

## **What is the Role of the Sea Services in the War on Terror?**

By Mitchell Wagner

The sea services are a vital necessity against the global war on terrorism. The sea services are made up of the brave men and women that serve in the Merchant Marine, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Coast Guard, and the U.S. Navy. All of these provide for the defense and security of our nation, at home and abroad.

The Merchant Marine consists of a fleet of ships that carry imports and exports all over the world, wherever our troops are stationed. They act as the Navy's auxiliary to deliver troops and supplies where and when they are needed. Their support resupplies our forces and enables them to continue to fight terrorism around the globe.

The United States Coast Guard protects our waterways. They provide security of our coast lines, patrolling up and down the east and west coasts and waterways, to see where additional security is needed to prevent a terrorist attack in our waters. On the local front, the Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team in Kings Bay was armed as a direct result of the September 11 terrorist attacks. This team is fully mission ready to conduct operations to protect our coast and Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base. They also patrol and keep vigilant the coastal areas where foreign dignitaries are visiting the U.S. for political summits.

The U.S. Marine Corp has a changing role, or a changing "ride" for a better word, in the sea services these days. With the shortage of amphibious assault ships, Marines may find themselves on an aircraft carrier, destroyer, or cargo ship. The Marines are often the first to arrive in a crisis, in which RECON units gather intelligence from many sources that is in turn used to fight the global war on terror.

The United States Navy supplies a forward presence in the way of ships, carrier battle groups, and submarines. There are over 329,000 active duty personnel, 272 deployable battle force ships and more than 3,700 aircraft. Navy submarines are the most silent and high-tech vessels in the world. SSNs and SSGNs bring tactical strike capability, as well as, the ability to gather real-time intelligence and insert Special Forces, like Navy SEALs, in covert operations. SSBNs are nuclear strategic deterrents against all enemies that pose terroristic threats to the United States and our allies. As technology evolves to become sleeker and speedier, so does the U.S. Navy in its use of airborne surveillance. Drones have become a necessity to the military's efforts to fight terrorist activity globally. Drones are being used on Navy ships to supply air support to their operations. New contracts are underway to create drones that are capable of operating and striking from smaller ships instead of aircraft carriers. Drones aren't going to be

limited to the air either. The Navy has plans to deploy a squadron of underwater drones by 2020. Sub drones will be another addition to combat the global war on terrorism.

As the son of a retired submariner, I appreciate the honor, courage, and commitment of our sea services to bring an end to the global war on terror. As an Eagle Scout, I appreciate their desire and call to service to protect us and fight the global war on terrorism. I cannot fathom what the state of our country and our world would be like without the sea services. I hope that as election time approaches, Americans will elect a leader that will support our sea services and believe that our strength must be in our military as we defeat terrorism around the globe.