

Community Leaders Forum 18 October 2007

Col O'Connor, Commanding Officer, MCAS Miramar opened the meeting with remarks concerning the success of the Miramar Air Show and the opening of the new "HUB" on base which includes, among other items of interest, the new library and learning center.

1st Lt Jill Leyden, External Information Officer, presented a most interesting briefing on the role of the military public information office in Iraq. Her remarks centered on the 1 MEF PAO (Public Affairs Office) deployment to IRAQ from Aug 6 2006 – Feb 7, 2007.

Lt Leyden gave the CLF a very professional briefing on the duties of the Public Affairs Office while deployed.

The PAO office oversees and works with the imbedded journalists from the major news networks. The mission is to counter propaganda initiated by the enemy. I asked her if her office had any problems with journalists who seemed to have "an agenda." Lt Leyden replied that 98% of the journalists write accurate stories. It is worth putting up with a couple of slanted journalists in order to get the news out.

The office also conducts live interviews and writes and publishes internal stories for the military.

By far the most stunning part of the briefing was learning that our own public affairs people intentionally withhold a great deal of positive news on the Iraq conflict. The reason is simple: Good news invites a terrorist response. If news is published regarding a new school that just opened, the terrorists blow it up. If an Iraqi leader manages to pull together several warring factions for the good of the country, and his good work is made public, he is assassinated. In fact, Abdul-Sattar Abu Risha, leader of the Anbar Salvation Council was assassinated right after it became known that he had precipitated a meeting between Shiite and Sunni groups and was able to inspire peaceful cooperation between the groups. Many of us here in the U.S. were under the impression that the "Liberal Press" minimized the good news while reporting on the bad news. While some of that does go on, by far the most censoring of "good news" comes from our own military.

Noise complaints regarding Miramar remain minimal.

The next CLF meeting is scheduled for November 15th, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey C. Frederick