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JAPAN, MARINES COMMEMORATE BATTLE OF IWO JIMA



The iconic image of Marines raising a flag on a mountaintop at Iwo Jima will forever be a part of American and Corps history. On March 14, the United States Marine Corps and the government of Japan commemorated the 67th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima. U.S. and Japanese veterans and their families, dignitaries and leaders from nations and Marines and Sailors from III Marine Expeditionary Force gathered on Iwo To, formerly known as Iwo Jima, for the event. The Battle of Iwo Jima took place Feb. 19-March 26, 1945, as part

of the Pacific campaign during World War II. Nearly 22,000 Japanese and more than 26,000 Americans were killed or wounded. Today, as partners in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States and Japan are committed to preserving stability in the area.

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HEROES

SPECIAL OPS MARINE RECEIVES SILVER STAR

Staff Sgt. William E. Burch of Marine Special Operations (MARSOC) Company G, Special Operations Task Force 81, was awarded the Silver Star on Mar. 8 for his actions in Afghanistan. On April 6, 2010, Burch and his company were on patrol when they came under fire from an enemy compound.

During the 10-hour firefight, Burch's leg was injured by shrapnel from a rocket-propelled grenade, yet he treated his own injuries and continued to fire upon the compound while directing Afghan National Army forces to assist him. Later, he sprinted up a hill to

man a machine gun position and remained there until his besieged troops had withdrawn. According to his citation, "His actions throughout the 10-hour firefight facilitated the destruction of dozens of enemy fighters and saved the lives of his fellow Marines, U.S. soldiers, and Afghan National Army Commandos." MARSOC officials say that Burch is the ninth Marine or Sailor assigned to MARSOC to receive a Silver Star since 2006. "I'm honored, there's nothing else to say about that," he said. "I'm just trying to do my job, that's all there is to it."

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INJURED MARINE CONTINUES TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES



Kyle Carpenter has undergone more than 30 surgeries since a grenade mangled his jaw, collapsed his lung, broke his fingers, fractured his right arm and caused other catastrophic injuries in November 2010



while deployed in Marjah, Afghanistan. Despite having spent months recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., he is still overcoming obstacles. One of his goals for recovery was to regain his ability to do pull-ups, a feat that he was recently able to demonstrate on film. "I guess this is kind of

like a message and a constant reminder for me and for everybody out there that thinks they have obstacles to accomplish and overcome them. You can see that you can overcome things and if you work at it you can only become better from here," he said about the video. Carpenter posted the video to the Operation Kyle Facebook page as a thank you to those who have supported him during the 15 months since he returned stateside.

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NEWS

AFGHAN FORCES, MARINES CLEAR SISTANI

Afghan security forces and Marines from Regimental Combat Team 5 (RCT-5) conducted a two-day sweep in the Sistani area of Marjah, Helmand province, Afghanistan, on Feb. 29 - Mar. 1. The Afghan police and army forces took the lead in the operation, searching compounds and talking to residents to find evidence of or weapons caches associated with insurgent activity. The Marines participated in a supporting capacity, allowing the Afghan units to exercise all that they have learned



under Marine mentorship. "We were just out there helping them, giving them some support with the assets we have and giving them advice along the way," said Sgt. Timothy Guinan, the military police chief for the RCT-5 Police Advisory Team. After finding several improvised explosive devices (IEDs), Afghan forces handled communication and security while Marine explosive ordnance technicians dismantled the IEDs. The clearing operation was a valuable part of transitioning the responsibility of handling criminal activity in the province

from the Marines to Afghan authority.

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CLB-4 OVERCOMES MUD, FLOODING TO DELIVER SUPPLIES



Prepared for rough terrain, the Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 4 (CLB-4) spent the first weeks of their seven-month deployment to Afghanistan dealing with muddy, water-laden roads created by severe weather. Heavy rainfall made it difficult for the Marines to maneuver while on a combat logistics patrol to resupply Regimental Combat Team 6 at forward operating bases in Helmand province on Feb. 21. "The biggest challenge for the patrol was the flooding of the roads," said Staff Sgt. Juan G. Camachomolina, platoon sergeant, Company B, CLB-4. He explained that as the roads get saturated with water, the vehicles lose traction and end up getting stuck in the mud. To complete the mission, the Marines travelled in a convoy with a truck carrying a mine roller leading the others. The following vehicles only drove where the lead truck went to avoid venturing into deeper water. Sharing the roadways also became a challenge as the Marines had to account for other drivers while navigating through the mud and water. Developing the skills to drive in such conditions takes time, but the CLB 4 Marines were

more than up to the challenge.

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MARINE AMPUTEE TRADES BULLETS FOR BYTES



Sgt. Ballard Hall left Iraq after a tour in 2005 unscathed, but after returning to Camp Lejeune, N.C., he began experiencing pain



in his left leg that became excruciating by 2007. Doctors diagnosed him with popliteal artery entrapment syndrome, a breaking down of the artery that supplies blood to the knee joint and muscles in the thigh and calf. For Hall, this was caused by the stress of carrying heavy loads repeatedly on combat patrols. In June 2009, after 24 artery bypass

surgeries aimed to rectify the problem, doctors decided to amputate Hall's leg below the knee. He was later fitted with a prosthetic that has enabled him to make nearly a full recovery. Hall had trained as a machine gunner in the Corps, but shifted his focus after the surgeries to developing his computer and information technology skills. He took internships with the National Reconnaissance Office and with Marine Corps Chief Information Officer Brig. Gen. Kevin Nally. He first served as a liaison between the office and the Marine Warfighting Laboratory in Quantico, Va., on techniques to combat improvised explosive devices. Hall now works on projects under Nally including cryptographic key management and cybersecurity, and he aspires to eventually become an FBI agent.

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MARINE WHO LOST LEGS IN AFGHANISTAN HAND-BIKES ACROSS COAST



Cpl. Justin Gaertner is determined to remain active despite his injuries. While on this third deployment to Afghanistan, improvised explosive devices detonated under his vehicle and caused him to lose both legs. Last week, Gaertner set off on the Ride 2 Recovery Gulf Coast Challenge with more than 200 cyclists, including fellow wounded veterans. The seven-day, 450-mile ride from New Orleans, La., to Tallahassee, Fla., will help injured warriors recover physically and mentally through biking. Gaertner participated in the ride using a recumbent cycle that he powers with his arms. "It's tough, but feels good to be out here," he said.

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MARINE DAUGHTER HONORED AS MILITARY CHILD OF THE YEAR



Operation Homefront's Military Child of the Year Award honored five military children for their bravery in the face of deployments, frequent moves and other challenges while still serving their families and communities. Each year, out of more than 1,000 nominees, one child is chosen to represent each branch of service as the Military Child of the Year Award recipient. This year's Marine Corps honoree is 16-year-old Erika Booth of Jacksonville, N.C., the daughter of Sgt. Maj. Scott Booth and his wife, Ginger. A committee of active-duty personnel, family readiness personnel, teachers, military mothers and community members chose Booth for the personal dedication she has shown to her family despite obstacles. "Children in military families demonstrate leadership within their families and within their communities," said Jim Knotts, president and chief executive officer of Operation Homefront. "The sons and daughters of America's service members learn what patriotism is at a very young age." Booth was an active teen until she was diagnosed with lupus, and

although she had to give up athletic activities then, she went on to dedicate even more of her time to helping care for her 13-year-old autistic brother. At school, Booth is the junior class president and she serves as the vice president of her local chapter of the Health Occupations Students of America and as a mentor with the Drug Education for Youth program. All the honorees, including Booth, will receive \$5,000 each, and along with their families, they will travel to Washington, D.C., for the gala on Apr. 5.

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THANK YOU

NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY RAISES MONEY FOR WOUNDED MARINE

The Mooresville, N.C., community rallied in support of Marine Cpl. Garrett Carnes who is recovering for injuries sustained in Afghanistan. Dozens of residents gathered at Mooresville High School for a walk and fundraiser on Mar. 10 and raised more than \$15,000 for Carnes and his family. He was injured in February when he stepped on a roadside bomb while clearing houses in a village in Afghanistan. "It's just overwhelming to see how many people that don't even know my family have come out and reached out to us," said Garrett's brother, Zach Carnes. Carnes is currently recovering at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and his family hopes that he will return home in a few months.

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