

# TROOPS

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If it does happen, and there are few here who believe it will not, an estimated 35,000 Marines from El Toro, Tustin and Camp Pendleton, and an untold number of others from Orange County serving in other branches of the military, will be thrown into battle.

Under any scenario, the Marines from Orange and San Diego counties will be in the thick of the fighting, whether it be an amphibious assault on Kuwait city or part of a flanking maneuver or frontal assault against the heavily fortified Iraqi positions along the Kuwaiti border.

An estimated 5,000 men and women from the Marine Corps Air Station at El Toro and the helicopter base at Tustin are in the gulf to support about 400 Marine helicopters and jet fighters poised to strike at Iraq.

Most of them too young to have served in Vietnam and encouraged by President Bush's vows that this will not be a protracted, drawn-out war, the young Marines look with confidence on their ability to bring the fighting to a quick and violent end.

"We're going in to kick ass," said Pvt. Eric Jones, 21, of Camp Pendleton. "It's going to be a quickie."

There is little escaping the signs of war that have come with the massive infusion of war materiel and troops into eastern Saudi Arabia.

The petroleum port cities that hug the coastline of the Persian Gulf have been virtually turned

## Troops Find Time for Mail, M&Ms, Game Boy

By RICHARD BEENE  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

EASTERN SAUDI ARABIA—Families across the nation have been separated because of the gulf crisis, but Lt. Col. John Moyer feels he suffered particularly bad timing.

Moyer was transferred to the El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in August, and a week later was sent to Saudi Arabia.

He returned in December, just in time to help his wife and four children move into their new home in Lake Forest, but was shipped back to the gulf on Jan. 6.

"I was there just long enough to hang the curtains," said Moyer, head of an aviation logistics squadron.

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\* Maj. Judd Whitlock, executive officer of HMM-462, a Marine helicopter squadron from Tustin, just wanted to say thanks.

"Our squadron has been adopted by the kids at College Park Elementary in Irvine, and we've received wonderful support from the Elks Club of Laguna Beach, the Newport Marriott, and so many more people. Please tell them all how much we appreciate it."

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If comic books and magazines were the diversions of past wars, the gulf crisis has gone decidedly high-tech. This year, the Nintendo Game Boy video challenge and portable cassette players have won the hearts of servicemen in the field.

Combat troops stationed in the desert spend evenings listening to tapes or hovering over the Game Boy, playing with the aid of a flashlight.

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What's the hottest item at the Marine base exchanges in Saudi Arabia?

In the summer, it was cases of soda, Gatorade and ice cream. Now that it's winter, it's hot cocoa mix and plastic-foam cups of soup.

The always-popular items: Walkman cassette players, tapes, cigarettes, Pop Tarts, Pringles potato chips, M&Ms, and cheap, disposable underwear.

Among women Marines, hair conditioner and hair spray are the top sellers.