



Why We Serve: Sailor Shares Deployment Experiences

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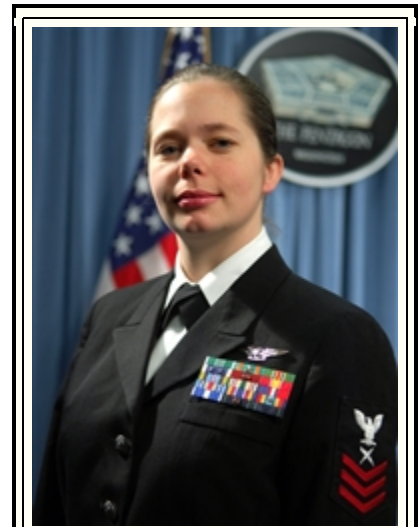
WASHINGTON, Feb. 22, 2008 – Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Emily K. Klinefelter may be a woman and a sailor, but she wants people to know that she has seen combat firsthand and gone through a lot of the same experiences as her brethren in the ground forces.

Klinefelter, a nine-year Navy veteran, volunteered for an individual augmentation deployment to Iraq in January 2007. She spent 10 months on the ground with an Army unit, working on counter-improvised-explosive-device operations for convoys.

“I’m intimately familiar with the damage an IED can do to a truck and the pressures that come from every day in a war zone and doing convoy work,” Klinefelter said. “That’s not only an odd experience for a sailor, but especially for a female sailor.”

Klinefelter said she volunteered for the deployment because, as a leader, she knew she would have to one day ask her sailors to deploy, and she wanted to have the experience first. Although she had just given birth to her daughter and was thinking about leaving the military, she said she didn’t hesitate when the deployment opportunity arose. “It was really not a hard decision for me to make,” she said.

Today, Klinefelter wants to share her experiences with the American public and promote a positive image of the military. She is one of 12 servicemembers who are touring the country as part of the Defense Department’s “Why We Serve” outreach program, which sends servicemembers who have recently deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan or other regions vital to the war on terror to various community, business and veterans groups to tell their stories.



Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Emily K. Klinefelter is one of 12 servicemembers touring the country as part of the Defense Department’s “Why We Serve” outreach program, which sends servicemembers who have recently deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan to various community, business and veterans groups to tell their stories. Defense Department photo

Klinefelter, who works in counter-electronic warfare, enlisted in the Navy's delayed entry program in December of her senior year in high school. Her reasons for joining were the same that motivate many young people to join the military, she said: She didn't see much opportunity in her hometown; she wasn't sure what she wanted to study in college; and she wanted to carry on her family's tradition of service. Klinefelter's grandmother served with the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services, or WAVES, during World War II, and she grew up hearing her sea stories.

After six years working in aviation maintenance administration, Klinefelter transferred to the intelligence career field. She said the most rewarding part of her service has been knowing that she is just a small part of an operation much bigger than herself.

"We do about a million and 10 little, tiny things that bring home the soldiers safe or make sure a civilian doesn't get hurt during an operation," she said of her work in intelligence.

Klinefelter's husband, Luther, served 10 years in the military, but left the service after their daughter was born. He is now pursuing a degree full-time, working, and being a full-time father, Klinefelter said, adding that his support of her career has never wavered.

"He's nothing less of being a saint; the man's amazing," she said of her husband. "He is 110 percent supportive of me."

Klinefelter re-enlisted for another six years while she was in Iraq, and she hopes to become a warrant officer shortly after being promoted to chief petty officer next year, she said. For now, her goal is to spread the message that the Navy is involved in the war on terror right alongside its fellow services, and that troops around the world are proud to serve their country.

"We're an all-volunteer force; nobody makes us go," she said. "We are privileged to have the choice whether or not to serve our country as part of the military."