

[Subscribe to the Marine Corps Connection](#)



## MARINES ADJUST TO LIFE ON SHIP



Being aboard the USS Wasp day-in, day-out is proving to be an adjustment for the Marines of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). For most, it's a new experience -- from the movement of the ship to the smaller quarters -- and a new facet to the Corps that many didn't expect to see. "This is the first time I've been out on a real ship. It's kind of a surreal experience. When you're standing on the pier, it's like, how does something this big float," said Lance Cpl. Robert Sanders, a rifleman with

Company C, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. The ship is nearly three football fields long at 844 feet and approximately 40,000 tons unloaded. Not everyone is new to life embarked on ship. For Staff Sgt. Vincenzo Perez, radio chief for the 26th MEU, this will be the fourth time aboard ship with a MEU. "This is a tradition. From a Marine Corps perspective, I take pride in being aboard a ship."

[Read More](#)

# NEWS

## SHOULDER TO SHOULDER AT BALIKATAN 2012

The Armed Forces of the Philippines and the United States officially opened Exercise Balikatan 2012 at Camp Aguinaldo, Manila April 16. Balikatan, a Filipino word meaning "shoulder-to-shoulder," is an annual bilateral exercise on its 28th iteration and the third humanitarian assistance/disaster relief focused exercise between the two nations. "Balikatan has been going on for a long time, for nearly 30 years," said Brig. Gen. Frederick M. Padilla, 3rd Marine Division commanding general, Okinawa,



Japan, and Balikatan exercise director for U.S. forces. "Longer than that has been the relationship between the United States of America and the Republic of the Philippines. We are bounded by similar traditions, a shared history and common goals. While the nature of contingencies changes over time, our relationship remains." The primary purpose of the exercise is to improve combined interoperability and disaster preparedness.

[Read More](#)

## BLACK SEA ROTATIONAL FORCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN ROMANIA



Marines and Sailors of Black Sea Rotational Force 12 (BSRF 12) spent part of Easter weekend in Corbu, Romania distributing warm clothes and Easter candy to less fortunate children while the BSRF 12 corpsman and medical officers provided basic examinations to families. The town of Corbu, which is located approximately 30 kilometers from Mihail Kogalniceanu military base, the BSRF 12 home station, lacks a hospital or a preventive medicine provider for the almost 3,000 residents. "We

definitely make a difference, you can see it in the family's faces," said Gunnery Sgt. Jerrick Croston, a civil military operations planner, Command Element, BSRF 12. "It's the little things that make this job worth it; running around with the kids shows them a different side of the Marine Corps."

[Read More](#)

## JUNGLE WARFARE TRAINING CENTER TESTS MARINES' METTLE



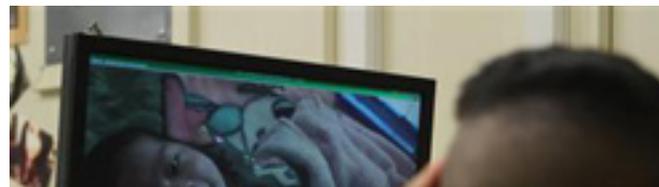
Wet feet, bugs swarming and bushes so thick one can barely see through them are only some of the many difficulties the jungle environment brings to the battlefield. At the only jungle warfare training center in the Department of Defense, located in northern Okinawa, Marines and Sailors learn a variety of combat techniques unique to a jungle environment. Combat Logistics Regiment 37 and Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 40, conducted an eight-day jungle training package April 1-8

at the Jungle Warfare Training Center on Camp Gonsalves, where they were taught basic infantry tactics while in the jungle. "I highly recommend for other units to take advantage of this unique training center," said Lance Cpl. Caitlin M. Carnella, a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense specialist with the regiment. "As long as you are able to keep a positive attitude, you will learn a lot about jungle operations and have fun at the same time."

[Read More](#)

## MARINE IN AFGHANISTAN AN ACTIVE PARENT TO NEWBORN BABY AT HOME

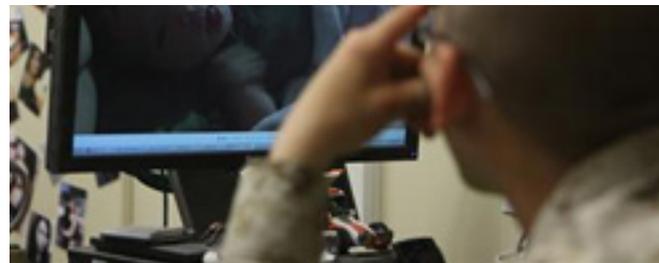
Less than three months into his deployment to Afghanistan, Lance Cpl. Juston Dickerson became a father when his wife, Adriana, gave birth to their daughter, Itzel. Thousands of miles away



from home, he's doing his part to help his wife and be a loving father by buying diapers, clothes, food and toys online and video chatting with his family every day.

"Even though she doesn't comprehend it now, I want her to know that her daddy loves her and misses her very much," said

Dickerson, a supply administrator with Headquarters Battalion, 1st Marine Division (Forward). His work area is covered with photos of his wife and daughter to motivate him and help him work with a smile. "He'll move heaven and earth to get to where he wants to go, and that shows a lot about him as a dad," said Cpl. Francis Collado, one of Dickerson's coworkers with Headquarters Battalion.



[Read More](#)

## FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO AFGHANISTAN, THREE MASSACHUSETTS MARINES STICK TOGETHER



Cpl. Francis Collado, Lance Cpl. Kiria Herrera and Lance Cpl. Ana Nunez share a strong bond. Collado met the sisters, Herrera and Nunez, at Bradford Matthew Chaloner Dufree High School in Fall River, Mass., in 2007. After enlisting in the Marine Corps, the friends were stationed at different units in southern California. Then all three deployed to Helmand province, Afghanistan, within a six-month period. "I was surprised when I found out we'd be deploying (at the same time)," said Nunez, a food service specialist, Combat Logistic Regiment 15, 1st Marine Logistic Group (Forward). "It made coming here a lot easier."

[Read More](#)

## HEROES

### 2/4 HONORS THEIR FALLEN

Five fallen Marines from 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment were honored by Marines, Sailors and family members at a formal ceremony aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., April 12. Staff Sgt. Stephen Dunning, Sgt. William Stacey, Cpl. Jon-Luke Bateman, Lance Cpl. Benjamin Schmidt and Lance Cpl. Kenneth Cochran lost their lives while deployed to Helmand province, Afghanistan. "It never gets easier," said Lt. Col. William Vivian, the commander of 2/4. "This is just part of being a Marine." During the ceremony, the Marines shared stories of their respected comrades, from experiences while deployed to tales of off-duty fun and memories of loved ones back home.



[Read More](#)

## TRANSITION

### SHOOTING COACH HAS WOUNDED WARRIORS LOCKED AND LOADED FOR WARRIOR GAMES

As the U.S. Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) shooting team head coach, John Schwent is definitely in it to win it again at the 2012 Warrior Games. The WWR shooting team won 21 out of 23 medals at last year's Warrior Games, which Schwent says is a testament to the success of the program and the Marines. "The greatest benefit of the program is showing our Marines that they can do the same things they used to before their injury and sometimes even better," he said. "We coach them from 'How can I?' to 'Yes, I can.'" Schwent spent more than 22 years in the Corps as a marksmanship instructor and competitive shooter. He retired as a major in 2008 and is also a disabled veteran. He has been coaching Marines for the Warrior Games since 2010.



[Read More](#)

## THANK YOU

### MARINES RAISE MONEY, AWARENESS FOR SEMPER FI FUND AT EGG IRONMAN CHALLENGE

Marines gathered to raise money and awareness for the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund at the Broken Yolk Cafe in Oceanside, Calif., April 13. San Diego radio station Rock 105.3FM challenged approximately 15 Marines to go up against radio show host Mike Costa in the 12-egg Ironman Challenge. The challenge was to consume a 12-egg omelette, a large side of potatoes and two fist-sized biscuits. The only Marine to come close to completing the challenge, with just two biscuits left on his plate, was



Gunnery Sgt. Marcus Wilson. "I was injured in 2006 and from the very beginning the (Semper Fi Fund) were there helping my family," Wilson said. "They helped me any time I needed any type of assistance from vehicle modifications to home modifications to everything in between. It's a great organization." The Semper Fi Fund has provided more than \$50 million in aid to service members and their families since 2004.

[Read More](#)

