

**Editor's Note:** The following article, which refers to **Capt. Michael P. Solovey '96, USA**, originally appeared in the Fayetteville Observer (Fayetteville, North Carolina) on March 17, 2005. It is reprinted here with permission of the Observer and writer Kevin Maurer. **Capt. Bradley D. Moses '95, USA**, is also mentioned in the article and appears in the accompanying photo of Solovey's artwork, "Reload," below.

## Soldier Finely Tunes His Detailed Sketches

by Kevin Maurer  
Staff writer

Capt. Michael Solovey has a unique philosophy about his artwork. He tries to "engineer the art like a BMW, design it like a Porsche and build it with the heart and soul of a Harley-Davidson."

Solovey draws inspiration from car and motorcycle makers and tries to emulate the fine craftsmanship. This translates into detailed and moving artwork commemorating deployments to Afghanistan and Bosnia. He spends hours making each piece "the highest quality and most passionate art in the world."

Solovey's specialty is drawing collages for deployed units. The drawings, done in pencil, take about three months to create. He tries to capture each unit's accomplishments in each piece.

The pictures start as simple sketches; over time, intricate details are added. Some are so detailed that you can read the brand of tires on a Special Operations Forces Ground Mobility Vehicle or on a souped-up Humvee.

Solovey is in charge of maintenance and ammunition for the 2nd Battalion of the 3rd Special Forces Group. He deployed to Afghanistan three times in the past three years with the unit.

He takes a sketchbook and pencils on every deployment. He shoots photographs using others in his unit as models to make sure he can capture the details. Each time the unit deployed, Solovey made a collage. The prints hang in the battalion headquarters.

Capt. Brad Moses, the battalion logistics officer, figures prominently in one of them. He is in the middle of the collage – bearded, wearing a baseball cap and clutching a pair of binoculars.

The prints are a morale booster and a great souvenir for the soldiers. "He's made me famous. It is a good representation of what the unit was doing at the time," Moses said. "There is something for everybody in there."

Drawing the prints has become big business for Solovey. Each print sells for about \$45. More than 90 percent of his business comes from word of mouth. Last week he was working on a print for the 25th Infantry Division's aviation brigade. He gets input from the soldiers and crafts the piece based on what they want. He keeps quantities small, and the printing plate is destroyed after the initial run.

While his military work accounts for most of his top sellers, he also has paintings of the Virginia Military Institute campus and scenes from France hanging in his house. One of his best pieces is an oil painting of a church in Bosnia. He painted it after serving there with the 1st Armored Division. A watercolor of a mosque in Afghanistan hangs at the battalion headquarters.

He graduated from VMI in Lexington, Virginia, in 1996.

He said every man on his mother's side of the family attended VMI. "I wanted the challenge and camaraderie," he said.

Solovey received an ROTC scholarship and studied modern lan-

guages with a minor in art. He studied at a French art school during his semester abroad.

Solovey, known as "Spike" to his friends, takes a soldier's discipline to his craft. He spends three hours a day working on the collages – that's three hours on top of a typical 12-hour workday. His home studio is immaculate. His drawing table is neatly organized, and a single light hangs over the work area. Finished prints are stacked neatly on shelves along one wall.

Solovey found his passion for art when he was in middle school and wanted to give something back. "Art is always something that came naturally to me. It was always a talent that I had," he said.

Earlier this year, Solovey donated \$3,200 to the art department of Fort Bragg's Irwin Middle School. All of the money came from his art sales. He was inspired by Arnold Schwarzenegger, who funded an after-school program in California before he became governor.

He presented the check and showed some of his artwork during a ceremony in February. He urged the students to follow their passion.

Solovey is leaving 3rd Group in a month to take a position as a foreign area officer. While his art business is booming, Solovey loves being a soldier and plans to retire from the Army.

"If you've got a love for something, just go after it," he said. "This is what I was meant to do."



"Reload" by Capt. Michael Solovey '96 illustrates the direct action mission aspect of the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group during Operation Enduring Freedom. Specifically, it depicts Operation Detachment-Alpha, including fellow alumnus Capt. Brad Moses '95 (in the ball cap). Solovey completed the initial sketch work in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 2003 and then finished it upon his return to Fort Bragg, North Carolina.