Delivering Hope to the Far Corners of the World
Since the surge of 2007, there are currently about 24,000 detainees in Multi-National Forces-Iraq Theater Internment Facilities. The majority of the detainees are at Camp Bucca, Iraq, where the detainee population spiked significantly.

A nation trying to free itself of tyranny needs many things to stand on its own and a capable, loyal military protecting its people is among the most important. The mission of the 14 individual augmentee Sailors assigned to the Navy’s embedded training team at Camp Clark is to mentor the Afghan National Army (ANA) and help them develop into a mature fighting force.

The sight of Sailors serving alongside Soldiers in Iraq is not unusual. More than 100 Navy EOD technicians have conducted more than 11,000 missions to find and neutralize the enemy’s weapon of choice and the single biggest killer of coalition forces – improvised explosive devices.
Members of the Navy Ceremonial Guard fold the Medal of Honor Flag that is presented to Daniel and Maureen Murphy, the parents of Navy SEAL Lt. Michael Murphy during the special ceremony in honor of their son held at the United States Navy Memorial. Murphy was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor on Oct. 22 in a ceremony held at the White House. Murphy was killed during a reconnaissance mission near Asadabad, Afghanistan, while exposing himself to enemy fire in order to call in support after his four-man team came under attack by enemy forces June 28, 2005. Murphy is the first service member to receive the honor for actions during Operation Enduring Freedom and the first Navy recipient of the medal since Vietnam.

Photo by MC2 Kevin S. O'Brien
Speaking with Sailors
Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy
MCPON (SW/FMF) Joe R. Campa

Our Navy is filled with titles, some formal and others far less. I started my career as a deck seaman and I know the kind of respect that goes along with someone earning the right to be called “boats.”

To those who have earned it, little else carries as much weight as a shipmate referring to them that way. No matter the rank, boatswain's mate 3rd class or BMCM, “Boats” is part of our Navy heritage and it’s a title respected around the fleet.

Serving in the Hospital Corps, I witnessed first-hand the courage and commitment of the men and women we call “Doc,” a word with special meaning to any of the thousands of Marines and Sailors who have a corpsman to thank for saving their life under fire.

Nothing has ever compared to the first time I was called “Chief.” Our newest chiefs, and even our oldest, know exactly what I mean. If you’re hungry for it, I’ll tell you it’s even better than you’ve imagined. That one-word title symbolizes several years of hard work and sacrifice and it’s a title with special meaning to all who have earned it.

There are other titles specific to our Navy, each with their own meaning and their own personal significance to each of you.

But of all the titles I’ve earned in 27 years, there has been one that has remained constant and one that belongs to every one of you. We are United States Sailors and that, shipmates, is a term in which we should all take a great deal of pride. It’s the word that comes to mind when I visit you at sea, in engine rooms and hangar bays.

When I see a young seaman or petty officer willingly working long hours because they know the mission requires it, I think to myself, “That’s a Sailor.”

In conversation, when I see and hear the character and the humor, the willingness to speak openly and frankly, I think, “That’s a Sailor.” I’ve stood on piers watching ships pull away from spouses and newborns and thought, “That’s the life of a Sailor.”

We share a culture and a spirit, you and I. As Sailors, we defend this nation from the sea.

There is no greater privilege, and no greater challenge, than wearing the uniform of a United States Sailor. It symbolizes the Honor, Courage and Commitment we embrace as Sailors. That uniform is going to change soon, but the standards that guide the men and women who wear it will never waiver. As we execute our new maritime strategy, the expectations our Navy and our nation have of you have never been higher. I take great pride in that. I know you do, too.

Those standards and expectations, along with our great heritage, proud history and bright future, are part of who we are as United States Sailors, a title earned by all of you.

Speaking with Sailors
"Boats" is part of our Navy heritage and it's a title respected around the fleet.
Man Overboard Device Saves Sailors’ Lives

By MC1 Mike Jones

A new device developed by an engineering crew aboard the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman (CVN 75) gives sailors a hands-on experience with a device that could save their lives. The device, developed by the Manufacturing Operations and Design Improvement (MODI) in conjunction with the ShipOverBoard Team (SOT), is a prototype model of a device that could be deployed to prevent loss of life when a sailor falls overboard.

The device, which is being tested on the Truman, is designed to be installed on ships and can save lives when a sailor falls overboard. The device is a small, handheld device that can be activated by the sailor to send a signal to the ship’s bridge. The signal is received by a satellite, which then relays it back to the ship. The device is being tested on the Truman and could be installed on other ships in the future.

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Tom Smith, enlisted education coordinator for NETC. “There are numerous programs in place that allow Sailors, whether deployed or on shore, to work toward their degree, and get those advancement points.”

The Navy’s educational initiatives are designed to support a continuum of learning and development throughout a Sailor’s career, including distance learning available in multiple formats almost anywhere around the globe.

Under the Navy College Program, several opportunities are available that give Sailors a head-start in earning their college degree. A visit to the local NCO is a logical first step to learn about the wide variety of college level examinations available, such as the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) Examination Program, the College Level Examination Program and the DANTES Subject Standardized Tests program.

In these programs and others, Sailors can take tests in a variety of subjects and receive recommended college credit for each test successfully completed. There are also several college admission tests given through the NCOs, including the Scholastic Assessment Test, and the American College Test assessment program. The Graduate Record Exam may be taken at certain testing sites off-base and DANTES will reimburse the Sailor for the cost of the test. The Sailor must personally fund the test administration fee. There is a great chance for Sailors to earn college credit for things they already do in their job. Rating-relevant degrees are accepted by examination, and offer distance learning opportunities to complete the remainder of degree requirements.

The Tuition Assistance (TA) program is one of the Navy’s most popular educational assistance programs. Through TA, Sailors can apply for financial support to help them complete their college degree.

The Navy funds 100 percent of tuition and mandatory course fees (max of $250 per semester hour) for up to 16 semester hours per fiscal year. The $250 per semester hour (or semester hour equivalent) payment applies only to tuition and mandatory course fees related to course enrollment. TA does not cover books or other expenses, and this policy applies to all pay grades.

Another Navy College Program designed to help Sailors continue their education while on sea-duty assignments is the Navy College Program for Afloat College Education (NCPACE). All NCPACE college courses are provided by accredited colleges and universities, and both undergraduate and graduate level courses are available. NCPACE courses are funded by the Navy with the individual Sailor only paying for books.

Story by Ed Barker, Naval Education and Training Command.
As the armored Humvees roar by on their far-flung missions, the children of Afghanistan come barreling out of their homes in a mad sprint, their faces full of wonder. They raise their arms above their heads and salute the passing Americans with the “thumbs up” sign, using both hands to convey their enthusiasm. They smile and wave at the gunners sitting in the turrets on top of the armored trucks. It is a moment of hope for the new Afghanistan that repeats itself during every convoy mission in the Khost province. It is a daily reminder of the great responsibility entrusted to every Sailor deployed to Afghanistan.

Twenty-seven individual augmentee (IA) Sailors are assigned to Camp Chapman in mountainous Eastern Afghanistan as part of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Khost. “The PRTs were set up to provide three lines of operations: security, reconstruction and governance,” said PRT Khost Commanding Officer, Cmdr. Dave Adams. “The mission is to reconstruct the country and to connect people to their government.”

The first step for the PRT was to identify the most basic needs of the people in the Khost province. “We worked with the Afghan government and their Provincial Development Plan, looked at their priorities and decided to do what we could to help them with their reconstruction priorities,” said Khost PRT Engineer, Lt. Cmdr. Robert Trader. “That’s water, education and roads – when you get right down to it,” said Trader.

PRT Khost provides the blueprints and expertise for each project then contracts the work out to local Afghan construction companies, providing jobs and a cash infusion for the fledgling democracy.
The term groundbreaking still carries its original meaning in the hard-scrabble soil of Khost.

“Closing the Doors to Prosperity”

Fifty school buildings in 25 locations are either in the planning stage, under construction or completed. Most of the school construction projects place a boy’s school directly next to a girl’s school, with a wall separating the two buildings. Educating girls is a new idea in Khost, but the PRT made this a top priority.

“It’s a cultural thing,” said Traeder. “They want them (boys and girls) separate – but we also want to see them complete some girl schools. If they are built adjacent to each other there will be a wall in between them. It’s rather unique. Some of the resistance to sending girls to school here is that parents don’t want the girls to walk to school alone. This way they can walk with their brothers and then they each go in a separate entrance. Each school will have its own latrine and its own hand-pumped well, and, culturally that’s important to them.”

The significance of the school’s construction projects was evident at a groundbreaking celebration for a rural school for girls and boys in the Khost Province was held on Oct. 10, 2007. Local elders, regional political leaders, PRT personnel and local youth were among the guests on hand at the event.

“The most important thing here in Afghanistan is education,” said Adams. “If we can educate the girls and the boys, and this is a combined school, then that will really allow them to build a solid country. Under the Taliban, education was really at the lowest level. Here in Khost, there were less than 1,000 kids in school. Today, we have 86,000 kids in school, most of them sitting outside. Building these schools allows them to come indoors and really have a chance to learn without dealing with the weather and the heat. This is the future generation of Afghanistan that will lead them toward prosperity instead of another 30 years of war.”

Life at the End of the World

Camp Chapman was formerly a Soviet base during their occupation of Afghanistan during the 1980s. Inside its gates are dozens of rusting Soviet aircraft, left behind to slowly fade away through the ravages of wind, sand and time. To say that the camp is remote would not be doing its location justice. To a Westerner, it feels as far from home as one could ever imagine: Just to travel to the U.S. military’s hub of transportation in Afghanistan, Bagram Air Force Base, personnel at PRT Khost will endure an often days long expedition that will likely include convoys and twin-engine aircraft.

The weather in Khost is a moody beast with 40-60 degree swings between night and day. Bats, scorpions and, everyone’s favorite, cobra’s, are just some of nature’s scourges with which Camp Chapman residents must come to grips.

Despite the logistical and cosmetic challenges, the Sailors have adopted the camp as their temporary home and, speak of their turf in measured terms when talking to outsiders. Rarely is a disparaging word spoken in regards to life on the camp.

“It’s very self-contained, very self-sufficient,” said PRT Khost Communications Officer, Chief Electronics Technician(SS) David Kerlan, “We have everything we need here on this little FOB (Forward Operating Base).”

Despite its small stature – PRT Khost at Camp Chapman is nothing more than a stone’s throw from end to end – the Sailors are very protective of their tiny parcel of land. Possibly, the feeling of ownership is just a Sailor’s natural response to life away from their natural habitat. Sailors taking pride and ownership in their job and their ship is the goal of every dipper, and clearly this has carried over as IAs take their mission ashore.

“This is cake. This is the easy life,” said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class SW(AW) Joshua Jorns. “We’ve got 10 times more living space here than you do on a ship.”

As is the case for most IAs, the Camp Chapman Sailors have learned to adapt to living in an Army dominated culture.

“At first it took us a while,” said Information Technician 2nd Class Carl Bahl. “When we first got to Fort Bragg, where we did almost three months of training before deployment, we were pretty segregated from each other at first. Then we started living in tents together and learning each others different quirks and ways of getting things done – I think that’s where we began to come together.”

“Each service has its own intricacies on how they do things so being there (Fort Bragg) for almost three months was a great help,” said Army 1st Sgt. Dino Cosio, PRT Khost’s senior enlisted leader. “The majority of our little differences got ironed out there.”

“I can actually see the difference that we’re making and the difference we’re making in the lives of these people.”

— CM1 (SCW) Jerry Jump
Battling More than Conditions

Visiting the construction projects to keep track of their progress is a never-ending process. To do this, the Sailors load up in their armored Humvees and convoy throughout the province. The terrain in Khost is among the most rugged and difficult to travel in the world. The treacherous mountain passes are better suited to pack animals. They navigate dusty, desert landscapes and stone-covered riverbeds. Through it all, the Sailors must be ever vigilant for Taliban fighters. Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and rocket attacks are a constant threat throughout the province. Most of the Sailors spend one to two weeks each month exclusively manning the convoys, often as gunners and drivers.

Despite being assigned to operations that they never thought they would experience when they joined the Navy, the Sailors say their experiences at sea have served them well in their new surroundings.

“Working at sea, you do have a fire department, a post office, but there’s nothing like that here,” said Culinary Specialist 1st Class (SW) Richard Rietch, PRT Khost cook and convoy gunner. “If you see anything that looks out of the ordinary, that’s going to send up a red flag. The hardest thing is that you’re never looking for one specific thing. As soon as we find a way to overcome a certain type of device, they come up with something new. It’s like [cat and mouse] and you just want to make sure that we’re always controlling the game. Anything out of the ordinary is suspect. This is the real thing, out here. You never want to be the one who didn’t act on something that could’ve saved your buddy’s life.”

Foundations of Trust

Through their efforts, a new found trust is maturing between the local Khost population and PRT personnel. The benefits of their labor are immediate and help the Afghani people at a fundamental level. Village by village, they are seeing medical clinics open to care for...
the ill. Water wells are dug to provide clean drinking water. Diversion dams are built to help cultivate crops where there was once just dust and stone. Schools are opening to enlighten the young, providing hope where they’ve once was only the oppression wrought by the extremism of the Taliban.

When PRT Khost personnel travel through the province, the warm embrace of smiling children and grateful men and women regularly greet them.

“I can actually see the difference that we’re making and the difference we’re making in the lives of these people,” said Construction Mechanic 1st Class (SCW) Jerry Jump, PRT Khost Human mechanic and convoy operator. “Just in the short time that I’ve been here, I can see a real change in the attitude that they have toward us. There is openness and friendliness toward us. I think they recognize that we’re doing good things that can only help them.”

“[Ninety-five out of 100] people here in Khost want development; they want a future for their children and they want international assistance,” said Adams. “The welcome mat is out.”

Just a few years ago, Khost province was a stronghold for Al Qaeda terror cells and its people were under Taliban control. Today it is alive with a newfound freedom and a burgeoning economy.

“This is so important because less than 15 miles from here were two of the [Al Qaeda] training camps. One was where Mohammed Atta trained for some time,” said Adams. “So 9/11 really started here. It’s important that we help the Afghans cast off that tyranny and terror and be able to lift up the future. It’s important for the hope of their children and our children. We want to make this a place where terrorism can no longer fester.”

McCammack is a photojournalist at Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
As the helo approaches Camp Bucca in the pre-dawn hours, a moment of déjà vu sets in. The overwhelming electric candlepower illuminating the facility set against the stark, black nothingness of the Southern Iraqi desert brings to mind the wattage of the Las Vegas strip. But this is not Sin City … or the City of Lights. Camp Bucca is the largest detainee facility in Iraq.

“The surge” of American forces in the spring and summer of 2007 netted thousands of individuals considered impending threats to Multi-National Forces-Iraq (MNF-I), Iraqi Security Forces or the fledgling Iraqi government. During this period the detainee population in Iraq spiked significantly.
The daily routine at Camp Bucca is made exasperatingly difficult by the extreme climate of Southern Iraq. In mid-summer, 140-degree temperatures are the norm. Outfitted with 50 pounds of body armor, a Kevlar helmet, an M-16 rifle and any number of accoutrements, the heat-born assault on the senses is physically and mentally exhausting.

Sailors work 12-hours on/12-hours off, six days a week. They are in direct contact with detainees who would stop at nothing to escape the compound or kill the troops guarding them. “Our guys literally work face-to-face with an enemy,” said Cmdr. John Lathroum, NPDB-3 executive officer. “There are quite a few of these guys, who, if they had their way, would do harm to U.S. service members. Most of them are here because they already have. We face that on a daily basis. Every time they walk inside that wire they have to bring their ‘A game.’

Detainees craft weaponry from the most rudimentary materials. Knives, machetes, nunchakus (numchucks), whips, swords and any number of other armaments have been found and confiscated during regular searches of the detainees’ shelters.

Some of the most violent Bucca detainees have burnt their own shelters to the ground and noted against the guards. They have dug tunnels and fashioned uniforms designed to resemble those of U.S. troops, out of material ripped from their tents, in failed attempts to escape the facility. For the most hardened insurgents, Camp Bucca is now their battlefield. One of the most basic (and common) weapons made by detainees are known among the guards as “Chai Rocks.” They have a tea. It’s super sweet and called chai,” said Quartermaster Seaman Troy Johnson, Compound 17 guard. “The tea is blended with dirt and made into balls which harden in the sun and become like hard rocks. Then they make slingshots out of anything they can find, even the elastic bands in their pants. Some of them are actually pretty accomplished with the slingshots. It’s just one more thing to keep you on your toes.” The detainees are placed within the facility in like groups (Sunni, Shia, various tribal factions) to ensure their safety from other detainees, to prevent violence, deter insurgent activity and to facilitate group recreation within the compounds. Third country nationals are normally detained separately from Iraqis. Females are kept separate from the male population and juveniles are kept at a separate facility away from the hardened adult population.

Each quad (there are four quads in each compound) can hold approximately 250 detainees. NPDB-3 Sailors control compounds which house some of the most violent insurgents at Camp Bucca. Inside the wire at these compounds are Islamic extremists who...
will maim or kill fellow detainees for behavior they consider against Islam.

"Sharia courts enforce a lot of rules inside the compounds," said Lt. j.g. Kevin Taylor, Compound 17 officer-in-charge. "Anyone who takes part in behavior which is seen as 'Western' is severely punished by the extremist elements in the compound. They’ll beat other detainees for taking part in these activities. It’s quite appalling sometimes."

Victims of the extremist justice are taken from the compound by ambulance and given medical care equal to what any member of U.S. Armed Forces would expect. Information on their attackers is rarely provided by the U.S. Armed Forces would expect. Information on their attackers is rarely provided by the victims because of the threat of further violence against them or their families.

At Bucca, the Navy-controlled compounds are known as "The Southside" and the Sailors and detainees is critical to maintaining safety and security within the compound.

“We have a strong sense of pride in ownership of our compounds," said Lt. Rey Castro Jr., Compound 15 officer-in-charge. "Interracial communications between the Sailors and detainees is critical to maintaining safety and security within the compound.

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The Sailors of NPDB-3 took on a mission of together you can make anything happen," said King. "This is a prime example. We’re all from different walks of life. Submariners, aircraft carriers, squadrons – you name it. It doesn’t matter. We all came together. It’s embedded in us since we went to boot camp. Sailors come together and overcome."

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The detainees come into the system here and many of them are illiterate – they don’t even know how to read the Koran,” said Task Force 134 Deputy Commander, Rear Admiral Garland Wright. “They’re unduly influenced by others who are misinterpreting the Koran for their own uses. Those who leave detention operations have at least a fifth-grade education. They’re able to write and read at a fifth-grade level. That’s a huge gain. That’s beyond anything they’d get on the outside and they’re able to interpret the Koran themselves and see the beauty of that book and understand it. They can argue with those trying to corrupt the Koran. That’s one small step in the right direction to creating stability and security in this country.”

"Nothing worth doing is easy”

“Nothing worth doing is easy”

"Nothing worth doing is easy”

They endure a daily routine that is difficult for them to explain to their own loved ones. They work in an environment foreign to men and women trained to dominate the seas. They treat insurgents hell-bent to do them harm with dignity and respect. It’s a hard job done with uncompromising honor and that in itself is reward enough for the Sailors of NPDB-3. “

McCammack is a photojournalist at Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
"Darken Ship" is a familiar refrain to Sailors accustomed to life at sea, but this is something entirely new. At night, they navigate the camp in blackout conditions with tiny, keychain flashlights – nothing more than tiny specks of blue, green or red light are allowed after sundown.

The cover of night is a friend to the Sailors here. It limits the enemy’s ability to get a proper fix on their location from the imposing mountains that surround the camp, diminishing their accuracy when they attempt to fire on the camp with rockets or mortars. On the downside it also severely limits a Sailor’s ability to find the latrine on their first night at Camp Clark.

A Sense of Family
A nation trying to free itself from tyranny needs many things to stand on its own and a capable, loyal military protecting its people is among the most important. The mission of the 14 individual augmentee (IA) Sailors assigned to the Navy’s embedded training team (ETT) at Camp Clark is to mentor the Afghan National Army (ANA) and help them develop into a mature fighting force.

Prior to deployment, these Sailors reported to Fort Riley, Wash., for three months of comprehensive training.

“It was very good training,” said Cmdr. Jay Green, officer-in-charge of the ETT at Camp Clark. “The guys at Fort Riley do a fantastic job. It gave us training on how to operate in an Army environment. We learned how to convoy, operate their radio equipment, conduct Humvee maintenance and, above all, there was a whole lot of training on weapons and time spent at the range. The Navy’s requirements for weapons don’t prepare us for this environment, so the training at Riley was invaluable for us.”

The Navy team at Camp Clark is a diverse group. They include medical personnel, pilots,
The ANA holds an all hands muster for accountability purposes.

“A Sailor uses an interpreter to question an ANA unit leader about the absence of several soldiers at a muster.”

“A Sailors walk to chow together at Camp Clark.”

“A Cmdr. Jay Green, commanding officer Navy ETT, Camp Clark uses an interpreter to chat with his counterpart in the ANA.”

“A ANA soldiers and an interpreter follow their Navy mentor down from a Camp Clark watchtower.”

“Keep your head on a swivel”

“The Sailors at Camp Clark are a team in every sense. They work together, live together and their lives depend on each other.”

“A Sailor uses an interpreter to question an ANA unit leader about the absence of several soldiers at a muster.”

“Setting the Example

Camp Clark is divided into two sides. The coalition forces inhabit the smaller side, while the ANA troops have their own facilities just down the street. Most of the Navy personnel spend a great deal of their time on the ANA side of the camp, mentoring and training their ANA counterparts.

“The Navy is basically the garrison staff. They support all the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen who are on this FOB (Forward Operating Base) and take part in projects on this side. They also act as the Afghan National Army Garrison Support Staff,” said Army Lt. Col. Brian Drake, 1st Brigade, ETT team chief.

“They help them function as a garrison which supports the ANA FOB. They mentor the ANA in the tasks that they should be doing.”

Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Brian Hill mentors medics at the ANA clinic.

“They act as medical mentors in the ANA clinics and help solve our problems. He’s doing two jobs. He’s helping me and he’s also executive officer of the Camp Clark Navy ETT.”

“Keep your head on a swivel”

“The ANA holds an all hands muster for accountability purposes.”

“A Sailor uses an interpreter to question an ANA unit leader about the absence of several soldiers at a muster.”

“A Sailors walk to chow together at Camp Clark.”

“A ANA soldiers and an interpreter follow their Navy mentor down from a Camp Clark watchtower.”

“If you’re in the gunner position you’re always looking for people with weapons, handheld phone devices or something that could set off an IED,” said Electronics Technician (SW/AW) Paul Nienow, ANA communications mentor. “If you’re in the front of the vehicle you’re looking for trip...”
Convoys can be dangerous, with pressure-plate IEDs and wire snares to watch out for. Convoy team members are always the center of attention when they navigate Khost’s narrow, congested roads.

By mentoring the ANA, Sailors strengthen the new democracy in Afghanistan by training their troops to operate as a professional military.

wires, pressure-plate IEDs and you’ve also got to always keep your eye out for suspect vehicles, especially single occupant vehicles.”

Chillin’ on the FOB
Life at the camp is much more relaxed in the few hours they are able to steal for themselves. The group at Camp Clark, prior to the current team’s arrival, made great improvements to the standard of living and the current Navy team has built upon their efforts.

Everywhere in Afghanistan, one hears whispers of a remote FOB that has its own swimming pool. No one seems to have seen it with their own eyes and the prevailing theory is that the pool is nothing more than urban legend. It is not. Camp Clark has the pool. It is crystal clear and just one of the homemade amenities on the FOB.

With nothing more than hammers, nails and a little bit of sweat, the Camp Clark team has created an oasis in the Afghan wilderness.

“It’s not bad here at all,” said Information Systems Technician 2nd Class (SW) Joshua Stewart, networks systems administrator. “The guys who were here before us did a great job of building this place up. It’s way nicer than I expected out in the middle of nowhere.”

The Sailors call their berthing spaces “beehives.” They are typically 8 to 10-man buildings with dividers separating each personal space.

“Honestly, we have it pretty good,” said Hill. “The beehives give each of us our own personal space, we’ve got a nice gym and pretty decent chow. Trust me, I’ve had orders to places that didn’t have it anywhere close to what we’ve got around here. I don’t want to make it sound like we’re at a four-star resort, because we’re not, but it’s much better than any of us expected.”

And even though they are separated from their loved ones by mountains, continents and oceans, the group has formed bonds much stronger than your average co-workers.

They live, work, eat together and sleep under the same roof. They solve their problems by bouncing ideas off one another. They quarrel and make up. The Sailors at Camp Clark have clearly formed a cohesive, self-reliant team, but most importantly, they have become a family.

McCamack is a photojournalist at Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
I t is just after nightfall in the Diyala province of Iraq, an old pickup truckambles down a winding dirt path. From the Blackhawk helicopters hovering above, the truck’s bobbing headlights stand in stark contrast to the surrounding checkerboard of dark palm groves and farmland cut through with irrigation canals.

The truck could be hauling farmers returning from a late night in the fields, or insurgents hoping to avoid detection by taking a side road. In this region, one of the most dangerous in Iraq, anything is possible.

As the helicopters descend from the sky to intercept the vehicle, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician 1st Class(EWS) Ed Hart shares his gut feeling with the Soldiers riding along in the rear.

“I don’t know what they’ve got, but these guys are not of the area,” he yells over the roar of the rotor blades.

When the lead chopper shines a spotlight on the vehicle, the driver speeds up as passengers toss weapons from the windows. When the vehicle does stop, Hart and his partner, EOD1(EWS) Brian Franke, both of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit (EODMU) 11, Company 3/13, join Soldiers from Task Force Lightening in discovering a small cache of weapons including assault rifles and homemade explosives. After detaining the suspects, Franke destroys the weapons with a small explosive charge.

The sight of Sailors serving alongside Soldiers in Iraq is not unusual. Throughout the country, more than 100 Navy EOD technicians are locked in a daily battle with Iraq’s insurgents.

During the past year, they have conducted more than 11,000 missions to find and neutralize the enemy’s weapon of choice and the single biggest killer of coalition forces – improvised explosive devices (IEDs), while disrupting the terrorist networks that plant them.

In this war, they are rarely fortunate enough to choose the time and place of their battles. Instead, they hunt the hidden enemy alongside their Army counterparts on Iraq’s urban streets and wind-swept desert plains. The hours are long and unpredictable, the work environment grueling and unforgiving, but their work saves lives everyday. They are the Navy’s frontline Sailors on the ground in Iraq.

Each morning, Lt. Kevin Gamble, officer in charge of Company 9/13, based at Contingency Operating Base Speicher near Tikrit, wakes early to check his e-mail. There is rarely good news in the overnight reports that fill his inbox. When the enemy is active – planting roadside bombs and attacking checkpoints – it means his men are in harm’s way. When the enemy is silent, “it usually means they’re planning something, getting ready for something big.”

If that “something big” were to happen, it would likely occur on Main Supply Route Tampa. The roadway is one of Iraq’s main thoroughfares connecting north and south. Military convoys carrying equipment and supplies travel the route daily, making it a popular place for roadside bombs planted by insurgents looking to disrupt military supply routes. Keeping Route Tampa open for business is one of Company 9/13’s biggest challenges. Men from the company patrol the route on a regular basis while looking for anything out of the ordinary. In a country where the roadside is littered with everything from animal carcasses and shredded tires to trash-filled plastic bags, the Sailors rely on experience to help identify threats.

“Get to the point where you’ve driven this road so much that you can immediately spot something that doesn’t look right,” said EOD1(EWS) Bert Marley.

But perhaps the most deadly threat along Route Tampa lurks unseen beneath the ground. Tunnels, called culverts, once provided an irrigation path for the farms that line Route Tampa. Today, they provide a place for insurgents to hide explosives, unseen, beneath the roadway. Since January, the number of culvert IEDs has increased dramatically. In response, the military has blocked access to the culverts with concrete barriers and concertina wire, but still the sailors of 9/13 are wary each time they pass over one.

“You heart beats a little faster every time you have to cross one of those things,” said Franke.

The sights of Sailors serving alongside Soldiers in Iraq is not unusual. Throughout the country, more than 100 Navy EOD technicians are locked in a daily battle with Iraq’s insurgents.

During the past year, they have conducted more than 11,000 missions to find and neutralize the enemy’s weapon of choice and the single biggest killer of coalition forces – improvised explosive devices (IEDs), while disrupting the terrorist networks that plant them.

In this war, they are rarely fortunate enough to choose the time and place of their battles. Instead, they hunt the hidden enemy alongside their Army counterparts on Iraq’s urban streets and wind-swept desert plains. The hours are long and unpredictable, the work environment grueling and unforgiving, but their work saves lives everyday. They are the Navy’s frontline Sailors on the ground in Iraq.

Each morning, Lt. Kevin Gamble, officer in charge of Company 9/13, based at Contingency Operating Base Speicher near Tikrit, wakes early to check his e-mail. There is rarely good news in the overnight reports that fill his inbox. When the enemy is active – planting roadside bombs and attacking checkpoints – it means his men are in harm’s way. When the enemy is silent, “it usually means they’re planning something, getting ready for something big.”

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“You heart beats a little faster every time you have to cross one of those things,” said Franke.
The Sailors of Company 9/13 risk their lives every day seeking out the roadside bombs that service members serving in Iraq try to avoid. Many of them are on their second or third deployments to Iraq, often returning home for six months between deployments.

“It’s tough,” said Marley. “I’ve seen my family for two months out of the past year and a half.”

His story is not unusual. The teams live together, fight together and sometimes die together. Ten Navy EOD technicians have died in the line of duty since 2003. In June 2007, a culvert IED claimed the lives of two of 9/13’s brethren while severely injuring a third.

But the men of Company 9/13 carry on with their dangerous mission.

“We owe it to the guys who are living to keep going, so they can go home to their families,” said EODCM(EWS) Michael McLean, command master chief of EODMU 2. “You can’t stop.”

Zelkals is a journalist assigned to Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. 5th Fleet.

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The release of NAVADMIN 297/07 allows Sailors to negotiate for IA orders as part of permanent change of station (PCS) orders under the Global War on Terror Support Assignment (GSA) detailing system. The GSA system provides Sailors and their families greater predictability in IA assignments.

The plan allows Sailors to negotiate eight- or 14-month PCS orders to Expeditionary assignments. The GSA system provides Sailors to negotiate for IA orders as part of permanent change of station (PCS) orders under the Global War on Terror Support Assignment (GSA) detailing system. The GSA system provides Sailors and their families greater predictability in IA assignments. The plan allows Sailors to negotiate eight- or 14-month PCS orders to Expeditionary assignments. The GSA system provides Sailors to negotiate for IA orders as part of permanent change of station (PCS) orders under the Global War on Terror Support Assignment (GSA) detailing system. The GSA system provides Sailors and their families greater predictability in IA assignments.

The ECRC IA checklist mandated by your command. If you do not have one, print out a completion certificate at the end of each course and take a copy of the certificate with you. Security clearance. You must meet the security clearance requirement stated in your orders. Your clearance must remain current for the duration of your IA tour. Your command security manager must sign the last page of your orders stating that your required clearance is reflected in JPAS. If your clearance needs to be updated, your current command must ensure this step is accomplished before you transfer. Ensure your ID card is CAC activated (your pin) and your PKI Certificates are updated. This cannot be stressed enough, your current command has established it. Establish a My Pay account and remember your pin. Your orders will specify if you will need a passport. Due to travel requirements, official passports are essential. Personnel assigned anywhere in Africa might be ordered to travel to various countries in CENTCOM AOR including but not limited to; Comoros, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen. Use one of these country codes when applying for an official passport.

All of the uniforms and the gear that you need for your IA mission will be issued to you at a Naval Mobilization and Processing Station (NMPS) and at your follow-on training sites. But, you must report to NMPS in utilities or equivalent and have enough clean uniforms for the few days you will spend processing. Coveralls or flight suits are not accepted.

Does your family need a Power of Attorney? Have you considered drafting a will? Does your family know your rank/rate and social security number? Take care of these important matters now, before you leave your current command. Have you given your family point of contact information for your command ombudsman? Your command IA coordinator and vice versa? Have you and your family made a plan in case of natural disaster or emergency at home? Where will your family move to and do you have the new address/phone number/emergency information with you?

Many IA Sailors have found it useful to have a commercial e-mail account while deployed in an IA billet. You may want to get one but it is not a requirement. Remember your Noble Eagle (NE) number and be sure to give that number to your family and to your parent command. The Navy uses NE numbers to identify and locate you. You can find your NE number in your orders.

Your mainsources of support during an IA deployment are still your parent command/NOSC and your command ombudsman. The Navy established the ECRC to providesupervision and coordination of all administrative processing, equipping, training, certification, deployment, re-deployment and proactive family support of Navy IAs. ECRC provides support for the IA Sailor and their family throughout the entire IA deployment process and until the Sailor returns safely home again.

Additional information and answers to frequently asked questions are available at the ECRC Web site www.ecrc.navy.mil. IA Sailors can contact the ECRC Helpdesk at ecrc.hq.fcft@navy.mil.

ECRC also maintains an IA Family Helpdesk at ecrc.fcft@navy.mil and a 24-hour toll free Family Careline at 1-877-364-4302 for any emergency situations that may occur. Truett is assigned to Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center, Little Creek, Va.

Sailors learn advanced soldiering techniques at the Udari Range in the Kuwaiti desert. The training at Udari is the final step before they report as IAs.
The U.S. Navy Seabees were formed shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in World War II. Because there was a need for massive military construction, and civilian labor in war zones was impractical, Rear Adm. Ben Morell, Chief of the Navy’s Bureau of Yards and Docks, established the first construction battalions, March 5, 1942.

This was the beginning of the Seabees, who obtained their name from a transliteration of “Construimus,” Latin for “We Build, We Fight.” Their symbol became a flying bee with a hammer, a wrench and a machine gun in its hands. The first Seabee enlisted men came primarily from the civilian construction industry, many having helped build the nation’s bridges, highways, skyscrapers and dams. Due to their construction experience, they were usually older than the average Sailor. With an emphasis on experience and skill, these craftsmen were quickly trained and shipped to overseas assignments. By the end of the war, 325,000 such men had enlisted in the Seabees.

Civil Engineer Corps officers, many with prior military and construction experience, were commissioned to serve in the units. Nearly 11,400 officers joined the Civil Engineer Corps during the war, and 7,960 of them served with the Seabees.

During World War II, the Seabees performed now legendary deeds in both the Atlantic and Pacific Theaters of Operation. They constructed more than 400 advanced bases along five figurative “roads to victory” which all had their beginnings in the continental United States. The South Atlantic road wound through the Caribbean Sea to Africa, Sicily and up the Italian peninsula. The North Atlantic road passed through Newfoundland to Iceland, Great Britain, France, and Germany. The North Pacific road passed through Alaska and along the Aleutian Island chain. The Central Pacific road passed through the Hawaiian, Marshall, Gilbert, Mariana, and Ryukyu Islands. The South Pacific road went through the South Sea islands to Samoa, the Solomon Islands, New Guinea, and the Philippines.

The first organized Seabee battalion deployed overseas to Bora Bora in the Pacific, where it began construction of a fuel tank farm. The first Seabee unit to debut in a combat zone did so on Sept. 1, 1942, when elements of the 6th Naval Construction Battalion went ashore at Guadalcanal. Using mostly captured Japanese equipment, they finished Henderson Field. This work was accomplished under trying conditions, not only from the enemy, but from the weather as well. Fighting rain, mud, sniper fire, artillery and bombing, the field was finished and maintained by the Seabees.

After Guadalcanal, Seabees took part in every island invasion in the Pacific. They could be found building airstrips, roads and camps within hours of the invasion’s start, quite often working while under fire. Eventually, the Seabees participated in every theater of operation during World War II. The Seabees built 111 major airstrips, 700 square blocks of warehouses, hospitals for 70,000 patients, storage tanks for 100 millions gallons of gasoline and housing for 1.5 million men. In nearly every major invasion in the Pacific, Marines were followed by Seabees to support the invasion and provide long-term facilities for the troops. In Europe, their greatest construction project was the building of the artificial harbor at Normandy, immediately after the invasion.

In the Atlantic, Seabees cleverly adapted pontoons so that they could be quickly assembled to form causeways, piers, and other structures. In Sicily, the enemy was quickly outflanked and overpowered as large numbers of men and huge amounts of equipment poured ashore over the Seabees’ pontoon causeways with a minimum of casualties and delay. These causeways were also a key element during the invasion of Normandy.

Seabees also manned the large ferries known as Rhinos that carried men and supplies from the larger ships to the beaches. These ferries were actually floating pontoon structures powered by giant outboard motors. Huge amounts of much needed equipment were hauled ashore on Rhinos during the first few days of the invasion.

On March 22, 1945, Army Gen. George S. Patton, with Seabee assistance, put his armored forces across the Rhine at Oppenheim in a frontal assault which swept away the German defenders. To support Patton’s advancing army, the Seabees built pontoon ferries similar to the Rhinos of D-Day fame and used them to transport Patton’s tanks across the river.

In all, the Seabees operated more than 300 craft which darted thousands of troops into the heart of Germany. One Seabee crew even had the honor of ferrying Prime Minister Winston Churchill across the Rhine on an inspection tour.

Due to their effectiveness in World War II, the Seabees became a permanent part of the Navy. They continued to serve in Korea, where they participated in both the Inchon and Wonsan landings and built advance bases in the Pacific.

In 1965, the Seabees made their first deployment to Vietnam and built an expeditious airfield at Chu Lai. As the demand for Seabees rapidly escalated, they constructed roads, bridges, airfields and hospitals, and helped in many civic action projects.

In the 1970s, they resumed peacetime deployments including construction at the strategic Indian Ocean Base - Diego Garcia. During Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, more than 5,000 active-duty and reserve Seabees served in the Middle East. They built 10 camps for more than 42,000 personnel, three airports, 10 aircraft parking aprons, three ammunition supply

Focus on Service
As the focus of effort began to shift from Rhino to Kandahar, additional personnel and equipment were moved in as needed. Seabees repaired crater damage from Coalition bombing and got the runway open for C-130 and C-17 flights within 48 hours. Seabees also built a Short Term Holding Facility to house Taliban and Al-Qaeda detainees. They were then tasked with improving the runway temporary repairs to permanent repairs so that other types of aircraft, including the C-141 needed to transport the detainees from Afghanistan to Cuba, would be able to use the airfield at Kandahar.

Other Seabees deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to build temporary holding facilities for about 300 Taliban and Al-Qaeda prisoners.

Seabees also deployed to Basra in the Philippines to support counter-terrorism efforts there. Seabees built roads, bridges and water wells and repaired ports and airstrips to allow access to isolated areas where the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group was trying to gain a foothold. Seabees supporting the First Marine Expeditionary Force were among the first U.S. forces on the ground to support U.S. efforts in Iraq. With about 3,000 Seabees in theater, they had the largest Navy role ashore during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Before hostilities, Seabees constructed a 20-acre airfield parking apron, preserved 10 and 20-acre areas for muniting, constructed two mudfencing storage areas, a 48,000-square-foot concrete pad, and a 1,200-person camp in Kuwait. When hostilities began, Seabees maintained 11 broach lanes as U.S. Marines crossed the line of departure and entered Iraq. Seabees erected bridges over the Diyala River and Saddam Canal in spans ranging from 40 to 60 meters. They repaired and constructed various roads to provide U.S. Marines with effective paths to move northward. Seabees also constructed a 14,400-person prison camp that covered 42 acres. Seabees performed work at the Umm Qmar, including building an elevated causeway to flood supplies and humanitarian aid and building a road to access the ferry landing there. Seabees also constructed a 116-bed Expedi tional Medical Facility and 250-bed Fleet Hospital Facility.

Continuing their worldwide reputation as ambassadors of goodwill, Seabees renovated schools and municipal facilities to help the Iraqi people. This included 7 bridges, 74 schools, 13 government buildings, 16 police and fire stations. They also completed 20 utility restoration projects, including the Al Hillah Water Irrigation facilities there. Seabees provided water to 125,000 acres of farmland. Seabees returned to Iraq in March 2004. Their efforts included force protection, troop housing, border outposts, expeditionary camps, community outreach centers, medical clinics, community cleanup and restoration and camp improvements. Seabees negotiated 300 projects valued at over $100 million in contracts in Al Asad to improve basic education, sanitation, transportation, water and sewer, primary care clinics, courthouses, police stations, and Iraqi security facilities. Seabees also created an apprenticeship program for local Iraqis to teach them job skills to help rebuild their community.

Seabees in Iraq are currently providing force protection and habitability improvements for forward operating bases and coalition facilities. This includes the construction of hardened facilities, force protection barriers, temporary berthing structures, storage facilities, wastewater treatment ponds, upgrades to electrical systems, and runway repairs. They are also constructing operating bases for Iraqi defense forces and border patrol units and providing assessments of roads, bridges and facilities to support the Marines. During the past 65 years the Seabees have repeatedly demonstrated their skills as fighters and builders. In peace and in war, no matter what the task, they have responded with a simple but proud, “Can Do!”

Smith is assigned to the Naval Construction Div., Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va., where he is a photographer at Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
just six days after Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait, Aug. 2, 1990, American forces began deploying to the Saudi Arabian desert. During the same time period, U.S. diplomats, led by then-Secretary of State James Baker, were urging other nations to join a U.N. coalition and condemn Hussein’s invasion of its peaceful neighbor.

On Nov. 29, 1990, the United Nations passed Resolution 678, which gave Iraq a withdrawal deadline of Jan. 15, 1991. The resolution authorized “all necessary means to uphold and implement Resolution 660.”

The response to the U.N.’s measure was swift and near unanimous. By the time combat operations began Jan. 17, 1991, 34 nations had assembled an awesome array of manpower and weaponry along Iraq’s border.

The naval presence in the Persian Gulf was truly remarkable. Navy assets in the Desert Storm theater of operations included an astounding six aircraft carrier battle groups. Against this overwhelming naval presence, the Iraqis managed to deploy just a few gunboats.

Hussein’s aggressive action in Kuwait had united the world against him – this included many of his neighbors. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were among the 34 nations who contributed to coalition efforts.

On Jan. 17, 1991, two days after the resolution’s deadline, a massive air campaign, Operation Desert Storm, was launched. At the same time, Navy BGM-109 Tomahawk cruise missiles were striking targets in Baghdad. The next generation of precision guided-missiles was revealed to the world, as events unfolded on live television.

The assault on Iraq continued through the night and was broadcast around the world. The glowing, green Iraqi anti-aircraft rounds, which made such an impression on television, did little to slow the assault.

In the months that followed, ground forces would eventually sweep into Iraq, advancing much quicker than U.S. generals predicted. By Feb. 26, 1991, Iraqi troops were retreating out of Kuwait, setting fire to Kuwaiti oil fields as they left.

Then-President George H. W. Bush declared a cease-fire on Feb. 27, 1991, declaring that Kuwait had been liberated. The ground campaign lasted just 100 hours.

The Gulf War was an unmatched success for coalition forces and verified the technological superiority both on land and at sea of the American forces.

McCammack is a photojournalist assigned to Naval Media Center, Washington, D.C.
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