

TESTIMONY OF
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Mr. Chairman and the Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to express my thoughts about the re-deployment process, while I was attached to the 39th Infantry Brigade.

My name is 1st Lieutenant Dwayne Page and as a member of the Arkansas National Guard I was appointed as the Fire Support Officer (Information Officer) for a motorized infantry company that served in the heart of Baghdad during the combat operation of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. Operation Iraq Freedom II started October 2003 and ended April 2005. Once my unit moved into Baghdad, Iraq, my company was attached to 3rd Brigade Combat Team, Task Force 1-9 Cavalry. Although my unit was trained as a motorized infantry company we performed the operations of a light infantry unit in the neighborhoods surrounding the well known Haifa Street. My job was to promote the progress of the coalition and provide the local Iraqi people information regarding the process to a successful election, as well as teaching the benefits of democracy and freedom. I was also in charge of debriefing combat patrols and conducting investigation on possible insurgents operating in my Task Force area of operations.

Just before we left the country we had a mandatory cool down period in Kuwait. It lasted about a week and a half of doing nothing but taking it easy. Once we arrived at Fort Sill, Oklahoma we were escorted to a field house to reunite with our families and friends. We were then released until the next morning. The next morning we were given classes and counseling sessions which lasted the majority of the day. This was about a five day process. I do remember that the counselors were stressing that we would have expectations of everyone, our friends, and our loved ones. And these expectations would be the root of our post deployment stress. I cannot recall the majority of the benefits and classes that were offered to us during this time of the post deployment phase. Like many soldiers, I knew that my loved ones were waiting in the parking lot for me to complete the classes. So I found it very difficult to focus on the instructors or the counselors.

The state and federal actions that were taken during the post deployment were great, except for the timing. The counseling classes would have been more effective if they would have been conducted in Kuwait, before we came home. As far as the benefits, most soldiers don't know what all they are qualified for. A great way to inform the soldiers of the benefits is to consolidate all the benefits on one sheet of paper in a list format. Then put a toll free telephone number on the bottom of the flyer for anyone who may have any questions or concerns about the benefit. But the key is to consolidate the information all on one page. I must have received fifteen to twenty different flyers that I pretty much put in a bag and never look at. With all do respect, we as soldiers had other things on our minds. We just came from a country where we were on an adrenaline rush

for a year straight. All we cared about was going home and resting. I would suggest about two to three months after the deployment using drill weekends to conduct these post deployment classes. This would help identify the problems some of the soldiers are facing after leaving the combat zone. We as a unit have had a couple of counseling sessions since the end of the deployment, which were great in identifying problems the soldiers may have. But I found the best counseling came from talking with my soldiers. I have ran into many of my soldiers since the end of the deployment and I always walk away from the conversation feeling like a weight being lifted off of my chest.

Once my deployment was complete I transferred back to my original unit - the 2nd Battalion, 142nd Brigade. I was then asked if I would like to go to Fort Sill, Oklahoma to conduct my Captain's Career Course, which I accepted with honor. I then came back to Arkansas and was deployed to Fort Chaffee, Arkansas for Operation Katrina. During Operation Katrina my job was to provide a logistical support to the hurricane victims. Once my orders ended at Fort Chaffee I was then deployed to New Orleans, Louisiana to help clean up the damage homes. Once I completed my duties in New Orleans, Louisiana I returned back to my hometown of Benton, Arkansas. After New Years Day I begin working for the 2nd Battalion of the 142nd Brigade located in Fort Smith, Arkansas. And I have been there ever since. Now I'm preparing myself for a second successful mission to the Middle East.

I know the United States and the state of Arkansas is doing everything in its power to get my life back on track and I truly appreciate the diligent work. But I think it would have been more effective if the presentation were given in Kuwait and/or two to three months after the deployment. Additionally, I would suggest the development of a consolidated list of all of the benefits available.

I would like to thank you for allowing me to speak on behalf the American soldiers and the Arkansas National Guard.

Sincerely,

1LT Dwayne K. Page