

# 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit

## The Marine Corps' force in readiness in the Asia Pacific

Hello 31st MEU Families,

Hopefully everyone just enjoyed a few days off with their loved ones following a brief, but very busy, Spring Patrol. While the majority of the MEU is back aboard Okinawa, we still have elements of the BLT, ACE, and CLB engaging counterparts during Theater Security Cooperation events, conducting training, and maintaining individual and unit level war-fighting skills. During this previous deployment, we trained in Thailand and then returned to the waters off Okinawa to complete our certification exercise (CERTEX). The Marines and sailors of the MEU did a fantastic job and the ARG/MEU was deemed "mission capable" in all evaluated events. Your spouses did not just sit off the coast of Okinawa for 10 days during this period—the MEU planned and executed 9 missions in 10 days to include a raid that was executed over 1200 nautical miles away. This time-compressed evaluation required an all-hands effort with everyone contributing to make the ARG/MEU succeed, and your Marines did an excellent job.

Being a forward deployed unit, the 31st MEU always maintains the requirement to keep a high state of readiness. Even though we just returned from an At-Sea period, we have commenced a maintenance stand-down effort on our equipment

and have also started to identify equipment to be replaced. Soon, we will start paying particular attention to all of the equipment that will go ashore in Australia. This equipment will require a lot of time and energy to clean and repair to meet the strict Australian Customs regulations. As I mentioned earlier, we also have concurrent operations and training underway. Elements of the BLT are still embarked aboard ARG shipping and are about to participate in Exercise Balikatan in the Republic of the Philippines. Others from the BLT and CLB will be participating in the Korean Military Exchange Program (KMEP). The MEU ACE will soon send a helicopter detachment to support III MEF forces involved in Exercise SSANG YONG as well as begin preparations for its upcoming turnover with VMM-265. We will also have remaining Companies from the BLT rotating through the Jungle Warfare Training Course in northern Okinawa. So as the MEU continues to be engaged, I would like to thank all of our families for their continued support, involvement, and care for the Marines and sailors of the 31st MEU.

Respectfully,

Col John E. Merna, USMC

**MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!**  
**31st MEU Beach Party, 21 June 2013 at Torii Beach.**  
*More information to follow*



# Sergeant Major

Greetings to the illustrious 31st MEU family and friends!

Our recent Spring Patrol was a short 7 weeks (or so), yet it felt like 7 months due to the many challenges we faced and the amount of different missions going on across the MEU. It was inspiring to see how our Marines and Sailors maintained the utmost professionalism and work ethic despite the disappointment of a cancelled port visit - this is a true hallmark of a professional organization, and the 31st MEU demonstrated this on a daily basis. As we transition back to a very busy garrison schedule, I encourage each one of you to take the time to reconnect with each other, explore the island, and have quality family time

doing things you enjoy. Because the 31st MEU is unlike any other unit, and is probably the most deployed unit in the Marine Corps, I urge you to communicate with each other regarding work schedules, anticipated time off, and the schedule for the next deployment in order to manage expectations for what the next few months will look like. Elements of the MEU will be spread across the island and the Pacific and there will be new units and personnel checking in, all occurring at the same time as regular training and pre-deployment preparations, so our time before the Summer/Fall Patrol is jam packed. Because of this, it is imperative that you connect with each other, communicate with each other,

and enjoy the time off when it happens.

Stay tuned to the 31st MEU's Facebook page for updates, pictures, and videos, and see below for our planned family activities for the next few months. Thank you for all that you do - the families and friends of the 31st MEU are the backbone of our great unit and give us the support we need to do our missions across the Asia-Pacific. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without you! Thanks for your time and have a motivating Navy/Marine Corps day! Ehrahhs!

Semper Fidelis,  
SgtMaj "Butch" Vasquez

## Be Ready; Be Flexible By Chaplain Hamilton

“Be ready; be flexible.” These two statements are often heard around the MEU headquarters building from Col. Merna; they are part of the mantra of being ready for anything that may come our way. But what does it mean to be ready? There are many ways to look at this. Readiness usually refers to a unit's military preparedness of personnel and equipment and even includes things like medical and dental readiness. In recent years, the Marine Corps has also started talking about readiness in terms of Family Readiness. What about Spiritual Readiness?

Spiritual Readiness can be defined in a general sense to describe the things that give meaning and purpose to one's life. While in a general sense this is true, I would also suggest the Spiritual

Readiness goes deeper. While it generally describes a person's world-view (how a person sees the world and what lens he or she uses to give meaning and purpose to life), it describes one's religious beliefs and the impact a person's faith has on his or her ability to cope with life's unpredictable situations.

A story from the Bible may be helpful in understanding this idea. Job was a man in the Bible who was described as “blameless and upright.” In one day Job lost everything; all ten of his children were killed in a freak storm, his livestock (source of wealth) was captured, stolen and killed, along with most of his servants. In the ancient world, this constituted what we would describe as losing everything. Yet Job's response was

simple: “The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised.”

At the heart of being flexible and ready, I would suggest, is the ability to trust God through difficult and painful circumstances. Whether those circumstances are changing or unexpected deployments, the loss of family members, financial difficulty or a host of other situations that life routinely throws at us.

May I encourage you to engage in some activity that builds your resilience or Spiritual Readiness? There are plenty of opportunities right here on Okinawa to do so—from chapel services to CREDO marriage retreats and many others.

Chaps



## ISLAND EVENTS

### RYUKYU KAIEN FESTIVAL-FIREWORK FESTIVAL

*Haihin Park, Ginowan City*  
*13 April, fireworks start at 1930*  
*Advance Tickets: ¥2,500*  
*Tickets at the Gate: ¥3,000*

### ALL ISLAND TRIATHALON

*Miyako Island*  
*21 April, Starts at 0700*

### IE ISLAND LILY FESTIVAL

*Lily Field Park, Ie Island*  
*21 April – 6 May*

### GOLDEN WEEK

*Japanese National Holidays*

*29 April – Showa no hi – Showa Day*  
*3 May – Kenpokenin Bi – Constitution Day*  
*4 May – Midori no hi – Green Day*  
*5 May – Kodomo no hi – Children's Day*

## UPCOMING MEU EVENTS

Intro to the MEU, Barracks Bash  
 Beach Party, Pre-Deployment Brief

### INTRO TO THE MEU

*26 April 1030-1300 at The Palms, Camp Hansen*

Join your spouse for lunch and learn what the MEU is all about. Col Merna will discuss what the MEU is made up of and what we do. You will also hear first-hand the latest and greatest on upcoming events, dates and deployment schedules.

R.S.V.P. to [Rich](#) by 22 April.

### BARRACKS BASH

*31 May 1100-1500 at Camp Hansen Barracks 2537*

Single Marines and Sailors will enjoy a day of fun with games and prizes. We ask that you send in your favorite dish for all to try in a disposable bowl. You may send in your dish the day of the event with your spouse.

### PRE-DEPLOYMENT BRIEF

*17 June 1800-2000 Camp Courtney Chapel*

Pizza, salad and drinks will be provided. Deployed Spouse Benefit Cards will be issued at that time also. Come and learn what the MEU will be doing to include all Port Calls and detailed scheduling.

### BEACH PARTY

*21 June 1030-1500 at Torii Beach*

Come and enjoy a day in the sun! All you need to bring in sunscreen, a towel and a side dish or dessert.

More details will be sent out later.





## Change of International Dialing Instructions for Marine Corps Base Butler (MCBB) Telephone Subscribers

MCBB telephone subscribers include all USMC Camps on Okinawa and the White Beach U.S. Naval Facility. 20(+) years ago a Japanese commercial International Direct-in-Dial (IDID) access service number was established to call MCBB telephone subscribers from outside Japan. This service allowed callers who did not have US government telephone service to dial 81-6117-XX-XXXX to call official and unofficial telephone subscribers on MCBB. The technology supporting this dialing sequence is obsolete and is being terminated by Japanese telecommunications companies on 30 April 2013; consequently a new dialing sequence is being established effective immediately.

### New Dialing Instructions:

International callers should use the following dialing sequence to reach MCBB telephone numbers prefixes:

645-XXXX  
- Dial 81-98-970-XXXX  
646-XXXX  
- Dial 81-98-971-XXXX  
622-XXXX  
- Dial 81-98-954-XXXX  
623-XXXX  
- Dial 81-98-969-XXXX

637-XXXX or 636-XXXX or 625-XXXX  
-Dial 81-98-911-5111, 81-98-911-5112,  
or 81-98-970-5555, wait for the dial tone and

## US Naval Hospital Okinawa invites you to attend our Patient Focus Group



- We would like your input about your experience of care as we strive for continuous improvement!
- These groups are offered monthly on the third Wednesday from 1300-1400 and are ongoing.
- If you would like to be part of NH Okinawa's upcoming patient focus group, please contact **LCDR Anne Hollis** at **646-7897** or [anne.hollis@med.navy.mil](mailto:anne.hollis@med.navy.mil)





# 2013 Road Tax Collection Schedule

**Required Documents: Military Registration, 2012 Road Tax Receipt, Vehicle Title, Japanese Compulsory Insurance, and American Insurance.**

**CAMP KINSER  
"SURF SIDE"  
Tue, 7 May  
0930-1530**

**CAMP FOSTER  
"THEATER"  
Wed-Fri, 8-10 May  
0930-1530**

**KADENA  
"KEYSTONE THEATER"  
Mon-Fri, 13-17 May  
0930-1530**

**TORII STATION  
"CHAPEL ANNEX"  
Mon, 20 May  
0930-1530**

**CAMP COURTNEY  
"THEATER"  
Tues-Wed, 21-22 May  
0930-1530**

**CAMP HANSEN  
"THE PALMS"  
Thur, 23 May  
0930-1430**

**CAMP SCHWAB  
"CAMP SERVICES"  
Fri, 24 May  
0930-1430**

**• DOORS MAY CLOSE BEFORE SCHEDULED TIME  
BASED ON NUMBER OF CUSTOMERS IN LINE.**

**• All Documents must be original.  
COPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!**

## ROAD TAXES MUST BE PAID IN JAPANESE ¥EN ONLY!

U.S. CURRENCY, CHECKS, & CREDIT CARDS ARE NOT ACCEPTED. COMMUNITY BANK SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE AT OR CLOSE TO EACH COLLECTION POINT.

LICENSE PLATE CATEGORY 40/400, 50/500, 77/78 .....	¥7,500
LICENSE PLATE CATEGORY 33/300 (4,500 cc & below).....	¥19,000
LICENSE PLATE CATEGORY 33/300 (above 4,500 cc).....	¥22,000
LICENSE PLATE CATEGORY 11/100,88/800 .....	¥32,000

MINI-CAR and MOTORCYCLE taxes MUST be paid 1 April-31 May to local City, Town, or Village Offices between 0830-1200 and 1300-1700. Bring your receipt to the Joint Service Vehicle Registration Office or tax collection site to receive a 2013 Road Tax sticker.

MINI-CAR ROAD TAX.....	¥3,000
MOTORCYCLE ROAD TAX - 126cc and above.....	¥1,000
- 125cc and below.....	¥500

All vehicles not de-registered before 1 April must pay road tax.  
All vehicles must display a 2013 Road Tax sticker before 1 June 2013.  
FOR MORE INFORMATION contact the Joint Service Vehicle Registration Office at 645-7481/3963.