

WASHINGTON (NNS) -- After April 1, 1996, the Navy will no longer have the Weapons Technician (WT) rating. Created in January of 1986, WTs initially absorbed a portion of the Gunner's Mate (Technician) billets when that community was disestablished. The mission of WTs was to maintain, assemble, disassemble, test and convert nuclear weapons, warheads and their components. Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton approved the disestablishment of the WT rating in 1994 after all tactical nuclear weapons were removed from Navy commands. The need for a dedicated rating to handle the weapons had diminished to the extent that disestablishment was deemed appropriate. Prior to the formal announcement of the disestablishment in October 1994, about 300 of the more than 500 WTs had already converted to other ratings. In the seventeen months since the announcement, almost all of the remaining WTs have converted to other ratings or retired. On April 1, 1996, WTs who have not converted will be assigned to duties as Aviation Ordnancemen for the remainder of their current enlistment. As we bid farewell to one of the Navy's most specialized ratings, it is encouraging to know that so many former WTs made the decision to 'stay Navy.' These Sailors have gone on to viable careers in other ratings, helping us meet the needs of the post-Cold-War Navy.