

STATEMENT BY

**BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN A. MACDONALD
COMMANDER
U.S. ARMY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER**

BEFORE THE

**MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

FIRST SESSION, 109TH CONGRESS

ON MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION PROGRAMS

7 APRIL 2005

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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U.S. ARMY COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER
ON MORALE, WELFARE AND RECREATION (MWR) PROGRAMS**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, it is a pleasure to appear before you to report on the state of Army Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Programs. I am privileged to command the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center (USACFSC) whose mission it is to deliver predictable MWR programs and services that enhance the well-being of the Total Army Family and address the strategic imperatives of the joint expeditionary Army. There is nothing I do that is more important than supporting our great Soldiers – particularly those on distant and hostile ground – and their families who wait patiently at home.

MWR SUPPORT TO DEPLOYED SOLDIERS

In 2001, in recognition of the increasing number of contingency operations and our role in them, we designated select MWR positions as Emergency Essential, meaning the incumbent is ready to deploy to support contingency operations. Currently, four MWR Emergency Essential Civilians are deployed to provide support as a part of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), meeting United States Central Command's MWR support requirements for Afghanistan, Qatar, and Kuwait. We have deployed a total of 34 MWR professionals since 9/11.

MWR facilities are established at 25 large and 22 small sites in Iraq, four major and five remote locations supporting operations in Afghanistan, and two major and five small sites in Kuwait. CFSC, in conjunction with suppliers, developed a variety of sports and recreation kits to meet the basic MWR needs of deploying units. "Small Unit Recreation Kits" (sports equipment and recreational games), "Library Kits" (paperback books, audio books, magazines, music CDs), "Theater-in-a-Box" (large screen, DVD/Video player, projection unit, speakers and movies), "Electronic Game Kits" (TV,

Play Station 2[®], DVD/VCR & games) and “Video Messenger Kits” (video camera, DVD/VCR, visual display and multi-system/voltage power pack) are positioned at the Power Projection Platforms and forward deployed equipment distribution sites. Kits are issued to deploying units and provide basic MWR supplies and equipment for company sized elements. “Service Level Kits” provide basic fitness, sports, and recreation equipment for battalion-sized elements and serve as the basic load for establishing Base Camp MWR facilities. “Read to Kids Kits” provide video recording equipment and books that allow deployed parents to read stories to their children. Either at home station or after deploying, Soldiers record stories so their families can watch and listen during the entire duration of the Soldiers’ deployments. Internet Cafés are now operated through Multi-National Force – Iraq to provide approximately 170, 20-station Internet Cafés for coalition personnel in Iraq. Three MWR Internet Cafés are operating in Afghanistan, and one will be installed at Camp Navistar, Kuwait.

Balkans Operations - Twelve civilian MWR professionals provide MWR support to service members in Kosovo, Bosnia, Hungary, and Macedonia. A satellite-based MWR net communications system provides deployed Soldiers with video-teleconferencing capability between camp cyberhuts and their family members. Since 1995, almost 200 MWR personnel have voluntarily deployed to promote physical fitness and provide recreation, social, and other support services.

In addition to the mission of providing affordable, family-oriented vacation recreation opportunities to authorized patrons, Army-operated Armed Forces Recreation Centers (AFRCs) provide Rest and Recuperation (R&R) programs in support of OIF and OEF for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, both Active and Reserve Component (RC), and accompanying families, while in an R&R or Block Leave status.

The Edelweiss Lodge and Resort, located in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany (formerly AFRC-Europe), has operated a discounted U.S. Army, Europe R&R program since October 2003. Similar R&R programs have been offered at the Hale Koa Hotel[®] in Honolulu, Hawaii and at the Shades of Green[®] on Walt Disney World[®] Resort in

Orlando, Florida, since May 2004. Dragon Hill Lodge® in Seoul, Korea, offers an R&R program to any Soldier visiting Korea in an R&R or Block Leave status on an individually tailored basis. A "Warrior Express Weekend" program is also available for 2nd Infantry Division Soldiers.

MWR SUPPORT AT HOME STATION

Recreation programs support mobilization and deployment in multiple ways. Installations use recreation and physical fitness facilities as mobilization staging areas. For example, Fort Hood, Fort Campbell, Fort Riley, and others process deploying personnel in their gymnasiums and recreation centers. Program managers adjust operating hours to meet increased demand and community support requirements. Normal recreation programs provide non-deploying units and family members with opportunities to participate in both self-directed and organized activities designed to increase social interaction and individual resiliency. Individual installations offer special programs to meet local demand. Army MWR furnished 49 "Small Unit Recreation Kits" to Reserve and National Guard units activated for force protection at remote stateside posts. Installation Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) Councils assist Guard and Reserve units in transitioning from a civilian community to a military environment. The single and unaccompanied Reserve Component Soldiers participating in installation BOSS programs receive information and education about recreation, outreach, and chain of command issues. BOSS is available at 44 stateside and 39 overseas installations. The BOSS Team is the "constant" during deployment, adapting to and supporting RC and deployed personnel. It continues to function during deployments under the auspices of the installation MWR program, albeit at a reduced tempo at some locations.

FAMILY READINESS

Of paramount importance in supporting Soldiers is caring for families. Soldiers must trust that we care and have confidence in the systems we have developed to

provide that support. The vision of Army Community Service (ACS) is to add a critical element of stability to the turbulent environment in which Soldiers and their families now live. We must be there for them when they need help, direct them to appropriate resources, ensure that families are self-reliant, and provide the best communication possible between the Soldier or unit and family members. The quality of our system is vital to both enhancing the well-being of our Soldiers and their families and to enabling the Army to provide ready, responsive forces. Studies show reducing tension between Soldiers' missions and family responsibilities enhances readiness and fosters commitment.

“The Family and Soldier Readiness System” includes: family assistance centers (FAC), family readiness groups (FRG), rear detachments (RD), family readiness group deployment/support assistants (FRGDSA), and unit family readiness liaisons (FRL) (unit Soldiers are assigned this responsibility as an extra duty). Unit commanders work with local ACS representatives and other agencies to ensure each component of the program contributes effectively to the goal of caring for and preparing Soldiers and families prior to, during, and after deployments. The Army's family readiness curriculum is Operation Resources for Educating About Deployment and You (OP READY), a series of training modules, videos, and resource books used by Army Community Service (ACS), Army National Guard, and Army Reserve family readiness program staff to train and prepare Army families, Soldiers, and key unit personnel for deployments and reunions. It can be viewed on-line at Virtual ACS, www.myarmylifetoo.com. Installation ACS Directors coordinate with Guard and Reserve units in their geographic areas of responsibility to augment their family readiness programs as required.

Prior to deployment, commanders establish family readiness groups (FRGs) to best prepare unit families by providing information, referral assistance, and mutual support. The FRG promotes cohesion among family members by providing links between them, the unit, and community resources. ACS personnel conduct predeployment briefings and training for rear detachments, FRG leaders, and family

assistance team members. When a unit is notified of an imminent deployment, unit commanders alert FRGs and identify rear detachment assets to provide a link between the unit and families. The FRG acts as a conduit for reliable information and refers families experiencing difficulties to appropriate community service agencies. CFSC is in the process of developing and fielding an on-line Rear Detachment Commander Training/Certification Program.

Commanders establish consolidated family assistance centers (FACs) that serve as one-stop resource centers for families prior to and during a deployment at the brigade, division, or installation level depending on local circumstances. ACS Centers and some National Guard Readiness Centers and Army Reserve Centers provide families an opportunity to use video-teleconferencing equipment and Internet accessible computers, making it easier and less costly for family members to communicate with their deployed Soldiers. When an Army unit deploys, the rear detachment commanders, FRGs, ACS, rear detachment chaplains, and other community resources combine as a team to provide support to families that addresses the unique aspects of stress associated with deployments.

When Soldiers redeploy and reunite with their families, the Army's Deployment Cycle Support Program prepares them for reunion. The standard for the reunion training is the OP READY Homecoming and Reunion module. Prior to redeployment, ACS, in coordination with assigned chaplain staffs and military treatment facility social work services conduct installation-wide reunion briefings and counseling. To help normalize the phases and process of reintegration to the family, chaplains provide redeployment training for Soldiers prior to their departure. ACS and unit chaplains provide follow up workshops on various aspects of reunification, such as reestablishing relationships with spouses and children, adjusting to household routines, disciplining and managing children, handling family finances, and meeting the expectations of children.

During this Global War on Terror (GWOT), the Army is conducting pilots for a multicomponent family support network to support the family readiness needs of an expeditionary force and mitigate the effects of extended deployments on Active, Guard, and Reserve families. This strategy facilitates coordination and collaboration among Army components and supports consistent, quality services to families in geographically dispersed locations.

Army families have a history of being resilient, strong, and steadfast in support of their Soldiers and the Army's mission. Their well-being and quality of life are critical to the readiness of our Soldiers and have a profound effect on decisions regarding whether the Soldiers will remain in the Army or leave it when their enlistments or obligations are over. The Army will continue to offer quality programs and services to reduce tensions in the family, which will positively affect retention. Soldiers who know their families are self-reliant with appropriate support available are better able to concentrate on their missions and are more likely to continue with their Army careers.

MILITARY ONE SOURCE

Military One Source provides a safety net for both Soldiers and families. A component of Military One Source, Army One Source (AOS), initiated in August 2003, is a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week toll-free information and referral telephone service available to active duty, National Guard, and Reserve Soldiers, deployed civilians, and their families worldwide. AOS provides information ranging from everyday concerns to deployment and reintegration issues. Additionally, if there is a need for face-to-face counseling, AOS provides referrals to professional civilian counselors for assistance. Overseas, face-to-face counseling is provided via existing medical treatment facility-contracted marriage and family counselors. As of March 17, 2005, AOS had responded to 41,373 telephone calls, 62,310 on-line visits, and made 9,388 referrals for counseling. Forty-seven percent of the calls were from active Army, 12 percent Guard, eight percent Reserve, less than one percent DA civilians, and 32 percent unidentified.

CHILD AND YOUTH SERVICES INITIATIVES

Army Child and Youth Services continue to support force readiness by reducing the tension between the parental responsibilities of the Soldier and unit mission requirements. Our greatest challenge is meeting the requirements of a high operations tempo environment with increasing deployments and contingencies. Services such as school transition assistance, extended hours child care, respite care, care to geographically dispersed Soldiers, and youth technology services are just a few of the ways we meet the needs of the Joint and Expeditionary Force.

I'd like to highlight two of our special initiatives to support children and youth whose parents are deployed in support of the GWOT:

- The Army is participating in *Operation: Military Child Care* – a Department of Defense initiative to support the child care needs of geographically dispersed military parents (Active and Reserve Component Soldiers) while they are deployed. Services are outsourced through a national nonprofit organization that will help families and child guardians locate child care at reduced rates in their own communities when they are unable to access child care on military installations. Fee reductions will vary depending on geographic location, total family income, and age of the child.
- Additionally, through our *Operation: Military Kids* initiative, we are working to create community support networks for military youth living in rural, urban, and suburban communities. These “suddenly military” kids look the same to teachers, friends, and the rest of the community but, in truth, their lives have been significantly impacted. Many of their usual support systems are no longer relevant or adequate. They need to connect with other youth in similar situations. They seek friends and adults who can empathize and help them cope with their new world. *Operation: Military Kids* is helping to meet this need through a

collaboration of state and county Cooperative Extension staff, veterans service organizations, schools, and youth serving agencies to include the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the Military Child Education Coalition, and the National 4-H Office.

Military Child Care reduces family tensions and retains Army Families and Soldiers. We are fortunate to have this “force multiplier” that is not only so important to the readiness of the Department’s workforce but continues to be recognized as a “model for the nation.”

PROGRAM STANDARDS

One way we meet our mandate to provide predictable programs and services is to measure them against credible standards. In October 1999, the MWR Board of Directors (BOD) approved baseline standards for Fitness and Sports, Army Family Action Plan conferences, Child and Youth Services, Army Community Service, Recreation, and Libraries. These standards establish minimum levels of resource requirements in support of MWR and Family Programs focused on staffing, training, availability, and equipment. The MWR BOD directed that installations conduct annual assessments against these standards.

For Soldiers and family members, the standards define predictable levels of service throughout the Army so they better know what to expect as they move from place to place. They provide managers and leaders an effective, logical means to articulate resource requirements by defining a level of “sensible adequacy” in staffing, training, and equipment.

Installations have conducted six assessments using the baseline standards. Managers and program proponents continue to refine the standards. They have proven

invaluable in defining and defending requirements during the Army's programming and budgeting process.

FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT

Operationally, total appropriated fund (APF) and nonappropriated fund (NAF) support to the Army's MWR (Fitness, Sports, Recreation and Library, Youth Programs, and Child Development Services) Programs for fiscal year 2004 amounted to \$1.54 billion, a \$123.5million increase over fiscal year 2003. NAF revenue was \$881.5 million, a \$27 million increase from fiscal year 2003. Higher sales, reduced expenses and the Army and Air Force Exchange Service dividends accounted for the increase. APF support, including military construction was \$672.1 million, a \$104 million increase over the previous fiscal year. Sixty-three percent of the increase was attributed to the GWOT supplemental support for MWR. The balance of the increase was found in higher Operations and Maintenance support and Military Construction, Army.

The fiscal year 2004 collective net income reported for NAF MWR activities was \$10.433 million, or 1.2 percent of total revenue. This represents a \$6.4 million increase from fiscal year 2003. Cost-effective management practices lowered operating expenses as a percent of revenue thereby increasing net income. The Army MWR funds' collective financial position as of September 30, 2004 reflected a current cash to debt ratio of 1.3:1 versus the 1.2:1 of last year.

Re-stationing effects in the next few years will almost certainly present significant requirements for NAF capital investments in the United States. Re-stationing may depress revenue because Soldiers and families stationed overseas spend more per capita in post exchanges and MWR activities than they do in the U. S. MWR will have to adjust its operations to take these changes into account. The Senior Army Leadership is aware of the significance of this possibility and is taking action to mitigate these projected effects.

The DoD standard is to use APF to fund 100 percent of costs for which they are authorized. The metrics only specify funding minimums of 85 percent for Category A (CAT A) activities, and 65 percent for Category B (CAT B) activities. No standards are specified for the APF-authorized common service support or overhead expenses, and this category of expenses is a major component of the instances of when NAF is used in lieu of APF. Additionally no standard exists for the use of APF in Category C programs which is slight. In fiscal year 2004 we exceeded the specified minimums in both CAT A and CAT B by meeting 92.5 percent of the program operating expenses for CAT A and 70.9 percent for CAT B with APF.

CONCLUSION

Today, our nation is proudly served by the best trained, best equipped, and most technologically sophisticated Army in the history of the world. These volunteer patriots, who sacrifice so much to serve their country, are unequivocally sustained by loyal, dedicated families who, themselves, sacrifice much in fulfilling their vital role in the lives of Soldiers. Never has this dedication been more evident than in the global challenges the U.S. now faces. Our Soldiers and their families are the nation's best. They deserve the best we can give them. Every day, Army MWR fulfills this important obligation with programs and services delivered around the world, wherever Soldiers and their families might be. While duty to country calls them into an uncertain world, America's certain promise must be one of gratitude demonstrated by opportunities for a quality of life comparable with that afforded to the society they pledge to defend. Army MWR answers that call. We know our success is not possible without your committed and steadfast support. Thank you.