

## Revival of the Attaché Intelligence Operations Technician Military Occupational Specialty

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### Introduction

The military intelligence community identified the need for a specialized warrant officer to be the conduit for operations forward and to support joint efforts in various international activities and objectives. This resulted in the creation of the military occupational specialty (MOS) 351Z (Attaché Intelligence Operations Technician). Members of this relatively small MOS make important contributions to the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State, and other interagency organizations. The 351Z operates within the Defense Attaché System, an arm of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) that represents the United States in defense- and military-related matters with foreign governments around the world. Defense attaché offices operate at U.S. embassies and are composed of both civilian and military employees.<sup>1</sup>

### The Vital Role in Supporting U.S. Interests

The history of the defense attachés, including their technical functions and contributions, was recorded through various events that date back before the formal establishment of the MOS in 1948. During the Vietnam War, intelligence reports focused on Vietnam and the regional political-military climate inaccessible at the tactical/operational level. The 351Zs conducted predictive analysis of possible attacks by the Viet Cong, succession plans, Russian and Chinese influence, and political-military positions of neighboring countries Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia. These intelligence reports were invaluable, assisting the U.S. government with decisions about whether to deploy military forces to Vietnam and, if so, exactly where to send those forces. When the United States embassy was evacuated in 1975, 351Zs provided atmospheric intelligence through Vietnamese human intelligence sources managed remotely from neighboring countries.<sup>2</sup> This added another layer of difficulty in an already extremely restricted operational environment.<sup>3</sup>

The 351Z warrant officers are currently stationed at various locations at home and abroad; however, Attaché

Intelligence Operations Technician accessions for this MOS ceased on 13 December 2011. The last two 351Z warrant officers graduated on 29 August 2012 and the total Army inventory of 351Zs reduced to 33.



Photo courtesy of the U.S. Embassy London

The U.S. Embassy in London is the largest American embassy in Western Europe, and it is the diplomatic mission of the United States in the United Kingdom. This new embassy, opened to the public in December 2017, resembles a crystalline cube.

### Revival of the 351Z MOS

In 2018, LTG Robert P. Ashley, Jr., Director of DIA, recognized the contributions of 351Z warrant officers and launched efforts to end the debate over the utility of the MOS. He successfully advocated for the commencement of accessions in 2019, and currently 56 positions are authorized.


On 5 December 2019, the U.S. Army Warrant Officer Career College Class 20-002 (Scarecrows) graduated 92 new warrant officers, of which four were the newly designated presumptive Attaché Intelligence Operations Technicians. For the first time in 7 years, four Soldiers walked across the graduation stage and pinned on warrant officer 1 as 351Zs. These newly minted warrant officer 1s graduated with distinction. One was the distinguished honor graduate and the remaining three made the commandant's list. They marked the resurgence of the 351Z and will pave the way for the future support of multi-domain operations.



On 5 December 2019, newly appointed 351Z warrant officers are celebrated at Fort Rucker, AL.

Attaché Intelligence Operations Technicians work in U.S. embassies around the globe, supporting joint operations and providing administrative support to defense attaché offices. While an obscure specialty, these technicians are a valued capability for the Army, DoD, and Department of State. They are unique because of their work in restrictive, nonrestrictive, and unconventional areas of operations. Currently, the 351Z MOS is sourced from all Services. Noncommissioned officers must possess a minimum of 3 years of experience working as an operations noncommissioned officer in a defense attaché office before applying for accession as a 351Z.

**The Defense Attaché System**



There are many ways to serve the nation, but one way most are unfamiliar with is the Defense Attaché Service (DAS)... DAS provides opportunities for...service members to serve in diplomatic assignments at U.S. embassies located worldwide...While working in a defense attaché office, these service members represent DoD to the host-nation government and military, assist and advise the U.S. ambassador on military matters, and coordinate other political-military actions within their area of responsibility. They serve as part of the embassy staff and contribute significantly to the U.S. diplomatic mission abroad...The defense attaché office [DAO] plays a vital role in supporting the U.S. interests. During a time of crisis or military contingency, the DAO is often at the center of the action.<sup>4</sup>

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The Attaché Intelligence Operations Technicians serve as the Army’s experts in interagency operations, often enabling DoD activities in foreign countries, advocating both DoD and U.S. foreign policy objectives, and advising DoD personnel on interagency processes. Their management responsibilities, with regard to strategic reporting and liaison roles, are to provide direct and indirect support to Army leaders and the force.

### Conclusion

The current international security environment requires the Army and DoD to have an expeditionary and ready force. As such, we must capitalize on all human dimensions and capabilities in order to reach operational and strategic goals.

It is imperative for commanders and leaders at all levels to know about the resources available to them. It is our hope that leaders will use the 351Z warrant officers as a valuable and unique force multiplier. ✨

### Endnotes

1. Wikipedia, s.v. “Defense Attaché System,” last modified 3 April 2020, 05:56, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense\\_Attach%C3%A9\\_System](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_Attach%C3%A9_System).
2. Y. Hunt, “Attaché Technicians in Vietnam” (unpublished paper, 26 November 2019).
3. “U.S. Relations with Vietnam,” U.S. Department of State, January 21, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-vietnam/>.
4. Scott H. Stalker and Joe DiMaggio, “Defense Attaché Service Offers Worldwide Job Opportunities for Elite Service Members,” Defense Intelligence Agency, May 18, 2017, <https://www.dia.mil/News/Articles/Article/1186808/defense-attach-service-offers-worldwide-job-opportunities-for-elite-service-mem/>.

### References

- “Vietnam War U.S. Military Fatal Casualty Statistics,” National Archives, last reviewed April 30, 2019, <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics>.
- Y. Hunt, “Attaché Technicians in WWII” (unpublished paper, 26 November 2019).