

NOWS IMPROVES READINESS AND QUALITY OF LIFE

By JO1(AW) John J. Joyce, USN

Web browser, mouse, printer ... and the New Order Writing System (NOWS). Naval reservist MA2 Antonio Cuin used these 21st-century tools from the comfort of his Brooklyn, N.Y., home and was prepared to deploy at a speed made famous by the Minutemen of 1775.

"I'm ready to get on the plane," said the New York City Corrections captain after he logged on to the NOWS Select Reservist (SELRES) and Commanding Officer/Training Officer (CO/TO) Web application site and printed official Active Duty for Training (ADT) orders, and a travel itinerary that would take him over 2,000 miles away from home.

In Panama City, Panama, Cuin rendezvoused with 15 Naval reservists from New York and Maryland who also used their home computers and NOWS to apply for the Commander, Submarine Group TEN (SUBGRU 10) force protection mission. They independently tracked the approval process of their requests online until Commander, U.S. Atlantic Fleet gave final approval for the official ADT orders that included a commercial travel itinerary.

"The NOWS application and approval process is a timesaver that helps reservists effectively balance family, civilian careers and military deployments," said Cuin. "If your page two is current and you're good to go, you don't have to travel to base at all. Unit members — some from upstate New York — have saved a day off from work without pay and a long trip to our reserve center in Amityville, Long Island."

The 16 SUBGRU 10 force protection reservists are among thousands of citizen-Sailors who have used NOWS since it went live on August 15, 2002, to apply, track and print their orders for domestic and international Annual Training (AT), and ADT and Inactive Duty Training Travel (IDTT) assignments. By the end of FY 03, an estimated 80,000 reservists will have logged on to the SELRES and unit CO/TO NOWS Web site at <https://nows.cnrf.navy.mil> to initiate reserve assignments with laptops and personal computers at homes, libraries, schools, and cyber cafes across the nation.

"The ability to print orders and electronic airline tickets on the Web has taken away a lot of leg work that was required under the old system," said TMC(SS) Christopher Crakow, Training Officer of SUBGRU 10's New York Detachment. "We were dependent on Amityville, but NOWS has given our unit control and a flexibility that we've never had. Every unit member now has the ability to see what is happening at every stage in the approval process from application, CO/TO, 'hard holds,' travel and final approval of orders. What's more, we can do it all from home and that's the big-



Naval Reservists GM3 Harold Gonzalez and MA3 Javier Valentin maintain a topside watch aboard the USS San Francisco (SSN 711) during its transit through the Panama Canal. Photo by MA2 Antonio Cuin.

gest advantage." But the SUBGRU 10 nuclear submarine force protection team could do it all from home because they were mobilization ready. All hard holds for all team members were current.

AT, ADT and IDTT applications with hard holds that are not current (physical or dental exams; an HIV test; required immunizations; end of service (EOS); or a security clearance) will be disapproved by a Naval Reserve Activity (NRA) Order Specialist. The disapproved application will not proceed to the next NOWS routing stage until the reservist personally visits medical, dental and the reserve center to resolve the matter.

"Electronic applications submitted via NOWS enables the 2,800 reservists we service to avoid physically coming to the center

if they are mobilization ready — if there are no hard holds," said Capt. John Landon, Commanding Officer of Navy Marine Corps Reserve Center (NMCRC) San Diego. "Our drilling reservists like the ease of NOWS and the quick turnaround in the receipt of orders and travel itinerary. From a customer service standpoint, this is a tremendous improvement over the old system. The customer service provided by the NOWS help desk to reservists and our staff is outstanding."

Manned by eight civilians and five active duty Navy service members, the NOWS help desk in New Orleans fields an average of 400 calls a day. Questions posed by AT, ADT and IDTT applicants, reserve liaison officers (RLOs), NRA order specialists, fund approvers, and gaining commands worldwide are answered by help desk personnel 24 x 7. "We work around the clock to help customers with NOWS questions," said NOWS help desk supervisor ENC (SW) Phillip Rogers, after getting off the telephone with a satisfied customer at a European gaining command. "Reservists and NRA staff are faced with a learning curve and there are some glitches in the system, but we have a team of software developers constantly working to improve NOWS. We have a help desk team standing by with the answers. If we don't have an immediate answer, we'll figure out how to get the right answer for the customer as soon as possible." Customers can also find answers at the NOWS SELRES and unit CO/TO Web site. The Web interface features online help screens that demonstrate the keyboard actions required to enter and approve orders.

The official NOWS Web site — www.navres.navy.mil/navresfor/now — contains links to helpful sites that include frequently asked questions (FAQs), Commander Naval Reserve Force NOWS policy and a Commander, Naval Personnel Command message authorizing the NOWS watermark and liquidation of travel at a more convenient personnel support detachment (PSD). Prior to final



Silhouette of the USS Florida (SSGN 728) transiting the Panama Canal with the Submarine Group TEN Force Protection Team on deck. Photo by MA2 Antonio G. Cuin, Jr.



approval, reservists can print orders with a watermark in the background reading "DRAFT" that can be provided to employers or other organizations. When the orders have received final approval and are ready to be executed, the watermark will read "ORIGINAL."

"These innovative features in NOWS are what reservists asked for," said Rogers. "Research and development were based on the input of NRA staff and drilling reservists. Applicants initiating their own orders are getting more and more excited about training since NOWS was released. The Naval Reserve Force is enjoying it."

Like the Revolutionary War Minutemen before them who devised a system of horseback rider alerts to assemble quickly, today's Naval reservists have found a way to mobilize quickly and spend more quality time with family in spite of the increasing demands placed on them by the Global War on Terror.

"My wife and children are glad that I've got at least one less trip," said EN2 Kevin Wright, a Naval reservist from Indian Head, Md., who deployed on the SUBGRU 10 Submarine Force Protection ADT with Crakow and Cuin. "Any time there is an issue with submarines, we have to be there," said Wright who works for the Treasury Department at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. "I've deployed five times in the past five months and one or two trips to Reserve Center Adelphi became normal with each mission. NOWS has streamlined the checkout process to the point where we just print our orders and go. NOWS is fast. It's user friendly. Even better ... it's family friendly."

Visit the official NOWS Web site at: www.navres.navy.mil/navresfor/now.

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"Over the last week the world has witnessed the skill and honor and resolve of our military in the course of battle. We have seen the character of this new generation of American Armed Forces. We've seen their daring against ruthless enemies and their decency to an oppressed people. Millions of Americans are proud of our military and so am I."

*- President Bush, Mar. 26, 2003
MacDill Air Force Base*

Editor's Note: As of March 26, 2003, and as we go to press, the total number of reserve personnel on active duty as reported by DoD is: Army National Guard and Army Reserve - 150,071; Naval Reserve - 9,494; Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve - 33,365; Marine Corps Reserve - 20,089; and the Coast Guard Reserve - 3,792. This brings the total Reserve and National Guard on active duty to 216,811 including both units and individual augmentees. At any given time, Services may mobilize some units and individual augmentees.

The list of mobilized personnel is an honor roll of dedication to duty and courage. I want to pay tribute to this brave group of men and women for answering the call of duty, and I want to thank the Naval Reservists of Submarine Group TEN for giving me a glimpse into their heroic lives.