

# WARRIOR MEDIC

## MONTHLY

An Army Reserve Medical Command Publication



## TRICARE to Extend Dependent Coverage to Age 26

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, Jan. 14, 2011 - To ensure military families don't get left out as the new national health care reform law extends parent's health insurance to their children up to age 26, TRICARE plans to roll out its new Young Adult Program by spring and to provide an option to make coverage retroactive to Jan. 1.

The new program will allow qualified, unmarried military children up to age 26 to buy health care coverage under their parents' TRICARE plans through age 26, defense officials announced yesterday. That's up from the current maximum age of 21, or 23 for full-time college students whose parents provide more than half their financial support.

The fiscal 2011 National Defense Authorization Act President Barack Obama signed Jan. 7 gave the Defense Department the authority it needed to extend TRICARE coverage to young adults, TRICARE spokesman Austin Camacho explained. This ensures benefits extended under TRICARE are in line with those all American families receive under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that took effect in March.

"We've been working hard to make sure we could put TRICARE Young Adult on a fast track," said Navy Rear Adm. (Dr.) Christine Hunter, who heads the TRICARE Management Activity. "Fortunately for our beneficiaries concerned about health care coverage for their adult children, the law signed by the president includes opportunities for military families to elect this new premium-based plan retroactive to Jan. 1."

Qualified young adults who don't have access to employer-sponsored health care coverage will be eligible to purchase it through TRICARE on a month-to-month basis, Camacho said.

Details about how much those premiums will cost under the new program still are being finalized. But because the 2011 defense

authorization specifies that the rates must cover all program costs, Camacho said, premiums will be based on commercial insurance data about the costs of providing care.

Once the new program is in place, Hunter estimated that it could extend TRICARE coverage to several hundred thousand additional beneficiaries.

"The premium allows us to provide the excellent benefit to our military families while responsibly addressing the impact of health care costs on the DOD budget," she said.

Meanwhile, the TRICARE staff has moved into overdrive to iron out the program details: determining eligibility and coverage criteria and costs; designing, testing and implementing the required software and systems changes; updating eligibility databases; and crafting education efforts, Camacho said.

Officials plan to roll out the new program in two phases, first offering a premium-based TRICARE Standard/Extra benefit, Camacho said. Then, later this year, they plan to introduce the TRICARE Prime and TRICARE Prime Remote plan, including overseas options, and the Uniformed Services Family Health Plan.

Once the program is in place, eligible young adults may submit an application and premium payment to the appropriate regional or overseas contractor for processing, Camacho said. Cost shares, deductibles and catastrophic caps will vary, based on the plan selected and the sponsor's status.

Young adult beneficiaries will receive an enrollment card after they buy coverage, and their payment is reflected in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System, Camacho said.

The new beneficiaries may choose to pay premiums back to Jan. 1, which will entitle them to file claims for any health care costs they have accrued since that date. To do so, officials advise that they save all receipts to ease claims processing.

For adults who need health insurance coverage but no longer qualify for TRICARE coverage, officials advise exploring the Continued Health Care Benefit Program. This premium-based program offers temporary, transitional health coverage for 18 to 36 months. Coverage must be purchased within 60 days of losing TRICARE eligibility. Information about the program is posted on the TRICARE website.

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## Gates Outlines 'Don't Ask' Repeal Process



By Cheryl Pellerin, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 7, 2011 - Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates yesterday described the Pentagon's three-step process for preparing to allow gays to serve openly in the military services.

At a Pentagon news conference with Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gates updated reporters on the department's plan for implementing repeal of the so-called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" law, which has been in effect since 1993 and remains in effect until the process is complete.

"Our goal here is to move as quickly, but as responsibly, as possible," Gates said. "I see this as a three-step process. The first is to finalize changes in regulations [and] policies [and] get clearer definition on benefits."

The second phase is to prepare training materials for use by personnel specialists, chaplains, commanders and other leaders, and those who are in daily contact with service members, he said.

The third phase, the secretary explained, is the actual training for service members.

"We're trying to get the first two phases of that process done as quickly as possible," he said. "My hope is that it can be done within a matter of a very few weeks, so that we can then move on to what is the real challenge, which is providing training to 2.2 million people."

The House of Representatives passed legislation in May that called for the president, defense secretary and Joint Chiefs chairman to certify the implementation plan before the repeal takes effect. On Nov. 30, Pentagon officials released the report of a working group that reviewed issues associated with a potential repeal. And on Dec. 18, the Senate voted 65-31 for repeal, and President Barack Obama signed the legislation into law Dec. 22.

Gates said Clifford L. Stanley, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, is leading the effort.

"I have asked Undersecretary Stanley to accelerate the first two phases of this process as much as he possibly can so that we can get on with the training process," the secretary said.

Mullen said the legislation specifies that the repeal will take effect only after he, Gates and Obama certify that new policies and implementing regulations are consistent with standards of military readiness, effectiveness, unit cohesion and retention.

"From my perspective," the chairman said, now is not the time to 'come out,' if you will," noting that even after the required certification takes place, the present law will remain in effect for 60 more days. "We'll get through this. We'll do it deliberately. We certainly are focused on this, and we won't dawdle."

## Congress Extends Stop-loss Application Deadline



American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 23, 2010 -

The deadline for eligible service members, veterans and their beneficiaries to apply for Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay has been extended to March 4, Defense Department officials announced today.

The deadline extension is included in the continuing resolution bill that President Barack Obama signed Dec. 21, providing funding for federal government operations through March 4.

Congress established the retroactive pay to compensate military members who served involuntary extensions or whose retirement was suspended between Sept. 11, 2001, and Sept. 30, 2009. Eligible members and their beneficiaries are required to submit a claim to their respective military service to receive the benefit of \$500 for each full or partial month served in stop-loss status.

The services estimate 145,000 service members, veterans and beneficiaries are eligible. Because most of those eligible had separated from the military, the services have engaged in persistent outreach efforts throughout the year. Efforts, including direct mail, engaging military and veteran service organizations, social networks and media outlets, will continue throughout the period of eligibility, Defense Department officials said.

## Commission to Recommend Lifting Ban on Women in Combat



By Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 18, 2011 -

A commission of current and retired officers, senior noncommissioned officers and civilians charged with evaluating Defense Department policies to ensure they promote equal opportunity plans to recommend lifting the ban on women in combat.

The nonpartisan Military Leadership

Diversity Commission will make 20 recommendations to President Barack Obama and Congress to increase diversity and inclusiveness and develop "a demographically diverse leadership that reflects the forces it leads and the public it services," according to a pre-decisional draft document posted on the commission's website.

The final report is expected in March.

Calling the military a leader in providing opportunities to all service members, regardless of their racial and ethnic background, the group concluded that it's now time to eliminate barriers based on gender.

Current U.S. military policy prohibits women from serving in combat units below the brigade level. And although women make up 14.6 percent of the military, they and minority members still are underrepresented in leadership posts, the commission noted.

"Increasing the racial, ethnic and gender diversity of senior leadership requires eliminating barriers that disproportionately affect the advancement of women and minorities," the draft report said.

This can be done on two levels, the commissioners said, beginning with the education and mentoring required to ensure all service members are equally prepared to manage their career progression.

"Second, DOD and the services must remove institutional barriers to open traditionally closed doors, especially those related to assignments," the draft report continues. "An important step in this direction, recommended by the commission, is to remove the restrictions that prevent women from engaging in direct ground combat."

Retired Army Lt. Gen. Julius W. Becton, Jr., a commission member, announced last week at a military professionalism conference that the group had agreed to recommend that women be allowed to serve in combat.

"What we are saying is that women may be assigned to any job they are qualified for," Becton said at the National Defense University's conference on "Introspection and Reflection on Basic Tenets and the Way Ahead" on Jan. 11.

"We are making a recommendation," he said. "We are saying, 'Let's remove barriers.' And I think people are very qualified to do certain jobs, but because of their gender, they are not given the opportunity to do them."

Becton has witnessed a sea change in equal opportunity in the military. He rose through the ranks from a private serving in a segregated Army during World War II to become commander of 7th Corps during the Cold War, and he helped to pave the way to fully integrate women into the military.

In response to a questioner, Becton said it will be up to the American people to decide if they will support seeing women in

combat billets.

"It was the opinion of the 32 members of the commission — and we listened to quite a few of our women; soldiers who have been in combat, lost limbs, helicopter pilots and everything else — that once they demonstrate what can be done, the country will go along with them," he said. "But that is a decision the country must make."

The Defense Department will review the commission's recommendations when the final report is issued, Pentagon spokesman Marine Corps Col. Dave Lapan told reporters last week.

"We'll see what the nature of the report is when it's done," Lapan said.

Congress repealed the combat exclusion laws in the 1994 National Defense Authorization Act, but requires the services to submit proposed changes to existing assignment policy to Congress for review, he explained.

For example, the Navy was required to inform Congress before changing its new policy to authorize women to serve on submarines, he said.

## DOD Directs Army, Marine Drawdowns for 2015, 2016



By Karen Parrish  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 6, 2011 - Budget pressures that have proven greater than anticipated mean the Defense Department will trim end strength in its ground forces beginning in four years, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said today.

"Under this plan, the U.S. Army's permanent active-duty end strength would decline by 27,000 troops, while the Marine Corps would decline by somewhere between [15,000] and 20,000, depending on the outcome of their force structure review," Gates said.

The secretary and Navy Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke to reporters at the Pentagon on the results of defense efficiencies initiatives begun in May to trim support costs and ensure funding for military modernization.

"The projected reductions are based on an assumption that America's ground combat commitment in Afghanistan would be significantly reduced by the end of 2014, in accordance with the president's strategy," Gates said. The Army also will lose the 22,000 troops it added in a temporary end-strength increase approved in July 2009, he added.

"Ever since taking this post, now more than four years ago, I have called for protecting force structure and for maintaining modest, but real, growth in the defense

topline over the long term," Gates said. "I would prefer that this continue to be the case, but this country's dire fiscal situation and the threat it poses to American influence and credibility around the world will only get worse unless the U.S. government ... gets its finances in order."

Gates said even after force reduction, both services would remain larger than they had been when he became secretary -- the Army almost 40,000 troops larger, and the Marine Corps anywhere from 7,000 to 12,000 troops larger.

Both services support the decision, the secretary said, noting Marine Corps leaders have spoken of trimming back the increases their force structure has seen in recent years.

"I think [the Marines] see this as ... more of an organic process within the Marine Corps in terms of their priorities and their needs," Gates said. "In the case of the Army, this is a situation where the Army is supportive of this decision. I think ... that support derives from understanding the importance of this in terms of their other priorities, as well."

## DOD Urges Troops to Quit Tobacco in 2011



From a Tricare News Release

FALLS CHURCH, Va., Dec. 27, 2010 - Each year, more than a million people successfully quit tobacco, and the Defense Department wants more military members included in that number in 2011.

"In the tradition of New Year's, we are asking our active duty and retired servicemembers and their families to make a resolution to quit tobacco," said Navy Cmdr. (Dr.) Aileen Buckler, chair of the DOD Alcohol and Tobacco Advisory Committee. "Tobacco use impairs military readiness and results in serious health problems, so New Year's is a great time to commit to stopping tobacco use."

With studies showing people are 10 times more likely to succeed in behavior change when acting on a resolution, New Year's appears to be the perfect opportunity to start the process of quitting tobacco.

"But making a resolution to quit tobacco is just the beginning. Developing a strategic plan to overcome obstacles and stay on course is the ultimate key to successful quitting," Buckler said. "DOD has developed a comprehensive set of tools and a support system to help individuals prepare to follow through on their New Year's resolution."

Buckler is referring to several Tricare resources, including "Quit Tobacco -- Make Everyone Proud," DOD's tobacco cessa-

tion campaign. Tricare is DOD's managed health care system. The campaign's website, [www.ucequit2.org](http://www.ucequit2.org), features Train2Quit, an online support system that uses interactive quit tools, self-assessment questionnaires, quizzes and other activities. The support system shows servicemembers how to create a customizable quit plan with a calendar to track progress and learn how to beat cravings, overcome weight gain and cope with the effects of nicotine withdrawal.

The site also offers live help with links to personal quit coaches, available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to get answers to questions about quitting tobacco and how to stay tobacco-free.

The website also features a New Year's resolutions page, where individuals can post their resolution to quit tobacco. Individuals can send e-cards of their resolution to quit tobacco, and family and friends also can send e-cards of encouragement to those trying to quit. Free New Year's smoking cessation materials are available for health professionals and other installation leaders to order or download to help promote events. The site also features an "I made a resolution to quit tobacco in 2011" badge that can be downloaded to a Facebook page.

Users of the DOD website can sign up to receive quit tips via text messages or personal widget downloads. The DOD site also has a savings calculator, fun games like Texas hold 'em and blogs for peer support, as well as social-networking links to Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. The site provides medication information, news articles, podcasts, RSS feeds, special monthly features and much more.

All non-Medicare eligible beneficiaries can receive assistance with smoking cessation through Tricare's toll-free smoking help line. Toll-free telephone lines are available in each Tricare region offering around-the-clock support.

"We are committed to helping all members and former members of our armed services and anyone close to them start the journey to a healthier lifestyle in the coming New Year," Buckler said.

## Nominations Open for Military Child of the Year Award



By Elaine Wilson  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5, 2011 - A nonprofit organization is giving Americans the chance to sing the praises of a group often called the nation's unsung heroes: military children.

Operation Homefront, a troop- and military-family support group, is inviting

people to nominate outstanding military children from all branches of service for the 2011 Military Child of the Year Award.

"It is vitally important to recognize military children," said Jim Knotts, Operation Homefront's chief executive officer. "I think kids have gotten overlooked as we've recognized the sacrifices of the military, and they are such an important aspect of our military community. They deserve to have their moment in the sunshine as well."

Each winner will receive \$5,000 and be flown here with a parent or guardian for a special recognition ceremony April 7.

In the past, just one military child out of the services received the annual top honor. But this year -- the program's third -- officials have expanded the program to recognize one child each from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

"The sacrifices of military kids are so dramatic," Knotts said. "They live through and thrive in the face of such great challenges, it is wholly appropriate to recognize more of them."

A panel of judges — comprising an Operation Homefront staff member and volunteer service members and spouses — will select the five winners. The panel will look at objective criteria, such as the number of months a child has dealt with deployments, and at subjective criteria, such as leadership, strength of character, resilience and ability to thrive in the face of challenges, Knotts explained.

Past winners have set a high bar, Knotts said, but he added that he has no doubt many others are just as deserving of the award.

Last year's winner, 10-year-old Willie Banks, helped to care for his younger sister when his mother deployed to Iraq. His father, an Army major, died when Willie was a toddler. He also volunteers at church, school and on the athletic field.

The year before, Brittany Wallace took the title. When her father was severely injured in Iraq, Brittany took over as head of the household while her mother tended to his rehabilitation. Brittany, who was 17 at the time, took care of her two younger siblings, cleaned the house and made meals — all while keeping up her grades at school.

"The two past winners are indicative of tens of thousands of exemplary military kids that are out there," Knotts said.

Nominations will be accepted online until Jan. 31 at <http://www.Operation-Homefront.net/MCOY>. Nominees must have a valid military ID or currently be enrolled in the Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System, be between the ages of 8 and 18 and able to travel to Washington, D.C., for the April 7 ceremony.

## President Signs Defense Authorization Act



By Karen Parrish  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10, 2011 - Noting his objection to two of its provisions, President Barack Obama signed the fiscal 2011 defense authorization act into law Jan. 7.

The Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 is named for former U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton of Missouri, longtime chairman the House Armed Services Committee, who lost his House seat in November's election.

"The act authorizes funding for the defense of the United States and its interests abroad, for military construction, and for national security-related energy programs," the president wrote in a statement accompanying the signing's announcement.

Obama registered "strong objections" to two of the act's provisions related to transfer of detainees from the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. One prohibits the use of funds appropriated by the act to transfer Guantanamo detainees into the United States, and the other bars the use of certain funds to transfer detainees to the custody or effective control of foreign countries unless specified conditions are met.

But despite his objections to the two sections, the president said in his statement, "I have signed this act because of the importance of authorizing appropriations for, among other things, our military activities in 2011."

The act governs a wide range of Defense Department activities, including procurement; research, development, testing and evaluation; equipment operation and maintenance; military personnel authorizations and policy; and reserve-component management.

## Employer Partnership career search portal gains ground



The state-of-the-art career portal [www.EmployerPartnership.org](http://www.EmployerPartnership.org) has had a busy first 30 days. Launched on Veteran's Day, the upgraded portal has garnered publicity across a wide spectrum of outlets from the Department of Defense's American Forces Press Service to a "tweet" from the spouse of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mrs. Mike Mullen.

The publicity has been instrumental in the early success of the portal. To date

more than 2,600 Reserve component Service members, their Families and veterans have registered to take advantage of the benefits the new tool offers.

Of course, there are always glitches associated with new software applications. The Employer Partnership portal was no exception. After learning that some individuals were having difficulty with log-on, the decision was made November 18th to remove the upgrade in order to implement further improvements. During this time the legacy job search portal continued to provide service to our customers. On November 30th the upgraded portal was live again.

We apologized for any inconvenience that some of you may have experienced during the portal's initial days of operation. If you have had log-in issues, we ask that you simply click on the words: "Trouble logging in?"

follow the instructions on the next screen and a new temporary password will be emailed to you.

We thank all who have visited the new portal and helped make our first 30 days so remarkable. We also hope that the Employer Partnership program is able to help each of you find the career opportunity which takes best advantage of your training, skills and experiences.

Thank you for your service to America.

## Spiritual Fitness Can 'Lighten Load' for Troops, Families



By Elaine Wilson  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 15, 2010 - Spiritual fitness can help "lighten the load" for servicemembers and their families, whether they're facing combat, dealing with health issues or just managing the day-to-day stressors of military life, the Army's chief of chaplains said.

"I would imagine that soldiers carry some of that in their rucksack," Army Chaplain (Maj. Gen.) Douglas L. Carver said. "[Chaplains] are there in many cases to help them unload some feelings, some of the trauma they're carrying around.

"That's what I think spiritual practice does, lighten the load," he added. "And who wouldn't want to take a few rocks out of a rucksack?"

The Army's top chaplain discussed the importance of spiritual fitness to servicemembers' overall well-being and its potentially "life-changing" benefits in an American Forces Press Service interview.

The Army defines spiritual fitness as the development of the personal qualities

needed to sustain a person in times of stress, hardship and tragedy. These qualities can come from religious, philosophical or human values, according to Army Regulation 600-63, and form the basis for character, disposition, decision making and integrity.

"It's not just about conceptual understanding," Carver explained. "It's not just believing, but practicing what you believe, that will have the greatest effect on you as an individual."

Reaching out to a transcendent power, regardless of religion, can help people process through and work on difficult issues, the chaplain said. "No matter what a person's faith, it's the fact that they've reached beyond themselves for strength in time of need," he said.

Carver recalled when he was in Iraq at the beginning of the war. A soldier approached him and explained that he was a sniper, trained to kill the enemy. He was struggling with issues of guilt and forgiveness, the general said.

"I'm not sure you can find some answers to those things outside of a religious or spiritual perspective," he said. "When you practice, regardless of what happens in a day's mission, I know you'll have the courage to handle it. It goes beyond training."

Traditionally, the military has placed a greater emphasis on emotional and physical health, rather than spiritual fitness, when looking at servicemembers' overall well-being. However, this past decade of war, and the resultant stress and strain on the force, has prompted new discussions about spiritual health and the integral part it plays in a person's life, Carver said.

Physical, emotional and spiritual fitness "are equally important," the general said. "And all must be taken holistically."

This holistic approach is becoming increasingly evident in hospital settings, where professionals are adopting a collaborative approach to treating the physical and emotional wounds of war, Carver said. "It's not just treating mental and physical health issues with medicine," he said. "There's a spiritual dimension."

Experts have conducted extensive research on the correlation between spiritual fitness and mental and physical health, and have found religion to be a "powerful coping behavior" for people who are facing adversity, anxiety and stress, said Dr. Harold G. Koenig, director of Duke University's Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health.

"Research documents that people who are more religious, more engaged in religious beliefs [and] activities, simply cope better," he said. "They experience greater well-being as a result of those beliefs and practices, which seem to ground them, and give them stability and a resilience."

Koenig said research has shown that people who are involved in religious practice

are less likely to become overwhelmed, develop depression or anxiety or commit suicide, and even are physically healthier.

He cited a number of studies that examined the effects of spiritual practice on everything from alcohol abuse to suicide.

Of the 444 studies conducted worldwide on the effect of religious involvement on depression, 61 percent found that people who are more religious suffer less depression and recover faster, he said. Of the 278 studies on alcohol abuse, 240 reported less alcohol use, abuse and dependence among those scoring higher on religious involvement. And of the 185 studies conducted on drug abuse, 84 percent reported less drug abuse among those who are more religiously involved.

Finally, on suicide, 75 percent of 141 studies found less suicide and a more negative attitude toward suicide among those scoring higher on religious involvement, Koenig said.

"A spiritual world view gives people a reason for living, gives life meaning," he said. "When you're out there on the field, constantly on the alert, trying to figure out, 'What's my life all about?' ... meaning is very, very important. When people lose their sense of meaning, they lose their sense of grounding, of direction."

The ability to ward off loneliness and depression, or self-destructive behavior such as drug or alcohol addiction, is a priceless benefit, Carver noted, particularly since studies have shown that one of the most common reasons soldiers take their own lives is isolation.

"You may have 300 friends on Facebook, but at 3 o'clock in the morning, who do you call to assist you as you're dealing with a crisis in your life?" he said. "Alienation is a tough place to be at any time, but especially when dealing with military life at a time of war."

Recognizing its potential value, the Army has begun to incorporate avenues to develop spiritual fitness in its soldier support programs and resources. Carver cited Comprehensive Soldier Fitness as an example. The program is designed to build resilience in soldiers and their families through online training modules and helping resources. It focuses on five dimensions of strength: physical, emotional, social, family and spiritual. Within the program, spiritual fitness is deemed on par with physical and emotional health.

In Iraq, chaplains and soldiers are being introduced to the Spiritual Fitness Initiative, which is designed to improve soldiers' well-being through spirituality. After an orientation, chaplains arrange for small, voluntary group sessions in which servicemembers can air their experiences and concerns. The initiative emphasizes the importance of developing spiritual health with the belief that

other aspects of health can then improve as a result.

The Chaplain Corps' Center for Spiritual Leadership has a research proposal through the Army Studies Program that will allow experts to follow groups of deployed soldiers for a year to see how the initiative has impacted their spiritual life and well-being.

And, as an ongoing resource for spiritual health, more than 1,600 active-duty chaplains from all faith backgrounds conduct more than 1,000 worship gatherings of soldiers and their families on any given week across the Army, Carver said.

"We help people see there is a future," he said, calling military chaplains "agents of hope."

"That's what spirituality does for you," he said. "It gives context for your life. There is a future, and there is hope."

The big-picture goal, the general said, is to sustain soldiers and their families for the long haul.

"If we're going to do this for decades, what is it that will carry a soldier through the cycle of a long, or almost an unending conflict?" he said.

People often are drawn to spirituality when it's time to face something significant, Carver noted, citing large chapel services at the beginning of the war and on and just after 9/11.

"It would be great if folks didn't have to wait for a crisis to do that," he said. "We're just trying to help folks realize this is something you might want to keep in your life. Like exercise or taking vitamins, a balanced spiritual life is also good for you."

"It's another way of looking at life," he added. "It's nonthreatening and voluntary, and can be life-changing. And it's available to all."

## 'Medical Home' Concept Improves Care, Controls Costs



By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 12, 2011 - Wouldn't it be fantastic to get the old-fashioned kind of health care, in which the doctor knew you and your family and kept track of your medical condition, but with the additional convenience and access to health care information that modern technology provides?

That's exactly what the TRICARE health insurance program is striving to provide as it rolls out the new patient-centered "medical home" concept to an increasing number of its beneficiaries, Navy Rear Adm. (Dr.) Christine S. Hunter, the top TRICARE

officer, told American Forces Press Service.

Civilian medicine has embraced the medical home concept, which introduces a team approach to health care and establishes a consistent, long-term relationship between patients and a provider team, Hunter explained.

The TRICARE Management Activity began introducing the concept last year. Already, 655,000 of its 9.5 million beneficiaries are enrolled in the medical home concept. Hunter's goal is to increase that number to 2 million by the end of 2011. Within the next several years, she said, she hopes to see as many as 3 million beneficiaries enrolled in the concept.

The Air Force was the first service to begin introducing the concept through its Family Health Initiative. The Navy followed with its Medical Home Port. The Army followed with its Army Home for Health program, which focused initially on wounded warriors but now has expanded.

In addition, 750 TRICARE network providers are now certified as medical homes.

In some cases, participation is voluntary, with facilities offering beneficiaries the option to join as medical home teams are stood up. In other cases, entire sites have transformed into medical homes, with all of their beneficiaries assigned to medical care teams.

Regardless of how the concept is introduced, Hunter called it a win-win situation for everyone involved.

Patients are assigned to a medical home team that typically consists of a doctor, a physician's assistant, a nurse and medical technicians. Together, they partner with the patient to support a comprehensive health care plan, Hunter said.

This improves the patient experience, she added, by fixing what many beneficiaries call a shortcoming of TRICARE as well as many other health care programs: never seeing the same health care provider twice.

That too often put patients in the position of having to explain and re-explain the same issue or concerns to every new doctor, Hunter said. As a result, she explained, they were likely to focus only on immediate concerns — what brought them into the doctor's office — instead of long-term health maintenance and wellness goals.

Under the medical home concept, every member of the provider team has access to the beneficiary's medical records, and works collaboratively with the rest of the team to provide the best care possible, she said.

When patients visit a hospital or clinic or call in with a question or concern, they see or talk to a member of that team — not another health care provider who steps in because the patient's provider is unavailable. And if the patient needs to be referred to a specialist, the team makes the referral and

tracks the results.

Ultimately, the patient receives better, comprehensive care and a better overall health care experience, Hunter said.

And because the medical home concept puts heavy emphasis on preventive medicine, it helps to address problems before they escalate, Hunter added. Not only does this make beneficiaries healthier, she said, it also reduces the need for catastrophic and expensive medical intervention.

Meanwhile, the patient-centered medical home concept takes advantage of new electronic tools to further improve communication between patients and their health care teams. Patients can use these technologies to schedule appointments, get prescription refills or have health care questions answered.

And if they need to contact a health care provider after normal duty hours, they can do so virtually. That reduces the likelihood that they'll report to the emergency room because they don't know where else to go, Hunter said.

The health care team, in turn, can use these technologies to remind patients when it's time for a checkup, test or inoculation or to deliver lab results and explain what they mean. They also can use them to provide information and coaching to beneficiaries working to lose weight, quit smoking or achieve other longer-term health maintenance or wellness goals.

Ultimately, Hunter said, the medical home concept supports what she calls TRICARE's "quadruple aim."

"We want to have readiness for the military members and their families, and we want to do that through the best possible health [for beneficiaries] and enhance the patient experience," she said. "And then we want to do so at a responsible cost."

Cost considerations make the concept particularly attractive as Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates seeks ways to control health care costs that are eating away an ever-increasing percentage of the Defense Department budget.

But Hunter said the best part of the patient-centered medical home concept is that it puts beneficiaries' interests first.

"You are getting quality, you are getting a good patient experience, and then the cost [of delivering health care] will naturally follow," she said. "If patients are healthy, the cost is low. ... So if you do the right thing for the patient and then we get to health, cost will follow."

## Army Gaming

### What is it?

The "America's Army" game is one of the most popular video action games in the

country due in large part to the unique look inside the U.S. Army that it affords gamers, and its non-stop action as players are transformed into Soldiers.

It provides players with an authentic military experience, from exploring the development of Soldiers in individual and collective training, to their deployment in simulated missions around the world. Through a variety of game scenarios, players learn that successful mission accomplishment requires a team effort and strict adherence to the seven Army Values.

Emphasizing team play, the game demonstrates the Army values of loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage, and makes them integral to success in the "America's Army" game.

### What has the Army done?

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center (USACR/SC) partnered with the "America's Army" Project Office to integrate safety and Composite Risk Management (CRM) into the "America's Army" game. Now the playing field is even bigger. USACRC Training Division is currently developing online courseware similar to the Virtual Battle Space 2 (VBS2) program. This courseware is interactive and will enhance multimedia training by providing learners with a unique level of experience through performance-based interactivities.

### What continued efforts does Army have planned for the future?

The "America's Army" gaming project is a long-term commitment focusing on the development of future products that will further the integration of CRM and safety throughout America's Army gaming, simulation, training, and outreach products. In addition, the USACR/SC has been invited to participate in the creation of a Gaming Community of Practice under the Battle Command Knowledge System (BCKS), Combined Arms Center-Knowledge, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), which will result in the deployment of a professional forum, currently under development with the working title "Game Net." This will enable the USACR/SC to remain on the cutting edge of future military gaming. USACR/SC is always searching for innovative ways to utilize virtual space to conduct training in the virtual world technologies.

### Why is this important to the Army?

Army gaming technology is the future of today's Army. It is critical that the Army "gets in" at the ground level. Some of the most cutting-edge technology comes from games and Soldiers will be exposed to this technology both on and off duty.

For more information, visit:  
[http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/12/27/?s\\_cid=email](http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/12/27/?s_cid=email)

## Interactive Simulation Launched to Provide Information on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



The Department of Defense (DoD) announced the launch of an interactive simulation designed to help those dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2) developed the 'Virtual PTSD Experience' to help combat veterans and their families and friends to anonymously enter a virtual world and learn about PTSD causes, symptoms and resources.

"We believe this is the first time DoD has used interactive simulations with the Web to help our military community with PTSD in the privacy of their homes," said Dr. George Peach Taylor Jr., principal deputy assistant secretary of defense for health affairs.

The Virtual PTSD Experience was designed to be used in the privacy of homes. Visitors are anonymous, which reduces the perceived stigma of asking for help with PTSD.

"We created an environment that lets people learn by doing, rather than reading text and watching videos on two-dimensional websites," said. Kevin Holloway, the psychologist who led T2's virtual world development. "They can learn something new each time they visit."

The T2 Virtual PTSD Experience can be visited at <http://www.t2health.org/vw-proj/>.

Located at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., T2 is a component of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury.

## Family Matters Blog: Webinars Offer Tips on Finances, Parenting



By Elaine Wilson  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 4, 2011 - Military OneSource will present a series of webinars this month designed to aid military families with everything from parenting and homework to money management and debt.

Webinars are web-based training sessions using teleconference audio and the Internet to deliver an interactive seminar.

I encourage our military families to check out these free workshops, which are open to anyone with access to Military

OneSource. For more information on the webinars or to find out how to join one, visit Military OneSource's webinar information page or call 1-800-342-9647.

The following is the webinar schedule for January:

-- Couples and Money on Jan. 20 at 10 a.m. and Jan. 24 at 7 p.m. EST

You'll have the opportunity to assess how you and your partner handle money issues, explore your financial values, identify money "hot spots" and learn tips for avoiding money conflicts.

-- Developing Responsibility and Independence: Skills You Can Teach Children on Jan. 28 at 11 a.m. and Jan. 31 at 7 p.m. EST

This session offers parents strategies for teaching their children to be dependable and accountable for their actions. Participants will be able to define responsibility and independence, identify areas of responsibility, strategize techniques for removing the barriers to responsible behavior and increase their confidence in their ability to raise responsible and independent children.

To read other posts, check out the Family Matters website, <http://afps.dodlive.mil/category/family-matters/>

## DOD Expands Community-based Child Care Options



By Elaine Wilson  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9, 2010

— The Defense Department will launch an initiative early next year aimed at expanding the quality

and quantity of community-based child care options for geographically dispersed reserve and active-duty families and for families facing long waits for on-base care.

Through the initiative, DOD will work with federal agencies, state officials and child care centers and programs to raise the quality of care within communities, which should translate to an increased child care capacity for military families, Barbara Thompson, director of the Pentagon's office of family policy/children and youth, explained.

"We know child care is a work force issue," Thompson said. It's vital "not just for our deployed servicemembers, but for our servicemembers who are here working long shifts, that they know their children are taken care of, that they are in a high-quality, developmentally appropriate, nurturing environment."

The initiative will be introduced as a two-year pilot program in 13 states that share the same "quest for quality" as the DOD, she said.

The initiative has been in the works for several years, Thompson said, and arose

out of an evident need. When seeking more child care options for Guard and Reserve families, DOD officials conducted an analysis of the quality of licensing requirements across the nation and found a lack of nationally accredited care and some "frightening" standards," she said.

According to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, just 8 to 10 percent of state child development facilities are accredited. Within the DOD, however, 98 percent of DOD child development programs are accredited.

"It's very hard for us to connect a military family with a program that we know is not developmentally appropriate and is not high quality," Thompson said. "We know how much it influences the well-being of children."

A lack of community-based care particularly impacts Guard and Reserve families, who typically are geographically separated from on-base care centers. "We have three things we know are critical: availability, affordability and quality," Thompson said.

Through the initiative, DOD officials will share lessons learned from the military child care system and also offer states support to improve the quality of the child care standards and oversight, she said.

The department will leverage its Joint Family Support Assistance Program teams — which include a child and youth behavior specialist and Military OneSource consultant — as one of many state partners interested in improving quality.

The department also will hire a state child care liaison who will work with state agencies, the state's Early Childhood Council, Health and Human Services, Head Start and the licensing bureau. The liaisons also will help to identify providers -- including schools, recreation programs and home-based care programs -- willing to take the steps needed to improve their quality. From there, the department will provide technical and training assistance, Thompson explained.

By doing so, there's an added benefit. Care not only is improved for military families, but for all children within the program, she said.

Those programs that meet the DOD's standards will be added to the list of approved providers, and the department will buy down the cost of care for military families.

Officials will track quality improvements through an evaluation of child care licensing standards and the state quality rating and improvement system, Thompson said. Once the two-year pilot program is over, officials will evaluate its success and lessons learned, she said.

Officials had specific criteria in mind when selecting the 13 states for the pilot program, Thompson said. They chose some

states based on the lack of an active-duty installation, such as Vermont and Indiana, and others for their deployment impact and existing quality improvement rating systems, she said.

The 13 states selected to participate are Alaska, California, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Vermont and Washington.

The initiative marks an extensive effort on DOD's part, Thompson noted. Officials conducted research to determine the most important quality indicators and to make sure they fully understood each state's licensing requirement, she said, and also had to develop a rating system that would work in a civilian community.

Officials also worked in collaboration with the Health and Human Services, Education, and Agriculture departments. "They opened a lot of very important doors for us," she said.

Thompson hopes the initiative will have a positive impact, not only for military families, but the nation as a whole.

"We're hoping to increase the availability of quality childcare for our military members and also help the United States in its endeavor to improve quality in early childhood environments across the nation," she said.

The message to military families, she added, is "we care about you and we care about the future of your children."

## The Army Reserve as part of the Operational Force



### What is it?

The Army Reserve, using the Army Force Generation (ARFORGEN) model of providing forces in a cyclic manner, provides operational forces to the total Army, to meet the nation's military demands. Many of the Army's civil affairs, psychological operations, medical, and transportation capabilities reside predominately within the Army Reserve. Due to mobilization and rapid-deployment demands since September 11, 2001, the Army Reserve has evolved into an operational, expeditionary force replete with streamlined deployable headquarters.

The Army Reserve's ability to mobilize quickly and essential capabilities make it well-suited for meeting the nation's future military requirements as a part of the operational force. Compared to the cost of active component support capabilities, the Army Reserve is able to provide enabler support more cost effectively, in order to meet security requirements at home and abroad. Army

Reserve Soldiers will remain a vital part of the total force for meeting the national security challenges of the future.

### What has the Army Reserve done?

The Army Reserve continues to be called to address imbalances within the Active Army for many required enabling capabilities, including logistical, engineer, military police, medical and civil affairs support, as well as to fulfill active duty generating force requirements. The Army Reserve is in the process of recasting itself from its part-time "strategic reserve" role, to a fully integrated and critical part of an operational, expeditionary Army. After a century of serving as the nation's strategic federal reserve force the Army Reserve has transformed into a ready operational force postured to effectively and efficiently support the Nation's evolving and challenging security requirements.

### What does the Army Reserve have planned for the future?

For now and into the foreseeable future, the Army Reserve will function as an integral member of the total Army's operational force and we will continue to be a positive investment for the nation. Progress is being made to transform the required institutional, policy and systemic resource processes and procedures to ensure a sustainable and ready force.

### Why is this important to the Army?

Employing the Army Reserve as part of the operational force provides the nation a "best value" cost-savings option, resulting from the nation only paying the full cost of Army Reserve Soldiers when they are mobilized. The Army Reserve, using the ARFORGEN rotational readiness model, is capable of providing support enablers to the operational force at nearly one-third less cost than maintaining the same capability in the Active Component.

An Army Reserve, as part of the operational force, provides predictability to Soldiers, families, employers, and allows for the synchronization of resources.

For more information, visit:  
[http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/12/20/?s\\_cid=email](http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2010/12/20/?s_cid=email)

## DOD Explores Post-NSPS Personnel Modifications



By Karen Parrish  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13, 2011 - As the National Security Personnel System fades into history, the Defense Department is exploring new modifications to the personnel system, a DOD official said today.

John H. James Jr., who directs the

Pentagon's NSPS Transition Office, said the effort is in the very early stages.

The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act "specifically gives us the authority to investigate and design a modified system in the realm of an enterprisewide performance appraisal system, high flexibilities in retention and a work force retention fund," James said.

The act authorizes the secretary of defense, in coordination with the director of the Office of Personnel Management, "to develop new regulations for the civilian work force which include fair, credible, and transparent methods for hiring and assigning personnel, and for appraising employee performance ... consistent with the existing general schedule pay system, without the need for any legislative change to that system."

Thus far, his office has hosted meetings with management and employee representatives to gather opinions on what those methods should be, James said.

"We had a huge conference out in Los Angeles in September where we had 200 employees — 100 from labor and 100 from the management side — get together just to explore ideas of the kinds of things we'd like to see in a performance management system, a work force incentive fund and hiring flexibilities," James said.

"We got a lot of great ideas from the organization, and we spent a lot of time getting to know each other and understanding different perspectives which proved to be very valuable," he added.

The transition office has since met with labor partners in a planning group to set out the scope and authority of design teams to address those three authorities, James said.

"The deliberate approach that we're taking on the front end will pay dividends on the far end," he said. "Knowing the relationships, understanding different perspectives, making sure we take the time to ... put together a diverse design team."

His office plans to capture "the thoughts and ideas that are out there, especially out in the field," James said.

"In Los Angeles, we had both labor and management -- employees and leaders -- from around the country: different disciplines, different geographical areas, different commands, different services," he said. "We got a plethora, a very good pot of really good ideas that we are going to give to the design team for them to evaluate."

The next milestone will be a planning group meeting with labor partners Jan. 20, he said.

"This is the group that's planning the actual design effort," he said.

Design work groups are scheduled to kick off their efforts Feb. 23, James said.

## Blogger Shares Secrets for Creating Exceptional Care Packages



By Elaine Wilson  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 27, 2010 - I'm pleased to introduce a new Family Matters guest blogger, Megan Just, a Navy veteran and the editor of the weekly newspaper at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Calif.

As both the sender of less-than-ideal care packages and the receiver of awesome ones, Megan discusses the importance of care packages to deployed servicemembers and the elements that distinguish an outstanding care package from a run-of-the-mill one.

By Megan Just

One of my most vivid memories of my deployment to Iraq is the adrenaline rush of receiving care packages. The arrival of a care package could instantly turn a bad day into a euphoric one. Receiving care packages was so important to me that I often wrote about them in my diary.

At the beginning of the deployment I wrote, "I received Eric's (my boyfriend) package today and I've been waiting all night to open it. I've been so looking forward to it that I don't want the anticipation to be over."

The next day, after opening his package, I wrote, "Eric's box was great. He sent my favorite fig sugarless cookies (which I am finishing as I write), a bunch of Cliff Bars and a variety of dried fruit. He also sent two issues of 'National Geographic' and 'Climbing.'"

In that care package, Eric had also enclosed a small book he made that contained his favorite quotes, photos of us together and a long letter. My reaction to the book tugged at my heartstrings enough to nauseate you, so I'll pass on sharing that section of my diary here, but I can assure you, the book meant a lot more than the fig cookies and it is still a treasured item today.

Toward the end of deployment, even as the recipient of an estimated 50 care packages, I was still raving about them. "I love getting care packages," I wrote. "It is hands-on proof that somebody loves me. Opening them is like being a kid on Christmas morning. Each package contains a surprise and what is inside is additionally valuable because the contents are things that I can't procure myself."

While all care packages are great to receive, I did notice a difference in the emotional impact of a run-of-the-mill care package versus one where the sender put a lot of thought into selecting the contents

and packaging them in a creative manner.

A run-of-the-mill care package contains generic items and things servicemembers can easily buy themselves at the Exchange on base or order online. A run-of-the-mill care package is one that might as well have been packed by one of the many web-based care package companies. See, the preparation of an exceptional care package cannot be outsourced. The preparation and thought that goes into a care package is half of its value and the servicemember can perceive this extra effort.

Now, I must confess that buried in my past is a string of these generic care packages. Back then, I was dating a servicemember who was deployed to Iraq and although I am a procrastinator by nature, I was determined to send him care packages at regular intervals and I was determined to do it in an efficient manner.

From the post office, I gathered an armload of identical Priority Mail boxes and customs forms. At Costco, I stocked up on a variety of jumbo packs of single-serve snack items like trail mix, crackers, beef jerky and sunflower seeds. Once a month, like clockwork, I tossed a handful of each type of snack item into a Priority Mail box and, voila! I had a care package! I think I added a note to each box before taping it up, but I couldn't be sure. (FYI: Not including a note -- even if it's just a sentence -- is the cardinal sin of care package preparations.)

I sent this string of care packages before I'd been deployed myself. The care packages I send to friends now are different. They are smaller, for one, and I think about details like picking a nice card for my note so the servicemember can use it to decorate their trailer. I sent a small box of gourmet chocolates to a friend around Valentine's Day one year and now, when I bake batches of cookies to send, I pay close attention to the packaging so the cookies don't turn into a plastic bag of crumbs by the time they arrive overseas.

While I'm on the topic of baked goods, it's important to mention that one of the greatest joys of a care package is being able to share homemade treats with the members of your unit and your trailermate. Keep this in mind if you send baked goods to servicemembers and send enough so the servicemember can share without jeopardizing his or her own stash of treats. Help them out by packing a large container for sharing and a smaller container for hoarding.

In some cases, however, the servicemember may be watching his or her weight and you shouldn't send them a double batch of Aunt Harmonie's Triple-Fudge Buttery Delights. Depending on the servicemember's level of self control, you might consider sending a single serving of the baked good: enough so they can enjoy the special treat, but not enough to throw their diet off

course.

What I found especially touching as a deployed servicemember was when I would receive a care package from someone unexpected, like the parents of a close friend, a distant cousin or a co-worker who I didn't know very well. Recently, a friend of mine sent a care package of gag gifts to the goofy husband of one of our mutual friends who is deployed on a Navy ship.

Family members back home can facilitate this process by making a list of the types of things the servicemember would like to receive and circulating the list with the servicemember's mailing address. Also include an approximate date range -- so you don't violate operations security -- so senders can spread packages through the entirety of the deployment.

If you have the time and desire, savor the process of preparing the care package. While you're packing, think about the servicemember who is absent. Tuck a family photo into the spine of a book. Wrap a brightly colored ribbon around a fancy chocolate bar. Have the kids make crafts. Go to an imports store and pick up a food item that you enjoyed together during your honeymoon in Paris. Make a good, old-fashioned mix CD. Clean a few seashells from your summer vacation and nestle them inside the package of undershirts your servicemember requested. In the end, you're not shipping goods. You're showing that you care.

**The following are some care package items I found especially awesome while I was deployed:**

-- A stack of 11x17 landscape prints from a friend who is a professional photographer.

-- A peppy comforter and matching curtains sewn to fit the dimensions of my trailer window. Also, a new sheet set and a foam mattress pad to make my bed more comfortable.

-- A mini-rice maker and a bag of rice helped me stay healthy by enabling me to skip occasional meals at the all-you-can-eat dining hall. Just-add-boiling-water meals were nice, too.

-- Good books friends and family members back in the States had recently read. I discovered several great books by authors that I might not have otherwise picked up and it gave me something interesting to discuss in letters and e-mails.

-- Ground coffee from my favorite coffee roaster in San Diego.

-- Fashion magazines and current newspapers from back home.

-- Watercolor paints.

-- Fancy shampoos, lotions and soaps.

-- Tape and scissors.

-- Decorations for the holidays, including the minor holidays, like a small pumpkin for Halloween.

-- Blank cards for sending thank you notes.

And here are some questions for you:

What have been some of your favorite items you've sent or received in a care package?

What are your strategies for sending thoughtful care packages ... efficiently?

## Biden Promises Responsible Drawdown in Iraq

By Donna Miles  
American Forces Press Service



WASHINGTON, Jan. 13, 2011 -

After meeting in Iraq today with its new governmental leaders and with U.S. officials, Vice President Joe Biden promised deployed U.S. service members the United States will draw down its forces in a way that preserves their achievements and honors the sacrifices made there.

Biden is the highest-level U.S. official to visit Iraq since it formed what Army Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, commander of U.S. Forces Iraq, called "the most inclusive government in their history." The vice president met with Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, Iraqiyya coalition leader Ayad Allawi, President Jalal Talabani, Speaker Osama al-Nujaifi and other political leaders.

Biden also met with Austin and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq James F. Jeffrey to discuss progress made, challenges ahead and plans to continue drawing down U.S. forces in Iraq through Dec. 31.

"I'm here to help the Iraqis celebrate the progress they made," Biden told reporters as he met with Austin and Jeffrey. "They formed a government, and that's a good thing. They have a long way to go."

Following today's sessions, Biden thanked an assembly of U.S. military members at Camp Victory for what they and those who served before them have helped to accomplish in Iraq and beyond.

Because of their "incredible sacrifices," he said, the Iraqi people are on the verge of having a country that will be "democratic, sustainable, and God willing, prosperous."

"And it can have a dramatic impact on this entire region," he added.

Biden pledged to the service members that the United States will end the war responsibly and "leave behind a country that is worthy of the sacrifices that so many of your brothers and sisters have made."

He noted that 4,422 U.S. service members have died in Iraq, and nearly 32,000 more have been wounded. While U.S. casualties have decreased dramatically, Biden said, the most recent losses earlier this week demonstrate that duty in Iraq "is not a

normal day at the office."

"You are still risking your lives for your country," he said.

Troops serving during Operation New Dawn in Iraq are laying groundwork that will remain long after they return home to their families and loved ones, Biden told the group.

He recognized, as an example, that the 807th Medical Command is helping the Iraqis build the infrastructure to deliver quality health care to their people.

The U.S. military mission is to advise and assist Iraq's security forces, conduct partnered counterterrorism operations and protect U.S. civilians. Meanwhile, the United States is increasing its diplomatic, political and economic engagement with Iraq.

"The things you are doing in this transition period are the things that are going to put the Iraqi people and Iraqi government in a position to sustain the incredibly hard-fought gains that you initially are responsible for," Biden said.

Just as the U.S. mission changed when the United States ended its combat mission in Iraq on Aug. 31, Biden said, it will change again at the end of 2011, when the U.S. military leaves in accordance with an agreement between the U.S. and Iraqi governments.

While lauding progress in getting Iraqi security forces "to a point now where they can be in the lead" and "getting better and better every day," Biden acknowledged that they are likely to continue to need U.S. assistance for some time. He cited training, equipping and maintaining as areas the Iraqis likely could require continued help.

Biden turned emotional as he thanked the service members for the sacrifices they and their comrades, as well as their families, have made in Iraq.

"You are part of an incredibly, incredibly proud tradition," he said. "And I hope that not only your military expertise wears off on our Iraqi friends. I hope they understand and see — and I think they do — the incredible patriotism, the incredible dedication to country, the incredible diversity that we represent: men and women, black and white, Asian, Caucasian, every single mix that exists on Earth, working as one incredible unit to protect the interests of the United States."

Today's men and women in uniform represent "the greatest warrior class the world has ever created," the vice president said. "This is not only the best-run, but this is the most powerful, significant military force in the history of mankind. And the world knows that and our citizens know that."

Biden promised that the United States will continue to live up to its "one true sacred obligation -- to prepare and equip those we send into harm's way and care for them when they come home."

He wiped tears from his eyes as he described how he and his wife, Dr. Jill Biden, visit nonambulatory patients at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and come away amazed that all they ask for is help getting back to their units.

Biden said Americans recognize and appreciate their military, but that he wished all could see what he does — "young women and men, not so young sometimes, who don't ask a thing for all that they've done."

"We owe you more than we could every repay you," he said.

Biden's visit to Iraq is his seventh since taking office in January 2009. He traveled to Baghdad from Islamabad, Pakistan, where he and Pakistani leaders focused on their countries' relationship and joint efforts toward regional peace and stability.

The vice president kicked off his visit to the region earlier this week in Afghanistan, where he met with U.S. and Afghan national and local leaders to assess progress and reinforce the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan.

## AR-MEDCOM Hosting A Commander's Training Workshop (CTW)



Attendees will receive vital information from select speakers and AR-MEDCOM staff on medical globalization enhancing preparedness for current and future missions, mobilizations, and/or deployments.

Additional events include Army Community Covenant Signing (ACCS), Army Reserve Family Programs Workshop (ARFPW), NCO Induction Ceremony and Semi-Formal Dinner, Commander Safety Council Meeting and a no-host social.

CTW events will take place at the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay Hotel, 2900 Bayport Drive, Tampa, FL 33607.

All personnel are expected to arrive no later than 1700, Thursday, February 10, 2011 at 5:00 p.m. and depart no earlier than Sunday, February 13, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.

For lodging reservations, utilize the following web site: <http://www.grandtampabay.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp?null>, or call: (813) 874-1234. Attendees must notify the hotel that they are making reservations for the "AR-MEDCOM Commanders Training Workshop."

Additionally, all attendees will complete a registration form and submit the form to the registration POC, Capt. Charles Cook, (727) 563-3840, email: [charles.h.cook1@usar.army.mil](mailto:charles.h.cook1@usar.army.mil).

If you are unsure if you are required to

attend, contact  
AR-MEDCOM  
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POC, Lt.  
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Baugher, (727)  
563-3841,  
email: robert.  
baugher@usar.  
army.mil; or  
Maj. Patricia  
E. Smith, (727)  
563 - 3804,  
email: patty.  
smith@usar.  
army.mil.  
See you  
there!

**Social  
Media  
and the  
Army  
Reserve?**

That's right,  
we're out there  
and we want  
you to be a part  
of the conver-  
sation! Social  
media sites  
such as Face-  
book, Twitter  
and Flickr  
connect people  
with each other  
and give them  
access to key  
resources and  
information  
that traditional  
sources can't.

Thousands  
have already helped us create the "MyAr-  
myReserve" on-line community of Soldiers,  
families and followers who share stories,  
photos, video and information about the  
Army Reserve with each other, as well as  
gain answers to their questions directly from  
the source.

So, whether you're sharing some great  
video and photos, learning more about a  
key program or resource, or just expressing  
your point of view, MyArmyReserve allows  
your voice to be heard loud and clear! Go to  
facebook.com, twitter.com and flickr.com,  
search for and follow MyArmyReserve to be  
a part of the conversation. Your voice mat-  
ters and it's your site, too!

Behind every Soldier  
is a strong support team

Use them to prevent suicide

Counselor  
Battle Buddies  
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Chain of Command  
Coach  
Chaplain  
Physician

www.militaryonesource.com | 1.800.342.9647  
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1.800.273.TALK (8255)

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# AMERICA'S ARMY: THE STRENGTH OF THE NATION™



February 11, 2011



## ARMY COMMUNITY COVENANT

**Honoring the Greater Tampa Area Army Reserve & Army Reserve Medical Command Soldiers.**

Together, We are committed to building strong communities.

We, the Community, recognize...

- ... The commitment Soldiers and their Families are making every day.
- ... The strength of Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families.
- ... The strength of Families is supported by the strength of the Community.
- ... The strength of the Community comes from the support of Employers, Educators, Civic and Business leaders, and its Citizens.

We, the Community, are committed to...

- ... Building partnerships that support the strength, resilience, and readiness of Soldiers and their Families.
- ... Assisting in the implementation of the Army Family Covenant.

# @ the CTW, Tampa