

Leaving a combat zone can become a stressful time

by Ryan D. Smith

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Redeployment from a combat zone can be a cause for happiness.

After a year or more away from loved ones, friends or even just an old-fashioned, greasy hamburger, Soldiers may be ecstatic to return to the United States.

However, redeployment can bring its own set of stressors.

According to Martha Brown, Deployment Readjustment Program manager, Fort Bragg Army Community Service, neither Soldiers nor their families should expect the readjustment to garrison life to be stress-free. In fact, the Web site, www.fortbraggmwr.com/ACS, states it's quite normal for

Soldiers to experience days or weeks of depression, anxiety and anger.

"Family members and Soldiers need to remember patience, good communication and realistic expectations," Brown said. "Everybody's going to have a different pace to their readjustment. It's a matter of time and patience."

Many symptoms may manifest themselves if post-deployment readjustment is not going well. Among these symptoms are:

- Guilt or shame;
- Excessive drinking or drug abuse;
- Frequent crying or other extreme reactions to events that would normally be handled more calmly;
- Sleep problems (either too little or too much);
- Depression, anxiety or

anger;

- Overdependency on others;
- Verbal or physical abuse toward family members;
- Stress-related physical ailments such as headaches, backaches or low energy;
- Inability to escape from frightening memories of war;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Suicidal thoughts.

Soldiers experiencing these symptoms should seek help, but should not feel powerless to help themselves.

According to the Web site, there are many ways in which redeploying Soldiers can readjust to stateside life:

- Identify people who can help — friends, spiritual advisors or mental health professionals — and seek their assistance. Be open about problems and resolve to work on them together, either with

family members or professionals.

■ Break big problems into smaller, more manageable parts. Then solve these parts as a means of rebuilding confidence.

■ Become involved in religious organizations, hobby groups or other activities that keep you active and help you rejoin the community.

■ Don't put off solving problems. Work on them immediately; inaction can reinforce a sense of powerlessness.

■ Family readjustment problems are a normal part of redeployment. Don't blame others for your distress, and don't blame yourself excessively, either.

■ Keep things in perspective. Do not allow every problem that comes your way to seem earth-shattering. A posi-

tive outlook helps speed readjustment.

■ Realize the stress of redeployment can make everyday problems seem bigger than they are.

■ Make allowances for yourself and your family.

■ Accept some setbacks in the readjustment process as normal.

Brown said Soldiers who feel they need help can contact ACS.

"There are a lot of resources available (to help with readjustment)," she said. "If anything, just remember Army Community Service. Soldiers can call us, and we can give them a referral elsewhere. Call us and we can give the information you need, so you won't have to worry about the details."

For more tips on readjustment, call ACS at 396-8682.

Taxes must be paid within 180 days upon return

by Lucille Anne Newman

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When President George Bush declared Afghanistan and its airspace a combat zone on Sept. 19, 2001, military personnel and their spouses were not charged interests or penalties for taxes due in 2001 until 180 days after the Soldier returned home.

"Let's say at a minimum they must file (their taxes) within the 180 days, but if they left between January 1 and April 15, they have 180 days plus their time in the combat zone within that time," said Valerie Thornton, Internal Revenue Service Media Relations Office in Greensboro, N.C. She added that the IRS has also suspended all tax return examinations and no interest or penalties will be added to the taxes while the Soldier is in a combat zone.

Thornton said military pay received by Soldiers while in a combat zone is exempt from income tax for any month they spent in the combat zone.

"If all of their pay for 2004 was earned while in a combat zone, for tax purposes that pay is excluded and (the Soldier) will have no taxable income during that time," she said. "But Soldiers can use that

excludable income in figuring their earned income credit.

Because you have to earn income to qualify for the earned income tax credit, they can use that excludable income in figuring their earned income credit if they choose to do so."

According to the IRS Web site, any military pay received by Soldiers is exempt from income tax while in a combat zone. However, commissioned officers are excluded, and are limited to the highest rate of enlisted pay, plus imminent danger or hostile fire pay.

Thornton said if Soldiers go to the IRS Web site at www.IRS.gov and download publication 3, it will explain in detail all the information that will impact them when they return as well as inform them of any changes made in 2004.

"Referring to publication 3 is a real good thing to do first," she continued. "Another publication they can review is called publication 17. Although it's not specifically for the military, it covers all information individual tax payers may need to file their taxes."

Thornton said once Soldiers are ready to file taxes, they should use what is available on Fort Bragg, and if they choose to use an outside compa-

ny to file their taxes they should be careful.

"Do some research before filing taxes with any local business or company," she said.

"You need to use common sense when filing with an outside source," she added. "Look for those businesses that have a long standing reputation and have been doing this for awhile."

Don't use fly-by-night businesses just because they claim they can get you a better or faster refund. The Soldier is ultimately responsible for any information they give or put on their tax return."

Thornton said it's better to research companies before making a selection and choosing a reputable one by using the Better Business Bureau's Web site to look up complaints against an establishment at www.BBB.org.

"Plus, they can file electronically for free on www.IRS.gov now through October 15," she added. "It's still available and is a real good place to get the information they need. And if it's about getting their refunds fast, they can authorize direct deposit and the returns will (be deposited) within 10 to 14 days or less safely."

For more information, call the Fort Bragg Tax Center at 396-1040 or visit the IRS Web site at www.IRS.gov.

Helpful phone numbers for redeployment transitions:

Army Community Service — 396-8682/8683

Chaplains' Office — 396-1121/1122

Military OneSource — 1-800-342-9647

Womack Army Medical Center — 907-6000

Provost Marshal Office — 396-0691

Crisis Line — 396-4357

Family Advocacy — 396-5524