



(Left to Right) Marine Corps MSgt. & Mrs. Jason Confer pose with RADM Edward H. Deets III, NETWARCOM vice commander, after receiving the 'On The Roof Gang' award.

(Left to Right) RADM Edward H. Deets III, NETWARCOM vice commander, congratulates CTICM(SW/AW/NAC) Ernest T. Ayers after giving him the 'On The Roof Gang' award for the Navy.

# "On The Roof Gang" Award Winners Ride High-Tech Wave

By MC2(SW) Christopher J. Koons

Throughout the history of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, those involved in the field of cryptology have often made vital contributions to the defense of the nation. The "On-The-Roof" Gang Award, presented by the U.S. Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association, honors those cryptologists who have performed their duties superbly.

This year's OTRG Navy recipient is CTICM(SW/AW/NAC) Ernest T. Ayers of Navy Information Operations Command Bahrain, and the Marine Corps award went to MSgt. Jason Confer of Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion Fort Meade. They received their awards during a ceremony in Saratoga Springs, NY.

The OTRG Award was named for a group of 176 Navy and Marine Corps enlisted radio operators who trained at a cryptologic school located in a steel-reinforced concrete blockhouse on the roof of the old

Navy Department Building from 1928-1941. Known as the "On-The-Roof" Gang, they were trained to intercept and analyze foreign radio communications and laid the cornerstone for U.S. naval cryptology during and after World War II. Nine members of the original group are still alive.

Confer credited his award to the advances that have been made in the intelligence capabilities of the armed services in recent years. "It's a great time to be a Marine cryptologist," he said. "The intelligence cycle has gone from days to hours, and in some cases, minutes. Actions are now based on what CTIs do. Our intelligence is effective in capturing and killing bad guys. War fighters trust the source -- us -- and know the information is correct."

Ayers added that the technologically advanced nature of today's intelligence community should spur others to enter the

cryptologic field. "When I was a young CTI we used paper, pencils and recorders -- today's Sailors are much more computer savvy," he remarked. "They are much smarter and more aggressive than the Sailors of my younger years were. People in this field have a lot of fun on their missions."

RADM Edward H. Deets III, Naval Network Warfare Command's vice commander, described Ayers and Confer as excellent representatives of the cryptologic field. "These two outstanding information warriors and cryptologists have exemplified leadership, initiative, resourcefulness and dedication over an extended period of time and personify the highest traditions established for cryptologic excellence by the 'On-The-Roof Gang' association," said Deets. "They are both truly worthy of this award."