



The Challengers



*The Challengers Family Readiness Group, M-158 Aviation Maintenance Company,
Building 7016, Second Floor, HAAF, Box 81, Fort Hood, Texas 76544-5081, (877) 620-4187*

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From the Commander

By Major Lonnie Slade

We are beginning to come together as a team here in Iraq. I am very proud of what the soldiers in M-Company have accomplished so far. It is a challenging mission here and one that we grapple with everyday. We are fortunate that many things have come together at the very last minute to make us successful. We call that phenomenon the "Mike Company Luck". It has followed us since our arrival at Ft. Hood.

Luck is always great when it is good, however, we all know safety involves more than luck. One thing that is very important to me is safety. I am doing my best to insure the safety of all the soldiers here. You can help me by reminding your soldier to be safe and follow proper safety procedures. I have a difficult job trying to enforce safety in the unit. The standard is zero accidents of course. All the officers and NCO's in the company are charged with enforcing safety standards and insuring we don't injure any soldiers. To this end I will always strive to keep all M-Company soldiers safe.

Time is passing rapidly as we stay busy with our daily duties. I have been speaking with the soldiers and they all seem to be in high spirits. We are all looking forward to the day we all come home. We appreciate the sacrifices all of you have made on the home front. Please stay strong, be patient, and continue to pray for us.

Sincerely,

Lonnie Slade
MAJ, AV
Commanding



Security of the unit and unit families is of the utmost importance.

Avoid any discussions of operational information.

Operational Security

As you communicate from home, it is crucial that you remember the importance of operational security.

Operational security consists of measures taken to ensure that sensitive information is not compromised. Ensuring the security of the unit and unit families is of the utmost importance.

Deployment areas and times, remote detachment sites, upcoming exercises, location of spouses and families during the deployment, any special pre-deployment training, and the planned return dates are all information that is sensitive.

Speak only in general terms of your own experiences and avoid discussing operational information in public places, over the telephone, or with members of the media.

Mailing Letters and Packages

Military mail letters are typically delivered between seven and 10 days, depending on country of destination. According to MPSA (Military Postal Service Agency) officials, Priority parcels will take 10 to 15 days to deliver and Parcel Post takes about 24 days.

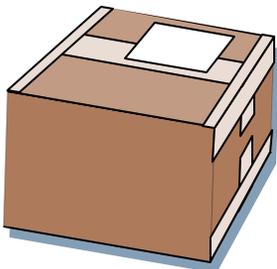
The Department of Defense has requested that those who send mail use the service member's full name (with or without grade, rank, or rating), or a specific title (e.g., Commanding Officer, Supply Officer, etc.). Also required is the unit designation, the APO/FPO address with the full 9-digit ZIP Code (if one is assigned), and a return address.

For packages, mailers are asked to print on one side only with the recipient's address in the lower right portion. Do not include the country or the base camp's city, as it might be routed through the host country's mail system.

USPS will supply pre-addressed Priority Mail labels and boxes at no charge. Call (800) 610-8734 for more information.

The current address to be used for our soldiers is:

Rank Name, or Specific Title (Rank is optional)
M. Co. 158th AVN, Platoon # (Platoon # is optional)
APO AE 09391



When mailing packages and letters:

Use the correct address

Print on one side of package

Send via Priority Mail for swiftest delivery

Stress Busters

- Positive thinking
- Refocus the negative to be positive
- Plan some fun
- Talk positively to yourself
- Make an effort to stop negative thoughts
- Eat foods for improved health and well-being
- Eat appropriate amounts of food at a reasonable schedule
- Make an effort to interact socially with people
- Reach out to others
- Nurture yourself and others
- Use relaxation techniques
- Take time for personal interests and hobbies
- Start a specific program of physical activity
- Go for a walk
- Listen to music

Sustainment and Stabilization Stage

At about 6 to 8 weeks after the member leaves, people start adjusting to the changes. Family rules, roles, and responsibilities are often realigned and structural changes adapt to the loss. Families find a new level of functioning without the previous ups and downs. Families that don't adjust and cope with the separation experience greater difficulties at this time. Often someone is feeling depressed. **If you believe you are suffering from depression or if your family can't seem to adjust, seek assistance.**

During the stabilization stage most people begin to:

- Realize at some point, that "Hey, I'm doing OK."
- Establish new family patterns/interactions that work for them.
- Feel more comfortable with their situation, self, and the reorganization of roles and responsibilities that occur.
- Attempt and successfully accomplish some goals, which add to self-confidence and feeling of being able to cope.
- Reach out for support through friends, church, work, spouse groups, etc.
- Eat "fast food" to save time/energy and to appropriately choose priorities—let some things go to have more time.
- Have higher long distance telephone bills—but must learn to stay within budget.
- To through the "my" syndrome: my house, car, kids, etc.
- Appear more mature and independent as "single" spouses since they have developed new activities and accepted more responsibilities to fill the void, while remaining secure in being married.
- Experience more sickness (at first), as the increased responsibilities tend to be more stressful until healthy coping skills are practiced.
- Feel vulnerable due to isolation from the military member, especially if recently moved to a new area without close friends or family.

Preventing Loneliness

- **Volunteer**

Be a Sunday school teacher, help with childcare during chapel services, join your FRG. You can even sign up to be a coach.

- **Get a Job**

Pick a job that involves other people. If it's a fun job it's even better because it's true-time flies when you're having fun!

- **Play a Sport**

Baseball and softball, tennis and aerobics, and many more. There are also associated opportunities-like a scorekeeper, team manager, or team mother/father.

- **Go to School**

Learn to fix your car, become a nuclear physicist or gourmet cook. It's up to you!

- **Join a Family Readiness Group**

Getting together with others that are going through the same thing as you really helps.

- **Teach a Class**

Share what you know with others at the local YWCA, American Red Cross, or the many other places that are looking for good teachers.

There are a lot of things you can do to fill up your time. Once you get up and go, soon you'll wonder where the time went!

Sustainment and Stabilization Stage –continued

- Spouses may feel uncertain of their abilities to cope and may experience self-doubt.
- Feel asexual, or no longer in need of sex or affection; or feel strangled due to suppressed needs and desires.
- Experience that a minor crisis can put them back into the disorganization stage.

You have many options to help you through the deployment. Set goals to accomplish during separation. Establish consistent ways to maintain contact, and include the children. Set one night a week aside for family time. Make sure you give yourself a break each week and allow yourself some privacy. Get involved in activities.

If you feel your energy level is low, do something with a friend, your children, or relatives. Even after the 6 to 8 week adjustment period, mood swings may continue. Recognize the roller coaster as normal. If you feel your fears of infidelity rising, express to your spouse your trust. When you identify a problem, tell your spouse about it and what you're doing about it.

The most important thing to remember is to establish and maintain frequent contact. Separation from loved ones and significant others can be stressful and may lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Encourage your family to express feelings as early and openly as possible. Especially with children, be sure to offer love and reassurance while discussing fears or doubts anyone may have of future events. Keep lines of communication open and use them frequently. Keeping in touch helps your family feel togetherness.

Sometimes a service member may really be missed. Don't try to fill their shoes, just do what you can as a family or individual. Share your responsibilities with others and be fair and realistic. There are only 24 hours in a day! Many people such as friends, neighbors, relatives, and your Family Readiness Group would be glad to help.

How are you doing emotionally? Strong feelings are most common before and after separation and reunion, but they can occur any time. To help maintain your emotional health, consider learning new coping skills such as relaxation techniques, stress management, or parenting skills.

Remember the 4 Ms: **Maintain, Manage, Monitor, Maneuver**

Positive Aspects of Separation

Many parents worry about the impact of deployments on children. However, deployments offer many positive growth opportunities. Several studies show that despite the distress during the separation, significant developmental gains are made by many children. Some positive aspects of separation include:

Fosters Maturity:

Military children have broader and more varied experiences than children from non-military families.

Induces Growth:

Military children learn more about the world and how to function within a community at an earlier age.

Encourages

Independence:

Military children tend to be more resourceful and self-starters. Helps with future farewells and building new friendships.

Strengthens Family Bonds:

Military families make emotional adjustments during a separation which often lead them to discover new sources of strength and support among themselves.

Children and the Sustainment Phase

Social Issues/Needs

Depending on age, a child may experience significant social issues and needs during a time of deployment. While preschool and elementary aged children typically require increased attention from parents and school, social interaction with peers can often take on increased value with adolescents. Although school and family must still play a significant role in their lives, it is important for adolescents to spend time with peers. Conversations and/or news coverage about war or deployment issues should be monitored for age-appropriateness.

Emotional Issues/Needs

While individual children's emotional needs and issues can vary drastically, all children need to maintain their daily routines at home and school to help cushion the impact of deployment. Common emotions during deployment include:

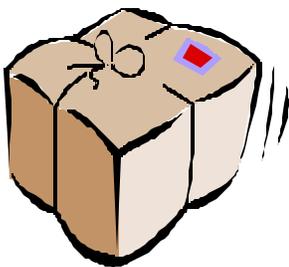
- Confusion
- Sadness
- Anger
- Fear

It is important to address these emotions with children and to provide them with reassurance and comfort. A child may exhibit a change in behavior while adjusting to being separated from his or her parents. However, if a child is exhibiting the following behavior after six weeks of separation, a referral should be made to the appropriate parental, school, community or military service:

- Continues to have high levels of emotional response such as continued crying or intense sadness.
- Perseveres in conversation and/or play about war and other deployment issues.
- Continues to appear depressed, withdrawn, and non-communicative.
- Expresses violent or depressed feelings in "dark" drawings or writings.
- Intentionally hurts himself or is a risk of hurting others.
- Gains or loses a significant amount of weight in a period of weeks.
- Discontinues taking care of personal appearance.
- Exhibits a possible drug or alcohol abuse problem.
- Has not been able to resume normal activities.
- Continues to have difficulty concentrating at school.



There are lots of ways you can help support our troops



"Care Packages", Calling Cards, and E-mails can be sent to support soldiers serving overseas.



Supporting Our Troops—New Links!!!!

Operation Hero Miles: www.heromiles.org/

Operation Hero Miles provides a way for you to help our troops stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan by donating your unused frequent flyer miles. Your donation of frequent flyer miles will help the military provide free transportation for families in an emergency leave situation.

Operation Laughline: www.operationlaughline.com

Donate comedy DVDs and CDs and send a little laughter to our troops!

Gift Certificates: www.aafes.com/docs/homefront.htm

Send a "Gifts from the HomeFront" gift certificate to an individual military family member, friend or loved one. They can use it at any military exchange (AAFES, NEX, MCX, Coast Guard Exchange) retail store around the world including those supporting Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Voices from Home: www.voicesfromhome.com/home.html

Voices From Home allows serving military members and their families and friends to send and receive immediate voice e-mail messages to hear the actual voices of their loved ones, regardless of the schedule difficulties, in remote locations around the world.

Operation Purple: www.nmfa.org

National Military Family Association and Sears American Dream Campaign has created a program (Operation Purple) that allows all military children (with a preference given to children who have experienced deployment or whose parents are now deployed) to attend summer camp. These camps are located in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida, Texas, Montana, Washington, Guam, North Carolina, Georgia, Oklahoma, Colorado, Utah, and Hawaii.

The camp is free of charge to all military children. Operation Purple seeks to give military kids some additional tools to help them cope with the stresses of deployment such as unique arts projects, team building, and time of reflection and much more.

Please go to www.nmfa.org for additional information to include an application and to find a camp near you. Also, you can call the National Military Family Association at (703) 931-6632 or (800) 260-0218.

Find more ways to support our troops at:

www.defendamerica.mil/support_troops.html



The best way to serve our loved ones while they are away is to serve each other.

Contact your FRG Leader for more information.



Point of contact volunteers have advantages

Join the Challenger Team!

The Family Readiness Group, otherwise known as the FRG, is here to augment the support systems that are already in place through the Army. FRG members are provided with information, assistance, referrals, connections, and a sense of community in areas unique to military separation.

Please consider where you would like to serve as a volunteer. We must stick together while our loved ones are away, and the best way to serve them is to serve each other. If you are interested in joining this worthwhile group, or would like more information, please call (877) 620-4187 or e-mail m158.frgleader@us.army.mil.

Telephone Tree

By Julie Lee, FRG Telephone Tree Coordinator

Thanks to all of the Telephone Tree volunteers! Volunteers stay "in the loop", stay involved, make new friends, and get the satisfaction of helping other families.

If you are interested in becoming a "branch" in the "tree", e-mail m158.phonetree@us.army.mil or you may call (877) 620-4187 or (817) 735-9732.

Family Information Data Sheet

At the back of this newsletter you will find a Family Information Data Sheet. The information on this form is used exclusively by your Family Readiness Group to contact you with news and information about your soldier and to assist you with any concerns or questions you may have. Without a completed form, we are unable to contact you. Please make copies of the form for additional immediate family members wishing to receive calls. Completed forms should be mailed to: M-158 AVIM, Bldg 7016, Box 81, Hood Army Airfield, Fort Hood, Texas, 76544-5081.

If you have not received any calls from the Family Readiness Group, we either do not have written permission to contact you or the telephone number listed on your previously submitted form may not be current. Please call (817) 735-9732 to leave a message and you will be contacted to update your information.

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Family Readiness Group
M-158 AVIM Co

Bldg 7016, Box 81
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Fort Hood, Texas
76544-5081

PHONE:
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Commanding

Resources and Contacts

Contact a Family Readiness Group member if you have questions or need information.

Your FRG contact name and phone: _____

For additional assistance, contact the unit resources below.

Home Detachment Commander: Cpt. Gambichler (254) 287-6416
Personnel Specialist: Mr. Schrader (254) 287-8590
Unit Administrator: (254) 287-8325
Home Detachment Fax Number: (254) 287-8339

TRICARE Information: (800) 406-2832
Dental-United Concordia: (800) 866-8499
Army One Source (www.armyonesource.com): (800) 464-8107

**** Remember: Pay issues MUST be initiated by the soldier. ****

Internet Resources

Family Readiness
<http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/family/toolkit/>

Deployment Connections
<http://www.deploymentconnections.org>

From the Editor

Let us know how we can make the newsletter more useful to you! Send newsletter contributions, suggestions, and comments to:

M158.frgnewsletter@us.army.mil

Due to the concern for our soldiers' security, the Challengers newsletter can be sent electronically to official military e-mail accounts only. You may register for an official AKO guest account at **www.us.army.mil**. You must have the AKO User name of your sponsor. AKO includes a comprehensive help guide and tutorial to allow you to personalize your AKO portal.
