

Aboard Subs, All Jobs Take On Added Importance

No one short of work on USS Providence

By ROBERT A. HAMILTON
Day Staff Writer

Aboard the USS Providence — Putting out the trash is a job most people do without really thinking; take the full can out to the curb in the morning and bring the empty can back in at night.

But when serving aboard a nuclear submarine, you'd better pay attention, because when you take out the trash you open a 12-inch hole to the sea at pressures of hundreds of pounds per square inch that could quickly flood the ship.

That's why the system is designed with interlocks that prevent opening both doors of the trash disposal unit, or TDU, at the same time, and why every time the ship puts out the trash, the system has to be checked by an enlisted man and an officer.

"It's almost sailor-proof," joked Machinist Mate 2nd Class Thomas A. Jones, who was hip-deep in cardboard that was waiting to be compacted and discharged as the Providence prowled the eastern Mediterranean Sea, waiting to hear whether it will go to war against Iraq.

In its first month, the Providence sent 137 TDU cans to the bottom. It manufactures them out of sheet metal templates that are rolled into a can about three feet tall and as wide as a dinner plate, then fitted with a 7.25-pound weight and filled with compacted trash.

The TDU can be filled with seven cans, about two days worth of garbage, before it has to be emptied. But a submarine is not always in a place where it can afford to make the noise of taking out the trash, so there's storage for up to 10 cans in the trash room and two more outside in the passageway. After that, it starts getting tight.

"Ten or 15 days is about the longest I've ever seen us go without shooting the trash," said Jones. "After a while, though, you start to have people hold their trash on station. Instead of bringing it up from the machinery room to the compactor, for instance, we ask them to hold off for a while."

As his foot slipped on a sloppy mess

on the deck, he lamented, "This may be the worst job on the ship."

□□□

Submarines operate in one of the harshest environments on Earth. Spaceships deal with a pressure differential of 15 pounds per square inch, the difference between one atmosphere and the vacuum of space. At 800 feet below the sea surface, the pressure differential is hundreds of pounds per square inch, and the ship might be firing missiles — or being fired at.

That means that whether it's cleaning out the trash or operating the reactor, every job takes on critical importance — and everyone has more than one job.

Storekeeper 3rd Class Kevan Lamb normally is responsible for keeping the shelves stocked in the galley. But as the Providence emerges from the deep and comes up shallow enough to receive radio messages, Lamb is at the helm controls.

Back home in Pittsburgh, the 20-year-old sailor has a couple of high school friends who are working at an Italian restaurant, and a couple of others who work at a local tool and die operation. Meanwhile, he's driving a \$2 billion submarine.

"They think it's pretty cool," said Lamb, noting that he couldn't imagine himself as a waiter now that he's qualified on "the sticks," the controls for the sub's helm and planes.

"And I don't even have a driver's license. I've never had one," Lamb said. "It would be a whole new learning experience for me in a car."

Senior Chief Petty Officer Wayne Gilbert, supervising Lamb on this watch, said as soon as anyone arrives on board, no matter what their specialty, they are thrust into training to serve in as many jobs as possible.

Gilbert said that giving young people so many different jobs leaves them little free time.

"Really, the only way these guys know what time of day it is, is by the kind of food they get when they go off watch," Gilbert said. "If they get breakfast, then it's morning."

But the policy on a submarine, where there are so few people to do so many jobs, is to give the men as much responsibility as they can handle, as soon as they can handle it.

"One seaman who's not even 21 yet,



TIM COOK / The Day

Chief Hospital Mate Michael Shoulberg, right, corpsman aboard the USS Providence, tends to the thumb of Machinist Mate 2nd Class Matthew Rector in the Mediterranean Sea on Saturday. Rector had jammed his thumb under a deck plate.

he was born after I came in the Navy, and he's in charge of training most new seamen," Gilbert said. "As a matter of fact, it's not unusual for me to take a third class petty officer who's unqualified and have him work for the seamen. He keeps them safe, keeps them out of trouble, and gets them off on the right foot. ...

"It isn't because we want to stress them out. We just want to know that, in a conflict situation, we can count on them."

□□□

Yeoman 1st Class Rick Magtira, a native of San Diego, normally is typing up messages for distribution on the boat or to be sent back to the fleet. But while most office workers have no greater worry than paper cuts, Magtira leads the battle stations' firefighting team. His job in combat is to don protective

gear, a self-contained breathing device, and to carry the thermal imager that will help him find hot spots in a fire or injured sailors after it is out.

The sub's captain, Cmdr. Jon Kan, has a standing policy that the crew be able to put a fire extinguisher on a fire within 30 seconds and a fire hose within 60, and Magtira's team can meet that deadline.

Kan noted that submariners not only hold multiple jobs, but most are studying for promotion exams or to qualify for expanded duties. In addition, submariners not only operate their equipment, but they have to learn to maintain it.

It's not like driving a car, where most people know how to start and steer but are stymied if it stalls on the side of the highway; submariners have to know the gear they use so well that they can rebuild it if it breaks. And they might have to improvise to get it going again.

When the low-pressure header valve malfunctioned one recent morning, an auxiliary gang chief scrambled to investigate. The system is needed to draw air for the submarine's emergency generators, and its loss could force the Providence to scrap the mission and head for home.

But within 15 minutes the chief had found the problem and directed a 21-year-old sailor how to fix it.

"The training they have, and their can-do attitude, allows us to keep going," said the executive officer, Lt. Cmdr. Thad E. Nisbett.

Kan noted that the surface Navy several years ago began a "Smart Ship" program that would allow it to reduce crew size by automating more systems and cross-training crewmembers so they can perform a wider range of tasks.

A destroyer has a crew of almost 350; a comparably sized submarine has a

crew about 60 percent smaller. "We've been 'Smart Ships' for years," Kan said.

□□□

On most Navy ships, the most important decision a hospital corpsman has to make is when to evacuate a sick crewman. On a submarine, evacuation isn't always an option, and "Doc," as the corpsman is invariably known, has a lot more responsibility.

"The rule of thumb is, it takes 48 to 72 hours to get someone off the boat," said Chief Hospital Mate Michael Shoulberg, the corpsman on the Providence. But if the submarine is in a "sensitive" area, it could be weeks.

Shoulberg has a picture of a young man stretched out on his stainless steel table (which doubles as his office desk) with a drip IV dispensing antibiotics to treat an inflamed appendix. When the crewman made it to a hospital a few days later, the doctors commended Shoulberg's diagnosis and treatment.

In the last year Shoulberg has treated a broken neck, a severely fractured arm, cardiac problems and an assortment of other illnesses and injuries.

"Usually about 90 percent of my job is radiological health and the rest is somebody gets sick or hurt, but this last year has been strange," he said. "We've seen it all."

In addition to standard corpsman schooling, Shoulberg had to complete 14 months of Independent Duty Corpsman training at the Naval Undersea Medical Institute in Groton before he could report to the Providence. Of 12 students who started, three finished the course.

"In the corpsman rating, this is the pinnacle," he said. "There is no harder job for a corpsman in the Navy."

Shoulberg joined the Navy in 1985 and chose corpsman because he has long been fascinated by life sciences and medicine. His office is four feet wide and six feet long, right around the corner from the crew's mess, one of the busiest corridors on the ship.

Most of his job involves collecting dosimetry information from the crewmen.

"If one of these guys pops up with a tumor 20 years later, was it due to Navy nuclear power?" Shoulberg said. "The reality is no, but we have to record every millirem of exposure he gets to prove it."

b.hamilton@theday.com

Assault on Iraq would commence with devastating attack from the air

From A1

ing on — is an Iraqi collapse so quickly after the first shots are fired that U.S.-led forces could enter Baghdad without a fight.

How Iraq responds to the initial air barrage will be a key factor in determining the timing of the ground war. Gen. Tommy Franks, the head of Central Command, may launch the ground assault just a few days after the air attack. In Desert Storm in 1991, the air campaign stretched to five weeks before the ground war that lasted only 100 hours.

Of the 250,000 U.S. troops arrayed against Iraq, about 130,000 are in Kuwait. That would be the main launching pad for a ground invasion, to include about 30,000 British troops. Franks on Monday met with his Army commander in Kuwait, Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan, and then returned to his base in Qatar, where he would give the first attack orders to U.S. forces throughout the region.

The overall scenario would differ from the 1991 war over the same ground. So-called "swarm tactics" — simultaneous, coordinated attacks by air, conventional forces and commando units, designed to confuse and overrun Iraqi defenders — would replace that war's five-week softening-up by air strikes.

The main Army forces are the 3rd Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division, the Army's only helicopter assault division, both in Kuwait.

With more than 200 tanks, the 3rd Infantry is expected to spearhead the drive to Baghdad. In a sign that soldiers of the "Iron Fist" division have moved to the brink of battle, troops of A Co., 3rd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, were issued their "basic loads" of live ammunition on Monday. They were told to break camp and be ready to move into action on a moment's notice.

Also assembled in northern Kuwait are more than 50,000 U.S. Marines. Some are expected to take part in a dash up the western flank of the Tigris-Euphrates Delta toward Baghdad, while others take the southern city of Basra and the strategic Shatt al-Arab waterway, Iraq's outlet to the Persian Gulf.

If the Iraqi defense doesn't crumble swiftly, the war could last weeks and pose grave risks for U.S. troops. One perilous possibility is that Saddam might foil the U.S. battle plan with a pre-emptive chemical or biological attack on allied forces.

A senior defense official in Washing-

ton said Monday that U.S. intelligence had detected signs — but no solid proof — that some soldiers in an Iraqi Republican Guard unit south of Baghdad had been given chemical munitions. Other officials called the signs inconclusive but troubling.

About 1,000 U.S. and British warplanes are arrayed on Iraq's periphery and analysts have said they expect as many as 3,000 precision-guided bombs and missiles to be launched in the first 48 hours.

The first planes to penetrate Iraqi airspace may be the Air Force's radar-evading stealth jets — the F-117B Nighthawk fighter, which led the attacks on Baghdad in the 1991 Gulf War, and the bat-winged B-2 bombers.

At about the same time, some 30 Navy ships and submarines in the Gulf and Red Sea would launch hundreds of satellite-guided Tomahawk cruise missiles at targets in Baghdad and elsewhere.

Anthony Cordesman, a leading expert on Iraq and U.S. military power, foresees a new kind of air war.

"It will be designed to paralyze enemy forces rather than destroy them," he wrote in an analysis March 15. Once the shooting starts, he concluded, the Iraqi government "will be gone in days or weeks."

Another key element of the air campaign would be Navy F/A-18 Hornets and F-14 Tomcats flying from five aircraft carriers — three in the Persian Gulf and two in the eastern Mediterranean. Each carries about 50 strike planes and some two dozen support aircraft.

The Air Force's fighters and bombers would launch from bases around the Gulf, plus the Indian Ocean island of Diego Garcia. Some might even come from Europe. The Marine Corps has dozens of F/A-18 fighters, AV-8B Harrier jets and AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters.

The U.S. strategy is predicated on speed — not just in the time it would take ground forces to reach Baghdad, but also the speed of communications that would enable fighter and bomber pilots, for example, to switch target coordinates in mid-flight.

Once under way, the ground assault is designed to be a lightning movement similar to the opening of the Gulf War, with M1A1 Abrams tanks, mine-clearing vehicles and other armored forces blasting through dirt berms and across oil-filled trenches on portable bridges

laid by combat engineers.

Close air support would come from Army AH-64 Apache attack helicopters and Marine Corps Harrier jets, among others. "We've been practicing 'the dance' — the battle rhythm," said "Scott," the commander of a Harrier squadron based on an assault ship offshore.

The main axis of attack was expected to involve the Army's 3rd Infantry Division and 1st Marine Division, striking northward on the western side of the Tigris-Euphrates Delta and crossing the Euphrates near Ramadi.

From there they would wheel east toward Baghdad and Tikrit, Saddam's hometown and clan stronghold, which he was likely to defend with his best troops, a Republican Guard division.

Cordesman and others say that despite years of intermittent U.S. and British bombing of Iraq's air defenses in the southern and northern "no fly" zones, Iraqi retains formidable batteries around Baghdad. These include sophisticated surface-to-air missiles that could pose serious danger to allied pilots, even at night.

Most analysts say Iraqi ground forces are far weaker than 12 years ago, having lost huge numbers of tanks and artillery pieces in the Gulf War and being short of spare parts for those that remain.

Saddam's wild card could be chemical and biological weapons; he claims he has none, but U.S. commanders believe he does and may use them if his survival is at stake.

In addition to attempting to neutralize Iraq's air defenses, the air campaign would target key communications "nodes," while generally avoiding civilian infrastructure like bridges and power stations.

Also to be targeted early are the H-3 airfields in far western Iraq where Saddam may have Scud missiles. Some believe U.S. and British special operations forces would secure these sites. Likewise, the oil fields in northern and southern Iraq will be key objectives in the first phase of war, since U.S. intelligence believes Iraq has wired them with explosives for a would-be reprise of the Kuwaiti oil fields destruction in 1991.

Franks' original plan to stage the 4th Infantry Division in Turkey to open a northern front was thwarted when the Turkish government refused to allow access to its bases. The division's role is in doubt, as is the U.S. strategy for moving forces into northern Iraq.

HUSKY IRA CD



A GUARANTEED RETURN MAKES THIS IRA A SLAM DUNK.

It's that time of year again. It's when the UCONN Huskies make a run for the national basketball championships. It's also tax time, so be sure to open a new IRA or add to your existing IRA before this year's deadline. Thanks to higher contribution limits, IRAs are more enticing than ever. And if you're 50 or older, a special "catch-up" provision lets you contribute even more toward your retirement.

2.00%
APY*
18 MONTH IRA CD
NEW IRA CONTRIBUTIONS ONLY

So stay ahead of the game. Speak with a People's Retirement Specialist today and make your IRA investment a slam dunk.



Visit: any branch Call: 1-800-772-1090 Click: peoples.com

*Rate effective on tax year 2002 and 2003 contributions of up to \$3500 on a Traditional or Roth IRA. Minimum balance of \$1000 required to open a 18-month IRA Certificate of Deposit (CD) account and to earn the Annual Percentage Yield (APY). Rate effective as of 3/11/03 and is subject change. This offer may be withdrawn without notice. Substantial penalty for early withdrawal. Fees may reduce earnings on account. Not available on Keoghs or SEPs. Offer available for Connecticut residents only. ©2003 People's Bank, Member FDIC