



PENTAGON FORCE PROTECTION AGENCY
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PENTAGON ANTI-TERRORISM, FORCE PROTECTION: Antiterrorism, Force Protection Director Jim Pelkofski

Story by Paul Taylor, PFPA Public Affairs

On Oct. 12, 2000, terrorists attacked the U.S. Navy Guided Missile Destroyer USS Cole (DDG 67) killing 17 Sailors.

According to the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) Director of Antiterrorism/Force Protection (AT/FP) Jim Pelkofski, the attack on Cole was a seminal event both for the Navy and for him.

“Cole was really the wake-up call for the Navy,” said Pelkofski. “I think that’s when commanders in the Navy really started taking AT/FP seriously.”

For Pelkofski, the timing of the attack was portentous: he was on active duty in the Navy and in the training pipeline preparing to take command of his own destroyer, USS Deyo (DD 989).

“Even though the Navy hadn’t yet formally adopted AT/FP as a mission area, when I went to Deyo I said, ‘This is one of our mission areas.’ So we set out to make as hard a target of ourselves, both in port and underway, as we possibly could,” he said.

After his command tour, Pelkofski’s next assignment was a full immersion into the AT/FP world; he served as the antiterrorism operations plans and policy officer on the staff of the U.S. Fleet Forces Command. After a final tour on the staff of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Pelkofski, having served in the Navy for more than 25 years, retired from active duty as a captain.

Although he retired from the service, he remained committed to serving his country. Then in November, 2009 he saw the job announcement for PFPA’s AT/FP director.

“I read the announcement and it was kind of like lights went off. ‘I’ve done this job before at Fleet Forces Command – I’m perfect for this!’ I applied and went through the interview process and fortunately every one else up to Mr. Calvery felt the same, and here I am. I wanted to stay in

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AT/FP Director Jim Pelkofski
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the fight so this is perfect for me and I'm really proud to be here." he said.

Back in his Navy days after taking command of Deyo, with memories of Cole fresh in his mind, Pelkofski and his crew made their deployment motto "Shoot to Kill."

"We had this aggressive mindset and I think it played out throughout the deployment and it's sort of my personal approach to life and I bring that philosophy here," he said.

In a 2004 article he wrote for the U.S. Naval Institute's magazine Proceedings, he explained that philosophy.

"The greatest deterrent to an al Qaeda operation is a defense poised to shoot early -- and shoot to kill -- in the event of any attack," he wrote. "Terrorists who are willing to die for their cause are deterred only by [the prospect of] certain failure in the execution of their operation."

Although AT/FP is a relatively new mission area for the military, it is one Pelkofski has been a part of from the beginning, and the danger to the nation posed by terrorism is not lost on him.

"We face an adversary that is truly out to destroy our way of life," he said. "And they're interested in attacking symbols, and there is no greater symbol of U.S. power than the Pentagon. There's no doubt in my mind that the enemy has its sights on the Pentagon; they did, they do, and they always will."

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NOTE TO MEDIA: Below thumbnail photos are available as high-resolution .jpg files upon request.

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Pelkofski's relationship with AT/FP began when he commanded the Destroyer USS Deyo (DD 989). Pelkofski said that after assuming command, "we set out to make as hard a target of ourselves, both in port and underway, as we possibly could." (U.S. Navy Photo)



Jim Pelkofski (PFPA File Photo)

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