

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

REPORT TO CONGRESS

Special Working Group on Reserve Component Members Returning from Deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom



**OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS**

October 2008

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Table of Contents

<u>SECTION</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
-SECTION 676 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	1
-INTRODUCTION	2
-NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY	5
-RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ASSISTANCE	7
-RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH & EXPLORATION	10
-GENERAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS	11
-CONCLUDING COMMENTS	16
 <u>APPENDIX</u>	
-APPENDIX I National Guard/Reserve Members in the Civilian Workforce	17
-APPENDIX II Impact of Mobilization on the Employment/Education Status of National Guard/Reserve Members	20
-APPENDIX III Support Needed and Provided for the Groups Targeted in this Report	33
-Self-Employed	33
-Students	41
-Multiple Recent Deployments	44
-Wounded and Injured	48
-Promotion and Constructive Termination	55
-APPENDIX IV VA OUTREACH AND TRAINING	63
-APPENDIX V Acronyms Used in this Report	80
-APPENDIX VI SPECIAL WORKING GROUP MEMBERS	85

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SECTION 676 REPORTING REQUIREMENT

As required by section 676 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2007 (2007 NDAA), (Public Law 109-364, October 17, 2006), the Secretary of Defense established a special, collaborative working group with a balanced membership of employees from the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Labor (DOL) to assess and identify the needs of members of the National Guard and Reserve (hereafter referred to as 'RC members' where RC stands for 'Reserve component') returning from deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in making the transition to civilian employment upon their return from such deployment. The following are key elements of the reporting requirements:

- Assess the needs of:
 - the self-employed
 - students
 - those who have experienced multiple recent deployments
 - those wounded or injured during deployment
- Assess the extent to which those listed above receive civilian employment promotions on their return from deployment or experience constructive termination by their employers as a result of such deployment
- Develop recommendations on means for improving assistance to such members in meeting the needs identified upon their return from deployment in OIF or OEF

The exploration is to be done in consultation with the Small Business Administration (SBA), employers that employ and associations of employers whose members employ RC members deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), employee assistance organizations, organizations that assist wounded or injured RC members in finding or sustaining employment, and other public or private organizations and entities as appropriate

In accordance with Section 676, the working group is to provide a report to the Secretary of Defense and Congress one year after its enactment. The report is to be made available to the public and is to include a discussion of the needs identified for self-employed, students, members with multiple deployments, members wounded or injured during deployment and an assessment of those needs. It is also to make recommendations on improving assistance to include outreach, training and collaboration between the public and private sectors to assist in the transition.

INTRODUCTION

Our nation benefits from the service and sacrifices made by members of the RC. As of April 2008, the Global War on Terrorism has been supported by the activation of 645,939 members of the RC. Of critical importance to this report are the 527,513 RC members who have been deactivated during this time, each of whom negotiated the challenges of transitioning from their military service back to their civilian circumstances and the responsibilities of work or education. DoD, VA, DOL and the SBA remain vigilant in their commitment to the needs of all our service members – Active, National Guard and Reserve – and their families. Returning to private life after serving on active duty is a complex process and can be a challenging undertaking. To execute successful transition from active duty, they must be empowered with the information, tools and assistance from federal, state and local governments as well as from private agencies to aid them in fashioning individual solutions to unique challenges each may face as they return to civilian life. DoD, along other federal agencies, are working to provide returning service members with a variety of resources, which begins with the cornerstone for transition – the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is comprised of three elements: (1) pre-separation counseling (provided by the Services), (2) TAP Employment Workshop (provided by DOL) and (3) VA Benefits Briefing and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) (provided by VA).

Returning RC members have their public and private sector civilian job rights and benefits protected through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA), codified in Chapter 43 of Title 38, United States Code. DoD, DOL, the Department of Justice and the Office of Special Counsel each have an important role in ensuring USERRA protections are provided. DoD and DOL work together to ensure that service members are briefed on their USERRA rights before and after mobilization, and that their civilian employers are aware of their responsibilities under the law.

In the event that returning RC members are seeking a career change, they are eligible to receive priority services at more than 3500 full service and affiliate One-Stop Career Centers funded by DOL. Veteran employment specialists throughout the One-Stop Career system provide a full array of employment services to help veterans find good jobs and careers.

The employees within the DoD, VA and DOL demonstrate dedication and willing service to form a base of support and to provide an assortment of effective transition programs for returning RC members. Interdepartmental communication and cooperation are essential for these departments to continue their critical support to men and women in uniform. While these federal agencies have been working together for well over a decade, the urgency to support the men and women fighting the Global War on Terrorism has drawn the departments closer together on behalf of combat veterans. Examples of the collaborative efforts include the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Steering

Committee, the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO), and the DoD and VA partnership through the Joint Executive Council (JEC), the Benefits Executive Council (BEC) and the Health Executive Council (HEC).

Whether being discharged from the military, retiring, or being released from active duty after mobilization, the most immediate goal of transitioning service members is returning to their family and community, their educational pursuit, previous employment, or finding a new job—and all this while maintaining or improving their economic quality of life. Creating an uninterrupted continuum of opportunities as service members transition from military service to civilian life is vital to maintaining morale and military readiness. Providing assistance to these RC members constitutes an obligation owed by our nation to individuals and their families who have sacrificed in countless ways to serve.

Successfully assisting RC members in returning to their employment and educational pursuits depends on equipping them with knowledge, tools and resources *in advance* of their needing assistance. For RC members to re-enter civilian life after activation, they must be given timely, accurate information so they can prepare their family and employer, and so they can arrange personal affairs to complement their military obligations. Last-minute or hurried attempts to cope with military service often lead to unsatisfactory outcomes.

There are numerous programs established to support RC members as they move through the deployment process. The graphic shown as Figure 1 depicts some of the key supports that are currently in place for service members and their families. The working group identified an impressive array of services and programs that are in place to support RC members as they transition out of a deployed status. The resources shown in Figure 1 and many others are described in Appendices III and IV. The working group was satisfied that most typical needs of transitioning members are being met or could be met through the many established programs. However, the working group recognized the need for: 1) emphasis on communicating the range and availability of resources to service members; and 2) delivering these resources and programs to RC members/families that are often widely dispersed geographically and separated from installations and organizations where services and consultation on benefits and support resources are generally available.

Deployment Support and Reintegration For National Guard / Reserve Members & Families

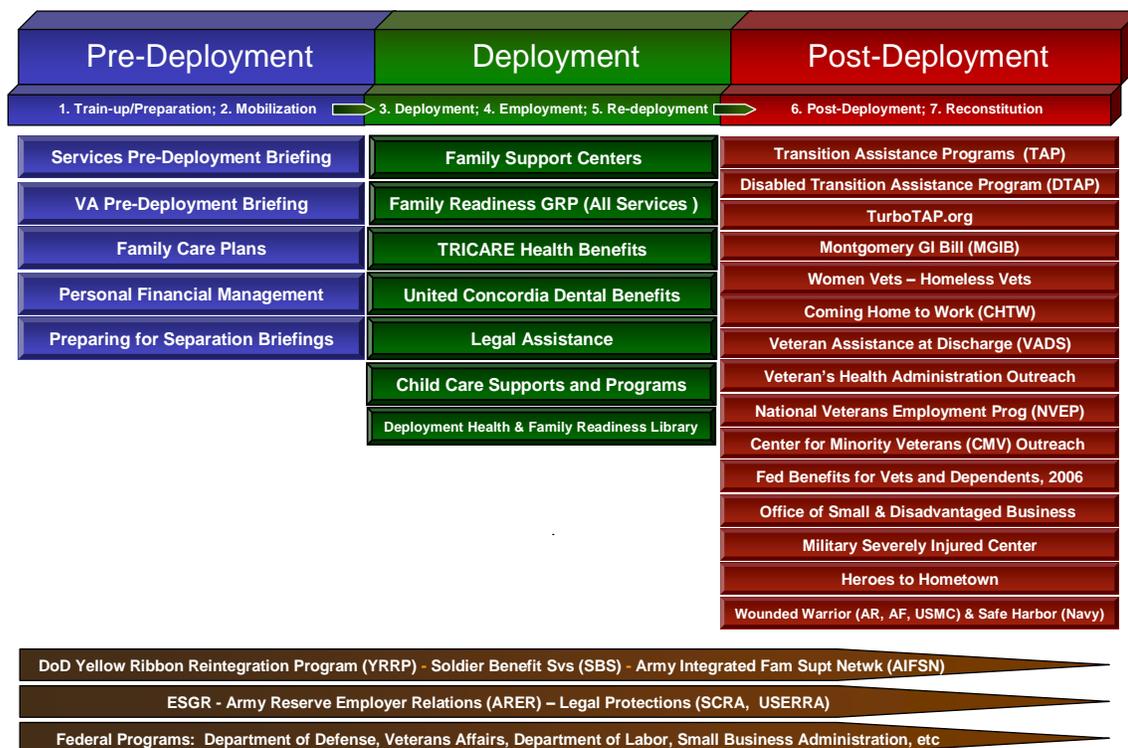


Figure 1

A NOTE TO THE READER

In the preparing this report the working group considered a broad range of studies, surveys (e.g., Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Status of Forces Survey (SOFS)) and their own professional experiences augmented by interactions with community-based employment assistance organizations. This report will move directly to a presentation of the working group’s determination about the needs of the groups and issues mandated by Section 676 of the NDAA 2007. The recommendations of the working group will then be presented. Appendices I, II, III and IV contain materials that served to inform the deliberations of the working group. Of particular interest, Appendices III and IV describe an extensive, though not exhaustive, summary of the support resources in place to assist RC members in transitioning to their civilian endeavors following deployment. These numerous programs demonstrate the clear commitment that exists to support men and women of the RC as they return to civilian employment and/or education following service in OIF and OEF. The working group found that the programs, supports and processes established to benefit RC members are both dynamic and continually growing in scope and reach.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

A key foundation for all readiness and transition must include the responsibility that each individual RC member has for his or her personal and family preparedness. Each member is encouraged to plan for the realities of military service by creating a strategy for personal and family well-being that includes career, financial and educational needs. In its review of member needs, the working group identified numerous resources and programs to help RC members as they return to civilian life. Information gathered and reviewed suggests that there are some support efforts that could be improved to better assist RC members in their transition back to civilian life. Given the geographic dispersion of members in the RC, one recurring theme is the need for resources to be available close to members' residences or accessible through electronic means. All groups addressed in this report would benefit from targeted assistance for the unique challenges they face consequent to military duty. Specific recommendations will be offered in the next section of this report. Following are the needs of the various groups as identified by the working group.

RC members who are Self-Employed:

- Timely advanced notification of deployment obligations and timelines
- Information and referral on personal and family financial planning
- Support for small business owners to plan for and utilize available SBA lending, business planning and procurement assistance programs both prior to and following mobilization
- Assistance to transition from activation back to civilian careers in small businesses, particularly to re-establish sustainable income producing employment (consultation on re-establishing/regaining markets, hiring and/or growing employees)
- Highly accessible re-integration programs that provide assisted access to the full range of federal, state, not-for-profit and private benefits/resources to support RC member's economic reintegration and post-activation economic success
- Assistance with disability claims, administrative claims or benefit processes available through VA and other benefit providers

RC Students:

- Timely advanced notification of deployment obligations and timelines
- Accessible distance learning strategies that use the latest technologies (e.g., platform independent educational programs) that could enable military students to continue their educational pursuits while serving on active duty
- Assistance following activation to return to post-secondary training and educational pursuits (e.g., resolving issues of educational standing, finances/student loans)

- Readily available information about educational benefits, entitlements and support resources for RC members, including resources available through VA programs
- Assistance with disability claims, administrative claims or benefit processes available through VA and other benefit providers
- Active efforts to find and offer “earned benefits” (including educational benefits) to those who are not affiliated with the mainstream military community (e.g., the homeless, or those unaffiliated with a military unit)

RC Members with Multiple Recent Deployments:

- Same needs as self-employed and students (shown above), but often with more pronounced needs due to the repeated disruptions of deployment

Wounded and Injured RC Members:

- Assistance with disability claims, administrative claims or benefit processes available through VA and other benefit providers
- Support to access rehabilitation counseling/therapy
- Support to access to career development counseling/guidance
- Focused support to ensure they have access to benefits and programs that will help with transitions required by changes in capability and capacity
- Assistance to enable them to redirect their career toward self-employment or entrepreneur-related options if desired

Promotion and Constructive Termination:

- Support to ensure the opportunity for job advancements and promotions
- The assurance that job security is not diminished because of military service or affiliation
- Knowledge of their employment/reemployment rights and benefits
- Knowledge of available assistance resources (e.g., Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), DOL, Office of Special Counsel, etc.)
- Assistance with mediation with an employer
- Representation when a dispute arises

RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ASSISTANCE

The working group makes the recommendations listed below to enhance the assistance given to RC members in the categories mandated by Section 676 of NDAA 2007 as they undergo transition to their civilian obligations following deployment. The process of research and discussion re-affirmed for the working group that these service members are committed patriot-citizens who warrant the best, seamless assistance that can be offered to them.

For the Self-Employed:

- Timely notification of deployment schedules as early as possible to allow them to make arrangements to sustain their business during activation
- To the extent possible, timely and predictable conclusion of military service so they can plan to return to self-employment following military activation (this is already receiving emphasis)
- Ensure self-employed RC members receive information about the following:
 - Protections available to prevent federal and private foreclosures, liens, penalties, IRS actions and other punitive actions during activation and for a period of time following de-activation
 - Deferrable financing options including repayment options
 - Pre-activation business planning about how to:
 - avoid loss of customer base and income during/following activation
 - cope with the immediate, post-activation “business-restart period.” (Defined as the time of transition back to sustainable, income-producing self-employment)
 - Consultation on how to participate in government procurement opportunities
 - Ready access to a broad spectrum of personal financial management and business consultation
- Prioritize the inclusion of RC member small business owners in government procurement to broaden RC member’s markets and to support growing the small business base in support of the war effort
- Explore options to address business interruption, which could result in economic loss during and following activations
- Establish more cooperative working relationships between federal, state, county, city, not-for-profit veterans agencies and other support/employment organizations
- Create a nationwide veteran-centric, community-based network of peer counseling assistance and referral centers using the not-for-profit Veterans Service Center model (e.g., run by local veteran groups)
- Expand coverage under SCRA given the observation that according to the Small Business Administration “the protections provided by SCRA are limited to

unincorporated small businesses and do not include or cover small businesses that are incorporated and where the RC member is the majority owner”

- Ensure that protections are in place for RC members in instances where their credit may be adversely affected as a result of military deployment

Note: The working group agreed that the most successful business owners have a plan that accounts for their own absence, however, most self-employed RC members could benefit from specific and networked programs to assist them as they plan for the realities of military service. This effort would support RC member small business owners as a deployable part of the military and connect them with a range of information, service and guidance.

For Students:

- Provide early notice of deployments and establish predictable deployment lengths
- Evaluate and strengthen supports for military members seeking post-secondary education:
 - Ensure there are knowledgeable and helpful advisors in the military to provide complete and accurate information about educational benefits, resources and supports
 - Establish a process for in-advance documentation of eligibility for RC member educational benefits (and accessing information regarding eligibility) to minimize the time required for substantiation and delivery of education benefits
 - Increase accessibility to higher education via distance/on-line learning while deployed or if disabled
- Increase options for the required start date for the repayment of student loans
- Increase organization and availability of “Student-Veteran” mentoring programs at institutions of higher education
- Establish (and make easily accessible) on- and off-campus Veterans Service Centers (VSCs) to assist with outreach and the use of federal, state and educational support programs (similar to the Veterans Cost of Instruction Program during the Vietnam War)
- Increase the use of VA work study agreements on- and off-campus, including at DoD, DOL, Department of Education (DOE), SBA and other government program offices
- Continue to gather data to better understand the extent of challenges faced by RC members in educational settings
- Expand participation in the consortium of Servicemember Opportunity Colleges (SOC) and increase the marketing and publication of the SOC institutions to increase the choice by RC members to attend these “military-friendly” institutions. Use SOC as a vehicle to accomplish the following:

- Encourage educational institutions to adopt preferred admission policies for RC members to support changes in “life-goals” that result from military deployments
- Increasingly call on higher education to assist with solving problems of service members in higher education (e.g., missed academic cycles, infrequently offered classes, reciprocity, open entry/exit)
- Undertake an aggressive marketing campaign to inform staff/faculty in higher education about the demands of military mobilization and deployment leading to increased cooperation with deploying RC members

For Those with Multiple Deployments:

- Continue to institutionalize the recently established DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Office to consolidate information and establish DoD-wide standards for reintegration and resources required to assist those whose employment or education has been repeatedly set aside because of military service
- Establish protections for RC members in instances where their credit may be adversely affected as a result of military deployment

For Wounded and Injured:

- Continued emphasis and proactive assistance with health related needs and rehabilitation as wounded or injured RC members transition into their chosen civilian employment or educational setting, and if needed, separation from the military with all of their appropriate benefits and entitlements
- Develop on-line training about the issues that confront the wounded/injured and the services available to them
- Information sharing:
 - Deliver training to those who are best positioned to assist with support and referral (e.g., commanders and senior enlisted leaders)
 - Provide vital information about support services and benefit information to families and caregivers of the wounded and injured
 - Provide effective information exchange using technology tools that facilitate communications between supporting organizations and the supported members/families
- Program examination and development:
 - Expand programs (such as the Army Wounded Warrior Education Initiative (AW2EI) pilot program) to provide skills for a career change while also providing the military with skilled instructors
 - Expand the Career Advancement Account (CAA) program to benefit wounded and injured service members. (Note: CAA is currently co-sponsored by DOL and DoD and provides training and education to military spouses to prepare them for careers that will persist during multiple relocations)

- Examine established Second Injury Funds (SIF) programs for their effectiveness in supporting the hiring and retention of wounded and injured RC members who have returned to the civilian work force

To Support Positive Employer Relations (Promotion, Issues of Termination):

- Continued clear, proactive communication to employers and RC members about the advantages of hiring RC members and the legal protections afforded RC member employees

Recommendations for Continued Research and Exploration

Much useful information comes from existing DMDC-R survey efforts and the working group recommends expanded data gathering. This may be accomplished through additional survey approaches to include increased cooperation between DoD and agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service, Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Social Security Administration, the Federal Reserve and other organizations that compile data to understand the financial well-being of members our society (e.g., business success/failure rates, home financing/loss, etc.).

Another source of information that is useful to understanding RC members in the workforce is the Civilian Employment Information (CEI) database. As part of the readiness processing for mobilization (Ready Reserve annual screening requirement), Services are required to record and/or confirm the civilian employment, student, or other status of each service member. This information is part of the CEI database that is currently maintained by the DMDC. This data can help understanding of trends and challenges in employment status upon demobilization and transition to civilian status or employment. Continuous emphasis on this data gathering is needed to maintain current civilian employment information on RC members.

Some existing programs should be further examined to ensure they provide the biggest payback for our service members. For instance, TurboTAP is a recently established on-line transition assistance tool that can be accessed 24/7/365. It is a robust tool that can be used to store an individual transition plan that can be easily accessed and updated. RC member and their family members can use TurboTAP to plan and take responsibility for their personal affairs. As military members proceed through their career they face many “decision points” or opportunities to review their responsibilities and options. TurboTAP was established with the recognition that disruptions caused by transitioning on and off active duty can be reduced by supplying information to military members as their military career evolves. TurboTAP, combined with the assistance of a transition counselor, enables RC members to access all available services and to tailor a transition plan that meets their specific needs. To ensure that TurboTAP achieves its highest potential and reaches the most people, the Department of Defense, in close collaboration

with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, should establish a formal evaluation of TurboTAP to include performance and outcome measures.

General Program Recommendations

Making information and resources available to transitioning service members is critical. Packaging and marketing information is an important step in connecting those in need of support with those who can assist them in their transition. Listed below are key delivery principles recommended by the working group that should be applied to enhance all transition and reintegration efforts.

1. Emphasis on a Culture of Personal/Family Readiness

Examples of building a culture of readiness include:

- Integrating transition assistance briefings and counseling into inactive duty training, annual training, family days and other opportunities not resulting from mobilization or deployment
- Disseminating readiness information using a broad-spectrum network of concerned individuals/organizations both inside and outside of the command structure (including family readiness groups, community groups and ombudsmen in providing transition information and support to service members and their families)
- Identifying and sharing best practices among the various reunion/reintegration programs to continually raise the quality and effectiveness of support efforts

2. Focus on Information “Push” versus information “Pull”*

Examples of information push include:

- Establishing mobile TurboTAP Teams (DoD, VA and DOL personnel) in forward deployed areas to conduct most of the major components of TAP
- Developing home station or community-based demobilization and include personalized transition counseling for members and their families

* In a "push" system the consumer does not request information, rather the information is "pushed at" the end-user by promotion. In a "pull" system the consumer requests information and must seek or "pull" it through delivery channels.

3. Broad Availability of Resources

- Providing transition information/planning resources at multiple “touch points” (times when the service member is seeking and receptive to guidance) in the phases of each RC member’s career that will likely include mobilization and demobilization

- Cataloging support resources into a marketable directory and maximizing the use of commonly available technology to deliver this information to help in the transition process
- Developing a standardized package of transition information (currently part of TAP) that can be provided to each RC member in a variety of formats (e.g., CD/DVD, pod casting, website, streaming video and paper). Using technology and other procedural changes to ease the time demanded for transition counseling

The concept of “Broad Availability of Resources” is reflected in the following congressionally mandated program:

DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) Office

The DoD YRRP has been established in accordance with section 582 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 which directs that “The Secretary of Defense shall establish a national combat veteran reintegration program to provide RC members and their families with sufficient information, services, referral and proactive outreach opportunities through the entire deployment cycle. This program shall be known as the “Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program.”

Once members join the military they are encouraged to create a personal/family plan to help them successfully cope with deployment. There are resources, such as TurboTAP, discussed in this report, to assist RC members in planning for deployment and for transition from activation back to civilian life. The establishment of the congressionally mandated DoD YRRP has been an important step in establishing a consistent, DoD-wide standard for reintegration along with resources to address the needs of transitioning RC members.

Reintegration is a process that requires support, information, education and training of service members, families and employers before, during and after a deployment event. Reintegration supports are most successful when accomplished locally to provide education, employment assistance, counseling and treatment during the transition from warrior back to citizen.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program defines policy and standards of a program that consists of informational events and activities for RC members, their families, employers and community members to facilitate their access to services supporting their health and well-being through all phases of deployment (pre-deployment, deployment and post-deployment/reconstitution) as follows:

A. Pre-deployment Phase

Pre-deployment constitutes the time from first notification of mobilization until deployment of the mobilized RC unit. Events and activities during this time focus on providing education and ensuring the readiness of members of the unit, their families and affected communities for the rigors of a combat deployment.

Examples of Events Provided during Pre-Deployment Phase:

- At 360 days to Mobilization: Briefings about family counseling, the single service member, VA support, Military OneSource, TRICARE, VET centers, financial planning, military day care, Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS), transition assistance, sexual assault awareness/prevention
- At 270 days to Mobilization: Briefings about marriage enrichment, youth programs/counseling, sensitivity training, DEERS update, community outreach, ESGR, CEI update, sexual awareness/prevention
- At 180 days to Mobilization: Briefings about family care plans, DEERS update, financial management, hotline information, community outreach, CEI update, ESGR, available websites
- At 90 days to Mobilization: Briefings about family counseling, single service member issues, VA support, Military OneSource, TRICARE, dental, VET centers, financial planning, access to Military and Family Life Consultants (MFLC), DEERS, ESGR, CEI update, sexual assault awareness/prevention
- Throughout the pre-deployment phase supports include: Hotline information, community outreach, ESGR

B. Deployment Phase

Deployment phase constitutes the time from deployment of the mobilized RC unit or member until the RC unit or member arrives at a mobilization station inside the continental United States.

Examples Of Events Provided During Deployment Phase Include:

- Information briefings provided by state RC resources (State Family Program Director, Family Readiness Groups), ESGR, Transition Assistance Advisors, state and local resource agencies
- Activities focused on the challenges and stress of separation and having a member in a combat zone, topics/activities may include:
 - Youth activities and counseling
 - Family activities and counseling
 - Child care

- TRICARE
- Military OneSource
- Legal counseling
- Medical holds
- Community Based Health Care Organizations
- Community resources
- Employment/employer support
- Education and school related issues
- “Battlemind” training for the family (which includes information to help the family face deployments with resilience and strength and includes elements of independence and resilience)
- Family support activities

C. Demobilization and Post-Deployment/Reconstitution Phase:

Demobilization Phase constitutes the period from arrival of the RC unit or member at the demobilization station until the departure of the unit or member for home station. Initial reintegration activities begin here as members are provided education about resources available to them as well as connecting them with service providers who can assist them with challenges of reintegration.

Post deployment/reconstitution phase constitutes the period from arrival at home station until 180 days following demobilization. Activities and services provided focus on reconnecting members with their families and communities and providing resources and information necessary for successful reintegration. Reintegration events begin with elements of the Initial Reintegration Activity program that were not completed during the demobilization.

Examples of events to provide during Post-Deployment/Reconstitution include:

- Processing that includes: VA enrollment/VA benefits briefing, TRICARE brief, ESGR/DOL brief, finance issues, safety brief, medical brief and welcome home activities
- 30-day, 60-day and 90-day reintegration activities (discussed below) are mandated by the NDAA 2008 and direct that RC organizations shall hold reintegration activities at approximately 30, 60 and 90 days following demobilization. These activities focus on reconnecting members and their families with the service providers from the Initial Reintegration Activity to ensure that members and their families understand benefits to which they are entitled and what resources are available to help them overcome the challenges of reintegration. The reintegration activities also provide a forum for members and their families to address negative behaviors related to combat stress and transition.

(NOTE: Family members (spouse, children, parents, grandparents and siblings) or significant others, should attend the 30-day and 60-day events and may attend the 90-day event if appropriate)

30-day event

Examples of information to include in this event:

- Marriage workshop
- Single service member workshop
- Reconnecting with children
- Mental health/PTSD
- Job fair and career coaching

Additionally there should be breakout sessions that include:

- TRICARE
- Education benefits
- Financial management
- Legal Matters
- VA benefits/VET Centers/Veterans Service Organizations
- ESGR
- Chaplain support
- Unit administrators to assist service members with pay, promotion and other issues

60-day event

Examples of information to include in this event:

- Anger management
- Substance abuse prevention
- Compulsive behaviors prevention

Additionally there should be booths for participating organizations that could include:

- VA
- Veterans Service Organizations
- TRICARE
- Employment opportunities

90-day event

Examples of information to include in this event:

- Completion of the Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA)
- TB Tine Test
- VA benefits
- VA Vets center
- TRICARE benefits
- ESGR
- Financial management
- Command Freedom Salute

Concluding Comments

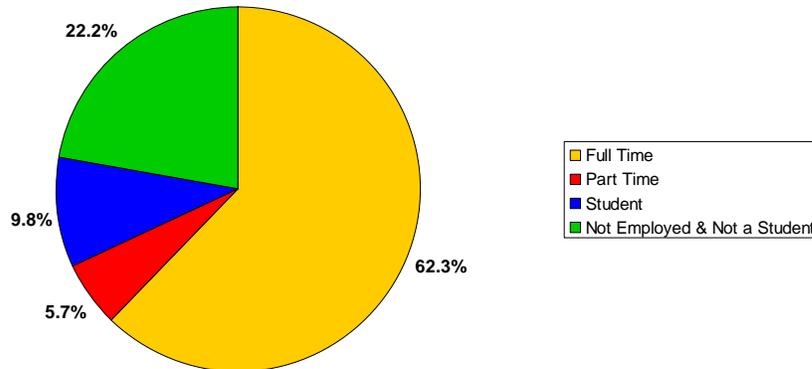
The working group heard from many organizations and agencies, as well as the Services and their components, concerning RC members' transition to civilian employment after serving in OEF and OIF. Due to the very nature of the RCs as the community-based force, the primary goal of demobilizing RC members is to return to their community and re-establish a sense of normalcy in their lives, families and social relationships as they return as contributing members of their community. Early planning by RC members for military activation can forestall challenges that may be triggered by that service. In addition to the careful personal preparation recommended for each service member, the working group recognizes valuable contributions made by numerous agencies and organizations in the federal, state and local government, as well as for-profit organizations, non-profit organizations and faith based groups, that are ready, willing and able to support our service members and their families' in transitioning back to civilian life.

APPENDIX I

RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS IN THE CIVILIAN WORK FORCE

In order to identify and assess the needs of RC members transitioning to civilian employment, the working group sought to understand how RC members are employed in the civilian sector. According to an analysis of Selected Reserve members and their employers conducted by the DMDC in March of 2007, about 68% of Selected Reserve members are employed full-time or part-time. About 10% of Selected Reserve members are full-time or part-time students (Figure 1, Appendix I). Given the “snapshot” nature of the survey process, the remaining 22% can be understood to be people who report they are not currently in the labor force (e.g., Guardmembers who may be unemployed and stay at home parents) or those who are in the middle of a life transition.

Civilian Employment Status of SelRes Members

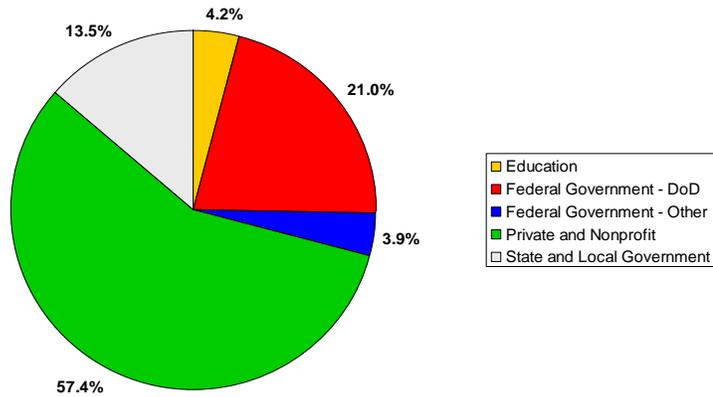


March 2007

Figure 1, Appendix I

Of the Selected Reserve members employed full- or part-time, about 58% work in the private and nonprofit sectors (Figure 2, Appendix I). Ten civilian occupation groups account for 76% of all full-time employed Selected Reserve members (Figure 3, Appendix I data drawn from Civilian Employment Information maintained by DMDC).

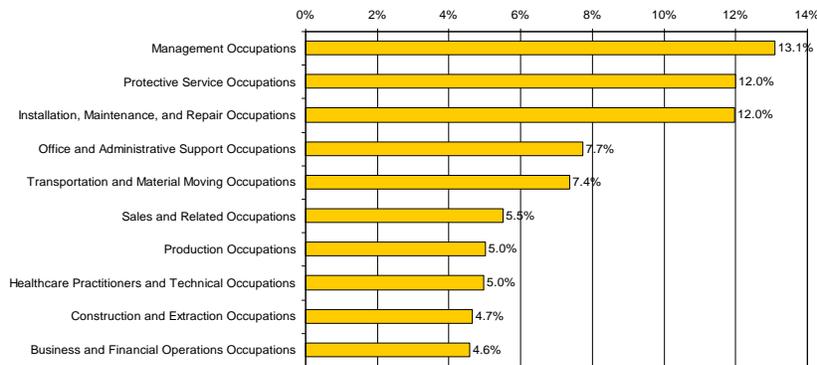
About 58% of Employed SelRes Members Work in the Private and Nonprofit Sectors



March 2007

Figure 2, Appendix I

The Top 10 Civilian Occupation Groups* Account for 76% of All Full-time Employed SelRes Members



*Based on Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) Major Groups.

March 2007

Figure 3, Appendix I

The typical private or non-profit full-time employer of a Selected Reserve member has 99 or fewer employees (nearly 70%). A few very large firms (defined as more than 600 workers) employ an average of 973 of Selected Reserve members (Figure 4, Appendix I data drawn from Civilian Employment Information maintained by DMDC).

A Few Very Large Firms Employ Hundreds of SelRes Members

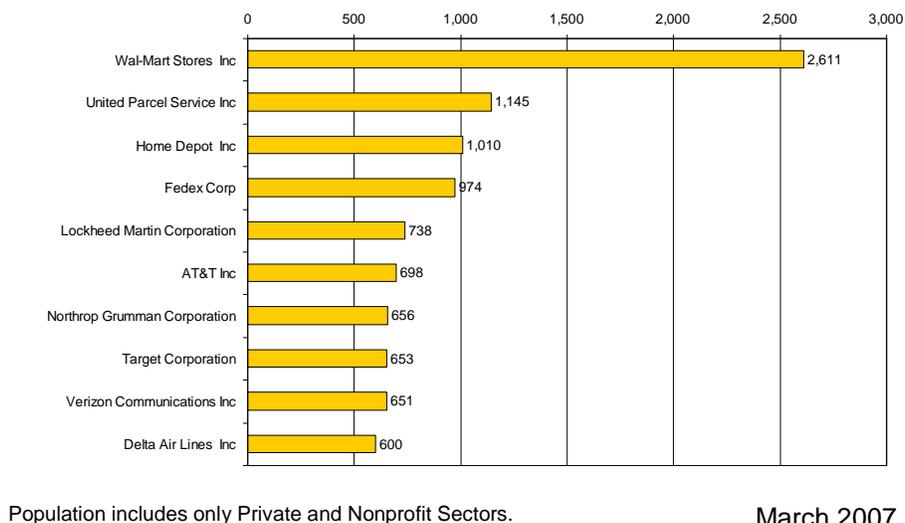


Figure 4, Appendix I

One important finding from the DMDC analysis is that more than 80% of employers in the private and non-profit sectors employ *only one* Selected Reserve member. Thus, the majority of employers have the potential for no more than one employee being absent for an extended period due to military duty. The greatest impact on businesses and individuals would fall on small businesses with few staff members and on self-employed RC members who operate as sole-proprietors or single-person practices. Finally, 6% of full-time employed Selected Reserve members reported themselves as self-employed (5% in December 2007).

NOTE: Figures 1-2 reflect data from the March 2007 DMDC Status of Forces Survey of the Reserve component (SOFS-R); Figures 3-4 contain data from Civilian Employment Information (CEI) maintained by DMDC. These figures describe Selected Reserve members in the U.S. workforce. These data represent a “snapshot” in time and may differ from data offered in this report from other time periods or data sources.

APPENDIX II

IMPACT OF MOBILIZATION ON THE EMPLOYMENT/EDUCATION STATUS OF RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

In an effort to provide meaningful and current information about RC members, the *December 2007 SOFS-R* included targeted questions regarding deployment, employment, education and the experience of those who returned from OIF/OEF with wounds and injuries.

NOTE: The target population for all SOFS-Rs consists of members from the Selected Reserve in Reserve Units, Active Guard/Reserve (AGR/FTS/AR;¹ Title 10 and Title 32), or Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) programs in the U.S. Army Reserve (USAR), U.S. Navy Reserve (USNR), U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (USMCR) and U.S. Air Force Reserve (USAFR) (1) who have at least six months of service at the time the questionnaire is first fielded and (2) are below flag or general rank. SOFS-R uses stratified random sampling procedures and weights the data using the industry standard process to produce survey estimates of population totals, proportions and means (as well as other statistics) that are representative of their respective populations.

Principal Employment Prior to Activation

Seventy-four percent of RC members indicated they were employed immediately prior to their activation since September 11, 2001. Of those, slightly more than half of them (52%) were employed by private or public companies and businesses. The next largest group (22%) was employed by the Federal government. From the viewpoint of employer size, roughly half (54%) of RC members reported their employers were very large with 1,000 or more employees. Only 11% indicated their employer staff was small with only 1-9 employees.

NOTE: Data described here are from the December 2007 DMDC SOFS-R. These data summarize survey responses to specific questions posed by this survey. SOFS-R represents a “snapshot” in time and may differ from data offered in this report from other time periods or sources.

¹ Names for this program vary among Reserve components: AGR/FTS/AR is a combination of Active Guard/Reserve (AGR), Full-Time Support (FTS), and Active Reserve (AR).

Post-Activation Employment

Of those working for an employer immediately prior to their activation since September 11, 2001, a large number of them (82%) reported that prior to departure for duty, their intent was to return to their same employer. Of those who were self-employed or in family businesses, 77% planned to return to the same business. However, only a total of 70% of RC members report that they returned to work for pay at all in the first three months following their most recent deactivation. Of those who did not return to working for pay in the three months following deactivation, 61% reported they needed a break after their activation and 26% decided to attend school.

Of the 70% who returned to work following activation, 86% returned to the same employer. Those who returned to an employer different than their pre-activation employer cited a variety of reasons—often more than one response was cited. Most often they reported that they did not like their “pre-activation job” (41%) and/or they had found a better job (69%).

In spite of reemployment, there were various problems reported that related to member’s principal civilian employment. For instance, 25% of RC members who were working for an employer prior to activation reported some type of problem related to returning to their civilian job. These difficulties ranged from being denied the same job as before activation (6%), being denied a promotion (8%), military service being considered a break in employment for pension benefits (12%), termination without cause (3%) among various other issues.

Of those deactivated since September 11, 2001, 10% reported receiving unemployment benefits during the three-month period following deactivation. For those who reported having been wounded or injured during activation, 18% reported receiving unemployment benefits.

Twenty eight percent of RC members who returned to working for an employer say they have received a promotion since their most recent activation and 33% of those believed the promotion was actually connected to or a result of their activation.

IMPACT OF MOBILIZATION ON SELF-EMPLOYED

SOFS-R data (December 2007) shows that of self-employed members who had been demobilized since September 11, 2001, the vast majority (80%) had a business or practice of nine or fewer people and an additional 10% had a business or practice of 10 to 24 people.

Data show that of RC members who were employed, 5% reported being self-employed in their own business, professional practice, or working for a family business or farm. Prior to their most recent activation, 77% of these respondents said it was their plan following activation to return to the same employment. In the three months following deployment, again, 5% of RC members reported being self-employed or working in the family business or farm. This suggests that after activation, the self-employed tend to resume their previous employment path.

As described in the previous section, RC members returning from deployment since September 11, 2001, sometimes face challenges in returning to their civilian employment. Those who were self-employed or who owned a small business faced problems associated with reestablishing their income stream. Furthermore, of self-employed respondents who had been demobilized, 11% indicated they received unemployment benefits in the three months after their deactivation. Note that the overall usage by RC members of unemployment benefits was 10% and 18% for those wounded and injured.

The Small Business Administration recognizes most self-employed individuals as small businesses by virtue of their filing of business income tax returns. With this assumption in mind, research conducted by the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) is relevant and found that many small businesses (defined in its study as having fewer than 100 employees) have virtually no costs associated with the mobilization of RC member employees and any costs that were reported were generally modest.¹ Of course, the working group recognizes the difference between a small business having an RC member-employee deploy and the challenges when the primary owner-RC member deploys. While the IDA research suggests that only a relatively small number of the self-employed report a negative financial impact due to activation, those who are negatively affected can have a significant financial impact.

Certain concerns were repeatedly voiced in the SOFS-R (December 2007) by self-employed RC members. Responses to open questions suggested that RC members faced challenges due to some military service realities such as long activations, repeated deployments, unpredictable deployment schedules, or activations of unpredictable length. For the self-employed, deployments characterized by these realities of military service reportedly lead to:

1. Loss of customer base
2. Loss of income
3. Lack of means to support self and family during the transition between the ending of active duty and the start of sustainable, income-producing self-employment

¹ See: Bragg, Natalie, Colin Doyle, Eleanor Schwartz, and Neil Singer; *The Effects of Reserve Component Mobilizations on Civilian Employers*, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, Document P-4347, 2008.

IMPACT OF MOBILIZATION ON STUDENTS

Among RC members demobilized since September 11, 2001, 20% reported that in the month prior to their most recent activation they were enrolled in a civilian school (SOFS-R, December 2007). Nearly all of these (91%) planned to return to school following military service, however, only 66% did return to their academic pursuits within three months of their deactivation. Those who did not return to school immediately cited various reasons such as: the timing of their return not coinciding with the school academic calendar thus resulting in a delayed re-enrollment, inadequate time following return from activation to accomplish all the logistics associated with getting back to school (finding housing and transportation, registering for classes, delays associated with GI Bill payments), needing a break before returning to school, needing time to re-establish relationships with family/friends and changed life goals.

On the December 2006 SOFS-R, data revealed that of RC members who were *full-time* students, 42% were forced to leave school for involuntary duty; 14% volunteered for duty; 11% for a combination of voluntary and involuntary duty; and 32% remained unaffected by military duty in school. For RC members who were *part-time* students, 27% were forced to leave school for involuntary duty; 14% volunteered for duty; 10% for a combination of voluntary and involuntary duty; and 48% remained in school.

Questions included in the December 2007 SOFS-R sought information about the experience of RC members who had been students in institutions of higher education and they reported a range of experiences. Many reported great flexibility and accommodation by educational institutions. Unfortunately there were also limited reports of military members who, on returning from activation experienced roadblocks to their educational pursuits. Needs revolved around the following:

1. Difficulties re-entering educational pursuits
2. Resolving issues of educational standing, finances (including student loan issues) and other educational challenges resulting from military deployments and commitments
3. Understanding and utilizing information on educational benefits, entitlements and support resources including VA programs (e.g., VA work study). The working group extended this to include active efforts to find and offer “earned benefits” to those who are not affiliated with the mainstream military community (e.g., the homeless, or unaffiliated)
4. Ameliorating barriers to educational advancement by pursuing disability claims and other administrative claims or benefit processes with VA or other benefit providers

IMPACT OF MOBILIZATION ON THOSE WITH MULTIPLE DEPLOYMENTS

One indicator of inability to return to the workforce is the receipt of unemployment benefits. The SOFS-R (December 2007) found 12% of those who had experienced one or two deployments since September 11, 2001, indicated that they received unemployment benefits in the three months after their deactivation and 6% of those with three or more deployments since September 11, 2001 report having received unemployment benefits. These percentages suggest that those with multiple deployments did not have more problems related to returning to their civilian job than members who experienced a single deployment. In spite of these findings about unemployment benefits, the working group agreed that problems facing the self-employed or students could be aggravated if the number and frequency of deployments increases.

IMPACT OF MOBILIZATION ON THE WOUNDED AND INJURED

The SOFS-R (December 2007) indicated that 19% of RC members demobilized since September 11, 2001, had been wounded or injured during activation. For members who were wounded and injured, 67% returned to work in the first three months and of this 67%, 85% returned to the same employer. By comparison, 70% of RC members not wounded/injured reported having returned to work for pay in the first three months following their most recent deactivation; of those, 87% returned to the same employer. These differences are not statistically significant, suggesting that, on the basis of employment, these two groups are similar.

Thirty one percent of wounded/injured members who were working for an employer prior to activation indicated that there was some type of problem related to returning to their civilian job (see Figure 1, Appendix II and discussion below). As noted in a previous section, of all those deactivated since September 11, 2001, 10% reported receiving unemployment benefits during the three-month period following deactivation. However, for those who were wounded or injured during activation, 18% reported receiving unemployment benefits.

Of those who reported having been wounded or injured who began working for someone *other than* their preactivation employer, 11% indicated the reason was because they were recuperating from their illness or injury. Of those who *did not return to working for pay*, 31% indicated the reason was because they were recuperating from an illness or injury.

The DMDC SOFS-R (December 2007) indicated specific problems in the differences between the problems in employment experienced by those who are wounded and injured compared to those without wounds and injuries. The survey is a self-report measure and it found instances of differences between these two groups. Figure 1, Appendix II shows

the different problems that were assessed on the survey. Those items shown below in red with an asterisk indicate items where there is a statistically significant difference between the wounded/injured and the non-wounded/non-injured. While there were not large percentages of problems reported, there were, nonetheless, instances of difficulty with reemployment, reinstatement of benefits and situations of termination without cause. In total, these data suggest that these wounded and injured service members could benefit from agencies such as DoD’s Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve to assist in resolving employment problems.

Self-Reported Problems Experienced at Principal Civilian Employment after Returning Home From Most Recent Activation Since September 11, 2001 (shown by Wounded/Injured Status)

Problem Experienced	Percent of Members who Experienced Problem		
	Total	Wounded/ Injured	Non-Wounded/ Non-Injured
Denied promotion that would have been granted if not for military service	8	10	8
Loss of seniority, seniority-related pay, or seniority-related benefits	7	10	7
Denied the same job as held prior to activation	6	10*	5
Employer could not accommodate reemployment claims	3	5*	2
Demotion to lower position than held prior to activation	4	5	4
Military service considered a break in employment for pension benefit purposes	12	14	11
Failed to receive immediate reinstatement of employer-provided health insurance	4	7*	3
Reasonable efforts not made to refresh or upgrade skills to enable you to qualify for reemployment	6	9*	5
Termination without cause (31-180 days after deactivation)	2	3*	1
Termination without cause (more than 180 days after deactivation)	1	2	1

December 2007 SOFS-R Q181

Margins of error range from ±1% to ±5%

*Red percentages indicate Wounded/Injured were more likely to report experiencing the problem than Non-Wounded/Non-Injured

Figure 1, Appendix II

IMPACT MOBILIZATION ON PROMOTIONS

Twenty eight percent of RC members who returned to working for an employer say they have received a promotion since their most recent activation (since September 11, 2001) and 33% of these believed the promotion was actually connected to or a result of their activation.

There is not a comparison group to which this number would be appropriately compared, nor are there reports that suggest a pattern of demotion of RC members following deactivation.

INCIDENCE OF TERMINATION WITHOUT A CAUSE

Section 676 requested an assessment of constructive termination. This is a form of “quitting” a job due to intolerable work circumstances created intentionally (albeit furtively) by an employer. The working group did not have empirical information about the incidence of constructive termination. However the SOFS-R (December 2007) did shed some light on the loss of employment under what was termed, “termination without a cause.” The SOFS-R (December 2007) found that 1% of RC members have experienced “termination without a cause.” Of this group, 13% believed their termination had nothing at all to do with their activation. The remaining 87% believed the termination was related to their activation to some extent [a small extent (10%), a moderate extent (18%), a large extent (15%) and a very large extent (44%)]. Of those terminated without cause, only 16% sought help from ESGR.

READINESS AND RETENTION

The working group believes that RC members serve with a clear awareness that the possibility of active military duty is the purpose and expected reality of their duty. Moreover, the working group agreed that RC members should expect policies and laws that generally allow them to serve our Nation without incurring excessively negative or irrecoverable results. The working group believes that for operational readiness and retention to remain strong, military service must receive reasonable recognition, support and remuneration. In addition, the sometimes difficult and even devastating results of military service must be supported by reasonable laws and policies to protect our service members and their families.

THE IMPACT OF MOBILIZATION ON RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS AND THEIR EMPLOYERS

Research conducted after Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and surveys conducted in 1986 and 1991/1992 documented economic losses to RC members who were self-employed and those who owned small businesses who returned from those

operations. These findings were presented in a DoD report provided to the Armed Services Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives, entitled *Effects of Activation in Support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM on Members of the RC who Were Self Employed or Owners of Small Businesses*. The findings in this report were based, in part, on the surveys and related analyses conducted by the RAND Corporation. This report was also cited at length in the first Annual Report (2003) of the Small Business Administration's Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs created by Public Law 106-50.¹

More recent work since Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom has focused on different aspects of RC deployments and their effects on firms and their employees. Most of these studies suggest that self-employed RC members and small business owners are more likely than large businesses to suffer adverse effects from extended deployments.

The following studies have acknowledged this problem. They are presented in order of release, with the most recent reports first. The information provided here is limited to the findings in each report as they apply to the purpose of the working group.

NOTE: Research reported below is, in each case, based on various data sources and these findings *in combination* serve to "paint a picture" about the condition of RC members and their employers. Data and findings between disparate studies may offer differing conclusions.

IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT ON EMPLOYERS OF RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), *The Effects of Reserve Component Mobilizations on Employers: Evidence from the Employer Economic Impact Survey, April 2008*²

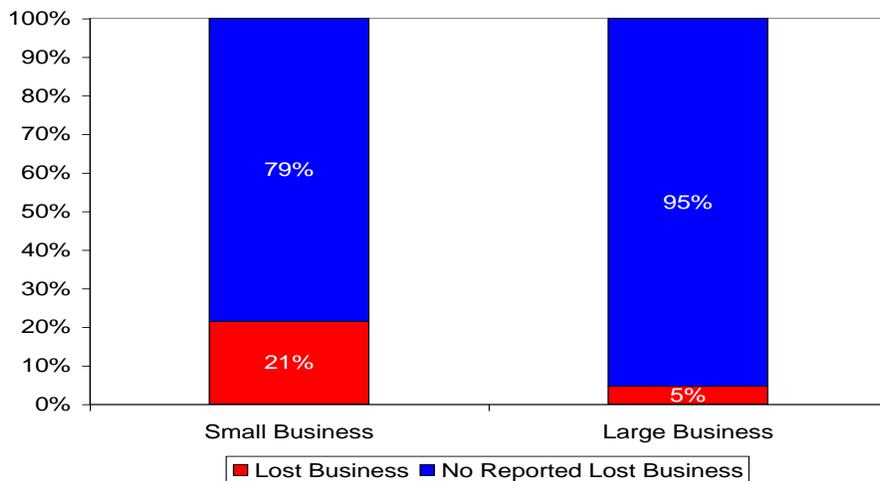
This study revealed that loss of business was a possible consequence of RC member mobilization among small businesses. It found that loss of a key employee might mean reduced marketing, diminished productivity, the inability to seek large-scale jobs, or shifts in a firm's output.³ Some of the respondents to an earlier survey reported that they

¹ See: Grissmer, David W., Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Man-bing Sze and David Adamson; *Insuring Mobilized Reservists Against Economic Losses - An Overview*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, RAND MR-446-OSD, 1995; Kirby, Sheila Nataraj, David W. Grissmer, Stephanie Williamson and Scott Naftel; *Costs and Benefits of Reserve Participation*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, RAND MR-812-OSD, 1997; and Kirby, Sheila Nataraj, and Scott Naftel; *The Effect of Mobilization on Retention of Enlisted Reservists After Operation Desert Shield/Storm*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, RAND MR-943-OSD, 1998.

² Bragg, Natalie, Colin Doyle, Eleanor Schwartz, and Neil Singer; *The Effects of Reserve Component Mobilizations on Civilian Employers*, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, Document P-4347, 2008.

³ For example, one medical partnership surveyed in the earlier study had to reduce its workload of surgeries and substitute patient consultations and physical therapy when one of its surgical partners was called to active duty.

had been driven out of business by their RC member’s activation. Designing survey questions to ask employers about lost business proved difficult. Part of the difficulty was use of terminology: Did the firm lose revenue, profit, gross receipts or sales? The issue also arose of what baseline was used to calculate the loss of business. In the end, the study team decided to raise the issue of lost business as an open-ended question, in effect letting employers decide what the appropriate definition was and how much they were affected. The results of this question are tabulated in Figure 2, Appendix II. While only a very small percentage of large firms reported any loss of business, *more than 20% of small businesses* did so. Not surprisingly, given the open-ended nature of the question, the amounts claimed to have been lost varied greatly, from as little as \$25 to \$1 million. The wide variation suggests that employers may have used different concepts of lost business, as well as having had severe losses in some instances.



Some For-Profit Employers Lost Business from RC Member Activation

Figure 2, Appendix II

Congressional Budget Office (CBO), *The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers*, May 2005¹

This Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report examines the effects of RC members’ activations and federal job protections on civilian employers. It also addresses the question of financial losses among self-employed RC members. CBO’s analysis found that most employers are unaffected by the activation of RC members – only about 6% of

¹ Congressional Budget Office, Congress of the United States, *The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers*, Washington, DC: May 2005.

business establishments employ RC members and fewer than one-half percent of self-employed persons are in the reserves.¹

CBO also reported that self-employed RC members are concentrated in fewer occupations than the Reserves in general. They are more likely to be health care or legal professionals or to work in occupations related to construction, sales, or building and grounds maintenance than RC members who are not self-employed. RC members who work for small businesses are less likely than other RC members to be managers or professionals and more likely to be in occupations related to food service, construction or sales.²

Self-employed RC members are essential to their own businesses and CBO found that “reservist-owned businesses are among the most likely to be harmed by involuntary call-ups.”³ Such businesses have reported that they face substantial hardships during call-ups. CBO reported that DoD survey data found:

...33% of self-employed reservists who had not been activated in the past two years responded that a three-month mobilization or deployment would pose a serious or very serious problem for their business or professional practice. Twenty two percent of reservists who had recently been activated said that the damage actually done to their business was a serious or very serious problem.⁴

IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT ON THE EMPLOYMENT AND EARNINGS OF RETURNING RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Additional Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Reserve Employment Issues*, February 2007⁵

This report focused on DoD efforts to capture RC members’ civilian employer data and processes at the DoD, Departments of Labor, Justice and the Office of Special Counsel, to track and address RC members’ USERRA complaints, including complaints related to disabilities incurred while on active duty.

In 2004, DoD changed employer reporting by RC members from voluntary to mandatory and the percentage of Selected Reserve members reporting had reached 91% by August 2006, nearing the DoD’s goal of 95%. Of 758,182 members of the Selected Reserve

¹ Ibid., p. 2.

² Ibid., p. 8.

³ Ibid., p. 19. The report also notes that “voluntary call-ups may benefit self-employed reservists” if they help smooth seasonal or other fluctuations in the owner’s income.

⁴ Ibid. Data from Department of Defense, *May 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members*.

⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Additional Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Reserve Employment Issues*, Report to the Committees on Armed Services, United States Senate and House of Representatives, Washington, DC: GAO-07-259, February 2007.

reporting employment status, 453,596 (or about 60%) reported full or part-time civilian employment.

Using data from DoD’s Civilian Employment Information (CEI) database as of August 2006, GAO presented in tabular form profiles on RC members’ civilian employment. Figure 3, Appendix II provides the details of the number of Selected Reservists reporting full or part-time private civilian employment by employer size for each RC. The “Unknown” category includes cases where there was incomplete information on the company size.

The GAO statistics below indicate that about half of all Selected Reserve members with verified civilian employment in the private sector work for firms with fewer than 500 employees and that about one-sixth work for very small businesses (four or fewer employees).

Private employer size	DOD Total	Army National Guard	Army Reserve	Coast Guard Reserve	Air National Guard	Air Force Reserve	Marine Corps Reserve	Navy Reserve
1-4	29,071	10,316	9,301	207	2,480	2,273	809	3,685
5-9	10,407	3,845	3,123	75	1,021	774	307	1,262
10-19	10,347	4,144	2,840	71	948	831	287	1,226
20-49	13,809	5,393	3,908	91	1,320	1090	381	1,626
50-99	9,141	3,559	2,528	44	840	792	253	1,125
100-249	10,189	3,863	2,805	64	988	889	271	1,309
250-499	6,710	2,558	1,858	40	601	629	147	877
500-1,000	6,474	2,323	1,881	29	663	650	144	784
1000-9999	26,087	8,487	7,582	158	2,755	2,982	514	3,609
10,000-99,999	33,764	10,558	9,004	197	3,916	4,483	836	4,770
100,000+	19,917	6,665	5,275	108	2,284	2,336	630	2,619
Unknown a	5,522	2,155	1,507	36	523	497	145	659
Total	181,438	63,866	51,612	1,120	18,339	18,226	4,724	23,551

Number of Selected Reservists reporting full or part-time private civilian employment by employer size for each Reserve component

Figure 3, Appendix II

RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute, *Effect of Activation on Reservist Earnings, 2006*¹

¹ Loughran, David S., Jacob Alex Klerman, and Craig W. Martin; *Activation and the Earnings of Reservists*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute, RAND MG-474-OSD, 2006.

This study presented new information on how activation affects the earnings of Selected Reserve members in all RCs except the Coast Guard Reserve. Using administrative data from the Defense Manpower Data Center and the Social Security Administration, the study compares the earnings of RC members with minimal (0-30) active duty days in the base year 2000 with earnings of RC members in 2002 and 2003 during which they served more than 30 days active duty.

RAND's estimates suggest that earning loss attributable to activation is less common than suggested by survey-based analyses. Their estimates show that, on average, activated RC members in this sample experienced a net gain in earnings over what they would have earned had they not been activated.

For self-employed RC members, the RAND study points out that "Self-employed reservists are a population of particular concern to DoD and the public, because the businesses these individuals own could be particularly vulnerable to key personnel absences resulting from activation."¹ Further, RAND's analysis shows that the gross effects of activation on self-employed RC members are on average similar to those not self-employed. Those self-employed RC members with 31 or more active duty days showed a mean increase in earnings (20.4%), somewhat less than that of those not self-employed (32.4%).²

However, the RAND findings also point to evidence that shows that some RC members do suffer an earnings loss when activated. Twenty four percent of self-employed RC members with more than 30 active duty days had some earnings loss, compared with 15% of those not self-employed. Of those members who experienced an income loss of \$10,000 or greater due to an activation of more than 30 days, self-employed RC members outnumbered not self-employed RC members by over two to one. Results are similar among members with 10% or greater in income losses due to an activation of more than 30 days.³

The preceding analysis of self-employed RC member earnings losses was based on what the RAND study refers to as "gross losses," that is the analysis does not include the loss of earnings the activated RC members would have experienced had they not been activated. Although the study does not present estimated "net loss" data for self-employed RC members, it does estimate that in most cases gross losses for activated RC members would be offset by those losses which would have happened had the reservist not been activated and that "net losses" would actually be positive in most instances.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 27.

² Ibid., Table 3.4, p. 27.

³ Ibid., Table 5.4, p.47.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 48-54. There are many factors which enter into these calculations, including normal labor market fluctuations, the business cycle, the particular years under study, and statistical considerations.

Again, this does not mean that no RC member suffered a loss of earnings due to activation.

RAND is currently conducting further research that is in its final stages and has bearing on the 676 report. The findings shown in the next paragraph are preliminary and subject to change (although the researchers hold a high level of confidence in these results).

These findings suggest that while activation results in some disruption in earnings, these changes are of relatively short duration. The researchers report:

To fight the Global War on Terrorism, the Department of Defense has activated RC members at a level not seen in nearly half a century. Previous analyses have shown that RC members, on average, experience substantial earnings gains while activated. Federal statute—the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)—provides certain guarantees that could protect RC members from experiencing significant declines in civilian earnings as a result of having served on active duty. However, the possibility of incomplete compliance by employers with USERRA, USERRA’s narrow view of the nature of employment relations, and physical and mental combat injury, leaves open the possibility that some RC members will nonetheless suffer declines in civilian earnings as a result of being activated. *Our results suggest moderate civilian earnings losses in the year immediately following activation, although total (military plus civilian) earnings appear to increase in that year. The estimated effect of activation on post-activation civilian earnings turns positive two years following activation suggesting that the negative effect of activation on post-activation earnings is transitory.*¹ (emphasis added)

As a concluding note, appeals to research about the impact of deployment on the earnings of RC members sometimes appear contradictory. In their analysis on this issue, RAND concluded that “under-reporting of military income by survey respondents and the omission of the federal tax advantage from survey-based estimates explain over half of the discrepancy between the administrative- and survey-based estimates of the effect of activation on reserve earnings.”² This suggests that policymakers and military personnel analysts should employ examinations based on administrative data, versus a reliance on survey data when seeking to understand this issue.

¹ Loughran, David S., Jacob Alex Klerman; *The Effect of Activation on the Earnings of Reservists*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute, and Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates (respectively), 2008.

² Martorell, Francisco, Jacob Alex Klerman, David S. Loughran; *How Do Earnings Change When Reservists Are Activated? A Reconciliation of Estimates Derived from Survey and Administrative Data*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute, and Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates (respectively), 2008.

APPENDIX III
SUPPORT NEEDED AND PROVIDED
FOR GROUPS TARGETED IN THIS REPORT

TARGETED GROUP 1:

SELF-EMPLOYED RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

Based on the results of DMDC surveys, contracted studies and the input of working group members from required federal agencies, self-employed RC members returning from OIF or OEF require:

- Assistance to re-establish self-employment and small businesses where they act as sole-proprietor or run single-person practices
- Transition support from deactivation to the reestablishment of sustainable, income-producing self-employment
- Accessible reintegration programs to help them access the full range of federal, state, local, not-for-profit and private benefits/resources to help with economic transitions from active duty to civilian life
- Availability of Veterans Entrepreneurial Training (VET) programs, to include the use of G.I. Bill benefits and scholarships
- Information and referral on personal and family financial planning and supports for self-employed RC members (small businesses)
- (For those with wounds or injuries) training to reestablish or redirect their career, to include training about entrepreneurial career options

Small Business Administration working group members recommend support for self-employed members to:

- Plan for and utilize available SBA lending, business planning and procurement assistance programs both prior to and following mobilization
- Reestablish/regain markets, hire and/or grow additional employees
- Participate in VET programs, access scholarships and use G.I. Bill benefits

Established Programs Supporting those who are Self-Employed

The programs listed and described in brief below are available to support the transition needs of RC members. While there are recurring types or categories of needs that RC members have, the unique needs presented by each RC member must be assessed and addressed. Every resource listed below has a set of established and flexible capabilities

to respond to the needs presented by RC members and their families. Of course, the full range of RC member circumstances is not described below.

The TurboTAP.org website has been designed with tools and resources to support RC members as they are released from active duty. It provides information and can lend structure as those members plan their transition from military back to their civilian careers. RC members also can take advantage of DoD Pre-separation Counseling which is generally provided during demobilization, and prior to release from active duty. Service members returning from OIF and OEF can receive two-hours of pre-separation counseling. Once home, RC members can contact the DOL Career One-Stop Center located in many local communities to receive further employment assistance. Also prior to release from active duty, RC members are eligible to receive a Veterans Affairs Benefits Briefing and a Disabled Transition Assistance Program Briefing (DTAP) that includes information about application procedures for vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance. This disability information is for service members who have or think they have a service-connected disability. Service members should follow-up once they return home by contacting the VA office closest to where they live.

Transition Assistance Advisors (TAA) The National Guard has placed a TAA at each of the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in each state to serve as the statewide point of contact and coordinator for easy access to Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and to provide assistance in accessing entitlements through the TRICARE. In May 2005, the partnership between the National Guard Bureau and the Department of Veterans Affairs was solidified when the Chief of the National Guard Bureau signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Under Secretary for Health and Under Secretary for Benefits at the Department of Veterans Affairs. The hallmark of this partnership is that it provides VA access to soldiers and families at unit events. The goal of the partnership is to educate all Guard members and their families about their entitlements and how to access VA programs and benefits.

TAA's assist National Guard members with access to care and enrollment at VA healthcare facilities near their home of record. They also assist National Guard members and their families in applying for other VA entitlements and benefits such as compensation and pension for disabilities, insurance, loan guarantee, Vocational Rehabilitation Employment (VRE) and educational benefits. Additionally, they work with directors of state family programs to build a coalition of support with VA and community organizations for Guard members and their families. While the program was set up to primarily take care of Guard members and their families, TAA's provide critical support and facilitate the integration for the delivery of VA and community services to all members of the Active and Reserve components.

As RC members transition back to their civilian lives and careers, their ability to cope with family disruption and to connect to the full range of support services is vital. One

important program to enable this connection was established by Section 675 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2007 which required the Department of Defense to implement a Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP). This program is designed to assist families of members of the Armed Forces and provides:

- Financial and material assistance
- Mobile support services
- Sponsorship of volunteers and family support professionals for the delivery of support services
- Coordination of family assistance programs and activities provided by *Military OneSource*, Military Family Life Consultants, counselors, the DoD, other federal agencies, state and local agencies and non-profit entities
- Facilitated discussion on military family assistance programs, activities and initiatives between and among supporting organizations, agencies and entities

The JFSAPs mission is to provide mobile, high quality, effective and efficient family assistance and services to augment current family program staffing levels to meet the needs of family members of Active Duty, Guard and Reserve members. The primary focus of JFSAP support is military members and their family who are geographically separated from military installations. Fifteen states were selected to be a part of an initial pilot program (pilot states were: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Indiana, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia). Most JFSAP teams are located at the National Guard Joint Force Headquarters in each state. The DoD objective is to have the JFSAP established in all states by November 2008.

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) (www.sba.gov) is uniquely equipped to support military members who are self-employed and small business owners who employ RC members. SBA is the primary federal source of business counseling, training, financing, federal procurement assistance, research and advocacy for America's small business entrepreneurs. While operating through a network of locally based district and regional offices, SBA assistance is delivered through thousands of third party, locally based public and private organizations, banks and partners.

SBA services are focused into three primary areas. 1) Availability of technical assistance, counseling and training in the establishment and successful operation of a small business, 2) access to business financing capital and federal disaster lending, 3) support for, program management of and oversight of various federal small business contracting and sub-contracting procurement programs and goals.

Through its national network of local services the SBA provides outreach on a range of services and consultation to more than 100,000 veterans and their spouses. SBA is

committed to support military members who are self-employed and seeking guidance as they prepare for, manage their absence from, or start up their small businesses, including reestablishing a small business after demobilization.

SBA ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

1) SBA Small Business Counseling, Technical Assistance and Training Resources

a. Veterans and RC members Focus

The Office of Veterans Business Development (OVBD) (www.sba.gov/vets) is SBA's source of entrepreneurial policy and program initiatives and recommendations specifically for veterans and RC members. OVBD is managed by the Associate Administrator for Veterans Business Development who also acts as an ombudsman for full consideration of veterans in all SBA programs. In addition to developing special veterans and RC member's initiatives with other SBA programs and partners, OVBD also manages SBA programs exclusively for veterans and RC members. These include: the SBA District Office-Veterans Outreach Initiative (DO-VOI), enabling SBA district offices to engage special outreach to veterans and RC members by linking SBA district offices with their local service organizations; and the Self Employed Reserve and Guard (SERG) Initiative (www.sba.gov/reservists) providing specific outreach and business planning tools to self employed RC members; and the Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC) program.

The VBOC is a grant-funded program that assists veterans and RC members in starting, growing and maintaining small businesses by providing specific hands on assistance, and by coordinating veterans' and RC members' access to the full range of business assistance available from SBA and others in the area where the veteran or the RC member resides. The VBOCs are independent entities that, while funded by SBA OVBD, are not manned by SBA employees. The VBOCs provide counseling, guidance and training to veterans who wish to start a new business, restart a business or who require assistance with an existing business. The VBOC coordinates with SBA district offices and all of SBA's resource partners such as Small Business Development Centers, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) chapters, SBA lenders and other programs and partners across the nation. Geographically disbursed veterans and RC members seeking assistance are provided directed referrals to one or more of these partners as appropriate.

On February 14, 2008, President Bush signed into law The Military Reservist and Veteran Small Business Reauthorization and Opportunity Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-186). This law created a new competitive veterans assistance and services program that is presently being developed and required changes are presently being made to the Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan (MREIDL) program. These changes include establishing a pre-activation loan application process, with priority decision making and collateral changes.

b. Additional Business Development and Consultation Resources

SBA's Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network

(www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/sbdc/index) is the most comprehensive small business assistance network in the United States and its territories.

Approximately 1000 SBDC's are located in communities in every state and are equipped to provide a variety of management, technical assistance and training services (including GI Bill approved Veterans Entrepreneurial Training) to small businesses and potential or current entrepreneurs.

The mission of the network is to help entrepreneurs succeed in their dream of business ownership and to assist existing businesses to remain competitive in the complex marketplace of an ever-changing global economy.

At the state level, SBDCs are conveniently hosted by leading universities, colleges, community colleges and state economic development agencies, and are core funded in part through a partnership with the SBA. SBDC agreements with SBA include veterans and RC members as a special targeted group for outreach and assistance. Local SBDC's can be located using a straight forward on-line search method, or by contacting the nearest SBA district or regional office.

SBA has a volunteer program known as SCORE (www.score.org). Approximately 12,400 SCORE volunteers and chapters are available to assist veterans, RC members, discharging service members and spouses with business counseling and assistance. SCORE is an excellent resource of experienced business professionals (half of which are veterans) who provide free, face to face and online expert advice based on many years of firsthand experience and shared knowledge on virtually every aspect of running a successful small business. Nationally, SCORE, with its volunteers and chapters, provide special on-line business counseling and mentoring assistance specifically to veterans, service-disabled veterans and RC members.

Another available SBA program sponsored through SBA grants is the Women's Business Center (WBC) program (www.sba.gov/services/). This national network of WBCs provides educational resources to help women (and men) start and grow successful small businesses. The program's mission is to level the playing field for women entrepreneurs still facing unique obstacles in the business world.

Many veterans and RC members benefit from the basic and convenient on-line SBA training courses that focus on entrepreneurship and establishing or running a small business. This help is available through the SBA Small Business Training Network (SBTN) (www.sba.gov/training). The SBTN allows veterans and RC members to take online courses in a variety of business and management areas, receive online counseling,

access the full SBA library of resources, and view connections to other educational and training opportunities available.

2) SBA Financing and Lending

a. Small Business Financing Programs

SBA supports a continuum of capital access programs for entrepreneurs, including the SBA Microloan Program. This program includes veterans as part of its target market and could be of particular importance to veterans, and RC members and spouses as it offers small loans to start-up, newly established, or growing small business concerns. Under this program, SBA makes funds available to nonprofit community based lenders (called intermediaries) which, in turn, make loans to eligible borrowers in amounts up to a maximum of \$35,000. These loans, which are generally uncollateralized, ensure that each borrower is provided business counseling assistance. The average loan size is about \$13,000. Applications are submitted to the local intermediary and all credit decisions are made on the local community level.

The SBA 7a Loan Guarantee programs comprise SBA's primary business financing vehicle. Available through thousands of banks, credit unions and other financial institutions, various versions of this program are available and targeted to different segments of the small business community. In June 2007, SBA created the Patriot Express (PX) Pilot Loan initiative (www.sba.gov/patriotexpress), combining the best terms and expedited loan processing times available from the 7a programs. This pilot loan initiative is targeted specifically to veterans, service-disabled veterans, RC members, TAP eligible discharging service members, spouses and widows of service members who died in service or of a service-connected disability. So far, more than 850 lending institutions have been approved and are offering this special loan targeted to the military community and approximately 1,500 SBA guaranteed loans were approved in its first year totaling more than \$150,000,000 in capital financing.

The SBA 504 Loan program (www.sba.gov/services) is designed to provide long-term, fixed-asset financing to small businesses. These loans are made through SBA-approved community and economic development companies in conjunction with private lenders and local governments. These loans tend to be focused on fixed assets such as equipment, infrastructure and buildings.

The SBA Small Business Investment Corporation (SBIC) program involves investment and venture capital funds that are licensed, approved and supplemented by SBA. This very competitive part of the business financing market is focused on cutting edge, emerging and growing segments of the American small business economy.

Other SBA financing programs include Rural, Express and International Trade Loans and Surety Bonding guarantees.

b. SBA Direct Disaster Lending

SBA is America's primary disaster lending institution. In the event of natural or other disasters, SBA direct lending is available to home and small business owners to aid in their recovery. One special loan in this program is the MREIDL program (www.sba.gov/services/disasterassistance/index.html) which is designed specifically to assist a small business owned by or who employs an RC member as an essential employee. This direct SBA loan may help an RC member's employer stay viable until the RC member returns from activation. More specifically, the purpose of MREIDL is to provide funds to eligible small businesses to meet its ordinary and necessary operating expenses that it could have met, but is unable to meet, because an essential employee was "called-up" to Title 10 active duty. These loans provide favorable terms and are capped at a maximum 4% interest rate. They are intended only to provide the amount of working capital needed by a small business to pay its necessary obligations as they mature until operations return to normal after the essential employee is released from active military duty. The purpose of these loans is not to cover lost income or lost profits. MREIDL funds cannot be used to take the place of regular commercial debt, to refinance long-term debt or to expand the business. Of particular note, important changes are presently being made to this program as required by P.L. 110-186. These programs are also especially important due to changes the NDAA 2007 required in Sections 201, 203, 204 and 205.

The Small Business Administration has provided thousands of business planning kits to RC members and veteran serving organizations through the MREIDL program, its Patriot Express (PX) Pilot Loan Initiative (www.sba.gov/patriotexpress) and through its SERG Initiative. Through these programs SBA reached out and provided support through approved or guaranteed 352 small business and disaster loans to existing and prospective RC member small business owners, totaling approximately \$34 million dollars. SBA notes that of the 302 MREIDL loans provided through May 31, 2008 (average amount of \$89,626), almost 13% went to offices of dentists (average \$93,400), physicians (average \$117,464) and chiropractors (average \$20,825), 6% went to offices of lawyers (average \$87,000), 7% went to general freight trucking (average \$97,100) and automotive repair businesses (average \$64,140) and 5% went to landscaping (average \$43,438) or engineering services (average \$136,825).

3) SBA Federal Contracting Assistance

SBA is working to achieve a government-wide 3% federal procurement goal for Service-Connected Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSB), and the Office of Veterans Business Development, along with the SBA Office of Government Contracting and Business Development (GCBD) works with all federal agencies with procurement

authority to achieve this goal. While SBA has exceeded this 3% procurement with SDVOSBs the last two years, government-wide they have not yet achieved this goal. Based on Presidential Executive Order # 13360, OVBD staff works with GCBD staff and programs, with Procurement Center Representatives (PCR), with DOD funded Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, and with other federal agency Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) to improve opportunities for SDVOSB federal contracting.

SBA GCBD (www.sba.gov/GC) manages a number of other federal procurement programs that many veterans, RC members and spouse owned small businesses participate in. These include the Section 8a Business Development Program, the Hubzone Empowerment Contracting Program, the Women Owned Small Business program, the Small and Disadvantaged Business Certification program, the technical assistance program, the Small Business Innovation Research Program and numerous other programs.

A note on state governments: In addition to SBA services, a number of states (www.nga.org/guardsurvey) have created special lending, business counseling and licensing requirements deferral, ombudsman, education, outreach, procurement and other programs targeted to veterans, RC members and families. Many of these state small business loan programs are utilizing SBA loan guarantees and similarly are maximizing the availability of SBA outreach, business counseling and other services in their state. These programs show great promise and could be expanded or replicated in other states. States presently include: Maine, New York, Maryland, Florida, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, New Mexico, California and Washington. In most states, the Departments of Veterans Affairs, State Treasurers, State Comptrollers and Secretaries of State are taking the lead in these emerging efforts.

TARGETED GROUP 2:

RESERVE COMPONENT STUDENTS

Based on the findings of DMDC surveys, contracted studies and the input of working group members from multiple federal agencies, RC members returning from OIF or OEF and who are pursuing post-secondary education/training require support to:

- Re-enter their educational pursuits
- Resolve issues of educational standing, finances (including student loan issues) and other educational challenges resulting from military deployments and commitments
- Understand and utilize information on educational benefits, entitlements and support resources including VA programs (e.g., VA work study). This includes active efforts to find and offer “earned benefits” to those who are not affiliated with the mainstream military community (e.g., the homeless, or unaffiliated)
- Ameliorate barriers to educational advancement by pursuing disability claims and other administrative claims or benefit processes with VA or other benefit providers

The SOFS-R (December 2007) completed by respondents included multiple comments and feedback that were complementary of the cooperation shown by professors and institutions toward deploying RC members. Along with the positive comments, there were suggestions to address four main areas:

- 1) Increase Military Consideration of Service Member Education Demands. Survey responses suggested the need to provide more advanced notice of deployments; ensure reasonable deployment lengths; when possible, allow flexibility for release from military duty to re-enter educational institutions.
- 2) Evaluate and Strengthen Supports for Military Members Seeking Post-Secondary Education. Survey respondents encouraged action to ensure that (as far as possible) the military member’s military service does not negatively impact educational standing. Recommendations included increased educational benefits for military members, knowledgeable and helpful advisors in the military who understand and give complete/accurate information about educational benefits, increased flexibility in the required start date for the repayment of student loans, extending the time limit imposed on the use of educational benefits (or discontinue time limits altogether) and finding ways to speed up the payout to students of Montgomery GI Bill benefits.
- 3) Increase Cooperation with Educational Institutions. Survey respondents expressed the need to rally more consistent cooperation of educational institutions and professors with

deploying RC members. This may include: facilitating an aggressive information campaign to help professors and institutions better understand the demands of military mobilization and deployment.

4) Increase Distance Learning Options. Many existing and emerging technologies and methodologies can be applied to benefit military members seeking post-secondary training and education. Efforts should be expanded to provide accessibility of higher education degrees and certifications that meet the unique needs of the military members. This should include providing quality education options globally to augment or replace traditional classroom and lab environments (e.g., portable, self-paced, technology-based education that is not restricted by traditional program schedules, delivery formats, or Internet connectivity). These efforts are recommended to allow educational pursuits while students are affiliated with and serving in the military.

Established Programs and Laws Supporting Students

Approximately 10% of RC members are students enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The Montgomery GI Bill -Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR), Chapter 1606, provides valuable education benefits to RC members of the Selected Reserve. This education assistance program can be used for degree programs, certification programs, correspondence courses, cooperative training, independent study programs, apprenticeship/on-the-job training and vocational flight training programs. RC members may use the MGIB-SR upon separation from the SELRES for the period of active duty served plus four months if they were serving in support of a contingency operation. Further information about the MGIB-SR can be provided by the member's education service representative. Additional information can be found at www.dva.gov.

The Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP), Chapter 1607, Title 10, United States Code, was established in the Ronald W. Reagan National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2005. It is a Department of Defense education benefit program designed to provide educational assistance to RC members called or ordered to active duty in response to a war or national emergency (contingency operation) as declared by the President or Secretary of Defense. Effective January 28, 2008, a new provision of law allows a member of the Selected Reserve who is eligible for REAP to continue eligibility upon separation from the Selected Reserve, for up to 10 years. With the new post 9-11 GI bill, the utility of REAP is now questionable since the new program, when implemented, will offer a much richer benefit based on the same period of service.

In addition to the MGIB, the DoD has worked extensively with the state governors and educational associations to support RC members who are involuntarily called to active duty. These efforts focus on ensuring student-RC members will: (1) receive refunds for tuition and fees they have paid for the semester, quarter, or term they cannot complete; or (2) be granted partial credit for completed course work or receive a grade of incomplete;

and (3) be granted the right to return to their college or university upon completion of their active military service. Further, national educational associations have communicated directly with many of the nation's universities, technical and vocational colleges, including private colleges, to gain their cooperation and support for student-RC members.

In 1972, DoD established a contract with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities establishing Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC). SOC is a consortium of over 1,800 higher education institutions that function voluntarily in cooperation with the Military Services to help meet the higher education needs of service members. SOC assists service members attending post-secondary institutions and has been very successfully in mediation with educational institutions on behalf of RC members.

In 2001, to assist members of the military who had been activated in support of military operations, the U.S. Department of Education directed lenders and colleges and universities to provide military members with relief from their student loan obligations, specifically identifying RC members who have been called to active duty. The department's guidance relates to student loans made under the Federal Family Education Loan, William D. Ford Loan and Federal Perkins Loan programs.

The Department of Education also strongly encouraged schools to provide a full refund of required tuition, fees and other institutional charges, or to provide credit in a comparable amount against future charges for students who are forced to withdraw from school as a result of the military mobilization. In addition, the Department of Education urged schools to consider providing easy and flexible re-enrollment options to affected students.

Regarding student loan concerns, deployment may create challenges for students who have established loans to assist with educational expenses. While the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (2003) provision that caps interest at six percent does not apply to guaranteed student loans, there are other forms of relief available. The Higher Education Relief Opportunities for Students Act of 2003, (Pub. Law. 108–76, Aug. 18, 2003, 117 Stat. 904, as amended by Pub. Law. 109–78, § 1, Sept. 30, 2005, 119 Stat. 2043), provides authorization for the Department of Education to waive or modify certain terms of student financial assistance, as necessary, for those individuals who are affected by military service. In addition, federal student loan regulations (34 C.F.R. § 674.59) have provisions for cancellation of up to 50% of a National Direct Student Loan (Perkins loan) for a service member working in an area of hostility that qualifies for special pay under section 310 of title 37 of the United States Code.

TARGETED GROUP 3:

RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS WITH MULTIPLE RECENT DEPLOYMENTS

Based on the findings of DMDC surveys, contracted studies and the input of working group members from multiple federal agencies (relative to employment or educational pursuits) RC members who have participated in multiple OIF or OEF deployments are similar to RC members who report a single deployment. These needs are repeated here for reader convenience.

If the member is self-employed and has participated in multiple deployments, they may require:

- Assistance to re-establish self-employment and small businesses where they act as sole-proprietor or run single-person practices
- Transition support from activation to the reestablishment of sustainable, income-producing self-employment
- Highly accessible reintegration programs to help them access the full range of federal, state, local, not-for-profit and private benefits/resources to help with economic transitions from active duty to civilian life
 - A comprehensive review of government and non-government programs at all levels that support the transitioning of RC members to ensure there are no gaps in policy or legal support systems
- Availability of Veterans Entrepreneurial Training (VET) programs
- Availability of MGIB benefits
- Information and referral on personal and family financial planning and supports for self-employed RC members (small business owners)
 - For those with wounds or injuries, training to reestablish or redirect their career, to include training about entrepreneurial career options

Small Business Administration working group members recommend the need to support the self-employed as they:

- Plan for and utilize available SBA lending, business planning and procurement assistance programs both prior to and following mobilization

- Reestablish/regain markets, hire and/or grow additional employees
- Participate in VET programs, including use of G.I. Bill benefits and scholarships

If pursuing post-secondary education, they require support to:

- Re-enter their educational pursuits
- Resolve issues of educational standing, finances (including student loan issues) and other educational challenges resulting from military deployments and commitments
- Understand and utilize information on educational benefits, entitlements and support resources including VA programs (e.g., VA work study). This includes active efforts to find and offer “earned benefits” to those who are not affiliated with the mainstream military community (e.g., the homeless, or unaffiliated)
- Ameliorate barriers to educational advancement by pursuing disability claims and other administrative claims or benefit processes with VA or other benefit providers

Established Programs and Laws Supporting Those with Multiple Deployments

OSD and the Military Services facilitate numerous family and reintegration support programs. Of the many available programs some key support resources include: Military OneSource, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Installation Family Support Centers and Military Family Life Consultants. Partnerships on the national, state and local levels are critical to ensuring that the necessary resources are available for RC members and their families.

From the beginning of the increase in operational tempo up to and during the execution of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, it has been DoD’s objective to keep involuntary multiple deployments of RC members to a minimum. This policy is based on the judicious and prudent use of RC personnel — being sensitive to the disruption that mobilization can cause for members, families and civilian employers. Only where operational requirements dictate were multiple deployments authorized, emphasizing the use of volunteers over involuntarily deploying a member more than once.

In a memorandum titled “Utilization of the Total Force” (January 19, 2007), the Secretary of Defense directed that involuntary mobilization for RC members will be for a maximum of one year at any time. And that the planning objective for involuntary mobilization of RC units and members will be at a ratio of one year mobilized to five years demobilized, with a realization that today's global demands will require a number

of selected RC units and members to be remobilized sooner, though such exceptions should be temporary. In addition, a memorandum through the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (March 15, 2007) recognizes the need for families to access TRICARE health benefits and provided that orders should be issued in a timely manner (defined as a minimum of 30 days prior to the mobilization date, with a goal of 90 days prior). Future goals are for force generation plans to be in place with military units notified up to 24 months in advance and mobilization with orders issued 90-180 days prior to mobilization.

Current records on multiple deployments for ground troops (Army Guard, Army Reserve and Marine Reserve) indicates that less than 2% have been deployed more than one time. This percentage decreases exponentially for RC members deployed more than two times (less than two tenths of one percent).

For the past seven years, the military has been prosecuting the Global War on Terror and in that time, almost 42% of the RC members in the Army have deployed once. As the Global War on Terror persists and the operational demand for Army forces remains high, the percentage of RC members who will be called to active duty and deployed more than once is expected to increase. This will affect the stress some military members and their families will experience. Various military and community support resources exist to help in handling the challenges of multiple deployments. Until recently, a large number of those experiencing multiple deployments have chosen to do so voluntarily.

Given the continuing demands of a high OPTEMPO and as RC members are called to serve in multiple activations, the role of DoD's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is more critical than ever. The mission of ESGR is to build a positive collaboration between America's employers, their RC member employees and the military. The ESGR vision and mission (respectively) states that ESGR is to "develop and promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees" and "we will gain and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflicts through mediation."

Identified examples of the effects of multiple deployments generally relate to the lack of time between deployments for individuals to fully recover before returning to a theater of operations. With the high demand for Army Personnel in the Global War on Terror, the Army is committed to ensuring all returning veterans receive the behavioral health care they need. They have a wide variety of new initiatives to provide education and training, including "Battlemind" training, this is training in Combat and Operational Stress Control and Provider Resiliency. A new program, called Respect-mil, integrates behavioral health care and primary care. The Army is also dedicated to teaching soldiers about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) through a Leader Chain Teaching Program (a program where military leaders teach soldiers under their direction about the signs and symptoms of PTSD and mild TBI). Leaders must be well informed and observant because, absent of outwardly exhibiting symptoms of mental

disorders such as PTSD, many troops fail to report their problems due to fear that there is a stigmatism associated with reporting a mental health concern which could in turn negatively affect their career or they are not aware there is a problem until they start acting out in other ways such as through drug or alcohol abuse.

To provide better mental health care for service members, DoD now requires a pre-deployment screening, a post-deployment screening and a post-deployment reassessment three to six months after the member returns home from deployment. This follow-up assessment is important, because many individuals do not report problems right after a deployment, but these problems surface later. The Services are countering these challenges by embedding psychiatrists, counselors and chaplains with deployed units and also providing training to leaders on coaching and mentoring to prevent post-traumatic stress.

In additions to these efforts, the DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) office recently published guidance that requires reintegration processes at 30, 60 and 90 days following release from active duty. The YRRP uses what has been learned about the timing of certain transition needs—in reality that what a returning RC members needs and what they attend to at 30-days following deactivation is quite different from the information they are receptive to at 90 days. These different events give commanders, counselors and chaplains an opportunity to interact with redeployed members and assess how well they are coping with the stress of redeployment and reintegration as they return to their civilian lives. The effectiveness of several pilot and demonstration reunion and reintegration programs have been evaluated and are serving as models upon which this new DoD program is based.

Circumstances associated with multiple deployments can result in the potential for financial changes or challenges. A potential result of these changes could include credit rating or other contractual difficulties. If an RC member deploys and finds his/her credit rating damaged due to factors associated with that deployment, there are generally no "after-the-fact" legal protections. However there are provisions in the Servicemember's Civil Relief Act (SCRA) 2003 and other laws that help RC members proactively prevent such matters from occurring. For example, the SCRA provides for interest rate caps on existing loans, deferment of business transactions and ability to seek release from home and car leases. There are also stay provisions for court proceedings. In additional there are other tools available to RC members to protect their credit rating. For instance, the Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. § 1681c-1) provides a way for service members to request an alert in their credit file, specifically this provision requires that along with any credit score generated in using that file there must be a notation of military service.

TARGETED GROUP 4:

WOUNDED OR INJURED RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

Based on the findings of DMDC surveys, contracted studies and the input of working group members from multiple federal agencies, (relative to employment or educational pursuits) RC members who suffered wounds or injuries due to participation in OIF or OEF deployments require support to:

- Accomplish re-entry into satisfying and gainful employment, including self-employment
- Have access to career development counseling/guidance
- Have access to rehabilitation counseling/therapy

Established Programs Supporting Wounded or Injured Service Members

When a service member suffers wounds or injuries there are a number of support systems in place to assist. The availability of information is a critical need to enable the injured service member and his/her family to understand options and to link with programs and resources that can make a difference. The DoD Deployment Health Risk Communication Working Group (DHRCWG) was established in 2004 to develop more consistent information across the Military Services regarding deployment-related exposures and emerging health concerns throughout the cycles of deployment. To this end, an on-line library—the Deployment Health and Family Readiness Library—was developed and provides service members, families, leaders, health care providers and veterans an easy way to find deployment health and family readiness information. Within this library are fact sheets, guides and other products on a wide variety of topics published by the Services and other organizations. It also offers links to organizations and resources devoted to the health and well-being of the service member and his or her family. It is accessible at the following website: <http://deploymenthealthlibrary.fhp.osd.mil/>

Another critical effort started officially in November 2007 when the Defense Department created the Defense Center of Excellence (DCOE) for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury to step up the quality of care for wounded warriors and their families. Through the establishment of this DCOE, the Department of Defense is committed to providing excellence across the board in protection, prevention, diagnosis, treatment, recovery and care transition for our military members and their families who sustain injuries or experience adverse health conditions as a result of the Global War on Terror. The DCOE works hand-in-hand with other federal agencies including the VA, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as public and private sector experts across the nation collaborate to provide military families with the support and information focused on:

- Resilience, prevention and community support services
- Early intervention to reduce the incidence of potential health concerns
- Deployment-related clinical care before, during and after deployment
- Access to care along with coordination and transition within DoD/VA systems of care; and
- Robust epidemiological, clinical and field research

Finally, the DCOE is working with medical commanders in the combat theater to revise traumatic brain injury protocols and treatment management practice guidelines.

*The Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes*¹ a Presidential Task Force established in April 2007, made significant recommendations that benefit RC veterans. The recommendation to expand eligibility of the Small Business Administration Patriot Express Loan to provide the full range of lending, business counseling and procurement programs to veterans, service-disabled veterans, RC members and families will allow more options for returning RC members who desire to become self-employed or establish a small business. Collaboration between DoD and DOL to improve Civilian Workforce Credentialing and Certification will allow for greater alignment of a service member's military experience with civilian opportunities. The Wounded Veterans Intern Program will provide another option for valuable work experience to injured GWOT service members while they are in medical hold status and are transitioning from military service. The emphasis by DOL, VA, DoD and SBA to provide expanded outreach in the following programs is especially noteworthy:

- Increased attendance at the Transition Assistance and Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (TAP and DTAP), respectively
- Active, Guard and Reserve participation in the Workforce Investment System in every state and territory and partner with over 120 private and public sector job fairs to expand the number of employers involved in veteran recruitment
- Promote awareness of the USERRA

The Department of Education's cooperation with the DOL to participate in DoD job fairs to provide returning service members and their families with an awareness of the post-secondary education benefits available is also a positive step in assisting wounded warriors.

Four years ago, recognizing the special employment challenges that returning Iraq/Afghanistan veterans face in the workplace, DOL in cooperation with VA and Walter

¹ Task Force Report to the President: Returning Global War on Terror Heroes; April 2007

Reed Army and Bethesda Naval Medical Centers initiated the Recovery Employment Assistance Lifelines, or REALifelines program. This program demonstrates the DOL's commitment to helping wounded and injured U.S. Veterans return to fulfilling, productive civilian lives. This program provides one-on-one job training, counseling and re-employment services to seriously wounded and injured service members who cannot return to active duty. REALifelines' staff, both federal and state, is forward-positioned at seven major military medical facilities, at the DoD Military Severely Injured Center, with the U.S. Marine Corps and with the U.S. Army at several installations. Through REALifelines, wounded or injured veterans and their spouses or caregivers build new and rewarding careers in the private sector. Furthermore, the work of *The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors*,¹ especially as it relates to challenges RC veterans face upon transition to civilian employment, has provided a strong foundation from which to build — particularly the recommendations concerning increasing the flexibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation & Education Program (VRE) and for providing incentives to members who complete those programs.

Beneficial programs focused on veteran well-being and job-placement assistance already existed at the federal, state and local levels. REALifelines united these efforts, creating a network of resources to address the professional and educational goals of veterans while they deal with the realities of rehabilitation and recovery.

REALifelines program efforts are centered on its national network of workforce and transition specialists. These specialists provide direct, personal assistance to severely injured service members and their families from point of recovery in the military medical treatment facility, to direct placement services with employers in their home town communities.

REALifelines representatives are located at every major military medical treatment facility where returning OIF/OEF veterans are receiving medical treatment in the U.S., in every federal region and are linked to each state Veterans' Employment & Training Service office and local workforce system agency. REALifelines coordinators are located at the Department of Defense's Military Severely Injured Center. They work with DoD and the individual Military Services to create a common data system, joint case management and rapid problem resolution for service members and their families.

The United States Army is currently implementing the Army Medical Action Plan (AMAP). This initiative represents the development of a soldier-centric approach to managing a soldier's medical recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. As an integral part of the AMAP, Warrior Transition Units (WTUs), comprised of both Active and RC soldiers, have been established at Army installations across the continental United States. These units are charged with managing the recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of

¹ Serve, Support, Simplify; Report of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; July 2007

wounded, ill and injured soldiers (referred to as Warriors in Transition) assigned to them. Through the use of a care management team called a triad (consisting of a physician primary care manager, nurse case manager and the soldier's assigned squad leader), the WTU manages Warriors in Transition through all phases of their recovery to include reintegration back to civilian life and employment, if they must be separated from military service. An organization that provides key assistance to the WTU in managing Warriors in Transition reintegration back to civilian life and employment is the recently established Soldier Family Assistance Center (SFAC). Each WTU has access to a SFAC which provides Warriors in Transition and their family members counseling and overall assistance in all aspects of the separation process to smooth transition to civilian life.

Each of the services has established programs for ensuring that all wounded and injured members and families receive the treatment and support they require to achieve the highest possible level of mental and physical functioning. More warriors survive battle today because of improved personal and vehicle armor and swift high-tech medical treatment in the field. Many consider RC members most at risk of falling through the cracks because they are not seen nearly daily by their military supervisor after deactivation. It is not unusual for members to develop problems weeks or months after they return from deployment. In the case of RC members, this often will occur when they are far from a military hub or under close observation by a military supervisor, who could easily and quickly ensure members get the help they need. Recognizing this problem, the Reserve components are developing reunion and reintegration programs with several events scheduled during the first six months following demobilization.

Army Wounded Warrior (AW2)

On April 30, 2004, the Department of the Army introduced the Disabled Soldier Support System (or DS3), the program has since been renamed The U.S. Army Wounded Warrior or AW2 program which provides severely disabled soldiers and their families with a system of advocacy, follow-up and personal support, assisting our nation's heroes as they transition from military service back into the civilian community. When a soldier receives a disability of 30% or greater and a special-category designation, the soldier is classified as AW2-eligible. Special categories include loss of sight or limb, permanent and unsightly disfigurement of a portion of the body normally exposed to view, incurable/fatal diseases, established psychiatric condition, or paralysis. AW2's intent is to incorporate and integrate several existing programs to provide holistic support services for severely disabled soldiers and their families throughout their phased progression from initial casualty notification to their return to home station and final career position. AW2 will also use a system to track and monitor severely disabled soldiers for up to five years beyond their medical retirements to provide appropriate assistance through an array of existing service providers. The initial focus of AW2 is to provide support to each soldier seriously injured during combat operations, but will eventually expand to those soldiers severely wounded since the beginning of the global war on terrorism. AW2 provides soldiers and their families with a personal AW2 advocate called a soldier/family

management specialist. This specialist ensures soldiers understand the numerous programs available for their support and provides the soldier with assistance in completing administrative requirements to receive support that is so well deserved. AW2 maintains contact with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Labor Department and foundations that exist to assist veterans. AW2 cuts through red tape – assists soldiers and their families in navigating federal, state and private benefit systems – and links them with selected financial, educational, employment, legal and medical resources. They advocate and serve as a change agent for all Army Wounded Warriors and implement lessons learned to adjust policy and increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of medical and benefit systems. More information on the Disabled Soldier Support System can be found on the AW2 Web site at: <http://aw2portal.com/Default.aspx>

DoD's Military Severely Injured Center was created in February 2005 and is now called the Wounded Warrior Resource Center to augment the support provided by the individual service's wounded, ill and injured support programs: the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2), the Navy Safe Harbor program, the Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2) program and the Marines Wounded Warrior Regiment program. The service support programs are the primary avenues of support for their wounded and families; the center continues to connect members and families as requested to such resources as Military OneSource and can provide liaison with other federal agencies and non-profits.

The problems of injured service members can last a long time, so the center established "Heroes to Hometown" programs nationwide. The recuperation time after hospitalization and rehabilitation is crucial to an individual's recovery. Knowing that they are welcome in their community and that there is a new life ahead can be the most significant part of this process. The program encourages communities to adopt these severely injured warriors by making their homecoming and life afterward as easy as possible.

The Army has also established a pilot program called the Army Wounded Warrior Education Initiative (AW2EI). This program is designed for active duty soldiers who are members of the Army Wounded Warrior Program and who are determined to be at least 30% disabled, to obtain graduate degrees so that they can serve primarily as instructors at Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) installations (expansion of the program and inclusion of RC members is being encouraged). The program requires an AW2 to attend a course of instruction appropriate for the position the person is being hired into (currently people are enrolled in information technology, social work and history programs to name a few) The obligation to the Army is three times the amount of time spent in school. Graduate programs are normally two-year programs so the obligation following graduation is six years. Soldiers who are medically retired are hired as DA civilians and attend graduate school in that status.

The Navy Safe Harbor's mission is to provide personalized support and assistance to severely injured sailors and their family. Safe Harbor operates a proactive outreach/visitation service to address needs by identifying and providing access to

existing support capabilities and resources for Navy and Navy Reserve members. They partner with the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment for sailors assigned to Marine units. They also establish and maintain liaison with the sailor's command and encourage retention. They provide continuing support for sailors with 30% or more disability rating transitioning to civilian life.

The Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment was established in 2007 to track wounded Marines through the challenges of follow-up medical care and subsumed a previously established Marine4Life Program. It provides oversight to eliminate possible seams or cracks in the system that Marines may fall through. Specifically, the regiment will help wounded Marines through medical and physical evaluation boards, assist them in making insurance claims and act as a clearing house for charitable donations and work to ensure accountability and non-medical case management during the recovery of the Marine. The regiment provides one process, one set of standard operating procedures that supports active duty, reserve and separated personnel. The regiment also oversees transition from DoD care to VA care. The regiment's mission is to provide information, advocacy and assistance to injured Marines, sailors injured while serving with Marines and their families in order to minimize the difficulties and worries they face as they navigate the road to recovery. Support begins at the time of injury and continues through return to duty or transition to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2) program (previously called the Air Force Palace HART (Helping Airmen Recuperate Together)) provides extended five-year case management follow-up, advocacy and tracking of all eligible Air Force members and immediate family. Air Force wounded warriors receive enhanced transition services to include relocation, financial and employment counseling and extended follow up for wounded warriors and their family members. If the member has a 30% or higher disability rating and desires to transition to federal civilian employment, a team is set up to facilitate Air Force civilian employment. The staff members also serve as the VA claims process intervention advocate. The Air Force is developing a dedicated website for separated/retired AFW2 members and their families to obtain up-to-date information on benefits, entitlements and resources. Additional consultants will also be added to the AFW2 program to provide better continuity of care to the growing numbers of wounded Air Force warriors.

As wounded/injured RC members readjust to life in the community, they may require equipment to assist them at home as they undergo rehabilitation. In these cases, if the individual is a veteran and no longer in the military or not a military retiree, the VA would pay cost for these needs. If the individual is medically retired, the cost would be covered by whomever the veteran is insured by which may include a combination of a private insurance company, TRICARE and/or the Department of Veterans Affairs. For instance, if an RC member is using TRICARE for their primary care, the referral for home equipment would go to TRICARE; however, if the individual is being followed as

an eligible patient by the VA, the referral for equipment would go through the VA channels. Finally, if a member uses a private insurer along with TRICARE as a provider, TRICARE will bill the private insurance company first and then will provide coverage as a secondary payer.

Another program that is available in many states is the Second Injury Fund (SIF), a program designed to support in the hiring of wounded and injured veterans. SIFs were introduced by most states after World War II to encourage employers to hire injured veterans. Though the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 prompted at least 19 states to abolish their second injury funds, approximately half the states still have SIFs. These funds serve to protect employers from higher costs that can result when a workplace injury aggravates an employee's prior disability. The worker's original impairment can be of any type or cause — work-related or not — as long as it is permanent and serious enough to pose an obstacle to obtaining employment. SIFs work on the theory that people with certain health conditions have a tendency to suffer additional injuries. When this happens, the SIF, if it is available in the state, helps pay the difference between the benefit the worker would have received for the workplace injury alone and the benefit for the aggravated disability. The fund can either reimburse the insurance carrier (or a self-insured employer) or take over the claim.

The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. Vet Centers are part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and are community based. Since their beginning, the Vet Centers mission has focused on providing a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services to eligible veterans and their family members in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life. In August 2005, Veteran Affairs Secretary authorized Vet Centers to furnish bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, to include federally activated RC personnel.

TARGETED GROUP 5:

PROMOTION AND CONSTRUCTIVE TERMINATION OF RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS

Based on the findings of DMDC surveys, contracted studies and the input of working group members from multiple federal agencies, RC members who have received promotions on their return from OIF/OEF deployment or who have experienced “constructive termination” by their employers require support to:

- communicate to employers how their military training, experience and discipline function to improve the quality of their contribution as employees
- communicate to employers the benefits and strengths of RC members as employees
- communicate to employers their legal obligations as employers of RC members

Established Programs Supporting Positive Employer Relations

In order to provide support to RC members, ESGR has a national and local organizational structure. As an organization it supports the following functions:

- Operating a proactive program directed at U.S. employers, employees and communities that ensures understanding and appreciation of the role of the RC in the context of the DoD Total Force
- Encouraging and assisting employee participation in RC training programs and on military duty without civilian job impediments of any kind, to include encouraging voluntary compliance with federal and state statutes governing employment and reemployment rights of RC members
- Encouraging interaction between RC units and their communities to promote public understanding of the RC and encourage partnerships between civilian organizations and military units in the community
- Assisting in preventing, resolving, or reducing employer and/or employee problems and misunderstandings that result from RC membership, training or duty requirements through information services and informal mediation
- Assisting in educating RC members regarding their obligations and responsibilities to employers
- Using the military chain of command to promote better understanding of the importance of maintaining positive working relations between employers and their RC employees, in order to sustain RC participation

- Soliciting the assistance of military agencies, military training schools, and military and civilian associations in educating the Reserve forces about their rights and responsibilities regarding terms and conditions of civilian employment, as stipulated in USERRA
- Recruiting and developing volunteer leaders at the national and local levels to promote the development of employer personnel policies and practices that accommodate and facilitate employee participation in RC activities

ESGR conducts both proactive and reactive services in support of the RC's strategic goals. The primary emphasis for a comprehensive employer outreach program is directed towards known employers of RC members, as identified by the Civilian Employment Information (CEI) initiative through the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel & Readiness. To that end, ESGR conducts the "Statement of Support Program."

Statement of support for employers who affirm the following views:

1. We fully recognize, honor and enforce the USERRA
2. Our managers and supervisors will have the tools they need to effectively manage those employees who serve in the Guard and Reserve
3. We will continually recognize and support our country's service members and their families in peace, in crises and in war

The primary means of assistance in preventing, resolving, or reducing employer and/or employee problems and misunderstandings that result from RC duty and membership is done through a nationwide Ombudsman Program.

ESGR has a national network of over 900 volunteer ombudsmen who help resolve issues between employers and their employees who serve in the RC. These volunteers, each of whom receives extensive training on USERRA and dispute resolution techniques, serve as informal mediators between the employer and employee and they inform and educate the employer and employee on what the law requires and assist in finding a mutually agreeable solution. Historically, ESGR Ombudsmen have successfully mediated over 70% of cases in each of the recent years.

ADDITIONAL PROGRAMS ESTABLISHED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE DEPLOYMENT PROCESS

Army's Deployment Cycle Support Program

Army's Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Program is a comprehensive program that ensures soldiers (Active and Reserve component), Department of the Army (DA) civilians and their families are better prepared and sustained throughout deployments. It

provides a means to identify soldiers, DA civilians and families who may need assistance with the challenges inherent to deployments. The goal of DCS is to facilitate soldier, DA civilian and family well-being throughout deployments. All soldiers deployed away from home station for 90 days or more complete the DCS program. Services for DA civilians and Families are integrated in every stage of the program and they are highly encouraged to take advantage of the resources provided.

Throughout the DCS process the Army identifies and emphasizes several critical requirements that help facilitate the reintegration process. Examples of these requirements are the Post-Deployment Health Assessment, Reunion/Reintegration Training, Communication with Spouses Training, and Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training. The original DCS program begins in theater (Redeployment phase) and continues at home station and demobilization sites (Post-Deployment and Reconstitution phases).

As of October 2007, 520,950 soldiers have completed the redeployment phase of the DCS program.

The Army is currently integrating the DCS program into all phases of the deployment cycle (Train-up/Preparation, Mobilization, Deployment, Employment, Redeployment, Post-Deployment and Reconstitution). In addition, performance metrics are being developed to analyze trends associated with deployments.

SUPPORTING RESERVE COMPONENT MEMBERS & THEIR FAMILIES

Soldier's Benefit Services

Another program the Army provides to soldiers and family members is the Soldier's Benefit Services (SBS), which is a web-based tool that provides a complete overview of the myriad benefits available on one website. The website contains general benefits information, as well as, access to specialized calculators and other tools for those soldiers serving on active duty.

SBS is easy to use, current, accessible by soldiers, family members and members of the Army community, and provides personalized survivor, disability and retirement benefits reports for all soldiers. The current SBS website features fact sheets that are customized by Army component and soldiers' status and contain essential benefits information, in both English and Spanish, on over 100 topics. The SBS website also includes fact sheets for the 54 states and territories to identify specific benefits and eligibilities for soldiers residing in those locations. The Army is committed to providing a holistic integrated process that clarifies and streamlines military benefits information. The SBS website, <http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil>, is the Army's official one-stop resource for benefits information.

Army Integrated Family Support Network

The Army Integrated Family Support Network (AIFSN) was developed by the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC), Army National Guard (ARNG), U.S. Army Reserve (USAR) and Installation Management Agency Family Programs staffs. The website is www.myArmylifetoo.com. It is intended to establish a comprehensive multi-agency approach for community support and services to meet the diverse needs of Active and mobilized RC Army families. The concept includes both Army Community Service/Family Programs and Child and Youth Services (FP/CYS). The AIFSN delivery concept is accomplished by training Active Army, ARNG and USAR service providers on all authorized services and programs available to soldiers and families by each component; marketing services to families through the “Purple Box” and the Ten Touch Personal Contact System; and unifying collaboration of military and civilian service providers through an Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC).

RESERVE COMPONENT EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Army Reserve Employer Relations

In 2005, the Army Reserve established Army Reserve Employer Relations (ARER) to build positive relationships with civilian employers to enhance soldier readiness and positively impact retention. The ARER Program compliments and augments ESGR programs at the state and local level. The ARER program focuses employer outreach efforts on Army Reserve-specific programs and initiatives. In FY 2006, the Army Reserve implemented, monitored and participated in the National Committee for ESGR’s “Pinnacle Advance” campaign. ARER promotes and sponsors the “Patriot Partner,” “Freedom Team Salute,” and other ESGR recognition awards, and created the Welcome Home Warrior Citizen “Patriot Partner” Employer Award. The “Patriot Partner” program is the first official Army Reserve-specific recognition for employers – acknowledging employer sacrifices and support of Army Reserve soldiers. The Chief of the Army Reserve has engaged employers in various forums to explore better ways for both the Army Reserve and businesses to work together to support Warrior Citizens. In August 2006, the Chief, Army Reserve established an Employer Outreach and Benefits General Officer Steering Committee (EOB GOSC) to study employer issues and make recommendations on improving partnership and relationship efforts with employers of Army Reserve soldiers and family members.

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Hire Vets First is a national campaign conducted by DOL to raise employer awareness of the value of hiring men and women who have served in the armed forces. The goal of the Hire Vets First Campaign is simple: to assist employers in understanding the training and skills that veterans possess at all ranks and occupational specialties and of the value these fine men and women bring to the workforce. This coordinated campaign carries the

message to employers and media markets all across America that veterans are an asset to any business or organization and to help make veterans an employer's first choice when hiring.

The Hire Vets First web site, the cornerstone of this campaign, enables employers to find veteran job seekers. The web site (www.HireVetsFirst.gov) includes a guide for employers, a translator that provides the civilian application of military skills, links to the nearest career one-stop center and a video explaining how to use the veteran's representative at each site. The site also features resources for veteran job seekers, including an online resume writer developed exclusively for people with military experience and links to public and private job web sites.

The Hire Vets First Campaign includes various outreach efforts and co-branded job fairs across the country.

America's veterans represent a unique national resource and employers can benefit from this resource for driving economic growth — this campaign is the culmination of DOL's strategy for the promotion of that resource as well as a shared vision to address employment barriers faced by military service members as they transition into civilian life.

Out of the Hire Vets First campaign, the top 10 reasons to hire Veterans were developed to help employers in determining why they should hire veterans. They are:

Top 10 Reasons to Hire Veterans

Accelerated Learning Curve

In addition to possessing transferable capabilities, veterans have the proven aptitude to learn new skills and concepts.

Leadership

The military trains people to lead by example, as well as through direction, delegation, motivation and inspiration, even in the most trying circumstances.

Teamwork

Out of responsibility to their colleagues, veterans understand how to blend individual and group productivity.

Diversity and Inclusion in Action

Veterans have learned to work side-by-side with individuals regardless of their diverse race, gender, geographic origin, ethnic background, religion and economic status, as well as mental, physical and attitudinal capabilities.

Efficient Performance Under Pressure

Under the stress of tight schedules and limited resources, veterans know how to accomplish priorities on time.

Respect for Organizational Structure and Procedures

With their acceptance of accountability for themselves, superiors and subordinates, veterans grasp their role within a hierarchical framework.

Current With Technology

Working where correct, timely data is critical, veterans frequently have experience with the most advanced information and network technology.

Integrity

Veterans know what it means to do “an honest day’s work.” Prospective employers can take advantage of a track record of trustworthiness.

Conscious of Safety Standards

Thanks to extensive training and conscientiousness, veterans can be instrumental in protecting employees, property and materials.

Triumph Over Adversity

Beyond dealing positively with issues of personal maturity, veterans may have overcome difficult situations and personal disabilities through strength and determination.

Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) has developed an employment workshop for the RC members. These members usually transition at fewer locations, referred to as demobilization sites. Typically the demobilization process is rapid, taking a matter of days once the service members arrive back in the United States from overseas. For example, the Army standard is to demobilize units in five days and it is not uncommon for military installations to get two or fewer days advance notice before returning troops arrive. During mobilization, service members may be expected to participate in as many as 18 separate briefings or activities such as physical examinations at various locations. This leaves little or no time for a full two and one-half day employment workshop. Nevertheless, many RC members would benefit from such transition assistance. State directors work directly with the RC commanders to make special arrangements following demobilization in order to present a modified TAP employment workshop to RC members.

Based upon requests from RC commanders or adjutants general and through coordination with DOL VETS’ state directors, TAP employment workshops in some form have been conducted in most states.

DOL state directors have contacted each state adjutant general to offer outreach and assistance to returning members of the RC during the demobilization process. VETS has offered to tailor workshops to the identified needs of transitioning RC members.

Since 2001 VETS has provided transition services to over 146,000 RC members. These transition services range in size and content from mobilization/demobilization briefing to the full TAP employment workshop. They are provided in 43 states and the District of Columbia. In some states RC members have been able to attend the regular TAP for Active component service members. The services provided to the RC are tailored to the needs and requests by the DoD.

Minnesota has been in the forefront of providing the needed transitional services to RC members. In early 2005, the state of Minnesota implemented a transition assistance program to assist the RC members and the contingent of active duty service members within the state. Realizing the RCs need the same quality of transition assistance that their active component peers receive, emphasis was placed on coordination through the state's adjutant general down through individual units for implementation of the program as a part of the overall "Beyond the Yellow Ribbon" reintegration efforts. The mini-TAP workshops or MN/TAP is a program designed primarily for the RC members who are limited in time to attend a full TAP. MN/TAP focuses on job search, resume and applications, interviewing and follow-up.

To meet the transition needs of the RCs, in FY 2007, DOL directed National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) to develop a modular version of the TAP employment workshop. The traditional TAP employment workshop was turned into a 15- module menu that RC commanders may choose from in providing those services to their unit members. This training includes a mandatory module that covers local labor market information, USERRA, the one stop career center system, small business opportunities and risks of homelessness. The other 14 consist of the current TAP employment workshop curriculum broken down into logical and connected blocks of instruction. This is not a new or separate curriculum for the RC; rather it has been packaged to better serve the RC community.

The Department of Labor, through the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA.

USERRA protects civilian job rights and benefits for veterans and members of RCs. USERRA also makes major improvements in protecting service member rights and benefits by clarifying the law and improving enforcement mechanisms. Most recently, DOL promulgated regulations implementing the USERRA statute. The regulations have been universally well received by the public and are written in "plain English" question-and-answer format designed to provide guidance and answer any questions employees and employers alike may have about their respective rights and duties under the law. In addition, DOL has created a USERRA e-laws Advisor, containing a wealth of information about the law, and which also contains an electronic complaint form, the VETS e1010. The e1010 allows individuals to complete and submit USERRA complaints electronically without the need to download, print and mail a signed copy to

the local VETS field office. The USERRA e-laws Advisor can be accessed at: www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm.

USERRA provides protection for disabled veterans, requiring employers to make reasonable efforts to accommodate the disability. Service members convalescing from injuries received during service or training may have up to two years from the date of completion of service to return to their jobs or apply for reemployment.

USERRA provides that returning service members are reemployed in the job that they would have attained had they not been absent for military service (the long-standing "escalator" principle), with the same seniority, status and pay, as well as other rights and benefits determined by seniority. USERRA also requires that reasonable efforts (such as training or retraining) be made to enable returning service members to refresh or upgrade their skills to help them qualify for reemployment. The law clearly provides for alternative reemployment positions if the service member cannot qualify for the "escalator" position. USERRA also provides that while an individual is performing military service, he or she is deemed to be on a furlough or leave of absence and is entitled to the non-seniority rights accorded other individuals on non-military leaves of absence.

Furthermore, the work of *The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors*,¹ especially as it relates to challenges RC veterans face upon transition to civilian employment, has provided a strong foundation from which to build — particularly the recommendations concerning increasing the flexibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation & Education Program (VRE) and for providing incentives to members who complete those programs.

¹ Serve, Support, Simplify; Report of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; July 2007

APPENDIX IV

VA OUTREACH & TRAINING

Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is dedicated to improving the lives of veterans and their eligible family members through the provision of benefits and services. VA staff throughout the country are committed to achieving the VA mission of fulfilling President Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans. Inherent in the mission is the need to familiarize veterans, family members and survivors with the benefits and services that they may be eligible for and to assist them in using these benefits. VA recognizes that outreach and awareness activities have a direct effect on the achievement of our mission.

Outreach is generally defined as the act or process of reaching out in a systematic manner to proactively provide information, services and benefits to stakeholders or the public. It may include any activity that is used to inform veterans about VA's health care programs and services. VA uses all available methods to ensure that the greatest number of service members and veterans are reached. Outreach in VA includes direct mailing, news media, community based activities, partnerships with other federal agencies, internet, phone centers and personal briefings to service members, veterans, veterans service organizations and other interested stakeholders.

VA's goal is to provide veterans with the world-class benefits and services they have earned and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability and stewardship. VA management is committed to increasing knowledge and awareness among veterans and their families about benefits and services.

VA programs enhance the Armed Forces' recruitment and retention efforts by providing assistance to veterans in their readjustment to civilian life. VA outreach efforts begin at recruitment to military service and continue throughout the life cycle of the veteran.

VA has facilities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and some U.S. Territories. VA delivers health care and benefits through a network which includes 156 medical centers, 875 community- based outpatient clinics, 207 veterans centers, 57 regional offices and 140 Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) sites. VA also operates 124 national cemeteries.

Outreach activities in VA are as varied as the programs administered and the beneficiaries served. Targeted outreach to special groups helps ensure that programs, benefits and services meet their intended recipients at the right time. Some level or style

of outreach is conducted at every point of service and benefit delivery. VA programs have discovered that hard to reach veterans must be addressed in ways that best meet their particular circumstances – community programs, targeted mailings, events, educating community resources, culturally appealing materials. For example, populations that are dispersed and difficult to reach may best be reached over the internet.

Outreach

This report provides highlights on the varied outreach that VA provides to service members, veterans and families to assure that they are made aware of the VA benefits and services available.

Outreach is not limited to veterans and family members but also includes educating other agencies and/or organizations involved in helping veterans and family members such as community service providers, school officials, lenders, service organizations and other federal and local agencies that work with veterans and their families.

VA has always been committed to outreach. This commitment is heightened during periods of war. Since September 11, 2001, approximately 646,000* men and women from the RC have been activated to serve in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (ONE/OIF/OEF). As of April 2008, approximately 527,500* of these troops have separated from active duty and transitioned to civilian life, becoming the newest generation of veterans. The increased role of the RC has focused VA's attention on expanding outreach efforts to ensure that they educate this segment of the veteran population and address their critical needs (*Data updated as of April 2008 by OSD/RA (M&P)) .

VA has continued to build its outreach efforts. In 2004, Secretary Nicholson began sending a personal letter to each returning OEF/OIF veteran based on lists routinely provided by the DoD. In August 2005, Secretary Nicholson established the Office of National Outreach Programs. This office is charged with working with VA's administrations and staff offices to coordinate and monitor major departmental outreach efforts to ensure veterans and their families have timely access to information regarding VA benefits and services. The office is also responsible for developing and implementing administrative and operational policies related to outreach.

The Office of National Outreach Programs coordinates with VA's senior leaders and the communications offices in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to develop national, regional and local outreach plans to inform specific veteran populations, their families and service providers of VA benefits and services. The office also serves as a liaison with the White House, Congress and other federal, state and local officials on the development of coordinated outreach efforts.

In 2004, the Secretary established a Seamless Transition task force to intensify and continue efforts to ensure the best and most timely services are provided to service members and veterans. The task force is composed of VA senior leadership from key program offices as well as the VA/DoD Joint Executive Council (JEC) structure. Initially, efforts of the task force focused on coordination and collaboration across administrations and agencies to ensure this mission is approached in a comprehensive manner. The partnership with DoD extends to all levels including military services, the office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and the offices of the Assistant Secretaries of Defense for Health Affairs and Reserve Affairs. Based on recommendations from the task force, the Secretary established the Office of Seamless Transition in 2005.

The Office of Seamless Transition functions to ensure that the provision of benefits and health services information is coordinated and provided at the earliest possible time. VA and DoD partner to ensure that the transition from active duty to veteran status is seamless for all military personnel including Guard and Reserve members transitioning from active duty.

VA and DoD developed a number of training materials for staff including a script and video for the front line staff to ensure that they can identify veterans who have served in a theater of combat operations and take the steps necessary to ensure they receive appropriate care. Each VHA facility and each VA regional office have designated a point of contact to coordinate activities locally and to ensure the needs of these service members or veterans are met and contact is made should the veteran relocate.

Seamless transition is improving collaboration with DoD to enhance outreach to returning members of the National Guard and Reserves. A new brochure has been developed and distributed summarizing the benefits available to this special population of veterans upon their return to civilian life. One million copies of this brochure have been printed. It is also available in electronic form on the VA internet site. The outreach component of the Office of Seamless Transition (OST) was established in 2005. The OST outreach program educates service members and veterans returning from theaters of combat operations about VA services and benefits. The OST focuses on combat injured veterans and OEF/OIF RC members returning from deployment and their families. The unique partnership OST established with the National Guard provides access to returning troops and family members during family day events, national conferences and reunion events at the units of the returning troops.

National interdepartmental outreach efforts include assistance in the training of Transition Assistance Advisors (TAA) about VHA, VBA, NCA and TRICARE to provide outreach in each state and referral to VA services and benefits experts to assist these new veterans in VA enrollment and eligibility. OST forms state coalitions to extend the outreach to local level partners in community and faith-based organizations.

At last count, formal agreements had been established with 26 states, an additional 16 states are working on formal agreements and 12 states have established informal agreements.

In joint efforts with DoD, OST participates in Post-Deployment Health Reassessment programs to reassess returning veterans for potential service-related health problems at three and six months post deployment. VA leverages this opportunity to provide additional outreach on benefits and services. OST collaborates with DoD to provide outreach to injured service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Medical Center by facilitating amputee peer visits by combat disabled VA employees.

OST provides case management by coordinating outreach efforts across the administrations and agencies to facilitate the transition of veterans from DoD facilities to VA and to the community medical facility located closest to their homes. VA/DoD Social Work Liaisons and VBA Benefit Counselors are now located at nine Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to assist injured and ill service members. VA began placing VA social workers and benefits counselors at key military treatment facilities (MTFs) where severely wounded service members from OEF/OIF are generally transferred from theater. Full time VA staff is assigned to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C. and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Similar teams work with patients and family members at other MTFs serving as key medical centers for seriously wounded returning troops: Eisenhower (Ft. Gordon, GA), Brooke (Ft. Sam Houston, TX), Darnall (Ft. Hood, TX) and Madigan (Tacoma, WA) Army Medical Centers; Evans (Ft. Carson, CO) Army Community Hospital; and Camp Pendleton and Balboa Naval Hospitals (CA). Through these resources, each claim from a seriously disabled OEF/OIF veteran is case managed for seamless and expeditious processing. VA social workers facilitate the transfer of veterans from major MTFs to the VA Medical Center closest to their home of record or most appropriate for specialized services required as a result of their medical condition.

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Outreach

Outreach activities within VBA are generally targeted at three categories of beneficiaries. The first is active duty military service members and activated National Guard and Reserve members. The second is veterans including those National Guard and Reserve members who have been demobilized. The third category of beneficiaries is the family members and survivors of service members who died while on active duty or veterans who die from a service-connected disability.

Outreach is a cooperative effort among the five VBA business lines (Compensation and Pension, Education, Loan Guaranty, Insurance and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment) and among VA elements including field organizations, VHA, NCA and the Office of Public Affairs (OPA). In addition, VA works in partnership with other federal,

state and local agencies and veterans service organizations to increase outreach opportunities.

VBA's outreach program includes a wide array of activities designed to assist veterans in understanding and applying for VA benefits, including transitional briefings for service members and RC members; direct mailings of information letters and brochures; staff presentations and speaking engagements with veteran groups, community organizations, educational institutions, etc.; conference exhibitions; and internet websites targeted to specific groups. These efforts focus on making information available and accessible and on creating benefits information that is "user friendly."

The outreach mission is carried out using various media such as toll-free telephone service, the internet, kiosks, special mailings, news releases, public service announcements, pamphlets, fact sheets, award letters, town hall meetings, benefits seminars and other forums in which information about VA benefits and claims assistance is furnished to attendees.

Outreach efforts begin long before the service member becomes a veteran. VA outreach efforts acknowledge that providing veteran benefit information to service members very early in their military careers will increase the likelihood of awareness.

Accession. Since November 2004, each person inducted into one of the five military branches receives VA Pamphlet 21-00-1, *A Summary of VA Benefits*, through Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS). This cooperative effort between VA and DoD ensures that inductees receive basic information on VA benefits and services to which they may become eligible. The MEPS process reaches virtually all personnel at induction. Since June 2006, VA Pamphlet 21-00-1 was distributed to graduates of the military service academies. The BEC is working to further expand on efforts to disseminate information on benefits and services available to uniformed service members and VA and DoD beneficiaries throughout the military personnel lifecycle. This includes efforts planned to engage each service branch to identify other key accession (e.g., ROTC) and service transition points (e.g., Senior NCO school) for distribution of *A Summary of VA Benefits* pamphlets.

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and Other Military Services Briefings. Over the past four years, VBA representatives conducted over 29,000 VA benefits briefings for over a million service members. VA also conducted retirement briefings, separation briefings, pre- and post-deployment briefings for National Guard and Reserve members, and overseas briefings. In FY 2006, nearly 7,300 briefings were provided to more than 284,000 attendees. In addition, the DOL provided a formal two and a half day Transition Assistance Workshop, as well as Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA) briefings at some 213 military installations world-wide. DoD and the military services provided "Preseparation Counseling" sessions to approximately 200,000 Regular component and 75,000 RC personnel annually.

Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). DTAP provides service members with information about VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) program. The DTAP program is the first step to ensuring professional and personal success outside of the military for eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities. Generally DTAP is conducted in conjunction with TAP briefings.

Benefits Delivery at Discharge. This initiative was established to provide transition assistance and continuity of care to service members who are separating from active duty. Under the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program, service members may begin the disability claims process with VA between 180-60 days prior to separation. There are currently 130 BDD sites that actively take claims from separating service members. VA and DoD signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) in November 2004 which established a Cooperative Separation Process/Examination under the BDD program. The MOA stipulates that only one examination is to be conducted, using VA protocols, which meet the needs of VA and DoD.

Coming Home to Work (CHTW). CHTW is an early outreach effort with special emphasis on OEF/OIF service members at military treatment facilities who are pending medical separation from active duty. Participants work with a VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to obtain un-paid work experiences at government facilities. Such work experiences allow veterans to learn valuable skills which they may use to ease transition to civilian employment.

Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) Mailings. MGIB benefit information is mailed to service members upon enlistment and again to those who enrolled in MGIB after 12 and 24 months of active duty. These mailings also include information on VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program. Both of these benefits administered by VA are available to active duty service members.

Outreach to Guard/Reserve. With the activation and deployment of large numbers of National Guard and Reserve members to Iraq and Afghanistan, VA expanded its outreach to this cohort. In partnership with DoD, VA conducts retirement briefings and healthcare services and benefits briefings at town hall meetings, family readiness groups and during unit drills near the home of returning Guard/Reserve members.

VA and the National Guard Bureau teamed up in 2005 to train 54 National Guard TAAs – one for each of the 50 states and four territories. The primary function of the TAAs is to serve as the statewide point of contact and coordinator to provide information and advise Guard members and their families regarding VA benefits and services. They also assist in resolving problems with VA healthcare, benefits and TRICARE. A VA sponsored training conference held in February 2006, enhanced the TAAs knowledge of VA services and benefits as well as defined their role as VA advocates.

VA encourages state National Guard coalitions to improve local communication and coordination of benefits briefings to ensure that National Guard and Reserve members are fully aware of benefits. To support better communication between the National Guard and VA, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was developed between VA and National Guard to institutionalize this partnership.

The national MOA between VA and the National Guard Bureau was signed in May 2005 outlining how the two organizations would work together to identify and solve problems and collaborate to improve communication and information about VA benefits for Guard and Reserve members. Each VBA office was instructed to begin to work locally with the National Guard to develop a similar local MOA with related state and local services. The purpose of this effort was to develop regional and local partnerships between VA leadership, National Guard adjutants general and State Directors of Veterans Affairs to enhance access and services to veterans and to share information about VA benefits and services through coalition meetings.

Veterans Assistance at Discharge System (VADS). In an outreach effort that began in 1968, VADS generates the mailing of a “Welcome Home Package” that includes a letter from the Secretary, VA Pamphlet 21-00-1, *A Summary of VA Benefits*, and VA Form 21-0501, *Veterans Benefits Timetable*, to all veterans recently separated or retired from active duty (including National Guard/Reserve members).

In addition, a VADS generated letter provides similar information to those same veterans with a 6-month follow-up letter, the summary of benefits information and the timetable for applying for benefits. VADS sends specific information on education benefits to separating and retiring service members as well as activated National Guard/Reserve members soon after release from active duty. VADS sends automated mailings to inform recently discharged veterans of their eligibility to convert Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI). At one week, three weeks and 55 weeks after discharge, applications are mailed to those service members who have not yet applied for VGLI. The computer-generated VGLI applications are also mailed to all RC members who have separated.

Unemployable Veterans with Service-Disabled Veterans’ Insurance (S-DVI) Outreach. This planned outreach effort will invite S-DVI policyholders who have also been rated to be Individually Unemployable (IU) to apply for a waiver of premiums on their S-DVI policies. In an effort to provide high-level service to policyholders who paid or are paying on a policy that potentially qualifies for a waiver, insurance service will invite all of the identified policyholders to file for waiver of their premiums.

First Time Applicants. All veterans who first apply for any VA benefit are informed about other potential benefits. Regional Offices include VA Form 21-0760, *VA Benefits in Brief*, with all acknowledgment letters for Compensation, Pension and Education

claims. Special instructions have also been established for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment applicants.

Women Veterans. Women Veterans Coordinators (WVCs) at regional offices continue to work closely with VHA Women Veteran Program Managers and with local service organization representatives. Through such partnering, local outreach events were expanded to regional activities such as the annual Women Veterans Appreciation Day in Branson, Missouri. VBA representatives at the national and local levels work closely with the Center for Women Veterans, the VHA Women Veterans Health Program and the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans to improve outreach to women veterans. VBA representatives also participate in the annual conference of the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators. VBA was a co-sponsor of the June 2004 National Summit for Women Veterans which was attended by almost 300 women veterans, women veterans coordinators and other interested individuals.

Homeless Veterans. In response to P.L. 107-95, VBA established full time Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs) at 20 regional offices in early FY 2003. Part time coordinators are assigned at all other regional offices. In October 2003, the directors of 10 regional offices joined the executive committee of their regional Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH). They were selected based on their proximity to each of the ICH Regional Council's base city. The HVOC for each of those offices participates in the ICH regional working group. VA representatives have key roles in implementing the national plan to end chronic homelessness in 10 years. HVOCs actively participate in stand downs for homeless veterans. Stand downs are typically one to three day events providing services to homeless veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings, VA and Social Security benefits counseling and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment. They are collaborative events, coordinated between local VA facilities, other government agencies and community agencies that serve the homeless. Stand downs have been used as an effective tool in reaching out to and assisting homeless veterans. Stand downs for homeless veterans are driven by local community efforts in partnership with VA Office of Homeless Veterans Programs. Through the collaborative efforts of VSOs, federal Benefits Offices, Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) and service providers, an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 homeless veterans have been provided outreach services thorough the conduct of local stand downs. HVOCs work closely with their VHA counterparts and participate in various homeless programs available at local VA medical centers such as the Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) Program, Veterans Industries, Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans and Comprehensive Homeless Centers. VBA representatives also work with the Social Security Administration and the DOL in implementing grant and per diem programs for the homeless.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Outreach

Outreach activities within VHA are generally focused on three categories of veterans. First are those veterans who may be eligible but are unaware of VA health care services. The second are veterans who are aware of the benefits but do not use them to the full extent of their eligibility. The final group is composed of service members who will become eligible for veterans benefits.

A variety of direct outreach and educational activities are employed to inform service members about their eligibility and services available and to improve the health outcomes of veterans. Outreach is used to provide information on health care issues in general, both to veterans and VHA health care providers.

VHA's primary outreach audience includes veterans eligible for medical treatment in categories 1-8, returning veterans, Members of Congress and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs).

Secondary audiences include military-oriented groups (both active duty and RC members), affiliations, unions and other governmental and private health care organizations. This covers other health care providers and community stakeholders at large. Activities may include the involvement of veterans and/or others with the ability to reach out to veterans directly (e.g., other medical providers and providers of community-based services).

VHA targets specific groups of veterans including: the homeless and indigent; elderly veterans and their family members; at-risk women; Native Americans; those with specific medical issues, such as AIDS/HIV, Hepatitis C, Parkinson's disease and Multiple Sclerosis; and those involved with Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), Agent Orange, or the Gulf War. Most importantly, VA is actively outreaching to and enrolling veterans returning from OEF/OIF, especially members of the RC.

VHA engages in numerous outreach activities, both at a national and a local level, using various outreach methodologies such as benefits fairs and exhibits which include VHA displays at conferences and conventions.

Activities and partnerships such as VSO meetings (e.g., America Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans), federal boards, town halls, educational patient support groups, DoD related activities such as the Transition Assistance Program, RC conferences and reunion events and the Post Deployment Health Reassessment Program activities all assist VHA in reaching its varied and dispersed target audiences.

Publications (including VHA newsletters, posters, direct mail correspondence, brochures, fact sheets and other publications prepared at the local, VISN and national level) provide

veterans and eligible beneficiaries with concise and targeted updates to existing benefits and services. Many of the publications are targeted to specific medical conditions impacting veterans or towards a specific group of veterans and include summary information regarding benefits and eligibility.

Web sites such as the primary VHA internet-based Web site, www.va.gov/health, for use by veterans support high technology communication favored by more recent veteran populations. In addition to providing concise information on VHA benefits and eligibility, this main site serves as the starting point for a multitude of other sites that link to additional information and application forms. Working together, VHA and VBA have included a new site that is geared specifically to returning OEF/OIF veterans. VHA and the Indian Health Service have developed a combined website to provide information tailored specifically to American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Other web sites have been developed by local VHA facilities and VISNs primarily for veterans already using the health care system who seek specific information (e.g., operating hours, telephone numbers, clinic schedules and procedures for reordering medicines).

VHA also conducts outreach through Clinical Education Programs which include instruction as part of formal education such as diabetes and heart health programs, Parkinson's Patient, family and community forums, flu vaccine fairs and facility tours for veterans who, in most cases, already utilize VHA for some health care services but may be unaware of other services.

VHA employs social workers at nine military treatment facilities nation wide to educate and assist injured and ill service members transitioning from military health care to health care provided by VA. These employees are instrumental in instructing veterans and family members about potential benefits and service and facilitating access to these benefits and services.

national and local news releases generated by VHA inform veterans about veteran events and changes in policies. Local news releases are particularly effective in informing veterans about local facility programs and activities and providing points of contact.

Ceremonies are held for dedication or expansion of VA facilities as well as major special events such as Memorial Day or Veterans Day. VHA takes advantage of these events to communicate with community and stakeholder groups through presentations or informational briefings.

A critical outreach activity to veterans and families concerns the potential health effects of hazardous military deployments. VHA has produced a brochure that addresses the main health concerns for military service in Afghanistan, another brochure for the current conflict in the Gulf region, and one recently distributed on health care for women veterans returning from the Gulf region. These brochures answer health-related questions that veterans, their families and health care providers have about these hazardous military

deployments. They also describe relevant medical care programs that VA has developed in anticipation of health care needs of veterans returning from combat and peacekeeping missions abroad.

Brochures addressing health concerns for military service for the current conflict in the gulf region, including Afghanistan and other regions include:

VA Special Health Registry Examination Programs -- Questions and Answers (IB 10-57, June 2006)

Tell Your Military Story (IB 10-93 P96156, November 2005)

Women Veterans' Health Program: A Promise Kept (IB-10-180 2004)

Iraqi Freedom Veterans: Information For Veterans Who Served In Iraq In 2003-04 And Beyond And Their Families (IB 10-166 December 2004)

Enduring Freedom Veterans: Information For Veterans Who Served In Afghanistan And For Their Families (IB 10-71 December 2004)

VA Health Care and Benefits Information for Veterans Wallet Card (IB 10-181 July 2004)

Summary VA Benefits for RC Personnel (IB-10-164 March 2004)

Special VA Health Care Eligibility For Veterans Who Served In Combat Theaters Fact Sheet (IB10-162 December 2003)

2 Years Free VA Medical Care for New Combat Veterans (VA POSTER 10-125 May 2006)

VA Cares about Vietnam Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange (VA Poster 10-71 Revised May 2004 P95250)

Operations Iraq Freedom/Enduring Freedom Review (Newsletter, direct mailed and available on line at www.va.gov/EnvironAgents)

VA Cares For Veterans Who Served In Southwest Asia (VAPoster10-83 Revised May 2004)

War-Related Illness and Injury Study Centers (WRIISCs): Specialized Health Care, Research, Education and Outreach for Combat Veterans with Difficult to Diagnose Conditions (IB-10-165 April 2003)

VIDEO: War And Health: Treating War-Related Illnesses At VA's WRIISCs (www.va.gov/Environagents/page.cfm?pg=17)

Toll-free call centers provide veterans with information on health benefits, eligibility and enrollment, Gulf War, special medical programs such as Spina Bifida, SHAD and Agent Orange.

Two hundred and seven Vet Centers include professional readjustment counseling, community education and outreach to special populations. Veterans participating in counseling at Vet Centers are also provided information about and access to available VA and community support services. Vet Center staff members encounter and educate veterans about VA service and benefits at numerous outreach-related events such as meetings, forums, fairs and post deployment health reassessment programs. In 2003, VA Vet Centers began serving veterans returning from conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a community outreach arm of VHA, the Vet Centers have initiated outreach efforts at area military installations and closely coordinated their efforts with military family support services on the various military bases.

In addition to community outreach to new veterans, the Vet Centers provide trauma counseling, family counseling, employment services and a range of social services to assist veterans in readjusting from war-time military service to civilian life. The Vet Centers also function as community points of access for many returning veterans, providing them with information and referrals to VA medical facilities for health care and VA regional offices for benefits issues.

Since 2003, the Under Secretary for Health authorized the Vet Center program to hire 100 OEF/OIF veterans to conduct outreach to their fellow Global War on Terror veterans. All 100 were hired. These positions are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. They provide information about VA and Vet Center services at military demobilization and RC sites, as well as at local community events.

VHA uses numerous methods to provide veterans with the latest information on medical research being conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs. These methods include brochures and reports available on the Office of Research and Development website at <http://www1.va.gov/resdev/resources/pubs/arch.cfm>, CDs, Frequently Asked Questions, VA Researcher's Speaker's Programs, and conference and meeting presentations. The goal of the research outreach program is to educate veterans on the scope of the program and to encourage veterans to participate in VA research.

Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations Outreach National Veterans Employment Program, Office of Marketing and Veterans Employment Outreach Service. Since 2001, the purpose of the National Veterans Employment Program (NVEP) has been to lead the Department's effort in promoting VA career opportunities to veterans. The program supports the Department's commitment to a diverse workforce by targeting qualified veterans to fill VA vacancies. Strategic goals of the program are to assist veterans in making a smooth transition to the civilian workforce; help restore the independence, capabilities and quality of life of disabled

veterans; and deliver world class service to veterans and their families. NVEP participates in outreach and recruiting events for veterans and promotes VA career opportunities at military transition centers, VSOs, professional military organizations and other veteran stakeholders as well as VA facilities nationwide. The program conducts campaigns to educate veterans, Human Resource (HR) professionals, employers and selecting officials on how veterans' preference and special hiring authorities for veterans can be used effectively to assist veterans obtain employment in the federal sector and, in particular, in VA.

The most recent expansion of the program is the development of Veterans Employment Coordinators (VEC) at HR offices throughout VA. VECs lead local efforts to recruit and retain veterans in VA's workforce. NVEP hosts a website, www.va.gov/nvep and has launched new marketing materials highlighting the tag line "Serving those who served," as displayed on posters, brochures and promotional materials distributed to veterans nationwide.

The Center for Minority Veterans Outreach. The Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) strives to develop and foster relationships with community organizations, VSOs, special emphasis groups and other stakeholders to assist in creating understanding of the unique needs of minority veterans. CMV provides briefings and panel presentations to minority veterans and family members. CMV educates staff and local communities, conducts town hall meetings and attends national and local conventions.

CMV identifies and assesses the needs of the minority veterans and conducts appropriate outreach. The goal of the outreach is to increase local awareness of minority related issues and develop strategies for increasing participation in existing VA benefit programs. Minority Veteran Program Coordinators (MVPCs) are located at all VA facilities. CMV provides guidance and direction to field staff to maximize the effectiveness of local outreach efforts. For example, CMV provides e-mails to field staff which may include samples on how to greet your supervisors that help your supervisor understand minority outreach needs in your local area so there is specific information on how to target outreach.

CMV provides liaisons to targeted populations including African American veterans, Asian American and Pacific Island veterans, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Alaskan Native veterans and Japanese American veterans.

The Center for Women Veterans Outreach. The Center for Women Veterans (CWV) conducts specific outreach to female veterans to ensure female veterans have access to VA benefits and services on a par with male veterans. Outreach is designed to improve female veterans' awareness of services, benefits and eligibility criteria. CWV informs female veterans through briefings, town hall meeting, panels, workshops and other government and community based activities. CWV participates in a national summit on Women Veterans' Issues.

CWV supported an information exhibit at the Joint Services Symposium for Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard women service members at Ft. McNair. CWV staff members participate on a variety of panels and task forces established to design future benefits and services. CWV staff members ensure that the special needs of the female veteran population are represented.

Office of Public Affairs Outreach. *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependent, 2006* is a 134 -page comprehensive guide on federal benefits programs for veterans. The guide is distributed widely to employees, VSO representatives, congressional offices and veterans. Orders for the booklet have increased steadily, totaling two million this year. Approximately 60,000 copies of the Spanish edition were printed in 2006. This booklet is also available on the VA internet site at http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.asp.

Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Outreach Program was created to reach out to faith-based and other non-profit organizations to remove barriers that prevented participation in existing VA programs and to develop new and innovative initiatives to assist our nation's veterans. The program focuses on maximizing community partnerships to deliver benefits and services to the community.

News releases and public service announcements are prepared and distributed by local and national public affairs offices. These releases reach a wide audience in the general public who might not otherwise be familiar with the benefits and services provided by the VA.

Native American Tribal Policy, in the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, develops policy to be used by VA staff to meet and consult with Native American Tribes. Meetings between the Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Intergovernmental Affairs and Native American tribal leadership, letters, notices and conventions ensure improved understanding of veterans programs. These meetings facilitate the development and use of programs targeted to this population, for example the Native American Loan Guaranty program.

Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Outreach. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) administer the small business programs through advocacy, education and oversight. The Center for Veterans Enterprise promotes business ownership and expansion for veterans and service-connected disabled veterans through the use of veteran targeted posters, briefings, newsletters, videos and websites such as <http://www.vetbiz.gov/> and <http://www.vetbiz.gov/StartBusiness/edu.htm> . OSDBU encourages agency contractors to subcontract with service-disabled veteran-owned businesses by attending local outreach events sponsored by other organizations and participating with prime contractors in prime outreach events as described in

<http://www.vetbiz.gov/fpp/VAstrategy.pdf>. The program provides veteran entrepreneurial training at the Chief Logistics Officers conferences and other meetings.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs - Outreach Strategies and Initiatives FY2006 - 2011

Strategic Outlook for Communication. Enhanced outreach and communication will ensure that veterans and their families, stakeholders and employees are well-informed about VA benefits and services as well as VA's vision, mission, goals and objectives. To ensure that service members and veterans receive information that is critical to their understanding of benefits and services, VA will systematically pursue an array of communication and outreach strategies. Enhanced communication and outreach will be especially important in the areas of seamless transition and VA/DoD collaboration. Outreach and awareness strategies and initiatives can be found throughout VA's Strategic Plan. The following is an outline of outreach and awareness activities contained in VA's Strategic Plan

Goal 1: Restore the capability of veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families.

Strategy and Initiatives:

Improve outreach, collaboration and data sharing to assist veterans in identifying and receiving appropriate benefits.

VA will improve the methods, content and distribution of our outreach efforts.

- VA will collaborate with DoD to ensure that outreach materials and briefings – provided by VA, DoD, or both – contain consistent information on health care and benefits
- VA will increase the number of sites where VA staff are stationed at military treatment facilities (MTFs)
- VA will seek additional opportunities at the state and local level to partner with Military services, veterans organizations and social service networks to expand awareness and understanding of VA benefits and services

Create, foster and maintain relationships with partners.

- VA will expand outreach efforts through joint training initiatives, information exchanges and aggressive oversight focused on improved cooperation, coordination and measurable interaction on behalf of disabled veterans in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program
- VA will continue to foster partnerships with local, state and federal agencies, such as the DOL and state employment services

Provide comprehensive employment assistance.

- VA will continue to use Employment Coordinators as an integral resource in the delivery of employment exploration, job readiness and job placement services

- To ensure that VA provides these services in a comprehensive, timely and individualized manner, Employment Coordinators will partner with state-employed Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and local Veterans Employment Representative staff

Identify and remove obstacles to participation in survivor benefits programs by eliminating redundancies and improving outreach.

- VA will continue to conduct outreach efforts to family members and employ a streamlined application process for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation benefits

Goal 2: Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.

Improve understanding of services through clear and consistent communication with future veterans and their families.

- VA will partner with DoD to conduct outreach activities and transition assistance to separating service members. For example, increased interagency collaboration in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)/Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) will improve service members' understanding of VA benefits
- Through readjustment counseling and other services, VA will assist veterans in fully reintegrating into their communities with minimal disruption to their lives

Goal 3: Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifice on behalf of the Nation.

Develop and implement outreach efforts designed specifically to reach elderly and low-income veterans and survivors.

- By coordinating outreach activities with those who serve the elderly and low-income veterans, such as the Social Security Administration, VA will continue to establish vital links for outreach to veterans and their family members
- These outreach partnerships are designed to inform veterans and survivors about the benefits to which they may be entitled

Enabling Goal: Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes and financial resources.

Improve communication with veterans and increase awareness about VA benefits and services by developing and widely disseminating comprehensive and accurate information.

- VA will implement a communications strategy to create a network within which VA personnel at all levels can effectively convey information about what they do as a veteran-centric organization. This strategy will increase public awareness and continued support for the Department's mission and programs

- VA's Office of Public Affairs will develop and implement a Communications Plan, focusing on strategic communications that help achieve VA's strategic goals. This plan will provide a coordinated approach to ensure that clear and consistent information about VA issues are provided to both employees and the public
- VA will disseminate a variety of information, reader-friendly publications—focusing on VA benefits, eligibility criteria, services and other activities—to the widest possible audience
- VA will conduct outreach and education activities for the veteran community and the general public through news releases, articles appearing in veterans service organization publications, public service announcements and presentations to schools and community organizations
- VA will continue to be a leader in plain language letter writing. VA sends out approximately 30 million pieces of correspondence annually

Enhance communication with service members to ensure a smooth transition through the Office of Seamless Transition, Transition Assistance Programs and the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program.

- VA's Office of DoD Coordination will partner with DoD to conduct outreach activities and transition assistance to service members separating from active duty, National Guard and Reserve. The office is developing a VA Seamless Transition Awareness Campaign to increase awareness of the process as service members transition from the military to VA and civilian life, particularly those who were seriously injured in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom
- The Office of DoD Coordination will promote continuity of health care and benefits for those returning from combat with service-related conditions. Through increased interagency collaboration in TAP/DTAP, VA will improve awareness of VA benefits for service members
- VA's BDD program is an ongoing effort to improve service. VA and DoD have implemented this program to help transitional military personnel apply for and receive decisions on VA disability benefits prior to separation from active military service
- VA has produced education materials for employees and returning service members who may need VA support services. A Veterans Benefits Learning Map will be made available to veterans service organizations and state VA offices to help veterans better understand the benefits and services they are eligible to receive

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs (December 2006). Report on Servicemembers' and Veterans' Awareness of Benefits and Services Available Under laws Administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs: Interim Report on Outreach Activities. Washington, D.C. Visit: http://vaww1.va.gov/op3/docs/Interim_outreach_report.pdf.

APPENDIX V

Acronyms Used in this Report

ACS – Army Community Service

ACVETEO - Advisory Committee on Veterans’ Employment, Training and Employer Outreach

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

AFW2 - Air Force Wounded Warrior

AGR – Active Guard and Reserve

AIFSN - Army Integrated Family Support Network

AMAP - Army Medical Action Plan

ANG – Air National Guard

ARER - Army Reserve Employer Relations

ARNG – Army National Guard

AW2 – Army Wounded Warrior

AW2EI - Army Wounded Warrior Education Initiative

BDD – Benefits Delivery at Discharge

BEC – Benefits Executive Council

CAA - Career Advancement Account

CBO - Congressional Budget Office

CBOC - Community Based Outpatient Clinics

CEI – Civilian Employment Information

CHTW - Coming Home to Work

CMV - Center for Minority Veterans

CWV – Center for Women Veterans

DA – Department of the Army

DAS – Deputy Assistant Secretary

DCOE - Defense Center of Excellence

DCS - Deployment Cycle Support Program

DHRCWG - Deployment Health Risk Communication Working Group

DMDC – Defense Manpower Data Center
DoD – Department of Defense
DOL – Department of Labor
DOE – Department of Education
DO-VOI - District Office-Veterans Outreach Initiative
DS3 - Disabled Soldier Support System
DTAP – Disabled Transition Assistance Program
DVOP - Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program
EOB GOSC - Employer Outreach and Benefits General Officer Steering Committee
ESGR – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
FMWRC - Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command
FP/CYS - Family Programs and Child and Youth Services
GAO – Government Accountability Office
GCBD - Government Contracting and Business Development
HART - Helping Airmen Recuperate Together
HCMI - Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill
HEC – Health Executive Council
HHS – Health and Human Services
HR – Human Resources
HVOC - Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators
ICH - Interagency Council on Homelessness
IDA – Institute for Defense Analyses
IMA - Individual Mobilization Augmentee
ISFAC - Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee
JEC – Joint Executive Council
JFSAP - Joint Family Support Assistance Program
MEPS - Military Entrance Processing Stations
MGIB-SR - Montgomery GI Bill-Selected Reserve
MOA – Memorandum of Agreement

MREIDL - Military Reservist Economic Injury Disaster Loan
MTF - Military Treatment Facilities
MVPC - Minority Veteran Program Coordinators
NCA - National Cemetery Administration
NCO – Non-Commissioned Officer
NDAA – National Defense Authorization Act
NVEP - National Veterans Employment Program
NVTI - National Veterans Training Institute
OEF – Operation Enduring Freedom
OIF – Operation Iraqi Freedom
ONE – Operation Noble Eagle
OPA – Office of Public Affairs
OSD/RA (M&P) – Office of Secretary of Defense/Reserve Affairs (Manpower and Personnel)
OSDBU - Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
OST - Office of Seamless Transition
OVBD - Office of Veterans Business Development
PCR - Procurement Center Representative
PDHRA - Post Deployment Health Reassessment
PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
PX - Patriot Express
RC – Reserve Component
REAP – Reserve Educational Assistance Program
ROTC – Reserve Officer Training Corps
SBA – Small Business Administration
SBDC - Small Business Development Center
SBIC - Small Business Investment Corporation
SBS – Soldiers Benefit Services
SBTN - Small Business Training Network
SCORE - Service Corps of Retired Executives

SCRA - Servicemembers Civil Relief Act
S-DVI - Service-Disabled Veterans' Insurance
SDVOSB – Service-Connected Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses
SELRES – Selected Reserve
SERG - Self Employed Reserve and Guard
SFAC - Soldier Family Assistance Center
SHAD – Shipboard Hazard and Defense
SIF - Second Injury Fund
SOFS-R - Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members
TAA – Transition Assistance Advisors
TAP – Transition Assistance Program
TBI - Traumatic Brain Injury
TRADOC - Training and Doctrine Command
TurboTAP – an online Transition Assistance Program
USAFR - U.S. Air Force Reserve
USAR – U.S. Army Reserve
USERRA - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act
USMCR - U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
USNR - U.S. Navy Reserve
VA – Department of Veterans Affairs
VADS - Veterans Assistance at Discharge System
VBA - Veterans Benefits Administration
VBOC - Veterans Business Outreach Center
VEC - Veterans Employment Coordinators
VET - Veterans Entrepreneurial Training
VETS - Veterans' Employment and Training Service
VHA - Veterans Health Administration
VR&E - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment
VRE - Vocational Rehabilitation Employment

VSO – Veterans Service Organizations

WBC - Women's Business Center

WTU - Warrior Transition Units

WVC - Women Veterans Coordinators

YRRP – Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

APPENDIX VI
Special Working Group Membership
October 2008

Members of the Special working group on the Transition of RC Members Returning from Deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, include:

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESERVE AFFAIRS

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Ms. Janet Salotti
MAJ Zolio Lopez

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

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Office of Veteran's Business Development:
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