

## Chapter 2

# Combat Stress Prevention, Management, and Control

### **2001. PREVENTING AND MANAGING COMBAT STRESS**

The same leadership skills that apply to troop welfare and warfighting can effectively reduce or prevent combat stress reactions. Leaders should take preventive actions and address stress symptoms as they appear. Ignoring the early warning signs can increase the severity of stress reactions. Positive action to reduce combat stress also helps Service members cope with normal, everyday situations and makes them less likely to experience harmful combat stress reactions. Table 2-1 lists stress management techniques.

### **2002. STRESS-REDUCTION TECHNIQUES FOR LEADERS**

To reduce stress, the leader should—

- | Lead by inspiration, not fear or intimidation.
- | Initiate and support stress management programs.
- | Provide information to focus stress positively.
- | Ensure each Service member has mastered at least two stress coping (relaxation) techniques, a slow one for deep relaxation and a quick one for on the job.

**Table 2-1. Stress Management Techniques.**

<p>Assure every effort is made to provide for the troops' welfare.</p> <p>Instill confidence in each Service member and his equipment, unit, and leadership.</p> <p>Be decisive and assertive; demonstrate competence and fair leadership.</p> <p>Provide sleep and/or rest, especially during continuous operations, whenever possible.</p> <p>Ensure sleep for decisionmaking personnel.</p> <p>Set realistic goals for progressive development of the individual and team.</p> <p>Systematically test the achievement of these goals.</p> <p>Recognize that battle duration and intensity increase stress.</p> <p>Be aware of environmental stressors such as light level, temperature, and precipitation.</p> <p>Recognize that individuals and units react differently to the same stress.</p> <p>Learn the signs of stress in yourself and others.</p> <p>Recognize that fear is a normal part of combat stress.</p> <p>Rest minor stress casualties briefly, keeping them with their unit.</p> <p>Be aware of background stress sources prior to combat; e.g., family concerns and/or separation, economic problems.</p> <p>Provide an upward, downward, and lateral information flow to minimize stress due to a lack of communication.</p>
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**Table 2-1. Stress Management Techniques (Continued).**

Practice stress control through cross-training, task allocation, tasks matching, and task sharing.
Look for stress signs and a decreased ability to tolerate stress.
Practice and master stress-coping techniques.
Face combat stress; it is unhealthy to deny the stresses of combat.

- | Look out for Service members' welfare.
- | Communicate with Service members personally to learn of stressors and detect signs of stress.
- | Understand that stress in response to threatening or uncertain situations is normal.
- | Create a spirit to win under stress.
- | Act as role model for self-control of stress reactions.

Realistic training is the primary stress-reduction technique. It assures Service members' maximum confidence in their skills and belief that their leaders are doing their best for them. Since the basic necessities of life assume even greater importance on the battlefield, leaders should:

- | Ensure personnel are properly trained.
- | Ensure training includes understanding of combat stress and how to deal with it.
- | Place welfare of subordinates before personal welfare, but keep them capable.
- | Ensure Service members get as much rest as possible.

- | Ensure the best possible shelters are available.
- | Keep Service members well supplied with food, water, and other essentials.
- | Provide mail, news, and information avenues.
- | Provide the best medical, logistical, and other support.
- | Maintain high morale, unit identity, and esprit de corps.
- | Keep the same unit members together.
- | Assure that experienced unit members take care of and teach new members.

The unit's encouragement and support of Service members' efforts to cope with stress have a decisive effect. Unit actions can determine if Service members will endure combat exposure and accomplish their mission. Stress-coping indoctrination is part of every unit's combat training and is followed by a program of action. Controlling stress requires practice. Programs are tailored to individual units and improve with experience. Coping with stress is practiced under conditions as similar to combat as possible. A unit's ability to cope with stress in combat depends primarily on how rigorously and realistically training has been conducted.

### **2003. PERFORMANCE DEGRADATION PREVENTIVE MEASURES**

Every Service member, team, and unit must learn to effectively sustain performance in continuous operations. This requirement applies especially to leaders. While it is an important ingredient, the determination to endure does not ensure effectiveness. Gaining the required capability goes beyond a high level of proficiency in combat skills and technical specialties. It means learning to identify the adverse conditions of continuous operations, cope with them,

and overcome their effects. It also means learning how to slow the rate of performance degradation. Units, leaders, and personnel must prepare and execute plans and train to sustain performance. Adverse conditions progressively degrade Service member effectiveness. Fortunately, long-term remedies exist for slowing the rate of performance decline. These remedies, which must be introduced prior to combat, include safety, food intake, combat load, and physical fitness.

### **Safety**

Safety, which encompasses such factors as using proper lifting techniques and staying alert and careful, is influenced by fatigue. Overtired Service members are more vulnerable to injury than those who are rested. After 72 hours of continuous combat, the tendency to seek shortcuts is very strong, and accident rates increase 50 percent. Fatigue affects all military systems, but it is especially hazardous when weapon systems are involved. Catastrophic accidents can occur when fatigued (and under-experienced) crews man weapon systems. Ways to safeguard Service members include developing and following safety standing operating procedures and increasing supervision during extended operations.

### **Food Intake**

If Service members are too busy, stressed or tired to eat adequate rations during continuous operations, their caloric intake will be reduced. This may lead to both physical and mental fatigue and degraded performance. For example, in accidents judged to involve aviator fatigue, there is some indication that before the accidents occurred, the pilots had irregular eating schedules or missed one or more meals. In field tests done by the U.S. Army Natick Research, Development, and Evaluation Center, Natick,

MA, some personnel subsisting solely on meals, ready to eat (MREs) lost weight over just a few weeks. Leaders must encourage troops to eat all of the main items in their MREs, not just the candy, to get balanced nutrition. In various other field tests conducted during continuous operations, it was discovered that meals were frequently delivered late or missed altogether. Although the relationship between performance and nutrition is not clear, eating regularly is important in continuous operations, as well as providing hot meals at assigned times or when the workload has been sustained boosts morale.

Good nutrition is important. An inadequate diet degrades performance, reduces resistance to disease, and prolongs recuperation from illness and injury. When food and water become available in continuous operations, leaders must provide and maintain a supply of food that has the nutritional value commensurate with the physical activity and stress of battle. They must remind and encourage Service members to eat and drink properly. The excitement, stress, and rapid pace of events associated with field preparations can cause Service members to forget to drink liquids. Thus, they enter the early part of the field scenario inadequately hydrated. Dehydration may result, especially if the early scenario calls for assault of a position or rapid air/land deployment. Contributing to developing dehydration is the relative lack of moisture in MREs and other packets. In addition, Service members experiencing dehydration lose their appetite and reduce their food intake. This, in combination with dehydration, leads to degraded performance. Leaders must reemphasize drinking regimens to ensure that Service members are properly hydrated going into battle. Leaders must remind Service members to drink liquids in both hot and cold climates and must monitor fluid intake. If personnel drink only when thirsty, they will become dehydrated.

## **Combat Load**

In combat, the load carried by a Service member significantly exceeds optimum recommended weights. In the case of a light infantry Service member, the combat load is as much as double the recommended load. Physical conditioning cannot compensate for this degree of excess. Service members tire faster and, in continuous combat, recovery from fatigue becomes more time-consuming.

When the Service member must carry excessive amounts of equipment, the effects of stress and lack of rest are magnified. Employing a load echelonment concept must be considered to ease the strain on Service members. In this concept, the unit separates an individual's equipment into two loads—fighting and existence. As the unit closes the objective, the heavier existence load is dropped and the Service member continues with the lighter fighting load.

## **Physical Fitness**

Good physical conditioning delays fatigue, builds confidence, and shortens recovery times from illness and injury. It also prepares individuals to better cope with the physiological demands of stress. Service members in top physical condition can better control their internal physiological functions, which will improve their overall performance. Physical fitness—including aerobic fitness, muscular strength, and endurance—must be developed in all Service members to strengthen their ability to rebound from exhaustion. Aerobic fitness increases work capacity and the ability to withstand stress. While feelings of depression and moodiness accompany tiredness, aerobically fit Service members are affected less than those unfit. The ability to quickly recover from physically strenuous workloads is maintained by smart physical training, performed consistently and routinely. However, there is

no evidence that good physical conditioning significantly reduces normal sleep requirements nor compensates for the deleterious impact of sleep deprivation on cognitive functioning. Sleep deprivation is discussed in greater detail in chapter 4.

#### **2004. EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

The effective leader in combat is competent and reliable. He knows his job without question, and he can be counted on to do it regardless of the situation or circumstances.

Effective small-unit leadership reduces the impact of stress in several ways. Leaders understand the sources of combat stress and reactions to them. In addition, leaders manage stress problems to keep them from spreading throughout the organization by implementing the following actions:

- | Continue mission performance; focus on immediate mission.
- | Expect Service members to perform assigned duties.
- | Remain calm, directive, and in control at all times.
- | Let Service members know their reactions are normal and there is nothing seriously wrong with them.
- | Keep Service members productive (when not resting) through recreational activities, equipment maintenance, and training to preserve perishable skills.
- | Ensure Service members maintain good personal hygiene.
- | Ensure Service members eat, drink, and sleep as soon as possible.
- | Let the Service members express their thoughts. Do not ignore or make light of expressions of grief or worry. Give practical advice and put emotions into perspective.



A battalion commander in World War II made the following address to his Marines just before a new offensive:

I know as well as you do that the going has been tough. Maybe I sweat it more than you do because I have more to worry about. But you've done a fine job, and I'm proud of every single man in my outfit. I assure you that everything possible will be done to give you the best available support, and I will not order you to attack unless I'm confident that you have a real chance to succeed . . . The harder we fight now, the sooner we can finish this mess and get back to living the way we want.

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That speech demonstrated a common sense approach in dealing with stress. Had this commander preached about the advantages of democracy over fascism or the evils of Hitler, his words would have fallen on deaf ears. Instead, he seized on the strong motivators of his troops: their *respect* for him as a leader, their desire to continue to be worthy of his respect, and their desire to share in the unit's accomplishments.

Generally, confidence is based on the technical and tactical competence exhibited by leaders and Service members. Since confidence is one of the strongest defenses against stress, its development is a major goal for every military leader. To gain confidence, Service members must believe in themselves, their equipment, other unit members, and their training. Above all, they must believe in their leaders' competence. Each of these beliefs is instilled and reinforced at every opportunity.

The following comments were made by a Marine colonel reflecting on his experience as a company commander in Vietnam.

A feeling of helplessness will overtake men when they realize that they have been put in an untenable position. When the situation is so bad that the men cannot fight back, they are susceptible to fear. The

situation can be critical, but as long as the men can fight back, fear normally will not overtake them. The solution to this problem is: don't put your men in untenable positions. Granted, in every battle some men in a unit will find themselves in a situation where they can't fight back. This is inevitable especially in an attack. Proper use of fire team, squad, platoon, and company formations, as well as intelligent use of terrain, minimizes the danger of a large portion of the unit being pinned down to the extent where the men cannot return fire. If you are tactically and technically proficient, use common sense, apply the principles of war, and employ the firepower available to your unit, untenable situations can be avoided. Simply stated, know your job!

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Those comments provide an insight and sensitivity to problems related to combat stress through small-unit leadership. His instincts told him how important it was to exhibit solid leadership qualities in order to allow his troops to operate at maximum efficiency. A unit builds confidence, esprit, integrity and cohesion when the *leaders know their jobs*.

## **2005. COMBAT STRESS MANAGEMENT BUILDING BLOCKS**

### **Confidence in Leaders**

Leaders must demonstrate effective leadership to earn their subordinates' loyalty and trust. Leaders are responsible for—

- | Committing the unit to missions commensurate with abilities.
- | Planning operations carefully and thoroughly.
- | Preparing the unit to accomplish the mission.
- | Leading and guiding the unit to mission accomplishment.

- | Showing consistent good leadership that convinces subordinates their leaders know best what should be done, how it should be done, who should do it, and how long the task should take. Authority accompanies leadership beyond the automatic authority given by military rank and position. Authority and respect are earned based on confidence in a leader's ability to guide the unit to success.

### **Confidence in Training**

Training helps Service members develop the skills required to do their jobs. Confidence is the result of knowing they have received the best possible training for combat, and are fully prepared. This confidence results from the following:

- | Realistic training that ends with successful mastery.
- | Relevance of training to survival and success on the integrated battlefield.
- | Refresher and cross training.
- | Systematic individual and collective training.

### **Confidence in Unit**

Each Service member in a unit needs to become confident of the other unit members' competence. Individuals must stay and train together to gain that personal trust. Unless absolutely necessary, teams should not be disbanded or scrambled. Subunits in the same larger unit should have the same Standing Operating Procedures and training standards, so members can fit in quickly if teams have to be cross-leveled or reorganized after casualties occur. Confidence in the unit leads to feelings of security, which in turn allows members to sleep and positively focus stress. In combat, the unit

must receive each member's highest commitment to unit loyalty. Mission accomplishment is the unit's highest priority.

### **Confidence in Equipment**

Service members who learn to operate and maintain assigned equipment develop confidence in their ability to employ it. This, in combination with an individual's belief in his personal capabilities, raises overall confidence in fighting ability.

### **Cohesion and Morale**

Good unit cohesion and morale offset the negative effects of combat stress. The foundation for any stress reduction program includes trust and confidence in the following:

- | Fellow Service members.
- | Competence and fairness of the unit leaders.
- | Unit's technical abilities and military power.
- | Equipment.
- | Personal combat ability.
- | Sense of support from the civilian community.
- | Personal spiritual well-being.

### **Physical Conditioning**

A strong relationship exists between physical stamina and the ability to resist combat stress. Good physical conditioning has

physical and psychological benefits. Rigorous physical conditioning helps protect against the stress of continuous operations. A regular program of physical fitness to increase aerobic endurance, muscular strength, and flexibility is essential to combat readiness. As physical conditioning improves, Service members feel better about themselves, have greater confidence in each other, and their stress is reduced.

Unit training includes regular physical conditioning. This increases the members' tolerance to all types of stressors. The program is geared to the unit's combat mission, and exercises are tailored to the environment where the unit operates. The pace, length, and types of runs, road marches, and other activities are commensurate with the unit's need. Light infantry units need more demanding, longer road marches than maintenance units. Activities also include team athletics, which capitalize on cohesion-building aspects as well as physical benefits. The benefits of such a program include developing endurance through aerobic exercises, enhancing strength through weight training, and deprivation/physical stress training.

### **Family Care**

Service members entering combat with financial worries or family problems risk breaking down under the additional stress of combat. Even positive but unfinished changes on the home front, such as a recent marriage or parenthood, can distract the Service members' focus on combat missions with worries that they will not live to fulfill their new responsibilities at home.

Leaders must be aware of this risk and assist members in handling personal matters before deployment. Pre-deployment and

post-deployment family briefings should be conducted, and programs established to assist families before, during, and after deployment. When Service members know their families are cared for, they are better able to focus on their combat duties.

### **Coping with Individual Stress**

Stress pushes the body to its limits and causes tension; relaxation reverses this process. Coping with personal stress is essential. Stress-coping skills are incorporated into unit training early, and command emphasis is placed on practicing them. Service members receive a block of instruction on stress-coping techniques, then are given supervised time each duty day to practice them quietly. After 3 or 4 weeks of practice, most Service members relax easily and quickly, even under highly stressful conditions. They will be able to naturally control stomach fluttering, heart rate, blood pressure, and stress.

The stress-coping exercises include deep breathing, muscle relaxation, and cognitive exercises. Deep breathing is the simplest to learn and practice; the others require longer instruction and more practice time. On request, the Combat Stress Control (CSC) team will provide instructional materials and assistance.

#### ***Deep-Breathing Exercise***

This consists of slow, deep inhaling, which expands the chest and abdomen, holding it for 2 to 5 seconds, then exhaling slowly and completely, which pushes out the used air. This can be done for five breaths as a quick, mind-clearing exercise, or continuously to promote sleep. Abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing (making the stomach move the air, rather than the upper chest) is especially effective for stress control and, with practice, can be done simultaneously with task that require full attention.

***Muscle Relaxation Exercises***

These are more complex. They generally consist of concentrating on various muscle groups and the tensing and relaxing of limbs to relax the entire body. Quick versions for use in action consist of tensing all muscles simultaneously, holding for 15 seconds or more, then letting them relax and “shaking out the tension.” Deep relaxation versions start in the feet and work up (or start in the head and work down), body part by body part (muscle group by muscle group), tensing and then relaxing each in turn, while noticing how each part feels warm after it relaxes.

***Cognitive Exercises***

These consist of self suggestion (positive self-talk); imagery (imagine being fully immersed in a deeply relaxing setting); rehearsal (imagine performing the stressful or critical task under pressure and doing it perfectly); and meditation (clearing the mind of all other thoughts by focusing on every breath and silently repeating a single word or phrase). These techniques involve creating positive mental images that reduce the effects of stressful surroundings, redirecting mental focus and learning to detach from stress. Service members are encouraged to practice stress management techniques and discuss their use in combat.

**CAUTION**

**It is important not to use deep relaxation techniques at times when you need to be alert to dangers in your surroundings. Practice the quick relaxation techniques so you can use them automatically without distraction from the mission.**

## **2006. CRITICAL EVENT DEBRIEF AND UNIT LEADER'S AFTER ACTION REVIEW**

**NOTE:** On the subjects of Critical Event Debrief/After-Action Review, U.S. Army personnel will follow the guidance provided in FM 22-51, *Leaders' Manual for Combat Stress Control*, chapter 6.

### **Critical Event Debrief**

A Critical Event Debrief (CED) is a structured group process designed to mitigate the impact of a critical event and to accelerate normal recovery of those personnel involved. The CED is normally conducted by a team composed of trained members, (medical officers, chaplains, mental health professionals, trained unit members). A CED's main value is to quickly restore unit cohesion and readiness to return to action, through clarifying what actually happened and clearing up harmful misperceptions and misunderstandings. It may also reduce the possibility of long term distress through sharing and acceptance of thoughts, feelings, and reactions related to the critical event. Ideally, CEDs are conducted 24 to 72 hours after the occurrence of the event, away from the scene and separate from any operational debriefing. The typical CED lasts from 2 to 3 hours. Situations that warrant a CED include:

- | Death of unit member
- | Death or suffering of noncombatants (especially women and/or children)
- | Handling of the dead, management of carnage or the sight of devastation during disaster work
- | Serious friendly fire incident



- | Situation involving a serious error, injustice or atrocity
- | Terrorist attack.

### **After Action Review**

Although a CED would be warranted following such traumatic events as those listed, if access to CED trained professional team is not available, small-unit leaders can modify their After Action Review (AAR) to assist in identifying the level of stress reaction of unit members. The AAR or “hotwash” is a routine practice used by leaders to debrief post-mission operations. Accordingly, it provides a familiar, non-threatening forum for leaders to identify the levels of stress reaction experienced by the unit members using the information in paragraph 1004. The leader's AAR may be sufficient to restore unit readiness for further action. It may also identify personnel who need immediate or later referral for chaplain or mental health/CSC help for combat stress-related symptoms. In those instances when access to CED trained facilitators is not available, the unit leader should incorporate the following questions in the AAR:

#### ***Fact Phase***

Ask unit members to describe the event from their individual perspectives. What was each member's specific role in the event?

#### ***Thought Phase***

What were each member's first thoughts at the scene (or when the incident was first heard of)?

#### ***Reaction Phase***

What was the worst thing about the event? What was thought and/or felt?

***Symptom Phase***

Describe probable thinking, physical, and emotional responses both at the scene and a few days afterward.

***Training Phase***

Relay information regarding stress reactions and what can be done about them. If prepared handouts are available, distribute them. Include points of contact within the unit.

***Wrap-up Phase***

Reaffirm positive things. Summarize. Be available and accessible. Debriefing team/unit leaders together decide which individuals need more help or referral.

**2007. EFFECTIVE COMBAT STRESS CONTROL PROGRAM**

An effective stress management program starts with early planning, continues during employment, and extends beyond the return home. The CSC program is comprised of three phases: pre-deployment, deployment and combat, and post combat.

**Phase 1: Predeployment**

During pre-deployment, some stressors facing Service members include long working hours, preparation for training, fear of the future, family worries, and anxiety about the unit's readiness. Signs of poor coping include insomnia, increased use of alcohol, marital problems, increased bickering in the unit, irritability, and suicidal feelings. The most important preparatory steps to take in the predeployment phase are to:

- 1 Conduct unit training and mission rehearsals.
- 1 Prepare for changed sleep schedules and jetlag.

- | Attend to task assignments and allocations.
- | Conduct equipment and supply maintenance checks.
- | Attend to personal and family matters. (Call the Family Service Center.)
- | Integrate new members into the unit positively and actively.
- | Welcome “significant others” (not just entitled beneficiaries) in the Family Support network information tree.
- | Brief as much information about the operation as possible, consistent with operations security measures.
- | Actively familiarize the unit members with the stressors and horrors they may encounter (for example, watch videotapes from network television showing suffering civilians or atrocities), but always followed immediately with what the unit will do in those situations.
- | Arrange for pre-deployment training and education, especially for refresher training of stress reduction techniques from local mental health professionals, a Special Psychiatric Rapid Intervention Team (SPRINT) or CSC team, if available.

***Unit Training***

Because unit leaders have combatted the stressors associated with garrison living and peacetime training, they have learned to know their Service members and what affects their performance. All Service members should believe unit training has prepared them thoroughly for combat. Stress is reduced if the training improves belief in themselves, and the unit's ability to fight and win. They are assured training is designed and developed to meet combat requirements, provides the ability to fight successfully, and that supporting units receive the same realistic training.

Realistic mission rehearsal helps desensitize Service members against potential combat stressors. For example, wearing and realistically training in protective gear is important. By doing so in pre-deployment training, Service members become less distressed in combat. The unit should be exposed to extensive drills wearing protective gear during live-fire exercises before employment. Such training has the two-fold, stress-reduction benefit of building confidence and preparing Service members for combat.

Leaders who provide their Service members with advance knowledge about the enemy prepare them for the stress created during deployment and initial enemy encounter. It is important during such training to talk realistically about enemy strengths and weaknesses as well as those of their own units. While inspirational pep talks are also important at this time, they should not include biased, inaccurate information. Leaders earn trust and respect if their troops perceive them as accurate, dependable sources of information.

#### ***Physical Fitness Training***

In the time-urgent work of preparing for deployment, leaders assure that physical fitness is sustained, either by the work involved or by selective unit physical training exercises. New unit members who are insufficiently fit receive special training.

#### ***Stress-Coping Skills Training***

During preparation for deployment, the leaders direct the unit to practice stress coping and relaxation techniques, and are positive role models by demonstrating use of these techniques. If necessary, the chaplain and mental health professional personnel available to the units can provide additional training.

#### ***Sleep Discipline***

Before deployment, unit leaders must consider fatigue and sleep loss occurring during combat. The enforcement of work and rest

schedules begins early in pre-deployment training. During continuous operations, fatigue caused by lack of sleep is a major source of stress. Breaks in combat are irregular, infrequent, and unscheduled. Extended sleep is unlikely. *Sleep logistics* is emphasized such that sleep and rest are allocated or supplied like rations, water, equipment, and ammunition. Sleep discipline training addresses the following points:

- | A unit-specific work-rest-sleep plan is developed and practiced.
- | The unit leader or commander is included in the allocation of sleep and rest time, as lack of sleep will impair his judgment and decision-making skills as much as those of his subordinates.
- | The plan allows Service members at least 5 hours of uninterrupted sleep, ideally between 2400 and 0600, every 24 hours. Persons receiving only 5 hours per 24 hours over a period of several days will accumulate a significant sleep debt.
- | Sleep priority is assigned to those whose judgment and decision-making are critical to mission accomplishment.
- | If received frequently, 1 hour of sleep or even 15-minute naps help, but “slow mental starting” upon wake up can result.
- | Relaxation exercises complement sleep schedules. These exercises are used as an alternative to regular sleep or as an aid to help Service members rest under difficult circumstances.

If preparation is made for jetlag, its effects are minimal. The ideal method is to seclude units up to several weeks before deployment, gradually changing work, eat, and rest cycles to coincide with the destination’s schedule. Although rapid deployment does not permit this method, there are ways to help make the transition

to a new environment, such as changing to new sleep cycles collectively versus individually; sleeping up to 12 hours before operation start; ensuring leaders receive rest; and adjusting diet to meet energy needs. If the unit is divided into shifts, make sure that shift assignments are maintained from day to day, i.e., if a member is assigned to the 0600-1400 shift, keep him on that same shift each day.

### ***Task Allocation and Management***

Overloading Service members with tasks or responsibilities is another major source of stress. Allocating tasks fairly among available Service members improves unit effectiveness as well as decreases stress. Proper allocation of tasks include:

#### ***Selecting the Right Person for the Job***

The right person is fitted to the right task according to the task requirement and the individual's talents, abilities, and training.

#### ***Duplicating Critical Tasks***

Two Service members are assigned to a critical task requiring mental alertness and complete accuracy. They check each other's work by performing the same task independently.

#### ***Cross-Training***

Each Service member is trained in a secondary duty position to ensure competently stepping into the position of another.

#### ***Developing Performance Supports***

Develop standing operating procedures, checklists or other mental aids to simplify critical tasks during periods of low alertness.

***Equipment Maintenance and Supply***

During pre-deployment, the unit maintains its equipment and manages needed supplies. Once deployed for combat, Service members require confidence that supplies are ample and equipment is dependable. The following questions are important:

- | Does the unit provide ample training in equipment maintenance and troubleshooting?
- | Has the unit's equipment been field-tested under realistic conditions? For example, have Service members fired and cleaned their weapons while wearing full combat gear or protective clothing?
- | Does the unit have sufficient ammunition, food, water, and other essential supplies?
- | Does the unit have contingency plans for procuring and managing critical supplies if normal channels are disrupted?

***Personal and Family Matters***

Family stress adds to combat-imposed stress and causes distraction, interference with performance of essential duties, and a negative impact on stress-coping ability. This will result in the unit's inability to perform at peak. The unit should help the Service members resolve important family care matters before deployment and develop methods for helping families when Service members are deployed. Service members are encouraged to:

- | Generate or update their wills.
- | Finalize power of attorney for spouses.
- | Update life insurance policies, including Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI).
- | Ensure family automobiles are in good repair.

- | Develop lists of telephone numbers of reliable points of contact for specific problems (mechanics, emergency transportation, babysitters, sources of emergency money, health care, etc.).
- | Resolve major legal issues such as alimony payments, property settlements following divorces, and child support payments.

### **Role of Leaders**

Unit commanders should:

- | Brief families as a group before deployment or as soon as possible after deployment. Within the bounds of security limits, explain the mission's nature. Even if a mission is highly confidential, families benefit from such a meeting by being told of the support available to them while separated. They begin to solve problems and form support systems with other families. This includes an opportunity to discuss family questions and concerns. The Family Services Office, base mental health service or the chaplain's office assist in staging this briefing.
- | Establish points of contact (e.g. Key Volunteer Network) to assist with family problems. These volunteers possess good working relations with the chaplain and mental health personnel to assist with the management of complex problems.
- | Establish key volunteer communication and support networks. Commanding officers' spouses, or spouses of sergeants major are often good resources for developing and running such networks; however, the involvement of junior Service members' spouses is also crucial. Some of the most enthusiastic participants are tasked to make *outreach* visits and encourage shy or depressed spouses to participate.
- | Have mental health professionals conduct meetings to discuss post-deployment problems. For example, some children have



difficulty adjusting to a parent's absence, and other family members may experience similar difficulties. Mental health professionals give families valuable information on these normal reactions and suggest ways to prepare for them.

## **Phase 2: Deployment and Combat**

In addition to the normal stress associated with moving to a combat zone, Service members in this phase start worrying about their survival and performance under fire. Their thoughts become centered on fear of the unknown. Leaders should emphasize that stress under these circumstances and conditions is expected and is a natural reaction. This will help prevent “normal” stress reactions from escalating into extreme reactions.

Unit leaders should provide as much information as necessary to their survival and mission success, reinforce the stress control techniques learned during pre-deployment, and help their subordinates understand what happens to them when stressors occur.

### ***Deployment Vehicle***

The deployment vehicle—in most cases, an airplane—is a stressor by itself. If it is a commercial aircraft, in-flight problems are usually minor. However, if the unit deploys on a military aircraft, leaders should accomplish the following:

- 1 Designate areas for light exercise and stretching to counter seating discomfort caused by a buildup of leg fluids.
- 1 Ensure Service members drink enough fluids to prevent dehydration and have access to head/latrine.
- 1 Adopt the activity schedule of the new time zone. If the unit is in the sleep cycle or is already in or about to enter the sleep

cycle, cover windows; reduce lighting; and issue earplugs, blankets, and pillows.

- 1 Allow uninterrupted sleep. If a stopover occurs during a sleep cycle, do not waken Service members to eat or partake in activities. If the stopover occurs during an activity period, take full advantage of it by having Service members take washcloth baths, stretch, and perform head-and-shoulder rotations.
- 1 Upon arrival in the area of operations, follow the schedule of the new time zone. Eat the next meal and go to bed on the new schedule. Doing so helps the Service members' bodies adjust.

#### ***Information Flow***

Since uncertainty about the future is a major source of stress, timely and accurate information becomes vital. Lines of communications are clearly defined and kept open. Issuing warning, operation, and fragmentary orders is critical to ensuring adequate information flow. Informational meetings are conducted at regular intervals, even when there is no new information to disseminate. This reinforces the organizational structure and the importance of unit meetings as the source of current, accurate information. Reliable sources of information are especially important for countering rumors.

Service members also need information or *performance feedback* after mission completion. Merely engaging in a firefight or completing a mission is insufficient. Service members must be told how they performed as a group. The knowledge of mission accomplishment and progress builds unit cohesion, develops a winning attitude, and reduces the effects of stress.

***Family Support***

Marine Corps Family Team Building programs and corresponding programs for other Services provide family support throughout deployments. The Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, Army Emergency Relief, American Red Cross, Family Service Centers, and other community agencies also provide direct assistance to family members. The Key Volunteer Network and the American Red Cross continue to function as conduits for emergency information between Service members and their families. Leaders need to educate Service members about these programs and agencies that are available to serve the needs of the community. Effective communication and caring support networks help to prevent anxiety while Service members are deployed and/or in combat.

***Religious Ministry Support and Pastoral Care***

The Religious Ministry Team is an integrated part of the battalion or unit. In the Marine Corps, a Religious Ministry Team (RMT) consists of a chaplain and Religious Program Specialist (RP) or chaplain's assistant. RMTs are organic to commands or are assigned by higher headquarters to provide direct religious ministry support to a command. (**NOTE:** In the Army, the same teams are called Unit Ministry Teams (UMT).) During operations, the RMT often travels with the forward battalion aid station (BAS) in order to minister to the wounded and to be with the Service members who are most likely to experience combat stress. Using their professional training, skills, knowledge, and relationship with the Service members, chaplains provide care focusing on prevention of mild and moderate combat stress reactions. The RMT's primary mission is to provide ministry and pastoral care to the troops, offering faith, assurance, and hope. Before, during, and after the mission, the team provides field services, sacraments, and counsel,

which bring comfort, assurance, and encouragement to Service members as they integrate their experiences into their lives.

In addition to being a spiritual/pastoral mentor for Service members, most chaplains are trained in some form of CED process. Chaplains are effective CED team members as well as trainers of small-unit leaders (e.g., platoon leaders, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), corporals, etc.) in CED team member skills and stress management techniques. Appendix B explains the roles of the Religious Ministry Teams.

#### ***Physical and Recreational Activities***

Service members need an outlet for the anger, frustration, hostility, and grief developed in combat. It is unwise to conduct sports and recreation activities under observation by the enemy, but these activities can be conducted further to the rear. Although makeshift athletic games help relieve stress, they should be conducted with caution. It is interesting to note that the most frequent medical problem in Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm was sports injury. Other activities, such as listening to music, reading or practicing relaxation exercises are encouraged at rest and recuperation facilities. Time and access to personal hygiene items and facilities are psychologically valuable in combat.

Humanitarian assistance and community relations' projects provide excellent opportunities for Service members to constructively engage in meaningful work. Public Affairs Officers, Civil Affairs Officers, and chaplains are excellent personal resources for developing working relationships with local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) in the coordination of such projects.

***Integration of New Unit Members***

The arrival of replacements requires small-unit leaders to conduct continuous training programs. Leaders should be concerned with the various stressors affecting new Service members, as well as those Service members who have been around for a while, including seasoned combat veterans. Leaders teach newcomers to use stress coping skills. Replacements are quickly integrated into their units and become thoroughly acquainted with all aspects of the new unit. The unit also becomes thoroughly acquainted with the replacements. A brief orientation with a sincere welcome, with NCOs and officer support, eases replacement transition for combat.

It is important Service members adjust to a new unit quickly and effectively. If they do not feel they are part of the group, unit cohesion and morale suffer, decreasing unit effectiveness. New Service members in garrison are assigned sponsors to assist them, introduce them to the unit, and smooth their families' adjustment. In combat, replacements are placed with suitable groups of seasoned veterans. New unit members are much more likely to become battle or stress casualties than are members of a seasoned and cohesive group. The veterans need to give support and advice to the newcomers, by example and direct action, if necessary.

**Phase 3: Post-Combat**

Just as pre-deployment and combat are stressful, the period after combat is also difficult. Today's rapid transportation enables Service members to travel from the battlefield to their hometowns in 48 to 72 hours. This short time often does not give them reflection with their comrades. Units should therefore set aside time in the last few days before leaving the theater to conduct their own "End of Tour" debriefing in which they start at pre-deployment and talk about whatever stands out in their memories, good or

bad, as they recount the operation up to its end. There should also be appropriate memorial ceremonies and rituals that formally bring the operation to a close. Awards, decorations, and other recognition must be allotted fairly by the commanders.

Unit officers, staff NCOs, and NCOs, assisted by the chaplains and mental health/CSC teams, prepare the Service members for problems encountered during family reunion. For example, most Service members expect to resume roles and responsibilities they had prior to separation. However, their spouses often resist giving up their new roles as decision makers and primary home managers. Also, a spouse may feel that his or her sacrifices during the Service member's absence have gone unrecognized. This feeling becomes an additional source of tension. If at all possible, the families should receive the same briefings or written materials. Families need to be reassured of their contribution. Key Volunteer Networks and other Marine Corps Family Team building programs, and corresponding organizations for other Services continue to help manage problems with reunion and adjustment.

Service members are briefed that startle reactions to sudden noise or movement, combat dreams and nightmares and occasional problems with sleeping, and feeling bored, frustrated and out of place are common when first returning from combat to a peacetime, civilian setting. The leaders, chaplains, and the CSC team emphasize the normalcy of such reactions. Service members are also advised on resources available to help deal with such symptoms, if they are persistent and become upsetting.