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Post-deployment reintegration experiences of AF personnel: Implications for scale development

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Defence R&D Canada
Technical Report
DRDC Toronto TR 2006-304
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Canada

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Abstract

The process of post-deployment reintegration can lead to intra- and inter-personal changes that may influence the quality of the returning members' relationships with (and their attitudes towards) their immediate and extended family, friends, and co-workers. While some of these changes may be negative and lead to adverse outcomes for the members, they also may lead to potential benefits, such as increased self-confidence and self-tolerance, expanded political understanding, and improved military qualifications. To date, studies of the post-deployment reintegration experience have been limited to the Army. However, there is strong interest to examine the post-deployment reintegration process within the Air Force community. This study is an initial attempt to determine the aspects of post-deployment reintegration within this environment. The study used the Army reintegration experience as a starting point. Several similarities and differences between the two environments were identified and the basis of an Air Force post-deployment reintegration measurement tool was established.

Résumé

Le processus de réinsertion postdéploiement peut engendrer des modifications personnelles et interpersonnelles susceptibles d'influencer la qualité des relations et des attitudes des militaires revenus au pays à l'égard de leur famille immédiate et élargie, de leurs amis et de leurs collègues de travail. Même si certains de ces changements peuvent être négatifs et entraîner des retombées néfastes pour les militaires concernés, ils peuvent également présenter des avantages, notamment une amélioration aux points de vue suivants : confiance en soi, tolérance à l'égard de soi, compréhension politique et compétence militaire. À ce jour, les études sur l'expérience de réinsertion postdéploiement n'ont porté que sur l'Armée de terre. Pourtant, la communauté de la Force aérienne (FA) s'intéresse vivement à ce processus. La présente étude se veut une première tentative de déterminer les divers aspects d'une telle réinsertion dans cet environnement. Au départ, elle s'est appuyée sur l'expérience vécue à ce chapitre dans l'Armée de terre. On y a relevé plusieurs similitudes et divergences entre les deux environnements et un instrument permettant d'évaluer cette réinsertion au sein de la Force aérienne a été créé.

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Executive summary

Post-deployment reintegration experiences of AF personnel: Implications for scale development

Blais, A.R., Sullivan-Kwantes, W., McCreary, D.R.; DRDC Toronto TR 2006-304;
Defence R&D Canada □ Toronto; September 2006.

Introduction

The process of post-deployment reintegration can lead to intra- and inter-personal changes that may influence the quality of the returning members' relationships with (and their attitudes towards) their immediate and extended family, friends, and co-workers. While some of these changes may be negative and lead to adverse outcomes for the members, military researchers have recently begun to investigate the possibility that participation in a peacekeeping mission, for example, also may lead to potential benefits, such as increased self-confidence and self-tolerance, expanded political understanding, and improved military qualifications (Melhum, 1995). Yet, until the members return home and fully realize and reflect upon the breadth of their deployment experiences and accomplishments, some of the implications of the deployment, as well as their post-deployment consequences, may not be fully comprehended.

Members of the Stress and Coping Research Group at Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) Toronto undertook a series of studies exploring the positive and negative aspects of post-deployment reintegration attitudes in three areas (work, family, and personal) among Land Force personnel (Blais, Thompson, Febraro, Pickering, & McCreary, 2003; Blais, Thompson, & McCreary, 2005; 2006). To do this, the DRDC researchers developed 81 attitudes related to post-deployment reintegration among Land Force personnel. Later research led to a final, 36-item measure of positive and negative post-deployment reintegration attitudes in these three areas: the Post-Deployment Reintegration Scale – Army (PDRS-A).

However, the extent to which the PDRS-A can capture the reintegration experiences of Air Force (AF) personnel is unknown. Thus, the objectives of the present study were to: (1) increase the understanding of post-deployment reintegration issues in the AF context by building upon and expanding the previous post-deployment reintegration work carried out with Army units, (2) begin the development of a measure of post-deployment reintegration attitudes specific to AF support personnel, based on the items from the initial 81-item version of the PDRS-A, and (3) identify, with the help of AF members, recommendations for changes to that 81-item measure that could be implemented into an AF version of the PDRS-A (i.e., the PDRS-AF).

Methods

A focus group interview format was selected in order to obtain rich and personal accounts of the post-deployment reintegration attitudes and experiences of AF members. Ninety-five AF personnel from seven CF bases (i.e., CFB Trenton, CFB Comox, CFB Cold Lake, CFB Winnipeg, CFB Bagotville, CFB Shearwater, and CFB Petawawa) commented on an initial

version of the PDRS-A and offered their advice, as subject matter experts, on the relevance of individual items to the AF context (e.g., terminology).

Results and Conclusions

Based on the focus group findings, recommendations were made regarding the scale format, items, word changes, and additions to the PDRS-A. It was felt that, in its current state, the 36-item PDRS-A that is currently being used by DRDC researchers could be used as a starting point to build the PDRS-AF. Because 23 out of the 36 items (i.e., more than 60% of the items) that now form the final, working version of the PDRS-A were not flagged as being irrelevant to the AF context by AF interviewees, we think this approach would be the optimal (vs. going back to the initial 81-item PDRS-A version or starting from a brand new pool of items). That is, this process would build upon the established validity and reliability of the current PDRS-A scores.

Firstly, the PDRS-A items (23 items) that were reviewed here and received either neutral or positive feedback from interviewees could remain unchanged. On the other hand, the PDRS-A items (13 items) that were judged to be acceptable with slight changes could be revised, following the recommendations from the focus group members. Furthermore, new items could be added to the scale based on the members' suggestions. Lastly, special attention would be paid to the scale format and wording. A proposed AF-specific PDRS is included in Annex F, with a list of the items that should remain unchanged, should be slightly revised, and could be added.

We strongly believe the PDRS-AF would constitute a useful quantitative tool to be included in the larger undertaking of implementing a formal standardized post-deployment process. The members interviewed here revealed a strong desire to express themselves with respect to their post-deployment reintegration attitudes, and the PDRS-AF would provide them with a quantifiable way to do so.

Sommaire

Expériences de réinsertion postdéploiement de militaires de la Force aérienne – Conséquences pour la mise au point d'un barème d'évaluation

Blais, A.R., Sullivan-Kwantes, W., McCreary, D.R.; DRDC Toronto TR 2006-304; R & D pour la défense Canada – Toronto; September 2006.

Introduction

Le processus de réinsertion postdéploiement peut engendrer des modifications personnelles et interpersonnelles susceptibles d'influencer la qualité des relations et des attitudes des militaires revenus au pays à l'égard de leur famille immédiate et élargie, de leurs amis et de leurs collègues de travail. Même si certains de ces changements peuvent être négatifs et entraîner des retombées néfastes pour les militaires concernés, des chercheurs dans le domaine militaire se sont penchés récemment sur la possibilité que la participation à une mission de paix, à titre d'exemple, présente des avantages, notamment une amélioration aux points de vue suivants : confiance en soi, tolérance à l'égard de soi, compréhension politique et compétence militaire (Melhum, 1955). Cependant, jusqu'à ce que les militaires soient revenus chez eux, aient pris toute la mesure de leurs expériences et de leurs réalisations au cours de leur déploiement et aient réfléchi à celles-ci, il se peut qu'ils ne perçoivent pas parfaitement une partie des tenants et aboutissants de leur déploiement et des conséquences de leur postdéploiement.

Des membres du Groupe du stress et des stratégies d'adaptation du RDDC-Toronto ont entrepris une série d'études explorant les aspects positifs et négatifs des attitudes de réinsertion postdéploiement dans trois secteurs (travail, famille et personne) au sein du personnel de la Force terrestre (Blais, Thompson, Febraro, Pickering, & McCreary, 2003; Blais, Thompson et McCreary, 2005; 2006). À cette fin, ces chercheurs ont identifié 81 attitudes se rapportant à la réinsertion postdéploiement de ce personnel. Leurs recherches les ont finalement amenés à retenir 31 rubriques pour évaluer de telles attitudes dans ces trois secteurs et ainsi constituer un barème de réinsertion postdéploiement de l'Armée de terre (BRPD-A).

Mais on ignore la mesure dans laquelle le BRPD-A permet d'évaluer les expériences de réinsertion du personnel de la Force aérienne. La présente étude avait donc les objectifs suivants : (1) mieux comprendre les questions liées à la réinsertion postdéploiement dans l'environnement de la FA en poursuivant et en prolongeant les travaux réalisés auprès d'unités de l'Armée de terre; (2) commencer à élaborer un instrument permettant d'évaluer les attitudes de réinsertion postdéploiement spécifiquement chez le personnel de soutien de la FA en fonction des 81 rubriques figurant dans la version initiale du BRPD-A; (3) avec l'aide de membres de la FA, dégager des recommandations visant à modifier le barème à 81 rubriques en vue d'établir la version FA du BRPD-A, c.-à-d. un BRPD-FA.

Méthodes

Les chercheurs ont eu recours à la technique des groupes de discussion pour obtenir des comptes rendus personnels et exhaustifs des attitudes et des expériences de réinsertion postdéploiement auprès de membres de la FA. 95 membres de cette force provenant de sept BFC (à savoir Trenton, Comox, Cold Lake, Winnipeg, Bagotville, Shearwater et Petawawa) ont commenté une version initiale du BRPD-A et donné leur avis, à titre d'experts en la matière, sur la pertinence de chaque rubrique pour l'environnement de la FA (p. ex. la terminologie employée).

Résultats et conclusions

À partir des conclusions tirées des groupes de discussion, les chercheurs ont formulé des recommandations au sujet de la composition, de rubriques, de changements terminologiques et d'ajouts relatifs au BRPD-A. Ils ont estimé que la version à 36 rubriques de ce barème actuellement employée par les chercheurs de RDDC pouvait servir de point de départ pour élaborer le BRPD-FA. Étant donné que 23 des 36 rubriques composant la version finale et de travail du BRPD-A (soit plus de 60 % d'entre elles) n'ont pas été pointées comme n'étant pas pertinentes pour l'environnement de la FA par les militaires de cette force interviewés, nous estimons que cette méthode est préférable à celle qui consisterait à reprendre la version initiale (à 81 rubriques) du BRPD-A ou à recommencer avec une toute nouvelle série de rubriques. Autrement dit, le présent processus cherche à tirer parti de la validité et de la fiabilité éprouvées des résultats obtenus d'après le BRPD-A actuel.

En premier lieu, les 23 rubriques du BRPD-A qui ont fait l'objet du présent examen ainsi que de commentaires neutres ou favorables de la part des militaires interrogés pourraient demeurer inchangées. En deuxième lieu, les 13 autres rubriques jugées acceptables pourraient être revues à la condition qu'elles soient légèrement modifiées en tenant compte des recommandations des membres des groupes de discussion. De nouvelles rubriques au barème pourraient même être ajoutées en réponse aux suggestions de ceux-ci. Enfin, une attention particulière devrait être accordée à la composition et à la terminologie du barème. L'annexe F propose un BRPD s'appliquant spécifiquement à la FA et énumérant les rubriques qui devraient, selon le cas, être conservées telles quelles, modifiées légèrement ou ajoutées.

Nous sommes fermement convaincus que le BRPD-FA serait un instrument d'évaluation utile dans une entreprise plus vaste qui viserait à mettre en œuvre un processus formel et normalisé de postdéploiement. Les militaires interrogés ayant manifesté un vif désir de faire connaître leurs attitudes de réinsertion postdéploiement, le BRPD-FA leur offrirait un instrument permettant de le faire de façon quantifiable.

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Introduction

Whatever the nature of a deployment (i.e., peacekeeping or other), returning military members may face many issues upon returning home. At home, their children have matured while they were away, and their families may have developed new routines to which the returning military member must adjust (Thompson & Gignac, 2001). At work, returning military personnel usually come back to increased bureaucracy, red tape, and decreased challenges, relative to the activity and purpose felt during their deployment, and to significant organizational disruptions (e.g., unit reconfigurations, postings) (Johnson, & al., 1997).

In short, the process of post-deployment reintegration can lead to intra- and inter-personal changes that may influence the quality of the returning members' relationships with (and their attitudes towards) their immediate and extended family, friends, and co-workers. While some of these changes may be negative and lead to adverse outcomes for the members, military researchers have recently begun to investigate the possibility that participation in a peacekeeping mission, for example, also may lead to potential benefits, such as increased self-confidence and self-tolerance, expanded political understanding, and improved military qualifications (Melhum, 1995). Yet, until the members return home and fully realize and reflect upon the breadth of their deployment experiences and accomplishments, some of the implications of the deployment, as well as their post-deployment consequences, may not be fully comprehended.

A review of the post-deployment reintegration research area conducted by Blais, Thompson, Febraro, Pickering, and McCreary (2003) revealed several gaps in the literature. These authors found that there were few available measures of the construct, and those that did exist showed incomplete information concerning the reliability of their scores, their underlying factor structure, and their validity with respect to other (un)related constructs. Finally, virtually all of the published research in this area involved US military samples; much less is known about the attitudes and experiences of Canadian military personnel in this area.

Thus, the Stress and Coping Research Group at Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC) Toronto undertook a series of studies (Blais et al., 2003; Blais, Thompson, & McCreary, 2005; 2006) that led to the development of a questionnaire, the Post-Deployment Reintegration Scale-Army (PDRS-A), focusing on the post-deployment reintegration attitudes of Land Force personnel.

The Four Reintegration Themes

Initial development efforts for the PDRS-A began with the results of a literature search, as well as the findings from a previous focus group study of CF Army augmentees (Thompson & Gignac, 2001). Together, these suggested that four main themes characterized post-deployment reintegration; that is, the personal, family, work, and cultural domains. However, the review also emphasized that post-deployment reintegration is not solely a negative experience, and that there also are positive experiences within each of these four domains. A description of the four domains is provided next.

Personal Reintegration

Negative personal reintegration has been characterized in the literature in terms of feelings of generalized anxiety, anger, and isolation or disconnection from the rest of the world (Bolton, Litz, Glenn, Orsillo, & Roemer, 2002; Orsillo, Roemer, Litz, Ehlich, & Friedman, 1998). Conversely, positive attitudes with regard to personal reintegration include feelings of hardiness, broadened life perspective, and increased self-discipline and independence as a result of deployment (Britt, Adler, & Bartone, 2001).

Family Reintegration

The second theme involves reintegration back into family life, or re-establishing coherence as a family unit. According to prior research, positive aspects of family reintegration can be seen in new feelings of closeness and appreciation for family life after deployment, whereas negative aspects of family reintegration comprise adapting to new roles and habits (Figley, 1993; Thompson & Gignac, 2001).

Work

The third theme, work reintegration, refers to adjusting back into garrison (or squadron life, when considering those working in an Air environment). Examples of positive post-deployment reintegration attitudes include increased pride in one's accomplishments and work motivation. Yet work reintegration can also lead to negative attitudes, such as boredom and frustration with excessive workload (Thompson & Gignac, 2001). Work reintegration is an area that members feel should be particularly attended to by the CF (Sullivan-Kwantes, Febbraro, & Blais, 2005); as a matter of fact, the strongest negative reintegration attitudes that emerged from the work of post-deployment reintegration in Army personnel revolved around work or organizational issues (Blais et al., 2003; 2005; 2006).

Cultural

Cultural reintegration attitudes can be seen in a greater appreciation for the rights, freedoms and conveniences taken for granted in one's country of origin, as well as in the development of a better understanding of other cultures (at large) and problems in the world. Coming back home to the "land of the haves" can, however, have a significant effect on one's core values (e.g., the importance of material goods vs. other issues in life) and can sometimes create tension with others (e.g., family members, friends, coworkers, members of the broader community, etc.) (Sullivan-Kwantes et al., 2005).

Aims of the Present Study

The past research on post-deployment reintegration has focused on those working in the Land environment. However, the extent to which the PDRS-A can capture the reintegration experiences of Air Force personnel is unknown. Thus, the objectives of the present study were to: (1) increase the understanding of reintegration issues in the AF context by building upon and expanding the previous post-deployment reintegration work carried out with Army units (Blais et al., 2003;

2005; 2006), (2) initiate the development of a measure of post-deployment reintegration attitudes specific to AF support personnel, based on the initial 81-item version of the PDRS-A (Blais et al., 2005), and (3) identify, with the help of AF members, recommendations for changes to that 81-item measure that could be implemented into an AF version of the PDRS-A (i.e., PDRS-AF).

A focus group interview format was selected in order to obtain rich and personal accounts of the post-deployment reintegration attitudes and experiences of AF members. This interview process went beyond the work that had been conducted with Army personnel. That is, AF personnel commented on an initial version of the PDRS-A. They offered their advice, as subject matter experts, on the relevance of individual items to the AF context (e.g., terminology).

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Method

Participants

Ninety-five AF personnel from seven CF bases (i.e., CFB Trenton, CFB Comox, CFB Cold Lake, CFB Winnipeg, CFB Bagotville, CFB Shearwater, and CFB Petawawa) participated in the focus groups. A total of 14 focus groups were held, 2 groups at each base. One group at each base consisted of non-commissioned members (NCMs), while the other consisted of officers only.

Table 1: Air Force focus group demographics

Variables		
Mean Age		40
Gender	Male	75
	Female	20
Education	Some high school	6
	High school diploma	32
	Some university/college	19
	University/college degree	35
	Graduate degree	3
Rank	Junior NCMs	37
	Senior NCMs	21
	Junior Officers	25
	Senior Officers	12
Average Years of Service		18
Status	Regular	78
	Reservist	2
Official Language	English	58
	French	23
Deployed with Operation	Athena/Apollo	50
Marital Status	Married	79
	Single	16
No. of participants with children living with them		81

The sample demographics are shown in Table 1. The 95 participants (20 women and 75 men) were aged between 27 and 55 ($M = 40.0$, $SD = 6.9$). The 7 NCM groups consisted of 37 junior

and 21 senior NCMs, and the 7 officer groups consisted of 25 junior and 12 senior officers. All of the participants had been deployed at least once in their career, with over half having been deployed on Operations Apollo and/or Athena. The majority of the participants were married (83%) and had children living with them (85%). Most the participants had obtained either a university or a college degree (36%) or a high-school diploma (34%).

Procedure

The AF bases in this study were chosen for their location (i.e., to provide an adequate cross-country sample), size, and resident aircraft. Each base received a letter through the military chain of command requesting volunteers for the study. Prior to their involvement, the volunteers received an Information Letter describing the purpose of the study and the goals and potential applications of the research, and explaining the confidential and voluntary nature of the study (see Annex A).

Blais and Sullivan-Kwantes conducted the focus groups in meeting rooms on each base in the Fall of 2003 and Winter of 2004. The participants at CFB Bagotville were given the option of participating in either French or English; they chose French. All other focus groups were conducted in English. Prior to beginning, the participants were asked for their permission to be tape-recorded during the session. They were told that they could leave or ask to have the tape turned off at any time, and that they did not have to answer any question that they did not wish to answer. All participants agreed to the use of the tape-recorder. A semi-structured format was used, and each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes.

After signing the DRDC Human Research Ethics Committee Voluntary Consent Form (see Annex B), the participants completed a demographic questionnaire (see Annex C). All of the participants filled out this questionnaire with the exception of the participants at CFB Trenton who, due to technical problems, filled out a slightly different version. After completing the demographic questionnaire, the participants were briefed on the history of the project and past findings with the Army (see Annex D, Introduction to the Focus Group Session). They were then asked to state their name, rank, occupation and deployment history for informational purposes.

The initial 81-item version of the PDRS-A (see Annex E) was distributed, and the participants had 10 minutes to read it over. This version of the PDRS-A assessed soldiers' positive and negative attitudes towards readjusting to the personal, family, work/organizational and cultural/community aspects of returning home after a deployment (see Blais et al., 2003, for more detail). Responses are indicated on a 5-point scale representing how true each statement is for the soldier from *Not at All True* (1) to *Completely True* (5).

The PDRS-A then was used as a starting point for discussion about the format (e.g., instructions and rating scale) and content of the questionnaire. That is, the 81 items were reviewed and evaluated, focusing on their relevance and applicability to the AF. The participants also were encouraged to share their post-deployment reintegration experiences.

A third party transcribed the tape-recorded interviews. Each transcript was reviewed for accuracy by one of the moderators (Sullivan-Kwantes) who made corrections when needed.

Data-Analytic Approach

Two research assistants independently coded each focus group transcript into the coding scheme based on the original post-reintegration attitudes framework, as well as on issues such as format, instructions, rating scale, etc. They then used the qualitative data analysis software tool NUD*IST (i.e., Non-numerical Unstructured Data with Indexing, Searching and Theorizing, revision 6; QSR International, 2004) to organize the themes within and across focus groups. The themes that consistently emerged in the a-priori determined categories were then carefully examined in terms of their relevance to scale development/refinement issues in an AF context.

Focus Group Dynamics

All of the focus groups lasted approximately 90 minutes (but no more than 2 hours). Each group had different interpersonal dynamics. A likely reason for this could be attributed to interpersonal style, gender, rank, deployment experience, and group familiarity. There were some groups who, due to the aircraft they supported, worked as teams, but the majority of the other participants were AF augmentees.

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Results

Comments on Scale Format

The AF members interviewed had a few comments regarding the format of the PDRS-A. Although their comments were generally positive, some members noted that the scale items appeared to be repetitive, which made them feel uncomfortable. In general, they felt as though the researchers were trying to “trick” them by asking similar questions.

Others commented on the ambiguity of some of the items, whereas a few AF members felt that some items lacked focus and might be better presented in blocks of similar items/domains. Some participants expressed the need for open-ended questions (although there were opinions to the contrary – some others felt they would be too tired/bored to write anything else at the end) and for follow-up interviews with themselves and/or their family members. Some interviewees mentioned that their family members should also have room to express themselves, either by filling out the scale as well or by providing subjective comments.

As far as the rating scale was concerned, it was suggested that the scale anchors were too subjective and should be made less ambiguous and/or should be reduced. The difference between, for example, *Somewhat* and *Slightly* was unclear to some of the interviewees. Finally, some of the participants discussed the possibility of having a *Not Applicable* option; but while some felt it would be a useful addition to the options provided, others disagreed, thinking it might be confusing.

In a group composed of AF officers, some participants commented that too much common language or “slang” was used, and they also felt there was a lot of Army terminology (which was to be expected, as this scale was developed for Army personnel). Finally, quite a few members vocalized that the concept of “since your return” should be repeatedly emphasized, as changes in family relationships, for example, may not solely result from being away on tour.

Other General Comments

It was fairly obvious that most interviewees were unhappy to participate in yet another study involving survey research. Some of them were particularly cynical. They complained that they complete far too many surveys and never seem to benefit from the results in any way. They also expressed that “they could not care less about such questions,” and that most surveys, to their knowledge, are long and useless. They also commented on the seemingly disparate origins of these surveys (e.g., students’ theses, university research, etc.) and the fact that they never hear about their results and implications. The general feeling was that asking AF members to complete an additional survey upon reintegration would not result in positive reactions, unless its origin, focus, and goals were to be carefully explained.

Some participants also felt they have to comply and participate in studies, and they consider themselves “voluntold.” This is problematic from a social scientist’s standpoint as such attitudes can lead to less-than-optimal responses. Furthermore, they commented on the fact that they do not feel they can be honest when completing surveys, as they fear they may get discriminated against

or stigmatized. Some other participants emphasized their need to know why changes are made within the CF and as a result of what (or which study, if any).

Many participants pointed out that additional information should be added to the questionnaire, such as the nature (e.g., Army vs. AF), location (e.g., Mirage vs. Athena), and type (56-day vs. 6-month) of the tour, as well as the roles performed while on tour. They believed these variables to be key determinants of their deployment experience and, ultimately, of their post-deployment reintegration attitudes. Information regarding their element, status (e.g., regular vs. augmentee/reservist), years of experience, and numbers of previous tours completed should also be collected for the same reasons, according to them.

Overseas tours should not be addressed exclusively, as training courses or exercises in Canada, as well as postings in other countries, share similar characteristics, according to the interviewees. For example, family reintegration after a six-month training course in Canada can be as challenging to an individual as is it after a six-month overseas tour.

A few participants remarked on the time sensitivity of the questionnaire. For example, they pointed out that it should probably be filled in within weeks after their return home, in order to capture the short-term reintegration attitudes. As they also noted, these attitudes are likely to change over time, and follow-up data should be collected after six and twelve months to document such longitudinal changes. For example, feelings of closeness with one's family may be stronger/weaker upon returning home, yet they may revert back to baseline six months later. Some participants also wondered about the time sensitivity of the items in the context of 56-day rotations. That is, they remarked upon the fact that, in such cases, timing is especially important (e.g., does one only fill out the questionnaire at the end of the last rotation vs. after each rotation?) and should be carefully considered.

Lastly, some participants pointed out that some of the items, especially in the personal domain, did not accurately describe their own experiences/attitudes to date, in part because they had never been confronted with extreme situations such as deprivation or death. For example, Item 9, "I have had difficulty reconciling the devastation I saw overseas with life in Canada," may not be relevant for AF members whose roles or tours are not conducive to such difficult, traumatic experiences. It was, however, mentioned that these scale items might, unfortunately, become more pertinent with the introduction of the AF support concept.

Comments on Individual Scale Items

Personal Reintegration Items. Before reviewing the comments on individual items in this domain, it should be noted that a suggestion was made to add questions related to physical health concerns/issues. These questions would be similar to those asking about working conditions (e.g., potentially hazardous or dangerous environments) while on tour.

Firstly, item 6, "I have felt 'out of sorts,'" was preferred to item 4, "I still feel like I am 'on the edge,'" yet it was suggested that "due to readjustments" be added at the end of the statement to clarify its meaning. Item 17, "My sense of religion or spirituality has deepened," should be dropped or reworded according to some interviewees; for example, "changed" could replace "deepened," in order for the item to be less suggestive. Some participants thought item 25, "I find

the world to be a more horrible place than I thought it was,” was too evocative, as were items 30, “I am more cynical about humanity,” and 47, “I have questioned my faith in humanity.”

The following two items, 26, “It has taken time to feel like myself again,” and 64, “Getting back to my ‘old self’ has been hard,” were criticized as being confusing and making little sense. Finally, some participants found item 39, “I am better able to deal with stress,” preferable to item 20, “I am mentally tougher than I thought I was.” Other participants suggested that the word “tougher” be replaced with “stronger,” due to the confusing meaning of “tougher” (i.e., “tough” being associated with hardened, cynical).

Family Reintegration Items. It should be mentioned that individuals who were unmarried and had no children felt left out of this aspect of the PDRS-A. To address this issue, some participants suggested, for example, that “family” be defined and expanded to include parents, friends and other family members (i.e., cousins), not just one’s partner and/or children.

Item 51, “Getting back ‘into sync’ with family life has been hard,” was identified as being more complete than item 43, “Getting myself back into the family routine has been difficult.” Participants also suggested that a similar item be included in the work domain. Some interviewees were confused by item 54, “I have a greater willingness to be with my family,” as it seems to imply that this willingness was not present before the tour. On a positive note, item 60, “I feel my family has resented my absence,” was singled-out as being particularly relevant. Lastly, item 77, “There has been conflict in my marriage or significant relationship,” however, should emphasize conflict as a result of the tour, or since returning (vs. on-going conflict).

Work Reintegration Items. First, some problems were raised with the terminology used in the questionnaire. Obviously, “air person,” “AF member,” “Officer/NCM,” should replace “soldier,” in order to reflect the AF context. Other word changes that should be considered include “tour,” which apparently is confusing to AF personnel. Similarly, a “deployment” should be called an “operation,” according to interviewees. The term “unit” should be changed to “squadron,” as should the word “garrison.” Participants also mentioned that the term “unit” (or if replaced, “squadron”) might not apply to AF augmentees, and that particular attention should be given to some descriptors in order to also encompass these members’ experiences.

A few items also should be slightly modified, according to participants. Item 1, “I find military bureaucracy more frustrating,” was confusing to some participants; they did not know if they should be focussing on frustration since returning from their tour. Similarly, some people were wondering how they should respond to the question if they felt that military bureaucracy was frustrating even before they went on tour. Some participants commented that items 12, “I am glad I went on tour,” and 18, “I feel my career has advanced,” were neither particularly relevant nor good items. Some participants felt that items 16, “I feel my current work duties are less meaningful,” and 40, “Day-to-day tasks seem tedious,” should be combined, as well as the words “meaningful,” or “tedious” being changed to “less challenging.”

It was suggested that “boring” be replaced by “less challenging,” in item 36, “Garrison life has been boring,” as in some cases, interviewees felt their work had gone from being important, meaningful to trivial, insignificant. Item 38, “My enthusiasm for my job has grown,” for example, should be reworded, as some members’ work duties changes while on tour (vs. at home). Thus, when these members come back to their regular work, after the tour, they feel disappointed (and

less enthusiastic) to return to what they sometimes consider to be less meaningful work. With regard to item 42, “I feel a stronger sense of teamwork within my unit,” these members asked about the direction of this item. That is, some felt that teamwork may actually be greater while over on deployment.

Some people wanted to know whether item 52, “I want to spend time with my buddies from the tour,” meant spending more or less time with them, while others wanted to be certain that it was the people with whom they deployed that this question is addressing. This latter concern is an example of the differences in terminology between the Land and Air elements. Other wording issues were focused on items 66, “I feel I am a better soldier” (e.g., could be rewritten as “Better at my job”), and 73, “I have considered leaving the military” (e.g., could be rewritten as “For the first time, since my return”). Item 71, “I have developed stronger friendships” was deemed confusing on two fronts: some suggested using the word “camaraderie” instead of the word “friendship,” while others asked if this was specifically a result of the tour.

On the other hand, various suggestions were made regarding items that could be added to the questionnaire. These suggestions varied from inquiring about post-deployment reintegration issues, such as their current understanding (i.e., as a result of the tour) of why they are in the military, the perceived value of their tour in terms of career development, the reception/support they received going back to work (i.e., from their home unit, leaders), and their willingness to go on tour again. Lastly, a few other items could, according to the interviewees, tap into their attitudes towards pre-deployment and deployment issues such as waivers, home leave travel allowances (i.e., HLTAs), and the quality of the support provided to their families, as well as problems with their pay while they were on tour.

Cultural Reintegration Items. There were concerns with several of these items. Items 24, “I have a greater appreciation of life in Canada,” 27, “I have realized how well off we are in Canada,” 61, “I have a greater appreciation of the conveniences taken for granted in Canada,” and 70, “I have a greater appreciation of the rights and freedoms taken for granted in Canada,” all appeared to be very similar to a majority of interviewees. It was suggested that some of these items be combined or removed altogether. According to a number of participants, an item inquiring about whether they think people here in Canada realize what they go through on a tour should also be included in the survey. Similarly, some participants felt that item 29, “I feel my community appreciates my effort overseas,” and item 55, “I feel my community has welcomed me,” should specify what “community” means (e.g., is it the people on the base, their unit, or the community in which they live?). However, according to other interviewees, these items could even be dropped.

It was also brought to our attention that, for some members, the “shock” alluded to in item 31, “Being back in Canada has been a bit of a culture shock,” has more to do with going away to a foreign location than with coming back home. While item 56, “I find people here in Canada to be concerned with trivial things,” received good comments (even though the word “people” was thought to be too broad), interviewees suggested that another item should be added that would inquire about one’s tolerance for the attitudes and behaviors of people living in Canada. There were also a few comments suggesting that item 57, “People have made me proud to have served my country,” may be irrelevant. With regard to item 74, “I have a more positive perspective on what is important in life,” some participants thought it was confusing and should be reworded.

Recommendations

The following is a list of recommendations to address the interviewees' comments and concerns, as presented in Results. Some of these recommendations can be readily implemented in a new, revised version of the PDRS to be used with AF personnel (e.g., deletion of some items, word changes to reflect the AF culture and language). Others will require more thought and deliberation, including an evaluation of the pros and cons before their inclusion in the PDRS-AF (e.g., time sensitivity). It should be noted, however, that since these focus groups were undertaken, the 81-item version of the PDRS-A has been reduced to 36 items, and the four domains have been reduced to three (i.e., work, personal, and family). The implications for this study is that several of the items which the AF members were concerned about have already been dropped from the PDRS-A. Lastly, other suggestions will necessitate decision-making at the highest level of AF leadership and might only be put in place gradually over time (e.g., follow-up post-deployment reintegration interviews).

Scale Format and Other General Comments

a) Reluctance of individuals to participate

The issue of participants being “voluntold” instead of being voluntary participants has been on-going for a long time. However, according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (1998), which the Department of National Defence has agreed to follow, all human research has to be voluntary. While working with Army personnel, the Personnel Selection Officers (PSOs) try to attend to this problem during survey sessions by stressing the voluntary nature of the survey (i.e., they were told to attend the session, but completing the documents is up to them). Being voluntold is less of an issue when research is conducted by mail or internet. However, when conducting research with the AF, PSOs may wish to emphasize the transparency of the research process, as this seems to be a key issue and may provide AF personnel with the incentive to participate readily in survey research. Most importantly, if AF personnel are told they will be informed of the results, practical implications, and changes resulting from survey research, they may recognize its importance and come to appreciate its value.

b) Time sensitivity

We recommend that the PDRS-AF be completed within two to four months of a member's return. Yet it is an open question as to when would be the ideal timing, especially in the case of the members who are on a 56-day rotation schedule.

c) Subjectivism/ambiguity of scale anchors

While a 5-point response option will remain, the number of anchor points could be reduced from five to three; only the mid- and end-points of the 5-point scale could be labelled. Alternatively, all of the labels could be replaced with less confusing ones.

d) “Not Applicable” option

This suggestion would be difficult to implement due to scoring and measurement concerns (e.g., increase in missing data). Another option might be to change “Not at all

true” to “*Not at all true/Not applicable*” and modify the instructions to ensure a clear understanding of the “*Not applicable*” label.

e) Open-ended questions and/or follow-up interviews; families’ participation

Two ways of fulfilling the members’ apparent desire for expression would be through the addition of space on the questionnaire (e.g., “Are there other reintegration issues that you would like to describe? If so, write your comments below.”) or via interviews with the members and/or their families.

The implementation of a formal post-deployment process, including feedback from the members and their families, appears to be a much needed course of action. To do this would allow for the study of a whole new set of theoretical/empirical questions. For example, a member’s reintegration attitudes might be validated/shared by his (her) spouse, lending further support to the notion of “permeable boundaries” between work and family spheres, as well as to the importance of the family as a unit of interest.

This process has begun in the US Army with the addition of the Battlemind program (Walter Reed Army Institute of Research Division of Psychiatry and Neuroscience, n.d.). This program is aimed at reminding soldiers who have undergone combat exposure that the skills that kept them alive on their deployment are not adaptive at home. The team who designed the Battlemind program for the soldiers also have developed material for the families in order to assist in the reintegration process. The extent to which this program is effective at reducing negative reintegration experiences, while enhancing positive reintegration experiences, is an empirical question, as is the applicability of this type of program for an AF environment.

g) Directionality of scale items

To avert this problem, both the PSO giving the survey, as well as the instructions themselves, should carefully explain that the survey focuses on attitudes “since your return and as a result of the tour,” and that while some of the items may appear to be leading in a given direction, they are worded in such a way as to assess positive or negative attitudes.

h) Repetitiveness of scale items

The instructions should clearly state that while some of the items appear to be very similar, they do not carry the same meaning and that each item is needed and included for specific reasons. The objective here is not to “trick” the respondents but obtain consistent scores and measure slightly different concepts.

The perceived repetitiveness of the scale items is a function of the length of the scale itself. Given that the initial PDRS-A had 81 items, the likelihood that some items were indeed similar is not surprising. However, given that the most recent version of the PDRS-A has only 36 items, (perceived) repetition is less likely to be problematic.

i) Lack of focus

Suggestions that the items on the scale should be organized into “blocks” is not the best way to arrange the questionnaire items, as doing so has been shown to increase the likelihood of response biases; thus, mixing up the items is best. The instructions could, however, emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers and that the items cover a wide range of post-deployment/reintegration attitudes.

j) Lack of relevance, harshness of scale items

This issue will likely become, unfortunately, less problematic with the introduction of the AF support concept (e.g., dealing with devastation, deaths and injuries, cynicism, lack of faith). Yet some of the items included in the PDRS-A have since been dropped or changed while further changes may be necessary in order to address the specific needs of the AF members.

Scale Items

a) Item 1, “I find military bureaucracy more frustrating.”

To prevent any misunderstanding, it should be reemphasized (e.g., at the top of every page) that the survey focuses on changes “since your return, as a result of the tour.”

b) Item 4, “I still feel like I am ‘on the edge.’” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

This item should be deleted from the PDRS-AF, as it was deemed inferior by interviewees to item 6 below.

c) Item 6, “I have felt out of sorts.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

Adding “due to readjustments” after “sorts” would clarify its meaning. Yet, again, to prevent any misunderstanding, it should be reemphasized (e.g., at the top of every page) that the survey focuses on changes “since your return, as a result of the tour.”

d) Item 12, “I am glad I went on tour.”

Having been found irrelevant by interviewees, this item could be deleted from the PDRS-AF.

e) Item 16, “I feel my current work duties are less meaningful.”

Changing “meaningful” to “challenging” would change the meaning of this item; therefore, it should be kept as it is stated.

f) Item 17, “My sense of religion or spirituality has deepened.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

Using “changed” instead of “deepened” would sidestep the direction of the change; therefore, this item should be kept as it is stated.

g) Item 18, “I feel my career has advanced.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

Having been found out of place by interviewees, this item could be deleted from the PDRS-AF.

h) Item 20, “I am mentally tougher than I thought I was.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

This item could also be deleted from the PDRS-AF, as it was deemed inferior to item 39, “I am better able to deal with stress,” by interviewees, or “tougher” could be replaced by “stronger.”

i) Items 24, “I have a greater appreciation of life in Canada,” 27, “I have realized how well off we are in Canada,” 61, “I have a greater appreciation of the conveniences taken for granted in Canada” and 70, “I have a greater appreciation of the rights and freedoms taken for granted in Canada.” (Item 24 is not in the current PDRS-A)

The most meaningful and significant item(s) should be retained. Again, it should be reiterated in the instructions that although some scale items may appear to be measuring the same attitude, they are not.

- j) Items 25, “I find the world to be a more horrible place than I thought it was,” 30, “I am more cynical about humanity,” and 47, “I have questioned my faith in humanity.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

These items were perceived as being too evocative by participants, perhaps because of the nature of their deployment/operation. They could be deleted from the PDRS-AF, but they may have more meaning after the implementation of the AF support concept.

- k) Items 26, “It has taken time to feel like myself again,” and 64, “Getting back to my ‘old self’ has been hard.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

These items could be deleted from the PDRS-AF, as they were deemed confusing and making little sense by participants.

- l) Items 29, “I feel my community appreciates my effort overseas,” and 55, “I feel my community has welcomed me.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

“Community” should be defined (i.e., unit, base, outside community, etc.). These items, thought to be irrelevant, could be dropped from the PDRS-AF, according to interviewees.

- m) Item 31, “Being back in Canada has been a bit of a culture shock.”

To modify this item based on interviewees’ recommendations would alter its meaning, as the intention here is to evaluate reintegration attitudes after a member’s return to Canada, not prior to it.

- n) Item 36, “Garrison life has been boring.”

To use “challenging” instead of “boring” would be too neutral; “boring” carries a negatively-laden emotional meaning that needs to be retained.

- o) Item 38, “My enthusiasm for my job has grown.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

Item 38 could be deleted from the PDRS-AF, as it was deemed inadequate by participants. It could, however, be reworded to capture the fact that, for some members, the nature of their work changes while on tour (vs. at home).

- p) Item 40, “Day-to-day tasks seem tedious.”

Again, using the word “challenging” would be too neutral; “tedious” carries a negatively-laden emotional meaning that needs to be retained.

- q) Item 42, “I feel a stronger sense of teamwork within my unit.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

This item, which is confusing, according to participants, could be deleted from the PDRS-AF. It could also be altered to refer to some members’ (e.g., AF augmentees) greater teamwork while on tour (vs. at home).

- r) Item 43, “Getting myself back into the family routine has been difficult.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)

This item should be deleted from the PDRS-AF, as it was deemed inferior by interviewees to item 51 below.

- s) Item 51, “Getting back ‘into sync’ with family life has been hard.”
A similar question should be added to the work domain (e.g., “Getting back ‘into sync’ with squadron duties has been hard.”).
- t) Item 52, “I want to spend time with my buddies from the tour.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)
Whether item 52 (vs. item 65 or both) should be kept in the PDRS-AF remains to be seen. Similarly, “more” or “less” could be added before “time”, depending on the meaning to be conveyed. A proper word should be substituted for “buddies.”
- u) Item 54, “I have a greater willingness to be with my family.”
It should be reemphasized that the survey focuses on changes “since your return, as a result of the tour.”
- v) Items 56, “I find people here in Canada to be concerned with trivial things,” and 57, “People have made me proud to have served my country.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)
“People” should be defined (i.e., general population, coworkers, family members?).
- w) Item 66, “I feel I am a better soldier.”
“Better at my job” should be substituted for “a better soldier.”
- x) Item 71, “I have developed stronger friendships.”
“Camaraderies” could be used instead of “friendships,” or another (to be determined), less “touchy-feely,” term might be suitable for this item.
- y) Item 73, “I have considered leaving the military.”
Again, it should be reemphasized that the survey focuses on changes “since your return, as a result of the tour.”
- z) Item 74, “I have a more positive perspective on what is important in life.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)
This item should be rewritten (e.g., “I have a more positive perspective on life”).
- aa) Item 77, “There has been conflict in my marriage or significant relationship.” (dropped from the PDRS-A)
It should be reemphasized that the survey focuses on conflict “since your return, as a result of the tour” (vs. on-going conflict).

Word changes

- a) “Community”
Whether the focus is on the base, unit, or live-in community should be specified.
- b) “Deployment”
This term could be replaced with “operation.”

- c) “Family”

Family should be defined as referring to the immediate as well as the extended family (including friends) in order to make single members feel included.
- d) “Soldier”

This term should be changed so that it applies to AF members (e.g., “air person,” “AF member”).
- e) “Tour”

“Tour” should be described in such a way that its meaning to AF members is clear. An open question is whether there is a need to distinguish between reintegration experiences in general (including after a course, exercise, or posting in Canada) or overseas only, or to differentiate between combat and non-combat reintegration experiences.
- f) “Unit/garrison”

This term could be replaced with “squadron.” However, it should be kept in mind that it might not reflect the experiences of AF augmentees; another term might be more appropriate.

Additions

- a) Additional information (e.g., nature, location, type, role, etc.)

A short section could be added at the beginning of the PDRS-AF to gather this information. The Human Dimensions of Operations (HDO) project (Dobрева-Martinova, 1999; Murphy & Farley, 2000), implemented with the Army, taps into these notions.
- b) Pre-deployment and deployment issues (e.g., waivers, HLTAs, support, pay, etc.)

Even though these issues may go together with post-deployment reintegration attitudes and should be assessed longitudinally, this mandate is not part of the present research. They have been, however, investigated with Army personnel through the HDO project, and they would be covered best in an HDO-like situation tailored to the AF context.
- c) Physical health concerns/issues

Again, to study these concerns is not part of the present mandate, yet they may go together with post-deployment reintegration attitudes. In fact, to include indices of physical health and well-being into the PDRS-AF would introduce a confounding factor to the scale. The proposed association might be studied better if standardized measures of physical health and well-being were correlated with PDRS-AF scores.
- d) Canadians’ understanding (i.e., as a result of the tour) of why members are in the military, what the members go through

This is an important point to address, but this type of question is related to the notion of social support and to include it in the PDRS-AF would introduce a confounding factor.
- e) Perceived value of the tour in terms of career development

This concept should be added to PDRS-AF (e.g., “This operation has been good to my career”).

- f) Reception/support the members received going back to work (i.e., from their home unit, leaders)

Again, this is a significant issue to address, but it is related to the notion of social support and its inclusion in the PDRS-AF would introduce a confounding factor.

- g) Tolerance for Canadians' attitudes and behaviors

Item 56 touched upon this attitude. However, the notion of lack of tolerance could be included in the PDRS-AF, by adding an item such as "I am less tolerant of Canadians' petty complaints."

- h) Willingness to go on tour again

This is an excellent suggestion; such an item should be included in the PDRS-AF (e.g., "I am looking forward to my next operation.").

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Concluding Comments

The initial PDRS-A does not generalize in its entirety to an AF environment, yet a large number of items do seem to fit both environments, at least to a certain extent. Some items may need to be slightly reworded, while others may need considerable altering. Special attention should also be paid to the language used. For example, would it be more appropriate to utilize generic terms (i.e., common to both elements) or to develop two slightly different versions, which would use element-specific terminology? Whereas the former would focus on the commonalities shared by both the Army and the Air Force and thus allow for formal quantifiable comparisons within and among the elements, the latter would be tailored to the unique attitudes of AF members.

Based on the recommendations presented above regarding scale format, items, word changes, and additions, the 36-item PDRS-A, in its current state, could be used as a starting point to build the PDRS-AF. Because 23 out of the 36 items (i.e., more than 60% of the items) that now form the PDRS-A were not flagged as being irrelevant to the AF context by AF interviewees, we think this approach would be the optimal (vs. going back to the initial 81-item PDRS-A version). That is, this process would build upon the established validity and reliability of the current PDRS-A scores.

Firstly, the PDRS-A items (23 items) that were reviewed here and received either neutral or positive feedback from interviewees could remain unchanged. On the other hand, the PDRS-A items (13 items) examined here and judged to be acceptable with slight changes could be revised, following the recommendations outlined above. Furthermore, new items could be added to the scale based on the members' suggestions for additional items. Lastly, special attention would be paid to the scale format and wording, depending on which terminology (i.e., generic or AF-specific) would be favored. A proposed AF-specific PDRS is included in Annex F, with a list of the items that should remain unchanged, should be slightly revised, and could be added.

In conclusion, we recognize that qualitative research such as presented here does not reveal the extent to which all of the members within one discussion group agree or disagree with the items. For example, a few individuals might have been more vocal than the others in their group and as a result, might have influenced the group as a whole in its understanding, liking, and disliking of the scale. This in turn can color the researchers' perceptions of whether the members truly liked or disliked the scale and its items.

We strongly believe the PDRS-AF would constitute a useful quantitative tool to be included in the larger undertaking of implementing a formal standardized post-deployment process. The members interviewed here revealed a strong desire to express themselves with respect to their post-deployment reintegration attitudes, and the PDRS-AF would provide them with a quantifiable way to do so.

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Annex A Information Letter

INFORMATION LETTER

Post-deployment reintegration experiences may be of particular concern for Air Force personnel as they often are quickly formed for a tasking or deployment with little lead-time. Moreover, when they return home, they often disperse quite quickly back to their home units. This means that support personnel may have lower levels of organizational and social support to facilitate the reintegration process. Thus, quality of post-deployment reintegration is tied to quality of life, operational effectiveness, and retention – all identified as current sources of concern in the CF.

One of the immediate objectives of this research is to identify the perceptions and appraisals of the ease or difficulty Air Force support personnel have experienced readjusting to the personal, family, organizational and community/cultural aspects of returning home. Another objective is to develop a reliable and valid scale reflecting these experiences, based on the existing Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire.

In the future, we hope to use the Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire to: 1) determine and quantify the relationship between reintegration experiences and various health and well-being indices, and 2) provide mental health service providers and commanders with the particular reintegration experiences identified as sources of concern for Air Force support personnel. Third, the findings will also help to suggest ways in which the Canadian Forces can better tailor post-deployment support services to the needs of Air Force support personnel.

Your participation in this study is **completely voluntary**. It will involve participating in a discussion group along with five to nine other colleagues, to discuss negative and positive experiences faced by Air Force support personnel after a deployment. It will also involve discussing and critically evaluating the Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire, in order to modify and tailor it to Air Force support personnel. The discussion group will be approximately 90-120 minutes in duration. A trained researcher will facilitate all discussion.

All information you provide is considered **completely confidential**. Information collected during the discussion groups will be recorded and transcribed, with your consent, and will be kept in a secure location to which only researchers associated with this project have access. Results communicated with mental health service providers and commanders will include only general descriptions, with no identifying information. The only risks in this study are fatigue that may come with participating in a discussion group. There are no other known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If after receiving this letter you have any questions regarding this study or would like additional information feel free to contact Dr. Ann-Renée Blais at 416-635-2000 x3082, or by e-mail at Ann-Renée.Blais@drdc-rddc.gc.ca. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at DRDC-Toronto (L-430).

I thank you in advance for your interest in, and assistance with, this project.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Ann-Renée Blais
Research Psychologist
Stress & Coping Group
DRDC Toronto

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Annex B Voluntary Consent Form

VOLUNTARY CONSENT FORM

Protocol Number: L-430

Research Project Title: Developing a measure of post-deployment reintegration of air force support personnel

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ann-Renée Blais, DRDC Toronto

I, _____ (name) hereby volunteer to participate as a subject in the study, “Developing a measure of post-deployment reintegration of air force support personnel” (Protocol L-430). I understand that I will be participating in a discussion group along with five to nine other colleagues, to discuss negative and positive experiences faced by Air Force support personnel after a deployment. It will also involve discussing and critically evaluating the Post-Deployment Reintegration Questionnaire, in order to modify and tailor it to Air Force support personnel.

I have read the information letter, and have had the opportunity to ask questions of the Investigators. All of my questions concerning this study have been fully answered to my satisfaction. However, I may obtain additional information about the research project and have any questions about this study answered by contacting Dr. Ann-Renée Blais at 416-635-2000 x3082.

I have been told that the principal risk of the research protocol is fatigue. I consider this risk to be acceptable. Also, I acknowledge that my participation in this study, or indeed any research, may involve risks that are currently unforeseen by DRDC Toronto.

I have been advised that the data concerning me will be treated as confidential, and not revealed to anyone other than the DRDC Toronto Investigator(s) or external investigators from the sponsoring agency without my consent except as data unidentified as to source. Moreover, should it be required, I agree to allow the data to be reviewed by an internal or external audit committee with the understanding that any summary information resulting from such a review will not identify me personally.

I understand that I am free to refuse to participate and may withdraw my consent without prejudice or hard feelings at any time. Should I withdraw my consent, my participation as a subject will cease immediately. I also understand that the Investigator(s), or their designate, may terminate my participation at any time, regardless of my wishes.

Volunteer's Name _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

FOR SUBJECT ENQUIRY IF REQUIRED:

Should I have any questions or concern regarding this project before, during, or after participation, I understand that I am encouraged to contact Defence R&D Canada - Toronto (DRDC Toronto), P.O. Box 2000, 1133 Sheppard Avenue West, Toronto, Ontario M3M 3B9. This contact can be made by surface mail at this address or in person, by phone or e-mail, to any of the DRDC Toronto numbers and addresses listed below:

Principle Investigator or Principal DRDC Toronto Investigator: Dr. Ann-Renée Blais, 416-635-2000 x3082, Ann-Renée.Blais@drdc-rddc.gc.ca.

Chair, DRDC Toronto Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC): Dr. Jack Landolt, 416-635-2120, Jack.Landolt@drdc-rddc.gc.ca.

I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form so that I may contact any of the above-mentioned individuals at some time in the future should that be required.

Annex C Demographic Questionnaire

Air Force Support Personnel Demographic Survey

1. What is your present Rank?
 - Jr. NCM (Pte to MCpl)
 - Snr NCM (Sgt to CWO)
 - Jnr Off
 - Snr Off

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female

4. What is your highest level of education?
 - Some high school
 - High school diploma (Sec V)
 - Some university / Some college (CEGEP)
 - University degree / College degree
 - Graduate degree

5. What is your first official language?
 - English
 - French

6. What is your marital status?
 - Married (incl common-law)
 - Single (incl divorced, widowed, or separated)

7. Excluding your partner/spouse, how many dependents live with you? _____

8. What is your status?
 - Regular
 - Reservist

9. How many years of service in the Canadian Forces have you completed? _____

10. How many tours have you had:

In total: _____

In the past 5 years: _____

In the past 12 months:

56-day tour: _____

6-month tour: _____

11. Have you deployed with OP Athena or OP Apollo?

Yes

No

If so, which unit have you supported? _____

12. What is your occupation? _____

13. Can you please briefly describe your most recent tour (length, location, etc.)?

Annex D Focus Group Introduction

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOCUS GROUP SESSION

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this focus group today. I'm Wendy Sullivan-Kwantes, Research Technician for the Command, Effectiveness and Behaviour Section at DRDC Toronto. I'll be your moderator for this session. With me is Dr. Ann-Renée Blais, Defence Scientist at DRDC Toronto. Each of you has been invited here today because you are experts on your own particular deployment and reintegration experience. This research we are conducting is supported by NDHQ and particularly by your ECS. We need you to identify the reintegration experiences of greatest relevance to Air Force personnel and help us develop a reliable and valid questionnaire reflecting these experiences. While this research has been undertaken on the land side, this is a relatively new initiative for the Air Force. Your experiences are very important to us and we use them to recommend changes in the Canadian Forces. In a group discussion like this, it is really important that you express yourself openly. There are no right or wrong answers; we want to know what you think. We are tape-recording this session in order to ensure accuracy when writing up a report. However, your responses will not be linked with your name or affiliation in any way. Everything will be anonymous and the tapes will be destroyed when we are finished. Because we are taping, I may remind you occasionally to speak up and to talk one at a time, so I can hear you clearly when I review the session tapes. Each time I ask a question, there is no need to respond if you do not wish to. However, it is important that a wide range of ideas are expressed. If you would like to add an idea or if you have an opinion that contrasts with those that have been aired, that's the time to jump into the conversation.

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Annex E PDRS-A

PDRS-A (81-item version)

For the next set of questions, please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true for you since returning from your overseas deployment. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. People may have differing views, and we are interested in what your experiences are. **Please indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true for you since returning from your overseas deployment:**

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
1. I find military bureaucracy more frustrating.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
2. I am more aware of problems in the world.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
3. Putting the events of the tour behind me has been tough.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
4. I still feel like I am “on the edge.”	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
5. My work motivation has increased.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
6. I have felt “out of sorts.”	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
7. There has been tension in my family relationships.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
8. I have a better understanding of other cultures.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
9. I have had difficulty reconciling the devastation I saw overseas with life in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
10. I have had trouble dealing with changes within my family.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
11. I am applying job-related skills I learned during my deployment.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
12. I am glad I went on the tour.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
13. I am more interested in what is happening in other countries.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
14. Dealing with memories of death and injuries has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
15. I have experienced difficulties readjusting to life in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
16. I feel my current work duties are less meaningful.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
17. My sense of religion or spirituality has deepened.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
18. I feel my career has advanced.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
19. I feel my family is proud of me.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
20. I am mentally tougher than I thought I was.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
21. I have felt like a stranger within my family.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
22. It has been hard to get used to being in Canada again.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
23. I have become more responsive to my family's needs.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
24. I have a greater appreciation of life in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
25. I find the world to be a more horrible place than I thought it was.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
26. It has taken time to feel like myself again.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
27. I have realized how well off we are in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
28. I have been confused about my experiences during the tour.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
29. I feel my community appreciates my efforts overseas.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
30. I am more cynical about humanity.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
31. Being back in Canada has been a bit of a culture shock.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
32. I have a greater appreciation of the value of life.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
33. Focusing on things other than the tour has been difficult.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
34. I have become more involved in my family relationships.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
35. The tour has put a strain on my family life.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
36. Garrison life has been boring.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
37. I have had to get to know my family all over again.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
38. My enthusiasm for my job has grown.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
39. I am better able to deal with stress.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
40. Day-to-day work tasks seem tedious.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
41. I would have liked more leave to feel like myself again.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
42. I feel a stronger sense of teamwork within my unit.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
43. Getting myself back into the family routine has been difficult.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
44. I feel a lower sense of accomplishment at work.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
45. I have realized how important my family is to me.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
46. On a personal level, I have learned some positive things about myself.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
47. I have questioned my faith in humanity.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
48. I feel more self-reliant.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
49. I feel closer to my family.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
50. I find that my family would like me to spend more time with them.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
51. Getting back “into sync” with family life has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
52. I want to spend time with my buddies from the tour.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
53. I have been less productive at work.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
54. I have a greater willingness to be with my family.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
55. I feel my community has welcomed me.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
56. I find people here in Canada to be concerned about trivial things.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
57. People have made me feel proud to have served my country.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
58. I more fully appreciate the time I spend with my family.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
59. Readjusting to garrison routine has been tough.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
60. I feel my family resented my absence.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
61. I have a greater appreciation of the conveniences taken for granted in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
62. The people I work with respect the fact that I was on tour.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
63. I feel my family has had difficulty understanding me.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
64. Getting back to my “old self” has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
65. I wish I could spend time away from the people with whom I deployed.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
66. I feel I am a better soldier.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
67. I have changed my priorities in life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
68. I have a greater appreciation of each day.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
69. I am proud of having served overseas.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
70. I more fully appreciate the rights and freedoms taken for granted in Canada.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
71. I have developed stronger friendships.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
72. I feel my family has welcomed me.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
73. I have considered leaving the military.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
74. I have a more positive perspective on what is important in life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
75. I enjoy being back in garrison.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5
76. I feel the tour has had a negative impact on my personal life.	O 1	O 2	O 3	O 4	O 5

If you do not have a spouse/partner please skip the next two questions.

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
77. There has been conflict in my marriage or significant relationship.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
78. My spouse/partner has been reluctant to give up household decisions.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5

If you do not have children please skip the next two questions.

SINCE RETURNING FROM MY OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT:

	Not at All True	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	Completely True
79. I find my kid(s) have matured more than I expected.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
80. Relating to my kid(s) has been hard.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5
81. I feel my kid(s) resented my absence.	O 1	O 2	O3	O 4	O 5

Annex F Proposed PDRS-AF

Proposed PDRS-AF (36 + 4 items)

New instructions:

“For the next set of questions, indicate the extent to which each of the statements below is true for you since returning home from your tour.

While some statements may appear to be very similar to others, each statement is needed in order to cover a wide range of slightly different post-deployment reintegration experiences. Also, some statements may appear to be leading in one direction, yet they are purposely worded in such a way to assess your positive or negative experiences. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. People may have differing views, and we are simply interested in knowing what your experiences are.

*You should choose *Not applicable* if and only if you mean that you have not experienced this issue. For example, if you have not been exposed to devastation overseas, then you would answer *Not applicable*. However, if you experienced devastation but have had no difficulty at all reconciling it with life in Canada, then you would choose *Not at all*.

*“Tour” defines the most recent overseas operation you have participated into.

*“Family” includes your parents, friends, other family members (i.e., cousins), as well as your close friends, not just your partner and/or children.”

New rating scale:

“1 = *Not at all true/Not applicable*

2

3 = *Somewhat true*

4

5 = *Completely true*”

Items that should remain unchanged or undergo only slight modifications:

2. I feel closer to my family.
3. Putting the events of the tour behind me has been tough.
4. There has been tension in my family relationships.
5. I find military bureaucracy more frustrating.
6. I am more aware of problems in the world.
7. I am applying job-related skills I learned during my tour.
8. I have become more responsive to my family’s needs.
9. I have had difficulty reconciling the devastation I saw overseas with life in Canada.
10. I am better able to deal with stress.
11. I feel the tour has had a negative impact on my personal life.
12. I feel my current work duties are less meaningful.

13. I have become more involved in my family relationships.
14. I have a better understanding of other cultures.
15. I feel my family has had difficulty understanding me.
16. I have been confused about my experiences during the tour.
17. Day-to-day work tasks seem tedious.
18. The tour has put a strain on my family life.
19. I have realized how well off we are in Canada.
20. I feel I am a better soldier. (Change to "I feel I am better at my job.")
21. It has been hard to get used to being in Canada again.
22. Garrison life has been boring. (Change to "Squadron life has been boring.")
23. I have realized how important my family is to me.
24. I have a greater appreciation of the value of life.
25. Getting back "into sync" with family life has been hard.
26. Being back in Canada has been a bit of a culture shock.
27. I am proud of having served overseas. (Change to "I am proud of having been on tour.")
28. I have a greater willingness to be with my family.
29. I have a greater appreciation of the conveniences taken for granted in Canada.
30. I feel a lower sense of accomplishment at work.
31. I feel my family resented my absence.
32. I have considered leaving the military.
33. I more fully appreciate the rights and freedoms taken for granted in Canada.
34. I have developed stronger friendships. (Change to "I have developed stronger camaraderies.")
35. Focusing on things other than the tour has been difficult.
36. I more fully appreciate the time I spend with my family.

Item that could be deleted in the future:

1. I am glad I went on tour.

Items that could be added, to eventually replace other, less adequate, items:

"This tour has been good to my career."

"I am less tolerant of Canadians' petty complaints."

"I am looking forward to my next operation."

"Getting back 'into sync' with squadron duties has been hard."

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Post-deployment reintegration experiences of AF personnel: Implications for scale development			
4. AUTHORS (last name, followed by initials – ranks, titles, etc. not to be used)			
Blais, A-R., Sullivan-Kwantes, W., McCreary, D.R.			
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The process of post-deployment reintegration can lead to intra- and inter-personal changes that may influence the quality of the returning members' relationships with (and their attitudes towards) their immediate and extended family, friends, and co-workers. While some of these changes may be negative and lead to adverse outcomes for the members, they also may lead to potential benefits, such as increased self-confidence and self-tolerance, expanded political understanding, and improved military qualifications. To date, studies of the post-deployment reintegration experience have been limited to the Army. However, there is strong interest to examine the post-deployment reintegration process within the Air Force community. This study is an initial attempt to determine the aspects of post-deployment reintegration within this environment. The study used the Army reintegration experience as a starting point. Several similarities and differences between the two environments were identified and the basis of an Air Force post-deployment reintegration measurement tool was established.

Le processus de réinsertion postdéploiement peut engendrer des modifications personnelles et interpersonnelles susceptibles d'influencer la qualité des relations et des attitudes des militaires revenus au pays à l'égard de leur famille immédiate et élargie, de leurs amis et de leurs collègues de travail. Même si certains de ces changements peuvent être négatifs et entraîner des retombées néfastes pour les militaires concernés, ils peuvent également présenter des avantages, notamment une amélioration aux points de vue suivants : confiance en soi, tolérance à l'égard de soi, compréhension politique et compétence militaire. À ce jour, les études sur l'expérience de réinsertion postdéploiement n'ont porté que sur l'Armée de terre. Pourtant, la communauté de la Force aérienne (FA) s'intéresse vivement à ce processus. La présente étude se veut une première tentative de déterminer les divers aspects d'une telle réinsertion dans cet environnement. Au départ, elle s'est appuyée sur l'expérience vécue à ce chapitre dans l'Armée de terre. On y a relevé plusieurs similitudes et divergences entre les deux environnements et un instrument permettant d'évaluer cette réinsertion au sein de la Force aérienne a été créé.

14. **KEYWORDS, DESCRIPTORS or IDENTIFIERS** (Technically meaningful terms or short phrases that characterize a document and could be helpful in cataloguing the document. They should be selected so that no security classification is required. Identifiers, such as equipment model designation, trade name, military project code name, geographic location may also be included. If possible keywords should be selected from a published thesaurus, e.g. Thesaurus of Engineering and Scientific Terms (TEST) and that thesaurus identified. If it is not possible to select indexing terms which are Unclassified, the classification of each should be indicated as with the title.)

Air Force Support, post-deployment attitudes, reintegration, scale

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