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## MONTFORD MARINES CELEBRATE THEIR SERVICE



It has been 70 years since the first African Americans were allowed to serve in the Marine Corps at Montford Point, N.C. As the few, proud men who make up the Montford Point Marine Association (MPMA) gathered this past Saturday for their annual convention in Atlanta, Ga., they reminisced over the sheer marvel of how times have changed. The history-making Marines never received the same recognition as the famed Tuskegee Airmen, African-

American pilots who fought in World War II. But the few Montford Marines who are still alive reunite each year in hope to spread the word about the path they paved. Edwin J. Fizer, who first reported for training at Montford Point in the summer of 1942, remembers how tough it was to prove himself as a Marine. For him, it is important to be among others who can understand the sting of discrimination while serving the nation. "I've often talked to young white people who say, 'If I were in your shoes, I would be very angry,'" Fizer said. "I tell them

that it takes strength." This year, the MPMA is focusing on preserving their legacy with a monument at Montford Point and supporting a bill that would grant Congressional Gold Medals for the first black Marines. On Saturday, Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James Amos met with the Montford Point survivors and began a month-long effort to pay tribute to them.

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[Click here to visit the Montford Point Marine Association website](#)

[Read Gen. Amos' speech at the Montford Point Marines Convention](#)

[Watch video of Gen. Amos' remarks](#)

## MONTFORD MARINES TO VISIT WASHINGTON, D.C.



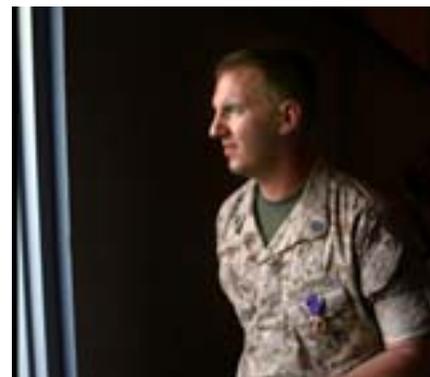
The Montford Marines will visit the Washington, D.C., area from the 25th to the 28th of Aug. They will be in D.C. to celebrate the 69th Anniversary of the first Marines arriving at Montford Point. During this visit, there will be an Evening Parade, Town Hall discussions, and visit to the National Museum of the Marine Corps (NMMC). Members of the community interested in meeting the Montford Marines can attend a gathering at the NMMC on August 27 at 1:00 p.m.

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## HEROES

### WOUNDED MARINE TALKS COMBAT AND RECOVERY

SSgt. Mark Zambon specializes in disposing explosives. Zambon has deployed six times in his eight-year career with the Marines. Last year, he lost two fingertips when a bomb exploded in his left hand and this past January, he lost both his legs. When asked why he enlisted, he simply replies that this is what he was meant to do. "You're always a part of a team, it's always a mutual effort, so what comes first is looking out for whose on your team, their safety, their wellness, and getting the job done," he says. He has been undergoing extensive rehab in California and he is learning



how to use his new prosthetic legs. Zambon is part of The Heroes Project, an organization that works with veterans, soldiers and military families. As for his future, this wounded warrior is planning to climb Mount Aconcagua in Argentina in February. He is also thinking of teaching or going back to school, all while remembering his time with the U.S. Marine Corps. "It's a scary thing, because it's uncertain and no one else can travel that path but yourself, and when you get to these areas where you're achieving additional functions or getting back what you had it's great, it really is," Zambon says.

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## WOUNDED MARINE INVITED TO HAVE BREAKFAST WITH VICE PRESIDENT BIDEN



As Vice President Joe Biden was leaving the House floor following the debt ceiling vote on Monday evening, he bumped into Marine Cpl. Todd Love and invited him over for breakfast Tuesday morning. Biden joked with Love, and then told a small group in the hallway, "I'm gonna keep my daughter away from this young man." The breakfast was initially to take place at the White House, but Biden later invited the Marine to his home at the Naval Observatory. Love, who was wounded by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan in October 2010 and lost both his legs and an arm, is currently being treated for his injuries at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. He was brought to the Capitol on Monday by Capitol Hill tour guide Bert Caswell, who often volunteers his own time to bring wounded warriors for visits.

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## NEWS

### COMING OF AGE THROUGH WAR: LCPL PREMPEH

Serving in uniform often challenges young adults to



mature in ways beyond their years -- and that is certainly the case for LCpl. Ernest Prempeh. "Just being me, I always had this whole thing where nothing could touch me," he said. "It was between me, and God. I had never been put in the situation where my life could end in the blink of an eye, or had to see someone get hit. I had always been a strong person." Prempeh is currently on his second deployment to Afghanistan, where he serves as a mail clerk with Headquarters and Service Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. He previously served as an M249 squad automatic weapon gunner with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. "Ever since we came here last year, it's been a totally different mindset," he continued. "Now I think about things before I do them. Last year wasn't like that for me. Even life in general, I did things on the fly, never thought about it, but after going through the deployment last year, I think about

everything before I do it."

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[See Also: Regional Command South-West weekly news round-up](#)

## TEXAS BATTALION'S GOOD NEIGHBOR POLICY HELPS KEEP HELMAND BASE SECURE



Marines and sailors with the Houston-based Lone Star Battalion, 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, have been conducting security and counterinsurgency operations in the vicinity of the Camp Leatherneck-Camp Bastion complex since deploying to Afghanistan in January. The battalion is responsible for the area surrounding the bases, which are the largest coalition installations in Helmand province. The Marines conduct mounted and dismounted patrols several times each week

throughout an area of roughly 400 square kilometers of rocky desert and open farmland,

typically alongside their Afghan National Army (ANA) counterparts from the 215th ANA Corps. The missions focus on safeguarding and reaching out to the local populace and keeping the base secure from potential insurgent attacks. "Our main focus is building relationships with the local people [and to] make sure that no one is messing with or harassing the locals," said 2ndLt. Sverre G. Sundgaard, a platoon commander with Company C, 1st Battalion., 23rd Marines. This good neighbor policy has operational benefits to the battalion and the bases they are charged with protecting. By keeping the locals safe, the battalion ensures any insurgents seeking to set up shop near the installations have a hard time hiding among the population.

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## MARINES ADAPT FOR THE FUTURE IN JAVELIN THRUST EXERCISE



Before he retired, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates urged the Marine Corps to redefine its role in a world beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, in an environment in which amphibious assaults are less crucial and there is no longer a need for a "second land army." In response, Marine Commandant Gen. James Amos has declared that in addition to amphibious assault training, the Marines should also train to be a light, fast, self-sustaining "middleweight force." According to Col. Brennan Byrne, the goal is to ensure that the Marines "are the most ready when the nation is least ready." Javelin Thrust, an exercise of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade, is an example of how that goal will be achieved. The 10-day training exercise involved 5,000 Marines and sailors, a middle ground between a Marine expeditionary unit involving approximately 1,500 personnel and the much larger Marine expeditionary force, which can range in the tens of thousands. The exercise honed skills that can be applied to humanitarian, disaster relief or quick-

strike combat missions. During the exercise, Marine ground units moved through rough terrain in the eastern Sierra, Nev.; logistics and convoy troops learned resupply techniques; and aircraft from the Marine base at Yuma, Ariz., conducted live-fire all in support of a training scenario in which Marines needed to protect a weaker nation from invasion by a stronger one.

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## MARINES 'ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENT' F-35B WILL GET OFF PROBATION

During a recent visit to the Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Gen. James F. Amos, Commandant of the Marine Corps, stated that he is "absolutely confident" that the Marine Corps' version of Lockheed Martin's F-35 Joint Strike Fighter will be taken off probation. In January, former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates put the F-35B, a short-takeoff, vertical landing version of the aircraft, on what could be a two-year development probation to work out problems with its lift system. The airplane's test metrics have



improved dramatically since that time, with Gen. Amos witnessing the approximately 120th vertical landing this year during a demonstration at the test site. The Pentagon is developing three versions of the aircraft in the \$382 billion F-35 program. Air Force and Navy variants are designed for conventional takeoffs and landings, while the Marine Corps' vertical landing version would replace the 25-year-old AV-8B Harrier for use from smaller amphibious warfare vessels and landings on improvised airstrips. By September, the aircraft will have completed 1,552 of the 2,272 test points scheduled for this year. To escape probation, the aircraft must show consistent reliability improvements without weight increases, meet software delivery schedules and successfully complete shipboard testing to commence in late October. The challenges "are not beyond the scope of what other airplane programs have seen," said Lockheed Martin Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Robert Stevens.

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## MILITARY FAMILY NEEDS KIDNEY FOR SON



Community members and local businesses have come together in San Diego to support a local military



family. Liam Houck, the 16-month-old son of former Air Force Pilot Vanessa Houck, suffers from Prune Belly Syndrome and is in need of a kidney transplant. The rare genetic condition, which affects an estimated one in every 40,000 children, has the mother seeking a kidney donor to save her son's life. Touched by the lively, energetic toddler's struggle, the local community is striving to raise

awareness and funds to support the Houck family. A frozen yogurt store in Point Luma, Calif., has pledged 20 percent of their profits to help the Houck's pay for Liam's medical bills. "The fact that it's Baby Liam and that he's in an unfortunate situation it's the least we could really do," Cup of Yo owner Veronica Ecker said. "It's amazing to see everyone who has come out and support him."

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## FREE VFW TROOP & FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS



Since 2004, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Unmet Needs Program has dispensed more than \$4 million in grants to help 2,800 military families through emergency financial situations. The program encompasses all Active, Guard and Reserve personnel in all five services, plus those veterans who were honorably discharged within the past 36 months. In addition, the VFW has provided more than 5.5 million free phone connections to deployed personnel and their families since 2006, and has hosted two million military families to farewell, homecoming and other troop support events since 2007. More information can be found on the Troop Support or Family Assistance website at [www.vfw.org](http://www.vfw.org).

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