

WARRIOR MEDIC

MONTHLY

An Army Reserve Medical Command Publication



Comprehensive Soldier Fitness



After nearly nine years of sustained conflict, many Soldiers and Families are feeling the strain of long separations and challenging environments. We and our Families must be emotionally, socially and spiritually resilient in the face of these realities. Developing every dimension of strength must be as high a priority as

maintaining the physical resiliency that we make time for every day.

A new Army initiative, Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, helps Soldiers and Families take their own pulse. By May 31st, every Soldier must take the online Global Assessment Tool (GAT), as part of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program. Measuring beyond physical strength, the survey provides a baseline in the four additional dimensions of strength: emotional, social, spiritual and family, and provides an opportunity to track self-development and growth in these areas over time.

The Global Assessment Tool (GAT) is online now (<https://www.sft.army.mil>). As soon as a Soldier finishes the GAT, self-help modules for the domains of psychological fitness automatically present themselves. Use these tools to get going. I would also encourage you to ask your family members to take the Family member assessment (AKO log-in required). It is on line now (<https://www.sft.army.mil/sftfamily> <<https://www.sft.army.mil/sftfamily>>). This program enables Family members to actively manage various physical and psychological challenges in their personal lives, and continue to be the pillar of support behind our Soldiers. The Strength of the Nation depends on it. The result of the GAT is confidential, protects the identity of Soldiers and helps in removing the perceived stigma that may go with seeking help. Only you will see the result. All we know is that you completed the assessment.

CSF marks a new era for the Army by comprehensively equipping and training our Soldiers, Family members and Army Civilians to maximize their potential and face the physical and psychological challenges of sustained operations. The CSF mission is to develop and institute a holistic, resilience-building fitness program for Soldiers, Family members and Army Civilians.

Based on more than 30 years of scientific study and results, CSF uses individual assessments, tailored virtual training, classroom training and embedded resilience experts to provide the critical skills our Soldiers, Family members and Army Civilians need.

I believe this program is vitally important to the long-term health and fitness of our Army Reserve. It will take the commitment of every leader and Soldier to bring this to fruition. Let's make accomplishing this mission a priority. The Army is committed to a prevention model for the entire force, enhancing Soldiers resilience and coping skills. Please take the GAT now at <https://www.sft.army.mil> <<https://www.sft.army.mil>> . More information on the CSF program and the GAT is available at the CSF website www.Army.mil/csf <<http://www.Army.mil/csf>> .

JACK C. STULTZ
Lieutenant General, US Army
Chief, Army Reserve/Commanding
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Wounded Warrior Web Site Upgraded



The Department of Defense announced today that its National Resource Directory <[blockedhttps://www.nationalresourcesdirectory.gov/](https://www.nationalresourcesdirectory.gov/)> (NRD) Web site for wounded, ill and injured service members, veterans, their families and those who support them, recently received a comprehensive system upgrade to provide users with easier access.

This Web site is a collaborative effort between the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs (VA) and Labor (DOL), and compiles federal, state, local and non-profit resources for wounded warriors, veterans, family members and caregivers in a single, searchable site.

"We worked closely with users of the National Resource Directory to find out how to make the information they need easier

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to find,” said Noel Koch, deputy under secretary of defense for Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy. “The resulting re-design is easier to navigate and adds useful new features.”

The upgrade makes the latest wounded warrior and veteran issues easier to locate and follow. A new “bookmark and share” application helps visitors alert others to the content they’ve found most helpful through social bookmarking, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking tools. Visitors can also subscribe to Really Simple Syndication (RSS) or e-mail updates to receive new content, events and features based on their specific interests and needs.

“There are thousands of programs and benefits available to wounded warriors and their families, from healthcare and housing to education and employment assistance,” said Koch. “Our people must have an easy way to sift through it all to find the resources that are most helpful for their circumstances, especially while they’re dealing with what can be overwhelming challenges. That’s why we’ve partnered with the VA and Department of Labor to offer the National Resource Directory. And with the feedback mechanisms we’ve added in the re-design, we’ll be able to keep improving our service to our wounded warriors and families.”

The faster, enhanced search engine ranks information based on the popularity of the sources among other site users, so the most valuable resources rise to the top of the search results. Visitors can tailor searches for resources in specific states and territories, and apply filters to narrow their searches.

The re-designed site also highlights resources to assist homeless veterans. NRD users can also recommend additional resources. All resources are thoroughly vetted prior to inclusion on the National Resource Directory, and as always, content is updated and reviewed daily by a content management team which includes veterans and subject matter experts.

More information is available at

<http://www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov>,
<http://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov>

New Health System Site Makes Information Accessible

American Forces Press Service



FALLS CHURCH, Va., March 8, 2010 - The Military Health System has launched a new Health.mil Web site that provides

a single point of entry to military health news, information and resources.

The site is part of the Defense Department’s continued commitment to make health information available and easy to find, officials said. Content is categorized by topic or audience, including servicemembers, retirees and families; health care providers; educators and researchers; Military Health System staff; Defense Department leaders; and the media.

“We’ve listened to the feedback from our users and redesigned the site to make it better-easier to navigate and easier to find information,” said Dr. Michael Kilpatrick, director of strategic communications for the Military Health System. “The new Health.mil is better organized, better looking, and more seamlessly integrated with our social media efforts.”

The new design better serves the system’s health care beneficiaries by providing links to Tricare and eBenefits up front. An easy-to-navigate layout provides multiple paths to the information, including an exposed site map and a topic index on every page. The new site includes improved Section 508 compliance for the disabled and is easier to use with mobile devices. A robust search function pulls in results from across multiple organizational Web sites within the Military Health System.

America’s Military Health System is a unique partnership of medical educators, medical researchers and health-care providers and their support personnel worldwide. This Defense Department enterprise consists of the office of the assistant secretary of defense for health affairs; the medical departments of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard and Joint Chiefs of Staff; the combatant command surgeons; and Tricare providers, including private-sector health-care providers, hospitals and pharmacies.

(From a Military Health System news release.)

Related Sites:

Military Health System: www.health.mil

New Policy Authorizes Social Media Access, With Caveats

By Donna Miles American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, Feb. 26, 2010 - Attention all Facebookers, Twitter tweeters and YouTubers: a new Defense Department policy authorizes you to access these and other Web 2.0 platforms from nonclassified government

computers, as long as it doesn’t compromise operational security or involve prohibited activities or Web sites. Defense Department officials issued the long-awaited policy today, establishing consistent rules for all military members and employers.

Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III, who signed the policy, said it strikes a critical balance between the benefits and potential vulnerabilities of these applications. “This directive recognizes the importance of balancing appropriate security measures while maximizing the capabilities afforded by 21st-century Internet tools,” he said.

While authorizing access to these tools, the new policy also recognizes the importance of protecting military networks and operations, explained David M. Wennergren, deputy assistant secretary of defense for information management and technology.

For example, the new policy allows commanders to temporarily limit that access as required to maintain operations security or address bandwidth constraints. It also prohibits malicious activity on military information networks and denies access to sites promoting prohibited activity such as gambling, pornography and hate crimes.

While information sharing may seem the polar opposite of security to some people, Wennergren said the Defense Department can no longer afford to consider just one or the other.

“If you look at either one individually, you will fail,” he said. “You will have great security, but no ability to access information sharing. [Or], if you think only about sharing, you will run into issues of operational security and letting bad things into your system. So you can no longer think of them as two separate subjects.”

The new policy promotes what Wennergren calls “secure information sharing,” providing the balance needed to tap into the capabilities social media networking provides without compromising security.

He emphasized the importance of personal responsibility in using unclassified military networks to access these tools, and said the department will continue to evaluate the policy after it takes effect.

“There’s a huge imperative for security,” Wennergren said. “It is everyone’s responsibility in the department to make sure they are doing all that they can to protect our information and our information systems.”

Ultimately, he called responsible, security-conscious use of social media networks a win-win proposition for the Defense Department and its members, enabling them to take full advantage of the power of social media networking.

“The world of Web 2.0 and the Internet provides these amazing opportunities to collaborate,” Wennergren said. It not only promotes information sharing across

organizational boundaries and with mission partners, but also enables deployed troops to maintain contact with their loved ones at home.

“So if you work on those two pieces” -- access and security -- “this really is giving people this avenue to do amazing things in terms of getting the information shared and making decisions happen much more rapidly,” Wennergren said.

Until now, most servicemembers have been able to access social media platforms from their government computers, but policies have not been consistent across the department. The Marine Corps instituted a policy in early 2007 blocking Marines from accessing these sites through the Marine networks. Marines have, however, been permitted to access the sites from personal computers.

Pentagon Changes ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ Enforcement

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



WASHINGTON, March 25, 2010 - Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates today announced changes to the Pentagon’s regulation on homosexuals serving in the military that he said make the

Defense Department’s enforcement of the so-called “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” law “fairer and more appropriate.”

On Feb. 2, Gates announced he’d ordered a review to understand the implications of a possible repeal of the 17-year-old law that bans gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military. President Barack Obama has called on Congress to repeal the law.

The initial 45 days of that review, he said, produced findings that “would enforce the existing law in a fairer and more appropriate manner” and are supported by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Navy Adm. Mike Mullen and Vice Chairman Marine Corps Gen. James E. Cartwright and the service chiefs.

“Today, I have approved a series of changes to the implementation of the current statute,” Gates told reporters at a Pentagon news conference. “They were developed with full participation of the department’s senior civilian and military leadership, and the changes are unanimously supported by Chairman Mullen, Vice Chairman Cartwright and the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff.”

The changes include:

-- Only a general or flag officer may separate an enlisted member believed at the conclusion of an investigation to

have engaged in homosexual conduct. Under previous policy, a colonel -- or for a captain in the Navy and Coast Guard -- could order separation.

-- A revision in what’s needed to begin an inquiry or a separation proceeding. Information provided by a third party now must be given under oath, “discouraging the use of overheard statements and hearsay,” Gates said.

-- Certain categories of confidential information -- such as information provided to lawyers, clergy and psychotherapists -- no longer will be used in support of discharges. Information provided to medical personnel in furtherance of treatment, or to a public-health official in the course of seeing professional assistance for domestic or physical abuse also is excluded, as well as information obtained in the process of security-clearance investigations, in accordance with existing Pentagon policies.

“These changes reflect some of the insights we have gained over 17 years of implementing the current law, including the need for consistency, oversight and clear standards,” the secretary said. “I believe these changes represent an important improvement in the way the current law is put into practice -- above all, by providing a greater measure of common sense and common decency to a process for handling what are difficult and complex issues for all involved.”

The military services have 30 days to conform their regulations to the changes. The new policies, however, took effect immediately upon Gates’ announcement, meaning that they apply to all open cases, he said.

“All separations from this point forward will take place under the revised regulations,” he said. “As of my signature, every case that is currently still open will be dealt with under these new regulations. So, they will be reinitiated by a flag-rank officer.”

The intent for open, ongoing investigations is not to restart the proceedings, but to carry them forward with regard to the types of information allowed in the new policy, he said.

“As far as the services are concerned, every case that is open as of this morning will be reinitiated and evaluated under the new regulations that I’ve just set forth,” Gates said.

The secretary also stressed that the policy changes are not an attempt to change the law, but rather to be prepared to offer Congress reliable information should the law be repealed.

The Pentagon’s top lawyer, Jeh Johnson, and Army Gen. Carter F. Ham, commander of U.S. Army Europe, head Gates’ working group charged with studying the potential implications of the law’s repeal. The panel will report its findings by Dec.

1. The group will spend the next several months traveling to military installations to learn how servicemembers and families will react to a potential repeal.

“There is a great deal we don’t know about this [potential repeal of the law] in terms of the views of our servicemembers, in terms of the views of their families and influencers,” Gates said. “There is a lot we have to address in terms of what would be required in the way of changed regulations. There are a lot of unanswered questions in terms of the implementation of this proposed change.

“We need to do this thoroughly and professionally,” he continued. “We need to do this right, and I think doing it hastily is very risky and does not address some of the concerns that have been expressed by the chiefs of staff of the services, and a number of questions that have been raised.”

Chairman’s Corner: Three Principles for Use of Military Force

By Navy Adm. Mike Mullen
Special to American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, March 5, 2010 - As I laid out during the Landon Lecture this week, our nation has been at war continuously over the last nine years against a syndicate of Islamic extremists, led by al-Qaida and supported by a host of both state and nonstate actors. I have watched -- and advised -- two administrations as they have dealt with this struggle, and I have come to three principles about the proper use of modern military forces.

The first is that military power should not, maybe cannot, be the last resort of the state. Sometimes, the military -- because of its unique flexibility and speed -- may be the first, best tool to use. But it should never be the only tool.

Use of military forces must be accompanied by other instruments of national and international power. Defense and diplomacy are simply no longer discrete choices, one to be applied when the other one fails, but must, in fact, complement one another throughout the messy process of international relations.

And I believe that U.S. foreign policy is still too dominated by the military. Should we choose to exert American influence solely through our troops, we should expect to see that influence diminish over time.

In fact, I would argue that in future struggles of the asymmetric, counterinsurgent variety, we ought to make it a precondition of committing our troops that we will do so only if and when the other instru-

ments of national power and our allies are ready to engage as well.

The second is that to the maximum extent possible, force should be applied in a precise and principled way. Precisely applying force in a principled manner can help reduce those costs and actually improve our chances of success.

This doesn't mean we don't do the things necessary to win. It means we do those things as mindful as we can about the impact to the innocent people we are trying to protect. Each time we kill a civilian inadvertently, we not only wreak devastation on the lives of their loved ones, we set our own strategy back months if not years. We make it hard for people to trust us.

Frankly, the battlefield isn't necessarily a field anymore, but rather is the minds of the people.

My third principle is that -- in the very dynamic security environment we find ourselves in -- we should welcome a constant struggle between policy and strategy.

The experience of the last nine years tells us two things: A clear strategy for military operations is essential, and that strategy will have to change as those operations evolve. In other words, success in these types of wars is iterative, not decisive.

We will win, but we will do so only over time and only after near-constant reassessment and adjustment.

The notion proffered by some that once set a war policy cannot be changed, or that to do so implies some sort of weakness, strikes me not only as incompatible with our own history, but also as quite dangerous.

War has never been a set-piece affair. The enemy adapts to your strategy, and you adapt to his, and so you keep the interplay going between policy and strategy until you find the right combination at the right time.

The day you stop adjusting is the day you lose.

Town Hall Meeting Q&A



In my travels as the Chief of the Army Reserve, I make it a point to meet and talk with as many of our Army Reserve Soldiers and Families as possible. Hearing your concerns and answering your questions means a great deal to me because you, our Warrior-Citizens, are the most important part of our Army Reserve family. Let me assure you - I am listening and I take your comments and concerns to heart.

During this past year I have met many of you in Town Hall meetings in places such as Kuwait, Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa and many other places around the world and here in the United States. Although

some of you have had the opportunity to attend a Town Hall meeting, many of you have not.

With that in mind, I have asked the staff of our Warrior-Citizen magazine to capture the questions from your fellow Soldiers at those Town Hall meetings, along with my responses, and publish them in future issues of the magazine. We are also posting the questions and answers on our web site <<http://www.usar.army.mil/arweb/soldiers/Pages/townhall.aspx>>. My goal is to keep you informed of the various issues and concerns important to you, your fellow Soldiers, and our families and what we are doing to address those concerns.

As always, it is an honor and privilege to serve alongside the 206,000-plus Warrior-Citizens who live and work in thousands of communities across our great country, and sacrifice to keep our nation safe.

LTG Jack C. Stultz
Chief, Army Reserve
Commander, US Army Reserve
Command

Support Helps Children Cope With Deployments

By Elaine Wilson
 American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, March 10, 2010 - Children with a strong nondeployed parent or caregiver and a solid support system have a better ability to cope with deployments, two recent studies have shown.

Anita Chandra, a behavioral scientist from Rand Corp., and Leonard Wong, a research professor from the Army War College, highlighted the findings of these studies during testimony to the House Armed Services Committee yesterday. Both studies focused on military children ages 11 to 17.

"We had a very strong relationship between the caregiver's mental health and their ability to cope as well as the ability for their children to handle some of the deployment stressors," said Chandra, describing the findings of the study "Children on the Homefront: The Experiences of Children From Military Families."

This independent study included more than 1,500 military families, focusing on the well-being of youth ages 11 to 17 and their nondeployed parent or caregiver.

The study's goal was to show how children from military families function with respect to academics, peer and family relations, general emotional difficulties and overall problem behaviors, Chandra explained. The study found that, when compared to a sample of U.S. children, military children

have a higher average rate of emotional difficulties at each age, she said.

Older children and girls, particularly, had a greater number of difficulties during deployment, she noted. And the total months the parent was deployed, rather than the number of deployments, was related to a greater number of challenges as well, she added.

Relating to family strength, "we found that caregivers with poorer mental health themselves reported more child difficulties during deployment," Chandra said.

Chandra suggested that families may benefit from targeted support to deal with stressors at later points in the deployment, and not simply during initial stages. And, "families in which nondeployed caregivers are struggling with their own mental health may need more support for both caregiver and child," she said.

Wong also found a strong connection between family strength and children's ability to cope with deployment in the Army study, "The Effects of Multiple Deployments on Army Adolescents."

For the study, an anonymous, Web-based survey was issued to a random sample of more than 2,000 active-duty soldiers, as well as to more than 700 Army spouses and about 550 military children between ages 11 and 17. The study focused on what factors might influence the magnitude of stress related to deployments, he said.

Wong found that the No. 1 factor in mitigating deployment stress was a child's participation in activities, such as sports, followed by a strong family foundation. Activities serve "as a distraction to the negative feelings associated with a deployment," he explained.

Another, unexpected predictor of deployment stress was a child's belief that the American public supports the war, he said.

"Sports as a diversion for deployment stress, that makes sense and youth sports programs are relatively easy to create," he said. "But that the strength of a child's perception of the American support for the war would be associated with their deployment stress was a surprise, and it's a much more complex issue to deal with."

In addition to looking at what factors influence the magnitude of stress, the study also examined how well adolescents coped with deployments overall. Along with the previous factors such as strong families, activities and a child's belief that America supports the war, the largest predictor of stress was a child's belief that the soldier is making a difference in the world.

This finding is surprising, yet intuitive, Wong noted. "These children understand that the Army is a 'greedy' institution demanding all of time, energy and focus of a soldier," he said. "They also understand from personal experience that the family is

a greedy institution that requires constant attention and care.

"They see deployed soldiers caught in the middle of both noble institutions," he added.

Looking ahead, Wong noted the importance of building strong families and focusing on activities such as sports to help mitigate stress. A child's belief system, however, may be a more complicated factor to tackle, he said. "The factors of the children's beliefs, what they feel about the Army, what they feel about the nation, make a difference," Wong said. "And so how do you influence a child's beliefs? That's a critical question and that will have us thinking for a long time."

While the studies are useful, more work remains to be done on behalf of military children, Chandra said.

"Both of our studies really point to the needs of older youth," she said. "What we hope from this work is that it starts to identify some of the needs of older youth and teenagers so we that can look at the programs we currently have and try and figure out if we are aligning our programs with those needs, particularly with adolescents, and particularly those older adolescents.

"Despite the contributions of previous studies, significant knowledge gaps remain, especially for older children," she added.

Official Details New Recuperation Leave Policy

By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, March 22, 2010 - Some deployed servicemembers will not be charged for rest and recuperation leave under a new Defense Department policy.

The new policy allows servicemembers in designated areas to go on rest and recuperation leave without charge to their leave accounts. "So in a sense, it is an administrative absence and that's up to 15 days," said Sam Retherford, the Defense Department's director of officer and enlisted personnel management.

In the past, the leave was charged to servicemembers' accounts, though travel time from the theater to the airport closest to their destinations was not charged, Retherford said.

The nonchargeable rest and recuperation leave program will be limited to the "most arduous" areas, and the combatant commander must recommend it through the Joint Staff for approval by the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness,

Retherford said.

To qualify for the program, members must be serving in a leave restricted area, where no dependents are allowed. They must be receiving hostile-fire pay and in areas where travel in and out of the country is restricted. "Two additional areas are that the duty has to be extremely arduous and the command has to foresee continuing combat operations," Retherford said.

The benefit will take effect once an area is designated by the undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness and will not apply retroactively.

The Army identified the need as especially important for junior members, Retherford said, because they typically do not have a large amount of leave accumulated. "At the end of their deployment, there is very little in their leave accounts for rest, recuperation and reintegration to the family and community," he said. "So this program means they will not be charged for the R&R leave, and they will have that leave upon redeployment."

Inability to take leave upon returning from a deployment is a problem. The services want their people to take leave so they can decompress and reintegrate with the families and communities. The services have been allowing administrative leave upon redeployment from a combat zone, but generally limit it to local areas around bases.

Servicemembers already in Iraq and Afghanistan who qualify to participate in the R&R program will qualify for the nonchargeable R&R program. The areas that qualify for the program have to be redesignated every two years.

The commander of U.S. Central Command requested that Iraq and Afghanistan be designated as nonchargeable rest and recuperation areas, Retherford said. "We quickly coordinated this request with the military departments to ensure we provided servicemembers with this new benefit as quickly as possible," he added.

About 1 million servicemembers have participated in Centcom's rest and recuperation program. Due to the requirement for combat operations in a presidentially designated combat zone, the nonchargeable rest and recuperation program should be limited to U.S. Central Command, officials said.

Care Plan to Encompass More Military Families

By Elaine Wilson, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, March 15, 2010 - The Defense Department's family care plan policy will be expanded in the coming months to encompass a wider population of

military parents, a defense legal expert said.

The new policy will require military parents with custody of children from a previous relationship to file a family care plan, said Army Col. Shawn Shumake, director of the Pentagon's office of legal policy. The requirement already is in place for dual military couples and single parents with custody.

Family care plans are used to ensure dependents are cared for while the servicemember is away for an extended period of time, whether it's for training, a deployment or a remote assignment, Shumake explained. The document includes everything from designation of temporary guardianship to arrangements for financial and logistical support, including relocation and medical care.

While the family care plan always has been a required and useful planning tool for dual-military couples and single parents, the lack of inclusion of "blended" families represented a "gaping hole" in the policy, Shumake said, prompting the first policy update since 1992.

"What we're trying to do is put these servicemembers in the best possible position before they leave," he said.

In recent years, Shumake said, he has seen an increase in custody disputes involving blended families that mostly arose from a lack of prior coordination. The deploying parent may designate guardianship to the step-parent, for instance, only to have the biological parent intercede while the custodial parent is gone. And the biological parent has every right to custody of that child, he explained, unless extenuating circumstances exist.

This situation can put a deployed parent in a tough, stressful spot while far from home, he noted.

"The worst possible thing is when things come to a head while the servicemember is gone," Shumake said. "The servicemember is going to be overseas, and that biological parent is going to pop up and be able to walk away with that kid." Requiring servicemembers with a blended family to have a family care plan will lead to anticipating some of these potential problems early on, he said.

Shumake noted that although it's helpful, the family care plan isn't a legally binding document. But if it's prepared early enough, the servicemember generally would be able to take the plan to court and petition for a court order to enforce it.

Servicemembers who anticipate that they won't be able to reach an agreement with or trust the noncustodial, biological parent should visit their legal assistance office so they understand the legal ramifications of not involving the biological parent, Shumake advised.

The new policy also will address issues that affect all parents required to have a care plan. For instance, if a catastrophic circum-

stance arises – a temporary guardian refusing to care for the child or getting into an accident and being unable to provide care, for example -- the new policy allows for a deployment deferment until the issue is resolved. Commanders also will be sensitive to those circumstances, Shumake said.

“It would shock me if there was any commander out there who would not allow a military parent the opportunity to deal with that and figure out a good response,” he said. “We have no interest in ripping a servicemember away from a child and sending the servicemember to Iraq or Afghanistan. No commander is going to want that to happen.”

In extreme cases, when the servicemember just can't piece together a family care plan, the commander has the option of separating the servicemember from service. “The commander needs to rely on his people and needs to know they'll be there,” Shumake said.

The commanders also are tasked with advising servicemembers of the risks involved with designating a nonviable guardian or leaving a biological parent out of the equation, he explained. The new policy will outline this increased responsibility for commanders, he added.

Family care plans are extensive and can take some time to fill out, Shumake acknowledged, further underscoring the need to start well in advance of a departure. Legal assistance offices are a valuable resource for help with a plan, as well as Military OneSource at <http://www.militaryonesource.com> or Military Homefront at <http://www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil>.

For parents needing more extensive assistance, such as those seeking court orders to establish guardianship, Shumake advised they first check with their legal office for advice. Local legal offices can help to point them to free legal assistance, such as that offered through the American Bar Association's Military Pro Bono Project.

Above all, the aim is to avoid problems in the first place, Shumake said. “We want to mitigate or avoid the problems before they happen,” he said. “Deployments are stressful enough without the added worry of care for your children back home.”

Updated Web Site Helps Wounded Warriors, Families

By Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, Feb. 24, 2010 - Defense Department officials have updated and improved access to the National Resource Directory, a Web site for wound-

ed, ill and injured servicemembers, veterans, their families and those who support them.

The Web site is at <http://www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov>; is one-stop shopping for servicemembers and their families. The site brings together information from the Defense Department, the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Labor Department.

The directory first went up in November 2008. “We had a vast array of information resources that had to be collated and coordinated and made easier to use,” said Noel Koch, deputy undersecretary of defense for wounded warrior care and transition policy. The current site takes the lessons learned from the first effort and improves on them, he added.

The three federal agencies provide most of the resources that wounded warriors and their families need. The directory touches on everything from benefits to current events to the processes servicemembers and veterans can use, Koch said. The site also provides addresses, contact points and links to nongovernmental agencies that provide assistance to servicemembers and veterans. And because these organizations are on the site, users can feel safe that federal officials have checked to ensure these are legitimate organizations, Koch noted.

The site answers questions about benefits, education, transition and medical care. The information is much easier to access and more up-to-date. “We improved it by listening to the people who use the site,” Koch said. “They told us what they need, and we put it in place. It reflects the expressed needs of wounded, ill and injured servicemembers, veterans and their families.”

The site also has a news section, “and we've gotten smart about social media now, and that's accommodated,” Koch said. The site also has a section developed with VA on homelessness and how the government can provide the information homeless veterans need.

The site contains a new “bookmark and share” application that users can click to point out content they've found most helpful through social bookmarking, Facebook, Twitter and other social networking tools. Visitors also can subscribe to RSS or e-mail updates to receive new content, events and features based on their specific interests and needs.

Computer Game Trains ‘Art of Battle Command’



By Christen N. McCluney
Special to American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 5, 2010 - A computer-based game is

helping to support the training of military commanders and their staffs in counter-insurgency and stability operations. The Army is working with the University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies in developing UrbanSim, a computer game built to help in training for operations in urban environments such as those encountered in some areas of Iraq and Afghanistan.

UrbanSim project is managed by the U.S. Army Research Development and Engineering Command, Simulation and Training Technology Center.

“We're trying to help the U.S. Army better train in what we call the art of battle command,” said Andrew Gordon, research associate professor at the University of Southern California Institute for Creative Technologies, during a March 3 interview on the Pentagon Channel podcast “Armed with Science: Research and Applications for the Modern Military.”

UrbanSim is a simulated city rife with political, economic and tribal rivalries, Gordon said. The user takes on the role of battalion commander and is directing actions of subordinate units over a 15-turn period. The idea was to take the best components of video games and apply this talent toward the Army's training needs.

The project began as part of a larger research project under an Army training objective, Gordon explained.

“The idea was to explore the creation of game-based training tools that could be rapidly developed to meet all kinds of different training needs as they arose,” he said. “A lot of times, the training community doesn't know how to ask for the things they really need, or even what's possible, using today's technologies. So in a lot of ways, our job here as researchers is to help define what we call the art of the possible.”

That allows trainers to think in creative ways about the problem they have and possible creative solutions to address those needs.

The team began a partnership with instructors at the School for Command Preparation at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and based the UrbanSim experience very closely on the scenarios they'd been developing at the school. This allowed a design in which each revision could be tested and put in front of students in a real classroom and for immediate feedback.

All of the concepts typically included in traditional Army schoolhouse training are in UrbanSim, Gordon said, but the program allows students to get hands-on practice with these concepts in a contemporary operational environment.

“One of the innovative things about UrbanSim is it also has this story-driven component where we're taking the real-world experiences of commanders from

places like Iraq and Afghanistan and trying to find innovative ways of moving those real life experiences directly into the simulation environment,” he said. “So that the real-world experiences of soldiers are the things that are driving the underlying simulation in the UrbanSim environment.”

ICT did a large amount of research to ensure that UrbanSim was as realistic as possible. The team created complex multi-agent systems that allowed the game to model the political, economic and social relationships that exist in the fictional city and be able to run them in real time to be integrated in the game.

The group also focused on developing story driven learning environments that not only capture the students’ attention but also integrate real-world and nonfictional stories into the simulation.

The game also uses intelligent tutoring technologies since the game was designed to be used in a classroom environment.

“You need to provide the students with enough support, enough guidance, so they’re simply not wasting their time playing a computer game,” Gordon said. The tutoring technology should give them the tools to think about what’s happening in the game, reflect on their own approach and strategy toward tackling the problem, and also reflect on their own thought processes, he added.

ICT also is traveling to run pilot studies to see where UrbanSim software might be applicable in other settings. “The idea is to help them either save time or do the same kind of training they’re doing now, but more effectively,” he said.

The program still is a research prototype and is slowly transitioning out of the lab and into the greater Army. “I’m very optimistic that this project will have a long life outside of our lab, based solely on the enormous enthusiasm I’ve seen from instructors and students who’ve used this tool,” Gordon said. “I think one of the competitive advantages of the U.S. military is the strength of its research community.”

Policy to Mandate Head Injury Evaluations

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



WASHINGTON, March 10, 2010 - Defense Department officials expect to launch a new policy in the coming months that will make head-injury evaluations mandatory for all troops who suffer possible concussions, a senior official with the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain

Injury said.

The current guidelines for treating troops with such injuries allows for them to come forward on their own. Troops in combat and in close contact with explosions or blasts make the decision on whether they need to be evaluated for concussions or head injuries.

But under the new policy, every servicemember exposed to such an incident will be required to seek attention. Those troops also will be required to rest and will be excluded from their unit’s mission cycle for at least 24 hours, Kathy Helmick, the senior director for traumatic brain injury at the center, said yesterday in an interview with American Forces Press Service.

“What is getting ready to become policy is a paradigm shift from a servicemember coming forward and saying, ‘I have a complaint’ to an incident-based protocol,” Helmick said. “When those events happen, you don’t get to say, ‘I’m having symptoms.’ You go to medical, and you get checked out, regardless of whether you have symptoms or not.”

Early detection and treatment is the cornerstone of the new policy, she said. The guidelines will help health care providers and researchers track such occurrences as well as expand their knowledge in treatment. The policy also will help to ensure unit readiness and longevity in the afflicted troops, Helmick noted.

The policy is intended to address the culture of troops who are so dedicated to their mission that they often shrug off their symptoms and simply learn to deal with them, she said. However, she added, failing to get treatment and education about their possible conditions may do more harm than good, not only for the troop in question but the unit as well.

Avoiding evaluations and treatment can be troublesome once the mission is complete and the servicemember returns home, Helmick said, because concussion indicators are not limited solely to concussions. They actually can be confused with symptoms troops may have in their readjustment period after a deployment.

“The premise here is that we know folks were so mission-focused that sometimes they weren’t being evaluated,” Helmick said. “If troops don’t come forward and simply ‘will it away’ and carry on with their mission, by the time they get home, those symptoms could be confused with readjusting to life back home.

“This is really an effort to provide state-of-the-art, up-front care quickly to the time of injury,” she continued. “If you had a sprained ankle, you wouldn’t be hobbling around on your ankle for eight months before you received care.”

Since 2006, servicemembers exposed to roadside bombs, sports injuries and other

incidents that could result in head injuries have participated in the military acute concussion evaluation. The evaluation is done in theater and is flexible enough to be done while “bullets are flying,” Helmick said.

Line medics and Navy corpsmen can give the evaluation on the spot or at the base camp in about 10 to 15 minutes without troops having to be transported to a field hospital. Studies have shown that troops recover quicker when they’re close to their unit, she said.

Troops are asked a series of questions that help the medics determine the severity of the concussion. Afterward, the troop is required to rest for 24 hours, and then participate in a follow-up evaluation. If the symptoms persist, more evaluations will be done to determine if the troop needs to be evacuated to a larger medical facility. If not, the troop will get back in the fight.

“You can almost do the evaluation with bullets flying,” she said. “It’s not supposed to be done in a controlled environment, but will identify red flags, tell the medics about the symptoms and give a very gross overview of the servicemember’s cognitive state.”

Making the evaluation mandatory for all troops in question was a request from troops on the front lines, and has drawn much attention from senior defense officials here, Helmick said.

She noted that Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has “really taken the stance” in not leaving the evaluation to subjective reporting by the individual servicemember. Leadership realizes the culture of mission focus and the demanding set of actions that servicemembers need to make, she said.

“If you lay it out for servicemembers, and they understand their conditions, you decrease the symptoms and you get better faster,” she said. “If you don’t detect it, you can’t educate about it, [and] you lose that opportunity to provide an educational intervention.

“What we hope to do is save lives from the serious injuries and decrease chronic symptoms of having problems with concussions,” she continued. “With policy change, we’re going to treat quicker and return troops to duty faster in full capacity.”

The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury was created in November 2007, and assesses, validates, oversees and facilitates prevention, resilience, identification, treatment, outreach, rehabilitation and reintegration for psychological health and brain injury for the Defense Department, military members and their families, according to its Web site.

The center also works closely with the Veterans Affairs Department to ensure veterans suffering from psychological health

issues and traumatic brain injury receive the most up-to-date care.

Association Pledges Support for Troops



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

WASHINGTON, March 19, 2010 - The world's largest association for human resource management today affirmed its commitment to bettering employment opportunities and benefits for citizen servicemembers by signing a statement of support endorsed by the Defense Department's Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve agency.

Dennis McCarthy, assistant defense secretary for reserve affairs, joined the society's president and CEO Lon O'Neil and board chairman Rob Van Cleave as they signed the statement.

"Thank you for the action of your leadership and organization," McCarthy told the society's representatives. "This is a great opportunity for [the Defense Department]

to witness your commitment."

The society's partnership with the Defense Department will ensure human resources organizations throughout the nation continue to solicit support and take part in National Guard and Reserve programs, he added.

McCarthy stressed that today's generation of citizen servicemembers may be the nation's "next greatest generation." He urged employers to look at hiring and retaining those servicemembers, calling them the best young Americans the nation has to offer.

"Thanking them for their service is very important," he said, "but so, too, is to tap into their potential."

Van Cleave agreed, calling the partnership mutually beneficial to the civilian work force and the military.

"If we look at the situation somewhat selfishly, these returning Guard and Reserve members represent a terrific talent pool," he said. "They are skilled, mature individuals whose dedication and work ethic have been tested and proven."

He praised citizen warriors for putting the nation's needs ahead of their own. Americans owe the military a debt of gratitude for their selfless service and willingness

to sacrifice, he said.

"They have given Uncle Sam a blank check to be used as needed, a check payable with anything, including their lives," he said of U.S. military members. "We owe them our worry, and in gratitude, we pledge to support them as they support and protect us."

The society is made up of more than 260,000 members in all 50 states. Along with hiring and ensuring pay, compensation and benefits for employed citizen servicemembers called to duty, local chapters in several states also have headed working groups to help military members find work.

Programs have been implemented, most recently in New Jersey and Indiana, to help military members and veterans prepare resumes and improve interviewing skills.

"It's our expertise ... [and] knowledge of organizational structures and business trends that can steer [citizen servicemembers] toward job opportunities," Van Cleave said. "It's our dedication that will drive development of policies and practices that support and encourage our organizations to participate in Guard and Reserve programs."

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