

# THE SUSTAINER

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Army 1st Lt. Evan Howard, a deployed Ohio Army National Guard member from Dayton, Ohio, reads a book with Daniar, a student at the Nadjeschda Children's Rehabilitation Center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Dec. 8, 2013. Howard and other Transit Center at Manas service members spent time with children from the school after delivering boxes of donated clothes and toys as part of the Rotary Club of Akron, Ohio's Operation Deployed for Good. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Ross Whitley)

## Ohio Rotarians and National Guard soldiers join forces to help Kyrgyz children with disabilities

Story by 1st Lt. Kevin McGee

On the morning of Oct. 17, as the sun rose over picturesque Rex Lake, five miles south of Akron, Ohio, its rays shone into the dining hall through a wall of windows. The light filled room was strewn with nearly 800 pounds of children's clothing, school supplies, craft materials and toys.

While it's not unusual for the 130-mem-

ber Rotary Club of Akron, Ohio, to stockpile donations for children with disabilities at the camp, this bright autumn day was different. Within a few hours, 20 volunteers would arrive to pack the piles of downy, winter coats and color crayons in brown boxes to be sent on a 6,500-mile journey.

The Akron Rotary's Operation Deployed for Good would not be completed until late December when these donations were distributed - by deployed Ohio National Guard soldiers - to more than 350 orphans and children with autism, Down syndrome and other disabilities in the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan, 500 miles north

of Afghanistan.

The operation would be a joint, volunteer effort to create an international supply chain of donations between Rotarians in Akron, Ohio, and deployed members of the Ohio Army National Guard's 371st Sustainment Brigade, stationed in Springfield, Ohio. The project's goal was to provide desperately needed supplies to four charities that serve children with disabilities and orphans in that country's capital city of Bishkek.

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Above: Salamat and Daniar, students from the Nadjeschda Children's Rehabilitation Center, and Spc. Jace Hooker, an automated logistical specialist from the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, play on a merry go round at a playground near the center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Dec. 8, 2013. Service members from the 371st Sustainment Brigade deployed to the Transit Center at Manas, visited students at the center after delivering 13 boxes of donated clothes and toys to the center. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Ross Whitley)

Below: Airmen and soldiers from the Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan, unload 13 boxes of donations for the Nadjeschda Children's Rehabilitation Center in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Dec 8, 2013. The Rehabilitation Center was founded in 1989 and is a part of a network of organizations that support children with special needs in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Ross Whitley)



When Ohio deployed nearly 300 of its citizen soldiers in support of the Global War on Terrorism in the spring of 2013, Graham Reinke, chairman of the Rotary Club's service project committee, reached out to his contacts at the 371st headquarters in Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, asking how Rotarians could support the Ohio troops. Lt. Col. David Seitz, executive officer for the brigade, knew exactly where Reinke's offer for support was most needed.

Early in the deployment, Seitz had learned of the needs of the children and orphans who lived near the U.S. Air Force Transit Center at Manas, Kyrgyzstan.

While conducting a mission at the transit center, Seitz discovered that orphanages and programs for children with disabilities in the country suffer from poor funding and struggle to acquire educational supplies and clothing for the destitute and abandoned children they serve.

Based on his experience in Kyrgyzstan and Reinke's offer of support from the Rotary, Seitz worked with some of his fellow 371st officers in Kuwait to craft a proposal of charitable relief for consideration by the Akron Rotarians.

"We saw a need near where we were serving and a number of soldiers in our brigade wanted to make a difference for the Kyrgyz children," said Seitz.

"We are a brigade of logistic, supply chain specialists who were looking to help. I knew if the Rotarians could provide the supplies, our soldiers could deliver." Seitz continued. "All we needed was a good plan."

During July, Seitz and his team in Kuwait developed a concept of support plan for Operation Deployed for Good

that identified the critical needs of Bishkek-area children's charities. This plan was then used by Reinke and his committee in Akron, throughout August, September and October, as they worked to collect supplies and monetary donations to purchase supplies.

The essential items, gathered from club members and their business associates, included children's clothing, winter coats, craft supplies, pencils and other school supplies. By mid-October, the club had amassed a generous trove of supplies at their camp weighing approximately one-third of a ton.

On Oct. 17, when it was time to gather at the Rotary camp to sort, inventory and pack the supplies for shipping to the 371st element in Manas, there was no shortage of volunteers. Douglas Hausknecht, a Rotarian and University of Akron faculty member, helped coordinate the packing and shipping effort.

"Getting items sorted, inventoried, packed, sealed and documented required people-power," said Hausknecht.

Hausknecht, who is the faculty adviser for two student organizations from the university, recruited extra volunteer help for the work day.

"Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and the University of Akron Rotarary students stepped-up and sent members who developed and implemented a system that got the job done efficiently," said Hausknecht.

The volunteers sorted and packed 33 boxes of items with care knowing that each coat would keep an orphaned child warm and each crayon would be used by a child with a disability to play and learn. When the large shipment left for Manas later that day, the Rotary Club would pay the \$1,000 freight bill.

Operation Deployed for Good's final phase would be managed by Ohio Army National Guard 1st Lt. Evan Howard, a native of Dayton, Ohio, who was the officer in charge of a 371st warehouse operation in Manas. As the boxes of supplies arrived in Manas during November, Howard ensured they were staged, opened, inventoried and sorted.

Recognizing the challenges that the operation's delivery phase would include, Howard recruited Air Force Staff Sgt. Nadia Wolfe, a host nation liaison and Russian-speaking linguist with the 376th Expeditionary Wing, also stationed at the transit center. Wolfe, a native of Kyrgyzstan, who now lives in San Antonio, had contacts with Bishkek-area charities.

The two would put together a delivery plan and prep for the multiple missions by obtaining off-post travel permits and planning travel routes to four Bishkek charities.

During December, the delivery team of Ohio soldiers realized the impact of Operation Deployed for Good as they met the children who would benefit from the well-traveled donations. After each delivery, Howard and his soldiers visited with the staff and the children at the charities.

During the first mission on Dec. 8, the element delivered approximately 316 pounds supplies to Nadjeshda Children's Center, a school that serves 72 Kyrgyz children with disabilities from impoverished families.

While at the Nadjeshda center, Howard took a few minutes to read a book with Daniar, an energetic, 5-year-old boy who receives services from the center. Despite his many challenges, little Daniar demonstrated a resilient spirit that impressed the service member volunteers who met him.

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## 371st Sus. Bde. Soldiers manage fuel needs throughout Kuwait

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Kimberly S. Hill

Soldiers with the 371st Sustainment Brigade, based out of Springfield, Ohio, are supervising the Tactical Petroleum Terminal (TPT) at Camp Buehring, Kuwait which supplies fuel needs for all of Kuwait.

The five soldiers with the 371st Sus. Bde., who have been on the job there since June 2013, are responsible for daily inspections, accountability of the fuel on the TPT, analyzing data to forecast fuel requirements throughout military installations in Kuwait and investigating fuel loss or gain, said Sgt. 1st Class Reginald Sharpe, a Chardon, Ohio native and the tactical petroleum

terminal responsible officer for the 371st Sus. Bde.

“As the reports sergeant, I handle daily inspections at the TPT, a challenge at first, since I have five different job titles and none are fuel,” said Staff Sgt. Jack Colston, a Chilo, Ohio native.

“While a water treatment specialist uses a lot of the same equipment, there are a lot of different requirements, regulations and reports.”

Although the daily inspections of the TPT and constant monitoring of the fuel is challenging with only five soldiers, Sharpe believes the hardest part of his job is predicting fuel needs throughout military installations throughout Kuwait, he said.

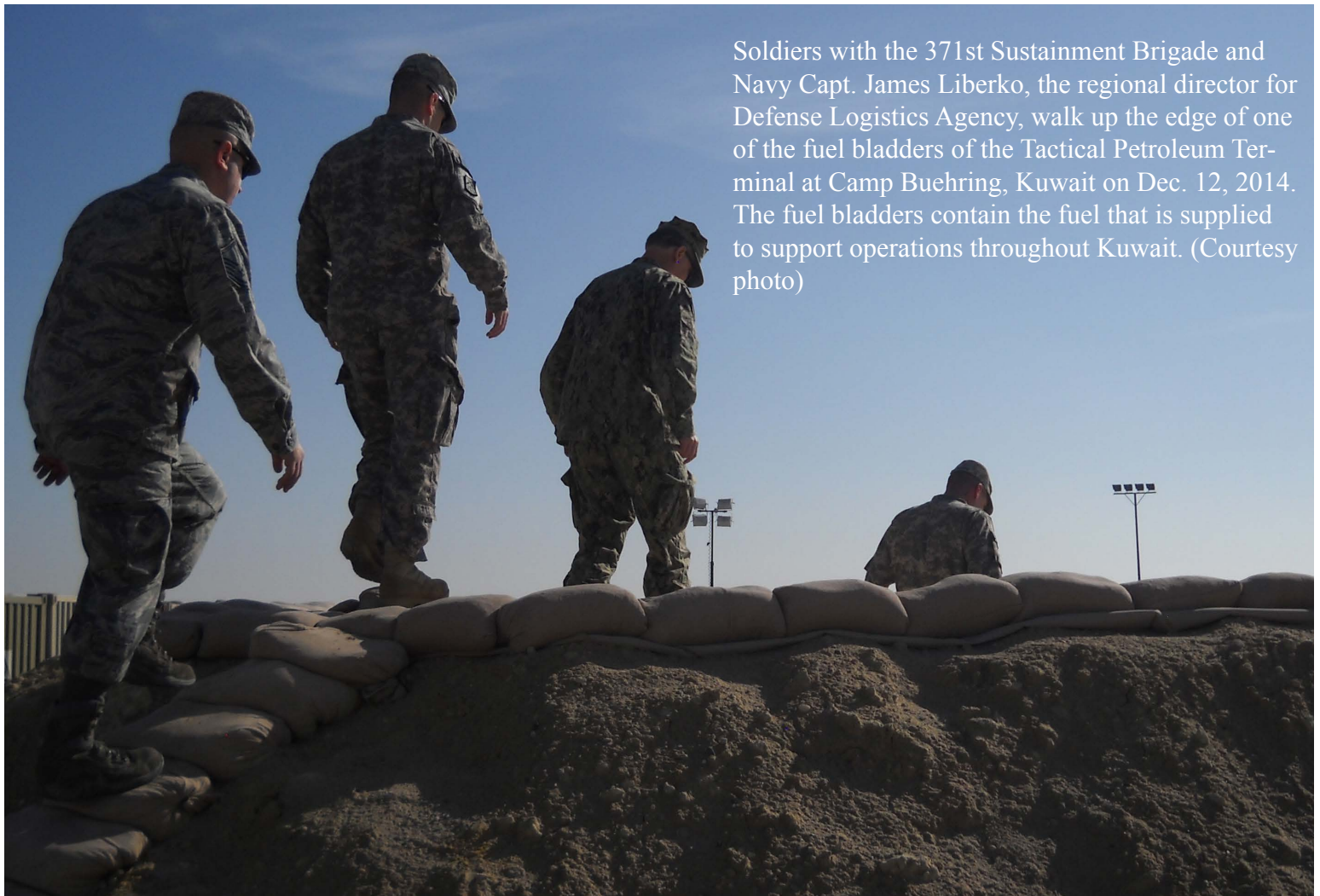
“It can be incredibly difficult, but I have access to tons of data that I can analyze and use to make the right as-

essment of a particular groups’ fuel needs,” said Sharpe.

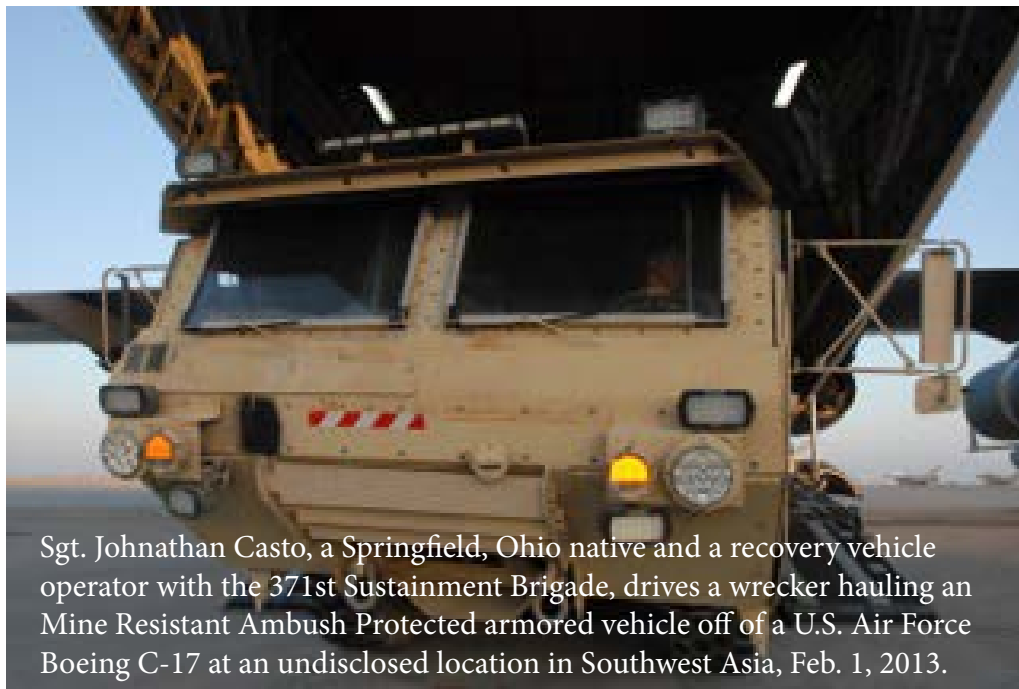
The work for the five soldiers has increased since August of 2013, when the Truck Fill Stand located near Camp Arifjan, Kuwait closed, leaving the TPT at Camp Buehring as the only supplier of fuel to military installations throughout Kuwait, said Sharpe.

Despite the high demands of supervising the TPT, Sharpe is proud of his work at Camp Buehring and believes his job is integral in supporting our mission in Kuwait.

“It’s an important job, all the power in theater comes from generators that run on fuel,” he said. “If there is no fuel or too little fuel, generators will stop working, hence no power on any installation.”



Soldiers with the 371st Sustainment Brigade and Navy Capt. James Liberko, the regional director for Defense Logistics Agency, walk up the edge of one of the fuel bladders of the Tactical Petroleum Terminal at Camp Buehring, Kuwait on Dec. 12, 2014. The fuel bladders contain the fuel that is supplied to support operations throughout Kuwait. (Courtesy photo)



Sgt. Johnathan Casto, a Springfield, Ohio native and a recovery vehicle operator with the 371st Sustainment Brigade, drives a wrecker hauling an Mine Resistant Ambush Protected armored vehicle off of a U.S. Air Force Boeing C-17 at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia, Feb. 1, 2013.

## 371st Soldiers conduct cargo operations for Southwest Asia

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Kimberly Hill

Soldiers with the 371st Sustainment Brigade support and conduct cargo operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom since June, 2013 at an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

“Our soldiers have done a great job of working with the Air Force, Department of Defense civilians and government contractors to accomplish their mission and solve problems, all while being separated from their brigade,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Scott M. Barga, a Versailles, Ohio native and the command sergeant major with the 371st Sus. Bde.

The soldiers are tasked with cargo operations, which includes hauling equipment on and off aircraft and supporting unit movement teams that are escorting their unit’s cargo.

Certain types of cargo require a unit movement team to escort the equipment during the deployment and redeployment process in and out of theater, said Sgt. 1st Class Joel A. Capell with the 371st Sus. Bde.

Capell, a Woodstock, Ohio native, works as an Army liaison officer and contract office representative for the Arrival/Departure Airfield Control Group yard to ensure that unit movement teams have the support they need in order to transport their cargo to its destination, he said.

“We ensure that the process is as smooth as possible for the unit move-

ment teams, make sure the paperwork is in order and proper procedures are followed,” said Capell.

When equipment cannot start or move on it’s own, Master Sgt. Dennis Bloomer and Sgt. Johnathan Casto, both wheeled vehicle mechanics with the 371st Sus. Bde., operate the wrecker on the flight line to offload the broken equipment from the aircraft.

“We are recovery vehicle operators, we provide recovery and maintenance assistance for the Aerial Tactical Operations Center (ATOC), as well as the A/DAGC yard and facilitate the movement of disabled equipment,” said Bloomer, a Springfield, Ohio native.

The two soldiers are on call 24 hours, seven days a week and must be ready to unload at any time during their work hours, which can sometimes be a challenge, he said.

“I wouldn’t ask for anyone else to be on the job – Master Sgt. Bloomer has 30 years of experience in the guard, wrecker experience and he’s a mechanic,” said Capell.

The three soldiers have been separated from the majority of the 371st Sus. Bde., which deployed to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait in June, 2013.

“This is not what I expected, but I get to do my job and it’s been a great experience overall,” said Casto, a Springfield, Ohio native.

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## Kuwaiti and US Sustainment Units speak common language of logistics

Story and Photos by 1st Lt. Kevin McGee

Anyone who's ever talked shop with logistics soldiers knows that "loggies" have a language all their own.

When the command team of 371st Sustainment Brigade attended the Kuwaiti National Guard (KNG) Workshop & Transportation Capabilities Demonstration at Camp Tahreer, Kuwait, on Jan. 23, 2014, an interpreter was needed to translate the English and Arabic being spoken. However, everyone present understood the common language of sustainment operations on display.

The demonstration was the culmination of nine months of relationship building between the KNG troops under Kuwaiti Brig. Gen. Faleh Shuja' Faleh Al-Otaibi, commander, KNG Support Command, and the deployed Ohio Army National Guard 371st Sustainment Brigade, under the command of Col. Gregory Robinette. With the assistance of a translator, the two commanders presided over the one-hour demonstration by KNG support sol-

diers on Taheer's parade field.

More than 40 U.S. and Kuwaiti service members watched the demonstration through the glass walls of an observation porch that felt more like a traditional Kuwaiti Dewaniya, or reception room, than the typical U.S. parade field dais. While the action unfolded outside, the military observers were served tea and stuffed figs in the Persian carpet-lined porch furnished with overstuffed sofa chairs.

The event included simulated explosions and smoke, as the KNG Transportation Battalion troops reacted to scenarios of recovering stranded vehicles and the egress of sustainment vehicles under attack. Camp Tahreer's massive parade field was also staged with static displays of KNG support vehicles including Pandur, Styr and Man tactical vehicles as well as the Kuwaiti version of the U.S. Army HMMWV. Technology was also on display as KNG mechanics demonstrated their remote vehicle status monitoring capabilities.

Maj. Devin Braun, support operations mobility chief with the 371st, attended the event and was impressed.

"The Kuwaitis demonstration showed they are professional, well organized

and disciplined in their command and control." Braun said, "We saw they have good SOPs and they know how to communicate, move and recover."

Maintaining the relationship with the host nation has been part of the mission for the Ohio National Guard unit during their 2013-14 deployment to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Conducting key leader engagements, or KLEs, is one of the most effective ways to make the connection. This event was the fifteenth KLE conducted by the Ohio logistics unit and the KNG. Most of the meetings were part of a joint training and leadership exchange being conducted since October 2013.

After the KLE, Braun commented on the relationship between the sustainment brigade and their Kuwaiti partners,

"If you're going to be working on an enduring basis with partners like the Kuwaitis, you have to develop relationships at the operational level through engagements like this. Getting to know one another is important and the end result is a relationship that facilitates day-to-day operations in Kuwait."

U.S. Army Col. Gregory Robinette, commander, 371st Sustainment Brigade, discusses the success of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Workshop & Transportation Capabilities Demonstration with Brig. Gen. Faleh Shuja' Faleh Al-Otaibi, commander, KNG Support Command, on the parade field at KNG Camp Tahreer, Kuwait, Jan. 23, 2014. Faleh and Robinette presided over the demonstration that was one of the culminating events of a joint training and leadership exchange, conducted by the 371st and the KNG from October 2013 through January 2014, during the Ohio Army National Guard unit's deployment to Kuwait in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



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Howard would later speak of his experience at the center and meeting Daniar: "This was a very exciting and humbling opportunity. Giving back is essential."

Deployed for Good would finish with deliveries to three more charities by Howard's team. On Dec. 9, over 200 pounds of supplies were delivered to the Uventis School that serves 21 Kyrgyz teens and adults with developmental disabilities, ages 15 and older, by teaching life skills and vocational skills. On Dec. 23, the 371st soldiers completed the operation when they delivered the final 261 pounds the supplies to the Belovodskiy Orphanage that serves 160 children, from new-

borns to age seven and the Voenno-Antonoskiy Orphanage that serves 101 children ages 7 to 17.

Wolfe acted as a guide on each delivery and assisted the Ohio soldiers by translating communications with the charities' employees. After seeing the soldiers playing with the children during the deliveries, Wolfe was struck with emotion.

After the last delivery was done, Wolfe commented in her characteristic Russian accent, "These gifts mean so much to all the orphans touched by this generosity," she said. "We were able to provide joy to these children that have next to nothing. We gave Daniar what is likely the only present he will receive this holiday season." Wolfe con-

tinued. "Thanks to charities like the Akron Rotary Club and people with big hearts who deploy, kids like Daniar had a very special holiday season."

When word of the successful deliveries made it back to Akron, Lance Chioma, president of the Rotary Club, was thrilled and praised the Ohio soldiers' participation.

"Working on this international service project, hand-in-hand with Ohio's deployed soldiers, has been an honor," he said. "Our club has reached-out to Akron-area children with special needs for most of its 100-year history. Given the opportunity to connect though our fellow Ohioans in the 371st, it seems natural to support children with disabilities in Kyrgyzstan."

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## “So Long, Until Tomorrow”

By Lt. Col. Mark Raaker

Time here is all winding down and we are all getting anxious, both here and I'm sure at home. We are all looking forward to getting back to the lives that we knew before the deployment and spending time with all of the things that we love; families, church, friends, sports and hobbies. Now is the time that we be vigilant both here in Kuwait and back at home. Now is the time to not lose focus on doing the right thing and making sure that we continue to take care of those that are around us, both here and home. Now is the time to not get lax in the standards that we expect from one another when it comes to performance at work and school. Now is the time to pay special attention to the emotions and behaviors of those that we work with and those that we love.

Remember to plan your time off. It is some of the better advice that I received during discussions about the redeployment and I have found that as I talked with my family about what will happen when I return, having a plan has not only helped me to know what life will be like for a couple of weeks, but

has set expectations and allowed my family to plan with others who want to come together and spend time, and don't forget to take time for yourself!

What a great opportunity to practice patience. The process of reintegration and stabilization can take several months as you rebuild your relationships. Understand that it's normal to feel out of sync. Everyone has grown and changed during the separation. It takes time to reconnect. Talking to one another will be a key to successful reintegration. Talking and not yelling!!! I would encourage everyone to remember that the most important part of communication is not what is said, but what is heard. It is incumbent upon all of us to be good listeners as we come back together and make sure that we listen to what others are saying and not just hear the words.

Know when to seek help. I have spoken on one occasion about how important I think the values of respect and personal courage are. It is OK to realize that you are struggling and there is no shame in asking for help. We have all gotten in the habit of being there for one another, regardless of our location. Now is the time to make sure that we continue those relationships and continue to talk to one another and check

on each other. Don't be afraid to reach out to one another; a family member, a coworker, a deployed friend. Call someone. Depend on family, your unit and friends for support.

There are a lot of resources that are out there for each of us to utilize. You are all aware of many of them. You can call the unit any time if you have questions. Military One Source ([www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil)) is a great place to start as is the Family Programs Office (<http://www.ong.ohio.gov/frg/FRWS-ContactUs.pdf>) at the state. I will not drop off the net and while I am unsure what my phone numbers will be upon my return, you can always email me at [mark.a.raaker.mil@mail.mil](mailto:mark.a.raaker.mil@mail.mil) and I will get in touch with you and make sure that get the answers or help that you need.

It continues to be an honor and a privilege to work alongside such an outstanding group of Soldiers. I am blessed to know each of you and to have gotten to know more about you and your families during this time. I am blessed to have the support of my wife, children and extended family and I am proud of all we have done, both professionally and personally! May God bless you each and every one of you!