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MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - Marines of Battery K, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, attached to 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, perform a fire mission with the M327 120mm Expeditionary Fire Support System during a live-fire exercise, March 28. The battery trained for four weeks on the new weapon system in preparation for an upcoming deployment with a Marine Expeditionary Unit later this year. EFSS is the newest weapon added to the Marine Corps' artillery arsenal, creating a triad with the M777 155mm Lightweight Howitzer and the High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System.

3/12 Marines wield explosive new weapon system

Story and photo by Alfred Lopez

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - Marines of Battery K, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, attached to 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment recently, concluded the first West Coast training with the M327 120mm Expeditionary Fire Support System with live-fire exercises at various ranges in preparation for a deployment with a Marine Expeditionary Unit this fall.

EFSS is the newest addition to the Marine Corps' artillery arsenal, creating a triad with the M777 155mm Lightweight Howitzer and the High-Mobility Artillery Rocket System.

"With the triple seven, we have medium range capabilities, and with the HIMARS we have long range capabilities," said Staff Sgt.

Javier J. Valdez, an artillery instructor from Fort Sill, Okla., in-charge of training Battery K on the EFSS. "This weapon gets us closer to the enemy."

The weapon system can be hastily deployed and sustained for 72-hour combat operations utilizing the MV-22 Osprey. During these missions, Ospreys transport two lightweight Internally Transportable Vehicles which tow the weapon and ammunition trailer, giving Marines the speed they need without sacrificing intensity.

"With this system, Marines could quickly bring close range indirect fire, contact the enemy and get out within three days," said Valdez, hailing from Hayward, Calif.

Battery K has spent the past four weeks training with the EFSS. They qualified with

the ITVs, learned maintenance and practiced deploying and egressing the weapons system.

"Operating it is the same basic concept as the triple seven (Howitzer)," said Lance Cpl. Tracy Strickland, a 20-year-old cannoneer from Indianapolis, with Battery K. "But it's a lot easier and faster to employ and displace, and you can fire a lot faster than with the Howitzer."

The battery is slated to be the first 1st Marine Division Battery to receive the EFSS, and will implement the weapon to their training regimen to prepare for an upcoming deployment.

"I'm excited to be on this new system," said Strickland. "We learned how to clean the weapon, and if we can keep it clean, we can keep on firing."

Army Special Forces sharpen skills, train with Marines at CAMOUT

Story and photos by Cpl. Andrew S. Avitt

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. - An Army Special Forces team called on Marines to help them sharpen their skills aboard the Combat Center's Combined-Arms Military Operations in Urban Terrain complex, the Corps' largest and most realistic training facility March 12-25.

Infantry with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and non-infantry Marines from Headquarters Battalion, served as students for a team of Green Berets from Special Forces Operational Detachment A, 5th Special Forces Group, as they practiced techniques they will use to train indigenous personnel and foreign military units in the event they are deployed overseas.

The training, part of the Joint National Training Capability program, brought Marine Corps and Special Operations Forces units together during an Enhanced Mojave Viper exercise to share tactics, techniques and procedures and facilitates rapport-building before combat deployments around the world. EMV is the Corps' premiere 28-day, combined arms, live-fire pre-deployment training exercise conducted aboard the Combat Center.

Given the strategic importance seamless service integration has on the joint battlefield, the combined training gave the Green Berets a first-hand view of how the Marine Corps operates in the battle space and gave the Marines a better understanding of the composition and mission of an Army SFODA.

This coordination and synchronization between Marines and Green Berets is crucial on the modern battlefield since both share integral



MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. - Infantry and non-infantry Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and Headquarters Battalion, conduct a house clearing operation March 19, at Range 220, as part of a joint training exercise with Army Green Berets.

roles, whether it involves intelligence gathering, foreign military training and advising or conducting combat operations, said the Special Forces detachment commander for the SFODA.

"Marine battalions act as battle space owners on the ground, and an SFODA operates within those same battle spaces," said a Special Forces team sergeant, who requested to remain anonymous. "De-confliction with those battalions and battle space owners is critical to ensure both the battalion and ODA can achieve maximum effectiveness and that their efforts aren't going counter to one another - which can happen if there's not cross-talk."

As a battle space owner, a Marine commander in a combat zone would be responsible for maintaining security and knowing what military operations are taking place in his operating area. The presence of a Special Forces team would be a very important thing to know with that level of responsibility and given the fast pace of combat operations.

"There's always a cultural difference between the Army and Marines and differences in standard operating procedures and acronyms. That's one of the reasons we chose to train with Marines," said the team sergeant.

Working with the Marines, specifically those who were not infantry by trade, also helped the Green Berets experience a situation similar to what they may encounter when working with foreign forces in combat zones.

"Our intention was to train differing levels of capabilities," said the detachment command-

er, "On a tactical side, the infantry Marines have more experience to draw from, but what I wanted to offer my detachment was the opportunity to deal with 20 personnel that had varying levels of experience, much like indigenous elements and operating forces that we will be working with in country."

"If the Marines don't understand something or if something my guys are telling them could be explained better, my guys are able to hone their training and teaching skills, which is a large part of what I need them to do overseas," he added.

"For the infantry Marines, it gave them a chance to work through some of their gun drills and some of their [standard operating procedures]," said the team sergeant. "For the support guys, this was an opportunity to familiarize and truly get comfortable behind those weapon systems. So if they ever find themselves in a combat situation, they now have that level of comfort, 'I know what I am doing and I can take on that threat.'"

The mixed group of Marines offered a realistic training group for the Special Forces detachment as they worked to bring everyone up from their shared rifleman background to complex tactics involving close quarters combat in a live-fire environment. Given the short amount of training time available, the ODA team's members needed to be on their "A game."



MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. - An Army Green Beret instructs two Marines to perform a house clearing exercise aboard the Combat Center's CAMOUT facility March 19 during a Joint National Training Capability program, exercise.

(CAMOUT, page 5)



3/5 Cracks Down on Insurgent, Drug Activity

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Ryan Smith

MALMAND, Afghanistan - Early twilight hours at Forward Operating Base Inkerman are abruptly disturbed by the loud rumble of mine resistant, ambush protected vehicles. The lead vehicle of the movement pulls out and the others fall in line, thus beginning a long serpentine across the eastern desert.

Malmand sits amid two key passes through the mountains between Sangin and Kandahar. This makes the town a key insurgent bed-down area during movement to and from the city centers.

The convoy flows into the valley surrounding Malmand, encircling the town with firepower aimed in on the village. The mission is to isolate and interdict insurgent activity in the area, effectively sealing off the area from anyone coming or leaving. Operation Golden Shillelagh is now in effect.

Then over the horizon, two CH-53E Super Stallions come in for a landing, pouring the Marines of 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 8, and their Afghan National Army partners onto the dry, dusty landscape. The main rotors spin up quickly as the Marine egress is finished.

The Marines move swiftly into the first village compound and begin to clear the area, looking for illegal drugs, weapons or suspected insurgent activity.

"They genuinely want to find the [insurgents] and get them to come out and play," said 1st Lt. Charles Broun, the platoon commander for 2nd Platoon. "The insurgents talk a big game but they are a bunch of thugs... like a bully who hangs out at the mall. They're all tough until you land a big punch to the face and then they quit."

The Marines cleared compound after compound and soon moved into what they have affectionately called Patrol Base Lopez, named for a fallen member from their unit lost earlier in this deployment.

"Sleeping in different compounds each night then waking up and going hunting for insurgents; this is what (infantrymen) sign up for," said Broun, a native of Atlanta.

With the Marines of 2nd Platoon moving



An Afghan National Army soldier questions some local children on the used opium bags found during a search of their family shop March 12 in the Malmand bazaar. The ANA soldiers, with assistance from 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 8, cleared more than 30 used opium bags as well as approximately 30 pounds of opium gum and bricks of purified opium.



Assuming a lookout position atop a compound wall, Cpl. Jose Launder, a native of Madison, Wis., watches activity in the local bazaar March 12 during Operation Golden Shillelagh. Launder is a squad leader for 2nd Platoon, Company K, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 8.

(CRACKDOWN, page 5)

1st Marine Division Marines march in Swallows Day parade



Photos by Lance Cpl. Alfred Lopez

Marines of the Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif., the 1st Marine Division Band, and Company C, 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, march to the beat of the drums during the 53rd annual Swallow's Day Parade at San Juan Capistrano, March 26. The parade is the nation's largest non-motorized parade, and features equestrian units, marching bands, floats, dancers, historical re-enactments and community groups. San Juan Capistrano is 1/11's adopted city.



Staff Sgt. Michael A. Flaningam, Drum Major, 1st Marine Division Band, leads the band as they march to the beat of the drums during the 53rd annual Swallow's Day Parade at San Juan Capistrano, March 26. Company C, 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, and the Mounted Cavalry of Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow also participated in the nation's largest non-motorized parade. San Juan Capistrano is 1/11's adopted city.



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CAMOUT

(Cont. from page 2)

"At first, a couple of my guys were hesitant, but at the end of the day, what [an] ODA does is solve problems," said the detachment commander. "About half of the Marines had never cleared a room, or building for that matter. But in the span of about 12 hours, we were able to go from dry and blank fire to conducting a live-fire shoot house with all 20 Marines," he said.

"I think it's those kinds of results that speak volumes of the Marines out here, their level of discipline and commitment. It speaks to my detachment members and their ability to properly train a lethal fighting force," said the detachment commander.

According to several of the Green Berets, they were also very impressed with the expansive and detailed CAMOUT facility, and the value it could serve for future training opportunities.

"This facility is second to none that I've

seen," said the team sergeant. "The attention to detail is impressive," he said, referring to a fully-furnished Afghan hotel that he saw as he explored a section of the 274-acre complex.

"Had I known about the size and features available at the CAMOUT, I would have recommended we bring multiple detachments here," said the team sergeant.

The culminating point of the joint force's training took place during the final stages of the exercise. The SFODA, Marines and 10 Afghan role players combined to conduct two raids in 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion and 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion's areas of responsibility as the two units carried out their tasks in Enhanced Mojave Viper. This cross-boundary movement required the Special Forces team to properly communicate with the adjacent Marine units regarding intelligence, routes, danger areas and objectives.

"If we were to arrest an individual who happened to be a political figure or a religious figure within that community and detain him, the population within that battle space may have concerns or issues," said the ODA team sergeant.

The Marine commander for that area would then have to deal with the repercussions. The team leader's coordination keeps that commander from being blindsided, so they are able to deal with any situation that might arise as a consequence of an SFODA operation, he said.

In sensitive situations like this, communication is crucial, the ODA team sergeant said. "Maybe we won't go after this guy just yet, but we are thinking about it. We may wait until the conditions are right to ensure we are achieving the effect that meets higher's intent."

The key to making this coordination and communication more fluid in combat: training together during pre-deployment exercises such as EMV.

"Our primary intention in coming out to participate in EMV was to integrate SOF and Marine elements," said the detachment commander. "This reduces confusion on the battlefield, saves lives and ultimately enhances mission accomplishment."

CRACKDOWN

(Cont. from page 3)

throughout the village, insurgent activity has come to a considerable lull.

"This is a change of pace coming out to an area where the insurgents are more cowardly," said Broun. "A lot of their leaders don't want to get caught."

Even hiding isn't working for some of the suspected insurgency leaders in the area. Within the first five days of the operation, the 2nd Platoon Marines have already captured two known insurgents. The local populace has gone out of its way to talk to the Marines concerning the conditions of the village and concerns for the future.

"The people don't mind us be-

ing here," said Sgt. Ryan Sotelo, a squad leader for 2nd Platoon. "They come out and openly talk to us."

"The people are friendly enough," added Sgt. Joel Bailey, the machine guns section leader for 2nd Platoon. "They like to approach the Marines and sit down and talk."

"Their economy is based on poppy," said Bailey, a Camarillo, Calif., native. "Once coalition forces can set a good presence in this town and help bring them roads and power, the people will move away from the opium trade."

Even with all the success, the Marines rely on camaraderie to push through the hot days and long patrols in Malmand.

"The Marines are doing well," said Broun. "They're a good group. They are like brothers; they take care of each other. They'll complain about the heat and the sanitation,

but they get by. It keeps them on edge."

"It's good if they're grumpy...a little pissed off; it makes you fight harder," added Broun. "We don't need a whole lot -- water, fresh batteries and bullets. Water and the ability to call for bigger guns if we need them, that's all we need."

With those tools in hand, the Marines of 2nd Platoon look forward to completing the operation and returning to their base knowing they have put a sizable dent in enemy activity in the area.

"The Marines have never lost their focus," said Sotelo, who hails from San Mateo, Calif. "We hope we are making a difference. At the end of the day, it comes down to taking care of each other and coming home alive."

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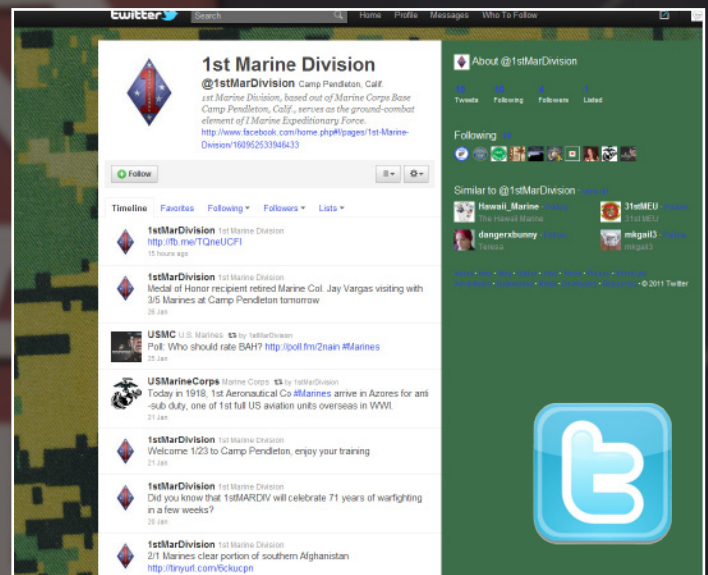
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