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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](http://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](mailto:harry.t.johnson@usmc.mil) or [michael.jones@usmc.mil](mailto:michael.jones@usmc.mil) Telephone: 703.432.1279 DSN: 378.1279

**From the Director: Weapons Performance**

Since the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) has accumulated a significant number of lessons and observations from Marine units concerning weapons performance and effectiveness, particularly as it relates to the M16 family of weapons. This information has been provided to decision makers on a number of occasions to assist in long-range planning. In early April of this year, MCCLL received a request from the Fires & Maneuver Integration Division of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) to provide summary information on weapons performance lessons, especially in terms of the impact of lubrication and cleanliness on performance. MCCLL quickly conducted a search of all its repositories, extracted relevant lessons and recommendations, and published a brief topical report, [Weapons Performance Extracts from Lessons and Observations](#).

As many are aware, there have been numerous anecdotal reports of problems with the M16A2 or M16A4 over the years. However, after our analysts conducted a thorough review of these reports, the problems invariably have been determined to involve improper care and cleaning, either of the weapon or, more likely, the magazine and ammunition. The consensus continues to be that the key to reliable weapon performance is the maintenance of its cleanliness and serviceability, without ignoring other components, particularly magazines and ammunition.

With the severe environmental conditions encountered in the deserts of OIF and the mountains of OEF, the difficulty in maintaining weapons properly is exacerbated by the sand and dust of these harsh climates. The availability of appropriate cleaning equipment and supplies, together with their regular use is essential to maintaining acceptable weapons performance.

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](mailto:monte.dunard@usmc.mil)  
 Telephone: 703.432.1286 DSN: 378-1286

The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) articles contained in this newsletter represent the considered judgment of experienced analysts assigned to the MCCLL. The purpose of the newsletter is to apprise members of the Marine Corps (as well as members of other Services and Department of Defense (DoD) commands and agencies) of recent items of interest contained in the Marine Corps Lessons Management System (LMS).

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**1st Battalion, 25th Marines Focused Collection Effort:** The recent focused collection effort by the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) with the 1st Battalion, 25th Marines was conducted in response to a request from the Commanding General, Training and Education Command (TECOM) that MCCLL serve as a repository for lessons and observations addressing the mobilization and pre-deployment training of reserve units preparing for deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

In support of this requirement (and as the fourth in a series of focused collection efforts), MCCLL visited 1/25 in March 2006 just prior to the battalion's deployment to OIF. MCCLL staff interviewed the Battalion Commander, Sgt Major, key staff officers, and company commanders and also surveyed a large number of enlisted Marines, all for the purpose of obtaining their comments on pre-deployment training. The focus was on the collection of recommendations that could be used to influence future training programs. Later, after deployment and a period of combat operations in OIF, the same Marines will be interviewed to determine whether their opinions concerning the pre-deployment training have changed.

MCCLL found that the battalion (subsequent to its notification in September 2005 of its activation for deployment in March) had begun an aggressive training program to prepare for its mobilization on the first of December 2005. This reserve battalion's preparations were impacted by the fact that it was the first to be activated under the "no second involuntary activation" policy; therefore, countless man-hours were expended determining the final list of Marines who would actually deploy. The battalion eventually consisted of almost 65% of previous 1/25 personnel, with 30 to 35% of personnel volunteering from 2/25, and between 5 and 10% of Marines consisting of Individual Ready Reserve and active duty volunteers. In January, 1/25 deployed to 29 Palms to continue its training, with heavy emphasis on live fire building block events, Basic Urban Skills training (BUST), and Military Operations in Urban Terrain (MOUT).

Based on its experience with these training programs, 1/25 provided MCCLL with many pointed comments and observations on their training that have now been documented in the report: [Pre-deployment Training Lessons and Observations from 1st Bn, 25th Marines](#).



A Marine from Headquarters & Support Company, 1st Bn, 25th Marines, waves a brightly-covered flag to warn civilians in Fallujah of possible danger. 1/25, a reserve infantry unit headquartered in Devens, Mass., deployed to OIF in March 2006 after intensive pre-deployment training.

### Some of the key observations on pre-deployment training from 1/25 are:

- **Battalion did not train on the equipment it will fall on in OIF. Examples are:**
  - Up-Armored HMMWVs
  - Electronic countermeasure systems
  - M24G Machine gun traverse and elevation bar for vehicle ring mounts
  - Insufficient number of Blue Force Trackers
  - Insufficient number of PRC-117 radios
- **Reserve battalions do not have an 0306 Battalion Gunner**
  - 1/25 will deploy without one, potentially affecting combat operations.
- **There is a need for a Tactical Driving Course**
  - With the documented requirement for large numbers of incidental drivers, a Combat Driver Licensing Course needs to be established.
    - A short duration and large through-put capacity course is recommended
- **Medical assets should be mobilized at the same time as the battalion**
  - Assets were not mobilized until 31 days later
  - Sound medical planning and screening of personnel may be impacted
- **Convolted pre-deployment chain of command impacted training ammunition and equipment support**
  - Grenades did not arrive in time
  - ACOGs arrived late
  - Small arms ammunition arrived late

For a complete discussion of these and other issues, please see the complete report at: [Pre-deployment Training Lessons and Observations from 1/25](#).

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**Small Craft Company Deployment During Operation Iraqi Freedom II:** As the only riverine unit ever deployed to Iraq, the Marine Corps Small Craft Company performed a unique function in support of the 1st Marine Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) II. The company provided fire, maneuver and rapid movement capabilities over water that were unmatched by enemy forces. However, based on the recommendations of the Force Structure Review Group 2004, the company was ordered deactivated, effective September 2005. The requirement for its capability continued to exist; however, and is currently being met by Marines from other organizations cross-trained to operate the Small Craft Company assets. The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) determined that it was important to capture lessons and observations concerning the company's organization, capabilities and employment while Marines that had been assigned to the Small Craft Company during OIF were still available to be interviewed. Therefore, in February 2006, a MCCLL staff member visited former members of the company at Camp Lejeune to collect their comments and observations on their pre-deployment training and combat operations in OIF.

The riverine mission that had been performed by the Marine Corps small craft company will be assumed by the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) in March 2007. At that time, the NECC will relieve the Marine Corps' Dam Support Unit (DSU) currently deployed in Iraq. As the standup of this capability proceeds, Marine forces should consider integration of training with the Navy unit for support missions previously performed by the Small Craft Company.

The topical paper summarizing the observations and recommendation of Marines assigned to the Small Craft Company is available at: [Small Craft Company's Deployment in Support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II \(OIF II\)](#).



During its second deployment in Iraq, Marines with the Small Craft Company conducted aggressive operations along the Euphrates River from September 2004 to May 2005.

### Selected lessons and observations from the Marine Corps Small Craft Company:

- **Small Craft Company Employment**
  - Ideally, patrols should include four boats at all times, with two boats each as a "buddy pair"
  - Lead boats should carry the assault element with the trace boats configured as fire support platforms
  - On some missions, a fifth boat should be used as a resupply/medevac platform
- **Communications/Command and Control (C2)**
  - A Riverine Assault Craft (RAC) should be used as the C2 platform since it can accommodate four separate VHF networks, a SATCOM radio, and UHF and HF capabilities
  - In order to communicate with air assets, UHF radios should be added to the Small Unit Riverine Craft (SURC) complement of VHF radios
  - Blue Force Trackers should be included not only for coordination among boats and ground forces, but also as an additional navigational tool.
- **Weapons**
  - The SURC proved to be an excellent platform for direct fire support for ground units.
  - Crew members should be cross-trained on all weapons systems to support mission specific weapon configurations and to prevent loss of capability due to casualties.
  - The MK19 40mm machine gun was the weapon of choice in most situations since collateral damage could be minimized.
  - A spare M240G machine gun should be carried in the event of a GAU-17 weapons failure.
- **Training**
  - The company conducted its own training courses for coxswain and boat captains.
  - Pre-deployment training focused on cross-training crew members to assume duties of every billet

Please refer to the MCCLL report for a complete discussion of these and other observations and lessons learned: [Small Craft Company's Deployment in Support of OIF II](#).

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**Family Readiness:** Family readiness is defined to be "families who are prepared and equipped with the skills and tools necessary to successfully meet the challenges of the military lifestyle". Increasingly, family readiness is viewed as a key factor in overall unit readiness. Family issues, if not addressed, can have a significant impact on unit readiness and cohesiveness.

The Marine Corps family readiness programs that have been instituted in recent years are designed to provide a support mechanism to help address family concerns. These programs are grouped under an umbrella program called, Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB), and include the following: (1) Key Volunteer Network (KVN), (2) Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge, Skills (L.I.N.K.S.), (3) Spouses Learning Series, (4) Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP), and (5) Chaplains' Religious Enrichment Development Operations (CREDO)).

Collectively, these programs are designed to ensure that the Marine Corps maintains optimum unit effectiveness and mission readiness, prepares Marine families to meet the challenges of the military lifestyle, and standardizes the policies and functions of the MCFTB programs across organizations and duty stations.

A significant number of observations and lessons from operations in the CENTCOM AO have provided insights into the strengths of the MCFTB and its component programs, as well as areas for improvement. The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) has incorporated these lessons, along with comments from a 2003 interview with Mrs. Bonnie Amos, wife of (then) MajGen James Amos, Commanding General, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, into a topical paper: **[Family Readiness: An Essential Element of Unit Readiness](#)**. The interview with Mrs. Amos is particularly relevant because of her extensive involvement with family readiness programs during the Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) I deployment.



Members of the Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) program discuss L.I.N.K.S. issues during a Family Readiness Conference at MCB Quantico.

### Selected observations on Family Readiness issues:

- Command emphasis and support are considered essential to a successful program. The selection of an experienced Family Readiness Officer (FRO) is key.
- Commanders continue to highlight the importance of countering the informal e-mail "rumor mill" by providing accurate communications from the theater back to families. The pre-deployment message should emphasize that the only accurate source of unit information is the command staff.
- Timely initial casualty notification is becoming more challenging due to excellent communications between deployed units and families and the presence of media on the battlefield. Commanders, where practical, are modifying casualty notification procedures to allow injured Marines to personally contact family members.
- Marine Corps Community services (MCCS) participation in family events can have a major positive impact.
- Family readiness should be emphasized in the Commander's Course, not only for commanders' spouses but also for commanders.
- The parents of single Marines should also be offered the opportunity to participate in Family Readiness activities.
- Enlisted spouses should be encouraged to become involved in the Key Volunteer Network. It is not just an "Officers' Wives Club".

Please refer to the MCCLL report for a complete discussion of these and other Family Readiness issues, as well as for the timely comments by Mrs. Amos: **[Family Readiness: An Essential Element of Unit Readiness](#)**.

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### Update:

**Counterinsurgency Operations:** In last month's newsletter, the results of a Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) collection effort in Afghanistan were highlighted that addressed the counterinsurgency operations of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines, while deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

Since then, a paper on counterinsurgency operations by a highly-respected retired Australian Army officer, LtCol David Kilcullen, has been widely distributed within the Marine Corps and the other military services. LtCol Kilcullen's background includes tours in Southeast Asia, a number of peacekeeping operations, several advisor roles with the militaries of other countries, a special advisor role to the 2005 U. S. Quadrennial Defense Review, and a current position seconded to the U.S. State Department as Chief Strategist in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. His academic credentials include a doctoral dissertation on insurgent and terrorist groups and counterinsurgencies in Indonesia.

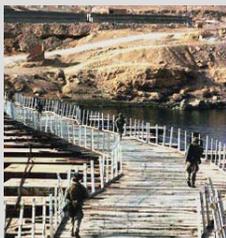
As indicated in the title of LtCol Kilcullen's paper, "[Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency](#)", he provides 28 observations on the collective experiences of military units conducting counterinsurgency operations around the world that he believes should be passed on to those preparing for future operations. Since every insurgency has its own unique features, he recommends that these observations be applied judiciously based on the specific situation.

LtCol Kilcullen's paper should be read by anyone interested in the lessons that have been learned in the past from world-wide counterinsurgency operations. The article that we have elected to highlight this month, is Article 3:

**"Organize for intelligence:** In counterinsurgency, killing the enemy is easy. Finding him is often nearly impossible. Intelligence and operations are complementary. Your operations will be intelligence driven, but intelligence will come mostly from your own operations, not as a product, prepared and served up by higher headquarters. So you must organize for intelligence. You will need a company S2 and intelligence section - including analysts. You may need platoon S2s and S3s, and you will need a reconnaissance and surveillance element."

In the area of intelligence, the MCCLL topical paper, [Counterinsurgency Operations in Afghanistan](#), contains similar recommendations and observations, including the recommendation for a significant augmentation of intelligence capabilities in infantry battalions:

"In order to allow infantry battalions to more successfully conduct intelligence collection and analysis, and to better allow intelligence sections to properly fuse information from several disparate disciplines (e.g., HUMINT, SIGINT, IMINT, MASINT), an increase in the number of 0231 intelligence analysts on the T/O from two to six would better support the requirements of such distributed operations."



Marines from 3rd Bn, 1st Marines, conduct a security patrol in Haqlaniyah, Iraq. During the battalion's deployment in OIF 04-06, it conducted more than a dozen counterinsurgency operations.

**Safety:** The Safety Newsletter from the 3d Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) continues to be a valuable resource for those concerned with safety issues in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and elsewhere. The [second edition of the newsletter](#) includes an interesting article on the award of the first 3d MAW Safety MVP to LCpl Miguel Rivera, a G3 Ops Clerk with the MWHS-3. The achievements of LCpl Rivera that resulted in this award should serve as a valuable lesson to other Marine units on the specific actions that need to be taken to improve safety: (1) establishing and maintaining a TACC safety board, (1) conducting safety surveys of billets to identify fire and electrical hazards, (2) posting all fire bills, (3) ensuring all smoke detectors are functional, and (4) inspecting all fire extinguishers for serviceability.

The first addition of the 3d MAW newsletter addressed the problem of near mid-air collisions; the second edition continues with this theme, providing some additional recommendations:

- (1) Briefings by Flight Leaders, Mission Briefers and Air Mission Commanders should include collision avoidance tactics and techniques,
- (2) UAV operators should consider conventional aircraft flight paths in all flight planning, and
- (3) All pilots on nighttime operations should never take for granted that you have been seen by other aircraft, particularly by those flying unaided or on FLIR systems.

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### Re-design of the MCCLL Website Homepage

Authorized users of the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) website, who regularly access our repositories, will have noticed a number of recent changes to the homepage that we hope will improve functionality and ease of use. If you have not been to the homepage recently, you are invited to [go there](#) and begin exploring the re-designed page, with the following re-designed items:

- **VIEW OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:** This link will now take you directly to the active lessons and observations in our system where you can perform searches of our repository to identify all lessons related to a particular subject area.
- **ADD OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS:** This link will take you to our standard lesson template where you can compose a lesson for submission to MCCLL. Once you complete the template and save the lesson, it will remain in a Pending status until it is activated by a Command Lesson Manager (CLM) or one of the designated staff members at MCCLL. The lesson cannot be viewed by other authorized users until it has been activated; however, as the creator of the lesson, you can review it at a later date (and edit it if necessary), by clicking on MYLESSONS on the top left of the home page.
- **GO TO THE COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST:** The MCCLL Forums have now been re-designated as **Communities of Interest** to highlight the fact that they provide information and resources that are of interest to specific communities within the Marine Corps (for example, logisticians, military police, military advisors, or Marines involved in SASO or MOUT operations). The home page of each Community is designed to announce events, provide links to other sites and news articles, serve as repositories for lessons, briefings, after action reports, and other documents, and provide access to discussion groups. **Note** that a new Community has recently been established for [Combat Engineers](#).

Although each Community of Interest includes an associated discussion group, there are also additional discussion groups for which a "full blown" Community of Interest has not been established. These can be accessed by clicking on [DISCUSSION GROUPS](#) on the left hand side of the home page. A new discussion group has recently been set up for [Mountain/Cold Weather Operations](#).

- **MCCLL REPORTS:** Only the latest twelve (12) MCCLL topical papers will now be highlighted on the home page. Other MCCLL products can be accessed by linking to:
- **FIND ALL OF THE MCCLL REPORTS:** This link now takes you to all of the MCCLL topical papers organized by publication date, with the most recent papers at the top. Each paper has a short summary of the contents. You can also click on "Click Here to Sort Alphabetically" to view the papers in that order.

We hope that you find these changes helpful (and stay tuned; additional changes are coming)!

### MCCLL and the Department of Homeland Security Working Together

**To:** All MCCLL users

**From:** LtCol Donald Hawkins, Branch Head-Integration and Technology, Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned

**Subject:** Invitation to Join *LLIS.gov*

As part of our on-going effort to collaborate and share knowledge and expertise with other lessons learned programs from across the services and the federal government, the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned invites you to join *Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov)*, the Department of Homeland Security's national, online repository for lessons learned and best practices. *LLIS.gov* is the repository for all homeland security lessons learned, many of which relate directly to our humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions. All MCCLL users are encouraged to access the site and make use of its content.

In order to enter *LLIS.gov*, it will be necessary to apply for a username and password. The site is controlled, but all MCCLL users are allowed access. When registering, enter "Donald Hawkins, Branch Head-Integration and Technology, Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned" as your Employment Verification Contact and "(703) 432-1282" as the Employment Verification Phone Number to expedite the registration process.

*LLIS.gov* is a free and secure system open only to vetted emergency response providers and homeland security/defense officials. *LLIS.gov* includes a collection of peer-validated lessons learned and best practices developed in consultation with, and validated by, emergency responders. The system also houses an extensive collection of homeland security-related materials and a comprehensive library of documents, reports, directories, and manuals. *Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov)* was developed by the National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism ([www.MIPT.org](#)) in Oklahoma City, in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Grants and Training (G&T). For more information and to register, visit [www.LLIS.gov](#).

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### MCCLL is Recruiting!

#### Reservists Wanted!

The Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) is actively recruiting reservists who wish to be mobilized to assist in the collection and analysis of lessons and observations originating from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The Center has a continual need for additional Marine officers and senior NCOs to join us in our critical work supporting combat Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the past, we have had many reservists working with us on short and long term assignments, who have provided valuable expertise in the analysis of issues identified by in-theater units, as well as by CONUS organizations.

Please consider joining us for this important work and helping us ensure that the Marine Corps continues to "Learn from those who have gone before."

Our point of contact is:

Maj William A. Czarniawski at (703) 432-1318 or [william.czarniawski@usmc.mil](mailto:william.czarniawski@usmc.mil)

#### Focused Collection Teams Wanted!

Many issues are being identified by Marines deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) that cannot be resolved fully until additional information is obtained to determine whether a problem is widespread within the Marine Corps or is isolated. Resolution of the issue may require a focused collection effort either in theater or with returning units to address the problem in more detail, achieve consensus concerning causes and effects, and identify potential solutions. With its small staff, the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) seldom has the resources available to staff collection teams on its own. We actively recruit Marines with special expertise to participate in these focused collection efforts.

If you are aware of issues in Marine Corps training, equipment, organizations, or tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP) that need to be addressed and have special expertise in the area, please contact: LtCol Mark A. Silvia at (703) 432-1317 or [mark.a.silvia@usmc.mil](mailto:mark.a.silvia@usmc.mil) to become a member of our Team.

### MCCLL Representative to I MEF (Forward)

LtCol James H. Griffin, USMCR, is the new Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL) representative to 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) (Forward) as it replaces II MEF in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) 05-07. LtCol Griffin has had a varied Marine Corps career that makes him ideally suited to serve as the MCCLL officer forward during this critical period, as U.S. forces work to complete training of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and ensure successful transition to a stable Iraqi sovereignty.

LtCol Griffin began his Marine Corps career as a CH-53D pilot with HMM-463, and, after deployments with HMM(c) - 165 and HMM(c) - 364, served as a FAC with 1/3 and then as a primary flight instructor with VT-2 (where he earned flight instructor of the year award). After 3 years of instructing, he moved west to MCAS Tustin and worked as the DOSS in HMM-363. In the early to mid 90's he left active duty to pursue a career with the airlines, but subsequently signed on with 3rd ANGLICO where he served in different billets for three years. After recuperation from injuries sustained from a HMMVV accident, he returned to active duty with TTECG as a coyote clone in the air shop, and then was deployed with 2/23 during OIF-1. After 2/23 returned to CONUS following the successful invasion, Maj Griffin worked in the Division air shop for the remainder of OIF 1. Upon redeployment in October 2003, he was first assigned as assistant training officer and then as training officer for the 1st Marine Division. This tour ended in July 2005, but after six months, he was again activated to begin training for his new assignment as the MCCLL representative to I MEF.



As the MCCLL representative to I MEF (Fwd), LtCol Griffin is responsible for coordinating the entry of I MEF lessons into the MCCLL Lessons Management System (LMS), making logistics and administrative arrangements for in-theater collection teams, and performing other coordination efforts to ensure that the important lessons from OIF 05-07 are documented and "learned".

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#### Ban on Synthetic Athletic Clothing in Iraq

10 April 2006, Camp Taqaddum, Iraq

Under direction of USMC commanders in Iraq, wearing synthetic athletic clothing containing polyester and nylon has been prohibited while conducting operations off of forward operating bases and camps.

The ban on popular clothing from companies like Under Armour, CoolMax and Nike comes in the wake of concerns that a substantial burn risk is associated with wearing clothing made with these synthetic materials.

When exposed to extreme heat and flames, clothing containing some synthetic materials like polyester will melt and can fuse to the skin. This essentially creates a second skin and can lead to horrific, disfiguring burns, said Capt. Lynn E. Welling, USN, the 1st Marine Logistics Group head surgeon.

Whether on foot patrol or conducting a supply convoy while riding in an armored truck, everyone is at risk to such injuries while outside the wire.

"Burns can kill you and they're horribly disfiguring. If you're throwing (a melted synthetic material) on top of a burn, basically you have a bad burn with a bunch of plastic melting into your skin and that's not how you want to go home to your family," said Welling.

According to Tension Technology International, a company that specializes in synthetic fibers, most man made fabrics, such as nylon, acrylic or polyester will melt when ignited and produce a hot, sticky, melted substance causing extremely severe burns.

For these reasons, Marines have been limited to wearing clothing made with these materials only while on the relatively safe forward operating bases and camps where encounters with fires and explosions are relatively low.

The popularity of these products has risen in the past few years, and they have started being sold at military clothing stores. Some companies have come out with product lines specifically catering to military needs. This makes polyester clothing readily available to servicemembers, said Welling.

The high performance fabrics work by pulling perspiration away from the body to the outside of the garment instead of absorbing moisture like most cotton clothing.

The Under Armour company, a favorite among many servicemembers here, advertises that the fabric used to make their garments will wick perspiration from the skin to the outer layer of the clothing allowing the person wearing it to remain cool and dry in any condition or climate.

While these qualities have been a main reason for Marines to stock up on these items, the melting side effect can be a fatal drawback, said Welling.

This point was driven home recently at a military medical facility located at Camp Ramadi, a U.S. military base on the outskirts of the city of Ramadi, arguably one of the most dangerous cities in Iraq.

"We had a Marine with significant burn injuries covering around 70 percent of his body," said Cmdr. Joseph F. Rappold, the officer in charge of the medical unit at the base.

The Marine was injured when the armored vehicle he was riding in struck an improvised explosive device, or IED, causing his polyester shirt to melt to his skin. Even though he was wearing his protective vest, Navy doctors still had to cut the melted undergarment from his torso.

His injuries would not have been as severe had he not been wearing a polyester shirt, said Rappold.

Burns have become a common injury in Iraq as the enemy continues to employ IED's and roadside bombs.

Currently, such hidden explosives are the number one killer of servicemembers in Iraq, said Welling.

For years servicemembers with jobs that put them at a high risk of flame exposure, such as pilots and explosive ordnance disposal personnel, were kept from wearing polyester materials because of the extra burn threat. Now, with so many encounters with IED explosions, the Marines are extending this ban to everyone going "outside the wire."



See [more of this article](#)

# Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned

## May 2006 Newsletter

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### Book Review

The books on the [Commandant's Professional Reading List](#) have now been supplemented by a list of books for Majors and Lieutenant Colonels deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan. These books can be reviewed on the [Commandant's Supplemental Reading List](#).

This month's featured book, *Airpower in Small Wars*, is on this supplemental reading list and was used by I MEF in planning for their return to Al Anbar province. The four chapters in the book that are recommended as must reads are: The introduction (Chapter 1), the French Colonial wars in Indochina (Chapter 5), the counterinsurgency air war in Southern Africa (Chapter 7), and the conclusion (Chapter 10).

*Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* by James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson

Reviewed by LTC Lester W. Grau, USA (Retired), *Military Review*, Nov/Dec 2004

Despite catchy phrases like "surgical strike" and "precision bombing," airpower remains a blunt instrument in unconventional and small wars. Air strikes against guerrillas fail when guerrillas cannot be precisely located. Bombing civilians in retaliation (or error) is ineffective and counterproductive. The pre-World War II aviation concept of "air control," in which aviation occupies and controls a small country by airpower alone, is clearly outmoded and wrong. What then is the role of airpower in small wars?

James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson have a clear vision of this role and have written extensively on air and ground power. Corum is a reserve army officer and a distinguished historian and professor at the U.S. Air Force (USAF) School of Advanced Airpower Studies. Wray R. Johnson is a retired USAF colonel who spent a career in special operations and is now professor at the U.S. Marine Corps University.

Airpower has been a player in small wars and counterinsurgencies since French aviators bombed Moroccan rebels in 1913. Sometimes airpower has been a key player; at other times, it has promised much more than it could deliver. In the case of French Indochina, airpower's failure to deliver as planned at Dien Bien Phu lost the war for the French. Air Power in Small Wars, the first comprehensive history of the subject, analyzes numerous conflicts with guerrillas, bandits, rebels, and terrorists in colonial wars, police actions, counterinsurgencies, and expeditions.

The book's pre-World War II section describes General John J. Pershing's expedition into Mexico; U.S. Marine Corps expeditions into the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Nicaragua; British Colonial expeditions in Somaliland, Aden, Transjordan, Iraq, and the Northwest Frontier Province of India; Spanish Colonial expeditions in Spanish Morocco; French Colonial expeditions in French Morocco and Syria; and Italian Colonial expeditions in Libya and Eritrea. The post-World War II section includes the Greek Civil War; the Philippine Anti-Huk campaign; the French Colonial wars in Indochina and Algeria; the British Colonial wars in Malaya, South Arabia, and Oman; the war in South Vietnam; southern African insurgencies in Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Namibia, Rhodesia and Malawi; Latin American insurgencies in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Columbia; the Egyptian expedition in Yemen; the Soviet War in Afghanistan; and the Israeli excursion in southern Lebanon. While it is an ambitious undertaking, it succeeds.

Among the book's key findings are that in small wars, the political and economic instruments are often more important than the military instrument. Reconnaissance and transport are usually the most important and effective aviation missions in guerrilla war. Airpower's ground attack role becomes more important as the war turns conventional. Aviation high-tech and low-tech systems might play an important role in small wars. Joint operations are essential for the effective use of airpower. Small wars are long and intelligence-intensive. Training for major wars does not translate into readiness for small wars.

This is an important book and, hopefully, one on which ground power and airpower advocates can agree. Insurgencies, expeditions, and other small wars might occupy the attention of the U.S. Armed Forces in the near term. The time to prepare is now, and getting the air and ground component to work together harmoniously is part of that preparation. This book should be a basic component of that preparation and of that harmony.