

Name: _____

THE MILITARY LIFE

We asked kids what they wanted to know about American servicemen and women who are now serving in the Middle East. Then we got the answers from Lt. Daniel Hetlage of the U.S. Navy.



1. How long do soldiers train before they go?

The time it takes to train varies for different jobs. A Marine may be ready to be deployed (sent to a military operation) the day after finishing 13 weeks of boot camp, or basic training. Highly specialized or technical jobs—those working with special equipment or computers, for example—may require a year or more of training.



2. How long do they stay away from home?

A typical deployment (posting) lasts about six months. This can be longer during wartime, but every effort is made by military leaders to rotate troops back home so that no one has to stay away longer than necessary.



3. What do they wear? How many uniforms do they get?

The basic uniform in the Gulf region is desert camouflage (CAM-uh-flahj). Every soldier is issued two uniforms.



4. Where do they sleep? Soldiers typically sleep in tents with 10 to 20 others. Ten people fit comfortably in a medium-size tent.

Twenty, however, is a crowd!



5. How often do they get to take a shower?

Showers are a luxury in the desert. On a base, showers may be available. But for soldiers camping in tents, anti-septic wipes and lotions, along with bottled water, may be all that's available for washing.



6. What do they eat?

Soldiers in the field typically eat MREs or Meals, Ready to Eat. These are plastic packages of food that can be stored up to three years. Meals include spaghetti, ham, chicken, hot dogs, and a vegetarian meal. A container that starts a chemical reaction when water is added heats the food. An MRE comes with forks, knives, napkins, and extras like Tobasco sauce and chewing gum. A favorite item is peanut butter!



7. Do they have free time? If so, how do they spend it?

Soldiers do not have much free time. When they do, they may use sports equipment to stay healthy. They may also have access to radio and television. Troops in the Middle East saw the Super Bowl—but because of the time difference, the game aired at 5:30 in the morning!



8. How can they talk to their families? What do they do if they get homesick?

E-mail is now available almost anywhere the military goes, making it much easier to stay in touch. Servicemen and women may also phone home. Writing letters home is the best way to deal with homesickness. The best prevention is getting letters from friends and loved ones.



9. What happens if a soldier gets sick or hurt?

When troops go into the field, doctors and medics (people with medical training) go with them. Also, some Navy ships sailing nearby have 300-bed hospitals on board, where military doctors can conduct complex surgeries and even video-conference with specialists at home.



10. Why do soldiers go to war when they know they could be hurt or killed?

The reason a soldier, sailor, airman or Marine goes to war is so that he or she can help protect America and its allies. It has also always been the hope that by going now, we can prevent our children from having to go in the future.

SEND E-MAIL TO OUR TROOPS!

Service members love to get messages from home. You can send e-mail by going to:
<http://anyservicemember.navy.mil/>