



Sgt. Walter L. Anderson briefs junior Marines before a marksmanship course at Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji's remote target range Feb. 6. Anderson and four noncommissioned officers organized the training event to give Fuji Marines a chance to hone their combat skills. Photos by Cpl. Jennifer Calaway

Training Targeted

Fuji NCOs help junior Marines focus on being riflemen first

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Seven years in the Marine Corps, and he hasn't trained with his M-16A2 service rifle since Marine Combat Training. Sgt. Walter L. Anderson, a postal clerk stationed at Combined Arms Training Center Camp Fuji, decided not to let the same thing happen to his Marines.

Anderson was among a handful of noncommissioned officers at Camp Fuji who raised the idea of a two-day marksmanship training evolution to give the camp's junior Marines a chance to hone their combat skills.

Camp officials supported the plan and appointed a team of five NCOs to execute the training on Camp Fuji's remote target range Feb. 5-6.

For Marines like Anderson, Mount Fuji will only be their neighbor for typically a one-year tour. The camp's mission is to support training units who come through to utilize the ranges the base shares with the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force. Although many units utilize Camp Fuji's ranges to train, permanent base Marines seldom get the chance — until now.

The team's responsibility began with picking a time and place and ended with every Marine making it home safely at the end of the day. The NCOs coordinated transportation, selected Marines to train, created a lesson plan, coordinated with range control and ammunition technicians, and secured Meals Ready to Eat.

Lance Cpl. Rachelle J. Fernandez, a motor transportation operator with Camp Fuji, said



Junior Marines run through the marksmanship course on Camp Fuji's remote target range.

at first she was apprehensive about firing live rounds from the prone position in more than six inches of freshly-fallen snow.

"I was nervous because the visibility out here is affected by the snow," Fernandez said. "But when I got on the ground, muscle-memory just took over, and it felt like MCT all over again."

The only officer to attend the days' events, Capt. Jonathan R. Parker, the range officer in charge, said the NCOs handled their mission flawlessly, setting a fine example for the young Marines who will soon conduct training sessions of their own.

"It's important for the (lance corporals) and below out here to see their NCOs taking it by the reins, organizing training where we're making them better marksmen," Parker said. "Every Marine is a rifleman, and sometimes that can get put on a back-burner here at Fuji."

Not if Anderson has anything to do with it.

He spent the day keeping the Marines on target, firmly ensuring that their muscle-memory was in check. He made sure the snow didn't hinder their sights and challenged them to focus under the stress.

"They're all over us out here, but in a good way," said Fernandez, grinning as she caught her breath. "You can tell they really want us to be able to hit our target no matter what kind of weather is against us."

Twenty-five hundred rounds later, Anderson sat down with his cold, wet Marines and told them about the times when he noticed they had let the pressure get to them. He emphasized the importance of correcting mistakes such as letting the snowy conditions distract their focus and cause them to forget to put their weapons on safe or take their eyes off their targets. Mostly he told them how impressed he was with them for showing him that every Marine truly is a rifleman.

"I'm already getting excited for the next one," Anderson said.

Anderson said he hopes the training paved the way for Camp Fuji Marines to train alongside the many units constantly flowing through the base.

Parker said he hopes to have Camp Fuji Marines train with soldiers from Camp Zama, an Army installation nearby, in March. The soldiers are scheduled to train on Camp Fuji to prepare for an upcoming deployment.

As for Anderson, he'll be firing his M-16 much more than he has in his career thus far.

"I just wanna get out on the range and get some!" he said.