

# WARRIOR MEDIC

## MONTHLY

An Army Reserve Medical Command Publication



## Cash Bonus to Replace 'Stop Loss' for Deploying Guard Soldiers

By Army Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy  
Special to American Forces Press Service



ARLINGTON, Va., A new program that provides special pay for soldiers deploying past their end-of-service dates is set to take affect Sept. 1 for the National Guard.

The Deployment Extension Stabilization Pay program replaces the "Stop Loss" involuntary extension program and pays a cash bonus of up to \$6,000 to soldiers in units set to deploy who elect to stay in past their end-of-service date to deploy, said Col. Marianne Watson, Army National Guard personnel officer.

The bonus is not a lump sum payment, and the amount of the incentive depends upon when the soldier decides to extend his or her enlistment contract, Watson said.

The Army's Stop Loss program has been used since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks to extend soldiers in critical jobs past the end of their enlistment contract to deploy.

"If you agree to extend from 180 days to 365 days [prior to the mobilization date] we're going to offer you \$500 a month for each month that you're in a Title 10 [active duty] status," Watson said. For those who extend between 179 days and 90 days before

the mobilization date, that rate drops to \$350 for each month on active duty.

Soldiers who elect to take advantage of this program would have their enlistment contracts extended for the length of the deployment plus 90 days, Watson said. However, to qualify for the incentive pay, soldiers must make it through the Soldiers Readiness Processing at the mobilization station.

Soldiers who have an enlistment contract that expires during the deployment and choose not to extend it still may have to deploy.

"We would take a soldier who could serve a minimum of six months boots-on-ground, plus still keep or maintain 90 days of reintegration," Watson said. "So a Guard soldier would go to mobilization station for two to three months, they would go to the deployment theater and they would do a minimum of six months boots-on-ground. Then they could come back, up to three months early."

To put it another way, Watson said, "anybody with a [contract expiration date] of mobilization day plus one year, we're taking to theater." But soldiers may rotate out of theater up to three months early, if need be, to have them take part in the 30-, 60- and 90-day reintegration programs prior to the end of their term of service.

"We said as a reserve component we still need to maintain that 30-, 60-, 90-day reintegration period," Watson said.

For unit commanders, the new policy

provides a way to establish early-on their units' manpower needs for the deployment, Watson noted.

"The Guard program provides stabilization for units in the deployment window," she said. "Our goal is to stabilize the organization and lock in the formations for the commander as far out as we can, up to 365 days prior to the mobilization date."

For soldiers who extend their contracts past the mobilization plus the 90-day reintegration window, standard retention bonuses would apply.

Stop Loss affects just 1 percent of the Guard, and only for limited time periods, Guard officials said. The Army still retains the authority for future use of Stop Loss under extraordinary circumstances.

State personnel offices have more information.

## Biden Announces Pentagon Housing Assistance Program Expansion

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Michael J. Carden  
American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON - Vice President Joe Biden today announced the Defense Department's plan to expand its housing assistance program

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**Do you have a story to tell?** The goal of the Army Reserve Medical Command's Public Affairs Officer is to feature stories in this publication that represent units from all over our command's region of responsibility. We are always seeking stories that would be of interest to our readers. Contributions are welcome. **Story ideas as well as written articles and photos for consideration should be submitted to ARMEDCOMPAO@usar.army.mil., or call 1-877-891-3281, extension 3730.**



with \$555 million devoted to servicemembers forced to sell their homes at a loss due to the country's struggling housing market.

The financial support comes from President Barack Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to supplement the department's Homeowner's Assistance Program, Biden said aboard the USS Ronald Reagan during a visit with sailors and their families at Naval Base Coronado in San Diego.

The funds are allocated to provide benefits to military and civilian employees, according to a specific priority order, who suffered housing financial losses since 2006.

"The sacrifices military families make for our country, in terms of deployments but also moving several times in their career, are immense," he said. "They often don't get to choose when they move and may be forced to sell their homes when they don't want to."

Several times during the average military career, military members may be ordered to change duty stations to meet the mission requirements for their respective branch of service. Duty calls on servicemembers and their families to relocate and establish a new home as frequently as every two to three years. Many have moved because of base closures under the 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure Act.

Some families have been forced to sell their homes despite the possibility of losing thousands of dollars amid the country's struggling economy and housing market. Many military members can't afford to own a home near Fort Bragg, N.C., and rent or buy another near Scott Air Force Base, Ill., for example.

"We are in the middle of a credit and housing crises, and we recognize that military families cannot generally choose when to move," the vice president said, "so we've used the Recovery Act to dramatically expand what was once a fairly small program, assisting families forced to relocate due to base closures or normal assignment rotations."

The initiative isn't entirely new, however. The Pentagon has offered and provided similar financial assistance to military and civilian employees for more than 40 years, defense officials said. Until now, the program's primary support has focused on those who owned homes and lost money near closed or soon-to-be-closed down military installations under BRAC.

With the expansion, the Pentagon can now provide partial reimbursement for home-sale losses to other groups. The priority order for the benefits, according to Pentagon officials, are as followed:

- Wounded servicemembers relocating for treatment or medical retirement,

and for the surviving family members of those who have died while on deployment.

- Military and Defense Department civilian employees affected by BRAC without the need to prove whether the base closure or the general housing market decline caused the loss.
- Normal permanent change of station moves, but only on a retroactive basis that covers PCS moves between July 1, 2006, through Dec. 31, 2009.

All active and former members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard, as well as DoD civilians who have sold a home since 2006 may visit the Homeowners Assistance Program Website to learn specific program criteria and eligibility.

#### Related Sites:

**Homeowners Assistance Program**  
<http://hap.usace.army.mil/>

## Health Officials Discourage Aspirin Use by Troops in Combat Zones



By **Gerry J. Gilmore**  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - The Defense Department is directing servicemembers and government civilians deployed in overseas war zones to refrain from taking aspirin unless under a doctor's orders, a senior military physician said here today.

"Aspirin use for reasons other than medical indications is discouraged," said Army Col. (Dr.) Tony Carter, director for operational medicine and medical force readiness under the deputy assistant secretary of defense for force health protection, a component of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

Military medical authorities also advise that troops slated for deployment to combat zones should cease taking aspirin at least 10 days before departure, Carter told Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service reporters.

Aspirin is "a platelet-inhibitor," Carter explained. Platelets are small cells floating in the blood that induce hemostasis -- the process that causes bleeding to stop through the forming of blood clots. Low amounts of blood platelets can lead to excessive bleeding.

"Those platelets serve an important role in stopping bleeding once it occurs," Carter said.

Then-Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Dr. S. Ward Casscells III

signed a March 12 memorandum that noted aspirin use by troops deployed in contingency areas could contribute to excessive bleeding in the event of wounding or injury.

Blood loss is the most common cause of preventable death associated with combat injuries, the memorandum said.

Carter recalled Casscells asking his staff if the military was discouraging aspirin use by people deploying to combat zones where they stood risk of injury. The answer at the time was no, Carter said.

The subsequent memorandum, Carter said, also directed the cessation of "over-the-counter access" to aspirin through Army and Air Force Exchange Service outlets or morale, welfare and recreation activities in war zones. AAFES has jurisdiction over Army post exchanges and Air Force base exchanges.

AAFES is complying with the Health Affairs-issued memorandum, noting in a news release that its "operations in contingency locations are removing all products containing aspirin from their shelves."

The intent of the new policy, Carter said, is to "discourage the inadvertent use of aspirin" in combat zones. People who routinely take small doses of aspirin per doctor's orders to maintain vascular health should be all right, he said, but they should consult their physician.

Servicemembers and civilians could substitute over-the-counter, non-aspirin-based medications such as Tylenol or Motrin -- for treatment of colds, fever, muscle aches and other maladies, Carter said.

"I think we should take every measure possible to make sure that we minimize blood loss," Carter said. "And, not taking aspirin, unless you need to take it, is one of those mechanisms that we want to use."

#### Related Sites:

**Health Affairs Memorandum,**  
[www.health.mil/Content/docs/pdfs/policies/2009/09-006.pdf](http://www.health.mil/Content/docs/pdfs/policies/2009/09-006.pdf)

**AAFES news release:**  
[www.aafes.com/pa/news/09news/09-033.htm](http://www.aafes.com/pa/news/09news/09-033.htm)>

## U.S. Combat Troops on Pace to Leave Iraqi Cities by June 30



By **Jim Garamone**  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - American combat troops are on pace to leave Iraqi cities by the June 30 deadline stipulated by the U.S.-Iraq security agreement, U.S. officials in Baghdad said

yesterday.

Army Brig. Gen. Keith Walker, commander of the Iraq Assistance Group, said in a news conference that security throughout the country has continued to improve.

The security agreement calls for all coalition combat forces to be out of the cities by the end of the month. "We will adhere to the security agreement," Walker said. "So, all combat forces will be out of the cities unless there is a specific invitation from the government of Iraq."

U.S. forces will be available in advisory roles and to provide enabler capabilities, the general said.

In 2007, there was an average of 900 attacks per week. In 2008, that number dropped to 200 attacks per week. In 22 of the 26 weeks this year, fewer than 100 attacks have taken place per week nationwide, Walker said.

This improvement in security happened as the number of U.S. forces in Iraq declined by more than 20 percent from the height of the surge. "We have returned over 100 bases to Iraq since October," the general said. "The provisions of the security agreement make our partnership with Iraqi forces that much more important."

Today, Iraqi security forces conduct all operations. Coalition forces participate only with Iraqi concurrence. The coalition-Iraqi partnership "is characterized by combined planning, preparation and execution with Iraqi security forces in the lead," he said. "It is enabled by a close working relationship and the collocation of partnership units and transition teams."

The partnership's coalition units help the Iraqi units with enablers, logistics and to ensure situational awareness between Iraqi forces and coalition forces.

Coalition transition units are now shifting attention to beefing up Iraqi command and control capabilities, sustainment and enabler units. "We have reached the point where partnership units are the core of what Multinational Corps Iraq does," Walker said.

The corps will take over the partnership chores from the Iraq Assistance Group. "It no longer makes sense to have two organizations doing the same thing," Walker said, so the mission of the group is folding into the corps.

Multinational Corps Iraq will handle the military and police transition teams and training for Iraqi forces in addition to operational responsibilities. The Iraq Assistance Group will case its colors June 3.

Even once the U.S. units move out of the cities, they will remain associated with their Iraqi partners, Walker said. "They'll have to drive a bit more, but they will be available," he said.

The security agreement covers the entire country, so coalition forces will move out of areas such as Mosul, which have been fairly hot in the past months, the general said.

More than 600,000 Iraqis serve in the country's security forces.

#### **Related Sites:**

#### **Multinational Corps Iraq:**

<http://www.mnci.centcom.mil/>

## New 'Operation Purple' Program Provides Family Retreats



**By Samantha L. Quigley  
American Forces Press Service**

WASHINGTON - It's no secret that deployments put stress on a family, and the National Military Family Association has developed a new "Operation Purple" program at no cost to military families.

The association created Operation Purple summer camps in 2004 as a way to help children of military families struggling with the stresses of war. A new program helps military family members re-establish their roles through family retreats.

"The intent of it was to bring the family together so that they could tell their deployment story as a family and really build on the experience of bringing the family back together after the deployment," Michelle Joyner, NMFA's director of communications said.

"This was just helping families [with] the reintegration piece of re-establishing the family roles, [which] was done through writing this deployment story as a family unit," she added.

Based on a six-week program that the FOCUS Project at the University of California at Los Angeles has been using with the Marine Corps, the first two Operation Purple family retreats were held in Port Angeles, Wash., and Sausalito, Calif., in March. NMFA worked with the FOCUS Project to come up with a concept that would be beneficial for military families and could be accomplished in a long weekend, Joyner said.

With support from the Sierra Club, military families bonded and enjoyed a number of outdoor activities in the national parks where the retreats were held. Activities were guided by four master's-degree-level clinicians experienced in working with families, said Patricia M. Barron, NMFA's director of youth services.

"Our collaboration with the FOCUS curriculum saw that the activities used at the

retreats were centered on skill building and resiliency training," she said. "Families were taught to use specific skills to identify feelings that could impede communication and also spent time creating a family collage that told the story of their unique experience as a military family."

The camp staff also was well trained, Barron said. As field-science educators, each held at least a bachelor's degree, and many had a master's degree.

Eligibility for March's pilot program was limited to those who had returned from deployment within the past year, and despite limited outreach, the response was huge, NMFA officials said. Applications came in from 400 families, and 43 were accepted for the program. The participants' response to the retreats was very positive, Joyner said.

"They appreciated having the dialogue and the activities that sparked the conversations," she said. "It was nice, because you're never sure how group activities are going to go over when you do them the first time."

NMFA officials are planning at least two more retreats for the fall, to be held on the East Coast, and hope for a third, possibly to be held on the West Coast, Joyner said.

Registration takes place through the Operation Purple Web site, which also features information and updates on the program.

#### **Related Sites:**

#### **National Military Family Association's Operation Purple:**

[www.operationpurple.org](http://www.operationpurple.org)

## Commissaries ask customers - 'What's in your closet?'



**By Millie Slamin,  
DeCA public affairs specialist**

FORT LEE, Va. - You can plan for a summer outing, but you can't plan for a natural or man-made disaster. This month, the Defense Commissary Agency wants to help you plan for both.

"Our focus is on delivering a premier commissary benefit to our armed services community," said DeCA Director and CEO Philip E. Sakowitz Jr., "and we do that by ensuring our customers have what they need, whether it is for a backyard barbecue or an emergency."

Beginning in June, and continuing throughout the summer months, commissaries are stepping up efforts to promote disaster preparedness through DeCA's "What's in Your Closet" campaign. This ini-

tative prompts customers to check their medicine and kitchen cabinets, garages, and wherever else they may keep their "survival kits," and purchase items that are missing.

"Our 'What's in Your Closet' disaster preparedness campaign is just one of the many ways in which we enhance our customers' quality of life," said Sakowitz.

"It also serves to reassure our troops, whether they are at home or in the field, that we are not only providing their families with the finest service possible, we are also taking the very best care of them."

During the campaign, commissaries will run their "Summer Water Program," and offer "Summer Club Packs" that include disaster preparedness items like nonperishable foods, toiletry items, flashlights and batteries.

Sakowitz noted that commissary patrons throughout the United States and overseas experience a myriad of climate changes throughout the year that sometimes cause disasters, most typically occurring at the onset of summer.

"It is now hurricane season for some of our customers, while others will experience lightning storms, floods, tornadoes or earthquakes," he remarked. "Then, too, there are the regions where dry summers bring grass and forest fires.

"Because shifts in weather conditions can bring about a natural disaster, it's important for us to heighten preparedness awareness and provide customers with items that will sustain them during a crisis."

To avoid the risk of not having all items on hand, DeCA recommends that customers check their emergency preparedness status and use their commissary benefit to stock up on emergency provisions at savings of 30 percent or more.

"With the help of our suppliers, we keep our shelves fully stocked with products that can sustain customers who are coping with a disaster," said Charlie Dowlen, promotions manager for DeCA's sales directorate.

"We are fortunate to have suppliers who will expedite the delivery of large quantities of critically needed items that will sustain those who have gone through a crisis."

DeCA recommends customers have the following items in their "closet":

- Water - at least one gallon, daily, per person for three to seven days.
- Nonperishable foods - canned meats, fruits, vegetables, dried fruits, nuts, raisins, cereal, crackers, cookies, energy bars, granola, peanut butter, and foods for infants and the elderly.
- Paper goods - writing paper, paper plates, paper towels, toilet paper.

- Cooking items - pots, pans, baking sheet, cooking utensils, charcoal, a grill and a manual can opener.
- First-aid kit - including bandages, medicines and prescription drugs.
- Cleaning materials - bleach, sanitizing spray, and hand and laundry soap.
- Specialty foods - diet and low-calorie foods and drinks.
- Toiletries - personal hygiene items and moisture wipes.
- Pet care items - food, water, muzzle, leash, carrier, medications, medical records, and identification and immunization tags.
- Lighting accessories - flashlight, batteries, candles and matches.
- Our stores are stocked and ready with emergency-essential items, and motivated staffs are standing by to provide exceptional customer service," said Sakowitz. "So don't wait until disaster strikes. Visit your commissary today, and you will see that - it's worth the trip!"

**For more information about how to best prepare for emergencies and natural or man-made disasters, visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency Web site: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov); the Department of Homeland Security Web site: [www.dhs.gov](http://www.dhs.gov); and the American Red Cross Web site: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org).**

## Single Soldier Retreat in Orlando 26-28 June 2009



Single Soldiers,

We still have space available for our Single Soldier Retreat on June 26-28 2009 in Orlando.

If you are interested, please register by filling out a registration form for the event ASAP. Soldiers will attend the event in either TDY or ADT status.

Please send all registration forms with supervisor's signature and UA POC information to Staff Sgt. Jennifer Fey at the AR-MEDCOM Chaplain's Office.

Please call or email with ANY questions about the event.

NOTE: We will also be hosting a Marriage Retreat in Orlando 14-16 August 2009

POC: Jennifer C. Fey, Chaplain Assistant, [jennifer.fey@us.army.mil](mailto:jennifer.fey@us.army.mil); Office : (727) 563-3726, Blackberry (727) 638-4102

## Program Makes High-Cost Schooling Accessible to Troops, Vets



By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Servicemembers and veterans who enroll in the new Post-9/11 GI Bill will be able to attend some of the country's most prestigious and high-cost universities, thanks to a new program that's gaining momentum in academic circles.

Keith Wilson, director of education service for the Veterans Benefits Administration, reported growing interest in the Yellow Ribbon Program.

"We're getting a lot of activity in that area," he said. "There are a lot of schools that have expressed interest in participating."

Participating colleges and universities enter into an agreement with VA to fund tuition expenses above the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rate. That rate, the maximum the Post-9/11 GI Bill can pay by law, varies from state to state.

Under the Yellow Ribbon Program, the school waives or offsets up to 50 percent of those higher costs, and VA will match that same amount.

If, for example, the tuition bill at a participating university is \$20,000 and the Post-9/11 GI Bill can pay only \$15,000, the university and VA will split the \$5,000 difference, explained Tammy Duckworth, who was confirmed last week as VA's assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental affairs.

Duckworth's alma mater, Washington's George Washington University, became the latest institution to sign on to the program this week. GW's commitment provides for 360 veteran students to benefit during the 2009-2010 academic year, which university officials expect to cover all eligible undergraduate and graduate students.

Under the agreement, qualified servicemembers and veterans attending GW as undergraduates will receive free tuition, and those attending as graduate students will receive a significantly discounted rate.

In announcing the university's participation, GW President Steven Knapp called the school's estimated \$2.5 million investment in the program during the upcoming school year a way of giving back.

"This is a significant investment in those who have sacrificed so much on our behalf," he said. "We as a nation owe our veterans a debt of gratitude, and this commitment will enable veterans who attend GW to have the kind of educational oppor-

tunity the original GI Bill envisioned."

Other schools large and small have signed on or are considering the program.

At Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., officials said they couldn't say no to the initiative. "It's really exciting for us, because it's an opportunity for us to serve veterans who have served our country," public relations director Karrie Heartlein said. "As you know, veterans deserve the best our country has to offer, and that includes the opportunity to attend the college of their choice. The opportunity for them to attend Knox College is very exciting."

La Roche College in McCandless, Pa., also joined the program. "We're honored to play a role in helping our veterans reach their education and career goals," said Hope Schiffgens, director of the school's Office of Graduate Studies and Adult Education. "This is a time in our nation's history when education and retraining is vitally important, especially to this group of men and women who have given so much to us."

Jerry Jackson, dean of enrollment management at Union College in Barbourville, Ky., said his school also looks forward to working with veterans through the Yellow Ribbon Program. "We're eager to get this program started and to make sure our veterans know they're welcome as students at Union," he said. "We're proud to be able to help cover the cost of a college education for people who have served our country."

"I am so pleased that Centenary College will be able to provide this benefit to the fine men and women who have served our country," echoed Barbara-Jayne Lewthwaite, acting president of Centenary College in Hackettstown, N.J. "It is an honor to be able to reward these individuals for their dedication. Additionally, we look forward to benefiting from their global experiences in the classroom based on their military service."

In announcing his school's participation, Mari Ditzler, president of Monmouth College in Monmouth, Ill., said he looks forward to the opportunity "to serve those who have served our country."

"The residential liberal arts experience at colleges like Monmouth has been described as uniquely American," he said. "We are pleased that the Yellow Ribbon Program will enable our veterans to experience this special approach to learning and living."

"We are excited to be a part of the Yellow Ribbon Program and to support our nation's veterans," agreed Joel Bauman, vice president of enrollment services at Westminster College in Salt Lake City. "This program allows us to offer educational opportunities to those who have made tremendous sacrifices, and this is one way

we can give back and thank them for their service."

In Pittsburgh, Seton Hill University's vice president for enrollment services, Barbara Hinkle, called the program a win-win situation. "We're very excited about the possibilities -- both for our current students whose families may qualify, but also for future students as they come back from being deployed or their family members who are here," she said.

Wilson said he expects more schools to join their ranks as Yellow Ribbon Program participants.

"We just started soliciting applications about two weeks ago," he said. "We're processing them as they come in, and we're getting them coming in every day."

VA began accepting applications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill today. The new benefit takes effect Aug. 1. It is among several VA-sponsored educational benefits available to servicemembers and veterans.

#### Related Articles:

#### VA Emphasizes Education Before Post-9/11 GI Bill Switch;

[www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=54151](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=54151)

## Jury Duty Scam



This has been verified by the FBI (their link is also included below). It is spreading fast so be prepared should you get this call. Most of us take those summonses for jury duty seriously, but enough people skip out on their civic duty, that a new and ominous kind of fraud has surfaced.

The caller claims to be a jury coordinator. If you protest that you never received a summons for jury duty, the scammer asks you for your Social Security number and date of birth so he or she can verify the information and cancel the arrest warrant. Give out any of this information and bingo; your identity was just stolen.

The fraud has been reported so far in 11 states, including Oklahoma, Illinois, and Colorado. This (swindle) is particularly insidious because they use intimidation over the phone to try to bully people into giving information by pretending they are with the court system. The FBI and the federal court system have issued nationwide alerts on their web sites, warning consumers about the fraud.

#### Resource links:

[http://www.fbi.gov/page2/june06/jury\\_scam060206.htm](http://www.fbi.gov/page2/june06/jury_scam060206.htm)

## Sexual Assault Prevention Videos Available from Defense Department



By Samantha L. Quigley  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - Defense Department agencies at all levels have valuable resources at their fingertips for training servicemembers, civilian employees and contractors on prevention of sexual harassment and assault.

More than two dozen prevention training DVDs are available through the DefenseImagery.mil Web site, said Vince Rotell, director of the Defense Imagery Management Operations Center's Customer Relationship Management Office at Tobyhanna Army Depot, Pa.

Although 25 DVDs are offered for sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention training, many are geared to a specific audience, Rotell noted. For instance, the Army is designated as the primary audience for the video titled, "The Many Faces of Sexual Assault," which was completed in May 2006 and serves as a way to generate discussion of sexual assault prevention. It also depicts a clear case of sexual assault vice sexual harassment.

Likewise, "SAVI: Putting the Pieces Together," completed in May 2003, targets the Navy, and explains the Navy's Sexual Assault Victim Intervention Program. The video was reviewed in 2008 to make sure the information contained in it was still current, Rotell said.

Another video, titled "Targeting Sexual Assault: Air Force Campaign Plan for Prevention and Response," was completed in November 2005 and is aimed at the Air Force. It explores the myths and realities surrounding sexual assault, as well as serving as a forum for the Air Force chief of staff and other senior leaders to address sexual assault and introduce the steps the Air Force is taking to enhance its prevention.

The videos, some of which date back to 1990, are reviewed about every three years to ensure they still contain valid information, Rotell said. "It comes back that these are still current," he said. "So there's some expert out there that's saying it's still good."

All of the more than 8,000 titles in the Defense Imagery catalog are available to Defense Department customers at no charge. Each request is checked to ensure only those eligible to have the videos get them.

The DefenseImagery.mil site employs a keyword search function. Users can search

"sexual assault prevention," Rotell said, but should also search "sexual assault harassment," as both terms are used. Also, in the search box the only two "Result types" that should be checked are "A/V and IMI Products," and "Site Content," he added.

## Service Exchanges Pull Hydroxycut Diet Supplement from Shelves



By Gerry J. Gilmore  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - A recent U.S. Food and Drug Administration warning to consumers has prompted military exchanges to remove the diet supplement Hydroxycut from store shelves, officials said today.

Military exchange officials contacted today confirmed that Hydroxycut products have been withdrawn from stores. The products are used by dieters and body builders.

In a May 1 news release, the FDA warned consumers "to immediately stop using Hydroxycut products." Usage of such products, the release stated, is "associated with a number of serious liver injuries."

Officials at the Dallas -based Army and Air Force Exchange Service directed managers to remove Hydroxycut from store shelves by noon May 2, said Judd Anstey, AAFES public relations manager.

The Marine Corps Exchange Service also removed Hydroxycut products from its stores in response to the FDA warning, said Bryan Driver, a spokesman for Marine Corps Community Services, based at Quantico, Va.

Navy Exchange stores removed Hydroxycut products from shelves on May 1, said Kristine Sturkie, a public affairs specialist for Navy Exchange Service Command at Virginia Beach, Va.

Patrons of Defense Commissary Agency grocery stores needn't worry about Hydroxycut, said Ronald Kelly, chief of DeCA's public affairs directorate based at Fort Lee, Va. "We do not carry the product in our inventory," he said.

The maker of Hydroxycut, the FDA release stated, agreed to pull the diet supplement off the market. The FDA release lists a number of products subject to the consumer warning.

### Related Sites:

#### Food and Drug Administration

#### News Release

[www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2009/NEW02006.html](http://www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2009/NEW02006.html)

## Education Activity Helps Deployed Parents See Children's Graduations



By Samantha L. Quigley  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - This year, as it's been for the last five, no high school senior graduating from a Department of Defense Education Activity school in Europe will look around wishing a parent could be there as the sound of "Pomp and Circumstance" fills the air.

For the sixth year, DoDEA is providing webcasts of graduation ceremonies from 17 European schools. Two of those ceremonies occurred yesterday, another 12 will take place today, and the remaining three will happen tomorrow, June 7 and June 12.

When the DoDEA graduation season is complete, about 125 parents deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, and other far-flung locales will have been able to participate in their son's or daughter's high school graduation ceremony.

"We know how important this is to parents, and particularly parents who are deployed," Frank X. O'Gara, DoDEA's educational communications officer, said. "Even if just one student is [graduating], trying to connect that parent with that student for this ceremony is very important.

"Right from the very beginning, when you watch one of them, you can see the power of it," he added.

Letters from deployed parents to their sons or daughters reflect servicemembers' sentiments about the importance of being a part of this once-in-a-lifetime event.

"There was this one soldier who wrote back and said, 'I was in a different war in the Middle East when you started kindergarten, and then I find myself back here in the Middle East on your graduation day,'" O'Gara said. "He talked about all of the times he had to be away during her life, and all the major events that happened.

"He ended by saying, 'Such is the life of a soldier, and such is the life of the family members of a soldier,'" he added. "It was very powerful. It's what it's all about."

The dad who wrote that letter was able to watch his daughter graduate via video teleconference, the way the graduations were broadcast in 2003.

That first year, only two schools' ceremonies -- Vicenza High School in Italy and Wiesbaden High School in Germany -- were broadcast by video teleconference. Immediately, however, other schools with units that would be deployed during the next graduation season wanted to participate. Because video conferencing

required too much equipment downrange, webcasting was chosen as the new mode.

Making the webcasts possible takes a lot of cooperation from the commands, both at home and downrange. The deployed servicemembers must be located, and then arrangements must be made for them to be at the viewing location at the right time.

Sometimes they're brought together to celebrate their children's graduations as a group. Other times, it's a solitary event. Either way, it's a sweet celebration, O'Gara said.

While not as cumbersome as video teleconferencing, webcasting still takes a good deal of effort. U.S. Army Europe and 5th Signal Command deserve a lion's share of the credit for making it happen, he said.

"The Army is really the major player ... and have really made it happen," O'Gara said. "The 5th Signal Command has been very instrumental in spearheading this effort and then working all the technical issues to make it happen."

The remaining graduation ceremonies to be webcast, and the air times, can be accessed at

<http://www.doddsegrads.net/Default.aspx>. Enter the username "2009grads" and the password "lucky2009."

The site also features graduation programs for and links to each webcast, information on those who made it possible, and graduation messages from commanders.

### Related Sites:

**Department of Defense Education Activity**, <http://www.dodea.edu>

## DoD Defines New GI Bill Transfer Rules



By Tom Philpott, Military Times

New GI Bill Transfer Rules Give Members More Control  
Servicemembers nearing the end of their careers will find it

easier than first thought to transfer new Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits to their spouse or children, under Department of Defense regulations.

And servicemembers who elect to transfer GI Bill benefits will be allowed to modify or revoke that decision at any time, thus keeping control of a benefit with an average start value estimated at \$75,000 to \$90,000.

Bob Clark, assistant director of accession policy in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, discussed the transferability feature of the new GI Bill in some depth during an April 29 phone interview.

The details should comfort many long-

serving careerists - including enlisted members facing high-year tenure rules or officers facing mandatory retirement - who worried about being denied transferability because they might not meet a requirement in law to serve four additional years.

Clark said the four-year requirement will be relaxed, and for some waived entirely, for individuals near to retirement. The regulation on transferability isn't final yet because it hasn't been signed.

"We're awaiting a general counsel opinion on the [need for] publishing them in the Federal Register," Clark said.

The Department of Veterans Affairs administers all veterans' education benefits. Defense officials are only responsible for transferability policy because of the potential impact on recruiting and retention. Officials decided to confirm policy details before they officially are set because VA will begin to accept Post-9/11 GI Bill application on Friday May 1.

Here then are the transferability details, as explained by Clark:

**ELIGIBILITY** - Only members on active duty or in the Selected Reserve on or after Aug. 1, 2009, can transfer new GI Bill benefits, and only spouse or to children or to any combination thereof. Immediate family status will be confirmed through the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System.

Unused benefits, up to the full 36 months, can be transferred. "You can give 36 months to one child or one month to 36 children," Clark quipped.

To transfer benefits, members must have served a minimum of six years and commit to serving four more from date benefit transfer is approved. However, exceptions - one permanent and five temporary -- will be allowed to the four-year added service requirement.

**PERMANENT EXCEPTION:** If a servicemember who already has served at least 10 years is barred by service policy or statute from serving an additional four years, because of high-year tenure rules or mandatory retirement rules, they still will be allowed to transfer GI bill benefits if they agree to serve the maximum amount of time allowed by that policy or law.

**TEMPORARY EXCEPTIONS:** Defense officials will allow five other waivers to the four-year requirement of additional service for categories of members nearing retirement eligibility or with retirement orders in hand.

These exceptions are to recognize, said Clark, "that we have a senior force out there who, had they had this opportunity many years ago, they probably would have selected transferability for their family members."

Granting these exceptions also help

force managers, he said. Without them, the services would see thousands of retirement-eligible servicemembers trying to stay four years longer to qualify for GI Bill transferability. That could have "a very negative impact on our force profiles," Clark said.

"So we said, 'Let's look at a way that we can phase this group out.' We developed five rules. All will sunset in 2013."

1) Members retirement eligible by Aug. 1, 2009, may transfer GI Bill benefits to an immediate family member and face no additional service requirement. "Retirement eligible" means completion of 20 years of active service or 20 qualifying years of reserve service.

2) Members with approved orders to retire on or after Aug. 1, 2009, but before July 1, 2010, will not have to serve added time to transfer benefits. This is to avoid forcing the services and members to change set retirement dates in the next year or so. Retirements set for after July 1, 2010, officials decided, could be changed with little difficulty.

3) Members who first become retirement eligible on or after Aug. 1, 2009, but before Aug. 1, 2010, will be required to serve one additional year from the date that transfer of GI Bill benefits is approved.

4) Members who become retirement eligible on or after Aug. 1, 2010, but before Aug. 1, 2011, will have to serve two additional years from the date that benefit transfer is approved.

5) Members who become retirement eligible on or after Aug. 1, 2011, but before Aug. 1, 2012, will have to serve three additional years after benefit transfer is approved.

**SUSTAINED ELIGIBILITY** - After transfer of benefits, spouse eligibility will not be affected by divorce, and children will stay eligible even if they marry. But the member retains ownership of the benefit and can modify or revoke transfer at any time without explanation. Also, the GI Bill benefit cannot be treated by judges as property to be shared in a divorce.

**LIMITS ON USE** - A spouse can use GI Bill benefits like the member. The monthly living stipend, set to match local Basic Allowance for Housing rate, won't be paid if the member is on active duty. If the member has left active duty, the spouse will be paid the living allowance. Children get the allowance whenever they use GI Bill benefits.

Also, the spouse has 15 years to use benefits after the member leaves service. Children can use only until age 26. They can start using transferred GI Bill benefits after graduating from high school or at age 18.

A spouse can use transferred benefits

immediately. A child can't use GI Bill benefits until the member has served at least 10 years.

"We hope to start to accept requests for transfers in June," said Clark. "But the earliest date transfer would be approved is Aug. 1."

## 'Her War' Podcast Aims to Help Military Wives



By Sharon Foster  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - When Melissa Seligman's husband left for his second deployment to Iraq, she knew all too well what was expected of her.

"I was expected to be the nice, caring, understanding military wife and mom," Seligman said. "No military wife wants to admit that she is hurt -- and sometimes angry and very fearful -- of being alone when her husband is deployed, ... sometimes for the second or third time. It's very hard. The guilt we feel from these natural emotions often keeps us silent."

Seligman said she hopes her new weekly podcast, "Her War," will help to provide a platform for military wives to openly discuss such anxieties and uncertainties about their husbands' deployments. The podcast, she said, is dedicated to providing military wives with the tools and resources they need to better equip themselves to deal with separation issues.

Weekly discussions will focus not only on hope, understanding and acceptance, but also on denial, anger, bargaining and depression -- feelings that she said often are hidden.

"'Her War' is about honesty," Seligman said. "Military wives can join our discussions and be fully honest about their inner fears and not worry about being judged. The absolute focus of this podcast is to uplift them. I truly believe giving these wives a chance to speak, hear and take charge will empower them. In doing so, we strengthen our soldiers, our marriages and our abilities to mother."

Seligman, with the help of another military wife, Chris Piper, launched the "Her War" podcast last week. The first discussion, which included eight military wives, centered on hope and denial.

"The podcast went really well," said Lucy Brassard, whose husband just returned from Afghanistan. "I was really pleased with the format. I could relate. This is a support group of women who have been there. You can trust them."

"I also liked the anonymity," she continued. "We military wives are often so closed-lipped. We just don't discuss these issues out in the open. When you join the podcast, the only name people know is your screen name. It just makes you feel more comfortable and more relaxed."

This is the type of atmosphere she'd hoped to capture, Piper said.

"I believe military spouses don't feel they have a right to feel a certain way, especially with their spouse in harm's way," she said. "With this podcast, they can learn that they are normal and not alone. We sit here in our homes thinking that we are the only ones that are grieving for our husbands while they are gone. Just knowing that we are having normal feelings and thoughts helps. We can learn to rely on ourselves and each other. We can also learn about other resources that the military provides for dealing with deployments."

Seligman, the author of "The Day After He Left for Iraq," said her inspiration for this podcast came from a military wife who drove three hours to her first book signing.

"She walked into the store carrying the weight of her burden and told me simply, 'I'm a military spouse, too,'" Seligman said. "She fell into my arms and cried. I told her she was not alone. Right then, I knew I wanted to create a tool that would uplift spouses and give them a sense of support and normalcy."

The "Her War" podcast is hosted by Courage Community, a California-based online support group consisting of mental health professionals and volunteers.

"We provide an online network and a lifeline of hope for those looking for peer support, professional help, reconnection to the community or just an understanding friend," Carlana Stone, founder of Courage Community, said. "Melissa is on a passion-driven pursuit, from her own military experiences in life, to empower and uplift military wives. We wanted to be a part of this. Courage Community wants to be an ally for these women."

#### Related Sites:

##### 'Her War' podcast registration;

<http://community.couragecommunity.org/user/displayUserRegisterPage.kickAction?as=31351&STATUS=MAIN>>

##### Courage Community;

<http://www.couragecommunity.org/>>

## New Paternity Leave For Army Fathers



### What is it?

The Army's new paternity leave policy gives fathers additional time to be with their families when a new child is born.

The policy, which was signed into law under President George W. Bush on Oct. 14, grants married Soldiers up to 10 consecutive days of non-chargeable administrative leave after the birth of a child. Paternity leave must be taken within 45 days of the child's birth; deployed Soldiers must take the leave within 60 days after returning from deployment. Leave not taken within the established timeframe will be lost.

Single Soldiers who father a child out-of-wedlock are not eligible for paternity leave.

### What has the Army done?

The Army recognizes the importance of families being together during significant events such as the birth of a child. It has developed a flexible paternity leave policy that allows male Soldiers to support their spouses during the joyous, but possibly stressful, time of adjustment following the arrival of a new family member. It also provides Soldiers returning from deployments uninterrupted time with their child to begin building bonds that will last a lifetime.

The policy allows Soldiers who have taken annual leave in connection with the birth of a child since October 2008 to request up to 10 days of leave be restored/re-credited to their leave account. Soldiers must provide documentation to support their claim (e.g., DA Form 31 or LES) and submit it through the unit S1 or Personnel Administrative Center.

## Tiger Woods Plans Fourth of July Weekend Treat for Troops



By Tim Hipps, Special to American Forces Press Service

BETHESDA, Md. - Golfer Tiger Woods vowed April 20 to dedicate his AT&T National

PGA Tour event to the men and women of the U.S. armed forces for the third consecutive year.

The AT&T National hosted by Tiger Woods will donate 30,000 tickets for retired veterans, active-duty troops, reserve-component servicemembers and their families to attend the tournament July 2-5 at Congressional Country Club.

Woods, who missed the tournament last year while recovering from knee surgery, will play the Earl Woods Memorial Pro-Am on July 1 with a foursome completed by servicemen and women, as he did in 2007, the tournament's first year.

The Military Caddie Program again will feature troops serving as caddies for the pros on the seventh hole. Two years ago at that hole, Woods handed his putter to Army Sgt. Michael Woods, who knocked down a 12-footer for the play of the day at Congressional.

Wounded warriors will serve as honorary starters on the first tee box for the tournament's opening ceremony July 1 at 11 a.m.

"Hopefully people come out, not only to watch the players, but also to say thank you to all of the servicemen and women that are coming out here," Woods said. "If it wasn't for them, what they are doing overseas, things might be different here."

Early commitments to play in the 2009 AT&T National have been received from past tournament champions K.J. Choi and Anthony Kim, along with tourney newcomer Ernie Els, who won the 1997 U.S. Open at Congressional.

European Ryder Cup team member Paul Casey, Jim Furyk and Danny Lee also have committed, said Greg McLaughlin, president of the Tiger Woods Foundation.

"There are various other military initiatives we will be doing during the week," McLaughlin said. "Again, we want to continue our support of the military in this great community, and we plan on really making a nice showing here in 2009."

Woods said he hopes to bring the buzz back to the nation's capital.

"To have the military there and to have everyone support the event like they did the first year, ... having the players just rave about it, having all the fans rave about it, it was just such a huge success," he said. "We are just trying to build on that momentum that we created the first year."

## Army Reserve Enrichment Camps Summer Registration is Still Open!



Army Reserve Enrichment Camps provide meaningful opportunities for interaction and activities that translate into resilient military youth.

Campers will have the opportunity to interact with other Army Reserve connected youth, learn about the unique factors associated with being an Army

Reserve dependent and most of all, and have fun!

**Who:** Any Army Reserve Connected Youth ages 8-16 (dependents, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc.) **REGARDLESS OF SOLDIERS DEPLOYMENT STATUS!**

**What:** Army Reserve Enrichment Camp- FREE 1 week residential camp at YMCA Camp Ihduhapi for Army Reserve Connected Youth (horseback riding, ropes courses, camping, hiking, outdoor cooking, fishing, swimming and so much more!)

The primary goal of the Army Reserve Enrichment Camps is to provide a fun and rewarding experience for Army Reserve youth ages 8-15 years. We have developed a partnership with accredited camps and national youth organizations to make this unique opportunity possible.

**Army Reserve Enrichment Camps will:**

- (1) Foster relationships between AR-connected youth.
- (2) Create leadership and team building opportunities at a local level.
- (3) Connect military Families with premiere youth development organizations
- (4) Equip youth with the skills necessary to effectively cope with deployment of a parent and increase resiliency
- (5) Afford campers an opportunity to reap the intrinsic rewards of community service
- (6) Offer a wide range of diverse, interesting, and skill-building activities
- (7) Create a program that can be self-sustaining and not dependent on parent's deployments status

**Locations:** This year's AR CYSS Enrichment Camps will be held for one-week at each of the following locations:

Tulsa, OK, Loretto, MN, Princeton, IN, Huguenot, NY, Boulder Creek, CA, Julian, CA, Sandwich, MA, Alpine, AL, King, NC, Trinity, TX, Jamesville, VA, Danielsville, GA, Oahu, HI, Graford, TX, Saipan, Port Murray, NJ, and Centerville, MD.

Camp activities such as ropes courses, boating, fishing, horse-back riding, and archery in conjunction with the unique factor of cooperative living offers an ideal youth development setting. Activities are designed to challenge and support youth in such a way that skills like independence, leadership, and peer relationships emerge. A common term used with regard to Military Families is resilience: "...the capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social and academic competence despite exposure to severe stress."

Army Reserve Child, Youth and School Services recognizes the importance of providing meaningful opportunities for participation that translates into resilient youth. It

seems summer camp is a proven and enjoyable way to foster that self-righting skill so imperative to military life. Campers will be housed in safe, secure settings and given time to relate with their peers, all while having fun.

The Army Reserve CYSS team will work directly with the Public Affairs Offices, Family Program Directors and Coordinators, Family Program Assistants and other Army Reserve staff to promote this unique opportunity.

Each site will host 30-100 campers from the surrounding region. Campers will have the opportunity to interact with other Army Reserve connected youth, learn about the unique factors associated with being an Army Reserve dependent and most of all, and have fun! Ages and dates vary by location. Visit [www.arfp.org/AREC](http://www.arfp.org/AREC) for all the details and to register. Space will fill quickly!

**For detail location information and to register, visit [www.arfp.org/arec](http://www.arfp.org/arec)**

## Fiscal Year 2011 Army Congressional Fellowship Program



The Army Congressional Fellowship Program educates selected Army Officers and Civilians on the importance of the strategic relationship between the Army and the Congress. It is a three-year program which includes pursuit of a Master's Degree in Legislative Affairs at George Washington University, service on the staff of a Member of Congress, and utilization on the Army or Joint Staff in a Legislative Liaison duty position. The program seeks Active, Reserve, and National Guard Officers who have demonstrated outstanding promotion potential, have recent experience in OIF and OEF, and have recently completed successful Company/Battery/Troop Command or equivalent Key Developmental (KD) duties. It is also open to outstanding DA Civilians who will work in a Legislative Liaison duty position in their parent organization.

Human Resources Command (HRC) will conduct a selection board in October 2009 to select 24 Officers and one DA Civilian for the 2011 Army Congressional Fellowship Program.

Additional inquiries about packet contents and eligibility criteria will also appear on the HRC-STL (HRC-STL) Web Site: [HTTP://www.HRC.Army.Mil/Site/Reserve/Soldierservices/PB/CongressionalFellowship.htm](http://www.HRC.Army.Mil/Site/Reserve/Soldierservices/PB/CongressionalFellowship.htm).

Eligible AGR Officers must request

permission to compete by submitting the following to their career assignment officer, U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC-STL) prior to 31 July 2009.

## Message from the CAR to Army Reserve Soldiers About Mentoring Opportunities



**By Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz, Chief, Army Reserve/Commanding General, US Army Reserve Command**

The American Corporate Partners (ACP) mentorship program offers mentoring opportunities for veterans and spouses of wounded or deceased military personnel. They have completed their initial launch, and many of you have participated. They have a number of openings right now in Dallas and Philadelphia that remain unfilled, and they have asked if I could make those of you who live in those areas aware of the opportunities.

As you may recall, American Corporate Partners is not a jobs program.

Instead, it provides mentoring opportunities for veterans, Servicemembers, retirees, and spouses in Atlanta, Chicago, Cincinnati, Dallas, Houston, New York, Norwalk, and Philadelphia. It is separate from the Army Reserve's Employer Partnership Initiative but offers (free of charge to the participants) opportunities for networking, gaining insights from business leaders, and developing skills.

ACP hopes to expand to another sixteen cities soon, so if you live in a different city, you may want to check back in a few months to see if your city has been added to their list.

For those interested, and not residing in cities where mentors are available to meet face-to-face, e-mentoring is also available. Visit their website at <http://www.acp-usa.org>. If you click on the link at the top of the website that says, "Program," you will reach a page that has a link to the e-mentoring link (bottom left side of the "Program" page). They require the same application that must be completed for the face-to-face mentoring.

## VA Web Site Helps College Counselors Aid Veterans



American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs has launched a new Web site to strengthen the connection between college and university mental health professionals and veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts studying on their campuses.

"Many of our newest veterans are beginning their post-service lives by furthering their educations," said Dr. Gerald M. Cross, VA's acting undersecretary for health. "This initiative is designed to ensure that colleges and universities are able to assist with any special mental health needs they may have."

The Web site, <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/College>, features recommended training for college and university counselors, with online modules including "Operation SAVE" for suicide prevention, "PTSD 101" and "Helping Students Who Drink Too Much." It also will feature a resource list that will be updated regularly.

Although the Web site is designed primarily for counselors, it also serves as a resource for veteran-students who wish to learn more about the challenges they may face in adjusting to their lives after leaving the military.

"We hope counselors and our returning veterans find this site helpful and easy to use," Cross said. "As the site grows, we expect it will become an increasingly valuable resource."

The new site is one of several Web-based tools VA has developed to assist veterans in dealing with mental health issues. Others include a guide for families of military members returning from deployment and information about a suicide prevention hotline for veterans.

**Related Sites: Department of Veterans Affairs:** [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov); **VA Web Site for College Mental Health Counselors:** [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/College](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/College)

## Transition Assistance Program



The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was established to meet the needs of separating service members during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services. TAP helps serv-

ice members and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace. An independent national evaluation of the program found that, on average, service members who participated in TAP found their first post-military job three weeks sooner than those who did not participate in TAP.

The U. S. Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service (US DOL VETS), provides the following video link to all National Guard and Reserve troops. **The six-minute video highlights the importance of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).** [http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov/media/hirevets\\_tap\\_wmv.aspx](http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov/media/hirevets_tap_wmv.aspx)

**For more information, visit [www.hirevetsfirst.gov](http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov).**

## VA Welcomes Veterans Home with New Web Site, Blog



American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - The Veterans Affairs Department has launched its new "Returning Veterans" Web site at <http://www.oefoif.va.gov> <blocked-<http://www.oefoif.va.gov>> to welcome home veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts with a social, veteran-centric Web site that focuses on their needs and questions, VA officials announced today.

"VA is entering the world of Web 2.0, because that's where this generation of veterans is already communicating," said Dr. Gerald M. Cross, VA's principal deputy undersecretary for health. "We're opening our doors to them virtually to let them know what they can expect when they step through our doors in reality."

The Web site will feature videos, veterans' stories and a blog where veterans are encouraged to post feedback. The site also will restructure the traditional index-of-benefits format found on other VA pages into question-based, categorized, and easily navigated links by topic. This will allow veterans to find benefits of interest easily and discover related benefits as they explore, officials said.

"We hope our returning veterans find this site easy and helpful, but also engaging," Cross said. "As the site grows, we will be linking to veterans' blogs and highlighting more of their own stories from their own views. We are their VA, so we are eager to provide a forum for veterans to discuss their lives."

**Related Sites: VA Returning Veterans Web Site,** [www.oefoif.va.gov](http://www.oefoif.va.gov), **Department of Veterans Affairs,** [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

## New Fitness Program Helps Soldiers Maximize Potential, General Says

By Navy Lt. Jennifer Cragg,  
Special to American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON- The Army's newest resiliency training, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, is a program designed to improve the emotional and psychological fitness of soldiers and their families, the program's director said.

"Comprehensive Soldier Fitness is really a strategy that the Army is starting to use to ensure that each soldier has the opportunity to maximize his or her potential in each important aspect of their life and their health, which is not just physical, it is really part of the roadmap to arrive at 'Army Strong,'" Army Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Rhonda Cornum told "DotMilDocs" listeners April 2 on Pentagon Web Radio.

Cornum discussed the program's intent, which is to boost the resilience of soldiers and their families by increasing their physical, emotional, social, spiritual and family strengths. She said the Army has historically concentrated on the physical fitness and physical health aspect of its soldiers.

"It's a preventative measure to not get people surviving, but thriving," Cornum said. "The idea is to make them more emotionally and psychologically fit."

Cornum added that the five domains -- mental, emotional, spiritual, family strength and fitness -- don't just happen, they have to be trained.

"We recognize now that those other domains are equally important, particularly in this time when the Army really is under a lot of stress," Cornum said.

"The program will start off with assessing where you are in those five domains and developing an ... individualized training program," Cornum continued. "It will link soldiers with what [is] needed prior to any problem developing."

Resiliency training will be initiated in all training schools, she added.

"Just like being able to do more push-ups or run faster, these aptitudes can be trained and they can be practiced and perfected and everybody can be improved," Cornum explained.

The Army's strength is its diversity, she said, but noted there are areas in which the Army can help soldiers do better.

"It's like changing your diet and your exercise and your blood pressure so that you don't get heart disease; not waiting until somebody has heart disease, has a heart

attack and then doing CPR," Cornum said.

To listen to the "Comprehensive Soldier Fitness" interview with Army Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Rhonda Cornum visit: "Dot Mil Docs" on Pentagon Web Radio <<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/stations/PentagonRadioNetwork/Dot-Mil-Docs/>>

## Program Offers Confidential Counseling for Troops, Families



By Samantha L. Quigley  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - With the country embroiled in two wars, frequent deployments, and the home-front issues deployments cause, the nation's servicemembers and their families are enduring heightened stress levels.

The Military and Family Life Consultant Program, created in 2004 as a pilot program, supplements other existing military support options to help servicemembers and their families deal with what comes with military life during times of war. The program belongs to the Military Community and Family Policy office.

"The big picture of the program is that the ... MFLC Program was developed to provide short-term, nonmedical support to the active and Guard and reserve components and their family members worldwide," said Mike Hoskins, special assistant to the office of the undersecretary of defense for military community and family policy. "What [the counselors] do is they augment existing support assets on the installation."

Several hundred thousand people a year take advantage of MFLC counselors' services, Hoskins said. Part of those numbers come from command-requested, pre- or redeployment briefings. Others use the service because it offers something traditional methods don't. The fact that they sought support from an MFLC counselor doesn't end up in their permanent file.

"People are sometimes worried about information ending up in their service record and then that having an adverse effect on them or their family or their status in the military or on the installation," he said. "With the exception of mandatory federal state and military reporting requirements, it's private and confidential."

The exceptions include knowledge of an intent to hurt oneself or others, domestic violence or child abuse, and drug use, Hoskins added.

The top two areas of concern for those seeking the support of an MFLC counselor are relationship issues with a spouse or children, or deployment-related issues. At this

time of year, tax season financial assistance is also a big concern.

"[They address] the day-to-day issues we all deal with," Hoskins said. "The military-specific issues relate to the deployment cycle, whether it's mobilization, deployment, reintegration or frequent moves. It addresses those issues also."

The program's counselors actively working on or near installations hold at least a master's degree or greater in a mental health-related field, including social work, psychology, and marriage and family therapy. They also must be licensed by a state or territory to practice at an independent practitioner level.

Hoskins said he sees the program continuing to grow because the needs are so great right now for this type of support.

"It fills the gap between what isn't able to be served through military treatment facilities or through Tricare or through the normal family center set ups," he said.

As summer approaches, Hoskins is getting ready to temporarily swell the ranks of his counselors in response to requests for support from children's summer camps.

"We provide MFLC support for [National Military Family Association] Purple Camps ... and for Guard and Reserve summer camps," he said. "The opportunity to provide support to kids in a more preventive kind of way is, I think, ideal."

The MFLC Program is part of the larger counseling program to include Military OneSource, which offers counseling face-to-face, by telephone and online. The two programs, MFLC and Military OneSource, are complimentary of one another in that they refer back and forth depending on the needs of the individuals. Services also can be tailored to meet specific needs of each individual, Hoskins said.

Troops or family members can find more information about the program at their local family center.

**Related Sites: Military Homefront,** [www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/](http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil/);

**Military OneSource,** [www.military-onesource.com](http://www.military-onesource.com)

## Groups Use Social Networking Sites to Reach Out to Supporters



By Sharon Foster, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - From fundraising to volunteering, troop-support groups are taking full advantage of social networking Web sites to reach out and gather support for troops at home and abroad.

"We created three MySpace pages a few

years back and a Facebook page this year," Andi Grant, president and founder of Give2TheTroops, said. "We update our pages daily, running current events, group news and photos. These Web sites have helped us quite a bit in gathering support and organizing."

Operation Gratitude, a California based troop-support group, has long believed social Web sites are a "great" tool for keeping in touch with supporters and sharing troop information. On its official Web site, Operation Gratitude urges all visitors to join the group's Facebook "cause" page and invite more of their Facebook friends to join as well.

"Our Facebook page was set up a month ago," Carolyn Blashek, president of Operation Gratitude, said. "The 'cause' page was set up about two years ago. We have seen an increase in volunteers and supporters through our Facebook networking. We started using Twitter about a month ago. The two have provided a mechanism for us to publish updates easily and recruit volunteers. I can honestly say keeping up with the two has enhanced our efforts, but also caused more work!"

Leaders of both groups agree social networking sites have allowed them to "get the word out" more quickly about different activities and events because of the high volume of traffic on these Web sites. It also allows for online conversations with prospective volunteers and supporters through chat rooms and forums, and direct supporters back to their official Web sites to collect funds for troop-support activities.

"By utilizing these Web sites, we have been able to introduce more people to who we are ? our goals, our mission and why we do what we do," Blashek said. "We've also received a lot of positive feedback and ideas from supporters who didn't know we existed."

Grant, whose troop-support group is based in Connecticut, acknowledged some possible drawbacks to social networking.

"You need to have the time to maintain the Web site, answer questions and monitor responses and comments," Grant said. "There is plenty of competition out there, so if you don't have designated people updating and monitoring your page, it can have adverse effects."

Grant said he had to delete inappropriate remarks and, on occasion, links to other causes which other supporters wanted his group to endorse. "Bottom line ? you have to patrol it often," he said.

While both leaders recommend social networking Web sites to other troop-support groups, they still value the success of their official Web sites.

"It's still too early to tell in comparing our Facebook page with our Web site," Blashek said. "Our Web site is still a vital

part of who we are. I would definitely recommend these other social networking sites to other groups. The more people know what you do, as it relates to supporting the troops, the better. I look at this as just another way of communicating with supporters."

## Army Reserve Employer Partnership Unfazed by Flagging Economy



By Donna Miles, Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs

WASHINGTON - A program that links Army reservists with civilian employers is going strong -- despite record unemployment and gloomy hiring predictions -- as more employers sign on every month so they can hire qualified reservists.

The American Trucking Association and INOVA Health Systems of Northern Virginia broke new ground in April 2008 as the first formal members of the Army Reserve Employer Partnership Initiative. Within six months, 65 employers had joined, and the program hit a milestone in February with its 200th employer partner.

Now Army Reserve officials are laying plans for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to sign on in mid-April at the program's first anniversary. That ceremony will bring the partnership to almost 300 employers.

"We have a huge success here," Army Reserve Chief Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz said of the program he introduced to help the Army Reserve and civilian employers share the same talent pool. "We've got more than 200 companies that have signed up, and another 200 that want to talk to us," he said.

The partners run the gamut, Stultz told about 200 reservists during a recent Pentagon town hall meeting. They include Fortune 500 companies like Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., and General Electric Company, the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C., mom-and-pop companies and everything in between.

Stultz called the partnership a win-win for everyone involved. Reservists get a leg up in a competitive job market. Employers who understand their military obligations guarantee interviews for qualified reservists, as well as priority placement for openings.

Meanwhile, the employers have a way to tap into a pool of trained, motivated workers. "With the skill sets we have in our force -- medical, law enforcement, transportation, engineering to name a few -- there's a good demand out there," Stultz said.

Even in a tight labor market, employers are clamoring for workers trained in these skills. One of the program's big selling points is that employers can piggyback on training the military already provides.

INOVA Health System, for example,

agreed to hire reservists the Army trains in radiology, respiratory therapy and surgical specialties. The arrangement is helping the company fill critical job shortages, while offering career opportunity to Pfc. Jason Black and other Army reservists.

Black, the first reservist INOVA hired through the partnership, is attending the yearlong Army radiology course at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. After he graduates this fall, he'll start working as a radiology specialist at INOVA. At the same time, he'll be assigned to the Army Reserve's 48th Combat Support Hospital at Fort Meade, Md.

Enthusiasm for the employer partnership extends even to industries that have been particularly hard-hit by the financial crisis.

Kenneth Crowley, president and CEO of the Crowley Auto Group in Bristol, Conn., said he's so impressed with the mechanics, accountants, information technology specialists and administrative staff he's hired through the program that he'd like to expand it beyond his nine dealerships.

"We're still involved with the program and will hire good, qualified people, absolutely," he said. "This downturn in the economy isn't going to last forever, and before you know it, we will be needing people and we won't be able to find them."

Fewer people may be buying new cars, but Crowley said that means they're maintaining the ones they already have. That, in turn, drives up the demand for qualified mechanics he's able to hire through the partnership program. "So it's been a lifesaver to us, actually, because what we are lacking in sales, we are making up in maintenance," he said.

Crowley's such a fan of the partnership that he hopes to build on it to benefit the industry as a whole. He's set up a meeting for early next month so representatives of the Army Reserve and a major auto maker can explore ways to award manufacturer-level diesel-technician certification to qualified Army Reserve mechanics.

This, Crowley said, would short-cut what's typically a two-year process before mechanics can work on warranty claims and other specialized tasks.

Reservists would benefit from the arrangement, too. "My thought was, if I got the Army to work with the manufacturer, now these guys get trained while they are serving," Crowley said. "I can hire them right away and start them at a much higher level of pay because they're already certified."

Like other partnership members, Crowley said he knows what he's getting when he hires a reservist. "What makes me like hiring them so much is that they are serious, and they are there to do the job and do it properly and in a spirit of team effort," he said.

Army Sgt. Maj. Nelson Ildefonso, non-commissioned officer in charge of the partnership program, said reservists have characteristics that make them particularly good

employees.

"They're skill-rich, but they're also good leaders," Ildefonso said. "They're good followers. They're drug-tested, and a lot of them have security clearances. They're disciplined. They accept leadership and want to move ahead."

"In a nutshell, they've got the characteristics that an employer looks for in an employee," he said. "And that's why the Army Reserve Employer Partnership Initiative has been such a success."

But echoing sentiments of many fellow partners, Crowley said another big attraction of the program boils down to good, old-fashioned patriotism.

"Being an employer partner is more than just having access to great employees," he said. "It is also a way for me to give back and say thank you to individuals who have dedicated themselves to serving our nation."

Stultz got an indication of the demand for his soldiers, and the partnership's reach, during a recent visit to Camp Bonsteel, Kosovo. A reservist who used the Employer Partnership Initiative Web site to seek out and apply for jobs told Stultz he'd hit pay dirt -- even while deployed thousands of miles from home.

"He went on the site and got three different job offers," Stultz told the Pentagon town hall session. "So his big challenge was deciding which of those offers to accept."

"So it's working," Stultz said of the program. "There's no question about it. We get anecdotal evidence every day."

**For more information on the Employer Partnership Program, visit:**  
<http://www.usar.army.mil/arweb/EPI/Pages/default.aspx>

## Robert Morris University Offers Free Tuition to Soldiers with GI Bill



Robert Morris University in Moon Township, Pa. announced that it will give veterans free tuition for graduate and undergraduate degrees.

With its newly created RMU Military Service Award, the private university will cover the difference between its full-time tuition and a federal tuition subsidy offered to veterans under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

The offer is open to all veterans, not just Pennsylvania residents. The university is also opening a Veterans Education and Training Center to help veterans and their families with transition services and to assist with enrollment.

For more information, visit the Robert Morris University website (<https://sentry.rmu.edu/web/cms/newsevents/foundations/Pages/rmu-wants-you.aspx>) or call Heather Jericho at (412) 397-3933.

United States Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland



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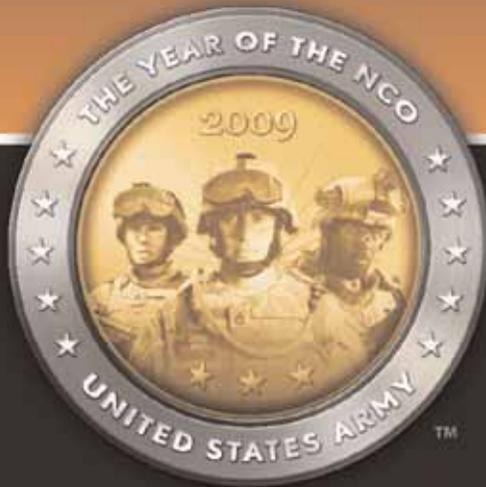
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# 2009

## The Year of the Noncommissioned Officer



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#### From the Desk of the CSM:

**Leaders,**

DA has opened the door for us to tell our story. Energize your folks to get some articles, photos, etc. put together and submitted for publication. This would be a great project for one (or more) of your junior / mid grade NCOs. 2009: The Year of The NCO; Lets show them we have some Great NCOs!

**ROGER B. SCHULZ  
COMMAND SERGEANT  
MAJOR**

#### From the Desk of the PAO:

**Leaders,**

We want to market at least two stories a month in 2009 about our outstanding NCOs, but we need your help.

If you have an outstanding NCO who truly stands out in your unit or within the community, contact us at

ARMEDCOMPAAO@usar.army.mil

We will need their name, unit, contact information (phones, address and email) as well as a short paragraph explaining why you feel they deserve some publicity for the work they are doing at home, school, work, in the community or as an outstanding NCO.

PAO will contact the NCO, draft an article and or news release about them and market their story in their hometown news outlets as well as other media avenues.

Please ensure the NCO is aware that you are recommending them for a feature story and that they are not "camera shy".

**MAJ. WILLIAM RITTER  
CHIEF, PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS**