



PHOTO BY CHARLES E. MCKELVEY

A UH-1 Huey lands at a mock forward operating post while training at Desert Talon, Yuma, Ariz. The Huey's pilots relay information from Marine Air Traffic Mobile Teams to land their birds.

## MMT Marines receive training via Desert Talon

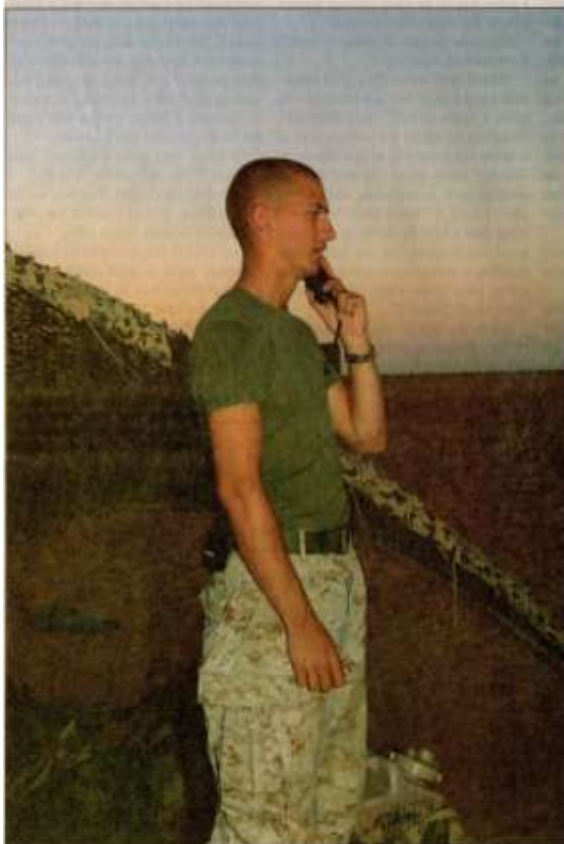


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Lance Cpl. Paul Valentin, an air traffic controller, informs the incoming pilot of conditions such as wind speeds and location of other inbound aircraft during a training exercise at Desert Talon.

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MCAS CHERRY POINT

When landing in an aircraft in the field the pilot relies on vital information from Marines who are part of a Marine Air Traffic Control Mobile Team. For that information to be as accurate as possible it is crucial that those Marines receive as much training as possible before they deploy to the deserts of Iraq.

Marines from the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing are doing just that, while training at Desert Talon in Yuma, Ariz.

Marine Air Control Squadron 2 MMT is running field operations on a daily basis and honing their skills to become a well-oiled machine for their upcoming combat tour.

An MMT is made up of six to eight Marines who are all air traffic controllers headed by a team leader, which is a billet held by a first lieutenant and an assistant team leader, who is a staff noncommissioned officer, said Capt. Sean F. Robertson, the AIC division head, Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1.

Also embedded in the team are two technicians, one navigational aid and one communications technician, said Robertson.

From the moment we get dropped off, we are able to set up and become fully operational in 30 minutes as well as reset the field for night operations in the same amount of time, said 1st Lt. Sean D. Cooper, the air traffic control officer, MMT Team Leader, MACS-2 Detachment Bravo.

"We are equipped with numerous communication devices giving us extreme capabilities for such a small unit," said Cooper.

The Marines of MACS-2 MMT use tactical air navigation units along with



PHOTO BY CHARLES E. MCKELVEY

An AH-1W Super Cobra prepares to land at a forward operating post at Desert Talon. Air traffic controllers relay vital information to pilots and play a big role in the landing of aircraft while in the field.

having the capability of operating over a communication satellite antenna, giving them the ability to talk to anyone anywhere who are using the same equipment while a satellite signal are constantly present.

"The big difference of conducting the training out here is that we have to bring and set up all of our equipment as opposed to arriving to a site, and everything is already setup for you such as the training that we normally do," said Cooper.

The Marines that comprise MACS-2 MMT come from all over the east coast and training like this gives us the ability to get to know each other and have experience working with each other since this is the first time that some of us have ever worked with one another, said Staff Sgt. Terry P. Harden, MACS-2 MMT.

Optimizing their down time the Marines cross train with one another learning how to operate all the equip-

ment and communicate using the radio.

"One of the most important things I think the team learned out here was how important it is to know one another's job, just in case one team member went down we could still be fully operational," said Brian K. Lee, an air traffic controller, for MACS-2 MMT, MCAS Cherry Point.

"This training is awesome," said Sgt. Timothy S. Vanderhorst, an air traffic controller for Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, S.C.

"Most of the Marines out here are Station Marines and have never seen this type of environment before. It really gets you prepared," said Vanderhorst.

"I consider ourselves lucky to get the chance to come out here and get this training and have the ability to further learn our jobs and ask questions in a time when it is not mission essential," said Vanderhorst.



PHOTO BY CHARLES E. MCKELVEY

Marines inspect an AH-1W Super Cobra after landing at a mock forward operating base during training at Desert Talon. Marine Air Traffic Control Mobile teams safely lead the birds in.