

# thinking REDEPLOYMENT

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just wanted to take a minute and discuss redeployment and what we can do to make it successful. Our unit, 1-10th Aviation, just returned from an 11-month tour in Iraq. The tour went well. Our commander was very receptive to my concerns as the unit's aviation safety officer and the recommended corrections throughout the tour. As we got to the six- to eight-month mark, we started working on a redeployment plan.

As anyone who has read the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center's preliminary loss reports knows, we are losing many Soldiers to the "getting-home phase." I would like to pass along our plan to generate a discussion and perhaps stimulate thought.

First, we actually did have a safety stand-down day in a combat zone in a hostile city. For this we needed the support of the ground brigade commander, a little help from a sister unit and our own command support. We executed the safety stand-down with 95 percent attendance, with the five percent who were on quick-reaction force making up the training later. Classes were focused on accident

review during our deployment and lessons learned, a reminder that many accidents happen at the end of the rotation. A few classes also focused on what lies in wait for us when we finally get home. I used many of the videos from the USACRC Web site (again, great job by the USACRC), but the one that had the most impact was the family video "Living Without Josh."

Second, during the redeployment briefs, my brief became required. It was interesting to note that briefs like finance, health assessment and others were documented, tracked and checked off. However, you had to dig deep to find the requirements to have a safety brief focusing on



<https://crc.army.mil/multimedia/> redeployment, especially given the amount of redeployment-related deaths and injuries. Again, support and direction from our command made the brief mandatory. I gave a second brief to all Soldiers in conjunction with the rest of the redeployment briefs. This brief focused on the hazards upon returning home. Again, the USACRC videos were a staple, along with segments from the United Services Automobile Association (USAA) driving class



**FIRST**, we actually did have a **SAFETY STAND-DOWN DAY** in a **COMBAT ZONE** in a **HOSTILE CITY.**



series. USAA sent me the training package in Iraq along with drunk-and-distracted driving goggles.

Third, all Soldiers, as they arrived at home station (while their bags were being off loaded and customs had the dogs on them), got another prepared oral brief from their chalk leader. Each chalk leader was briefed by the task force commander as to his intent and expectations. This brief reinforced all the briefs we'd conducted in the first two phases. It also included some topics covered by other sections such as reunion issues. At this time, all Soldiers were given a taxi card and key phone numbers. Phone numbers are very important, as the unit has become reliant on each other and could, at any time, just knock on someone's door. Most phones were turned off during the deployment. Having a phone plan and a receptive rear detachment was important for all issues from basic to emergency.

Having a lodgment plan for geographical bachelors and single Soldiers was also important. Providing basic housing for a limited time reduces problems significantly. A unit van was available for Soldiers to get to the PX and places to get food and other needs. Access to privately owned vehicles in storage was made available the next day and was part of the seven-day process. The first two days allowed Soldiers time to sleep off the jet lag, get to know their families once again and refamiliarize themselves with the local area. These two days also allowed Soldiers to have their vehicles inspected by a mechanic and registered on post. No vehicle left storage if it failed a POV inspection. Soldiers were told well in advance of leaving country that this was a requirement and to check their license, registration and inspection data.

Finally, we conducted a seven-day reverse Soldier readiness

checks, or SRC, process. It seems painful and stupid (trust me, I heard it plenty), but it allows Soldiers to ease into garrison and family life and still have contact with the people they just spent a year with. We had a basic half-day schedule doing the out-processing-type stuff, and then the rest of the day was for the Soldiers. This also helps single Soldiers because their buddies are still there to assist with rides and getting things fixed.



## FYI

Before you head out on the open road, go to the USACRC's Web site <https://crc.army.mil> and complete the ASMIS-2 POV risk assessment form. It's quick, easy and will help make sure your trip is a safe one.

The last day of the SRC, the chalk leaders of all flights sat down with each Soldier and reviewed their ASMIS-2 printout (done on the third day of R-SRC with computers provided by rear detachment), discussed their plans for travel and return and reviewed each Soldier's contract. The contract was a discussion of the trends

within the Army for incidents between the leader and the Soldier. A few leaders didn't like this, but it was one last chance to interface with the Soldier before sending him or her on leave for 30 days.

I'm not sure if this process is appealing to everyone, and not all Soldiers need these briefs. But, I will say all our Soldiers are back from block leave (except those who had extended leave) with no incidents and no DUIs. ◀

# PEACE CAN KILL

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**A**fter 14 long months in Iraq, we were finally home. Before redeploying back to the States, we received our "get-home-itis" safety brief designed to smoothly transition troops from the combat zone to home station. Troops and family members alike were eagerly anticipating reuniting after a year of untold hardships—both in Iraq and at home. Returning home! The urgency of combat operations was no longer present. It would be criminal to have our fellow brethren return home safely, only to lose them through carelessness, poor leadership or negligence.

Redeployment training ideally should begin several months before arriving at the port. The Army mandates Soldiers attend classes to aid them in returning to home station safely. But other than the core Army classes, the aviation community, for the most part, is responsible for ensuring redeployment training is complete. What should a unit consider when developing this training syllabus?

Once aircraft are back at home station is not the time to consider if aircrews are ready to fly. In fact, if possible, it is usually best to have a sister unit pick up your aircraft since

your unit's pilots may not be proficient or even current after block leave and recovery. Listed below are some items to ensure your unit's success in redeployment recovery operations.

### Safety

- Enforce the standard.** There is only one standard, but during a time of war, risks are higher and mission requirements may be placed ahead of normal safety considerations. Remember armament and range procedures. Flight and survival gear requirements are different in a peacetime environment. Also keep in mind that "land as soon as possible" no longer requires you to fly back to friendly forces. Now that you're back in a peacetime environment, land as soon as possible means land at the nearest suitable area without delay.

### Records

- Individual aircrew training folder.** Is the IATF complete and up-to-date? Have all required evaluations and minimums been completed or waived? If any requirements were waived, how long is the waiver current? Are all signatures and task lists up-to-date? Does the individual have to fly with an instructor pilot upon return to home station?



- Medical records.** Does the crewmember have a current flight physical or is he on an extension? If an extension is granted, ensure the flight physical is completed within the prescribed time.
- Individual flight records folder.** Does the crewmember have a current Department of Army Form 759 and does it annotate the required entries? Are all waivers and extensions annotated?
- Individual pilot readiness.** Some pilots have flown so much in theater that they could become complacent. This is a common tendency for aviators who have flown almost every day in a hostile environment but are now in the "nonhazardous" airspace. Take such intense flying and add a couple of months of not flying, and the individual's piloting skills may have become rusty. The unit standardization pilot should evaluate the capabilities of each pilot.

This doesn't mean every pilot gets a checkride, but in some cases a flight evaluation may be necessary. Things to consider: what is the experience level of each pilot and what flight conditions are they weak in? Instrument flight training was almost nonexistent while deployed, so will a trip to the simulator be necessary? A new pilot who was designated a pilot in command in country might need to be re-evaluated or retrained to ensure he is capable of operating safely in the national airspace system.

- Aircraft.** Maintenance personnel should ensure aircraft are thoroughly preflighted before leaving the docks. After being flown hard for more than a year and having possible battle damage maintenance, aircrews need to give the aircraft an extensive and thorough preflight.
- Standing operating procedures.** Now is the time to update your SOPs to reflect lessons learned and get the entire unit on the same

sheet of music. Additionally, SPs need to check for local procedures that might have changed. This is extremely important considering you may have pilots in the rear detachment, companies that have operated independently and companies that have been consolidated to form task forces made up of various aircraft types.

These are a few of the items that need to be completed while a unit is in its recovery phase and returning from block leave. Do any of these items look familiar? You can look at this training as a mini-Army Readiness Management System inspection that you give yourself. This could be the best way to know if you are once again the well oiled unit you were before redeployment and lessen your chances of being another statistic in the U.S. Army Combat Readiness Center database. ◀