

By Marine Pfc. Carrie C. Booze

FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, Md. -- Nine sailors comprised the first Navy Mass Communication Specialist class, which graduated May 16 from the Defense Information School here.

The students are the first sailors to go through this six-month course, which started Nov. 15, since the Navy merged the jobs of an illustrator, journalist, photographer and draftsman to create the multi-purpose Mass Communication Specialist.

Previously, sailors learned only one of those communications-related disciplines, depending on their assigned rates. The 109-day MC course was established because technology in the Navy is integrating the communication occupations, said Navy Chief Petty Officer Jason L. Carter, a Mass Communication course instructor at DINFOS. It makes sense to combine the courses because it streamlines and saves money, Carter said.

Navy Senior Chief Petty Officer Dave Fitz, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the Public Affairs Department at DINFOS, said these graduates will become force multipliers in the fleet.

“The MC students are very fortunate because we just merged our (communication occupations) so these students will have more advanced training than previous students,” Fitz said.

Navy Capt. Thomas P. Van Leunen Jr., the deputy chief of information at the Pentagon, was the guest speaker for the graduation ceremony.

Van Leunen's speech explained the significance of mass communications, and reminded the graduates to always be confident of their abilities.

The MC graduates offered advice of their own to sailors following in their footsteps.

"The only advice I would pass on to the future MC students is to ask a lot of questions during class," said Navy Seaman Recruit Chrystal Booth, an MC class graduate. "It is a long course, but as long as you maintain your focus and discipline, you will retain the knowledge."

Navy Seaman Terrence Siren was recognized as the class's distinguished honor graduate for having the highest overall average. The other graduates were Booth, Seaman Matthew Daniels, Seaman Apprentice Andrew Dunlap, Seaman Recruit Sabrina Hamilton, Seaman Apprentice Anthony Harding, Seaman Apprentice Michael Lindsay, Seaman Apprentice Jeffrey Militzer and Seaman Kilho Park.

Regardless of final grades, all of the MC graduates said they feel a strong sense of accomplishment for completing this challenging course and are ready for the next of the careers.

“It feels like we are a part of history,” said Booth. “We were trained very well and I can’t wait to apply the techniques when I get to the fleet.”