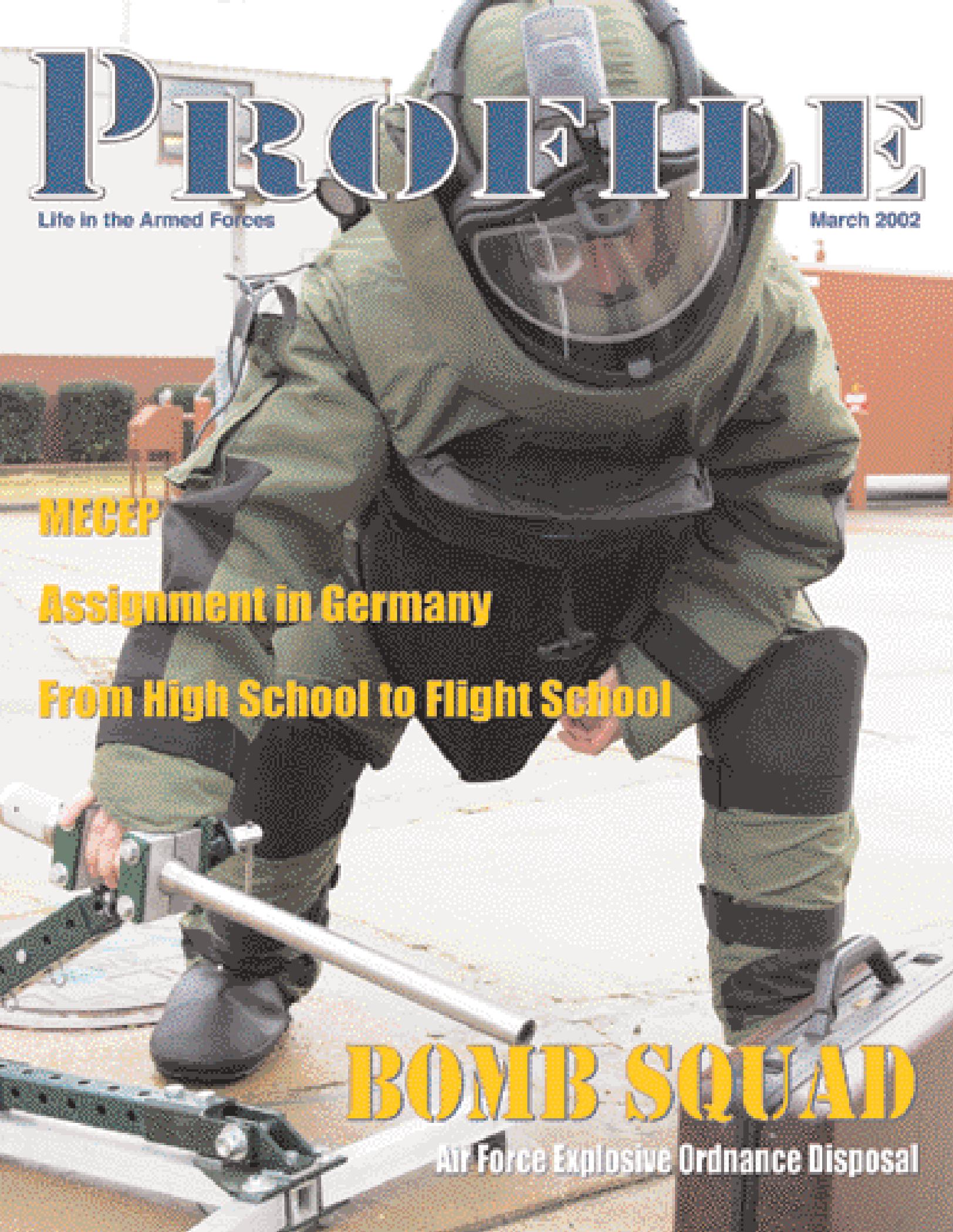


PROFILE



Life in the Armed Forces

March 2002

MECEP

Assignment in Germany

From High School to Flight School

BOMB SQUAD

Air Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal

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They look like anybody else you might meet, but inside their minds are layouts of bombs and memories of blowing stuff up. They are members of an Air Force explosive ordnance disposal team, or "bomb squad."



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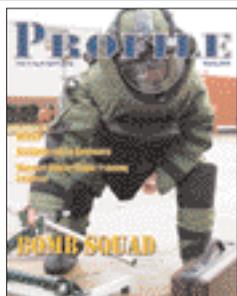
Coast Guardsmen trade their boats for bicycles to protect the environment and promote safety awareness.

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**ON THE COVER**

Wearing the EOD-8 suit, an EOD technician cautiously sets up a tool to render safe a simulated improvised explosive device. (Photo by Sgt. Kim Lopez)

**In the Spotlight.**

Each month on this page we spotlight servicemembers to show our readers the diverse opportunities the military services offer.

**Seaman Thaddeus A. Imfeld
U.S. Navy**

Imfeld is an operations specialist assigned to the USS Nassau, an amphibious assault ship at Norfolk Naval Base, Va. He is originally from Charlottesville, Va., and was home schooled prior to coming into the military. He operates various radars and communications equipment in the ship's combat information center. This is his first duty assignment in the Navy.

**Seaman Jackson Francois
U.S. Navy**

Francois, an operations specialist assigned to the USS Nassau, an amphibious assault ship at Norfolk Naval Base, Va., is a graduate of Watkins Mill High School in Germantown, Md. He operates various radars and communications equipment in the ship's combat information center (CIC) and said he enjoys working with his shipmates on the CIC team. This is his first duty assignment in the Navy.

**Seaman Justin Comans
U.S. Navy**

Comans, an information systems technician assigned to the USS Nassau, an amphibious assault ship at Norfolk Naval Base, Va., is originally from Pittsburgh, Pa., and graduated from Westinghouse High School. He sends and receives messages from other commands and ships, and makes sure the circuits stay up and running. When in port, he is a security guard in the Ship Security Defense Force. He said the best part of his duty are the marketable job skills he's learned, because "it's what I plan to do when I get out."

**Cpl. Terrell M. Jackson
U.S. Marine Corps**

Jackson, an administrator assigned to the Fleet Hometown News Center at Norfolk Naval Base, Va., graduated from Highland Park High School in Detroit, Mich. He inputs data on sailors and Marines for the purpose of producing news stories for newspapers in the service members' hometowns. He said the best part of the job is working on a computer and serving his fellow Marines. Jackson has traveled to Okinawa, California, North Carolina and Korea.





B-52 turns 50

Considered by many to be the tried and true workhorse of the U.S. Air Force heavy bomber fleet, the B-52 Stratofortress turned 50 years old April 15.

Although originally designed to penetrate the Soviet Union and drop nuclear bombs, the B-52 has served in a variety of conventional bombing roles in Vietnam, Iraq, Kosovo and most recently Afghanistan.

The first prototype of the bomber flew April 15, 1952. The last B-52 was delivered in October 1962.

□For 50 years, the B-52 has been the massive firepower in American aerospace power,□ said Lt. Gen. Thomas J. Keck, 8th Air Force commander. □Enemies of the United States continue to fear the formidable B-52 because it carries the widest variety of munitions of any aircraft and has a devastating long-range standoff capability that allows it to attack anywhere at anytime.□

Though some of the aircraft are crewed today by the sons, grandsons, daughters, and granddaughters of the first B-52 aircrews, the Air Force plans to continue using the bomber until 2037. The Air Force and Boeing

have continually updated the B-52 with new avionics, communication links, defense systems and precision-guided weapons. The Air Force is considering new fuel-efficient turbofan engines for the eight-engine jets.

The B-52 is the only U.S. aircraft capable of delivering long-range AGM-86C conventional air-launched cruise missiles and AGM-142 Have Nap air-to-ground missiles, and is the only Air Force platform capable of delivering the AGM-84D Harpoon anti-ship missile. Called □standoff weapons,□ cruise missiles improve the bomber's ability to survive by allowing it to fly outside the range of enemy defenses and launch missiles into the target area.

The B-52 also drops laser-guided weapons, inertially guided weapons and weapons guided by the Global Positioning System of satellites, including the new Joint Direct Attack Munition used extensively in the Afghanistan air campaign.

A total of 744 B-52 bombers were built by Boeing in Wichita and Seattle. Today, 94 B-52H models remain in 8th Air Force, based at Barksdale Air Force

Base and Minot AFB, N.D. *8th Air Force Public Affairs*

AAFES brings airmen slice of home

Airmen deploying for the first time are often surprised when Army and Air Force Exchange Service employees at a fully functional exchange store greet them at their new location. They should not be.

AAFES has been operating in the field since World War II, providing some of the comforts of home in austere environments worldwide. For Operation Enduring Freedom, AAFES has 18 sites throughout the theater, said Norm Griffith, AAFES general manager who oversees five sites in three countries.

At Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, an 80- by 30-foot hardened shelter serves as a tactical field exchange for all who deploy to this desert locale in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The store is stocked with food and drinks, electronics, clothes, toiletries, reading

material, music and video, and other items that arrive weekly.

Initiatives planned for the near future include name brand fast food concessions, a beauty salon and other small retailers, said Griffith. *366th Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs*

Sergeant's idea earns him \$10,000

A 463rd Logistics Support Squadron sergeant earned \$10,000 for an idea that will save his base more than \$264,000 a year.

Tech. Sgt. James S. Lennartz, a 463rd LSS turbo propulsion craftsman, came up with an idea to fix C-130 Hercules engine parts for 75 cents instead of getting replacements from a depot for \$4,808.29.

The parts are the mount bushings on a C-130 oil cooler flap actuator. The oil cooler cools the C-130 engine's oil, the flap actuator regulates a flap that brings airflow to the oil cooler, and the mount bushings hold the parts together.

Lennartz said that whenever the mount bushings became worn from flight turbulence, the entire oil cooler flap actuator would have to be replaced because there was no technical order for repairing mount bushings. Fifty-five of the 123 C-130



engines repaired at the engine regional repair center here last year required a flap actuator replacement.

"I figured out what size the old bushings were, had the machine shop make up some stock material for (a bushing) to see if it would work, and I sent it off to the engineers, and they approved it," said Lennartz.

His idea will now be instituted for all C-130 oil cooler flap actuators worldwide.

Lennartz was awarded \$10,000 through the Innovative Development Through Employee Awareness program, which rewards Air Force people up to \$10,000 based on the annual savings that result from their idea. *314th Airlift Wing Public Affairs*

Special Forces Recruiting Initiative

A new Army program that lets recruits enlist directly into rigorous Special Forces training is currently underway and receiving a favorable response from civilians interested in earning the coveted Green Beret, according to officials from the U.S. Army Recruiting Command at Fort Knox, Ky.

"Since we restored the program, the results have been extremely positive," said Capt. David P. Connolly, a public information officer at the U.S. Army Recruiting Command. "We anticipate achieving mission success well before the end of the fiscal year."

Revived in mid-January, the Special Forces Recruiting Initiative is a return to the original Special Forces recruitment process, which began in 1952 and allowed both civilians and servicemen to sign up for the

USS COLE RETURNS



Rain and wind did not dampen the spirits of crewmembers who "Man the Rail" as the USS Cole returns to her Norfolk, Va., homeport. The Cole has been at the Northrop Grumman Ship System facility in Pascagoula, Miss., for the past 14 months undergoing repairs after a terrorist bomb blew a hole in her port side while refueling in the port city of Aden, Yemen, killing 17 sailors. (Photos by Petty Officer 1st Class Tina M. Ackerman)

Seaman Len Edwards puts the finishing touches on a large brass plaque, bearing the names of each sailor killed in the Oct., 12, 2000, terrorist attack, while the ship was refueling in the port city of Aden, Yemen. The plaque represents a centerpiece for the newly completed "Hall of Heroes" aboard ship.



nearly two years of training necessary to become a Green Beret. "I think this program is the best thing to happen to Special Forces in years," said Col. Charles A. King, 1st Special Warfare Training Group (Airborne) commander. "It will allow us to recruit the right kind of guy off the street, train him, prepare him and mold him right from the start."

In 1988, the recruiting process was adjusted to allow only soldiers already in the Army to become Special Forces qualified.

"We are restoring a program which we used to have, in order to meet our current operational requirements," King said. "We have the added benefit of having looked back and studied the (pre-1988) program. We're going to improve on it (with the Special Forces Recruiting Initiative)."

As of March 28, Army recruiters have already filled 140 of the 400 slots allotted for civilians enlisting into the Special Forces Recruiting Initiative, according to Connolly. He said since the initiative's pilot program

was started in January, it has met with much interest among those interested in the military.

Recruits who begin training under the new program will enter the Army as a private first class, eventually earning the rank of sergeant when they complete training, King said.

"This program is not about putting privates on Special Forces teams. A soldier that comes in (the Army) under this program will join a team as a noncommissioned officer," he added. *Army News Service*

EXPLOSIVE OR

Jeremy Phillips likes to lift weights in his spare time. He enjoys drawing and spending time with his wife. He is soft spoken and intelligent. He may come off as your average Joe, but inside the mind of this normal-looking 22-year-old are layouts of bombs, memories of explosions and a high level of suspicion uncommon to most people.

No, he's not a criminal locked behind bars. He's not a terrorist hiding out in a condemned building.

Jeremy Phillips is a senior airman in the Air Force and when he goes to work, he plays with robots and blows stuff up. He gets paid for it, too.

As a member of the explosive ordnance disposal team, a fancy term for bomb squad, at Langley Air Force Base, Va., Phillips investigates dropped or damaged missiles. He is also responsible for recovering explosive items and disposing of them quickly and safely.

How do you dispose of explosives? You blow them up.

Phillips also checks out the team's bomb suits and other equipment on a regular basis to ensure everything is ready to go at a moment's notice.

Located near the Langley flightline, and

only a few hours drive from the nation's capital, the team answers a variety of calls - everything from community threats to incidents on the flightline.

"This job is kind of like the fire department — something new every day," said Phillips. "The job's great," he said, casually adding, "I get paid to wake up every morning, come to work and blow things up."

"I've gone on 24 calls," said the Corpus Christi, Texas, native. "About half of those were dynamite, one was a pipe bomb, another was a sparkler bomb, and then we had this guy who had his home booby-trapped with weapons."

Sounds like pretty exciting stuff, but not everyone has what it takes to make it in this field.

To become an explosive ordnance disposal technician like Phillips, servicemembers must pass intensive training at the Naval School, Explosive Ordnance Disposal in Eglin, Fla.

Phillips started out with 24 classmates, but about nine months later, on graduation day, only he and three others had successfully completed the course.

Although Phillips is in the Air Force, he went to a joint services school. The course



BOMB SQUAD

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. KIM LOPEZ, USMC

ORDNANCE DISPOSAL



Members of the explosive ordnance disposal team at Langley Air Force Base, Va., pictured clockwise from left: Airman 1st Class Derik Sinclair, Senior Airman Jeremy Phillips, Staff Sgt. Michael Yates, Airman 1st Class Benjamin Ford, Tech. Sgt. Milton Sawyer, Senior Airman Doug Blair, Master Sgt. Tim Davis



Wearing the EOD-8 suit, Phillips cautiously sets up a tool to render safe a simulated briefcase bomb.

length and subject matter varies for students from service to service, based on the different missions of each service. For instance, sailors receive extra training on diving and performing their job under water.

By the end of a course, one class has detonated more than 3,000 pounds of miscellaneous explosives.

Phillips smiled as he recalled his first “hands-on” experience.

“I was nervous. You know, you’re shaking really bad. You don’t know any better. If anyone tells you they weren’t afraid it was going to blow their hand off their first time, they’re lying, but now it’s like an everyday thing,” he said.

EOD School is not simply about book learning and practical application of classroom instruction. Personalities and individual behavior are also put to the test. From the beginning of the course, instructors scrutinize the behavior of each student in various interactive environments, such as a football game. Even a student’s reaction to a good test score can make or break his success in the course.

Phillips remembered one student who displayed extreme excitement each time he received a passing grade. He was dropped

from the course. According to Phillips, the instructors interpreted the student’s boisterousness as a lack of self-confidence.

But it’s justified, Phillips said. “It’s a brotherhood and the other EOD servicemembers are our brothers and sisters. This job is not a nine-to-five. The one person who slides through school could be the person working next to you when your life is on the line.”

Although Phillips has only been in the EOD field for about two years, his life has been on the line many times. About one year after graduation, while assigned to an EOD team in Montana, Phillips received a report of dynamite found along the side of a road. He and his supervisor rushed to the scene. As it turned out, an earthmover had been digging a trench along the side of the road when dynamite began spilling out of the dirt.

It was late at night, and had started to snow. Phillips and his supervisor figured the only safe way to remove the dynamite was to pick through the dirt by hand. Piece by piece, they recovered more than 100 sticks of dynamite. It took them about four hours to complete the job.

“Dynamite’s bad stuff when it’s aged and starts to sweat like that,” said Phillips. “I was

nervous... You don’t want to screw up ‘cause your buddy’s down there in the pit with you. If you screw up, it could kill him too,” he said.

Although EOD can be a pretty stressful field, no one is forced to be there.

“It’s what I get paid for,” said Phillips. “But, anytime you can’t handle it anymore, you can DOR (Drop on request),” he explained. “DOR and you’re out of there.”

To Phillips, the extra stress is a small price to pay for his job. Besides receiving an extra \$150 a month for demolition proficiency pay, he’s had the opportunity to work with the U.S. Secret Service.

Phillips said that’s been his favorite part of the job.

“When we’re with the Secret Service, we don’t wear uniforms,” he said. “We wear suits, so no one can tell we aren’t actual members of the Secret Service. It’s been pretty cool to stand face-to-face with the commander in chief.”

In a period of six months alone, members from the Langley EOD team have given security support to the Secret Service during presidential visits from leaders of nations including Jordan, Sweden, Finland, Afghanistan,

Algeria, Hungary and Macedonia.

“All the guys here are up for a challenge. We travel a lot more than the average [servicemember],” said Phillips. “There’s a lot of stuff to know and stay proficient on.”

The pacing of EOD life is varied and unpredictable. They can be conducting training at their shop one minute, and an hour later be out on an emergency call. In one month they might receive as few as one or two calls, and the next month six or seven.

The situations they are called out on are just as varied and unpredictable as the work schedule, so it is impossible to have a set list of guidelines for approaching any situation.

The basic framework of completing a job consists of assessing the situation, formulating a plan and carrying out the plan.

To carry out the plan, the technicians have a variety of technology at their disposal.

The unit boasts five robots, each remotely controlled and used in situations deemed too hazardous even for the technicians. The robots are equipped with cameras and a mechanical hand used to pick up and transport an object.

For instance, one robot, the Mark Six Remote Control Transporter, is outfitted with three extendable cameras that can each rotate, pan, tilt and zoom. The technician uses a monitor and control panel to bring the robot to life from a remote location. It may sound simple, but actually trying to pick up an object, such as a briefcase, while viewing it through the monitor takes a certain degree of dexterity and skill, since it is impossible to perceive depth through the viewing monitor.

The job of an EOD technician is psychological and intellectual, but also requires a great deal of physical agility. The bomb suit alone weighs more than 80 pounds and somewhat resembles your typical space suit.

“Parts of the job are very physical,” said Phillips. “When you put on the bomb suit, you’re basically wearing another person.”

The cumbersome, green suit is made of Kevlar, the same material used in the Mark Six and other combat gear, such as bullet-proof vests. The sleeves are extra long, to protect fingers while approaching a potentially explosive item. The EOD-8-Suit has extra spinal support and includes ceramic and steel plates for added protection.

Complete with a face shield, it can get pretty

sweaty inside the suit. Luckily, a fan can be switched on at the wearer’s convenience for ventilation and to reduce fogging of the faceplate.

Even though the robots and bomb suits are intended to create a safer working environment for the EOD team, there are some jobs that are better left to the technician alone. A mechanical arm is just not capable of being as gentle with an explosive item as a human hand, and the bomb suit may prove too cumbersome in certain situations.

So, once the explosives are recovered, how does the EOD team transport such delicate material?

They use a Total Containment Vessel that basically looks like a steel water tank on wheels. The explosives are placed inside the TCV, and in the event of an explosion, it redirects the blast upward so a bystander can survive.

Once an explosive device is contained, the team transports it to an isolated area, such as a large dump or quarry. In this case, the Langley EOD team has a private range surrounded by a tree line.

It’s pretty much their own world out at the range. Each technician knows his limits and carefully adheres to all safety regulations. Even if just two people are present at the range, a safety briefing is given, read from a black notebook, ensuring all protective gear is worn and rules are followed.

This is where the fun really happens. After all the tedious work of transporting the explosive device to the range, they finally get to blow it up using the Jet Remote Opening Device.

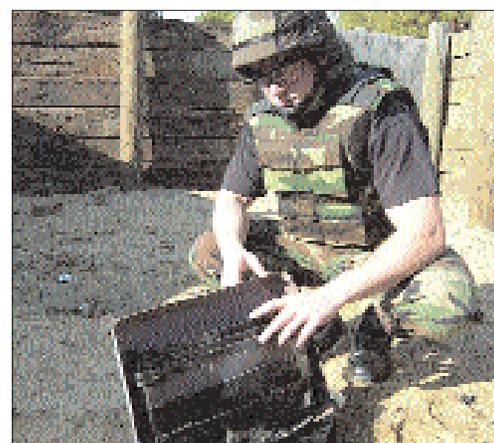
The JROD uses water and a small amount of explosives to destroy an item, such as a briefcase bomb. This weapon works on the principle that all types of matter can be condensed, except for water. When packed with enough force, water proves stronger than steel.

The blast is impressive, leaving the simulated briefcase bomb in shreds.

Simply put, the equipment and each case-by-case scenario are all in a day’s work for Phillips.

That’s the nature of this field. The technicians realize they put their lives on the line every time they answer a call, but they see it all as part of their job.

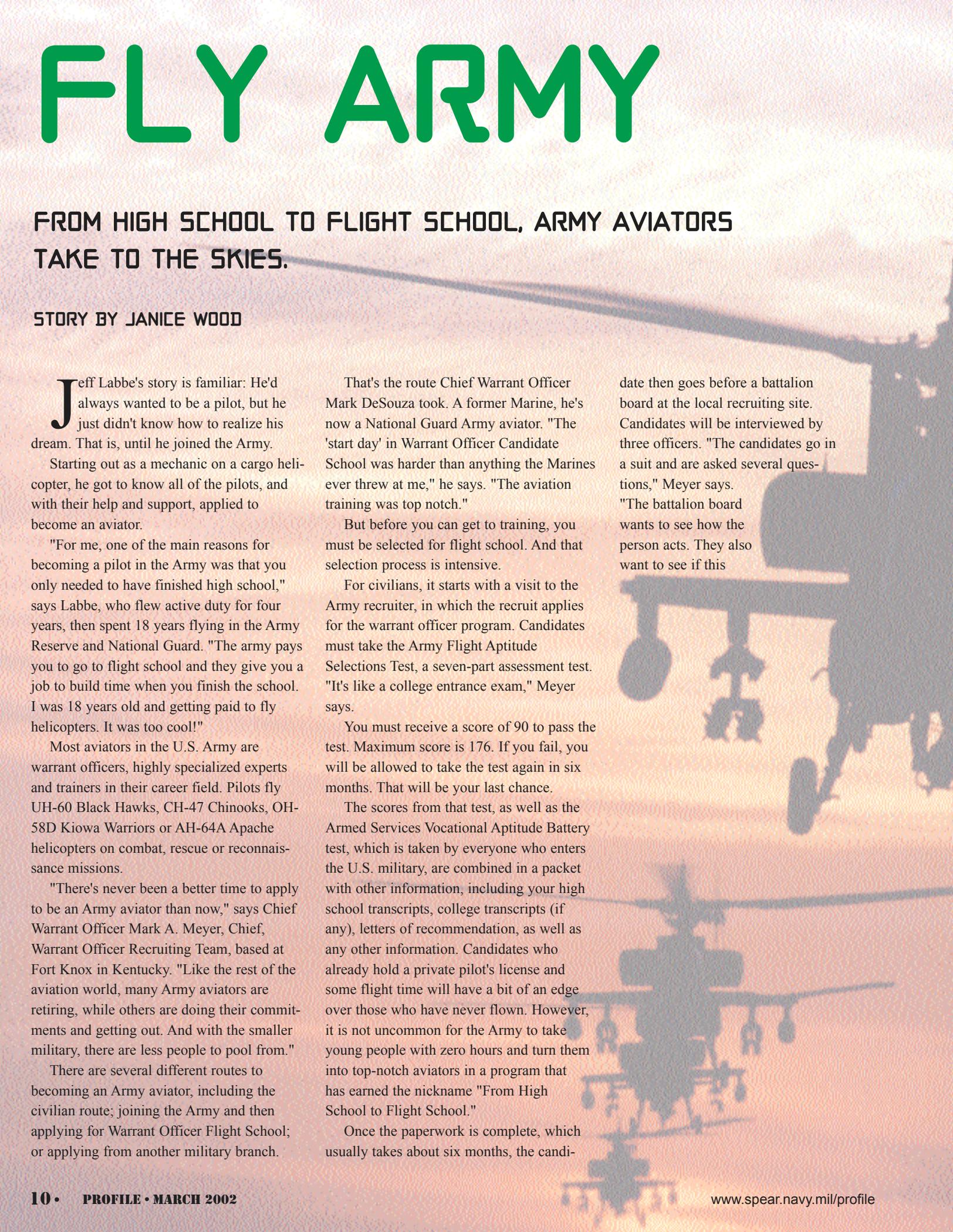
And they get to blow stuff up.



(Top) Phillips lays the firing wire for a JROD as he approaches a simulated briefcase bomb. (Middle) The JROD fires and blows a simulated briefcase bomb to shreds. (Photo by Senior Airman Jeremy Phillips, USAF) (Bottom) Phillips recovers the remains of the briefcase bomb.

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FLY ARMY



FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO FLIGHT SCHOOL, ARMY AVIATORS TAKE TO THE SKIES.

STORY BY JANICE WOOD

Jeff Labbe's story is familiar: He'd always wanted to be a pilot, but he just didn't know how to realize his dream. That is, until he joined the Army.

Starting out as a mechanic on a cargo helicopter, he got to know all of the pilots, and with their help and support, applied to become an aviator.

"For me, one of the main reasons for becoming a pilot in the Army was that you only needed to have finished high school," says Labbe, who flew active duty for four years, then spent 18 years flying in the Army Reserve and National Guard. "The army pays you to go to flight school and they give you a job to build time when you finish the school. I was 18 years old and getting paid to fly helicopters. It was too cool!"

Most aviators in the U.S. Army are warrant officers, highly specialized experts and trainers in their career field. Pilots fly UH-60 Black Hawks, CH-47 Chinooks, OH-58D Kiowa Warriors or AH-64A Apache helicopters on combat, rescue or reconnaissance missions.

"There's never been a better time to apply to be an Army aviator than now," says Chief Warrant Officer Mark A. Meyer, Chief, Warrant Officer Recruiting Team, based at Fort Knox in Kentucky. "Like the rest of the aviation world, many Army aviators are retiring, while others are doing their commitments and getting out. And with the smaller military, there are less people to pool from."

There are several different routes to becoming an Army aviator, including the civilian route; joining the Army and then applying for Warrant Officer Flight School; or applying from another military branch.

That's the route Chief Warrant Officer Mark DeSouza took. A former Marine, he's now a National Guard Army aviator. "The 'start day' in Warrant Officer Candidate School was harder than anything the Marines ever threw at me," he says. "The aviation training was top notch."

But before you can get to training, you must be selected for flight school. And that selection process is intensive.

For civilians, it starts with a visit to the Army recruiter, in which the recruit applies for the warrant officer program. Candidates must take the Army Flight Aptitude Selections Test, a seven-part assessment test. "It's like a college entrance exam," Meyer says.

You must receive a score of 90 to pass the test. Maximum score is 176. If you fail, you will be allowed to take the test again in six months. That will be your last chance.

The scores from that test, as well as the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test, which is taken by everyone who enters the U.S. military, are combined in a packet with other information, including your high school transcripts, college transcripts (if any), letters of recommendation, as well as any other information. Candidates who already hold a private pilot's license and some flight time will have a bit of an edge over those who have never flown. However, it is not uncommon for the Army to take young people with zero hours and turn them into top-notch aviators in a program that has earned the nickname "From High School to Flight School."

Once the paperwork is complete, which usually takes about six months, the candi-

date then goes before a battalion board at the local recruiting site. Candidates will be interviewed by three officers. "The candidates go in a suit and are asked several questions," Meyer says. "The battalion board wants to see how the person acts. They also want to see if this

person looks like officer material. It's like a job interview."

Recommendations from the battalion board are part of the package that makes its way to the U.S. Army Recruiting Command and the final board that makes the decision on which civilians are chosen for warrant officer flight training.

"The ones who get chosen are those who have done a lot of outstanding things," Meyer says. "They are set apart from their peers. A good GPA helps, good test scores help, extra-curricular activities, such as being an Eagle Scout, helps, as well as varsity sports -- anything that shows leadership."

Each year, there are a certain number of slots reserved for civilians. The remaining are reserved for active duty soldiers. Active duty soldiers applying for Warrant Officer Flight School go before a different board. "The stronger soldiers will do better," he says. Of course, throughout the entire process, the Army

recruiters are looking for those intangibles that make a great Army pilot.

"Most people that want to be an aviator have that pilot mentality," Meyer notes. "It's a calling. It's one of those things they are drawn to."

Another pilot puts it this way: "The Army figured out a long time ago there are men and women out there that love flying more than their mother," says Rob Brantner, a former Army pilot and pilot for a regional airline. "They have been able to identify those people. Those people have, in most cases, very little college. They know in their heart they want to fly and will go through anything to get their wings. They are a proud group."

Army aviation is primarily about being a great helicopter pilot, says retired Chief Warrant Officer David Tomlin. "There is no

more exciting place to be," he says. "And Army aviation is worldwide. I've had the pleasure to chase goats over the countryside of South Korea, fly night vision goggles over the treacherous Saudi desert, and beat the persistent low ceilings and visibility that belong to Central Europe. The reason I stayed is also about responsibility. The Army does not have time for

underachievers. You are given responsibility for your aircraft and crew and are expected to perform to a high standard."

The high standard the Army strives to achieve in all its pilots starts in flight school. Following nine weeks of basic training at various bases around the country, candidates are then sent to six weeks of Warrant Officer Candidate School, followed by flight training at Fort Rucker in Alabama. Flight school is 39 weeks long. A new class starts every two weeks.

About halfway through flight school, students in the class are allowed to choose which aircraft they want to specialize in -- the Black Hawk, the Kiowa Warrior, the Apache or the Chinook -- based on their grades. "This gives the students motivation to do well in the course," says Meyer, who has been in the Army 18 years, flying for 14.

GPA is not the only determining factor in the selection process. All candidates also get points for physical training and leadership.

Certain airframes can mean a bigger paycheck for the pilot. Those who fly the Apaches can get a bonus of up to \$12,000 a year. New graduates of flight school are designated as Warrant Officer 1 and receive a salary of about \$2,800 a month. At the sixth year mark, as you move up the ranks, average base salary is \$3,700 a month. Flight pay adds between \$125 and \$840 extra to the pilot's paycheck each month.

Once candidates graduate from flight school, they owe a commitment of six years to the Army. And after graduation is when your day-to-day life as an Army aviator begins.



(Top) ACH-47 Chinook prepares to sling-load a HMMWV. (Photo by Maj. Mike Durham) (Background) A flight of AH-64 Apaches. (U.S. Army Photo)

What a typical day is like really depends on the mission you have, adds Tomlin, who was a general support pilot. "This job offers you the most variety, from hauling troops or VIPs to doing external loads with night vision goggles," he explains.

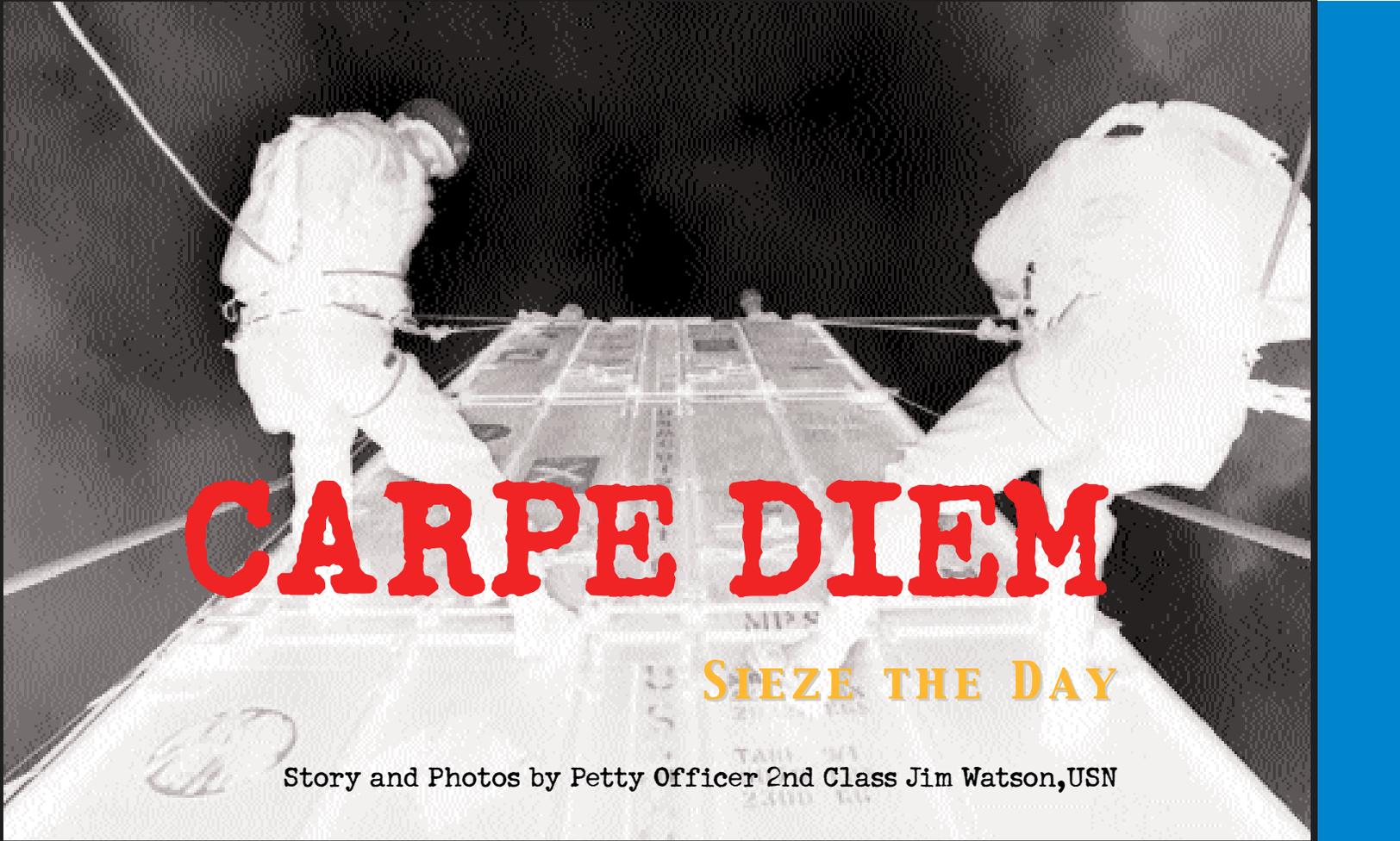
His last 12 years of service, he was a VIP pilot, flying both helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. "VIP flying is not unlike being a corporate pilot," he says. "We cater to a specific clientele and provide reliable safe transportation. The best part about VIP flying is it gets you out of the training areas into the active world of aviation."

"For the aspiring pilot with an absolute love of helicopters and the desire to fly or learn about these machines, you can do no better than the U.S. Army," says Tom Ahl, a former Army pilot who is now a U.S. Customs service pilot and Mississippi National Guard UH-60 Instructor pilot.

"Free advice: Go for it," adds David Sherman, who spent four years flying the Cobras, then transitioned into the "mighty" AH-64 Apache. "These military aircraft are thoroughbreds. The flying is extremely fun. The Army does contour, low level, and nap-of-the-Earth flying better than any branch of service anywhere in the world. Period. If you like it at 130 knots at 3 feet AGL, you'll love the Army flying."

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CARPE DIEM

SEIZE THE DAY

Story and Photos by Petty Officer 2nd Class Jim Watson, USN

Petty Officer 2nd Class William Reed (left) and Petty Officer 2nd Class Haracio Maldonado repel off the top of a cargo container during the "search" phase of their VBSS training.

At Naval Training Center Mayport, Fla., members of USS Roosevelt are doing far more than just seizing the day. They're seizing the opportunity for camaraderie, teamwork and some fun while learning to take control of a ship during a simulated Visit, Board, Search and Seizure.

In the blink of an eye, everything can go wrong. One minute the practice boarding is running smoothly, the ship's "captain" is complying and the boarding team has successfully checked most of the ship for contraband.

Suddenly, everything goes wrong. A paintball traveling at 300 feet-per-second hits your shipmate. A decision has to be made. Do you abandon him, or do you try to return fire, drag him out and run for the boat?

"Every scenario is different, gentlemen," bellows VBSS Instructor Petty Officer 1st Class Monty Lane, a gunner's mate, holding his paintball rifle and standing over a sailor covered in paint. "You are not SEAL teams going in with guns blazing. You are there as diplomats doing a peaceful mission, and if all

hell breaks loose, you leave. Of course, if you can get to your team member safely, and he is still alive, you do it."

"While it is well known that a member of your team could get injured while boarding a ship in hostile territory, 99 percent of all ship boardings run smoothly," adds VBSS Instructor Petty Officer 1st Class Cecil Bazley, a sonar technician. "This class should show all of you that there is the potential for hazards, but more than that, it should prepare you to see [hazards] before they occur, and as a team stop them from ever happening."

"Is this really what it would be like?" is a question many of the students ask themselves during the five-day course that would introduce them to the basics of ship boarding. Adding to the realism are instructors who look the part, complete with "squared away" uniforms, well-prepared lesson plans, and exceptional military bearing.

Students are taught to rappel down three stories worth of shipping containers, to search those containers safely and thoroughly, and to take down and secure an individual who is a

potential threat. But nothing could prepare them for the last two days of training where the instructors disappeared and resurfaced with a new look.

"Oh, hello my friend," says one of the ship's crew in a foreign accent. "What you do here?" "Hello, we are just here to check out the ship," says Petty Officer 1st Class Duanne Spears, a mess management specialist, staring at what used to be his instructor, who is now dressed out in civilian clothes, long hair and a set of those glasses with the oversized fake nose.

"Um, could you please move to this side of the ship?"

"For what for," questions another of the ship's crew in broken English as the others pretend not to understand the American sailors and wander around the bow.

"Shake hands," the crewmember says as he and his shipmates move closer to the boarding team. "Please, step back," Spears said after shaking hands with the crewmembers. He adds a little more emphasis to his voice, and looks to his team for support. Yet,

this training is over as quickly as it began, because the ship's crew has positioned themselves to have the upper hand over the boarding team.

"OK. Training time out," exclaims VBSS Safety Instructor Petty Officer 1st Class William Walker, an operations specialist who was watching the whole scene from afar. "This becomes a potential threat when you don't show force; you didn't even ask if they had weapons on them. You don't know this man; why would you shake his hand and let the others get out of control? And your team members - what are they doing? Just standing around not helping you? Letting them get close enough in case anything happens?"

Walker runs through various mistakes, like the handshake, which he explains, is OK once they are sure there is no threat posed by the ship's crew. Scenarios are repeated several times, allowing the students to consider many possible hazards, and so that situations can be created that are increasingly difficult to control.

The first scenario might start off with a crewmember that needs to use the head. That might lead to another where two crewmembers get into a brawl, or to one where a crewmember draws a weapon.

"It's little things that will catch you off guard," an instructor reminds the students before moving into the next phase, where it will get all too real once everyone is armed

Chief Petty Officer Charles Hollis, electronics technician, the assistant boarding officer during the course and on the Roosevelt, said, "With this class, I'm able to go back and train junior personnel one day, and board a ship the next, looking for contraband. I just doesn't get any better than this."

But it does get better; better for the Navy that is. It's classes like VBSS, and various others throughout the fleet, that are helping retain sailors; giving them the education they were looking for when they entered the service.

"When I came in, the Navy was at the tail end of its downsizing," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Dean Avellaneda, a gunner's mate. "Things may still be in transition, but every year it has gotten better. Whether you're talking about the 50 percent retirement, up from 38 percent, or the educational benefits we now get. I have set a lot of Navy-related goals and I have many more to go before I even think about getting out."

Petty Officer 1st Class Kevin Martini, another electronics technician, added, "The opportunity to be on this boarding team and take this class has greatly influenced my decision to stay onboard my ship and in the Navy."

The possibilities are endless as pointed out by Petty Officer 2nd Class James Garret, a fire controlman who intends on taking as many similar schools as possible before

found out, whether it was during the search, or during the seizure phase of the class, that teamwork was what it would take to make it through this class, and later out in the fleet.

"I think teamwork is an important part of retention in the Navy. The brotherhood you feel being in the Navy is like none other and this class really enforces every aspect of that. Teamwork is paramount here and we believe the students take that back to their ships and promote a positive message," said Petty Officer 1st Class Edgar Bartley, a gunner's mate and one of two billeted VBSS instructors for the course. "We just have fun."

Where else can you do this and get paid for it," continued Lane. "I stayed in the Navy because the detailer offered me this duty as an instructor. I'm getting a great deal of satisfaction knowing I am making a difference in a small community, and teaching it safely so they can get a lot out of it, stay alive and take on any situation they encounter."

All the instructors and students at VBSS are seizing different aspects of what the Navy has to offer, and even if they do leave NTC with a little paint on their uniforms, at least they know they have seized their futures through teamwork, education and the Navy.

Story originally appeared in All Hands Magazine, Sep. 2001.



with paint ball rifles. The scenario goes just as the instructors expected it would.

The boarding team walked into a dark room resembling an engineering space where they were immediately ambushed. Each member of the six-man team was hit, the paint indicating simulated wounds, their faces showing their hurt pride. The opportunity for a sailor to become a member of a boarding team, and to attend classes such as this puts extra excitement and education into what might otherwise be just be another day at sea.

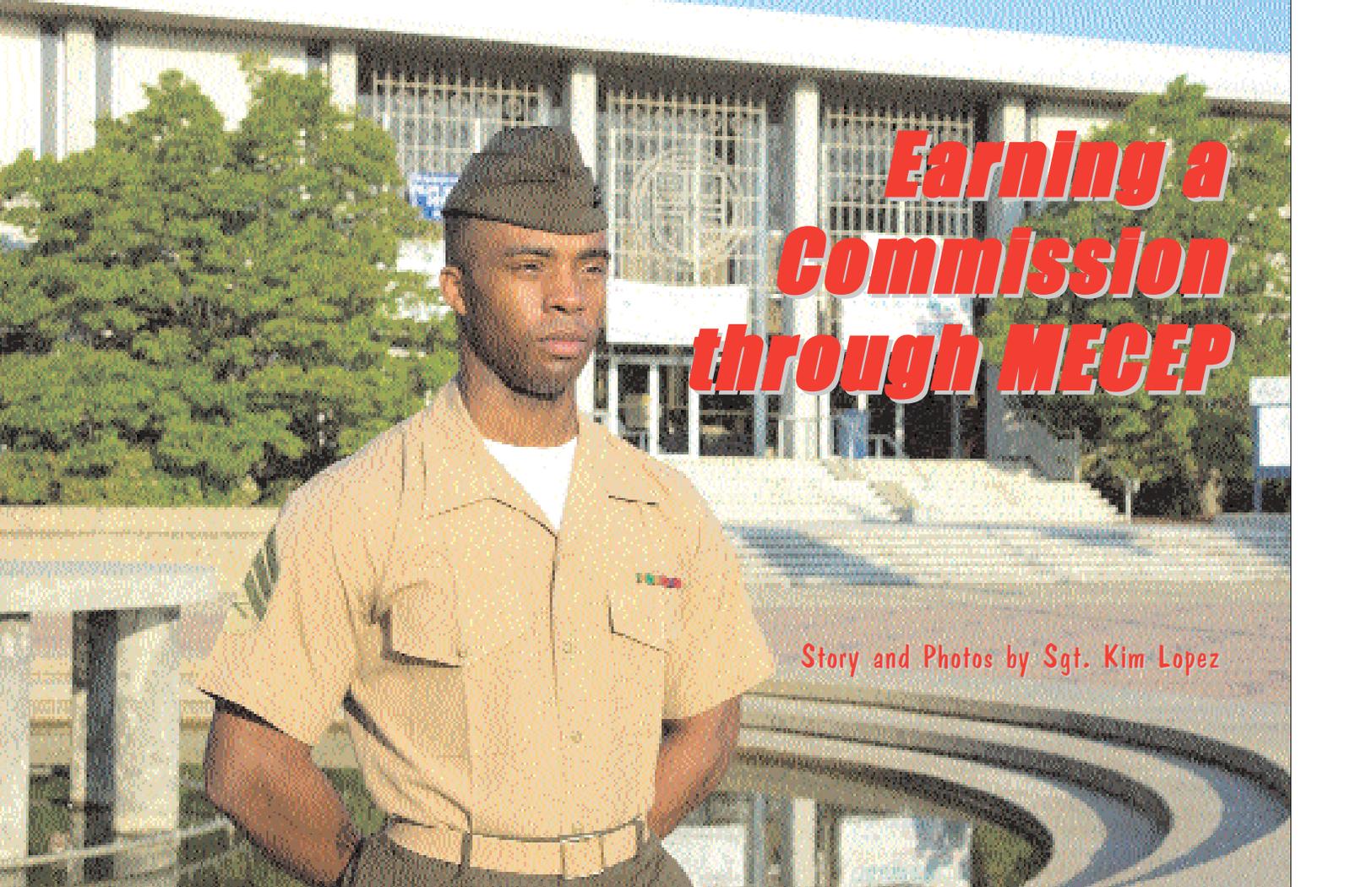
seeking a civilian career in law enforcement. And for sailors like Avellaneda, this course is a stepping stone to further his career and possibly get him into the Special Warfare community.

"Before the Navy, I was an auto parts store manager in Long Beach, N.Y.," said Avellaneda. "Now, with my small arms and special tactics training, I am beneficial to my crew, the Navy and my team. It's teamwork that holds us together."

Everyone on the boarding team quickly

(Left) As Petty Officer 2nd Class Maldonado radios the boarding officer that the crew is secured, the instructors, like Petty Officer 1st Class Monty Lane (in civilian clothes), make it anything but easy for the students as they try to corral the crew into one area. (Center) Students entering a mock engineering space, are faced with paintball fire to simulate a potentially dangerous boarding. (Right) Teamwork is the key to successful completion of VBSS training. Students learn the proper techniques of covering their teammates to ensure their safety.

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Earning a Commission through MECEP

Story and Photos by Sgt. Kim Lopez

Sgt. John B. Dickens, pictured in front of Old Dominion University, where he is pursuing a college degree and commission through the Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Education Program.

Senior year draws to a close; the summer beckons and people begin to look toward the future. For many students, this ending to a high school career signifies the beginning of a long-awaited break before continuing on to the next stage of their lives; college, a full-time job or maybe even a career in the military. The possibilities seem endless. The only decision to make: how will I get there?

The military is well known for its educational incentives, such as college programs, enlistment bonuses and scholarships. It's all there for the taking. Many people enlist with the idea of going to school part time. But, then, what if you aren't ready for college? What if you want financial independence, but you don't want to get stuck in a "go-nowhere" job?

The answer was simple for Marine Sgt. John B. Dickens, 22, from Newport News, Va. "I knew I wanted to go to school," he said, "I knew I wasn't ready (right after high school) because financially, I didn't want to

be dependant on my parents, and just maturity. I knew if I went to school right away, I probably would have failed out."

Dickens enlisted in the Marine Corps straight out of high school and became a disbursing clerk, processing payroll and balancing accounts for his command. He was financially independent, had experienced valuable on-the-job training and was in a position to build an incredible career as an enlisted member of the Marine Corps. At the same time, though, Dickens said he began to realize that he could be more valuable to the Corps as a leader, as an officer. He said he discovered there were more benefits to being a Marine than he had initially realized.

"I had a major who started asking me questions about school and where do I see myself four years from now. I told her that I at least wanted to have my associate's degree, and I wanted to work on my bachelor's, but I didn't really see myself in the Marine Corps," said the 1997 graduate of Menchville High School in Newport News.

"After I started talking to her, I started learning about how the Marine Corps offers more opportunities if you're an officer, things like leadership positions. I thought I could be more influential to Marines as an officer, rather than as a staff sergeant or gunnery sergeant."

His window of opportunity came in the form of the Marine Corps Enlisted Commissioning Education Program.

MECEP is open to all active duty enlisted Marines and members of the Marine Corps Reserve who are assigned to the Active Reserve. The program was created to provide exceptional enlisted Marines the opportunity to serve as officers. Marines who successfully complete the program receive a bachelor's degree and a commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Reserve.

As a corporal (E-4 or above), Marines can apply for MECEP, and if accepted, are promoted on a non-competitive basis. The majority of participants are immediately promoted to the next rank, provided they are

eligible and recommended for the promotion.

It may sound hard to believe, but the Marine Corps actually pays MECEP participants to attend their choice of one of 67 colleges or universities full time (the school must have a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps).

Upon acceptance into the program, the officer candidates enlist for an additional six years, to include the time spent as students. After graduation, the newly appointed officers commit to a period of at least four years to the Marines.

Before they report to school, selectees complete a nine-week preparatory school at Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, Calif.

Once Marines report to college, they are no longer connected to their original duty station. They become part of the NROTC, wearing their Marine Corps uniforms and receiving military training one day out of each week. Most units also conduct physical training three days a week.

Not only do selectees receive their full paycheck while attending school; they also receive full medical and dental coverage.

"The best thing about MECEP for me is that I am able to spend time with my family and gain an education at the same time, which was my real reason for joining the military, to gain an education," said Dickens, a student at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va. "Plus, under the program I'm allowed to go to school full time and still draw a full paycheck, so I don't have to worry about finances the way other students do. As part of MECEP we still get our benefits and you are able to stay in one location for four years," he said.

As the director of officer programs for the Marine Corps at Quantico, Va., Maj. David R. Baldwin touts various benefits to the program.

"It gives you a good financial foundation while going to school. You can concentrate on academics without worrying about things like medical and dental. That's the biggest plus about this program," said the Canton, Ohio, native.

In fact, Baldwin, himself, is living proof of the benefits of MECEP.

"I went to my education officer and said, 'I want to be like you, sir,'" he said. "One, I wanted to fly, and you had to be an officer to do that. Two, I wanted to lead Marines."

"I picked up staff sergeant while I was in college," continued Baldwin. "I actually got promoted to second lieutenant on the same day," said Baldwin. Needless to say, he never actually wore the staff sergeant chevrons.

Through MECEP, Baldwin has become a true success story. He now has a four-year degree in mechanical engineering and was able to become a pilot, flying the CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter. Baldwin has built a 19-year career as a Marine, spending the past 11 years as an officer.

MECEP works well for people who are not ready to go from high school directly to college, said Baldwin.

"But if you're ready to go to college, go to college," he said.

"Some people don't have the maturity, dedication or desire to go straight to college," said Baldwin. "Those people can go into the (Marine Corps) and get the maturity and discipline first."

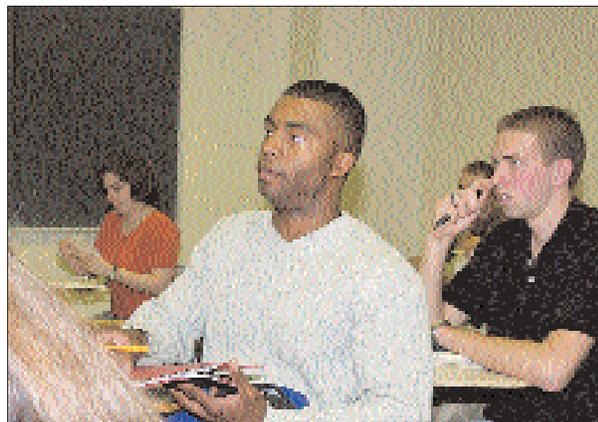
Lifestyle is another benefit to MECEP, said Dickens.

"We don't have to worry about walking around campus and not knowing anyone, there's always someone in your class or people you see around that are also in the military," he said. "You don't have to start out like a freshman not knowing anyone. We don't live in the dorms. We live in real homes. We don't worry about roommates that party all day. We eat real food, not ramen noodles," said Dickens, laughing in reference to the typical eating habits of some college students.

MECEP participants are responsible for paying their own tuition. Although the Marine Corps Tuition Assistance Program cannot be used by MECEP participants, the Marine Corps encourages participants to use other forms of tuition assistance, such as the Montgomery G.I. bill, the Veterans Education Assistance Program, the Colonel Short Loan Program, and student loans.

Because of this, Dickens doesn't really worry about the cost of college.

"Currently the Montgomery G.I. bill is about \$800 a month. Plus, you're able to receive student loans or grants and scholarships at the same time. It more than covers your tuition," he said.



Dickens, in class, is just another student at ODU.

While attending training with the NROTC, Dickens has gained new insights to leadership techniques.

"This is my second semester. I started in the fall of 2001. I've really learned a lot more about Marines. I've been able to see a lot of different leadership styles. At ODU, it's a student run battalion. Students fill all the leadership positions, such as commanding officers and platoon sergeants," said Dickens. "You are always in some type of leadership position and being evaluated on your leadership."

MECEP students are required to take the most efficient route to obtaining their degree, meaning they are required to take summer school classes, unless they are attending Officer Candidate School, which is usually during the summer before their sophomore year of college.

MECEP is often a bridge to success for people who never thought they could become college graduates or officers.

"My advice to anyone would be to apply early," said Dickens. "Don't wait until you think you're ready. It doesn't matter if you've been in (the military) for ten years or four years, like me. Everyone starts out as a lieutenant, so do it while you're young. Get an early start."

He then added some words of support and encouragement.

"Don't let anyone in your life discourage you from following your dreams. Don't let them tell you that you can't, because you can."

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PEDAL PUSHERS

CYCLING CAPE COD, PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT
AND PROMOTING SAFETY

Summer is almost here. It won't be long before the marine science technicians at the Marine Safety Field Office on Cape Cod, Mass., dust off their mountain bikes in preparation for a second season of duty patrolling the harbors and marinas on Cape Cod and surrounding islands.

Though some may scoff at calling it duty -- who wouldn't want to ride along the bike paths and coastlines of Cape Cod on a picturesque summer day? -- the bike patrols, which started last summer, have proven to be an effective way of promoting pollution prevention and safe boating practices to the public.

Story by Petty Officer 3rd Class Amy Thomas, USCG
Photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Andrea Stevenson, USCG

Petty Officers Bill Jensen (left) and Jason Wishart patrol the harbors and marinas along Cape Cod Canal, on the lookout for pollution and ready to answer questions.

“Since we started using the bikes, we’ve seen a 50 percent spike in pollution reports,” said Lt. Joel Roberts, the supervisor at the MSFO.

“You have to do it where it fits,” he said. It fits like a glove on Cape Cod, which hosts millions of tourists every summer and sports a large boating population.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Wishart, one of the members of the bike patrol, said he thinks the patrols are a perfect opportunity to raise visibility. When people see the Coast Guard riding around on bikes, they want to know why. This curiosity opens up the lines of communication, naturally leading to discussions about pollution and boating safety.

With the education the bike patrol officers offer through brochures they carry in their saddlebags and face time, Roberts said boaters are now more aware of how to avoid polluting the water, and they know what to do if they see pollution. They are also not as tentative of reporting pollution as they once were.

“A lot of marina managers are under the impression they’ll be fined if a boat owner has a spill at their marina,” Roberts said. “That’s not the case. After we explain what our mission is and that they won’t get into any trouble, they want to know how they can help.”

Roberts said that the uniform the bike patrol officers wear makes them more approachable. The uniform consists of bike shorts and a golf shirt.

“Before the bike patrols, interaction with the public was limited to enforcement activity,” Wishart said. “Now, it’s a friendlier atmosphere. We don’t carry a gun or anything, so we’re not as intimidating to people.”

Patrolling on bikes gives Wishart and his partner, Petty Officer 3rd Class Bill Jensen, greater accessibility to some of the smaller communities on the cape. Summer tourism brings congested traffic and parking is at a premium. The bikes make navigating the cape’s highways much more manageable.

It’s also cheaper. Taking a vehicle on a ferry to Nantucket or Martha’s Vineyard in the summer costs \$155 each way.

“We went to Nantucket 25 times last summer,” said Roberts. “Multiply that by \$300, and there is considerable savings.” The \$300 normally shelled out for one ferry ride more than covers the cost of a new bike and all the accessories.

The initial cost of outfitting the MSFO with two new bikes and accessories, and new uniforms for the patrol officers was about \$2,200. One thousand dollars of that was paid by the commercial fisheries division at the First Coast Guard District in Boston.

“We looked at it as another way to reach more people in remote fishing industry areas to help spread the word about safety and the availability of voluntary dockside exams,” said Ted Harrington of the district’s commercial fisheries division.

“Fishermen are always asking questions about safety equipment and what they need to do to properly dispose of oily waste,” Roberts said. “They realize that in the long run it’s going to save them a lot of money if they do it right.”

“Prevention is the key,” he added.

Wishart said the bike patrols have also improved the relationship the Coast Guard has with the local police, fire departments and harbor masters.

“They know what we’re doing out there and what we’re looking for,” Wishart said. “If something should ever happen, they know who to call.”

Wishart said he is certain the bike patrols will take on new significance in this first post-Sept. 11 summer. He said he thinks people will want to know more than ever about the Coast Guard’s roles and missions, and what’s being done about homeland defense and security.

The bike patrols will be the primary means of promoting maritime domain awareness on Cape Cod, Roberts said. The public will be informed what they can do to help keep their communities not only clean, but also safe.

“I think it’s going to give the public a greater sense of safety,” Wishart said. “They’ll see the bike patrols as more of a security effort.”

With more than 1,000 miles of shoreline around Cape Cod, Nantucket and Martha’s Vineyard, the MSFO’s bike patrol officers are not alone in their mission.

Roberts said they are coordinating security patrols with Coast Guard Group Woods Hole, the Marine Safety Office in Providence, R.I., and Air Station Cape Cod in order to get the greatest coverage and avoid duplicating their efforts.

“We don’t want to be waving at each other as we do our patrols,” Roberts said.

There are no special requirements for the



Jensen (right) and Wishart spend some time talking with a boat owner, making sure he is armed with the knowledge he needs to help keep Cape Cod waters clean.

petty officers at the MSFO to be members of the bike patrols, other than the marine science training they receive through the Coast Guard. They just have to be able to ride a bike and have a willingness to talk to people.

“You’ve got to have an outgoing personality, because when someone notices you, they’ll come up and start talking,” Roberts said. “The next thing you know, you’re surrounded by a bunch of people.”

Roberts admits the command at the MSO in Providence was skeptical at first of the idea of the bike patrols.

“I don’t have any problem with my guys enjoying themselves while they do their job,” Roberts said, but it took some effort to convince his commanding officer that the patrols would work for everyone.

Roberts said he firmly believes the patrols are a good balance between the mission, wellness and morale. So far, he hasn’t been wrong.

“You get out in the sun and get some exercise,” said Jensen. “And every time you tell someone about what you do, you learn more about what you do. You get a little bit better at it.”

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Assignment in Germany

Welcome to Germany. Delicious food, a scenic patchwork countryside and historical character make Germany a prime overseas assignment for members of the U.S. military.

Major American military units assigned throughout the country include U.S. European Command, U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Air Forces Europe, each with various operational and support units located throughout the country.

Slightly smaller than Montana, Germany is a member of the European Union in the heart of Europe. It has nine neighboring countries within driving distance: Denmark in the north, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg and France in the west, Switzerland and Austria in the south, and the Czech Republic and Poland in the east. Germany is laced with a variety of landscapes. The Alps lie in the south, and dry sandy lowlands lie in the north.

As Western Europe's richest and most populous nation (82 million), Germany remains a key member of the continent's economic, political and defense organizations. European power struggles immersed the country in two world wars in the first half of the 20th century and left the country occupied by the victorious Allied powers of the United States, United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union in 1945.

With the advent of the Cold War, two German states were formed in 1949: West and East Germany. West Germany embedded itself in key Western security and economic organizations like NATO while East Germany was on the front line of the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. The decline of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War allowed for German unification in 1990.

Assignments

Although the original intent for NATO was to counter the Soviet Union's Warsaw

Pact, it still exists today to deal with other potential security threats. The United States remains a key partner in NATO with its European allies, although American presence decreased somewhat in the 1990s due to downsizing the military.

In order to support NATO, Germany provides the United States with several facilities and installations located in and around cities throughout the country. Most bear the name of the German town or city where they are located. Many also provide the same standard services that can be found at any U.S. installation in the states (i.e. post exchange, post offices, etc.), although some may be more limited than others.

These areas and facilities include: Ansbach Military Community (Army); Bad Aibling Station (Army post); Bamberg Military Community (Army); Baumholder Military Community (Army); Darmstadt Military Community (Army); Friedberg/Giessen Depot (Army); Garmisch Area Support Team (Army); Geilenkirchen Air Base (NATO); Grafenwoehr (Army training facility); Hanau Military Community (Army);

Heidelberg Military Community (Army); Hohenfels Combat Maneuver Training Center (Army); Illesheim Military Community (Army); Kaiserslautern Military Community (Army/Air Force); Kalkar (NATO); Mannheim Military Community (Army); Ramstein Air Base (Air Force); Rhein-Main Air Base (Air Force); Schweinfurt Military Community (Army); Spangdahlem Air Base (Air Force); Stuttgart Military Community (Army); Vilseck Military Community (Army); Wiesbaden Army Air Field; Würzburg, Kitzingen and Giebelstadt Military Communities (Army).

Cultural Events and Attractions

While assigned to Germany, servicemembers and their families experience German culture at various events held throughout the year. Here are just a few.

Oktoberfest (Munich) -- The festival starts with an opening day parade with

Oktoberfest guests aboard horse-drawn brewer wagons.

After the parade, visitors can go to 13 mammoth beer tents, one for each of Munich's major breweries. It also includes rides and food. The festival starts the last part of September and lasts for two weeks.

Fasching -- This is central Europe's answer to the Mardi Gras of the Americas. It starts Nov. 11 and ends more than two months later on Ash Wednesday.

Heidelberg Castle Illumination -- Heidelberg presents a castle illumination and fireworks display three times each summer. The atmosphere on the evenings of the illumination is festive, as thousands of people with picnic baskets and coolers watch from across the river from the old town.

Christkindelmarkts -- Get into the Christmas spirit with steaming cups of spicy gluhwein, the ginger smell of Lebkuchen and the festive atmosphere at any of Germany's traditional Christmas markets.

Spargelfest -- Schwetzingen is the spargel (white asparagus) capital in Germany. Celebrate the spargel harvest with music, rides and entertainment. This event occurs in early spring.

With a history spanning hundreds of years, another way to experience Germany is by visiting some of its many cultural attractions. Here are just a few.

Neuschwanstein Castle -- located in Bavaria, this is Germany's most famous castle. Its interior styles range from Byzantine through Romanesque to Gothic, making a fairy-tale fantasy come true. Built between 1869 and 1886, the castle sits high above the Alpsee Lake with the Alps towering above it.

Heidelberg -- for people all over the world, Heidelberg is the very image of romantic Germany. The river Neckar flows through its deep wooded valley past ancient towers and bridges, and the red sandstone castle ruin rises majestically over the roofs of the old town. It also has the oldest university in Germany.

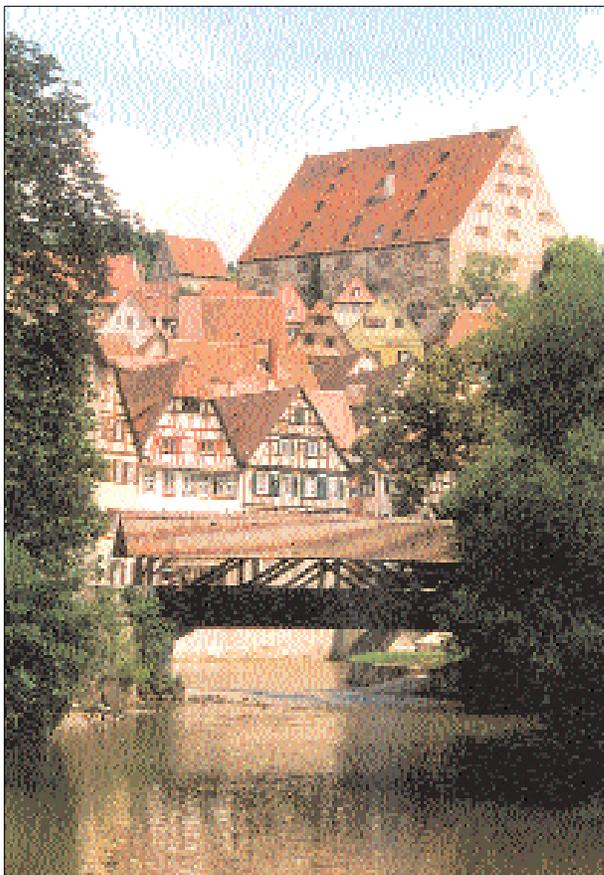
Linderhof Castle -- built between 1870 and 1879, its interior has lavish adornments full of mirrors, painted ceilings and gilded cherubs, in a mixture of Renaissance and baroque styles. The surrounding gardens in French, Italian and English styles include a grand cascade and artificial grottos.

Berlin -- the capital of Germany, Berlin is a good place to explore on foot through its public buildings, museums, theaters and restaurants. Take time to stroll from Alexanderplatz to the Brandenburg Gate along Unter den Linden.

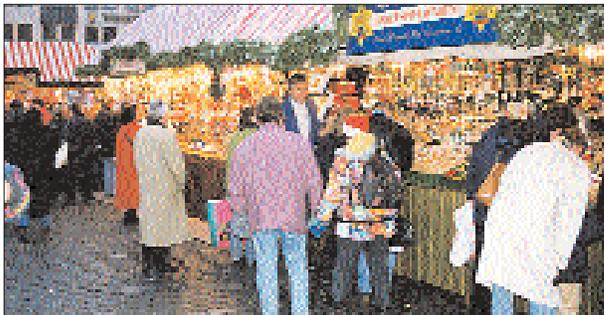
Rhine Valley -- The best scenery lies between Mainz and Koblenz with fertile vineyards clinging to steep hills, numerous castles and wine villages. Every little village has at least one wine



Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria



(Above) Many German towns, such as Schwabisch Hall in Bavaria, still retain their medieval appearance. (Below) A stall at the Christkindelmarkt in Nuremberg where items such as Nutcrackers and Smokers may be purchased.



festival per year, with the most famous being the Rhine in Flames series of festivals, when water, lighting and fireworks are combined.

Educational Opportunities

If you have children of school age, they will most likely attend one of the Department of Defense Dependent Schools in Germany. The DoDDS system is the primary educational resource established by DoD to provide a free, appropriate public education to overseas, Department of Defense family members.

DoDDS schools are of equal quality and curriculum to stateside schools. It includes professional educators such as enrichment teachers, speech therapists, reading specialists, counselors, and classes for

students with special needs.

DoDDS also provides for such extra-curricular programs as: National Honor Society, sports, art club, student council, Junior ROTC, cross country, Model United Nations and music.

Parents who enroll their children in private schools, host nation schools or home schools may also sign them up in DoDDS classes or activities on a part-time basis to complete graduation requirements or obtain a course required for admission to a specific post-graduation program. However, participation is limited to space availability.

Adult Colleges and Universities

Education centers operate the largest military education program in Europe making degree completion realistic during a tour in Germany.

Services include college and university degree programs, college-level testing services, non-credit study courses, education and career counseling, Tuition Assistance for service members and the Spouse Tuition Assistance Program.

There are four colleges and universities that offer more than 40 different undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Courses are offered days, evenings and weekends. Methods

of study include distance learning, electronic mail, videocassette and video teleconference.

For example, the University of Maryland University College offers traditional as well as distance learning courses (upper level classes only) toward certificates, associate's, bachelor's and master's degrees. Areas of study include automotive technology, emergency medical services, fire science, criminal justice, paralegal studies, information systems technology, early childhood development, business and management, communication studies, computer studies, English, German government and politics, history, management studies, philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, art history and economics.

UMUC has a residential, coeducational, full-time campus in Mannheim for family members of U.S. military and DoD people living in Europe. The Mannheim campus, not a community or junior college, is an integral part of the major state university system offering the first two years of the university's curriculum in liberal arts, sciences and business. University System of Maryland offers the following graduate degrees: Master of Arts in Administrative Management-Public Administration, Master of Science in Management Information systems, Master of Arts in Counseling and Personnel and Master of Education in Counseling and Personnel Services.

Exchanges, Commissaries and Recreation

Military installations in Germany offer many of the same exchange, commissary and recreation services available at stateside bases. As an example of typical services available installations in Germany, Ramstein Air Base and its neighboring facilities such as the Kaiserslautern Military Community, provide the following services:

Commissaries – Most commissaries have the standard grocery departments as well as a bakery and deli.

Exchanges – In addition to the standard base or post exchange facility for shopping, the Army and Air Force Exchange Service also provides facilities in most military communities such as furniture marts, food courts, shoppettes, theaters, military clothing sales, beauty and barber shops, flower shops, optical shops, car sales, used car sales, service stations, car rentals, auto parts and repair shops, and various American food courts.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation – MWR activities and facilities available include: intramural sports, fitness centers with basketball courts, weight rooms, aerobic and jazzercise classes, personal fitness assessments, saunas and racquetball courts, and bowling centers. Community activity centers feature snack bars, classes such as dog obedience and Lamaze, as well as having overseas telephone and fax service, television rooms, billiards, table tennis and darts. Information, Tickets and Tours (ITT) provides a full service travel operation in Germany with bus tours, flight arrangements, hotels, trains, ferries, cruises and car rentals.

Armed Forces Recreation Center-Europe – With hotels, campgrounds and recreational facilities located at Garmisch and Chiemsee in the Bavarian Alps of southern Germany, this provides a low-cost opportunity for servicemembers to travel. Once they arrive, they can take advantage of numerous recreational facilities; sailing and windsurfing in the summer and skiing and snowboarding in the winter. Tours from these locations are also available to places like Berchtesgaden, Munich and Salzburg, depending on the time of year.

Religious Activities

Military installations have chapels that provide church services and other activities for numerous denominations. In addition, Germany has numerous churches that serve many different faiths at off-base locations.

Housing

The type of housing military members get depends on a number of factors, including location, rank, and whether or not family accompanies the person. In general, single enlisted pay grades E-4 and below will be assigned to barracks or dormitories. Many others at E-5 and above or with family members will stay in housing provided by the government, with the number of bedrooms depending on the size of the family and availability.

In some cases, members may elect to live off base if they are authorized or if no government quarters are available. In these cases, the government provides some benefits to members to help offset the cost of living on the local economy. Here are just a few.

Overseas Housing Allowance -- OHA is



The ruins of Heidelberg Castle. Once the home of the Electors Palatine, the castle was sacked by the French during the reign of Louis XIV.

an allowance payable to members, stationed overseas, who are residing on the local economy and paying housing expenses. The rate payable is based on the members rank, accompanied status, rent, as well as exchange and housing rates.

Move-In-Housing Allowance -- MIHA is an entitlement which is designated to partially offset the costs associated with occupying economy quarters overseas. This is a one-time up front entitlement that you will receive when you sign a lease. This entitlement is payable to all individuals, regardless of expenses, who initially occupy economy quarters.

Cost of Living Allowance -- COLA is for members stationed overseas in high cost areas to partially compensate for increased expenses associated with living in a high cost area. COLA is payable to everyone assigned to Germany. The monthly amount is based on

rank, time in service and number of family members.

Going Overseas

As you can see, the military not only offers an opportunity to visit a foreign country and experience European culture firsthand, it makes every effort to ensure an assignment to Germany is a home away from home. As a result, military members get the best of both worlds.

Information for this article was compiled from the Office of the Secretary of Defense Standard Installation Topic Exchange Service on the Internet. For more detailed information about assignments in Germany, visit www.dmdc.osd.mil/sites.

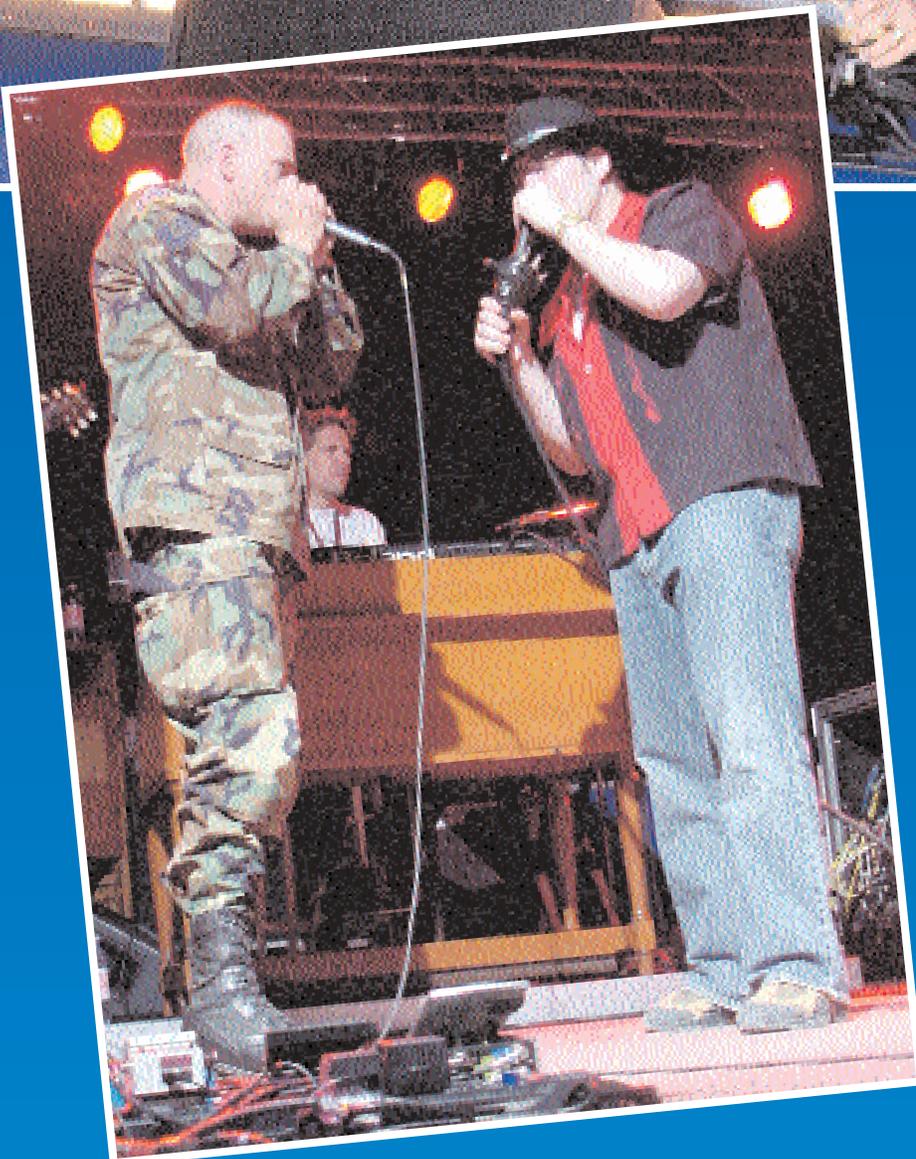
Photos by Maj. Michael Durham

One advantage of living in Germany is the opportunity to visit other countries. The close proximity of European countries means that day and weekend trips to countries such as France, Switzerland, Italy and the Netherlands are easily accomplished. This is the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, France.

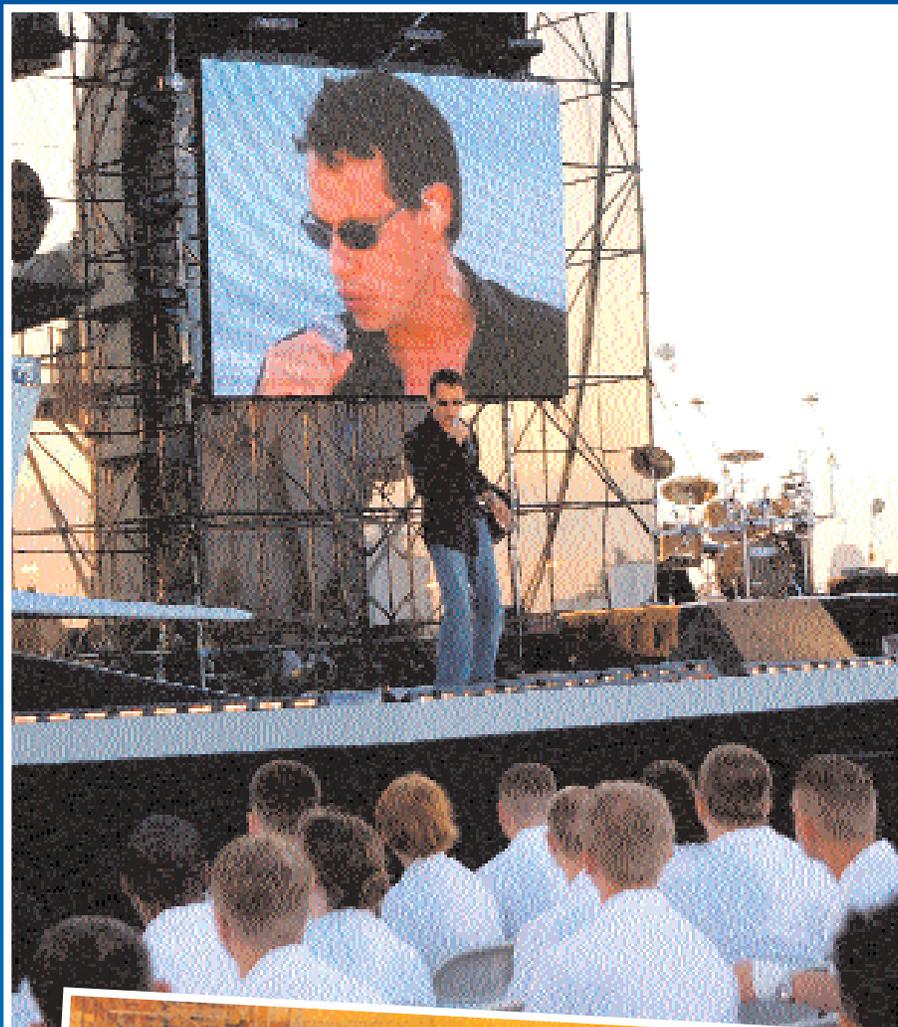




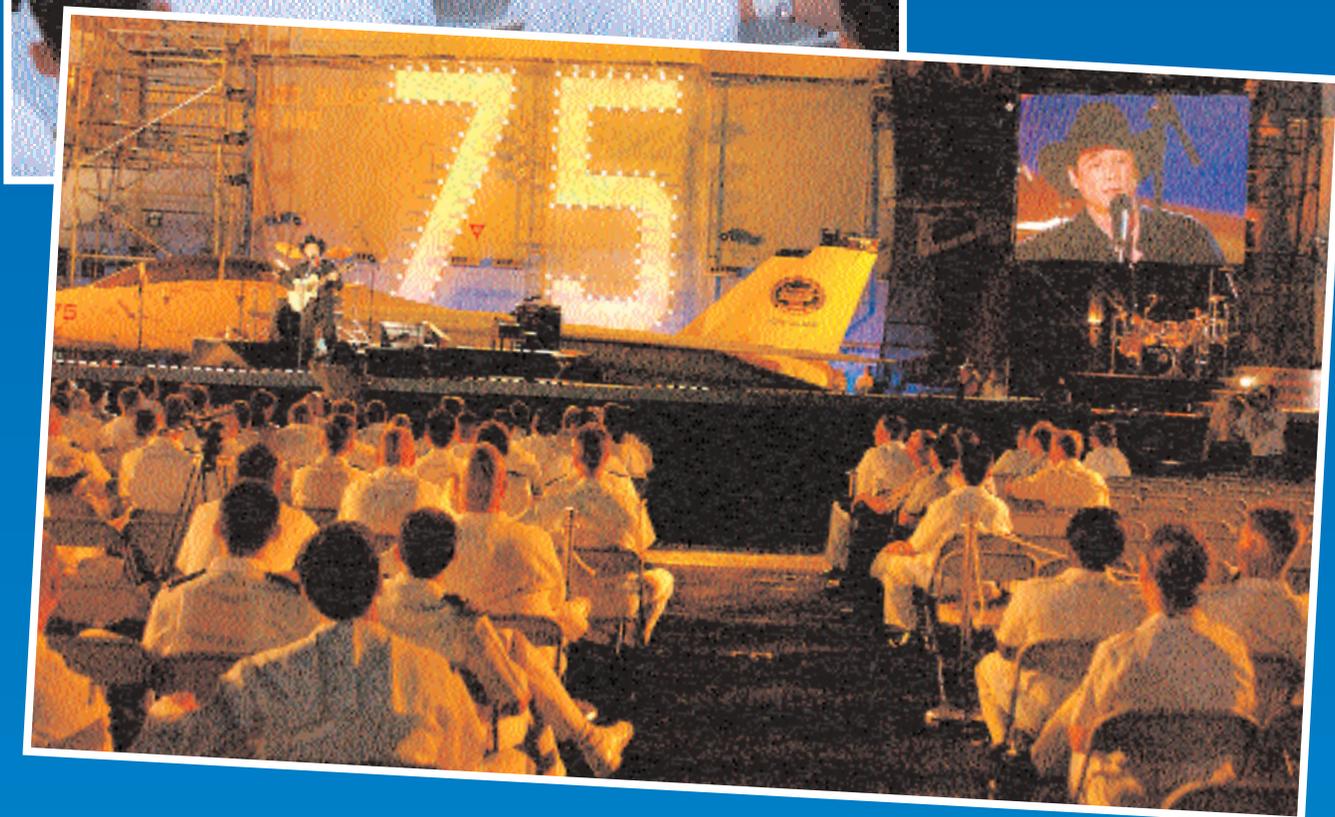
(Top) Jessica Simpson performs a song during the taping of the CBS television special, "Rockin' for the USA - A National Salute to the U.S. Military," onboard the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman. Truman and six other U.S. Navy ships are visiting Fort Lauderdale for "Fleet Week 2002." (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Justin Bane)



(Left) Tech. Sgt. Timothy McCormick, a patrolman from the Ohio Air National Guards' 180th Security Forces Squadron, jams with Blues Traveler performer John Popper during a April 29 concert in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The concert wrapped up the group's 2002 Balkans tour. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jess Harvey)



(Left) Marc Anthony and his band practice a song during a concert dress rehearsal on the flight deck of USS Harry S. Truman. (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Christopher B. Stoltz)



(Bottom) Country singer Clint Black and his band rehearse on the flight deck of USS Harry S. Truman prior to the taping of the television special, "Rockin' for the USA – A National Salute to the U.S. Military." (Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Christopher B. Stoltz)

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