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Reservists Often Struggle To Explain Service To Civilians

by Cody Stevens

There are over twenty-eight thousand military Reservists in Ohio, yet the Reserves are a service option that often causes confusion to civilians. Our Veterans' Voices series continues today with Marine Corp Reservist, and Wright State University student, Cody Stevens of Xenia, who talked to two of fellow Marines about this problem.

I have been in the Marine Corps Reserve for 6 years, and my family, friends, and coworkers still don't know what that means. They only know that I go away one weekend a month, and two weeks every summer. While I was away for my annual training, or AT as we call it, I talked to my fellow Marines to find out what the people in their lives think they're up to.

"They usually think that I'm just going to sit around for a weekend and do nothing," says Lance Corporal John Mackenzie from West Virginia. Some of his coworkers think he's on vacation. "You get a lot of people that you work with that see it as you just taking a break from your civilian lifestyle. They don't see the work that you put in on the military side."

The work we did this time was a mock deployment, where we took over an abandoned prison and turned it into an operating base. From it, we conducted missions at all hours, such as foot patrols to collect Intel, and detaining the enemy. In the Reserves, our training is continuous since we can be called upon at any time to support major combat assignments, or humanitarian efforts.

"You are sustaining your knowledge for that moment that you deploy. It sustains you and keeps you in the mindset of being a Marine so that you don't lost that focus, ever," says Corporal Alan Vaughn from Ohio.

Being in the Marine Reserves is definitely a balancing act between my civilian obligations and my military responsibilities, but I choose it because I can go to college while serving my country. And no, it's not a vacation. Do you have to practice martial arts in a patch of poison ivy on your vacation?

"I look forward to going home every single time. But I'll always look back on this with fond memories of the training I went through and the people I enjoyed that misery with. I live for this stuff," says Lance Corporal Mackenzie.

Veterans Voices is produced in collaboration with the [Veteran and Military Center at Wright State University](#). Funding for this series comes from Ohio Humanities.

