



# HANDBOOK

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# FAMILY READINESS GROUP INFORMATION



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## Foreword

The Family Readiness Group (FRG) provides an avenue of mutual support and assistance and a network of communication among family members, the chain of command, and community resources. The primary purpose of any FRG is to encourage self-sufficiency among its members by providing information, referral assistance, and mutual support.

### Key Lessons

- The FRG encourages self-sufficiency among its members.
- The FRG achieves family readiness by providing emotional support and activities that build a cohesive team.
- The FRG and the Rear Detachment (Rear D) provide the primary support to family members during a unit's deployment.

Family readiness initiatives are designed to assist Army families during periods of deployment or emergency and provide a means of information flow between the military (Rear D) and family members. During periods of non-deployment, FRG activities are directed at developing a sense of community among families in partnership with their unit. Knowing family members will have the collective support of unit FRGs and the Rear D command group allows Soldiers and leaders to focus on mission requirements.

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<b>Family Readiness Group Handbook</b>	
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Unless otherwise stated, whenever the masculine or feminine gender is used, both are intended.



## **Introduction**

**You are the senior company commander in your battalion, readying your unit for combat. The phone rings, and it is your battalion commander, who says, “I need to talk to you in my office.” This office call appears like many others as you make your way to the battalion headquarters. As you enter the commander’s office, he tells you to have a seat, and he pulls up a chair across from you. “There is no easy way to tell you, but I’ve decided you are my rear detachment commander...”**

This scenario occurs at every echelon from battalion to corps, and the impact of the decision is deep. Choosing the right rear detachment commander (RDC) will have a lasting effect on the lives of the Soldiers in the unit and their Families.

Rear detachment (Rear D) operations are conducted at the battalion level, which make the position of RDC even more challenging. Typically, the RDC is a selected company commander with no experience as a battalion commander. This lack of experience, combined with the lack of doctrine or Department of the Army guidance/regulations on Rear D operations, magnifies the challenge.

This handbook is designed to assist deploying commanders, RDCs, and Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders in developing an effective Rear D/FRG operation. The principles outlined in this handbook apply at each echelon and for all unit types.



## **Chapter 1**

### **Thoughts for a Deploying Commander**

In relation to mission success, selecting a rear detachment commander (RDC) and rear detachment (Rear D) team is the most important and most difficult decision a deploying commander will make before deployment. It is important to choose wisely. It is a difficult balance between taking the maximum combat power forward and leaving the right team behind to take care of the home front.

Family readiness, and therefore Rear D, is tied directly to retention. Soldiers who see that their Families are in good hands and have help when needed are more likely to reenlist.

#### **The Process**

- Select the Rear D team.
- Build the Rear D team and integrate as soon as possible; maintain continuity.
- Test and train (during the mission readiness exercise [MRE]).
- Recognize the Rear D as a unit, with a designation (e.g., D Company) and treat as equal to the other units.
- Establish credibility of the Rear D team.
- Ensure Soldiers know the team responsible for their Families.
- Diffuse issues early.

**Selection.** The first hurdle in the selection process is to determine a selection criteria. The individual selected must possess the ability to operate at your level, as well as one level below (a battalion RDC must function as both a battalion commander and a company commander). The RDC must be “everything to everyone,” a trait not addressed in Army schools or doctrine.

The RDC represents you during the deployment. One technique for selecting an RDC is to take your duty description and identify measures of effectiveness to define the selection criteria, then apply the criteria to the current commanders. If it doesn't hurt to leave someone back, the wrong guy was left back. Commanders who deploy will be under supervision. The RDC will not be under supervision.

Listed below are some character traits necessary to succeed as an RDC:

- Maturity
- Calm under pressure
- Command presence
- Problem solver



- Proactive
- Tough, but fair
- Solid decision maker
- Good listener
- Consensus builder (Families and Family Readiness Group [FRG])
- Understands command supply discipline
- Understands legal actions
- Aggressive
- Knowledgeable trainer
- Possesses unit pride
- Candor
- Personality capable of maximizing the traits listed above

Include your FRG advisor in the process. The RDC and the FRG advisor must be able to work as a cohesive team.

**Integration.** Early in the predeployment process, establish the Rear D team with high-caliber leaders as the cadre, augmented with nondeployable personnel. Soldiers unable to initially deploy because of medical reasons and wounded in action-returnees are a tremendous asset to the unit. Typically, these Soldiers are invested in the unit and demonstrate the necessary drive to succeed in the Rear D mission.

**Cost-benefit analysis.** Selecting the right RDC ensures you will not have to look over your shoulder once you deploy. Knowing that your Soldiers' Families are in good hands allows you and the unit to focus on the fight. This type of focus is a form of force protection and a force multiplier. Your only real influence over operations on the home front is in the selection of the RDC and the Rear D team. The ramifications of making the wrong decision are enormous. When the Rear D functions badly, units may feel the negative effects years after the deployment. Do not let this happen to your unit.

### **Establishing the Rear D**

**Teamwork, training, and trust are critical in establishing the Rear D.**

**Teamwork.** Units struggle with Rear D operations when they do not use Army procedures and systems. Soldiers need a clear chain of command and a unit identity, which is lost when using the term "rear detachment." Think about uncasing the guidon early in the deployment preparation in order to identify the Rear D as a recognized unit with an established chain of command.

**Training.** Most units conduct an MRE prior to deploying to combat in order to train the unit for its combat mission. The MRE is the perfect time to train the Rear D, as well as the Families and the FRG. Replicate the anticipated future deployment conditions, and ensure the Rear D trains and exercises the systems necessary to succeed once the unit departs home station. A number of events will occur during the MRE that will stress the unit and the Families and, as a result, identify Families with problems and weak points in support structures. Utilize the time between the MRE and deployment to correct these deficiencies.

Sharing your command philosophy and decision processes will prove invaluable as the RDC prepares for the mission. You can positively influence the future decisions of your RDC in this manner, since you will likely have limited contact with the RDC once deployed.

**Trust.** Once you deploy, do not second-guess the RDC. The battlefield of the RDC is different from yours and different from the garrison battlefield you left behind. By following the process stated earlier and selecting your best commander as the RDC, the Soldiers will trust the leadership responsible for taking care of them and their Families in any situation. Initially, Families trust the Rear D based on performance during the MRE. Positive comments from their deployed Soldiers increases that trust. Continued positive performance during the deployment solidifies that trust.

### **Final Thoughts**

Share your expectations with the RDC and the FRG leadership. The RDC and the FRG advisor are effective when their duties are complementary. Maintain two-way communications with the Rear D. Talk to your RDC and your FRG advisor; include both in your battle rhythm. Send a routine newsletter for publication on a Web site or the virtual FRG, which will satisfy the perceived need for information by the Families.

Choose smart, integrate the team early, and rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!



## **Chapter 2**

### **Rear Detachment Command: Mission and Organization**

The success or failure of a unit's rear detachment (Rear D) directly impacts unit readiness and retention, while indirectly impacting the forward unit's mission. Often the difference between success and failure in Rear D operations stems from the perception that a Rear D is a nebulous organization outside the standards and regulations of the Army – that it is somehow different. In reality, the Rear D is no different at its root than any other unit.

Soldiers want and need unit identity, a task/purpose mission, and training on that mission. Because the Rear D addresses every legal issue within a unit at the time of deployment, the need for a disciplined, task-oriented organization magnifies.

Every unit in the Army has a mission, prescribed task organization, and a mission essential task list (METL) to focus training.

#### **Mission**

A simple mission statement posted in the unit area and understood by all Soldiers, both incoming and outgoing, pays dividends in terms of Soldier performance and behavior.

**Sample mission statement:**

**"D Company conducts rear detachment operations in support of Task Force 2-34 Armor deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom III from DEC 04-UTC in order to allow the battalion to accomplish its mission."**

**Task: Conduct rear detachment operations**

**Purpose: Allow the unit to accomplish its mission**

Key element: The mission statement above has an unspecified completion date (UTC). It is easier to prepare Families and Soldiers for a tour extension ahead of time, than to announce an unexpected extension.

#### **Task Organization**

Task organization for a Rear D should be similar to the task organization of the unit one echelon below (i.e., company for battalion, battalion for brigade, and so on). The Rear D command team and staff must be able to operate in the absence of the parent unit.

There are two divergent thoughts on organizing a Rear D at the battalion level: 1) organize as a company with platoons aligned by parent company; or 2) organize as a company with platoons aligned by tasks/mission and personnel.

Sample task organization and considerations at a battalion level:

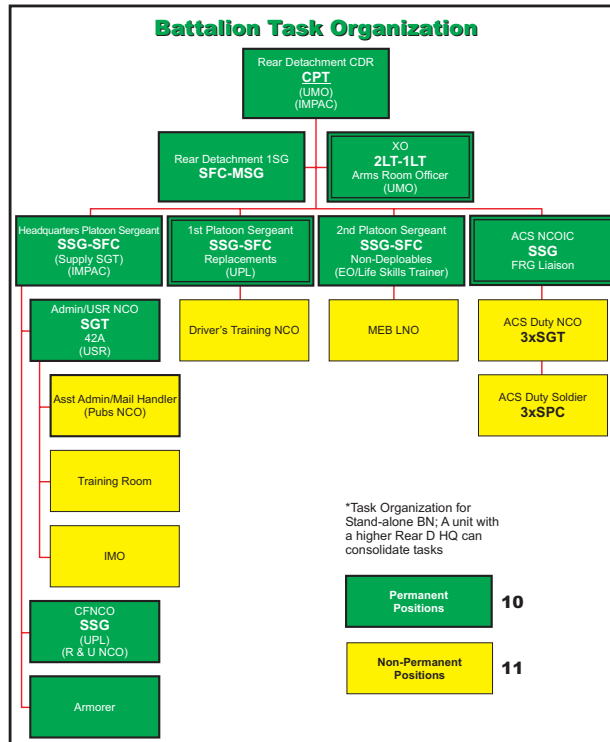


Figure 2-1. Battalion task organization

**Command team**

- Personnel and responsibilities:
  - Commander: Experienced individual with command experience at a rank two below the parent unit (i.e., captain for battalion, major/lieutenant colonel for brigade, and colonel for division):
    - \* Interacts with Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders and the FRG advisor.
    - \* Serves as the battalion commander.

(Note: See also Chapter 1 for abilities/attributes.)
  - First sergeant (1SG):
    - \* Establishes and maintains standards:
      - < Barracks
      - < Headquarters building – area improvement/beautification

- < Counseling
- < Soldier accountability
- \* Serves as the battalion command sergeant major.
- \* Maintains schedule on casualty battle drill rehearsals.
- \* Maintains DA Form 6 (Duty Roster) for sponsorship, both incoming Soldiers and returnees.
- \* Focuses on caring for Soldiers.
- Executive officer (XO) (good use of a nondeployable lieutenant):
  - \* Supervises supply, arms room, and maintenance.
  - \* Serves as safety officer.
  - \* Trained to take command; provides flexibility to the commander.
  - \* Proficient in all casualty battle drills.
- Considerations:
  - XO allows the Rear D to effectively balance all requirements with minimal external assistance; can augment the commander during mass casualty situations.
  - Commander and 1SG need experience in applying Uniform Code of Military Justice action.

### **Headquarters platoon**

- Personnel and responsibilities:
  - Platoon sergeant (PSG): Senior-ranking noncommissioned officer (NCO) responsible for platoon accountability and accomplishing assigned missions; can serve in dual positions.
  - Personnel clerk: Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 42A, Human Resource Specialist:
    - \* Preferably an NCO; processes majority of personnel actions for the forward-deployed unit.
    - \* Must be able to complete all transactions required of a Personnel Administration Center (PAC).
    - \* Supervises mailroom clerk.

- Mailroom clerk:
  - \* Requires certification
  - \* Consolidate at brigade level, if possible
  - \* Can also work publications
- Supply sergeant: Establishes and maintains supply room; responsible for property accountability. Supervises the following:
  - \* Arms room (requires a school-trained armorer)
  - \* Maintenance (should be an MOS 63-series Soldier; use nondeployable personnel)
  - \* Repairs and utilities (R&U) (requests and completes building repairs)
- Command finance NCO (CFNCO): Works with the Army Community Service NCO in charge (NCOIC) to assist Families:
  - \* Provides access to financial assistance for Soldiers and Families; documents assistance provided.
  - \* Tracks trends and prevents abuses of the system.
- S2/S3: Individual capable of working security and training issues with higher headquarters.
- Considerations:
  - Shortages in knowledgeable personnel will require higher Rear D headquarters to augment in support of the unit.
  - Fight to get qualified NCOs for the supply SGT and PAC NCO.
  - Acquire a representative to work with the Director of Information Management for automation support.
  - Establish a training room. Utilize a junior NCO to handle the routine training room issues; does not need to be a permanent position.
  - Some capabilities can be consolidated at brigade level.

### **Replacement platoon (1st Platoon)**

- Personnel and responsibilities:
  - PSG:

- \* Senior-ranking NCO responsible for platoon accountability, accomplishing assigned missions, borrowed military manpower (BMM) Soldiers, reintegrating all returnees, and training all replacement Soldiers for deployment.
- \* Deployment training NCO.
- \* Can serve as the S3 representative; schools NCO.
- Soldiers:
  - \* Support BMM and separate duty taskings.
  - \* Returnees (wounded in action [WIA] and disease and nonbattle injury [DNBI]).
  - \* Replacements.
- Considerations:
  - Develop a tool to track completion of the mandatory reintegration tasks for all returnees.
  - Develop a tracking tool for predeployment training; maintain all training records.
  - Use a comprehensive sponsorship program to receive new Soldiers and Families as well as returnees.

### **Nondeployable platoon (2nd Platoon)**

- Personnel and responsibilities:
  - PSG: Senior-ranking NCO responsible for platoon accountability, accomplishing assigned missions, and processing all legal actions and medical evaluation boards (MEBs):
    - \* Legal liaison.
    - \* MEB liaison.
    - \* Unit prevention leader (UPL); conducts monthly urinalysis; able to conduct command-directed urinalysis.
  - Soldiers: Consists of all Soldiers determined nondeployable, which includes medical, MEB, mental health, and legal. Soldiers cleared to deploy transfer to 1st Platoon.
- Considerations:
  - **Do not label Soldiers with legal or mental health issues.** A negative command climate will adversely affect the discipline of



the unit and the results of any legal actions. A negative label equates to punishment.

- **Always consult your trial counsel when in doubt.**
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive drug and alcohol program; maintain discipline and punish offenders.

### **Army Community Service (ACS) platoon**

Some posts consolidate Rear D desks similar to the staff duty officer/staff duty NCO in the ACS building to facilitate supporting the Families.

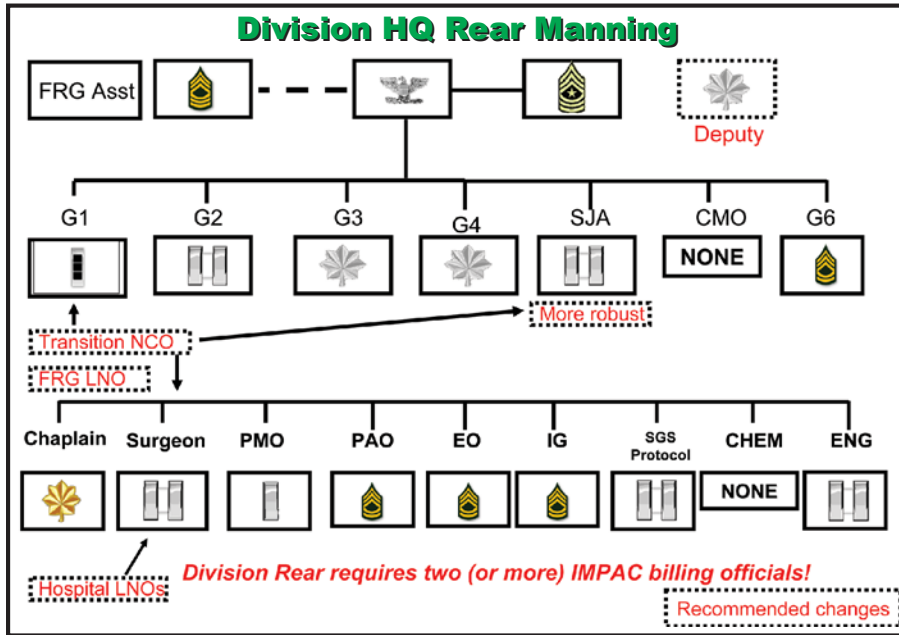
- Personnel and responsibilities:
  - PSG/NCOIC (deployable SSG should serve as a permanent cadre member due to the importance of maintaining stability in supporting the Families):
    - \* Works with FRG leaders to maintain accurate rosters and contact information.
    - \* Maintains family member database.
  - Soldiers (three teams, with an NCO (E5) and a specialist (E4) on each team):
    - \* Use medical nondeployables or WIA returnees.
    - \* Maintain as much stability as possible.
    - \* Rank is important; Families typically do not trust a private with their personal issues.
    - \* Three teams provide flexibility in developing work schedules and provide additional manpower during casualty operations.
- Considerations:
  - Man with quality personnel; brief Families that these personnel are solely dedicated and trained to help them find solutions to their problems.
  - Do not place Soldiers with legal or mental health issues in positions providing contact with Families.
  - Establish a trained ACS cell for the mission rehearsal exercise.
    - \* Train Families to utilize resources.
    - \* Avoid the expectation that the commander or 1SG will handle every issue.

- \* Identify Families with recurring issues and address with chain of command during final deployment preparations.
- \* Identify points of friction.
- \* Establish family member database and family support systems.
- \* Learn from your mistakes.

Army regulations state a unit may utilize deployable Soldiers up to 2 percent of the unit's authorized strength as Rear D cadre. Recommended permanent cadre members include the following:

Commander	PAC clerk
1SG	Supply SGT
XO (if possible)	Armorer
CFNCO	Mailroom clerk
ACS PSG	

**Sample Task Organization**



**Figure 2-2**

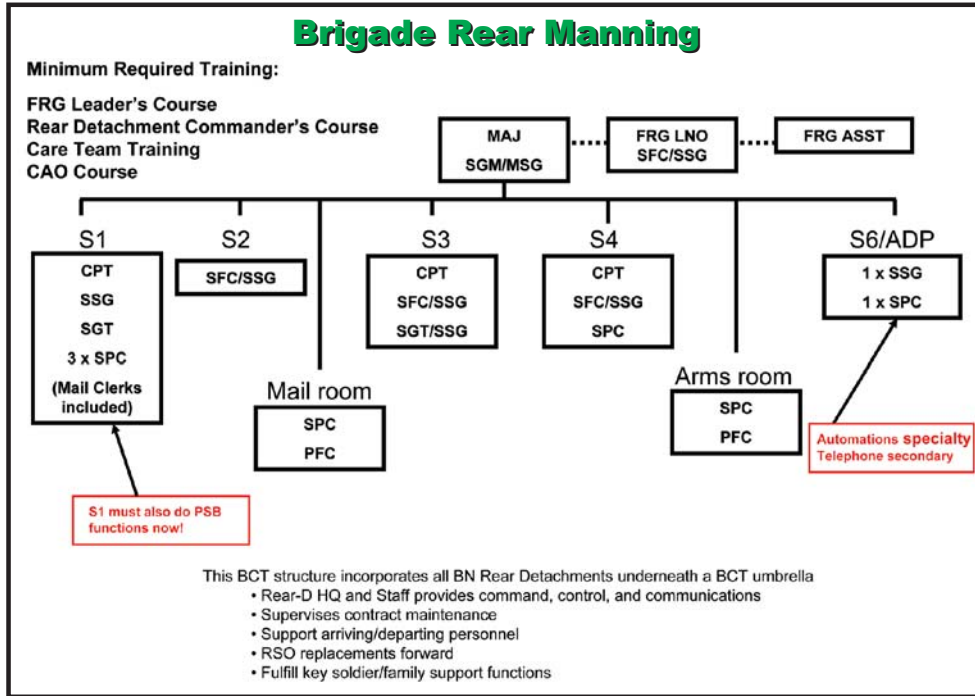


Figure 2-3

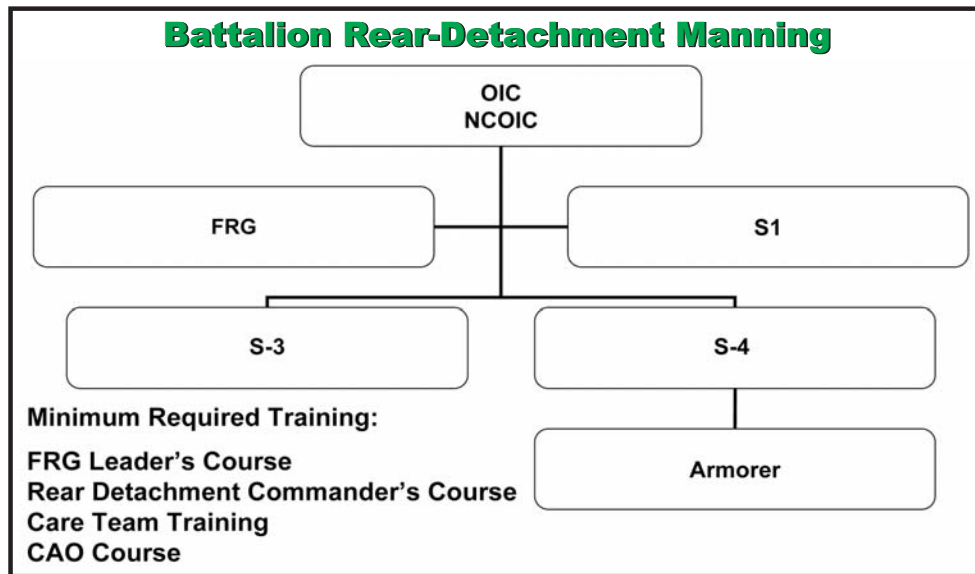


Figure 2-4

## Mission Essential Task List (METL)

*Do essential things first. There is not enough time for the commander to do everything. Each commander will have to determine wisely what is essential and assign responsibilities for accomplishment. He should spend the remaining time on near essentials. This is especially true of training. Nonessentials should not take up time required for essentials.*

**--General Bruce C. Clarke**

A mission essential task is a collective task. To accomplish an appropriate portion of its wartime operational mission, the organization has to be proficient in completing this collective task. The commander must identify these mission essential tasks in a battle-focused METL, which provides the foundation for the unit's training program. According to FM 7-0, *Training the Force*, all company-level and above units develop a METL that is approved by its designated wartime commander.

All Rear Ds operate in a resource-constrained environment that requires maximizing every individual and resource. It is important to focus the newly-formed unit on its mission and quickly develop a METL to focus the training efforts of the cadre prior to deployment.

Some common tasks associated with a METL are deploy, attack, defend, and movement to contact. Rear D essential tasks are caring for the Families of the Soldiers and conducting all facets of casualty operations – a zero-defect operation.

As in the normal METL development process, subordinate units are nested with their higher headquarters. Remember, a Rear D is no different than any other unit.

**Sample METL**

1. Casualty notification/assistance.
  - Brigades identify qualified personnel (all Rear D E6 and above should be qualified).
  - Brigades submit names of qualified personnel and those who are scheduled or being scheduled for casualty notification/assistance training to division Rear D G3.
  - Rear D G3 maintains roster for casualty notification officer/casualty assistance officer (verify names).
2. Coordinate with and assist FRG.
  - Brigades identify one E7 to be the assistant to the FRG liaison.
  - Brigades submit names to the Rear D G3.
3. Out-process/command and control stay-behind Soldiers.
  - Brigades will submit daily duty status to the Rear D G1.
  - Brigades will hold daily duty call (FM) except for holidays; long weekend counseling is still required for all Soldiers.
  - Brigades will report all serious incident reports to the Rear D division staff duty officer.
  - Brigades will have a minimum of a staff sergeant for staff duty at the brigade level.
4. Process and ensure new Soldiers are trained for forward movement.
  - Rear D division G1 will track all new Soldiers as they arrive to the division and are assigned to the brigade.
  - Brigades will ensure that new Soldiers are in-processed and complete all necessary training (deployment briefs, individual readiness training, weapons qualification, and central issue facility) prior to deployment.
5. Oversee sustainment of left-behind equipment (LBE).
  - Brigade Rear D commanders will ensure that they have properly inventoried and accounted for all LBE.
  - Rear D brigades will be prepared to facilitate the movement of LBE equipment, if not completed by the deploying unit.
  - Rear D must be prepared to maintain any LBE and consolidate equipment into a centralized location.

6. Manage reduced unit footprint in accordance with footprint strategy.
  - All Rear D units be prepared to transfer responsibility of facilities to garrison.
  - Maintain all Rear D facilities.
7. Represent unit at corps and off-post activities; rehearse all ceremonies.
8. Set conditions for unit redeployment and reception.
  - Plan and coordinate unit reintegration training and redeployment ceremonies.
  - Develop time line for property reintegration with the parent unit.

**Brigade/battalion METL**

1. Conduct casualty operations.
2. Conduct battalion- and company-level garrison operations.
3. Conduct family support operations.
4. Conduct replacement operations.
5. Conduct deployment/redeployment support operations.

**Conduct casualty operations** (see Chapter 6)

- Taking care of Soldiers and their Families (a zero-defect operation).
- Utilize battle drills.
- WIA/DNBI returnee reception:
  - Establish sponsor system similar to that used for newly-assigned Soldiers.
  - Develop a reintegration checklist.
- Develop kits.
- Standardize memorials.
- Include the FRG; they can be combat multipliers or combat dividers.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!

### **Conduct routine garrison operations**

Conduct operations of the deployed unit and one unit down (i.e., a deployed battalion = battalion- and company-level garrison operations).

- Company-level operations:
  - Supply
  - Personnel:
    - \* Legal
    - \* Medical/MEB
  - Maintenance
  - Training
- Battalion-level operations:
  - Unit status report (USR)
  - Personnel asset inventory (PAI) and PAC operations:
    - \* Mailroom
    - \* Publications
    - \* All personnel actions
    - \* Finance
  - Brigade and post taskings and missions
  - Schools
  - Maintenance

### **Conduct family support operations** (see Chapter 5)

- Train the Families via predeployment briefs:
  - Personal responsibilities
  - FRG responsibilities
  - Rear D responsibilities
- Train the FRG leaders:
  - Gain and maintain trust.

- Gain and maintain two-way communication.
- Develop and disseminate home front command information campaign.
- Equip Families to solve problems; serve as enablers and support, as opposed to solving the problems.

### **Conduct replacement operations**

- Receive and integrate new Soldiers:
  - Provide sponsors.
  - Provide in-processing checklists.
  - Link up Families with the FRG.
- Train Soldiers.
- Equip Soldiers.
- Process leave requests.
- Conduct precombat inspections (PCI).
- Manifest and ship Soldiers forward.

### **Conduct deployment/redeployment support operations**

- Manage manifests and baggage details.
- Clear barracks.
- Turn-in/draw barracks, motor pools, and unit buildings.
- Ship supplies and equipment forward.
- Monitor rail support operations.
- Activate/deactivate unit arms rooms.

### **Keys to Success: Mission and Organization**

- Clearly define the following:
  - Mission
  - METL
  - Task organization



## **CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED**

- Chain of command down to the individual Soldier
- Battle drills
- Create a unit identity (e.g., D Company).
- Conduct a mission rehearsal exercise.
- Trust and train junior leaders.
- Manage leave - Use awards and streamers to reinforce success.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!

## **Chapter 3**

### **Preparations and Execution**

This chapter provides the critical considerations in successfully preparing and executing your assigned missions. Higher headquarters (brigade and division) can employ economy of force in some areas to relieve the burden on subordinate units. The following considerations and recommendations are not all-inclusive; check for local regulations. The areas listed are fairly standard throughout the Army.

#### **Rear Detachment (Rear D) Training and Personnel Responsibilities**

Success or failure of the unit cannot rest on the shoulders of one individual. Soldiers will come and go, while new and different missions will continue throughout the deployment.

##### **Commander and first sergeant**

- Locally hosted Commander/First Sergeant (1SG) Course.
- ACS-sponsored Rear D Commander's Course:
  - Part 1: Web-based training via [www.myarmylifetoo.com](http://www.myarmylifetoo.com)
  - Part 2: Taught by local ACS
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- Web-based Commander's Safety Course via Army Knowledge Online
- Unit status report (USR)

##### **S1, training room, and command finance noncommissioned officer (CFNCO)**

- S1:
  - USR
  - Electronic Military Personnel Office (eMILPO)
  - S1 paperwork
  - Noncommissioned officer efficiency reports (NCOERs)
  - Awards
  - Promotions
  - Mail handler
  - Publications clerk
  - Manifest paperwork

## **CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED**

- Daily status report; personnel accountability
- Dental/medical readiness
- Reenlistment
- Meal and ID cards
- Training room. Standard Army Training System (training schedules)
- CFNCO:
  - Wounded-in-action (WIA) Soldier benefits
  - Budget counseling
  - Army Emergency Relief (AER) loans
  - Government travel card
  - Housing coordinator

### **S3/training NCO**

- Ammunition (although most units turn in and close accounts, which require reopening by the advanced echelon on redeployment):
  - Account balances
  - Draw/turn-in
  - Signature cards
  - Ammunition storage, including blanks for memorial rehearsals
- Schools:
  - Temporary duty
  - NCO Education System
  - Troop schools:
    - \* Combat lifesaver
    - \* Bus driver
    - \* Equal opportunity/Consideration of others (CO2)
  - Off-post schools: Sniper
- Master Driver: Provides the capability to begin licensing replacement Soldiers; handles licensing requirements for Rear D.

### **S4/supply**

- Unit-Level Logistics System (ULLS)-S4 and Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced System (PBUSE)
- Financial liability investigations (FLI) (formerly reports of survey)
- Statement of charges
- Unserviceable turn-in through the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office (DRMO)
- Property book management:
  - Turn-in and receipt of equipment and buildings
  - Transfer of equipment
- Government Purchase Card (IMPAC)
- Arms room:
  - Repair
  - Small arms repair parts (SARP) accountability
  - Physical security
- ULLS-G (maintenance); only required if the unit is maintaining equipment and vehicles:
  - Vehicle parts
  - Weapons parts (SARP)
  - Licensing
  - Dispatching
  - DA Form 5988E, Equipment Inspection and Maintenance Worksheet
- Transportation motor pool (TMP) vehicle coordination
- Barracks utilization reports
- Key control
- Repairs and utilities (R&U)
- Automation (Director of Information Management)

### **Additional duties/areas**

- Army substance abuse NCO (unit prevention leader)
- Automation security
- Arms room small arms maintenance
- SARP custodian
- CFNCO
- Family Advocacy Program (commander)
- Family Readiness Group (commander)
- Fire safety
- Government purchase card
- Installation property
- Equal opportunity NCO
- Mailroom
- Leave and pay (1SG/personnel administration center [PAC] clerk)
- Motor pool and physical security
- Publications
- Records management
- Supply management NCO
- Weight control NCO – 1SG
- Government travel card
- Safety and occupational health
- CO2 NCO

### **Keys to success**

- Identify shortfalls and train early.
- Cross-train personnel utilizing NCO Development Program (NCODP); cross-train all personnel:
  - Force-feed NCODP; include in training schedules.
  - Train at least two personnel for each job.

- Have experienced NCOs brief at NCODP (i.e., an NCO returns from body escort duty and briefs all NCOs on the body escort process).
- Search for certification prior to deployment:
  - Collect training certificates.
  - Identify strengths of assigned personnel.
  - Identify additional duties assigned to Soldiers from their previous unit.
  - Establish training records.
- Utilize staff assistance visits from the Inspector General's office to ensure proper systems are in place.
- Utilizing checklists equates to maintaining standards.
- Interview returnees and incoming Soldiers for special skills and training; leverage individuals.
- Assign responsibilities; hold personnel accountable for specific tasks and duties.
- Many of the required schools are in high demand; start the enrollment process early.

### **Predeployment Preparations**

- Select the team. Lack of personnel will be the greatest challenge initially. Work with the command sergeant major (CSM) to place the right NCOs in the right positions.
- Train the team:
  - Individuals
  - Unit - collective training
  - FRG (leaders are the target; train them on the organization, the mission, the command philosophy, and their role in casualty operations)
- Conduct predeployment briefings:
  - Deploying commander briefs expectations.
  - CSM briefs policies on rest and recreation (R&R) leave, emergency leave, and other policies as needed.
  - RDC briefs responsibilities of the Rear D, the FRG, and the Families.

- Collect data for the family member database.
- Allow Families to meet the Rear D Soldiers they will interact with during the deployment.
- **Do not give out unit office numbers.** Provide the numbers for the ACS desk or FRG liaison.
- Answer questions for the Families and Soldiers.
- 100 percent accountability for attendance. Include single Soldiers.
- Encourage Families to meet and confirm information with FRG leaders.
- Copy and scrub all Soldier Readiness Packets (SRPs). Maintain at a minimum DD Form 93 (Record of Emergency Data), Servicemember's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) information, and family care plans.
- Collect counseling and training packets on all assigned Soldiers.
- Establish systems and exercise systems during the mission rehearsal exercise (MRE).
- Update systems based on the after-action report (AAR) from the MRE.
- Remain intact following the MRE.
- Conduct quality inventories, establish accountability, and split property books.
- Continue to refine processes and guidance with the commander and CSM.
- Publish a plan for building closeout.
- Determine chains of command and reporting requirements.

### **Deployment: Daily Operations**

- Scrub manifests with the unit alpha roster immediately upon the departure of the last main body flight (provides 100 percent accountability). Complete paperwork to update the roster.
- Develop and publish a battle rhythm: Good units do routine things routinely:
  - Training meetings
  - Inventories and property accountability
  - Publish training schedules
  - Physical training (PT), including remedial PT

- Rehearse casualty battle drills until all leaders know the drills.
- Conduct memorial rehearsals at least monthly; the firing detail practices weekly.
- Direct each FRG to conduct a meeting within the first ten days of deployment. Families are thirsty for information since their Soldiers will have trouble communicating while in transit.
- One member of the command team should attend all FRG meetings; the ACS NCO attends as well.
- Develop good working relationships with all supporting agencies on post; use NCOs to work issues at the lowest levels possible.
- Recognize people and agencies for support. A certificate and a unit coin go a long way to enhance community support. Publicly recognize volunteers.
- Communicate with the FRG advisor constantly. Work with FRG leaders for assistance with family issues (two-way communication).
- Do not make promises the Rear D cannot keep.
- Execute legal actions quickly and with an even hand. Establish standards and stick to them.
- Conduct AARs of key events; make changes to systems as needed.

Remember, teamwork is the key – that includes the command forward, the entire Rear D, and the FRG.

### **Redeployment Operations**

Nothing is more important at the end of a unit's deployment than successfully receiving and reintegrating the unit. All other successes or failures do not matter if things are handled poorly during redeployment. Below are some considerations for successful redeployment and reintegration.

- Communicate with the forward unit early. Outline the redeployment flow and remain involved in the development of milestones and time lines.
- Determine a cut-off for sending Soldiers forward. Conduct a troop-to-task evaluation as part of the military decision-making process.
- Coordinate with the forward unit on the composition of the advanced echelon (ADVON):
  - The purpose of the ADVON is to assist in the reception and reintegration of the returning unit.
  - The CSM must make wise decisions in the composition of the ADVON:



## CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

- \* Quality Soldiers and NCOs.
  - \* Armorers for each company to receive sensitive items and establish unit arms rooms. The armorers need to bring current documentation, signed by the commander, required for the arms room.
  - \* Key control NCOs for each company to issue barracks and organizational keys.
  - \* Senior maintenance NCO and warrant officers to establish the motor pool and maintenance accounts.
  - \* Drivers to assist in reception responsibilities.
  - \* Representative for each staff section to establish staff offices and accounts.
    - The ADVON should plan to take block leave with the last redeploying flight in order to complete the unit's reception.
- Develop comprehensive checklists for reception and reintegration.
  - Utilize the unit's chaplain to assist in the evaluation of troubled Soldiers. Seek help for Soldiers who are not coping well or are not ready for reintegration.
  - Brief FRG leaders on redeployment plans. Keep the Families informed. **Caution:** Do not exceed time lines for arrival notification due to operations security and changes in flights. Reception ceremonies are official functions, and the ACS section, not the FRG, should make the notification to Families of the anticipated times.
  - Conduct rehearsals for every returning flight.
  - Work with the garrison staff and higher headquarters to have barracks and organizational buildings prepared for the unit to occupy upon return. Certify all arms rooms.
  - Keep property secured and separated until property book merge inventories are complete. Plan to issue and hand receipt certain equipment for the units to conduct basic garrison operations immediately.
  - Remain intact through the unit's block leave period. The Rear D is responsible for the unit until the end of block leave; therefore, every Soldier assigned to the Rear D at the time of redeployment remains until a later deactivation date.
  - During block leave, the chain of command of each subordinate unit is responsible for its Soldiers. Keep them informed, and remember that they make decisions on actions required to resolve issues.

- Plan and execute property book merge inventories, which include pre-inventories. It is the Rear D's property until the property books are merged. Maintain a copy of the documentation, even after permanent change of station (PCS), just in case there is an issue later.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Rear Detachment Challenges**

“Defending the home front” sounds like a slogan from another era until you take a closer look at the challenges of the rear detachment (Rear D), including medical processing, legal processing, property accountability, command information dissemination, and interaction with the local community.

#### **Medical Processing**

Medically nondeployable Soldiers can make up 60 to 70 percent of a brigade’s nondeployable roster and includes the following:

**Soldiers on temporary profiles prior to deployment.** Once these Soldiers are rehabilitated and cleared for duty, they are deployed forward.

**Wounded-in-action (WIA) Soldiers who return for treatment.** WIA Soldiers and their Families are cared for throughout the recovery process.

**Soldiers with P3 and P4 profiles.** These Soldiers require a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Medical Retention Board (MMRB) or a medical evaluation board (MEB) to assess their fitness for duty.

- Generally, when a Soldier receives a P3 or P4 profile, you should be notified that the Soldier is going to be scheduled for an MMRB:
  - Ask Soldiers with P3 or P4 profiles if their physicians are referring their cases to a MEB.
  - If not, check with the G1 Strength Management office for a scheduled MMRB date and your list of requirements.
- Ninety percent of MMRBs refer the case to a MEB:
  - A MEB is an informal proceeding consisting of at least two physicians who evaluate the medical history of the Soldier and determine how the injury/disease will respond to treatment protocols.
  - During the course of the MEB, physicians refer to medical fitness standards contained in AR 40-501, chapter 3 (1998). The regulation lists various medical conditions and physical defects that may render a Soldier unfit for military duty.
  - Soldiers with P3 or P4 profiles that require a MEB may stay and assist the unit or be moved to a medical hold company, thus removing the Soldier from the unit’s books. The local commander determines which policy is implemented.
  - Many medical nondeployables are quality NCOs with valuable experience. Use them actively in leadership roles while in the MEB process.

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- The MEB process is lengthy, and a majority of the steps are out of the control of the unit and the Soldier.

Remember, as the commander you must balance the needs of the Army and the needs of the Soldier. Give consideration to the service rendered by the Soldier when proceeding with the process. The commander’s memos to the board appear as form letters with no real substance; however, weighing in on the side of the Soldier with personal comments can carry enough weight with the board to produce a desired outcome.

**Keys to success**

- Understand the process.
- Appoint one noncommissioned officer (NCO) to track MEB processing. Use a tracking tool for visibility (see Table 4-1 for an example). The NCO must maintain weekly contact with the physical evaluation board officer (PEBLO).
- Consider the Soldier’s desires.
- Keep copy of all paperwork for the MEB packet in a secured area at unit.
- Start clearing the Soldier when the packet is mailed.
- Keep the Soldier proactive, as it is in the best interest of the Soldier and their family.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Profile date</i>	<i>Initial brief</i>	<i>Phase 1 &amp; 2</i>	<i>Turn-in packet</i>	<i>Dictation</i>	<i>Dictation review</i>	<i>3947 Signed</i>	<i>Admin review</i>	<i>Mail out</i>	<i>Results expected</i>	<i>Sign 199</i>	<i>Orders in</i>	<i>Final out</i>

**Table 4-1**

### Problems

- Soldiers do not turn in packets on time.
- The PEBLO retains the medical records, which prevents the completion of Phase II physicals.
- Doctors take excessive time to complete dictations.
- Soldiers are not cleared from post when orders are ready for pickup.
- Appeals.

### Legal Processing

Soldiers must trust the unit to quickly process legal actions to punish and remove Soldiers when they engage in illegal activities or disobey valid military orders. Holding Soldiers accountable and processing them accordingly has a positive impact on unit effectiveness. Be tough, yet fair.

### Legal references

Key legal references include the following:

- *Manual for Courts-Martial*.
- AR 27-10, *Military Justice*, Chapter 3, Nonjudicial Punishment.
- AR 635-200, *Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separations*.
- FM 27-1, *Legal Guide for Commanders* (covers all administrative, nonjudicial, and judicial actions).
- *Uniform Code of Military Justice*, Subchapter III, Non-Judicial Punishment, and Subchapters IV through IX, which discuss procedures for courts martial.

### Commander's disciplinary tools

The following are tools available to the commander when imposing discipline:

- Administrative:
  - Counseling
  - Denying pass privileges
  - Corrective training
  - Rehabilitation transfer
  - Adverse efficiency report
  - Administrative reduction in rank

- Including offense and corrective action in personnel records (putting a flag in the record)
- Barring reenlistment
- Administrative separation
- Nonjudicial (Article 15) (ensure UCMJ chain is clear before deployment):
  - Summary
  - Company grade (battalion RDC)
  - Field grade (brigade RDC or division RDC)
- Judicial (Court Martial):
  - Summary
  - Special (Bad Conduct Discharge [BCD])
  - General

Establish your standards for legal processing early in the deployment process and be consistent through deployment. Be open to changing your approach if the Soldier's actions/behavior changes once the legal process has started. Start establishing your standards by asking the following questions:

- What does the forward unit want done with the Soldier?
- What precedence do you want to set?
  - Rehabilitate Soldiers and retain them.
  - Process Soldiers out of the Army.
  - Hold Soldiers accountable for their actions before processing them out of the Army.
  - Allow Soldiers' actions/behavior to influence your decision on a case by case basis.

### **Summary court martial (SCM)**

SCM allows the commander to impose jail time for certain offenses. A commander can quickly execute an SCM within the brigade Rear D. Maintaining discipline within the Rear D is a difficult but essential process that builds trust and confidence in the remaining members of the unit.

### **Administrative separations (Chapters)**

The commander must ensure the unit is efficient at completing administrative separations. Administrative separations are either command initiated (involuntary)

or Soldier initiated (voluntary). There are three types of discharge: Honorable, General (under honorable conditions), or Under Other Than Honorable Conditions. Consult AR 635-200, *Active Duty Enlisted Administrative Separation* for additional information on administrative separations.

### **Keys to success**

- Understand the process.
- Determine your standards. Weigh the desire to punish with the need to process Soldiers out of the Army.
- Appoint one NCO to track and expedite the legal process:
  - Use a tracking tool for visibility (see Table 4-2 on page 38 for an example).
  - Get to know brigade legal NCOs.
  - Get to know transition point personnel.
  - Start the clearing process upon submitting chapter packets:
    - \* Schedule central issue facility (CIF) appointment first.
    - \* Complete mental health evaluation.
    - \* Complete Phase I and II physicals.
  - Be proactive.
- Keep and secure a copy of all paperwork for the packet at the unit.
- Send sterilized copies of court martial proceedings forward for posting so deployed Soldiers can see the punishments imposed in writing.
- Brigade and division Rear Ds retain sufficient legal NCOs/Soldiers to complete the initial load of legal actions and can deploy some forward based on mission analysis.
- Counseling must be done correctly. Identify which article of the UCMJ the Soldier violated in order to streamline the creation of charges.
- **The cardinal rule of military justice: Always consult your trial counsel!**



<i>Name</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Packet to Legal</i>	<i>Soldier started clearing</i>	<i>Pick up from Legal</i>	<i>Notification</i>	<i>Get Temp ID</i>	<i>TDS</i>	<i>Packet back to Legal</i>	<i>Processed for signatures</i>	<i>Signatures complete</i>	<i>Copy of clearing papers to legal</i>	<i>Packet to Transition</i>	<i>1st Transition Appt</i>	<i>Transportation</i>	<i>Final out</i>

**Table 4-2**

**Problems**

- Lost paperwork.
- Delays in appointments with Trial Defense Services.
- Clearing family and unit housing.
- Shipping household goods.
- Confinement issues.
- Long waits for appointments (location and situation dependent) with CIF.
- Financial liability investigations (FLI) and/or statement of charges not correct or all-inclusive.

**Command Information Campaign**

Command information includes predeployment briefings; newsletters; Family Readiness Group (FRG) phone trees; Web sites; virtual FRG Web sites (vFRG), sponsored by Army Community Service as an online portal for Families to maintain contact with the unit; and FRG meetings. The key players in the command information campaign include the battalion commander, battalion command sergeant major (CSM), company commanders and first sergeants (1SGs), the RDC, Rear D personnel, the FRG advisor, FRG leaders, FRG points of contact, Soldiers, and the Families (including non-local extended Families, Families of single Soldiers, and close friends).

Key components to a successful command information campaign include the following:

- Newsletters (send to families via e-mail or through the postal service, whichever is appropriate):
  - Newsletters are the most successful way to prevent rumors.
  - Newsletters can be posted on a unit Web site or vFRG for widest dissemination.
  - A weekly newsletter from the forward commander and subordinate commanders supplies Families with needed information.
- Meetings:
  - Pre-deployment briefings:
    - \* Include the battalion commander, the battalion CSM, and the RDC.
    - \* Sets the tone for the Rear D, and should be mandatory for the Soldier and highly encouraged for the spouse.
    - \* RDC should address the responsibilities of the Rear D, the FRG, and the Families.
    - \* Include Rear D NCOs. Spouses often talk to Soldiers and leaders they know.
    - \* Use caution on setting redeployment time lines.
  - Monthly FRG leader's meeting:
    - \* RDC leads the discussion in conjunction with the FRG advisor.
    - \* RDC coordinates with the FRG advisor ahead of time in order to speak with one voice.
    - \* RDC disseminates the command message via talking points.
    - \* RDC attends company FRG meetings and is available to brief or answer questions, as required.
    - \* RDC hosts quarterly battalion FRG meetings and shares video or photos sent from the forward-deployed unit.

- Messages:
  - Adjust messages based on issues circulating both forward and at home.
  - Use FRG leaders to identify topics and develop talking points to address the issue.
  - Monitor local/national/international news; if there has been a big fight near to where the forward unit is located, reassure Families that Soldiers are okay.
- Special events:
  - Recognize the contributions of sponsors and key spouses.
  - Do something unique for both the spouses and the Soldiers deployed forward (e.g., customized birth orders).

### **Interaction with the Local Community**

The interaction of RDCs with the local community is different for each post and unit. Often, battalion commanders do not directly interact with the community, as that responsibility is usually reserved for garrison commanders and division commanders, but things change when units deploy. Private organizations often provide local community support by sponsoring programs for Families of deployed Soldiers.

As the RDC, you are responsible for the interaction between the FRGs and private organization sponsors. Routine interaction with sponsors should remain with the company FRG leaders. Set the groundwork early so both the FRG leaders and the sponsors understand the expectations and limitations of the sponsorship program.

When in doubt, ask the administrative law judge advocate general or ethics advisor to ensure nothing illegal or improper occurs. Personal interaction with local sponsors goes a long way to bolster the support provided. Simple gestures of appreciation and invitations to unit functions also serve to reinforce the relationship between the unit and the sponsor. It is the RDC's responsibility to ensure the interaction remains legal and appropriate. The link to the local community is critical in selling the Army story to civilians who have limited contact with the Army.

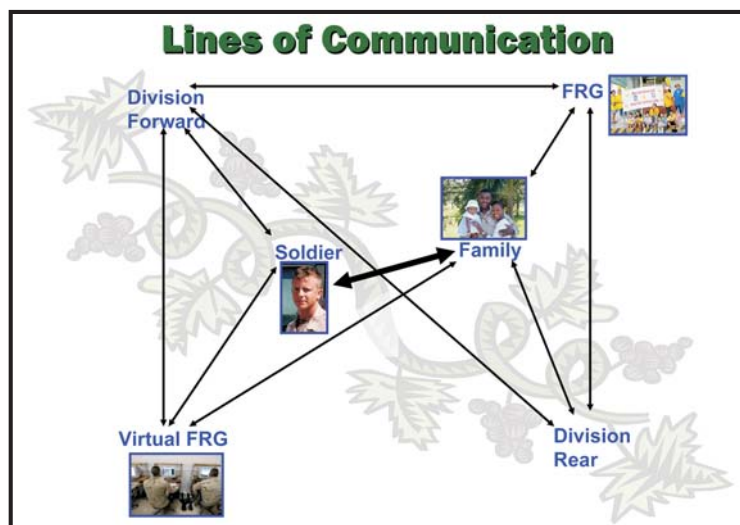
Some divisions, such as the First Infantry Division, have a society to provide additional support to units. Use this resource, if available. For example, the family members of IID Soldiers killed in action who belong to the Society of the Big Red One are eligible for scholarships. Veterans groups post extensive networks around each medical treatment facility, which provide additional assistance and support to wounded Soldiers and their Families.

## Chapter 5

### Family Readiness Groups

A rear detachment commander's (RDC) greatest combat power comes from the Family Readiness Groups (FRGs). The FRG is the RDC's program to manage for the deployed commander. This chapter covers thoughts on the FRG from both the RDC's point of view and the FRG advisor's point of view.

To understand some of the challenges, the RDC must first gain an understanding of the lines of communications during a deployment – the ever-present grapevine. The strongest link can be the line between Soldier and family, which excludes all official channels.



**Figure 5-1: Lines of Communication**

#### Lines of Communication Challenges

- Rumor control
- Communication from Families
- Reverse casualty notifications
- Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)
- Finances
- Paperwork
- Delegation of responsibilities within the FRG
- Army Community Service (ACS) desk standards
- Deployed spouses

Of the above, the greatest challenge will likely be rumor control. As with most military operations, a commander must develop a command information campaign early. The campaign is designed to provide the Families timely, accurate information they can rely on. A commander can lose the fight on the home front if the grapevine is perceived as more effective than official channels.

### **Predeployment Briefings**

Start early! Briefings are the best means to communicate all messages prior to deployment. Make it mandatory for Soldiers to attend and encourage them to bring their spouses so they hear the same messages. Utilize the vFRG Web site to inform those Families who may not be able to attend.

Key points to include in a predeployment briefing are listed below:

- Time line
- Expectations
- Life on the forward operations base
- Return/exemption policy
- Standards
- Responsibilities
- Family challenges, expectations, and resources

In addition, it is important to:

- Identify rear detachment (Rear D) and ACS cell personnel.
- Include FRG leaders so they can:
  - Meet spouses
  - Collect contact data
  - Provide point of contact (POC) information
  - Know who is remaining and who is "going home" and target each with information – e-mail addresses key.
- Complete family deployment worksheets.

### **FRG Leader Training**

Another key to the campaign is informing and training the FRG leaders themselves. Do not assume FRG leaders from previous deployments fully understand the complexities of the current deployment; each deployment is different. Train the FRG leaders. Treat them with respect and ask for their input. They appreciate the open, honest truth. Training sessions will establish FRG leaders as trusted agents

capable of handling the majority of family issues based on the preliminary guidance from the training:

- Brief FRG leaders on Rear D operations.
- Discuss tough subjects openly (e.g., casualty notification).
- Treat leaders with respect and allow them to find solutions.
- Speak with one voice.
- Reinforce good decisions.

The RDC should conduct a monthly FRG leader meeting and lead the discussion. Prior to the meeting, the RDC should meet with the FRG advisor to discuss the agenda. Hand out talking point cards (command message that addresses concerns/rumors) at the meeting down to key caller level. Include Rear D noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Spouses tend to talk to Soldiers they know.

Recognize sponsors and key spouses when appropriate. Recommend that company FRG meetings be held monthly and battalion FRG meetings be held quarterly.

**Sample talking points** (printed on business cards given to FRG leaders down to key callers)

### **Home Front Talking Points (May 05)\***

1. Stay in your lane.
2. If notified by spouse of injury, contact Rear D desk FIRST! Allow us to research report/status.
3. There are NO changes in deployment length.
4. Maintain your quarters. It is your responsibility.
5. Keep Rear D informed of changes in your life, so we can help you if assistance is required.

\*Talking points based upon feedback from FRG leaders on rumors or recurring issues. Beneficial to empower junior leaders to answer questions and reinforce the most important issues.

The RDC's relationship with the FRG advisor and the FRG leaders must be special. Trust is of utmost importance. Assume everything you do is seen by others – because it is! Innocent interaction can be misinterpreted as something more, so be forewarned. Open, two-way communication is the answer.

### **Keys to Success - Unit**

- ACS cell.
- Mission rehearsal exercises.
- Plan house inspections and home visits:
  - Assign two NCOs.
  - Complete memorandums for record to document each visit.
  - Develop a follow-up plan.
- Update the database.
- Maintain copies of all Soldier Readiness Packets:
  - Include in deployment time line
  - Scrub, scrub, and re-scrub
  - DD Form 93, Record of Emergency Data
  - Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance Election and Certificate (SGLV 8286)

### **Keys to Success - FRG**

- Clearly define:
  - "Green suit" issues versus FRG issues
  - Chain of concern
  - Delegation within the FRG
  - Communication (lateral, vertical, and Rear D)
  - Battle drills
- Conduct FRG leaders training.
- Institute a command information campaign.
- Identify trusted individuals.
- Recognize individuals publicly.

### **Keys to Success - Families**

- Clearly define:
  - Individual responsibilities

- FRG responsibilities
- Unit responsibilities
- Access the ACS Help Desk and Company Finance NCO.
- Maintain open communication..
- Trust in the FRG and Rear D:
  - Attend monthly company FRG meetings.
  - Attend quarterly battalion FRG meetings.
- Utilize recognition events (e.g., birth orders for babies born during the deployment).

### **Establishing a Successful FRG (Battalion Level)**

- Identify who is in charge overall. It should **always** be the RDC!
- FRG leaders are volunteers who freely give of their time out of a willingness to help and a desire to be involved. FRG leaders are not, nor should they be, the ultimate authority.
- The FRG advisor does not have to be the commander's spouse, but should be someone who can effectively communicate and maintain a good working relationship with the commander.
- The commander should set up an FRG chain of command at battalion level first, then at company level, then platoon. Set suspense dates for placing individuals in the FRG slots.
- Have co-leaders at all levels, if at all possible.
- In garrison, commanders and FRG leaders work very closely together exchanging ideas and desired outcomes.
- When all positions are filled, have a battalion-level FRG meeting with all the FRG leaders and commanders. During the meeting the battalion commander states his intent, explains his role, and explains what he expects from the FRG leaders. The commander should also specify how often they will meet at the battalion level and what sort of things will be discussed/decided at those meetings.
- The commander should also specify how often company-level FRGs should meet.
- Topics that should be discussed at meetings include training calendars, upcoming events, fundraising activities, and money available for events.
- Decide on the most effective form of communication and make sure everyone knows how to access the information.



- Maintain rosters to keep everyone informed.
- Give FRGs the freedom to work within the personalities, work schedules, and motivation levels of the people involved.
- Keep the lines of communication open in order to solve problems before they become disasters.

### **Enduring a Deployment**

- The FRG advisor and the RDC form a new team.
- The FRG leaders transition to a more autonomous role, running their own FRGs and making most of the decisions for the FRG.
- The FRG leaders should have a good working system set up so one person is not doing all the work. The chain of command should already be established with the FRG leaders and POCs down to platoon and squad level, if possible:
  - Make sure everyone in the battalion knows that the RDC is in charge. He should have the ultimate authority on issues.
  - The FRG leaders at all levels should have open access to the RDC.
- Communication will be the key to success during the deployment.
- Prior to deployment, determine what your role will be in the notification of wounded in action and killed in action, how you will disseminate key dates and information, what you will do if FRG leaders go out of town, and how you will handle memorial services.
- The RDC and the FRG advisor should provide information to the FRG leaders about how to handle the above situations.
- Prior to deployment, determine how often you will meet at the leader levels and how often you want each company to meet; however, allow the company to decide what works best for them.
- Have regularly scheduled (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly determined by your circumstances) battalion leaders' meetings to decide what information to put out to the Families, to discuss upcoming events, and to brainstorm solutions to problems encountered by lower-level FRGs.
- Company-level FRG leaders should do the same with their POCs.
- Have either the RDC, FRG advisor, or another high-level spouse attend the company-level FRG meetings to see what is going on and to show command presence.
- Decide how you will keep Families not local to your installation informed. A Web site for your battalion is extremely effective. Use the Web site to post regularly scheduled letters written by commanders at all

levels, FRG information, upcoming events, pictures, and mailing information.

### **Relationship Between FRG Leaders, FRG Advisor, and RDC**

- Communication is the key! This relationship must be very close and secure. A lot of sensitive information is shared that should not be disseminated to the battalion until it is appropriate.
- Decide who is going to be the primary problem solver. If the FRG leader has a family at home or works, then the RDC should step in as the primary. The FRG leader is a volunteer, the RDC is not. Ultimately, it is a decision that should be made by both. Information should always be shared.
- If the FRG advisor is the battalion commander's spouse, she must work with both her husband and the RDC. Being truthful, honest, and open during these times will help alleviate any contradictions. Ultimately, the battalion commander is still in charge and so his desires should take precedence.
- Sometimes the FRG advisor will find out information before the RDC knows about it. Always keep the RDC informed and vice versa.

### **Final Advice**

- Put systems in place first.
- Communicate effectively.
- Do not gossip or allow it to continue.
- When in charge, be in charge.
- Quell rumors.
- Be forthcoming and timely with information.
- Spread the workload out among all the leaders. Don't be afraid to let people take the initiative and work for you. Most often they will follow through and get the job done right.
- Have fun with each other, and allow yourself to learn, grow, and make mistakes.

### **Family Readiness Group Tips for Avoiding Burnout**

- Stick to caring, and let the Army do its part in delivering specific services.
- Stop and take a breath.
- Evaluate what you are doing and set priorities.

## **CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED**

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- Take care of yourself and your family first.
- Consider using a telephone answering machine.
- Do not try to be “all to all.”
- Mutual support goes both ways. Ask for help!
- Look for your own support in friends, family, church, and ACS.
- Do not overextend yourself.
- Know your limits.
- Make sure you eat and sleep as regularly as possible.
- Dysfunctional Families will devour you. Refer them to professional organizations.
- Understand and stick to the role assigned to you.
- Learn resources for referring problems.
- Do not judge success by numbers.
- Do not measure success in “thank you’s.”
- Do not compare your group to others; this is not a competition.
- Seek advice from senior spouses; they have been where you are now.
- Learn ways to delegate.
- Leadership is a risk; do not try to please everyone.
- Don’t reinvent the wheel; use systems in place.
- Do not be afraid to try something new.
- Be yourself!

## **Chapter 6**

### **Casualty Operations: The Glass Ball**

Many tasks and responsibilities of the rear detachment (Rear D) are important, but not zero-tolerance tasks. Casualty operations are the exception. If something is dropped within the area of casualty operations, then it breaks just like a glass ball. One can never change the impact of failure within the area of casualty operations.

Soldiers and their Families must know the unit will care for them in any casualty event. Family readiness is significantly impacted by the actions of the unit in response to casualty events, whether positive or negative. In addition, a key to family readiness is the ability of the unit to reintegrate returning Soldiers and their Families, especially the wounded-in-action (WIA) returnees.

#### **Keys to Success**

- Develop detailed casualty notification battle drills.
- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse!
  - Rehearse drills with all senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) within the unit and with Family Readiness Group (FRG) leaders.
  - Conduct table-top rehearsals. Conducting an actual dress rehearsal can upset family members.
  - Conduct monthly memorial rehearsals.
  - Include rehearsals in the training schedule; higher commanders should validate subordinate unit drills.
  - Identify key roles and update each month:
    - \* Inspect uniforms.
    - \* Rehearse Honor Detail (firing squad) weekly.
- Incorporate the FRG into battle drills.
- Utilize a Family Care Team (FCT) concept to provide support to local Families in the event of a Soldier killed in action (KIA).
- Standardize memorial ceremonies.
- Understand the difference between a memorial ceremony and a memorial service. The deploying commander will determine the type to use. But remember, what the family wants is what they get.
- Develop a close relationship with the local Casualty Assistance Command (CAC). Conduct casualty assistance officer (CAO) and casualty notification officer (CNO) training early.

## **CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED**

- If feasible, use a sponsor program for reintegrating returning Soldiers.
- Use Web sites to access the latest casualty information to assist Soldiers and Families.
- Leverage unit alumni-type associations (e.g., Society of the Big Red One) and local community support organizations.
- Control information regarding casualties:
  - Ensure the ACS desk follows procedures during casualty drills.
  - Inform higher headquarters and the Casualty Affairs office once notified of a casualty.
  - Maintain operations security within the unit until notification is complete. Ensure that medical and dental clinics, FRG leaders, and the FRG advisor understand their roles in information control.
- Treat every casualty the same. Conduct after-action reviews after each event and document the findings to improve the unit's performance.
- Once notifications are complete, develop a basic message for use by the ACS desk and FRG leaders.
- Brief Soldiers:
  - If notifications are not complete, brief Soldiers on the status and explain how critical it is to not discuss the event prior to official notification.
  - Families will look to get information from Rear D personnel.
  - Treat Soldiers as part of the solution.

### **Casualty Terms**

The following is a list of important acronyms to know and understand in casualty operations:

DNBI: Disease and non-battle injury. Includes any and all medical reasons to evacuate a Soldier.

WIA: Wounded in action.

DUSTWUN: Duty status-whereabouts unknown. A transitory casualty status, applicable only to military personnel; used when the responsible commander suspects the member may be a casualty whose absence is involuntary, but does not feel sufficient evidence currently exists to make a definite determination of missing or deceased.

VSI: Very seriously ill or injured. The casualty status of a person whose illness or injury is classified by medical authorities to be of such severity that life is imminently endangered.

SPECAT: Special category. Casualty involving loss of eyesight or amputation.

SI: Seriously ill or injured. Casualty status of a person whose illness or injury is classified by medical authorities to be of such severity that there is cause for immediate concern, but there is no imminent danger to life.

NSI: Not seriously ill or injured. The casualty status of a person whose illness or injury may or may not require hospitalization; medical authority does not classify as VSI, SI, or III; and the person can communicate with the next of kin.

III: Incapacitating illness or injury. The casualty status of a person (a) whose illness or injury requires hospitalization, but medical authority does not classify as very seriously ill or injured; or (b) seriously ill or injured and the illness or injury makes the person physically or mentally unable to communicate with the next of kin.

DCIPS: Defense Casualty Information Processing System. System of processing casualty messages and official messages.

### **Casualty Notification**

No two casualty notifications will happen the same way:

- Address handling of casualty events. Discuss in depth with chain of command prior to deployment.
- Concerns during casualty notification:
  - Divorce. Slows the notification process.
    - \* Both parents must be located and notified.
    - \* Address of one parent may not be current or is unknown.
    - \* All children must be informed if former spouse is no longer PNOK.
  - ACS Desk:
    - \* Once notification is complete, ensure personnel control information and adhere to the Public Affairs Office prepared release.
    - \* Ensure personnel avoid speculation.
  - Media:
    - \* Be aware: Family may contact the media before official DOD news release is posted
    - \* Media representatives may call the ACS desk or unit looking for information. Refer all media calls to Public Affairs Office..

- \* Morale phones and computers (forward and rear). Verify that communications are blacked out until notification is complete, including all subordinate unit and attachment locations.
- Cell phones. The primary way Families receive unofficial notification. Do not allow the use of cell phones.
- Kuwait CAC:
  - \* DCIPS messages are sometimes inaccurate; when possible, verify with forward command.
  - \* Secondary DCIPS messages contain changes to the original message, which can include how the Soldier was wounded or killed. The CNO must then inform the PNOK with updated information.
- Information control:
  - \* Within the unit
  - \* Organizations outside the unit (medical and dental clinics)
  - \* FRG receives third-source information
- Department of the Army Casualty Affairs. (**Note:** Notify this office to report breakdowns in the proper notification process.)

### **Casualty Notification Battle Drills**

Drills will vary slightly with each post and unit. Meet with the local CAC to determine post procedures.

- Drill #1. WIA/DNBI (VSI and SPECAT): Phone call required, but some commands mandate a Soldier in Army combat uniform (ACU) visit following the phone call.
  - Soldier in ACU will not be confused with a KIA notification.
  - Visit helps the family by addressing the severity of the injuries and what to expect in the near future, to include possible travel to Walter Reed Army Medical Center or Brooke Army Medical Center.
- Drill #2. WIA/DNBI (SI and NSI): Phone call is the required method.
- Drill #3. KIA: Recommended breakdown of casualty teams is listed in the following battle drill.

### **KIA casualty teams (Drill #3)**

- Notification team: CNO and chaplain

- Support team: Brigade chaplain, RDC, and FRG advisor offer support until arrival of FCT or comfort person.
- FCT: Based on the PNOK's desire, the team forms at battalion headquarters and waits for a call from the FRG advisor. Team comes to house if requested.
- CAO: Contacts PNOK following support team.

### **Family Care Teams (FCT)**

Teams of three volunteers are trained to provide support to Families in the case of a KIA. Support is provided only if PNOK desires assistance.

- Provides emotional support.
- Listens and responds to family's needs:
  - Answers door/phones. Provides a protective barrier when needed.
  - Assists with the children.
  - Contacts friends.
  - Provides or coordinates dinner meal for day of notification.
- Provides contact card with phone numbers of FCT members to spouse for additional assistance.
- Provides feedback to commander on needs/issues.
- Coordinates directly with company FRG leaders.

**Note:** See Appendix A-III for additional information.

### **KIA Tasks (Drill #3)**

- Unit responsibilities:
  - Secure Soldier readiness packet.
  - Secure medical/dental records and send to CAC once notification is complete. Note blood type (memorial dog tags).
  - Copy 201 file for biographical information once notification is complete.
- Summary Court Officer: From brigade or unit; XO is unit POC and schedule keeper. Required both forward and rear:
  - May inventory personal effects
  - Collects debts and accepts claims from creditors



- Closeout:
  - Commander calls CAO, battalion tactical operations center, brigade commander, and brigade RDC.
  - Commander provides DCIPS message to ACS NCO in charge (NCOIC) along with PAO press release; morale phones reopened.
  - FRG leaders notified by the battalion FRG advisor.
  - Memorial date set.
  - Casualty debrief with chaplain for affected company FRG (if requested).
  - Company formation to brief Soldiers.
  - Keep all communications down until all notifications are complete.
  - Communications with cross-attached Rear Ds.
- Body escort from Dover AFB to funeral location (within 2-4 days of DCIPS message):
  - Reviews briefing book.
  - Reports to CAO.
  - Conducts inspections of Class A uniform.
  - Secures two unit crests and two unit patches.
  - Is authorized to remain through funeral.
  - Verifies awards.

### **Missing in Action/Captured (Drill #4)**

Treat as KIA in regards to support and planned employment of an FCT:

- Just as traumatic, with no immediate closure.
- Do not overlook this event for planning purposes.

### **Memorials (Drill #5)**

The memorial is the unit's opportunity to remember its fallen comrade. The family's opportunity is the funeral. Always encourage the Families to attend the memorial ceremonies when possible and to provide special music or pictures.

Develop a standardized memorial rock drill for use the day prior to the memorial. It is critical to standardize the unit's memorial ceremonies in order to prevent the perception of privileges due to rank. Every Soldier, no matter the rank, deserves an

appropriate memorial. Perceived differences can be divisive for the Families of lower-enlisted Soldiers.

### **Support**

The priority for returning WIA Soldiers is to focus on healing and spending time with their Families. Convey that message to both the Soldier and his family. Each case is different, but also keep in mind that sometimes getting the Soldier back to work is also good therapy.

The support battle drill below works for both single and married Soldiers. The key is to gain positive control on all returning Soldiers, so they are effectively once again embraced by their unit.

### **Local Support (WIA and DNBI) (Drill #6)**

- Commander is notified by patient movement specialist of returning Soldier.
- Commander notifies Personnel and Administrative Center (PAC) NCO of return and files DA Form 4187, Personnel Action, to move the Soldier from hospitalized to present for duty or applicable status.
- PAC NCO or first sergeant notifies sponsor based on DA Form 6, Duty Roster.
- Sponsor determines if family is local and available and notifies them of Soldier's return.
- Sponsor coordinates with local support agency and picks up barracks key from S4 for unmarried Soldier.
- Sponsor meets unmarried Soldier at hospital and escorts Soldier to sign for barracks.
- FRG leader is notified by commander.
- Medical returnees initially assigned to deployable platoon until status is determined.
- Platoon sergeant tracks completion of returnee tasks.
- Sponsor coordinates with spouse, support agency, and FRG leader for Soldier/family support:
  - Welcome basket
  - Welcome signs
  - Linens
  - House or room cleaning
  - Room setup

- Up to seven days of dinner meals (two provided by FRG)

There are numerous organizations to help support WIA Soldiers and their Families. The Army Wounded Warrior Program is one way to maintain visibility on programs. Recommend tasking a competent NCO to research and track programs in conjunction with the local Army hospital.

The commander should meet the Soldiers as they return. Brief them on expectations and priorities. The sponsor is their link to the unit and the completion of required tasks.

### **Single Soldiers**

Make a plan to have several barracks rooms ready to receive returnees. The FRG can assist in preparing the rooms with making beds, food, and welcome home signs. The sponsor is a critical link to receiving the Soldier and bringing him back into the unit.

### **Married Soldiers**

Upon notification of a pending return, brief the spouse on who will be the sponsor and the process once the Soldier arrives. The sponsor is the link between the Soldier and the spouse prior to reunification and then serves as the POC within the unit for completion of required tasks and required assistance. The FRG leader can visit within the first few days and offer to bring meals and help with other tasks:

- To prevent the spouse from waiting at the hospital for a no-show, the sponsor meets the Soldier at the hospital to verify his arrival before calling the spouse. Returnee begins medical evaluation prior to spouse's arrival.
- Recommend that the spouse not bring children to the hospital. This allows the couple to address the severity of wounds and visual appearance without the children present.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Keys to Success**

- Establish a company (battalion-level rear detachment [Rear D]): Soldiers need an identity.
- Understand your roles as commander and first sergeant. You are not Rear D officer in charge and noncommissioned officer (NCO) in charge.
- Avoid referring to the unit as the “Rear D.”
- Utilize all assets; train, empower, and then hold NCOs to task.
- Be flexible and understand the life cycle of a deployed unit; change as the battlefield changes.
- Utilize medical evaluation board (MEB) and medical hold NCOs to maintain core leadership initially following the mission rehearsal exercise.
- Be hard, be consistent, and be fair.
- Rehearse casualty operations.
- Speak with one voice; establish a relationship with the Family Readiness Group leadership.
- Actively participate in the home front command information campaign.
- Choose the hard right over the easy wrong, even when no one is looking.
- Understand commander and command sergeant major priorities and philosophies.
- Maintain Army standards.

#### **Challenges**

- Property accountability
- Balancing family support issues and Soldier issues
- Personnel:
  - MEB and legal processing
  - Lack of quality NCOs
- Accomplish routine tasks routinely; establish systems.
- Allow for personal time for cadre; establish leave plans.



## **Appendix A**

### **Greatest Challenges**

#### **Section I: Managing Family Issues**

**Subject:** Rear Detachment Management of Family Issues

1. **Purpose:** To provide current and future rear detachment commanders (RDCs) with information concerning tactics, techniques, and procedures and best practices for managing family issues during deployments.

2. **Facts:** RDC is a challenging position, both personally and professionally. Part of the challenge comes from the expanded scope of responsibilities in the unit. The greater part of the challenge comes from the interaction with Families. Typical Army leaders are not well-groomed at early stages in their careers to deal with Families and their associated issues. Understand that each post is different, but the concepts remain constant.

a. Case Review Committee (CRC). The CRC is a committee designed to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect, or nonsupport issues involving the Soldier, spouse, or child.

- Unit is notified via telephone, e-mail, and letter.
- Unit sends the commander or first sergeant (1SG) to represent the interests of the Soldier and unit. The unit representative:
  - Provides additional information.
  - Participates in recommendations.
  - Does not vote.
  - Understands and enforces treatment recommendations.
- Participants include:
  - Social works services
  - Doctors
  - Military police investigators
  - Case workers
  - Victim advocates
  - Judge advocate general representative

- Determinations:
  - Substantiated
  - Unsubstantiated

Do not notify the forward unit until recommendations are known in order to avoid issues of possible false allegations or misunderstandings.

b. Well-Being Board. The Well-Being Board is designed to investigate quarters issues such as animal neglect, unsanitary quarters, misconduct in quarters, and abandoned quarters.

- Unit notified via e-mail.
- Unit sends the commander or 1SG to represent the interests of the Soldier and unit. The unit representative:
  - Provides additional information.
  - Makes recommendation.
- Participants:
  - Garrison command sergeant major (chairs the Board)
  - Department of Public Works
  - Military police investigators
  - Department of Engineering and Housing
- Determinations:
  - Warning letter
  - Termination of quarters
  - Immediate termination of quarters

Do not notify the forward unit until a determination is released. The Soldier may not receive basic allowance for housing if quarters are terminated (determined by the RDC).

c. Finance and debt collectors. Debt collectors and finance issues require such persistence and finesse in resolving that most units place an E6 in a separate duty position as the command finance NCO (CFNCO).

- The RDC is not responsible to collect debts. The RDC is required to counsel Soldiers for indebtedness.
- The CFNCO is on point for:
  - Bounced checks.

- Letters of indebtedness.
  - Contacting repeat offenders.
  - Offering assistance: Use financial instruction as a gate to continued assistance.
  - Keep records; document meetings and plans of action.
  - Occasionally notify forward of recurring offenders.
  - Refer to legal assistance when in doubt.
- d. Non-support issues:
- Review AR 608-00, *Family Support, Child Custody, and Paternity*.
  - Get to know the POC at the local Inspector General's office.
  - Forward all notices on nonsupport to the company commander for action.
  - Know the requirements.
  - Train platoon sergeants on requirements; resolve issues internal to the Rear D.
  - Document everything.
  - Provide the required counseling.
  - Follow up with MyPay.
  - Allotments are the best method of payment. The paper trail is easily tracked by the forward unit.





## **Appendix A**

### **Greatest Challenges**

#### **Section II: Operations Security (OPSEC)**

As Soldiers deploy, they will relay news and events to family and friends at home, and friends and family will do what they can to find out information about Soldiers, their units, and their missions. These circumstances can become troublesome for OPSEC officers, the Families, and the Soldiers. With some training and planning, everyone can overcome these problems.

Soldiers and family members often do not know that innocent requests and news from the units can become OPSEC issues. Our enemies can easily intercept information through e-mail, phone, and Internet chat sessions. Units and Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) must make Soldiers and family members aware of possible OPSEC violations before the unit deploys. Units have been successful in establishing secure video teleconferencing and voice between deployed Soldiers and facilities on post for communication between family members and Soldiers, greatly reducing OPSEC concerns.

Information-gathering has moved from the passive listening mode to active collection from deployed servicemember's Families. There have been recent attempts to gather family member personal information, such as social security numbers and birth dates. FRGs must make Families aware of these threats and their potential damage. Servicemembers and their Families must report any OPSEC collection attempts to the post intelligence office or counterintelligence (CI) facility directly, not through the FRG or the Soldier's chain of command. Examples include the following:

- Some families of UK soldiers have been contacted by the enemy
- Scammers who say the servicemember is hurt or killed to gain information (Families need to know the procedures to spot scams)

The protection of deployed Soldiers depends upon OPSEC control at both the Soldier and family levels. All Soldiers and family members must receive OPSEC and Subversion and Espionage Directed Against the Army (SAEDA) training before deployments. This training and increased awareness will limit threats against deployed Soldiers.

#### **Lessons Learned**

- Rear detachments and FRG leaders must know the correct reporting procedures when Soldiers and family members receive personal and troop information requests.
- Soldiers and family members must report possible information collection efforts to a CI office or security manager.
- Maintain frequent regular contact with FRG leaders and brief them even if the situation has not changed.

## **CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED**

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- Encourage the use of phone tree/information chains inside the FRG so that information can be disseminated quickly to all family members.
- Establish strict communication standing operating procedures (SOP) during serious incidents and whenever Soldiers may have been injured or killed to prevent the early release of sensitive information.
- Rear detachment units must inform Soldiers and family members of policies in place concerning sensitive information and communication using unsecure channels.
- Provide a secure means of communication between Soldiers and family members where sensitive information can be discussed.

## **Appendix A**

### **Greatest Challenges**

#### **Section III: Family Care Teams**

##### **Talking with Grieving Families**

Realize that families who grieve will feel anger as part of that process, and it is important to know what to say in the initial stages of grief.

In the initial stages, it is best to leave the comfort of religious and spiritual ministry to the chaplain. The chaplain has a good deal of experience bringing up these issues with individuals who are grieving. Let the chaplain discuss the hard questions of “why” with the family.

##### **Stages of Grief and Loss**

- Numbness/shock. The body’s natural defense system insulates individuals in the initial stages of a threatening situation. They may run on “automatic pilot” and later not even remember what happened when they first heard the news of the loss.
- Denial. They may experience disbelief: “That is not possible ... there must be some mistake ... you must have the wrong person, the wrong medical records ... that can’t be true ... ”
- Pain and anguish. As the truth sinks in, as the numbness fades, they may feel deep pain or stomach cramps, feel like they cannot breathe, like their heart is breaking, a raw knot in the center of their being, a sense that they will die, or never be whole again. They may even pass out.
- Anger. They may get angry at the messenger who delivers the news, the doctor, the person who caused this pain (even if that person is now deceased), at anyone they hold responsible for their grief.
- Bargaining. They may try to negotiate the situation: “Please give me one more chance and I promise things will be better ... I will change ... If you will reverse this, then I will \_\_\_ in return ...”
- Depression. When they realize the loss is real and unchanging, they may sink into a deep sorrow. They may feel guilt, remorse, or regret. They may feel their life is over. Some may consider or attempt ending their lives.
- Acceptance. If they can come to terms with the reality of the situation and gradually let go of the struggle, they can move beyond their suffering and find some peace within themselves, even with their new circumstances.
- Hope for the future. Acceptance of the reality of current circumstances can lead to a renewed hope for a future, even though different from the one they used to imagine.

### **Children and Grief**

When a family member dies, children react differently than adults. Young children are unable to verbally articulate what they are feeling. They will act out their feelings:

- Children 5 and under see death as temporary and reversible, a belief reinforced by cartoon characters that die and come to life again.
- Between ages 5 and 9 children begin to think more concretely. They do not have coping skills, yet may understand death as permanent.
- Adolescents may experience the same reaction as adults and/or regress to early childhood behaviors.
- Teenagers will probably show more of their emotions to their peer group. Behavior problems, such as substance abuse and trouble in school, may follow the loss of a loved one.

The person who has died was essential to the stability of the child's world. Children should be allowed to express feelings about their loss and grief in their own way. Relatives and friends should stay close and spend as much time as possible with the child.

### **Helping Those in Grief**

Reach out to the grieving. Show your interest and share your caring feelings. Be prepared for emotional feelings yourself. A death generates questions and fears about our own mortality.

**Listen.** Your greatest gift to a grieving person can be your willingness to listen. Allowing the person to talk about the deceased freely without fear of disapproval helps to create healthy memories. It is an important part of healing. While you cannot resolve the grief, listening can help.

**Ask how you can help.** Taking over a simple task at home is not only helpful, it also offers reassurance that you care. Be specific in your offer to do something and then follow up with action.

**When possible, remember holidays and anniversaries.** These can be very difficult times for those who are in grief. Do not allow the person to be isolated. Remember to share your home, yourself, or anything that may be of comfort.

**Suggest activities that you can do together.** Walking, biking, or other exercises can be an opportunity to talk and a good source of energy for a tired body and mind.

**Help the grieving person find new activities and friends.** Include grieving persons in your life. Grieving people may require some encouragement to get back into social situations. Be persistent, but try not to press them to participate before they are ready.

**Pay attention to danger signs.** Signs that the grieving person is in distress might include weight loss, substance abuse, depression, prolonged sleep disorders, physical problems, talk about suicide, and lack of personal hygiene. Observing these signs may mean the grieving person needs professional help. If you feel this is the case, a suggestion from you (if you feel close enough to the person) or from a trusted friend or family member may be appropriate. You might also want to point out community resources that may be helpful.



## **Appendix B**

### **Frequently Asked Questions on Rear Detachment Operations**

These frequently asked questions and associated answers were consolidated from multiple Family Readiness Group (FRG) panel discussions by a former rear detachment commander (RDC).

Q: How were you selected to be the RDC?

A: I was the most experienced and senior company commander in the battalion, and I had earned the complete trust of the battalion commander. It was a tough day for both of us when he told me of his decision. It was the greatest professional kick in the stomach, yet also the greatest professional compliment – the commander was entrusting the care of his family and the Families of his Soldiers to me!

Q: What was your relationship with the FRG leader/advisor?

A: Simply put...a platonic marriage! We talked constantly. Sometimes about serious issues, sometimes about nothing in particular, and sometimes just to vent in a no-threat environment. She was my sounding board, as I had been a career single Soldier. As the battalion FRG advisor, she and I worked closely to develop our messages and always speak with one voice. There were times and issues where she took the lead and other times where I took the lead. We always met before each monthly FRG key leader meeting to discuss our agenda and ensure we were in agreement prior to talking with the other leaders. She was also invaluable in sharing communications with her husband, since she talked to him more frequently than I did. We were careful to not violate any trust, and venting sessions were not shared with others, to include spouses.

The advisor and I also met multiple times prior to the deployment to discuss issues and topics to help determine ways to handle certain situations. We defined “green-suit issues” versus FRG issues early. It was very clear that as the RDC, I was in charge when a decision was needed. I made a concerted effort to include input from the FRG leaders so I could make informed decisions. **The Rear D and the FRG are one team!**

Q: What was your greatest challenge?

A: Rumor control! I instituted a home front information operations campaign plan. The plan included:

- Monthly company-level FRG meetings. I attended to answer questions or brief the group on the current situation, especially early in the deployment.
- Quarterly battalion-level FRG meetings. I used “hero tapes” made in Iraq to show the Families what their Soldiers were doing.
- Talking points. I gave the FRG leaders a business card-size handout with our monthly talking points to give to each point of contact (POC). The talking points were developed to answer the most crucial questions,



concerns, or rumors as reported by the FRG leaders. This allowed POCs at the lowest level to answer questions and address rumors or concerns.

- Battalion Web site. Open source of information for Families and friends, with contact information to Rear D. OPSEC must be maintained. As the RDC, I reviewed everything that went onto the Web site, to include letters from the company commanders.
- ACS desk. We maintained a 24/7 desk in the ACS building for each Rear D to serve as the POC for the unit. This was efficient in giving the unit access to ACS agencies to help Families. I dedicated a platoon of seven soldiers – an E6, three E5s, and three E4s – for this mission. They were an intricate part of the information flow.

Q: How did you incorporate others into the FRG (extended Families, parents of single Soldiers, and girlfriends/fiancées)?

A: The unit Web site is the best means for sharing information and including others. I relied upon the FRG leaders to update their rosters and maintain communication with Rear D Soldiers at the ACS desk to keep our contact information current. We also included a place for Soldiers to designate others to receive information from the unit as part of the predeployment processing worksheet. Soldiers could also contact us from Iraq if they wanted to have someone removed from their list.

Q: How did you get people to participate in the FRG or at least attend meetings?

A: It is important for the FRG to be functional prior to a deployment. The FRG must be there in case of tragedies or natural disasters to provide that mutual care and comfort. Socialize early and often. Company commanders must actively encourage attendance at FRG meetings. I even allowed Soldiers to bring their wives to the meetings. The Soldiers would then go hang out while the FRG leader and I conducted the meeting. This reduced the anxiety of the Soldier and his spouse in regards to the purpose of the FRG.

I recommend getting input from as many spouses as possible to identify topics they would be interested in learning about and then use that list to target each FRG meeting to address a topic or two.

I also mandated that each company have an FRG meeting within the first ten days of the deployment. This is the time where Soldiers are out of contact with their spouses, so the spouses are actively seeking any information they can receive.

Q: What is your best advice to future commanders and FRG leaders/advisors?

A: Family Readiness is directly linked to retention.

- Commanders and command sergeants major:
  - Pick your Rear D team wisely. The RDC will need to operate in your stead and be capable of conducting operations when out of contact with you.

- Train the Rear D and FRG. Have the team in place and operational during the mission rehearsal exercise and have them exercise their systems. This rehearsal is also beneficial for the Families to prepare for the deployment; this is their training to support their Soldier.
- Inform both the RDC and the Families. Include communications with the RDC in your battle rhythm. It is okay to just call and chat; commanders need commander fellowship. Make the time in your battle rhythm to write a letter to the Families that can be posted on the Web site. Address individual units throughout the deployment so Families see their Soldiers' units getting recognized.
- FRG and RDC:
  - You are a team.
  - Understand you will not make everyone happy. It is okay to be imperfect. Do not take things personally.
  - Use teams and delegate. This is a marathon. Use co-leaders at all levels, and ensure that leaders also get some vacation time. We formed Family Care Teams (FCT) to provide care and comfort to Families of Soldiers who are killed in action or missing in action. We used trauma counselors and chaplains to train the teams on a volunteer basis. They were used to provide care and comfort to the family until the spouse no longer requested their assistance. This team was only used when desired by the spouse.
  - Open communication. FRG leaders must maintain open communication with their Soldiers and the RDC. Understand that the RDC needs to understand the dynamics of your unit.
  - Identify “green suit” issues versus FRG issues ahead of time.
  - Teach and train the FRG. I did not realize the importance of training the FRG leadership just prior to the deployment on topics including Rear D task organization and mission, casualty notification procedures, and command philosophy. This began the “one team, one fight” mentality between the FRG leaders and myself. They understood my capabilities and limitations. They also answered many questions at their level without elevating it to my level, thus freeing me to concentrate on priority missions and issues.
  - Do not be afraid to make adjustments. We held a wounded-in-action roundtable discussion at the eighth or ninth month mark to identify where we could better care for wounded soldiers and their Families. No standing operating procedures or plans were immune to change if they were not meeting the standard or need.

## **CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED**

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- Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse, and standardize casualty notification procedures and memorials. We rehearsed casualty notification battle drills and memorial ceremonies monthly. We completed a full memorial rehearsal, sometimes including the FRG team, monthly. The salute squad practiced the 21-gun salute weekly. We developed kits to standardize the entire memorial ceremony. The FRG fielded a three-person team to set up the reception areas, the foyer, and the family room.

## **Appendix C**

### **Links to Resources for Family Readiness Groups**

Center for Army Lessons Learned: <<http://call.army.mil/links/frg.asp>>

My Army Life Too: <<http://www.myarmylifetoo.com>>:

Managing Deployment; Operation READY; FRG Leader's Handbook

FRG Forum: <<http://platoonleader.army.mil/frg.htm>>

Military OneSource: <[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)>

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