

# ***Headquarters U.S. Air Force***

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## ***Landing Gear: Overview***



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# ***Agenda***

- Overview
- PTSD Data
- Redeployment Support Process
- Traumatic Stress: Risk & Recovery
- Landing Gear
- Tracking Progress
- Additional Resources



# ***AF Response to Deployment Stress***

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- Phase I: Deployment of Post-Deployment Health Reassessment to better identify Airmen with ongoing symptoms of deployment stress
- Phase II: Systematic training of AF Mental Health personnel on state-of-the-art treatment techniques for PTSD and deployment stress
- Phase III: Traumatic Stress IPT conducted detailed analysis of AF data to identify Airmen at greatest risk for PTSD
- Phase IV: Deployment of Landing Gear to facilitate recognition of and help for Airmen at risk



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# Overview

- Traumatic stress problems (e.g., PTSD and other mental health problems) remain a constant threat for Airmen in the theater of operations
- Landing Gear serves as a bridge to care designed to facilitate recognizing and helping Airmen suffering from traumatic stress symptoms
- Landing Gear provides standardized approach to the mental health requirements for pre-exposure preparation training for deploying Airmen and reintegration education for redeploying Airmen



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# Overview

*No matter how powerful an aircraft is in the air, properly functioning landing gear is necessary to safely launch and recover.*

*All Airmen must to be able to recognize the signs of deployment stress and know when to seek help.*

*Effective risk recognition and help seeking are the functional equivalent of landing gear for Airmen.*



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# **PTSD Data**

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# ***PTSD Prevalence***

- National Prevalence = 8%
- Trauma Victims = 20-30%
- Vietnam Veterans = 30%
- Persian Gulf War I Veterans = 10%
- Soldiers returning from OIF:
  - Report one or more PTSD symptoms: 22%
  - PTSD Diagnosis: 12%



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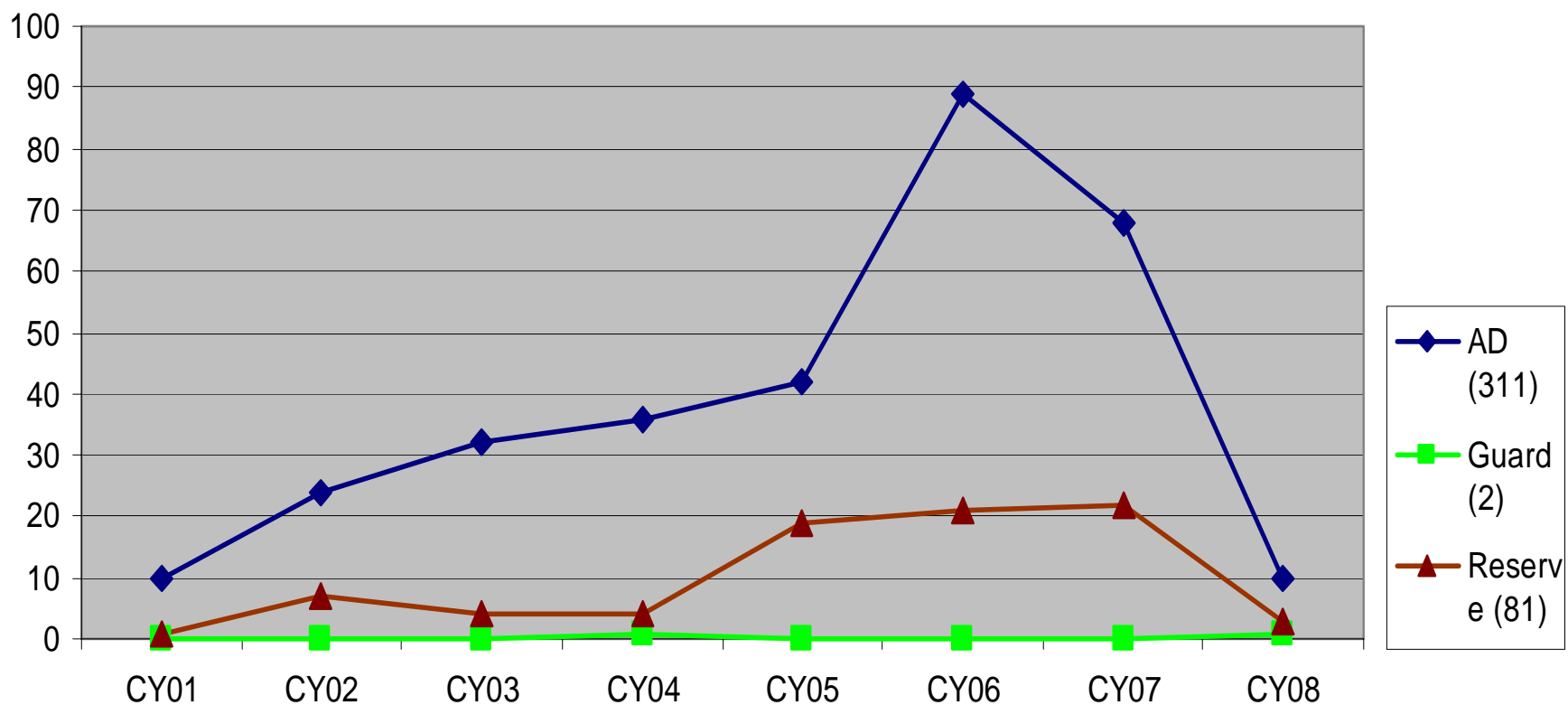
## ***OEF/OIF & PTSD in AF***

- Amongst all Airmen deployed in support of OEF/OIF:
  - Report one or more PTSD symptoms: 1.9%
  - PTSD Diagnosis: 0.35%
- Amongst all Airmen deployed on ILO missions in support of OEF/OIF:
  - Report one or more PTSD symptoms: 4.7%
  - PTSD Diagnosis: 1%
- AF PTSD discharges increased tenfold since 2001
  - From 10 discharges in 2001 to 110 in 2007



# PTSD Discharges by Component

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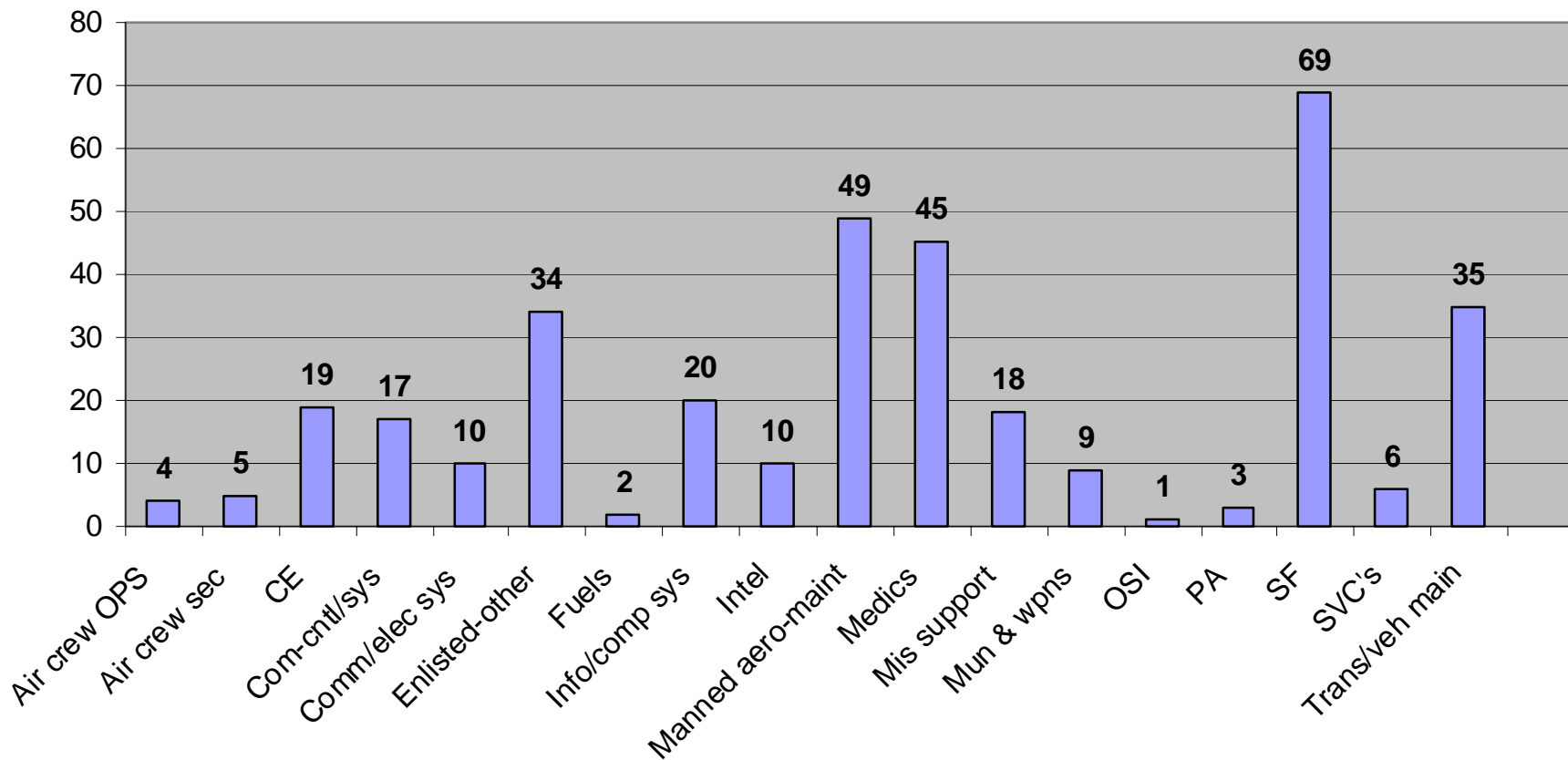


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# PTSD Discharges by AFSC

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# **Deployment Support Process**

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# Guidance

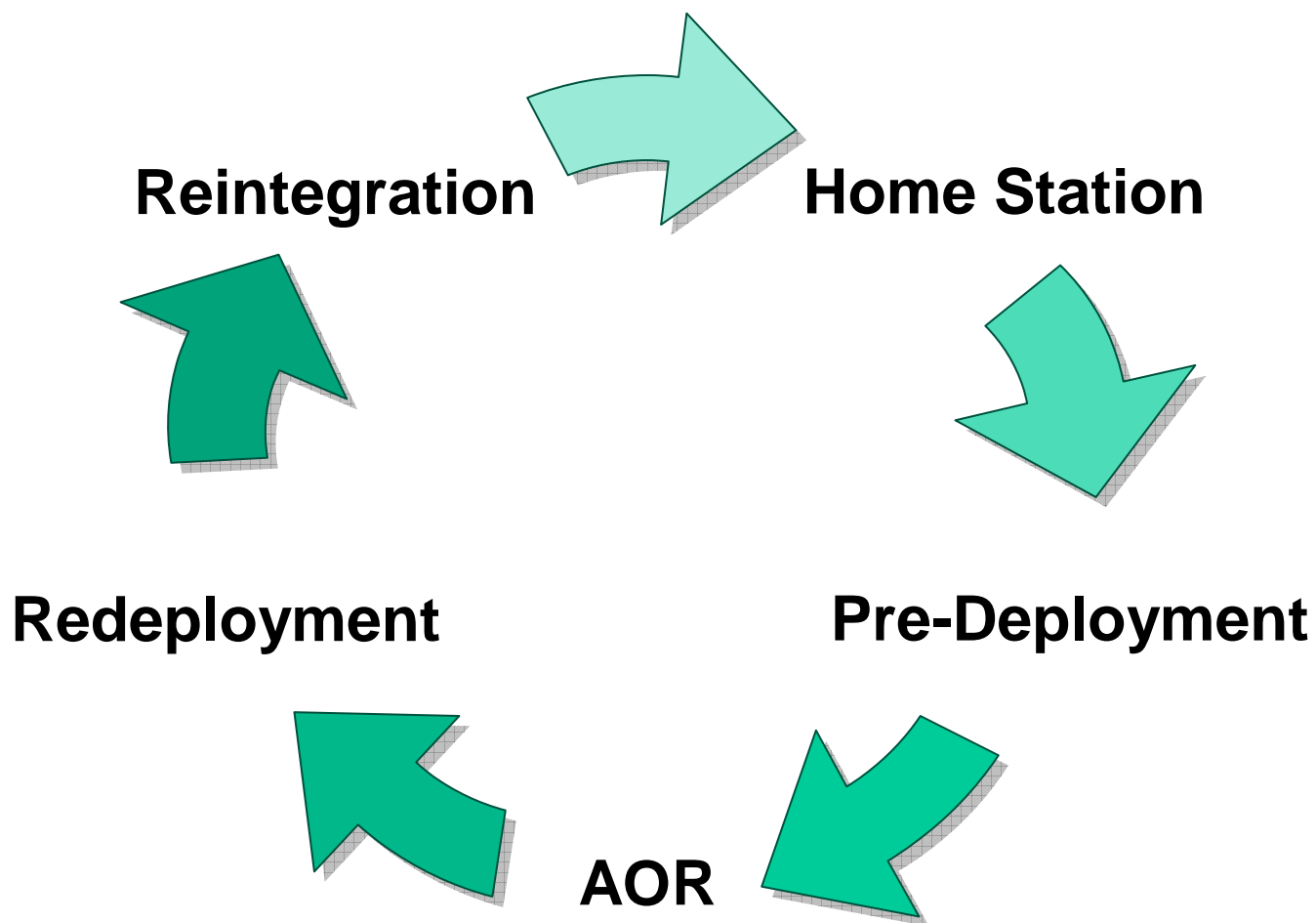
- ***Deployment Planning and Execution*** (AFI 10-403)  
oversees deployment of forces to and from the theater
- ***Redeployment Support Process*** (AFI 10-403, Chapter 8)  
facilitates smooth return of Airmen from AOR
- ***Reintegration Education*** (AFI 10-403, para 8.10.2.3.1)  
supports reentry of Airmen into work and family life
  - Required mental health component
- ***Pre-Exposure Preparation Training*** (AFI 44-153, para 3)  
prepares Airmen to cope with traumatic events (e.g., combat casualties)



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# ***Deployment Cycle***



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# *Medical Deployment Support*

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- Pre-deployment:
  - Pre-Exposure Preparation Training
  - Pre-Deployment Health Assessment
  - Neuropsychological baseline screening
- In AOR:
  - Expeditionary Medical Support
  - Traumatic Stress Response Teams
  - Combat Operational Stress Control Teams
- Post-Deployment:
  - Reintegration Education
  - Post-Deployment Health Assessment
  - Post-Deployment Health Reassessment
- Medical and mental health care throughout deployment cycle

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# ***Mental Health Deployment Support***

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- Mental health services at home station and in theater (e.g., counseling, medications, etc.)
- Prevention Activities (e.g., suicide prevention, stress management, reintegration education, etc.)
- Combat Operational Stress Control Teams (i.e., prevention and management of operational stress)
- Trauma Stress Response Teams (formerly known as Critical Incident Stress Management Teams; assists coping with exposure to devastating events)
- Pre-Exposure Preparation Training (prepares Airmen and units in advance to deal with traumatic events)



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# *Redeployment Support Process: AF Wingman Culture*

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- Supporting Airmen returning from the AOR is a critical component of the AF Wingman Culture
  
- Secretary of the Air Force, 7 Aug 07:
  - *“Smart Airmen seek out help when they need it and great wingmen know when to encourage their peers to get help.”*
  
- CSAF Sight Picture, 31 August 05:
  - *“Being a great wingman means recognizing when other Airmen are in distress and having the courage to care.”*



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# *Redeployment Support Process: Overview*

- Provides continuous, integrated support to Airmen and their families in AOR and at home station
  - Aids in transition from deployed environment to both family life and the work center
  - Addresses spiritual, medical, mental health, financial, legal, childcare, administrative needs
- Oversight assigned to base Community Action Information Board, IAW AFI 10-403, Chapter 8



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# ***Redeployment Support Process: Timeline***

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- In last 30 days prior to return from AOR:
  - AOR CC contacts Home Station CC about Airmen at risk
  - Chaplains & Mental Health provide reintegration education
  - Post-Deployment Health Assessment completed
- Return Date: Turn in weapons
- Within 2 days: Inprocessing with Personnel Readiness Function, Logistics Readiness Squadron, Finance, Legal, Public Health
- Within 5 days: Travel voucher submitted
- Within 7 days: Reintegration education accomplished
- Within 30 days: Post-Deployment Health Assessment
- Within 3-6 months: Post-Deployment Health Reassessment
- At each step, individual counseling provided as needed



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# *Redeployment Support Process: Integrated Base Response*

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- Commanders, first sergeants, Unit Deployment Manager, supervisors and other unit personnel
- Personnel Readiness Function
- Chaplains
- Medical, Public Health, and Mental Health
- Airman & Family Readiness Center
- Finance
- Legal
- Security Forces
- Logistics Readiness Squadron



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# **Traumatic Stress: Risk & Recovery**

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# *Traumatic Stress: Risk*

- 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
  - Airmen with history of trauma exposure are 2-4 times more likely to develop PTSD than other Airmen
  - Data consistent across Army, Navy, AF, and Marines
  - Exposure measured through specific items on PDHA
  - Other risk factors (e.g., AFSC, ILO, etc.) usually reflective of increased exposure risk



# *Traumatic Stress: Recovery*

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- Most Airmen exposed to trauma will recover without assistance or complications
- Data indicates 60% of Airmen with serious persisting traumatic stress symptoms won't recover without help
  - Prompt medical intervention (i.e., mental health counseling) greatly improves outcomes
- No evidence that lengthy training prevents PTSD or improves resiliency
  - Resiliency is learned over time (e.g., parenting, mentoring, professional training, psychotherapy, etc.)
- Brief training is effective at identifying those at risk and getting them in for help



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# ***Profile of Vulnerability***

- A “yes” answer to any of these questions on the PDHA represents an increased risk for traumatic stress symptoms:
  - Did the Airman ever feel he/she was in great danger of being killed?
  - Did the Airman ever see anyone wounded, killed, or dead?
  - Did the Airman ever inspect (or were they ever in) a military vehicle that was destroyed?
  - Did the Airman ever engage in direct combat where they discharged their weapon?



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# *High Risk Groups*

- High risk groups face increased risk for trauma exposure in theater:
  - Security Forces
  - EOD
  - OSI
  - Intelligence
  - Medics
  - Transportation
  - Airmen in ILO positions
  - Airmen with multiple deployments
  - Airmen on longer deployments



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# Landing Gear

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# Course Overview

- Purpose: Landing Gear serves as a bridge to care designed to increase the recognition of Airmen suffering from traumatic stress symptoms and connect them with helping resources
  - 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
- Detailed instructions are provided in course materials (executive brief, overview, curriculum slides, training manual, and talking paper)
  - Available on-line at <http://afspp.afms.mil>



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# ***Course Content***

- Introduction
- 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)
- Discussion



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# *Pre-Deployment Classes*

- Landing Gear fulfills requirements for pre-exposure training (IAW AFI 44-153, para 3)
  - Prepares Airmen to cope with traumatic events
- 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 emphasize Deployment Stress, Deployed Environment, Typical Reactions, Prevention, and Getting Help sections
- Reintegration and Reunion previewed to lay foundation for what to expect after deployment



# ***Post-Deployment Classes***

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- Reintegration education required for all Airmen to facilitate reentry into work and family life (IAW AFI 10-403, Chapter 8, para 8.10.2.3.1)
  - Required mental health, chaplain, and Airman & Family Readiness Center components
  - Three components can be accomplished independently or can be integrated into one session
- Landing Gear fulfills requirements for mental health component of reintegration education
  - Reintegration classes review Deployment Stress, Deployed Environment, and Prevention sections, but emphasize Typical Reactions, Reintegration and Reunion, and Getting Help



# Scheduling

- While Landing Gear effectively addresses needs of both deploying and redeploying Airmen, the concerns of these two groups are different and their classes should be conducted separately
- Installation will determine the frequency and scheduling of classes based on local needs
- Scheduling Options:
  - Recurring (e.g., once a week)
  - As needed (e.g., for larger groups projected for deployment or redeployment)
  - Impromptu or just-in-time (e.g., for individuals or groups with short notice deployments or unanticipated returns)
- Best to schedule special sessions when larger groups of Airmen from high risk groups return from theater



# *Length*

- Typical length will be 30-60 minutes for both pre and post deployment classes
- Class length can be expanded or contracted as needed to address audience needs
- Class should continue until the group discussion has run its course and all questions are answered
- For extremely short notice deployments, the lesson plan may need to be summarized in a few minutes
- For high risk groups, the briefer will encourage more discussion with each slide and the workshop will take longer (up to 2-3 hours, if needed)



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## ***AFR & ANG***

- AFR and ANG currently receiving pre and post deployment services from host base or base of departure
  - Oftentimes, accomplished upon arrival at installation just prior to deployment and immediately after returning from deployment
  - AFR and ANG personnel will receive Landing Gear from host base personnel in same fashion
  - Landing Gear can also be taught in Reserve and Guard units by qualified support personnel



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# **Tracking Progress & Additional Resources**

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# *Tracking Progress*

- AF-wide
  - PDHA identifies Airmen exposed to trauma in theater
  - PDHA and PDHRA identify Airmen with significant traumatic stress symptoms following redeployment
  - Symptoms amongst all Airmen exposed to trauma in theater will be tracked for AF-wide trends
- Individual Airmen
  - Commanders and unit members will often be aware of trauma exposure in theater and can be vigilant for symptoms warranting referral to Military Treatment Facility
  - PDHA/PDHRA process facilitates the identification and treatment of Airmen with significant trauma exposure history and/or traumatic stress symptoms



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## ***Additional Resources***

- Army Battlemind Program was developed to help Soldiers cope with the stresses and strains of deployment
  - Provides specific materials targeting soldiers, leaders, National Guard, Reserves, spouses, families, and helping professionals
  - Materials include a website, lesson plans, slide sets, videos, brochures, etc.
  - Available at [www.battlemind.org](http://www.battlemind.org)
- Airman Battlemind Programs have also been created by several MAJCOMs (e.g., AMC, ACC, AFMC, USAFA, AFSOC, AFSPC)



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***Questions?***

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