

JOHN WAYNE JOINS RECON BATTALION

author: USMC

source: United States Marine Corps

CAMP SCHWAB, Okinawa, Japan -- Rhythmic, booming taps occupy the air of the 5th Force Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division's main office hallway as a large creature makes its way to the Training and Operations Office.

Its body is covered with black, coarse hair on top with a sharp white blotch on its chest. He weighs 95 pounds and exudes confidence.

This animal is known throughout the base as Private First Class "Big Duke Six," 5th Force Reconnaissance Battalion's pit bull mascot.

Duke, respectfully named after John Wayne, is four years old and has been with the unit since May 1999. "We believe he was a Japanese fighting dog before we picked him up at the [kennel]," said Gunnery Sgt. James B. Smith, training chief and caretaker for Duke.

"He was originally the platoon mascot for 1st platoon, Company A. He picks up his official orders as the battalion mascot this week."

The Duke's daily routine is almost equal to a reconnaissance Marine's schedule. "He'll run physical training with us and go the whole three miles," said Smith. "He'll even sit out in front of the office and wait for another platoon to run by, [and] chase some units down the road."

With all of the exposure to different Marines each day, Duke tries to mimic humans.

"He'll sit in chairs, thinking he's a person," said Smith. "He even sleeps on a cot at night." With Duke's new billet as battalion mascot, new things await him. "We're building him a six-foot wide, seven-foot tall and eight-foot deep doghouse," said Smith.

"We're even putting a love seat in it which he likes to sit on." Duke may have his comical moments, but still stands as a pillar of pride for the battalion.

"He's a very loyal dog," said Smith. "If you mess with him, he'll align you." [{HOME}](#)

reprinted with the permission of the USMC.

© USMC



