DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC

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MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM/SG

FROM: HQ USAF/SG3
110 Luke Avenue, Room 400
Bolling AFB DC 20032-7050

SUBJECT: Landing Gear – Pre and Post Deployment Prevention Education

Exposure to battlefield trauma places Airmen at risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental health problems. In an effort to minimize this risk, the Air Force Medical Service is releasing Landing Gear to standardize the delivery of pre-exposure preparation training for deploying Airmen and the mental health component of reintegration education for returning Airmen. Details for conducting Landing Gear are contained in the course materials, available on-line at http://afspp.afms.mil. The attached bullet background paper provides a brief overview of the Landing Gear program. Please distribute this information to your Mental Health Flight Commanders for implementation at the installation level.

My point of contact for this program is Lt Col Steven Pflanz, Senior Psychiatry Policy Analyst, AFMOA/SG3OO, (703) 681-6333, DSN 761-6333, or Steven.Pflanz@Pentagon.af.mil.

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Attachment:
Landing Gear Bullet Background Paper

BULLET BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

LANDING GEAR

- Exposure to battlefield trauma place Airmen at risk for PTSD and other mental health problems

  -- 20% of Airmen exposed to serious traumatic events in theater; less than 1% develop PTSD

- Trauma exposure is the most powerful predictor of problems following deployment; all high risk groups (e.g., security forces, medics, EOD, ILOs) face higher rates of trauma exposure

  -- Airmen with history of trauma exposure are 2-4 times more likely to develop PTSD

- Most Airmen exposed to trauma will recover without assistance or complications

  -- Data indicates 60% of Airmen with serious traumatic stress symptoms won't recover without help; prompt medical intervention (i.e., psychotherapy) greatly improves outcomes

  -- Brief training is effective at improving risk recognition and help seeking behavior

- Landing Gear serves as a bridge to care designed to increase the identification of Airmen suffering from traumatic stress symptoms and connect them with appropriate helping resources

  -- Provides standardized approach to mental health requirements for pre-exposure preparation training for deploying Airmen and reintegration education for redeploying Airmen

  -- Based on metaphor that, no matter how powerful an aircraft is in the air, properly functioning landing gear is necessary to safely launch and recover; effective risk recognition and help seeking behavior are the functional equivalent of landing gear for Airmen

- Course Overview

  -- Standardized but flexible lesson plan that can be tailored to audience needs

  -- Primary briefers will be mental health personnel; qualified IDS members can be utilized

  -- Installation will determine the frequency and scheduling of classes based on local needs

  -- Class length will be tailored to needs of audience, but typical length is 30-60 minutes

    --- Impromptu classes for short or no notice deployments may be much briefer

    --- Classes for groups of high risk Airmen may last longer to encourage open discussion

-- While Landing Gear effectively addresses needs of both deploying and redeploying Airmen, the concerns of these two groups are different and classes should be conducted separately

-- Can be accomplished as a freestanding class conducted by Mental Health Personnel, or in conjunction with briefings by the Airman & Family Readiness Center and Chaplains

- Course Content: All subject headings linked to operational metaphors

-- Deployment Stress (Pre-Flight Checklist)

-- Deployed Environment (Gear Up)

-- Typical Reactions (In Flight)

-- Reintegration and Reunion (Recovery to Home Station)

-- Prevention (Routine Maintenance & Inspection)

-- Getting Help (Troubleshooting & Repair)

- Landing Gear: Pre-Deployment (Purpose is to prepare Airmen to cope with traumatic events)

-- Landing Gear fulfills requirements for pre-exposure training (IAW AFI 44-153, para 3)

-- Base commanders and mental health personnel determine which personnel require training

--- Ideally, all Airmen will attend course before deploying

--- At minimum, deployers from high risk groups should attend

-- Pre-deployment classes cover Deployment Stress, Deployed Environment, Typical Reactions, Prevention, and Getting Help sections

-- Reintegration and Reunion previewed to lay foundation for what to expect after deployment

- Landing Gear: Post-Deployment (Purpose is to facilitate smooth reentry into work/family life)

-- Landing Gear fulfills requirements for mental health component of reintegration education (IAW AFI 10-403, Chapter 8, para 8.10.2.3.1), which is required for all returning Airmen

-- Reintegration classes review Deployment Stress, Deployed Environment, and Prevention sections, but emphasize Typical Reactions, Reintegration and Reunion, and Getting Help

- Detailed instructions are provided in course materials (executive brief, overview, curriculum slides, training manual, and talking paper), which are available on-line at http:\\afspp.afms.mil