

**TESTIMONY OF**  
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**NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER-IN-CHARGE, PERSONNEL READINESS**  
**188<sup>th</sup> FIGHTER WING**  
**ARKANSAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD**  
**BEFORE THE**  
**COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**  
**NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY**  
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Congressman Boozman and Congresswoman Herseth: My name is MSgt Bryan Peters, Non-Commissioned Officer-in-Charge, Personnel Readiness, 188<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, Arkansas Air National Guard, and I am honored to be here on behalf of the Arkansas Air National Guard, to discuss Transitional Assistance of our members upon their return from combat. I will be addressing our program as both a deployed member and someone who plays an integral role in the in-processing of unit members when they return from combat.

In 2005, the 188<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing deployed over 400 airmen to 16 different locations around the world. When we deploy members, we may deploy a group of 300 to one location and then deploy groups of two or three individuals to several other locations. Most of our deployments are these small groups and single individuals. When we prepare to provide our members transitional assistance, we prepare to provide all of our members the same service no matter how big or small of a group that may have deployed.

As you may know, the Air Force has Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) rotations. These AEF rotations allow units to know that they are going to

deploy every 15 to 18 months. When I say units I am talking about the big groups of 300 or more individuals. The units also know well in advance where they are going to deploy and how long they are going to be gone so it makes it easier to prepare for the deployment.

Deploying every 15 to 18 months allows us to better prepare to provide transitional assistance to our members because we do not have lengthy periods of time in between deployments. Also, since we deploy small groups and single individuals on an almost continual basis to fill the AEF requirements of Active Duty and other Air National Guard and Reserve units we, are constantly providing transitional assistance. In deploying these small groups it also allows more one on one interaction in discussing transitional assistance issues.

To start our transitional assistance we have meetings with all of the key players to discuss what the returning members would need. Several members who deployed in the past brought their ideas on what redeploying members need. We also had several members who just returned from deployments bring their ideas on what redeploying members need. Once we developed our game plan we had several more meetings to hone our processes.

When our members return home in big groups we set up an in-processing line. On this in-processing line, we have stations, including Finance and Medical sections. When members process through the Finance Station they fill out their final travel voucher and decide whether or not they are going to take their accrued leave. When members process through the Medical Station they have blood drawn, they turn in their post-deployment questionnaires and deployed medical records (the post-deployment

questionnaires are filled out in country and ask questions about how your health was while you were deployed, if you visited the medical section while you were deployed if you had any non-combat related injuries or if you have any concerns that need to be addressed before you return home), fill out the paper work to enroll in Tricare Prime once their orders end and they start their Transitional Medical Care. Family Readiness has a table set up to provide handouts on VA Benefits. We also provided a handout to our Civil Service Technicians that deployed. We also provided handouts concerning Awards and Decorations as well as DD Form 214s.

The biggest key to the success of our in-processing and the start to our transitional assistance was to allow our returning members to be met by their families. We had the families meet at the hangar and allowed them to hang welcome home signs and other patriotic items. We also allowed them to stand outside the hangar and see the plane when it landed and taxied onto the tarmac where they would unload. We understood that family was probably the most important thing for the members to see first. When they allowed the members to spend time with their families and start their in-processing at their leisure. To our surprise many of the members hugged and kissed their families and started the processing so they could get done and go home and spend time with them.

Having been deployed this past rotation as a group of two to Karshi-Khanabad, Uzbekistan, I can tell you that our process does work no matter how big or small the group. Although I had to walk around to the different areas to complete my in-processing I felt that I was treated with the same importance as those in the big groups who went through a processing line. When small groups and single individuals

in-process we do not have the processing line set up but we do have a standardized checklist that all members use when they in-process, ensuring that they process through the same sections they would process through in an in-processing line.

Advantages that we had in preparing for the transition back from the AOR included having clear guidance from the Air Force MAJCOMs on leave and downtime policies upon return, and knowing when the members would be arriving back at home station enabling us to have the processing line already set up for the large groups.

Some of the issues we had included the following: Demobilization requests for those members that were partially mobilized takes too long, no doctor was present to talk or evaluate those individuals that had non-combat related injuries, we should have had briefings to go along with the handouts and the need for a quicker way to accomplish DD form 214s.