

THE 31ST MEU'S LETTER



Commander's Greeting

Families of the 31st MEU,

We "passed" our certification exercise and did extremely well. This success was based on the positive attitude of the Marines and Sailors. Due to the limited time in preparation, we could have had a negative attitude and not done well, but that was not the case. Everyone kept a positive attitude, which led to correcting problems on the spot to ensure they didn't happen again. This attitude showed and was addressed to the Commanding General at the outbrief to him. Job well done!

As of writing this we are in the middle of our next exercise. So far there have been no major issues and we are looking forward to training with our host nation military forces. This is set up to be a great experience. As usual, we have had our share of changes, but none that has cancelled events or stopped training. As you read this, we are most likely finished with the exercise and you should have received several Commanders' updates on EMarine.

EMarine is the way ahead. 31st MEU will be using this mode of communication more and we will eventually migrate this newsletter to EMarine along with information that keeps all families up to date. If you have not registered, work with your Marine/Sailor and get registered today.

Semper Fi,
Col MacMannis

**CELEBRATE THE MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD!
STAY TUNED TO YOUR LOCAL NEWS AND EVENT SOURCES
FOR HAPPENINGS IN YOUR AREA.**

Inside



SERGEANT
MAJOR'S
MESSAGE

2



CHAPLAIN'S
CORNER

3



OKINAWA
ADVENTURER

3



FROM THE FRO

4



RESOURCE
SPOTLIGHT:
ROAD TAX INFO

4



MEU MOMENTS

5

Deployment Contact Numbers

Family Readiness Officer: Mr. Rich Palma
Cell Phone: 080-1385-7132
Email: richard.palma@usmc.mil
Family Readiness Hotline: 623-4990

INTERNATIONAL DIALING
Family Readiness Officer: 011-81-80-1385-7132
Family Readiness Hotline: 011-81-611-723-4990

Sergeant Major's Message

If I may, I'd like to navigate my thoughts away from the Marines and Sailors for a moment and shift my thoughts to the loved ones of the Thirty-BEST MEU.

The 31st MEU families and loved ones are the perpetual source of encouragement, advocacy, assurance, and emotional refueling that empowers us to move forward with great confidence and successful attitudes.

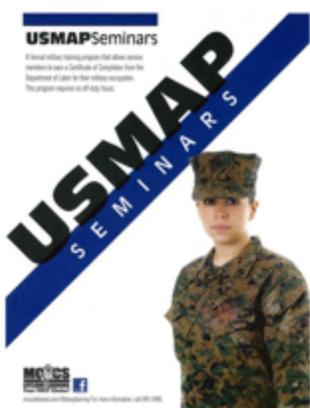
Without your unwavering love and support we simply could not complete the tasks at hand with the level of vigor and tenacity that is required of us. Numerous times we are lauded and thanked for the support we offer our nation by serving in uniform. Although appreciated, it's the spouses and family members who are often overlooked. Please know that we thank you and appreciate everything you do for us, and for the many sacrifices that you tackle and accomplish in our absence.

On the eve of our return, I am proud to announce that we accomplished formidable tasks and graduated our CERTEX even though we experienced many challenges. Regardless of the obstacles - we are qualified, certified, and confident in our capabilities and remain ready, waiting, and willing to take on our next mission.

Our recent VIP visit with the MEF Commanding General and his Sergeant Major was also a huge success. I stood very proud to bear witness to our Marines and Sailors as they briefed their respective areas of expertise to our VIP guests. This not only brought great credit upon themselves and their sections, but it also showcased the level of talent we possess as a whole in our magnificent MAGTF.

Again, thank you for a job well done and for the support we receive as we accomplish what we do best!

Be safe, God bless and Semper Fidelis!
Sergeant Major G.A. "Butch" Vasquez



Will you be getting out of the military in the near future? Are you interested in completing apprenticeship requirements during duty hours? Do you want to receive recognition for skills learned, obtain documented proof of work experience, improve advancement opportunities, broaden your knowledge of trade tools and materials, or gain additional work experience? Did you know that an 0622 can participate and get credit for an apprenticeship as an 0952N Radio Station Operator, or that the 3043 MOS can get you apprenticeship time for a 0578N Retail Store Manager position? Find out more about the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) by contacting your local Education Center. Visit the USMAP [website](#) to view the apprenticeship options for your MOS.

Hansen Education Center – Bldg. 2339, 623-4376	Schwab Education Center – Bldg. 3429, 625-2046
Courtney Education Center – Bldg. 4412, 622-9694	Foster Education Center – Bldg. 5679, 645-7160
Futenma Education Center – Bldg. 407, 636-3036	Kinser Education Center – Bldg. 1220, 637-1821

Chaplain's Corner

Planning Marriage

“Prior planning prevents pitifully poor performance.” Anyone who has ever spent more than a day or two in uniform has heard that statement. In fact, everything we do in the military has a plan of one type or another. The hope is that by taking time to plan various activities, factoring in all the possible outcomes, we become more successful in all that we do.

As a chaplain and a pastor, I've discovered over the years that people spend months of planning and preparation, not to mention thousands of dollars on the wedding ceremony and the reception following. Yet many couples spend little if any time in preparing for marriage itself. Sort of ironic isn't it that so much attention would be given to the ceremony and none given to the actual marriage, which is meant to last for the rest of one's life. In fact, for several years I have had a policy that I do not perform weddings unless the couple is willing to go through a series of pre-marriage classes.

With the Spring Patrol now over and summer right around the corner, many MEU families are looking forward to some quality time together. May I encourage you to include in your summer plans time to focus on your marriages. There are many opportunities to do so here in Okinawa. You may simply want a weekend getaway together where someone else watches the kids for a couple days, or maybe a more focused time such as attending a CREDO Marriage Enrichment Retreat.

Whatever you do over the next few months, I encourage you to plan and set aside time to strengthen your marriages.

Blessings to you,
Chaplain Hamilton

Okinawa Adventurer: Naha Haarii

Okay adventurers, let's talk haarii. Haarii, or dragon boat races, will be taking place in many Okinawan towns as the weather gets warmer, but right now teams all over Okinawa are practicing for the event that will culminate the [Golden Week](#) holidays.

While the localized dragon boat races get you right in the thick of things, there is just something to behold at the Naha Haarii, scheduled for 5 May this year. Whether it is the magnificent dragonhead and tail adorned boats or the contagious energy of participants and observers alike, the Naha Haarii is memorable. This year's race will be held at the Naha New Port Wharf from 1030-1700. There is no parking available at the site but it is easily accessible via public transportation (you're up for a true adventure, right?). You can park at Kinser and then carpool to the wharf in a taxi. Tours+ can also help you with finding alternate starting points for your Naha Haarii adventure. Here are some tips that have been passed on from Okinawans:

- The children's race will be on the 3rd (1115-1800).
- Contact 098-862-4887 for more information about the races; English-speaking staff should be available at this number. The number provided by the [website](#) only has Japanese-speaking staff, even though all the pertinent information is presented in English.
- Don't tip the vendors!
- IMPORTANT! Make sure to put trash in the appropriately labeled trash bin: Burnable (燃えるゴミ) vs. Unburnable (燃えないゴミ)
- Bring a hand towel (probably, no place to dry hands in the public restrooms).
- Probably not a good idea to smoke at the festival grounds (no rule against it, but it's a courtesy thing to do)
- Smile! Have fun! Make Friends!

Take lots of pictures and [share your adventure](#) with us. Your story could be published...

Keep your adventurous spirits high and I'll see you around the island!

- Bobbi

Resource Spotlight: Road Tax Info

The road tax is a mandatory requirement for all vehicle owners in Japan. The amount of tax due each year is dependent on the size of the vehicle. For example, the tax for a regular-sized vehicle will be about ¥7500, while a mini car or a motor cycle will cost less. The flyer below has additional cost information by vehicle weight.

The easiest way to meet this road tax requirement is to bring your military registration, 2011 road tax receipt, vehicle title, Japanese Compulsory Insurance (JCI), and your American insurance. All of these are likely to be found in the handy packet in your glove compartment. If you can't make heads or tails of all that, just grab the whole thing and bring it with you. The collectors are very professional and will just pull out what they need. At the end of the process you will receive the new decal for 2012.

The process is a little more time-consuming if you miss the on-base dates. You will need to pay the annual road tax either at a local Japanese tax office, a convenience store, a Japanese post office, or your local on-base insurance agency. The receipt obtained will need to be presented to the registration office, upon which the decal will be issued. The road tax must be paid by 31 May.

2012 Road Tax Collection Schedule

CAMP KINSER "SURF SIDE" Wed, 2 May 0930-1530	KADENA "KEYSTONE THEATER" Mon-Fri 7-11 May 0930-1530	CAMP FOSTER "COMMUNITY CENTER" Mon-Wed, 14-16 May 0930-1530
--	--	---

CAMP COURTNEY "EDUCATION CENTER" Thur-Fri 17-18 May 0930-1530	TORII STATION "CHAPEL ANNEX" Mon, 21 May 0930-1530	CAMP HANSEN "THE PALMS" Tues, 22 May 0930-1430
---	--	--

CAMP SCHWAB
"CAMP SERVICES"
Wed, 23 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!**

Required Documents: Military Registration, 2011 Road Tax Receipt, Vehicle Title, Japanese Compulsory Insurance, and American Insurance.

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 2012 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 2012 Road Tax sticker before 1 June 2012.

FOR MORE INFORMATION contact the Joint Service Vehicle Registration Office at 645-7481/3963.

From the FRO

Now that our loved ones are back and summer is quickly approaching, get out and enjoy what Okinawa has to offer. Many of you will be rotating back to the states this summer. Be sure you leave the island knowing that you got to see the beauty and wonders this place has to offer. The beaches are beginning to open for the season so get out and get that tan.

For those families who are staying with the MEU, or even on Okinawa, start thinking about your typhoon preparedness kits. Dust those off and start to make a list of what needs to be replaced and replenished as the season gets closer. Don't get caught off guard.

The new Marine Corps Order for Family Care Plans has been signed and released. It will be posted on eMarine. There is one standard form now instead of each unit having its own, which is great. Please be sure you update yours as well.

Enjoy your time together and I hope to see you around the island.

- Rich

4 Lenses: Temperament Intelligence

April 17
9:00-11:30 am
Camp Foster
Ocean Breeze

Learn the most fun way to:

- Build creative teams
- Develop your strengths
- Problem solve in new ways
- Welcome a new approach
- Understand the people you value most

RSVP by 12 April 17 To me at [Rich Palma](#)
Or phone 623-4990/090-1386-7132.

MCFTB
MARIA, JAPAN

645-7481/3963
090-1386-7132
090-1386-7132

31st MEU Moments: L.I.N.K.S. for Spouses



Find more pictures and updates on our [eMarine](#) page!

Editor's Corner: The R.s.v.p.'s Comeback

A couple weeks ago I came across a site that suggested that "R.s.v.p." was a proper and correct way to write that popular acronym request for a response, I did a little more digging. There seems to be quite a few misconceptions about the entire R.s.v.p. process, the biggest of which is the train of thought that leads one to believe that a response is not needed if one does not intend to accept the issued invitation. Since this is clearly not the case, let's set the R.s.v.p. etiquette record straight

What does R.s.v.p. stand for? R.s.v.p. is an abbreviation for the French phrase "répondez s'il vous plaît" which basically means respond please.

Who should R.s.v.p.? For the standard invitation, you are expected to respond regardless of whether or not you plan on attending. If you receive an invitation that states "regrets only," it is expected that you will be in attendance if a response is not received from you, i.e. you R.s.v.p. if you will not be able to attend. A good rule of thumb though is to respond whenever you are issued an invitation.

What's the proper way to R.s.v.p.? Another good rule of thumb is to respond to an invitation in a similar manner as it was sent. E.g. if you are emailed an invitation, typically an email response would be appropriate. A telephone call may also suffice. (If you send paper invites and require a paper R.s.v.p., it is polite to include the return postage on the R.s.v.p. card/envelope).

Some other things to remember about the R.s.v.p. include:

- A host/ess does not need to know your reason for not attending. They just need to know that you won't be.
- If you are unable to give a definite response either way, contact the host/ess and explain the situation.
- Always respond to an invitation within a few days of receipt.
- If you accepted an invitation and something unplanned is preventing you from attending, call the host/ess immediately.

Following these simple courtesies will allow better planning for your host/ess and it will keep invitations coming your way.

Adapted from [R.s.v.p. is a Matter of Manners](#)

Upcoming Events

April

2012

“We are either progressing or retrograding all the time; there is no such thing as remaining stationary in this life.”

- James Freeman Clarke

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12 Obi Making (Courtney Bldg. 4225, 0900-1100)	13	14
15	16 Survival Japanese (Hansen Bldg. 2339, 1130-1230)	17 4 Lenses Workshop (Ocean Breeze, 0900-1130) 	18 Money & Marriage (Courtney Bldg. 4225, 1130-1300)	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 Job Fair Success (Courtney Bldg. 4225, 1000-1100)	28
29	30 Survival Japanese Writing (Foster Bldg. 439, 1300- 1600)					

Click any  MEU-hosted event to send in your response if you would like to attend.

If you would like to contribute an informational article, an Okinawa experience, or any military experience, send your submissions to the FRO by the third Friday of the month.