

FLEET HOMETOWN NEWS CENTER

**DEPLOYED HOLD FILE
INSTRUCTION**

2004

Sir/Ma'am,

The Fleet Hometown News Center (FHTNC) is seeking your support in establishing a hold file for your unit. With a hold file, we can produce a story on any newsworthy operation your command conducts.

In order to send out these positive news stories to friends and family back home, FHTNC must have the individual hometown news release forms for your personnel who want to participate. Without having these forms on file, we do not have the necessary biographical information needed to produce detailed news stories about your hardworking crewmembers.

The program is quite simple and requires very little action on behalf of the collateral duty Public Affairs Officer. The forms must be completed and sent to the Fleet Hometown News Center, where we will input the forms into our system. A cover letter should be attached to the batch of forms letting us know the reason for submission, points of contact and some generic bullet-type information about your command so we can write a more detailed story.

The hold file will cover your beginning, middle and end deployment milestones as well as noteworthy exercises, accomplishments and port visits. One FHTN release usually generates four to five media releases per event. This is significant as more than 12,000 news agencies subscribe to our service.

Additionally, your hold file helps your unit to release information more easily on individual matters such as reenlistments, advancements, qualifications and awards. Since your forms are already in the system, the collateral duty PAO can e-mail us directly with this information for releases vice having to resend the FHTN form.

We look forward to working with you on your upcoming deployment. Attached is the FHTN form. Our mailing address is:

Fleet Hometown News Center
9420 3rd Ave Suite 100
Norfolk, VA 23511

Respectfully,

JOHN M. OLMSTEAD
Gunnery Sergeant
Fleet Liaison
United States Marine Corps

FLEET HOMETOWN NEWS CENTER BACKGROUND

History

The Fleet Hometown News Center has produced hometown news stories for more than 50 years. The program began in 1945 as the American war effort in the Pacific pushed its way toward victory in Japan. Hometown news stories were an ideal way for the Navy to tell its Story to the American public and to highlight the accomplishments of its hard working Sailors through their hometown newspapers.

The hometown news effort started with a group of about 100 enlisted Sailors writing news stories about their fellow Navy men and women serving in the war. The concept was an immediate success and soon newspapers everywhere were requesting news stories about their local Sailors. Not only did the news stories help raise public awareness of Naval operations, but they publicized the efforts of brave men and women to family and friends back home.

Through these hometown news stories, thousands of small towns across America got a unique view of the battles and victories in the Pacific through the experiences of their hometown Sailors. A central management point was finally created to coordinate the distribution of the stories and with it came the creation of the Fleet Hometown News Center.

Mission

The FHTNC mission is essentially the same as it was 50 years ago; to generate public awareness of the accomplishments of men and women serving in our nation's sea services. The FHTNC not only produces stories on Navy men and women, but also distributes stories on Marine Corps and Coast Guard personnel as well.

FHTNC stories are used by more than 12,000 hometown news media organizations including newspapers, radio and television stations and college/alumni publications throughout the United States and its territories. Each year, FHTNC distributes nearly a half million news releases to these outlets in its effort to build morale and highlight the achievements of hardworking Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen to their family and friends back home. The hometown news stories also continue to inform the American public about the capabilities and operations of our high-tech Naval forces serving around the world.

STEPS FOR INITIATING A HOLD FILE

Per SECNAVINST 5720.3A, units deploying must establish a hold file. Begin establishing a hold file approximately six months prior to deploying.

To create a hold file, personnel must fill out a FHTN form. The collateral duty PAO will fill out the command name and mailing address as well as the PAO information box next to the mailing address. Once these forms have been collected, the PAO should screen the forms.

When screening forms, the PAO should ensure each form is filled out legibly, accurately and completely. Forms will be rejected without an individual's social security number, RUC/UIC, signature, date signed and lack of family information tying the story to a hometown (parent/guardian or high school).

Screening Checklist

Personal Information Section

- Correct SSN
- Full name
- Rank (Lance Corporal, Petty Officer 2nd class)
- Branch of service/active or reserve status
- Duty assignment
- Service member's signature
- Date signed

Command Information Section

- UIC/RUC-MCC/OPFAC
- Command mailing address
- Releasing authority signature/name/phone
- Duplicate all forms for command file

Hometown Ties Section

- Parent's name
- High school/college/year graduated
- Correct zip codes

Once the forms have been screened, the PAO should make a copy of all forms and keep a copy on file at the unit. Send the originals to:

Fleet Hometown News Center

Attn: Hold Files
9420 3rd Ave, Suite 100
Norfolk, VA 23511

Ensure a cover letter is attached to the batch of forms, stating the reason for creation of a hold file, the point of contact information for the unit's PAO and some basic information about the unit so FHTNC can create a more detailed story (see Enclosure 1).

The PAO should report any updates to the hold file about personnel who have detached from the command or whose status changes, i.e. promotion, death, injury, arrest, divorce or change in biographical information. Send additional forms to FHTNC as necessary.

Two weeks prior to deployment, unit PAOs should verify their hold file.

Fleet Hometown News will release a beginning, middle, and end deployment story based upon the deployment timeline. Additional stories may be released when the unit PAO notifies the Hold File Section of newsworthy events. Newsworthy events are as follows:

- ❑ Training events
- ❑ Reporting aboard
- ❑ Promotions and advancements
- ❑ Reenlistment (include length of reenlistment)
- ❑ Awards and Medals: Certificate of Commendation, Meritorious Mast, Navy Achievement Medal, Good Conduct Medal, etc.
- ❑ Marine/Sailor of the Quarter and Year. Attach copy of citation to FHTN form.
- ❑ Retirements (provide brief synopsis of assignments, achievements and awards. Do not submit stories about discharge or releases from active duty.
- ❑ Completion of resident schools three weeks or more in duration (if possible, attach course description to FHTN form).
- ❑ Off-duty scholastic achievement for degrees or certificates (receipt of associate, baccalaureate or graduate degrees make good stories).

Timely submission of news release forms and the 60-day verification of hold files are required elements in ensuring accurate and newsworthy information is delivered to news media. News release material should be sent to arrive at FHTNC within 30 days after the news event occurs. PAOs need to keep in mind that the more current the information, the better the chances the media will use it.

Below is a list of essential information needed to prepare unit-wide news stories. When sending information for unit-wide roster stories, please include:

- ❑ Dates of deployment
- ❑ Number of personnel deployed or serving with unit
- ❑ Approximate miles traveled (number of sorties flown)
- ❑ Number of days at sea since leaving homeport
- ❑ Ports visited
- ❑ Exercises or operations (simple explanation of participation for a civilian audience)
- ❑ Community relations events (painted an orphanage, repaired a school, etc.)
- ❑ Rescue or humanitarian operations
- ❑ Significant events or visitors
- ❑ Simple description of unit's mission during deployment

The Fleet Hometown News Center needs to be informed immediately of any personnel casualties. Casualty reports may be sent via message to: FHTNC NORFOLK VA//00//. This is important because if we have just sent out a news release on that person, we can call the media and stop that release from being printed. It would be terrible for a mother and father to return from their child's funeral and pick up the newspaper only to read about how great he's doing in the Navy, Marine Corps or Coast Guard. We will also delete that person's name from your hold file to prevent any additional stories being released.

The Fleet Hometown News Center forms can be copied. If you do this, it is recommended that you fill in blocks 4 and 5 before duplicating. This will help when filling out numerous forms. The Fleet Hometown News Form can be downloaded at www.chinfo.navy.mil. If you need more details, SECNAVINST 5724.3 of 18 April 86 is the governing instruction.

Fleet Hometown News Center will send each unit feedback once a release has been generated. A standard e-mail will be sent to the PAO stating the number of forms on file and releases generated. For this to work, the PAO must have an e-mail address on file at FHTNC.

The success of our program depends on the quality of input you provide. Not only are you improving the morale of your crew and their families, but you're also generating public support by educating the American people about Naval operations around the world. If you have any further questions regarding the form or our program, please call (757) 444-4199, ext. 322/328, or e-mail Gunnery Sergeant Olmstead directly at john.m.olmstead@navy.mil.

SAMPLE FHTNC HOLD FILE COVER LETTER

5720
PAO
DATE

From: Public Affairs Officer, HMM-361
To: Fleet Liaison, Fleet Hometown News Center

Subj: FLEET HOMETOWN NEWS HOLD FILE

Encl: (1) Fleet Hometown News Release forms
(2) Alphabetical roster
(3) Deployment description
(4) Unit History narrative

1. Elements of enclosure (1) have been verified for accuracy and are authorized for release. Enclosure (2) is an alphabetical roster of HMM-361 personnel who have submitted FHTN releases. Enclosure (3) is a brief description about our deployment. Enclosure (4) is a brief overview of the history of HMM-361.
2. There are a total of 60 Fleet Hometown News releases in this submission.
3. If you have any questions please contact the Public Affairs Office at commercial: (757) 444-1010 or DSN: 253-8908. The e-mail points of contacts are: 1st Lt. John Smith, at smithj@1maw.usmc.mil, and Gunnery Sgt. John Doe at doej@1maw.usmc.mil.

JOHN SMITH

ENCLOSURE (1)