

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

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## ***Landing Gear: Executive Summary***



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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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# *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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# 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



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# ***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*

- 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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