Risk Management of U.S. Army Rear Detachments

With the fast pace of the U.S. Army fighting two wars, details of deployment preparation must be completed to ensure a successful deployment for all. A deployment is the process of moving all personnel and equipment from a unit’s home station to the war. Part of this preparation should include consideration for hazards faced by rear detachments and the families of deployed service members. Rear detachments are composed of those personnel and families who remain behind after the soldiers have left for war. Overall risk management of the deployment should be performed as an integral part of deployment planning and included in the military decision-making process and must include rear detachment operations and families.

HAZARDS

Seven primary areas should be addressed in addition to the normal hazards: geographic location of unit, geographic location of services, leadership experience, leadership training, planning, training/exercise schedule and family support (Table 1). Geographic considerations are more important for Army National Guard, Army Reserve and organizations outside the continental U.S. Leadership experience and training are key for all rear detachments. The further down one goes from the rank designed to command a unit, the more risks one assumes.

The geographic location of the unit, if separated from its parent unit, as measured in driving time can cause or contribute to the hazards of operating a motor vehicle. Operating a motor vehicle is likely to be one of the most dangerous things rear detachments personnel and family members do. The hazard is determined by comparing the type of unit with the driving time. This can range from 30 minutes to well over an hour. The longer the driving time, the more risk involved.

Geographic location services involve the distances from services measured in driving time. This again measures the risk involved with operating a motor vehicle to obtain services. These are measured by service type, which would include hospital, dental clinic, family assistance center, grocery stores, shopping facilities and recreation services. The more important the service, the more personnel are likely to visit it.

The second measurement can be the miles that must be driven to get to the service. The more important the service and the more driving time, the more risk involved. However, additional risk is often present if essential services are not provided. Many can live for a short time without a library, but if a medical facility is a great distance from home and no transportation is available, the risk becomes high of not having appropriate medical treatment when needed.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Leadership experience can cause or contribute to accidents in many ways. The most obvious is that military personnel of lower rank normally have less knowledge, skills and abilities than higher-ranking personnel. This is due to training, education and job experience. Leadership position for rear detachment often ranges from brigade command level down to platoon level. If this is compared with the individual assigned as the rear detachment commander, one can obtain a risk level. The rear detachment brigade level might be a captain while the company rear detachment commander might be a Sergeant First Class.

Units can also offset this risk by providing training to personnel to prepare them for the duties and issues of rear detachment command. With training provided, one can compare the rank of the individual assigned with the train-
You can reduce the risk of being a family member of a deployed service member by reducing the level of risk the family member is exposed to. This table describes the risk levels for rear detachment personnel and families left behind.

### Risk Levels

The hazards posed by these seven categories should be included just like the hazards from mission and operations. The leader identifies the hazards present. The highest risk of these initial estimates becomes the initial risk. The leader then identifies risk reduction measures to reduce the risk and then identifies the risk based on control measures.

After reducing the initial risk as much as feasible without adversely affecting the rear detachment’s ability to conduct its mission, residual risk is identified. This level of risk is accepted or refused by the rear detachment commander. The amount of approval authority should be determined in the early stages of the deployment planning process (Table 2).

This risk acceptance approval authority should be agreed to by the individuals at the various levels of command within the organization. In addition, the risk acceptance levels should be documented in the operations order or operations plan to ensure commanders and staff at all levels understand the approval authority. These levels are based on the knowledge, skills and abilities of personnel at different ranks. These levels describe the amount of risk each level agrees to accept.

### Conclusion

A good safety program must include the particular hazards faced by rear detachments and the families left behind. By including these two areas in the initial risk management process conducted during the deployment planning, hazards to rear detachment personnel and families can be identified and reduced. The risk management process can and should be updated periodically as mission and situation changes.

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