

D. KEVIN ELLIOTT

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ou'd be hard-pressed to find anyone in uniform who would not like to make more money.

But judging from the comments of the volunteers for the 2006 version of "How your pay stacks up," our annual comparison of military and private-sector pay, service members are much more content these days than they were a few years ago.

Sure, pockets of disgruntlement remain — it wouldn't be the military without a little griping. Some troops, especially midgrade enlisted members, say their compensation still doesn't match their education and responsibility levels, which have been on an upward swing for a couple of decades now.

And, as always, a number of our volunteers cite the fact that unlike many 9-to-5 jobs on the outside, service members work much longer and much harder hours that keep them apart from their families — never more so than in the current wartime environment.

Still, most military personnel understand and acknowledge the Defense De-

Although Army Staff Sgt. Dalon Pittman, assistant chief engineer for small tugboats at Fort Eustis, Va., takes home more than the average civilian marine mechanic with his experience, he thinks military pay "could be better ... but you can't beat the benefits."

partment's efforts to restore the value of military pay that had eroded significantly toward the end of the 1990s, particularly for midgrade and senior enlisted people and warrant officers.

And while a few of our volunteers noted that the Pentagon's proposed 2.2 percent minimum raise for 2007 may

signal the end of the pay boom of recent years, most say that for the moment, they're satisfied.

FIND OUT MORE

For an explanation of how we determined the military pay of our volunteers, visit us at:

ArmyTimes_com

Coast Guard Senior Chief Electrician's Mate Ron Inget, based at Naval Station Mayport, Fla., summed it up this way: "As far as pay in the military ... for the most part, I think it's pretty close to the civilian sector. I have no complaints — and if I did, it wouldn't matter anyway."

MILITARY PAY

CIVILIAN **EOUIVALENT**

Military job: Army automated logistics specialist (E-6)

\$52,301.64 Name: Staff Sgt

Vicente Rivera Post: Fort Bragg,



Civilian job: Materials logistics specialist

\$35,000 Local salary

\$30.000-\$60.000

National average

Military job: Air Force communications computer systems controller (E-3)

\$34,542.00

Name: Airman 1st Class Mitchell Davis

Base: Folin Air Force



Civilian job: Computer network administrator

\$43,100 Local salary \$45.600 National average

'The pay we have for airmen is enough to get by as far as paying the bills, but that's it.'

Military job: Marine Corps infantry battalion operations officer (0-3)

\$80.568.55

Name: Capt. Marius Harrison

Base: Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C.



Civilian job: Operations manager, midsize company

\$70.000 Local salary

\$75,000 National average

Military job: Air Force draftsman

(E-4)\$36,655.12

Name: Senior Airman MariaChristina Magdaleno



Civilian job: Surveyor/draftsman

\$53.600 Local salary

\$47.300 National average

Base: Luke Air Force Base. Ariz.

Military job: Navy health care administrator (0-3E)

\$89,209.78

Name: Lt. Fred Stevenson

Base: Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla.



Civilian job: Corporate training manager

\$60.000-\$85,000

\$70.00**0**-\$90.000 National average



CIVILIAN **EOUIVALENT**

Military job: Marine Corps supply officer (0-4)

\$97.069.44 Name:

> Maj. Ly Fecteau Base: Marine Corps Air Station Yuma Ariz.



Civilian job: Logistics manager, midsize company

\$80.000-\$130,000 Local salary

\$80.000-\$120,000 National average

Military job: Navy medical clinic supervisor (E-5)

\$90,208.34

Name: Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Teri Charles Base: London



Civilian job: Medical operations manager

N/A Local salary

\$75.000-\$125.000 National average

Military job: Army military police operations sergeant (E-8)

\$98.586.60

Name: Master Sgt. Marko Hakama

Post: NATO Joint Headquarters Lisbon, Portugal



Civilian job: Deputy sheriff

N/A Local salary

\$65,000-\$79.000 National average

Military job: Army diagnostic radiologist (0-5)

\$164,759.02

Name: Lt. Col Kevin Reilly

Base: Fort Knox, Ky.



Civilian job: Diagnostic radiologist

\$360,000-\$400.000 Local salary

\$300.000-\$600,000

'I knew that I wouldn't get paid what I get on the outside going into this.'

Military job: Navy command equal opportunity adviser

\$89.578.69 Name: Master Chief

Hull Maintenance Technician Ronald Gonzales

Base: Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, Texas



Civilian job: Human resources manager, large company

\$85.000 Local salary

\$75,000-\$90.000 National average

After determining local wages,



MILITARY PAY

Military job: Air Force still photographer (E-2)

\$29,256.79

Name: Airman Kamaile Chan

Base: Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas

CIVILIAN EOUIVALENT

Civilian job: Staff photographer, small newspaper

\$28,000-\$32,000

\$30,000-\$35,000

Local salary

Airman Kamaile Chan, a still photographer at Goodfellow Air Force Base, Texas, earns slightly less than the national average for an entry-level staff photographer at a small-town newspaper. But, she says, "I enjoy my job. I like the fact that I get paid to learn."

How we did it

National average

omparing the pay of service members and their civilian counterparts with similar jobs and experience levels with pinpoint precision is not easy.

We start by asking service members what they do, how much experience they have and where they're assigned. We then call businesses and institutions in the same area — the same city or county, if possible — to get salary data for civilian workers with similar jobs and experience.

For a military air traffic controller, we call an airport near where the member is based. For a human resources manager, we call local companies to see what their HR personnel earn.

We also contact professional associations and job recruiting and placement firms, as well as personnel officials and wage-andbenefits specialists.

we do a similar exercise, using ad-

ditional data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and other online resources, to get a national average for a service member's equivalent civilian profession.

Still, making such comparisons is a highly inexact science that leaves plenty of room for debate. Many military jobs match up readily with the civilian sector law enforcement, health care, aviation — but others don't translate as easily.

For example, Army Sgt. John Fleet, one of our volunteers this year, is an instructor in a new unit at Fort Carson, Colo., called the Installation Replacement Training Company. The unit runs refresher training for troops heading to Iraq in such areas as weapons qualifications, convoy and urban operations, land navigation and traffic control.

Obviously, that's not a job with

See METHOD next page

MILITARY PAY

CIVILIAN EOUIVALENT

Military job: Navy steelworker (E-3)

\$62,807.51

Name: Constructionman Rhett Kuritz

Base: Naval Air Station Keflavik Iceland



Civilian job: Metal fabricator, large company

N/A Local salary

\$38,000 National average

Military job: Marine Corps logistics chief (E-7) \$71,453.33

Name: Gunnery Sgt. Marvin HernandezGarcia

Base: Camp



Civilian job: Materials manager

N/A Local salary

\$53.700 National average

Courtney, Okinawa

Military job: Marine Corps recruiter (E-7) \$76,242.10

Name: Gunnery Sgt. Gordon Miller

Base: Orange County, Calif.



Civilian job: Corporate recruiting supervisor

\$73.500 Local salary

\$65.000-\$75,000

'I speak to defense contractors and their recruiters at job fairs and their incomes could literally be in the millions between pay and bonuses.'

Military job: Air Force civil engineer (0-1)

\$52,779.49

Name: 2nd Lt.

Base, N.C.



Civilian job: Civil engineer

\$56,900 Local salary

\$51.000-\$65.000 National average

Military job: Commander, Military Entrance Processing Station Miami (0-5)

\$120,991.06

Name: Coast Guard Cmdr. Raymond Brown

Base: Miami



Civilian job: Recruiting manager

\$80,000-\$90,000 Local salary

\$85.000-\$110,000

National average



Military job: Navy submarine electronics warfare officer (W-3)

\$96,254.26

Name: Chief Warrant Officer 3 Timothy Duffy

Base: Washington, D.C.



Civilian job: Corporate manager/ administrator

CIVILIAN

EOUIVALENT

\$100.000-\$105.000 Local salary

\$95.000-\$105.000 National average

Military job: Marine Corps squadron legal chief (E-5)

\$42,700.34

Name: Sgt. Nikolai Atkinson-Pettigrew

Base: Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C.



Civilian job: Paralegal

\$36,000-\$44,000 Local salary

\$40.000-\$50.000

National average

Military job: Army finance officer (0-4)

\$98.749.44

Name: Maj. Tracey Hodo

Post: Whitehall, Ohio



Civilian job: Corporate assistant treasurer

\$95,000-\$140,000 Local salary

\$95.000-\$140,000

National average

Military job: Army mortuary affairs specialist (E-6)

\$55,229.64

Name: Staff Sqt. Gerald Peckham

Post: Fort Riley, Kan.



Civilian job: Mortician/funeral home director

\$46,200

\$48.300 National average

Military job: Air Force registered nurse (0-3)

\$67.133.35 Name: Capt. Franchesca Stone

Base: Lackland Air Force Base, Texas



Civilian job: Registered nurse

\$50.000-\$60,000 Local salary

\$52,000-\$62,000

'Pay is good. ... The downside [of military service] is you don't feel like you have any control over your career.'

INDICATES TOP PAY FOR THAT JOB



Cpl. Benito Flores, an electrical equipment repair specialist at Kaneohe Bay Marine Corps Base Hawaii, earns \$54,100 a year, about the average for his private-sector counterparts in the local economy.

Method

From previous page

an instantly recognizable civilian equivalent. After discussing his military duties, we decided that they match up closest with someone who trains civilian law enforcement officers.

Placing a value on experience is another subjective judgment. We gauge years of experience in the job a service member holds now, not total years in uniform. For example, senior enlisted people often move into jobs outside their career specialty when they reach

grades E-8 and E-9. An E-8 may have 24 years in the military but only a few years of experience in the job he is doing now, so our civilian pay comparison probably will be on the low end for that job.

Every year, readers write in to say that our military pay figures are much too high. But when allowances, special pays and other factors, such as bonuses and the tax advantage derived from untaxed allowances, are included, military pay invariably is much higher than what's listed on a pay stub — and we don't even try to add in the value of other benefits. such as health care or commissary savings. \square

Some of the sources for our civilian pay comparisons:

Bureau of Labor Statistics U.S. Census Bureau Salary.com VetJobs.com CareerBuilder.com The Lucas Group Merritt, Hawkins & Associates California Professional Divers Association Fabricators and Manufacturers Association Professional Pilots Association American Association of University Professors American Nurses Association American College of Radiology American Society of Civil Engineers National Air Transportation Association Helicopter Association International



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SANDY HUFFAKER

As a deep-sea diver trained in salvage, construction and demolition, among other skills, Chief Information Systems Technician Troy Roat's military income is well above the average for divers in the private sector. But his job is what has kept him in the Navy for 18 years. "If I wasn't doing this, I wouldn't have stayed in for a career," he said.

MILITARY Pay

Military job: Army pre-deployment training course instructor (E-5)

\$41.273.54

Name: Sgt. John Fleet
Base: Fort Carson, Colo.



Civilian job: Law enforcement weapons instructor

CIVILIAN

EOUIVALENT

\$40,000-\$45,000

Local salary

\$40,000 National average

Military job: Naval Academy professor (0-5)

\$133,143.46

Name: Cmdr. David McDonnell

Base: Annapolis, Md.



Civilian job: Associate physics professor

\$65,000-\$73,000

Local salary

\$63,000-\$71,000

National average

Military job: Marine Corps computer network administrator (E-3)

\$43,343.51

Name: Lance Cpl. Max Horn

Base: Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.



Civilian job: Computer network administrator

\$59,000 Local salary

\$54,000National average

RED FIGURE INDICATES TOP PAY FOR THAT JOB

