



“WRAIR Forward”

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COMMANDER'S CORNER

Sir Isaac Newton, “We stand on the shoulders of giants.”



As I begin my tour in Heidelberg, it is most appropriate to say a few words about my predecessors. In 1977, the WRAIR established the USAMRU-E in Heidelberg with the goal of studying soldier morale and unit cohesion under the leadership of COL Ingraham. This research culminated in his seminal work, “The Boys in the Barracks.” LTCs Schneider and van Vranken, and COLs Gifford and Martin continued this research

effort building the scientific prestige of the unit. Through the efforts of LTC Bartone, the research base was unified under a biennial DoD and allied forum on human dimensions research in the military. Responding to the increased pace of operations in USAREUR, LTC Castro refocused human dimensions research toward the issues of operations and personnel tempo that included deployment related stress effects on soldiers and families. My focus will be to build on the unit’s rich research history by integrating research objectives addressing cognitive readiness, stress resilience, sustained performance, and perceptual awareness into our programmatic goal of developing soldier and unit readiness decision support tools. These efforts, described in a new unit brochure, will be in direct support of Objective Force Warrior and funded through Army-approved Science and Technology Objectives.

-MAJ James W. Ness

OPTEMPO Symposium at APA



Data from the U.S. Army, Europe, & 7th Army Operations Tempo/Personnel Tempo (OPTEMPO) Study served as the cornerstone for a symposium on OPTEMPO at the

American Psychological Association annual meeting held in San Francisco this year. Members of the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe (USAMRU-E) science staff presented papers on the link between OPTEMPO and three different outcomes: performance, retention, and health. The symposium concluded with a paper from Department of Neuropsychiatry, WRAIR, examining the issue of OPTEMPO for families in a US-based sample. Key findings from the USAMRU-E presentations include:

OPTEMPO and Performance

- When OPTEMPO was measured by quantity of work time (e.g., work hours, days spent training, number of deployments), higher OPTEMPO was linked to better performance.
- When OPTEMPO was measured by perceptions of work overload, greater OPTEMPO was linked with decreases in performance (e.g., more discipline problems, lower scores on tests of physical fitness).
- Soldiers worked more hours and days per week when on training exercises than in garrison or on a deployment. Soldiers reported higher job satisfaction and unit combat readiness and had higher fitness scores when in training.

OPTEMPO and Retention

- Although interviews with soldiers indicated that long work hours had a negative impact on career intentions, survey data demonstrated that actual self-reported work hours were similar for soldiers who were leaving and for those who were staying in the military.
- For junior-enlisted soldiers, combat arms soldiers were more likely to leave the military than were soldiers from other units. For non-commissioned officers, being a member of the combat arms, working fewer days per week and not having deployed predicted intention to leave the military. For officers, lack of deployment experience predicted intention to leave.
- When soldiers were asked about OPTEMPO variables that are reasons for leaving the military, only number of work hours was cited by the majority of respondents.

OPTEMPO and Health

- There was no direct relationship between work hours and psychological or physical health.
- Sleep moderated the negative impact of long work hours on psychological and physical health. When soldiers worked long hours and slept little, they reported more health problems than when they slept more.
- Exercise also moderated the effect of OPTEMPO on well-being. When soldiers worked long hours and also exercised a lot, they reported fewer problems with well-being.

Symposium: Adler, A.B., & Castro, C.A. (2001, August). Soldiering the load: The impact of Operations Tempo on U.S. soldiers. Symposium conducted at the **Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association**, San Francisco.

Thomas, J.L., Adler, A.B., & Castro, C.A. (2001, August). It cuts both ways: Differential relations between OPTEMPO and Performance in the US Army.

Huffman, A.H., Adler, A.B., Dolan, C.A., Thomas, J.L., & Castro, C.A. (2001, August). Impact of OPTEMPO on retention of U.S. personnel in Europe.

Dolan, C.A., Adler, A.B., Castro, C.A., Thomas, J.L., & Huffman, A.H. (2001, August). Pushing the limit: The impact of OPTEMPO on the health of US soldiers.

Adams, G. A., Durand, D., Burrell, L., Teitelbaum, J.A., Pehrson, K.L., & Hawkins, J.P. (2001, August). Impact of OPTEMPO on families.

Family OPTEMPO Project

Interviews and survey data collection for the first year of the Family OPTEMPO Study are now complete. Overall, more than 80 surveys were received by USAMRU-E, and 50 interviews were conducted in the following categories: civilian spouses, Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) families, dual military and single parents. The second phase of this study will begin in January 2002 and will repeat the interview and survey research design.

Another component of the Family OPTEMPO project is the *Senior Spouse Study*. This study continues to receive the support of senior leader spouses in the U.S. Army, Europe. The research design for this study also includes a survey and interview.

The Family OPTEMPO Project is under the direction of LTC Castro and Dr. Durand, Division of Neuropsychiatry, WRAIR, and Ms. Frey (coordinator), USAMRU-E.

Force Health Protection Program

The psychological screening program and force health protection continues to have the support of USAREUR commanders. In August, the USAMRU-E deployed seven teams to Baumholder to conduct the first of two post-deployment psychological screening missions for the 1st Armored Division (1AD) Rotation 2B, coordinated by Ms. Prayner. Almost 900 psychological screenings from 6 different battalions were completed in the month of August, with half of each battalion's companies selected for the first phase of screening. The rest of the companies will be screened in November. This is the first time the post-deployment screening will be divided into two time frames, at 3 months and 6 months post-deployment. Upon completion of the post-deployment screenings, the data set will be merged with the pre-deployment and re-deployment screening data collected for Rotation 2B for analysis of deployment cycle effects on soldiers.

Adler, A.B., Wright, K.M., Huffman, A.H., Thomas, J.L., & Castro, C.A. (2001, August). Deployment cycle effects on the psychological screening of soldiers. Poster presented at the **Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association**, San Francisco.

Presentations & Publications

Bolton, E.E., Litz, B.T., Britt, T.W., Adler, A., & Roemer, L. (2001). Reports of prior exposure to potentially traumatic events and PTSD in troops poised for deployment. **Journal of Traumatic Stress**, 14(1), 249-256.

Dolan, C.A., Crouch, C.L., West, P., & Castro, C.A. (2001, September 7). Sources of stress and coping strategies among US soldiers and their leaders. Paper presented at the **European Health Psychology Conference**, St. Andrews, Scotland.

Dolan, C.A., Huffman, A.H., Adler, A.B., Wright, K.M., Thomas, J.L., Crouch, C.L., & Castro, C.A. (2001, July 12). Coping with the stress of a military deployment: Psychological and physical health. Presented at the **Stress and Anxiety Research Conference**, Palma de Mallorca, Spain.

Thomas, J.L., Dickson, M.W., & Bliese, P.D. (2001). Values predicting leader performance in the US Army Reserve Officer Training Corps Assessment Center: Evidence for a personality-mediated model. **The Leadership Quarterly**, 12, 181-196.

USAREUR Suicide Prevention

In FY 01, General Meigs, Commanding General, U.S. Army, Europe, & 7th Army (USAREUR), commissioned a Suicide Prevention Task Force. At the request of BG Ursone, Command Surgeon, USAREUR, the USAMRU-E was invited to be a member of this Task Force responsible for analyzing the data on suicide completions and attempts in USAREUR. The collection of retrospective suicide events over the past two years was completed in mid-August with the help of SPC Haig and Ms. Schroeder. This data collection was accomplished with the assistance of Landstuhl Regional Medical Center's (LRMC) Inpatient Psychiatry and Psychology Services, as well as the LRMC Medical Record's Department and their Bensheim Records Storage facility. A technical report based on the retrospective data should be completed in early 2002.

- Coordination meeting with LTC Harvey, Chief, Psychology Services, LRMC, and MAJ Ness, Dr. Wright, CPT Thomas, and Ms. Schroeder (24 September 2001).

USAMRMC Assistance Visit

CSM Paul Servantes, U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, provided on-site support to the unit and was briefed on the unit's research activities (7 & 8 August).

Military Training

SGT Marta Mitchell, NCOIC, USAMRU-E, is attending Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC) at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio, TX (29 August – 23 October).

Hail & Farewell

- Major Ness assumed command of the U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe on 20 July 2001. He is accompanied by his wife Mary and their children Jonathan (9) and Marielle (11).
- Ms. April Dowdey, research assistant (6 July 2001); Ms. Ann Huffman, principal investigator (27 July 2001); and Ms. Shelley Robertson, research assistant (30 July 2001) completed their nonpersonal services contracts and have now returned to the States. Ms. Helene Millescamps, French translator, completed her nonpersonal services contract on 30 June 2001.

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