



Major Richard “Trainwreck” Burkett, Jr. United States Marine Corps (Ret.)

Biography:

January 1994, Richard Burkett enlisted in the United States Army Reserve (USAR) serving with the 347th Quarter Master Company out of Farrell, PA. While serving there he was promoted to the rank of Sergeant and completed two overseas deployments. He also completed his undergraduate degree at Grove City College, earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Management in 1998.

After requesting a Conditional Release from his USAR contract, Sgt Burkett was granted the opportunity to attend the United States Marine Corps Officer Candidate School (OCS). Upon successful completion, Sgt Burkett would be released from his USAR contract and be allowed to accept a commission in the Marine Corps. On 06 June 1999, Candidate Burkett reported to OCS and on 13 August 1999 he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, USMC.

Without delay, 2ndLt Burkett reported to The Basic School (TBS) as an open contract and was assigned to Fox Company, '99. 2ndLt Burkett excelled and earned one of two Aviation Military Occupational Specialty positions available to the entire company of over 200 Lieutenants. He graduated from TBS on 17 March 2000.

From TBS, 2ndLt Burkett reported to Marine Aircraft Training Support Group 21 (MATSG-21). While waiting to be assigned a flight school start date, he was assigned as the the Leadership, Education and Development (LEAD) program Officer in Charge (OIC). During his time as LEAD OIC, 2ndLt Burkett supervised and trained over 1500 junior enlisted Marines as they awaited their MOS school report dates. 2ndLt Burkett was also a member of the 2000 All-Marine Corps Rugby Team.

2ndLt Burkett “classed-up” in April of 2001 and was assigned to Fixed Wing Training Squadron 2 (VT-2), the Do-er Birds. During his time at VT-2, 2ndLt Burkett was promoted to First Lieutenant. He completed his primary and intermediate flight training at VT-2 and was then transferred to Helicopter Training Squadron 18 (HT-18), the Boiler Makers. 22 November 2002, 1stLt Burkett completed advanced flight training at HT-18 and earned his wings. He was selected to be a CH-46E pilot; he would fly the Battle Frog.

12 December 2002, 1stLt Burkett reported to Medium Marine Helicopter Training Squadron 164 (HMMT-162), the Night Riders, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA to complete his flight training on the CH-46. While at HMMT-164, he was assigned as the Assistant Flightline officer. In April 2003, 1stLt Burkett completed his training and was finally headed to the Fleet.

May 2003, 1stLt Burkett reported into Marine Aircraft Group 29 (MAG-29), Marine Corps Air Station New River, NC and was assigned to Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 162 (HMM-162), the Golden Eagles. However, the Golden Eagles were on their way home from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and only their Advanced Party was on deck so he was sent to Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) School. Upon completion of SERE School, he returned to HMM-162, who were now back in force and he was assigned as the Embarkation Officer. 1stLt Burkett completed Amphibious Ship Load Planner Course as the Distinguished Honor Graduate.

In 2003, he was again selected to the All-Marine Rugby Team. July 2004, 1stLt Burkett was promoted to Captain. He also received the call-sign, “Trainwreck” prior to deployment.

March 2005, HMM-162 (Reinforced), now assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) as the Air Combat Element (ACE), deployed to the Northern Arabian Gulf in support of OIF. In addition to flying combat missions over Iraq, Capt Burkett orchestrated four major on- and off-loads from supporting Navy ships.

After completion of the deployment, Capt Burkett was assigned to MAG-29 as the Ground Training Officer. His responsibilities included facilitating all of the ground training events for eight subordinate units as well as ensuring all pre-deployment training was 100% complete for the MAG's upcoming OIF deployment. During this time, Capt Burkett served as part of the coaching staff for the 2005-2006 All-Marine Rugby Team.

The MAG deployed in February 2007 and Capt Burkett was part of the Remain-Behind-Element (RBE) and was responsible for all training of replacement and rotating MAG personal. In July of the same year, he was called forward and reassigned to 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (2 MAW) where he served as the Rotary Wing Tasker responsible for all helicopter movement in Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

February 2008, Capt Burkett returned to MCAS New River with the MAG and transitioned to the MV-22 Osprey program in September of 2008. He reported to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Training Squadron 204 (VMMT-204) as a student pilot and was assigned as the Assistant Airframes Officer.

In October 2009, before he completed flight training, Capt Burkett was assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 261 (VMM-261), the Raging Bulls. Shortly thereafter, the Bulls deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan in support of OEF. He served as the RBE OIC until he completed flight training and then joined the Bulls as the first MV-22 squadron in Afghanistan. 01 January 2010, Capt Burkett was promoted to Major and served as the squadron's Logistics Officer.

July 2010, the Bulls returned to MCAS New River and Major Burkett remained as the squadron's Logistics Officer and prepared the Bulls for their MEU deployment scheduled for early 2012.

March 2012, the Raging Bulls deployed as the ACE for the 24th MEU. While conducting missions in support of Operation African Lion, Maj Burkett was involved in a crash. The pilot flying at the time lost control of the aircraft and before it could be recovered it impacted the desert floor at over 75 degrees nose down. Both Crew Chiefs died in the crash and both the co-pilot and Maj Burkett sustained severe injuries, Maj Burkett's were life threatening.

Maj Burkett and his copilot were CASEVACed to Landstuhl Regional Medical Facility, Germany and five days later he was MEDEVACed to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Naval Support Activity Bethesda, MD.

Maj Burkett was joined there by his wife and, then, four children. He remained there with them undergoing countless surgeries (in excess of 50) and procedures over the next four years before he was discharged and transferred to Wounded Warrior Battalion East, Marine Corps Base Camp LeJeune. Maj Burkett retired from the United States Marine Corps on 01 August, 2016. In February 2018, the long battle with MRSA in his left knee was lost and his leg was amputated above the knee.

It was during the time at Walter Reed that Maj Burkett realized his new calling. Throughout his recovery, he used archery as a means of therapy, not just for his physical needs, but also for the mental strength it gave him. With practice he was able to earn a place on the 2015 United States Archery Team, earned his National Level Coaching certification, won Gold in Archery at the inaugural Invictus Games in London. As a result of the healing benefits of archery that he experienced and his desire to "give back," Maj Burkett earned his National Level Coaching Credentials and has since coached many wounded, ill and injured Marines, soldiers and sailors and help them in their rehabilitation. He also coached for the Baltimore and Washington DC VAsand MedStar National Rehabilitation Hospital adaptive archery programs, coached the Marine Wounded Warrior Team at Marine Corps Trials in 2016 through 2022 as well as at Wounded Warrior Games in 2017 through 2022. Most notably, he returned to the 2018 Invictus Games in Sydney, Australia as the US Wounded Warrior Archery Coach.

Richard Burkett continues to volunteer, coach archery and compete. For his next big event, he will be headed to Santiago, Chile later this month to compete in the Pan American Championships.

Awards:

- Air Medal (x2)
- Navy Commendation Medal
- Navy and Marine Achievement Medal (x2)
- Army Achievement Medal (x2)
- Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal
- Meritorious Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal
- National Defense Medal (x2)
- Presidential Unit Citation (x2)
- Navy Unit Commendation (x3)
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal
- Iraqi Campaign Medal
- Global War On Terrorism Medal Expeditionary
- Global War On Terrorism Service Medal
- Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (x4)
- Army Reserve Overseas Deployment Ribbon (x2)
- Nato Medal - ISAF Afghanistan.

Family:

- **Wife:**
 - SSgt of Marines Melissa
- **Children:**
 - Keenan (19)
 - *SeaBee in the US Navy in Guam*
 - Josilyn (16)
 - Mastin (13)
 - Lochlen (10)
 - Nollynn (5)
 - Roawyn (5)

