



CHAPTER 9

UNDERSTANDING THE DEPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF RESERVE COMPONENT FAMILIES

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The nation's reliance on the reserve component has steadily increased since the first Gulf war in 1990–1991. Over 500,000 reserve component members have been activated to support the global war on terrorism since September 11, 2001, conducting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as missions in the continental United States. Guard and reserve members comprised more than 40 percent of the troops in Iraq in 2004 (Commission on the National Guard and Reserves 2007), and in 2005 represented approximately 30 percent of the force supporting Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (Chu 2006).

More recently, about 20 percent of the forces in Afghanistan and Iraq consisted of guard and reserve personnel (Chu 2006). Although this number represents a decline relative to the peak of operations in Iraq, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2005 suggests that the utilization of the various reserve components will continue at a high rate. Specifically, Congress modified the stated purpose of the reserve components, and in doing so formally acknowledged the components' evolution from a strategic reserve into an operational reserve. Instead of being relied upon exclusively as a source of personnel for major wars, the reserve components are now officially tasked with contributing to day-to-day military operations as well. This additional, operational role for the reserve component implies that large numbers of guard and reserve personnel will be called to active duty in the coming years. Such call-ups will likely occur on a regular basis for individual service members.

This increased—and different type of—dependence on the reserve component has implications for guard and reserve families. Though several recent studies have examined the effects of deployment on service members and their families, those efforts have focused primarily on the active component.¹ Because guard and reserve personnel and their families differ from those in the active component demographically, such research may have only limited applicability to reserve

component families. For example, members of the reserves tend to be older than their active component counterparts, and a greater proportion of the reserve component is female. Further, guard and reserve families tend to be more geographically dispersed. Such differences suggest that reserve families may face different issues during deployment, and consequently require different types of support.

This chapter describes research on reserve component families' experiences and perceptions related to deployment.² Based primarily on interviews with hundreds of reserve component members and their spouses, as well as experts on reserve family issues, the study focuses on how reserve component personnel and families regard their level of readiness for deployment, the problems and benefits associated with deployment, their ability to cope, and their use of support resources.

How Ready Are Guard and Reserve Families?

Family readiness is regarded as a critical aspect of a service member's preparedness for active duty service. The Department of Defense (DOD) has stated that "the department's ability to assist service members and their families to prepare for separations during short- and long-term deployments is paramount to sustaining mission capabilities and mission readiness."³ However, how family readiness is defined and measured varies, and some surveys of reserve component members overlook the subject entirely. To provide policy makers with better data in this area, this study assessed the meaning of family readiness to both service members and spouses. Three types of family readiness were each cited by approximately 40 percent of those interviewed: financial readiness, readiness related to household responsibilities, and emotional or mental readiness. Less frequently mentioned aspects of family readiness included those related to legal matters, military resources, and establishing a support system.

Financial Readiness

Financial readiness includes an assortment of financial tasks, such as saving money in anticipation of a break in pay or in case of emergency, notifying creditors, and both short- and long-term financial planning. Financial readiness was mentioned by 58 percent of the service members who offered a definition of family readiness during their interview; it was the type of readiness most cited by this group. In comparison, 45 percent of spouses that provided a definition mentioned financial readiness. Representative comments regarding financial readiness include the following:

- We had enough time to arrange financially for me to go on active duty. There was a break in money coming into the house until I started getting paid and we were able to plan well enough to where it did not adversely affect us (Army National Guard, O-3).

- Making arrangements with banks and creditors (Army National Guard, E-4).
- It means that we have paperwork in line, and we have our finances figured out. We know exactly what our pay would be. We know exactly what our BAH [basic allowance for housing] would be, what our COLA [cost of living adjustment] would be, what all of our allotments would be so that we could budget accordingly (Army Reserve, E-5's wife).
- To be financially prepared in case we have to take a hit for any, like, major repair or anything while he is away (Marine Forces Reserve, E-6's wife).

Household Readiness

Household responsibilities related to readiness include being prepared to handle household tasks normally managed by the service member, as well as arranging for child care. Fifty percent of both service members and spouses who defined family readiness mentioned this type of preparedness. Typical remarks include:

- I think for us, the biggest issue was about being able to be prepared for daily household management kind of stuff. An example would be, do I know how to change the furnace filter, do I know how to check oil on vehicles, that kind of maintaining things while he's gone. That was kind of the biggest thing that really put us in a pinch, was making sure everything was prepared for winter, and that kind of stuff (Army National Guard, E-5's wife).
- Basically, making sure we have made arrangements to take care of our home and pets and kids (Army Reserve, E-5's wife with two children).
- To have a system in place to deal with all the changes, to deal with my absence, and all the things that are going to pop up while I'm gone. [This includes] a set of procedures, more or less, to take care of all the household bills, to take care of my bills, to make sure that the cars get serviced, to make sure that the grass gets cut, make sure that the exterminator is still scheduled. I guess just to maintain a status quo, I guess, a system to keep all those daily functions going (Marine Forces Reserve, O-2).

Emotional Readiness

Comments relating to emotional readiness include a number of references to “being mentally ready.” For many, this means having enough time for family members to “deal with” the fact that the service member could be separated from his or her family for a considerable length of time. This type of readiness was mentioned by 54 percent of spouses who defined family readiness, but notably fewer service members—only 37 percent. Comments in this area include:

- To be mentally prepared to live without your spouse. To prepare your children that their father is going to be gone. To deal with all of the other practical and emotional issues associated with that kind of a deployment as best as you can, including the concern you have over your spouse being in a war zone (Army Reserve, O-3's wife).
- I think it [readiness] means a lot because if you're not ready, then you get caught off guard and you get upset, and you get stressed, and then if you're ready, then you just have the right emotional state to be able to have him leave and not have a nervous breakdown (Army National Guard, E-4's wife).
- Emotional preparation—just knowing that I was going to be gone for so long. [So] all members of the family—me, my wife, and my child—were able to be emotionally prepared to miss significant events like Thanksgiving and Christmas, which I did miss (Air Force Reserve, O-3 with one child).

After asking service members and spouses how they defined family readiness, we then posed the question: "How ready was your family for your/your spouse's most recent deployment?" Sixty-five percent of service members and 60 percent of spouses in our study indicated their families were ready or very ready. Among the remaining interviewees, similar proportions described their families as somewhat ready or not ready at all.

Additional analyses revealed various reported family readiness levels for different demographic groups. For example, spouses of junior enlisted personnel, service members age 25 or younger, and newly-wedded service members (married two years or less) were more inclined to characterize their families as not ready than those married to midgrade enlisted personnel or junior officers, those age 26 or older, and those married longer. In addition, spouses with prior military experience were more likely to regard their families as ready or very ready.

Further, our results indicated a strong relationship between family readiness and military preparedness. Service members who said they were well prepared for active duty tended to characterize their families as ready or very ready for deployment. Those who believed they were poorly prepared for active duty leaned toward feeling their families were not ready at all. Given the nature of our data, however, we could not determine whether one type of readiness (military versus family) affected the other, or if a third factor, such as an underlying personal attribute, influenced both family readiness and military preparedness.

What Problems Do Guard and Reserve Families Report?

When asked about problems reserve and guard families face, the majority of experts on reserve family issues cited financial problems, health care issues, emotional and mental problems, and household responsibility issues. Service members and spouses pointed to many of these same problems, but to varying degrees. Emotional

or mental problems were mentioned most frequently, and spouses mentioned them more frequently than service members (39 percent of spouses compared to 26 percent of service members). The severity of these problems, however, varied, ranging from relatively mild sadness and anxiety to more severe emotional and mental difficulties that required medical attention. The following are typical comments:

- Unless a person has had to go through having a loved one deployed, they really can't understand what we go through. It's one thing to deal with death, but it's another thing to worry about if it's going to happen and when it's going to happen. It's like you can't live fully without having that constantly on your mind. It's a mental and emotional aspect that I wouldn't wish on anyone (Army National Guard, E-4's wife).
- Having to deal with the mental stress of not knowing what is going on with your spouse. Like with my wife, when she was pregnant she didn't know what was going on with me and she would hear on the news that certain places got hit in Iraq, you know, and all that mentally will break you down, and that is just not a good thing for a pregnant woman (Army Reserve, E-5).

Forty percent of spouses also mentioned problems with household responsibilities, while service members cited them less frequently (20 percent). These concerns related to accommodating the demands of family life, including child care, household chores, and chauffeuring children. The following examples illustrate some of the issues in this area:

- The fact that my wife, with me being gone, had to deal with making sure the bills are being paid, taking care of the yard, chores around the house, all the things I would have done or helped doing, she had to take on all by herself (Marine Forces Reserve, O-3).
- The household issues as far as the yard work and trying to keep the house clean and you don't have an extra set of hands to help you out. When your child gets sick and they have to be pulled out of daycare, there's only one parent that can stay home with them (Army National Guard, E-5's wife with one child).

Twenty-six percent of spouses mentioned effects on their children, as did 12 percent of service members. These included a range of emotional or mental problems as well as other sacrifices or difficulties experienced by their children. Comments covered a range of issues that varied with the age of the affected children:

- There are some problems with the kids, that they are facing, attachment issues. ... We have a two-year-old who wouldn't sleep in his own bed for the first seven months that he was gone. He wouldn't let me out of his sight. He was scared I was going to leave. Our 10-year-old stopped joining sports, he just wanted to stay home. Stuff like that (Army National Guard, E-5's wife with three children).

- The kids, every day asking for Daddy, that's hard. When they constantly—they don't understand. They're four and six; they don't get it. My youngest asks all the time if Daddy is going to die (Army Reserve, E-4's wife with two children).
- My teenage children claim that their social life was destroyed. Because Mom was too tired to drive them somewhere. My daughter turned 16 when he was gone and she is 17 now and still doesn't have her driver's license because we didn't have the time to take her out as much as she needed to before her test (Army National Guard, E-4's wife with two children).

Although reserve family experts emphasized the financial, legal, and health care problems associated with reserve component deployment, relatively few service members and spouses mentioned those issues. Just 15 percent of spouses and service members overall cited financial or legal issues, and only about 10 percent pointed to health care problems. Other issues service members and spouses referred to included education, employment, and marital health problems.⁴

Just as readiness varied by type of family, study results indicate that different kinds of families experience different problems stemming from the service member's deployment. For example, younger spouses and those newer to marriage were more likely to report emotional and mental problems, whereas older spouses and those in more established marriages were more likely to cite issues relating to household responsibility. Prior military experience was also a factor in the types and extent of problems service members and spouses reported. For example, spouses who had formerly served in the military were less likely to mention emotional or mental problems, and in fact, they were more likely than other spouses to say they had experienced "no problems."

It is also important to note that not all reserve component members and spouses reported experiencing problems during deployment. In fact, 29 percent of service members (albeit only 14 percent of spouses) reported that their families experienced no problems stemming from deployment.

What Positive Outcomes Do Guard and Reserve Families Report?

The majority of guard and reserve families reported some positive results of activation and deployment. Twenty-six percent of service members and 20 percent of spouses mentioned financial gain as a positive outcome. Twenty percent of service members and 29 percent of spouses discussed an increase in family closeness as a result of deployment, saying that they appreciated one another more after being apart. Approximately 24 percent of spouses and 15 percent of service members pointed to some combination of patriotism, pride, and civic responsibility as a positive aspect

of activation. These individuals referred to the honor and pride involved in serving abroad, as well as the importance of teaching children the responsibility of serving their country. Twenty percent of spouses and 14 percent of service members cited an increase in self-confidence, resilience, or independence among spouses or families who realized that they could manage household responsibilities, such as finances and chores, themselves.

While a majority of families mentioned at least one positive outcome from deployment, no one positive was mentioned by a majority of families. Additionally, 20 percent of service members and 13 percent of spouses indicated that their family had not experienced any benefits as a result of deployment.

The types of positive outcomes reserve component families experienced differed somewhat based on family characteristics. In general, the family's distance from the nearest military installation, whether the family had experienced more than one overseas deployment since September 11, and whether the family had been ready for deployment affected whether service members and spouses reported positive outcomes.

How Well Do Guard and Reserve Families Cope?

Because prior research focused on families' coping abilities in spite of the potential ambiguity of this concept, in this study we first asked service members and spouses to describe what coping meant for them, and then to discuss how well they had coped during deployment. A sizeable minority of interviewees—37 percent of service members and 29 percent of spouses—could not define coping, and those who did respond offered varying definitions. Consistent with the definitions for readiness, and the types of problems families encountered, respondents' definitions of coping included coping emotionally and coping with household responsibilities.

Despite the absence of a consistent definition, almost all respondents were able to assess how well their families had coped with deployment, and the majority (72 percent of service members and 69 percent of spouses) felt their families had coped well or very well. In general, spouses in longer marriages, spouses of officers, spouses married to service members with prior active duty experience, and those who described their families as ready or very ready for deployment were more likely to feel they coped well or very well.

Not surprisingly, spouses and service members who felt their families did not cope well were more likely to mention many of the commonly cited problems related to deployment, or to report that they had experienced no positive outcomes. In contrast, those who believed their families coped well were slightly more likely to report some benefits from deployment.

What Resources Do Guard and Reserve Families Use During Deployment?

A variety of resources are available to families of guard and reserve members during periods of deployment. Which resources families turn to most frequently and why some families do not access these resources were other aspects of this research. To gain insight into this area, we asked members and spouses about the military and nonmilitary resources available to their families during deployment.

Most families interviewed turned to some type of support resource during their most recent deployment experience. They cited military resources such as TRICARE (military health insurance) and family support organizations (e.g., Family Readiness Groups, Key Volunteer Networks) most frequently. Military OneSource⁵ was a distant third among the military resources mentioned, cited by 11 percent of service members and spouses overall.

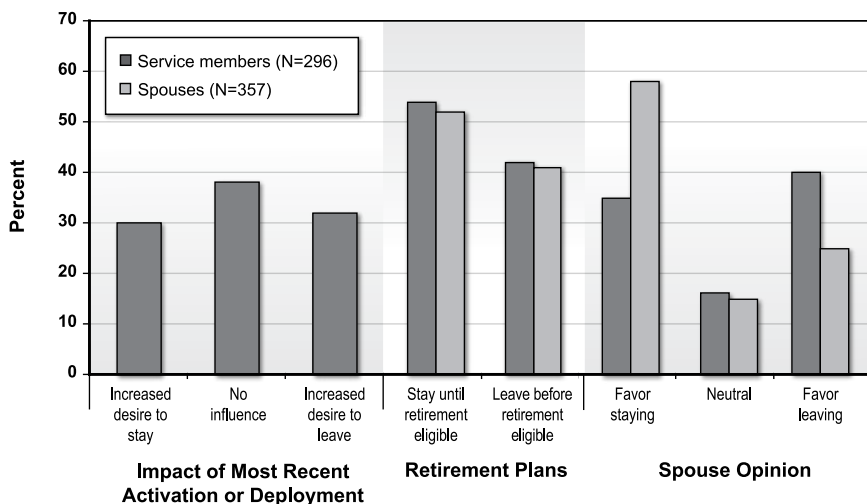
Among nonmilitary resources, extended family, religious organizations, and friends and neighbors were mentioned most frequently during interviews. In fact, extended family was the only resource, either military or nonmilitary, cited by a majority; 57 percent of spouses mentioned their extended family as a source of support during deployment. As the following remarks demonstrate, extended family helped in many ways:

- Extended family. They are my rock. They help me through everything (Marine Forces Reserve, E-5's wife).
- Mainly, I just used the extended family, and that was more for stuff like babysitting and helping out with things around the house I can't fix myself (Air Force Reserve, E-4's wife with four children).
- We have a group of family members that are available for my wife when I'm deployed. Example is my mother or my father who are available to her at her beck and call. If something happens to me or she needs somebody to talk to, my family's there for her (Army National Guard, E-5).

Several characteristics associated with maturity or being established predicted both the type of support resources families used, as well as the likelihood they would use them. For instance, older service members and service members married longer (three years or more) were more apt to cite their family's use of TRICARE, and older spouses were more likely than younger spouses to turn to a religious organization or their friends and neighbors for assistance during deployment.⁶

How Do Guard and Reserve Families' Retention Plans Differ?

This research also analyzed service members' intentions to remain in the reserves until retirement eligibility, as well as spousal opinions about those plans. We asked service members and spouses versions of both of these questions. For example, we asked spouses how they felt about their service members' military career plans, and service members how they perceived their spouse's opinion towards their retention intentions. In addition, we asked service members to evaluate how their most recent activation affected their career plans. Thirty-eight percent of service members said their most recent activation had no influence on their career plans (Figure 1). Another 30 percent indicated it increased their desire to stay in the guard or reserve, while 32 percent reported an increased desire to leave.



Source: 2006 RAND Corporation Guard and Reserve Family Interviews.

FIGURE 1. RETENTION INTENTIONS: SPOUSES AND SERVICE MEMBERS

Spouses and service members were in agreement when it came to career intentions. Just over half of each group (54 percent of service members and 52 percent of spouses) reported plans for the service member to remain in the guard or reserve until retirement eligibility, while 42 percent of service members and 41 percent of spouses indicated plans to leave military service prior to the service member's eligibility for retirement.

While spouses and service members had similar responses regarding guard or reserve career plans, responses differed significantly between the two groups with respect to spouse opinion. Specifically, 59 percent of spouses favored their service member staying in the guard or reserve, compared to just 39 percent of service members who believed their spouse favored their staying.⁷ In addition, 44 percent of service members indicated their spouse favored their leaving, while only 26 percent of the spouses in our study stated they felt that way.

As with earlier results, demographic attributes and characteristics were related to reported retention intentions. For example, those more likely to want to stay included older interviewees, those married longer, service members with children, spouses with a college degree, and Air Force Reserve personnel and spouses. In contrast, junior enlisted personnel and spouses of junior enlisted personnel were more apt to express unfavorable retention plans, as were female service members and male spouses of female service members.

In addition, the overall family experience with deployment—family readiness, many of the problems and benefits associated with deployment, and family coping—all had implications for retention, a crucial aspect of force continuity. Specifically, those who described their families as ready or very ready for deployment and those who believed their families coped well tended to have a preference for remaining in the military.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research describes how guard and reserve families perceive readiness and coping, their actual readiness and coping levels, the problems and benefits they experience as a result of deployment, and their resulting retention intentions. Study results show most families were ready for deployment and coped well with deployment. Nonetheless, the majority of families did report a deployment-related problem. Further, the kinds of problems that respondents cited—and the types of families associated with each problem—differed. On the other hand, the majority of interviewees also cited a positive aspect to deployment. As with the problems associated with deployments, family characteristics varied with the type of positive impact reported.

There are several reasons why it is important that policy makers and organizations chartered to support military families understand the problems and benefits military families experience during deployment. First, as part of the social compact that recognizes the tremendous sacrifice of military families, DOD has committed to ensuring and promoting general family well-being.⁸ Second, not only does DOD consider family readiness critical to mission success, it regards quality-of-life issues as inseparable from overall combat readiness (Myers 2004). Finally, there is a relationship between families' deployment experiences and the impact of those experiences on the military as a whole—including readiness and retention.

This research also has implications for family support within a more operationally-oriented reserve component. As noted at the outset of this chapter, the reserve component now plays a larger role in day-to-day military operations and will continue to do so. As a result of this change in the reserve component's mission, not only will large numbers of personnel continue to be activated, but activations will become routine and periodic. The family support issues highlighted in this study may become increasingly important given the shift towards an operational reserve. Our research recommendations include the following suggestions, which may be especially critical during the reserve component's transformation:

- **Ensure family expectations are consistent with a reserve component vision that is both operational and strategic.** Service members and families should recognize that reserve members are likely to begin a new deployment every six years, and that some service members may be tapped to serve more frequently.
- **Increase levels of readiness among not-yet-activated families.** Given the increased likelihood that reserve members will be activated at some point in their military career, units should encourage members to resolve any outstanding administrative issues—such as updating wills and powers of attorney. These administrative tasks need not, and should not, wait until a service member is activated.
- **Know how to find families.** DOD should improve its centralized data on military households so families receive both activation notice and deployment information in a timely manner. As the interviews with experts indicate, information about the location and demographics of guard and reserve families is also critically important to designing and managing appropriate support resources.
- **Explore ways to connect families to one another,** including families that live near one another but represent different units or reserve components. Some spouses mentioned the importance of other military spouses during their service member's deployment, thereby suggesting that strategies to better connect reserve component families, particularly those who live in the same area, should be explored. Spouses need not be associated with the same unit, or even the same reserve component, to participate in the same informal support network.
- **Recognize the limited capacity and capabilities of volunteer-based resources, both military and nonmilitary.** Many family support organizations, including family readiness groups, and local community support entities such as Veterans of Foreign Wars organizations, depend heavily on volunteers. While the contributions of individuals from these organizations are very important, such individuals are rarely trained to handle the range

of guard and reserve family needs. Moreover, these organizations may not be able to sustain their high levels of support indefinitely. DOD should understand both the strengths and limitations of such organizations, and plan accordingly. This may require the department to develop a registry of these organizations—possibly with the assistance of military family advocacy organizations—and to evaluate organizational resources, strengths, and limitations. Ultimately, this could lead to developing more comprehensive statistics on usage rates, the proportion of the reserve component population served, the portion seeking assistance but turned away or deterred, and organizational effectiveness in providing support. Such metrics could enable DOD to optimize the “web” of both informal nonmilitary and formal military resources available to assist reserve component families.

- **Seek ways to support, partner with, and improve awareness of local and community resources for military families.** Support for and partnerships with local and community resources could take many forms, with DOD’s relationships ranging from informal to formal—or even contractual. In some areas, for example, DOD’s support could take the form of an endorsement, while in other instances it might enter into a joint-venture-type support effort. DOD’s goals and resources, and the attributes of local or community resources, should help determine the optimal relationship. Strategies to promote these resources in a proactive and standardized way could include creating a family-friendly version of the organization registry mentioned above.
- **Tailor family support efforts to avoid and mitigate deployment-related problems.** As the interviews show, the problems facing guard and reserve families differ based on family characteristics. Successful support programs must be flexible enough to anticipate and respond to these different needs. For example, some support should address the problems confronting younger, less-experienced military families. Programs should also acknowledge that more established families face different challenges, such as children’s issues and handling household responsibilities. Recognizing that different kinds of families confront different issues during—and after—deployment should help DOD tailor family support resources to better serve the needs of all reserve component families.
- **Seek ways to make deployment-phased and “on-demand” information available to families.** Our interviews suggest that different families have different informational needs; some families want more and better information, while others commented on the deluge of predeployment information. Some spouses may view predeployment briefings as sufficient or helpful, but spouses less familiar with deployments might view such briefings as a “fire hose” of data. Similarly, some spouses may benefit from focused and intensive workshops, but others may feel that information from centralized websites is sufficient.

- **Learn from and reinforce those families who appear to proceed through the deployment cycle with fewer problems.** While all the families included in this research made a significant contribution to the success of the military mission and to the United States more broadly, some families considered in this study had fewer difficulties overcoming the challenges they faced. These included spouses and service members whose families quietly and successfully endured extended deployments, and who were disinclined to focus on the negative aspects of their experiences. DOD should consider ways to learn from these families as models for other families. For example, DOD might facilitate spouse mentoring programs, to the extent that spouses who have successfully weathered deployments are willing to share their experiences.

It is possible that current family support structures and programs may already be equipped to implement these recommendations. It is still important, however, to have metrics in place to accurately measure how effectively these programs and services advance family support goals. Family readiness and coping, for example, are multifaceted constructs and should be measured accordingly. In addition, metrics should be used to consider both the short- and long-term effectiveness of family support programs. While it is important to note success in avoiding and mitigating problems and to track usage rates, policy makers should also consider how changes in policies, programs, and services may affect family readiness and coping, as well as retention intentions. Measuring such outcomes can contribute to effective management of reserve component personnel over the long term.

Finally, although the findings presented here offer important insights into the circumstances of guard and reserve families, additional research is warranted—both to understand how representative these findings are and to answer important questions raised by this research. Future research should:

- **Explore communities' capacity to support guard and reserve families.** The research presented here included references to support provided by the local community, specifically religious organizations, nonprofit organizations, and local business and grassroots efforts. It is not clear, however, whether such organizations—many of which rely on volunteers—have the resources and the energy necessary to sustain high levels of support for extended and repeated deployments. Understanding the range of local support available to guard and reserve families, and the capacity of local communities to continue supporting them, is important to satisfying the long-term needs of these families. Meaningful metrics that assess current and projected organizational capacity and utilization would contribute substantially to DOD's understanding of family support resources.

- **Examine deployment experiences and support options for parents and siblings of guard and reserve members.** Parents and siblings are oftentimes the only immediate family for reserve component personnel, particularly among younger members and those who are single or divorced. It is reasonable to assume that the well-being of these family members affects the performance of service members, especially young members of the guard and reserve. Additionally, these families-at-home are among the influencers of other prospective service members. Understanding the issues faced by service members' parents and siblings, especially younger siblings, is crucial to ensuring the well-being and performance of today's service members, and may impact military recruiting in the long term.
- **Develop a better understanding of the effect of family readiness on coping and retention.** Results from this study show that families who felt they were ready for deployment were more likely to report coping well and to indicate positive retention plans. However, the cross-sectional nature of this study prevented us from determining whether readiness had a direct effect upon coping or retention plans; thus, this topic deserves further investigation. Future efforts should also seek to understand whether family readiness and coping affect *actual separations* from the reserve component, not just retention *intentions*.
- **Explore both the effectiveness and efficiency of solutions intended to improve families' ability to cope during multiple deployments and help them emerge from deployments with few negative consequences.** Because multiple deployments are a feature of today's operationally-oriented reserve component, understanding how families' needs evolve through them—and how best to ensure that families maintain their coping skills—is critical. This line of research may ultimately include testing solutions through pilot programs that are conducted in collaboration with DOD and other family support providers.

Appendix. Methodology

The cross-sectional data employed for our research stem primarily from interviews with hundreds of reserve component members and spouses. It also includes interviews with experts on military family issues.

Initially, the research team conducted telephone interviews with reserve component family experts. These professionals included 15 representatives from the six Department of Defense reserve components and the Office of the Secretary of Defense, as well as 11 experts from military advocacy and support organizations.⁹

The core of the research, however, is based on the interviews with guard and reserve members and spouses. During the summer of 2006, telephone interviews were conducted with 296 service members and 357 spouses, representing 653 guard and reserve families.¹⁰ The interviews were limited to four of the reserve components (Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Air Force Reserve, and Marine Forces Reserve) and to members and families who had experienced at least one overseas deployment since September 11, 2001. Additionally, the research concentrated on junior and midgrade enlisted families, and on junior officer families, reflecting a focus upon individuals who had not already committed to a long military career.

The interviews consisted of both closed-ended (i.e., yes/no) and open-ended questions that provided a rich, qualitative description of the experiences of reserve component families.

Notes

1. See, for example, Haas, Pazdernik, and Olsen 2005; and Hosek, Kavanagh, and Miller 2006.
2. Castaneda, Harrell, Varda, Hall, Beckett, and Stern 2008. This report presents the results of a multi-year RAND research effort. The report offers considerable detail about the study, including topics not discussed here, as well as detailed analysis of interviewee characteristics that help explain differences in comments provided or experiences reported. These characteristics include some of the demographic attributes that differ between reserve component and active component families on the whole, as well as other potentially important factors like indicators of maturity, relationship strength, and experience with military life and deployments. Readers should refer to this report for the complete and final version of the analysis excerpted here.
3. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs website, <http://www.dod.mil/ra/html/familyreadiness.html> [January 15, 2007].
4. These problems are discussed in greater detail in Castaneda et al. 2008.
5. Military OneSource is a free telephone and Internet-based support resource provided by the Department of Defense to active duty personnel, guard and reserve (regardless of activation status) personnel, and their families. For a detailed listing of the types of services provided by Military OneSource and the range of issues it can address, see <http://www.militaryonesource.com>.
6. Additional patterns related to utilization of specific military or informal resources are described in the RAND monograph.
7. Interviewed service members and spouses were from different households, so it is unclear whether the individuals married to the service members in our study actually held the less favorable views suggested by their interviewed spouses.

8. U.S. Department of Defense, 2002a.
9. Interviews with military family professionals did not include representatives from the Coast Guard Reserve.
10. Interviewed service members and spouses were not from the same households.

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