

Appendix B

Religious Ministry Team's Role

(Adapted from Army Field Manual (FM) 22-51, *A Leader's Manual for Combat Stress Control*.)

This appendix addresses the general role of the ministry team in the commander's program of combat stress control and in battle fatigue ministry. In the Marine Corps ministry teams are called Religious Ministry Teams (RMTs) and consist of chaplains and Religious Program Specialists (RPs) or chaplain's assistants (In the Army they are called Unit Ministry Teams). The RMT is assigned to a command or designated by higher headquarters to be responsible for the direct religious ministry support to the command. RMTs provide professional ministry support to leaders in fulfilling their combat stress identification and intervention responsibilities. RMTs can also assist in training leaders to recognize combat stress symptoms.

EFFECTS OF STRESS

Negative effects of stress can be lessened when members are prepared physically, emotionally, and spiritually prior to combat/operations. RMTs can assist in preparing Service members to manage combat stress with training before and during deployment. This training helps Service members draw upon their personal religious faith, spiritual strength, and values as well as to share strength and confidence during any operation.

RELIGIOUS MINISTRY TEAM RELATIONSHIP

The RMT's established relationship with the command promotes trust with the troops. As integral members of their commands, RMTs are trained and ready to respond to the needs of Service members experiencing combat stress. A person-oriented resource, the chaplain and RP team minister to combat stress casualties, especially Service members having less severe difficulties who have rapid replenishment potential.

SPIRITUAL VALUES

Service members' inner resources are often based on their personal faith, religious beliefs and spiritual values. In combat, Service members may show more interest in their religious beliefs. When religious and spiritual values are challenged during the chaos of combat, Service members may lose sight of inner resources that sustain them. Service members can then become targets of fear, despair, hopelessness, and eventually, combat stress casualties. They are also at risk for committing misconduct stress behaviors. Chaplains are a source of direction and stability to Service members experiencing these dilemmas and seeking to refocus their personal beliefs and spiritual values.

RELIGIOUS MINISTRY TEAM SUPPORT

Ministry teams can provide preventive, immediate, and replenishing spiritual and emotional support and care to Service members experiencing combat stress.

Preventive

The RMT's religious ministry support assists in preventing combat and misconduct stress behaviors through establishment of a presence within the unit. It is important for the RMT to be present with Service members when the unit trains and when it deploys. The chaplain and RP can be a calming influence on members and can help Service members strengthen or regain values important to them. Chaplains can help prevent combat stress and misconduct by:

- | Being present with the Service members and deploying with the unit.
- | Providing opportunities for private and group prayer and worship.
- | Supplying personal religious articles and materials.
- | Reading the scriptures with Service members.
- | Providing sacraments as the situation allows.
- | Counseling Service members, allowing them to work through stress, fear, anxiety, anger, and frustration.
- | Visiting Service members in work and living areas.
- | Assisting Service members and families prior to deployment with preparation for geographical separation and an uncertain future through Marine Corps Family Team Building (MCFTB) programs that emphasize family strengths. This helps Service members to know that their families are cared for during deployment.

Immediate

RMTs can assist commanders in the identification of Service members experiencing combat stress. Chaplains often work closely with the medical officer and are trained to recognize the signs of combat stress and provide religious support to Service members experiencing combat stress. Chaplains assess spiritual needs and provide the appropriate religious ministry. This may include such things as:

- | Presence with the Service member.
- | Conversation and counseling, providing opportunities to share fears, hopes, and other thoughts.
- | General prayers; prayers for the individual or fallen comrades.
- | Rites, sacraments, and ordinances as appropriate.
- | Reading from scriptures.

Replenishing

Following an engagement, the unit may require reconstitution through the addition of new personnel. The RMT can assist surviving Service members rebuild their emotional, psychological, and spiritual strength. During this time, RMTs continue their ongoing direct religious ministry that includes:

- | Coordinating the availability of worship services, sacraments, rites, and services and/or ceremonies honoring the dead.
- | Assisting with the integration of personnel replacements.
- | Enabling the grief process through personal counseling and memorial services.

- | Reinforcing the Service member's sense of self-worth and hope.
- | Assisting with CEDs to provide opportunities for Service members to talk about their combat experiences and to facilitate integration of the combat experience into their lives.
- | Providing leadership training and supervision of CEDs.
- | Providing personal religious articles and materials.
- | Providing or arranging faith group coverage in the command or for other units.
- | A chaplain's ability to relate the spiritual aspects of life to the Service member's situation is an essential element in the replenishment process. Religious ministry can assist Service members in achieving emotional and spiritual wholeness.

Reintegration

After deployments and operations, RMTs can assist reintegration of the individual Service member into family relationships and society at large. Many religious ministry support programs remain the same. Expanded ministry may also include providing the following:

- | Worship events for the entire unit.
- | Worship events for varied faith groups.
- | Briefings that help Service members recognize, prepare for, and master the stressors of reunion with family.
- | Structured events to assist Service members returning to family and civilian life.
- | Opportunities for Service members to experience and understand the forgiving and unchanging love of God.