



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO
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16 Nov 01

Dear Colleagues:

Returning from deployment is a joyous time. Sailors, Marines and Coast Guard personnel count down the hours until they see their loved ones on the pier, at the airport terminal, or at the bus station. Emotionally charged embraces and tears of joy from families and friends mark the occasion of this long-awaited reunion.

Deployment "veterans" know that the initial jubilation of homecoming can sometimes give way to other emotions. Passions may go awry as re-entry issues emerge. Internalized stresses, power struggles and misunderstandings can negatively impact recently reunited families.

Many who participated in Operations Desert Shield/Storm tell us they experienced reentry shock when returning from Southwest Asia. Some did not know they were experiencing post-traumatic stress syndrome until confronted by friends and loved ones. Moodiness, sleeplessness, nightmares, listlessness, adjustment problems and others symptoms revealed an internal struggle to leave the desert behind and adjust to "normal" life at home. Intervention from informed chaplains and other leaders helped re-acclimate these brave souls to their current environment.

Those returning from Operation Enduring Freedom may face an even starker reentry experience. Our Nation has changed dramatically in the last two months: security is more stringent and emotions are charged with patriotic enthusiasm. We are more aware of our mortality because our sense of safety has been undermined. Add to this new reality the emotional and psychological stresses of combat, long hours of flight and ground operations, deprivation, and danger, and you have a stressful situation. Chaplains and Religious Program Specialists (RPs) assigned to combat units are not immune to the stresses and emotional upheaval of this hostile environment.

As you welcome those who have already returned, and await those who will follow, I encourage you to prepare reentry briefs that deal with the harsh reality of a new war. Quality return and reunion briefs have proven successful in averting many potential post-deployment problems. Support groups and pastoral counseling can also help people work through the complex issues they face. We can guide Sea Services members to help such as Critical Incident Stress debriefings to process their stresses. This is essential for individuals, and benefits their commands as well. Chaplains and RPs must also take care of and look out for one another.

The life-transforming service you provide makes a difference. I thank you for your dedication to God and Country. We pray for you often, asking God to protect you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. C. Black", is positioned above the typed name.

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy
Chief of Navy Chaplains