

Commentary

Troop Talk

An interesting question was sent to *The Monitor* by a Soldier who recently returned from Iraq.

Air defenders from Fort Bliss and all across the Army are being pulled to serve on Transition Teams in Iraq. This keeps them from serving in positions that will provide career longevity in the air defense branch such as small unit leaders, battery command or ADAM cells. How will being on these Transition Teams impact the careers of the air defense officers and noncommissioned officers? I sacrificed my tour to Korea (and possible command) to serve on one of the first Transition Teams into Iraq only to wait another year for command.

As you know, we are a nation at war. It is important to note, the vast majority of transition team taskings are filled by the other branches. Commanders carefully scrutinize candidates for these positions and where possible, take into account professional development issues. I believe HRC assignment



officers, regardless of branch, try to balance these same issues while meeting theater requirements. Currently, only Infantry and Armor remain command centric, air defense is not. What this officer is gaining is tremendous experience, an opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life and an opportunity to take part in something bigger than our Army. As Soldiers, we must serve where the Army needs us most, and in the end, things have a way of working themselves out.

I feel it is appropriate that a reminder of the Hands Free Driving Policy that I initiated in January be reemphasized. The guidelines established in the policy apply to all servicemembers and civilians assigned to or visiting the installation. This action was taken to preserve the health, morale, safety, security, welfare, discipline and good order of our community. The message is clear: a driver cannot use hand held devices while driving, which includes cameras, radios, games, cell phones, etc. Use of these items impairs driving

and masks or prevents recognition of emergency signals, alarms, announcements and the approach of other vehicles.

Violation of this policy by Soldiers could result in administrative, non-judicial or punitive action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Civilians can be cited for reckless driving under both Texas and New Mexico law. The only exception to the Hands Free Policy is emergency responders who may use cell phones or hand-held radios in the performing official duties. Any distraction while driving a vehicle put the driver, passengers and others in danger. It is not a practice that any driver should follow. I encourage every driver, Soldier, civilian or visitor to adhere to this policy.

Maj. Gen. Robert P. Lennox
Fort Bliss Commanding General

Confusion, anger, denial all part of deployment feelings

KAMRYN JAROSZEWSKI

Special to *The Monitor*

Four years after saying "I do" to my military man, we're gearing up for round three. Experts say confusion, anger and denial are all a part of learning about deployments. I'm not sure what stage I'm in – it tends to change by the minute, sometimes.

This one has hit me much harder than the first two.

Deployment number one came five months into our marriage. I knew it would happen before we said our vows, so it was basically a waiting game; I put on my "supportive wife" hat and ran with it. Jared left in September 2002 bound for Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. I was still in the Army then, and found myself taking more

pride in my uniform and what it stood for; after all, my husband was a desert-clad warrior defending the freedoms of the United States. We missed our first birthdays, holidays and anniversary together, but I learned to survive for seven months with my dog, Amigo, prayers from my family and calls from Jared as my sole comforts.

I'd never smiled so big in my life as I did the day he came home. I shouted to the world that my husband was a hero.

We had one year together before he left again.

I was grateful I never really understood what the Quick Reaction Force was until after he came home. Despite being a parachute rigger, Jared trained to be a gunner on a 26-man QRF team tasked with convoy security in Iraq. I knew he would drive around

protecting vehicles, but I didn't know about the secret missions or exactly how accurate sniper rounds could be. Or that he had no protection around his hatch for the first half of his deployment.

Ignorance was bliss.

That deployment was harder on us emotionally. Jared lost his dad on New Year's Day, and a friend from his unit, Sgt. Rocky Payne, a few months after that.

Rocky's death is an example of the enemy's accuracy.

But instead of remembering his year in Iraq with sorrow, we instead felt immense pride; Jared's QRF team drove 1,197,000 miles with no accidents or fatalities. I'm forever indebted to those 25 men, because there were a few close calls.

When he returned, I was skinny and tanned and ready to jump into starting a family with both feet.

Two months later, we were pregnant. Two months after that, we found out we'd be reporting to Alaska in the middle of the winter for a three-year tour.

All of my careful planning went right out the window. I was now being taken from the home I'd made for the last three years – away from my military family – and dropped into the arctic in my third trimester of pregnancy.

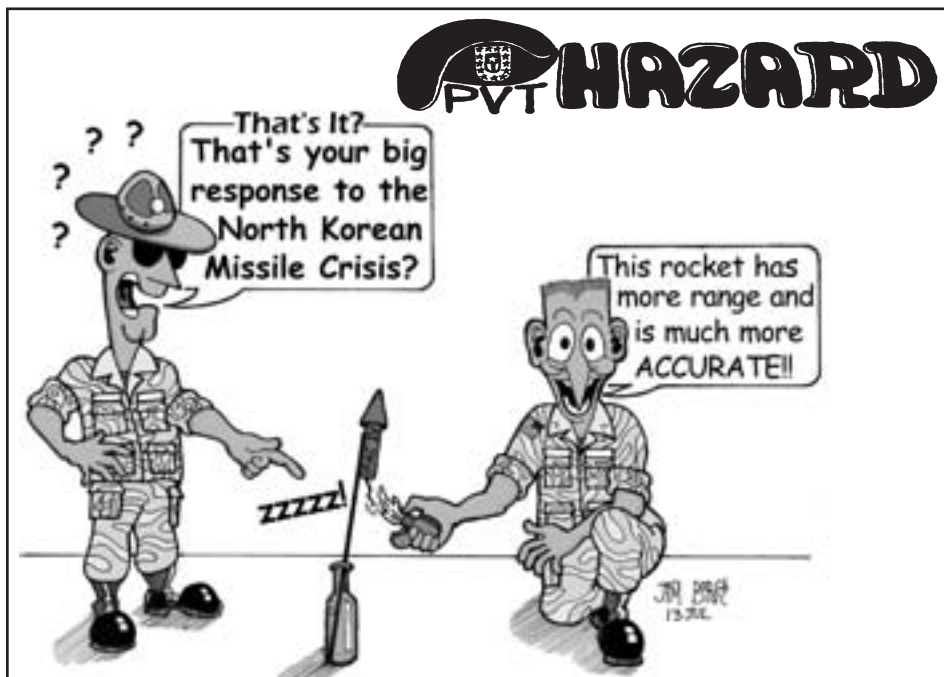
I tried to keep my hormones under control and look at everything as an adventure. Then I found out he was going back to Iraq.

I have to admit I've struggled slightly with keeping a positive attitude. It will be nice to pay off our bills, but he'll miss our daughter's first words, steps and holidays.

I realize I'm not unlike thousands of other military wives who temporarily become single parents while their husbands deploy again. I also know I don't always have to like it. At times, I wish we could hide our heads in the sand and pretend we don't hear Uncle Sam knocking at the door.

In reality, I know I have to set an example for my daughter – even at an early age. Through me, she will learn how to be a strong, independent woman. She will learn it's okay to miss someone and be afraid for them.

Most importantly, though, she will learn how to be patriotic and believe in the values that make up the country she was so lucky to be born in. So for her, I will put aside my frustration about this deployment and teach her the first lesson of her life: her daddy is a hero.



Web sites of interest

- The Monitor**
www.lavenpublishing.com/fortblissmonitor.html
- Fort Bliss** www.bliss.army.mil
- William Beaumont Army Medical Center**
www.wbamc.amedd.army.mil
- Department of the Army** www.army.mil
- Department of Defense** www.defenselink.mil
- DoD news about the war on terrorism**
www.defendamerica.mil
- Defense Finance Accounting Service**
www.dod.mil/dfas
- Army Knowledge Online** www.us.army.mil
- Civilian Personnel Online** www.cpol.army.mil
- Thrift Savings Plan** www.tsp.gov
- Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)**
www.defenselink.mil/brac
- Fort Bliss MWR** www.blissmwr.com
- Armed Forces Vacation Club** www.afvclub.com
- www.amigoairsho.org

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