickens, "They were destroyed. So basically it was just two open lots."

The engineers immediately went to work designing two new schools from the ground up. Instead of using their standard construction templates, the 9th ESB Marines modified the design to ensure the buildings could be

maintained with materials readily available in Bangladesh after they left. They decided on using tin for the roofs and bamboo sheathing for walls instead of the plywood and shingles more common in Western construction.

Building the schools with unconventional materials required the assistance of a Bangladesh Army engineer platoon who worked alongside the U.S. service members.

"As Americans we don't do a lot of tin roofing any



Pvt. Jesse Helsley (left), Bangladesh Army Sgt. Rahman Khalil and Cpl. Robert Knudson help put together the tin roofing for a new school house for an Islamic school in Mongla, Bangladesh March 22.

more," Dickens said. "We had to lean on the expertise of the Bangladesh Army for that."

Members of the Bangladesh Navy provided security during the project.

Some platoon members found working with the Bangladeshi soldiers difficult at first due to the language barrier as communications were often reduced to hand signals.

"We were basically playing charades in order to construct a building," said Cpl. Michael Spivey, a squad leader for the platoon.

Over time, both parties began to pick up on the other's language, making communication smoother. A common phrase emerged as a constant on the job site - "Shu-muh-sha-ne", a Bangladeshi phrase meaning "no problem".

"That was the motto of the mission. Any time there was a debate over a problem it always ended with 'Shu-muh-sha-ne,' we'll figure it out," Dickens said.

The appreciation of the townspeople was evident each day as the Marines drove through town on their way to the construction site, said squad leader Cpl. Amanda Wilson.

"They were really, really grateful and excited when we came by," she said. "They stood on the side of the streets just waving as we passed. I've always wanted to do something for a country like that, and I'd do it again in a heartbeat."

Dickens shared the sentiment.

"It's probably one of the best projects I've ever done in my 16 years in the Marine Corps," he said.

College of Continuing Education web-based interactive course enrollments break records

Lance Cpl. Ryan Wicks

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — The College of Continuing Education is seeing record enrollment in their Officer Distance Professional Military Education seminars and Marine Corps distance learning program (Marine Net) according to Terry Kerrigan, the director of the CCE.

Last year, the Marine Net interactive multimedia Web-based courses saw great increases in participation and 2,800 students have already signed up for the seminars this year. This is a record high number for the CCE, a department of Marine Corps Training and Education Command.

"The reason for the jump was because we have started to incorporate required military classes

into our Web site," said Kerrigan. "This way, Marines get to experience our interactive courses and realize how much better they can be than the normal paper-based courses."

The CCE has also begun enhancing pre-deployment training classes which help build the popularity of the courses, Kerrigan said.

The CCE offers Web-based courses ranging from computer technical skills to pre-deployment training. Service members can receive promotion points by completing the Marine Corps Institution courses or just learn a skill that they are interested in by completing other available courses.

Kerrigan said the online courses are a good fit for today's computer-minded service members, and they allow the students to move at their own pace.

"Normally classroom instruction and PMEs

are geared to move as fast as the slowest student," he said. "These courses prevent individuals who move faster from being bogged down."

The courses are also very flexible in that they do not have a set completion date, said Timothy Keefe, a customer outreach coordinator with the CCE. A service member can enroll, get deployed and come back months later to finish their course. There are also deployable servers and laptops that service members can use while deployed, Keefe said.

Kerrigan said he expects enrollment to continue to rise as word continues to get out about the program.

"I really think these classes are the new wave of learning in the military," he said.

Students interested in online courses can visit www.marinenet.usmc.mil.



Students in a Helicopter Rope Suspension Technique Masters Course conduct Special Patrol Insertion/Extraction training Sept. 20, 2007 in the Central Training Area. The photograph won first-place in the combat photography category of the 2007 Merit Awards Program. Photo by Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke



Marines and sailors of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit's Battalion Landing Team 2/1 attempt to dry their soaked feet and boots June 23, 2007 during Exercise Talisman Saber 2007 in Queensland, Australia. The photograph won first-place in the stand-alone photography category. Photo by Cpl. Eric D. Arndt

Okinawa Marine staff leads Corps in Marine journalism awards

Lance Cpl. Daniel A. Flynn
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — The Okinawa Marine staff led the entire Corps in the 2007 Marine Corps Combat Correspondent Association and Division of Public Affairs Merit Awards Program competition.

Staff members earned of

the Okinawa Marine earned first place in seven categories and placed in 16 of the 28 categories overall.

The winners were announced in Marine Administrative Message 211/08, which was released March 27. The competition recognizes professional excellence in print and broadcast journalism

throughout the Marine Corps.

Okinawa Marine editor Sgt. Ethan E. Rocke received five first-place individual awards in the competition. He was named Marine photojournalist of the year, print journalist of the year and earned first place in combat photography, pictorial photograph

and photojournalism.

Design editor Cpl. Eric D. Arndt won two categories: outstanding new writer and stand-alone photograph. He also took second in Marine photojournalist of the year and combat photography. He received an honorable mention for portrait and personality photography.

Competition judge Tessa

K. Ferrario, a photo editor with the Washington Times, described Rocke and Arndt's photojournalist of the year submission packages as "leaps and bounds" above the competition.

She said photographers should look at what Rocke and Arndt put together for their entries as examples of great storytelling.

Improved Awards Processing System reduces likelihood of lost, duplicate award recommendations

Lance Cpl. Andrew S. Avitt
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — The Improved Awards Processing System went into effect March 1 as Headquarters Marine Corps strives to make lost and duplicate awards a thing of the past.

The upgraded system is designed to enhance the abilities of commanders to submit, approve, endorse, and track personal and unit awards, according to Marine Corps Administrative Message 042/08.

Manpower Information Technology Branch personnel at Headquarters Marine Corps designed the new system based primarily on input from Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

One of the primary concerns was revamping the submission and approval procedures.

Under the old system, award recommendations were submitted up the chain of command via e-mail, according to 1st Lt. Nicholas W. Mull, the head of the Personal Awards Section, HQMC, and these e-mails contained links where award information was located. The problem was that as awards were processed, information could be moved, making the links inactive and leaving administrators floating in cyberspace with no way to find the needed data, he added.

Now, the routing of awards takes place in a single Web service where awards information is more accessible, Mull said.

IAPS is also tied into the Marine Corps' manpower database, which helps avert lost awards due to changes of rank, unit or last name.

Another common problem with the old sys-

tem was awards were often duplicated since there was no way to monitor the progress of pending awards, according to Mull.

Unit award administrators now have permanent visibility through the Web service of awards created or processed in their unit, Mull said. This includes the accurate status and location of awards after they are forwarded to their higher units.

The program is accessible from any computer with an internet connection as long as the user has access to a Common Access Card reader and the appropriate software.

Marines can register on the Improved Awards Processing System by going to <http://www.manpower.usmc.mil/iaps>. More information can be found in Marine Corps Administrative Message 042/08 located on <http://www.usmc.mil>.

Counter, human intel Marines conduct training in Combat Town

Lance Cpl. Richard Blumenstein

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CENTRAL TRAINING AREA — Cooperative local citizens and captured enemy insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan are the main source for those collecting information on terrorist activities.

To stay proficient in their ability to gather this intelligence, Marines with Counter Intelligence/Human Intelligence Company, 3rd Intelligence Battalion, III Marine Expeditionary Force, conducted human intelligence training March 31- April 4 that focused on the challenges these Marines face in a combat zone.

Since counter/human intelligence Marines have access to the highest level of classified information and must often work covertly, those interviewed for this story will remain nameless for security reasons.

"Intelligence drives operations," said a CI/HUMINT officer who will be referred to as Capt. Smith. "An infantry or combat commander cannot send his Marines out anywhere without having some kind of intelligence to guide him in that area."

As their occupational field description indicates, the Marines' job consists of two main areas.

The human intelligence side of the Marines' job is what they focused on during the training. This mission requires them to gather information from civilians and detainees to support commanders' ability to make combat decisions.

During the training, the Marines took part in numerous scenarios that mirrored actual events that have taken place in Iraq, according to Smith.

To add realism to the exercise, Marine and civilian volunteers acted as Iraqi citizens and enemy insurgents during the training.

The Marines practiced their verbal interrogation skills on fellow "counter-intel" Marines acting as captured insurgents. The Marines questioned the captives for information that proved vital to the success of their mission in the scenarios.

"A captured insurgent could know a plethora of information," Smith said. "They could know about future attacks on coalition forces or Iraqi citizens."

During the training exercise, the Marines also had to implement their understanding of the Iraqi culture to build rapport with the role players acting as local citizens.

"You cannot ignore the culture - that is paramount," Smith said. "If you ignore the culture, you are going to disrespect the people and shut off that flow of information."

An example of adhering to the culture that was included in the training was asking the man-of-the-house for permission to enter. If the CI/HUMINT Marines made the mistake of asking the woman in the home for permission, a conflict ensued making it harder for the Marine to gather information.

"It's always (difficult) trying not to ruin rapport and not burn bridges," one Marine said, noting that one small mistake can negate weeks or months of progress in a community.

The Marines also faced strong language barriers during the training. Role players who could speak a second language such as Spanish used it during the scenarios. This

forced the Marines to communicate through a translator, similar to how they operate in Iraq.

"We base our training on information provided by teams that recently came back from Iraq and the

new (tactics techniques and procedures) that have been implemented in Iraq," Smith said. "Scenarios we exercise out here are coming from real life experiences from other CI/HUMINT Marines."



A counter/human intelligence Marine interviews a role player April 2 during training at Combat Town in the Central Training Area. The Marines took part in numerous scenarios that mirrored actual events that have taken place in Iraq. Photo by Lance Cpl. Richard Blumenstein

Marine Forces Pacific sergeant major visits Okinawa, discusses core values



Sgt. Maj. Evans McBride, the Marine Forces Pacific sergeant major, speaks with Marines at the Hansen Theater March 8. Photo by Lance Cpl. Richard Blumenstein

Lance Cpl. Richard Blumenstein

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP HANSEN — Sgt. Maj. Evans McBride, the Marine Forces Pacific sergeant major, visited Okinawa to speak with Marines about Corps values April 7-8.

McBride visited Marine Corps Base Camp Butler in light of the recent string of incidents that have occurred in the Pacific area. McBride read to the Marines a message from Lt. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general of the III Marine Expeditionary Force and commander of Marine Corps Bases Japan.

"The standard ethics and corps values we hold as Marines give us legitimacy in our leadership roles in international relation-

ships," McBride read. "Whether involved in combat, training or off duty, Marines are expected to be leaders who uphold the highest traditions of our service and our country."

He also spoke directly to all staff noncommissioned officers about ensuring they take the time to properly teach their Marines about core values and ensure they follow them day to day.

"If you take a brand new private first class just coming into the Marine Corps and let him do whatever he wants to do, he's going to find a whole lot of bad things to get into," McBride said. "But if you guide him, you mentor him and teach him the right way, then you're going to fix the morality of my Corps everyday."

TIM FROM PG 1

Jeffers is a smart ass. It is, his friends say, his biting wit for which they know and love him, and his charismatic personality helped forge the tight bonds that defined the Marines of 2nd Platoon.

"His personality is just awesome," said Cpl. Jason O'Hearn, who became close friends with Jeffers on Okinawa. "He was the life of the party. He was a ladies man. He was like my little brother."

Fraternal bonds run deep in 2nd Platoon, which goes by the moniker "Scorpions." The Scorpions are fiercely proud of the glory days before Iraq when they reigned as the all-star platoon of Motor T Company. They trained hard and "played" even harder. They exercised together, went to the field together, smoked and drank together and traded tales of life back home. They did all the things Marines do to become units, to become family. They felt, as one member put it, "untouchable."

"We were taught that if there was ever going to be anything or anyone better than us, they better be untouchable," said Sgt. Charles Trask, the tough kid from a broken

home in Kansas City, Mo., who goes by the call sign "Spartan" and wears a matching tattoo of a Spartan warrior on his left pectoral.

Trask calls the Marines of 2nd Platoon "my Marines," and he reveres them like a proud father. His fervent pride and loyalty to his Marine family is prevalent in 2nd Platoon.

Many of them came from broken homes or dysfunctional families and found in the platoon a kinship they had never known. That kinship was at the heart of the "unbreakable chain" the platoon formed before they went to war together in 2006.

"Our belief and trust in each other always got us through," said Sgt. Joseph Tocci, a Boston native and mellower complement to Trask's hard-edged disposition. "Our leaders always instilled in us to be the best, and we always were."

Before they left for Iraq, 2nd Platoon, Tocci says, had the highest physical fitness test average in the company, and the platoon won every unit competition that came along.

They were untouchable.

'You either find 'em or you hit 'em'

When the Scorpions went to Iraq in 2006, they were assigned the mission of security platoon and worked out of Al Asad Air Base, the biggest base in Anbar Province, supporting convoys that supplied forward operating bases in the area. The mission was arduous, nerve-racking and never-ending.

The battalion the Scorpions supported lost eight Marines within the first six weeks they were on the ground, and the harsh realities of war quickly set in for them.

"It was definitely a culture shock," Tocci says. "We were like, 'It's no joke over here.'"

With improvised explosive devices and snipers the two biggest threats in Iraq, the Scorpions' mission was to find and protect against those threats during convoy operations.

"You either find 'em, or you hit 'em," Tocci said about the stark reality they faced either spotting IEDs or triggering them. "We were the ones right in front looking out. You have to really have that eagle's eye to see them."

The platoon was attacked with IEDs continuously. Trask

was hit with an IED himself but suffered only minor injuries and returned to duty.

"It was IED after IED after IED," he said. "I expected the enemy to be right in my face like a football game. It wasn't like that. It was an enemy that was right there in our face that we couldn't see."

The invisible enemy loomed constantly under roadside rocks and rubble. The Marines regarded every object with suspicion and contempt.

'You tell them what they need to know'

Marines have an informal doctrine for mourning. A Marine's mourning process is often abbreviated and stored away, to be indulged in some time later when it isn't a battlefield liability. It is a very unnatural act to swallow a heart full of sorrow, but it is a necessary sacrifice Marines make for the sake of the mission.

"You tell them what they need to know," Trask said, describing the process. "You give them the least bit of information to carry on, and when the mission is accomplished, you give them some

Cpl. John Rockwell and Jeffers make their way toward the beach for some jet skiing March 29.



“She told us one of our own got hit. She didn’t tell us how bad until later, but they don’t tell us somebody got hit unless something bad happened.”

— CPL. JOHN ROCKWELL

time to mourn. Then you get them focused again.”

The day Jeffers was wounded, Cpl. John Rockwell, Jeffers’ next-door neighbor in the barracks on Okinawa, was on a separate convoy. When the Marines reached their destination, a lieutenant pulled everyone together and passed the news.

“She told us one of our own got hit,” Rockwell said. “She didn’t tell us how bad until later, but they don’t tell us somebody got hit unless something bad happened.”

Rockwell and Jeffers, who both hail from Orange County in Southern California, forged a strong friendship on Okinawa.

“Me and Jeffers got really close,”

Rockwell said. “We were a lot alike because we’re from the same area.”

When Rockwell learned what had happened to Jeffers, it hit him hard.

“I can’t really explain the feeling,” he said. “It’s horrible. It’s just the worst feeling possible.”

O’Hearn, who was attached to an engineer unit, also got an initial vague report.

“At first, I thought, ‘he’s fine,’” he said. “I had to tell myself that. That’s like my brother. I had to tell myself that to stay sane.”

He found out the next day how bad Jeffers had been hit.

“I broke down,” O’Hearn said. “I was bawling. When I heard the extent of his injuries, I didn’t

think he was going to make it. I thought ‘how could anyone live through that?’”

Cpl. Carl Drexler was in the convoy with Jeffers, but he was far back in the snaking procession of vehicles.

The convoy stopped when a vehicle in the rear was hit with an IED. Jeffers, who was the pace vehicle commander, did what he was trained to do. He got out to sweep the area around his vehicle for IEDs or insurgents.

Drexler heard the call come over the radio moments later: “We lost a man.”

He initially assumed it wasn’t anyone from 2nd Platoon. “We figured maybe it was a contractor or something because they didn’t say Marine.”

But when the convoy arrived at Al Qaim, Drexler saw someone else in Jeffers’ seat.

“As soon as I saw he wasn’t there, I knew it was bad,” he said. “I’d seen a lot of guys get hit, and they don’t get medevac’d. They just go in a different track.”

Drexler grabbed a Marine who had been close to the incident and demanded to know what

happened. He asked three times before the Marine revealed his horrible secret.

“He told me both his legs got blown off.”

Drexler figured his friend was dead. He thought he would have bled to death on the chopper ride.

“I just wanted to stop,” he said “I didn’t want to go back out there.”

The platoon’s leaders knew the other Marines would have similar thoughts. They pulled the Marines together.

“When you take that unbreakable chain you’ve built and then break it, the whole thing can fall apart,” Trask said. “Our staff sergeant brought us together and told us ‘no matter how much we want to quit, no matter how much we hate this situation, we can’t let it tear us apart.’”

And they didn’t let it tear them apart, but, as Drexler put it, none of them were the same after that.

“We were all just down for the next few weeks.”

While they were down, Jeffers was in a coma.

Part two of the Untouchables will appear in next week’s Okinawa Marine.



“This is where they took out the first piece of shrapnel,” Jeffers said, showing Sgt. Joseph Tocci his scars.



An instructor with IED Defeat, a training team with the Engineer Center of Excellence based in Camp Lejeune, N.C., shows Marines an example of what improvised explosive devices may resemble April 2 at the Central Training Area during 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group's IED training. Photos by Lance Cpl. Aaron Hostutler

Defeating an unseen enemy

9th Engineer Support Battalion conducts improvised explosive device training

Lance Cpl. Aaron Hostutler

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

The path ahead seems clear. Everything is quiet. Marines are on high alert looking for anything out of the ordinary. Suddenly, a Marine disappears in an explosion of baby powder.

As the air clears, the Marines realize that if they were in a combat zone instead of a training environment, they would have more to worry about than a powder-filled improvised explosive device.

With insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan continuously evolving their IED tactics, it is vital that Marines receive constant training to keep them aware of what to look for in a combat environment, said Gregory Sedia, a mobile training team instructor with IED Defeat. The training team is part of the Engineer Center of Excellence based in Camp Lejeune, N.C. and is in Okinawa to help Marines here deploy with the best training available on IEDs.

The mobile training team used their expertise to enhance the readiness of Marines with 9th Engineer Support Battalion, 3rd Marine Logistics Group April 2.

"There can never be enough training. Because as fast as we adapt, the insurgents adapt, which is why we want (Marines) to be aware of the signs of IEDs," Sedia said.

Sedia said Marines on the battlefield must be "hyper vigilant" to be able to effectively

identify IEDs. "Insurgents have learned to make almost anything explode, so we try to give (Marines) a whole spectrum of what they can expect," he said.

In order to expose the Marines of 9th ESB to several types of IEDs they could encounter in combat, instructors hid nine simulated explosive devices along a patrol path in Central Training Area to test how many each Marine could find. Some did well, and others, such as those covered in white powder, did not. Either way, many Marines said they benefited from the course.

"I now know what to look for and what to do when I come into contact with an IED," said Pfc. Jason Fisher, a line walker for Bulk Fuel Company. "That's the kind of information that will keep me alive in Iraq."

The training also covered immediate action drills following an IED explosion that results in casualties. Instructors explained this is a very important part of the course since a Marine's instincts will often drive him to immediately rush to the aid of a wounded comrade. However, an IED detonation is often the beginning of an extremely volatile situation that may include secondary attacks or a direct assault from the enemy, Sedia said. Therefore, Marines were instead taught to first wait for further attacks and then set up security and a safe zone before attempting to bring the casualties to safety.

The improvised explosive device training course was designed to give the Marines a

look at as many different situations as possible to better prepare them to make the right decisions when it counts most.

"It's important to understand that no two situations are the same," Sedia said.



Objects such as propane tanks and short-wave radios were used to simulate Improvised Explosive Devices during the training.

Quenching the thirst

Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152's new KC-130J Hercules aircraft makes refueling more efficient

Lance Cpl. Ryan Wicks
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

To keep air combat crews and their aircraft constantly in the fight, refuelers must be ready to fill-up thirsty jet fighters in flight in or near combat zones.

To ensure this readiness, Marines from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152 conducted a fixed wing aerial refuel training mission April 7 off the west coast of Okinawa with Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242.

VMGR-152, also known as the Sumos, utilized the newest KC-130J in its inventory during the three-hour mission, refueling two F/A-18D Hornets from VMFA(AW)-242.

Normally the mission would have taken a little longer because the older model planes weren't as easy to maneuver.

"The new plane is state of the art," said Maj. Constantinos Koutsoukos, an aircraft commander with VMGR-152. "All we do is give it the information that we have gathered, and it basically takes over. It is a fully automated plane. I could even sit there with my arms crossed the whole mission and have hardly have to do anything."

As advanced as the system is, however, there is still much to be done beforehand by pilots and crew to ensure a successful mission. Crews must first gather detailed data such as weather conditions, cargo and crew weight, fuel requirements and mission timeline, Koutsoukos said. Then the execution phase begins by preparing the aircraft's internal operating system.

For the April 7 mis-

sion, Koutsoukos, pilot 1st Lt. Joseph Lenox and crew chief Master Sgt. Ian Kubicki took all the data they gathered and entered it into the plane's computer. The plane's operating system used that information to adjust in-flight settings according to the variables such as weight and weather.

Besides having a better "brain," the KC-130J also has more brawn, according to Koutsoukos.

"We can go higher and move faster than before, which makes it much easier for the jets to refuel and allows them to get back to the fight faster."

And getting the fighters back in the fight is the "bread and butter" of the squadron, he said.

"The majority of our missions in battle consist of aerial refueling, so we must master that skill," he said.

Lenox also emphasized the importance of efficient refueling missions.

"In Iraq, for example, the jets provide air support for troops on the ground," he said. "If (the jets) had to go back to base every time they ran low on gas, it would waste time, fuel and potentially lives."

With that type of focus, personnel of VMGR-152 conducted the refueling exercise as if it were the real thing.

"Everything was run as if we were in Iraq and fighter planes needed refueling support," Koutsoukos said. "The only difference is that we did not wear any (personal) protective gear or armor."

The exercise concluded with two Hornets topped off with fuel and a Sumo crew more confident than ever in their aircraft's ability to save lives on the battlefield.



Master Sgt. Ian Kubicki, a crew chief with Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152, inputs data into the KC-130J Hercules April 7 during a refuel training mission. Photos by Lance Cpl. Ryan Wicks



An F/A-18D Hornet from Marine All Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 242 is refueled by Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 152's KC-130J Hercules April 7 during VMGR-152's training.



The Imperial Japanese Army Memorial site on Peleliu Island, located next to the 1st Marine Division Memorial, commemorates the Japanese soldiers who lost their lives during the Battle of Peleliu. Photos by Cpl. Juan D. Alfonso

Marines visit sites of World War II battle on Peleliu for historical, familial lessons

Cpl. Juan D. Alfonso
OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

A squad of Marines move as they conduct an amphibious landing unlike any they've trained for. They can feel the blistering 120 degree weather sapping them of their energy; they hear enemy bullets fly by their heads hitting the men to their left and right. They expected it to be like this, but they didn't expect the 600-800 yards of coral they have to fight through before setting foot on the beach.

That was the story Cpl. Donald (Mac) Taggart never told his grandson, Capt. Benjamin T. Taggart, the manpower officer for Marine Aircraft Group 36, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

Donald couldn't tell his family the things he witnessed as an engineer with 1st Marine Division Sept. 15, 1944 during the Battle of Peleliu, Taggart said. But his grandson was determined to connect with his late grandfather by unearthing his story, told to him by World War II Historian and Peleliu resident Des Matsutaro.

To honor his grandfather's memory and find the truth, Taggart, with the help of the Marine Corps University Foundation, organized a battle site study April 6 for Marine Corps Air Station Futenma officers, staff noncommissioned officers and their families at the site of one of the bloodiest battles of World War II.

"The whole experience was just surreal," Taggart said as he



Capt Benjamin T. Taggart collects sand from White Beach, Peleliu Island April 6. Taggart's grandfather, Cpl. Donald (Mac) Taggart, assaulted the beach during the Battle of Peleliu.

recalled standing on the beach his grandfather assaulted. "This trip was an indescribable connection to my grandfather's past and family history."

The 30 participants toured the six-mile island, visiting several memorials honoring both Japanese and American troops who fought and died during the three-month battle. Leading the group was Matsutaro, who describes Peleliu as the "Forgotten Battle."

The Battle of Peleliu has become a part of the Corps' history that many have forgotten, he said. Though the U.S. troops who fought on Peleliu left victorious,

poor intelligence and changing Japanese tactics resulted in casualties that the U.S. was not prepared for and many would rather forget.

The attack on the island was intended to cut-off Japanese troops stationed in the Philippines from supply routes and to secure the only working Japanese flight-line in the area, according to Craig A. Swanson, the associate dean of academics at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

"At this point in the war, Japan knew it couldn't win the war," Swanson said. "They had been ordered not to conduct anymore Banzai attacks (suicide attacks.) The U.S. forces didn't expect the change in tactics."

What began as a battle involving 15,000 Imperial Japanese soldiers ended with only 223 Japanese survivors and more than 6,500 Marine casualties, a third of the division, and 1,500 Army casualties.

One of the stops on the tour was the 1,000 Man Cave, a series of underground tunnels used by Japanese forces during the battle. The cave derives its name from the amount of Japanese troops believed to be residing there at the onset of the battle.

"The 1,000 man cave was intense," said Staff Sgt. Joseph P. Altman, the Navy Marine Corps Intranet Help Desk staff noncommissioned officer in charge for MAG-36. "So much detail went into building those tunnels. It's

amazing no one got lost in them, and there was so much (unexploded ordnance) left in the tunnels. It really gave you an idea of what took place there."

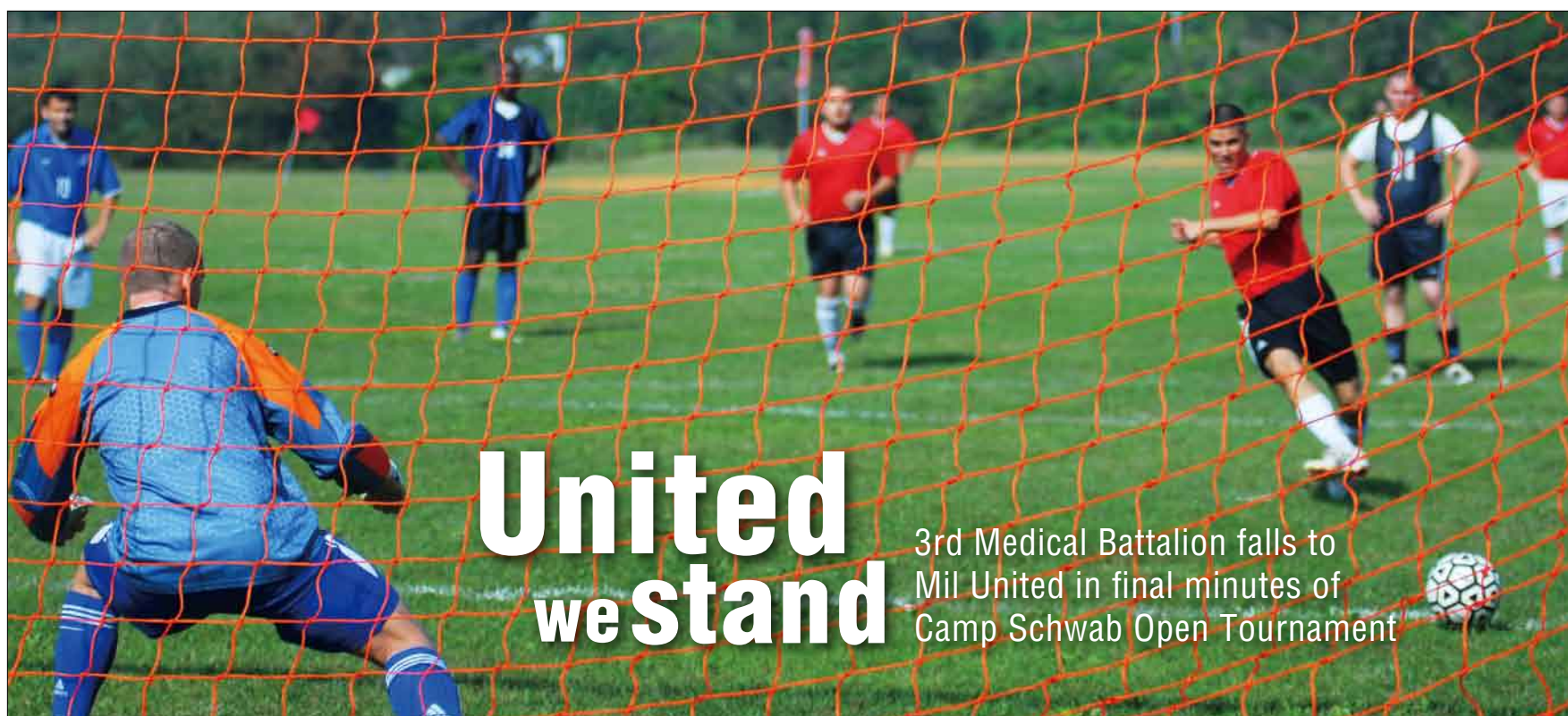
Many of the participants agreed one location on the tour stood out from the rest - White Beach, the site where Cpl. Taggart's unit landed.

Though the location exists today as a quiet tropical beach surrounded by lush jungle, it was a different scene during the battle. Prior to the attack, allied forces bombarded the beach relentlessly, clearing the way for the landing. But in the process, most of the vegetation in the nearby jungle was destroyed, eliminating any cover or concealment the Marines may have had. Despite the bombardment, the Japanese bunkers on both ends of the beach remained intact as the Marines came ashore over the coral reef.

"I'm still trying to imagine what it must have been like to attack that beach," Taggart said. "Imagine the jungle gone, covered in tree stumps, with no place for any of the Marines to hide. They were sitting ducks."

At the end of the day, the participants said they had a greater appreciation for the Corps' history and what happened on Peleliu.

"I really want to thank the Marine Corps University Foundation," Taggart said. "Without their help, we wouldn't have been able to make this possible. It was an absolutely unbelievable experience."



United we stand

3rd Medical Battalion falls to Mil United in final minutes of Camp Schwab Open Tournament

3rd Medical Battalion forward Victor Aguayo (right) attempts a penalty kick against Mil United goalie Alex Johnson during the championship game of the Camp Schwab Open Soccer Tournament March 6. Mil United defeated 3rd Medical Battalion 1-0 to win the title. Photos by Lance Cpl. Daniel R. Todd

Lance Cpl. Daniel R. Todd

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP SCHWAB — With less than five minutes to play in the championship game of the Camp Schwab Open Soccer Tournament, Mil United and 3rd Medical Battalion were tied at zero -- and Mil United forward Andrew Richard was tired of it.

He received a pass near the goalie's box and blasted the ball to the top of the goal, just beyond the outstretched fingers of 3rd Medical Battalion goalie Daniel Salinas who had been near perfect in the match.

"Our goalie had a hell of a game, but it was one hell of a shot that guy got off," said 3rd Medical Battalion defender Fabian Browne.

But even with the lead, Mil United didn't let up knowing 3rd Medical could get right back in the game.

Instead of dropping back and playing defense, they continued with their attack game plan, putting a lot of shots on goal. The plan worked; they held their lead for the last minutes

of the game to win the championship.

"Making the winning goal was awesome because it was my last tournament on island and I have been playing with these guys for a while now," Richard said. "I am glad that we pulled it out and I could help add another win to this team's impressive record."

The game might have turned out differently, though, if 3rd Medical Battalion forward Victor Aguayo could have capitalized on a penalty kick during the first ten minutes of the game.

Aguayo had the Mil United goalie completely fooled on the kick, but he blasted the ball into the right post. The rest of the game ended up a defensive battle between two teams that each carry All-Marine players on their roster.

"We played our hearts out, and so did they," said 3rd Medical Battalion defender Kishan Harripersad. "What makes them so good is that they practice together all the time, so they know how to play together. If we start practicing more, we would be on the same level as them if not better."



Mil United defender Travis Alexander (blue jersey) blocks 3rd Medical Battalion forward William Gordon from the ball.

History made, records broken during Mike Petty Memorial Track, Field Meet

Lance Cpl. Daniel R. Todd

OKINAWA MARINE STAFF

CAMP FOSTER — Kubasaki track coach Charles Burns' voice rang out over the loud speaker March 5 announcing where each school placed in the sixth Mike Petty Memorial Track and Field Meet here. As he drew closer to announcing the first place winner, the Kadena High School Panthers track team grew more excited.

He announced Kadena took the boy's title and the Panther athletes and fans went crazy, but a few minutes later Burns announced the Kadena girls also won.

Kadena is the first school

in the meet's history to sweep both the boy's and girl's title.

More than 300 high school athletes from nineteen schools across the Pacific region participated in the sixth annual Mike Petty Memorial Track and Field Meet March 5-6. That makes it the largest gathering of high school track and field athletes in the Far East, Burns said.

The meet is the premiere track and field meet in the Far East for these students, and there are a lot of great teams, so it is really impressive that Kadena took both titles, Burns said.

Kadena's boys team scored 88 points and the

girl's team scored 92 points to beat out the 18 other schools participating in the meet.

"The girl's team has struggled to beat Kubasaki, so for this to happen is just amazing," said Kadena assistant coach Stephanie Davis. "I'm so proud of them all; they really gave it their all."

Athletes pushed themselves to the limit and started breaking records on the first day of the meet. Seoul American High School's Mark Lieberg broke the shot put record with a throw of 14.79 meters and Zama American High School's Andrew Quallio broke the boy's 3200-meter record

with a time of 9 minutes 58.95 seconds.

The athletes continued with their break-out performances on the final day, making four more meet records.

Quallio had another excellent performance taking the boy's 1600-meter race with a time of 4:37.57.

"I saw his performance Friday night and as soon as I saw him line up for the 1600-meter I knew he was going for another record, and I was pretty sure he was going to break it," Burns said. "He is an awesome athlete."

Christian Academy's Blake Bannister was also involved in two record

breaking performances. His team broke the record for "Mike's Medley," a relay race consisting of two 200-meter legs, one of 400 and one of 800, with a time of 3:49.50. Bannister ran the anchor leg and later broke his own 800-meter record, which he set last year with a time of 2:02.89.

Tokyo's International School of the Sacred Heart's Nako Nakatsuka took the girl's 1600-meter record with a time of 5:35.69.

"It was truly an exciting meet, and I think all of the kids really enjoyed having the chance to compete against the best in the Pacific," Burns said.

