



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
UNITED STATES ARMY, EUROPE, AND SEVENTH ARMY  
UNIT 29351  
APO AE 09014-9351

AEAGA-MPPD

4 May 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned During Baumholder Deployment

This memorandum expires in 1 year.

1. The enclosure provides valuable lessons that were learned when units in the Baumholder military community were deployed to support Operation Iraqi Freedom. These lessons, which are based on the experiences of family members during the deployment, can be used to improve our Soldier- and family-support operations.
2. Rear detachment commanders (RDCs) will read the enclosed lessons learned and make them available to family readiness groups. In addition, RDCs are strongly encouraged to share these lessons with other individuals and community-support agencies. The lessons are also available on the Family Focused Deployment Information Web site at <http://www.per.hqusareur.army.mil/familyfocus/index.asp>.
3. Your efforts in supporting Soldiers, civilians, and families are greatly appreciated. The sharing of experiences and lessons learned, and the implementation of proven improvements where possible, remain critical to our ability to accomplish Any Mission, Anywhere.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

Encl



E. PEARSON  
Colonel, GS  
Deputy Chief of Staff

DISTRIBUTION:  
A (AEPUBS)

**SUBJECT: White Paper on Lessons Learned during the Deployment of Baumholder Units to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)**

**DATE: 17 Mar 04**

**BACKGROUND: The vast majority of Soldiers stationed in Baumholder, Germany deployed to Iraq for a one year period in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The purpose of this paper is to highlight issues that arose affecting family members and what actions were taken to resolve them. This paper was compiled from information provided by our family members based on their experiences and from the support staff of the 222d Base Support Battalion and community agencies.**

**Issue: Prepare family members for a long family separation.**

**Discussion:** Prior to the deployment in support of OIF, Army Community Service (ACS) and BSB agencies conducted pre-deployment briefings for family members and Soldier Readiness Program (SRP) processing for Soldiers. The ACS family member pre-deployment brief consisted primarily of Operation Ready material and each community support agency briefed available and anticipated services and programs. At the Soldier SRP, agencies were set up to give Soldiers the opportunity to take the steps necessary to prepare wills, Powers of Attorney (POA), check ID cards, etc. Even though Soldiers and family members participated in these events, they usually did them separately and many did not do all of the suggested actions to prepare their families for deployment. To reverse this common trend, we developed a Family SRP for both Soldiers and their family members. Each deploying battalion was scheduled for a Family SRP that included a one-hour “problem & solution” type briefing in the theater followed by a community-wide Family Assistance Center operation in an installation fitness center. Each family was given a deployment preparation checklist that was also used for door prize drawings. Screeners only accepted completed checklists for the drawing. This new type of pre-deployment briefing resulted in a significant increase in family readiness participation and a major decrease in family issues after the Soldiers deployed.

**Recommendation:** Conduct Family SRPs similar to the one Baumholder developed at all deployment locations.

=====

**Issue: Soldiers arrived (PCS) in Baumholder and quickly deployed without pre-deployment training.**

**Discussion:** During the deployment, Soldiers deployed within a couple of weeks of arriving in Baumholder. Those new to the Army had not received pre-deployment training. In many instances the Soldier deployed before their family was settled in the community. Once this problem was identified, the Central Processing Facility (CPF) scheduled appointments for Soldiers and spouses with an ACS staff member to conduct pre-deployment training and decentralized Family SRPs as part of the in-processing curriculum.

Encl

**Recommendation:** Add pre-deployment training and a checklist to the In-processing Training Program. Encourage FRGs to create Welcome Teams to help newly arrived families get settled into the community and into the unit's family network.

=====

**Issue:** Train Rear Detachment Commanders (RDC), Family Readiness Liaisons (FRL) and Soldier and Family Assistance Center (SFAC) agency representatives to provide seamless family support during deployment. (Note formerly known as Family Assistance Center, the SFAC is made up of all community agencies that support Soldiers, civilians and their families during times of deployment and crisis.)

**Discussion:** ACS conducted training for RDCs, FRLs, Senior Spouses and FRG leaders prior to the deployment. The training focused on roles and responsibilities as defined in Operation Ready and supporting agency resources. This group of people along with representatives from selected community agencies formed our Deployment Support Group (DSG) and met at least monthly to maintain an effective communication network for on-going training, rumor control, problem resolution and team building. Unfortunately, some of the DSG members turned over during the deployment and the orientation training was not repeated for the new members. A US Army in Europe Inspector General (IG) review recommended that interpersonal skills be added to the RDC training curriculum.

**Recommendations:**

- Establish the DSG prior to the start of the deployment.
- Offer DSG orientation training on a quarterly basis throughout the deployment for new DSG members.
- Expand the DSG orientation training curriculum to include interpersonal skills, such as conflict resolution, listening skills, problem solving, anger management, and suicide prevention and counseling techniques.
- Establish a separate Family Readiness Liaison (FRL) Council that meets with ACS Deployment Support Manager regularly to discuss family support issues and trends. An FRL Council, coordinated by ACS, would ensure closer working relationships with these pivotal players, and improve the accuracy and number of referrals to appropriate installation agencies.

=====

**Issue: Provide support for short-term emergencies and services when families are unable to provide for themselves.**

**Discussion:** With the Soldier deployed, some families were unable to take care of some household tasks their Soldier had accomplished, such as changing the oil, hanging blinds, mowing the lawn or fixing the computer. Spouses who could not drive or had more than one child often had short-term transportation or childcare challenges. The Baumholder Buddies Program was developed as a community resource to help these families in need. Volunteers came together and shared their talents, skills and time. Volunteers were given an inexpensive Uncle Sam pin to identify them as Baumholder Buddies and their information was entered into a database maintained by the Installation Volunteer Coordinator. Buddies were registered in several different categories such as Lawn Care, Emergency Transportation, Emergency Childcare, Pregnancy/ Labor Support, Computers, Translators, and Miscellaneous. When a family member had a short-term need for assistance, they called ACS and were connected with an available Baumholder Buddy. This program not only provided resources to meet short-term needs, it also strengthened community cohesion and provided flexible volunteer opportunities for spouses who were not able to commit to a set volunteer work schedule. While the Baumholder Buddy program successfully met the short-term needs, it was ineffective for long-term needs, such as pregnant or sick women needing long periods of bed rest or hospital stays. (See Family Care Plan recommendation below).

**Recommendation:** Establish a volunteer team similar to Baumholder Buddies to meet community short term needs. We will share the database and registration forms upon request.

=====

**Issue: Family Care Plan – Some Soldiers and spouses did not have an adequate family care plan for long-term medical-related problems or emergencies.**

**Discussion:** Army regulation states that Family Care Plans are a Commander's program and are only required for dual-military couples and single parent Soldiers. During this deployment, the major problem we encountered was the unexpected need for family care plans for families that were not required to have a plan. We had several pregnant spouses with children that had doctor-prescribed bed rest. We also had spouses that had children that had surgery or long hospital stays. Army Emergency Relief would not pay for a relative to fly to Germany to provide child care and spouses claimed not to have the money to purchase the tickets themselves. Finding volunteers to provide long term child care, housekeeping or medical care was not always successful. As a result, Soldiers were either sent home or the family put off needed bed rest or surgery.

**Recommendations:**

- Prior to deployment, units invite ACS to provide Family Care Plan training to all Soldiers and their spouses at a unit meeting. The training should include information on how to complete a successful plan by identifying all available options, selecting the best plan, and setting aside required funds to activate the plan (when needed).

- In regard to family assistance during a short or long term medical crisis of a family member, we made this specific issue an Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) issue. Our AFAP recommendations include:
  - Implement a program similar to the Air Force and Navy Relief Societies that allow the funding of travel expenses for one extended family member or friend to assist the family during a verified medical crisis.
  - Provide personnel at OCONUS assignments to help with in-home, short-term family needs.
  - Provide supplemental insurance through TRICARE to cover the cost of in-home visits to be provided by a qualified home care service provider.

=====

**Issue: Keeping families informed to maintain effective rumor control.**

**Discussion:** While FRGs are good ways to pass on information, active FRG participation by many family members was low during the deployment. It did not start to increase until redeployment drew near. Although we had our Area Support Group (ASG) newspaper, we developed other effective communication mediums to keep families informed. One large challenge was keeping abreast of where families were located during the deployment. They often left the area without leaving emergency contact information.

**Recommendations:**

- Develop a Community Leader Email Distribution List that can be used as the primary medium to quickly and effectively pass information through the FRG, FRL, Rear Detachment, and supporting agency channels. Our Deployment Support Manager in ACS managed this email distribution program.
- Initiate periodic community leader meetings attended by senior spouses, RDCs, and BSB agency representatives to discuss community problems and recommend solutions. Other effective communications forums include the Striker Statement (2d BCT newsletter emailed to the RDC and family members bi-monthly) and monthly community information (LINKS) meeting to pass information on policy changes, upcoming events, and other information of interest to families.
- We established the Baumholder Information Channel that provided constant, up-to-date information on services, programs, and community information. The channel is available at no cost to all family and single Soldier quarters that receive TKS cable television.

- We recommend that a big effort be made to encourage spouses to complete the appropriate notification forms before leaving the area and that Soldiers be asked to provide family and in-law contact information during the SRP in case the spouse could not be reached in the local area and is believed to have gone to visit relatives.

=====

**Issue: Provide social opportunities for family members to reduce stress and loneliness.**

**Discussion:** A large number of the waiting spouses were new to the military and new to Germany. We had encouraged them to stay in Germany and felt an obligation to help them successfully cope with the deployment. We conducted a variety of activities to help them during this pivotal time in their Army career. While some events were well attended, others were not. This was partially due to the fact that many family members left Baumholder during the summer months.

**Recommendations:**

- **Host Nation Appreciation Events** – Public Affairs (PAO) and ACS partnered with local communities to provide regular activities for families of deployed Soldiers. Local mayors and community groups provided free bus transportation and entry to city tours, Christmas markets, swimming pools, etc. PAO coordinated the events with the sponsor and ACS coordinated family member participation. These events were a great way to provide family members with a free outing, an opportunity to make new friends, to strengthen community ties and to increase the families’ cultural experiences.
- **ACS Cooking and Craft Classes** – ACS offered international cooking and craft classes to give spouses an opportunity to get out of the house, meet new friends, learn new skills, and to have fun. The classes served as pseudo support groups. The Friends of Baumholder’s ACS Private Organization paid for the food and craft supplies.
- **Holiday Events** – To brighten the holidays, the 222d BSB planned special holiday meals and activities. The Dining Facilities served special meals and conducted activities on Thanksgiving and Christmas. DCA planned special Christmas and July 4<sup>th</sup> activities and FRGs scheduled special events for Valentines and Easter. These were huge successes. Videos were made and sent downrange for some of the events.
- **Concerts** – Nearly every month, the 222d BSB coordinated for a no-cost professional entertainment event.

=====

**Issue: Significant increase in personal mail.**

**Discussion:** The Community Mail Room (CMR) experienced a very significant increase in the volume of personal mail with extended periods of over twice the amount normally received and processed. The redirecting of mail became a major task with the redirecting of mail not only from family members and friends in Germany, but also for the increased amount of mail that the Soldiers received from friends, relatives, well wishers, and companies and organizations who do not normally send mail. In addition, we confirmed with AAFES that on the average, each Soldier was buying 2.5 footlockers to send back personal MPS mail to home station prior to redeployment.

**Recommendations:**

Soldiers and Family Members:

- If Soldier wants their mail sent to another individual, address it accordingly (i.e. don't address it to yourself, address it to your spouse).
- All mail a Soldier addresses to him/herself through the CMR will go to the CMR central holding warehouse(s) where it will be stored until the Soldier returns.
- Family members must be capable of carrying any mail sent to them at their CMR address. The CMR is not staffed to deliver mail past the CMR counter. In the event a family member receives heavy or large packages, they should bring a "strong" helper to assist.

CMR:

- Plan on a significant increase (100%) in the amount of mail that you handle above a "normal" non-deployed status workday.
- Have a coordinated plan for the storage of mail Soldiers send to themselves and procedures for issuing the mail upon the Soldiers' return.
- Increase the CMR staff through overhire positions. Hire additional staff prior to the start of the deployment to allow for training.
- Establish a central holding warehouse capable of allowing fork lift/pallet movement to store MPS mail that Soldiers address to themselves. Separate mail according to Company/Battery element, not Battalion level. Battalion level will become unmanageable.
- Contract for larger trucks to be used as mail trucks to move the mail to the warehouse(s). Ensure there are enough licensed vehicle operators for these larger than normal vehicles.

Units: Advise Soldiers well prior to the deployment of the following:

- If Soldier wants their mail sent to another individual, address it accordingly (i.e. don't address it to yourself, address it to your spouse).
- All mail addressed to oneself will go from the truck to the CMR warehouse where it will be stored until the Soldier returns.
- Advise Soldiers to ensure that their family members are capable of carrying any mail received at their CMR mailbox. CMRs are not staffed to deliver mail past the CMR counter. For heavy and larger packages, recommend the family member bring a "strong" helper as appropriate.
- Identify and train rear detachment unit personnel to serve as certified mail clerks to assist in handling the large volumes of mail received, stored, and distributed through the CMR central holding warehouse(s).

=====

**Issue: Based upon existing policies, teens have some limitations to certain community recreational activities. This situation is exacerbated during extended deployments where at least one parent is not available to accompany them to activities.**

**Discussion:** The 222d BSB does not have a permanent youth fitness center. Through interaction with the community, the 222d BSB identified the need for teens to be allowed access to fitness centers. Applicable Army regulations prohibit teens 12-16 years old from using fitness centers without direct parental supervision. A system was established that oriented youth to facilities and then they signed an agreement that they understood procedures and standards of behavior. This certification allowed them unaccompanied access to fitness centers. An additional certification was required for teens using weight equipment. The 222d BSB requested and was granted an exception to policy by IMA-E to execute this program on a test basis during the deployment. The program served over 50 teens. Over the period of the program, no safety or behavior related incidents occurred.

**Recommendation:** That IMA-E adopts a standing policy and procedure authorizing BSB Commanders to grant access to fitness centers by youth ages 12-16 during extended deployments.

=====

**Issue: Identify Soldier-focused facility and infrastructure improvement projects prior to deployment.**

**Discussion:** The 222d BSB maintains a perpetual renovation and construction plan for the entire installation. Action was taken to identify projects that would directly support deployed Soldiers and units upon their return. When the Soldiers are in garrison, renovations can cause major disruptions. With Soldier and unit areas vacated, renovations can progress unimpeded.

**Recommendation:** Identify and program Soldier-focused projects prior to deployment. Have the units turn back to the BSB all facilities during the deployment so that the BSB can manage renovations and upgrades to barracks, motor pools, maintenance facilities, and unit areas.

=====

**Issue:** Families wanted the Army Post Office (APO) open on Saturday mornings.

**Discussion:** Adding additional hours to the APO can create strain on an already stretched staff that included both paid (Soldiers and civilians) and volunteer workers. Management analyzed customer usage and adjusted work hours to better meet customer demand. Rather than hire additional staff for Saturday mornings, hours were reduced from weekdays and scheduled on Saturday to meet this customer request.

**Recommendation:** Recruit APO volunteers prior to the deployment. Conduct a survey to determine APO high usage periods.

=====

**Issue:** Shortage of chaplains to meet the community's needs.

**Discussion:** Unit ministry teams deployed with their units leaving a shortage of chaplains in the community to minister to families and remaining Soldiers and civilians and to conduct the various religious services required to meet the spiritual needs of the community.

**Recommendation:** We contracted for a German civilian catholic priest to conduct Mass. We requested Reserve and Guard Unit Ministry Teams to support our religious programs, however, it is important to request these teams early and have them in place prior to the start of the deployment. One of these Guard chaplains partnered with ACS to conduct Soldier and family member reunion/reintegration training.

=====

**Issue:** Tourist passports needed for R&R travel and Block Leave.

**Discussion:** A tourist passport is required to travel to most countries. Some Soldiers arrived in Europe with an ID card and orders and did not have a tourist passport. Soldiers who deployed to Iraq who did not have a tourist passport could not apply for one because application had to be made in person (in Germany). US passport services were not yet available in Iraq. As a result, Soldiers who intended to travel to locations requiring a passport spent part of their leave (R&R or block leave) to obtain a passport.

**Recommendation:** Encourage Soldiers and family members to apply for tourist passports prior to the deployment in case they decide to travel either during R&R or block leave. Further, Soldiers and family members are cautioned on making firm travel arrangements to destinations requiring a passport until they have a valid passport in hand.

=====

**Issue: Most agencies require a special power of attorney (SPOA).**

**Discussion:** General POAs were executed at the SRPs if the Soldier wanted to give full power to his/her spouse or another person. However, some support agencies would not accept a General PAO.

**Recommendation:** Contact all support agencies several months well prior to the deployment and determine what kind of powers of attorney they accepted for what. To eliminate any questions, we then created an information paper and chart showing the type of POA needed by each agency. For Baumholder, we determined the following POAs were required:

	General Power of Attorney	Special Power of Attorney	OTHER FORM
VEHICLE REGISTRATION	SPOUSE		NON-SPOUSE AE Form 190-AD-R
FINANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ RELEASE LES</li> <li>➤ SUBMIT TRAVEL CLAIM</li> <li>➤ CASH CHECKS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ALLOTMENTS</li> <li>➤ OBTAIN TREASURY CHECK</li> </ul>	
PASSPORTS AND BIRTH REGISTRATION		SPOUSE	
TRANSPORTATION	SPOUSE OR OTHER		
VET CLINIC		ANY ID CARD HOLDER	
TAX CENTER	SPOUSE OR OTHER		
MAIL ROOM			ID CARD HOLDER DA Form 3955 AND/OR SIGNATURE CARD
DEERS ENROLLMENT/ ID CARD	SPOUSE	IF FOR DEERS ENROLLMENT MUST SPECIFY "DEERS"	
TRICARE			NOTHING NEEDED IF DEERS ENROLLMENT IS COMPLETE
Service Federal Credit Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ WITHDRAWALS BY CHECK</li> <li>➤ WITHDRAWALS BY MONEY ORDER</li> <li>➤ TRANSFERS WITHIN ACCOUNTS</li> <li>➤ OPEN-END LOAN ADVANCES</li> </ul>		
COMMUNITY BANK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ACCOUNT CLOSURE</li> <li>➤ ATM CARD ORDER/PICKUP</li> <li>➤ CASH WITHDRAWALS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ CHANGE ACCOUNT</li> <li>➤ OVERDRAFT PROTECTION</li> <li>➤ REDEEM SAVINGS BONDS</li> </ul>	

=====

**Issue: Demand for legal assistance increased during the deployment.**

**Discussion:** We did not expect that Legal Assistance work would be as brisk with the Soldiers deployed. Previous long-term deployments like Kosovo were not like this. The problems were more complex and were aggravated by the length of the deployment and sometimes difficult communications to Iraq. There was a great increase in the areas of international law, immigration, and birth registration by German mothers.

**Recommendation:** Hire a full time German attorney at least four months prior to the start of the deployment. A solution to birth registrations by German mothers is to use an Affidavit of Physical Presence and a POA that states the mother has authority to act on behalf of the father.

=====

**Issue: Shortage of child care providers.**

**Discussion:** The majority of Baumholder's child care providers were spouses of deployed Soldiers. Some of the Child and Youth Services (CYS) staff quit their jobs prior to the deployment so that they could spend extra time with their Soldier. Others quit in the summer so that they could temporarily leave Baumholder (visit relatives, travel) or because they found the responsibilities of single parenting and working outside of the home as being too difficult. As a result, CYS faced a large staffing shortage during the deployment which is expected to be critical during redeployment block leave period. The issue was not having the money to pay for child care staff; it was not having the staff to offer care. Unfortunately this loss of staff comes at a time when the community demands more child care to support deployment/redeployment activities.

**Recommendations:**

Support to FRGs:

- Let FRGs know early if child care for certain meetings is not possible.
- Encourage FRGs to help each other by becoming Volunteer Child Care in Unit Settings (VCCUS) volunteers. Offer VCCUS training each month along with regular training. Help set up a VCCUS site for child care adjacent to FRG meeting rooms. VCCUS training is conducted by CYS for a minimum of 4 hours (developmental activities, positive discipline techniques, and basic health and safety practices). Once trained, volunteers may provide on-site care for their FRG or trade off with another FRG. They must follow established CYS adult to child ratios. Parents of children in care must be attending the same function in same place where care is given & remain on site for the duration of the VCCUS session.

## CYS Operations:

- In pre-deployment staff meetings, work on team building and encouraging CY5 staff to remain in Germany during the deployment. Invite someone who has been through a deployment before to come and talk to and encourage staff. The woman we invited also encouraged staff to take trips and arranged with MWR to offer some shopping excursions.
- When one child care center had a staff meeting, staff from another center provided childcare. The centers switched off to help each other.
- Request temporary over-hire care-giving positions well in advance of the deployment to last at least three months beyond when the units have returned. These are staff that will help cover Rest and Recuperation (R&R) and block leave periods.
- Coordinate with the Installation Management Agency to determine if care providers can be identified at other Army installations and sent on temporary duty to support child care operations during peak critical periods.

=====

### **Issue: Redeployment of departing (PCS/ETS) Soldiers prior to the units return.**

**Discussion:** When units return to Baumholder, Soldiers will be greeted by flag waving crowds, patriotic music, and lots of fanfare. However, many Soldiers returned individually to Baumholder from Iraq to PCS or ETS prior to their unit's return. These Soldiers would not receive the large hero's welcome that they deserved. To resolve this inequity, the BSB declared Wednesdays as Baumholder Heroes Day. The day's events included the required Reunion Training provided by ACS and Community Chaplain, a heroes recognition ceremony conducted by the BSB Commander that included providing Hero certificates to all Soldiers and a small candle given to all spouses thanking them for "keeping the home fires burning during the deployment," a free lunch provided by ACS and community volunteers, and free childcare for participants. This was a fantastic success. It gave the community an opportunity to thank each Soldier (and their spouse) for his/her selfless service, service to the Nation, and contributions to the Baumholder Military Community. It also gave each Soldier a well-deserved heroes welcome.

**Recommendation:** The ACS and supporting agencies must be prepared to provide mandated Deployment Contingency Support Plan redeployment tasks for small numbers of individual Soldiers returning prior to the unit's return. The Heroes Day was a big hit with our Soldiers, their spouses, and the community.

=====

**Issue: Marketing the 7 Half Day Reintegration Plan.**

**Discussion:** Our goal was to ensure all involved parties were well aware of how our returning Soldiers would execute the 222d BSB Redeployment and Reintegration Plan. To this end, we gained buy-in of all supporting community agencies, we took the plan downrange and briefed commanders and leaders, we explained the process to our Senior Spouses, we briefed the US Army in Europe Commanding General, Deputy Commanding General, IG, Installation Management Agency – Europe Director, and our ASG Commander, we briefed the spouses of deployed Soldiers, and we briefed the 222d BSB workforce. The driving factor for putting this information out at all levels was to explain the process and set expectations to ensure everyone was on the same track. To make this information readily available to everyone, we produced a compact disk (CD) that included all information related to redeployment and reintegration. This easy to use CD is inter-linked to our Redeployment and Reintegration Plan, supporting briefings, Department of the Army and US Army in Europe guidance, information papers, facility lay-outs, schedules, and timelines. We provided a copy of the CD to each commander and first sergeant at the company/battery level and higher of our redeploying units. To make this information even more accessible, we posted all the information on the CD to our community website ([www.baumholder.army.mil](http://www.baumholder.army.mil)).

**Recommendation:** Ensure everyone involved in reintegration understands the process, the timelines, and the expectations. Make information readily available and useful to those engaged in redeployment and reintegration.

=====