



## Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office Family Information Guide

What you need to know if your  
loved one is missing or captured.

## Introduction

*Dear Family Member,*

*The pain and uncertainty associated with having a loved one missing or captured can be overwhelming. As you begin to search for answers there are resources available to help you in that endeavor. We want to offer you our support.*

*The most important resource at your disposal is your Casualty Assistance Officer. Take every opportunity to communicate with your Casualty Assistance Officer. He or she will do their best to get you answers to your questions.*

*This Family Information Guide is another resource. It was created based on feedback from family members who experienced a loved one captured during combat operations in Kosovo. This guide is not designed to give you all the answers, but it does contain some basic information and terminology you may hear in the upcoming weeks. The information is provided to help you better understand the situation and answer some of your questions. Several Department of Defense agencies contributed to the information provided in this booklet.*

*Finally, we want you to know that the Department of Defense is doing everything possible to bring your loved one home safely.*

*The Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office*

tions. Though personnel recovery may occur during non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), NEO is not a subset of personnel recovery.

**Prisoner of War (POW):** A detained person as defined in Articles 4 and 5 of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949. In particular, one who, while engaged in combat under orders of his or her government, is captured by the armed forces of the enemy. As such, he or she is entitled to the combatant's privilege of immunity from the municipal law of the capturing state for warlike acts which do not amount to breaches of the law of armed conflict. For example, a prisoner of war may be, but is not limited to, any person belonging to one of the following categories who has fallen into the power of the enemy: a member of the armed forces, organized militia or volunteer corps; a person who accompanies the armed forces without actually being a member thereof; a member of a merchant marine or civilian aircraft crew not qualifying for more favorable treatment; or individuals who, on the approach of the enemy, spontaneously take up arms to resist the invading forces.

**Recovery:** (as it applies to Personnel Recovery) In evasion and recovery operations, the return of evaders to friendly control, either with or without assistance, as a result of planning, operations, and individual actions on the part of recovery planners, conventional and unconventional recovery forces, and the evaders themselves.

**Repatriation:** The release and return of prisoners of war to their country in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War.

**SERE:** Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape

**Operation Yellow Ribbon:** Department of Defense plans and actions related to processing returned U.S. personnel.

prevent escape of its members.

**besieged** – The casualty is a member of an organized element that has been surrounded by a hostile force compelling it to surrender.

**captured** – The casualty has been seized as a result of action of an unfriendly military or paramilitary force in a foreign country.

**detained** – The casualty is prevented from proceeding, or is restrained in custody, for alleged violation of international law or other reason claimed by the government or group under which the person is being held.

**interned** – The casualty is definitely known to have been taken into custody of a nonbelligerent foreign power as a result of and for reasons arising out of any armed conflict in which the Armed Forces of the United States are engaged.

**missing** – The casualty is not present at his or her duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and whose location is unknown.

**missing in action (MIA)** – The casualty is a hostile casualty, other than the victim of a terrorist activity, who is not present at his or her duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and whose location is unknown. Also called MIA.

**Personnel Recovery (PR):** The aggregation of military, civil, and political efforts to recover captured, detained, evading, isolated or missing personnel from uncertain or hostile environments and denied areas. Personnel recovery may occur through military action, action by non-governmental organizations, other US government (USG)-approved action, and diplomatic initiatives, or through any combination of these op-

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## Role of Your Casualty Assistance Officer

The Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO) represents your loved one's military branch in relationships with you, the next of kin (NOK) of a missing or captured serviceman or woman. The Casualty Assistance Officer is assigned by the military branch to assist you in every way possible during the time your loved one is missing or captured. Accordingly, Casualty Assistance Officers are selected because of their maturity, compassion, and effectiveness in relating to people.

During your first meeting, the Casualty Assistance Officer told you about his or her role and what to expect from the military family. They are your immediate source for ensuring you understand all of the available military and non-military resources that are available to you. Your Casualty Assistance Officer will also be able to assist you in obtaining current updates to your loved one's status as this information becomes available. Some of the questions you may have are listed below. Feel free to ask your Casualty Assistance Officer about them:

- How do I deal with the Media?
- How can I obtain Chaplain support?
- How can I obtain legal assistance?
- How can I forward mail to my loved one?
- Will anything happen to my loved one's pay?
- Do I keep my Dependant Identification Card?
- Does my family retain its medical and dental benefits?
- Will I have continued use of Base Exchange and Commissary privileges?

You can expect the Casualty Assistance Officer to be in contact with you regularly, until all actions are complete. Remember the Casualty Assistance Officer will keep you abreast of any new information concerning your loved one's status.

common means of recovery. Isolated individuals will usually be in hostile areas, with others' lives at risk they need to follow recovery procedures and recovering force's directions exactly.

**Negotiated Release** – This is the most common form of release from a detention situation. Captors will try and use release for last minute propaganda opportunities. Returnees must maintain their resistance posture. Remember, release has been negotiated at the highest levels and is bigger than the individual. Returnees do not have to reduce their resistance posture in order to be released.

**Rescue** – Any armed rescue has its obvious dangers. Do not try and help. Get to a "safe area" and lie down with hands visible. Follow the directions of rescuers. Returnees will most likely be physically restrained and treated harshly until positive ID has occurred.

**Escape and/or evasion** – If returnees are being recovered after prolonged evasion or after an escape from a detention situation, they may not have direct communication capabilities with recovery forces. Once returnees encounter friendly forces they must remember that they may be physically restrained and treated harshly until they have been positively identified.

**Isolated personnel:** Military or civilian personnel that have become separated from their unit or organization in an environment requiring them to survive, evade, or escape while awaiting rescue or recovery.

**JPRA:** Joint Personnel Recovery Agency

**Missing:** A person declared missing is categorized as:

**beleaguered** – The casualty is a member of an organized element that has been surrounded by a hostile force to

bers on similar missions and information, which might assist the intelligence community in updating its overall evaluation of the detaining nation. The Intelligence debriefing will also focus on the possible compromise of U.S. information, materials, and/or methods.

**Decompression:** Perhaps the most critical and least understood essential element of the repatriation process is unstructured, SERE psychologist assisted, group and individual decompression time. This process starts immediately upon reception of the returnee at Phase I and continues through Phase II. Failure to correctly execute Decompression will result in psychological damage to the returnee and loss of accuracy of critical intelligence and operational information. It is essential that the returnees have time together in an unstructured, unsupervised environment to tell “war stories” and to “normalize” their ordeal. The Decompression Process continues during debriefings as the returnee methodically processes the isolation experience. SERE Psychologists are present through out this entire Phase II Decompression Process to facilitate personal readjustment and optimize accuracy of information recall. Failure to allow for this in Phase II of the Repatriation Process significantly increases the likelihood that members, upon returning home, will focus on and amplify feelings of helplessness and failure they may have experienced while in captivity. This can lead to long term psychological problems for returnees.

**DPMO:** Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office

**Evader:** A person isolated in hostile or unfriendly territory who eludes capture.

**Initial recovery/release:** There are four basic methods of release and/or recovery. Each situation will be unique and will not fit exactly into any of these methods.

**Conventional CSAR recovery** – This will be the most

### Introduction

During the stressful period while your loved one is missing in action, held as a prisoner of war, or nearing release, you may find that local and national news media may approach you to tell your story. We strongly recommend that you do not grant “on camera” interviews during the time your loved one is held in captivity. You are, of course, free to talk to the media at any time, but with that freedom comes a heavy burden of responsibility.

The main concern is the welfare of your loved one. You should be very careful not to do or say anything that could be used against your loved one. For example, if you or any of your relatives discuss family details, high school achievements, names of wives, husbands or children, etc., this could be information that has not been revealed to the enemy during interrogation. Additionally, avoid any comments about his or her current or past units, mission, or special training. Information such as this could be used against your loved one in future interrogation. Since the news media may attempt to contact relatives outside the immediate family, please ensure that this **very important message** is shared with everyone in your family, including those in distant locations.

If you, or anyone in your family, does decide to grant an interview, it is imperative that you request the assistance of an experienced public affairs officer. This chapter, however, is written to give you some insight on what to expect and what you may wish to consider as you make your decision.

## “The Media”

Each of us has our own perception of what “the media” is. That perception is usually based on pleasant or unpleasant experiences we may have had. It may even be based on second or third hand information from friends and relatives.

One very important fact emerges as we consider who “the media” really are. “The media” can be a hometown newspaper, circulation 25,000, published weekly. The editor, or certainly some of the reporters, may be friends of yours. They may go to your church or coach your kids’ soccer teams. They print tidbits of interesting local news from throughout the county.

Then there’s the big city newspaper or the television station. They don’t write much about what goes on in your hometown, but they do include some national and international news that you don’t see in your local weekly paper. In New York or Los Angeles, we find the “national” newspapers and the television networks. They produce news programs that most of us watch, and we generally have strong opinions about who we trust (to get the story right) and who we don’t.

The point of these examples is to show that “the media” is a label that’s not uniform, not consistent, and may even be misleading. There is truly a difference in our perception of our local weekly newspaper reporter, and a reporter from a national network.

## The News Angle

News writers, whether print or broadcast, will seek to tell the story of American military service personnel to their readers or viewers. Newspapers and broadcast outlets in your local area prefer to show a local tie; it makes the story more interesting to their audiences. National newspapers and television networks approach their news writing from a broader perspective, usually seeking to tie the story of the captives (or the returnees) to national or international issues.

## Terminology and Acronyms

**Casualty Status:** A term used to classify a casualty for reporting purposes. There are seven casualty statuses:

- **deceased**
- **duty status-whereabouts unknown** – A transitory casualty status, applicable only to military personnel, that is used when the responsible commander suspects the member may be a casualty whose absence is involuntary, but does not feel sufficient evidence currently exists to make a definite determination of missing or deceased.
- **missing**
- **very seriously ill or injured**
- **seriously ill or injured**
- **incapacitating illness or injury**
- **not seriously injured**

**Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR):** A specific task performed by rescue forces to effect the recovery of distressed personnel during war or military operations other than war.

**Debriefing:** They are two basic types of debriefings associated with Repatriation. The types of debriefings are:

**SERE Debriefing** – This debriefing will focus on the overall general experience with an eye toward the captivity environment and operational issues related to the mission.

**Intel Debriefing** – This debriefing will be geared more toward information, which may be useful to future crewmem-

## Points of Contact

### Your Casualty Assistance Officer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Local Public Affairs Officer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Local Chaplain

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Nearest Military Installation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

If news editors believe that a story including your comments makes it more readable, then they will seek you out. At the risk of making an over-generalization, there is a clear difference in how today's media cover stories about the military serviceman or woman...and how they covered them during the Vietnam War. Today, media representatives tend to be respectful of the sacrifices made by uniformed members of the military. They also understand what "privacy" means to you and to your loved ones.

### Frequently Asked Questions

The following "FAQs" or "Frequently Asked Questions" are provided to help you decide what to do when media representatives approach you for an interview.

**Question:** A reporter from a newspaper/TV station/radio station has called and wants to interview me about my feelings about my son/father/brother/daughter being held captive. How should I respond?

**Answer:** How you deal with that request is entirely up to you. You may receive some advice from a military public affairs officer (PAO) who is available to you, but the final decision is yours entirely. If you do decide to talk to the media, **YOU** may set the ground rules. For example, you may want to meet them at a location other than your home. You may want to talk to them outside your home. You may want to invite them inside, to have a talk over the kitchen table. You may tell them in advance that you do not want to talk about any of the correspondence you've received from him/her, so do not ask any such question during that interview. You may tell them in advance that any questions about his/her childhood are strictly off limits. (We recommend this one, because you do not want to reveal any personal information that could be used against him/her while in captivity.) If you feel it's best for your family, do not hesitate to establish such ground rules in advance of the interview.

**Question:** Will anything I say during the interview be harmful to him/her while they're still in captivity?

**Answer:** It could be, but this is the kind of thing you may want to discuss with the public affairs officer who is supporting you. Don't hesitate to ask any question you wish about such interviews, and don't hesitate to contact him or her day or night. If your military casualty assistance officer has not put you in contact with a public affairs officer, please ask them to do so.

**Question:** If anyone from a newspaper/TV calls me at home, can I just say "I'm not interested"?

**Answer:** Yes. If you're not comfortable talking to the media, you have every right just to say 'no thanks.' Or, you could simply tell them, "I'm just not comfortable discussing this with anyone. I hope you'll understand and respect my privacy."

**Question:** What if I want to talk to the media, but I just don't want to do this 15 times. Can't I talk to them all at once?

**Answer:** Yes. Ask your supporting public affairs officer, or a trusted family member, to tell the media contacts that you'll be glad to talk to them, but only once. You'll be available at (time, date, location) to make a statement (if you want to) and to answer their questions. If you have many media in your area, and if the crowd might become too large for your front porch, you may consider conducting such interviews at a place away from your home. Set a time limit, perhaps half an hour. Do not subject yourself to a two-hour marathon session. Do not try to do this by yourself. Always have a friend or public affairs officer assist you.

**Question:** If I agree to do an interview, is there someone I should ask for advice about subjects to avoid?

**Answer:** Certainly. Contact either your supporting public affairs officer (day or night) or your casualty assistance officer.

## Helpful Resource

**5<sup>th</sup> Allied POW Squadron:** During Desert Storm there were 21 American service men and women captured and held captive by the Iraqis. The vast majority of these were classified as MIA, with a few being classified POW after videotaped interviews were released to CNN by the Iraqis. The families of Desert Storm POWs found the ex-POWs from the Vietnam War to be a valuable resource in coping with the uncertainty of a loved one missing or captured. The Desert Storm POWs and their families formed an organization called the 5<sup>th</sup> Allied POW Squadron upon their release from captivity in 1991. This organization is active today and offers direct, personal support to those families who find themselves in similar circumstances as a result of a renewed conflict with Iraq. If you wish to speak or meet with ex-POWs, their spouses, or family members from Desert Storm please ask your casualty assistance officer for more details.

Disclaimer: The Department of Defense does not endorse the above organization.

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U.S. Government. Additionally, the attorneys can advise your loved one on financial and other personal issues of a legal nature.

- **Chaplain** – Chaplain support is always available to returnees. This support is provided in a structured way in the form of religious worship time and personal consultation opportunities with the Chaplain. Care is taken that returnees don't feel pressured to talk to the Chaplain just because time has been allotted on the schedule. Chaplain support is provided across all denominations possible.
- **Processing Team Chief** – The Processing Team Chief shall be the central coordinator and point of contact for all processing preparations and activities at a particular installation. The Processing Team Chief shall assist the installation commander to develop plans to prevent unauthorized access to the returnee and family members during the repatriation process. The Processing Team Chief will establish liaison and coordination arrangements with primary processing activities at the installation (e.g., medical, dental, finance, chaplain, personnel, debriefing, public affairs, and legal) to ensure adequate plans, facilities, and installation support. The Processing Team Chief will also monitor advanced planning and on-scene management of arrangements for families visiting the installation, including transportation arrangements, housing, facilities, and escort assignments.
- **Escort Officers** – An escort officer shall accompany each returnee to the PHASE III processing center. The primary consideration is for returnees to have someone from their Military Service immediately available to respond to questions or provide assistance. Escorts will support returnee needs and security as required.

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**Question:** If I do grant some interviews, will my son's or daughter's captors see it?

**Answer:** They may. Most of the national news broadcasts you see every day in this country are also beamed overseas via satellite.

**Question:** If I grant an interview, can I send some message of love or support to him/her through the media, or can I send him/her a secret signal?

**Answer:** You can, but this can be risky business. You may inadvertently give his/her captors information that they could use for exploitation.

**Question:** But what if a reporter blurts out a question like, "If you could send a message to Johnny, what would you like to tell him?"

**Answer:** Take care of this in advance. Have your friend, or the public affairs officer, tell the media before the interview begins that you do not want to send any "messages" through the media, and that they should not bring it up as a question.

**Question:** After he/she returns home, if the media want to do interviews with him/her, what is the guidance?

**Answer:** Your loved one will receive guidance on dealing with the media environment. Guidance is provided regarding issues such as potential television interviews, book publication offers, TV-based journalistic specials, and press conferences with the family.

## Missing Service Personnel Act

The Missing Service Personnel Act, more commonly referred to as the Missing Persons Act, Title 10, United States Code Sections 1501-1513 (1996), establishes a system, structure and procedures that enable the Defense Department to account for missing persons. The Secretary of Defense created the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office to establish policy and maintain oversight for the issues relating to missing persons. The Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office coordinates with other agencies of the government on all matters regarding missing persons.

The Secretary of Defense has established policies for personnel recovery and determination of status (e.g. Missing, Dead, etc.) that implement the Missing Persons Act's provisions. When any member of the Armed Forces on active duty performing official duties; U.S. citizen employees of the Department of Defense; and employees of Department of Defense contractors is missing as a result of hostile action, the Missing Persons Act and its implementing instruction, Department of Defense Instruction 2310.5, impose responsibilities and time limits on the commander to determine the status of that individual and report that status to the appropriate Service Secretary (i.e. the Secretary of the Air Force, Army, or Navy).

The Service Secretary will review the commander's recommendation and appoint a board to inquire into the status of the individual. The Missing Persons Act establishes procedures for the board. The Missing Persons Act provides for the appointment of a counsel for the missing person to represent his/her interests during the inquiry. The missing person's primary next of kin has the right to submit information to the counsel relative to the disappearance and status of their loved one. Once the Board renders its recommendation and prepares its report for the Secretary, the counsel conducts an independent

cally reserved for relaxation and, most importantly, an opportunity for returnees to discuss their experience openly with one another, personal preparation time is scheduled into daily activities. This is an opportunity for your loved one to phone home, have snacks, or generally unwind.

- **SERE Debriefing** – The Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Debriefings are designed to focus on the overall experience with an eye toward the captivity environment and operational issues related to the mission. This debriefing also serves a critical decompression function in that it allows your loved one to thoroughly process their experience and receive feedback from subject matter experts. In doing so, your loved one can exit repatriation without lingering questions regarding his/her mission performance.
- **Intel Debriefing** – The Intelligence Debriefings serve a similar decompression function as the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Debriefings. Most importantly, they collate specific mission essential and captivity related information that is quickly turned around and provided to those who are fighting as well as the general intelligence community.
- **Public Affairs Support** – Assistance from public affairs officers is critical because of the intense pressure generated by mass media demands. Your loved one will receive guidance on dealing with the media environment. Guidance is provided regarding issues such as potential television interviews, book publication offers, TV-based journalistic specials, and press conferences with the family.
- **Legal Support** – Returnees have many questions regarding what they can, and cannot, relate about their captivity experience. In addition to classified information, military attorneys provide guidance, which compliments the public affairs guidance your loved one will receive in order to protect oneself, their fellow detainees, their families, and the

Resistance, Escape Psychologists also monitor all aspects of the decompression/debriefing Phase II activities to ensure your loved one's health and stamina are maintained.

- **Casualty Affairs Office** – The casualty offices are responsible for: establishing procedures to notify the families, keeping families advised of missing personnel, providing advice on processing activities, advice on status determination, advice on Yellow Ribbon procedures, and for providing transportation for family members to the reunion and processing facilities within the continental United States. Casualty Offices play a critical role in repatriation by ensuring family members understand the repatriation process in adequate detail to be active participants. Past experience shows family members who understand the process and are kept informed enhance repatriation effectiveness.
- **Medical Support** – Your loved one will receive medical screening immediately upon reception. This will occur en route to the Phase II location. Further medical evaluation and treatment will occur at the Phase II location.
- **Decompression** – Perhaps the most critical and least understood essential element of the repatriation process is unstructured, Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologist assisted, group and individual decompression time. This process starts immediately upon reception of the returnee at Phase I and continues through Phase II. It is essential that the returnees have time together in an unstructured, unsupervised environment to tell “war stories” and to “normalize” their ordeal. The decompression process continues during debriefings as the returnee methodically processes the isolation experience. Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologists are present throughout this entire Phase II decompression process to facilitate personal readjustment and optimize accuracy of information recall.
- **Personal Preparation Time** – While evenings are specifi-

review. That review becomes part of the official record of the board that is presented to the Secretary.

The Missing Persons Act requires the Secretary to review the report within 30 days of receiving it, and to determine the status of the individual. Once the Secretary has determined the status, he/she shall provide an unclassified summary of the commander's initial assessment, and the recommendation and report of the board to the primary next of kin and other members of the immediate family. The Secretary shall advise the primary next of kin and other members of the immediate family that another inquiry into the whereabouts and status of their loved one will be made on, or about, one year after the first official notice of disappearance, unless information becomes available earlier that may result in a change of status.

The Missing Persons Act directs the Secretary to appoint another inquiry board if information is received within one year after the initial board's report that may result in a status change. Family member attendance and participation at the subsequent board proceedings is permitted. Once the Board makes its recommendation, the Service Secretary shall determine the status and report that status to the family members. After this determination, the Missing Persons Act requires the Service Secretary to conduct additional proceedings if information is received that may result in a change in status.

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:** Who is covered under the Missing Persons Act?

**Answer:** Any member of the Armed Forces on active duty or member of the reserve component performing official duties; U.S. citizen employees of the Department of Defense; and employees of Department of Defense contractors (when Secretary of Defense designates such contractor employees as covered persons) who becomes involuntarily absent as a result of hostile action or under circumstances suggesting that

the involuntary absence is a result of hostile action.

**Question:** What are the statuses under the Missing Persons Act?

**Answer:** “Missing”, “deserted”, “absent without leave”, or “dead” are all statuses under the Missing Persons Act.

**Question:** Who serves as a “Counsel” under the Missing Persons Act?

**Answer:** The Missing Persons Act specifies the qualifications and duties of the counsel. For example, the counsel must be a licensed attorney, have appropriate security clearances, and have expertise in the law relating to missing persons. The Counsel has access to all facts and evidence considered by the board, will observe all official activities and proceedings, as well as question witnesses and monitor deliberations.

**Question:** Who is considered a Missing person?

**Answer:** A person who is not present at his/her duty location due to apparent involuntary reasons and whose location is unknown.

## Decompression and the Debriefing Process

**Introduction** – While pressure to immediately conduct comprehensive and exhausting intelligence, survival/evasion/captivity/recovery, and security debriefings in order to rush returnees home to family and the public is well intended, it leads to degradation of critical information and avoidable psychological damage to the returnees. This fact is borne out by the repatriation experiences of a majority of returnees since the Vietnam War. Chronic psychological maladjustment, familial disintegration, avoidable separation of valuable assets from active service, chronic dissention between operators, emotionally distorted incident informational recall, and alienation from family and military are the predictable result when repatriation is compromised. When the stages of the repatriation process (Screening, Decompression, Debriefing, and Support) are conducted, proportional to the circumstances of the individual's isolation experience, the health and welfare of the individual is protected, critical and timely collection of information is accomplished, and the returnee is more resilient and effective in reintegrating with family, coworkers, and society.

The decompression/debriefing process occurs once your loved one is returned to U.S. control. This process includes several critical elements to maximize the accuracy of critical information collected in debriefings and minimize the potential damaging effects of post traumatic stress, family adjustment problems, and exposure to the mass media and other social demands. These elements include:

- **SERE Psychology oversight and intervention** – Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologists, will provide one-on-one intervention as required and group counseling and support to your loved one. A Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologist will accompany the returnees to the Phase II location. Survival, Evasion,

hospital. Your loved one will receive a complete medical exam and all elements of the debriefing/decompression process will start. Returnees should stay at the transition site a minimum of 4 days; during this time they will have time to reconnect with their family via telephone calls. Personal visits from family will not occur until your loved one has received the necessary screening, decompression, and debriefing. Returnees need time to readjust and process their captivity. Phone/e-mail contact with family and loved ones is essential, but returnees need sufficient time to decompress before handling even normal family interactions. Families who wait for in person reunions until after this decompression period report more satisfying initial interactions with their loved ones. On the approval of the medical authorities and the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologist your loved one will be transported stateside for a reunion with you and your family. Your loved one will receive definitive medical care and continued debriefing as needed.

### Yellow Ribbon Phase III

- Stateside – Services are mandated to give the returnee's immediate family the opportunity to meet them upon their arrival stateside. Medical care will continue as needed, and the Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologist will continue to monitor the repatriation process. Upon completion of stateside medical care and debriefings the returnee will be returned to duty, retired, or discharged. We strongly recommend that they return to duty at their original unit at least for a week or two to tie up any loose ends.

Follow-up – The Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape Psychologist will follow-up with your loved one for at least one year. All prisoners of war are eligible for follow-up medical and psychological services at the Robert Mitchell Center for Repatriated Prisoner of War Studies.

## Geneva Convention

Prisoners of war are considered “protected persons” entitled to the protections of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. It is one of four Geneva Conventions of 1949. The other Geneva Conventions provide protection to the wounded, sick, and civilians that fall into enemy hands. Prisoners of war are combatants captured by an enemy who are entitled to prisoner of war status. Other persons may be entitled to prisoner of war status, e.g., contractors working for the Department of Defense. According to the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, captors are to respect (not attack) and protect (care for) those who surrender. There should be no reprisal for acts the prisoners of war committed before capture that were required of them as combatants. Protecting prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War is the responsibility of the government and soldiers of the enemy country.

Protections given prisoners of war apply from the time they fall into the hands of the enemy until their final repatriation. Prisoners of war must be treated humanely at all times. Some of the primary protections provided prisoners of war include: requirement for humane treatment (no torture); protection from violence; freedom from intimidation, insults, and public curiosity; equality of treatment; general and medical care; respect for person and honor; no reprisals; and criminal immunity for acts committed while in combat, that would be considered criminal otherwise, e.g., killing of another person. Women prisoners of war shall be treated with all the regard due to their gender and shall in all cases benefit by treatment as favorable as that granted to men. Subject to certain considerations, e.g., gender, age, health, all prisoners of war shall be treated alike, without adverse distinction based upon race, nationality, religious belief or political opinions, or any other dis-

inction founded on similar criteria. Prisoners of war may not be subjected to physical mutilation or to medical or scientific experiments of any kind, which are not justified by medical or dental treatment of the prisoner of war carried out in his/her interest. prisoners of war are precluded from renouncing their rights and their status as prisoners of war, even if they do so voluntarily.

There is a requirement to provide certain benefits to prisoners of war. These benefits include: quarters equal to the capturers; adequate clothing considering the climate; recreation; religious accommodations; proper hygiene; food; and a copy of the Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War in the prisoner's language. The last benefit allows the prisoner of war to determine if the required protections and benefits are being provided.

Immediately upon capture or within one week after arrival in camp, prisoners of war should be allowed to write to his/her family. This correspondence should be forwarded as rapidly as possible and may not be delayed in any manner. Subsequently, prisoners of war shall be allowed to send and receive letters and cards. Prisoners of war shall also be allowed to receive relief shipments containing food, clothing, religious articles, and similar items.

Prisoners of war may be released before the cessation of hostilities; however, they must be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of active hostilities.

U.S. service members are trained to treat captured enemy personnel as prisoners of war because we want our personnel treated as prisoners of war.

## Operation Yellow Ribbon: The Phases of Repatriation

The Joint Personnel Recovery Agency (JPRA) is responsible for the debriefings of American Service men and women when they are released from captivity. The psychologists who specialize in the effects of captivity have designed a program called Operation Yellow Ribbon. The purpose of the program is to provide psychological support and assistance during the debriefing and decompression process. The Joint Personnel Recovery Agency oversight also serves to protect the service men and women from undo pressures and publicity during their critical integration period. The following plan was developed from both research and experience and is the Department of Defense's position on the Repatriation Process.

### Yellow Ribbon Phase I

- Initial recovery/release - This is always an unpredictable and emotional time. There may be indications that release is imminent only to have events delay the process.
- Safe Area – Once released your loved one will be immediately transported to a safe area. A psychologist who has special training in the repatriation process will monitor and follow your loved one throughout the repatriation process. These psychologists, called Survival, Evasion, Resistance, Escape (SERE) Psychologists, work hard to assure the returnees' welfare maintains a forefront with all the political pressures and military requirements for repatriated individuals. Your loved one will receive a medical examination and be cleared for transportation to a "transition location" once they are medically stable. Transportation can occur almost immediately but may take a few days depending on your loved one's medical condition.

### Yellow Ribbon Phase II

- Transition site – The transition site is usually a regional