



■ Crew members of the USS Providence keep watch around the boat using the periscopes during operations in the eastern Mediterranean on Friday.

TIM COOK
The Day

A unique perspective on a potential war zone

By ROBERT A. HAMILTON
Day Staff Writer

Aboard the USS Providence — While most crewmen on this submarine know little more about the Middle East than what they've read in the newspaper stories about a looming war with Iraq, Lt. JG Todd A. Bowie brings a unique perspective of the region.

He was 2 years old when his father took a job at the Saudi Aramco petroleum company, and lived in the Middle East eight years before returning to the United States. He returned to the region in 1991 and stayed until he enrolled in a New Jersey boarding school in the ninth grade.

"The region has a fabulous history," Bowie said. "When you hear about the Middle East, you only hear about the bad stuff, which is all that's been in the news for the last 30 years — the 1967 war with Israel, the Olympic Games at

Munich, the civil war in Lebanon.

"People think of it as a very violent place, and very volatile, and in a way that's true," Bowie said. "But there's also a lot of history, and a lot of the medicine and science and math in the Western world was developed during the rise of the Islamic Empire in the 11th and 12th and 13th centuries."

Bowie said that while an appreciation for that rich history is what he brought away from his time growing up in the Arabian Gulf, he also acknowledges that some Muslim groups don't hold the progressive attitudes of the past, particularly the male-dominated monarchies.

"They got paranoid, and there were a lot of people who were not very approving of the advances that were being made and the direction that was taken," Bowie said. "Really, the last 500 years, the culture has been very stagnant."

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