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POST EXCLUSIVE

Leesburg couple's son takes part in exercise



UTAPAO, Thailand — For the son of a Leesburg couple, being an ambassador for peace in a country known for its spicy cuisine, magnificent colorful temples, and lush jungles where deadly cobra snakes are king, was quite an experience recently.



Jeffrey D. Brooks

is a Petty Officer 1st Class in the U.S. Navy. Earlier this year he took part in Cobra Gold 2010 in Utapao, Thailand. Brooks is the son of J.D. and Shirley Brooks of Leesburg.

Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Jeffrey D. Brooks, son of J.D. and Shirley Brooks of County Road 44, Leesburg, participated in Cobra Gold 2010, the largest multi-lateral military training exercise in the Pacific region. Sponsored by the Royal Thai Supreme Command and United States Pacific Command, Cobra Gold is conducted

throughout the Kingdom of Thailand. This year's participants are Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, United States, and for the first time, the Republic of Korea.

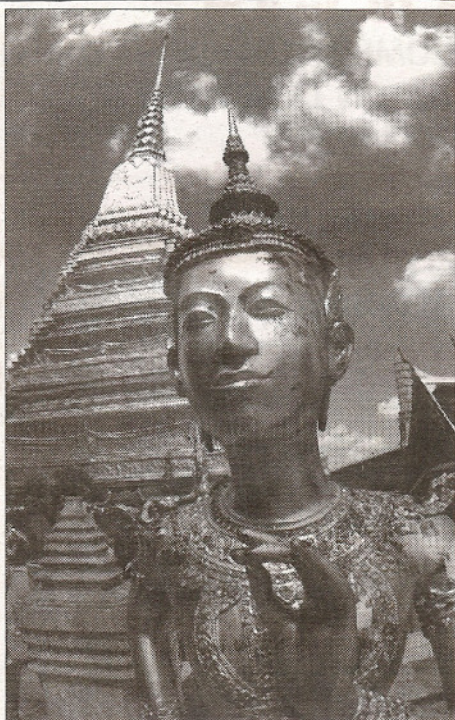
"I assist with the launch and recovery of Marine troops," said Brooks, a boatswain's mate on the USS Essex.

Since its inception in 1982, Cobra Gold has developed into an important symbol of the U.S. military's commitment to maintaining peace and security in Asia. The exercise provides realistic training, improves efficiency through military coordination, and tests military operations.

Service members work on their tactical skills and test their ability to operate in a joint, multinational environment. These range from amphibious assaults to engineering and medical humanitarian and civic assistance projects geared towards improving the quality of life of the Thai people. They also practiced noncombatant civilian personnel evacuation operations used during disaster-relief needs.

This type of training gives Brooks a chance to improve his individual skills and experience the culture of other countries.

"This exercise helps train the Marines and other services in what is needed in the



event of a real world scenario," said Brooks, a 2001 graduate of Fort Payne High School. "This way we already know how to work with our foreign allies and things can go that much more smoothly."

Thailand is quite a contrast to the hustle and bustle of the United States. With its tropical landscape, exotic beaches, and animal wildlife, it is also sometimes referred to as the "Venice of the East." With its canals and rivers, inland waterways still maintain their dominance over daily life.

Instead of retail shopping markets that Brooks and the others are accustomed to, floating markets abound with sellers who pack their wares — a variety of tropical fruits, flowers, vegetables, and fresh produce, onto small boats and jostle with each other for the attention of buyers alongside the canals.

"This is my first time in Thailand and I'm really looking forward to the new experiences," said Brooks.

In an age where it is just as important for countries to support peace operations, Brooks and his multi-national military partners understand firsthand what it takes to bring many countries together to respond to disasters and humanitarian assistance around the world.