Chapter 2

MILITARY FAMILIES AND COMBAT READINESS

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines military family issues associated with combat readiness. It includes a description of the history of the still-evolving relation between the military and its families. Discussion of military culture is included to enhance understanding of current military beliefs, customs, and actions. Both military history and military culture have shaped and determined how the military and its families interact and affect one another. Their inclusion is necessary to understand the military-family interface in the modern armed forces. It is within this interface that families can affect military readiness. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of institutional efforts to build and sustain healthy, self-reliant families as a factor in promoting military readiness. The information in this chapter is important for all operational mental health personnel supporting divisions and corps, including mental health teams and hospital sections. It is also important for garrison mental health and human services agencies and even has value for local social service agencies supporting military families. The active-duty U.S. Army is the primary focus of this chapter. However, the issues discussed are relevant to the other U.S. military services (Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force). Some of the issues also apply to Reserve and National Guard component service members and their families.

Historically, military families were not included in the discussion of organizational prevention of combat stress casualties or any other aspect of military readiness. The military family was simply not considered a part of military readiness. This is not surprising because until fairly recently (circa 1967), our enlisted military force comprised mostly single men (61%).[1] Among units that actually face the enemy on the battlefield (combat and combat support units), it was unusual to find married soldiers in the enlisted ranks. Wives were primarily associated with higher ranking servicemen (who have generally adequate pay and good support groups), who had the time and experience to have adjusted to military life. This ensured that there was no historical precedent for considering family effects on readiness. This situation changed during the past 20 years (1970–1990). The change was due to the accumulation of data from a number of sources[2,3,4] that unequivocally demonstrated that families can and do affect military readiness.

Military unit readiness is assessed routinely. It is based on a numerical score determined by comparing the actual availability of personnel and material with a published description of what the unit requires (at 100% strength). This measure is not fully relevant to discuss organizational factors affecting soldier functioning because an important aspect of our discussion concerns psychological readiness. Therefore, in this chapter, *unit readiness* is defined to comprise additional (but inherently more difficult to measure) attributes. We define *readiness* as a combination of a soldier's willingness and ability to do his job and cope in peacetime and during combat, and the army's ability to retain trained service members during peacetime. Obviously this definition involves much more than a simple manpower count.

We now know that family life affects a service member's military performance during peacetime and during combat. Families play a major role in the army's retention of personnel and also affect the service member's well-being. The military has its own set of regulations, cultural norms, and behavioral proscriptions. These affect military families, especially when they are not congruent with behaviors acceptable to the larger society. At the same time, the service member's duties and military situation can have an important effect on family life and family member well-being. The dynamic and reciprocal relations between these institutions (military and family) vary across the family life cycle and the soldier's career.

Before the creation of an all-volunteer U.S. Army in 1973, less than one-fourth of junior enlisted soldiers were married, although the majority (80%) of older officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) were married.[1] This adoption of the all-volunteer military established the pattern for the current married career military force. It is important to remember that the composition of army families is not static. Every year large numbers of families leave the military and return to civilian life, while other new families join (or are established in) the army.

The timing of this change also coincided with numerous changes in U.S. society's views and expectations about family composition and family member roles. Today, the employed husband-father and his homemaker wife-mother no longer reflect the normative U.S. family. Like society at

large, the military services also have a wide variety of family types, including dual-career families, single-parent families, and families where the wife is the military member and the husband is a civilian dependent. Despite this variety, the career component of the military, especially the army, is still composed almost exclusively of stable, two-parent families,[5] and traditional family values remain the institutional norm.

In 1983, the U.S. Army formally embraced the family when the then Army Chief of Staff, General John A. Wickham, Jr., issued a white paper stating that "A partnership exists between the Army and Army families. . . . Towards the goal of building a strong partnership, the Army remains committed to assuring adequate support to families in order to promote wellness; to develop a sense of community; and to strengthen the mutually reinforcing bonds between the Army and its families."[6] Underlying this partnership was a clear sense of its import to the mission: The Army recruits soldiers but retains families.[6] Headquarters, Department of the Army, proclaimed 1984 as the Year of the Army Family. During 1984, the first in a series of Army Action Plans was developed, and the army established the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center, a major headquarters office, to oversee the development and operation of all army-family policies and programs. In 1988, this center became a Department of Defense organization.

While there are some demographic differences between services, the major difference in family demographics (and especially family lifestyle) is in the comparison between military and civilian populations. The vast majority of today's military families are young couples with small children. When compared to their civilian age cohorts, military members marry earlier, bear children at an earlier age, and have somewhat more children than their civilian counterparts. There are also proportionally fewer single parent families in the Army than in the similar-aged civilian population.[7] From an economic perspective, all army families have at least the income of one parent and access to a range of health and social service resources sometimes not available to civilian families.

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS AND CHANGING CULTURE

During the most recent 20-year period (1970s to 1990s), all the military services have been confronted by society's increased expectations for benefits, services, and employment accommodations for spouses and for expectations for a range of family-related services, such as programs for the handicapped, special needs children, and recently dependent elderly parents. In addition, adoption of the all-volunteer force resulted in a current force that is predominantly married and contains a stable but small minority of alternate family types (eg, single-parent families, dual-career families, and so forth). The dramatic increase in the number of young enlisted families led to a corresponding need to expand and enhance a variety of family support services designed to ease some of the stressors associated with military life. In response to this need, the Department of Defense developed a variety of programs and administrative services such as the child care centers and volunteer-based community service programs to support and manage the needs of military families. The stressors can be categorized into two major areas: (1) cultural, based on organizational norms developed over the years; and (2) military life, based on unit demands on the service member.

Cultural Norms and Family Stress

Until the 1980s, all family members were referred to by the term *dependent*. Military regulations reflected the fact that the spouse (typically the wife) and children were dependent on the military member (typically the male) for all support, including access to military benefits and services. The term *dependent* is now considered to be pejorative in nature; the term *family member* is currently the acceptable way to refer to a spouse or child of a military member. This change was fostered in part by effective women advocates pressing military leaders for change, including a change in overall status as a military spouse (Wickham's concept of partnership referred to earlier). However, the term *dependent* is still well entrenched in the minds and vocabulary of the active military forces today.

Before the increases in the number of married enlisted soldiers, military families were predominantly wives of NCOs and officers. There was an expectation that these wives would support their husband's military careers by performing various service or charitable activities. Senior enlisted and officers' families were implicitly made part of the

military, but they received little formal recognition and no compensation.

Today, however, military spouses are increasingly likely to be employed outside the home. The spouses of career military members may also be trying to establish their independent careers. In spite of these trends, military spouses often feel that they should not work, and they are sometimes even made to feel that it is their duty to volunteer for post community activities. Not long ago, complaints by a group of U.S. Air Force wives led to a letter by the Secretary of Defense banning such pressure in all services.[8] However, military culture based on the traditional premise that wives are dependents will undoubtedly continue to foster these competing roles and competing demands. It is easy to see how the stress normally associated with such expectations is exacerbated in a marriage where one partner is often unavailable for "domestic duty" because of the priority attached to military duties and where frequent separations are considered the norm.

Military spouses are subjected to the demands of a number of competing, overlapping, and sometimes mutually exclusive roles. The military spouse is often idealized as a competent homemaker, mother, and volunteer. While the number of single parents, male spouses of service members, and the number of dual-career couples are relatively small in comparison with the traditional male service member (female family member, military family), the issues of balancing the requirements of military duty and family life are even more complicated and often more stressful for these families. The military has historically supported rank-based wives clubs (generally for officers and NCOs wives) that perform both social and charitable functions. Today's unit-based family support groups did not evolve until the 1980s. Although their precise purpose varies by military command and facility, the most common functions of these sanctioned spouse groups are to enhance communication between the unit and wives and to encourage development of social supports to help buffer against stress commonly associated with military life. In particular, they are to help families cope during lengthy unit training or operational deployments. Today's family support group generally mimics the military chain of command, and the commander's wife is usually the leader. This hierarchy is sometimes referred to as a "chain of concern." Members serve as an important communication link between the military unit and spouses connected with it and ensure that spouses have a support group when their active duty partners are deployed.

Spouses of all ranks are supposedly able to, and are even expected to (by the military), associate freely and work together. After all, the spouse has no military rank, but many wives "wear" the rank of their soldier husbands. Especially among the spouses of higher ranking service members, many expect status benefits to accrue from their own years of marital association with the military. These contrary expectations led to the presumption that wives of different rank soldiers must not socialize; this presumption is firmly embedded in the military's traditional culture. This implicit norm is occasionally asserted explicitly; it is tacitly understood by seasoned military husbands and wives alike. Indeed, such interspouse socialization is labeled as a form of fraternization and is often alleged to be "against the regulations." (Fraternization is a military term for inappropriate interrank relationships). Although no such regulation concerning spouses has ever existed, the myth of a spousal fraternization ban exerts great influence on family-to-family relationships in military communities and within units. The effect can be to decrease social integration and social support, isolate those lower ranking families who most need help, and reduce familial support for the service member to remain on active duty.

Some family members remain out of the reach of unit family support programs. For example, a wife who elects (or is required) to remain in the United States when her husband is assigned overseas is usually not carried as a member of any military family support group even if she has remained in the vicinity of an army installation. Army-sponsored support programs for these "waiting" spouses are typically weak or nonexistent. These waiting families are full-fledged military families with all the rights and privileges due any family member, but practically and administratively they are treated quite differently (ie, they are often ignored). As the U.S. Army downsizes and reduces the number of soldiers stationed overseas, short-term, unaccompanied tours of duty and long training deployments will become the norm. As a result, more families will find themselves in this difficult and sometimes ambiguous waiting category.

Single parents are officially recognized as military heads of households and provided the same financial and service benefits as married soldiers. However, within the Army's very traditional culture they are sometimes not well tolerated by unit

leaders and are usually ignored by formal spouse organizations. Soldiers who are single parents usually are not included in formal unit family activities such as support groups. Single parents are also not usually included in unit mailings to military families.

In many cases, these cultural aspects of the military work against the adjustment of the young military family. It is the young family with a low income that is at greatest risk for coping problems. The U.S. Army has a large number of such families, many with very small children. Regardless of the nature of their extended family relationships, these families often lack the immediate availability of extended family support during some of the most difficult and challenging phases of both marital and military life. The increased stress this places on the soldier can certainly decrease his effectiveness on the job during peacetime training and wartime combat. To the extent that spouses are dissatisfied with family life in the military, they will not support further active duty by the service member.

The marital and parenting issues associated with these family responsibilities may distract or physically impede the soldier from participating in unit training activities, and when severe, these family-life difficulties (eg, a spouse's severe illness or injury) may make the soldier nondeployable for combat. In this sense, family problems present serious readiness challenges for small unit commanders and military service care providers, for example, social workers, family counselors, drug and alcohol counselors, and other specialists.

Military Life and Stress

Unit factors, especially the attitude and behaviors of small unit leaders, have a tremendous effect on soldier well-being and, in turn, on the well-being of the soldier's family. When leadership and morale in the unit suffer, the problem is often transferred to home and family. Army policy and policies made at division, brigade, and battalion levels affect the soldier in a general way. But the day-to-day coping and adjustment of the typical soldier and his family are determined by the attitudes and behaviors of the soldier's company commander, first sergeant, platoon sergeant, and squad leader. This is one of the reasons why small unit leadership is such a critical dimension of military readiness, and it provides a model for understanding the reciprocal relation between the army and its families.

In spite of the change in the official attitude, unit leader attitudes and practices often betray a contrary belief that does not include family members as full-fledged partners in the military mission. For example, we have observed rules against wives telephoning the military unit, expectations that wives must join affiliated wives' clubs, ignorance of spouses' and children's needs for a reasonably predictable time off-duty, and the need for reasonable duty schedules with sufficient time off to meet family needs. Such practices contribute to negative attitudes toward further military service. On the other hand, when unit leaders attend to the issue in a positive way, enhanced family adjustment and commitment to the military can result.

There is a common belief[5] among military family advocates that family life in the military is more stressful than civilian family life. This assertion is based on factors like frequent, prolonged, or unannounced absences; "lockins"; long and often irregular duty hours with a corresponding inability to share domestic and child care responsibilities; frequent family moves; legal constraints and requirements of military service; and stress associated with training with modern weapons and the real possibility of deployment to a combat zone. Frequent reassignment and relocations may have a negative impact on the military family member's personal well-being, employment, and career opportunities. These beliefs are supported by research. For example, Lewis[9] reported that U.S. Air Force wives viewed their lives as more stressful than their civilian counterparts, and Pierce and Luchsinger[10] found that U.S. Air Force wives reported greater psychological stress than comparable civilian wives. Vernez[11] concluded that the U.S. Army environment is yet more stressful for families than is that of the other services.

Many of these military life stressors impact on children. Father (and now, mother) absence can have a profound negative impact on children's social and psychological development.[12,13] Furthermore, family relocations require children to change schools and disrupt their social networks of friends, teachers, and other important sources of developmental support. The developmental problems to which this mobility can contribute were reported by Shaw and Pangman.[14] While some civilian families experience similar stressors, no one group in American society is so institutionally bound to an organization for all aspects of life as is the military family.

For most soldiers, worries about the home front can be a source of severe distress, can jeopardize the individual soldier's ability to adequately partici-

pate in training activities, and most important can interfere with the soldier's ability to adequately perform his combat role. Worry or preoccupation with home-front issues jeopardizes self and other unit members, risks the success of the mission, and places the soldier at risk for psychological breakdown. In modern combat, these problems can be more severe than ever before. Deployed soldiers may be engaged in combat within hours or days of arrival into the theater of operations. They may have little if any time to shift their mental focus from family to the events at hand. Even in the remotest parts of the world, current technology allows soldiers instantaneous telephone communication with their families. While this contact can be comforting to soldiers and their families, it also means that there is no buffer (of time and psychological distance) between the soldier and family. Loneliness and immediate concerns about well-being are brought into the present in a situation where the soldier and family are relatively helpless to effect any change or provide real comfort. This situation presents a tremendous challenge for all small unit leaders.

Across a typical military career, families face a variety of life-cycle issues. These issues include marriage, birth of children, raising and educating children, moving households, career decisions of civilian spouses, and so forth. Various life stages will be stressful for some families and most families will experience some type of family or individual member physical, psychological, or social crisis during one or more of these periods. Such personal or family crises inevitably have at least a temporary impact on the service member's military performance. This impact means that military leaders must be able to manage soldiers' experiencing family difficulties and at the same time to ensure that the unit's mission is accomplished. Leaders require the skill and knowledge to direct the soldier to seek and make use of appropriate military and civilian services designed to correct or ameliorate family-related stress. Otherwise, family issues will adversely affect the soldier's performance and reenlistment and, in turn, unit readiness.

While military families may experience unique stressors associated with their military lifestyle, some unique aspects of social and emotional support distinguish military from civilian family life. By the nature of their transient lifestyle, career military families find that other military family members and various unit and military community-based organizations become over time their primary source of tangible and emotional support. This is particularly true for soldiers in the combat arms and soldiers associated with combat units. Regardless of the strength of their initial extended family ties, across the time and distance of a military career these ties usually diminish (at least as sources of everyday tangible support). If they are replaced, it is usually by ties to other military families that they have come to know across the experiences of shared time and military-related hardships.

Military families typically develop strong relationships with other military families based on their shared experiences, proximity, and similar life circumstances. Frequent relocations force military families to continually re-create local friendships. A shared military identity and daily activities involving the use of common installation programs and services facilitate relationship development in this somewhat nomadic lifestyle. Regardless of rank, most military families use the post (base) exchange and the commissary. Most also use the military medical facilities as needed, and many live in military housing. Specific stressors, such as spouse absence due to training requirements, or stressors associated with an actual combat deployment serve to facilitate bonding among military families.

Military families also have access to a wealth of support agencies; few of these agencies are available to the public at large or from other civilian employers. It is this institutional commitment to family well-being, especially during a deployment, that provides soldiers the psychological capacity to leave family and place their lives in danger.

There are also many myths about military family life. One of these is that military families are bonded together in close knit military communities. While some military families live in the all-encompassing confines of a military installation, most military families live offpost, and much of their life (religious activities, education of their children, family recreation, and shopping) centers on activities in the civilian sector, not on the military installation. Even for military families who do live on post, most typically perceive their sense of community in terms of their neighborhood—the area comprising the houses and apartments on a few streets around them.[15] This operational face-to-face level organizes important daily aspects of their family life.[16] However, military families living overseas are increasingly likely to live on a military installation and to use military facilities and services. As the number

of military families overseas continues to decline and as the monetary exchange rates in these host countries diminish the value of the dollar, these trends will continue.

FAMILY ISSUES AND READINESS

Retention

Military readiness includes the retention of trained service members. The link between family issues and retention has been well documented. Moghadam,[17] in a study across time, found that wives' attitudes towards reenlistment were as important as soldiers' intent in predicting soldiers later actual reenlistment behavior. Lewis[9] found that wives' attitudes toward reenlistment in the U.S. Air Force predicted career intent of their airman husbands. Dansby and Hightower[18] reported job-related satisfaction and retention were related to spouses' attitude toward and commitment to the military. Two studies of retention in the Navy reported similar conclusions. Seboda and Szoa[19] and Bruce[20] found that wives' attitudes related significantly to their husband's career intent. The former study included follow-up and confirmed that career intent predicts retention behavior fairly accurately.

The implication that the military must attend to family needs to maintain force levels is clear. This issue will become more critical in the future if current demographic trends continue. Thus, the personnel pool of young men and women is predicted to shrink. At the same time, job complexity with its increased training costs and costs to replace skilled workers will continue to rise. Unfortunately, military leaders and those responsible for family programs do not always agree on priorities for resources, programs, and demands on troop time. Military leaders typically give priority to the immediate mission; family program managers give priority to family needs. Long-term consequences (eg, spouses might not support continued military service) are rarely considered by local military leaders. Nichols[21] pointed out that family issues need to be integrated into the broader concerns of military operations and military management. A report by the Army Science Board (an independent advisory group to the Secretary of the Army) concluded: "Recognition of the powerful impacts of the family on readiness, retention, morale and motivation must be instilled in every soldier from the soldier's date of entry-to-service through each succeeding promotion."[22(p5)]

Military Performance

The link between family issues and military performance is supported primarily by assertion and belief and only somewhat by empirical research. A bibliography of military research prepared by the Military Family Resource Center in 1984[2] illustrates this point. Of the more than 200 references listed, none involve an empirical study of the influence of families on military readiness. At the same time, military leaders need to know more about the military life factors that are known to influence family member well-being, general life satisfaction, and support of a spouse's decision to remain in the military. These factors include length and predictability of duty hours, training absences, deployments, family relocation, unit communication with families, and unit support during temporary family difficulties. Many of these factors are controlled or influenced by local commanders and are likely to have variable impacts depending on factors such as the service member's military and family life stage.

While there are only a limited number of empirical studies linking readiness and family issues, there are considerable data[4,23,24] from which one can infer a family impact on readiness. For example, domestic problems in the home are believed to translate into decreased combat effectiveness and increased risk for death on the battlefield. Data from the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) show that 30% of their casualties in the Lebanon War were due to combat stress reaction, a temporary breakdown due to accumulated stress. It renders the soldier dysfunctional and unable to effectively carry on. The IDF found that soldiers who had experienced certain marital discord or stress in personal relationships (parents or girl-friend) were at especially high risk to suffer a combat stress reaction.[25,26]

U.S. Army medical personnel have frequently reported[27,28] that both military sick call and family member outpatient visits increase just before a deployment, probably due in part to an increase in family stress. Knudson and colleagues[27] demonstrated negative changes in the general well-being of wives associated with their husbands' deployment. In 1979, a major study[29] of the relation be-

tween unit deployment and various associated health problems was begun at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research. This study was among the first to detail the reciprocal relation between family life stress and soldier adaptation. A similar military–family life reciprocal relation was demonstrated by Schneider and coworkers[30] in a report showing that wives' adjustment is related to morale in their husbands' military unit (and unit morale is a commonly accepted readiness factor).

Other investigators[4,31] reported that individual performance and combat efficiency are in part dependent on marital and family issues. For example, Dooms[32] reported on a U.S. Air Force–Europe study that identified broadly defined personal and family factors related to air crew stress as figuring in 7 of the command's 10 aircraft crashes during the study period. Although these last results were based on expert opinion (rather than on quantitative data), they point out a dramatic and important relation between family issues and military performance.

The Present

While there are still family issues that need to be addressed, the Persian Gulf War resulted in a number of changes in policies and programs and represents a high-water mark in the relation between the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army family. (The same is true for each of the other services and, to a lesser degree, the U.S. Army Reserve Components.) When U.S. military forces began their deployment to Southwest Asia, senior Department of Defense officials spoke publicly about our nation's commitment to our military families. National and local news media described the stress experienced by military families and showed stories about family courage and commitment. For army leaders in the United States and Germany taking care of the families of deployed soldiers was a primary mission.

Military installations, often with the support of the surrounding civilian communities, became a focal point for making certain that the deployed soldier's family was enmeshed in a social support safety net. An array of programs and services were set in place to cover a range of contingencies from normal life stressors such as the car breaking down to the crisis posed by the potential of mass combat casualties. No military service in history ever devoted more resources to sustaining its military families.[33]

The Persian Gulf War provided an extensive test of the various components of the military's family support system. For the most part, family support efforts worked well. Overall, only a small percentage of active duty soldiers were not able to deploy because of severe family problems, and few soldiers had to return early due to family problems. Even the army families already deployed in Europe weathered this deployment without large numbers of families returning to the United States. However, the Persian Gulf War demonstrated that the U.S. military, and particularly the Army, cannot deploy a major force into combat without the reserve components. The Persian Gulf War was a convincing demonstration that being a member of the military reserves requires being prepared to put civilian life aside for an extended period of active duty, possibly in a combat zone. Many reservists, their spouses, and their children were not adequately prepared for this reality, and as a result, they experienced significant distress during the deployment. A U.S. Army review[34] of these experiences highlights the need to substantially enhance reserve component family support services and benefits.

The Persian Gulf War deployment, particularly of an already forward deployed force in Europe and large numbers of Reserve and National Guard personnel, demonstrated a depth and range of family needs that sometimes exceeded institutional plans, capabilities, and leadership expectations. As a result, a new era has emerged. The leadership focus has shifted from taking care of families to promoting family readiness. By family readiness, leaders mean enhancing family self-sufficiency so that the family supports and sustains the soldier in peacetime and during war and does not become an additional source of stress for the deployed soldier to carry onto the battlefield. The Persian Gulf War provided a powerful example of the important relation between the military family and the army. This is a relation that exists at the level of the soldier's unit, the installation where the family resides, and the senior levels of the army where family policy is developed and managed.

Survey and interview data[33] suggest that the most important sources of support for most of these military families were their relationships with immediate friends, neighbors, and especially the families of other unit members. Unit-based family support groups, facilitated by assistance from the unit rear detachment, were primary sources of information, practical assistance with day-to-day family life problems, and personal social support. Just knowing that there was a family support group available to assist in an emergency provided the

spouses of deployed soldiers a sense of comfort and security.

The Future

The rest of the 1990s presents enormous challenges for the U.S. Army and the other military services. The demise of the Soviet Union and the birth of democracy in eastern Europe shifts the focus of military readiness from the threat of global war with the now defunct Warsaw Pact to rapid response to regional confrontations, such as the invasion of Panama, the Persian Gulf War, and the humanitarian relief effort in Somalia. At the same time, Europe is evolving beyond the post-World War II structure that has dominated United States-European relations for the past 40 years. There has also been marked flux in the relation between North Korea and South Korea. Overall, the direct outcome of these changes will be a much smaller U.S. military. Army forces will be primarily based in the United States yet will be required to be constantly ready for rapid deployment for a range of worldwide contingencies. In terms of reduction in size and relocation of personnel from overseas back to the United States, the army has borne the brunt of these changes. The other services and the reserve components have been affected, but to a lesser degree.

It is possible that the 1991 army's 750,000 members will be reduced in size by 1995 to a force of about 450,000 soldiers. This reduction is a very stressful process for soldiers and families and creates an extended period of uncertainty for everyone. For those leaving the army as a result of force reduction, the move back to areas in the United States with weak economies and high unemployment rates makes the transition all the more difficult. Some individual and family problems and conditions (eg, a child with a severe physical handicap requiring lifelong specialized care) may also require a decision to leave military service. (This decision may come voluntarily or be directed by the army if the condition prevents the soldier from meeting his military duty requirements.) These are often questions of individual and family values and lifestyle choices and / or an official recognition that for a variety of reasons, the individual does not meet retention standards. Individuals faced with such decisions need counseling and institutional support. Family members may also benefit from professional advice and counseling to ease the difficulties associated with transition back to civilian life. Organizations that have a climate of caring provide employees with outplacement counseling and transition assistance. The recent implementation of the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) to assist soldiers' (and family members') transition back into civilian life demonstrates this enlightened attitude.

The all-volunteer force means that the majority of service members, especially in the career grades, will continue to be married. If there are any substantial demographic changes in the composition of the force, they are likely to be changes among those family types (single parents and dual-career couples) who face the greatest challenge maintaining their ability to meet family demands, the increased requirement for extensive training absences, and the need to be available for immediate worldwide deployment. For example, the Persian Gulf War demonstrated that family care plans (for single and dual-career military parents) have to be realistic and take into consideration extended absences and the possibility of combat. The Persian Gulf War made it clear that the requirement to deploy involves everyone in uniform including those in the reserves. These are all readiness requirements that cannot be taken lightly.

Downsizing the military, returning forces to the United States, and in particular maintaining a worldwide rapid deployment capability will have an enormous impact on military family life. Retaining only the best will add pressure to the perceived greedy relation that already exists between duty and family life demands.[15] While an army based primarily in a small number of U.S. installations may provide an opportunity for longer periods between family moves, the focus on readiness for rapid deployment and contingency operations requirements will likely mean frequent training deployments, including extended 3-, 6-, or 12-month overseas unit-training exercises. These deployments bring with them added stress for the soldiers, the spouses, and especially the children who have to shoulder this readiness burden.

In addition, there is always the possibility of military involvement in what appears to be a growing array of regional, ethnic-based conflicts, as well as the likelihood of our using military personnel to assist in a variety of worldwide humanitarian relief efforts. For an army that is composed primarily of soldiers who have significant family responsibilities, the relation between the stress of a military lifestyle and family life remains a critically important topic. The fact that

the majority of these military families will continue to be young and inexperienced and without a readily available extended family support system heightens these concerns.

CONCLUSION

A paucity of married soldiers and cultural values established in the all male military in which wives were "dependents" delayed recognition of the vital role families play in readiness. Today, military family policy is one element of a national defense policy. Military families play an important role in recruitment, retention, and commitment to the combat mission. Even good soldiers distracted by family concerns do not make effective soldiers. Family issues affect individual and unit readiness and function as a protective factor in preventing combat stress reactions. The U.S. military services have made a substantial commitment to family wellness. These efforts view family members as true partners in a military that is seen as a way of life, not simply a job. The family's responsibility in this partnership is to support the service member and other unit families and to participate in building and sustaining healthy, supportive military organizations. The military's responsibility is to create an environment where families and family members can prosper and realize their potential.

The future has many implications for this partnership. The structure of the military, the way it trains and operates, and the demands that it will make as an institution on service members and their families will continue. What is not changing is the basic premise that the volunteer force concept will continue to be the way the United States staffs its armed forces. The force will continue to be composed primarily of married personnel, especially in the career ranks but increasingly among newer and younger service members. Family life will continue to be an important source of strength and support for soldiers, and family life stress will remain an important readiness issue for all the military services.

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