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CONFERENCE BRINGS EXPERTS TOGETHER TO REFINE WAYS OF REINTEGRATING SOLDIERS AFTER DEPLOYMENT

By Dave Melancon

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

HEDELBERG, Germany -- U.S. Army Europe leaders and community agencies responsible for the reintegration of Soldiers and civilian employees returning from deployment will soon find updated tools at their disposal.



SGT AIMEE MILLHAM

Spc. Justin Beck from U.S. Army Europe's 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, checks Staff Sgt. Abdurraheem Sulaimaan's personnel records in the reintegration center in Schweinfurt, Germany during the reintegration process. Sulaimaan and his fellow Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division completed their return from Iraq in November upon their return from Iraq. That process was reviewed during a recent four-day conference attended by subject-matter experts representing every area addressed during reintegration.

The key tool in negotiating the reintegration process – the USAREUR reintegration checklist -- has been refined to bring it in step with the Army's recently revised reintegration process and provide more depth on post-deployment issues such as alcohol abuse, mental health concerns and brain injury awareness, said Sgt. 1st Class Steven Stanfill from the policy branch of the USAREUR personnel directorate.

The refinements were the product of a four-day conference in Bad Kreuznach, Germany in January. The conference brought together subject-matter experts such as unit leaders, attorneys, chaplains, educators, family readiness group members and medical professionals, he said.

Their goal was to “validate, create and organize the reintegration process for our Soldiers and civilians returning from downrange,” Stanfill explained.

“We had 42 of the smartest subject-matter experts in USAREUR there,” Stanfill said. “Every person contributed to the product because they work it every day.”

“We (now) have a more detailed, user-friendly product for commanders to use, and it is user-specific,” he said.

“Many of these SMEs have deployed and experienced the reintegration process,” added Daniel Barbosa, also of USAREUR’s personnel policy branch. “They continue to give us feedback on what was working and what has not, and we took those into consideration when updating the current checklist.”

Conference attendees focused on the development of tasks, conditions and standards for a unit or community reintegration program, Stanfill said. Although many of the tasks have been updated or modified, the basic reintegration process that spans seven half-days immediately following redeployment has not changed.

“We want to help the units reintegrate their Soldiers as easily as possible,” he said. “The last thing you want them to do is go all over the installation from one place to another, simply creating confusion. We want the process to be user-friendly and without too much inconvenience. It is also a must to reintegrate with their family and friends.”

Family members are also encouraged to attend several briefings provided by the unit’s rear detachment in preparation for their spouses’ return, he added.

USAREUR was the first major Army command to codify its reintegration policies and operations into regulatory guidance, Stanfill said. Soon after, other Army commands adopted these procedures and incorporated them into their reintegration programs.

USAREUR will change some of its reintegration procedures, Barbosa explained, and add some new tasks to the process, such as in-depth counseling and medical reviews, now required by the Department of the Army.

“We ripped apart our current checklist to ensure that we are in compliance with the new Department of the Army Deployment Cycle Support Directive,” said Stanfill.

Personnel specialists and other service providers can go to USAREUR’s reintegration web site at <http://www.per.hqusareur.army.mil/reintegration/> to see what tasks they need to perform and how to perform them, he said.

“When you go to the web site and click any one of the tasks, it will take you to the tasks, conditions and standards for ... that task,” Stanfill said. “And that is what commanders, first sergeants and units are using as a tool to reintegrate their Soldiers. They should not be creating their own (reintegration programs).”

“Some units have modified the current program to fit their process for an easier reintegration experience,” he added, “which is fine as long as all the tasks are completed and validated.”

Any Soldier or Department of Defense civilian employee deployed for more than 90 days will go through the same reintegration modules, Stanfill said.

The checklist is divided into several sections for redeploying units, rear detachments and communities, Barbosa said. The sections make it easier for service providers to find the part of the reintegration process pertaining to their areas of expertise.

“There is a section for IMCOM, chaplains, legal and other service providers. The checklist also includes sections pertaining to reserve component Soldiers and civilian personnel as well,” he said.

The new steps will be added to the checklist when the approval process is complete, Stanfill said. Additionally, the USAREUR reintegration regulation, USAREUR Regulation 600-8-109, is being rewritten to reflect the changes.

Additional USAREUR deployment and reintegration resources are also available in the USAREUR “blue box” at: <http://www.per.hqusareur.army.mil/bluebox/>



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