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OPERATION ENDURING OPPORTUNITY



The International Franchise Association (IFA) has pledged to hire 75,000 veterans and 5,000 wounded warriors by 2014 as part of Veteran Franchise's (VetFran) Operation Enduring Opportunity initiative. The VetFran program offers financial incentives, training and mentoring to veterans interested in opening franchises. Beth Solomon, IFA Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Industry Relations,

said there is a connection between military experience and owning a franchise. "Success in franchising comes from following systems and procedures. It depends on operational excellence and team leadership," she said. "Those skills are very much in the training of service members." Veterans will be hired for entry level to management positions in 300 business categories, with the goal of working up to become franchise owners.

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NEWS

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE VISITS 15TH MEU TO HIGHLIGHT AMPHIBIOUS CAPABILITIES

Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta met with Marines and Sailors of 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) during a visit aboard the USS Peleliu and reinforced his commitment to maintaining an expeditionary fighting force. "The [MEU/Amphibious Ready Group] is what we need for the future," said Panetta. "This is about agility, this is about being able to move quickly, this is about being flexible. It is about doing the things you do right here from this ship. This is the future and that is why I wanted to come here. It is important for me to tell you how important you are to our strategy," he said. The Marine Corps is returning to its amphibious roots with the drawdown in Afghanistan.



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Also Read: Defense Secretary Visits Calif., Blasts Military Budget Cuts and Warns Iran is a Threat

MARINES DEPLOY TO AUSTRALIA

Marines of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment from Kaneohe Marine Corps Base, Hawaii, said farewell to their loved ones April 2 and headed across the Pacific for a six month deployment to Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. During the deployment, the Marines will train with the Australian Defence Force and participate in theater security cooperation in the region. "We're hoping this mission further bolsters the partnership between the U.S. and Australia," said Capt. Chris Richardella. The Marines are also prepared to conduct humanitarian efforts or disaster



relief missions while overseas. They will return in October.

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[Also Read: 200 Kaneohe Marines Heading Out for Training in Australia](#)

TRAINING THE TRAINER: AFGHAN OFFICERS TAKE CHARGE



Marines at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan are busy training the Afghan Army with the skills necessary to provide safety for their citizens. During a nine-week Joint Officers Tactical Leaders course (JOTLC), Afghan Army officers learned land navigation, compass training, land mounted patrol, tactical vehicle driving, patrol offense, defense operations, and tactical mount. "I've acquired many new experiences that I never had before. The class has been very

productive," said Afghan Army 2nd Lt. Abdul Ghani. "I am feeling more powerful, and I will be able to make better decisions in the future. I will be a better leader and will be able to help my own soldiers that will work for me." The course culminates in a field training exercise in a simulated village, which is designed as a teaching tool for offensive and defensive combat operation skills.

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DOGS OF WAR: FRIENDS AND SAVIORS OF MARINES IN AFGHANISTAN



A recent security patrol through the Loya Darvishan region of southern Helmand province was no different than the hundreds of others conducted by Lance Cpl. Jarrett Hatley, his improvised explosive device detection dog Blue, and fellow Marines with 3rd Platoon, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment. But Hatley noticed a darker patch of dirt that looked recently



disturbed. Halting the patrol, he sent Blue to sniff for explosives. Moments later, the yellow Labrador retriever laid down next to

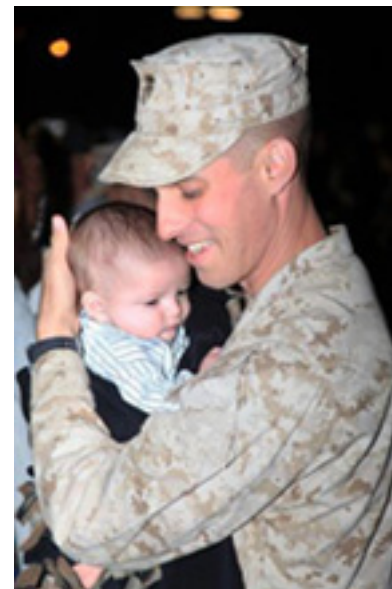
the area, confirming the presence of an IED on the path a dozen men were about to travel. "My dog Blue is pretty much like another Marine, I guess," Hatley said. "He doesn't know he's doing it, but he's protecting all of us. If I have him on a patrol and there's an IED that could hurt us, I know he'll find it."

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2/4 MARINES, FAMILIES OVERJOYED AT HOMECOMING

Marines and Sailors with Fox and Golf Companies, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment were greeted by wives, husbands, newborns and family members March 27 as they returned from their seven-month deployment to Afghanistan. The homemade signs and American flags were a welcome sight for the Marines. "I've done homecomings and I've done combat homecomings," said Capt. Thaddeus Drake, commanding officer of Golf Company. "But I was just telling my wife that I have never seen anything like this." The Marines were deployed to northern Helmand province where they contributed to local governance and security in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

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MARINE GENERAL BATTLES CANCER



Lt. Gen. Robert Milstead, deputy commandant of manpower and reserve affairs, was diagnosed with an aggressive form of prostate cancer in January. "The C-word can be intimidating," Milstead said. "The range of options goes from denial to acceptance, and I think I was able to jump pretty quickly up to, "OK, I've got cancer. How am I going to deal with this?" The general



described his diagnosis and recovery during an interview with *Marine Corps Times*, just weeks after undergoing surgery to remove his prostate, to raise awareness about the benefits of annual physicals and regular screening. "This is a huge

fraternity," he said. "You've got a better chance as a man of getting prostate cancer than you do as a female of getting breast cancer. It's not a club I ever wanted to join, but I'm a card-carrying member now."

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NAVAJO CODE TALKER RELATES HISTORY AT YUMA

After joining the Marines in 1944, Peter MacDonald learned he and 29 others had been recruited specifically to develop a new code for the Corps. "We didn't join to become Code Talkers. None of us did. All of us joined to be Marines," he said. While visiting with Marines at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma March 27, MacDonald told of how it took the men three months to create the Navajo Code. Consisting of words spoken in Navajo that literally or symbolically corresponded to military terminology, it was understood by only the Navajo Code Talkers. The code was used to send messages in battles in the Pacific Theater during World War II and remains the only military code in modern military history that was never broken.



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THREE STAR: LEADERSHIP MOST SOUGHT-AFTER SKILL SET TODAY



Lt. Gen. John E. Wissler promoted the importance of leadership to students at Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, Ga., March 28. Meeting with students from the academy's Character Development Program, Wissler delivered the message that



leadership is a timeless characteristic all students should cultivate. "Leadership is not exclusive to the military. Leadership is the most sought-after skill set in America today," Wissler said. "The true test of a leader is not the leader's performance, but the performance of the people the leader leads." Wissler also emphasized the importance of the core values of the Marine Corps - honor, courage and commitment.

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HEROES

N.C. MARINE VETERAN RECEIVES SECOND PURPLE HEART

Marine veteran Matt Ellis recently received his second Purple Heart for injuries sustained in an improvised explosive device (IED) strike during his second combat deployment in 2009-2010, when he served in Marjah, Afghanistan. Driven to serve because of the September 11 terrorist attacks, Ellis graduated from high school a year early and enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2007. "I wanted to go to combat and the Marines were the first to fight," he said. He now serves as a deputy sheriff for Hoke County in North Carolina and says he views his military civil service not as a means to an end but as a gratifying experience in and of itself.



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TRANSITION

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO MENTOR WOUNDED WARRIORS LEAVING ACTIVE DUTY

Volunteer mentors are needed to assist transitioning Marines at the Wounded Warrior Detachment at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif. Mentors will work on a one-on-one basis with Marines to help them transition to civilian life. The program was started by the Desert Cities Mitchell Page Medal of Honor Chapter, 1st Marine Division Association in Palm Desert. "Most joined the Marine Corps after high school graduation and were looking at the Marines as their career in life," said Jim Sullivan, a chapter member and one of the program organizers. "Due to wounds and injuries, they now have to enter civilian life and need some help in making decisions as to going on to college, trade schools, or finding a job." For more information or to volunteer, call (760) 901-5494.

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