

FLIGHT JACKET

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Ordnance crew keeps 'Bats' ready for action



VMFA(AW)-242 ordnance technicians arm a Maverick missile attached to an F/A-18D Hornet before the aircraft taxis down the runway for takeoff at Al Asad, Iraq. Photo by Cpl. Paul Leicht

Story by Cpl. Paul Leicht

MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent

Al Asad, Iraq — Around the clock every day, the F/A-18D Hornets of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (All Weather) 242, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, are constantly armed and ready to respond to any call to support Marine ground units in Iraq.

Maintaining that state of perpetual readiness has not been an easy task.

The squadron's leadership credits the resolve of their ordnance Marines for helping to deliver a high level of productivity in the harsh desert environment here.

"All of our Marines and Sailors are very hard workers," said Sgt. Maj. Charles H. Oldham, sergeant major, VMFA(AW)-242. "But the ordnance Marines in particular have been working some long hours in awful heat conditions."

After spending a day with the Bats' ordnance ground crewmembers, one can see why Marines have a lasting reputation for their zealous professionalism, dedication, and commitment to their mission.

"Since our arrival in Iraq a few weeks ago, we have maintained an extremely high operational tempo," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Thomas M. Andersen, ordnance officer, VMFA(AW)-242, and native of Salt Lake City. "Within a few hours of being on deck we had ordnance

loaded and standard combat load munitions were being employed in support of Marines on the ground. We have had a lot of coordination with the grunts and so consequently combat munitions are constantly being moved," he added. "Our ordnance shop has been the busiest in the squadron."

Working 12-hour shifts, with occasional overlap, the enlisted members of the squadron's ordnance shop are largely "green," or new to the squadron, but their recent accomplishments belie their experience level.

"Some of these young lance corporals just got out of their (military occupational specialty) school or came over to us

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MAG-16 rotates attack, transport squadrons in Iraq

Story by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

MAG-16 Combat Correspondent

ALASAD, Iraq — The rotation of Marine forces is changing the face of Marine Aircraft Group 16 for the second half of this phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Some incoming squadrons are deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for the first time and are upbeat about their arrival, said Maj. Ian R. Clark, assistant aviation main-

tenance officer, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367, MAG-16.

"During OIF I, the squadron was in Okinawa, (Japan)," said the 34-year-old from Peterborough, Ontario, Canada. "We may have felt a little left out and were eager to do our part. (The Marines) have positive attitudes about doing their part and doing what they joined the Marine Corps to do. We are ready to execute missions in support of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force."

"Scarface" Marines of HMLA-367, MAG-16, have arrived in Iraq recently to replace the "Coyotes" of HMLA-775, MAG-46.

Gunnery Sgt. Drake S. Simms, quality assurance representative, Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 774, MAG-16, spoke of the reserve Marines' outlook on supporting the mission in Iraq.

"Most are excited to help out," he said. "The active component has been out here working hard; it's good to come and give them a break."

"Everybody knows it's their job," he continued about his fellow squadron mates. "They're proud of what they do and proud to be Marines even if it is part time. They all know it could be a full time thing if they're needed."

The "Moonlighters" of HMM-764, MAG-46, are being relieved from duty in Iraq by "Wild Goose," HMM-774, MAG-42.

Of the many concerns that face incoming

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Weekend forecast from Miramar's weather station



85°/67°
Today



86°/66°
Saturday



83°/65°
Sunday

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Marines supplement MCMAP skills
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Top enlisted leaders emphasize Navy/Marine Corps team importance

Story by Navy Public Affairs

Office of the MCPON

ARABIAN GULF (NNS) — The Navy/Marine Corps team's top enlisted leaders made a joint visit to thousands of Sailors and Marines supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom during a tour of the Middle East region, Aug. 18-22.

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry Scott, joined by Sgt. Major of the Marine Corps John Estrada, spoke to Sailors and Marines stationed at three Iraqi bases, in Kuwait City, Bahrain, and on board four ships in the Arabian Gulf. The trip was the first of its kind for the two enlisted leaders, who traveled together speaking about issues that affect each of their services, and the importance of the continued teamwork throughout the history of the Navy and Marine Corps.

"One of our objectives is that we wanted to bring focus and put a lot of attention to the Navy/Marine Corps team, and how we work together and how we fight alongside each other," said Scott during their visit to Al Asad, Iraq.

During their trip to Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, Scott went even deeper into the history of the Navy/Marine Corps team.

"We've got a long history together — about 228 years of history fighting alongside each other. Whether it was the Marine sharpshooters climbing the rigging lines to the fighting tops of our sailing ships, the boarding team brandishing cutlasses aboard the *USS Intrepid* at Tripoli harbor, or fighting alongside each other in the Pacific during World War II," said Scott. "Two Jima, Okinawa, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, and now Afghanistan and Iraq — our Sailors and Marines have been fighting alongside each other and doing our country proud."

The two enlisted leaders also traveled to Fallujah, Iraq, where Estrada spoke to Sailors and Marines about the positive impact that the services' teamwork has created during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I'll tell you, there are a lot of positive things that have happened over here. If you wonder if you've made a positive impact, the one big thing that stands out — the Iraqis now have control of their government," said Estrada. "That is huge. You caused that to happen."

After spending time on the ground in Iraq, Scott and Estrada flew out to visit those supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom from the sea aboard the *USS John F. Kennedy* (CV 67), *USS Vicksburg* (CG 69), *USS Belleau Wood* (LHA 3) and *USS Mobile Bay* (CG 53).

Estrada told Sailors aboard the *Belleau Wood*, "No one else can do what you do. No one. No other services can do for the nation what you do for the nation. We get to the fight quickly. No one can get to the fight as quick as we can, and we're doing so when



Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Terry Scott and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps John Estrada receive a tour of Al Basrah Oil Terminal off the coast of Iraq. Scott and Estrada traveled throughout Iraq, Kuwait and the North Arabian Gulf talking to Sailors and Marines on the front lines in the global war on terrorism. Iraqi Oil Terminal (KAAOT) is currently under the protection of U.S., coalition and Iraqi security forces. The six-day visit marked the first time the MCPON and Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps have toured the Middle East together. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Wes Eplen

called upon. We dominate upon the high seas and then we dominate the battlefield when we get ashore."

"Our nation would not be successful if you weren't serving," said Estrada. "We have the best young men and women serving in our fine institution — the Navy/Marine Corps team."

Scott and Estrada also visited areas with smaller concentrations of Sailors and Marines, such as the ones supporting the war on terrorism from Kuwait and aboard oil terminals in the North Arabian Gulf.

"We knew that there were a lot of places that Sailors and Marines served together, and the sergeant major and I wanted to make sure we got an opportunity to go out and visit as many places where our Sailors and Marines serve together," said Scott. "We wanted to make sure that in addition to the chief of Naval Operations and the commandant of the Marine Corps, that our Sailors and Marines also knew that the sergeant major of the Marine Corps and master chief petty officer of the Navy felt that we, too, were each other's number one joint partner."

At every stop along the trip, the sergeant major showed his appreciation to those who continue to serve as part of the Navy/Marine Corps team.

"I'd like to thank the Marines and Sailors for their commitment, their loyalty to serving our great nation...the world's best Navy and the world's best Marine Corps," said Estrada.

While in Kuwait City, at the conclusion of the week's visits throughout three countries and four ships, Scott left the Sailors and Marines with something to think about.

"It may sound cliché to say that we're fighting for our freedom. But we are — freedom from terrorism."



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MIRAMARKS

"Why is it important to have a good Marine Corps/Navy relationship?"



SGT. JUAN F. ESCALANTE
Bulk Fuel Specialist
MWSS-373

"Without the Navy we couldn't go where we need to go. We need to be a team to accomplish the mission in Iraq."

CPL. COLBY B. STAHNKE
Navigator
VMGR-352

"A strong Navy/Marine Corps relationship is important for the cohesiveness of the two branches when they work together."



PFC JOHN D. CAIN
Ordnance Technician
MALS-11

"I work with Sailors everyday. It's important to build the team to effectively do your job. Without that relationship you can't get it done."



FLIGHT JACKET

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A fire team's tale: 11th MEU combat in Najaf

Story by Cpl. Matthew S. Richards

11th MEU Combat Correspondent

FORWARD OPERATING BASE HOTTTEL, Iraq — Early August, the world watched as Marines and sailors of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) battled against Muqtada al-Sadr and his militia in the opening days of a tough fight in a huge cemetery sacred to the Shia Muslims.

By August 6, the struggle was well known as it flashed across television sets around the globe, but the story of the men wedged inside this vicious fight was untouched by the eyes of the world.

These Marines and Sailors trained for many months before this day arrived. Infantrymen and corpsmen participated in the battle, along with many other Marines from varying technical specialties. All, however, walked in the footsteps imprinted in history by the endless unsung heroes who fought America's battles before them.

Men like Lance Cpl. Sanick P. Dela Cruz, a twenty-one-year-old team leader from Chicago; Lance Cpl. Nathaniel A. Ziobro, a twenty-year-old rifleman from Temecula, Calif.; Pfc. Ryan D. S. Cullenward, a nineteen-year-old rifleman from Cool, Calif.; and Pfc. Heladio Zuniga, a nineteen-year-old rifleman from Jackson, Mich., were the heroes this day.

These Marines, only one of which is old enough to buy a beer, all walked away from the battle unscathed and without individual recognition. Their names won't be remembered for their actions that day, except for a lifetime by the men who fought alongside them.

They were just another fire team with 2nd Platoon, Company C, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 11th MEU (SOC).

They were relaxing in between shifts of guard duty at Forward Operating Base Duke, Iraq, when they got the word to saddle up and get ready. They were going into combat to join the ongoing fight.

"It was not really a shock, but we were excited and nervous at the same time," said Dela Cruz, the fireteam's only veteran from Operation Iraqi Freedom I.

They were split at the time of the announcement. Dela Cruz and Zuniga had

come back from breakfast when they heard the news. But Cullenward and Ziobro were told as they came back from sitting up all night on the flight line, ready to jump on a helicopter in case a casualty needed to be evacuated.

"We were just coming in after a long night and we were thinking we would get some sleep when they told us to pack our stuff and get on the seven-ton (truck)," Cullenward said.

But they were ready for the action.

"A lot of us were kind of excited to get off guard duty and kind of do something," Cullenward said.

Zuniga agreed with him.

"Just like he said, I was happy we got to do something," Zuniga said.

The battle had been going on for one day and was all over the news. More important than the politics behind the fighting, they only cared about the battle they were called to join, deep inside that massive cemetery.

They loaded up and rushed to the fight. No sooner had they arrived there than a rocket-propelled grenade flew directly over their heads.

"I heard it go right over our heads and heard the boom right behind us," Cullenward said, mimicking the flutter sound of an RPG in flight.

Except for Dela Cruz, it was the fire team's first taste of combat and it came as a shock at first.

"I first thought, 'whoa, I'm getting shot at,'" Ziobro exclaimed. "It was kind of funny because the walls are real short and I'm kind of a tall guy."

They joined the rest of the Marines lined up down the road that ran along the edge of the cemetery. The fire team happened to be on the far right side while the company pivoted on the left. They moved the farthest and the deepest into the cemetery, and were responsible for covering the company's right flank.

"Above all, we knew our responsibility was that flank," Dela Cruz said. "It was only our fire team covering it."

They took constant sniper fire, mortars and RPGs. They could hardly ever see who was shooting at them.

"We had no idea where they were coming from, we just would shoot where everyone was shooting," Dela Cruz said. "Every



Marines with 2nd Platoon, Company C, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable), fight from tomb to tomb against Muqtada militia entrenched in the Wadi Al Salam cemetery during combat operations in An Najaf, Iraq. Photo by Cpl. Daniel J. Fosco

now and then they'd pop out at us."

This was different from what they had expected.

"I was kind of hoping they'd show their face a little more," Cullenward said as Dela Cruz acted as if he was ducking behind a wall and shooting blindly. "If you're going to shoot someone, show yourself."

They eventually became accustomed to the never-ending incoming fire.

"After a while you just get used to it," Cullenward said. "You're just standing by a tomb as rounds fly by you head."

At one point they were taking constant sniper fire from a building near the cemetery. The enemy fire ended abruptly, however.

"We started taking fire from a building and the (81mm mortar platoon) told us they'd been taking fire all day from that building," Dela Cruz said. "Then all of the sudden the whole building just went boom! Someone had called in an air strike or artillery on it."

Once they took up a defensive position, they continued to receive sniper and mortar fire.

"What (stunk) was we could hear the

mortar rounds being walked in on us," Cullenward said. "One landed just to the left side of us and our doc had to go to help a Marine that didn't make it."

Cullenward felt an inner conflict when he thought of all the Marines taking heavy fire.

"You're relieved when it hits somewhere else, but it's difficult because it might have hit someone else," he said.

Later that day, water began to run low during the hottest part of the afternoon and Cullenward became very dehydrated.

"When we had no water, my tongue felt like paper," he said. "I could just tear it in half."

Dela Cruz did the best he could for the team.

"I tried to rotate them all into the shade while we were fighting," he said.

Once nightfall came the fireteam was still there. They were constantly watching for the enemy and spent a restless night watching and waiting. They each only got an hour of sleep.

"I kept hearing their flags flapping, thinking it was somebody coming," Ziobro said.

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squadrons, maintenance was on the top of the list, explained 1st Lt. Matthew R. Crouch, CH-46E Sea Knight pilot, HMM-268, MAG-16.

"There was some concern that the aircraft may suffer by being here for 14 months," voiced the 26-year-old from Reno, Nev. "The maintenance shop has laid that to rest. (HMM-161) has really taken care of their birds. For the turnover, I am impressed by what they have left us. They have set us up for success."

The "Red Dragons" from HMM-268, have come from MAG-39 to assume the casualty evacuation mission from the "Greyhawks" of HMM-161, MAG-16.

Simms echoed Crouch's testimony to the aircraft's condition.

"The condition of the aircraft is pretty good and they're holding up pretty well," said the 34-year-old from Suffolk, Va. "We don't think there will be a big problem keeping them up for seven more months. The 'Phrog' is a work-horse and you just can't stop that thing."

Other concerns are also weighing on the minds of leadership within the incoming squadrons, revealed HMM-365 Sgt. Maj. Blaine H. Jackson.

"One of our biggest things is the weather," said the 39-year-old from Plaquemine, La. "We're coming in one of the hottest months in the year. We're getting people acclimated to the weather so they won't get fatigued working 12 to 14-hour days."

Many of the squadrons began preparing their Marines for the extreme Iraqi temperatures months before, he noted.

Blaine's "Blue Knights" from HMM-365, MAG-29, have taken over the support responsibilities from the "Raging Bulls" of HMM-

261, MAG-26.

Other changes include the "Flying Tigers" of HMM-361, MAG-16, replacing the "Wolfpack" of HMM-466, MAG-16; the "Yankees" of VMGR-452, MAG-49, who are relieving the "Rangers" of VMGR-234, MAG-41; and the "Vipers" of HMLA-169, MAG-39, who have already turned over with the "Warriors" of HMLA-167, MAG-26. Other units will be changing over personnel, but staying in Iraq to continue operations.

All incoming personnel have nothing but glowing remarks about their predecessors in Iraq. This may give them a goal in excellence to shoot for, according to Jackson.

"When you replace a unit that has done exceptionally well, you want to at least meet that level," Jackson revealed. "They have set a precedent. They have done a complete and thorough turnover so we could take over and not miss a beat."

The reserve Marines have echoed Jackson's statements, noted Simms, but he also spoke of fulfilling the legacy that the outgoing crews have left behind.

"I think there's some pressure to do well...not as much pressure as much as pride," he said. "HMM-764 has proven to themselves that they can do what the active guys can. We want to uphold that."

Although the incoming squadrons have been given transition assistance in arriving, all of the squadrons have received training for the long months ahead, which the Marines will hold onto when they meet the new challenges that will face them, Simms noted.

"We train at home to do this and everybody knows what to do," he said. "There's an inherent danger of taking fire. Hopefully, the training we have done will carry us through without incident."

Expanded Jet Mart under construction

Story by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Many Marines go to the Jet Mart on a daily basis. The convenience store is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which offers busy servicemembers and other personnel on the air station service anytime.

The Jet Mart is currently undergoing construction to expand and refurbish its existing building. Tentatively scheduled for completion in February, the new and improved Jet Mart will provide its customers with more food and beverage selections, faster service and a new and improved store.

"Our main purpose is to serve our Marines and fellow patriots," said John Poggemeyer, manager, Jet Mart. "Since our sales were approaching \$2,000 for each square foot, we knew it was time to expand."

Construction was begun on the new addition to the Jet Mart in February, and the two buildings are scheduled to be blended into the new Jet Mart Oct. 11.

"When the new addition is added, we will vacate everything from the existing Jet Mart and move it into the new building," explained Poggemeyer, a Vista, Calif., native. "We will also open up a temporary trailer where customers can purchase wine and spirits until the refurbishing is complete."

The Jet Mart will also be renamed the Marine Mart, in an effort to be uniform with all of the Marine Corps bases.

According to Poggemeyer, the renaming decision was made on a global level, and the Marine Corps is implementing the name changes in a phasing process.

Once the new Jet Mart is complete, servicemembers and other personnel on the air station can look forward to many new features and advantages.

"Right now, we plan to have cases of cold beer, a food bar, a Krispy Krème stand, a larger coffee bar and a soda fountain," said Ernie Hamilton, assistant manager, Jet Mart. "It's going to be like a 7-11 in here once everything is completed."



The Jet Mart, currently under renovation, is scheduled for completion in February. The improved convenience store will have a fast food bar, Krispy Krème stand, a soda fountain and other new features. Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

Currently, most of the beer is not cold, but once the new Jet Mart opens up, customers can choose their drinks from rows of refrigerated cases.

The new food bar will have items like hot nachos, fresh hot dogs, hot chili soup, egg rolls and other fast foods. The coffee bar will still offer its existing Starbucks coffees, but will have in addition, tea, cappuccinos, hot chocolate and more choices. The Krispy Krème stand will make fresh donuts available to sweet-toothed customers, seven days a week.

"We will also have restrooms for both males and females (before, customers had to use the single bathroom in back of the store), six registers versus the four we have, and basically a larger selection of everything. When we become a bigger store, we will be able to carry more pallets and variety of goods to please our customers," said Hamilton, a San Diego, Calif., native.

To please its customers even more, the new Jet Mart will also increase parking.

"In the contractor plans, there are plans to create twenty more parking spaces," said Poggemeyer. "Our goal is to increase our customer service and make everything a greater convenience to our shoppers."

For Marines like Pfc. Evan Callahan, and other Jet Mart customers, they could not be happier for the enhanced convenience store.

"I shop here everyday and I cannot wait to see what the new Jet Mart will be like," said Callahan, an air traffic control communications technician, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron. "I think it will definitely benefit all the Marines here."

TALE

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The other Marines joked and poked fun at Zuniga because during the course of the night he claimed to have seen two ghosts.

"That cemetery is a spooky place I swear I saw two ghosts," Zunga said as the others laughed. "Maybe I was just hallucinating from the heat."

Dela Cruz wasn't worried about ghosts, he was thinking about the fight the next day.

"I didn't want the morning to come," he said. "The only thing I was scared about was

one of us getting hurt, and I was worried about Cullenward being a heat casualty."

But morning inevitably came. They didn't stay long that next day. In fact, after the fire team was tasked as a security element for their company first sergeant, the entire BLT pulled out of the engagement.

They had to run the 500 meters back to their trucks under mortar and sniper fire in full combat gear.

"I was the very last one of our platoon in the seven-ton," Zuniga said.

They lived through the battle that day and fought like Marines, their contribution a small footnote in Marine Corps history.

Montford Point Marines reunite in San Diego

Story by Cpl. T.D. Smith

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Marines are educated in their history from the first time they step off the bus onto those yellow footprints at a recruit training depot. They are reminded of all those before them who took the challenge of becoming a Marine. Ask any new recruit about Dan Daly, Smedley Butler, or Lewis "Chesty" Puller, and chances are you are in for quite the history lesson.

Ask the same recruit about Sgt. Maj. Louis Roundtree, who served with Gen. Lewis "Chesty" Puller, Sgt. Maj. Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson, or about the Montford Point Marines and they aren't as likely to be quite as knowledgeable.

At a recent Montford Point Marines Association, San Diego Chapter 12 banquet called, "The Chosen Few Banquet," Brig. Gen. James L. Williams, commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force rear, explained the importance of such events.

"There needs to be an oral history now," Williams said. "(We need) to capture the experience of the ones (Montford Point Marines) still living (so that) all Marines can see the connectivity."

According to the Charlotte Post, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt prompted her husband, President Franklin Roosevelt, to establish Executive Order 8802, the Fair Employment Practice Commission. This began the process of allowing African-American males to join the Marine Corps.

The enlisting of Marines of color did not mean equal treatment or acceptance of diversity into the Corps. The commandant of the Marine Corps at the time, Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb, expressed opposition to the inclusion of African-Americans, according to the Maryland Montford Point Marine Association 28's Web site.

"The Negro race has every opportunity now to satisfy its aspirations for combat in the Army—a very much larger organization than the Navy or Marine Corps—and their desire to enter the naval service is largely, I think, to break into a club that doesn't want them," the web site said.

Despite the inequality, segregation and harsh conditions, one soldier of the sea asked to be discharged from the Navy, after serving aboard the *USS Wyoming* during the bombing of Pearl Harbor so he could join the Marine Corps as soon as they started training at Montford Point, N.C.

Sgt. Maj. Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson not only served in the Navy, but also the Army before entering the Corps and receiving the nickname for his time in service and age. He became a drill instructor at Montford Point and the facility has since been named Camp Johnson in his honor.

One of the most decorated heroes of the Montford Point Marines was Sgt. Maj. Louis Roundtree. He served in both the frozen lands of the Chosin Reservoir, under the command of Puller, and in the jungles of Vietnam. While serving as an advisor to the South Vietnamese Army, his unit was overtaken and he escaped by floating downriver while breathing through a bamboo stick and lashing himself to a tree with a belt to sleep. He was eventually rescued and after recovering, he rejoined his unit in the field. His awards include the Silver Star, four awards of the Bronze Star, three awards of the Purple

Heart and two awards of the Navy Commendation Medal.

These two Montford Point Marines accomplished these achievements after enduring initial training that was more difficult than most had ever endured before.

"It was hell," said retired Sgt. Maj. James S. McCargo, a Montford Point Marine. "The training that we received made us better Marines than ever before."

McCargo explained the importance of the original Montford Point Marines by saying the unfair treatment needed to happen to begin the change.

"We knew the door was open, but there was a lot of work to be done," he said. "(We must) take advantage of opportunities that were not there before. Life is what you make of it and you have to learn how to make lemons sweet."



A Montford Point Marine speaks about his experiences as a black Marine at a reunion ceremony. Photo by Cpl. T.D. Smith

Army medevacs save Marine lives in Iraq

Story by Cpl. Paul Leicht

MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent

ALANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq — One hundred feet above the barren terrain, zipping across the Iraqi desert in total darkness, an Army UH-60 Blackhawk medical evacuation helicopter is on its way to downtown Baghdad, Iraq.

Inside the aircraft, amidst a crowded stash of medical gear, supplies and four patients, an onboard flight medic moves about the dark, cramped cabin to check their vital signs. One bloodied Marine desperately asks where he's being taken while wincing in pain from multiple wounds.

"How long 'til we get there?" cries the Marine as he clenches the stretcher above him.

Traveling from Al Asad, Iraq, the speeding Blackhawk will get there in about one hour.

With a calming touch, the flight medic leans over to tell him he's going to be okay while an extra passenger on board holds the Marine's hand. A dose of morphine is then skillfully administered through a needle in the shifting helicopter, easing the Marine's anguish.

The wounded men, whose lives are hanging in the balance, are being flown to an urgent medical care facility by dedicated Army soldiers with the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) here, who put their own lives at risk to save others.

"Before a flight, what goes through my head is making sure that I have the necessary medical supplies that I need to keep a patient alive," said Army Staff Sgt. Spencer Howell, flight medic, 507th Medical Co. "One of the first things I do is get a set of vital signs and a rapid trauma assessment. On board my situational awareness goes way up."

Howell continued, "When I am not treating a patient during a flight, the crew chief and I watch for any power lines and any suspicious activity on the ground in the event that we receive fire," he added.

Even when not flying in darkness with night vision

gear, medevac missions in Iraq present many hazards.

For an enemy that has no qualms about shooting at the symbol of the Red Cross, especially over Iraqi cities such as Baghdad, Fallujah and recently Najaf, it is unfortunately a very common occurrence, said Army Maj. Jack Leech, commanding officer, 507th Medical Co., and a native of Louisville, Ky.

"We have some really great Soldiers in this unit and most of them were here last year during the big push to Baghdad in Operation Iraqi Freedom I," said Leech. "They are some of the most experienced, best trained air crews and medics I have ever worked with."

Showing a deep concern for his patients, Howell, a native of Pontiac, Mich., said he makes a point to ask them where they are hurting so he can make their time with him as pain-free as possible.

"Talking to the patients, if they are conscious, is very important," explained Spencer. "Many of them are very disoriented after the often violent experience that caused their injuries and then moving from the aid station before getting on our aircraft. They are on their backs, in pain and do not know what is going on or where they are, so I tell them it will be alright and give them a 'thumbs up' or touch them to reassure them."

Supporting Marines day and night since they left Fort Hood, Texas, seven months ago has been the '507th Dustoff's' role here.

"We have one mission," said Army Capt. Joshua Stuckey, UH-60 pilot, 507th Medical Co. "We are here to help save lives. If there is a wounded person, be it a Marine, Soldier, civilian or even an (enemy combatant), we will pick them up from

the point of injury on the battlefield, take them aboard our helicopter and deliver them to a treatment facility, where they will receive the critical care that they need to survive."

With more than 1,300 flight hours and hundreds of medevac missions behind them, the Army unit handles two types of patient delivery, according to Leech.

"More routine or priority patients are typically loaded aboard our aircraft from a vehicle ambulance," said Leech. "We also do 'tail-to-tail' transfers where we take urgent patients directly from another Blackhawk that picked them up at the point of injury or an aid station."

Stuckey, a native of Katy, Texas, near Houston, said that once airborne, their strength is speed, low altitude and unpredictability of route on the way to Balad, Iraq, or a more dangerous destination, such as Baghdad.

For trips to and from the Iraqi capital, the 507th is often escorted by Marine AH-1W Super Cobras, but they sometimes have a difficult time keeping pace with the lighter, faster Blackhawks.

Returning from the nighttime flight from Baghdad, the medevac crew takes off their flight gear as they exit the aircraft. With another mission behind them, they wind down and prepare for the next mission.

"I love this job and wake up every day knowing that I am going to help save the life of a Marine," said Stuckey.



Army flight medics and a crew chief from the 507th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) prepare to transfer a wounded Marine onto a UH-60 Blackhawk medevac helicopter before flying from Al Asad to an urgent medical care facility at Balad, Iraq, Sept. 3. Photo by Cpl. Paul Leicht

3rd MAW Marines enhance MCMAP training in Iraq

Story by Cpl. Joel A. Chaverri

MAG-46 Combat Correspondent

AL ASAD, Iraq — Throughout the years, the Marine Corps has recognized hand-to-hand combat as a fundamental part of basic training.

The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is a system embedded within the training that recruits receive during boot camp. MCMAP is just one example of the Marine Corps' pursuit of excellence in combat preparation.

In an effort to continue this training, Lt. Col. Edward H. Hart, information management officer, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, created a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu class for the Marines deployed here.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu is a martial art that focuses on joint locks and grappling techniques to maintain control of the opponent.

"I wanted to pass on to Marines what I have learned in martial arts," expressed Hart.

Hart has taken marital arts for a while, but did not become very interested until just a few years ago.

"I didn't get serious in training until I took MCMAP," explained the 43-year-old native of Pensacola, Fla., "and then I began to take classes in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu from (a master instructor)."

Martial arts requires a lot of discipline and hard work, but those are

qualities that come naturally to "the few and the proud."

"The majority of the Marine Corps population is young, athletic, strong, competitive and very eager to learn," claimed Hart. "Those aspects are an instructors dream."

It can be dangerous taking a class that teaches fighting and wrestling techniques; therefore, safety is paramount.

"We approach (these classes) like a sport," Hart pointed out. "We have rules that we follow very closely to ensure no one gets hurt."

"This art teaches a student how to develop a lot of power," he added, "so we also teach how to control that power. Power without control is useless."

Held at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center here, the classes are open to all military personnel aboard the air base and have created a strong following.

"I really like this class," declared 20-year-old, Marietta, Ga., native Lance Cpl. Thomas B. Haddle, field radio operator, Company P, 4th Low-Altitude Air Defense Battalion, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. "It's a rush. I can't wait to come back."

"I love being able to come to these classes," stated St. Louis native Sgt. Michael J. Wagner, combat engineer, Combat Service Support Battalion 7, 1st



Lance Cpl. Mark A. Fowler, a 22-year-old field radio operator, Company P, 4th Low-Altitude Air Defense Battalion, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, puts an ankle lock on 22-year-old Lance Cpl. Jesse L. Riner, gunner, Company P, 4th LAAD, 3rd MAW, Sept. 1, in Al Asad, Iraq. Photo by Cpl. Joel A. Chaverri

Force Service Support Group. "I live to fight and fight to live."

Every Marine is a rifleman, but there are times when combat requires more skill than merely squeezing a trigger from a distance.

"It's important for Marines to know hand-to-hand combat," believes the 26-year-old Wagner. "Some people say, 'Why train in martial arts? I can shoot you from far away,' but you never know what might happen, and it's vital that you be prepared."

With the growing popularity of the class, Hart envisions it becoming a

permanent fixture during his deployment, as well as when he returns home.

"I want to continue this as long as I'm (in Iraq) and hopefully train other instructors to keep it going," Hart emphasized. "I'm really interested in starting a Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu team within the Marine Corps."

Being in a war-zone, it's not always easy to find the best facilities to practice such an intense sport.

"MWR has been very accommodating with their (gym)," Hart noted, "but we're trying to get our own space. I think (my students) are worth it."

Blood drive provides new hope on battlefields

Story by Sgt. Cecilia Sequeira

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Every servicemember in the U.S. armed forces signed the dotted line agreeing to make the ultimate sacrifice if necessary. Marines sing cadences and tell war stories full of blood, guts, and glory, but when it comes time to face a needle, sometimes that's a different story.

Most people don't like to have blood drawn. Many agree there is nothing pleasant about a large needle tapping into a vein for several minutes while the blood slowly seeps into a transparent tube. Nevertheless, as uncomfortable as it may be, and as little as servicemembers may want to, many are still turning out for the blood drives.

Sept. 1, the Navy bloodmobile from Naval Medical Center San Diego visited the Miramar Exchange. In five hours, the bloodmobile hosted 48 donors, a good turnout according to Naval Medical Center San Diego "blood" recruiter Doreen M. Rekoski.

"There is no substitute for human blood. If you are injured

and you need blood there is nothing else that we can give you to save you. Blood is like a parachute, if it is not there when you need it then it is too late," said Rekoski.

Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16 flight equipment's Cpl. Derrick T. Riley says he is afraid of needles, but still comes out every time he gets a chance. "Especially in a time of war, people are going over and getting shot. If they need blood, I'd like to be the one to give it to them," he said.

His efforts didn't stop there. Riley can only give so much blood, and like all donors, he must wait 56 days before donating more. So, he convinced a friend to come. "I brought my buddy because he is type O negative, and I knew they needed it. I'd encourage anyone to give blood," he said.

MALS-16 work center supervisor Gunnery Sgt. Ella M. McGovern also gave blood to help deployed Marines. "I donated because it's for the Marines for overseas. This is my way of supporting the war effort," she said.

McGovern and Riley share a common belief, "if you aren't willing to give blood you shouldn't be willing to receive it." Riley said, "You've got to give to receive. It's a karma

thing. Do unto others as you'd have done unto you."

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 314 flight equipment's Lance Cpl. Adam C. Tippie gave blood for the first time to support the Marines in Iraq. "If I can't be in the war, then at least my blood can," said Tippie.

VMFA-314 maintenance administration clerk Cpl. Jason M. Kirby has type AB positive blood, a rare blood type, and this is his main reason for giving blood.

Regardless of the reason, giving blood saves lives. One day it could be your own. During World War II, a Navy veteran named Harry Starnor donated blood while on leave in Washington, D.C. Later, when he was wounded, he received some plasma when, glancing at the bottle, he saw his own name. Such instances are rare, but the likelihood of any Marine being pulled from the rear and sent to the front is not.

Donated blood supports servicemembers around the world in harm's way, military clinics and hospitals, retired military and family members. However, out of 57 percent of the Department of Defense population eligible to donate blood, only 6 percent does.



Lance Cpl. Brian A. Twigg, ordnance technician, VMFA(AW)-242, and native of Woodland, Calif., completes the disarming of a Maverick missile under the wing of an F/A-18D Hornet at Al Asad, Iraq, Sept. 1. Photo by Cpl. Paul Leicht

BATS

continued from page 1

from (Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101) back at (Marine Corps Air Station) Miramar(Calif.)," said Master Sgt. Charles E. Frick, squadron ordnance chief. "They have really come together remarkably as a team and are one of the best crews I have ever seen."

Frick, a native of Anna, Ill., added that the Marines in his shop have no margin for error. When the alert is called they have only one shot to have Hornets reloaded for a new mission in a matter of minutes.

So far, 'Bats' ordnance crews have accomplished every mission assigned to them, either on time or with time to spare.

"We are extremely proud of this crew and they have contributed to our mission here tremendously," said Andersen. "They deserve some recognition for their performance and commitment to duty."

Gunnery Sgt. Anthony J. Garcia, ordnance staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, VMFA(AW)-242, and San Antonio native, said that the young Marines in his shop have meshed superbly. He also mentioned that they demonstrate a rare eagerness to understand new things and they take the initiative to read publications to learn as much as they can about their job.

"I know a lot of other people have said it too, but I am very proud of them," said Garcia after mentoring the young group of Marines in their workspace during a

brief pause in the day's flight operations.

Before deploying to Iraq earlier this month, a few of the ordnance shop's lance corporals had to stay behind due to manpower constraints, according to Andersen.

There were no volunteers.

During their work shifts, the ordnance crews have little time to rest. If they do have a short break in between flights, the Marines are either having a quick bite to eat, cleaning their weapons, doing pull-ups, studying or doing something related to their job. They are constantly occupied with work-related activities, but they also like to crack light-hearted jokes.

The shop's younger Marines come from diverse backgrounds and from different states across the country. Yet they share a positive work ethic and an understanding of their role that manifests itself on the flight line of this former Iraqi Air Force base in western Iraq.

"We know that what we do out here affects the grunts on the ground in other parts of Iraq, so we take this job very seriously," said Lance Cpl. Ruben R. Giner, ordnance technician, VMFA(AW)-242, and a native of Salinas, Calif.

Events in Iraq throughout August saw the 'Bats' flying more than 900 hours compared to a monthly training average of 400, according to Andersen. The demands of such a busy combat environment often tax the human spirit, but the youthful vigor of VMFA(AW)-242's ordnance crew might never lead one to believe it.

Miramar boxing club throws big punch

Story by Sgt. Cecilia Sequeira

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Every week a group of fighters gather at the main gym's aerobics room for some serious training, but what they are doing there is one of Miramar's best-kept secrets. The Miramar Boxing Club is not only active, but also pursuing ambitious goals.

"The ultimate goal for these boxers is to make it to the Olympic Games. We aren't training Marines so they can try it for a little while and then drop out. We'd like all of our members to compete," said head coach Robert V. Holloway.

Although each new member is expected to display some amount of commitment to the sport, they are not required to have any training before they apply for membership. Holloway said, "I want people with little to no experience, because usually, former boxers are set in their ways and have bad habits. We're going to teach them the right way."

In addition to learning the right way to box, there is also a right way to apply for the challenge. Applications can only be accepted after interested parties go through the proper channels to become an authorized boxer.

The first step is to show up at the aerobics room Monday through Thursday between 5 and 7:30 p.m. Holloway then guides prospective members through the following steps: Each boxer's command

must sign a release form before service-members may apply for registration. Once approved, a registration fee and additional paperwork is necessary to become registered with United States Amateur Boxing. Only registered boxers will be able to fight competitively with the Miramar Boxing Club.

Monday through Thursday, members punch bags and refine boxing techniques without actually sparring. There are several reasons servicemembers do not spar on station. Marine Corps Community Services Athletic Director Bob L. Stopp said, "It is not a safe place for sparring. We have mirrors, and we don't have sufficient area for that kind of activity, but it does make an excellent room for training purposes. Although there is not enough room in the gym to set up a boxing ring, Marine Corps Community Services has contracted with a local gym for team members to spar Tuesday and Thursday nights at a certified ring."

The precautionary measures are standard and don't stand in the way of the boxers, who still practice sparring and compete off station. The club's next major competition is coming up October 21-24 at the 29 Trump Casino Desert Showdown, part of the National Invitational Championship in Palm Springs, Calif.

Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352 operations clerk Cpl. Aaron



Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352 operations clerk Cpl. Aaron J. Espinoza prepares for a match by training with a punching bag. Photo by Sgt. Cecilia Sequeira

J. Espinoza has been boxing since he was 15. He is one of the club's most committed members according to his coach. "We need more members like him. He just got back from Iraq last week, and here he is training for the next competition," said Holloway.

"It's an individual sport, it builds discipline and it's a great way to stay out of trouble," said Espinoza. He joined the club when it started in April of 2003.

Although there are only about seven members active at any given time, the club has grown pretty close, according to Espinoza. "Most of our members are deployed to Iraq, so we don't have many people right now, but we're a pretty tight group."

Espinoza's only complaint about the club is that many newcomers sign up only

to back out a short time later. "They need to be willing to learn and put the time into it," said Espinoza about prospective members.

"People need to be willing to train four to five times a week for a couple hours a night. The expectation is for the people to learn to box properly and to go to matches," said Stopp.

Carlito M. Vasquez helped start the club over a year ago and has goals for each of its members. "Training and tournaments are for experience. It's a necessary step to reach the All-Marine Boxing Team," said Vasquez.

For more information on the Miramar Boxing Club contact the athletic director at (858) 577 - 4127.

Miramar Marines' small efforts yield big returns

Story by Sgt. Cecilia Sequeira

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

The average American spends about 4 hours a day watching television, so it goes without saying some are finding time to waste. Nevertheless, when a group of servicemembers is addressed for a volunteer opportunity, the room goes so silent one can almost hear crickets singing. What causes people to avoid volunteering like the plague?

Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron weather observer Cpl. Russell A. Oubina says there are several reasons Marines have given him for avoiding volunteerism. "The most common excuse is lack of time," said Oubina. He's tried to recruit friends and fellow Marines to volunteer at a Muscular Dystrophy Association summer camp but says sensitivity is also a common problem. "Some people can't handle summer camp. The camp has 6 to 21-year-olds. You might be an 18-year-old changing the diaper of a 21-year-old or helping them shower. Other people don't like the fact that they could bond with someone, and that child could be dead in another couple weeks. It takes a lot to be able to handle that situation," he said.

Oubina has a lot on his plate, but still manages to be one of the air station's lead volunteers. "I just find the time. I probably have one of the busiest schedules you could have — 15 units of college, I'm full-time active duty and I volunteer as well," he said.

Oubina has been volunteering for several years, and through the efforts, met event coordinator Glenn A. Riese, who says he appreciates Oubina and volunteers like him, on both a professional and personal level. Riese works for the Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis Association (better known as Lou Gehrig's disease). Riese became personally involved with the association when his wife began to suffer from the disease. The volunteers' work "means more to me than if I were directly affected," he said.

Sept. 1, a group of Marines came down to the ALS organization to help move the contents of the office from one building to another. They moved everything from furniture to wheelchairs and walkers. "As a non-profit organization, we are limited on our funds. Their help allows us to put the money toward other things, like buying wheelchairs. Volunteers are our lifeblood," said Riese.

H&HS air traffic control communication technician Cpl. Gina B. McAskill was one of the volunteer movers at the ALS office. As a full-time single mom and active duty Marine, McAskill is often swamped with work, but also finds time to volunteer. "It makes me feel good," she said.

Although McAskill doesn't suffer from ALS or anything similar, she says she understands their appreciation. As a single mom, she says, "Sometimes, I need a break from my son, and people help me out. I'm just trying to give back where I can."

McAskill said the most rewarding moments for her are those she can spend with children who can benefit from her help. "I love the look on their faces when they smile, and to just talk to them because it makes them happy," she said.

McAskill has volunteered up to once a month for two years, but it doesn't take that kind of dedication to make a difference. Every volunteer can help non-profit organizations be successful at improving lives.

Volunteer opportunities are listed in newspapers and are available on the Internet. Station-wide e-mails searching for volunteers circulate frequently. Librarians are on a constant search for story-time readers and, at times, volunteers are needed to help with forest fires. AmeriCorps is an organization through which volunteers can help build homes for low-income families, and in return can help volunteers pay for some of their college tuition. Volunteer openings are everywhere and are rarely filled to maximum capacity.

Oubina says he has learned a lot from volunteering. "There is a broad spectrum of people out there and it is important to be able to see what these people have to face, the struggles you sometimes see on 'Oprah'. It's about the only time you see something like that. God forbid you go out there and actually do something. You are in the Marine Corps and you are blessed with the physical capability of walking and going to the bathroom, and all the things people take for granted," he said.

Oubina is constantly on the lookout for new volunteers, and reminds people who are skittish about working in sometimes awkward situations that, "It is nothing like what you would face in a wartime situation, so suck it up Marines. They need you."

Security team guards crash site investigation team



Sgt. Joseph K. Johnson, classified material control center clerk, Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, stays vigilant and searches the landscape in front of a CH-46E Sea Knight from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 764, MAG-16, Aug. 21. The 27-year-old Marine from Long Beach, Calif., was part of a security detachment charged with the protection of a crash site investigation team looking through the wreckage of a recent CH-53E Super Stallion crash. Photo by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

Story by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

MAG-16 Combat Correspondent

AL ASAD, Iraq — A team of Marines lifted into the early morning sky Aug. 21 to determine the cause of a crash that killed two Marines 10 days earlier.

The crash site investigation team arrived at the crash site of the downed CH-53E Super Stallion from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 166 (reinforced), 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, shortly after the sun rose over the vast desert. The team of investigators also had a security element in tow.

Of the many lessons learned while in Iraq, security in any situation takes precedence. Safety first has been a mainstay policy of the Marine Corps and security is a vital part of that.

Security comes into play in all

aspects of living, from convoys or patrols, to investigating crash sites in unsecured landing zones and even serving aboard one of the many Marine bases set up throughout Iraq.

Every Marine is a rifleman, so every Marine could be faced with a scenario where they would have to become part of a security team.

The Marines that supported the crash site investigation team were a conglomeration of Marines from the administrative, supply and logistics, and armory sections of Marine Aircraft Group 16, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, with CH-46E Sea Knight transportation support from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 764, MAG-16.

Although the investigation team's security job completed their protection mission, the cause of the crash is still under investigation.

Miramar Movies

The Station Auditorium is located in building 2242, and will be featuring the following movies free of charge. Outside food and drinks are not permitted. For more information contact 577-4143 or log on to www.mccsmiramar.com.

Today:

4:30 p.m. A Cinderella Story (PG)
6:30 p.m. The Village (PG-13)
8:30 p.m. The Bourne Supremacy (PG-13)

Saturday:

6:30 p.m. Thunderbirds (PG)
8:30 p.m. Catwoman (PG)

Sunday:

1 p.m. A Cinderella Story (PG)
6:30 p.m. I, Robot (PG-13)

Wednesday:

6:30 p.m. Collateral (R)

Thursday:

2 p.m. Yu-Gi-Oh! (PG)
6:30 p.m. The Village (PG-13)

Presentations and time subject to change.

101 Days Winners

The results of the 101 Days of Summer Drug Free Challenge and Spirit Competition Winners have been announced.

1st Place: VMFAT-101, 2045 points
2nd Place: MALS-11, 2005 points
3rd Place: MAG-46, 1451 points

The units received \$600, \$450 and \$250, respectively.

Winners of the Unit Challenge will be announced in middle of this month.

Religious Services

The Chaplain's Office is located in building 5632 and coordinates regularly-scheduled worship services. For the location and meeting schedules of religious activities, contact the Chaplain's Office at 577-1333.

Sunday:

9:30 a.m. Protestant worship service
11 a.m. Roman Catholic Eucharist

Wednesday:

7 p.m. Baptist service

Monday-Friday:

11:30 a.m. Roman Catholic Daily Mass

Jewish:

7 p.m. First Friday of the month MCRD
7:30 p.m. Last Friday at Edson Range Chapel

3rd MAW OIF book

Marine Corps Association bookstores will soon carry an exclusive new title detailing the exploits of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"Third Marine Aircraft Wing: Operation Iraqi Freedom" follows the journey of 3rd MAW in support of I Marine Expeditionary Force and coalition forces in liberating Iraq and toppling Saddam Hussein during OIF. The book is a testament to the Marines' well-proven, colorful battle history.

The cost of the book is \$34 for members and \$36 for nonmembers.

Marines can visit the MCA Bookstore located at Camp Pendleton's Main Exchange, Building T1100 on Vandegrift Ave., or call 888-237-7683 to order a copy.

Fire Awareness

The Cleveland National Forest has implemented a new Fire Danger Awareness System for residents and visitors. Residents and visitors can now call (619) 563-2183 or log on to www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland to find out current fire danger levels before visiting the Cleveland National Forest. The Forest Service is asking all visitors to check prior to visiting, as the fire level will determine what activities will be allowed in the forest.

Ice Hockey Tryouts

The Ice Hockey team will have a practice game Sunday at 6:30 p.m. at the San Diego Ice Arena. Interested players can show up at the team meeting at 6 p.m. or call 577-1232.

Impounded Vehicles

The following vehicles have been impounded and need to be claimed by the owners. Towing fees average \$113, storage fees \$28 daily. For more information contact the Provost Marshal's Office at 577-1461.

Vehicle:	License:	Date:	Stored at:
Red 1998 Dodge Stratus	AZ/220DVX	Aug. 12	Road One Towing
Yellow 1984 Subaru 4dr	KS/UBK534	Aug. 16	Road One Towing
Red 1997 Saturn SL	IA/594HQW	Aug. 16	Road One Towing
Grey 1987 Toyota Corolla	TX/D43KSG	Aug. 24	Road One Towing
White 1986 Oldsmobile 88	WA/013GVM	Aug. 26	Road One Towing
Red 1987 VW Cabriolet	CA/5CSE674	Aug. 26	Road One Towing