



DEFENSE DEPARTMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON

WOMEN IN THE SERVICES

2005 REPORT

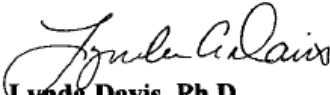
**Defense Department Advisory Committee on
Women in the Services (DACOWITS)**
4000 Defense Pentagon, Room 2C548A
Washington, District of Columbia 20301-4000

6 Dec 05

We, the appointed members of the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS), do hereby submit the results of our findings and offer our recommendations to improve the policies, procedures, and climate within the United States Military Services.



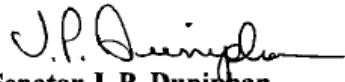
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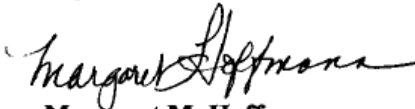
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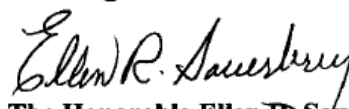
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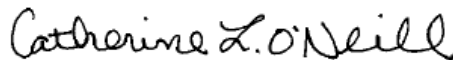
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) is to provide advice and recommendations on how to better recruit and retain the qualified military needed to defend our country, focusing on female military members and families. As women play an increasingly important role both in terms of numbers and responsibilities, policies that enhance the recruitment and retention of women with the requisite skills and commitment for military service become more important. These policies, particularly those that address work-life balance issues, are not important just to women but to all segments of the military population, more than half of whom are married.

Military members who opted for a military career ten or even five years ago are reaffirming that decision today in a much different military that is being transformed to fight the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). In the 2003 and 2004 reports, DACOWITS research focused on issues affecting recruitment and retention decisions in this changed environment. We found that, despite many commendable programs that help Service members and their families meet the challenges of this changing environment, the difficulty of balancing a military career with family life remains the most frequently cited reason for leaving the military. Accordingly, DACOWITS in 2005 focused on the work-life balance issue from three perspectives: Career Opportunities, Family Well-Being, and Guard and Reserve Issues.

Common themes emerged:

- There is a high degree of commitment to and satisfaction with military life, juxtaposed with a struggle to balance the requirements of military service and career development with family responsibilities, and also, in the case of Reserve Component (RC) members, a civilian career.
- Many outstanding programs have been implemented to assist military personnel and family members, especially during deployments. There is, however, a lack of knowledge about, and low usage of, programs such as Family Service Centers and *Military One Source*. Satisfaction was high among those who did use support programs.
- Strong leadership and a positive command climate were identified as key to effective career development, support programs and ultimately retention.
- The negative effect of longer, less predictable back-to-back deployments on families is leading to increasing divorce rates (especially in the Army), high stress for children and decreasing spousal satisfaction with military life.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

DACOWITS explored how career requirements, including more frequent and longer deployments, physical fitness and educational requirements affect career decisions. Service members perceive the military as a career characterized by opportunities for education, travel, and benefits as well as intangible satisfactions like pride in service to country and challenging and important work. While Service members were generally satisfied with the promotion and evaluation systems, women were more likely to question the fairness of the system. Service members reported that physical fitness requirements, especially for women following pregnancy, and educational prerequisites for career advancement are frequently problematic.

Focus group participants, particularly women, expressed widespread apprehension about how transformation will affect both mission accomplishment and their careers. Service members were concerned about plans to alter career structures, change career fields, civilianization and privatization.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Spouses and Service members identified length and frequency of deployment as the number one reason to leave the military. Service members reported deployment negatively affected their children and spouses. Shorter and more predictable deployments will have a positive effect on families and therefore retention.

Parents report negative effects of deployment on their children. Current research is needed to track the health and well-being of military children in order to identify ways to mitigate negative consequences.

Despite improvements in family support programs, they remain underutilized due to a lack of information and access. Dissatisfaction with overall family support was most common among Service members who had experienced a deployment of a year or longer.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND GUARD AND RESERVE ISSUES

Reserve Component (RC) members and their families identified mobilizations as a challenge to their ability to successfully balance their family responsibilities, military career and also meet their civilian employment and/or educational commitments. Frequent and unpredictable mobilizations affected their retention decisions and their families' support for their continued military service.

The majority of RC family members experienced frequent and unpredictable mobilizations as stressful, especially for children. Reserve Component spouses said separation from children and the family was the most important factor contributing to

their desire to have their spouse leave the service. Support services (e.g., *Military One Source*) for RC Service members and family members are numerous but underutilized due to lack of timely, usable information and access.

DACOWITS supports the force structure planning goals of limiting involuntary mobilization of RC personnel, as well as the Services' initiatives to restructure and rebalance the Active and Reserve Components to better address the challenges of work-life balance and enhance retention.

CONCLUSION

The responses of OSD and the Services to previous DACOWITS recommendations demonstrate significant gaps between the intent of policies/programs and their implementation. DACOWITS strongly recommends that DoD accurately measure the effectiveness of programs on the bases of cost, usage and intended outcomes. The Department and the Services must continue their efforts, as exemplified by the best practices noted in this report, to mitigate the significant challenges of work-life balance within the context of the GWOT, and thereby retain quality Service members. Our military and family members deserve it; the security of our nation requires it.

I. INTRODUCTION

The DACOWITS charter authorizes the Committee to advise DoD, through the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (PDUSD (P&R)), on policies and matters, including family issues, which affect the recruitment and retention of highly qualified military Service members. (See Appendix A for the current charter.) The Committee (See Appendix B for 2005 membership) acts as a direct conduit, expressing the concerns of Service members and their families to the senior DoD leadership. Towards the fulfillment of our chartered goals, DACOWITS conducted in 2005 an extensive program of primary data collection and survey research review to ascertain current attitudes, perceptions, and views from members of the military community on a broad range of issues, which are described more fully below. Methods used by DACOWITS to collect these data included:

- A series of focus group interviews held at 15 military installations—both Active duty and Reserve Component—in which all Service branches were represented (See Appendix C for Installations visited). In Appendix D, “Best Practices” from these locations, as described by installation leadership to the visiting Members during in-briefings and installation tours, are also briefly explained. Also, six focus groups were held by video teleconference with deployed personnel participating in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). (See Appendix E-I for all protocols and surveys used).
- A short survey administered to each focus group participant at the conclusion of each session.¹
- Briefings and associated materials provided to DACOWITS during its periodic business meetings by representatives from the individual military Departments and the DoD. (See Appendix J for DACOWITS Briefings)
- Representative survey data on the attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of members of the military community compiled by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) through its Human Resources Strategic Assessment Program (HRSAP).²
- Recent and ongoing research (published and unpublished) conducted by recognized subject matter experts on military personnel and family issues.

The Committee first tested its focus group protocols and survey instruments with Army National Guard and Active duty Army personnel at two sites near the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area: the Washington D.C. National Guard Armory (13 March) and Fort Belvoir, VA. (30 March) Installation visits began in earnest on 1 April and continued through 1 July. Staff from Caliber, a private contractor, were responsible for the

transcription and subsequent analysis of the data collected during the focus groups. Typically, five focus groups were conducted at each installation, four consisting of Service members and one of military family members. Participants were recruited to reflect diversity with respect to gender and rank, and were ensured confidentiality, which allowed them to speak freely and honestly about their views and experiences. Many of the participants had returned from, or were currently involved in, deployments related to the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), emphasizing the real-life, real-time perspective necessary to illuminate the issues of concern to the Committee.

Based on findings from installation visits in 2003-2004 and the large volume of survey data and research reviewed over the past 3 years, DACOWITS decided to focus its 2005 research activities primarily on the issue of work-life balance in the armed forces and its effect on retention. This focus entailed learning from Service members and family members which military career requirements and other aspects of military life mitigate against a healthy balance between their family and work domains, as well as the extent to which work-family conflict—particularly as it might relate to the demands of GWOT deployments—is causing Service members and their families to leave, or strongly consider leaving, the military.

DACOWITS' 2005 research activities—to include protocol development, site-visit selection, and data analysis—were designed to explore issues of work-life balance experienced by four distinct groups, each of which is facing the challenges of military service from a unique perspective: Active duty Service members, Guard and Reserve Service members, family members of Active duty personnel, and family members of Guard and Reserve personnel. Though there is much overlap with respect to the issues faced by each of these groups, each group also has unique concerns and challenges that the Committee believed were important to explore. Rather than minimize these unique concerns by employing a “one size fits all” approach to the 2005 research questions, focus groups and analysis, DACOWITS working groups designed four distinct protocols tailored for use within focus groups composed exclusively of members from each one of these populations. This same approach also guided the selection of installations to be visited by DACOWITS in 2005, and it guides the organization of this report. A modified Active duty protocol was used in the video teleconference with deployed Army personnel participating in OIF.

Following this Introduction, the 2005 report is presented in the following four sections:

II. Work-Life Balance and Career Opportunities

III. Work-Life Balance and Family Well-Being

IV. Work-Life Balance and Guard and Reserve Issues

V. Responses to DACOWITS' Recommendations from the 2003 and 2004 Final Reports.

In Section II, the findings presented are based mainly on data collected in focus groups with Active duty Service members, who were asked about their deployment experiences, their perceptions of transformation, their career requirements and other topics—all in relation to the Service member's career intentions and their perceived ability to balance work and family life.

The findings presented in Section III are based primarily on the responses of family members of Active duty personnel, but also include some Active duty Service members' responses, and explore the impact of deployment on families and children, family well-being issues (e.g., housing, spouse employment, finances, etc.), the advantages and disadvantages of military life, and other topics—all in relation to the achievement of work-life balance, retention and spouse support for the Service member's career.

Section IV findings are based on the responses of Guard and Reserve members, as well as family members of Guard and Reserve personnel. Topics covered within Guard and Reserve member groups included perceptions of individual and unit readiness, mobilization experiences, effects of mobilization on income, attitudes of families to the member's Guard or Reserve service, and other topics. Topics covered within Guard and Reserve family member groups included the advantages and disadvantages of military life, use and awareness of support services, the impact of mobilizations on the family, support for the Service member's career, and others. For both Service members and family members, these topics were all discussed in relation to work-family balance and career intentions.

The 2005 report adds a Chapter V that reviews the findings and recommendations from the 2003 and 2004 reports and highlights areas that still need attention by the DoD. Chapter VI provides expanded recommendations based on all the preceding chapters, with greater emphasis on program and policy areas the Committee believes will benefit the Department the most to expand outreach, assess effectiveness and increase resources. Improvements in many of these areas were requested by Service members, and were described as still being a problem even after several years of operation in a high tempo environment.

II. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

A. INTRODUCTION

In 38 focus groups with Active duty Service members, 388 focus group participants were asked about their deployment experiences, their perceptions of transformation, and their career requirements—all within the context of their career intentions and their perceived ability to balance the demands of work and family life. Where possible, these responses are compared with survey data on similar topics collected recently by the DoD through its *Status of Forces* survey program and with findings from related military research. Considered together, these sources of data provide a detailed understanding of the challenges Service members face in balancing work, life, and career opportunities.

B. EFFECT OF DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE ON SERVICE MEMBERS' CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND RETENTION

DACOWITS assessed the extent of deployment experience in each focus group and asked Service members about the effect of deployment on their military careers and family lives. Specific topics discussed included the impact of deployment and non-deployment experience on career opportunities and retention decisions, expectations about deployment length and frequency, and the impact of the risk of hostilities on retention decisions. Each of these topics is discussed below.

Deployment experience

Based on the results of a short survey administered to each participant, 67% of the Active duty Service members in the DACOWITS focus groups reported they had deployed at least once within the past three years. Deployment experience was most common among participants in Army focus groups, with 79% reporting having been deployed in the past 3 years. Seventy percent of Air Force participants and 65% of Navy participants had deployed at least once, but less than half (43%) of Marine Corps participants had experienced a deployment in the past 3 years.

About half (51%) of Army Service members with deployment experience within the last 3 years had spent a year or longer away from home during this period. Total time spent away over the past 3 years was lower for those with deployment experience in the other Services: 28% of Marines with deployment experience had spent a year or more away, compared with 24% of Sailors and only 3% of Airmen.

Deployment experience among DACOWITS focus group participants was somewhat higher than that reported by Active duty personnel in the March 2005 *Status of Forces* survey (March 2005 *SOF*).

Effect of deployment experience on career opportunities and retention decisions

DACOWITS asked Service members about the effect of deployment on their career opportunities, and whether their deployment experience had influenced their decisions to remain in or leave the military. In about half the groups there were participants who reported that deployment was a factor in their decisions to leave the military. Some said that deployment had not affected their career. One-third of the focus groups contained Service members who reported that the deployment experience had influenced their decision to stay in the military.

“I was deployed for 7 months...Being gone for that period made a huge impact on my family, and the possibility of being deployed again is a big issue. You have to choose between your family and your military service.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“I did 15 months in Iraq. I can’t do it again for family reasons. When you’re deployed for 6 to 15 months, the time away takes a toll on the family. You’ve got to fit yourself back into your family, and things change to the point where you don’t recognize your family. I didn’t like it.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USA

“The deployment schedule is tough. We were supposed to come back in 6 months but were extended for another 4 months. We had a lot of retention problems after that.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

“It’s not the deployments, it’s the successive deployments with no end in sight.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USA

About one-half of the groups contained Service members who said that deployments had not affected their career decisions. In the opinions of these participants, deployments are an expected part of military life:

“When you join the military, there are certain things you expect. You expect your GI Bill; you expect to go to war. You’re in the Army. That’s what they’re there for, to go to war. That’s what you train for.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“It’s all part of the job. If you want to stay in, you deploy.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USAF

Although single Service members and Service members without children said that they took the deployment in stride and were willing to deploy again, some speculated that having a family might change their feelings in the future:

“I love to deploy...Everything that I did was life or death. I enjoy it. Next time, if I have a family, it would be a different story.”

—Dual Military, Officer, USMC

Some Service members described deployment as influential in their decisions to remain in the military. They reported enjoying deployment, often because it allowed them to use their training:

“I loved it. You got dirty, you didn’t care; the camaraderie was great. The technical stuff that we had over there....I got to use so much knowledge.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USMC

Service members identified patriotism as a factor that contributes to decisions to remain in the military:

“I went to Iraq...I was proud to serve my country....I’d go back if I had to.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

DACOWITS focus group findings in this section track closely with survey data collected by the Army Research Institute (ARI), which periodically measures Soldiers’ reasons for considering leaving or intending to leave the Army. Findings from the Fall 2004 Sample Survey of Military Personnel (SSMP), briefed to the Committee in May of 2005, indicate that—among Army commissioned and warrant officers—the factor most frequently cited as the most important reason for thinking about or planning to leave was “amount of time separated from family” (30%). “Amount of enjoyment from my job”, cited by 10% of officers, was the next most frequently mentioned reason to leave—a distant second.

The percent of Army commissioned and warrant officers citing “amount of time separated from family” as their most important reason for considering leaving increased during each survey period. “Amount of time separated from family” was also the most frequently cited reason to leave among enlisted Soldiers in Fall 2003 (18%) and Fall 2004 (18%).

Effect of non-deployment on career opportunities and retention decisions

DACOWITS wanted to learn if Service members perceived a lack of deployment experience as a career liability. More than half of the groups with Service members who had not deployed contained participants who believe that non-deployment has, or will have, a negative impact on their opportunities for promotion and advancement:

“I think that it will be a factor in this [promotion] board....My counterparts have two tours. I have none. I think that they have a leg up.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USMC

In one-third of these groups, participants reported that their lack of deployment experience had influenced their decisions to leave the military:

“A year ago, I thought about reenlisting. There were no slots available on any ships, and the fact that I haven’t been able to deploy has hurt my career. So I’ve decided to get out.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

Service members in about one-fourth of these groups reported that non-deployment has not affected their career decisions or opportunities. Service members holding this view explained that their jobs do not deploy, that they expect to deploy, or that their careers will not be affected in the long run:

“We [people in my job category] don’t typically deploy, so I am more competitive for taking this [good] opportunity and not being deployed.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USN

Expectations regarding length and frequency of deployments

DACOWITS sought to learn Service members’ perceptions about the length and frequency of deployments, particularly compared to what they anticipated when joining the military. Nearly every group contained at least some Service members who said their experiences with deployment differed from their original expectations. Service members in one-third of groups identified changes in the frequency of deployments, particularly back-to-back deployments, as unanticipated:

“Nobody knew this was what the war was going to be like. If I had known, I wouldn’t have joined. If they had said you were going to be there [Iraq] for a year and then in Korea for a year, I wouldn’t have joined.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Service members in slightly more than one-fourth of the groups, however, said that deployments are as expected. They explained that they understood from the start what the military would demand from them and their families:

“This is my fourth deployment. The deployments have not made a difference in my retention decision. It is hard on my family, but I like the military, and I am not ready to get out.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

“I’ve been dual military for 9-10 years, and we’ve got a 4-year-old daughter. I accepted that [deploying] as a risk every day. Being dual military, that’s a risk every day I’m in the Army, and you make that choice.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USA

Data collected in the March 2005 *SOF* survey were similar to DACOWITS focus group findings. Among Active duty Service members surveyed and who had deployment experience, 41% reported that deployments since September 11, 2001, were longer than expected.³

Effect of the risk of hostilities during deployments on retention decisions

DACOWITS asked Service members whether the risk of hostilities has affected decisions to remain in or leave the military. Over three-fourths of the focus groups contained Service members who said that the risk of hostilities was not a factor in their career decisions and that they intend to remain in the military. The August 2004 *Status of Forces* survey (August 2004 *SOF*) asked Active duty Service members if the number of hostile deployments (or lack thereof) impacted Service members’ desire to stay in the military. Results were similar to the qualitative data obtained in DACOWITS focus groups in 2005. Specifically, most of the Active duty Service members surveyed (73%) reported no change in their desire to stay in the military, while 18% reported that hostile deployments decreased their desire to stay, and a smaller segment (9%) reported that these deployments had increased their desire to stay. The percent of Service members who reported that hostile deployments decreased their desire to stay was significantly higher in the Army (26%) than in the Navy (9%), Marine Corps (17%), or the Air Force (18%).

“It hasn’t affected my decision. I’m not leaving. It’s a threat you think about, definitely. My company commander died when I was in Iraq. I know it’s real, it happens, but you know, you want to do something bigger than yourself. That’s why I joined, to give back to America.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USA

“Deploying gives you a unique perspective. You see how people outside America live and how women are treated in these countries. Whenever I come home, I kiss the tarmac. I feel lucky to live in America. You don’t realize how much freedom you have until you see how others live. By fighting the war, I’m protecting my kids’ future.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

Personnel in about one-fourth of the groups attended by female Service members discussed the risk of hostilities and the laws and regulations intended to shield female

military personnel from risk. These female Service members expressed opposition to policies that limit their roles in theater:

“When I was in Iraq, we went over to do convoys. I fought to get out on roads—that’s my job. [But] we sat around for 2 months. They said that is because they [the enemy] do worse things to a female if they get captured. That is a risk that you have to take. It is degrading to be told that.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USMC

“Gender should not be a factor in who gets sent into combat. We’re all part of the unit. Gender shouldn’t matter.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

Fewer than one-fifth of the focus groups contained Service members who said they had decided to leave the military due to the risk of hostilities:

“I’m getting out. People were trying to kill us!”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“I’ve seen Marine support guys that didn’t like what they saw, and you cannot get them to reenlist. A lot of people did not join to go to war.”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USMC

The December 2004 *Status of Forces* survey (December 2004 *SOF*) survey asked Service members who had deployment experience to identify their biggest concerns about returning from their most recent deployment.

Among those with deployment experience, 20% ranked the possibility of being deployed again as their biggest concern, 16% ranked readjusting to family life as their major concern, and 14% ranked concern about reestablishing good relations with their spouses as their primary concern. These rankings reflect the clear primacy of family-related issues in the mind of Service members with deployment experience, and their attitudes track closely with comments and themes expressed by DACOWITS focus group participants in 2005.

C. EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATION ON CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AND RETENTION

DACOWITS explored Service members’ understanding of transformation initiatives, and perceptions of how these changes are affecting career opportunities and decisions. The following was used to define transformation for the focus groups.

“The military is undergoing a series of changes to better adapt to new circumstances. This has been broadly referred to as *transformation*, which basically means changing how the military does business. For example, we are seeing an increase in joint assignments, some military jobs are being converted into civilian positions, and there is a shift in the kinds of jobs and skills that are being emphasized. These are just a few aspects of transformation. We would like to understand how you think these changes are going to affect you, your career, and your attitude toward military service.”

Effect of transformation on career planning

Service members in almost all of the focus groups reported that transformation will make it more difficult for them to plan their military careers because of uncertainty of how transformation will be implemented:

“Right now, I think transformation will make it more difficult for people to plan careers in the military because they don’t know or have a clear idea of what happening and when it’s scheduled to happen. They just know that it will happen at some point in the future.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“I think there has been a lot of talk about it, but until you see what actually is going to happen...We really don’t know what it means.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USMC

Many Service members fear their military jobs will be affected. They are concerned about how changing career fields will affect their military future:

“I don’t want to re-class out of my MOS [military occupational specialty]...I have 10 months before reenlistment and I’m undecided. I want to know where my career is going. It’s not about the money. I want a career plan. What is the Army going to offer me to stay?”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“I think it’s going to be difficult because I want to be a chef, and they’re going to replace us with civilians, and I have no idea where they’re going to put me.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“What’s affected my decision is what happened to my branch. Field artillery has taken a different road that does not interest me, and that’s the crux of my decision.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USA

Service members were also concerned about promotional and command opportunities under the new organizational structure, and some female participants expressed concern that transformation will limit opportunities for female Service members:

“First of all, you have to figure out how our branch is going. I’m military intelligence, and they’re taking away battalion commands, not increasing the number of G2s. I think the Army will make the decision for me [about staying] when I hit 22 [years of service].”

—Male, Senior Officer, USA

“They are going to be taking a lot of opportunities from women, because a lot of those positions [being turned over to civilians] are female.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USMC

“Once they look at the unit [under transformation], and they see that it’s going combat, the women are weeded out. My MOS is gone—I just got [promoted to] E7, so I’m doing the recruiter thing. They’re forcing females to stay in one rank structure and never move, and then kick them out.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

Some Service-specific differences also emerged regarding transformation. For example, Service members in both Army and Navy focus groups anticipated that new education requirements, or the need to improve scores to qualify for new career fields, will put them at a disadvantage:

“I think it [transformation] is making it more competitive. For the young Soldiers without education, it is going to be very hard [to advance]. If they don’t beef up [their education levels], there will be retention issues.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

In the short term, Service members described stressful aspects of transformation, including moving to new jobs and places, and having too few people in place to meet mission requirements:

“What I find difficult is that the mission is not changing much, but that we’re supposed to do the same mission with less people. People are getting out and none of us have a say in whether people stay or leave.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USAF

Effect of the ‘civilianization’ of military jobs

In two-thirds of the focus groups, Service members expressed reservations about current initiatives to civilianize military positions under transformation. Service members voiced

concern that civilians do not share their commitment to the military mission and are not able or willing to work long hours to get the job done:

“We walk and talk differently...Marines are focused on mission accomplished.
The civilians are not mission accomplished focused.”

—Dual Military, Officer, USMC

“The military is hurting themselves; the civilians that are taking some of the jobs on post are not going to do what we do. They get off at 5 p.m. We are 24-hour workers.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

Service members worry that units may be placed at risk by not having Service members with the right skill sets when units deploy without civilian personnel:

“The purpose of hiring civilian workers is so we can be at sea more. I see a problem with that idea, though. For example, if you take new Sailors who have never taken apart a gas turbine engine on shore, how are they supposed to do it at sea?”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

Service members also speculated that civilianization will have a negative impact on retention:

“It’s going to come down to retention, too, because the civilians we work with make three to four times what we make.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“If they phase me out, I’m going to leave and go back as a civilian and make double the money.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAF

One-fourth of the focus groups contained Service members who expressed optimism about transformation in the long term. These Service members are confident that the military will make transformation work, and they look forward to aspects of transformation that promise a positive effect on family life, including stability and deployment predictability:

“I think it [transformation] will make it [career planning] easier. It narrows the decisions and choices.”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USMC

“One of the promises of transformation was stability: staying for awhile, your family stays stable but you’re away.”
—Male, Senior Officer, USA

D. BALANCING MILITARY REQUIREMENTS AND FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Committee examined how military professional requirements such as physical fitness, education requirements, demands of geographic mobility, promotion/evaluation system gates, issues of career planning, and demands of family responsibilities affect retention decisions and challenge Service members’ efforts to balance work and family life.

Effect of military requirements on career opportunities

Effect of physical requirements on career decisions and advancement

Three-fourths of the focus groups contained participants who said that military physical requirements were problematic, although others said they had no problems with these requirements (recorded in one-third of the groups). Service members in one-fourth of the groups said that fitness requirements influenced career opportunities and advancement.

Complaints about the physical requirements and standards of military service were much more common within female focus groups than within male groups. Participants in all of the Army, Navy, and Air Force female focus groups in which problems with physical requirements were raised said that the height and weight standards are unfair to women and that measurement (taping) procedures are inaccurate. Many said that they have difficulty meeting what they view as unrealistic weight standards for their height, even though they have no problems in meeting PT test standards:

“The weight limitations they have, the standardized table they use, because of all of our different races and backgrounds, there’s no way that we’d fit into that. I’ve always been taped. I weigh 130 lbs and I’m 5’2”. I’m overweight for the Army, because we’re all different races. Unless it’s racially or ethnically changed, very few women make height and weight requirements.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“It depends on who is doing the measuring. Once, I was taped with 28% body fat. Another time, I measured at 7% body fat. Taping is so inaccurate.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“One of the problems I see has to do with how much time you have to get back into shape post-pregnancy. The Navy gives you 6 months to get back to standards. It’s not a real 6 months, though, because you can’t do much for the first 2 months. That leaves you with 4 months to get back into shape. It’s stressful, and it doesn’t have to be. I say extend it by a month or 2 in order to alleviate the stress.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“Something that is not considered is when a woman has a child and her hips spread and then we are measured at the hip. That is not taken into consideration.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USMC

A few Service members, however, said that some women use pregnancy as an excuse to be out of shape:

“I just want to preface my comment by saying that I have nothing against pregnant female Seamen per se. I do have a problem, however, when these women use child bearing as an excuse to be out of shape.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“My concern is for when women get older. I am 37 and I have never had a baby, but I am having a hard time keeping up. Medical has done tests, and I am in normal range, but I have trouble keeping my weight there.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USMC

One-third of focus groups (primarily male groups) contained Service members who reported that meeting PT requirements and the height and weight standards pose few problems for them. They said that they expected to have to meet physical requirements when they joined the military and perceive maintaining these standards as part of their jobs:

“To be physically fit is part of my job.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USAF

“As far as the standards, physically, I have no problems passing the PT test or making weight. I think it’s a good thing to do exercise. It keeps you mentally and physically strong.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USA

Service members in one-fourth of the focus groups said that they believe being fit—or appearing to be fit—has a positive influence on career opportunities and advancement:

“In order to advance, you need to meet the physical requirements. The board looks at appearances. They look for you to look the part of a Soldier. When they look at you, you need to look like you’re fit. This definitely plays a part in career decisions and advancement.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USA

Data from the November 2003 *Status of Forces* survey (November 2003 *SOF*) show that only 1% of Service members failed a fitness test in the previous 12 months and that only 2% were entered into a weight management program. The common perception among female focus group participants that military physical standards are biased or unfair does not translate into a lack of success on the part of female personnel in actually meeting the standards. It is important to note, however, that the *Status of Forces* surveys are voluntary; some personnel may be reluctant to self-report failure at a required test.

Effect of education requirements on career opportunities and advancement

Three-fourths of the focus groups contained members who said that it is difficult to meet education requirements:

“I was going to do it [pursue higher education] as a junior enlisted Soldier, but once I became an NCO, you have more responsibility, less time, and as a platoon sergeant, you have no time.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USA

“I go to work and do my job as a Sailor. I go home and am a wife to my husband. I want to be a good Sailor and a good wife, but when do I have time to do it all and go to school?”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

Service members reported that deployment is a barrier for those trying to complete college work or military courses. Unpredictability in deployment schedules and length upsets Service members’ plans, and for those pursuing courses on-line, access to computers during deployment is problematic:

“I went to shore and got 57 credits. But when you are deployed, there is no such thing as doing school then. The Internet is always down in the middle of the sea. We have training and PT and all that. It is hard to be a parent, a Seaman, and go to school.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USN

On the other hand, Service members in four of the six focus groups interviewed in Iraq said that they were able to study while in theater, finding it easier to focus and allocate time for coursework:

“I’ve seen a lot of Soldiers that have applied themselves and get courses online. They actually have more time here [in Iraq] than they do in the rear...This is a unique area and not everyone that is deployed can do that, but I think that if it was a focus, then it could be done more.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

Service members in half of the focus groups said that education was important for advancement and promotion. They believe that having a degree—even if not required—may be a deciding factor in career advancement:

“I think it’s pretty simple: if you have a higher degree, you progress.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAF

“Most leaders look for those Soldiers to be meeting requirements...When I was enlisted, I had a good NCO who was like, ‘Get into school or you won’t get promoted.’ It is part of career progression.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USA

Concerns about completing education requirements were particularly evident among Navy personnel. Within one-half of all Navy focus groups, Sailors voiced concerns about how new Navy education requirements will affect their careers. Many believe that changes will make promotions more difficult, especially for Sailors who entered the Navy prior to the implementation of the new requirements, and they worry about finding the time to complete coursework, especially while at sea:

“The Navy’s new proposal is based on certain educational requirements. You must fulfill certain requirements in order to move up. However, there are not enough hours in the day to do it all.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

“There is no way that people can fit it [the new Navy education requirements] in. The enlisted folk have great opportunities to get education at sea....As an officer at sea, there is no education [courses offered] and there is no time.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

Effect of geographic mobility on career decisions

With respect to geographic mobility, participants in DACOWITS focus groups presented a mixed picture. Service members who said that geographic mobility has not affected career decisions often saw it as a positive aspect of military service and a requirement they accept:

“Yeah, it [moving] is a part of the lifestyle.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

“That’s one of the things I like about the Marines. I would be disappointed to stay somewhere for more than 4 years.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USMC

Many Service members said they welcome the opportunity to travel, live in different places, and learn about different cultures:

“I think it’s enhanced my life. I’ve been deployed all over the world: Panama, Grenada, Korea, Japan, etc. I’ve been to places that no one has ever heard of or that don’t exist anymore.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAF

“I don’t care about moving—that’s why I joined. I wanted to see new places and travel.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Some Service members, however, attributed their decisions to leave the military to the reality of frequent relocation:

“You really don’t have a choice over whether you move....Sometimes people get out because they don’t want to transfer.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

“I’m getting out. We just came back from a deployment, and now I’m on orders to go to Korea. They say I’m a single Soldier so that’s why I have to go, but that doesn’t mean I don’t have family. My mother’s going crazy. I’m not signing another contract for nothing.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Others reported making career decisions in order to provide their families with stability. Service members said that they have chosen to seek sea duty or deployments or have taken unaccompanied assignments in order to avoid relocating their families:

“Like I said, I’m a geographic bachelorette. For example, when I moved to Guam and San Diego, I chose not to move my family. It’s too much of a strain on them.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

Others said that they have taken less advantageous career positions because their families did not want to move:

“My wife works and she has a career, and I chose to PCS [permanent change of station] within the same location. It didn’t help my career, but I got more stability so she could get tenure [in her job].”

—Male, Senior Officer, USA

Service members in over two-thirds of focus groups that discussed this career requirement reported that frequent moves negatively affect their children and spouses. According to Service members, frequent moves affect children by requiring them to change schools and meet differing state education standards:

“My kids have always been honor roll kids, except for when we were at Fort Leonard Wood. But the educational standard is terrible. Even kids on post have to study Missouri history [to meet state standards], but they have no interest in state history. It had an effect on their grades. Now they study Colorado history...and they love Texas history, since that’s where they were born. Each state has different requirements, it varies widely.”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

Participants also said that it is difficult for spouses to leave jobs and find new employment with every move:

“My spouse’s earning capacity was diminished by ten-fold. I have not been anywhere for more than 3 years.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

Survey data collected in the December 2004 *SOF* survey confirm that PCS moves are part of military life and that like the focus group participants, *SOF* data also confirm that, for some Service member families, spousal employment is negatively affected by PCS resulting in loss or decrease in spousal income.

Effect of the promotion and evaluation system on career decisions and advancement

In nearly all the groups, there were participants who reported that the evaluation system was unfair. On the other hand, in nearly half the groups, others said the system was fair. Perceptions of unfairness were most commonly recorded in junior enlisted groups—one or more participants in all of the junior enlisted focus groups believed the evaluation system to be unfair:

“That’s why I do not like the evaluations, because if you are not someone’s favorite, then you are just sitting on the back burner.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USN

“It’s a lot of favoritism. Just because you know someone does not mean that you are the best Marine.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USMC

“Especially in our unit. It’s a ‘good-old-boy’ system. You don’t go anywhere unless you’re part of it.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Not all of those who expressed reservations about the promotion and evaluation system were junior enlistees, however:

“People who did not supervise me directly have always evaluated me. One year, I was stationed in Belgium and my immediate supervisor was stationed in Frankfurt. He had no idea what kind of job I did. I didn’t like the fact that my evaluator does not see my work.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

Service members voiced concern about inflated reports, especially when they are the ones doing the rating:

“That’s the kind of stuff that leads to over-inflation. You know that if you give honest evaluations, people won’t be rewarded. Do you go with the flow so your people get decorated? Because you know they’ll be fabulous down the road. Or do you keep your integrity and mark them honestly?”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAF

The perception of unfairness in the evaluation and promotion system was not universal. In slightly less than half of the groups in which this requirement was discussed, Service members said the system works well. Focus groups with male Service members were more likely than female focus groups to contain participants who characterized the system as fair. Service members said that the system is designed to promote the right people:

“I think it’s a good system. It’s probably the best system. Is it 80% accurate? No way. It’s flawed because it has human touches. The system was made to do the right thing.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USA

“I am a proponent who says that the system is not perfect but it does work, and that the best will always rise to the top. I think that is happening. I don’t think that it is a popularity contest.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

The integrity and quality of the supervisor is important in ensuring that the evaluation and promotion system remains fair:

“I do think it’s fair if you have competent people who understand what the Navy is looking for and actually spend some time looking at the Sailors they are evaluating.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

Service members surveyed in the December 2004 *SOF* survey reported mixed opinions on the effectiveness of the promotion system. When asked whether their Service’s evaluation/selection system is effective in promoting its best members, 42% reported that they disagreed that the system is effective in promoting its best members.

Effect of leadership on career opportunities

DACOWITS asked focus group participants to comment on access to career development information, the effect of leadership on career opportunities and promotion, recommendations to ensure access to needed career development information, and on mentorship.

Access to career development information

DACOWITS asked Service members if their unit leadership provides them with the information they need to plan their careers. Service members in more than half the groups reported that leadership is not providing them with the resources, while Service members in half of the focus groups said leadership is providing the required resources. Focus groups within all of the services contained both satisfied and dissatisfied Service members. Service members said that getting career development information is leadership dependent.

“If leadership isn’t actively involved, you’re not going to care about staying in the Navy...Some people don’t care if their Sailors get training and they fall behind the power curve. Once they’re behind, they’re less inclined do stick with it.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

“Counseling and leadership is critical for development in the military.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USN

“Different leaders have given me advice. Who I am is based on leadership.”
—Male, Senior Enlisted, USA

“I think that good leadership is what makes the experience and makes you stay in.”
—Female, Junior Officer, USA

“I think that your first supervisor in the military greatly impacts your decision to stay in the military. I think that my first supervisor was fair and firm and showed an interest in me, and I think that if we give Soldiers a sense of belonging [they will stay].”
—Male, Senior Officer, USA

“We’re here for a career, but the military is no longer about career development. We’re here to fight a war. The Army is not concerned with Soldiers getting an education.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

In contrast to Service members who talked about the role of leadership in providing career development information, participants in about one-third of the groups suggested that getting career development information was a personal responsibility. Service members said that they must rely on themselves to get the information they need to move forward in their careers:

“The level of support that the command places on career development is the determination of the success of the career development.”
—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

“You have to be ready to take care of yourself.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USMC

“That’s more of a self thing. If you want to push ahead, start reading.”
—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

Data from the December 2004 *SOF* survey indicate that 57% of Service members have positive views about the degree to which their immediate supervisors are “motivating” their subordinates. Twenty-one percent of the Service members represented in this survey report that immediate supervisors are not motivating subordinates. In this *SOF* survey, “motivating” was defined as creating a supportive work environment, inspiring people to do their best, acknowledging good performance of others, and disciplining in a firm, fair, and consistent manner.

December 2004 *SOF* survey data also indicate that 61% of Service members have positive views about the degree to which their immediate supervisors are “developing their subordinates”. Sixteen percent did not have positive views. Developing subordinates was defined as encouraging professional growth, teaching effectively, using counseling to provide feedback, providing the opportunity to learn, and delegating authority.

Satisfaction with career opportunities

The Committee reviewed survey findings and studies that addressed Service members’ satisfaction with career opportunities. The March 2005 *SOF* data indicate that 53% of Service members were satisfied with these opportunities, while 26% were dissatisfied, and 21% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

A study completed in 2004 by Evertson and Nesbitt focused on both career opportunities and career barriers perceived by female officers in the Marine Corps and the Air Force, the two services with the smallest and largest representation of women respectively. Their research findings, which are based on a literature review, survey data, and a series of 40 personal interviews with female officers in these Services, suggest that, while new positions have been opened to military women in recent years, women perceive that significant barriers to the career progression and advancement of female officers remain.

Many women officers in the study see the military as an environment characterized by opportunities for education, travel, and monetary benefits, as well as intangibles such as pride experienced through service to country and challenging work. However, interviewees noted that because the armed forces remain male-dominated organizations, a significant number of cultural barriers, characterized as the “glass ceiling”, still exist. Some of the on-going challenges for women pursuing a career in the officer corps of these Services are:

- Many male officers are not comfortable with women
- A woman’s job performance is more carefully scrutinized and considered a reflection of the performance of all women
- Few women hold positions of senior leadership
- Female officers must continually prove themselves
- Balancing work and family obligations as a female officer is difficult.

Many of the interviewees suggested that women must be seen in senior level positions in order to demonstrate the reality of women’s military career advancement to junior female

officers. High-visibility positions of women in the military can both encourage young female officers to remain in the military and help to dispel the perception of a military glass ceiling.

Mentorship

DACOWITS asked Service members in the focus groups if they currently had military mentors. Participants were almost evenly split among those who reported having a mentor and those who reported not having one. Service members reported that their mentors help them by providing career advice and assistance, helping them prepare for promotions, and giving them good information:

“[I can go to my mentor] if I have any questions with my MOS [or] work related stuff. [My mentor] helps me get promoted.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USMC

“Providing information about career development is...your mentor’s responsibility.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“I am a big believer in mentoring. I seek out lieutenants and captains and talk to them on a regular basis about their future.”

—Female, Senior Officer, USA

“For me, my...mentor was hard on me, but I wouldn’t be where I am today if it weren’t for him.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

“She [my mentor] sat down and talked to me and studied with me. She introduced me to people. She is supportive. I think she is one of a kind.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USN

Within the focus groups, Service-specific differences emerged with respect to the issue of mentorship. The Navy’s formal mentor program drew critical comments from Sailors in six of the seven Navy focus groups in which mentorship was discussed. They said there were too few mentors, and assigning mentors decreases the personal aspect of the mentor-mentoree relationship that is important for an effective experience:

“All these mentorship programs are a replacement for poor leadership.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

“Mentors feel like there are not enough mentors and too many young Sailors. You don’t get enough time and they don’t get enough individual time.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

“I think things were more effective in the old days when you found someone on your own. Some people pair up well and some don’t. This new program doesn’t allow for individual differences.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

In the DACOWITS focus groups Active duty Service members were evenly split between those who reported having a mentor and those who did not. This finding differs considerably from rates of mentorship reported in the December 2004 *SOF* survey. Overall, less than one-third (27%) of Active duty Service members in the December 2004 *SOF* survey reported currently having a mentor, although 41% of those surveyed said they had had a mentor at one time but do not have one now. Additionally, 21% of those surveyed said they had not had a mentor, but they would prefer to have one.

Challenges to balancing military career, family life, and personal goals

Military career opportunities in conflict with family responsibilities/personal goals

Service members in all of the DACOWITS focus group said that balancing a military career, family and personal goals is one of the most difficult aspects of military life. In half of the focus groups, Service members reported having turned down a career opportunity because of family or personal goals. Less than half of the groups contained participants who reported choosing the military over family.

“It’s a ‘mission first’ thing for now—this is what we have to do. It’s mission, then your Soldiers, and then your family.”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

“Only one of six master chiefs is married. You are forced to choose between the military and your family.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

“It’s difficult to balance it all. I’m no expert. I have no idea how to do it.”

—Female, Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAF

Some turned down OCONUS assignments, training opportunities, or positions that would require extensive travel even if it had a negative impact on their career:

“I turned down orders for my family...I put my career on hold so that I can be with my husband. I have to sit back and take one for the team.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

“I was given the opportunity to go to school, but I knew that if I had gone it would end my marriage. I wanted to go so bad, but I had to choose my family. I will be a mother for the rest of my life, [but] I will be a Marine for only part of it.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USMC

“The Navy wants us to be the perfect Sailor, and there’s too much to balance. I can’t be a good wife, a good mother, and a good Sailor. Something’s got to give. I leave my baby girl at daycare for 10 hours every day.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

“If they could have deployments be 6 months, it would be much more feasible.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

“For me, the deployment schedule is also a big problem. The unpredictability of my schedule is getting to my wife. I’m close to unhappily divorced.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

“I considered ending my pregnancy, knowing that I was not going to be able to hit the wickets that I should have hit to get the next promotion. [It was hard] not knowing what direction my career was going in and not having support for my family, my husband was deployed, and I had a 10-month-old, and then trying to think about the next step.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USMC

“It is difficult to resolve. My choice was to go to command in Boston or be with my family. So I ended up calling the detailer and he told me that I might not get another opportunity.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USN

None of the *Status of Forces* surveys reviewed included questions that directly address the challenges Service members may face in trying to balance work and family demands. Although the December 2004 *SOF* survey included some questions about Service members’ concerns during and post-deployment, these questions were narrowly focused on deployment and not the broader issue about how Service members and their families deal with conflicting work-life demands.

Challenges unique to junior enlisted Service members and families

DACOWITS asked Service members to identify the unique challenges that face junior enlisted Service members and their families in balancing the competing demands of work and family. Availability and cost of childcare were identified most frequently, reported in nearly half of the focus groups:

“The wait for on-base childcare is 2 years, so most people use off-base providers. If you use off-base childcare, most require you to pay \$1.00 extra for every minute you’re late. That’s ridiculous. Junior enlisted personnel don’t have extra money to shell out.”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

Other challenges included the stress of deployment on these young families and monetary problems—insufficient pay and difficulty in managing a budget and finances.

“Typically, they just graduated high school. They’re newly married...They’re not prepared for what’s to come. They’re not prepared for deployments.”

Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“The frequent deployments are hard on young families who are just getting established. Not that they aren’t strong enough to do it, but they’re not used to their spouses being gone.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USA

“Junior enlisted members and their families face a lot of monetary issues.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

“I think the Navy would do well to invest in financial training for junior Sailors. The Navy gives them a paycheck and housing, but they really don’t go into the financial side of it. The major downfall for Sailors is on the financial end. The fact that we ask people to give to Navy Relief means there’s a problem.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

Service members also recommended gender specific training, suggesting that topics such as sexual assault, career planning, and birth control be discussed with junior enlisted female Service members:

“There needs to be an education program to stop getting pregnant. There should be some education. Some sort of single Soldiers counseling to help with family planning.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USA

“Women’s issues are not all about weight and sexual assault. There should be briefings about networking and finances.”
—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAF

Availability of training to balance work-life

Responses to the question about whether Service members have received training or information about balancing work/life demands were overwhelmingly negative. Only one-fourth of the groups contained Service members who had received training. A few Service members recalled receiving information or training about balancing the demands of a military career, family life, and personal goals during OCS [officer candidate school] or at a service academy.

E. ISSUES AFFECTING RETENTION AND THE DECISION TO LEAVE THE MILITARY

Effect of military requirements on retention decisions

DACOWITS moderators asked focus group participants to identify one of these four military requirements that would most likely influence a decision to leave the military. The order of the frequency in which the requirements were mentioned is:

- Geographic mobility
- Promotion and evaluation system
- Education requirements
- Physical requirements.

“The geographic factors, the moves. There comes a point in time that if you’ve got kids, you have to make a decision for your military career or family.”
—Male, Senior Officer, USA

“I would say that the geographic mobility is my main issue with the Navy. I’m planning on retiring in February.”
—Female, Senior Enlisted, USN

The promotion and evaluation system was the next most likely requirement to influence the decision to leave the military.

“The evaluation process, because you cannot move up without a good evaluation. If you tell command things, then they hate you, and you cannot move up because you are not someone’s favorite.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USN

Retention Intentions

DACOWITS collected data from all focus group members regarding their intentions to stay or leave the military and what factors contributed to the decision to leave.

Career intentions among Active duty Service member focus group participants were mixed.

- 50% intended to stay until retirement
- 9% intended to stay beyond their current obligation, but not necessarily to retirement
- 13% reported they will probably leave after their present obligation
- 11% intended to definitely leave at the end of their present obligation
- 1% intended to leave the Active Component and join the Reserve Component
- 16% were undecided about their intentions.

Male Service members were more likely than female Service members to say they intended to stay in the military until retirement (60% and 45% respectively), and there were also differences by Service. Two-thirds of Service members in the Navy (68%) and the Air Force (64%) intended to stay until retirement, compared with less than half of Service members in the Army (44%) and the Marine Corps (43%) groups. Due to its unique mission, the Marine Corps is a more youthful Service with a smaller requirement for career-oriented personnel, and thus some difference in intentions between the USMC and the other Services might be expected. This is not the case for the Army, however, which, like the other Services, needs a significant portion of its Soldiers to choose the military as a career. For both the USMC and the Army, the relatively low percentages of Service members intending to stay until retirement may reflect the demands of frequent deployment described throughout this report.

The focus groups also included 58 Service members with 20 years or more of service. Of these, 41% reported intentions of staying indefinitely or as long as possible, 24% said they would retire as soon as possible, and 35% said they were undecided. These data were similar to findings from the March 2005 *SOF*.

Factors Influencing Decisions to Leave the Military

The impact on families of maintaining a military career was reported in two-thirds of the groups as a reason to leave the military. They spoke about not wanting to miss any more

of the children's lives and to be a good parent—something they saw as a conflict with the demands of their military careers:

“I want to be a stay-at-home mom and be in the Army. You just can't do that. I am going to stay out and be a mom.”

—Female, Junior Officer, USA

Others said they want stability for themselves and their families (reported in about one-fourth of the groups):

“[I've] had enough. I served. I did what I can. I have grown. There are other things that I would like to do.”

—Dual Military, Officer, USMC

“When I look for a career, I look for stability, being able to be somewhere for a while.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Others cited what they perceive as failures of leadership—particularly leaders who don't take care of Service members or their families—as reasons to end their military careers (reported in less than one-fourth of the groups):

“I think that it is leadership and work life combined. You need good leadership to help you balance work life, so that you don't get overly stressed out.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USN

Dissatisfaction with the frequency and length of deployments (reported in less than one-fourth of the groups) influences retention decisions.

“An increased number of deployments would seriously affect my family life. Family comes first. What I want to do after the Army still satisfies what I want to do, which is serve our nation, fight terrorism; but I don't want to be away from my family for a year.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USA

“I've been in Iraq twice. I'm always in the field. I can't keep doing this.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

Dissatisfaction with pay, benefits, and quality of life in the military (reported in fewer than one-fourth of the groups) influenced others to leave:

“I could work on the outside and get paid \$100,000.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAF

Choosing to leave the military so that the Service members’ spouses could pursue careers or job opportunities were specifically identified in a small number of focus groups:

“The moving around is the biggest thing, but it’s not the only thing...My wife wants to start teaching. It’s not the right life for me.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USA

Satisfaction with life in the military

DACOWITS asked Service members to rate their overall satisfaction with life in the military. Most (71%) of the 382 Active duty Service members who answered this question reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with military life, and 21% reported “neutral” attitudes. Satisfaction was higher among men (82%) than women (64%) and lowest among junior enlisted personnel (37%). Married Service members were more likely than those who were single or separated/divorced to report they were satisfied (76% vs. 55% and 57%, respectively).

Service members in the Army and Marine Corps were less likely to express that they were satisfied with military life (67% and 62%, respectively) than those in the Navy (79%) or the Air Force (86%). Analysis of the career intentions of the Active duty focus group participants who were not yet eligible for retirement shows that 79% of those who reported being satisfied with military life (n = 218) intended to remain in the military beyond their current obligation or until retirement. In contrast, only 31% of those reporting neutral attitudes or who were dissatisfied with military life (n = 104) intended to stay beyond their current obligation or until retirement.

Although these figures describe only the focus group participants interviewed by DACOWITS in 2005 and cannot be generalized to the military as a whole, they are similar to data collected military-wide by DMDC. In the March 2005 *SOF*, 63% of Active duty Service members reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the military way of life. Service members in the Air Force reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction (72%) than did Service members in the Navy (62%), Marine Corps (60%), and Army (60%). Despite these differences, the majority of Service members participating in both the DACOWITS focus groups and *SOF* survey reported being satisfied with military life.

F. CONCLUSION

Findings presented in this chapter suggest that Service members are finding it increasingly difficult to create and maintain a balance among the competing demands of the military, their families, and their personal goals. The increasing demands placed on

their time and families are beginning to negatively influence the way many Service members think about their military careers.

What did emerge from the 2005 DACOWITS focus groups of primary importance was the strain that long and repeated deployments have on Service members and their families. As was true during 2003 and 2004 site visits, time away from family remained a key factor in Service members' satisfaction with military life and their retention decisions in 2005.

DACOWITS also found that the effects of transformation and its impact on military specialties and career paths was a significant concern among Service members. Additionally, needing to meet new education requirements compounds uncertainty about their military careers.

Service members perceive that career fields that have traditionally been considered more conducive to family life and the interests of women are being transformed to new career fields or civilianized. These altered career areas support the need for skills that assist in building the restructured combat force which must meet the sustained obligations of longer operations and peacekeeping missions. Career and family in the military must be compatible pursuits or DoD risks excluding these members. Women will find other ways to serve and Service members will choose to raise their families as civilians outside of the military community. Women's enlistment rates and retaining demographic groups, particularly families, need to be monitored. Attaining a balanced quality of life for Service members and their families, a quality that supports the demands of their military service, is critical to recruiting and sustaining a diverse force. Flexibility in types of jobs that Service members can access over the span of their career path must be part of the personnel restructuring efforts within Transformation.

Many junior enlisted personnel questioned the fairness and implementation of their Services' promotion and evaluation systems. Many female Service members questioned the effectiveness of current height and weight standards. The challenge of finding time to accomplish all that is required while still meeting personal responsibilities was also voiced by Service members in the focus group discussions. Service members say that they seek guidance from leaders and mentors, but often have to rely on their own initiative.

Service members also told DACOWITS that they have had, at some point in their careers, to choose between military opportunities and family responsibilities. They handle these choices case-by-case, choosing to take career opportunities or accept relocation, regardless of its impact on their families vs. sometimes choosing to turn down an opportunity or move in order to provide stability for their families.

Long workdays, deployments, and career demands are making it more difficult for Service members to balance the demand of work and family life. The impact of military service on families and Service members' time with their families, both at home and away, was the factor most frequently reported by focus group participants as influential in the retention decision.

III. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

A. INTRODUCTION

In seven focus groups with family members of Active duty Service members, 65 focus group participants were asked about the impact of deployment on families and children, family well-being issues (e.g., housing, spouse employment, and finances), the advantages and disadvantages of military life, and other topics—all in relation to the achievement of work-life balance, retention, and spouse support for the Service member's career. Also included in this chapter are DACOWITS focus group responses from Active duty Service members related to family well-being issues. Where possible, these responses are compared with survey data on similar topics collected recently by DMDC through its *Status of Forces* survey program and with findings from recent military family research. Considered together, these sources of data provide a detailed understanding of the challenges that families face in balancing work, life, and family well-being.

B. IMPACT OF DEPLOYMENT ON THE FAMILY

DACOWITS moderators posed questions about Active-duty family members' perceptions of the effect of deployment on military families. Specific deployment-related topics discussed included: the effect of separation on children; ways to help children cope with separation; the challenges that spouses face during deployment; and the impact of media coverage of military operations on families. Each of these topics is discussed below.

Deployment experience

Based on the results of the short survey administered to each participant, 83% of the family members in the DACOWITS focus groups reported they had experienced the deployment of their Service member in the past 3 years. Family members reported variation in the total amount of time Service members had spent away during this period. Specifically, 8% reported their Service member's total time away as 1 to 3 months, 8% 4 to 6 months, 18% 7 to 9 months, 7% 10 months but less than 1 year, 42% 1 year to 18 months, 12% 18 months but less than 2 years, and 5% more than 2 years.

Effect of deployment on children

DACOWITS sought information about the effect of deployment on Service members' children. Family members reported variation in the levels of stress they perceived in their children in response to deployment. Specifically, 11% of focus group participants said that stress levels were high or very high, 42% said that stress levels were moderate, and 47% said that stress levels were low or very low. DACOWITS moderators asked

parents in both Active duty Service member and family member focus groups to elaborate on deployment's impact on children in various age groups. (Because not all of the focus groups contained Service members or family members with children, the analyses that follow are based on only those groups for which the question applied.)

Not recognizing the Service member as their parent when he or she returned from deployment was the primary issue that emerged within the focus groups that contained parents of very young children:

“My daughter had some trouble adjusting post-deployment. My husband came home Christmas Eve, and it was many months before she would accept him. She is now 21 months old and they are still getting used to each other. He left before she was even one year old. There was no pre-deployment bonding.”

—Family Member, USA

“My 20-month old did not know who I was.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USMC

Service members and family members also described behavior problems among young children who could not understand why their parents were not at home:

“We had a lot of trouble with our son. He didn't understand that dad would be back. He was 4 years old and after 2 months he started to lock himself in his room. I didn't think that it was a big deal but then he started to lock himself in the bathroom, in the dark and he would cry. I took him to the psychologist and they wanted him to draw pictures, and he didn't want to work with them or talk to me.

It was very hard.”

—Family Member, USA

“My babies have no clue what's happening. My oldest son understands why I need to leave, but my little guy is angry at me. He thinks it's his fault that I'm leaving.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USN

Service members and family members identified behavior problems as the typical way that school-age children and teens responded to the stress of deployments. Anger, acting out, and problems in school were among the specific issues cited:

“My daughter got into a lot of trouble at school for not listening to the teacher [when I was gone].”

—Dual Military, Enlisted, USN

“I have a teen in my neighborhood who is 17 and the best babysitter, sweetest kid that you know. But, when his father was deployed, he was stealing from the PX, and he couldn’t even explain why. He doesn’t know how to deal with the loss.”

—Family Member, USMC

“My [teen-age] son especially has been affected the most. In school, he’s failing.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Parents in both Service member and family member focus groups said that children of all ages continue to have issues post-deployment. They explained that readjusting to family roles is difficult and that children are often clingy and show other signs of being anxious about future deployments:

“It is hard to get them [children] to understand where their dad is. I don’t think that they can understand. After my husband got back, our daughter would just fall apart when he was on duty for the night.”

—Family Member, USN

“My 3-year-old goes to pre-school, and every time I go pick him up, he’s like, ‘Mommy, you came and picked me up!’ and he’s been going on [like this] since January [5 months ago]...He hates it when I leave [him at school]—he thinks I’m going to leave him again. It makes me sad, and he’s like, ‘Daddy left and went to Iraq and now you’ll go to Iraq.’...I liked my whole experience there, but the thing that tears me up is that I have to leave my baby, and he wants to be just wrapped around my leg. And he has to sleep with me in the bed to feel secure [enough] to fall asleep.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

Family members recommended developing children’s support groups through the unit or schools as a way to help them cope with separation and deployment:

“The Family Readiness Groups have done a lot for families. There should be something like that for kids.”

—Family Member, USMC

“I had a support group for the kids in my class who had parents that were deployed. That helped a lot, and it is important to let your school teachers know about the deployment.”

—Family Member, USMC

Data collected in the March 2005 *SOF* survey of Active duty Service members tracks closely with DACOWITS focus group findings. That survey found that deployments can

negatively affect children's behavior and school performance. Specifically, 81% of Service members reported that they agreed that deployments increase the likelihood of emotional problems in their children, and 62% agreed that deployments increase the likelihood of problems at school. Slightly more Army Service members agreed with these statements than was true in other Services. Specifically, 87% of Army Service members said that deployments were likely to increase children's emotional problems and 68% of Army Service members said that deployments were likely to increase problems at school. Two-thirds of Service members also agreed that potential deployment-related problems can be minimized with proper preparation (67%), with little difference among the Services.

The March 2005 *SOF* survey found that 41% of Service members agreed that deployments teach children to be more independent, a perception that did not emerge in 2005 DACOWITS focus group discussions with Service members or their spouses, but which did surface in the 2004 focus groups.

On the March 2005 *SOF* survey, the four factors Service members most frequently rated as important or very important to their children's ability to cope with deployments were:

- Ability to communicate with the deployed parent (95%)
- How the spouses deals with the deployment (94%)
- Children's financial well-being (84%)
- How children are prepared for the deployment (83%).

Since the release of the 2004 DACOWITS Final Report—which reviewed research on the impact of military deployments on children conducted by Jensen et al., Pierce et al., Kelly et al., and Ender⁴—there has been little to no DoD-sponsored empirical research on this topic that has been widely released or published in peer-reviewed journals, other than the DACOWITS findings discussed here. This is true despite the fact that deployments—including multiple deployments—are affecting the lives of an increasing number of children in military families as the GWOT enters its fifth year. As the number of children in military families affected by long-term, repeated deployment grows, quality empirical research is needed that monitors, describes, and documents the issues experienced by this generation of military children. This research is needed to track the health and well-being of military children for their own sake, but also to ensure that the attitudes toward the military held by these children remains positive, as children from military families have historically represented a group with above average propensity to serve in the armed forces.

Effect of deployment on spouses

In order to better understand the impact of specific challenges for spouses of Service members, DACOWITS moderators asked focus group participants to identify issues that affected them during the deployment. Family members reported variation in their assessment of the overall stress of deployment. Specifically, 30% of focus group participants said that stress was high, 39% said that it was moderate, and 30% said that stress was low. Asked to elaborate, family members discussed the challenges they faced and how their families dealt with media reports of military operations.

In many focus groups, spouses said that being solely responsible for managing household and family affairs during deployments is a major source of stress:

“I feel like I work 24/7 without a break. I feel tired and want a timeout. Yet when I hire a babysitter, I feel guilty because I am not spending time with my kids.”
—Family Member, USMC

“The deployment is tough, especially when you have five kids, your husband is gone for a year, and your family lives far away. You make good friends on post and you have the Army community. That is what gets you through the deployment—the support.”
—Family Member, USA

Spouses also described challenges in communicating with their deployed spouses. Although e-mail is a positive communication tool, it can cause stress when it suddenly stops:

“When the e-mail system went down during the war, people freaked out. People assumed the crew was dead. I had to try and calm down and explain that no signals could go on and off the ship for safety reasons.”
—Family Member, USN

Dealing with the media and news coverage was one of the most challenging issues that families faced during the deployment. Spouses were especially concerned with the effect of the media on their children. Some worried that their children would find news reports scary and would assume that the absent parent was in danger or was doing something wrong:

“My son is very sensitive and when he watched the news, he worried about his dad. You could see that he was acting out what he saw when he was playing. He was very upset.”
—Family Member, USAF

“I wouldn’t let my kids watch the news. I would try and watch in the morning before they got up and at night after they were sleeping.”
—Family Member, USA

Spouses also questioned the quality and accuracy of the news, and many suggested that media coverage is biased and focused only on the negative aspects of the war:

“The media is very biased. There is always a political agenda. I think they embellish the facts.”
—Family Member, USA

“I don’t think that they are supportive of what is going on. They put on all the bad things, like that we are killing innocent people. We get confused and I hate being confused. I don’t want to question what we are doing. I think that is horrible for the families and especially for the children.”
—Family Member, USMC

The amount of news coverage also affected the spouses’ families. Some reported that there was too much war news shown (a source of worry and stress), while others said that there was not enough (ignoring the sacrifices being made daily by Service members on an on-going basis):

“My husband was on the front lines, and I had to pull myself away from the television, especially once the kids woke up. I listened to NPR [National Public Radio] all day, and any time I heard about something I would begin to worry. It got to the point where I didn’t want to turn on my television but I just had to.”
—Family Member, USA

“The country is at war. My husband is deploying to a war zone and there is more news on about what is going on in the Michael Jackson trial in our country!”
—Family Member, USA

The March 2005 *SOF* survey posed questions to Active duty Service members about their families’ ability to cope with deployments. Their responses, like those of the DACOWITS family member focus groups participants, emphasize the importance of receiving timely and accurate information from Service members and the military. Specifically, 97% of Service members rated their families’ ability to communicate with them as important/very important, 94% rated knowing the expected length of deployment as important/very important, and 85% rated pre-deployment information as important/very important to their families’ ability to cope with deployment.

Similar to DACOWITS findings, a recent study by Ender of media viewing habits and military spouses’ perceptions of the mass media found that Army spouses tend to be

extremely critical of the national media coverage of the war in Iraq.⁵ Two major themes related to the quality of coverage as perceived by military spouses: 1) that the portrayal of events was overwhelmingly negative, and 2) that there was little coverage of particular units headquartered at the locations at which the study took place, creating a perception among spouses that their loved ones were forgotten by the media and the public. With respect to the viewing habits of participant spouses, most reported controlled or limited television viewing, but about one-third (35%) of enlisted spouses watched no coverage. About half of the spouses did not allow their children to watch the television coverage—an increase of 20% from 18 months earlier. The top three sources for information about the war in Iraq included: 1) mass media, 2) their spouse, and 3) the unit Family Readiness Group.

Support during deployment

Data collected from the post-group survey administered to 2005 DACOWITS focus group participants indicate that most Active duty personnel and family members were satisfied with family support during deployments. With respect to overall installation support, 80% of Service members reported being satisfied, while 20% reported being dissatisfied. Similarly, 76% of family members were satisfied with overall family support. The survey also assessed their satisfaction with specific aspects of family support. Specifically, 96% of focus group participants reported being satisfied with assistance with legal or administrative issues, 76% reported satisfaction with their ability to obtain deployment-related information, and 73% reported being satisfied with obtaining a unit point-of-contact (POC).

Service members tended to be slightly more satisfied with support group programs than were their spouses: 80% of Service member focus group participants reported being satisfied with unit support groups or programs, while 76% of family members reported being satisfied with family readiness/support group programs.

DACOWITS moderators asked family members to discuss their opinions about family support during deployments. Focus groups participants typically voiced a mix of opinions, with some family members saying they were satisfied with the support they received and others reporting being dissatisfied.

Service members and family members told DACOWITS moderators that family support programs and groups helped families cope with deployment:

“Our FRG was awesome. We got together once a month. We did Christmas boxes for the guys, parties for the kids, and you knew that if you were having a bad day, you could contact your FRG leader and they would be there for you.”

—Family Member, USA

“My FRG is really good. They visit my family, send e-mails. That is because those ladies and the husband that are left behind are very involved....They are [like] a close-knit family. I’ve been blessed.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

“I think the family programs here are awesome. My husband took advantage of them, and it didn’t matter that he was male.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USAF

Active duty Service members said that military support services like Navy Relief, Army Community Service, and Family Support Centers are available to help families during deployments. Some observed that the military has made great strides in providing support to families:

“We didn’t use to have the support groups and wonderful resources [back] when I went on my first cruise. There was a really high divorce rate [then] and I think these things are helping [now]....I think that long term, down the road, these resources pay back dividends.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

Spouses recognized the importance of leadership in creating effective programs and recommended increased levels of command support:

“There’s supposed to be a family support group affiliated with every command, but the effectiveness of the center is contingent upon leadership. It also requires that spouses pull together. It requires cooperation and volunteers from the community. It would be great if leadership supported the family support group so that things were more organized, and we did not have to reinvent the wheel every time new spouses come into the command.”

—Family Member, USN

“Briefings should be made more family friendly. For instance, offer childcare during the briefings or allow kids to attend.”

—Family Member, USAF

While most Service members in the DACOWITS focus groups reported they were satisfied with the family support they received from these various sources, dissatisfaction with overall support was most common among those who had experienced a lengthy deployment (i.e., 1 year or longer). Among Service members whose most recent deployment was less than one year and who expressed an opinion about family support at their installation⁶ (n = 161), only 15% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In contrast, among those whose most recent deployment was a year or longer and who expressed an opinion (n = 86), 29% reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the overall

family support at their installation. This finding may be indicative of the additional stress and burden experienced by families as a result of lengthy deployments and the additional support needs that this added stress creates.

Service members responding to the March 2005 *SOF* survey reported lower levels of satisfaction with support services than did DACOWITS focus group participants. Specifically, 63% of Service members reported being satisfied/very satisfied with on-base services to individuals or families concerning military separation and deployment, while 30% reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 7 % reported being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Additionally, only 6% of Service members surveyed reported using the *Military One Source* website or helpline service in the past 12 months, with 70% reporting they were not familiar with the program.

C. BALANCING FAMILY AND MILITARY CAREER

DACOWITS sought to learn the extent to which military service affects family well-being and how changes in family well-being influence retention decisions. Family well-being topics that were discussed within the family member focus groups included finances, spousal employment, housing, and children's education. DACOWITS explored other issues related to work and family balance with family members, including balancing work-family demands, the unique challenges of junior enlisted families, and training in work-life balance. Additional well-being topics reviewed by DACOWITS included responses from Service member focus groups about family care plans and current data/research on military divorce rates and work-life balance.

Family well-being

Finances

DACOWITS moderators reviewed some of the recent DoD initiatives to increase compensation for Service members and their families, including recent increases in base pay and, since 2001, a 41% increase in the housing allowance. Additionally, tax exemptions during deployment, and compensation of up to \$700 per month for enlisted families when the spouse is deployed to dangerous overseas locations, are the standard.

DACOWITS sought to learn whether these changes help families manage the demands of military life and deployment separation. The opinions of family members participating in the focus groups were mixed, with some saying extra compensation is helpful and some saying that compensation and allowances remain inadequate.

Family members said that the additional compensation during deployment reduces the financial stress on families:

“I think it’s helpful to know that the family can afford things like plane tickets, and other things to help with coping, going to see family for support. You’re not so worried about paying the bills....It eased up the financial stress.”

—Family Member, USA

Spouses said that separation pay is not paid when families need it. Some families found the amount paid too little to make up for the months of separation from Service members:

“The hazardous duty pay was awesome, but the family separation pay is bad because you don’t get it until your husband gets back.”

—Family Member, USAF

“The allowance I received when my husband was in Korea is peanuts. We got \$200 extra per month for being separated for 14 months. It was a slap in the face. Is that all our sacrifices are worth to the Army?”

—Family Member, USA

Family members in more than half of the focus groups said that pay and allowances are insufficient, especially in high-cost areas.

“But as far as 3% pay raises, that’s not enough.”

Family Member, USA

“While my husband was stationed at the Pentagon, we lived in downtown DC [District of Columbia]. The cost of housing was astronomical and our [housing allowance] did not cover our housing expenses.”

—Family Member, USN

Data from the March 2005 *SOF* survey indicate that one-third of military Service members face some degree of financial difficulty. Specifically, 24% reported that they occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet, 8% say it is tough to make ends meet but they are keeping their heads above water, and 1% report they are in over their heads. More junior enlisted Service members than other Service members report facing some degree of financial difficulty (45%): 31% say they occasionally have some difficulty making ends meet, 12% say it is tough to make ends meet but they are keeping their heads above water, and 2% report being in over their heads. Within that same survey, 29% of Service members reported having at least one financial problem. Specific problems included failing to make a monthly minimum payment on a credit card or other account (14%), being pressured to pay bills by stores, creditors, or bill collectors (14%), and bouncing two or more checks (10%).

Spouse employment

In order to learn how military service affects employment opportunities for military spouses, DACOWITS asked participants about their employment status and career opportunities. Focus group participants reported that 22% were employed full-time, 22% were employed part-time, 11% were seeking employment, and 46% were neither employed nor seeking employment.

All family member focus groups included spouses who said that their Service member's military career hinders their own career or ability to find employment. Depending on the location, many spouses expressed difficulty finding jobs, jobs that paid well, or jobs in their career fields. Spouses stated that they often must start over each time they move:

“It's inconvenient because you have to start over a lot.”

—Family Member, USMC

“It's hard to find a job when they find out you're a military spouse because they don't know how long you'll be there.”

—Family Member, USA

Some of the focus groups also contained family members who reported that their spouse's military career had given them opportunities within civil service, the freedom to explore different kinds of jobs, and opportunities for training:

“It has done nothing but help me. I have had some opportunities that I could not have afforded if I weren't a military spouse. You can get Microsoft certification for free, the Red Cross will pay for you to become a dental hygienist and then they help you find a job.”

—Family Member, USMC

Other participants explained that spouses often choose careers that are compatible with military life:

“It's pretty common for military spouses to try and adapt their career to fit the military lifestyle. I know I did. I went to graduate school to become a physical therapist. I chose that field because I only ever have to sign a 1-year contract. This allows me to move with my husband. When we got married, I was sat down and given advice about what professions to go into. It was good advice.”

—Family Member, USN

Focus groups also contained spouses who chose not to work, often in order to provide stability and emotional support for their families:

“My life, my job, is the homemaker. I take care of things when he is gone. I do things for him. When we got married, that is the job that I took on.”

—Family Member, USA

Data from the November 2003 *SOF* survey indicate that spouse employment is negatively affected by PCS moves in ways that correspond to problems identified by DACOWITS focus group participants. Specifically, 49% of Service members responding to this question reported a loss or decrease in spouse income following their most recent PCS move, and 44% reported experiencing moderate to very large problems with spouse employment following the move. In the more recent March 2005 *SOF* survey, slightly less than half (44%) of Service members report being satisfied with on-base spouse employment services, with 27% reporting being dissatisfied and 29% reporting being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Housing

Most of the focus groups contained spouses who preferred to live on the military installation and others who preferred to live in the civilian community.

The advantages of living on the military installation included a sense of community for family members and the quality and safety of housing on post:

“I prefer to live on post because there is a sense of community and security.”

—Family Member, USA

“Living on post is important for the kids. Army brats who live on post know that there are other children around who are just like them. In the civilian world, it’s not like that. Civilian kids just don’t understand why daddy is gone for 6 months of the year. Kids on post have moved 4 or 5 times, it is a bond between kids.”

—Family Member, USA

“I think that on post housing is more than adequate. I love living in a gated community. I feel very safe and if something breaks there is always someone to come and fix it.”

—Family Member, USA

Disadvantages included poor quality of military housing and long waiting lists for quarters:

“I think some of the quality of the [on-post] housing is terrible. It looks like they used the projects as a model.”

—Family Member, USA

“There is a 4-year waiting list [for housing]. When you move every 2 years, its pointless to put your name on that list.”

—Family Member, USN

Advantages to living within the civilian community included home ownership, more privacy, and access to better schools:

“I prefer to live off post because you have more privacy.”

—Family Member, USN

“That’s why we moved off post, because of the school district.”

—Family Member, USA

According to the March 2005 *SOF* data, most military families live off post. Specifically, 70% of single parents, 66% of married couples with children, and 71% of married couples without children report living in either civilian or military housing off post. The July 2003 *Status of Forces* survey (July 2003 *SOF*) survey asked Service members whether they would prefer to live on or off post. Few families reported a preference for living on post, with 23% of single parents, 30% of married couples with children, and 21% of married couples without children saying that they would choose to live on post, if their housing choices were controlled for quality and cost.

Similar to findings from the July 2003 *SOF* survey cited above, the 2002 *USMC Quality of Life Study* found that, assuming equal cost, the large majority of Marines would prefer to live in civilian rather than military housing. The study investigators reported that, for all Marines, average satisfaction with residence was 4.18 on a 7-point scale (1 = very dissatisfied; 7 = very satisfied), a value slightly above neutral. Marines living in civilian quarters tended to be more satisfied with their residence than those housed in military quarters, with the most satisfied group comprised of those Marines who own a house in the civilian community. Similarly, Marine Corps spouses whose Service members were in the more senior enlisted or senior officer pay grades (i.e., E8-E9; O4 and above) were most likely to own a home with their Service members, and reported the highest satisfaction with housing.⁷

These findings differ from those of the DACOWITS focus groups that found family members more evenly divided in their preferences for on post or off post housing. The DACOWITS findings about the factors that families consider in making housing choices are similar to those of the July 2003 *SOF* data, which found that over 50% of Service members in all family categories reported that they evaluate support services, quality of

schools, access to facilities, safety of neighborhood, and distance to work when determining where to live.

Children's education

DACOWITS moderators asked family members about the military's impact on their children's education, and whether issues related to education affect the career plans of Service members.

Almost all of the focus groups contained family members who said that children find changing school difficult and stressful:

“In terms of stressors, the number one stressor is schools—what they're going to be like. Will the kids be prepared? Will they be able to make friends? Able to make the basketball team?”

—Family Member, USA

“I think changing schools has been the most difficult part.”

—Family Member, USN

According to focus group participants, different state standards contribute to the difficulty children face in transferring to new schools when Service members' relocate:

“The inconsistency is hard on kids. For example, when we moved to Virginia, all of a sudden, my kids were required to know Virginia history to pass the annual test. Of course my kids didn't know anything about Virginia history because last year they were living in another state. It's stressful for them.”

—Family Member, USA

They also reported considering a range of schooling options (public, Department of Defense Education Activity [DoDEA], and private schools, as well as home schooling) in order to ensure that their children are getting the best education, even when it affects family finances:

“We want to send our kids to public school but the quality of the education is so low in some of the areas we have lived in. We are forced to send our kids to private school....I think DoD should reimburse families for money spend on private schools when no quality public school is available.”

—Family Member, USN

“It's the education quality that matters.”

—Family Member, USMC

Other spouses indicated that changing schools is an opportunity for their children and a positive aspect of military:

“I actually think that my kids are getting a more well-rounded education because of our military lifestyle.”

—Family Member, USA

“It depends on the child. My son enjoys changing schools. He’s used to moving because he’s done it ever since he was a baby....Moving has never affected his grades. They’ve consistently been high. He views moving to a new places as a new opportunity.”

—Family Member, USN

Two-thirds of the family member focus groups included spouses who reported that issues related to their children’s education influence Service members’ career plans and decisions. Some Service members decide to leave the family in one location while they accept assignments, like deployment, that will not require removing children from schools they like:

“I have two kids. My husband is willing to go to Afghanistan for a year, so we don’t have to leave...The schools [here] are excellent, and I don’t want to have to explain to one more teacher how to teach my kids.”

—Family Member, USA

One Navy family described curtailing an assignment because of education issues:

“We faced the same problem [poor schools] in Australia....Our choice was between sending our kids to private school, which was very expensive but subsidized, or sending them to public school, which was not very good. At one point, DoD pulled the funding for private schools. We returned to the United States because of it.”

—Family Member, USN

Parents of teen-age children said that they believe stabilizing children during high school is important and influences Service members’ retention decisions:

“We have kids going into high school and if that means he has to retire to keep them stabilized for high school, then that is what we will do. I wouldn’t have thought that people would separate because of kids in high school but now it makes all the sense in the world. We will do what we have to. Let’s keep it to one or two high schools.”

—Family Member, USA

“Our family has adapted well [to moving and changing schools]. It’s challenging for a parent to monitor all of the educational requirements but we deal with it. That might change in the future when our son is in the last years of high school, though.”

—Family Member, USMC

The focus groups also included spouses who said that their families find ways to cope with school changes and education quality so that the career plans of Service members remain unaffected:

“This is our 15th move in 20 years. You have to make the serious choice between home-schooling your kids or coughing up the big bucks and sending them to private school. That is the choice. The lack of standards for some of the public schools is a problem.”

—Family Member, USA

“You may pay a little more for housing, I pay a little more for private school. That’s where our priorities are.”

—Family Member, USA

December 2004 *SOF* data are similar to the DACOWITS focus group findings about the effect of military life on children’s education. Specifically, the data show that:

- 37% of Service members reported slight to serious problems with difficulties adjusting to a new school
- 24% reported slight to serious problems with exclusion from extracurricular activities
- 20% reported slight to serious problems with correct classroom placement
- 19% reported slight to serious problems with difficulty transferring school records
- 13% reported slight to serious problems with discontinued special education, gifted education, English as a Second Language or other services
- 10% reported slight to serious problems with mandated entrance or exit exams on any grade level
- 7% reported slight to serious problems with being unable to continue Kindergarten or 1st grade due to age restriction

- 5% reported slight to serious problems with not being able to meet graduation requirements due to junior or senior year transfer.

Work and family balance

Balancing demands

All focus groups contained spouses who said that it is difficult to balance the demands of a military career with family life, particularly given long, demanding, and unpredictable work schedules:

“The biggest obstacle is that there are no set hours. There is no ability to plan for the family. You can never eat dinner together.”

—Family Member, USMC

“The most significant barrier is the long hours. You never know when they’ll need to work. My husband is a pilot and can never coach my child’s soccer team. I would definitely say that the most significant barriers are related to the irregular work hours and the amount of time that is required to do their jobs.”

—Family Member, USA

Deployments and separations are factors that make it difficult to balance military career demands with family life:

“The most difficult barrier is the war, that’s the biggest challenge.”

—Family Member, USA

“My husband was gone for 4 months because of training. I had to run the entire household for 4 months. I learned to use all the tools—I was Mrs. Fix It. When my husband came back, I had to be Mrs. Submissive and ask him how to open the refrigerator! There are too many roles to keep switching. It works that way for the kids, too. When daddy is gone, these are the rules. When he’s home, they change.”

—Family Member, USAF

Although the role of the military spouse is difficult, it is one that spouses say they accept and with which they cope:

“We chose their lifestyle when we married military men. We knew we would need to wear different hats and put up with them being gone.”

—Family Member, USA

“It takes a lot of work to have the balance, and you have to sit down [with your husband] and have a plan....Having communication in the family and a plan helps you in the long run.”

—Family Member, USA

Service members share the perception of family members that it is difficult for Service members to find time for their families. In response to the March 2005 *SOF* survey question, do you have more or less time for your family than you expected when you first entered the military, over half of the Service members queried reported that they have less or much less time for their families.

A related question in the March 2005 *SOF* survey offered Service members the opportunity to rate the extent to which deployment, work and career, finances, relationships with their spouses/significant others, and relationships with their children/other family members created stress in their lives in the past 12 months. Specific responses include:

- 25% of Service members report that deployment created large to very large levels of stress in their lives, 29% report that deployment created small/moderate levels of stress, and 46% report that deployment did not create stress in their lives at all.
- 45% of Service members report that work and career (e.g., hours, coworkers, change, supervisors) created large to very large amounts of stress in their lives, 48% report that work and career created small to moderate levels of stress, and 8% report that work and career did not create any stress in their lives.
- 19% of Service members report that finances (i.e., their and their families’) created large to very large levels of stress in their lives, 59% report that finances created small to moderate levels of stress, and 21% report that finances did not create any stress in their lives.
- 19% of Service members report large to very large amounts of stress from relationships with their spouses or significant others, 50% report that these relationships created small to moderate levels of stress in their lives, and 31% report that these relationships did not create any stress in their lives.
- 10% of Service members report large to very large levels of stress due to relationships with children and other family members, 43% report that these relationships created small to moderate levels of stress, and 46% Service members reported that these relationships did not create any stress in their lives.

Work-life research in the military

Psychologists at the Department of Military Psychiatry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research have been conducting an ongoing study of work-family conflict (WFC) in the Army, and the impact of PERSTEMPO [personnel tempo] and deployment experiences on the mental health and functioning of Soldiers and their families.⁸ Their research—which is based on survey data collected from several hundred spouses of Soldiers in Army airborne units, and several thousand Soldiers from these units—investigates levels of WFC and family-friendly unit climate (FFUC) reported by Soldiers and spouses in these units, and probes for key differences in these outcomes between spouses of junior and senior Soldiers, spouses with and without children, and between Soldiers and families with and without recent deployment experience.

The Walter Reed study team found that spouses of junior and senior Soldiers reported moderate to high levels of work/family conflict, with no significant difference in their average report of WFC. For example, similar percentages of junior and senior spouses agreed or strongly agreed with some of the key aspects of WFC including:

- Due to my spouse's work, I have to make changes to plans for family activities (66% vs. 65%)
- The demands of my spouse's work interfere with home and family life (58% vs. 51%).

Junior and senior spouses did, however, appear to differ somewhat in their self-assessments of some of the components of the WFC scale, including:

- My spouse's job produces strain that makes it difficult for him/her to fulfill family duties (42% vs. 28% agreement for junior and senior spouses, respectively)
- Things I want my spouse to do at home don't get done due to job demands (38% vs. 51%, respectively)

When recent deployment experience was considered, the researchers found that spouses of non-deployed Soldiers reported significantly lower average levels of WFC than spouses of deployed Soldiers. Some of the aspects of WFC with which spouses of deployed Soldiers more often agreed or strongly agreed included:

- The demands of my spouse's work interfere with home and family life (61% vs. 39% agreement for spouses with and without deployment experience, respectively)

- The amount of time my spouse's job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family duties (52% vs. 28%, respectively).

Researchers also found statistically significant relationships between key aspects of work-family conflict and Spouses' self-report of Soldiers' intentions to leave the military, and spouses' marital satisfaction. While there was also a significant relationship between spouses' average WFC and depression, there were no relationships found between WFC measures and spouses' drinking behavior.

Castro and Clark also explain that there is a clear linkage between work family conflict as perceived by Soldiers and family members, Family-Friendly Unit Climate, and the day-to-day experiences of Soldiers. In explaining the relationship between these factors, they note that:

- Leadership behaviors are related to subordinates' perceptions of the degree to which the organization is supportive of their efforts to balance work and family.
- The effect of this leadership behavior on WFC occurs indirectly through these Soldier and family member perceptions of the organization's level of support for families.
- Effective leadership plays a role in establishing a family-friendly unit climate, which lowers WFC.

In their study, the Walter Reed team cites a substantial body of civilian research demonstrating that, when employees use family friendly policies and resources, WFC decreases while job satisfaction and physical and mental health increase. Based on their research findings, the study team recommended that the Army train NCOs and officers on how to effectively recognize, build, and maintain family friendly work environments to promote work-family balance among Soldiers and families. They also suggest that the Army educate Soldiers on the availability of family-friendly DoD resources, and the linkages between family and work environments.

Effectiveness of family care plans

DACOWITS moderators introduced the topic of family care plans by noting that single parents and dual military couples are required to complete these plans. DACOWITS asked Service members if they had found completing family care plans helpful or effective. In general, responses were mixed, with some Service members reporting that family care plans were helpful and effective (recorded in half of the groups) and others reporting that the plans were neither helpful nor effective (recorded in slightly less than half of the groups).

Service members said that completing family care plans helps them think through the issues facing them as parents and are important tools for military leaders:

“It helped me. They gave me a checklist and that helped me. There were things on there that I would not have thought of. So, yes, it helped [me] prepare.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“I think that it is helpful for the chain-of-command...It is a tool that the chain-of-command needs to have at their disposal. The command needs to know who is in charge of the families of the Soldiers with dependents.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USA

Other Service members said that they would create a plan even if it were not required because doing so is simply a part of good parenting:

“We already talked about our plan before we had our child.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USMC

“I would have done it anyway.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USA

Among the focus groups were Service members who said that family care plans are ineffective when the information they contain is not accurate and when the plans are implemented inconsistently:

“The family care plan is only as good as the information that’s written down.”

—Male, Junior Officer, USN

“I know Soldiers who went to Iraq without a family care plan. They were [considered] essential, so they didn’t get into trouble.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USA

“It is an ineffective tool...As a commander, I get to see people come up with a plan, but there are no checks and balances...I think that sometimes people just put things down to have something on the form.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USN

Service members in about half of the focus groups said that it was often difficult for single parents and dual military couples to complete family care plans because it was often difficult to find and choose caregivers, especially after a PCS move and within the time given families to complete their plans.

“It’s difficult to initially come up with one [designated caregiver] when you’ve been on base 60 days. Who do you trust?”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAF

“When you arrive at a new installation, you need time to meet people and get to know them before you can trust them with your kids. Maybe they [the military] should extend the 30 days [you are given].”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, USA

The March 2005 *SOF* survey asked Service members who were supervisors about the effectiveness of family care plan policies. Like the DACOWITS focus group findings, survey respondents indicated mixed opinions. Of the 11% of Service members answering this survey question, 37% reported being satisfied with family care plan policies, 21% reported being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 12% reported being dissatisfied, and another 31% reported that the question did not apply (they were not supervisors or had never reviewed family care plan policies).

Unique challenges of families of junior enlisted Service members

Spouses in the focus groups identified pay, childcare costs, and the lack of quality military housing as the barriers to work-family balance that most affect the families of junior enlisted Service members:

“I don’t have much contact with junior enlisted families but I think most of their decisions are based on financial concerns.”

—Family Member, USA

“Childcare. We are a dual income family and I used the school-aged services; I can only imagine that junior enlisted families use those services more.”

—Family Member, USA

“There is a lack of quality housing and they can’t afford to live off post. Give them a pay raise.”

—Family Member, USA

They recommended that the military help these families by increasing their awareness of and access to existing programs, benefits, and services:

“The Army needs to let families know what resources are out there to help them...It shouldn’t have to be such a struggle. Create better programs and let junior enlisted families know that support resources are out there.”

—Family Member, USA

Work-life training

DACOWITS asked family members if they had received training or information on balancing work-life demands. Spouses in half of the focus groups reported having received some training, whereas spouses in half of the focus groups said that they had not. Spouses said that they wanted training in balancing work-life issues, as well as information about available resources:

“If there is training, I want it!”

—Family Member, USMC

“I think that AFTB [Army Family Team Building] has courses, but people don’t take advantage of them.”

—Family Member, USA

“There are programs in the family assistance center to educate Sailors and family members, but I don’t think that people know about it or take the help that is offered.”

—Family Member, USN

“I went to a meeting the other day, and I got a binder filled with information. It taught me how to do things like handle a move, get couples’ therapy, etc. I think I lucked out at the meeting. The information is there, but dissemination is a problem. There needs to be a more central way to get information to us at different levels, from the commander’s wife to junior enlisted personnel.”

—Family Member, USN

Recommendations of spouses

Participants recommended that families learn to be self-sufficient and develop coping skills. They believe that these personal strategies and support systems help families deal with the demands of military life:

“You have to go out and meet people. You need a support system because without it you will feel miserable.”

—Family Member, USA

“You have to be self-sufficient. You can’t expect to depend on your man.”

—Family Member, USA

Spouses also recommended that the military reduce the length of deployments and give Service members more time with their families after a PCS move and between deployments:

“They need to look at the OPTEMPO [operational tempo]. They need to know what families are going through. When you can see a light at the end of the tunnel you can suck it up, but when there is no light that is when you want to ask if our 20 is up.”

—Family Member, USA

“They should have 6 months in between deployments. There should also be a 2-month breaking period when you move to a new base. I would love that. Schedules need to be standardized, especially when people go to new places.”

—Family Member, USAF

Establishing and improving existing family support programs emerged as recommendations in some of the focus groups. Spouses said that the military should provide more outreach to families:

“There should be a group in the rear that comes and speaks to deployed Service members’ families. Just having someone come and say, ‘Hi, my name is so-and-so. Please call me if you need me. Here is my contact information.’ That would mean a lot.”

—Family Member, USA

“There should be some kind of incentive for family members to attend briefings. That would help them get there, like coupons or gift certificates.”

—Family Member, USMC

They also recommended that the military formalize family support programs by adding paid staff:

“I wish that there were employees that were responsible and expected to have the information, so that families can rely on those people.”

—Family Member, USAF

“I like the idea of a family deployment liaison.”

—Family Member, USA

Military divorce rates

Recently, media scrutiny of the rates of divorce among Active duty Service members has increased. While rigorous, peer-reviewed empirical research has yet to be published on the impact of recent deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan on the rate of marital dissolution, many observers have noted a clear association between the increasing number of divorces in the Active duty military since 2001, and the characteristics of OIF/OEF [Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom] deployments that are different from those of previous decades—including the demanding pace of OIF/OEF rotations, their extended durations, their inherent unpredictability, and their frequency.⁹

The rates of divorce over the last 5 years for Active duty Service members have been on an upward trajectory. Marital dissolution has appeared to have affected officer marriages disproportionately during this period; the number of divorces among officers in 2004 was more than that recorded in 2000, with little increase in the number of personnel. The following data—which are based on analyses of matching files comparing the total number of married Active duty officers (in all Services) at the end of a given fiscal year to the number who were still married at the end of the next fiscal year—illustrate this steady increase in divorces each year during the period 2000-2004:¹⁰

- FY 1999: 155,902 married, FY 2000: 2,208 divorces
- FY 2000: 152,423 married, FY 2001: 2,463 divorces
- FY 2001: 148,425 married, FY 2002: 2,644 divorces
- FY 2002: 153,615 married, FY 2003: 3,683 divorces
- FY 2003: 156,286 married, FY 2004: 5,206 divorces.

This trend of rising divorce rates is most prominent in the Army. The following data—also based on analyses of matching files—illustrate that the number of divorces among Soldiers in the Active duty Army has nearly doubled since 2000:

- FY 1999: 258,775 married, FY 2000: 5,619 divorces
- FY 2000: 255,353 married, FY 2001: 5,658 divorces
- FY 2001: 248,180 married, FY 2002: 7,049 divorces
- FY 2002: 254,308 married, FY 2003: 7,473 divorces
- FY 2003: 257,684 married, FY 2004: 10,477 divorces.

D. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MILITARY LIFE

To understand the ways that military life affects families, DACOWITS asked family members to identify the benefits and drawbacks of military life and reviewed survey and report data on levels of satisfaction among Service members and their families. Focus group participants reported high levels of satisfaction with military life, with 81% of family members rating themselves as satisfied. Asked to elaborate, family members discussed their perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of military family life.

Advantages of military family life

Family members in most of the focus groups said that pay and benefits are among the advantages of military life. Specifically, they cited medical, retirement, commissary, and housing benefits as having a positive impact on their families:

“I’ll start with what’s important. Retirement is one of the reasons he is staying in. In terms of advantages, I would have to say living arrangements—that is, living on post. Benefits such as the commissary are also wonderful.”

—Family Member, USA

“For our family, I think that TRICARE has worked really well. My son was born with club feet, and we have had referrals to Chapel Hill and we have not paid a dime for any of his care, here in town or there.”

—Family Member, USMC

Participants in many of the family member focus groups also said that job security is an advantage of military service:

“You can’t get fired from the Army!”

—Family Member, USA

“Yes, I like the security of knowing that my husband is not going to get laid off. That’s huge.”

—Family Member, USAF

Family members also identified geographic mobility as a positive aspect of their military lives, describing traveling, living in different places and countries, and learning about new cultures as advantages:

“I would say that the ability to move around is most advantageous. I like going to different countries and being exposed to different cultures.”

—Family Member, USA

Family members identified the sense of community that military life provides as another positive factor:

“The deployments are a drag but I have had great support with the units that I am a part of. I became a Key Volunteer to learn more and it has helped a lot. Our unit is very small we only have about 5 people each to call, so we are lucky.”

—Family Member, USMC

“The friendships that develop are pretty invaluable. I really enjoy my husband’s social obligations.”

—Family Member, USN

Disadvantages of military family life

Family members in more than half of the focus groups identified benefits as a disadvantage to military life, citing specific problems with the availability and quality of housing and access to quality medical care:

“Housing. Here we have a 10 to 12 month wait list for housing. We were not even here for 1 month before he deployed. I did not know anyone. I was here by myself. The housing did not run smoothly. I could not get answers from anyone.”

—Family Member, USN

“Trying to get a [medical] referral is like pulling teeth, and it’s not just us who have problems. I happen to know of an incident where the commander was very sick. He had to wait 3 hours for medical to call him back; so he went to the emergency room.”

—Family Member, USAF

“I went downtown with a [medical] referral. TRICARE didn’t pay the bills and a collections agency began calling me.”

—Family Member, USAF

Inadequate pay, especially given the demands of the military on Service members, is another disadvantage identified by some family members:

“Another issue is money; the pay is not worth the sacrifices, and especially with the last deployment. The contractors make more than our husbands, who are actually risking their lives.”

—Family Member, USA

Half of the focus groups contained spouses who said that they have difficulty finding employment and maintaining careers as a part of a military family:

“All I have been doing for the past 23 years is moving from place to place. When people ask me about my career, I laugh. What career? Army spouses do not have careers. We have jobs.”

—Family Member, USA

In addition, spouses reported that they have to set aside their own career aspirations and take on roles that directly support their Service members’ military careers:

“There is a great deal of sacrifice on the spouse’s part. That is to choose to do whatever you can do in the local community, or not work, and then you also have to be a part of the Key Volunteer Network to support your husband. You really have to set aside your dreams and goals to support your husband’s career.”

—Family Member, USMC

In many of the focus groups, participants said that separation from their Service members and the unpredictability of deployments are negative characteristics of military life:

“It’s difficult not knowing if my husband is going to deploy again and when it’s going to happen.”

—Family Member, USA

“I’m new to the Navy. So far, the overall feeling I have is a loss of control. My husband tells me that he might be gone for 6 months. I said, ‘What do you mean you might be gone for 6 months? Which part are you unsure about, the 6 months or if you are going at all?’ He said, ‘Both.’ The experience has been almost numbing. It’s very stressful.”

—Family Member, Navy

Family members also identified geographic mobility as another negative aspect of military life, especially because of its impact on children and their education:

“Moving 15 times is a lot and, as children get older, it’s much harder to move. Trying to stabilize them through high school is the key.”

—Family Member, USA

“I think the hardest part of military life is that you never know where you are going to move next. You don’t know what the schools will be like or what the grading system will be.”

—Family Member, USA

Satisfaction with military life

Research conducted by the individual Services also indicate that most families are satisfied with life in the military. For example, the *2003 Air Force Community Assessment* contained questions related to the coping abilities, emotional well-being, and community health as reported by Airmen and their spouses.¹¹ The *Community Assessment* found that 82% are satisfied or very satisfied with life as a whole, 71% are satisfied or very satisfied with the Air Force way of life, and 65% are satisfied or very satisfied with the Air Force as an environment in which to bring up children.

Most Navy spouses also report satisfaction with military life. The Navy Personnel Research, Studies, and Technology Institute administered the *2002 Spouse Quality of Life Survey for Organizational Assessment*.¹² The survey found that 66% of Navy officer spouses and 59% of Navy enlisted spouses are satisfied with military life. Navy spouses also reported satisfaction with specific aspects of their personal lives, including:

- Relationship with children (97% of officer spouses, 96% of enlisted spouses)
- Marriage relationship (92% of officer spouses, 88% of enlisted spouses)
- Current job (76% of officer spouses, 73% of enlisted spouses)
- Healthcare (76% of officer spouses, 77% of enlisted spouses).

While over half of all Navy spouses reported being satisfied with the following aspects, there were differences in satisfaction rates between spouses of officers and enlisted personnel:

- Neighborhood (89% of officer spouses, 77% of enlisted spouses)
- Residence (88% of officer spouses, 77% of enlisted spouses)
- Standard of living (78% of officer spouses, 54% of enlisted spouses).

The Marine Corps *2002 Quality of Life Survey* was administered to spouses as well as Marines themselves. USMC spouses' average rating for their global quality of life was 4.94 (7 point scale), well above the neutral rating. Findings from the 2005 DACOWITS family member focus groups track with these other surveys, with 81% of focus group participants reporting satisfaction with military life.

E. ISSUES AFFECTING RETENTION

Toward the end of each family member focus group, DACOWITS asked spouses to share whether they wanted their spouses' to remain in or leave military, and why.

Spouses' preferences for Service members' retention decisions

Most Active Duty family member groups contained a mix of participants, with 78% reporting they wanted their spouses to remain in the military beyond the Service member's current obligation, 5% reporting they wanted their spouses to leave the military after the current obligation, and 11% who reported being undecided. These DACOWITS findings are much more positive than those reported in the March *SOF* survey, in which 46% of Service members said that their spouses/significant others favored staying in the military, 36% favored leaving, and 19% had no preference.

Factors that influence spouses' preferences for Service members' retention decisions

Factors to stay

Spouses cited benefits, job satisfaction, and job security as factors that contribute to wanting their Service members to remain in the military. Family members in almost all of the focus groups identified healthcare and retirement benefits as important factors in their decisions:

“The benefits are great. I know we'll be sitting pretty nice after retirement.”

—Family Member, USAF

“The pension benefits are great. My husband has 19 years in the Navy. It would be a shame for him to leave now and forgo the pension.”

—Family Member, USN

“The medical benefits.”

—Family Member, USA

Spouses said that they based their reasons for wanting to remain in the military on their Service members' satisfaction with their military careers and the job security military careers offer:

“It's what he loves. That's the bottom line for me.”

—Family Member, USN

“It’s job satisfaction. He loves what he’s doing.”

—Family Member, USA

“A steady paycheck.”

—Family Member, USMC

These factors are similar to those identified by spouses in the Marine Corps’ 2002 *Quality of Life Survey*, in which health care was cited most frequently as a reason to stay.

Factors to leave

Deployment was identified by spouses in almost all of the family member focus groups as the reason they want their Service members to leave the military:

“The only reason we’d leave is because of deployment and the family. It takes its toll.”

—Family Member, USA

“I’m fundamentally opposed to the direction the military has taken in the past few years. That’s why I left the Reserves. I believe our military has changed what it’s about in the last 4 to 5 years, ever since 9/11. It scares me because I know he’ll deploy again, and I’m scared that I’m going to lose him at some point.”

—Family Member, USA

Wanting to provide a stable environment for their families and put an end to the relocations required by military life were also identified as factors influencing the desire to leave the military:

“We’re ready for stability. My parents are living in the same house they’ve been in since I was 5 years old, and my kids don’t have that security.”

—Family Member, USA

“It’s hard to move the kids. I’m sick of looking for good schools.”

—Family Member, USN

These factors are similar to those identified by spouses in the Marine Corps’ 2002 *Quality of Life Survey*, in which separation, pay and benefits, and relocation were most frequently rated as influences to leave (60%, 36%, and 36% respectively), and the fall 2004 Sample Survey of Military Personnel (SSMP) discussed in Chapter II.

Factors for the undecided

Spouses who were undecided about whether they wanted their Soldiers to remain in the military said that deployment and the availability of civilian career opportunities are factors that influence their feelings about retention:

“Right now, the mentality in the Navy is ‘get a good horse and ride it until it dies.’
The back-to-back deployments are terrible. I worry about him.”
—Family Member, USN

“I’m undecided because my wife has deployed too frequently. Whether or not she
has to deploy will make or break her decision.”
—Family Member, USN

“I’m undecided because a job as a civilian pilot would take him away more at this
point—3 days gone, 3 days home. That’s how it would be for 3 or 4 years if he
worked for an airline. Additionally, retirement increases every year after he hits
the 20-year mark.”
—Family Member, USA

In the August 2004 *SOF* survey, 48% of Service members reported that their spouse/significant other favors staying in the military, and 34% reported that their spouse/significant other favors leaving the military.

F. CONCLUSION

Findings reviewed in this chapter suggest that the difficulty Service members face in balancing the competing demands of work and life is beginning to negatively affect the well-being of military families. Despite being able to handle deployment-related stress and to rely on installation support programs, family members shared experiences that demonstrate that long and frequent deployments are negatively affecting children’s behavior and increasing demands on spouses. Family members also report that it is becoming more difficult to balance family and military careers, pointing to the negative impact that frequent moves place on their own employment options and their children’s education, in particular. Stress on families is also evident in reported difficulties in completing family care plans and coping with finances, and in research on work-family conflict and military divorce rates. While satisfaction with military family life currently remains high for most family members, many are also reporting that Service members’ time away from home—long workdays and deployments—is beginning to have an impact on their support of Service members’ decisions to remain in the military.

Limited peer reviewed, empirical research was available to examine in detail issues such as the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) on military families, the effects

of current GWOT deployments on military children, and the effects of deployment on marital relationships and family stability in the military. Based on the lack of current, up-to-date studies, it is not clear that these topics, all of which may become more salient as time goes by, are being adequately investigated through current DoD or DoD-sponsored research efforts. Considering the well-established link between the well-being and support of military families and retention, the absence of a rigorous research program in these areas is a cause for concern.

IV. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND GUARD AND RESERVE ISSUES

A. INTRODUCTION

The findings in this section are based on two sources: 1) the responses of personnel from three Army National Guard units, three Army Reserve units and a Coast Guard Reserve unit and their family members who participated in 23 Service member focus groups and 4 family member groups conducted by DACOWITS in 2005; and 2) research data available from secondary sources such as the Status of Forces Surveys and the National Guard Bureau. The protocol for both Service member and family member focus groups contained questions that related to their overall experience trying to balance family responsibilities, civilian employment and military service.

B. BALANCING FAMILY, CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT AND MILITARY SERVICE

Balancing family responsibilities, personal goals, civilian employment and military service poses unique challenges for Guard and Reserve Service members and their families. DACOWITS asked focus group participants to discuss these challenges and to offer recommendations to help Service members and their families achieve greater balance.

Balancing family responsibilities, civilian employment and military career

Participants in all of the Reserve Component service member and family member focus groups said that making choices among the demands of family life, civilian career and military duty is a difficult part of Guard and Reserve service. Striking a balance is a challenge to which nearly all participants could relate:

“When you are younger and single, it is a lot easier to do this kind of thing. Things are different when you are in your twenties and don’t have a family versus when you are in your thirties and do have a family. When you start hitting that point in your life when you have to start thinking about the future, it changes.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

“I had to tell my unit that I couldn’t go to Germany because of my career and also because I was in school. I couldn’t take anymore time off.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

When asked to identify the major challenges to achieving a balance between their family responsibilities, civilian careers and military service, Guard and Reserve members and their families identified the experience of mobilization, including:

- a. Unpredictability and length of mobilization
- b. Negative impact of mobilization on civilian jobs.

Family members, in particular, found mobilization stressful, saying that they were not well prepared, mobilizations are too long, and there is little support for families:

“It is hard to balance during mobilization. You are not prepared for the mobilization, because they are Reservists. They are there longer than the Active duty and there is absolutely no family support.”

—Family Member, USAR

Any balance that Service members and their families have managed to achieve can be threatened when mobilization affects Service members’ civilian employment opportunities:

“My husband had started a job for a few days before he got called up and had to quit because they weren’t going to keep a new guy on for a year.”

—Family Member, USCGR

Consequences of choosing between military careers and families or civilian jobs.

National Guard and Reserve members were asked if they have ever had to choose between a military career opportunity and a family or civilian career responsibility.

Focus groups contained some individuals who said that they had turned down military career opportunities because of family or civilian career responsibilities (reported in half of the groups) and others who said that they have chosen the military over family or civilian careers (reported in half of the groups). Themes that emerged across groups included:

- a. Turning down military opportunities negatively affects military careers
- b. The military mission often takes precedence over family and civilian careers.

Service members reported experience with turning down military career opportunities, including annual training and military schooling, because of their family or job responsibilities. Some said that their military careers suffer as a result:

“... I had invested my money in my own business and my managers wanted me to go to AT and I couldn’t go. My company commander told me that I needed to be there. I had to balance that and I chose my business and I was demoted after that.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAR

“I’ve had to decide between personal goals and a military career. With PLDC slots, there are very few summer slots, and I’m trying to graduate from college. I can’t miss 2 weeks to further my career in the military. I have to get my degree for my personal life.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

Reserve Component Service members also said there were times when they had to put the military mission first to pursue military career opportunities, even when doing so negatively affected their civilian careers or the well-being of their families:

“Yes, I’ve chosen to turn down civilian positions because of my military and family obligations. I haven’t turned down any military assignments though.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

Participants in about one-third of the focus groups reported finding no conflict between pursuing military career opportunities and their responsibilities to family or civilian careers:

“I have never experienced a conflict. They are two different things. My civilian career is my 8-5 weekdays, then commitment to the Guard is weekends and so I can develop both.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

C. IMPACT OF MILITARY SERVICE ON CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT

DACOWITS asked National Guard and Reserve members about the effect that military service has on their civilian jobs and the attitudes of their employers and co-workers. Members’ responses also addressed the effect that military service has on their student status and completing their college education.

Effect of service in the Reserve Component on civilian employment

National Guard and Reserve member focus groups contained a mix of individuals; some who said that military service has had a positive impact on their civilian careers (reported in three-fourths of the focus groups) and others who said that military service has had a negative impact on their civilian jobs (reported in half of the focus groups).

Positive effect on civilian employment

The following themes emerged across focus groups that contained Service members who reported that their military service affects their civilian careers in positive ways whether they are employed in the private or public sectors:

- a. Military training helps them qualify for civilian jobs
- b. Civilian promotions and career opportunities remain available.

Some Guard and Reserve Service members said that the knowledge, skills, and abilities they acquire through their military service assists them in their current civilian jobs or have assisted them in seeking new civilian positions:

“My military background was why my previous employer hired me. I lacked the technical experience in the field, but they counted my military experience in lieu of my actual experience.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USCGR

“Other career opportunities have opened up—counter intelligence and things.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

Some Service members also reported that promotions and other opportunities remain available to them, despite their military commitments:

“I would like to commend my employer. They supported me 110% during mobilization. They gave me the promotions that I was supposed to get while I was gone. I have absolutely no complaints.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

Negative effect on civilian employment/education

Service members who described negative effects of military service on civilian employment cited the following most frequently:

- a. Falling behind on work and missing promotional opportunities
- b. Losing civilian skills or jobs during mobilization
- c. Missing school and falling behind in college completion.

Service members described falling behind on work and missing promotion opportunities as examples of the negative effects of their Guard and Reserve service on their civilian careers:

“When I am not there, it puts the reports behind....It presents problems with having my job done by other people.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

“When you are mobilized, you miss work and the opportunity to compete with your co-workers. I’ve missed out on some things.”
—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

“I didn’t get promoted because I was deployed.”
—Male, Junior Officer, USCGR

Other negative effects were related to mobilizations, such as not being able to use their civilian skills or losing their job:

“I’m an emergency technician assistant. The biggest impact was that the deployment took me away from my job and it’s taken me awhile to get back into it....It’s the skill level thing; if you don’t do it, you lose it.”
—Male, Junior Officer, USCGR

“I actually lost a couple jobs because of mobilization and my other Reserve commitments.”
—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

Service members in about one-third of the focus groups also said that mobilizations negatively affected their education by interfering with their ability to fulfill college requirements:

“Work wasn’t a problem, but I had some major issues with school. The problem was the unpredictability of our mobilization schedule. I didn’t know when to withdraw from the university because I didn’t know when we were going to deploy.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Attitudes of civilian employers and co-workers toward Guard and Reserve service

Guard and Reserve members were asked about the attitudes of their civilian employers and co-workers. Nearly all the groups contained participants who said that civilian employers and co-workers were supportive of their service, and about half of the groups contained participants who characterized their civilian employers and coworkers attitudes as unsupportive.

Supportive attitudes

Themes that emerged across focus groups containing Reserve Component members who said employers and co-workers were supportive included:

- a. Employers and co-workers understood and supported military obligations
- b. Employers and co-workers helped families during mobilization.

Service members with supportive employers and co-workers explained that their colleagues respected the obligations of their Guard and Reserve service often because they had prior military experience themselves:

“My employer doesn’t have a problem. All three of my leadership support me because they are all retired military.”
—Male, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“Both of my employers thought it was great that I was in the Army Reserve. They were sad when I deployed because they didn’t want me to go, but when I came back, I got my old jobs back.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Some Service members also reported that employers and co-workers extended support to their family members during mobilization:

“My co-workers supported me 100%, and they helped my family while I was gone.”
—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Non-supportive attitudes

Other Guard and Reserve members reported that their civilian employers and/or co-workers do not have supportive attitudes:

- a. Employers were concerned with negative impact of absence on business productivity
- b. Co-workers resented the Service member’s absence.

Participants explained that service in the Guard and Reserve, especially during mobilization, can have a negative impact on their employer’s bottom line, which affects their attitudes:

“My particular company is not happy about it. But, they understand that they legally have to let me go. But I know that it is always in the back of their mind

that I am not as flexible as others. It [my absence for Guard training] costs them money and time. It is a negative for my company.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

“Some employers hold it against you.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Reserve Component members also reported difficulty with co-workers who resent having to pick up the slack during their absence, or who do not understand why Guard and Reserve members can return to previously held positions:

“When I returned from mobilization, a lot of my old co-workers had left. The new employees questioned why I was getting a raise and my old position. They thought that it was special treatment.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

“I kind of got the cold shoulder from my employer and co-workers when I got back.”

Male, Junior Enlisted, USAR

D. MEETING MILITARY CAREER DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

DACOWITS wanted to learn about Service members’ perceptions about career development opportunities and requirements within the Guard and Reserve, since prior focus group findings and DoD research had shown that mid career was often the point at which Service members—particularly female junior officers—were choosing not to terminate their military career. Questions addressed the requirements associated with promotion, job opportunities, physical fitness, education, geographic mobility and the influence of leadership.

Experience meeting career development requirements

DACOWITS asked Service members questions about their ability to meet career development requirements. Typically, focus groups contained a mix of participants; some who said it was difficult to meet these requirements (reported in slightly less than half of the groups) and others who said it was not difficult (reported in more than one-third of focus groups). Participants (reported in half of the groups) said that trying to meet these requirements was difficult to accomplish while meeting civilian employment and family obligations.

Difficult to meet career development requirements

Guard and Reserve members identified factors that made it difficult for them to meet career development requirements, including:

- a. Limited promotional opportunities and favoritism
- b. Limited training and education opportunities
- c. Limited time and access due to mobilization(s).

Participants identified a lack of unit support and a system that values ‘who you know’ over job performance:

“I don’t think this unit is good with promotions. They aren’t trying to send anybody to school or get them promoted. It’s hard to get into military school. They are not going to take the initiative to help you.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

“To speak on behalf of Reservists: these guys have been called up three times since 9/11 and yeah, there are opportunities for school, but they’re only gonna take 2 Reserve members in the course. How does that help them?”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USCGR

“The Army Reserves is a buddy-buddy system. If you don’t know people and you’re not scratching their backs, you’re not going to advance.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

Reserve Component members also reported that there were limited spaces, particularly in comparison with allocations for Active Component members:

“On websites, there are 1-2 slots for school, and there are 8,000 [people] in the Coast Guard, and how many guys get into the schools they want?”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USCGR

“I think by being in the Guard, it’s like we’re on the bottom. If you look at it, there are more Guard troops [than Active duty] fighting in Iraq, but when it comes to military schools, we’re the last.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Some Service members found that mobilization made it more difficult to meet specific military career requirements:

“It was hard to study for our upcoming promotional exams while overseas. We came back from mobilization and had to take our promotional exams. If you ask unit personnel how many were 100% prepared for that exam, maybe 25% would say yes. I certainly wasn’t.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USCGR

Ability to meet career requirements

On the other hand, Service members in more than one-third of groups reported that they are able to meet career requirements. Themes that emerged across groups included:

- a. Individuals actively pursue opportunities to advance skills and careers
- b. Leadership supports training and education.

Service members said that they had to take personal initiative and responsibility for their own career progression, to include learning needed skills and pushing for promotions:

“When I first got here, there were no other machinists in the motor pool. However, by working with the mechanics, I was able to get an idea of what’s going to happen. I’ve gotten to know all the guys at the motor pool and everyone shows me how to do different tasks. That I don’t have another machinist to shadow hurts a little, but I get an idea of what’s to come and have learned how to use the tools.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

“I’ve really had to push for my promotion. You have to be your own advocate and prove yourself. I’ve had a few people mentor me and that’s the reason I got promoted. They’ve recognized that I can do my job. You just have to push for what you want.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

Service members in these focus groups report that leadership supports them in their efforts to attend training and education opportunities:

“We’re sending more people to school now than we ever have.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USAR

Military career requirements conflict with demands of civilian career and family

Themes that emerged with respect to balancing military career requirements with demands of civilian career and family obligations included:

- a. Difficult to meet both military and civilian education-related requirements
- b. Difficult to advance in both military and civilian careers.

Reserve Component participants found it difficult to balance the educational requirements of either their military or civilian careers with their service, especially given expectations of future mobilization:

“When you come back after being gone for a year, and then you think about the schools I need to go to better myself, and then you tell your civilian employer that you have to go to school for 2 weeks, and they are like, ‘You were just gone for a year!’”

—Male, Junior Officer, USCGR

“I know I want to continue school and become a nurse. However, nursing programs are very strict, and I’m afraid that as soon as I start the program, I will have to leave for mobilization. I don’t want my professional education to suffer.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Service members reported that they had to prioritize career advancement in either the military or in their civilian position, and that doing both at the same time was too difficult:

“I’ve learned that you can’t focus your energy on advancing in your military and civilian careers at the same, especially when they are so different.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Effect of leadership on career development

Guard and Reserve members were asked what ways leaders affect their career development, promotion and job opportunities. Almost all groups contained participants who said leadership plays a key role in career development. Themes that emerged across the focus groups included:

- a. Lack of leadership support and information limits career advancement
- b. Good leadership contributes to career advancement.

Reserve Component members in more than half of groups reported they do not receive support or advice from leadership about their military career progression. As a result, participants reported feeling uncertain about what they need to do:

“There’s not enough individual one-on-one interaction going on and ‘Let me give you some advice.’”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, ARNG

“Depends on the personalities. You may have some Sergeants or a Sergeant Major who just don’t care, but some of them do. It depends on the personalities.”
—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Other Guard and Reserve members were clear that good leaders have helped them in their career advancement:

“In general, support from leadership is not a problem. If I need to go to school, I can go and get adequate funds to do that.”
—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

“They make it clear what you need to do to get promoted.”
—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

E. EXPERIENCE OF MOBILIZATION: READINESS, STRESS, PREPARATION, PREDICTABILITY, INCOME AND BENEFITS

All of the Guard and Reserve Service member focus groups in 2005 contained participants who had been mobilized since September 11, 2001. Ninety-three per cent of the Reserve Component focus group participants reported being mobilized at least once since September 11, 2001. These RC members reported being on Active duty or mobilized for different amounts of time within the past 3 years: 1 – 3 months (1%), 4 – 6 months (4%), 7 – 9 months (4%), 10 – 12 months (7%), 12 – 18 months (47%), 18 – 24 months (20%), and more than 24 months (17%). The reason most frequently cited for Active duty or mobilization was participating in overseas military operations, reported by over three-fourths of those with recent Active duty/mobilization experience. Less than one-fourth of participants reported being mobilized for State Active Duty. However, this latter number would change if participants had been questioned after state mobilizations in response to Hurricane Katrina and Rita.

Between September 2001 and December 2004, the number of Reserve Component personnel mobilized for federal duty in support of Operation Noble Eagle (homeland security support post 9/11), Operation Enduring Freedom (Operations in Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Operations in Iraq) increased by 103,178 from 77,455 in September 2001 to 180,633 in December 2004. As of 30 September 2005, there were 142,636 people mobilized in support of these operations. During April and May 2003, 223,333 RC personnel were mobilized, which represents the height of mobilization thus far.

Of primary concern to DACOWITS in 2005 was the impact that the increased frequency and length of mobilizations was having on Guard and Reserve members and their families. Reserve Component personnel in all branches of the military have experienced

a dramatic increase in the number of days they have been called to either federal service, or, in the case of the National Guard, State Active Duty (SAD).

Compounding the federal duty for military operations has been the increase in State Active Duty (SAD) mandays for those Guard members who have remained at home. Mandays are the cumulative days spent by all RC personnel performing duties under Title 10 or Title 32 of the United States Code or the State laws governing the Reserve Components. Under State law, the governor may order National Guard soldiers to perform State Active Duty (SAD) to respond to emergencies, disasters, civil disturbances, and for other reasons authorized by state law. In 2001, National Guard Service members SAD days were 236,179, which doubled by 2004 to 545,202, and doubled again to 1,180,784 in 2005. For example, while Florida National Guard units were mobilized for federal duty in Iraq, those remaining in the country experienced an increase from 249 SAD mandays in 2001 to 180,000 SAD mandays in 2004. This increase was due largely to activation in response to natural disasters—Hurricane Charlie in 2004. As one focus group member stated:

“Stress is being gone when three hurricanes hit your state.”
Male, Senior Officer, ARNG

In 2005, the SAD mandays for Florida National Guard members were still high compared to 2001 at 78,487. More recently, RC personnel were mobilized nationwide to assist with rescue efforts in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. During Katrina 3,998 Mississippi National Guard members were serving in support of current operations overseas and 2,601 were called up to assist in disaster relief. Many of these Service members had only recently returned from duty overseas. Other Guard members serving in Iraq were themselves victims of the hurricane—losing their homes and even family members while mobilized.

Because the increase in overall mandays within the RC is likely to affect their present performance and their subsequent decisions on recruitment and retention, the focus group protocol contained questions about mobilization, including: readiness of the individual and the unit to perform; stressful aspects for Service members and family; challenges faced by children and spouses; affect on income and benefits; and preparation for, and predictability of tours. Responses to questions on the utilization of support services during deployment will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Individual preparedness for wartime job

Guard and Reserve members were asked if they and their units were ready or prepared to perform the wartime job and mission for which they would be mobilized for. Service members were evenly divided on whether they believed they were personally prepared

for mobilization. More than half of the focus groups contained Service members who questioned their unit's readiness.

Individual prepared to perform

Focus groups typically contained some individuals who said that they were personally prepared to perform their wartime jobs (reported in three-fourths of the groups) and others who said they were not prepared (reported in two-thirds of the groups). Service members who reported being prepared to perform their wartime jobs emphasized the following:

- a. Military training prepared RC members to perform wartime jobs
- b. Civilian job training prepared RC members to perform wartime jobs

Reserve Component members said that they were trained to handle wartime responsibilities and that they were well-trained to meet the requirements of their MOS:

“Before I went to Iraq, we went to Ft. Campbell for training. I had already received that training, so I was well prepared.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

“I was prepared for my MOS. That is what you do. I was ready for that.”
—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Service members also said that civilian employment prepared them for their wartime jobs:

“I work in the medical field in both the military and civilian sector. I think I felt prepared only because I do this kind of work in my civilian job.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Individual not prepared to perform

Other RC members questioned their personal preparedness, citing the following factors:

- a. Lack of sufficient, hands-on training in their MOS
- b. Lack of training for actual wartime assignments.

Some Guard and Reserve members said that often training was inadequate, especially when it did not provide them with hands-on experience:

“There is no doubt that other members of my MOS during traditional Guard training are not in a position to get their hands-on [training]. Just getting the equipment to show some of the younger Soldiers [is difficult]... The 6 months I was here with the unit, there was no actual hands-on training for Soldiers in my MOS.”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, ARNG

“We did not do any fueling during the entire time we were at Ft. Drum.”

Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Focus group participants also said they were unprepared for their wartime jobs when they were assigned different responsibilities in theater than the ones for which they had trained:

“I was 100% prepared to do my MOS because I’ve been training in it for year, and I knew what I was going to do. But when I got there, I didn’t do the job that I’m trained to do. I was doing something else. I was trained on the spot to do the job.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“My civilian job helped prepare me to perform my MOS [building design], but didn’t teach me how to handle a nuclear weapon. As far as being prepared for battle, my unit didn’t teach me anything. I didn’t know my elbow from my knee.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Unit preparedness for wartime job

Focus groups were more likely to contain National Guard and Reserve members who believed that their units were not well-prepared to perform their wartime missions (reported in three-fourths of the groups) than participants who believed that their units were prepared (reported in one-third of groups)

Unit not prepared to perform

Within groups containing RC members who did not consider their unit well prepared, the following factors emerged most frequently:

- a. Lack of equipment, supplies
- b. Lack of training in mission area or relevant conditions
- c. Lack of manpower.

Guard and Reserve members reported that their units were unprepared because they lacked the equipment and supplies needed for mobilization, often because this equipment had remained overseas following their redeployment:

“Supplies and equipment were not distributed properly....Some people had five uniforms, while some people only had one uniform. We had Vietnam-era flack vests and some of us didn’t have wet weather gear or sleeping bags.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

“Our unit is not as prepared as it was 4 years ago. A lot of our equipment is still overseas because we didn’t bring it with us when we returned. We’ve received some replacement equipment, which is inadequate. So, we are not prepared to mobilize as a unit in terms of equipment, and we’ve also lost three-fourths of our battalion staff that have transferred and attached to other units.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

Guard and Reserve members said that unit readiness levels were negatively affected by ambiguity in mission and training that took place in terrains and weather conditions that were different from those in theater:

“It was hard to prepare for deployment because we weren’t sure what our mission was going to be. We ended up installing fuel lines and building prisons. None of us knew how to do either of those things.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

“Before we left for Fort Drum, we were neither physically nor psychologically prepared for war. When we left Fort Drum, we were somewhat prepared for war, but we could have been better prepared. The main obstacle was that the training environment was too different from the combat zone. Iraq is located in a desert climate and Fort Drum is cold and wet. How is qualifying on a weapon in the freezing rain going to map on to firing a weapon in a sand storm?”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Focus group participants also pointed out that manpower issues affected unit readiness:

“The reason we waited around for awhile [before deploying] was because we were only at 80% strength, and we had to be at 90% before we could leave.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USAR

Unit prepared to perform

Focus groups also contained Service members who described their units as prepared to meet their wartime mission requirements attributing readiness to the following factors:

- a. Leadership
- b. Teamwork.

Service members cited the importance of leadership and its impact on unit readiness:

“We had good leadership. We think outside the box and are more adaptable and have real world experience....I think that, with the training and leadership, that made us prepared.”

—Male, Senior Officer, ARNG

Participants also said that teamwork is an essential component of mission readiness:

“Even if you weren’t up to speed, that’s where teamwork comes in. Some people do things better than others. We were able to succeed in our mission.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Most stressful aspects of mobilization

DACOWITS sought to learn more about the mobilization experience—particularly those aspects considered stressful to RC members and families.

Guard and Reserve members reported different assessments of the overall stress they experienced during mobilization: 45% reported stress as high, 37% reported stress as moderate, and 18% reported stress as low. When asked to identify the most stressful aspects of mobilization, the most frequently identified themes were:

- a. Difficulty in balancing military and family/personal responsibilities
- b. Unpredictability of mobilization schedule
- c. Poor living conditions/quality of life in theater
- d. Lack of or ineffective leadership in theatre.

Reserve Component members in more than half of the focus groups reported that the struggle to balance their military obligations with their family and/or personal responsibilities during mobilization is a source of stress:

“Being away from my son. He was 5 years old at the time. My mother watched him.... We had some guardianship issues and issues with our house. Things at home; power of attorney; civilians don’t recognize my parents being able to take care of my legal matters. My son got in trouble at school. And [my family is] not on a post like an Active duty Army base, so there’s no support system there.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

“To go back to the stressful question ... it was...the four hurricanes. One hit here on the west coast, and a bunch on the east coast. They had some weeks advance notice of these, and we were like, ‘How are we going to get back’ and ‘What are we going to do for families.’ That was the most stressful thing. I own a house, and their [the military’s] response to my concerns was that ‘we’ll figure it out.’ There was no preparation for that kind of situation.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USCGR

RC members in about half of the groups reported the unpredictability of the mobilization schedule as stressful, especially when participants lacked advance notice and specific travel dates:

“I think the most stressful aspect of mobilization was the lack of advanced notice.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

RC members also reported that their living conditions and overall quality of life during mobilization were very difficult to adjust to:

“I was stressed the first 4 months. We were in tents, and it was hot. There was no AC [air conditioning], and it was hot. We only had two bottles of water a day. No phones or computers. ... We were building it all while we were there. I lost a lot of weight. We were eating MREs.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, ARNG

In a few focus groups, RC members attributed stress to ineffective leadership. Specifically, they described leaders who did not take care of subordinates, did not communicate well with their troops, and abused their authority. Members said it was sometimes difficult to determine who was in charge:

“The lack of communication between the leadership and the troops [was a problem]. We were just waiting for something to happen. We were just shooting from the hip. Before the mobilization, during, and after.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Adequacy of official notice to activate Active duty benefits

DACOWITS asked Guard and Reserve members and their families about their experiences preparing for mobilization. Focus groups contained a mix of individuals: some who said that 30 days were not sufficient (reported in over three-fourths of the groups) and those who said the time was sufficient (reported in two-thirds of the groups).

Inadequate amount of time

Among the focus groups containing participants who said that they were not given enough time, the following themes emerged:

- a. Too many tasks to accomplish in too little time
- b. Process for activating benefits was difficult.

Reserve Component participants in almost all of the focus groups said there were too many tasks to complete, given that during this time they needed to also handle issues related to their family responsibilities, civilian employment or college courses, and meet the unit's deployment readiness requirements:

“The 30 days is not a full 30 days. We only had a 2-day weekend and I need to get my wife off her job to get here and get it done. You are just trying to cram too much in. You are working with much less time.”

—Male, Senior Officer, ARNG

RC members noted that activating Active duty benefits was especially difficult when they were given less than 30 days notice:

“We only had 4-days notice. We ran around like chickens with their heads cut off.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

“We didn't have 30 days. So when it actually came to mobilizing we had 3 days. We didn't have enough time to prepare. Thirty days would have been better. I don't think that families had time to prepare.”

—Family Member, USAR

Adequate amount of time

Regardless of the number of days Service members had to prepare for mobilization, two-thirds of RC member focus groups also contained individuals who reported that the notice was adequate:

“In 30 days, you can get [your] stuff in order.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Mobilization schedule

DACOWITS wanted to know how mobilization schedules—specifically the predictability and length of mobilization—affected Guard and Reserve members and their families.

Fifty four percent of Service members reported that they were dissatisfied with their ability to obtain timely mobilization information and 46% reported satisfaction with the timeliness of the information they received. Family members, however, reported more satisfaction than dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the information they received: 64% reported being satisfied and 36% reported being dissatisfied.

Predictability of timing and length of mobilizations

Participants in all of the Reserve Component and family member focus groups agreed that mobilization schedules were unpredictable and negatively affected Service members and their families. Themes that emerged most frequently across groups were:

- a. Lack of predictability limits Service members' and civilian employers' planning
- b. Long, unpredictable schedules lower morale, increase stress and affect retention
- c. Lack of reliable information on mobilization schedules increases distrust.

The lack of predictability affects RC members and their civilian employers:

“It’s just unrealistic to expect people, even military people, to put their lives on hold for 2 years. It’s not realistic to expect employers to hold your job. It’s not realistic to leave your family for 2 years and for them to accept you back with open arms.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

Guard and Reserve members said that long and unpredictable mobilization schedules lower morale and increase stress on RC members and families, ultimately affecting retention decisions:

“For the most part, Soldiers prefer shorter mobilizations and, on average, they’re mobilized for 18 months. It’s disappointing for them to be told 6 months and then to get 18 months. From the stand points of morale and retention, shorter mobilizations are preferred.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

Family members said that stress was compounded by their lack of trust in the accuracy of the information they received from the military:

“Because things were changing—stop loss and all—I did not trust the information I was given about my husband’s date of return.”

—Family Member, USAR

“You never know when your husband is coming home until he’s on a plane and in the air. Even then, there’s the possibility his plane might be diverted.”
—Family Member, USAR

Effects of mobilization on family

DACOWITS moderators asked Reserve Component members to identify the most stressful aspects of mobilization for their families:

- a. Spouses’ difficulty managing family responsibilities alone
- b. Family concern for safety of deployed Service member
- c. Poor communication and unreliable information from the military
- d. Negative media and news reports.

Three-fourths of the focus groups contained RC members who reported that their family members found it stressful to manage all of the household responsibilities and deal with life events on their own:

“I have two boys and my oldest son is starting puberty. My wife had some challenges with him. ... She had some significant stress because of the oldest son. There was nothing that I could do about it.”
—Male, Senior Officer, ARNG

Concern for the safety of their deployed loved one was a major source of stress for families:

“Communication was fine stateside, but on the ground, there was no communication. They [families] didn’t know whether we were alive or dead for four months.”
—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

RC members said that rumors and poor communication with their families is problematic. Families want accurate information from the military in a timely manner:

“The rumor mill is awful. I tell my family, ‘don’t believe anything until it comes out of my mouth.’ A lot of the time, leadership sits back and waits a few days to clarify rumors. Rumors are awful. They kill morale for us and the rumors also really hurt family members because they don’t know what to believe.”
—Male, Senior Enlisted, USAR

“Our FRG did not give accurate information....They [FRGs] were guaranteeing that we would be home on certain dates. The families were getting so angry with them.”

—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

In addition, Service members described the media’s portrayal of military operations overseas as negatively affecting their families:

“My family was on pins and needles because of the bad media.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Challenges of deployment for children

DACOWITS moderators asked Guard and Reserve family members a series of questions about the challenges that children of different ages faced during deployment. Parents reported that their children experienced different levels of stress overall, with 57% of the focus group participants reported that stress levels were high, 14% reporting that they were moderate, and 29% reporting that they were low.

Challenges for young children

Among focus groups containing parents of young children (below the age of 6), the following mobilization-related challenges emerged:

- a. Failure to recognize returning parent
- b. Stress of back-to-back deployments.

In all of the Reserve Component family groups, parents of young children reported the children’s failure to recognize their returning parent as their primary concern:

“When he [husband who was also mobilized] was away, she [our daughter] would ask about daddy. He would talk to her on the phone, and [she] wondered, “why can’t I go with him,” and that makes it harder...When he came home, she didn’t know who he was until he spoke because she had talked to him on the phone and she recognized his voice.”

—Family Member, USGCR

Family members also said that back-to-back mobilizations were particularly stressful for their young children:

“At first, I don’t think that my children understood why my husband was gone for so long. He came home and then left again, which was hard. It set us back 6 months. After the first extension, things weren’t good. It was just an emotional set back for my children. It was very stressful.”

—Family Member, USAR

Challenges for school-age children

Among the RC focus groups containing parents of school-age children (ages 6 to 12), the following issues emerged:

- a. Attitude and behavior problems
- b. Poor academic performance.

Guard and Reserve family members said that their school-age children reacted to mobilizations with attitude and behavior problems, including anxiety, anger, and acting out:

“My oldest son is 10, and he doesn’t like change. I think that it was hardest on him because he just sort of didn’t have the same world...he missed his father. His teachers saw a lot of the changes. He had some behavior problems at school during that year. He is better now that his father is back.”

—Family Member, USAR

They also reported declines in their children’s schoolwork that improved once their absent parents returned from mobilization:

“Mobilization impacted my son’s grades very much. You could see a difference in his grades when daddy left versus when daddy returned. When my husband left, my son was getting Bs and Cs. When my husband returned, my son’s grades improved.”

—Family Member, USCGR

Challenges for teenage children

Very few Reserve Component family member focus group contained parents of teenagers (ages 13 to 18). Among those that did, the mobilization-related issues for teenagers that emerged included:

- a. Behavior problems
- b. General sense of loss
- c. School problems.

Family members attributed their teens' behavior problems, general sense of loss, and problems at school to the mobilization:

“My 13-year-old son developed habits of lying and behavioral issues. There were personality changes, and school problems were more prevalent. He was defiant. He is still struggling in school. At those teenage years, when he is the same size as me and he is defiant, that was a problem.”

—Family Member, USAR

Recommendations to help children cope with mobilization

RC family member responses to DACOWITS requests for recommendations to help children handle the challenges of mobilization fell into three major categories:

- a. Increase communication between mobilized RC members and their children
- b. Hold more events and activities for children
- c. Expand family support programs and have paid, full-time personnel.

Family members said that maintaining good communication between the mobilized parent and children is important. Participants recommended increasing access to communication technology (e.g., satellite phones, e-mail, and video teleconferences), as well as improving the quality of information they receive:

“There need to be more phones for kids to talk to their parents.”

—Family Member, USAR

Guard and Reserve family members recommended holding social events for children as a way to help children cope with the separation of mobilization. Participants said that children benefit from these activities because they enable children to meet others whose parents are also mobilized:

“This unit's family support group did the best it could with what it had. I've been through mobilization before with another company, and it was very different. The other company did so much for the kids—babies through teens. We had Christmas parties, Halloweens parties, etc. All that stuff made the mobilization easier for the kids to take. I don't know if the last mobilization was this unit's first, but family support was not ready for the experience.”

—Family Member, USAR

Family members also recommended that the military increase the availability and improve the quality of family support by creating more family support programs, and by replacing volunteers with paid staff:

“I think that the family readiness volunteers should be paid, full-time employees.”
—Family Member, USAR

Challenges for spouses

All of the spouses of the participating RC family members had experienced a mobilization during the past three years. The total amount of time that that their Service member had spent away mobilized or deployed in the past 3 years varied between the participants. These periods ranged from 7 to 9 months (14%), 10 months to less than 1 year (14%), 1 year to less than 18 months (43%) 18 months to less than 2 years (14%), and 2 years or more (14%).

Asked to assess the levels of stress they experienced during mobilization, 57% of family members reported that stress levels were high, 29% reported stress levels were moderate, and 14% reported that stress levels were low. Guard and Reserve spouses reported that the most challenging issues they faced during mobilization were:

- a. Difficulty assuming household and family responsibilities
- b. Challenges dealing with family-related issues.
- c. Resolving military pay problems
- d. Coping with stress-related illness.

Assuming sole responsibility for household tasks and the well-being of the family emerged as the primary challenge within the National Guard and Reserve family member groups:

“I found it hard being mom and dad, doing everything, literally. Trying to run a house with car problems and house problems. It’s not what are we going do about this, it’s what am *I* going do about this. It’s like being superwoman.”
—Family Member, USCGR

Family members also identified additional stressful aspects of mobilization, including coping with military pay problems and stress-induced illness:

“We went from having \$50,000 a year to \$15,000 a year. He was home for two weeks and we got served a notice that our house was going to be taken away. The bank was very cooperative after we provided it. He is a certified mechanic and he is an E5 so he didn’t make much money.”
—Family Member, USAR

“I figured since this was the third one I could do it, but this deployment, probably because of the news and everything, it was cumulative, and even physicians said, “We can’t find anything wrong with you,” and I said it was stress.”
—Family Member, USCGR

Effect of media coverage on family members

Guard and Reserve family members said that media coverage of military operations affected them and their family members during mobilization, often by increasing fears for the safety of mobilized RC members. Participants described problems with media coverage, including:

- a. Bias in news reporting
- b. Stress of news exposure
- c. Negative effect of news on children.

Most of the focus groups contained spouses who said they perceived news reports as biased toward emphasizing the negative aspects of the war and ignoring the good that Service members have accomplished in Iraq:

“I think there are too many negative stories in the media. You hear nothing good.”
—Family Member, USAR

Family members also said they found viewing news reports stressful. Not only did they actively avoid watching television, they tried to limit their children’s exposure to news about the war:

“Once I saw an interview with all these Army widows, and I had to turn off the television.”
—Family Member, USAR

“For the first few weeks that my husband was gone...I was glued to the TV and then I realized that my kids were going to see it. I had to stop watching it.”
—Family Member, USAR

Effect of mobilization on income and benefits

DACOWITS was interested in the effect that mobilization has on the quality of life of the RC member and their families, including their income and benefits. Information collected from DoD surveys confirmed focus group findings that mobilizations impact income and benefits:

The May 2004 *Status of Forces* Survey for Reserve Component personnel (*May 2004 SOF Survey*) collected information on income changes for Guard and Reserve personnel and their families:

- 70% reported a decrease in their monthly civilian income: 41% reported a decrease of \$2,501 or more and 29% reported a decrease of \$1,001 to \$2,500.
- 61% reported an increase of \$1,001 or more in their monthly military income during activation, with 80% of senior officers compared to 54% of junior enlisted Service members reporting an increase of \$1,001 or more in their monthly military income during activation.
- 55% of married/separated Reserve Component members reported an income increase and 42% reported an income decrease.
- 77% reported that their spouse's monthly income during activation did not change.
- 51% of single Reserve Component members reported an increase in their total monthly income during activation while 48% reported a decrease.

Civilian employment: pay, benefits and support

Guard and Reserve Service member and family member focus groups contained a mix of participants: some who said that mobilization had a positive or neutral impact on their income and benefits (reported in almost all of the groups), and others who said that mobilization had a negative impact (reported in half of the groups).

Positive impact on income and benefits

Among participants who reported that mobilization had affected their income and benefits in positive ways, the following factors emerged:

- a. Civilian pay and/or benefits were maintained
- b. Military pay/allowances higher than civilian income
- c. Tax benefits.

Guard and Reserve Service member and family member focus group participants reported that their income increased during mobilization if their civilian employers continued their pay and/or benefits. For these RC members, mobilization had a neutral to positive effect:

“Financially, my circumstances improved. I’m a state employee. The state gave me 15 days military time and I had personal time too.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“I actually made extra money. It turns out that E8 pay is \$200 less than what [I was making]. So, [my employer] made up the difference.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USAR

“He was actually making more money and [had] better insurance.”

—Family Member, USAR

The *SOF Survey* shows that changes in the income of RC members during mobilizations vary based on not only rank, but on their civilian status as students, part-time or full-time employees. The 2005 DACOWITS focus groups also found differences. In particular, RC members who were students or part-time employees tended to report receiving higher military pay and benefits during mobilizations than from their civilian salaries and benefits:

“I saved money. In my civilian job, I was working 25-hours-a-week and had taxes. I was working full time when deployed and had fewer expenditures.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USCGR

“Because I live in Boston, my BAH [basic allowance for housing] is fairly high. So, my income and benefits actually improved.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

Negative impact on income and benefits

Maintaining income and benefits during mobilization, particularly for married and mid to senior career personnel, appears dependent in large part on whether the employers decide to suspend or maintain the RC member’s civilian salary and benefits. The *May 2004 SOF Survey* found that:

- 93% of those RC members working part time and 67% of those working full time reported that their employer did not continue their regular salary during their activation.
- 64% of employed RC members reported that their employers did not continue their healthcare benefits during activation. Reports of employer health care benefit termination differed by gender, with 81% of females but only 62% of males reporting that their employer did not continue their healthcare benefits during activation.

- 67% of RC members reported that their employers did not continue their other company benefits during activation. Reports of company benefit termination differed by rank, with 80% of junior enlistees but only 62% of mid-grade enlisted personnel reporting that their employers terminated their company benefits during activation.
- 79% of RC members reported that their employers did not provide other types of support during activation. Differences existed by employment status, with 77% of those working full time and 91% of those working part time reporting that their employers did not provide other types of support during activation.

Focus groups also contained participants who reported that mobilization had negatively affected family income and benefits. Factors cited included:

- a. Lower military than civilian salaries
- b. Loss of civilian benefits
- c. Difficulty accessing the military medical insurance system

The factor cited most frequently by focus group participants as negatively affecting family income was the loss of salaries and benefits from civilian jobs:

“I made one eighth of my usual income while I was away. That’s one of the reasons it’s hard to recruit doctors.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

“We lost money because my husband had to quit a second job that had great full time benefits. ... He had to resign and that \$20,000 additional income was not there and the benefits were gone.... We lost as a family.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“Before I left, I had a full time job with a lot of benefits including 401k, full health, and dental. I don’t have that through the military.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

The cost of mobilization was not only measured in salary, but in benefits and in additional expenses for household or personal management while deployed. Data from the *May 2004 SOF Survey* indicate that:

- 40% reported experiencing additional childcare expenses during their most recent activation.
- 58% reported having additional expenses during activation due to communicating with family.

- 54% reported additional expenses due to household repairs, yard work, or car maintenance.
- 24% reported additional expenses due to storage or security of personal belongings.
- 18% reported additional expenses due to pet care.

Problems accessing TRICARE

Focus group participants also described their difficulties with the military medical insurance program, TRICARE:

“The insurance and healthcare was a mess. My wife was fighting with them the whole time. They lost the paperwork and I had to do it all again. If I am worried about my kids, I can’t get my head in the game.”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAR

“It took the longest time for TRICARE to pay the providers. Due to late payments, I’ve had doctors calling me demanding their money. The doctors are aggravated. You’re aggravated. TRICARE is aggravating.”

—Family Member, USAR

Recommendations to improve future mobilizations

DACOWITS asked Guard and Reserve members to provide recommendations for future mobilizations. Their responses emphasized the desire for:

- a. Predictable, shorter and fewer mobilizations
- b. Improved communications to family members and employers
- c. More time for pre-deployment planning
- d. Full time staff for family support programs.

Two-thirds of the focus groups contained RC members who recommended improving mobilizations by making them more predictable, shorter, and less frequent:

“Keep mobilization at one year. Don’t extend us beyond that timeframe. Otherwise, morale goes down the toilet. People get depressed, tired, and then get themselves killed.”

—Male, Senior Enlisted, USAR

“I think that it is unfair. We must have seen 3 exchanges of the Air Force, while we were there. Why are they special and get 3 to 6 months and the Marines get a max of 7 months and we are there for a year and half?”

—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

RC members in almost half of the focus groups recommended improvements in information flow from leadership to civilian employers and family members:

“I think that there should be an information briefing for employers so that they are not out of the loop. Why do you have longer mobilizations than other units? Maybe [give employers] a tour and see what we go through. And maybe for the kids, too.... I think they need to have something for the kids.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“We are lucky that we have a JAG officer. He can give us some of the answers that we need. We are lucky that we have one... not every unit has one. The briefings need to be from informed leadership.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, ARNG

Focus group participants also recommended improving pre-mobilization planning to give RC members more time and assistance to organize their personal and family affairs:

“I personally think there should be a formalized training process that takes place pre-mobilization. This is an increasingly necessary step now that people are transferring and joining different units. We need to make sure that people are synched up and fill in any vacancies.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

“Advance notice would be the most important. I would like 2 months.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Reserve Component members also suggested staffing changes in family support programs:

“In the family support realm, there needs to be a good coordinator. Every single unit that mobilizes needs to get DoD to find some money to have the part time paid position and coordinate the family group. Just to call up and say ‘How is everything going?’ There needs to be someone.”

—Male, Senior Officer, ARNG

F. AWARENESS AND USE OF SUPPORT SERVICES

DACOWITS focus group findings and supplemental research reviews during 2003 and 2004 suggest that those who do use support services find them generally helpful. However, while there are many outstanding family support programs and services within DoD and within the individual Services that are available before, during and after mobilization, it is a continual challenge to maximize the awareness and use of these programs and services, particularly by RC personnel and their families. The *September 2003* and the *May 2004 SOF Surveys* found that most of the services available to units to foster communications with families during deployment are not used.

For example:

- 83% had not used morale calls
- 95% had not used Videophones on base/Reserve Center or Armory
- 89% had not used military websites
- 80% had not used email to keep informed.

Of the small percentage of families who did report using the services, most of those who did found them very or extremely helpful. While 70% of the families of Guard and Reserve members reported having a military point of contact (POC), such as a Family Readiness/Support Group, Key Volunteer, or Ombudsman while their RC member was deployed, only 21% needed to contact their military POC during the deployment. Of those family members that did use the military POC, 65% were somewhat to very satisfied with the assistance they provided.

Because of the reported low rate of support service utilization on the 2003 and 2004 *Status of Forces* Surveys, DACOWITS pursued this topic in 2005 in its focus group discussions with RC Service personnel and family members. DACOWITS again found a reported lack of awareness and use of support services, especially for many of the innovative programs and services recently implemented to provide additional assistance during mobilizations.

Support Services

2005 focus group participants completed post-group surveys that contained questions on the use of unit based support services. The focus group protocols also specifically asked about the awareness and use of the new *Family Support Centers* and *Military One Source*. Service members and families offered recommendations to improve knowledge and use of all of these critical resources.

Unit specific support was generally rated more favorably than non-unit specific services like *Family Support Centers* and *Military One Source* by service and family members completing the 2005 DACOWITS post-group survey. Service and family member participants were generally satisfied with the following support services offered by unit personnel or representatives before, during and after deployment:

- Assistance with legal or administrative issues: 88% of Service members satisfied; 12% dissatisfied; 69% of family members satisfied; and 31% dissatisfied
- Obtaining military ID cards for family members: 92% of Service members satisfied; 8% dissatisfied
- Obtaining a unit POC for family members: 72% of Service members satisfied; 28% were dissatisfied; 69% of family members satisfied and; 31% were dissatisfied
- Unit family readiness group or program: 69% of Service members satisfied; 31% were dissatisfied; 62% of family members satisfied; and 38% were dissatisfied.

RC family members were less positive in their assessment of overall DoD support services: 58% reported satisfaction with family support and 42% reported dissatisfaction. This less favorable assessment was seen in responses to the questions related to *Family Support Centers* and *Military One Source* where an apparent lack of information and access reduced their utility to RC members and their families.

Awareness of Family Support Centers

DACOWITS moderators pointed out that there are 433 *Family Support Centers* for Guard and Reserve personnel and their families. These centers offer a wide range of services that are available to all RC and Active duty personnel and their families regardless of service affiliation or geographic home of residence. Despite their commendable efforts at outreach, DACOWITS found that focus group members were not accessing the benefits of these centers for several reasons:

- a. Service members and their families are unaware of *Family Support Centers*
- b. Service members and their families lack information about what the services offered and how to access them.

RC members in three-fourths of the focus groups reported that neither they nor their families were aware of the *Family Support Centers*:

“I am not aware of any *Family Support Centers*. I don’t know where the closest one is, and I didn’t use these services during mobilization.”
—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

RC participants in almost one-third of the groups said that, although they were somewhat aware of these services, they lacked adequate information about them. They didn’t know where the closest center was, what services were offered, or how to contact center personnel:

“No, I don’t know where the closest one is.”
—Family Member, USAR

“There is one [a Family Support Center] here, but I don’t know the person that I need to contact if I need information.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

Awareness of Military One Source

RC focus group participants gave mixed responses to questions on their awareness and use of *Military One Source*; three-fourths of the groups had individuals who did not know about it, and participants in slightly less than half of the groups knew of it. The following comments were made most frequently to explain the lack of awareness and use of this resource:

- a. Service members and families were not aware of *Military One Source*
- b. Service members and families used alternative non-military support services.

“I think I actually have heard of it, but I don’t know what it is.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

“Maybe it was on a business card. It sounds familiar.”
—Family Member, ARNG

“Yes, I have heard it [*Military One Source*]. The information on the website did not seem useful because it was already available from other sources.”
—Family Member, USAR

G. ISSUES AFFECTING RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

DACOWITS sought to learn about issues affecting retention and recruitment in the Guard and Reserve by asking RC members and their families about their retention intentions and preferences. RC members also commented on the current recruiting climate.

Factors Affecting Service Members' Retention Decisions

Career Intentions

Eighty-three percent of Guard and Reserve members who participated in DACOWITS focus groups in 2005 had fewer than 20 years of service. Among these RC members, 38% reported they would remain until retirement, 8% reported they would stay beyond their present obligation but not necessarily until retirement, 15% reported they would probably leave after their present obligation, 20% reported they would definitely leave after their present obligation, and 19% were undecided. Among the 17% of RC members with 20 years or more of service, 60% reported they would stay indefinitely or as long as possible, 12% reported they would retire as soon as possible, and 28% were undecided.

Factors influencing RC members' decisions to leave military

The factors that emerged most frequently as influential in the decisions of Guard and Reserve members to leave the military were:

- a. Unpredictability of mobilization schedule
- b. Difficulty balancing military obligations, family and civilian career
- c. Perceived leadership problems
- d. Risk of hostilities.

RC members in more than half of the focus groups said that they would consider leaving the Guard and Reserve because of mobilization. RC members noted that the extended length, frequency, unpredictability, and the affect of mobilization on family and civilian careers would be the most influential factors:

“If I was going to leave the Guard it would be because I don’t know how many more times I will be mobilized again.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“The biggest stress is the unknown. If you don’t know what’s going to happen, you can’t plan your civilian career or family life. If you can’t do those things, you’re paralyzed in time.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Again, in more than half of the focus groups, RC members reported that the difficulty of balancing family responsibilities and civilian careers with their military responsibilities would be a potential influence on their retention decisions:

“For me, it’s career specific. I don’t have the opportunities in the military to earn what I would as an architect. For me, it’s all about my civilian career, my financial future.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

“I love my military job, but I would like to get out in October and focus on my civilian education. I’m in the middle of a nursing program. When I left on mobilization, I had to wait another 9 months to return to the program because I need to take classes in a certain order. I want to finish my civilian education. Also, every time I deploy, I’m making a choice between my personal life and the military. Finally, I don’t like the unpredictability of the mobilization schedule. I want to start a family and can’t do both when I have little kids. I mean I could, but I don’t want to do it.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

The 2005 Reserve Component Service member focus group responses about the importance of mobilizations to retention decisions were similar to those provided by Guard and Reserve members on the *May 2004 SoF Survey* when they were asked the extent to which activation/deployment were reasons to leave the RC components:

- 71% cited the burden on the family
- 65% identified activations/deployments as too long
- 57% identified too many activations/deployments
- 51% identified income loss.

RC members in about half of the 2005 DACOWITS focus groups volunteered that their perceptions of unit leadership failings would contribute to their decision to leave. This factor is especially influential when poor communication and lack of support from leaders affect Service members’ career progression:

“The reason I want to leave is because of the lack of integrity I see in today’s leaders.”

—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

“Leadership. When we quit, we are quitting the leadership. When we don’t get the support from the leadership that causes problems.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

Effect of risk of hostilities on retention decisions

RC focus group participants were asked how the risk of hostilities affects retention decisions. Themes that emerged across the focus groups were:

- a. Risk of hostilities is an expected and accepted part of military service
- b. Concern about how their deaths would affect their families.

RC members in three-fourths of the Guard and Reserve focus groups said that the risk of hostilities does not affect their retention decisions. RC members who identified this theme reported that they expected to go into combat and enjoyed the opportunity to do so:

“That’s part of the job.”
—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

“We signed up and expected to enter combat.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

“We all joined the military knowing we could go to war. We signed the dotted line.”
—Male, Junior Enlisted, USAR

RC personnel in two-fifths of the focus groups said that the risk of hostilities exacerbated their mobilization experiences, but did not indicate whether these risks influenced their retention decisions. Some RC members reported that they worried about dying in battle and leaving their children without a mother or a father:

“Everyone is concerned about dying when they have kids.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

Factors affecting family members’ support

RC family members who took part in the focus groups reported the retention intentions of their service member spouses. Sixty-four percent of spouses reported their Service member intended to stay in the Guard or Reserve until retirement, 14% reported their Service member would probably leave after their present obligation, 7% reported their RC member was undecided, and 14% didn’t know what their RC member’s intentions were.

Guard and Reserve family members were asked to explain why they wanted their RC members to stay in or leave the military, or to elaborate on their feelings if they were undecided.

Want Service members to stay

The following themes emerged in the focus groups containing spouses who said they wanted their RC members to remain in the Guard or Reserve:

- a. Support for RC member's reported job satisfaction
- b. Reluctance to force a decision that the RC member does not want.

When asked why they would want their RC member to stay in the military, family members in all of the groups responded by citing the member's desire to stay in the Guard or Reserve:

“It's just what he loves to do and if he wasn't doing that, I don't think I'd want to live in the same house with him! He loves it, and it's part of who he is.”

—Enlisted Family Member, USCGR

Spouses do not want to be the ones forcing RC members to do something they do not want to do:

“He loves it. I certainly wouldn't prevent him from doing it. He'd resent me if I tried.”

—Enlisted Family Member, USAR

Want RC members to leave

The following themes emerged in focus groups containing spouses who said they wanted their Service members to leave:

- a. Separation from children and family
- b. Pursuit of other employment opportunities.

Spouses said that separation from children and family is the factor that most contributes to their feelings of wanting their spouses to leave the Guard or Reserve:

“I don't want my husband to miss out on a 1½ years of my daughter's life. If he has to leave in 3 months, she won't remember him when he returns. Plus, we're thinking of having more kids, and I would hate it if I was pregnant and he left.”

—Enlisted Family Member, USAR

Family members also said that a reason to leave was their sense that it was time to move on and pursue other opportunities:

“I just feel he’s done his time. He’s 38; he’s been doing this almost his entire adult life and our entire married life. I’m ready for a new chapter and a different focus.”

—Enlisted Family Member, USCGR

Unsure about desire to stay or leave

Themes that emerged as potentially influential on families’ retention preferences were:

- a. Mobilizations may negatively affect retention preferences
- b. Desire to support Service members’ decisions may affect retention preferences.

National Guard and Reserve family members who were unsure whether they wanted their RC member to stay in or leave the military reported that mobilization, particularly the impact of separation from family and children, is a factor they are weighing when trying to decide whether they want their RC members to stay in or leave the military:

“Since we have been married we have never spent a whole year together. I am used to him being gone and that is not a good thing.”

—Officer Family Member, ARNG

“Just the stress and watching him reconnect with his daughter again. For me, last year when he left, I was pregnant, and he was gone two weeks and I miscarried, and it’s just, like, there’s a big part of me that says, ‘don’t go!’ But, he really enjoys doing what he does; I’m so proud of him.”

—Enlisted Family Member, USCGR

For some family members, supporting the retention decisions of their RC member is more important than their own feelings on the subject. For example, family members said they would support their RC members’ retention decision, no matter what it was:

“Security, him having a job, retirement benefits, and I know that he enjoys it, and I don’t think I could pull the plug on him.”

—Enlisted Family Member, USCGR

H. ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF MILITARY LIFE

Families of Reserve Component members are a key factor in the service member’s evaluation of their military experience and in their decisions about retention.

DACOWITS asked family members to share their perceptions about the advantages and disadvantages of military life. Family members reported that they were generally satisfied with military life: 64% said they were satisfied, 29% said they were dissatisfied, and 7% said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Advantages of military life for Guard and Reserve family members

Guard and Reserve family members were asked to identify the advantages of their spouse's military service, particularly those aspects that make them want to remain part of the military community. Advantages identified across groups included:

- a. Availability of benefits
- b. Service member's job satisfaction
- c. Pride/patriotism.

Family members in all of the RC focus groups reported that benefits—particularly life insurance, health insurance, retirement benefits, and education benefits—are advantages and reasons to remain in the Guard or Reserve:

“The life insurance and dental insurance are important.”
—Family Member, USAR

“The Army Reserve also helped finance our son's education—undergraduate and graduate.”
—Family Member, USAR

Family members in three of the four focus groups identified their RC members' satisfaction with their military jobs as a factor that influences support for the Service member's retention decision:

“My husband loves his job and that's why his military service is important to me. That's the advantage.”
—Family Member, USAR

Family members also said patriotism and pride in service are strong motivators for them to remain a part of the military community:

“The overall feeling of serving our country—that's the biggest advantage.”
—Family Member, ARNG

Disadvantages of military life for Guard and Reserve family members

Family members identified several disadvantages that discourage them from wanting to remain in the military community:

- a. Unpredictable and lengthy mobilizations
- b. Lower benefits and pay than civilian sector or Active duty components.

Family members frequently cited mobilization as a negative aspect of Guard and Reserve service, especially when mobilization lacked predictability and involved long separations from family:

“Separation. I have two sons, a 10 year old and a 14 year old. I spent a year with them by myself. The 14 year old is a difficult child and that was hard. It has been a bad year.”

—Family Member, ARNG

“Units are deployed for 2 years with no certainty as to when they’re coming home. You’re given one return date, and it passes. You’re given another return date, and it passes. You get everyone’s hopes up, and then they’re dashed. People are looking forward to having their families home, and then you take it away.”

—Family Member, USAR

Benefits and pay were also cited as disadvantages, especially when they compared unfavorably to the pay and benefits of the civilian sector or the Active Component Service members:

“When they are mobilized, they were denied adequate medical care. My husband had a broken tooth and another guy had a torn rotator cuff. Both were told they were Reserve and that they could wait until they got home. They are treated as second class citizens compared to the Active duty.”

—Family Member, USAR

Factors considered by potential recruits

Given the increasing challenges to recruiting reported by the Guard and Reserve, DACOWITS asked RC members about their opinions on recruiting. Themes that emerged across focus groups were:

- a. Benefits and compensation attract recruits
- b. Mobilizations and risk of hostilities dissuade potential recruits
- c. Negative media portrayal of overseas duty influences recruiting
- d. Lack of physical and mental preparation for military service is a concern.

RC members in three-fourths of the Guard and Reserve focus groups said that pay and benefits attract new recruits. They suggested ways to improve upon existing benefits and compensation packages, including eliminating the delay in enrolling in school, ensuring tuition assistance for all who want it, and increasing salary:

“Kids want to join for the school money and there’s now a 2-year delay between when you join and when you can enroll.”
—Female, Mid-Grade Enlisted, USAR

“We do have 100% tuition assistance, but there are so many people [who want to take advantage of the education benefits] that the Coast Guard ran out of money!”
—Male, Senior Enlisted, USCGR

“It’s a salary thing. People can make more money in the civilian world than they can in the military world. I would like to see the military pay be more competitive.”
—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

RC members in approximately two-thirds of the focus groups reported that the prospect of mobilizing and participating in various military operations overseas is a disincentive to join the Reserve Component, as are the length of mobilizations and the risk of hostilities:

“Mobilization. Like I said, I work with a recruiter’s office. Before I finish my duties there, I’m supposed to recruit one or two people—at least get them into the office. When you ask recruits why they don’t want to join the military, you have people telling you things like, ‘I wouldn’t want to get told what to do and also don’t want to go overseas.’ The major factor considered by potential recruits when deciding whether to join the military is the fact that it’s wartime and not peacetime.”
—Female, Junior Enlisted, USAR

“The length of mobilization. I think that kids are scared of going away for such an extended length of time.”
—Male, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

RC focus group participants also said that the media’s portrayal of military operations overseas, particularly the war in Iraq, is another potential deterrent. They believe the media are biased and only air negative events, which negatively affect potential recruits’ views about mobilization and the risk of hostilities:

“I recruit on a full time basis. The primary concern is going to Iraq. Part of that is the media who show so many of the negative aspects. There are so many things [that we do in Iraq] that are commensurate to civilian jobs. All they [the media] show is shooting the weapons and the tanks. They need to show some of the humanitarian things too. They [possible recruits] need to know they are not going to die just because they are going over there.”
—Male, Mid-Grade Enlisted, ARNG

More than half of the RC focus groups contained members who reported believing that new recruits are not prepared to meet the physical and mental demands that the National Guard and Reserve place on them, especially if recruiters are less than forthcoming about military life:

“I don’t think that they realize what they are getting into and so when mobilization comes up they are not as cooperative or getting ready. They need to understand the requirements of the job. They are not prepared. We found that we had to baby-sit during mobilization. Which is an extra stressor during the mobilization.”

—Female, Senior Enlisted, ARNG

“There have been rumors about recruiters telling tales to entice recruits to come in.”

—Male, Junior Officer, ARNG

These RC members also cited youth’s apparent lack of interest in or connection with the military and their lack of understanding of what a life of service entails, the duties performed, or the benefits that service in the Guard or Reserve would make available to them:

“Today, kids always ask, ‘what’s in it for me? What do I get out of it?’ There’s that side of it. Recently, I’ve begun thinking that today’s youth has no connection with the military. I know because my kids’ friends ask and they don’t have any clue what it’s about, and they’re only a few years away from being 18 years old.

You can’t hit them for the first time when they’re 18 and ask them to make a decision to join the military. The idea of service needs to be introduced at an earlier point in time. It can’t be a new concept during the recruiting process.”

—Male, Senior Officer, USAR

“What I think would help to correct the lack of interest is exposure. They have no idea what we do every day. Like high school kids, for example, they don’t know what we do. [They should] rotate [them] through a class [about the military] in high school.”

—Female, Junior Enlisted, ARNG

I. CONCLUSION

The overall DACOWITS topic of work-family balance resonated strongly with Guard and Reserve personnel and family members who participated in the focus groups in 2005. The average number of “mandays” logged by members of the Reserve Component has increased substantially in recent years, due to mobilizations and deployments for federal service in Iraq and Afghanistan and, for the National Guard, mobilizations for federal or State Active Duty (SAD) in response to natural disasters. The increased frequency,

length and unpredictability of these mobilizations and deployments have made the balance of work-family responsibilities especially challenging for these members and their families, who still have the majority of their work and family activities in civilian communities.

RC members in the majority of focus groups reported having to make difficult choices between fulfilling requirements that would benefit their military careers and the needs and responsibilities of their families and civilian jobs. Many RC focus group participants suggested that it was detrimental to their military career to prioritize family obligations over their Guard or Reserve requirements, but that they had done so anyway. Other participants reported choosing to fulfill military requirements, but only at the expense of their families' needs or their civilian work.

More than half of the Guard and Reserve members in the 2005 focus groups reported they were probably or definitely either leaving the military, or were undecided. These RC members cited the unpredictability of the deployment schedule and the difficulty of balancing their military service with their family and civilian careers as the most important factors in their decision.

Most Guard and Reserve spouses who participated in the focus groups reported that their service member would probably stay in the military beyond their current obligation. Family members cited the RC member's job satisfaction as the main reason they would support that decision. The most common issues raised by family members who wanted their spouses to end their RC service were separation from children and family, and the desire of their Service member spouse to pursue civilian employment opportunities. Both family members and RC members stated that the stress for children due to recent mobilizations was a significant concern.

Guard and Reserve focus group participants reported that recent mobilizations had both positive and negative effects on their civilian jobs and careers. Positive outcomes included the development of new skills while mobilized that would aid the Service member in their civilian career. Negative outcomes included falling behind in their civilian work and missing out on opportunities for promotion and advancement. Others reported that progress in their civilian education had been put on hold and academic and financial penalties were incurred due to frequent and unpredictable mobilizations. Similar to data collected on the Status of Forces surveys, DACOWITS Reserve Component participants were mixed in their assessments of how mobilization affected their income: many Service members reported that their monthly earnings increased due to activation, while others described losing family income and/or facing increased family expenses (e.g., childcare). The reported willingness of civilian employers to maintain pay and/or benefits for Service members during mobilization also varied among the participants.

Guard and Reserve members were critical of policies and practices that they felt worked against them but not against those in the Active Component. Participants reported that there were not enough slots in military schools for Guard and Reserve members. Some reported they had been hampered further in their military career development by a lack of support or by favoritism on the part of leadership, or by a mobilization pace that prevented them from completing educational requirements. Reports that their units were not prepared to perform their wartime missions were also common among Guard and Reserve participants. These Service members also cited lack of manpower and training in their mission area or relevant conditions as the reasons they felt their units were unprepared.

When discussing their use of support services, Guard and Reserve personnel and their families both reported a very limited knowledge and use of *Military One Source*. Similarly, most Service members and family members were unaware of the *Family Support Centers*, or did not know what services they offered or how to access them. For those Guard and Reserve family member participants who had taken advantage of military support programs and services, most expressed satisfaction with the support provided. Overall however, results from the 2005 focus groups and the survey data reviewed indicate that lack of awareness of available support remains a significant problem in the Guard and Reserve community. Family members and Service members alike recommended that there be a dedicated, full time family support staff member at the unit level to assist families.

V. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN DACOWITS' 2003 AND 2004 REPORTS

A. INTRODUCTION

DACOWITS has received responses from the DoD staff agencies and the Services to the recommendations of the 2003 and 2004 annual reports. This chapter is a recap of those responses. Over the three years covered by this report, 45 installations were visited. The total number of military personnel in DACOWITS focus groups for those years is 1549 and for family members is 260.

B. RETENTION

In 2003 DACOWITS was asked by the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness to look at the retention rates of female officers which was lower than that of male officers through all years of service but particularly in the range of 5-8 years of service. The Army acknowledges it is targeting programs to keep officers in the range of 5-8 years of service, but makes no gender differentiation. They have updated the Officer Personnel Management (OPMS) II program to OPMS III and briefed its changes to the Committee. The Navy has identified two departing populations for female officers: Surface Warfare Officers (SWO) and the Aviation community. A comprehensive program to address SWOs is underway and has been briefed to the Committee. The Aviation community has not responded with the resources seen committed to the issue by the SWO community. The Air Force has not recognized any retention problem for its female officers. The Air Force has for the last three years experienced an officer corps that is over their authorized levels. Additionally, the Air Force already has the highest percentage of female officers serving. The Marine Corps has not identified that female Marine officers leaving in the early career years will be problematic. The Marine Corps has the smallest officer corps with the smallest percentage of women officers among the Services.

One assumption is that this is a normal separation rate and is comparable to women's work patterns in civilian industry. DACOWITS has looked at these rates through the bureau of labor statistics and current research. It is estimated that, in civilian life, one-third of women will postpone their careers by leaving the work force or move to family friendly jobs after childbirth. Traditionally, military officers are expected to accomplish even more demanding leadership roles at certain times in their career, and if they fail to do this they become noncompetitive for promotion. They then have little chance for retention. Military peak career challenges correspond to women's child bearing years. DACOWITS believes that the military can be a family friendly employer and still execute effective mission accomplishment. DACOWITS recommendations have been to create more flexible career paths that women, and increasingly men, need to successfully navigate both career and family responsibilities while serving in the military. The

Department cannot afford to lose qualified, capable and experienced military members because of the very structured personnel management rules of the past.

The Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness has commissioned RAND to study the Officers Corps and provide viable options to revising the 1984 Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA). DOMPA prescribes the time when officers will be considered for promotion. Relief from some DOMPA strictures will assist Service initiatives to retain women and even out the historical spikes in departure that occur at the 5-8 and 20 years of service. This study is expected to address more flexibility in promotions, longevity, joint qualifications, education and transferability among DoD civilian, Guard and Reserve and other opportunities to serve. DACOWITS supports DoD's and the Services' initiatives to address these issues, and looks forward to the results of the next Quadrennial Resource Management Review (QRMCR).

In 2003 and 2004, DACOWITS made numerous recommendations on incentive packages, family friendly policies, career paths and leadership issues to help address retention issues for all Service members and their families not just women.

DACOWITS focus group responses regarding factors influencing the decision to stay in the military are generally consistent with the Status of Forces Surveys (SOFs) surveys. The number one reason heard in the focus groups was "enjoyment of the job." In the 2004 DACOWITS focus groups, work/family imbalance was cited most frequently by both genders, all ranks, Active duty, Guard and Reserve members as the determinant of their intention to leave. Seventy-one percent of Active duty focus groups included people who attributed the imbalance as the seminal conflict prior to separation. The second most cited reason was "change in personal goals." Other influential factors in their decisions were workload and schedule conflicts and benefits.

- **More specific information needed:** The Committee has recommended research questions that address work-family balance be included in the Status of Forces surveys, and that has been accomplished.
- **Social Compact initiatives and investments made:** have helped sustain current force levels. The Department and the Services need to continue efforts to address member and family concerns in work-family balance, workload and schedule, relocation instability, and leadership climate. This is especially important and more difficult in a high OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO environment and can lead to a change in personal intention to stay in the military.
- **Leave of Absence/Sabbatical programs:** The Coast Guard has had Care for Newborn Children and Temporary Separation Programs for enough years to see that it can be very helpful. The Navy has proposed Navy Surface Warfare Officer Sabbatical. DACOWITS strongly supports the Department in

obtaining the legislative authority needed for these programs. However, requests by the Department to establish pilot programs for these initiatives have been rejected by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB believes, “there is no compelling reason, at a time of strained manpower resources, for Service members to be away...on (extended) personal leave. Further, the Air Force and Navy are bringing down their end strength; and the Army and Marine Corps are straining to accumulate sufficient personnel resources to support current needs associated with the war”. DACOWITS strongly disagrees with the logic used in advancing these arguments.

- **New benefit, compensation, and bonus programs:** Some examples of programs we believe would be helpful to those members with children are: Provide children of Service members greater access to ROTC scholarship programs, expand transferability of Montgomery GI Bill benefits to dependent children, and allow additional enrollment opportunities for Montgomery GI Bill benefits.

In response to the above DACOWITS recommendations, the Department and the Services have listed the resources and incentives they have in place to address retention issues. These resources and incentives do not always line up with the DACOWITS recommendations, nor do the responses make a commitment to adopt the recommendations, stating that their programs are sufficient. Good examples where the Services deferred adoption of DACOWITS recommendations include ROTC scholarships and transferability of the Montgomery GI bill benefits. The Services said that adequate programs are in place or additional incentives are not needed, yet DACOWITS continues to hear about requests for such incentives. Good examples of current initiatives by DoD and the Services that are successful are the increased bonuses for retention and enlistment and increases in base pay and housing allowances. Additionally, Congress took significant action to address health care and access equity for activated Guard and Reserve members during mobilization. For 2005 all the Services and the Reserve Components will report success in retaining Service members based on their total numbers goals. If unhappiness continues, future retention, especially of needed skills, could become problematic quickly.

C. DEPLOYMENT

In 2003 and 2004 the Committee made numerous recommendations concerning deployment. They cover frequently mentioned themes in the focus groups: deployment predictability, child care, insufficient time with family pre and post deployment, communications, support services and impact on children. The Department of Defense has responded to the current increased deployment tempo by investing in websites, toll free phone numbers, free counseling sessions, \$44.4M added to child care in 2004, expansion of child care options and increasing childcare flexibility for high tempo

Service members, significant outreach to community and service organizations for child care support, and pre and post health care assessments, just to name a few. The Services have responded to the Committee's recommendations with the list of extensive opportunities Service members have for briefings pre and post deployment, programs for unit support systems to include ombudsmen, key volunteer leaders, family readiness groups, Services' current marketing efforts to achieve outreach to families and Service members during deployment, and the two week mid-tour leave option for deployed Service members.

The Services' responses to DACOWITS' deployment recommendations are an extensive array of programs that DACOWITS finds has mixed results at the execution level. Too many Service members do not know about these programs or do not use them. Knowledge of, as well as availability of and access to, support programs continue to be issues in spite of all the efforts and progress that has been made. This is especially true for Guard and Reserve Service members and their families.

The Committee acknowledges there has been much progress made in the last two years, but there is more to be done. Support to families is a concern of the military member while deployed, especially for those who deploy independent of their unit. This has a direct impact on mission accomplishment. It's important to remember that "family member" includes the dual military spouse and families of single members! Hard to reach populations (parents, male spouses) and high-risk family members (junior enlisted female spouses) who do not avail themselves of services due to inexperience in the military system or geographic dispersion continue to be a gap in service being provided by these extensive programs. Misinformation by well-meaning volunteers or information provided by people who are not subject matter experts and cannot answer more complex questions from individuals continue to aggravate family members.

Deployment and redeployment dates continue to be unpredictable events for Service members. The Committee has made clear the impact of this unknown on Service members and families. The Services responded with the leadership's efforts to maintain a good information flow and provide the most current information in a timely manner. Although quarterly surveys of Service members are being conducted which include questions on support service during deployment, results of regular surveys of family members at the DoD level have not been released since 2000, and pre 9/11 in the Army. Most of the post 9/11 surveys of family members were driven by Congress requiring a quality of life survey for the Quadrennial Quality of Life report due to Congress in 2003. The most recent spouse surveys for which data are available are: 2003 Air Force Community Assessment, Navy 2002 Spouse Survey, Marine Corps Col/LTC Spouse survey and 2002 Marine Corps population survey that included spouses/reserves/recruiters, 2002 National Guard/Reserve Spouses Survey. Up-to-date assessments of families and their intentions and perceptions of support are hard to find. The

DACOWITS findings and recommendations based upon focus groups during installation visits can provide the Services more recent feedback.

Another area of investigation by the Committee has been the impact of deployment on children. At DACOWITS' recommendation, the Department will include questions about this issue in surveys and gather data that has not been looked at before. This should inform future family-related policies. Additionally, DACOWITS made recommendations the enactment of which would lessen the impact on children when single parents deploy or one or both parents in a dual military family deploy. The Department and the Services stated they are satisfied with current policy requiring family care plans for the long term support of children during deployment of dual military and single parents. This issue came up again in 2005 and is addressed in Chapter II.

D. HEALTH CARE

In 2003 DACOWITS examined the issues of health care for Service women and family members. The Committee was asked to look at the effect of Congress mandating that female family members be allowed off post for their obstetrics care and not have a co-pay under TRICARE, regardless of availability on base. The Department was concerned that an exodus of female family members would impact patient numbers in military treatment facilities and consequently funding. DACOWITS made several recommendations concerning improved provider communication, privacy, access and continuity of care.

All the Services and the DoD responded with the DoD program called the Family Centered Health Initiative for OB/GYN care. The roll out and execution of this program was supposed to address the issues brought to the Department's attention during their own surveys and investigation into maintaining female patient satisfaction, as well as the recommendations made by the Committee. The Committee considered the roll out premature to the availability of resources at military treatment facilities to fulfill the expectations of the program. However, it was too early in the program's release in 2003 to assess its impact and the Committee has not addressed the health care issues of women in its subsequent two years. The good news is that the anticipated exodus of female family members from Military Treatment Facilities has not occurred.

Additionally, in 2003 DACOWITS was asked to address the issue that somewhat over 10% of Active duty women do not receive care in the first trimester of their pregnancy. Service members' responses revolved around the stigmatization which is believed by many Service women to follow their informing the chain of command about a pregnancy. DACOWITS recommendations were for greater education and focus by health care officials, Commanders and the Services' Surgeons Generals. The DoD's and the Services' responses were that the current services are adequate to reach an overall 90% rate of appointments in the first trimester for Active duty females. These figures are self reported by Service members and the TRICARE Management Agency is trying to find

more accurate metrics to assess DoD's real success in reaching the 90% goal. In essence however, the Department and the Services failed to address the real finding that some women are reluctant to announce a pregnancy due to possible negative feedback from their work environment.

E. SEXUAL ASSAULT

In 2004 DACOWITS studied the issue of sexual assault within the Services. The DACOWITS recommendations closely parallel the recommendations of the DoD Task Force for the Care of Sexual Assault Victims and its subsequent work at conference level and later at DoD staff with the Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR). Two areas where the Committee differed in recommendations concerned the establishment and utilization of a clear definition of sexual assault. Sexual assault was defined by the Task Force and SAPR to ensure consistent training, data gathering and understanding by leadership. The Committee also wanted this definition to be included in the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). UCMJ revision was done by the Uniformed Board for Administration of the UCMJ. SAPR and the Board collaborated on the changes to the UCMJ; however, the definition is not an exact cross walk to the UCMJ. Changes to the UCMJ are pending the FY06 Congressional legislation approval.

The other area where the Committee added to the Task Force recommendations was in their recommendation for gender segregated sexual assault training. None of the Services in their response to the DACOWITS recommendation committed to training sexual assault in gender segregated groups. In their response, SAPR described their training guidance to the Services as scenario driven which could be done in mixed or segregated groups. All the Services' responses to DACOWITS recommendations included compliance with zero tolerance recommendations, compliance with increased training at accession and all leadership levels, increased efforts for outreach, compliance with recommendations to subordinate resolutions of minor offenses to the resolution of the major case, and full and aggressive prosecution and investigation of allegations while maintaining maximum privacy and confidentiality.

DACOWITS appreciates the time spent by the Department and Services to respond to its 2003 and 2004 recommendations. It is the Committee's intent to continue to address these issues as they arise in our focus groups and our review of surveys and research. We hope the Department and Services will continue to refine the delivery of these many programs, regulations and training, all of which increase satisfaction, quality of life and the retention of our valuable Service members.

VI. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Service members were asked about their deployment experiences, their perceptions of transformation, and their career requirements—all within the context of their career intentions and their perceived ability to balance the demands of work and family life.

1. Effect of Deployment on Service Members' Careers Opportunities and Retention

a. Finding

When asked if the present deployment schedule had influenced their intention to remain in or leave the military, participants in one-half of the focus groups reported the deployment schedule influenced their intention to leave the military. Participants in nearly all the family focus groups said that the deployment was the reason they wanted their Service member to leave the service.

b. Recommendation

Services should recognize the adverse impact of lengthy and frequent deployments on retention, and work toward deployments of no more than 6 months.

2. Effect of Transformation on Career Opportunities and Retention

a. Findings

- i. DACOWITS found widespread apprehension about what transformation actually means and how it will be implemented.
- ii. Service members were concerned about promotion and command opportunities. Some female participants voiced concern that altering career structure and civilianization initiatives will result in fewer career opportunities for women.

b. Recommendations

- i. Ensure Service members are regularly updated on policies developing under the transformation of the forces: Training Transformation (T2) Program, Joint National Training Capability, and Joint Officer Management.
- ii. Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness conduct a quantitative study on altering career structures and civilianization initiatives and their impact on women in the

Services. This study should be broader in scope than the congressionally mandated study on the impact of modularity on women in the Army, and should include all the services.

3. Impact of Military Requirements on Career Opportunities

a. Findings

- i. Seventy-five percent of the focus groups included participants who perceive physical fitness requirements as problematic. Specifically, in all of the Army, Navy and Air Force female focus groups, members said height and weight standards are unfair and taping procedures frequently show inaccurate results. Twenty-five percent of the female focus groups had members who said they believed being fit—or *appearing* to be fit—has a positive influence on career evaluations and advancement.
- ii. Female Service members believe that the regulation mandating a return to height and weight standards within six months of giving birth is not realistic and requires re-evaluation.

b. Recommendations

- i. The Committee commends the DoD for the review and rewriting of Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1308.3. Waivers granted to Services should be reviewed.
- ii. DoDI 1308.3 should be updated providing clearer pictures of measuring points.
- iii. The Services should ensure that training on taping procedures to measure body fat composition is conducted prior to each taping session. Measuring should not occur unless the Service regulation and clear pictures of measuring points are available to both participants in the taping process.
- iv. The Services should extend post partum recovery weight standards and physical fitness testing standards from 6 months to 8 months.

4. Effect of Education Requirements on Career Opportunities and Advancement

a. Finding

In 75% of the focus groups, lack of sufficient time to meet both military and off duty education requirements while working to balance career and personal responsibilities was the most frequently noted challenge. The present OPTEMPO of the GWOT and an increase in repetitive deployments make completing college work or military courses on time problematic, particularly because computer access and time are limited.

b. Recommendations

- i. Ensure dissemination of information regarding all avenues available for successful completion of academic requirements and advancement goals during pre deployment briefings. For example, the E Army U program and the Navy Old Dominion U. program were strongly recommended by Soldiers and Sailors.
- ii. Recommend increased availability of broadband access, VTC capability, full internet/e-mail and telephone service OCONUS and shipboard in order that deploying Service members may meet educational requirements.
- iv. DoD should publicize the services of The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) and the Service Members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) more broadly to Service members directly at the unit level, and through the *Military One Source*, Service Education Centers, and other military informational sources.

5. Effect of Geographic Mobility on Career Opportunities and Decisions

a. Findings

- i. Participants in over half of the focus groups reported frequency of relocation as the non deployment-related military requirement most likely to influence the decision to leave the military.
- ii. Service members reported they are experiencing career altering destabilization despite Service efforts to establish a more stabilized force.

b. Recommendations

- i. Services should establish measurable programs to ensure changes due to transformation and deployment are increasing stabilization.
- ii. In order to improve retention, the Services should continue efforts to reduce PCS turbulence despite deployment and operational needs.

6. Effect of Promotion/Evaluation System on Career Decisions and Advancement

a. Finding

The promotion and evaluation system was the second most likely non deployment-related requirement to influence the decision to leave the military. Perceptions of unfairness were most commonly recorded in junior enlisted focus groups.

b. Recommendation

To eliminate the perceptions of unfairness, the Services need to enforce the evaluation, promotion and associated counseling requirements prescribed in the regulations.

7. Effect of Leadership on Career Opportunities

a. Findings

- i. Service members reported that access to career development information and enhanced career opportunities are influenced by leadership involvement.
- ii. Service members at all grade levels continue to report being unaware of the programs available to them in advancing their careers.

b. Recommendation

The Services should review, and with unit leadership involvement, improve current methods for disseminating career planning information to ensure that even the most junior officers and enlisted are aware of career advancement opportunities.

8. Mentoring

a. Finding

Mentoring is intended to be an integral part of military development. However, only 50% percent of the focus group participants reported having mentors, and only 27% of December 2004 *SOF Survey* respondents reported having a mentor.

b. Recommendations

- i. Each Service collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of the mentoring program.
- ii. Require specific comments regarding mentoring in Officer and NCO performance evaluations.

B. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Participants were asked about the impact of deployment on families and children, family well-being issues (e.g., housing, spouse employment, and finances), the advantages and disadvantages of military life, and other topics—all in relation to the achievement of work-life balance, retention, and spouse support for the Service member's career.

1. Impact of Deployment on the Family

a. Findings

i. Despite significant improvement in family programs and high rates of satisfaction, some Service members and family members still lack knowledge of available resources and how to access them. For example, only 6% of Service members surveyed in the *March 2005 SOF Survey* reported using the *Military One Source* website or helpline in the previous 12 months, while 70% reported not being familiar with the program.

ii. Family member focus group participants reported that barriers to effective family support include:

- Lack of paid staff and an over-reliance on volunteers.
- Lack of leadership involvement in family support.
- Lack of communication between unit leadership and family members

b. Recommendations

i. Family support should emphasize teamwork and better integrate the chain of command, paid staff and volunteer networks in order to achieve comprehensive support for every Service family.

ii. Leadership education for commanders should include the importance of their role in providing family support as part of unit readiness and mission accomplishment. Commanding officer performance evaluations should include a rating on the effectiveness of their family support efforts.

iii. The low numbers being reported regarding access to *Military One Source* should be viewed by DoD as unacceptable. Communication about this and other programs needs to be extended to potential users by other methods than those currently being used.

2. Children

a. Findings

i. The *March 2005 SOF Survey* of Active duty Service members reported that deployments negatively affect children's behavior and school performance: 81% reported that deployments increase the likelihood of emotional problems in their children; 62% reported that deployments increase the likelihood of problems at school.

ii. There is a lack of research studying the effects of parental deployment on children, especially infants and young children, following September 11, 2001.

b. Recommendations

- i. DoD should study the effects of parental separation due to prolonged or multiple deployments on infants and children of military personnel following September 11, 2001.
- ii. *Family Support Centers* should organize support groups for children of deployed members in units and/or schools in which they can discuss their concerns and anxieties.

3. Communication

a. Finding

When Active duty Service members were asked in the *March 2005 SOF Survey* about their families' ability to cope with deployments, 97% rated their families' ability to communicate with them as important or very important.

b. Recommendation

Units and Military community service centers should ensure family members, including children, have 24/7 access to telephones, email, and video teleconferencing, which is currently offered at some installations.

4. Media

a. Finding

Family members reported that negative media and news coverage present one of the most challenging issues they faced during deployment, and they worry about potential ill effects on their children.

b. Recommendation

DoD and the Services should ensure the news of positive contributions and accomplishments of individual Service members in the GWOT are widely disseminated, including to hometown newspapers.

5. Work Family Balance and Military Retention

a. Findings

- i. In DACOWITS focus groups, dissatisfaction with overall support was most common among Service members who had experienced a lengthy deployment, of 1 year or longer.

- ii. Researchers found correlations between perceived work-family conflict, family friendly unit climate, and the daily experience of Soldiers. Effective leadership plays a role in establishing a family-friendly unit climate, which lowers work-family conflict.
- iii. The number of divorces among officers in all services more than doubled from FY 2000 to FY 2003. The divorce rate for Active duty Army officers and enlisted nearly doubled during that same period.
- iv. Some spouses in almost all of the DACOWITS family member focus groups identified deployment as the reason they want their spouses to leave the military.

b. Recommendations

- i. Services should work toward shorter and more predictable deployments with a goal of deployments not longer than six months.
- ii. The dual military parents of minor children should be given an option not to deploy simultaneously.

C. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND GUARD AND RESERVE ISSUES

Topics covered include perceptions of individual and unit readiness, mobilization experiences, effects of mobilization on income, attitudes of families to the member's Guard or Reserve service, and other topics. Topics covered within Guard and Reserve family member groups included the advantages and disadvantages of military life, use and awareness of support services, the impact of mobilizations on the family, support for the Service member's career, and others. For both Service members and family members, these topics were all discussed in relation to work-family balance and career intentions.

1. Work-Life Balance

a. Finding

RC personnel reported that the increase in mobilizations and deployments following September 11, 2001 has made it more difficult to balance their military career, family life and civilian employment. RC personnel expect that this situation will have a negative effect on future recruiting from both the civilian sector and the Active duty forces.

2. Impact on Civilian Employment and Education

a. Finding

Service members in about one-third of the focus groups said that mobilization negatively affected their career goals by interfering with their ability to fulfill both their civilian employment and/or their postsecondary education requirements. When mobilized or deployed, RC personnel who were enrolled as students were often forced to withdraw from courses of study without sufficient time to avoid penalties. RC personnel were not aware of formal support services to assist them with their civilian academic challenges, and relied instead on the resources of the unit or the nonstandard policies of their individual instructors or postsecondary institutions.

b. Recommendations

- i. Congress should extend to postsecondary education institutions and RC personnel who are students requirements and protections similar to those of Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) that currently apply only to employers and employees.
- ii. State legislatures should enact laws and regulations to assist RC personnel attending public and private postsecondary institutions to resolve academic and financial challenges related to mobilization.
- iii. DoD should publicize the services of The Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES) and the Service Members Opportunity Colleges (SOC) and current state military service education protection laws more broadly to RC members and their families directly at the unit level, and through the *Military One Source*, Family Service Centers and other military informational sources.

3. Meeting Military Career Development Requirements

a. Finding

RC focus groups participants reported that the lack of opportunity to complete their military education requirements—especially residence schools—affects their professional development, promotion and retention. Reserve Component personnel who experience multiple, often back to back, mobilizations and deployments report difficulty meeting their military career development requirements—particularly to attend resident schools. Often there are not enough slots available for mandatory education and training, or their civilian employers cannot accommodate additional absence from work on top of mobilizations.

b. Recommendations

- i. DoD should develop policy ensuring equitable allocation of training seats for RC personnel pursuing professional development courses.
- ii. Services should ensure equitable allocation of training seats for RC personnel pursuing professional development courses and report annually to DoD any shortfalls in filling valid RC requests for training.
- iii. Services should expand opportunities for RC personnel to participate in career development courses through attendance at abbreviated resident schools, distributive learning courses and earned credit for operational experience.

4. Experience of Mobilization

a. Findings

- i. Forty-five percent of Service members participating in the focus groups rated their stress level during mobilization as high. Thirty seven percent said it was moderate. The reasons most frequently given for this assessment were: difficulty balancing military and family/personal responsibilities and the unpredictability of the mobilization schedule.
- ii. Fifty seven percent of the focus groups included parents who reported that their children experienced high stress levels during the parents' deployment.

b. Recommendations

- i. DoD should consider flexible rotations for the mobilization of National Guard units based on the potential for State Active Duty or Title 32 call ups to meet homeland defense or natural/catastrophic disaster response requirements.
- ii. DACOWITS supports the force structure planning goal of limiting the involuntary mobilization of RC to one year out of every six years and encourages rapid implementation for retention purposes.
- iii. DoD should develop additional partnerships with private organizations, similar to that developed with the 4H, to provide services to children of deployed RC personnel.
- iv. The National Guard Bureau should broaden the Child Care Needs Assessment survey to address the unique needs of dual military families, single parent families and special needs children to ensure that information is available for policy and program planning and resource allocation.

5. Awareness Of, and Access To, Support Services

a. Findings

- i. DACOWITS commends the efforts of the National Guard Bureau to reach National Guard, Reserve and Active duty personnel through the nationwide network of *Family Support Centers*. However, participants in about one-third of the RC focus groups said that they lacked adequate information about the Centers, and most reported not using these Centers.
- ii. Three-fourths of the RC focus groups had participants who did not know about *Military One Source*. Of those familiar with this resource, most reported not using its services.
- iii. RC Service members and their families requested further improvements to support services, especially in the areas of: greater information dissemination, dedicated unit level assistance, access to counseling services and expanded outreach beyond the nuclear family.
- iv. RC families reported insufficient access to unit administration personnel and family support volunteers during deployment. This limited the resources available to help them solve problems.
- v. Families reported difficulty receiving legal aid from the JAG during deployment, particularly if they lived in a state other than the one where the unit was based.

b. Recommendations

- i. NGB should continue to eliminate any barriers that limit awareness, access and utilization of *Family Support Centers*.
- ii. Military One Source and Heath Net should increase information dissemination to RC personnel and their families. Information should be sent directly to all RC families through US mail and should also be prominently displayed at the unit level.
- iii. DoD should evaluate the utilization of MilitaryOne Source by RC personnel and their families.
- iv. The National Guard Bureau's placement of a full time Family Support Coordinator and a Child and Youth Program Coordinator at the state level should be augmented at the unit level by responsive and knowledgeable personnel.

v. Services should ensure that full time professional support is available to assist RC families with legal questions, particularly those that cross state jurisdictions.

6. Retention and Recruitment

a. Findings

i. RC Service members in more than half of the focus groups reported that their difficulty balancing military service with family responsibilities and civilian careers influences their retention decisions.

ii. Military spouses said that separation from children and family is the most important factor contributing to their desire to have their spouse leave the Guard or Reserve.

iii. RC Service members in more than half of the focus groups reported that they would consider leaving the Guard or Reserve because of the extended length, frequency, unpredictability, and effect of mobilization on family and civilian careers.

b. Recommendations

i. DoD should ensure that information on recently developed resources such as the “Help Our Troops Call Home” and the “Guide for Helping Youth Cope with Separation” programs are widely disseminated to deploying RC personnel and their families through the US mail.

ii. DoD should evaluate the utilization of the “Help Our Troops Call Home” and the “Guide for Helping Youth Cope with Separation” programs by RC personnel and their families.

iii. DoD should effectively pursue policies, such as one in six, that will achieve reasonable service requirements related to frequency, duration, and predictability of mobilization for RC personnel.

iv. The Services should implement initiatives, such as Army Restructuring and Rebalancing the active/Reserve Component mix, that increase predictability of mobilization schedule, reduce the length of deployment, and eliminate the need for stop loss, particularly for RC personnel.

v. DoD should evaluate the effect of transformation initiatives with respect to mobilization predictability and stabilization on RC personnel and families.

7. Advantages and Disadvantages of Military Life

a. Findings

- i. Family members frequently cited mobilization as a negative aspect of Guard and Reserve service, especially when mobilization lacked predictability and involved long family separations.
- ii. There is a wide spread perception among RC family members that RC pay and benefits compared unfavorably to the pay and benefits of civilians or Active Component Service members.

b. Recommendations

- i. Services should distribute information on the behavioral effect of separation on adults and children directly to RC family members, particularly those that are geographically dispersed.
- ii. Services should ensure that unit leadership and family support personnel are trained to recognize signs of separation difficulty, particularly for geographically dispersed RC families, and make informed referrals to and follow up with existing resources, such as *Family Support Centers*, *Military One Source* and associated not-for-profit service organizations.
- iii. DoD should prepare an informational package for RC family members comparing the full range of current RC pay and benefits with those of comparable civilian and Active Component members. This should be distributed directly to RC family members at the unit level, as well as through the *Family Support Centers* and *Military One Source*.

D. RESPONSES TO RECOMMENDATIONS IN DACOWITS' 2003 AND 2004 REPORTS

The responses from the DoD offices and the Services on DACOWITS report recommendations from 2003 and 2004 have generally addressed the issues raised. However, we do find that there are areas that require continued emphasis and response. DACOWITS will continue to follow these issues, requesting follow-up data and reports from DoD and the Services.

1. Policy Implementation

a. Findings

i. Significant gaps exist between policy and implementation. The units, installations, Services, and DoD offices have described programs promising support, benefits, training and career assistance for which the reported satisfaction rates are high. In some cases, the implementation of new programs has trailed our visits. But too frequently, these programs are underutilized either because of lack of information or accessibility.

ii. Significant resources are being spent on new programs and services with little evidence, in some cases, of measures of effectiveness. Examples are provided in Chapter V.

b. Recommendation

DoD should develop measures that accurately indicate the effectiveness of programs relative to their use, outcomes and cost. Benchmarking needs to set a high standard especially with the current OPTEMPO/PERSTEMPO and its impact on recruiting and retention.

2. Communication With Families

a. Findings

i. Insufficient and ineffective communication from leadership continues to be raised by Service members and their families in the focus groups. The related DACOWITS recommendation in 2004 specifically called for mailing letters to the family member and was generally not addressed by the responses of the Services. Service and family Members continue to request this type of communication.

ii. Free child care, Commissary and PX certificates have been found to be successful options to encourage attendance at command briefings.

b. Recommendations

i. Leadership at every level must take advantage of all means of communication. Accommodation must be made for those without access to the internet or to the installation for briefings. Commands should confirm direct contact through mailings and phone calls that connect with a person instead of a message machine. All outreach efforts should include the designated point of contact for single members.

- ii. Commands should incentivize participation by family members in on base briefings by providing Commissary and PX certificates or/and providing transportation.

3. Survey Issues

a. Findings

- i. Questions have been added to the Status of Forces Survey regarding data on work-life balance and family deployment issues at the request of DACOWITS. Services responses regarding the value of this data were mixed.
- ii. Surveys of Active and RC families are conducted infrequently. Understanding that the Services “recruit the member and retain the family,” it is necessary to know the issues and concerns of families on a more frequent basis than has happened recently.

b. Recommendations

- ii. The Services should conduct annual surveys of Active and RC families based on the DoD *Status of Forces* model.

4. Officer Retention

a. Findings

- i. Responses to the officer retention issue indicated in many cases that the services do not see this as a problem. Retention issues relate directly to mission accomplishment. Even though a Service may be downsizing or their overall retention statistics look good, especially for enlisted, the issue is the officer population, the year group and skill sets that are being retained vs. what is needed.
- ii. Flexible career options are necessary to maintain a trained and experienced workforce available to accomplish many different and complex missions. Some of these missions are gender specific, for example, gathering intelligence from the female population in a country where females are not allowed to talk to males outside their families). Data show spikes for female officer departures at certain year groups. The DoD Flexible Career Program initiatives are viewed positively by the Committee.

b. Recommendations

- i. DoD should submit and Congress should enact legislation to update DOPMA to allow for greater personnel management flexibility to enhance retention in support of mission effectiveness.

5. Child Care and Youth Services

a. Finding

The contribution of quality of life expenditures for child care and youth services to mission accomplishment must be recognized. Some innovative approaches have been implemented and need to be sustained. Progress has been made, but more is needed.

b. Recommendation

Congress should enact DoD requested legislation to sustain child care and youth services initiatives.

6. Pregnancy Issues

a. Finding

Female Service members in the focus groups continued to report experiencing an unsupportive command climate when they report their pregnancies to their chain of command.

b. Recommendation

DACOWITS continues to recommend, as in the 2003 report, that ALL levels of leadership, especially at the unit level, receive regular mandatory briefings on pregnancy, physiological changes, advisable health care regimens and job performance expectations of pregnant personnel to ensure a positive command climate.

7. Sexual Assault

a. Finding

DACOWITS commends the SATF training template that supports both gender segregated and gender integrated training. While DACOWITS recognizes there is a place for gender integrated training, some issues can be addressed much more candidly and clearly with questions asked and completely answered only in a gender segregated group.

b. Recommendation

Services should acknowledge the advantages and effectiveness of gender segregated sexual assault prevention training and implement such training, especially for personnel ages 18-24.

APPENDIX A: CHARTER

Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)

A. Official Designation: Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

B. Objectives and Scope of Activities: The Committee shall provide the Department of Defense, through the Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) (PDUSD (P&R)), with advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of highly qualified professional women in the Armed Forces. In addition, the Committee shall provide advice and recommendations on family issues related to the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified professional military. To accomplish this mission, the Committee shall be composed of not more than 15 civilian members, representing a distribution of demography, professional career fields, community service, and geography, and selected on the basis of their experience in the military, as a member of a military family, or with women's or family-related workforce issues. Members must be US citizens selected without regard to race, creed, gender, national origin, age, marital status or physically challenging conditions. Members are appointed by the Secretary of Defense, and shall serve as individuals and not as official representatives of any group or organization with which they may be affiliated. While the members serve at the pleasure of the Secretary of Defense, normally the term of membership is three years, with approximately one-third of the membership rotating annually. The members of the Committee shall serve without compensation, but may be allowed transportation and per diem for Government-directed travel.

C. Period of Time Necessary for the Committee to Carry Out Its Purposes: Indefinite.

D. Official to Whom the Committee Reports: The Committee reports to the PDUSD (P&R), with functional responsibilities under the staff cognizance of the Director for DACOWITS and Women's Military Matters. The PDUSD (P&R) shall appoint a Designated Federal Official (normally the Director) to approve or call each meeting, to approve the meeting agenda, to attend all meetings, and to chair meetings when so directed by the agency head. The Designated Federal Official shall have the authority to adjourn any meeting of the Committee which is not considered to be in the public interest.

E. Agency Responsible for Providing Necessary Support: The PDUSD (P&R) provides such personnel, facilities, and other administrative support necessary for the performance of the Committee's functions.

F. Duties: The duties of the Committee include assisting the Department of Defense by advising on specified matters relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of highly qualified professional women in the Services. In addition, the Committee will advise on family issues related to the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified professional military. In carrying out its duties, the Committee serves as a conduit of information and advice to the Department of Defense on issues relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of highly qualified professional women and on family issues related to the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified professional military. Through its work, the Committee encourages public acceptance of military service as a citizenship responsibility and as a career field for qualified women in the Services. In addition, the Committee will actively promote family-related issues that will assist the Department in recruiting and retaining a highly qualified professional military.

G. Annual Operating Costs: It is estimated that the annual operating costs to support the Committee will not exceed \$500,000, which includes staff support years, meetings, per diem and travel costs. The annual person-years of Federal staff support for the Committee will not exceed five.

H. Number and Frequency of Committee Meetings: A minimum of two meetings shall be held annually.

I. Termination Date: The Committee shall terminate upon the completion of its mission or two years from the date this Charter is filed with the US Congress.

J. Filing Date: April 17, 2004

APPENDIX B: DACOWITS MEMBERS' BIOGRAPHIES

DR. LYNDA DAVIS

Lynda Davis is the President of Davis O'Connell, Inc., and a Managing Director of International Capitol Partners, LLC providing government relations, management consulting and resource development services in the areas of homeland defense and homeland security. Her career has included service at the Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Senate Budget and Appropriations Committees, the U. S. Department of Education, and the Office of the Governor of the State of Florida. Dr. Davis has a M.A. in Clinical Psychology and an M.P.A. and P.D. in Public Administration. She serves on the Boards of the National Council for Adoption, and INMED: Partnership for children. She was a decorated signal officer in the Florida Army National Guard and the Army Reserve.

SENATOR J. P. DUNIPHAN

J. P. Duniphan is currently a state Senator for South Dakota. She served as a State Representative for South Dakota for eight years where she was a committee chairman and a Majority Whip and served on the Executive Board. She is currently Chairman of the State Corrections Commission and Chairman of the Interstate Compact of Prisoners Commission. She is a business owner and a partner in Hospitality Systems Inc., Quad Investments, and the Elks II Theater. Sen. Duniphan is a member of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve State Committee of South Dakota and a member of the Rapid City Chamber of Commerce – Military Affairs Committee, Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD. She received a B.A. from Lorette Heights College in Denver, CO. Sen. Duniphan serves on South Dakota Sen. John Thune's Service Academy Selection Board and has previously served on Sen. Pressler's, Congressman Janklow's and former Congressman Thune's Boards.

BONNIE FULLER FORD

Bonnie Fuller Ford is currently employed as a registered nurse in a major medical center. She is a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and a member of the New Mexico Cultural Heritage Council. Her vast nursing experience ranges from home health and hospice to oncology and Cardiac Rehabilitation Center Co-director. Ms. Ford is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Nursing from the University of New Mexico.

MARGARET M. HOFFMANN

Margaret Hoffmann is a High School College Advisor (ret.) and a College Admission Director (ret.). She served at Bryn Mawr College, Madeira School, Virginia, Mount Vernon Seminary/Junior College, Washington, D.C., and the Washington International School, Washington, D.C. She received a M.Ed. from Harvard in Counseling Processes.

Currently, Mrs. Hoffmann serves as a Trustee of Capital Partners for Education, Schools Committee Chair, and The Arena Stage, Community Engagement Committee.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL CAROL A. MUTTER, USMC, RETIRED

Carol A. Mutter serves as the Chair, Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). She served for over 31 years in the U.S. Marine Corps, attaining the rank of Lieutenant General. Her military experience included leadership positions in logistics, data processing, financial management, and research, development and acquisition. Achieving many firsts for women during her career, Carol was the first woman to be qualified as Command Center Crew Commander/Space Director at U.S. Space Command (Joint Assignment), the first woman of general/flag rank to command a major deployable tactical command (3rd Force Service Support Group, Okinawa, Japan), and the first woman nominated by the President of the U.S. for three-star rank. She ended her Marine Corps career as the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. She currently serves on the American Battle Monuments Commission and on the National Advisory Council of the Alliance for National Defense, is a Senior Fellow at the Joint Forces Staff College, and is a past National President of Women Marines Association. She has a B.A. in Mathematics Education from the University of Northern Colorado, an M.A. in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College at Newport, RI, and an M.S. from Salve Regina College at Newport, RI.

DR. MARY ANN NELSON

Mary Nelson has taught mathematics at all levels over the past 35 years, and is currently an Applied Mathematics instructor at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Previous college teaching positions included George Mason University, the University of Maryland Overseas Division and Front Range Community College. Mrs. Nelson has a B.S. and M.S. in mathematics from Marquette and George Mason University, respectively, and has a Ph.D. in Research and Evaluation Methodology. She was an Army spouse for 26 years including ten years in Germany and two in Moscow, Russia. In Moscow, she managed an AID program through the Commerce Department, which brought scientists and businessmen from all over the former Soviet Union to the United States for internships.

CATHERINE L. O'NEILL

Catherine L. O'Neill currently works as a researcher for the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. She served in the United States Army as an enlisted Signals Intelligence Analyst, where she performed top-secret work at a Joint Service Intelligence Center in San Antonio, TX. Upon separation from Active duty, she became a writer and commentator specializing in issues involving women in the military. She is a Past Commander of American Legion Pioneer Post 149 in Salem, OR – an all-women veterans post. Ms. O'Neill graduated from Harvard University with a B.A.

degree in 1992. She also attended Yale University Divinity School and was 1991 National Endowment for the Humanities Younger Scholar Award winner.

COLONEL DARRYL LADD PATTILLO, USAR, RETIRED

Colonel Pattillo was recalled from retirement and is currently serving as the Deputy Commander, Task Force Dragon, Multi-National Corps, Baghdad, Iraq. In his civilian life he is the President of D. Ladd Pattillo & Associates, Inc., an investment-banking firm in Austin, Texas. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Rotary Club of Austin, and President of the Military Affairs Council of Austin. He serves as financial advisor to numerous local governments in Texas. He retired as an Infantry Colonel, following thirty-three years in the Army Guard and Reserve. Throughout his military career, he held various leadership and staff positions, culminating in his last assignment as Deputy Legislative Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Colonel Pattillo received a B.B.A. in Finance from the University of Texas at Austin. He graduated with a J.D. from South Texas College of Law and served four years as Assistant Attorney General of Texas. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College and the Air Force War College. Colonel Pattillo is a member of the Texas Veterans Land Board and is the Treasurer of the Reserve Officers Association of the United States.

MARGARET ROBSON

Margaret Robson serves on the Board of Directors of the American Folk Art Museum, New York, NY, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the Vice President's Residence Foundation, Washington, DC and is a Regent for the Museums of New Mexico. She has served on the Board of Directors for Northwestern Memorial Hospital, Chicago, IL, as a Commissioner for the Georgia Boxing Commission, Atlanta, GA, the Board of Directors of the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN and the Santa Fe Art Institute, Santa Fe, NM. Former President George H. W. Bush appointed her to the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Ms. Robson received her B.A. from the University of Minnesota.

VIRGINIA ROWELL

Virginia Rowell is a Senior Cadillac Sales Director for Mary Kay Cosmetics. She previously served as the Training Instructor for the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Training Center and as an Education Program Specialist at the Vilseck, Germany Child Development Center. She earned numerous awards and recognitions through her Army community involvement: the Soaring Eagle Award, the highest award for community service presented by the U.S. Army Europe; the St. Joan Medallion, the outstanding Community Service Award from the Vilseck, Germany Military Community; and the Commander's Medal for Outstanding Community Service from Fort Leavenworth, KS. Ms. Rowell earned a B.A. from Marymount College, Tarrytown, NY and attended St. John University Graduate School of Education, NY. She has been an Army spouse for over 25 years and the mother of two Active duty soldiers.

AMBASSADOR ELLEN R. SAUERBREY

The Honorable Ellen Sauerbrey is the United States Representative to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. An educator, legislative leader, radio talk show host, writer, and political activist, Mrs. Sauerbrey is the former Minority Leader of the Maryland House of Delegates. She was the 1994 and 1998 Republican nominee for Governor of Maryland and subsequently elected Republican National Committeewoman for Maryland. She served as a member of the U.S. Delegation to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in 2001. Ambassador Sauerbrey graduated Summa Cum Laude from Western Maryland College with a BA degree in biology and English and taught biology in the Baltimore County school system.

COLONEL VANCE SHAW, USAFR, RETIRED

Vance Shaw is a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and a Vietnam veteran with the Legion of Merit and a Bronze Star. He currently works as a Human Resources consultant with John Snow, Inc. in Arlington, Virginia. He taught AFROTC at Tuskegee University; taught Military History at the US Air Force Academy; and taught as an Adjunct Professor for Johns Hopkins Graduate School of Business. He has facilitated over 2,000 workshops on Human Relations and Diversity. He is a member of Sigma Pi Phi-Boule Fraternity and a former member of the Board of Directors at Lake Michigan College. He has a B.A. in Psychology from Texas A&M University, an M.A. in Police Administration from Michigan State University, and an M.S. in Urban Sociology from the University of Northern Colorado.

ROSALIE SILBERMAN

Rosalie Silberman was a member of the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from 1984-1995. She served as Vice Chairman from 1986-1995. In 1995, she was appointed as the first executive director of the United States Congress' Office of Compliance, a newly created independent regulatory agency. The agency administers and enforces the eleven anti-discrimination, labor management relations, safety, and employment laws applied to the legislative branch by the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995. She currently serves as Chairman of the Board of the Independent Women's Forum, a national, non-partisan organization that speaks for public policies, which promote a strong military, equal opportunity, and economic growth. She received her B.A. from Smith College.

**APPENDIX C:
INSTALLATIONS VISITED IN 2005 FOR FOCUS GROUPS**

SITE	MEMBERS	DATES
DC Army Guard (Test Site)	Dr. Davis and Ms. Robson	12-13 Mar 05
Ft. Belvoir, VA (Test Site)	Col Shaw, USAFR(Ret), Mrs. Rowell	30 Mar 05
50th ASG, Florida Nat'l Guard	Dr. Davis, Col Shaw, USAFR(Ret)	2-3 Apr 05
Iraq VTCs	Mrs. Silberman, Sen. Duniphan, Dr. Davis, Mrs. Hoffmann	12-14 Apr 05
Port Security Unit (PSU) 307 St. Petersburg, FL	Ms. O'Neill, Ms. Sweeney, Dr. Davis	16-17 Apr 05
Norfolk, VA	Mrs. Silberman, Mrs. Hoffmann	27-28 Apr 05
Ft. Hood, TX	COL Pattillo, USAR(Ret), Ms. Robson	5-6 May 05
Mississippi Air Nat'l Guard 185th AVN Grp (Army), Jackson, MS	Mrs. Nelson, Ms. Robson	14-15 May 05
368th ENG Bn, Londonderry, NH	Dr. Davis	14-15 May 05
San Diego, CA	Sen. Duniphan, Ambassador Sauerbrey	1-2 Jun 05
94th MP Co. Londonderry, NH	Col Shaw, USAFR(Ret)	4 Jun 05
439th QM Co. New Haven, CT	Ms. Robson	4-5 Jun 05
Ft. Carson, CO	Mrs. Nelson	7-8 Jun 05
Port Security Unit 308, Gulfport, MS	Ms. O'Neill, Mrs. Nelson CANCELLED DUE TO: (<i>Tropical Storm "Arlene"</i>)	CANCELLED
29 Palms, CA	Dr. Davis, LtGen Mutter, USMC (Ret)	13-14 Jun 05
Ellsworth AFB Rapid City, SD	Sen. Duniphan, Ambassador Sauerbrey	22-23 Jun 05
Camp Lejeune, North Carolina	Mrs. Hoffmann, Ms. O'Neill	29-30 Jun 05

APPENDIX D: BEST PRACTICES

- Army Community Services runs a van 3-4 times a day from housing areas to youth activities areas.
- Free child care during memorial services and Family Readiness Group (FRG) activities.
- School age children of deployed parents get together once a week to talk about their problems and experiences.
- School age children of deployed parents get together over lunch at school once a week to talk about their problems and experiences.
- Units sponsor monthly social events for children of deployed parents. Additional ideas are to include older children of non deployed parents as buddies for these groups.
- Army Community Service is open 24/7 and provides video conferencing to families to support communication needs.
- “Home Front Cares” is a program that provides funding for needy families for memorial services, including money for family members to visit injured members at health care facilities.
- “Caring Saturdays” is a program in which, twice a month, Child Care Centers provide 5 hours of child care free from 12PM to 7PM.
- Part time school liaison officers are assigned to schools serving the most military children. They regularly visit every school and inform schools of the deployed status of the parents of the school’s children.
- YMCA provides free services for families of deployed members including free child care one afternoon a week and week-long summer camp. Ft. Carson is negotiating with YMCA to provide additional needed child care.
- Ensure that state social services agencies are informed of situations of deployed parents.
- Parents make pre-deployment recordings available for children.

- Create state ombudsman to work with social services on behalf of children of deployed parents to ensure family unification in cases where family care plans are inadequate and social services have had to assume care of the children.
- Family Intervention Team (FIT) created by Ft. Carson which includes: rotation of full time personnel, child and youth services, MEDDAC, Army Community Services (ACS), Chaplin, Family Readiness Group (FRG), school counselors, and JAG. On call 24/7 to assist children of deployed parents in case of emergencies.
- Video at the Day Care Centers so parents with computer access can see pictures of their children in their daily activities.
- 24/7 day care.
- VTCs between deployed commanders and family members assist in communications issues.
- Marriage enrichment programs for deploying soldiers and spouses.
- Materials such as The “Guide for Helping Children and Youth Cope with Separation” and related materials should be widely disseminated to teachers, community and business leaders in areas where deployed parents live.
- Weekend/liberty/pass risk management worksheets ensures Service members’ chain of command has phone numbers of their destination, departure and arrival times, and who the Service member is traveling with prior to departure. The risk management checklist also identifies the risks associated with the planned absence and requires that steps be identified to mitigate those identified risks.
- Posters on the back of restroom doors that identify high risk behavior and who to call for prevention. In particular a graphic scene was posted at one installation of a mother being arrested for DUI, while her young daughter is looking on and being led away by a law enforcement officer.

APPENDIX E:
ACTIVE DUTY FAMILY MEMBERS PROTOCOL AND SURVEY

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Facilitator: _____

Recorder: _____

of Participants Present for Entire Session: _____

of participants excused: _____

Reason(s) they were excused:

For demographic variables below, recorder please highlight in **bold type** the appropriate category:

Paygrade group: *Officer family members* *Enlisted family members*

Service: Army Navy Air Force Marine Corps Coast Guard

Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion. My name is (your name) and my colleague is (team member's name). We are civilian volunteers serving on the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services—also known as DACOWITS. We also have with us (Caliber staff member name), an employee of Caliber Associates. Caliber is a civilian research firm contracted by DACOWITS to record today's discussion.

The Committee is composed of 13 civilian volunteers who are responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Department of Defense on issues relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of women in the Armed Forces. We are also tasked to examine family issues related to the recruitment and retention of our military.

PROCESS

We are visiting installations throughout the country and talking to members of all branches of the military, male and female, to learn their concerns. We are also speaking to family members to learn about their particular issues. The issues we will discuss with you today include retention, recruitment, your experiences with deployment, and balancing military obligations with personal and family life.

We want to emphasize that all of the information you choose to share with us is confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. We will not attribute any information to you individually or provide anyone, including commanders, information that would identify you. Our report will communicate the overall substance of the views and concerns military personnel and family members share with us to the Department of Defense.

EXPLANATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF MINI-SURVEY

Before we start our discussion, we'd like for you to fill out a brief mini-survey [**Scribe distributes forms**]. Please don't put your name on the survey; it's completely anonymous. The reason we ask you to fill this out is so at the end of the study, we can accurately describe the sample of Service members and family members that we have spoken to. Please take your time.

[**Scribe collects completed surveys, and replaces them in envelope**].

GROUND RULES

Thank you. Let me explain some simple ground rules, and then we'll get started.

Please speak loud and clear. Only one person should talk at a time. If several people are talking, [name of scribe] will not be able to capture your comments. Also, let me emphasize the importance of respecting one another's views. We value everyone's thoughts and may ask you directly to contribute your thoughts to the group.

Our session will take about an hour-and-a-half. We will not take a formal break.

WARM-UP

- 1. Let's begin by finding out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Please introduce yourself by telling us your first name, how long you have been a/an (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard) family member, whether your spouse has deployed since September 11th, 2001 and, if so, for how long.**

Thank you.

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
What are the most important benefits and drawbacks of military life to family members?*

BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF MILITARY LIFE

We'd like to begin by discussing some of your experiences with life as a military family member. Specifically, we would like to learn your opinions about the benefits and drawbacks of military life as they apply to you and your family.

- 2. What are the aspects of military life that are most advantageous to you and your family?** [Caliber note for this and all questions: If insufficient detail is provided, then moderator needs to probe: "could you explain why? (or why not?)"; "What do you mean exactly? Could you give me an example?"]
- 3. What are some of the drawbacks of military life for you or your family?**

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
How do personal issues (e.g., finances, housing, family wellbeing, education and spousal employment) affect military personnel and their retention decisions?*

FAMILY WELL-BEING

Now that we've talked about some of the benefits and drawbacks of military life, let's address some specific areas.

- 4. What stresses have you and your family experienced due to military life?**

FINANCES

- 5. The Department of Defense increased base pay by 3.1% this year and since 2001 has increased housing allowance by 41%. Additionally, tax exemptions during deployment, and compensation of up to \$700 per month for enlisted families when the spouse is deployed to dangerous overseas locations are the standard. Are these monetary compensations assisting families in managing the demands of military life and deployment separation?**

SPOUSAL EMPLOYMENT

Now, we'd like to talk to you about your employment experiences and opportunities.

- 6. How many of you work outside the home full-time? Part-time? How many of you are currently looking for work? (Scribe records hand count)**

- 7. Has your ability to find employment or pursue a career influenced your support for your spouse's military career? How has your career been hindered or enhanced by the military lifestyle?**

HOUSING

We would like to talk with you about housing.

8. Do you feel your housing choices have been adequate? Generally speaking, do you prefer to live on-post or off-post and why?

CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

We also want to talk about children's education.

9. By a show of hands, how many of you have children in kindergarten through high school? (Scribe records hand count)
10. For those of you with children in school, how has military life affected their education?
11. How have the issues you have described influenced you and your spouses' military career plans?

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
What are the effects of deployment/separation on children, and the impact of separations on family members on the retention of military members?*

DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES: SEPARATION FROM CHILDREN

Our next topic is about deployment. We'd like to learn your opinion about how the separation caused by deployment affects military families, and we'd first like to focus on deployment's impact on children. Because children of different ages often react differently to these separations, we'd like to ask about your experiences with specific age groups.

[NOTE TO MODERATOR: If participants do not have children in a particular age group, then move ahead as appropriate.]

12. For those of you who have young children below the age of 6 years old, what were the specific challenges they faced during the deployment?

13. What issues did your school-aged children—6 to 12 year olds—encounter?

14. What issues did your teenagers—13 to 18 year olds—encounter?

15. What recommendations do you have to help children deal with the separation of deployment? What has worked for you and what can the military learn from your experiences?

<p style="text-align: center;">DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES: SEPARATION FROM SPOUSE/SUPPORT SERVICES</p>

As you know, deployments affect spouses as well as children. We'd like to talk about the way you, as spouses, have coped with the challenges of deployment.

16. What were the most challenging issues you experienced during your spouse's deployment?

17. Did media coverage of military operations affect you or your family during the deployment? In what ways exactly?

- 18. How satisfied were you with the support your family received from the military and/or civilian community during your spouse's most recent deployment? What can the military do to better assist spouses with family separation?**

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
How can the requirements of family well-being be balanced with military career responsibilities?*

WORK AND FAMILY BALANCE

Our last topic is about balance. As military family members, you often have to balance the competing demands of your spouse's military career and family life. We would like to learn what experiences and recommendations you have on this topic.

- 19. Have you and your spouse found it difficult to balance the demands of a military career with family life? If so, what are the most significant barriers to achieving balance between the demands of a military career and the responsibilities of maintaining a family?**
- 20. What unique challenges do junior enlisted members and their families face in balancing the demands of work and family? What do you recommend to assist these Service members?**
- 21. What recommendations do you have to help military families balance the requirements of a military career and family life? What has worked for your family and what can the military learn from your experiences?**
- 22. Have you ever received training or information on balancing work-life demands?**

RETENTION

We've talked about several aspects of military life that affect military families. We'd like to wrap up by talking about which of these factors most strongly influence your support for your spouse's military career.

23. We'd like to get a show of hands: (Scribe records hand counts)

- How many of you want your spouse to remain in the military beyond his or her current obligation? _____
- How many of you want your spouse to leave the military after his or her current obligation? _____
- How many of you are not sure whether you want your spouse to stay in or leave the military after his or her current obligation? _____

24. For those of you who want your spouse to stay in the military, what are the top two or three reasons why?

25. For those of you who want your spouse to leave the military, what are the top two or three reasons why?

26. For those of you who are unsure whether you want your spouse to stay in or leave the military, what would be the major factor in your decision?

END

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and experiences with us. Your thoughts are invaluable to our efforts to inform the Office of the Secretary of Defense on these matters, so that they can be more effectively addressed.

Once again, thank you very much.

FAMILY MEMBER FOCUS GROUP SURVEY (ACTIVE DUTY)

1. How long, in total, have you been a military spouse or family member? ____ Years ____ Months

2. What is your Service member's paygrade? ____

3. What is your relationship with your Service member?
- ☐ The Service member is my spouse
 - ☐ The Service member is my boyfriend/girlfriend or fiancé/fiancée
 - ☐ The Service member is my parent or step-parent
 - ☐ The Service member is my son/daughter or step child
 - ☐ Other relationship (*Please specify below*):

4. How many dependent children in the following age groups are living with you?

- ____ Infant/Toddler (birth to 2 years)
- ____ Pre-K - Kindergarten (3 - 5 years)
- ____ Elementary (6 - 10 years)
- ____ Middle School (11 - 13 years)
- ____ High School (14 - 17 years)
- ____ 18 - 21 years

5. Which of the following best describes your work situation?

- ☐ I am employed full-time
- ☐ I am employed part-time
- ☐ I am not employed and I am looking for a job
- ☐ I am not employed and I am not looking for a job

6. In the past 3 years, has your Service member been deployed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. In the past 3 years, about how much time have you spent separated from your Service member due to deployment or other military duties?

- ☐ Does not apply; my Service member has not been deployed
- ☐ Less than 1 month
- ☐ 1 - 3 months
- ☐ 4 - 6 months
- ☐ 7 - 9 months
- ☐ 10 months to less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 year to 18 months
- ☐ More than 18 months, but less than 2 years
- ☐ 2 years or more

8. Overall, what level of stress did you experience during your Service member's MOST RECENT deployment?

- ☐ Does not apply; my Service member has not been deployed
- ☐ Very low
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ High
- ☐ Very high

9. (For spouses only) Overall, what level of stress did your child(ren) experience during your Service member's MOST RECENT deployment?

- ☐ Does not apply
- ☐ Very low
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ High
- ☐ Very high

10. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:

	Very satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Does not apply
Unit family readiness/support group or program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance with legal or administrative issues (e.g., Wills, Power of Attorney)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Amount of advance notice provided prior to deployment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support from unit points-of-contact or unit rear detachment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall family support at my installation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Which of the following best describes your Service member's career intentions in the military? (MARK ONE)

- ☐ He or she is staying until eligible for retirement
- ☐ He or she is staying beyond his/her present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement
- ☐ He or she is probably leaving after his/her current obligation
- ☐ He or she is definitely leaving after his/her current obligation
- ☐ He or she is leaving the Active Component to join the Reserves
- ☐ He or she is undecided/not sure
- ☐ I don't know what my Service member's career intentions are

12. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with military life?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

**APPENDIX F:
ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS PROTOCOL AND SURVEY**

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Facilitator: _____

Recorder: _____

of Participants Present for Entire Session: _____

of participants excused: _____

Reason(s) they were excused:

For demographic variables below, recorder please highlight in **bold type** the appropriate category:

Paygrade: *E1-E4* *E5-E6* *USMC E1-E3* *USMC E4-E5* *W1-W2/O1-O3* *O4-O5*

GENDER: **MALE** **FEMALE**

Service: **Army** **Navy** **Air Force** **Marine Corps** **Coast Guard**

NOTE: HAND OUT NAME CARDS

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion. First of all, thank you for your service. We're very proud of all you do! My name is (your name) and my colleague is (team member's name). We are civilian volunteers serving on the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services—also known as DACOWITS. We also have with us (Caliber staff member name), an employee of Caliber Associates. Caliber is a civilian research firm contracted by DACOWITS to record today's discussion.

The Committee is composed of 13 civilian volunteers who are responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Department of Defense on issues relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of women in the Armed Forces. We are also tasked to examine family issues related to the recruitment and retention of our military.

PROCESS

We are visiting installations throughout the country and talking to members of all branches of the military, male and female, to learn your concerns. We are also speaking to family members to learn about their particular issues. The issues we will discuss with you today include retention and recruitment, your deployment experiences, and balancing your military obligations with your personal and family lives.

We want to emphasize that all of the information you choose to share with us is confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. We will not attribute any information to you individually or provide anyone, including commanders, information that would identify you. Our report will communicate the overall substance of the views and concerns military personnel and family members share with us to the Department of Defense.

EXPLANATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY

Before we start our discussion, we'd like for you to fill out a brief survey [**Scribe distributes forms**]. Please don't put your name on the survey; it's completely anonymous. The reason we ask you to fill this out is so at the end of the study, we can accurately describe the sample of Service members and family members that we have spoken to. Please take your time.

[**Scribe collects completed surveys, and replaces them in envelope**].

GROUND RULES

Thank you. Let me explain some simple ground rules, and then we'll get started.

Please speak loud and clear. Only one person should talk at a time. If several people are talking, [name of scribe] will not be able to capture your comments. Also, let me emphasize the importance of respecting one another's views. We value everyone's thoughts and may ask you directly to contribute your thoughts to the group.

Our session will take about an hour-and-a-half. We will not take a formal break.

WARM-UP

- 1. Let's begin by finding out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Please introduce yourself by telling us your first name, what job you are doing now, and how long you have served in (branch of service). Also, you might want to say why you joined.**

Thank you.

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
What military career requirements specifically affect retention decisions?*

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

We'd like to begin by discussing what military career requirements specifically affect retention decisions. Our first question concerns the physical requirements, height, weight, PT test, as they apply to your career.

- 2. How have these physical requirements affected your career decisions and/or advancement?**

[Caliber note for this and all questions: If insufficient detail is provided, then moderator needs to probe: "Could you explain why? (or why not?)" ; "What do you mean exactly? Could you give me an example?" , etc.]

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Fulfilling educational requirements are necessary to advance in your military career. For instance, a higher GT Score for enlisted and NCOs is sometimes required, and officers may have to move in order to complete a professional military education requirement. A college degree or an advanced college degree is often beneficial.

- 3. How has fulfilling the educational requirements affected your opportunities for advancement or your ability to obtain a job that you want?**

GEOGRAPHIC MOBILITY

- 4. Frequent moves have long been part of life in the military. How have moves affected your career decisions?**

PROMOTION AND EVALUATION PROCESS

- 5. Currently, decisions for promotion and advancement are based on military evaluations and/or your supervisor's recommendations. What has been your experience with this evaluation system and what are your impressions of it?**

MILITARY CAREER REQUIREMENTS AND THE CAREER DECISION

6. We've talked about 4 of the major requirements for a military career: physical requirements, educational requirements, geographic mobility, and the promotion and evaluation process. If you were leaning towards leaving the military, would any of these influence you to leave the military?

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
Do current worldwide operations and plans for the changing military environment influence your career goals and intentions?*

DEPLOYMENT/NON-DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES

We would now like to talk to you about the military requirement of deployment, which is distinct from those already discussed. Namely, we are interested in understanding how current worldwide operations and plans for the changing military environment have influenced your career goals and intentions.

7. By a show of hands, how many of you have deployed since September 11th, 2001?
(Scribe records hand count)
8. For those of you who have not deployed, how has the lack of deployment experience influenced your retention decision or your career opportunities?

9. For those of you who have been deployed, how has your deployment experience influenced your retention decision?
10. In what ways have the length and frequency of deployment that you have experienced differed from what you expected when you joined the military? If your experience has been different from your expectations, do you see this as positive or negative, and why?
11. How has the risk of hostilities affected your retention decision?

DEPLOYMENT IMPACT ON THE FAMILY
--

12. For those of you who have been separated from your children due to deployment, what issues did you encounter with very young children, school age children, and teenagers?
13. In light of your experiences with deployment, how satisfied were you with the care your family received from the military and/or civilian community during your most recent deployment?

TRANSFORMATION

The military is undergoing a series of changes to better adapt to new circumstances. This has been broadly referred to as “transformation,” which basically means changing how the military does business. For example, we are seeing an increase in joint assignments, some military jobs are being converted into civilian positions, and there has been a shift in the kinds of jobs and skills that are being emphasized. These are just a few aspects of transformation. We would like to understand how you think these changes are going to affect you, your career, and your attitude toward military service.

14. Do you think transformation will make it easier or more difficult for people to plan careers in the military? How so?

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
Is today's military taking the necessary steps to provide ongoing career development and direction for Service members?*

CAREER DEVELOPMENT, LEADERSHIP, MENTORING

We want to discuss whether your military leadership provides career development advice, information, and direction for Service members.

15. Is your unit military leadership providing the information you need about your career development? For example, are you getting counseling and briefings about your career? If so, have they been useful?

16. In what ways does leadership affect your career development, promotion and job opportunities in the unit? Could you give us some examples?

17. How many of you currently have a military mentor? (Scribe records hand count)

18. Could you describe some of the things your mentor does for you?

19. What recommendations do you have to ensure that Service members are getting information they need to advance in their careers?

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
How can the requirements of a military career be balanced with personal goals and family responsibilities?*

BALANCING WORK AND LIFE DEMANDS

Our next topic is about balance. As members of the military, you often have to balance the competing demands of your military career, your family life, and your personal goals. We want to learn how your careers have been affected by these competing demands. We also want to hear your recommendations about how to achieve balance in these areas while still maintaining a military career.

20. Have you ever had to choose between taking advantage of a military career opportunity and turning it down because of your family responsibilities or personal goals? How did you resolve this and what recommendations would you make?

21. What unique challenges do junior enlisted members and their families face in balancing the demands of work and family? What do you recommend to assist these Service members?

22. Single parents and dual military couples are required to complete a Family Care Plan. For those of you who have had to complete a Family Care Plan, has doing so helped you balance your military and family obligations? For supervisors, does this tool work?

23. Have you ever received training or information on balancing work-life demands?

OVERALL RETENTION

We have talked about several factors that affect your career including: military requirements, deployment, transformation, leadership/mentoring, and work-life balance. We'd like to wrap up by talking about which of these is most important in your military career decisions.

24. Can I get a show of hands? How many of you intend to leave the military after your current obligation? How many intend to stay? How many are undecided? (Scribe records hand count)

25. For those of you who plan to leave the military, what is the main factor that will influence your decision?

END

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and experiences with us. Your thoughts are invaluable to our efforts to inform the Office of the Secretary of Defense on these matters, so that they can be more effectively addressed.

Once again, thank you very much.

ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBER FOCUS GROUP SURVEY

1. How long, in total, have you served in the military?

(Please consider both your active duty service and any time spent you may have spent in the reserves):

_____ Years _____ Months

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

3. What is your paygrade? _____

4. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single, with no significant other
- ☐ Single, but with a significant other (e.g., girlfriend/boyfriend, fiancée)
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced or legally separated
- ☐ Widowed

5. How many dependent children in the following age groups are living with you?

- _____ Infant/Toddler (birth to 2 years)
- _____ Pre-K - Kindergarten (3 - 5 years)
- _____ Elementary (6 - 10 years)
- _____ Middle School (11 - 13 years)
- _____ High School (14 - 17 years)
- _____ 18 - 21 years

6. In the past 3 years, have you been deployed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. In the past 3 years, about how much time in total have you spent deployed?

- ☐ Does not apply; I have not been deployed
- ☐ Less than 1 month
- ☐ 1 - 3 months
- ☐ 4 - 6 months
- ☐ 7 - 9 months
- ☐ 10 months to less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 year to 18 months
- ☐ More than 18 months, but less than 2 years
- ☐ 2 years or more

8. Overall, what level of stress did you experience during your MOST RECENT deployment?

- ☐ Does not apply; I have not been deployed
- ☐ Very low
- ☐ Low
- ☐ Moderate
- ☐ High
- ☐ Very high

9. Please rate your satisfaction with support for you and/or your family in each of the following areas:

	Very satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Does not apply
Unit family readiness/support group or program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance with legal or administrative issues (e.g., Wills, Power of Attorney)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Amount of advance notice provided prior to deployment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support provided to your family by unit points-of-contact or unit rear detachment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall family support at my installation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Which of the following best describes your military career intentions? MARK ONE.

For those with less than 20 years service:

- ☐ Staying until I am eligible for retirement
- ☐ Staying beyond my present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement
- ☐ Probably leaving after my current obligation
- ☐ Definitely leaving after my current obligation
- ☐ Leaving the active component to join the Guard or Reserve (any service)
- ☐ Undecided/Not sure

For those with 20 or more years of service:

- ☐ Staying indefinitely, or as long as possible
- ☐ Retiring as soon as possible
- ☐ Undecided/Not sure

11. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with military life?

- ☐ Very satisfied
- ☐ Satisfied
- ☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ☐ Dissatisfied
- ☐ Very dissatisfied

**APPENDIX G:
GUARD AND RESERVE FAMILY MEMBERS PROTOCOL AND SURVEY**

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Facilitator: _____

Recorder: _____

of Participants Present for Entire Session: _____

of participants excused: _____

Reason(s) they were excused:

For demographic variables below, recorder please highlight in **bold type** the appropriate category:

Paygrade group: Officer family members Enlisted family members

Service: Army National Guard Army Reserve Coast Guard Reserve

Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our session. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion. My name is (your name) and my colleague is (team member's name). We are civilian volunteers serving on the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services—also known as DACOWITS. We also have with us (Caliber staff member name), an employee of Caliber Associates. Caliber is a civilian research firm contracted by DACOWITS to record today's discussion.

The Committee is composed of 13 civilian volunteers who are responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Department of Defense on issues relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of women in the Armed Forces. We are also tasked to examine family issues related to the recruitment and retention of our military.

PROCESS

We are visiting installations throughout the country and talking to members of all branches of the military, male and female, to learn their concerns. We are also speaking to family members to learn about their particular issues. The issues we will discuss with you today include retention, recruitment, your experiences with deployment, and balancing military obligations with personal and family life.

We want to emphasize that all of the information you choose to share with us is confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. We will not attribute any information to you individually or provide anyone, including commanders, information that would identify you. Our report will communicate the overall substance of the views and concerns military personnel and family members share with us to the Department of Defense.

EXPLANATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY

Before we start our discussion, we'd like for you to fill out a brief survey [**Scribe distributes forms**]. Please don't put your name on the survey; it's completely anonymous. The reason we ask you to fill this out is so at the end of the study, we can accurately describe the sample of Service members and family members that we have spoken to. Please take your time.

[Scribe collects completed surveys, and replaces them in envelope].

GROUND RULES

Thank you. Let me explain some simple ground rules, and then we'll get started.

Please speak loud and clear. Only one person should talk at a time. If several people are talking, [name of scribe] will not be able to capture your comments. Also, let me emphasize the importance of respecting one another's views. We value everyone's thoughts and may ask you directly to contribute your thoughts to the group.

Our session will take about an hour-and-a-half. We will not take a formal break.

WARM-UP

1. **Let's begin by finding out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Please introduce yourself by telling us your first name, how long you have been a Reserve/National Guard family member, whether your spouse has deployed since September 11th, 2001, and, if so, for how long.**

Thank you.

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
What are the most important benefits and drawbacks of military life to family members?*

BENEFITS AND DRAWBACKS OF MILITARY LIFE

We'd like to begin by discussing some of your experiences with life as a military family member. Specifically, we would like to learn your opinions about the benefits and drawbacks of military life as they apply to you and your family.

2. **What are the advantages of National Guard/Reserve commitment to you and your family? Which aspects of the Guard and or Reserve are most important and make you want to remain part of the military community?**

[Caliber note for this and all questions: If insufficient detail is provided, then moderator needs to probe: "could you explain why? (or why not?)"; "What do you mean exactly? Could you give me an example?"; etc.]

3. **What are the main disadvantages of your spouses Guard/Reserve commitment. Which aspects have most discouraged you from wanting to remain?**

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
How do personal issues (e.g., finances, family stresses) affect military personnel and their retention decisions?*

FAMILY STRESS

- 4. What are the most stressful aspects of your spouses' military commitment?**

FINANCES

- 5. How does mobilization affect your income and benefits, such as salary, health care, life insurance and tax status? Did you or your family experience a change in any of these items? By mobilization we mean a deployment overseas to support the operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, or a call to state duty for disaster relief or homeland security that prevented your spouse from doing their civilian job for 30 or more days.**

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
What are the effects of deployment/separation on children, and the impact of separations on family members on the retention of military members?*

DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES:

Our next topic is about deployment. By deployment we mean separation, overseas to support the operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, or other locations for more than 6 months. We'd like to learn your opinion about how the separation caused by deployment affects Reserve families. We will start with the impact on children, but we will cover a number of topics dealing with deployment. Because children of different ages often react differently to these separations, we'd like to ask about your experiences with specific age groups.

[NOTE TO MODERATOR: If participants do not have children in a particular age group, then move on.]

- 6. For those of you who have young children below the age of 6 years old, what were the specific challenges they faced during the deployment?**

- 7. What issues did your school-aged children— 6 to 12 year olds— encounter?**
- 8. What issues did your teenagers—13 to 18 year olds— encounter?**
- 9. What recommendations do you have to help children deal with the separation of deployment? What has worked for you and what can the military learn from your experiences?**

As you know, deployments affect spouses as well as children. We'd like to talk about the way you, as spouses, have coped with the challenges of deployment.

- 10. What were the most challenging issues you experienced during your spouse's deployment?**
- 11. Did media coverage of military operations affect you or your family during the deployment? In what ways exactly?**

- 12. There have been 419 Family Support Centers added for the Guard and Reserve personnel and their families over the past two years. Are you aware of them? Do you know where the closest one to you is? During deployment did you or your family use any of their services such as: child care; family, mental health or financial counseling; or reunion support?**
- 13. Have you ever heard of *Military One Source*?**
- 14. What recommendations do you have to increase service member and family member awareness and use of support services, including unit family support, state and federal family support centers and employer support services?**
- 15. What do you think of the predictability of timing and length of mobilizations and deployments?**
- 16. Is 30 days official notice prior to deployment adequate to enroll in DEERS, TRICARE, get ID Cards, and activate your Active duty benefits for yourself and family?**

*Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section):
How can the requirements of family well-being be balanced with military career responsibilities?*

WORK AND FAMILY BALANCE

Our last topic is about balance. As National Guard/ Reserve family members, you often have to balance the competing demands of your spouse's civilian career, military career, and family life. We would like to learn what experiences and recommendations you have on this topic.

17. Have you and your spouse found it difficult to balance the demands of a civilian career and military career with family life? If so, what are the most significant barriers to achieving balance between these demands?

18. What recommendations do you have to help National Guard/Reserve families achieve balance? What has worked for your family and what can the military learn from your experiences?

RETENTION

We've talked about several aspects of National Guard/Reserve life that affect families. We'd like to wrap up by talking about which of these factors most strongly influence your support for your spouse's military commitment.

19. We'd like to get a show of hands: (Scribe records hand counts)

- **How many of you want your spouse to remain in the military beyond his or her current obligation? _____**
- **How many of you want your spouse to leave the military after his or her current obligation? _____**
- **How many of you are not sure whether you want your spouse to stay in or leave the military after his or her current obligation? _____**

20. For those of you who want your spouse to stay in the military, what makes you feel that way?

21. For those of you who want your spouse to leave the military, what makes you feel that way?

22. For those of you who are unsure whether you want your spouse to stay in or leave the military, what makes you feel that way?

END

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and experiences with us. Your thoughts are invaluable to our efforts to inform the Office of the Secretary of Defense on these matters, so that they can be more effectively addressed.

Once again, thank you very much.

FAMILY MEMBER FOCUS GROUP SURVEY (GUARD/RESERVE)

1. How long, in total, has your spouse/family member served in the military? (Include your Service member's time in the Guard/Reserve and any prior service in the active component):

_____ Years _____ Months

2. What is your Service member's paygrade? _____

3. What is your relationship with your Service member?

- ☐ The Service member is my spouse
☐ The Service member is my boyfriend/girlfriend or fiancé/fiancée
☐ The Service member is my parent or step-parent
☐ The Service member is my son/daughter or step child
☐ Other relationship (*Please specify below*):

4. How many dependent children in the following age groups are living with you?

- _____ Infant/Toddler (birth to 2 years)
 _____ Pre-K - Kindergarten (3 - 5 years)
 _____ Elementary (6 - 10 years)
 _____ Middle School (11 - 13 years)
 _____ High School (14 - 17 years)
 _____ 18 - 21 years

5. Which of the following best describes your work situation?

- ☐ I am employed full-time
☐ I am employed part-time
☐ I am not employed and I am looking for a job
☐ I am not employed and I am not looking for a job

6. In the past 3 years, has your Service member been mobilized (i.e., called up for to active duty)?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

7. In the past 3 years, about how much time have you spent separated from your Service member due to mobilization?

- ☐ Does not apply; my Service member has not been mobilized
☐ Less than 1 month
☐ 1 - 3 months
☐ 4 - 6 months
☐ 7 - 9 months
☐ 10 months to less than 1 year
☐ 1 year to 18 months
☐ More than 18 months, but less than 2 years
☐ 2 years or more

8. Overall, what level of stress did you experience during your Service member's MOST RECENT mobilization?

- ☐ Does not apply; my Service member has not been deployed
☐ Very low
☐ Low
☐ Moderate
☐ High
☐ Very high

9. Overall, what level of stress did your child(ren) experience during your Service member's MOST RECENT mobilization? (FOR SPOUSES ONLY)

- ☐ Does not apply
☐ Very low
☐ Low
☐ Moderate
☐ High
☐ Very high

10. Please rate your satisfaction with each of the following:

	Very satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Does not apply
Unit family readiness/support group or program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance with legal or administrative issues (e.g., Wills, Power of Attorney, DEERS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Amount of advance notice provided prior to mobilization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support from unit points-of-contact or unit rear detachment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall family support available from the Guard/Reserve	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Which of the following best describes your Service member's career intentions in the Guard/Reserve? (MARK ONE)

- ☐ He or she is staying until eligible for retirement
☐ He or she is staying beyond his/her present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement
☐ He or she is probably leaving after his/her current obligation
☐ He or she is definitely leaving after his/her current obligation
☐ He or she is leaving the Reserves to join the Active Component
☐ He or she is undecided/not sure
☐ I don't know what my Service member's career intentions are

12. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction your experience as a Guard/Reserve family member?

- ☐ Very satisfied
☐ Satisfied
☐ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
☐ Dissatisfied
☐ Very dissatisfied

APPENDIX H:
GUARD AND RESERVE SERVICE MEMBERS PROTOCOL AND SURVEY

Location: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Facilitator: _____

Recorder: _____

of Participants Present for Entire Session: _____

of participants excused: _____

Reason(s) they were excused:

For demographic variables below, recorder please highlight in **bold type** the appropriate category:

Paygrade: E1-E4 E5-E6 USMC E1-E3 USMC E4-E5 W1-W2/O1-O3 O4-O5

Gender: Male Female

Service: Army National Guard Air National Guard Army Reserve Coast Guard Reserve

NOTE: HAND OUT NAME CARDS

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/afternoon/evening and welcome to our session. Before we start, are there any personal here who are working full time in government service (GS) in the unit during the week and then drill with the unit during the year? Or is anyone on a full time National Guard or Reserve assignment in this group? If so I'd like to ask you to leave. Sorry, if things got mixed up but the next hour or so will not be of a benefit to you, so we are going to let you get back to your duties. Thank you for taking the time to join our discussion. First of all, thank you for your service. We're very proud of all you do! My name is (your name) and my colleague is (team member's name). We are civilian volunteers serving on the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services—also known as DACOWITS. We also have with us (Caliber staff member name), an employee of Caliber Associates. Caliber is a civilian research firm contracted by DACOWITS to record today's discussion.

The Committee is composed of 13 civilian volunteers who are responsible for providing advice and recommendations to the Department of Defense on issues relating to the recruitment and retention, treatment, employment, integration, and well-being of women in the Armed Forces. We are also tasked to examine family issues related to the recruitment and retention of our military.

PROCESS

We are visiting installations throughout the country and talking to members of all branches of the military, male and female, to learn your concerns. We are also speaking to family members to learn about their particular issues. The issues we will discuss with you today include retention and recruitment, your mobilization experiences, and balancing your military obligations with your personal and family lives.

We want to emphasize that all of the information you choose to share with us is confidential to the maximum extent permitted by law. We will not attribute any information to you individually or provide anyone, including commanders, information that would identify you. Our report will communicate the overall substance of the views and concerns military personnel and family members share with us to the Department of Defense.

EXPLANATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF SURVEY

Before we start our discussion, we'd like for you to fill out a brief survey [**Scribe distributes forms**]. Please don't put your name on the survey; it's completely anonymous. The reason we ask you to fill this out is so at the end of the study, we can accurately describe the sample of Service members and family members that we have spoken to. Please take your time.

[**Scribe collects completed surveys, and replaces them in envelope**].

GROUND RULES

Thank you. Let me explain some simple ground rules, and then we'll get started.

Please speak loud and clear. Only one person should talk at a time. If several people are talking, [Name of scribe] will not be able to capture your comments. Also, let me emphasize the importance of respecting one another's views. We value everyone's thoughts and may ask you directly to contribute your thoughts to the group.

Our session will take about an hour-and-a-half. We will not take a formal break.

WARM-UP

1. **Let's begin by finding out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Please introduce yourself by telling us your first name, what job you are doing and how long you have served in the unit. You also might want to say why you joined, and if you are prior service or not.**

Thank you.

Mission and Goals Statement (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section)
How do career development, readiness, civilian employment concerns, and the perceptions of employers, coworkers and family members affect recruitment and retention decisions of Guard and Reserve members?

CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT

We'd like to begin by talking about your civilian employment.

2. **In what ways, if any, has your Service in the Guard/Reserves affected your civilian employment? If so, how? Give me an example.**
3. **How would you describe the opinions and attitudes of your civilian employer and your co-workers towards your Guard/Reserve Service? Why do you think they feel the way they do?**

PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY MEMBERS

- 4. How would you describe the opinions and attitudes of your spouse (or significant other) and your family members towards your Guard/Reserve Service? Why do you think they feel the way they do?**

CAREER DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENTS

- 5. How would you describe your experience in trying to meet the career development requirements in the Guard/Reserve? Specifically the requirements associated with promotion, job opportunities, physical fitness, education, and even geographic mobility?**
- 6. In what ways do leadership affect your career development, promotion and job opportunities in the unit? Could you give us some examples?**
- 7. What can the National Guard/Reserve/do better to assist you with the requirements of career development?**

READINESS IN THE GUARD AND RESERVE

8. Overall how well prepared are you to perform your wartime job?

9. Overall how well prepared is your unit to perform its wartime mission?

*Mission and Goal Statement: (not spoken, just for reference to the overall intent of the section)
What challenges are specific to service in the Guard or Reserve resulting from mobilization and calls to state Active duty?*

MOBILIZATION EXPERIENCES

Now we would like to discuss your mobilization experiences, by mobilization we mean a deployment overseas to support the operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, or a call to state duty for disaster relief or homeland security that prevent you from doing your civilian job for 30 or more days.

10. Please tell us by a show of hands, how many of you have been mobilized since September 11, 2001? (Scribe records hand count)

STRESS

11. What were the most stressful aspects of mobilization for you?

- 12. What about your family? Would you say there is an increased level of stress for them? From your point of view, what were the most stressful aspects of the mobilization for your family?**

INCOME AND BENEFITS

- 13. How did the mobilization affect your income and benefits, such as salary, health care, life insurance and tax status? Did you or your family experience a change in any of these items?**

PREPARATION

- 14. Is 30 days official notice prior to deployment adequate to enroll in DEERS, TRICARE, get ID Cards, and activate your Active duty benefits for yourself and family? (10 left)**

PREDICTABILITY

- 15. What do you think of the predictability of timing and length of mobilizations?**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 16. We'd like your thoughts and recommendations about future mobilizations. Are there current mobilization processes/policies you could suggest that might work better?**

Mission and Goals Statement: How can the requirements of a military and civilian career be balanced with personal goals and family responsibilities?

BALANCING WORK AND LIFE DEMANDS

As members of the Guard/Reserve, most of you have to balance your military duties with your personal goals, family obligations, and your civilian job responsibilities.

17. Have you ever had to choose between accepting a military career opportunity or turning it down because of your family or civilian career responsibilities? How did you resolve this and what recommendations would you make?

18. What recommendations do you have that could help Guard/Reserve personnel balance the demands of military service, a civilian career, and family obligations/personal goals? What policies are working and what are not?

OVERALL RETENTION

19. We've talked about several aspects of a commitment to the Guard/Reserve. If you were leaning towards leaving the Guard/Reserve, which of the issues we have discussed would most strongly influence you to leave?

20. How has the risk of hostilities affected your retention decision?

Mission and Goals Statement: To what extent are Guard and Reserve members and their families aware of available support services? How can use of these services be increased?

SUPPORT SERVICES

21. There have been 419 Family Support Centers added for the Guard and Reserve personnel and their families over the past two years. Are you aware of them? Do you know where the closest one to you is? During deployment did you or your family use any of their services such as: child care; family, mental health or financial counseling; or reunion support?

22. Have you ever heard of *Military One Source*?

23. What recommendations do you have to increase service member and family member awareness and use of support services, including unit family support, state and federal family support centers and employer support services?

RECRUITMENT

24. As you may have heard in the news lately, some of the Reserve components are finding it more challenging to recruit new Service members. What do you think are the most important factors that potential recruits are considering these days when making their decision about whether to join the Guard/Reserve?

END

This concludes our discussion. Thank you for taking the time to share your opinions and experiences with us. Your thoughts are invaluable to our efforts to inform the Office of the Secretary of Defense on these matters, so that they can be more effectively addressed.

Once again, thank you very much.

GUARD/RESERVE SERVICE MEMBER FOCUS GROUP SURVEY

1. How long, in total, have you served in the military?

(Please consider both your Guard/Reserve service and any time served in the active component):

_____ Years _____ Months

2. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

3. What is your paygrade? _____

4. What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single, with no significant other
☐ Single, but with a significant other (e.g., girlfriend/boyfriend, fiancée)
☐ Married
☐ Divorced or legally separated
☐ Widowed

5. How many dependent children in the following ages groups are living with you?

- _____ Infant/Toddler (birth to 2 years)
_____ Pre-K - Kindergarten (3 - 5 years)
_____ Elementary (6 - 10 years)
_____ Middle School (11 - 13 years)
_____ High School (14 - 17 years)
_____ 18 - 21 years

6. In the past 3 years, have you been mobilized for any of the following? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

- ☐ Does not apply; I have not been mobilized
☐ Training, in the continental U.S. (CONUS)
☐ Training, outside the continental U.S. (OCONUS)
☐ Military operations overseas (not training)
☐ State Active Duty (SAD)
☐ Homeland security (e.g., airport security)
☐ Disaster relief

7. In the past 3 years, about how much time have you spent on active-duty, or in a mobilized status?

- ☐ Does not apply; I have not been mobilized or called to active-duty status
☐ Less than 1 month
☐ 1 - 3 months
☐ 4 - 6 months
☐ 7 - 9 months
☐ 10 months to less than 1 year
☐ 1 year to 18 months
☐ More than 18 months, but less than 2 years
☐ 2 years or more

8. Overall, what level of stress did you experience during your MOST RECENT mobilization?

- ☐ Does not apply; I have not been mobilized
☐ Very low
☐ Low
☐ Moderate
☐ High
☐ Very high

9. Please rate your satisfaction with support for you and/or your family in each of the following areas:

	Very satisfied	Mostly satisfied	Mostly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Does not apply
Obtaining military ID cards for family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participating in a unit family readiness group or program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance with legal or administrative issues (e.g., Wills, Power of Attorney, DEERS)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining timely mobilization info (e.g., advance notice, dates of mobilization.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining a unit Point-of-Contact (POC) for family members	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Which of the following best describes your career intentions in the Guard/Reserve? MARK ONE.

For those with less than 20 years service:

- ☐ Staying until I am eligible for retirement
☐ Staying beyond my present obligation, but not necessarily until retirement
☐ Probably leaving after my current obligation
☐ Definitely leaving after my current obligation
☐ Leaving the Guard/Reserve to join the active component (any service)
☐ Undecided/Not sure

For those with 20 or more years of service:

- ☐ Staying indefinitely, or as long as possible
☐ Retiring as soon as possible
☐ Undecided/Not sure

APPENDIX I:
IRAQ ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS PROTOCOL AND SURVEY

Date: _____ Time: _____

Facilitator: _____

Recorder: _____

of Participants Present for Entire Session: _____

of participants excused: _____

Reason(s) they were excused:

For demographic variables below, recorder please highlight in **bold type** the appropriate category:

Pay grade: _____

Gender: _____

Service: _____

WARM-UP

- 1. Let's begin by finding out some more about each other by going around the room one at a time. Please introduce yourself by telling us your first name, what job you are doing now, and how long you have served in [branch of service]. Also, you might want to say why you joined.**

TRANSFORMATION

- 2. Do you think transformation will make it easier or more difficult for people to plan careers in the military? How so?**

DEPLOYMENT

- 3. In what ways has the deployment that you have experienced differed from what you expected when you joined the military? If your experience has been different from your expectations, do you see this as positive or negative, and why?**
- 4. How has the risk of hostilities during your deployment affected your retention decision?**
- 5. How has your deployment experience influenced your retention decision?**

DEPLOYMENT IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

- 6. For those of you who have been separated from your children during deployment, what issues did you encounter with very young children, school age children, and teenagers?**

- 7. During your deployment, how satisfied are you with the support services, including unit support and Family Support Centers services such as child care, family, mental health or financial counseling; your family/spouse/parents are receiving from the military and/or civilian community?**

CAREER DEVELOPMENT, LEADERSHIP, MENTORING

- 8. During your deployment is your unit military leadership providing the information you need about your career development? For example, are you getting counseling and briefings about your career? If so, have they been useful?**

- 9. In what ways does leadership affect your career development, promotion and job opportunities in the unit? Could you give us some examples?**

- 10. How many of you have a military mentor?**

- 11. Can you describe some of the things your mentor does for you?**

12. What recommendations do you have to ensure that Service members are getting information they need to advance in their careers?

EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

13. How has your deployment impacted on fulfilling the educational requirements needed for advancement?

BALANCING WORK AND LIFE DEMANDS

14. How are you balancing your deployment and taking care of the needs and requirements of spouse, family, and personal goals at home station. What recommendations can you make?

15. What unique challenges do junior enlisted members and their families face in balancing the demands of deployment and family? What do you recommend to assist these Service members?

16. Single parents and dual military couples are required to complete a Family Care Plan. For those of you who have had to complete a Family Care Plan, has doing so helped you balance your deployment and family obligations? For supervisors, does this tool work?

OVERALL RETENTION

We have talked about several factors that affect your career including: deployment, transformation, leadership/mentoring, and work-life balance. We'd like to wrap up by talking about which of these is most important in your military career decisions.

17. Can I get a show of hands? How many of you intend to leave the military after your current obligation? How many intend to stay? How many are undecided? (Scribe records hand count)

18. For those of you who plan to leave the military, what is the main factor that will influence your decision?

19. For those of you who plan to stay in the military, what is the main factor that will influence your decision?

20. For those of you who are undecided, what is the main factor that will influence your decision?

END

APPENDIX J:
BRIEFINGS PROVIDED AND PANELS HELD DURING DACOWITS FY05
BUSINESS MEETINGS

DACOWITS BUSINESS MEETING 2-3 FEBRUARY 2005

“Army National Guard and Army Reserve Panel.” Presented by COL Kent Milliken, National Guard Bureau, Chief Human Resource Officer and Ms. Karmin R. Jenkins, LCSW-C, U.S. Army Reserve Well-Being Liaison Officer.

“Sexual Assault.” Update on the submission to Congress and policy development issues for the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Presented by BG K.C. McClain, Commander, Task Force for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response.

“Reserve Panel,” presented by LTC Greg S. Bennett, Assistant Director, Manpower Requirements and Programs, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; Richard J. Kimmer, Personnel Policy Program, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; Colonel James Scott, Director, Individual and Family Support Policy, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs; Mr. Bob Hollingsworth, Executive Director, Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve.

“FY04 Female Healthcare Issues in the CENTCOM AOR”

DACOWITS BUSINESS MEETING 16-17 MAY 2005:

“Work-Family Balance in Soldiers and Their Families,” presented by LTC Carl A. Castro, Ph.D. and Julie C. Clark, M.S., Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

“Military Family Responses to Deployment,” presented by COL Karl Zeff, M.D., William Beaumont Army Medical Center.

“Air Force Women’s Health Surveillance Program,” presented by COL Penny F. Pierce, Ph.D., RN, U.S. Air Force Reserve.

“Force Health Protection Combat/Operational Stress and Deployment Mental Health,” presented by COL Joyce Adkins, Ph.D., MPH, Deployment Health Support Directorate, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

“Women in the Army: Career Plans, Reasons for Leaving, and Trends in Attitudes,” presented by Dr. Morris Peterson, Chief, Army Personnel Survey Office, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

“U.S. Army Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) Update,” presented by MAJ Elizabeth Griffin, U.S. Army Human Resources Command.

“Army Unintended Pregnancy Study,” presented by COL Michael Custer, DrPH., Chief of Nursing Research, Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

APPENDIX K: FOCUS GROUP SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Results: Demographic Profile of Service Members Participating in DACOWITS 2005 Focus Groups (n=536)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Military Status	Active Component	388	72%
	Reserve Component	148	28%
	Total	536	100%
Gender	Male	239	45%
	Female	297	55%
	Total	536	100%
Marital Status	Married	348	65%
	Single	137	25
	Divorced or legally separated	48	9%
	Missing	3	1%
	Total	536	100%
Paygrade	E1-E4	141	26%
	E5-E6	147	27%
	E7-E9	92	17%
	W1-W3/O1-O3	79	15%
	W4-W5/O4-O6	67	13%
	Missing	10	2%
	total	536	100%
Years of Service	Less than 10 years	281	52%
	10 – 19 years	196	37%
	20 years or more	59	11%
	total	536	100%

Survey Results: Career Intentions Active Component Service Members (n=388)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Service Members with less than 20 years service (n=330)	Staying until retirement	164	50%
	Staying beyond present obligation but not necessarily until retirement	31	9%
	Probably leaving after present obligation	41	12%
	Definitely leaving after present obligation	35	11%
	Leaving to join the Reserve component	3	1%
	Undecided	53	16%
	Missing	3	1%
	Total	330	100%
Service members with 20 years or more of service (n=58)	Stay indefinitely, or as long as possible	24	41%
	Retiring as soon as possible	14	24%
	Undecided	20	35%
	Total	58	100%

Survey Results: Career Intentions Reserve Component Service Members (n=148)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Service Members with less than 20 years service (n=123)	Staying until retirement	47	38%
	Staying beyond present obligation but not necessarily until retirement	10	8%
	Probably leaving after present obligation	19	15%
	Definitely leaving after present obligation	24	20%
	Leaving to join the Active component	0	0%
	Undecided	23	19%
	Total	123	100%
Service members with 20 years or more of service (n=25)	Stay indefinitely, or as long as possible	15	60%
	Retiring as soon as possible	3	12%
	Undecided	7	28%
	Total	25	100%

Survey Results: Deployment Experience Active Component Service Members (n=388)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Deployment Experience (Past 3 Years)	Yes	261	67%
	No	125	32%
	Missing	2	1%
	Total	388	100%
Time Spent Deployed (Past 3 Years)	Have not been deployed	125	32%
	Less than 1 month	3	1%
	1-3 Months	22	6%
	4-6 Months	55	14%
	7-9 Months	43	11%
	10 months to less than 1 year	43	11%
	1 year to 18 months	68	17%
	More than 18 months, but less than 2 years	15	4%
	2 years or more	11	3%
	Missing	3	1%
	Total	388	100%
Overall Level of Stress Experienced During Deployment	Very High/High	112	29%
	Moderate	100	26%
	Very Low/Low	58	15%
	Don't Know/does not apply	115	30%
	Missing	3	<1%
	Total	383	100%

Survey Results: Mobilization Experience Reserve Component Service Members (n=148)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Mobilization Experience (Past 3 Years)	Yes	137	93%
	No	11	7%
	Total	148	100%
Time Spent on Active Duty/Mobilized Status (Past 3 Years)	Have not been mobilized or called to Active Duty	11	8%
	Less than 1 month	0	0%
	1-3 Months	2	1%
	4-6 Months	5	3%
	7-9 Months	5	3%
	10 months to less than 1 year	9	6%
	1 year to 18 months	64	44%
	More than 18 months, but less than 2 years	27	18%
	2 years or more	25	17%
	Total	148	100%
Purpose of Mobilization	Training in CONUS	29	43%
	Training OCONUS	6	9%
	Overseas Military Operations	57	84%
	State Active Duty	15	22%
	Homeland Security	22	32%
	Disaster Relief	2	3%
Overall Level of Stress experienced during Mobilization	Very high/High	61	41%
	Moderate	51	34%
	Very Low/Low	25	17%
	Does not apply	13	8%
	Total	148	100%

Survey Results: Satisfaction with Support and with Military Life Active Component Service Members (n=388)			
Satisfaction with:		Number	Percent of Total
Unit family readiness/support group or program	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	239	62%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	59	15%
	Don't know/does not apply	85	22%
	Missing	5	1%
	Total	388	100%
Assistance with legal or administrative issues	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	326	84%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	23	6%
	Don't know/does not apply	34	9%
	Missing	5	1%
	Total	388	100%
Overall Military Life	Very satisfied/Satisfied	271	70%
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	82	21%
	Very dissatisfied/Dissatisfied	29	7%
	Missing	6	2%
	Total	388	100%

Survey Results: Satisfaction with Support and with Military Life (cont.) Active Component Service Members (n=388)			
Satisfaction with:		Number	Percent of Total
Amount of Advance Notice Provided Prior to Deployment	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	234	60%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	87	22%
	Don't know/does not apply	61	16%
	Missing	6	2%
	Total	388	100%
Support from Unit Point of Contact or Unit Rear Detachment	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	199	51%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	74	19%
	Don't know/does not apply	104	27%
	MISSING	11	3%
	TOTAL	388	100%
Overall Installation Family Support	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	255	66%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	64	16%
	Don't know/does not apply	58	15%
	Missing	11	3%
	Total	388	100%

Survey Results: Satisfaction with Support Reserve Component Service Members (n=148)			
Satisfaction with:		Number	Percent of Total
Assistance with Legal or Administrative Issues	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	108	73%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	15	10%
	Don't know/does not apply	24	16%
	Missing	1	<1%
	Total	148	100%
Obtaining Timely Mobilization Information	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	62	42%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	74	50%
	Don't know/does not apply	12	8%
	TOTAL	148	100%
Obtaining a Unit Point of Contact for Family Members	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	90	61%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	35	24%
	Don't know/does not apply	22	15%
	Missing	1	<1%
	Total	148	100%
Obtaining Military ID Cards for Family Members	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	82	55%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	7	5%
	Don't know/does not apply	59	40%
	Total	148	100%
Participation in Unit Family Readiness Group or Program	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	74	50%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	34	23%
	Don't know/does not apply	40	27%
	Total	148	100%

Survey Results: Demographic Profile of Family Members Participating in DACOWITS 2005 Focus Groups (n=79)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Service Member's Military Status	Active Component	65	82%
	Reserve Component	14	18%
	Total	79	100%
Relationship to Service Member	Spouse	76	96%
	Boyfriend/girlfriend or fiancé/fiancée	1	1%
	Son/Daughter or step-child	2	2%
	Total	79	100%*
Family Members Work Situation	Employed full-time	21	27%
	Employed part-time	17	22%
	Not employed and looking for a job	8	10%
	Not employed and not looking for a job	33	41%
	Total	79	100%
Service Member's Paygrade	E1-E4	6	8%
	E5-E6	21	27%
	E7-E9	10	13%
	W1-W3/O1-O3	7	9%
	W4-W5/O4-O6	30	38%
	Missing	5	6%
	Total	79	100%*
Service Member's Years of Service	Less than 10 years	45	57%
	10–19 years	25	32%
	20 years or more	8	10%
	Missing	1	1%
	Total	79	100%

*Total does not equal 100% exactly due to rounding.

Survey Results: Family Member's perception of their Service Member's Career Intentions Active Component Family Members (n=65)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Service Member's Career Intentions (n=65)	Staying until retirement	51	78%
	Staying beyond present obligation but not necessarily until retirement	7	11%
	Probably leaving after present obligation	3	5%
	Definitely leaving after present obligation	0	0%
	Undecided	4	5%
	Don't know my Service member's career intentions	0	0%
	Total	65	100%*

*Total does not equal 100% exactly due to rounding.

Survey Results: Family Member's perception of their Service Member's Career Intentions Reserve Component Family Members (n=14)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Service Member's Career Intentions (n=14)	Staying until retirement	9	64%
	Staying beyond present obligation but not necessarily until retirement	0	0%
	Probably leaving after present obligation	2	14%
	Definitely leaving after present obligation	0	0%
	Undecided	1	7%
	Don't know my Service member's career intentions	2	14%
	Total	14	100%*

*Total does not equal 100% exactly due to rounding.

Survey Results: Deployment Experience Active Component Family Members (n=65)			
Variable		Number	Percent of Total
Deployment Experience (Past 3 Years)	Yes	54	83%
	No	11	17%
	Total	65	100%
Time Spent Deployed (Past 3 Years)	Have not been deployed	5	8%
	Less than 1 month	0	0%
	1-3 Months	5	8%
	4-6 Months	5	8%
	7-9 Months	11	17%
	10 months to less than 1 year	4	6%
	1 year to 18 months	25	38%
	More than 18 months, but less than 2 years	7	11%
	2 years or more	3	4%
	Total	65	100%
Overall Level of Stress experienced during deployment	Very High/High	17	26%
	Moderate	22	34%
	Very Low/Low	17	26%
	Does not apply	7	10%
	Missing	2	3%
	Total	65	100%*
Overall Level of Stress Experienced By Your Children During Deployment	Very High/High	5	8%
	Moderate	19	29%
	Very Low/Low	21	32%
	Does not apply	17	26%
	Missing	3	5%
	Total	65	100%

*Total does not equal 100% exactly due to rounding.

Survey Results: Mobilization Experience Reserve Component Family Members (n=14)			
		Number	Percent of Total
Mobilization Experience (Past 3 Years)	Yes	14	100%
	No	0	0%
	Total	14	100%
Time Service Member Spent Mobilized (Past 3 Years)	Have not been deployed	0	0%
	Less than 1 month	0	0%
	1-3 Months	0	0%
	4-6 Months	0	0%
	7-9 Months	2	14%
	10 months to less than 1 year	2	14%
	1 year to 18 months	6	43%
	More than 18 months, but less than 2 years	2	14%
	2 years or more	2	14%
	Total	14	100%*
Overall Level of Stress Experienced During Mobilization	Very High/High	8	57%
	Moderate	4	29%
	Very Low/Low	2	14%
	Does not apply	0	0%
	Total	14	100%
Overall Level of Stress Experienced By Children During Mobilization	Very High/High	4	29%
	Moderate	1	7%
	Very Low/Low	2	14%
	Does not apply	5	36%
	Missing	2	14%
	Total	14	100%

*Total does not equal 100% exactly due to rounding.

Survey Results: Satisfaction With Support and with Military Life Active Component Family Members (n=65)			
Satisfaction with:		Number	Percentage of Total
Overall Family Support	Very satisfied/Mostly Satisfied	45	69%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly Dissatisfied	14	22%
	Don't know/does not apply	4	6%
	Missing	2	3%
	Total	65	100%
Overall Military Life	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	52	80%
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	11	17%
	Very dissatisfied/Dissatisfied	1	2%
	Missing	1	2%
	Total	65	100%*
Unit family readiness/support group or program	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	41	63%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	13	20%
	Don't know/does not apply	9	14%
	Missing	2	3%
	Total	65	100%
Assistance with legal or administrative issues	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	51	78%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	2	14%
	Don't know/does not apply	12	18%
	Total	65	100%
Obtaining Timely Mobilization Information	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	44	68%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	14	22%
	Don't know/does not apply	5	8%
	Missing	2	3%
	Total	65	100%*
Obtaining a Unit Point of Contact for Family Members	Very satisfied/Mostly Satisfied	37	57%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly Dissatisfied	14	22%
	Don't know/does not apply	13	20%
	Missing	1	2%
	Total	65	100%*

*Total does not equal 100% exactly due to rounding.

Survey Results: Satisfaction with Support and with Military Life Reserve Component Family Members (n=14)			
Satisfaction with:		Number	Percentage of Total
Overall Family Support	Very satisfied/Mostly Satisfied	7	50%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly Dissatisfied	5	36%
	Don't know/does not apply	1	7%
	Missing	1	7%
	Total	14	100%
Overall Military Life	Very Satisfied/Satisfied	9	64%
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1	7%
	Very dissatisfied/Dissatisfied	4	29%
	Total	14	100%
Unit family readiness/support group or program	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	8	57%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	5	36%
	Don't know/does not apply	1	7%
	Total	14	100%
Assistance with legal or administrative issues	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	9	64%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	4	29%
	Don't know/does not apply	1	7%
	Total	14	100%
Obtaining Timely Mobilization Information	Very satisfied/Mostly satisfied	9	64%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly dissatisfied	5	36%
	Total	14	100%
Support from Unit Point of Contact in the rear detachment	Very satisfied/Mostly Satisfied	9	64%
	Very dissatisfied/Mostly Dissatisfied	4	29%
	Don't know/does not apply	1	7%
	Total	14	100%

VIII. ENDNOTES

¹ The survey and interview data collected during the DACOWITS 2005 focus groups are intended to document and describe the attitudes and views of the participants, whose views may not necessarily represent those of the larger military community. Throughout the report, where possible, DACOWITS findings based on focus group information are compared to findings based on representative survey data collected through random sampling techniques (e.g., DMDC *Status of Forces* surveys, the *Sample Survey of Military Personnel* fielded by the Army Research Institute). In general, there was a high degree of similarity between the 2005 DACOWITS findings and those collected through large random samples of members of the military community.

² The following DMDC survey products were reviewed for this report:

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2003). *July 2003 status of forces survey of Active duty members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2003-019). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2004). *November 2003 status of forces survey of Active duty members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2003-031). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2004). *April 2004 status of forces survey of Active duty members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2004-006). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2004). *May 2004 status of forces survey of Reserve Component members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2004-015). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2004). *August 2004 status of forces survey of Active duty members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2004-018). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2005). *December 2004 status of forces survey of Active duty members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2005-004). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

Defense Manpower Data Center. (2005). *March 2005 status of forces survey of Active duty members: Tabulation of responses* (DMDC Report No. 2005-011). Arlington, VA: DMDC.

³ In its *Tabulations of Responses* volumes, DMDC provides the margin of error associated with each reported estimate derived from the Status of Forces surveys. For the purposes of readability these margins of error are not reproduced here, but are available in the *Tabulations* volume for the cited survey. As a rule, the margins of error for estimates reported here range from +/- 1% to +/- 5%, depending on the sample size of the group being described. Margins of error are smaller for estimates describing the military as a whole, and larger for estimates describing various sub-populations (e.g., single parents).

⁴ Studies on how deployments affect military children reviewed and discussed in the 2004 DACOWITS Report included the following:

Jensen P.S., Martin, D., & Watanabe, H. (1996). Children's response to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 35: 433-441.

Kelley, M.L., Hock, E., & Bonney, J.F. (2001). Navy mothers experiencing and not experiencing deployment: Reasons for staying in or leaving the military, *Military Psychology*, 13(1): 55-71.

Kelly, M.L., Hock, E., Smith, K.M., Jarvis, M.S., Bonney, J.F., & Gaffney, M.A. (2001). Internalizing and externalizing behavior of children with enlisted Navy mothers experiencing military-induced separation. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* 40: 464-471.

Kelly, M.L. (2002). The effect of deployment on traditional and non-traditional military families: Navy mothers and their children. In M.G. Ender (Ed.), *Military brats and other global nomads: Growing up in organization families*. Westport, CN: Praeger.

Pierce, P.F., Vinokur, A.D., & Buck, C.L. (1998). Effects of war-induced maternal separation on children's adjustment during the Gulf War and two years later. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 28: 1286-1311.

⁵ Ender, M. G. (2005). *First Cavalry Division spouses of OIF II: Fall 2004 survey results*, Unpublished Research Report, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, NY.

⁶ Excludes those who answered "don't know/does not apply."

⁷ Decision Engineering Associates. (2002). *2002 Quality of life in the Marine Corps study*. Prepared for the Commanding General, U.S. Marine Corps MCCDC, Studies and Analysis Division. Dumfries, VA: Decision Engineering Associates.

⁸ Castro, C. A., & Clark, J.C. (2005). *Work-family balance in soldiers and their families*. Briefing presented to the Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) May 16, 2005. Silver Spring MD, Department of Military Psychiatry, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

⁹ For example, see Jowers, K., & Cavallaro, G. (2004). "War & wedlock: Stress of duty and deployments turning marriage into a minefield." *Army Times*, 65, 24-25.

¹⁰ Divorce data provided to DACOWITS by the Defense Manpower Data Center. DMDC does not actually track "divorce" per se, but the number of personnel who report no longer being married at time 2. While the vast majority of these cases will represent divorces, the figures also include the extremely small number of officers who become widowed during the course of the year.

¹¹ Caliber Associates. (2003). *2003 Air Force community assessment: USAF survey results*. Prepared for the Department of The Air Force. Fairfax, VA: Caliber Associates.

¹² Newell, C. (2004). *Results of the 2002 spouse quality of life survey*. Briefing presented to the OSD Quality of Life Research Committee, February 11, 2004. Millington, TN: Navy Personnel Research, Studies and Technology.