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# Navy Expands Master-at-Arms Program

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MILLINGTON , Tenn. (NNS) -- With U.S. military forces worldwide on heightened security, the need for additional master-at-arms (MA) personnel to help protect our Navy has become a priority.

Navy Recruiting Command is rising to the challenge of recruiting qualified men and women into this rapidly expanding rating. The Navy has established its own MA schools in fleet concentration areas, such as Norfolk, Va., San Diego and Kings Bay, Ga., and the MA rating was recently opened to entry-level personnel. Sailors previously had to be a petty officer third class or above to cross-rate into the MA field.

Chief Master-at-Arms (SW) David Bruce, the assistant enlisted community manager for the MA program, explained several of the most recent changes.

"Prior to the Navy Security Force 21st Century (NSF 21) plan, there were approximately 4,800 security/law enforcement billets. This number was further broken down to 1,800 permanent MAs and 3,000 temporary Navy Enlisted Classification Code (NEC) 9545s (law enforcement specialist) from various ratings," said Bruce.

According to Bruce, NSF 21 primarily restructures the Navy's security/law enforcement program to a more permanent footing. Originally, NSF 21 was expected to increase the total number of MA billets to about 6,000 once the MA conversion phase was complete, he said.

However, after Sept. 11, the plan was amended to increase the MA rating to around 9,000, with an additional 1,200 NEC 9545 personnel. Said Bruce, "We are taking E-3 to E-6 personnel with no more than 16 years of service. The latest MA conversion instruction has not been officially released, but we are still following the same format."

According to Bruce, a draft copy of the instruction, MILPERSMAN 1440-010, can be obtained from the Legal/Law Enforcement Community Manager Web page located on the BUPERS Web site at <http://www.bupers.navy.mil>. The draft instruction contains all the qualifications that a candidate must meet prior to applying to become an MA.

Navy Recruiting Command is working closely with Sailors just entering the Navy, as well as prior service applicants (NAVETS and OSVETS), interested in becoming part of the MA community.

"Active-duty Navy personnel interested in cross-rating into the MA program should confer with their command career counselor for current requirements," said Lt. Todd R. Carpenter, head of the PRIDE Operations/School Branch for Navy Recruiting Command.

NAVETS and OSVETS interested in returning to active duty may wish to consider coming back as an MA, he added. Carpenter pointed out that prior service applicants help provide the mid-level leadership needed while the rating expands. These applicants, Carpenter explained, have an excellent chance of retaining their time in grade and former pay grade.

"Civilians with prior law enforcement experience also may qualify to enter the Navy in the MA rating at an advanced pay grade through the Direct Procurement Enlistment Program (DPEP)," Carpenter said.

Expanding the MA rating will be a multi-year undertaking. Bruce explained, "Over the next several years, as we take the MA force from 2,000 to around 9,000 personnel, we anticipate growing by 2,700 MAs per year."

Carpenter emphasized, "Opening the rating to entry-level applicants is making quite a difference. In the past, we lost potential MAs by restricting recruits from the rating. An increased need for MAs also gives classifiers more flexibility in the classification process, by providing more jobs to offer future Sailors."

For more information about Navy recruiting and the master-at-arms rating, go to <http://www.navyjobs.com>.

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Official U.S. Navy file photo of master-at-arms with working dog. March 8, 2002

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