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SUPPORTING MILITARY FAMILIES TOUR BEGINS AT CAMP LEJEUNE WEDNESDAY



First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden will launch a national initiative to support and honor America's service members and their families Tuesday (Noon, ET). The initiative aims to educate, challenge, and spark action from all sectors of our society citizens, communities, businesses, non-profits, faith-based institutions, philanthropic organizations, and government to ensure military families have the support they have earned.

This initiative also builds upon the President's directive to establish a coordinated and comprehensive Federal approach to supporting military families. Following the launch of this initiative, the First Lady and Dr. Biden will embark on a two-day national tour to visit extraordinary examples of communities, businesses and non-profits working to support our Nation's military families. Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden will begin the tour Wednesday, April 13, by speaking to 3,000 Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, and military family members from Camp Lejeune, one of the country's largest Marine Corps bases. They will be joined at this

event by the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James Amos, and the Commanding General of Marine Corps Installations East, Maj. Gen. Carl Jenson. Mrs. Obama and Dr. Biden will also visit with 40 pregnant women whose husbands are service members. They will bring gifts donated through a special White House Operation Shower donation drive. Special guest Martha Stewart will join this shower and teach the art of preserving memories through scrapbooking for these military mothers.

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Pictured above, the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, (behind the podium) and the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford Jr. (left) at a recent event to honor military children of the year.

MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD



April is also the National Month of the Military Child, a time for our nation to recognize and honor the service and sacrifices America's military personnel and their families have made, past and present. This month has been set aside to recognize the sacrifice that the children and youth of our military personnel make because when parents serve in the military, their kids are heroes too. These

children and youth are a source of pride and honor to us all, and it is only fitting that we take time to recognize their contributions, celebrate their spirit, and let our men and women in uniform know that while they are taking care of us, we are taking care of their children and youth.

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DID YOU KNOW?

That retired Gen. Michael Hagee, the 33rd Commandant of the Marine Corps recently sent a letter to all Jacksonville media asking them to pronounce the 'Lejeune' in 'Camp Lejeune,' correctly? He sure did. Jacksonville's CBS News Anchor, Allen Hoffman, reports that Channel 9 had it right all along, pronouncing it

as 'Luh-jern,' and that the TV station had been "taking a beating from viewers" because of the way they were pronouncing it.

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[View Gen. Hagee's letter >>](#)

NEWS

MESSAGE FROM SERGEANT MAJOR OF MARINE CORPS



The following is a message from the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Carlton Kent, stressing the importance of risk management during motor vehicle operations. "I want to talk to you about a risk you take nearly every day -- driving your personal motor vehicle. Most Marines did a great job managing this risk last year, but the fact remains that too many Marines are killed on the roadways, behind the wheel of their

car, truck, or on their motorcycle. There are four factors that account for the vast majority of all motor vehicle fatalities -- speed, fatigue, alcohol and not wearing a seatbelt. Any of those can have a deadly consequence. The good news is, all of these fatal factors are things you can control by driving at a reasonable speed, pulling over if you feel tired, never driving if you've been drinking, and always wear your seatbelt and ensure your passengers do too. We need you safe and prepared to fight and win our Nation's battles. Semper Fidelis Marines!

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CONFIDENTIAL HELP FOR VETERANS, FAMILIES



The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) [Veterans Health Administration \(VHA\)](#) has founded a national suicide prevention hotline to ensure veterans in emotional crisis have free, 24/7 access to trained counselors. To operate the Veterans Hotline, the



VA partnered with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Veterans can call the Lifeline number, 1-800-273-TALK (8255), and press "1" to be routed to the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline.

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[See also: War casualty on the home front >>](#)

F-35 CRUSHES GOALS FOR EARLY 2011 TEST FLIGHTS



The first quarter of 2011 was a good one for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter test program, with the plane logging 57 more test flights than the planned 142, even in the face of a fleet-wide grounding last month, according to Lockheed officials. Interestingly, it was the Air Force's F-35A conventional variant and the Marine Corps' F-35B short take-off and vertical landing variant that did much of the heavy lifting in achieving the 199 test flights last quarter. The F-35As flew 82 times against a plan of 62 flights while the F-35Bs flew 101 flights against a plan of 62 sorties. The embattled Bravo

performed 61 vertical landings last quarter. Compare that to the 10 vertical landings it performed in all of 2010! Meanwhile, the Navy's F-35C carrier variant racked up only 16 out of 18 planned flights for the quarter, according to Lockheed. No information was provided as to why the Cs missed their targets. Two production model F-35As also took to the skies for a total of seven flights in 2011. All told, the F-35 now has 753 flights under its belt since 2006, according to Lockheed.

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MEANWHILE, IN THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN ...

Bing West recently wrote an article



that appeared in the Wall Street Journal about how the decade-long conflict in Afghanistan may be old news at home, but in one Marine platoon, it starts new every day. " On March 17, St. Patrick's Day, a dozen Marines, coated in mud, were sloshing through poppy fields in southern Afghanistan. Walking point for the patrol, Lance Cpl. Cody "Yaz" Yazzie swept a small metal detector back and forth. Twelve grunts from the Third Platoon followed carefully in

his footsteps. Back in the U.S., the news was dominated by events in Libya, the start of March Madness in college basketball and the latest court appearance of Lindsay Lohan. The fighting season in Afghanistan had begun, too, but in the U.S., the decade-old war is now largely ignored."

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Pictured above, members of Kilo Company, Fifth Marine Regiment, in Afghanistan on March 18. Photo by Bing West.

JAPAN'S ROAD TO RECOVERY



Three weeks after a 9.0 magnitude earthquake, citizens of the small island of Oshima, Japan are still rummaging through the remains of their homes, neighborhoods and towns. As part of Operation Field Day, Marines and Sailors with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, III Marine Expeditionary Force, have been aiding the local government authorities and personnel in the clearing and clean-up. Accompanied by Japan Ground Self Defense Force Lt. Gen. Eiji Kimizuka, Lt. Gen. Kenneth J. Glueck,

III Marine Expeditionary Force commanding general and Joint Task Force 505 commander,

toured three sites where the servicemembers have been working. Kimizuka is in charge of the ground recovery efforts for Japan's JTF Tohoku. "This has been a horrible event, and I'm sorry," Glueck said. "But we are here to assist you in any way we can." Glueck and Kimizuka shared their observations of the damage and talked about the moral of the locals affected. Oshima has a population of approximately 3,000 people, with 600 living in shelters with electricity provided by generators. Food, water and fuel continues to be brought in by Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force SH-60K Sea Hawk helicopters and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron-262 (Reinforced), 31st MEU, CH-46E Sea Knights.

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MARINES TRAIN WITH NICARAGUAN MILITARY



A U.S. Marine Corps Forces South security cooperation team and more than 25 service members from the Ejercito de Nicaragua (National Army of Nicaragua) conducted a five-day multinational hand-to-hand combat skills exchange at the Corinto Naval Base, Nicaragua, March 24. The team of five Marines and one Sailor from Marine Corps Training and Advisory Group in Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek - Fort Story are aboard high speed vessel 2 (HSV2) Swift in support of U.S. Southern

Command's Southern Partnership Station 2011, which is an annual deployment designed to strengthen cooperative partnerships across the Caribbean and Central and South America. "Overall SPS 11 has been a challenging and rewarding experience," said Capt. Raul Melano, officer-in-charge of the security cooperation team. "The information exchanges we've been conducting with our partner nations have made us better Marines."

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MARINES TO EXTEND GEORGIA TRAINING MISSION

Marine officials are planning for the extension of the Georgia Deployment Program. Launched in 2009, the program prepares Georgian combat



troops for deployment alongside Marines in Afghanistan. The extension would keep Georgian troops in the fight in southern Afghanistan and continue their training at home, where tensions remain high with neighboring Russia. In a March 10 command brief to Sgt. Maj. Carlton Kent, Marines on the training team said discussions are underway to include up to eight more battalion deployments. "These guys are in the fight, they want to fight and they want us to teach them how to fight, which is the beauty of it," said Maj. Andrew Del Gaudio, head of the seven-man Georgia Training Team the Corps has based outside Tbilisi, Georgia's capital.



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AVIATION REINVENTED NAVAL OPERATIONS



During the four years of American involvement in World War II, the battleship suddenly found itself supplanted by a relatively new invention, the airplane. The fleets of the world's greatest naval powers shifted from being a battleship-based force to being an aircraft carrier-based force and brought to the forefront the future importance of Naval and Marine Aviation. During the Battle of Midway, a combined Navy-Marine action sank four Japanese carriers, destroying much of Japan's premier aviation capability. Retired Maj. Gen. Michael P. Sullivan, who commanded Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point and the 2nd Marine Aircraft

Wing, said pilots on both sides were an extraordinary breed and an important factor for the outcome of the Pacific air war. "In World War II, it was all about who was a better aviator," said Sullivan. "Sometimes a pilot could be in a better airplane and lose to a better pilot in a lesser airplane. The only weapons airplanes had were guns, so you had to be behind the guy, get in gun range, and blow him away, so it was a lot of skill."

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HEROES OF THE WEEK

RUNNING ON INSTINCT



Sgt. James Rodrigues, Jr., a communicator formerly with Regimental Combat Team 7 partnering team, 2nd Brigade, 1st Battalion, 203rd Afghan National Army, was awarded the Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device at the 62 area chapel, March 25. Rodrigues, 22, from Modesto, Calif., and his team were engaged by enemy forces with small-arms fire on Feb. 22, 2010. After returning fire to the enemy, Rodrigues moved to a better firing position and while taking cover, he observed a small Afghan girl trapped in the melee, crying and frozen with fear. He rushed to the girl, cradled her in his arms to

protect her from the fire fight and carried her to the safety of a compound on the opposite side of the road. "I just reacted to the events as they happened," said Rodrigues. "I was running on instinct."

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SECOND BRONZE STAR WITH COMBAT VALOR



The Operations Officer for 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, received his second Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 8, 2011. The award was presented to Capt. Matthew J. Martin for actions while in command of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, during the battalion's deployment to Afghanistan from May to November 2009. As the commanding officer of Company G, 2/8, Martin and his Marines were tasked with patrolling, on foot, more than 11 miles to secure a city in Helmond Province, Afghanistan. Over the three days it took to conduct the movement, he and his Marines fought the enemy and encountered multiple IED's in 130 degree heat. "We probably got into a firefight or took fire, found an IED, or an IED exploded every other day for the entire deployment," said Martin.

"Every Marine fought with valor and pride and continued to go outside the wire knowing they

were going to take enemy contact."

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EVENTS



DREW CAREY TO RUN USMC HALF MARATHON

Comedian and "The Price is Right" game show host Drew Carey will make his half marathon debut at the Marine Corps Historic Half on May 15 in Fredericksburg, VA. Carey announced his plans to run in a March 14 tweet. In addition to running, Carey also will serve as the official starter of the half marathon event, organized by the Marine Corps Marathon (MCM). Carey, who is celebrating his dramatic weight loss, will join 8,000 Historic Half participants on the 13.1 mile run through the scenic and historic City of Fredericksburg. Known for his trademark buzz cut and black wide-rim glasses, Carey is a former U.S. Marine corporal who served six years in the Marine Corps Reserves from 1981 to 1987. He was a communications center operator serving with the 4th Marine Division in Las Vegas and Cleveland. "The Marines are proud Drew Carey is making the Marine Corps Historic Half his first half marathon event," says MCM Director Rick Nealis. "His participation is certain to inspire others to pursue a healthy, active lifestyle."

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ONLY IN AMERICA WITH LARRY THE CABLE GUY

Larry the Cable Guy believes the United States of America is the greatest country on the face of the earth and he's out to prove it. In "Only in America with Larry the Cable Guy," Larry crisscrosses the nation, going totally off the beaten path to find the people, places and things that define this nation's unique history. In this episode, Larry joins Marines at Camp Pendleton to find out what it really takes to be one of



the World's Finest.
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