

Media Advisory
For Immediate Release



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National Naval Aviation Museum Historian Decorated for Iraq Service

Pensacola, Fla.—Feb. 25, 2009—Lieutenant (junior grade) Thomas Daniel Clifton, a historian at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Fla., has been awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal and Bronze Star for his service as a Navy Reserve intelligence officer with Combined Joint Task Force Troy, Multi-National Force-Iraq.

Lieutenant Clifton received the awards from Rear Admiral David W. Titley, Commander, Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, during a 20 February ceremony at the John C. Stennis Space Center in Mississippi. Clifton previously received the Joint Service Achievement Medal and Combat Action Ribbon.

A Louisiana native, Clifton received his Navy Reserve commission through the direct commission officer program in 2005 and deployed to Iraq in the fall of 2007. Characteristic of the experience of Navy Individual Augmentees supporting the Global War on Terror, Clifton served in a joint environment, specifically supporting Army units in countering Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), the most deadly threat to those serving on the ground in Iraq. Operating from Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shield and Joint Security Station, Sadr City, he patrolled the streets of Iraq embedded with Army armored and military police units.

His level of tactical involvement in day-to-day operations surprised him. "I had no idea that I would end up on foot patrols in Sadr City or providing tactical counter-IED intelligence to armored battalions during ongoing combat operations," he said. "I never expected to even see an M1 Abrams Tank or Bradley Fighting Vehicle, much less ride in one on a regular basis. I did not anticipate seeing actual combat; yet found myself in actual firefights."

The ultimate goal of his work was to apprehend those responsible for assembling, embedding and triggering IEDs, and to this end, Clifton devoted much time to conducting investigations, including collecting biometrics at the scenes of attacks and interviewing detainees. It was for his actions in the wake of an IED explosion in the City Council Building in Sadr City that he received the Joint Service Commendation Medal. Within minutes of the attack on 24 June 2008, on his own initiative, Clifton rushed to secure the crime scene. He subsequently tested more than 100 individuals for explosive residue, and apprehended three suspects, two of whom eventually confessed to setting and detonating the IED. When one of these men mentioned the name of another accomplice that worked within the City Council Building and adjoining Iraqi Police Compounds, Clifton broadened his investigation to include this man, identifying him as the number ten most-wanted individual in the Iraqi Theater of Operations. He was captured within four days of the explosion. All told, Clifton's efforts in the forward areas resulted in the gathering of evidence that led to the prosecution of more than 90 IED-related cases at Central Criminal Court of Iraq – Rusafa.

Given his civilian occupation, Clifton had a distinct appreciation for his service and the foundation upon which it rested. "I often thought of the veterans with whom I have conducted oral histories and what they told me combat was like," he said of his work at the National Naval Aviation Museum. He kept a journal for posterity, mindful of how beneficial firsthand accounts are in the study of history. "I greatly appreciated every aspect of every day and tried to remember as much as I could and remind myself where I was and what I was doing."

Asked what he took away from his service overseas, Clifton pointed to shared hardships with his fellow men and women in uniform. "It is an overwhelming feeling of comradeship and sense of purpose...I experienced more than I could ever have imagined."

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Media Note: Lieutenant Clifton is on another active duty assignment in Mississippi but can be reached by email at tdcusnr@yahoo.com or by cell phone at (985) 707-8600.

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