



Photo by Pfc. Joshua Hutcheson, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

*Sgt. 1st Class Otis Nunn, frequency manager, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), watches a sunset on the balcony of one of Saddam's palaces in Mosul. The palace was completed in 1994 and overlooks the Tigris River.*

## Soldiers receive reintegration training during redeployment

Soldiers returning from deployments will receive more reintegration training to help with the impact deployments can have on family life. The soldiers will receive more training than ever before because of Army-wide implementation of a Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) plan that began in May.

Using the plan, returning soldiers must remain with their unit through mandatory medical and mental health screenings, as well as reunion training designed to ease reintegration into family relationships, all before getting on a homeward bound plane, said Sgt. Maj. Lon H. Crosier of the Human Resources Policy Directorate, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1.

“As the backbone of the Army, NCOs monitor many diverse systems while maintaining a high level of readiness in the unit,” he said. “The most crucial of those systems

remains the soldier. Without soldiers coming together as a cohesive team everything else is insignificant.”

Historically, NCOs have focused on training and vehicle and equipment readiness. Often, Crosier said, they would neglect to focus on the personal readiness of soldiers and families.

“Deployment cycle training will focus on caring for soldiers and their families to ensure a healthy, ready Army,” Crosier said.

While the DCS covers three areas – predeployment, operations and redeployment – the first changes many soldiers



Photo by Spc. Matt Meadows

*Austin Tucker, age 3, stands behind a “welcome home” sign at Lawton, Okla., Regional Airport, June 15. Tucker was at the airport to welcome his uncle, Spc. Paul Jones, Battery C, 1st Bn., 14th Field Artillery.*

will see will be during the redeployment phase.

Soldiers preparing to return from current operations, training exercises and training center rotations will first receive training in the field. Leaders will have the opportunity to screen their soldiers using a *Unit Risk Reduction Leader Tips* card. The card includes a soldier risk assessment checklist as a tool to identify soldiers at risk for developing readjustment problems. The screening covers indicators such as suicidal thoughts, financial troubles and possible causes of strained family relations.

Another key element in DCS is that the unit leadership will ensure a hand-off takes place between the unit and the homestation assistance agencies.

"In the past, it was the soldier's responsibility to make these appointments once [he or she] redeployed," Crosier explained. "Now soldiers will be required to see a counselor before being allowed to take any leave from the unit."

In fact, all soldiers will remain under unit control for the first 10 days following redeployment, Crosier said. The soldiers will spend half of each day undergoing more integration training and observations. They may use the remaining time to visit with families or take care of personal business. Once all soldiers in the unit have completed their DCS tasks, they are free to take block leave, Crosier said.

The training at home station consists of a series of briefings, videos and appointments with installation service agencies.

Soldiers also receive handouts on the subjects the training covers. The handouts include:

- Reestablishing intimate and sexual relations
- Children's reactions to the soldier's return
- Reunion stress
- Stress symptoms
- Reunion stress coping strategies
- Adjustment for soldiers
- Sources of support and assistance for Army spouses and families
- Other sources of support and assistance
- Going back to work

The classes dealing with reunion stress prompt soldiers to ask themselves questions such as, "What changes might have happened while I was gone?" and, "Do I view these changes as a crisis or threat?" Unit leaders use the briefings to impart to soldiers that blaming others or ignoring changes are bad coping strategies. Viewing change positively is a good strategy, according to the handout on coping strategies. Other good strategies include expecting to have doubts and worries, forgetting any fantasies you may have had about reunion day and not expecting everything to be the same as when you left. Soldiers who approach their return to family life with those attitudes are much less likely to experience problems, Crosier said.



Photo by Spc. Robert Woodward, 101st Airborne Division

***An infantry soldier with the 101st Airborne Div. keeps a photo of his sweetheart close to him at all times – in his Kevlar.***

He also said the training concerning service agency availability would be good for many soldiers and NCOs. "While talking to junior and mid-level leaders recently in the field, I was astonished by their lack of knowledge on the multitude of readily available resources," Crosier said. He also became aware of another reality: soldiers generally have a fear of bring unwanted attention on themselves by seeking assistance from a referral agency such as Army Community Service (ACS), the chaplain or a medical facility.

"As Army leaders we must address these issues and allow the DCS system to work effectively without the soldier being harassed or penalized," Crosier said. He said NCOs must also be keen and consistent in identifying the warning signs of trouble that often lead to domestic conflicts and other serious problems.

*(Editor's note: The Army Well Being Office, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, provided the information for this article.)*



Photo by Spc. William Shelton

***Spc. Kelly Simmons, 19th Maintenance Battalion, Fort Sill, Okla., rushes from formation to hug her son, 7-month-old Conner, after a welcome home victory celebration, June 11. The 19th Maintenance Bn. deployed for Operations Iraqi Freedom, March 16.***