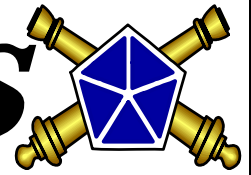




USAREUR PREP TIMES

FREEDOM'S
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
AN ARMY FORWARD
ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!



ISSUE THREE

UNIT MINISTRY TEAM

OEF/OIF

DECISIVENESS DECISIVENESS



CAUTION SIGNS On a castle wall in Scotland, I came across an unusual sign. As I toured one of the many castles in this ancient land, there was a sign (pictured above) posted above an arched entrance. Though its intent is to simply warn tourists of the low doorway, in a way it also serves as a simple reminder regarding important decisions that may loom on the horizon. Caution, careful thought, and consideration of all members of the family are ways to... *mind your heads*. In other words, think before you act.

As Soldiers and families make tough decisions on where to live, schools, jobs, assignments, careers, etc. the sign says it well...*mind your head*. Think about all the factors before making a decision. Now, it is true that none of us has a crystal ball we can gaze into to make sure things will work as planned. However, we owe it to our families to gather as much information as we can, discuss issues with all involved, and make sound decisions.

PREP TIMES is a series of eight newsletters designed to address issues, problems, and concerns facing Soldier families that are preparing for deployment.

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TOUGH CHOICES

How many decisions do we make every day? Truthfully, we make hundreds. Some are routine and require little thought, what we call "no brainers". Some are more complex and require a bit of analysis. Others are extremely important and we may seek help and advice. Still others may be life-altering or critical.

I recall the story of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police candidate who was asked the following hypothetical question on an exam,

Situation: You arrive at a gas explosion to find numerous casualties, you notice a drunk driver whom you recognize as the wife of senior official...nearby woman is about to give birth, someone is drowning in a nearby canal, meanwhile a fight breaks out which could result in loss of life or damage. In a few words, describe what you would do.

He replied...

"I would remove my uniform and mingle with the crowd!"

There are times when it seems that whatever decision we make will not be a good one. Those are the tough ones. Even if we have all the best intentions, all the right information, and all the resources...some decisions are not easy. As in the story above, the temptation is to mingle with the crowd. But even non-involvement is a decision. When it comes to family matters, families MATTER. And if Soldiers or family members have difficulty, they need to know that there are resources available to help in the decision-making process.

Some good questions when making decisions...

- When does the decision need to be made?
- How will postponing a decision impact?
- Who is most impacted by the decision?
- What are the best and worst outcomes?
- How final is the decision?
- What other resources are available to assist?
- Is there some middle ground available?
- Will those who disagree still support it?

For information about PREP TIMES contact Chaplain Eric Erkkinen at eric.erkkinen@us.army.mil

CLEAR THOUGHTS (sort of)...

I will never forget the "insightful" quote from the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, a while ago. In an interview he said,

"Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns, there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns - the ones we don't know we don't know."

At a car dealership in Maryland to announce new seat belt legislation: *"Belt your family. It's the law."*

Fitness Center sign: *"Self Esteem is feeling good about yourself - regardless of the facts."*

An ad appeared in the lost and found.
Lost Dog - mixed retriever and spaniel, is blind in one eye, partially deaf, missing hind left leg. Answers to the name "Lucky".

"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."
- Albert Einstein



WHOSE IDEA WAS THIS?

YES and NO

When I say "yes", I say "no". It is true. Whenever we say "yes" to something, we are also saying "no" to something else. For example, if I say "yes" to working late, I am saying "no" to a relaxing dinner with my family and to probably having reheated leftovers later. We make choices and live with them.

What are you saying "yes" and "no" to? Are there times that you have a hard time saying "no"? Conflicts can occur when decisions are made independently and without communicating with all those impacted. With the changing calendars and schedules, our families will need a lot of patience.

Most families understand the sacrifices that military life can sometimes require, and we make allowances and compromises. Plans can, and frequently are, changed. With deployments, families have little choice in timetables and schedules. However, they do have choices on how the available time is going to be used. As your family looks over the calendar in the coming months, consider how you will be allocating your time. Block leave is designed to allow families maximum opportunity to say "yes" to quality time together. To ensure this happens, it is best to make the decisions jointly. Be fair, be considerate, and be flexible in your planning.

You may have heard of the 6 P's. That is...proper prior planning prevents poor performance. Part of planning and scheduling should also include a plan B and a plan C if plan A doesn't happen. Consider alternatives in family schedules. And, include everybody.

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"Do you, Jason, take Heather to have and to hold, to E-mail and fax, to page and beep, until death do you part?"

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