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About the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned: The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) is part of the Training and Education Command (TECOM) of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), located at MCB Quantico, VA. The MCCLL mission is to collect, analyze, manage, and disseminate knowledge gained through operational experiences, exercises, and supporting activities in order to enable Marines to achieve higher levels of performance and to provide information and analysis on emerging issues and trends in support of operational commanders and the Commandant of the Marine Corps Title 10 responsibilities. MCCLL manages the Marine Corps Lessons Management System (LMS) and the Consolidated Data Repository (CDR) databases, and reports findings, trends and issues through verbal, written and electronic media.

Visit the MCCLL Website at: www.mccll.usmc.mil

Customer relations management support for the MCCLL Website and questions about the newsletter should be directed to: harry.t.johnson@usmc.mil or michael.jones@usmc.mil Telephone: 703.432.1279 DSN: 378.1279

From the Director: Updated *Lessons for Leaders*

In last month's newsletter, we highlighted the report, "Lessons for Leaders", that compiled five individual topical papers from the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) into a consolidated report that we believed could serve as a valuable resource for commanders at all levels. This report was subsequently provided to attendees at the March 2006 CMC Commanders Course.

Since the initial publication of the "Lessons for Leaders" report, MCCLL has produced a report documenting the results of the Air Combat Element (ACE) Commanders Conference (see a summary of this report [here](#)). This sixth report has now been included in [Lessons for Leaders \(Revision 1\)](#). The report now includes:

- Report on the Ground Combat Element (GCE) Commanders Lessons Learned Conference
- Report on the NCO Lessons Learned Conference
- Report on the Combat Service Support Element (CSSE) Commanders Lessons Learned Conference
- Report on the Air Combat Element (ACE) Commanders Lessons Learned Conference
- Seven Months in Ar Ramadi: Observations from 2d Battalion, 4th Marines
- 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines Pre-deployment Training Lessons and Observations

With the inclusion of lessons and observations from the ACE Commanders Lessons Learned Conference, the consolidated report now includes the entire spectrum of lessons for the MAGTF, particularly in the area of pre-deployment training. We invite all commanders, and prospective commanders, to review the timely observations and lessons in this report.

We would also like to encourage our readers to forward the MCCLL newsletters to their Marine friends and acquaintances, so that they may become familiar with our newsletter and website and learn the value of providing us with their observations and lessons learned. This is one of the best ways to ensure that their "good ideas" reach decision makers and influence program decisions.

Comments on this or any other topics are welcome. You may contact the Director at:

Col Monte E. Dunard, USMCR, Director MCCLL monte.dunard@usmc.mil
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ACE Commanders Lessons Learned Conference: In late November and early December 2005, the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) hosted the fourth in a series of lessons learned conferences designed to capture, in a systematic manner, the operational experiences of deployed Marines across the MAGTF. The fourth conference brought together Air Combat Element (ACE) officers with squadron command experience. The objective was to collect observations and lessons (particularly as they relate to training) from front-line ACE commanders with experience in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), or both. The commanders were especially eager to provide their insights and recommendations for training and combat leadership, and did not shy away from controversial topics.

As mentioned previously, the report on the fourth lessons learned conference has now been included in the "[Lessons for Leaders \(Revision 1\)](#)" report and is also available separately for review and downloading at: [Air Combat Element Commanders Lessons Learned Conference, 30 November – 2 December 2005](#).



Two CH-46E Sea Knights from HMM-764 take off from a runway in Al Asad, Iraq. The reserve squadron based at Edwards Air Force Base boasts one of the most experienced pilot rosters in the Marine Corps.

Selected observations from the ACE Commanders Lessons Learned Conference:

- **Train, Equip, Provide**
 - The desired lock-in time for unit manning before deployment is: 120-180 days for active duty and 90 days for reserves.
 - Pre-deployment training is generally excellent, but many Marines join late and miss training.
 - The Desert Talon Exercise provides excellent adaptive training based on changing missions.
 - Although Desert Talon had limited culture training, it was considered adequate for ACE due to the limited contacts with the local populace.
 - Weapons training and ammunition allocations were inadequate, particularly for VMU.
- **Deployment, Re-Deployment, RIP/TOA**
 - The USMC rotation policy of 7 months in theater and then 6 months in CONUS is preferable to the longer tours used by the other services.
 - In the opinion of reserve commanders, "Program Nine" which provides reserve medical support personnel to aviation units is not adequate.
 - Deployment tempo varies from unit to unit; VMU and assault support are most tasked, fixed wing is least.
- **MAGTF Support**
 - The operational tempo is increasing. The ACE perception is that they are "flying more and more", although the GCE perception is that ACE is not supporting.
 - Direct action assault support has increased dramatically from earlier OIF deployments.
 - The Air Tasking Order is too rigid to meet emerging requirements.
 - The threat matrix was a useful tool; the CH-53 employment was limited most by the matrix.
 - An intelligence capability is needed at the squadron level.
- **Support Issues**
 - Contract maintenance support of aircraft was outstanding; contract facilities maintenance was not as good.
 - The Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) performance was outstanding.
 - The manning process functions as if it were peacetime; there is a need to review excepted commands, professional military education, Marine Officer Instructors, and 'B' billets

For a complete discussion of these and other issues, please see the complete report at: [Air Combat Element Commanders Lessons Learned Conference, 30 November – 2 December 2005](#)

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MCCLL Afghanistan Collection Team: From December 2005 thru January 2006, a MCCLL collection team comprised of two experienced officers, LtCol Gregg Lyon and Maj Jon Lauder, were embedded with the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines in Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman Provinces, Afghanistan, to gather lessons and observations from the maneuver units, as well as from Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and Embedded Training Teams (ETTs). LtCol Lyon and Maj Lauder interviewed the battalion staffs, as well as other Marine officers and enlisted personnel, to gather extensive information on emerging issues and trends in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). They also visited the Counterinsurgency (COIN) Academy in Taji, Iraq, and observed the training provided by this facility. Three topical reports have now been published based on this collection effort:

- (1) [Counterinsurgency Operations in Afghanistan: Observations from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines](#),
- (2) [Embedded Training Teams with the Afghan National Army \(ANA\)](#) and
- (3) [Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Tactical Units with Strategic Impact](#).



Marines from E Company, 2nd Bn, 3rd Marines, man the perimeter at Camp Blessing during an indirect fire attack. Camp Blessing is the most remote Marine Corp post in Afghanistan.

Some preliminary observations from the Marine Corps counterinsurgency, PRT and ETT operations in Afghanistan are:

• **Counterinsurgency Issues.** The 2nd Bn, 3rd Marines conducted counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan from June 2005 through January 2006, within an area of operations (AO) that totaled over 13,000 square kilometers. This resulted in companies often having to operate independently at distances over a hundred miles apart in a theater that was significantly different from Iraq in terms of terrain, climate, culture and the political situation. Many of the comments from 2/3 Marines and Sailors reflected concerns that their pre-deployment training was focused on preparing them for operations in Iraq rather than Afghanistan. Some of the specific areas in which additional training is needed are:

- Mountainous combat operations, during which there are often sustained, high tempo, heavy load, extreme weather conditions with high temperature fluctuations
- Basic infantry skills (especially for Staff NCO ranks including platoon sergeants and squad leaders)
- Motorized operations (with training on all types of vehicles that will be operating in the mountainous terrain)
- Small war logistics, including Combat Delivery System (CDS) drops and pack mule employment
- Insertion/extraction techniques for convoy operations
- Electronic countermeasure (ECM) devices
- Communications equipment deployed in theater, e.g., tactical satellite communications

• **Embedded Training Team (ETT) Issues.** The MCCLL collection team visited three ETTs during its deployment to Afghanistan. The ETTs are tasked with training, mentoring and advising Afghan National Army (ANA) units. Two of the major themes that emerged from the collection effort were inadequate pre-deployment training and inadequate support in such areas as logistics, communications, and intelligence. Some of the specific ETT training issues were:

- Pre-deployment training courses should be taught by instructors who have prior experience as members of ETTs, military transition teams (MiTTs), or other foreign military training organizations.
- Additional training on ECM employment, troubleshooting
- Training on TACSAT employment and ECM integration
- Language training appropriate for the specific region, e.g., Pashto and Dari language training
- IED training that is Afghan specific
- Familiarity training on foreign weapons



See [more of this article](#)

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MCCLL Afghanistan Collection Team (continued)

- **Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Issues.** The PRTs in Afghanistan are designed to extend the reach and legitimacy of the Central Government by developing a self-sustaining, peaceful, civil society. With a mix of military, civil government and non-governmental organizations, the success of the PRT depends on its ability to increase governmental capacity and good governance, and its success in "seizing human terrain and defeating the enemy". Some of the key observations of the Marine PRT members were:
 - The need for chain of command clarification for the PRTs
 - Additional staff training on ECM employment, civil military operations, language and cultural awareness, inter-agency coordination and integration
 - Additional skills needed: communications technicians, motor-t mechanics, logisticians, and combat engineers
 - Streamlined logistics support (e.g., parts blocks for vehicle/weapons maintenance) due to the great distances involved over extreme terrain
 - Additional interpreters from the local area who are culturally astute to the nuances of the specific tribes in the region



Marine from the 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines provides security around a clinic during a medical assistance and assessment visit by the Khost Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). Over 660 Afghans were provided medical assistance.

For additional information on the observations and issues raised during the MCCLL collection effort in Afghanistan, please see the three topical reports at:

- (1) [Counterinsurgency Operations in Afghanistan: Observations from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines.](#)
- (2) [Embedded Training Teams with the Afghan National Army \(ANA\)](#) and
- (3) [Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Tactical Units with Strategic Impact.](#)

Updates to MCCLL Forums/Discussion Groups: In response to requests from current Marine users of our website, additional discussion groups have been added on the topics of [Reserve Component Mobilization](#) and [Spectrum Management](#). Marines with prior experience in planning mobilizations of reserve units or with expertise on spectrum management issues are encouraged to participate.

Although many users of our website are very familiar with the discussion groups and forums available on our site, others have yet to explore the variety of postings on a wide range of topics. The discussion groups are an important resource for sharing good ideas among specific Marine Corps communities of interest. The use of these discussion groups has already resulted in some positive impacts on Marine Corps planning activities. To see a complete list of discussion groups, [click here](#).

One of the best ways to keep abreast of new postings to the discussion groups is to post your own comments on each topic of interest and then check the box:

Subscribe me to this topic (you will receive email messages when new messages are posted)

By doing this, you will be notified by e-mail when anyone else posts to the topic. The e-mail also has a convenient link connecting you back to the particular discussion group.

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Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Lessons from Hurricane Katrina: The humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by civil and military authorities revealed significant deficiencies in the planning and execution of an effective and coordinated response. Many of these deficiencies in the Nation's response have been widely reported in the press, especially as key participants have published their own reports on lessons learned.

The Marine Corps is proud of its contributions in helping to stabilize the affected areas as part of the Nation's military response, especially the support provided to the victims, with many stranded individuals rescued and lives saved. However, the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) believes that it is essential to review all aspects of the Hurricane Katrina planning and response efforts to ensure that substantive observations and lessons be documented to assist in future HA/DR efforts. Based on the candid comments and reports of Marines and their leaders who actively supported the nation's Hurricane Katrina response, MCCLL has now published a topical paper summarizing the lessons learned: [Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief Lessons from a Hurricane: A summary of observations from Hurricane Katrina.](#)



Marines from Cherry Point board a C-9 to deploy as the command element of MARFOR Katrina in support of relief efforts in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama.

Selected observations on the humanitarian assistance and disaster relief planning and execution efforts in response to Hurricane Katrina:

- **Planning**
 - A strategic, NORTHCOM HA/DR exercise should be planned to help Marines become more knowledgeable of requirements, types of relief organizations, and procedures to follow in working with Title 32 forces and civilian authorities.
 - A disaster relief operational plan is needed to help ensure that the proper skill sets are brought to an HA/DR operation. Marine commanders have noted a number of instances in which the equipment and skill sets brought to the relief effort were not the most suitable for the evolving mission.
- **Command and Control**
 - A review of joint doctrine for civil affairs and civil military operations (CMO) is recommended. Although MARFOR Katrina effectively established horizontal coordination for relief and recovery efforts, there was no vertical integration of CMO efforts through an analogous CMO organization at higher headquarters.
 - Clear guidelines on the type of assistance that should and should not be provided under the Stafford Act needs to be published and reviewed by the local Marine commanders involved.
 - Staff Judge Advocates should provide guidance to planners on the specific activities that Title 10 personnel may conduct.
- **Communications**
 - All the key players in communications planning should be brought together to coordinate implementation of the network.
 - The warning order should contain sufficient information necessary to ensure that command and subordinate elements are integrated effectively into the network.

Please refer to the MCCLL report for a complete discussion of these and other observations and lessons learned to assist in planning future humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts:

[HA/DR Lessons from a Hurricane.](#)

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Updates on Safety Issues:

Hearing Protection: In June 2005, MCCLL published a topical paper on the subject of [Command & Control and Hearing Protection](#) that addressed significant increases that have been experienced in the number of Marines with hearing loss due to exposure to hazardous noise environments in combat. It was recognized at the time that the issue went well beyond medical and safety concerns and had direct tactical implications on command and control at the small unit level where communications by voice and radio predominate. The MCCLL topical paper provided information for both small unit leaders and senior decision makers to help them become better informed on the implications of noise induced hearing loss on individual and unit effectiveness in combat.

Unlike other MCCLL topical papers, a portion of the hearing loss report was a fictionalized combat story to dramatize the impact of hearing loss on real-world operations. This story, written by one of the Senior Analysts on the MCCLL staff, dramatized the events of the Second Battle for Fallujah in November 2004 and the difficulties encountered in prosecuting the operation due to high noise levels. The story was developed to bring the issue to the attention of Marines in a context that directly relates to their combat operations. Previously, the issue of hearing protection has been taught from a medical, hearing loss perspective. The Fallujah experience demonstrates to Marines and their leaders how command and control deficiencies can occur when hearing loss is experienced.

Since June, the issue of hearing loss has continued to receive publicity as evidenced by a recent article in the Dallas Morning News on the subject: [Seeking the Right Amount of Sound in the Fury of Combat](#). LtCol Donald Hawkins, the MCCLL Integration and Technology Branch Head, was quoted in the article, pointing out that "the Fallujah battle showed Marine leaders that hearing protection isn't just a question of health, but a matter of combat effectiveness." He noted that, as a result of the Fallujah experience, the Marine Corps has revised its regulations to require that every Marine, "especially forward-deployed Marines in combat environments", be issued Combat Arms Earplugs and be trained to use them. The current challenge is to convince all Marines that wearing earplugs will give them an edge in battle rather than taking an edge away.



See the complete article from [the Dallas Morning News](#)

Eye Protection: In February 2005, MCCLL (in collaboration with the Navy Operational Medical Lessons Learned Center) published an [Initial Observations Report on Health Services Support](#). The report pointed out the critical need for effective eye protection that is now achievable with state-of-the-art ballistic eyewear. Since then, the use of commercially available eyewear products in OIF and OEF has increased as Marines have become increasingly aware of the need to protect their eyes from shrapnel ejected by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), as well as other types of projectiles from all sources. A memorandum from the Department of the Army Project Manager for Soldier Equipment identifies the [commercially available eyewear](#) that has been tested and meets the military's stringent ballistic protection and optical standards. These eyewear products have been widely accepted by soldiers and Marines.

A recent experience of an Army officer with the 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, deployed to Mosul in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) highlights the critical importance of eye protection. He writes:

"I am 1LT Anthony Aguilar, an Infantry Platoon Leader assigned to B Company, Task Force 2-1 Infantry, 172nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, currently deployed to Mosul, Iraq, in support of OIF. Our patrol was struck by a massive IED on 28 Feb 2006, launching shrapnel and debris at high velocities toward the vehicle. I was thrown into the hull of the Stryker and later discovered that my eye-pro prevented a shard of shrapnel from contacting my face, saving my eyesight and preventing serious injury. The shrapnel punctured the lens, but did not penetrate. The shrapnel was large enough to dislodge the eyewear from my face and force me into the vehicle. I wore the glasses the rest of the patrol, confident they could still do the job."

This testimony should help convince all Marines of the imperative of employing effective eye protection during all combat operations.



1LT Aguilar wears the eye protection (with embedded shrapnel) that saved his eyesight after his patrol experienced a massive IED explosion.

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Liaisons to MCCLL from the Joint Staff J-7 and the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL)

The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) is fortunate to have two experienced liaison officers on site at its facility in Quantico, VA; one from the Joint Staff J-7 and one from the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL). These liaisons serve in a very important capacity by ensuring that critical lessons are shared among the Marine Corps, other services and the Joint Staff, that related activities are coordinated for maximum synergy, and that the dissemination of important lessons to all concerned personnel is expedited.

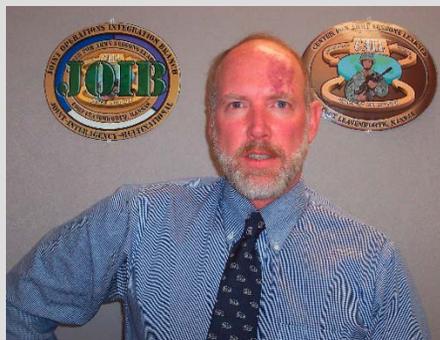
Mr. Mark T. Satterly, USAF (ret), is the Joint Staff J-7 Joint Lessons Learned Program Specialist liaison officer (LnO) to the MCCLL. In this capacity, he advises the MCCLL Director on all joint lessons learned program matters. His principal role is to ensure that Marine Corps lessons learned are integrated across the combatant commands, services, combat support agencies, and other government agencies to enhance Joint warfighting and support the strategic plan for the DoD training transformation at the tactical, operational and strategic levels of war. Mr. Satterly can be contacted at: mark.satterly@usmc.mil.



Mark Satterly is the liaison officer to MCCLL from the Joint Staff J-7, ensuring effective coordination between the Marine Corps and the joint staff, as well as other services and government agencies.

The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) has established full-time liaison with both the Marine Corps and Air Force Centers for Lessons Learned. The CALL liaison officer, Mr. Bill Bender, USMC (ret), provides expertise on Army policy, plans, procedures, and milestones necessary for efficient conduct of joint training with respect to lessons learned. The CALL LnOs are designed to facilitate the cross-walk of issues between organizations and Service lessons learned centers for potential incorporation in the issue-resolution process. Mr. Bill Bender provides full-spectrum CALL representation for the development and sharing of all products, processes, and activities related to the collection and distribution of Army and Marine Corps lessons learned. He can be contacted at: william.j.bender@usmc.mil. Active duty and Reserve Marines, and DoD civilians, can access the CALL website at call.army.mil, and use the DEERS login option after selecting **DoD Users Login Here**.

Bill Bender serves as the liaison officer to MCCLL from CALL, providing valuable coordination between the Marine Corps and the Army in such critical areas as IED tactics, techniques and procedures.



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Using MCCLL "Binders": Many users of the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) website are unfamiliar with a feature specifically designed to help Marines and other users perform their own research efforts. This feature allows all authorized users to set up "Binders" for aggregating information on specific topics that they identify through searches of the MCCLL repositories.

In order to use this feature, begin by clicking on "[MYBINDERS](#)" at the top left of the home page and scrolling down to view the binders that have already been established. At this point, you have three options:

1. If a binder has already been set up in your area of interest, you can access it and begin viewing the contents for relevance to your requirements. If the binder contains a significant number of lessons, you can quickly review all of the lessons by clicking on "Book Format", which displays the contents of every lesson as a continuous webpage for easy review, without having to open each lesson individually. (You can also cut and paste the contents of the Book Format display into an MS Word document to save for further review).
2. If there are no currently existing binders on your topic of interest, you can set up your own binder and begin adding lessons and other records to it. Just click on [ADD A NEW BINDER](#), and complete the following information: "Title" (give it a different title from any existing binder), "Status" (you should make it an Active binder), and "Type" (either Private, Viewable, or Collaborative). The definitions of the Type Binders are:
 - a. A "Private" binder can be seen only by you.
 - b. A "Viewable" binder can be viewed by all authorized MCCLL website users; however, only you can add additional items to the binder or make any other changes.
 - c. A "Collaborative" binder can be viewed by all authorized users, each of whom can include additional items to the binder.

Once you have saved this information, the new binder will be displayed on the list of binders. In order to begin adding records to the binder, click on the  next to the entry to make it your Default Binder.

You will notice that the title of the Binder is now **bold** and much larger to highlight the fact that it is the Binder to which you are currently adding information. You can then conduct your search for relevant lessons and other documents by clicking on [GOOGLE TYPE SEARCH](#) and searching on key words of your choosing. Once the results are displayed, you will notice a clipboard  next to each item. By clicking on this icon, the record will be added automatically to your binder.

3. If you do not feel that you have the expertise or time to conduct your own search, please contact either [LtCol Donald Hawkins](#), MCCLL Integration and Technology Branch Head, or [LtCol Mark Silvia](#), MCCLL Collections and Analysis Branch Head, to request that a MCCLL staff member be assigned to conduct your search and populate a binder for your use.

We encourage all authorized users to explore the current contents of MyBinders and consider using this capability to support your future research requirements.

News

[Safety Newsletter from the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing \(MAW\)](#)

Col Robert D. Hermes, the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) liaison with the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW), has initiated publication of a monthly health and safety newsletter for the MAW that will be of interest to many Air Combat Element (ACE) Marines. The [first issue of the 3rd MAW newsletter, "Lines in the Sand"](#), contains articles on near mid-air collisions and preventive medicine concerns, as well as extracts from the [MCCLL ground mishaps report](#) that was highlighted in our March newsletter.

On near mid-air collisions, the 3rd MAW newsletter points out that this is a frequently recurring hazard for forward deployed aircrew. Some incidents involve flights with U.S. Army aircraft that are flying either lights out or without communicating with the appropriate air traffic controller or deconfliction agency. The frequency of the near mid-air collisions is a reminder to aviators to ensure professional, timely internal and external traffic communications, to display appropriate external lighting for the flight, to fly the appropriate flight formation, and to maintain a disciplined, vigilant lookout for traffic.

On preventive medicine, the 3rd MAW newsletter points out the prevalence of parasitic infectious diseases transmitted by the bites of infected sand flies. A skin infection caused by the leishmaniasis is particularly prevalent in Iraq with over 800 cases reported. There is also a slight chance of malaria in the region. Preventive measures include the use of repellents containing DEET, wearing permethrin-treated uniforms, and sleeping under permethrin-treated bed nets or within screened enclosures.

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Stability Operations in Complex Urban Terrain

The U.S. Joint Forces Command (USJFCOM) recently completed a limited objective experiment (LOE) in preparation for Urban Resolve 2015. The Urban Resolve series of experiments are designed to identify solutions for both current and future challenges that warfighters might face in conducting stability operations in a complex and evolving urban environment.

The experiment which ran in February 2006 examined two initiatives: force application and force protection. Force application is defined to be the activities necessary for joint planning, executing, and assessing information operations at every level of warfighting to influence both friendly and enemy centers in the urban environment. Force protection encompasses the joint force's ability to protect critical nodes, including friendly forces and civilian population centers, against a highly adaptive and irregular warfare enemy.

More than eighty participants from USJFCOM, the Joint Staff, the U.S. Special Operations Command, the Marine Corps and other military services, and governmental and non-governmental agencies took part in the experiment with some multinational and interagency partners.

The next iteration of the Urban Resolve series will involve the planning stages for FY 2007 and 2008, incorporating many of the lessons learned from the previous experiments.



Read [more about Urban Resolve 2015](#)

Infantry Raid on MOUT Town

By Cpl. Joseph Digirolamo

Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twenty Nine Palms, 10 Feb 2006

Cpl. Glen R. Clacher knows the best way to prepare for Iraq is to get a little taste of it before he deploys. "Sometimes our training doesn't feel too realistic," said the 21-year-old fire team leader. "But when real life elements are provided in the mix, you start to believe in the situations you get into."

Clacher is part of 3rd platoon, I Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, which currently is participating with about 1,000 other Marines and Sailors from the battalion, in the Urban Warfare Training Center portion of their revised combined-arms exercise and stability and support operations training, branded 'Mojave Viper.'

The 10-day urban warfare package focuses on tank and assault amphibious vehicle infantry integration, vehicular and foot patrols, vehicle checkpoints and coordinated searches in a mock Iraqi city housing more than 300 role players including some 50 Iraqi linguists. "The exercise duplicates life in Iraq for an infantry battalions in an urban environment," said Capt. Edward T. Nevglowski, operations officer for 3rd Bn., 8th Marines.

Throughout the second phase of the battalion's Mojave Viper training, the unit jumped into an exercise known as urban centralized training – a training evolution where the targets, for all intents and purposes, shoot back. Each Marine and role player is fully engaged in a paintball war armed with 9 mm marking cartridges called simunition (SIM) rounds, which are from the Special Effects Small-Armed Munitions System.

"[Using blanks] you really don't know how accurate you are," said Lance Cpl. Hector L. Borrero, ammunitions chief for 3rd Bn., 8th Marines. "These SIM rounds allow you to tell who gets hit and who doesn't... they build up a Marine's proficiency when it comes to moving and shooting."

This exercise allows platoons to lead an assault on a portion of the mock city against an army of insurgents in the town. The Marines are armed with blue munitions as insurgents yield the color red.

"The urban centralized training focuses on room clearing, movement to assault an objective... and geometry of fire," said 2nd Lt. Steven M. Keisling, infantry platoon commander, 3rd Plt., I Company, 3rd Bn., 8th Marines. Keisling knows that the training here is exactly what his men need before they deploy. "What we're trying to get from this is a mastery of the basics," said the 25-year-old from Napa, Calif. "It's those basics that save lives."



See [more of this article](#)

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April 2006 Newsletter

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Book Review

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Book Review

***Ambush Alley: The Most Extraordinary Battle of the Iraq War* by Tim Pritchard**

March 23, 2003: U.S. Marines from the Task Force Tarawa are caught up in one of the most unexpected battles of the Iraq War. What started off as a routine maneuver to secure two key bridges in the town of Nasiriyah in southern Iraq degenerated into a nightmarish twenty-four-hour urban clash in which eighteen young Marines lost their lives and more than thirty-five others were wounded. It was the single heaviest loss suffered by the U.S. military during the initial combat phase of the war.

On that fateful day, Marines came across the burned-out remains of a U.S. Army convoy that had been ambushed by Saddam Hussein's forces outside Nasiriyah. In an attempt to rescue the missing soldiers and seize the bridges before the Iraqis could destroy them, the Marines decided to advance their attack on the city by twenty-four hours. What happened next is a gripping and gruesome tale of tragedy, and heroism.

Huge M1 tanks leading the attack became mired in an open sewer. Then a company of Marines took a wrong turn and ended up on a deadly stretch of road where their armored personal carriers were hit by devastating rocket-propelled grenade fire. USAF planes called in for fire support play their own part in the unfolding cataclysm when they accidentally strafed the vehicles. The attempt to rescue the dead and dying stranded in "ambush alley"; only drew more Marines into the slaughter.

This was not a battle of modern technology, but a brutal close-quarter urban knife fight that tested the Marines' resolve and training to the limit. At the heart of the drama were the young Marines, most of whom had never been to war, who were embroiled in a battle of epic proportions from which neither their commanders nor the technological might of the U.S. military could save them.

With a novelist's gift for pace and tension, Tim Pritchard brilliantly captures the chaos, panic, and courage of the fight for Nasiriyah, bringing back in full force the day that a perfunctory task turned into a battle for survival.

"Ambush Alley" is a gut-wrenching account of unadulterated terror that's hard to read yet impossible to put down. London-based journalist and filmmaker Tim Pritchard, who was embedded with US troops during the initial stages of the American-led invasion of Iraq, paints a compelling picture of one of the costliest battles of the Iraq war that will at turn anger, horrify, and sadden, regardless of one's political views."

--The Boston Globe



See [more reviews and comments on Ambush Alley](#)

Books on the Commandant's Professional Reading List, can be obtained through the [Marine Corps Association Bookstore](#).