

DLA Strategic Communications

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DLA Sailors recognized as top performers

Two Sailors assigned to a Defense Logistics Agency support team in Iraq were recently named the Iraq senior and junior petty officers of the quarter by Naval Forces Central Command.

Petty Officer 1st Class Kathleen Schulz was named the Iraq Senior Petty Officer of the Quarter, and Petty Officer 3rd Class James Blankenship was named the Iraq Junior Petty Officer of the Quarter.



Petty Officer 3rd Class James Blankenship, an expeditionary disposal remediation technician assigned to DLA Disposal Remediation Team 4, was recently named the Iraq Junior Petty Officer of the Quarter by Naval Forces Central Command. Courtesy photo

Schulz, the hazardous waste contract manager for DLA Disposition Services Iraq, is a reservist assigned to DLA Disposal Remediation Team 4, out of Columbus, Ohio. On this, her third deployment, she has spent six months in Iraq and is preparing to transfer to Bagram, Afghanistan, to join the DLA Disposition Services team there.

Schulz entered the Navy as a torpedoman's mate in 1990 from Cape Coral, Fla. After four years on active duty, she attended college at University of Arizona and received a Bachelor of Arts in Social Studies Education. In June 2000 she joined the Navy Reserve. This is her third deployment.

Schulz, a high school history teacher, said she plans on staying in the Navy for six more years and then retiring. She said she has truly enjoyed working with DLA, as it has given her an appreciation for all the work the agency does behind the scenes.

"DLA Disposition Services plays a major role in the responsible drawdown of troops and equipment from Iraq, and I have been part of that team during this historical event," she said. "I am a history teacher in the civilian world. This deployment with DLA has given me the opportunity to teach about this event from a 'been there, done that' perspective."

Blankenship, an expeditionary disposal remediation technician also assigned to the DLA Disposal Remediation Team 4, from the Columbus Naval Operational Support Center, is in the middle of a 12-month deployment to Iraq.

His role as an EDRT is to identify items that require demilitarization and ensure they are accounted for and disposed of properly. On his current deployment, his team has been supporting DLA Disposition Services sites in theater and going on "clean sweep" missions, which are designed to advise smaller bases without DLA Disposition Services sites on how to properly get rid of excess and unserviceable property.

A native of Charleston, W.V., Blankenship joined the Navy in 2007 after graduating high school, looking for a different option than the traditional college route.

"I wanted to have a college degree eventually, which is one main reason why I chose the military as a good way to ensure a way to pay for it when I am ready for college," he said. "But I knew that I also didn't want to do what everyone else was doing, and most of all, I felt like I wanted to serve my nation and the people that make it up."

Blankenship joined under the National Call to Service enlistment program, which consists of a 15- to 18-month active-duty tour followed by two years in the active reserves. He did his active-duty time onboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, then in 2009 was assigned to a local reserve unit.

Working with DLA has given him a new perspective on the equipment the military uses and the work that goes into not only getting it to the warfighters in the field, but also taking care of excess and unwanted material after the fact, he said.

"It has given me a new perspective on why things are done and a kind of enlightenment about a new process," he said.

Blankenship said he enjoys being in the Navy and working with DLA, because of the stimulating, challenging work he does every day.

"There is so much to do and many ways to accomplish what you want," he said. "The journey alone is fun, and each day there are new challenges to overcome. I guess I am trying to say that it is exciting for me."

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