

New regiment to increase services for wounded Marines

by Paul M. Krawzak

WASHINGTON - Camp Pendleton's Wounded Warrior Center will be expanded, with additional staff and new barracks, as part of the creation of a specialized regiment to improve care and services for injured and ill Marines, Pentagon officials said Wednesday.

The new Wounded Warrior regiment, headquartered at Quantico, Va., will oversee existing programs for wounded Marines at Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejeune, N.C.

The Wounded Warrior program was begun in 2005 to provide injured Marines and associated sailors and their families with assistance in finding proper medical care, filling out insurance forms, and securing other services.

Col. Gregory A.D. Boyle, commander of the new regiment, said putting the program under a single command will allow services to be provided more efficiently.

"One of our goals is to help Marines cut through the bureaucracy," he said during a Pentagon news conference Wednesday. According to Boyle, several Marine commands have been involved in running the program up to now and "all of them are not necessarily aware of how the system works."

The creation of the regiment became official Sunday. Boyle said it would begin operating in May and would be fully operational by the end of the summer.

Fourteen injured Marines are currently in the Wounded Warrior barracks at Camp Pendleton, while another 36 are in the barracks at Camp Lejeune, Marine spokeswoman 1st Lt. Blanca Binstock said.

Other Marines at Camp Pendleton also benefit from the program but do not live in the barracks, officials said.

The impact of the change on the Camp Pendleton program is unclear. Lt. Col. Charles Johnson, who has been named commander of the Wounded Warrior Battalion at Camp Pendleton, was not at the Pentagon briefing.

Boyle said while additional staff will be added to the program at Camp Pendleton, exact numbers have been not been determined.

The Camp Pendleton program has 10 personnel.

Officials said they are seeking \$53 million from Congress to build additional barracks at Camp Pendleton and Camp Lejeune to expand capacity, as well as construct a regimental headquarters at Quantico.

No breakout was available for how much construction funding would be allocated to Camp Pendleton.

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