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## Rally draws more than 2,000 to Summerlin

By Mary Manning  
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 LAS VEGAS SUN

A **rally** marked by wind-whipped American flags, red-white-and-blue garb and community goodwill drew more than 2,000 people Wednesday night to demonstrate support for U.S. **troops** in the Persian Gulf.

Many at the **rally** in Summerlin had personal ties to the war in Iraq.

Nevada Highway Patrol trooper James Bell, a 24-year law enforcement veteran, said he anxiously watches the news when he is not sleeping or working because his son, Chris, 33, is with the 1st Marine Division in An Nasiriyah.

"His was one of the first units in," Bell said of the machine-gunner whose letter written 10 days ago arrived at the family's Las Vegas home earlier Wednesday.

Chris Bell is serving in the area where Tonopah resident U.S. Marine Corps 2nd Lt. Frederick E. Pokorney Jr. was killed along with eight other Marines in Iraq over the weekend.

James Bell attended the **rally** with his son Sam, 34, also a highway patrol trooper.

"It's tough to stay at home," Sam Bell said.

When Chris gets out of the Marines, James Bell

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said, he wants to be a welder. His twin brother, Thomas, is a chef at The Rio. Thomas has also served in the Marines.

"You don't have to support the war, but support the people, the **troops**," James Bell said. "It's about our freedom."

Traffic was backed up for more than two hours on Summerlin Parkway as people tried to reach the **rally**, Nevada Highway Patrol public affairs officer Jim Olschlager said.

Las Vegas firefighters, Metro Police on horseback and on bicycles and many veterans cheered the patriotic poems and praise for military men and women overseas heard at the **rally**.

Pete Pinal waved a sign with a photo of his daughter, Lance Cpl. Eva Pinal, 20, who is on her way to Kuwait.

"She was so gung-ho, she quit college and joined," Pinal said. "We're so proud of her, but of course, we're scared. We support the **troops**."

One thing the retired Air Force master sergeant, who served in Germany during the first Gulf War, can't understand is the attention being paid to anti-war protesters, he said.

"When I watch the news, I don't want to watch the demonstrators," Pinal said.

Kathryn Myers, who walked to the **rally** with her three children from their Summerlin home, said she had not heard from her nephew-in-law Garrett Hill, who was sent to the Gulf while serving in the Coast Guard.

"His mom thought he'd be safe in the Coast Guard," she said.

Hill's sister was about to be called to serve, but she found out she is pregnant so will not go overseas, Myers said.

"It kind of really hits home if it's one of your relatives," Myers said.

Marjorie Weiss, whose son John Kalua, 21, is a gunnery petty officer on the USS Reuben James in

the Gulf, said she got a message from him recently.

"He said he was going to write my name on one of the missiles headed for Baghdad," Weiss said as the crowd roared its approval.

Most of the flags rippled in the spring winds, but Christine Montgomery made a special small blue flag stuck on a toothpick. "It took me all day to make it," she said jokingly.

The flag's message read "USA -- Give 'em hell."

Montgomery, who designs quilt patterns, said her husband is a retired Navy photojournalist.

"I think we have to do all we can to support our people," Montgomery said.

Phil Randazzo of insurance company Nevada Benefits organized the rally and was amazed at the turnout.

"I can't organize dry cleaning," he said. "This isn't a pro-war rally. This is a pro-troop rally."

Randazzo said he donated \$10,000 toward the rally. Nevada Benefits donated \$10,000 worth of calling cards to the troops, and other donations were announced at the rally.

Soldiers serving in the parched Iraqi desert will receive 250,000 tubes of lip balm from Las Vegas next week, Randazzo said.

Nevada's three congressmen and two senators sent representatives who made brief statements in support of the troops.

Las Vegas Mayor Oscar Goodman said he would write a \$1,000 check today.

"Just send someone to pick it up," the mayor said, adding, "This is awesome. I think it is a great moment for Las Vegas."

Las Vegas Councilwoman Lynette Boggs McDonald said, "I am a daughter of a soldier and I'm a straight shooter myself."

McDonald's father served as an Army command sergeant major in the 3rd Infantry Division, which

was 50 miles from Baghdad on Wednesday.

"They are over there to protect the blanket of freedom we sleep under every night," she said.

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