

Austin S. Hamner, a 1986 Kennedy Center graduate, just completed a deployment from the U.S. Army Reserves to support the Armed Forces Medical Intelligence Center (AFMIC), a branch of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). Hamner is now in Bagdad, Iraq, as part of the Iraq Survey Group (ISG), a team assisting in finding key evidence relating to the war. "I have now been mobilized three times," said Hamner of his current deployment.

"I was called up in 1991 for the Gulf War, in 1996 for Peacekeeping in Croatia, Bosnia, and now in 2003 for the War in Iraq," said Hamner. "This current mobilization has been the longest by far, and the first ten months were at Fort Detrick, Maryland, where I was blessed with being able to go home for three days once every six weeks."

A husband [to wife Patricia] and father of six, three boys and three girls, Hamner defends the importance of serving others and one's country. "I hope through this sacrifice, my children will see that sometimes it is necessary to stop talking about serving your country and fellow man and actually do it, regardless of the sacrifice," Hamner explained.

In 1980, Hamner's international service began in the form of his mission to Kobe and Osaka, Japan. Upon returning from his mission, Hamner pursued a bachelor's degree in international relations. "Professor Stan Taylor with all of his professionalism still took time to talk one on one with students," Hamner recalls of his experience at the Kennedy Center. The center also had an effect on his community involvement. Hamner noted that "Professor Richard Vetterli's desire to get more students in the electoral process prompted me to run for school board."

Following his Brigham Young University studies, Hamner received an MBA from the University of Indianapolis, though he "will candidly admit that [he] would like to have achieved the master's in the international program as well." Hamner further commented regarding what the master's would have meant in his current situation, "I can tell you from interfacing with the intelligence community that the master's of international relations means a great deal to them."

Prior to his involvement in the War in Iraq, Hamner worked full-time as a territory manager for Kato Spring of California, a Japanese springs manufacturing company Hamner helped represent in the Midwest of the United States. He will pay a significant price after his deployment is completed. "I built up the territory for two years before being mobilized. Inasmuch as it (his former position as territory manager) was 90 percent commission, the damage will be severe by the time I return to the territory," he reflected. "Of course I will still have a job, but the income difference will be substantial."

Despite these obvious challenges, Hamner is answering his country's call, and he is grateful for those who have likewise been willing to serve in the past. "While freedom is never free, we begin to take it for granted when we don't see the sacrifices of those who no longer live among us." Hamner continued, regarding his own involvement in war, "I've been told that our government should send only single guys to war, but the bottom line is basically this: If not me, then who? If not now, when? Certainly we should all be prepared to preserve not only our careers and reputations, but our church, our families, and our country."

No Events