

# THE COMMAND OMBUDSMAN'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING FAMILIES OF INDIVIDUAL AUGMENTEES

## I. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

In support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) the Navy has more than 13,000 Sailors on the ground. That includes mobilized reservists, individual augmentees (IAs) and Navy units. Sailors serving in IA billets are split equally between active duty and Reserve components. The majority of IAs receives TAD orders to Central Command in Iraq and Afghanistan but other locations are possible. The Navy is looking towards ways to standardize IA assignments to increase assignment predictability for Sailors and their families.

The purpose of this module is to:

- Familiarize new Command Ombudsmen with the impact of IA assignments on families.
- Introduce them to new resources established to assist IA families.
- Highlight the important role Command Ombudsmen have in support of IA families.

This module is a temporary training addendum to *Ombudsman Basic Training* is approximately twenty-five minutes long and should be incorporated with *Module Eight: Mission Readiness*.

## II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this training participants will be able to:

- Identify the unique challenges of IA families.
- Identify at least three responsibilities of the parent command and Command Ombudsman.

- List at least two referral resources for questions or concerns regarding a Sailor's IA assignment.

### **III. MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT**

Materials and equipment needed to deliver this module include:

- Power Point projector.
- Power Point slides.
- Copies of the IA Handbooks.
- Copies of the IA Family Connection Newsletter.

### **IV. OUTLINE**

1. Introduction.
2. IA deployment challenges.
3. IA process.
4. Parent Command and Ombudsmen roles and responsibilities.
5. Combat Operational Stress.
6. Resources.
7. Summarize and conclude.

### **V. CONTENT**

#### **1. Introduction**

TELL participants, "The purpose of this module is to:

- Familiarize you with the impact IA assignments have on families.
- Introduce you to new resources established to assist IA families.
- Highlight the important role you and your command have in supporting IA Sailors and their families."

ASK participants to raise their hand if:

- You have individual augmentees from your command in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa or Guantanamo Bay?
- You are unsure whether or not you have individual augmentees from your command.
- Your spouse is or has been an individual augmentee.

## 2. IA Deployment Challenges

LECTURE the following content:

Individual augmentees are Sailors with needed skills that are sent temporarily from their current command to assist, or augment another command. The Navy tries to use volunteers, but when there are no volunteers with the required skills non-volunteers are sent. Individual augmentee assignments are not new to the Navy as the Navy has always used service members to support another command as needed. For example if a destroyer was getting ready to deploy and the independent corpsman could not get underway for some reason, then an independent corpsman from another command would be assigned to deploy with the destroyer - generally until the assigned corpsman could meet the ship or until another corpsman was permanently assigned.

One of the twists to the concept of Sailors augmenting other commands is that they are augmenting other branches of the services - primarily the Army and Marine Corps. Another difference is Sailors are supporting Soldiers and Marines on the ground most often in Iraq or Afghanistan. Other Sailors are supporting ground efforts in Africa and in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, but Sailors can be sent anywhere they are needed in support of the Global War on Terror.

Until recently, most Sailors were being sent mid-sea or shore duty tour to a Temporary Active Duty (TAD) IA assignment. The Navy recognizes the hardship this causes for Sailors and their families. The Navy is now trying to assign Sailors to IA assignments as they transfer. There is an initiative called GSA (GWOT [Global War on Terrorism] Support Assignment) which would assign Sailors at the normal rotation point to the IA mission. These Sailors are PCSed to the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC). If it is decided to continue in this direction it is estimated that it will take 18 - 24 months before all Sailors would be assigned as GSA. Until then, the "traditional" assignment of IAs as temporary duty from their parent command continues for most Sailors.

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ASK participants, "What are some unique aspects to an IA deployment compared to a typical Navy deployment?" Responses may include:

- The Sailor does not deploy with their regular Navy unit or with a unit at all.
- Training for the deployment is different.
- Deployments are typically longer.
- There are some additional family support systems.
- There is an element of danger.
- There is little fanfare at homecoming.
- IA families say they often feel isolated and alone.
- The joys and possible pit falls of mid-tour R&R leave.

DISCUSS how the Command Ombudsman may be able to assist with these challenges such as:

- Staying in contact with IA families.
- Being a listening ear.
- Providing information and suggestions about what to expect during R&R leave, homecoming, resources available, etc.

LECTURE the following information:

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Most IA Sailors are supporting ground forces in their traditional military specialties, or core competencies ashore, such as:

- Base and port operations support.
- Medical services.
- Explosive ordnance disposal.
- Mobile security forces.
- Civil affairs.
- Detainee operations.
- Infrastructure protection.

Note that most jobs are support positions which reduce the level of risk for a Sailor in an IA billet compared to Soldiers and Marines on the front lines of combat. However,

Sailors are in combat zones so there is a level of risk. Deployments are typically one year long plus training. Sailors may get two weeks of R&R leave approximately half way through their assignment. Leave is not automatic. It must be requested and approved by the chain of command. Sailors have to be assigned for at least 270 days "boots on the ground" to qualify.

### 3. IA Process

TELL participants the Navy established a new command in October 2006 that encompasses IAs. In addition there are some other organizations that a Command Ombudsman should be aware exists:

- The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC).
- The Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC).
- Navy Mobilization Processing Sites (NMPS).
- Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Skills Training.

The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) is headquartered at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, VA was formally established in 2006. NECC reports to Fleet and Forces Command. NECC:

- Consolidates
  - Anti-terrorism force protection.
  - Shore-based logistical support.
  - Construction missions.
- Oversees
  - Bomb-disposal crews.
  - Expeditionary logistics specialists.
  - Mobile dive/salvage teams.
  - Naval coastal warfare groups.
  - Master-at-arms forces.
  - Navy's riverine force.

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The Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC):

- Is part of NECC.
- Is becoming “parent” command for many IA Sailors.
- Is POC for all theater related family issues.
- Moderates Navy Knowledge Online IA information.
- Makes referrals to services available for families.

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Contact ECRC:

- Web <http://www.ecrc.navy.mil/>.
- Phone 1 (877) 364-4302.
- Email [Ecrc.hq.fct@navy.mil](mailto:Ecrc.hq.fct@navy.mil) .

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Navy Mobilization Processing Sites (NMPS) handle both active duty IAs and reservists who have been called up to serve in an IA assignment. The purpose of the processing site is to ensure the Sailor is ready to deploy. Deployment briefings, reviews of medical, dental, training and personnel records are completed and the Sailor is determined to be ready to deploy. Most Sailors spend only a few days at the NMPS.

There are two primary processing sites:

- San Diego - 619-887-8080.
- Norfolk - 757-438-3375.

Seabees are processed at:

- Port Hueneme - 805-982-2007.
- Gulfport - 228-871-3199.

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The Army provides Navy Individual Augmentee Combat Skills Training for Sailors. Many Sailors are trained at Fort Jackson, South Carolina unless their specialty training is at another site. Training is approximately 17 days long and includes a variety of topics including:

- Weapons qualifications.
- Convoy operations.
- Urban operations.

- Code of conduct.
- First aid.
- Cultural awareness.

ASK participants the rhetorical question, “What happens when a Sailor receives orders to an IA assignment?”

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TELL participants the Navy strives to give sixty days or more notice to enable a Sailor time to adequately prepare. For active duty sailors, both the command and sailor are notified, reservists receive mobilization orders. Once notified, a Sailor works closely with their parent command to complete a mandatory pre-deployment checklist before leaving. A copy of the checklist is available on <https://www.nko.navy.mil>. If a Sailor is unable to successfully complete the pre-deployment checklist for whatever reason an alternate Sailor must be selected for the IA assignment and they will not have as much notice. Sailors may not be able to successfully complete their checklist due to medical, dental or other reasons.

After completing the pre-deployment checklist the Sailor must complete NKO Individual Augmentee Prerequisite Training before proceeding to the Navy Mobilization Processing Site where it is verified the Sailor is ready to deploy. All SELRES personnel must report to their parent command for processing prior to departing to the NMPS site.

It is then on to combat skills training. After combat skills training Sailors may be required to attend additional job specific training before being transported to their ultimate duty station. During transportation to their ultimate TAD assignment Sailors must carry four sea bags of gear, of which only one half of a sea bag is uniforms, to their ultimate duty station.

#### 4. Parent Command and Ombudsman Roles and Responsibilities

TELL participants there are a number of ways the Parent Command can maintain the connection between IA Sailors, their families and the command. Commands may:

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- Assign a command POC and instruct that person/s to maintain at least monthly contact with IA Sailors via telephone or Internet. Instruct IA POC/s to inform the CO or designated command POC of any concerns expressed by IA Sailors.

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- Periodically acknowledge those serving in IA assignments in the command POD.
- Periodically make a telephone call or send a letter or email from the Commanding Officer, Executive Officer or Command Master Chief to the IA Sailor and/or their family.
- Ensure an accurate fitness report documents Sailor's contributions to the GWOT.
- When a Sailor from the command returns from a TAD IA assignment ensure welcome home arrangements have been made.
- Reorient IA Sailors to the command. While attendance at a full session of command indoctrination may not be necessary, a command "update" is in order.
- Welcome IA Sailors back from their temporary duty during All Hands, in the POD, via a command newsletter or other means.

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As Command Ombudsmen you should:

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- Be informed of the unique aspects of IA assignments.

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- Maintain at least monthly (or as requested) contact with IA families via telephone, Internet or in-person.
- Communicate with your Command POC and know who the IA Sailors are at your command.
- Know your local FFSC IA POC.
- Inform the CO or designated command POC of any concerns expressed by IA families.
- Keep IA families on any command correspondence such as newsletters, telephone trees, social rosters, etc.
- Link IA families to the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center public accessible website: <http://www.ecrc.navy.mil>. The Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center Individual Augmentee Family Support's toll free line 1 (877) 364-4302 is available to help you with questions regarding IA issues.
- Be aware of possible signs of combat operational stress and make referrals to the local Fleet and Family Support Center, Chaplain, Medical, Veterans Affairs or Military One Source.

- Inform IA families about the existence of any IA specific resources such as virtual IA discussion groups, newsletters and the IA Family Handbook available at [www.ffsp.navy.mil](http://www.ffsp.navy.mil).

## 5. Combat Operational Stress

TELL participants that homecoming can be especially challenging for Sailors returning from an IA assignment that involved combat. Family members may be the first to notice that their Sailor is struggling to adapt to life at home and contact you, their Command Ombudsman, for assistance.

Behaviors that may be indicative of a need for assistance with adjusting to life after being in a combat zone include:

- Sleep problems - inability to go to sleep, stay asleep, sleeping too much, nightmares.
- Flashbacks or re-experiencing an event or events.
- Poor work performance.
- Withdrawal/inability to connect socially.
- Avoiding situations that remind the IA of a traumatic event including avoiding crowds and loud noises.
- “Self-medicating” with alcohol or drugs.
- Angry outbursts.
- Tearfulness/sadness.

Specialized training is not required to recognize when an individual is under stress and needs assistance. Help is available to Sailors and their families. Contact:

- Medical at the command or on base.
- Fleet and Family Support Center.
- A Chaplain.
- Military OneSource.
- Department of Veterans Affairs.

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## 6. Summarize and Conclude

TELL participants, “In summary, it is important for you to stay connected with your command IA families to ensure they feel they are still part of the Navy family.

Fleet and Family Support Centers have staff members identified as IA POCs. These staff members are trained to understand the IA process, provide IA specific pre/mid and post deployment information and act as a “safety net” for those IA families whose commands are not maintaining contact. Contact your local FFSC, learn who your FFSC IA POC is and work closely with them.”

## VI. POWERPOINT SLIDES

## VII. HANDOUTS

Recommended handouts for use with this module include:

- Ten Tips for a Happy R&R Leave
- *IA Family, Sailor and Command Handbooks*
- *IA Family Connection* (IA Family Newsletter)

# 10 **Ten Tips for a Happy R&R Leave**

1. Agree upon R&R leave plans in advance of the leave period. Discuss plans via phone, letters and emails. Some families choose to spend their time together as if they were on vacation. Others go about their daily lives - work, school, commitments.
2. Compromise as necessary. Your Sailor will likely be tired from the long trip home. You may be eager to go out. Try not to over schedule. The structure and strict routine of deployment can leave your Sailor craving unscheduled time and hoping for relief from constant responsibilities.
3. Stay flexible. Make plans and then make back-up plans. Changing schedules can mean a delay in return. Leave starts once the Sailor arrives at the airport nearest home.
4. Set aside time to spend alone with just your partner. Of course children will be eager to spend time with their parent, and their needs should be accommodated as much as possible. However; your relationship with your Sailor is your family's foundation. Your children need you to have a strong foundation.
5. Expect sex to be a bit awkward. You both will probably feel a bit anxious about engaging in sex initially. It might be the fact that you haven't been naked in front of someone for quite a while. This is especially true for someone who is pregnant or has recently given birth. Take it slow. Remember, practice makes perfect!
6. Offer to drive. Your Sailor may be used to avoiding roadside debris by driving down the middle of the road!
7. Set aside time for friends and extended family. Many have found it is helpful to host a cookout or other social event. Invite everyone and then the rest of R&R leave is available for your immediate family.
8. Your Sailor may need to rest both physically and emotionally. It's probably not best to expect them to share every detail of their experience with you during the course of two weeks. Let them open up the best that they can and realize that may not be much.
9. Keep in mind your Sailor must return to the IA zone. It's especially important for children to be aware that daddy/mommy is coming home for a visit.
10. Have some fun. Enjoy being together. Create family memories that will last long after this deployment.

