

THE IWAKUNI APPROACH

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Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan



Amid 1,700-degree heat at their new training facility near the flight line here Sept. 6, teams of station aircraft rescue firefighters work to extinguish jet fuel vapors billowing as high as 200 feet in the air as part of a routine training exercise. Read the full story on page 6. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez

America's Squadron recognized for service

LANCE CPL. JOSEPH MARIANELLI
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Marine Wing Support Squadron 171, America's Squadron, receives the 2008 James E. Hatch Award for Marine wing support squadron of the year Aug. 6.

The award is being presented to MWSS-171 at the Marine Corps Aviation Association's 37th Annual Symposium and Reunion in Myrtle Beach, S.C. Oct. 16-18.

The James E. Hatch Award recognizes the most outstanding wing-level unit that provides ground support to aviation and enhances the combat capability of Marine aviation by furnishing transportation, engineering and communication essentials.

"MWSS-171 was selected due to the outstanding Aviation Ground Support it provided during real-world operations and multi-national training exercises," said Lt. Col. Tim Hogan, an aviation manpower and support officer with the Department of Aviation at Headquarters Marine Corps. "The professional execution of all assigned missions combined with high operational tempo made MWSS-171 stand out in the award category."

From May 1, 2007 to April 30, 2008, MWSS-171 dispensed more than 2.3 million gallons of fuel, provided full runway service to 1,728 allied aircraft and participated in 17 multi-national exercises in seven countries throughout the Pacific theater while maintaining a 95.41 percent equipment readiness.

In addition, MWSS-171 sent 48 individual augments to Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom.

The award was established in honor of Col. James E. Hatch who designed the Marine wing support group and its subordinate squadrons.

October: Max accrued leave to increase

Marines can accrue 15 more days leave, save for later use

LANCE CPL. DAN NEGRETE
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Starting next fiscal year, service members can keep an extra 15 days of accrued leave in their books, allowing them to have a total of 75 days rather than 60.

The new policy will go into effect Oct. 1 and will remain in effect until Dec. 31, 2010, at which point the limit will go back to 60 days.

This policy "affects all service members, honoring their sacrifices and recognizing the high operations tempo of ongoing military conflicts," said Eileen Lainez, Department of Defense spokeswoman, in

a June 28 Stars and Stripes article.

"With the Global War on Terror, the Marine Corps has had to do more with less," said Capt. Randall W. Smith, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron adjutant. "We've been asking Marines to do far beyond what we used to ask them to do."

This doesn't only apply to Marines supporting combat operations, but also to those attached to rear elements and non-deployable units, said Smith.

With more Marines out on deployment and more Marines going to combat zones as individual augmentees, the Marines staying behind must fill-in for their absence, he said. This forces Marines in the rear to bear added responsibilities, which in turn prevents them from taking leave.

The new policy gives Marines under such circumstances a break by giving them a greater chance to use their leave later on, said Smith.

The new policy also addresses issues dealing with service members who have been deployed to combat zones or have engaged in contingency operations.

Service members who have been deployed to a combat zone for 120 consecutive days can keep their special leave accrual of up to 120 days for four fiscal years instead of three, Lainez said. Also, special leave accrual for service members supporting a contingency operation has been increased from 90 to 120 days.

"Often times, Marines returning from Iraq or Afghanistan have to prepare for follow-on deployments as soon as they get back to the states," said Smith. "The training they must go through between deployments further limits their ability to take leave."

With the changes announced in Marine Administrative Message 137/08, service members now have the opportunity to save more leave rather than lose it from one fiscal year to the next.

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CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

'Mud Puddle'

LT. GREGG PETERS
MWSS-171 SQUADRON CHAPLAIN

Men and women are different! So concluded the editors of a national weekly news magazine in the mid-nineties. This obvious statement in recent years has actually been debated! But it is true and it can even be seen in the different ways we respond to the problems in our lives.

Imagine a man walking down a dirt road who sees a woman he cares about

sitting in the middle of a mud puddle. For men a typical response in this situation is to "fix the problem." "Here are several ways to get out of the mud puddle." After doing that we men may continue to "fix the problem" by discussing the ways she could have avoided the mud puddle in the first place. "Next time, don't walk down this street" or "make sure you watch where you're going." Perhaps men wrongly think that the obvious wasn't so obvious to her. But remember, we're different. Many times, before a woman wants the problem fixed, she wants to describe what the "mud puddle" or problem feels like.

So men, here is the tip. Next time

we find a woman we care about in the middle of a so-called mud puddle, climb in! Get alongside her and see what the mud feels like. She does want the problem fixed but first she wants to know if we understand how this situation affects her life.

Ok, what might a real-life mud puddle be? Let's say the car breaks down on her way to a job interview so she's late and doesn't get the job. Before we say things like "there'll be other jobs," or "it wasn't meant to be," or "I would have done this..." get into the mud puddle, and try to understand how that event affected her day. Once we've done that we can focus on fixing the problem.

Poor safety practices usually end in a not-so-funny accident, death

ALSAFE 050/08
NAVAL SAFETY CENTER

Here's the latest Not-So-Funnies, in which we take a serious look at a few of those grim mishaps that don't end up with a stretch of light duty and a few new scars. These end up with horrible phone calls in the middle of the night, distraught family members, massive guilt and endless regrets. The real heart-breaker is they all seem so easy to avoid, in retrospect.

An E-3 aviation structural mechanic was visiting a friend, who was in one of the home's bedrooms, showing his new 12-gauge shotgun to a third person. The E-3 walked out of the room he was in, through the living room, and toward the bedroom where the owner was. The owner, who later said he thought his shotgun was unloaded, "somehow" pulled the trigger. Buckshot tore through a wall and a cabinet, hitting the E-3 in the neck and chest. A Marine who was present and a civilian tried to stop the bleeding while the owner called 911. The E-3 was pronounced dead at an emergency room. There is no excuse for not knowing whether your weapon is loaded. There is no excuse for pulling the trigger unless you are aiming at something you intend to put a hole in. And even though the guy who pulled the trigger wasn't exactly pointing it at someone, he might as well have been. Is there some reason you can't point a

weapon at the floor, just as a habit?

We often encourage you to spend a few minutes thinking about worst-case scenarios before you take off on an activity. This isn't necessarily enjoyable, but it can help you think of some cheap and easy precautions.

Here's a worst case for you: A petty officer 1st class and petty officer 3rd class were riding dirt bikes in a California desert. They chose an afternoon in July when the temperature was going to reach 106. They were wearing helmets, gloves and other protective gear, none of which did them the slightest good once an uncontrolled risk — namely, heat — overcame them. Not sure what happened on the way to fatal heat stroke. Presumably they got confused and lost. Maybe they went too far and couldn't get back once they started overheating. Somehow they were separated. Hikers found the petty officer 1st class' body at 3:30 p.m. He had water in a hydration backpack. Local police found the other sailor's body a half-mile away seven hours later. He had taken off his shirt and didn't have any water.

An E-4 and a buddy had gotten into the dangerous habit of racing their cars around a mountain road in California (the report called it "aggressively driving"). This time, the sailor was in the lead, going into a curve at 70 mph. His buddy knew it was too fast and "motioned with his lights" to let the sailor know. This pathetic precaution didn't

work, of course. The sailor's vehicle veered off the road, flipped several times, and smashed into a boulder. His seatbelt didn't save him from caving in his skull. It was a bad place to find out how fast is too fast and to test your driving ability. "This mishap was in the making for over six months," the report concluded.

Also in the mountains was a 21-year-old petty officer 3rd class who was riding his motorcycle in a recreation area in Nevada. He had a couple strikes against him, had been drinking and wasn't wearing any personal protective equipment. His major error was thinking that since his motorcycle's headlight didn't work, he'd just have a buddy ride along to provide illumination. At some point, the buddy realized just how idiotic this technique was and decided to call a halt — but it was too late. The petty officer 3rd class lost control and crashed into a crevasse. He was unconscious and not breathing when they found him. Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) proved futile. Paramedics pronounced him dead at the scene.

That's all for this episode. Next week, we'll be back with the usual snide remarks and persiflage. Until then, remember: bad habits and risky behaviors don't just startle. They don't just injure. Sometimes they kill. Part of the problem — and what is scary — is that you usually get away with them. It would be a happier world if "usually" meant "always," but that isn't the case.

MMEA visit roster changes

The roster for Marine and Manpower Enlisted Advisors visiting the station Sept. 19 has changed. Below is an updated list, however it is still subject to change before the visit date. Call Gunnery Sgt. Leodis Smith Jr., station career retention specialist, at 253-4274 for more information.

Billet	Name
MMEA Branch Head	Richard W. Spooner
MMEA Sergeant Major	Sgt. Maj. Gary W. Weiser
MMEA Section Head	Hector J. Duenez
MMEA Section Head	Maj. Teague A. Pastel
MMEA Trip Coordinator	Master Sgt. Donald G. Bird
Procurement Chief	Staff Sgt. Steven M. Davis
Counselor	Gunnery Sgt. Rosalia Scifo
Counselor	Gunnery Sgt. Mark B. Ingram
02xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Douglas D. Smarsty
0311 Monitor	Gunnery Sgt. Gerald C. Thomas
0369 Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Larry E. Deyott
0612/21/27 Monitor	Master Sgt. Felix J. Stafford
0613/14/19/29 Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Bradley Lucky
08xx Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Tracey Robinson
353x Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Matthew M. Manieri
58xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Christopher A. Benke
04xx Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Maurice E. Johnson
30xx Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Patrick J. Lynch
0151/43xx Monitor	Gunnery Sgt. Thomas B. Owens
21xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Stephen L. Walker
04XX Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Maurice E. Johnson
3381/41xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Courtney T. Thomasson
1361/71/46xx Monitor	Master Sgt. John H. Wilber
Assistant Unit Head	Lt. Col. Philip A. Fickes
6048/63xx Monitor	Master Gunnery Sgt. Philip D. Hoisington
65xx/70xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Warren E. Hackler
61xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Ryan W. Reinhart
6042/6062/607x/6092	
625x/628x Monitor	Gunnery Sgt. Joseph E. Jones
26xx Monitor	Master Sgt. Joseph D. Black
64xx/66xx Monitor	Gunnery Sgt. Venesa A. Delgado
Transition Monitor	Staff Sgt. Roger W. King
Recruiting Duty Monitor	Master Sgt. Steven M. Barnes

PMO asks residents to abide by station orders

The Provost Marshal's Office highly encourages residents aboard the station to abide by all air station regulations.

Please take note of the following so you can do your part to ensure this installation is a safe home for all residents.

Please be sure you do not use a cell phone while driving a vehicle on or off the installation.

Every passenger of a motor vehicle — personal or government — must wear a seatbelt. Also, be sure that when you are riding a bicycle you have a proper bicycle helmet, properly fitted and secured on your head.

Earphones are not permitted to be worn outside, except on the seawall. When leaving your vehicle unattended, even for a brief stop, leaving the keys in the ignition and the engine running is prohibited.

For our motorcyclists, bicyclists, skaters and skateboarders, be sure you are wearing mandatory personal protective equipment per MCASO P5560.8A.

The MCAS Iwakuni orders can be found on the station intranet.

Marines with sleeve tattoos are ineligible for some special duty

ALMAR 494/08
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

Marines who were grandfathered for sleeve tattoos per the references are not authorized to serve as a recruiter or a Marine security guard.

Recruiters and Marine security guards have a significant impact on public perception as they routinely interact with civilians both at home and abroad in the daily performance of their duties. Marines grandfathered for sleeve tattoos may continue to apply to serve as a Marine combat instructor, drill instructor or Marine Corps security forces guard.

Marines who were grandfathered for sleeve tattoos currently on special duty assignment as a recruiter or Marine security guard are authorized to remain on special duty until the completion of their assignment.

Marines currently serving as recruiters who are already grandfathered for sleeve tattoos are authorized to continue in that billet unless relieved for cause or for the good of the service approved by Marine Corps Recruiting Command and Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

Requests by recruiters for follow-on service or designation as a career recruiter who have a grandfathered sleeve tattoo may not be favorably viewed but will be forwarded to the deputy commandant of Manpower and Reserve Affairs for final adjudication.

All tattoos continue to be subject to review to determine if the tattoo is contrary to our professional demeanor and the high standards America has come to expect of the Marine Corps which may include, but are not limited to, any tattoo that is sexist, racist, vulgar, anti-American, antisocial, gang related, or associated with an extremist group or organization. Excessive tattoos may adversely affect both retention and assignment to special duty.

Review of a questionable tattoo will be submitted to the deputy commandant of Manpower and Reserve Affairs via the reenlistment, extension, lateral move system. The package will include a photograph and page-11, which grandfathered the tattoo, measurement of the size in inches, description of the location and an explanation as to why the tattoo has been deemed questionable by the commander.



U.S. Marines cling to small ledges on the tail of a Sea Knight helicopter to remove dirt and debris from within the aircraft during an agricultural wash on the flight deck of the amphibious assault ship USS Peleliu in the Gulf of Aden, Sept. 4. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Dustin Kelling



"Eat your 80s"

- A live 1-hour radio show that features the best of 80's music. Noon to 1 p.m.

Tuesdays and Thursdays, except holidays, on Power 1575.



A wide view of modern-day Himeji atop Himeji Castle. Himeji Castle has been recognized as a world heritage site and is also an upcoming trip destination offered by IT&T. Photos courtesy of IT&T

Explore Japan through IT&T and I&R

LANCE CPL. DAN NEGRETE
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Station residents are encouraged to travel and explore as much as they can while they're stationed overseas.

Information and Referral and Information, Tours and Travel are two great resources service members and their families can use to make the most out of their overseas tour.

Although IT&T and I&R are located inside the same office at the Crossroads Mall, they each provide a different service.

Travel in Japan

With IT&T, service members can purchase train tickets, bus trips, guided tours and make hotel arrangements.

"Compared to travel agencies out in town, our prices are much cheaper," said Yuji Tanaka, an IT&T representative. "Our bus tours save our customers a lot of money since our buses are owned and operated by MCCS."

Bus tours organized by IT&T include the Tokyo Fun Trip, Space World trip, Universal Studios Japan trip, Kyoto trip, and several other popular destinations.

"At IT&T, we don't only sell tours and tickets, but also give customers additional information regarding their trip," said Tanaka.

Also, IT&T offers a shuttle service to and from the

Hiroshima Airport for \$60 per seat.

Information and Referral differs from IT&T in that I&R is not a cash-handling service, said Hiroe K. Ruby, an I&R specialist.

Instead, I&R is a free service offered to the military community for information they may need to get to a certain destination, Ruby said. Their destination doesn't necessarily have to be a paid IT&T trip.

Anyone can speak with an I&R representative to learn more about places to travel in Japan.

"I highly encourage customers if they need any information related to the local community or have something they need to find out, to come by my counter," said Ruby.

Information and Referral provide station residents with maps, brochures and directions to many local destinations at no charge.

"IT&T and I&R are here to help Marines and sailors go to more places while they're here in Japan," said Tanaka. "We're in the middle between Marines and sailors and the outside Japanese community."

Whether jumping in on a bus tour, buying train tickets, making hotel reservation or simply requesting advice and information on how to travel to a certain place in Japan, IT&T and I&R are here to help service members with all their travel needs.



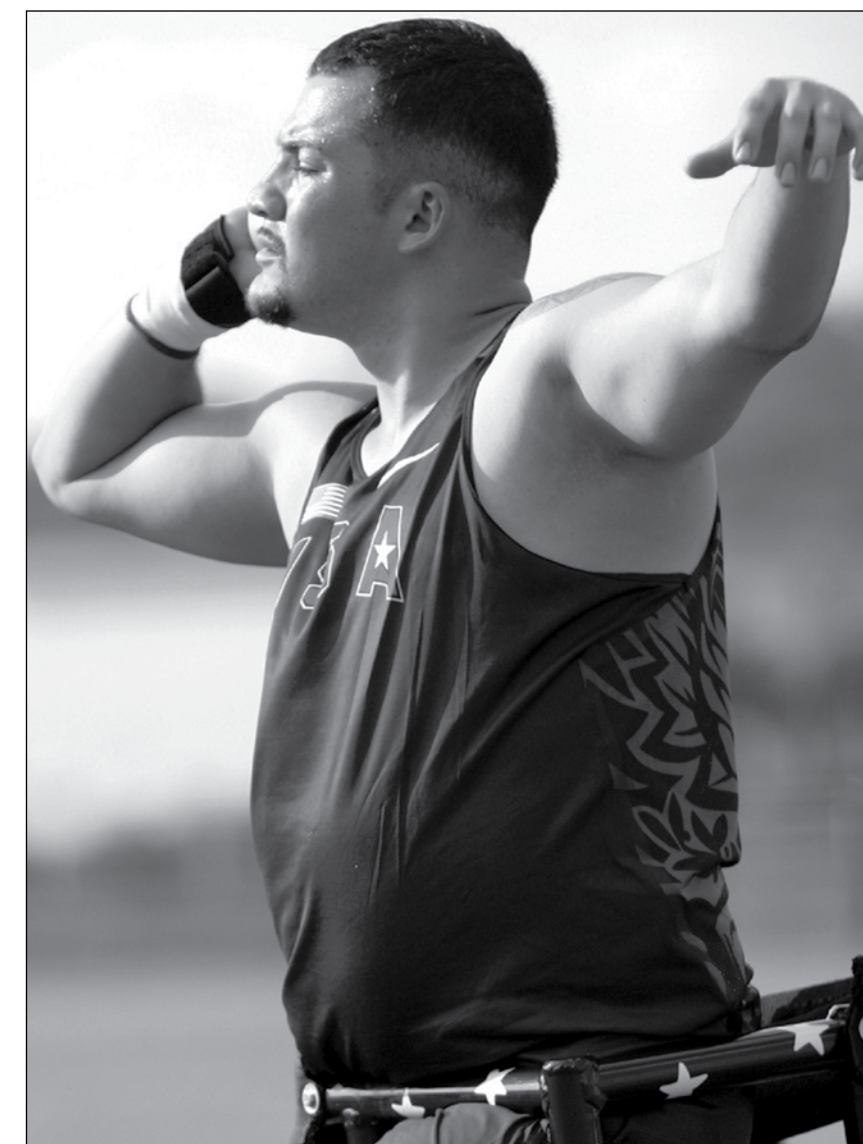
Visitors gaze at the spiral pattern fortifications unique to Himeji Castle. Trips to destinations like Himeji Castle can be coordinated through IT&T, and specific information about these landmarks can be obtained at I&R.

Fast Fact:
I&R vs. IT&T

Information and Referral differs from IT&T in that I&R is not a cash-handling service.

The road to Beijing

Carlos Leon practices the shot put Aug. 27 in preparation for the Paralympic Games in Beijing, China. Leon is a gold-medal contender in the discus event. Photo by Lance Cpl. Jeffrey Cordero



LANCE CPL. STEFANIE C. PUPKIEWICZ
OKINAWA MARINE

KADENA AIR BASE, Okinawa (September 5, 2008) — The lobby of the Shogun Inn on Kadena Air Base is rather unassuming, if a bit cold, when stepping in from the Okinawan heat.

A strange scene plays out in front of the vending machines, however. One man is on the floor trying to pull himself back up into this wheelchair while another younger man is trying not to laugh.

"He knocked me out of my chair," the older and more heavily bearded of the two explains while he hoists himself back into his chair.

The younger man is former Marine Carlos Leon, current world record holder for the discus in Paralympic sports. The man he playfully knocked to the floor is Scott Severn — his teammate and friend on the U.S. Paralympic team.

Leon looks around before buying some chips from a vending machine. He looks to check to make sure his tyrannical nutritionist is not watching as he starts to consume the forbidden food.

It's the second bit of junk food he's had in a while, he said. The first were some cookies on the plane ride to Okinawa to train for the 2008 Beijing Paralympics.

"They were some damn good cookies," Leon said.

The chips disappear quickly and licking his fingers he states, "This is the best part."

He leans forward resting his elbows on his legs and drawing attention to his seat, a wheelchair that seems out of place on such a physically fit man.

Injured on active duty in the Marine Corps, Leon came to Okinawa for a week's preparation for the Beijing Paralympic games with the U.S. Paralympic team.

As a Marine and now as an athlete, Leon has always relied on hard work to succeed — something he learned from his family.

His cousins, who he looked at as brothers, were Marines. As physically active and involved in sports as he was, he could not see doing anything else with his life besides becoming a Marine, he said.

Just after turning 17, he left for Parris Island, S.C., to join 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, Company K.

His recruiter told him he was going

to be in Explosive Ordnance Disposal, where blowing stuff up would be his nine-to-five job.

Leon soon learned there were no nine-to-five jobs in the Marine Corps, and blowing stuff up was not his destiny.

He instead got to jump out of airplanes as a parachute rigger.

Attached to a radio reconnaissance unit and having the "time of his life," Leon deployed with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit to Iraq in December of 2004, he said.

Despite the intense training and anticipation leading up to the deployment, it was a rather uneventful combat tour he said. In the post-surge Iraq, the unit did not engage in any significant scuffles, Leon said.

It may not have been what he and the rest of the unit had in mind in the way of a combat tour, however the positive side is that the unit did not lose any Marines or sailors during the deployment, he said.

Ironically, it was after Iraq when Leon's life changed forever.

Shortly after returning to Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, he went to the beach with his friends, he said. He dove into the water and hit a rock.

The impact broke his neck and rendered him quadriplegic with an incomplete spinal injury.

He still had some sensitivity in his limbs but he had no motor function, Leon said.

Leon went from a 20-year-old Marine corporal with control over his life to not even being able to control his own body, he said.

As bad as it seemed, he was not allowed to descend into depression and withdrawal, he said. His family and friends would not let him.

The Marine Corps and his unit were hugely supportive, he said.

"I just knew that people loved me," Leon said.

The nature of his injury allowed for regeneration of some of the nerves through hard work, he said.

"I started working harder than anyone in the hospital," Leon said. Six hours a day and six days a week, he was either in therapy or in the gym.

The work ethic instilled by his family and his upbringing encouraged by the Marine Corps allowed him to reclaim his life.

During his rehabilitation, his therapist encouraged him to participate in a sports camp the U.S. Paralympics Team was hosting for wounded military service members, he said.

He attended because he was always active in sports prior to the accident and wondered if it was still possible for him to play again. Prior to that, he did not think sports were even an option to him anymore, he said.

At the camp, he went to the pool. An Iraq veteran was swimming laps, he said. The veteran was an EOD technician and a quadruple amputee.

Leon was motivated by what he saw.

"I want to get into the water," he said turning to his father.

His father wasn't sure about it but consented and helped him change and get into the water.

Soon after, Leon was in the pool swimming on his own.

"I can't believe I can still do this," Leon remembers thinking.

A demonstration of track and field events later in the camp sparked his interest and obsession and with the shot put and discus. Both events he had never tried before.

He tried the events and was told by the athletic coach that he had a real knack for the discus event, Leon remembers.

"You can really take this to the next level," the coach told him.

Leon began competing and winning in both events around the country.

In 2007, he qualified for the U.S. team going to the Pan-American Games in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

"A year and a half after I was told I would never do anything, I was putting on a Team USA jersey," Leon said.

In the Pan-American games, he took silver in the discus and the bronze in shot put.

Stepping into the circle at the field trials for the Paralympic team in 2008, he threw a foul followed by a world record throw. The world record was not surprising for Carla Garrett, coach of the national team.

Garrett said Leon has a good chance for gold in his first Paralympic games and will surprise people in the coming weeks.

Leon has trained for a year and a half for just one day of competition at the Paralympics, said Chad James, Leon's personal coach and assistant track and cross country coach at Samford University, Birmingham, Ala.

"Walking or rolling away from this, it was worth it," Leon said.

1,700 DEGREES

Firefighters battle fuel set ablaze for aircraft mishap drill

LANCE CPL. KYLE T. RAMIREZ
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

Anyone enjoying the sunrise on the morning of Sept. 6 might have noticed the 200-foot flames erupting from the flight line here.

Although the massive clouds of smoldering vapor and black smoke pouring into the sky may have looked like a real-world catastrophe, it was part of a routine fire-training exercise conducted by station aircraft rescue firefighters preparing for possible flight line mishaps.

For hours, ARFF Marines dumped as many as 800 gallons of jet fuel into their newest training pit — set it all on fire — and left it to the trainees to take down what most would consider hell on earth.

“You gotta understand every firefighter is just a little bit of a pyro,” said Pfc. David J. Hess, one of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron’s newer firefighters. “After leaving the schoolhouse, I thought I knew everything. When you’re standing there and you see the fire 25 feet above your head, you’re heart starts pounding and you get the adrenaline rush — but that’s pretty much why everyone is here.”

Hess may have seen the early-morning fires as somewhat of a wake-up call, but for others, it was just another day at work. Lance Cpl. James Frame, an H&HS aircraft rescue firefighter, explained how seemingly unpredictable flames can be extinguished with precision and grace.



Aircraft rescue firefighters wear a seven-piece suit, increasing their weight by about 45 pounds while stabilizing a hose that sprays at least 100 gallons per minute — sometimes while the firefighter is in a dead sprint. The suit is engineered to protect them with its layers of heat-reflective materials. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez

“The biggest things when dealing with a fire of this size are technique and staying close together,” he said. “If two crews stay shoulder-to-shoulder, they can work the same pattern together and push the flames away from each other as long as they stay at the same pace. If they’re too far apart, they’re only fighting themselves while feeding the fire back toward each other.”

ARFF Marines are trained to focus when things get hot. Common knowledge between the firefighters when dealing with burning fuel vapor is to stay low and attack the flames with a 30-degree front. Instead of smothering flames at the base like generic extinguisher labels instruct, ARFF Marines know to spray just above the fuel’s surface to cool the air igniting from extreme heat.

“It’s the fuel’s vapor that’s burning, not the fuel itself,” Frame added.

They train with two teams of four Marines — a hand-line, back-up, turret and safety. As the hand-line works to extinguish the flames directly, the back-up ensures he hasn’t missed anything and yanks him back into position if he is tripped. The safety stresses technique and ensures training is going smoothly.

In a real-world situation, the turret is the first to begin smothering the

flames with a foam mixture from atop the ARFF truck. Meanwhile, the hand-line does the same job on the ground level, while the back-up rushes to rescue any crash victims. With practice, the whole process will play out in seconds.

“We needed this training,” said Hess. “This is the real deal. You can train all day without fire, but this one is very much alive. You have to feel it and commit to it.”



Normally, a driver is the first to begin smothering the flames by engaging the hose, but during a fire-training exercise at the new Aircraft Rescue Firefighters training facility here Sept. 6, he monitors training, controls water levels and waits for his turn to battle the flames directly. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez



Several hundred feet into the air, black smoke and burning jet fuel vapor billows, rising nearby concrete temperatures to that of a brick oven. Expanding and contracting, the concrete explodes with pressure, sending burning shrapnel in every direction. The colossal blaze pulls oxygen and heats it at such an amazing rate; it creates small cyclones within the cloud. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez



Station Aircraft Rescue Firefighters finish off what was a monstrous inferno at the new ARFF training facility near the flight line here Sept. 6. With technique, the teams of Marines were able to tackle the flames in a little less than five minutes. Section leader and former ARFF school instructor, Staff Sgt. Robert A. Wichner, said the teams did a great job but will have to work on their speed to save lives. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez



Master Sgt. Robert L. Warmbir debriefs a team of Aircraft Rescue Firefighters who just concluded an exercise at their new training facility near the flight line here Sept. 6. “Marine firefighters are different than regular firefighters because we’re more aggressive,” he said. “We have the presence in the pit to communicate and get (the fire) out as quickly as possible.” Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez



Station Aircraft Rescue Firefighters are trained to focus under pressure. As their eyes fall on their hoses’ directions, they must also be aware of their peripheral vision to keep the flames from swallowing them alive. Some Marines describe being near the heat of the fire, inside their bunker gear as feeling like a big baked potato wrapped in aluminum foil. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez

CORPS NEWS

HIGHLIGHTING MARINES AND SAILORS AROUND THE GLOBE



Cultural exchange aboard Okinawa

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION FUTENMA, OKINAWA, Japan — Military aircraft like the CH-53 Sea Stallion helicopter were on display for military members and local citizens during the Futenma Flightline Fair held in late August. Photo by Pfc. Antwain J. Graham

Marine honors Iraqi family through Corps service

CPL. ROBERT W. BEAVER
MCRD SAN DIEGO

MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT SAN DIEGO — Life in Iraq seemed like hell for Pvt. James Akhnana and his family. Iraqi soldiers invaded homes, doing what they pleased while religious groups fought each other.

His family wanted a safer life and they knew they would have to leave Iraq to find it.

"The country was too dangerous with Saddam and the rivaling clans," said Akhnana, Platoon 3271, Company M. "Life was unfair there. If we had photos hung on our walls in our house, the largest picture had to be an image of Saddam. We had to idolize him."

His family planned to move to America but first moved to Iran when Akhnana was four years old to save money.

His father had a college degree in electrical engineering and was able to earn enough money within six months to send his family to America.

Most of his family members settled in Illinois when they arrived in the states, except for his uncle, who lived in California and was a former commander in the Iraqi Army.

"My uncle started a business and was doing financially well for himself," said Akhnana, 19. "He let us stay with him until we got on our feet."

Soon after his family settled with their uncle, Akhnana's father could not find a job. Instead, an electrical engineering job was available in Illinois, but was not as financially rewarding as before.

"America has been good to my family," said Akhnana. "We found exactly what we wanted when we got here." Things seemed to be going well for Akhnana's family

until his father was laid off. Fortunately, he received six months severance pay.

Akhana's father began searching for another job. Three months into his search, his brother suggested that he could be a translator for the military in Iraq.

After a screening in Virginia, his father became an Arabic, Assyrian and English translator for the U.S. Army, and is currently serving in Iraq.

"My parents worked hard for the well-being of our family," said Akhnana. "They made me into a strong person, so I felt like it was my responsibility to be successful."

Akhana thought about going to college after high school, but he did not want his parents to pay his way.

"I knew it was time to move on," said Akhnana. "I had been mooching off my parents my whole life. We've been dealing with money since we got to America, and I did not want to give my parents more issues by paying for my college."

As Akhnana pondered what he was going to do, his friends suggested he look into joining the military.

"I spoke with recruiters from all the branches," said Akhnana. "The Army sounded like a good deal but my friends told me about the Marines."

The friends who suggested military service were Marines themselves. They explained what the Marine Corps offered.

Akhana visited a recruiter's office, seeking more information. During that visit, he made his choice.

"The Marine Corps offered a deeper sense of pride and better training," said Akhnana. "It looked like a great step forward in life that would give what I need to be successful."

Akhana broke the news to his family.

"Our mom freaked out when she heard," said Jennifer Akhnana, his sister. "She knew that he would always be gone and would only visit sometimes. She had trouble letting go but eventually supported his decision."

His sister also said she was shocked he made the choice because he was known for being the typical immature high school student.

"I think this will be a good thing for him," said Jennifer.

His father also gave his blessing during a phone call from Iraq.

Three weeks later, Akhnana enlisted in the Marine Corps and shipped to boot camp here June 9.

"I enjoyed boot camp a lot," said Akhnana. "The



Pvt. James Akhnana, Platoon 3271, Company M, awaits orders from his drill instructor to attend the Warrior's Breakfast at the Edson Range chow hall at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Aug. 28. Akhnana, 19, joined the Marine Corps to better himself and his family. Photo by Cpl. Robert W. Beaver

Marine Corps seems like a good fit for me. I was interested in all the knowledge they crammed into my head."

Akhana said he enjoyed the environment of boot camp.

"He added to the character of the platoon, and without him, they would not be the unique group they are," said Sgt. Christopher Boelzner, drill instructor, Platoon 3271.

Boelzner, a Boston native, said Akhnana was self-motivating through the training cycle and said he will make a good Marine.

He added that stress does not affect Akhnana, even with the hardships he has been through previous to training.

"The thought of going back to Iraq scared me," said Akhnana. "The more I trained here, the more confident I became. We are trained to do what we do successfully, if necessary."

Community Briefs

Japanese Language Course

The 2008 fall Japanese language course will run from Sept. 30 to Dec. 16, every Tuesday, 7 – 9 p.m. at Iwakuni Civic Hall (Shimin Kaikan). Only 40 seats are available, first come, first served basis. To take the class, you need to sign up in advance at Public Affairs Office, Rm 216, Bldg. 1. For more information, please call the Public Affairs Office at 253-5551.

Club Beyond

Club Beyond (CB) is a globally recognized, command endorsed and funded faith based youth program that desires to reach out to every military student in grades 7-12. CB will start Sept. 9, and will have monthly events along with retreats and service projects. The youth meetings consist of

games, skits, music and a faith based talk. Contact the director of CB at 253-5183 or IwakuniCB@gmail.com for more information. Or visit our website at <http://iwakuniteens.blogspot.com>

Substitute teachers training

Mathew C. Perry High School and Elementary School is having a substitute teachers training on Sept. 15 from 8 to 10:30 a.m. at the computer lab, room 600, in the elementary school. If you have been appointed a substitute or would like to be a substitute, please come. For more information, contact M. C. Perry High School at 253-5449.

"A Very Special Love"

Sept. 18, doors open at 6 p.m., show starts at 7 p.m. at Sakura

Theater. Free of admission.

Open to all personnel. Filipino-American Association presents "A Very Special Love" with John Lloyd Cruz and Sarah Geronimo. Movie is in Tagalog/English with Japanese subtitles. For more information, call 253-6084.

Officers Spouses Club Kickoff

Sept. 19, 5 p.m. at Club Iwakuni Officer's Club (Indian Joe's Lounge). Hawaiian Luau attire encouraged, but not mandatory. For more information, call 253-2896.

Boys & Girls Club Day for Kids

Sept. 20, noon – 4 p.m. at Crossroads Amphitheatre and Roadway between outdoor pool and park. Free of admission. Entertainment, interactive information and food. All authorized personnel, guests, and Japanese guests are invited. For more information, call Youth and Teen Center at 253-5549 or 4803.

Ball Gown Exchange

Sept. 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at community room, Bldg. 1209. Raffles, dresses, shoes, and more! Donations needed. Donate last years ball gown by Sept. 20 and receive credit towards purchase of "new" gown. For more information, call 253-2866, 090-9109-8122 (cell), or e-mail to Hutchwife08@yahoo.com.

College Fair

Sept. 22, 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

at Crossroads Mall Kiosk Area. Free sodas and snacks, degree counseling, new GI bill information, financial aid information, new class schedule. For more information, call 253-4802.

Sophie's Antique Furniture Sale

Sept. 27, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Sept. 28, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. at M.C. Perry School Cafeteria. Home delivery will be available. 1-year home layaway interest free. Proceeds to benefit the American Red Cross Community and volunteer programs on MCAS Iwakuni. Volunteers for the sale are also needed on Sept. 26 from 5 – 9 p.m., Sept. 27, 8:30 a.m. – 6 p.m., and Sept. 28, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. For more information, contact American Red Cross at 253-4525.

Rosh Hashanah Service

Sept. 30 at 6:30 p.m. and Oct. 1 at 9 a.m. at Station Chapel, Bldg. 1100. For more information, contact Station's Chapel at 253-3371.

Fall Festival

The Fall Festival is quickly approaching on Oct. 3 and M. C. Perry Elementary PTO is planning lots of fun & activities for your entire family! If you would like to help, please call 253-2180.

Educator's Day

Oct. 24 from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., all MCAS community members are welcome to attend this event. If you have information or a class that you would like to share with the community, please fill out the application posted at <http://mcperryhs.pac.dodea.edu/> and return it by the posted deadline. For more information,

contact M. C. Perry High School at 253-5524.

MBA program

We are bringing the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program onsite right here! Don't miss out.

- 12 classes
- Classes meet once a week
- Each class is six weeks long
- Over half off our regular tuition
- Instructors are experts in their fields
- Earn your prestigious degree in 18 months

For more information, contact with Asia/Pacific office of University of Phoenix, at DSN: 252-3044 (Sasebo), or e-mail to mike.bormann@phoenix.edu. URL: <http://upxnewsroom.com/>

Fine Arts Exhibit Program

Begin creating artwork. As participant in the National Fine Arts Exhibit program, the Youth & Teens Center may submit artwork in four age divisions and 10 categories, including watercolor, pastel, oil, acrylic and collage. Selection artwork will be screened at the local level up to national level. Start today. Local exhibit will be held December 2008. For more information, call Youth and Teen Center 253-5549 or 4803.

National Preparedness Month

September is National Preparedness Month for the American Red Cross. You can be "Red Cross ready." For emergencies follow three simple steps:

1. Get a kit
2. Make a plan
3. Be informed

For more information, logon to <http://www.redcross.org/beredcrossready>.

Sakura Theater

Friday, Sept. 12, 2008

7 p.m. Step Brothers (R)

Premier

10 p.m. X-Files (PG-13)

Premier

Saturday, Sept. 13, 2008

1 p.m. Space Chimps (PG)

4 p.m. X-Files (PG-13)

7 p.m. Mamma Mia (PG-13)

10 p.m. Dragon Emperor (PG-13)

Sunday, Sept. 14, 2008

1 p.m. Center Earth (PG)

4 p.m. Step Brothers (R)

7 p.m. X-Files (PG-13)

Monday, Sept. 15, 2008

7 p.m. Step Brothers (R)

Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008

7 p.m. Meet Dave (PG)

Wednesday, Sept. 17, 2008

7 p.m. Hancock (PG-13)

Last Showing

Thursday, Sept. 18, 2008

7 p.m. A Very Special Love

Free Admission

General Admission: Ages 12+ are \$2.50/ Ages 6 - 11 are \$1/ Children ages 5 and under admitted free. Visit www.mccsiwakuni.com or call 253-5291.

253-5291

THE IWAKUNI APPROACH

Classifieds

Automobiles

1998 Mazda Demio

Low mileage, automatic transmission, 4-cylinder. JCI runs until 2010. Road Tax paid. Power locks, windows. A/C. Asking \$3,200 OBO. For more information, call 253-2366 or 3156

1994 SUZUKI Wagon R

Automatic transmission. Yellow tag. JCI runs until 2009. Road Tax paid. Power locks, windows. A/C. Asking \$2,200 OBO. For more information, call 253-2366 or 3156.

2004 Honda Shadow

750 cc. Asking for \$5,000 OBO. Comes with 2 full-face helmets, leather saddlebags, full wind screen, English owner's manual. Too much bike for my husband. Need

to sell, must negotiate. For more information, call 253-3337 (work) or 53-5470 (home).

Job Openings

Job Announcement for WIC

Choctaw Management Services Enterprise has opportunities available for a full-time Nutritionist/Dietitian/Nurse in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Overseas Program in Iwakuni. Position requires a BS in Nutrition, Nursing or Home Economics. Experience in prenatal, maternal or infant nutrition required. Registered Dietitian preferred. Experience in WIC desirable. Must have driver's license. Must be a U.S. citizen. Salary and benefits package includes 401(K), medical/dental/vision, and opportunities for career relocation and growth. or immediate consideration, please e-mail your resume to Denise.Williams@med.navy.mil or fax to 243-2614 (Yokosuka).

Miscellaneous

Jam Band Auditions

A local vocalist/acoustic guitarist is compiling a jam band to play covers in the local area. A keyboardist, bassist, drummer and percussionist are desired. Saxophone player recruited! Influences include Tom Petty, Stone Sour, Dave Matthews Band, Coldplay, City and Colour, and Rufus Wainwright. Gear used: Taylor Acoustic Electric guitar and Schecter C-1 Plus electric guitar with Peavey Tube Amplification. Call 253-2356 and leave a detailed message, or e-mail inner.vision@yahoo.com.

DVDs for sale

- "The Wire," Seasons 1-5, \$100 OBO (sold as set).
- "Quantum Leap," Seasons 1-5, \$100 OBO (sold as set).

For more information, call 253-5301 (work) or 253-2265 (home).

PCS sale

- Japanese refrigerator - \$50.
- Japanese washer and dryer - Free, both work but have minor problems. Please pick-up at my house.
- Japanese Electric heaters (4) - \$20 each. These are very nice (expensive) and sure beat the inconvenience of kerosene heaters.
- Bed - Free

For more information, call 253-5171 (work) or 090-2004-6957 (cell), or e-mail to edward.meyer1@usmc.mil

Furniture for sale

- 1 antique, square Chinese tall table with 2 arm chairs and 2 side chairs. Paid \$1,500, but willing to negotiate.
- 1 full size, 3 cushion sofa with rolled arms, 2 small pillows. \$200 OBO.
- 1 rocker-recliner. Maroon upholstery. \$100 OBO.

For more information, call 253-3337 (work) or 53-5470 (home).

BOWFLEX TREADCLIMBER TC5000

Purchased for \$2,600 with shipping two years ago. Slightly used. Asking \$1,800 firm. For more information, call 253-2611 or e-mail to dawn_larrabee@yahoo.com. For more information on the machine, visit www.bowflex.com.

Eddie Bauer stroller car seat combo for sale

Includes base, and infant head rest, \$140. Purchased at MCX for \$200, only used for 7 months. Contact 253-2611 or e-mail to dawn_larrabee@yahoo.com.

Mess hall Schedule

MONDAY

Beef w/Bacon Soup, Shrimp Gumbo Soup, Caribbean Flounder, Country Style Steak, Steamed Rice, Macaroni and Cheese, Hush Puppies, Broccoli Combo, Wax Beans, Dinner Rolls, Peanut Butter Brownies, Marble Cake, Butter Cream Frosting, Banana Cream Pudding, SPECIALTY BAR: PASTA BAR

TUESDAY

Tomato Soup, Vegetable Soup, Lasagna, Roast Pork, Au Gratin Potatoes, Toasted Garlic Bread, Whole Kernel Corn, Mixed Vegetables, Cream Gravy, Cheese Biscuits, Cherry Pie, Boston Cream Pie, Oatmeal Raisin Cookie, SPECIALTY BAR: TACO BAR

WEDNESDAY

French Onion Soup, Cream of Broccoli Soup, Baked Tuna Noodles, Breaded Pork Chop, Mushroom Gravy, Garlic Roasted Potatoes, Carrots, Mix Vegetables, Hot Dinner Rolls, Chocolate Chip Cookies, Dutch Apple Pie, Devils Food Cake w/ Butter cream Frosting, SPECIALTY BAR: BBQ

THURSDAY

Manhattan Clam Chowder, Split Pea Soup, Chicken Parmesan, Italian Sausage, Buttered Pasta, Oven Browned Potatoes, Eggplant Parmesan, Cauliflower Gumbo, Alfredo Sauce, Marinara Sauce, Garlic Bread, Sugar Cookies, German Chocolate Cake, Banana Cream Pie, SPECIALTY BAR: DELI BAR

FRIDAY

Chicken Noodle Soup, Cream of Mushroom Soup, Southern Style Fried Catfish, Chicken Cacciatore, Steamed Rice, Candied Sweet Potatoes, Southern Style Greens, French Fried Cauliflower, Cream Gravy, Jalapeno Corn Bread, Chocolate Cream Pie, SPECIALTY BAR: MONGOLIAN BARBEQUE



LANCE CPL. JOSEPH MARIANELLI IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

"Everybody wants to be a superstar."

For Marines and sailors with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron wishing to represent H&HS in the Fall Classic flag-football game against Marine Aircraft Group 12 today, Terrence Riley, H&HS's coach, holds the keys.

Practice starts the same every day, and everyone is expected to run and then stretch to loosen up and build endurance.

As the first practice kicked off Sept. 3, Riley sent the prospective players up and down the field five times for an approximate 750 yards.

As the players ran the field, their paces slowing each cycle, Riley let them know there was more in store.

"You thought it was going to be easy didn't you," said Riley. "Just wait until the rest of your 'compadres' get here."

Trey Ardese arrived late and just like everyone else was told to run the field five times.

As they finished stretching, Riley began discussing strategy like a general outlining tactics for battle.

Riley gave the players a taste of his playbook, describing plays of misdirection requiring precise route running for proper execution.

"Practice the way you play," Riley said describing his coaching strategy. "If you practice sloppy, you'll play sloppy — if you practice tight, you'll play tight."

Because of time constraints, the team only had six practices to become a well-oiled machine.

"There's a short period of time to get the Marines playing at the same level, in harmony," said Riley.

"There has to be, how do you say, intensity."

After talking about the offense, Riley began describing his defense methodology, sounding like an experienced trapper.

"Our job is to get their flags," said Riley. "This is not glory ball."

Throughout the practice, Riley tried to make it clear that playing wasn't about showboating.

"I let the game speak for itself," said Riley. "It's a sport — go out there and have fun."

Besides the challenge of getting the players all on the



Trey Ardese takes a snap from Gregory Joseph during Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron flag-football practice at Penny Lake here Sept. 5. During practice, the players worked through a play looking at different options on what players would be good passing options depending on the defense quarterback pressure. Photos by Lance Cpl. Joseph Marianelli

same page, Riley also has to deal with the stigma associated with this particular football game.

Ultimately this game boils down to bragging rights and even though in the grand scheme the game may not mean much, during the game the players will need to remember that they are there to play and have fun.

"Settling down — I think that's the biggest thing for

any team especially in a game for essentially bragging rights," said Riley.

Even though Riley has tried to emphasize playing the game for fun, the players certainly

seem to be focused on defeating MAG-12.

"Tell MAG they might as well give us the trophy right now," said Samuel Anderson, an H&HS player.

His sentiment was expressed by almost the entire team in one form or another.

The game is scheduled for 1 p.m. today at the north side football field.

Samurai Baseball heats up



Lane Jones, 8th grader, steals third base for home scoring a run for the M.C. Perry Samurai during a Sept. 6 baseball game against Sasebo's E.J. King. The Samurai stole 21 bases during the baseball game, winning 26-3. Photo by Carrie Baltazar



Daniel Cardenas takes a hard pass to the chest during Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron's flag-football practice at Penny Lake Field here Sept. 5. During this particular drill, the players were making 10 yard run and cuts to focus on quick execution.

SEASON CHAMPS

Stacked takes summer season after Tuesday's 40-25 victory

LANCE CPL. JOSEPH MARIANELLI
IWAKUNI APPROACH STAFF

With solid teamwork, hustle and a small height advantage, Stacked crushed the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-12 Untouchables 40-25 in the summer intramural basketball championship at Ironworks Gym here Tuesday.

Coming off a close 46-43 win over MAG Sept. 5, the Untouchables were the top seed going into the championship game and theoretically considered the favorite.

Even though Stacked was coming off a Monday night game where they smashed the 171 Engineers 51-25, Stacked started out quick winning the tip-off, drawing first blood and quickly taking a 4-0 lead.

The pace was fast and furious with Stacked setting the tempo using quick ball movement to offbalance the Untouchables defense.

On top of out-hustling the Untouchables, Stacked used effective zone defense to force the Untouchables into hasty passes usually resulting in steals that were quickly run down court for an easy two points.

Even when the Untouchables were able to get inside, Stephen Benjamin, Stacked's towering center, was almost always there to challenge the shooter.

"Basically, they came through defensively and offensively working together as a team," said Chris Reitman, Stacked's coach.

Nearing the end of the first half, virtually every player on Stacked had scored a bucket and everyone was contributing to their domination in some way.

Ending the first half, Stacked was firmly in control with a 13 point lead and the score at 21-8.

The Untouchables were getting manhandled in virtually every aspect of



In the tradition of today's athletic battles, Stacked comes together to let out their war cry as a motivational tool before taking on the Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron-12 Untouchables in the summer intramural basketball championship at Ironworks Gym here Tuesday. Photo by Lance Cpl. Kyle T. Ramirez



Brad Gutierrez, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 12 Untouchables' center, and Bryan Scott, MAG center, vie for the ball at tip-off to open the summer intramural basketball semi-final between the Untouchables and MAG Sept. 5. The Untouchables would go on to narrowly win the game 46-43 putting them in the championship game against Stacked. Photo by Lance Cpl. Joseph Marianelli

the game and needed the unity they had against MAG in the semi-final game.

But that unity never came despite talking strategy during the half on how to combat the pressure created by Stacked's zone defense.

Stacked continued their assault in the second-half.

Samuel Anderson, Stacked's point guard, added nine more points to Stacked's total and making him the lead scorer for Stacked with 13 points.

Gregory Flowers, Stacked's Most-Valuable Player for the season, jumped into the fray adding five points of his own.

Untouchables' center Mario Brown added 11 points to his team's total and pushed his own tally to 17 making him the games lead scorer.

Despite Brown's contribution, the Untouchables couldn't get the rhythm back they had in their last game.

With two minutes remaining the score was 40-21, Stacked.

Without a miraculous final second finish the game ended calmly, lacking the desperation fouling usually seen at the end of basketball games, 40-25.

"It's been a long time coming," said Reitman.

Last summer season Stacked moved swiftly to the championship, maintaining a perfect season up to that point, and lost.

"Our defense was on point," said Stephen Benjamin. "Everybody did their part tonight."

Even though the score may look lopsided, scores don't necessarily paint the whole picture, especially when considering Stacked's tough loss last year.

"Just knowing that we were in the final round — that's a lot of pressure," said Benjamin.

For the Untouchables, the loss probably couldn't be more rotten and the irony of the two team's role reversal looms in the background.

"We didn't come together as a team," said Untouchables guard Steve Navar. "If we had stopped arguing with each other at the beginning we probably would have won."



Mario Brown

UNTOUCHABLES

"I gotta let this second place finish wash over me."

Stephen Benjamin

STACKED

"Just knowing that we were in the final round — that's a lot of pressure."

