

PREPARING FOR WAR

*'Tomahawk's the heaviest weapon we handle. You lose hydraulics, and you go to strong backs. That's why most of the guys down here aren't exactly on the petite side.'*

USS Providence Chief Torpedoman Kent R. Hope

# Crew Of USS Providence Stays Sharp While Waiting

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do, which can be used against other submarines and surface ships. "We didn't get a lot of attention," Hope said. "But things have really stepped up lately." Starting with the 1991 Gulf War, the Tomahawk has become the undersea fleet's weapon of choice, and in the last 12 years submarines have played an increasingly important role in attacks on land targets. The Tomahawks can be fired from beneath the waves, transition to flight, and deliver a 1,000-pound warhead more than 1,000 miles away with pinpoint accuracy. The Providence was one of the first "shooters" in the war against the Taliban in landlocked Afghanistan in October 2001. Now, with war against Iraq looming, it is carrying a heavy load of Tomahawks on its current deployment.

The training emphasizes established procedures to keep the men, and the weapons, safe. The Tomahawks are moved on trays that are powered by 3,000 pounds of hydraulic pressure, which could easily crush anyone who got in the way. And that pressure could easily damage the missile if it were even slightly misaligned. The missiles are stowed parallel to the hull, but before they can be loaded they have to be offset to seven degrees, the angle at which the tubes leave

the ship. There's just over one-tenth of an inch of wiggle room for the 21-inch-diameter, two-ton weapons. In addition, the electrical and pneumatic connectors on the breech door have to be connected to the Tomahawk properly if it's going to function. In combat, Hope will have 17 men loading weapons, only five of them torpedomen. "We went to the engineering department, the supply department — we get them from everywhere," Hope said. "And right now I have a lot of people coming up and asking, 'Hey, can I get on the weapons handling team?'" But Hope said he's not planning to replace any of his regular crew. "These guys all volunteered for the job when there was no glory," he said. The fire control technicians, who plan the mission based on their targets and schedule, do their training separately, "spinning up" the missile to check its guidance system and conducting other diagnostic checks. In combat, they would share the torpedo room with the loading team. "There's days you have to leave the torpedo room just to change your mind, things get so crowded," Hope said. Hope and two conventional weapons-handling supervisors make sure all safety procedures are followed. Two other sailors pore over three binders — one describing how to stow the missile, one how to handle it, and a third that specifically deals with the cables that are attached when it is in the tube. Us-



■ Machinist's Mate 2nd Class Cory Onigkeit inspects a torpedo tube aboard the submarine USS Providence during a reloading exercise with the Tomahawk cruise missiles in the eastern Mediterranean Sea on Thursday.

TIM COOK / The Day

ing a grease pencil, they run through dozens of checks to make sure every step is followed. "It doesn't matter how experienced the guys are, we still have the binders

out, checking off every step," Hope said. Sometimes, during a drill, he will simulate a breakdown in the loading gear, forcing the loading team to switch

to block-and-tackle and wrestle the missiles into the tube. "Tomahawk's the heaviest weapon we handle," Hope said. "You lose hydraulics, and you go to strong backs."

That's why most of the guys down here aren't exactly on the petite side."

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Several members of the loading team sleep in the torpedo room, in temporary bunks set up amid the missiles. "Sleeping next to a warhead is kind of a rush," said Torpedoman 3rd Class Anthony H. Thompson, who has been in the Navy three years. He said that in the torpedo room he has more room than elsewhere on the submarine and doesn't have to share a bunk. But Sonar Technician Seaman Jalil-Ali Shakur, who joined the Navy in March 2001, said he's still not comfortable with his accommodations. "It's not like I worry about it blowing up in my face, but that's not something you want to be thinking about when you go to sleep," Shakur said. Even when loading them, he said, "I try not to think about the fact that these are weapons. You just concentrate on doing your job in a timely fashion, and doing it well." Hope said there's no reason to be worried about sleeping in the torpedo room — without the arming instructions that are loaded into the missile right before it goes into the tube, he said, there is little danger. "These weapons are designed to be safe," he said. "They can be dropped, lit on fire ... nothing is going to happen." [b.hamilton@theday.com](mailto:b.hamilton@theday.com)

## Good food and a few toys can keep submariners on an even keel at sea

**From A1**  
and it's not good, you just don't go back. "Here, these guys are stuck," Rojas said. "For six months, they've got no choice where to go." Chief Mess Specialist Chris Nailon said he tries to make sure there are a few "special" touches during particularly tense missions. "We might put out some nachos or wings, and we've done a couple of 'surf-and-turf' nights, and crab legs," he said. "We try to do stuff that will keep the crew happy." When the Providence pulled into Souda Bay, Crete, this month for supplies, it took on plenty of ice cream, including mint chocolate chip, peanut butter cup, orange sherbet and vanilla. In all, it took on 30,000 pounds of food, enough to keep everyone in eats for 30 days. With only a few pieces of exercise equipment on board, the crew needs non-caloric entertainment as well. Every night at 8 p.m. and again at 1 a.m. (Greenwich time), movies are played in the wardroom, mess deck and chief's quarters. On the ship's last deployment, the favorite was "The Matrix," with

Keanu Reeves. This time, it's been "Undercover Brother," with Eddie Griffin and Denise Richards. The submarine has a selection of almost 1,000 titles, and many sailors bring their own. "I've got about 150 movies on board myself," said Rojas. Many crewmembers have the new PlayStation 2 with a built-in video screen, he said. "I think Sony made that machine for submariners," Rojas said. "Play movies, play video games and play music, and you never have to get out of your rack. There's quite a few guys who have that PlayStation 2 on this boat." Sonar Technician 2nd Class Steven Casar has been on the ship's recreation committee since shortly after he arrived on the Providence in July 1997. "You've got to find something to put you in a good mood all the time," Casar said. "The junior guys come to the boat, and if they don't see smiling faces, they're not going to smile much. "Even if you're not happy, you've got to put on that face, so that you keep everyone motivated." Keeping the crew comfortable has a big impact on morale as well. Chief

Health Corpsman Michael Schoulerberg dispenses seasickness pills and monitors the crew for other illnesses. Some health factors, Schoulerberg said, are beyond his control. The normal atmospheric oxygen level is 20.5 percent to 21 percent, but the ship's oxygen generating equipment usually keeps it at 19 percent to 19.5 percent. Low oxygen levels can trigger chronic headaches, Schoulerberg said, "so Tylenol is like nuclear popcorn." The Navy's official recommendation is that a submarine carry two bottles of 1,000 capsules; Schoulerberg bought 14 for this trip. Foot fungus also festers more easily in a low-oxygen environment, he said, so sailors are cautioned to wear plastic sandals in the shower and pay strict attention to hygiene. "The rule of thumb is, if you let your feet touch the deck, you've just made a major mistake," said Schoulerberg, who is supposed to carry 10 bottles of anti-fungal ointment but brought along 100. And even with the lotion, Schoulerberg tells sailors, "You're going to be itchy the whole deployment." [b.hamilton@theday.com](mailto:b.hamilton@theday.com)

## Bush, Blair, Aznar hope to salvage war resolution during island summit

**From A1**  
Fleischer also renewed a long-standing U.S. threat to disarm Iraq, with force if necessary, even if the United Nations does not sanction military action. The Security Council voted 15-0 in November to demand that Iraq disarm or face "serious consequences." The United States agreed to seek a second resolution to satisfy Blair, who faces a revolt in his own party over his support of Bush's tough Iraq policies. The president pledged to seek a vote, even if the measure was doomed to fail. As he backedpedaled on that, White House officials hastily organized the summit in the Azores, islands that are part of Portugal and a traditional eastern-Atlantic refueling stop. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice said the leaders will explore "all of the possibilities," a signal that the summit agenda will include talk about waging war without U.N. approval. "It is time to come to a conclusion that says to Saddam Hussein, it is time for you to disarm or be disarmed," she said. Fleischer said Bush will "discuss the importance of pursuing every last bit of diplomacy, to work toward passage of a Security Council resolution."

However, administration officials said there was little chance of changing opponents' minds during a meeting of leaders who agree with each other 2,300 miles from the U.N. headquarters and 900 miles from the European mainland. If the leaders can somehow break the impasse, a compromise would almost certainly provide a brief extension of the second resolution's March 17 deadline, officials said. U.S. and foreign diplomats said another alternative was more likely: Blair would ask Bush and Aznar to withdraw the resolution rather than face certain defeat. Almost immediately, the White House would shift to a war footing, said aides who are preparing a major war address by Bush. The speech, which could come as early as next week, is expected to serve as a final ultimatum for Saddam to disarm or face war, White House officials said. As millions of workers staged anti-war protests in Spain, Aznar said failing to act against Saddam "is neither politically nor morally acceptable." Protests were heard at the White House, as well. "Let us pull back from the brink of war and give peaceful so-

lutions a chance to work," said a statement signed by more than 70 former members of Congress, all but four of them Democrats. In Baghdad, Abdel-Razzaq al-Saadi, the imam of Umm al-Maarek, or Mother of All Battles mosque, said in his sermon that it was "the obligation for Iraqis and others now to threaten U.S. interests everywhere and set them ablaze." Of the three summit leaders, Blair has the most at stake. Spain supports an attack on Iraq but has not committed troops, while polls show Americans generally support Bush's drive against Saddam. Bush tried to give his British ally some political cover by declaring Friday that he would soon unveil his long-sought formula for peace in the Middle East if Palestinians enact reforms. Opponents of war with Iraq accuse the United States of failing to confront Israeli-Palestinian violence while targeting Saddam. "We are right to focus on Saddam Hussein and his weapons of mass destruction, but we must put equal focus on the people whose lives are being devastated by the lack of progress in the Middle East peace process," Blair said.

## FBI keeping an eye on suspects from on high

**From A1**  
does not do flyovers to listen to telephone calls and gather electronic data from random citizens in hopes the data will provide leads. Rather, the planes are used to follow specific individuals, some of whom may already have been bugged or for whom the FBI has a warrant to listen to cell-phone calls. Still, the idea of an FBI air force gives at least some people pause. The FBI will not disclose where the planes are being used. This month, however, in the college town of Bloomington, Ind., residents spotted a Cessna aircraft flying overhead at roughly the same times every day for more than a week. After first issuing denials, local FBI agents admitted it was their plane, involved in a terrorism investigation. FBI officials also were quick to say it was not doing electronic eavesdropping. "There should be no concern that the aircraft is doing anything other than assisting with physical surveillance," said FBI agent James Davis. The FBI has been using airplanes since 1938, when an agent in a Stinson monoplane helped stop an extortion attempt that involved a payoff package thrown from a moving passenger train. The first major deployment happened in 1975 during the investigation of the killings of two FBI agents at the sprawling Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

The program has been particularly useful in investigations of organized crime and drug trafficking. Mobsters who suspected their homes and telephones were bugged frequently held meetings in moving cars, not realizing that bugs also were placed there and were being monitored from the air. Aircraft are now seen as ideal in the FBI's domestic war on terror. FBI Director Robert Mueller said last year there was a 60 percent increase in field-office requests for airplanes in the year after the Sept. 11 attacks, with almost 90 percent of air missions now dedicated to surveillance. "You don't have a criminal case. You don't necessarily have a terrorism case. You want to know what they are doing, who their associates are, who they are meeting with," retired agent Kennedy said. "Surveillance is going to have a pretty big role in that." This year Congress approved a \$20 million increase in the FBI's aviation budget but denied a request for two new Black Hawk helicopters. It also ordered the bureau to develop a master plan for its aviation program. The FBI also can request aviation help from the Defense Department. That can involve a great deal of bureaucracy and care, however, to ensure the military does not violate laws preventing them from doing law enforcement work within the United States. [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov)

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