



SPAWAR

Reservists

launch

UFO

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SAN DIEGO - Seamless integration of active and reserve components extended beyond earth's orbit last December as the Navy's Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR) launched an Ultra High Frequency Follow-On (UFO) war fighting communications satellite to support various Navy Battle Groups and other armed services across the globe.

Navy Reserve SPAWAR Headquarters 0466 (SPAWAR HQ 0466) helps launch satellites and field space communication systems in support of the Navy's Communications Satellite Program Office 146 (PMW-146).

According to CAPT Dan Lowen, the SPAWAR HQ 0466 commanding officer, SPAWAR's overall mission is to provide "information technology and space systems for today's Navy and Defense Department activities while planning and designing for the future."

LT Scott Murray, the mission operations leader for PMW-146, said Reservists played an important part in the recent launch. "Our Reservists were intertwined with our active-duty folks. You couldn't tell who was a Reservist and who was active duty."

"The launch was in December and went all the way through Christmas," Murray said. "The Reservists were there with us taking care of business and supporting the mission. They really helped me through the mission side of the operation."

"SPAWAR is the Navy's battle force architect," said Lowen. "We design total systems for the forces instead of individual



Illustration by Tasheka Arceneaux

platforms and weapons.”

PMW 146 is one of 17 activities under the SPAWAR umbrella. Some of SPAWAR’s additional responsibilities include electronic combat surveillance systems, tactical data-link systems, submarine communications, and the Navy Marine Corps Intranet (NMCI). Lowen added SPAWAR HQ 0466, based at Naval Air Facility Washington, is one of four SPAWAR Space Units affiliated with the Reserve Space and Network Warfare program (SNWP).

According to LCDR Jack Turner, a member of SPAWAR HQ 0466’s San Diego detachment, the mission of the Navy’s Communications PMW-146 is to acquire space-based communications systems and satellites for the fleet and joint war fighters.

“Our unit is part of program 18, which deals with satellites and other space-related communication systems, while program 26 units provide surface ships with advanced communication support,” Turner, a systems engineer and the head of modeling and simulations at Maxim Systems, said. “We go to the launch sites and augment our active-duty counterparts in all aspects of the operation, from liaison operations to briefings.”

LCDR Mike Mattis, another member of the San Diego detachment, said his unit supports the space acquisition, life-cycle management, and operations of various Navy communication satellite systems such as fleet

satellites (FLTSAT), leased satellites (LEASAT) and the UFO program.

“In the 1990s, the Navy acquired 10 UHF Follow-On spacecraft capable of providing bandwidth-limited Navy platforms a vital communications conduit for battle group and joint operations,” said Mattis, a senior engineer at Maxim Systems. “We recently helped launch the eleventh and last UFO satellites into orbit.”

Mattis said the UFO-11 launch and Early Orbit (L&EO) operations required extensive coordination between PMW-146, the acquisition agent; Boeing Satellite Systems, the commercial satellite manufacturer; and the Naval Satellite Operations Center (NAVSOC), the command responsible for flying the Navy’s fleet of on-orbit operational communication satellites and payloads.

According to Mattis, the Navy is preparing to tackle the challenges of the next generation of UHF satellites – the Mobile User Objective System (MUOS) program.

“It will take four to five years after PMW-146 awards the contract to launch the first of these satellites,” said Mattis. “We expect our next launch to be sometime in 2009. So, in the interim, our unit will be working with the Air Force and National Reconnaissance Office to maintain our proficiency with these highly technical skills.”

For more information about SPAWAR and its related services go to www.spawar.navy.mil. ❖