Outstanding Year at Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport

By Dr. Richard Kelley

This week, I had the pleasure of visiting the Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport (HGIDA) to review its operations and facilities and receive the budget for 2011. John Fitts, CEO of Outrigger Lodging Services, which manages the property, and representatives of the property’s ownership group, joined me.

Reviewing their beautifully done report, it was quite clear that our ‘ohana in “The Mile High City” faced up to the challenges of 2010 and produced outstanding results. They beat budget at the bottom line, renovated and improved half of the guest rooms and many public areas, and assisted the local community in a number of ways. In the interest of health and the environment, the property was converted to 100 percent non-smoking. It also held a health fair for employees.

I was particularly pleased to note how our team in Denver supports the men and women of our nation’s armed services. Denver and nearby Colorado Springs are home to many units of today’s military. Buckley Air Force Base, just a 15-minute drive away, is the headquarters of the 460th Space Wing and 140th Wing of the Colorado Air National Guard. Besides operations, many are trained there before deployment to the world’s “hot spots,” including Afghanistan.

Under the leadership of hotel General Manager Gian Gandolfo, our Denver area ‘ohana hosted a number of events for the military over the past year, including a USO luncheon, an Armed Forces Recognition Luncheon, breakfasts for the Defense Council, and a Marine Corps Anniversary Ball.

They also “adopted” Bravo Marine Group and its stateside families, while the group was in Afghanistan as HET-5 (Human Exploitation Team, i.e. counterintelligence). The group was sent several “Care Packages” while overseas and welcomed home with a rollicking party.

During the recent celebration of the Marine Corps’ 235th anniversary, Gian and his team were presented with a memento of thanks in the form of a shadow box containing

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a photograph of the HET-5 in Afghanistan and a U.S. flag flown over their base there.

The inscription on the back of Marine shadow box reads:

“To Hilton Garden Inn,

Thank you for your support for all the Marines of HET-5 before, during and after their deployment. This box contains a photo of the members of HET-5 taken aboard Camp Leatherneck, Washir District, Afghanistan, the NATO (ISAF) and Afghanistan Campaign Medals and Ribbons presented to US Forces serving in Afghanistan. Also the Eagle, Globe & Anchor, the symbol of the Marine Corps. Finally the American Flag was flown over Camp Leatherneck in recognition of your continued support of the Marines. Semper Fi. – (Signed) Staff Sergeant Bennett, USMC”

A plaque inside the shadow box reads:


Congratulations to every member of our ‘ohana at Hilton Garden Inn Denver Airport for a great year and all you do every day! 🎉

Happy homecoming for Bravo Marine Group

Bravo Marine Group in Afghanistan - standing: SSGT Gibson, SSGT Bennett (he handmade the shadowbox), SGT O’Malley, and CPL Roland. Kneeling: CWO Vigil, SGT Olson, and SSGT Severy