

Leadership class visits Marine Corps Base Hawaii

Marine Corps Base Hawaii – Kaneohe Bay

Story by [Kristen Wong](#)



Photo by Kristen Wong

Jaclyn de Jacquant, an Executive Leadership Development Program participant, tries the obstacle course at the Landing Zone Boondocker aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii, Dec. 8.

KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii -- With the morning sun beating down on his head, Lance Cpl. Charles Dunham demonstrated flipping over a bar, jumping over a wall, and scrambling up a rope.

After seeing the amphibious assault crewman for Combat Assault Company, 3rd Marine Regiment perform this feat, whispers of “what have we gotten ourselves into?” and “I can’t do that!” could be heard among the audience.

More than 50 participants of the Executive Leadership Development Program Class of 2010 visited the base, Dec. 8. The program, established in 1985 and funded by the Department of Defense, is open to civilians and active duty service members.

The program allows civilians to interact with and train like service members while preparing them for future career advancement. Service members in the program learn about other entities and branches in the department.

While aboard the base, Marines gave participants a feel for training in the Corps.

"I've only got one battle scar," commented ELDP participant Karen Milner, motioning to her arm after the obstacle course.

Though Milner is a former Army sergeant, she did not do the type of training the Marines demonstrated.

"[The class has] got a lot of team spirit, [and a] very collaborative team building atmosphere," said Ariane Whittemore, program executive officer, Executive Management, Department of Defense. "They never leave a teammate behind. They're excited about all the training that they've had an opportunity to do even though this is only their second training deployment, so they gelled as a team early, which is really good for the rest of their year of training."

As the class entered its third month and second "deployment," participants split into smaller groups at the Landing Zone Boondocker on base.

In addition to sampling the obstacle course, participants rappelled down a 45-foot tower with assistance from three Marines of 4th Force Reconnaissance Company.

Staff Sgt. David Tellefsen, the safety insert officer for 4th Force Recon said the participants learned how to secure a harness and rappel down the tower. He said though everyone showed excitement for the experience, many were also afraid. Tellefsen said Sgt. Brian Zygmant, helicopter rope suspension techniques master, 4th Force Recon, was able to help participants become more comfortable.

More than 10 Marines from various units also guided participants through a sample of Special Effects Small Arms Marking System training, which normally uses wax based bullets to simulate real fired shots.

“They were ecstatic,” observed Staff Sgt. Michael Howell of the participants. “They enjoyed it thoroughly.”

Howell, the range inspector and supply chief at Headquarters Battalion, said the participants learned how to use weapons with the SESAMS and learn the correct strategy used to secure a room with possible hazards.

“As civilian workers their principal job is for the war fighter,” Whittemore said. “Many of them are not in jobs that ever allow them the opportunity to see what the war fighter does on a daily basis. So this yearlong development program will test their own mental strength.”

ELDP participant Emilee Blount, the site director for installation support, Defense Logistics Agency, wanted the chance to interact with service members.

Blount, 48, found it interesting “just sitting beside 18, 19-year-old, young airmen and Marines and Army troops and just seeing their level of energy and their excitement about what they do and ... just the tremendous knowledge they have about their jobs and responsibilities.”

ELDP participant Chris Greaver, financial analyst, Navy Budget Office at the Pentagon, applied for ELDP to improve his skills as he plans to advance in his career.

“I learned the first week that I was a lot more creative than I gave myself credit for,” said the 31-year-old.

Greaver said he also learned how to better his leadership skills.

The program can be as challenging as it is rewarding. Greaver and Blount said the participants had to adjust to new routine changes in eating and sleeping. They also attended early morning briefings.

But Greaver said he enjoyed chatting with service members throughout the program, whereas at work he rarely gets to interact with them.

“Another big challenge is combining these deployments and these trips with our full-time jobs,” said ELDP participant Doug Wise, the chief of plans and operations at Fort George G. Meade, Md. “We all have fairly responsible positions and need to really work hard once we get back at our normal jobs.”

Wise said his 26 years in the Army helped him during the program. He said the training in ELDP was similar to what he has already experienced, and it built his confidence to know he could still perform tasks he once did in uniform. He also believes it’s valuable for civilians to experience the ELDP training.

“[The training] gives them a real taste of what the war fighter is going through,” Wise said.

Though the course is far from over, several participants already carry significant memories from the program. Blount found her trip to the demilitarized zone with the South Korean Army to be memorable.

“The North Koreans are within 30 plus feet of you,” Blount said. “Just knowing the conflict and the tension between the two, and then to have them bomb South Korea two days after we left, that really brought home what’s going on in that area.”

Wise found his first attendance to a Dec. 7 ceremony at Pearl Harbor to be the most memorable. Being able to see the survivors of the Japanese attacks in 1941 and the war that followed was “very emotional.”

The program seems to resonate still with ELDP graduates, like Michael Smith, training and readiness manager, Navy Region Hawaii. For Smith, 54, a retired Marine master gunnery sergeant, some experiences were new. For instance he learned how to operate the USS Hopper, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer at Pearl Harbor, for the first time in 2008.

“[ELDP] gave me a broader understanding of the DoD’s mission,” said Smith, who holds a doctorate in management. “It’s very intensive and it’s a great program.”

Eligible Department of Defense civilians in levels GS-12 to GS-14 and service members in paygrades O-3 and O-4 can apply for ELDP through Headquarters Marine Corps.

"[ELDP] helps them become team leaders as they move up in the Department of Defense," Whitemore said. "They need to be able to lead teams and [ELDP] gives them a really good first-hand grasp of what the war fighter does on a daily basis, and how they then in their current jobs and their future jobs can more effectively support the war fighter."

For more information about ELDP, visit http://www.cpmc.osd.mil/lpdd/eldp_index