

## Hearts of Fire

Michael Archer | February 22, 2007

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According to a recent article in the [Washington Post](#), many processing out of the military face a major dilemma: What to do now that they're hanging up the uniform for the last time? The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) helps steer Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to new careers where they can be happy and productive, but there are still many bumps along the way when transitioning from being a specialist in the arcane arts of war back into civilian life.

However, one civilian occupation values these warriors -- emergency services. "I was originally looking at law enforcement, especially the LAPD and Sheriff's SWAT Teams," said Battalion Chief Bob Doyle of Glendale Fire Department. "I saw a fire on TV where firefighters were going into a building window while thick black smoke poured out and thought 'that looks like fun.'"

Chief Doyle, a Marine Recon veteran, was enamored of the teamwork and physical skills it took to do the job. "I like the job of leading these brave men and women in executing the mission."

### Training

Fire fighting involves more than pointing a hose at a blaze, there's much to be learned about fire science that is every bit as challenging as being a specialist in the military. Many firefighters have extensive schooling in fire science courses, which they pick up after they leave the military. Some, like Darryl Cleveland -- a Fire Captain with Corona, Calif.-based Corona Fire Department -- sign up specifically to get training in firefighting. "I met some firefighters and found out the Air Force was the only place in the military where I could be strictly a firefighter and get the kind of training I wanted," Cleveland said. He gained valuable skills at the first-rate fire training center at Chanute AFB.

### Benefits

Folks in the emergency services also receive good pay and benefits. Many firefighters make a base of more than \$50,000 a year and, with overtime pay, can increase that amount substantially. It's not unusual for firefighters who want to earn some extra income to work several extra shifts each year.

### ABOUT MICHAEL ARCHER



Michael Archer is a wildfire consultant and writer. He has written articles for *Home and Fire Magazine*, *Wildland Firefighter Magazine*, and other publications, lectured to many groups about fire issues, been quoted by Associated Press and USAToday reporters, and also appeared on cable and network TV discussing wildfire issues. Currently, he is acting as webmaster and technical consultant to Wildfire Research Network ([www.wildfireresearch.org](http://www.wildfireresearch.org)), a Los Angeles-based citizens' action group that promotes firefighting issues involving the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI).

His "Firebombers Incorporated" series of novels gives readers an intriguing "what-if" scenario on how 21st century technology could modernize the wildland firefighting force. His novel "Firestorm," received excellent reviews from *Writers Digest*, *The Nashville News*, *The VVA Veteran* (Vietnam Veterans of America's magazine) and firefighting professionals across the United States. His company, Firebomber Publications, donates 50 percent of net profits to organizations that support the families of injured and fallen firefighters.



You can visit his website at:

[www.firebomberpublications.com](http://www.firebomberpublications.com)

Firestorm can be purchased at [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com)

Comments can be sent to:

[marcher47@firebomberpublications.com](mailto:marcher47@firebomberpublications.com)

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## Camaraderie

One theme that runs through emergency services is the need for camaraderie and teamwork, which servicemembers have already developed. "There is a strong unity, there is a strong family," says Battalion Chief Bart Chambers of Riverside County Fire, a former Navy Corpsman. A view that is seconded by Dennis Day, a Public Safety Communications Officer with Riverside CDF who was in the Army, "You're with a good crew, a good group of people."

Finding people who already possess these skills when they apply for the job just makes veterans that much more attractive to the emergency services. "There were thousands of guys testing for four jobs at municipal fire departments and my experience in the military was my leg up on these guys," Art Organista of the Chino Hills FD says. "Even though I had the same certifications as the other job seekers when I got out, when I mentioned that I'd been a firefighter in the Navy, boom, I got three job offers." It's also common knowledge in firefighter ranks that many departments give candidates upwards of 10 bonus points on written exams for their military experience.

Firefighters who have served in the military also bring along their own stories of life in uniform. One that really stood out was from Brian Savage. Brian Savage, a Fire Captain for Culver City FD, had the unique experience of extricating a driver from a Volkswagen Jetta -- six feet off the ground! "I was on a three-person rescue unit at Hahn Air Base in Germany. A drunken serviceman drove off a dirt road and his Jetta went airborne, wrapping itself around a tree about six feet off the ground. The guy ended up living, but everything below his belly button was fractured and he spent eight months in the hospital. He was eventually discharged and sent home. I still have the pictures, in fact." (For more stories and the complete interview notes for these and many other firefighters, go to [Firebomber Publications](#) and click on the "Firefighter Interviews" button.)

So, if you're contemplating what career to pursue after active duty, consider giving the emergency services a serious look. And the next time you see an emergency vehicle racing by with lights flashing, give them a nod. You may be saluting fellow warriors on their way to do battle once more where seconds matter and lives hang in the balance.

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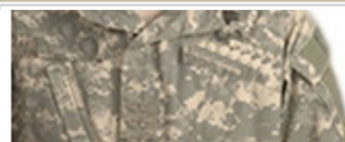
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In 2004, Military.com joined forces with Monster Worldwide (NYSE: MWW) to accelerate our growth and change the playing field for career and educational opportunities for servicemembers, veterans and military spouses. Monster's vision is bringing people together to advance their lives, which is a great fit with Military.com's "members first" ethos and goal of connecting the military community to all the benefits of service.



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## Military Timeline

