The Deployment Cycle and Its Impact on Service Members and Their Families

Center for Deployment Psychology
Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences

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**U.S. Veterans**

### 2010 Veteran Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Service/Locations</th>
<th>Locations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wartime</td>
<td>Fort/Post/Base in any state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII</td>
<td>Korea/Japan/South Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean conflict</td>
<td>Balkans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam era</td>
<td>Alaska/Hawaii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War (8/90 – 8/01)</td>
<td>Qatar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gulf War (9/01 – present)</td>
<td>Spain/UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wartime veterans*</td>
<td>Germany/Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peacetime veterans*</td>
<td>Middle East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Others?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Statistics from 2009, U.S. Census Bureau (2011)*

**Types of Deployments**

Wear and Tear

OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan)
October 7, 2001– present

OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq)
March 20, 2003 – August 31, 2010

OND – Operation New Dawn (Iraq)
September 1, 2010 – December 18, 2011

Demographics Handout

Department of Defense
Demographics 2012
Profile of the Military Community

www.militaryonesource.mil
www.census.gov

Active Component vs. Selected Reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Component</th>
<th>Selected Reserve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Full-time&quot; military</td>
<td>&quot;Part-time&quot; military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On call 24/7/365</td>
<td>1 weekend/month/2 weeks per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Army</td>
<td>National Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Air Force</td>
<td>— Army NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Navy</td>
<td>— Air NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Marine Corps</td>
<td>Reserves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>— Coast Guard</td>
<td>— Army — Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximately 1.4 Million</td>
<td>— Navy — Marine Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>— Coast Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approximately 1.1 Million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Branch Strength

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2011 Military Personnel by DoD Component and Coast Guard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Active Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army National Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Active Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps Active Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force Active Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air National Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force Reserve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Active Duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast Guard Reserve</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selected Reserve vs. Active Duty: Implications of Differences

- Suddenly military
- May remain near family support, but not have military installation support
- Feelings of isolation for service member and family
- Family benefits different from Active Duty
- TRICARE issues

Pre-Deployment

“Physically present and Psychologically absent”

Pre-Deployment Stress in Military Families
Pre-Deployment Preparation for Military Families

• Preparedness
  – Practical preparation
  • Power of attorney/will/financial plan
  • Location of important papers
  • Emergency contact procedures
  • Child care arrangements

...but deployment pay can offset negative aspects of deployments

Pre-Deployment Stressors for Military Families

• Lack of preparation time
  – Unit preparation vs. family preparation
  – Last minute tasks
• Shifting expectations
  – Length of upcoming deployment
    • Open-ended deployments
  – Deployment date

Pre-Deployment Stressors

— Emotional preparation
  • Prepare to cope with unexpected problems
  • Trust service member will be protected
  • Prepare for absence of partner/parent
  • Support mission

Military Families

• Clarifying changes in family dynamics
• Anticipation of threats to service member
• Perception of mission purpose
• Lack of information
• Potential rumors
• Striving for intimacy
• Service members often value deployments

Military Children

• Preparing for extended separations from a primary caretaker
• Altered family roles and responsibility
• Increased stress on non-military parent/caretakers
• Community level stress/loss
Deployment

Pre-deployment
- Notification
- Preparation
- Training

Deployment
- Departure
- Sustainment
- Combat and conflict

Return from Deployment
- Reunion
- Reintegration

Deployment Phases for Military Families

In first month...
- Adjusting to new responsibilities
- Roller coaster of mixed emotions
- Disrupted routines
- “Hole” where service member used to be

“Psychologically present and physically absent”

Faber et al (2008)

Logan (1987)
**Deployment Phases for Military Families**

After first month through penultimate month ...
- Resiliency develops
- Increased confidence
- New routines established
- New sources of support
- Newfound independence

1 month before return ...
- Intense anticipation
- Rush to complete “to do” lists
- Surge of conflicting emotions
- “What will I have to give up?”
- High expectations

**Spousal Deployment**

Caregiver-Reported Challenges for Self

- Taking on more responsibilities at home caring for youth: 83%
- Helping youth deal with life without the deployed parent: 80%
- Feeling like people in community don’t get what life is: 55%
- Spending more time with child on homework: 55%
- Talking to teachers about child school performance: 52%
- Feeling like I had no one to talk to about stress, sadness: 40%
- Changing roles in the marriage: 30%
- Losing contact with other military families: 29%
- Problems growing apart from the partner: 25%
- No longer spending time with other military families: 18%

Factors Associated with Increased Youth/Caregiver Difficulties

1. Poor caregiver emotional well-being
2. More cumulative months of deployment
3. National Guard and Reserve status
4. Poor caregiver-youth communication
Communication

- Technology is easier and quicker
  - Phone, email, IM, FAX, VTC, DVD, Facebook, Skype
- Email and IM most frequently used
- Telephone preferred but less available

As Goes the Parent, So Goes the Child

- Child adjustment problems linked to parental distress
  - Depression and PTSD in parents were predictive of child depression/child internalizing and externalizing behaviors
  - Longer parental deployments associated w/ increased risk for child depression/externalizing symptoms
- Children can have a high level of anxiety even after the deployed parent has returned

Externalizing Symptoms by Gender and Parent Deployment Status

Parental Deployment

Youth-Reported Challenges for Self

- Dealing with life without deployed parent
- Helping caregiver deal with life without deployed parent
- Not having people understand what deployment is like
- Feeling misunderstood by people in your school, community
Subgroups and Identified Trends During Deployment

- Older teens reported more academic difficulties/
younger teens reported more anxiety symptoms
- Girls reported more anxiety symptoms than boys
- Caregivers “faring well emotionally” were more likely to have children who were “functioning well”

Deployment Stress in Service Members

Tough Realities About Combat

- Fear in combat is common
- Unit members will be injured and killed
- There will be communication/info breakdowns
- Leadership failures will be perceived
- Combat impacts every soldier mentally and emotionally
- Combat has lasting mental health (MH) effects
- Soldiers are afraid to admit that they have a MH problem
- Deployments place a tremendous strain upon families
- Combat environment is harsh and demanding
- Combat poses moral/ethical challenges

Challenges for OIF and OEF

- No clearly defined “front line” or rear areas
- Highly ambiguous environment
- Complex and changing missions
- Long deployments
- Repeated deployments
- Environment is very harsh

WRAIR Land Combat Study Team (2006); House et al (2006)
### Deployment Challenges for Service Members

#### Physical
- Heat and cold
- Dehydration and wetness
- Lack of comforts
- Sleep deprivation
- Dirt and mud
- Noise and blasts
- Fumes and smells
- Long work hours
- Illness or injury

#### Cognitive
- Boredom/monotony
- Unclear/changing role or mission
- Unclear/changing ROEs
- Experiences that defy beliefs
- Too little or too much information
- Loyalty conflicts

#### Emotional
- Fear of failure/loss
- Shame and guilt
- Helplessness
- Horror
- Anxiety
- Killing
- Feeling devalued
- Excitement, thrills
- Satisfaction

#### Social

#### Spiritual

Figley et al. (2007); photo courtesy of Christopher Hines, MD
**Deployment Challenges for Service Members**

**Social**
- Separation from loved ones
- Lack of privacy
- Public opinion and media
- Turning to their peers for support

**Spiritual**
- Change in faith
- Inability to forgive
- Loss of trust

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**Women’s Roles in OIF/OEF**

- Roles
  - Combat vs. non-combat
  - Medics/Mental Health
  - Convoy transportation
  - Pilots
  - Mechanics
  - Administrative
  - Intelligence
  - Security Forces/Military Police

**Female Deployment Stressors**

- Genitourinary health issues
- Body armor fit issues
- Feelings of both isolation
- (few females) and yet always being around someone (Battle Buddy system)
- Separation from family/children
- Sexual assault/harassment
Stressors in the Deployment Cycle
Service Members

Pre-deployment:
- Notification
- Preparation
- Training

Deployment:
- Departure
- Sustainment
- Combat and conflict

Return from Deployment:
- Reunion
- Reintegration

Return from Deployment
“Physically present and Psychologically absent”

Family Reintegration

Typical Course of Reintegration

Family has...
- New routines
- New responsibilities
- More independence and confidence
- Made many sacrifices
- Worried, felt lonely
- Gone through milestones that were missed

Service member’s return can...
- Interrupt routine
- Disrupt space
- Throw off decision making
- Cause family to walk on tip toes
- Not make everything perfect
- Not replace the sacrifices and missed milestones

Adapted from a briefing by COL Kevin Gardes (May, 2008)
Typical Course of Reintegration

Child...
• Is used to depending on other parent or caretaker
• May have made new friends
• May have developed new interests
• May have achieved milestones or rites of passage

Post-Deployment Stressors

• Unmet or unrealistic expectations
• Post homecoming let-down
• Changed roles/responsibilities
• New independence of spouse
• Tug on loyalties
• Extended family
• Unresolved marital issues haven’t vanished

Parental Reintegration

Youth-Reported Challenges for Self
- Fitting deployed parent back into home routine: 54%
- Worrying about the next deployment: 47%
- Dealing with deployed parent mood changes: 36%
- Worrying about how parents are getting along: 34%
- Getting to know deployed parent again: 31%
- Figuring out who to turn to for advice: 27%

Spousal Reintegration

Caregiver-Reported Challenges for Self
- Fitting deployed parent back into the home: 71%
- Rebalancing child responsibilities: 61%
- Getting to know deployed parent again: 55%
- Worrying about the next deployment: 52%
- Dealing with deployed parent’s mood changes: 50%
- Figuring out who to turn to for advice: 21%
Subgroups and Identified Trends Related to Parental Reintegration

- Older teens and girls reported more difficulties related to reintegration
- Caregivers with a spouse in the Guard or Reserve were more likely to report that their children faced deployment and reintegration challenges.

BATTLEMIND Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHILE DEPLOYED</th>
<th>HOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buddies (cohesion)</td>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>Controlling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Targeted Aggression</td>
<td>Inappropriate Aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactical Awareness</td>
<td>Hypervigilance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lethally Armed</td>
<td>“Locked and Loaded” at Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Control</td>
<td>Anger/Detachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission OPSEC</td>
<td>Secretiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Responsibility</td>
<td>Guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Defensive Driving</td>
<td>Aggressive Driving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline and Ordering</td>
<td>Conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-Deployment Challenges for Reserve Component

- Return to civilian life
- Job may no longer be available
- Can have reduction in income
- Transition of health care/loss of health coverage
- Loss of unit/military support system for the family
- Lack of follow up/observation by unit commanders to assess needs

Service Member Reintegration

Chandra et al. (2011)
Reintegration

5 critical challenges service members need to master
• Overcome alienation
• Move from simplicity to complexity
• Replace war with another form of high
• Move beyond war and find meaning in life
• Come to peace with self, God, and others

Adapted from CH (LTC) John Morris, Minnesota National Guard: Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

Overcome alienation
• From family, friends
• From coworkers
• From community

Replace war with another high
• War is an adventure
• Nothing in civilian life matches the intensity
• Speed kills: So do drugs, alcohol, etc...
• How do SMs learn to accept life as it is?

Move from simplicity to complexity
• From self to others
• From survival to thriving
• From others thinking for you to responsibility
• From no choices to overwhelming choices
Move beyond war

- Find meaning and purpose outside of combat
- We were someone before war and will be someone after war
- Will we be stuck in Iraq/Afghanistan, etc., forever?

Make peace with self, God, and others

- SMs may have done, or not done things that violated their moral code
- SMs may have participated in the killing of other humans
- SMs may ask, “Is there absolution or do I live with guilt, (real, false, survivors) forever?”

CDP Website: Deploymentpsych.org

Features include:

- Descriptions and schedules of upcoming training events
- Blog updated daily with a range of relevant content
- Articles by subject matter experts related to deployment psychology, including PTSD, mTBI, depression, and insomnia
- Other resources and information for behavioral health providers
- Links to CDP’s Facebook page and Twitter feed

Online Learning

The following online courses are located on the CDP website at:

http://www.deploymentpsych.org/content/online-courses

NOTE: All of these courses can be take for free or for CE Credits for a fee

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Prolonged Exposure Therapy for PTSD in Veterans and Military Personnel (1.25 CE Credits)
- Epidemiology of PTSD in Veterans: Working with Service Members and Veterans with PTSD (1.5 CE Credits)
- Provider Resiliency and Self-Care: An Ethical Issue (1 CE Credit)
- Military Cultural Competence (1.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 1 (2.25 CE Credits)
- The Impact of Deployment and Combat Stress on Families and Children, Part 2 (1.75 CE Credits)
- The Fundamentals of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) (1.5 CE Credits)
- Identification, Prevention, & Treatment of Suicidal Behavior in Service Members & Veterans (2.25 CE Credits)
- Depression in Service Members and Veterans (1.25 CE Credits)

All of these courses and several others are contained in the Serving Our Veterans Behavioral Health Certificate program, which also includes 20+ hours of Continuing Education Credits for $350.
Provider Support

CDP’s “Provider Portal” is exclusively for individuals trained by the CDP in evidence-based psychotherapies (e.g., CPT, PE, and CBT-I)

Features include:
- Consultation message boards
- Hosted consultation calls
- Printable fact sheets, manuals, handouts, and other materials
- FAQs and one-on-one interaction with answers from SMEs
- Videos, webinars, and other multimedia training aids

Participants in CDP’s evidence-based training will automatically receive an email instructing them how to activate their user name and access the “Provider Portal” section at Deploymentpsych.org.

How to Contact Us

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