THE STRENGTH OF AN ARMY IS NOT IN ITS WEAPONS, ITS STRENGTH IS IN ITS PEOPLE
You are holding a handbook designed primarily for those of you who are preparing to be deployed in peacekeeping missions, but it can also serve anyone who, due to the nature of their work, often travels and works outside of their place of residence.

The aim of this handbook provide simple and understandable answers to the most frequent questions asked by the members of the unit and their families, in order to adapt to changes, as easy as possible, and to establish a normal living in new circumstances.

The deployment to peacekeeping missions represents a professional challenge for every soldier, but also a new experience. It is not an instant decision but a plan posing great mental and physical challenges to the individual and his/her family. The situations the members of the unit are exposed to, during their travel and work and the fact that spend longer periods from the familiar social environment, families, partners and friends, increase their stress-related sensitivity.

It is our hope that this handbook helps you to find the answers to your questions and overcome doubts. For all further information, advices and assistance, please contact your superiors, military psychologist or one of the mental health centers from the list provided at the end of this handbook.
“the one responsible for his actions is the brave!”

“the one who endures is the brave!”

“the silent one is the wise!”

“the one seeking assistance is the wise!”

WHAT IS THE PROPER MINDSET?
Deploying to peacekeeping missions, such as longer business travel, represents a new experience to everyone. Prepare yourself so that it represents a challenge and an opportu-

**When deciding about the deployment, the following circumstances may influence you:**

Motivation for deployment  
Ability to withstand stressful situations  
Confidence in your own abilities  
Your health and the health of your family members  
Relations in the family  
Important events in the family during the absence  
The nature and duration of the mission  
Information and communication possibilities

**The good psycho-physical readiness will make it easier to decide.**
Socializing and conversations make lasting memories that will “keep you warm” when far away from home.

• Try to prepare each family member to your departure, especially young children or parents who find it more difficult to adapt to the changes.

• Spend time with your children, playing and talking. Let them show you their feelings, joy, but also anger or sadness. Show them that you love them unconditionally. Never tell them that you are leaving for their own good, since they can grow a feeling of guilt related to your departure.

• Transfer some of your duties onto your children, according to their age, thus provide them with the responsibility.

• It is normal to have feelings such as fear, anger, sadness, anxiety and tension. Share your feelings with loved ones and support them to do the same to you.
• It may occur that you encounter conflicts more frequently. That is normal. However, ensure not to leave unresolved issues when you leave.

• Be supportive to family members and show them that your trust.

• Regulate your finances (loan obligations, financing of the family).

• Take your favorite family photograph, book, movie or prayer book with you, something that will help you to feel closer while you are away.
Good psycho-physical preparation is the key to your success

Believe in yourself and your abilities.

Be supportive to your family members, show that you trust them.

Good psycho-physical readiness reduces reactions to stress.

People change after the mission, become more independent and

Many people actually become

Through joint efforts, taking care of yourselves and each other, you can go through the mission successfully.

When being deployed to a mission, both, the individual deployed and his/her family, are exposed to stress.
ADVICE TO FAMILY MEMBERS

• Support your deploying family member.
• Take over the control in the family.
• Take care of yourself, get enough sleep, take care of your diet, discuss your feelings.
• Be positive in order to make deployment easier on your family member.
• Engage children in the activities related to deployment of the family member.
• Engage in activities organized by the unit related to deployment.

THE KEY TO SUCCESSFUL COPING WITH STRESS

• psychological stability
• physical fitness
• self-control
• courage
• self-restraint
• self-esteem
• self-confidence
Right before the departure, tension intensifies and the following may occur:

- feelings of discomfort in relations
- distractions
- increased sensitivity, conflicts
- sleep disorder
- eating disorder
- reduced intimacy
- feeling of hostility

The entire family lives through a similar situation. Try to be patient with yourself and with them.

This is a normal reaction to a situation in which you are in.

Frequently it occurs, right before the deployment, that quarrels and anger take place among family members, as a result of tensions and constant mood changes.

That is normal as well. People find it easier to cope with anger caused by a quarrel, then discomfort due to deployment and long absence of a family member.
Start your travel relieved

When relieved, you find it easier to perform tasks, and family members perform their everyday duties easier, particularly related to children.

• Pack up earlier. Dedicate the day before departure to family members and loved ones.
• Before leaving, your attention is shifting from the family to the mission.
• Trust only official sources of information related to departure.
• Take care of yourself, maintain your physical fitness, watch your diet, sleep, talk about your feelings.
Military bag, a couple of personal items and arriving to the unknown. This is the beginning of a period when many changes occur.

**DAILY LIFE IS CHANGING**
Life in the community with certain set of rules, lack of privacy, adjustment to other people, all this represents something to one needs to prepare oneself in advance, but also to get used. That may also have its good sides. You may become more tolerant, more communicative, more flexible and more independent.

**LIFE IN MISSION**
You may be exposed to the problems of local population, various dangers and threats, which may cause you to feel powerless and angry. Although it is hard on you, you must remain neutral and professional.

**DIFFERENT CLIMATE**
Acclimatization may take from several days to several weeks. It is important to maintain and enhance physical strength. In the case of any health issues, consult your physician.

**NOSTALGIA**
You are far away from your family and it is normal that you miss them. Write them, contact them whenever it is possible. That will mean a lot to you as well, since you will express your feelings. Consider start writing a diary. Putting your feelings down on a paper can be mental relief for you, and, simultaneously, you can follow the changes and progress in your feelings. When you return home you can read about some interesting events from the mission to your family members.
DIFFERENT CULTURES
The language and communication style in the mission area are different than those you are accustomed to. This can cause a feeling of tension and insecurity. It is good to know some basic words of their language, manners of greeting, and learn about the culture and traditions of the people living in that area.

Awareness is essential. Ignorance can cause fear and discomfort.
You have prepared for the events in the mission. Some unpleasant and unpredictable situations may occur and it is normal to react to them. Every person has different reactions, some during the unpleasant situations, some with a certain (longer or shorter) delay. Some people have mild reactions, while others’ reactions are more intense. The intensity and duration of a reaction to a stressful situation depend on the nature of the person him/herself and the level of stress.

Reactions to stress are mended by good psycho-physical readiness.

PHYSICAL REACTIONS
fatigue, tension, cold sweat, headache, nausea, racing heartbeats, tremor, numbness, frequent urination and similar reactions. Maintain your physical shape, you will be more resistant to stressful events, and the reactions will be milder.

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSES
mood swings, hypersensitivity, anxiety, feelings of weakness and anger, guilt, remorse and similar reactions.

SOCIAL REACTIONS
isolation, excessive consumption of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, strife, aggressiveness and other difficulties in social communication.

However, many people are actually stronger after the mission.
Relieve reactions

**TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF**
- Talk about your experiences
- Be informed about the events
- Don’t expect the impossible from yourself
- Forgive yourself if you lose your patience or if you get angry
- Be physically active
- Don’t isolate yourself, participate in joint activities
- Try to eat and sleep enough
- “Release yourself”, don’t let the negative energy accumulate
- Do something that relaxes you, play sports, listen to music, read books

**TAKE CARE OF OTHERS**
- Maintain contact and good relations with other members of the unit
- You all are living through the same experiences, and each of you is experiencing them in your own way.
- Talk about it
- Seek help or offer it when you feel it is needed
- Encourage others to engage in joint activities
- Build mutual trust and strengthen the bonds within the group

Through joint efforts, caring for yourself and each other, you can successfully live through the mission.
Emotional cycles during the absence of a family member have variations in intensity and duration.

The feelings are mixed. There is a mixture of joy and sadness, anticipation and anger, fear and relief. However, family members are gradually becoming accustomed to the absence of their family member.

**WHAT CAN I DO?**

- Establish contact with your family as soon as possible. That will bring relief to you and to your family members.
- Talk, but try not to give an impression that you find it difficult or dangerous, in order not to burden additionally the family with worries about you. It will be much easier to talk about everything once you are together.
- Don't forget events that are important to the family, such as anniversaries, birthdays, graduation, starting school, and religious holidays.
Advice to family members

Be patient. It may take several days before the absent family member contacts you.

**Try to keep up the routine of everyday life.**

Talk with children about their feelings. Help them express their feelings and maintain the connection with the absent parent in their own way. They can write them, draw, make, record or photograph something.

Take care of yourself and your health. Don’t let the feeling of loneliness and everyday worries be the reason for your bad situation.

Don’t burden the absent family member with minor household or family problems. Try to find a solution yourself or seek help. It is important that the conversations with you be pleasant and relieving for your family member, instead of a reason to think about the things he/she has no influence over.

Maintain contacts with the families of other unit members.

If you notice that your family member is irritated and angry, tired and sleep deprived, lacking appetite, moody, has unrealistic demands, do not hesitate, seek help, consult military psychologist!
MISSION AND CHILDREN

To a great extent, child's experience of a longer absence of one of the parents, depends on child's age, personality, and affection towards that parent. Changes in child's behavior and mood are, mainly, the response to the events in the family. It is important to follow the child's behavior, observe changes and timely seek help.

CHILDREN (UNDER 2 YEARS OF AGE)

Children are very sensitive to changes in their environment and require a lot of care and attention. The parent who cares for the child should be emotionally stable otherwise the child may become apathetic and will grow inadequately. Eating and sleep disorder may occur, as well as tearfulness, etc. For the children at this age, your proximity, cuddling and playing are very important. If children already have acquired eating, bedtime and walking habits (schedule), they should not be changed. Devote them enough time and attention.

PRESCHOOLERS (2 TO 6 YEARS OLD)

Children of this age still cannot, or it’s difficult to them to understand the departure to a mission as they mix fantasy and reality. The child’s behavior can be an “image” of family problems. Therefore, the situations child is exposed to be important. You may notice that the child is more connected to adults and objects, and that fear of strangers and new situations can occur. They are often weepy and irritable without reason. They attract attention with undesirable behavior. There may occur sleep disorder and eating disorder. There can also come to regression, so that the already formed children habits sometimes vanish. Tolerate these things and devote more attention to the child. Play with it, cuddle it, the presence of parents is important to the child because it may feel abandoned, and still doesn’t know how to say that.
SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN (6 TO 13 YEARS OLD)

Children of this age can understand what is happening, but still do not know how to accept it. They attract the attention by making up that they are in pain, they become more demanding and aggressive. Sometimes, sleep and eating disorders may occur. Decrease in interest in school may occur as well, thus it is good to talk with the class teacher to avoid lowering of grades in school. They need support and help to recognize and talk about their feelings. Give them more attention than usual.

ADOLESCENTS (13 TO 18 YEARS OLD)

Adolescence itself is a very sensitive period, with increased feelings and experiencing of themselves. They are stubborn and easily become moody and arguing. Behind their aggressiveness hides vulnerability and insecurity. They are very self-critical and may blame themselves for the new situation. Their interest in school may decrease as well as in socializing with friends. They easily withdraw into themselves and become inaccessible or enter a bad company. You should not allow them to do that. Talk to them about anything that is of interest to them, because they are sufficiently able to understand. Children in this period don’t like to „beat around the bush“, but rather like parents who are stating their points of view openly and assertively. It would be beneficial that they assume some of your responsibilities when you leave, which can support their confidence and enhance their sense of responsibility. Maintain the contact with them regularly.

If you have any questions regarding the preparation of children, ask for help.
Preparing for the return causes intense and mixed emotions. Joy and happiness can trigger a new influx of energy and make you become more active, wanting to speed up the return. On the other hand, the agitation and fear, anxiety, eating disorders, sleep disorders, hostility and concerns may occur as well. These are all normal reactions, caused by the situation which you are in. Many start thinking about what they are going to do when they come back home. It is better to think about that after the return. Relax, but take care of your own security. Take time for yourself and those experiences that you will “carry” with you.
Trust only to official sources of information regarding the details of the return.

If possible, prepare gifts as tokens of appreciation, especially for children.

Prepare to the changes in the family, which have occurred during your absence.

Don’t assume that everything will be the same as it was when you left.

Advice for family members

• Wait for the official information about the time and place of the return of your family member.
• Engage children in preparations for the return. Talk with them about their feelings.
• Explain to them that some things will change again, and that it will take time to adapt.
• Prepare yourself that the family member has changed, but believe that the changes are positive. Mentally, because of the new experiences, and perhaps physically (weight change, change of skin color or hair style).
• If you can, participate in preparations for welcoming the unit from the mission.
• Plan the welcoming of your family member. Ask him/her what kind of welcoming he/she wishes. Some wish to relax first and just to be with the family, others want a celebration, etc.
The period of adaptation can last from several days to several weeks, although some circumstances, such as childbirth, loss of employment, illness, injury in the mission, etc., may extend this period. This is a sensitive period for all family members. It requires a lot of patience and time. You have had different experiences and seen different events, thus it takes time to get used to the fact that you are together and to reconnect again as a family. That is an opportunity to improve interpersonal relationships.

Even though you are happy for your return, the following may occur initially:

- feelings of tension and nervousness
- disorganization and uncertainty
- feeling of loss of freedom and independence
- confusion, alienation
- mistrust, etc.

Difficulties may occur as well:

- with re-establishment of communication and intimacy with the partner
- in establishing parental role
- in taking over the family responsibilities

It takes some time to reconnect and get used to each other because you all have changed in some way. Try to be patient and tolerant and gradually take over your family responsibilities. Be open and adaptable to changes that have occurred, and if you do not like them, try, over time, to change them and adapt to yourself.
Your family had to get used to your absence, now they need time to get used to your presence

• You have an unforgettable life experience. Now you may think differently about many life issues, use it in the best possible way.

• Maintain friendships and contacts with other members of the unit and their families, because you share the same experiences and you can understand each other.

• Be active, set yourself some realistic goals and try to achieve them. You can plan your activities in agreement with other family members.

• It is good to talk about your problems. Avoid the use of alcohol, tranquillizers or other stimulants. They will not solve your problems - they will only create the new ones.

• Continue to maintain your physical shape, take care of yourself and your health.

If you have problems in establishing relationships and in daily functioning over a long period of time, seek professional assistance. Returning to everyday life can be strange and difficult sometimes. You have a special experience that the most people do not.

Life and work are slowly returning to normal, so try to be active at work. You can try to improve your work by using the knowledge and experience you have gained in the mission.
Problems are part of life whether you are in a mission or at home. If it happens that problems last for a long time or you feel like you cannot cope with them alone, do not close up or run from the problem, seek help.

Advice for family members

• Be the support in re-establishment of family relations.
• Although it has been your job, slowly get the family member, who has been absent, to take over a part of family responsibilities.
• When leaving to the mission, persons often experience changes that may be physical, emotional or social. Although it will be unusual for you at first, talk about that and provide support to positive changes, but point out to them the changes that are negative.
• Take care of yourself and your health, talk about problems.
To children, reunion means joy, excitement, confusion. Their feelings are often mixed. They want your attention and contact, but don’t know how to show it. Some children can show anger that accumulated in them due to the feeling of abandonment. If you have several children, devote special time to each of them.

**CHILDREN (UNDER 2 YEARS OF AGE)**

The child may forget you. It can cry when you take them in your arms, it may laugh at you, but still be wary (uncertain). Do not be worried. Children learn quickly and with little patience and effort you will regain the closeness. Play with them and participate in everyday care for them. Give them time to adapt to you.

**PRESCHOOL (2 TO 6 YEARS OLD)**

With smaller children who might have forgotten you, you will have to reintroduce yourself again. Older children are aware that you were absent so they have more suspicions. They may be angry, weepy and run away from you. They want to attract your attention with undesirable behavior. During this period, they tie all events to themselves, so they can blame themselves for of your absence. Be patient, try to play with them, get their attention with something interesting. Let them approach you on their own convenience. When you establish contact they can become your “limpet”, because they may be afraid of re-separation. Give them a lot of attention and help them express their feelings with drawings, stories etc., because they still do not know to express themselves with words.
SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN (6 TO 13 YEARS OLD)

During this period, children are still attaching everything to themselves so they can have a feeling of guilt because of your absence. On the other hand, they can be proud of you due to the additional attention from their peers caused by your participation in the peacekeeping mission. They want to socialize with you, to assist you if you are doing something, to talk. Give them plenty of attention and talk about their feelings. Be interested in everything related to the child, what you have missed, what sports they love, what they like to watch, listen etc. Praise them for the effort and help while you were away.

**Talk about the problems, and hold on with the criticism for one period.**

ADOLESCENTS (13 TO 18 YEARS OLD)

Adolescence is a very sensitive period in development. Their attention is focused more on their peers than on the family. Because of that, they may seem less interested in you, which is not true. Show respect for their personality and talk about the feelings related to your absence. Let them tell you what has been happening in their lives, what you have missed. Talk to them about your experiences, giving them a sense of importance, so that they can feel grown up. Praise them and reward for the duties that they fulfilled while you were absent. Speak openly about possible problems, with a calm tone and trying to find a solution together.

*If you have difficulties in re-establishing of communication with children, ask for help.*
DON’T FORGET
Before you leave, prepare all the documentation you need. Talk to your family about what they will have to do on your behalf. Try to solve timely:

• Issues related to travel (passport, visas, vaccines)
• Legal and administrative issues: child custody, life insurance
• Authorizations (tax declarations, children’s travel to foreign countries)
• Financial issues (financial status, bank cards, bills)
• Health issues (insurance, health insurance cards, medications)
• Issues related to the house (mortgage, loans, rent, insurance, utilities)
• Issues related to the car (driver’s license, registration, insurance)

WHERE YOU CAN ASK FOR HELP
Members of the unit who are in the mission can seek the assistance from their superior
All members of the Armed Forces and their families can seek help through:

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For additional information see [www.preventiva.ba](http://www.preventiva.ba)