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Employee Q&A: UAPD Operations Division Commander Bob Sommerfeld

University Communications
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Name: Bob Sommerfeld
Position: UAPD Operations Division Commander
Number of years at the UA: 27
Favorite thing about working at the UA: The level of diverse activity and environment.
Favorite part of campus: It's two locations: Arizona Stadium and McKale Center, during a game when the score is very close and we've just scored above our opponent .... I've traveled around the world and I can't say I've ever experienced that level of energy and enthusiasm anywhere else.

A typical day in the shoes of **UA Police Department** [1] Cmdr. Bob Sommerfeld is anything but predictable.

"Nobody calls to make an appointment that they're going to be burglarized," Sommerfeld said. "I typically don't know what the day is going to entail, which is one of the reasons I enjoy this job."

As Operations Division commander for UAPD, Sommerfeld supervises the field units on campus. Some days he could be at 10,000 feet working with the security officers at the **Mount Graham International Observatory** [2]. Other days might involve working closely with new students and parents at orientations regarding crime prevention tactics. The variety of work and never knowing where his day may lead him are what he enjoys most.

After graduating from high school, Sommerfeld, a native Tucsonan, left his hometown to join the **Air Force** [3] and travel the world, eventually becoming a security specialist. After finishing his initial enlistment, he returned to Tucson and decided to continue his law enforcement career at the UA, as well as working concurrently in the **Arizona Air National Guard** [4]. Throughout his combined total of 28 years in the military, including an additional two and a half years in the Air Force following Sept. 11, he spent time in the Middle East and also in Washington, D.C., working with the anti-terrorism bureau at the Pentagon.

Sommerfeld ended his military career when he retired from the Arizona Air National Guard three and a half years ago. Nowadays, he brings a strong passion to his work as a UAPD commander each day. "I love law enforcement," he said. "I look forward to getting up every day and coming to work and working with the men and women of the police department and with the University."

A notable highlight of his career was working as the incident commander when President Barack Obama visited the UA two years ago for the memorial honoring victims of the Jan. 8, 2011, Tucson shootings in which then-U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was critically injured. (*Read more about the memorial event in this **UANews article*** [5].*)*

Sommerfeld remembers hearing a rumor of the president's visit three days beforehand, receiving final confirmation only two days prior to the president's arrival. That left an extremely short amount of time to pull together a multitude of entities to coordinate the historic event.

"We only had a couple days' notice. Normally, other locales and cities would have a week or weeks (of)

advance notice," Sommerfeld said. "It was a couple days of no sleep, but it came off so well. It helped the healing process for the Tucson community."

When off duty, Sommerfeld is involved with the **Boy Scouts of America** [6] and the **National Eagle Scout Association** [7]. He also enjoys traveling and scuba diving in exotic locations â€? his favorite to date being French Polynesia.

Sommerfeld recently took time to speak with LQP about his career.

What was your first job?

I was a summer camp counselor at the **Triangle-Y Ranch Camp** [8] outside Oracle Arizona. I enjoyed being in the outdoors and working with kids who had never experienced the outdoors or being away from home for an extended period of time. The only drawback was it occupied my entire summer so I had no time off between my junior and senior year of high school.

Describe what you do.

I'm currently the Operations Division commander for the police department. I oversee the uniformed personnel in the field. Thatâ€?s the police officers, police aides, community service officers and the detective unit.

Since I work in an educational institution, we also take an educational role in crime with our community. We educate them on how to deter and prevent becoming victims of crime and what they can do to help their fellow community members and law enforcement if they see a crime or something suspicious occurring. We encourage people to interact with us to prevent something from occurring rather than us having to go out and take a report after the fact that someone has been victimized.

If you didn't have this job, what career would you have?

Either a photographer or a divemaster at a dive resort in the Caribbean.

Who or what has inspired you in your career?

What inspired me the most was my time as a civilian police monitor with the **United Nations Police Force** [9] in Bosnia and Eastern Slavonia in 1996-1997. I had the opportunity to work with police officers from 19 other countries to train and restructure a new police force. The changes and support provided to a newly restructured government and gaining the trust of the civilian populace in their newly formed police force was very rewarding. My best mentors have been peers and fellows from groups that I interactive with, like the **Academic Leadership Institute** **[10] â€¦.** They help me see things in a different light at the University. I interact daily with police officers and my supervisor and my peers here, but I think mentoring and development-wise, I learn more from my peers outside of the department.

What career advice would you offer someone just starting out?

Step out of your comfort zone. Experience as much of your department and the University as possible to help you be more well-rounded. Develop and maintain relationships â€? internally and externally from your department.

How would you like to spend your retirement?

International traveling and (scuba) diving around the world. Iâ€?d like to go to Micronesia.

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