



WHAT IS DEPLOYMENT?

Military deployment is the movement of armed forces. Deployment includes any movement from a military personnel's home station to somewhere outside the continental U.S. and its territories. One example would be when a unit based in the U.S. is deployed to another country to enter into a combat zone, such as Iraq. Deployment is not restricted to combat; units can be deployed for other reasons such as humanitarian aid, evacuation of U.S. citizens, restoration of peace, or increased security.

Mobilization is when an individual or unit is sent somewhere within the continental U.S. or its territories. For example, a unit may have been mobilized to assist during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina to a location in Louisiana from their base in Illinois. Mobilizations count as deployments under the USERRA Act.

Not all Veterans will deploy, some will have served one tour while some have served multiple, some will have been deployed to a theater of war while others have not.

DEPLOYMENTS CAN BE DIVERSE:

- Deployments may last up to 15 months. With the current conflicts, multiple deployments have become more common.
- Among war Veterans, significant differences exist between various eras, such as the WWII, Korean, Vietnam, and OIF/OEF/OND (Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom) eras.
- Modern military units cycle through four deployment cycle phases as they prepare to deploy, perform their missions during deployment, and return and reintegrate with their homes and families.
 - o Preparation for deployment: A period of time when Service Members train with increasing focus and intensity for the upcoming deployment. Family members plan and prepare for the prolonged separation.
 - o Deployment (leaving): This is a brief period of intense readjustment of saying goodbye and beginning to adapt to the new normal of deployment.
 - o Sustainment while deployed: This is a relatively long phase, lasting from 7-13 months, while operational missions are performed and families cope with separation.
 - o Redeployment (returning): Like the deployment phase, redeployment (the official term for returning) is a brief but tumultuous transition phase between two very dissimilar worlds; it is a time of reintegrating, resettling, and trying to heal from psychological and physical injuries of many kinds.





OPERATIONAL STRESSORS DURING DEPLOYMENT

Each phase of deployment comes with its' own set of challenges. Stressors that can take place during deployment while serving in a theater of war include the following:

<u>Physical & Practical Challenges</u>	<u>Emotional & Mental Challenges</u>	<u>Social Challenges</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety concerns • Hostile environment • Life threat • Exposure to death and dying • Illness, injury • Trauma (e.g., combat, accidents) • Exposure to toxins • Intense desert heat • Intense cold • Dehydration • Sand, sandstorms • Not having needed equipment • Delayed supplies • Sleep deprivation, nightmares • Co-ed living quarters • Lengthy deployments (12 to 18 months) • Being deployed multiple times 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty / Ambiguity • Ambiguous enemy • Authoritative work environment • Fear, anger • Hatred of the enemy • Loss of comrades • Survivor's guilt • Boredom • Hyper-focus/concentration • Fast-paced action • Lack of information • Values challenged • Life does not make sense • Lost faith in God or religious belief • Concern about job when they return 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing peers/leaders • Relationship conflicts • Family separation • Loss of income/financial worries • Conflicts between military and family responsibilities • Missing family milestones • Separated from social supports • Little to no privacy/private time • Perceived lack of support of war efforts or military from general public

COMMON CHALLENGES

Although many Service Members will have successfully navigated deployment stressors, readjustment to civilian life is, understandably, a challenge for nearly all military personnel. Despite these challenges, the great majority of returning Service Members and Veterans are quite resilient, are able to adapt, and will transition successfully.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH VETERANS WHO HAVE DEPLOYED TO A THEATER OF WAR:

- Assess recent stressors resulting from military deployments or other operations
- Ask about important stressors throughout recent deployment cycles
- Refrain from assuming any event, however challenging it seems in retrospect, necessarily produced significant distress or dysfunction
- But be watchful for stigma of mental illness as a barrier to truthful reporting of stress symptoms





Mental Health Services

Deployment and Operational Experiences

- When assessing the potential impact of military life demands it is also important to assess what resources were used and were most helpful for the patient
- Assess which biological, psychological, social, or spiritual resources may be needed by the patient now

For more information, visit <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/communityproviders/index.asp>.



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