

**Joint Statement For
OSD, Army & Navy
Casualty & Mortuary Affairs**

BEFORE THE

**NATIONAL SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE
HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE**

SECOND SESSION, 113TH CONGRESS

EXTORTION 17

FEBRUARY 27, 2014

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
HOUSE OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE**

The Department holds casualty and mortuary affairs among its most solemn responsibilities to our Service members, surviving family members, and the nation. A fundamental element of military culture and tradition is that we hold our fallen in highest esteem, treat their remains with highest reverence, and provide their surviving family members the highest level of care and continued support. The Office of Casualty and Mortuary Affairs promulgates policies that reflect these core values, and works in coordination with the Military Departments and the Services to ensure that the intent of the policies is reflected throughout all casualty and mortuary tasks and processes.

Casualty Assistance:

The Secretary of Defense is responsible for establishing uniform personnel policies and procedures for reporting, recording, notifying, and assisting the next of kin of Service members who are deceased, duty status - whereabouts unknown (DUSTWUN), excused absence – whereabouts unknown (EAWUN), missing, ill, or injured. The Office of the secretary of Defense (OSD) also establishes uniform policy and procedures for reporting, recording, notifying, and assisting the next of kin of DoD civilian personnel, eligible contractors, and other designated or covered personnel. These policies apply to the Military Departments, Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense, Defense Agencies, DoD Field Activities, and all other organizational entities in the Department of Defense. To carry out this mission, DoD has established procedures for completing and updating the Record of Emergency Data or DD Form 93. The DD Form 93 is an official record for military personnel that provides the names and addresses of the persons the Service member desires to be notified in case of injury or death, designates certain benefits in

the event of a Service members' death, and designates the person authorized to direct disposition of his or her remains. The DD Form 93 also serves as a guide for the disposition of pay and allowances if captured, missing, or deceased. This form is also used for civilian personnel as emergency notification in the event the civilian member becomes a casualty.

Mortuary Affairs:

In addition to providing policy oversight for casualty assistance, the Office of Casualty and Mortuary Affairs provides overarching policy guidance and serves as the Department's focal point for coordination of all matters related to the DoD Mortuary Affairs Program. This includes policy oversight for the handling and transportation of human remains; group interments, disinterments, memorial ceremonies, and cremation of remains.

Program Governance and Oversight:

DoD has codified the Departments' policies in Department of Defense Directive 1300.22E, Mortuary Affairs Policy, and Department of Defense Instruction 1300.18, Personnel Casualty Matters, Policies, and Procedures which are further augmented by Service specific instructions, regulations or directives. DoD meets the statutory requirement as described in Section 562 of Public Law 109-163, to provide a uniformed casualty assistance program by defining the core training requirements for all casualty assistance personnel regardless of Service. The Services then establish additional requirements to address the Service-unique circumstances of their members, families, organizational structure and traditions. To ensure DoD is meeting the needs of our Service members and their families, and to ensure uniformity with DoD casualty and

mortuary affairs policies, the Department established the Central Joint Mortuary Affairs Board and the Casualty Advisory Board as governing bodies for all matters relating to mortuary affairs and casualty assistance policies respectively. These Boards meet quarterly with representatives from all Services, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Armed Forces Medical Examiner, and other agencies to discuss casualty and mortuary policies and procedures. In addition to these boards, OSD conducts a monthly survey of DoD survivors, and the Director, Casualty and Mortuary Affairs serves as a co-chair on the DoD and Department of Veterans Affairs Survivors' Forum. The Service specific operations and procedures are provided in more detail throughout the remainder of this written statement.

Army Casualty Overview

The Army has been in a state of continuous war for over twelve years – the longest in our Nation's history. More than 4,900 Soldiers have given their lives on behalf of this Nation. Behind each and every one of these Soldiers is a Survivor or Survivors, and it is the Army's charter to provide the best support possible to ease their transitions. The mission of the Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Center is to execute the full-spectrum of Army Casualty and Mortuary Affairs for present and past conflicts. In this role, the Casualty and Mortuary Affairs Operations Center provides policy and direction to 33 Casualty Assistance Centers, develops standardized Casualty Assistance and Casualty Notification Officer training, operates the Joint Personal Effects Depot where Personal Effects for deceased personnel for all Service members who die in the combat theater of operations are processed/cleaned and returned to family or loved ones and provides notification, casualty assistance, and case

management for injured, ill, missing and deceased personnel. Casualty notification and initial support are completed through Casualty Notification Officers and Casualty Assistance Officers.

Army Casualty Notification Officer

The Casualty Notification Officer (CNO) represents the Secretary of the Army. The notification officer is courteous, helpful and compassionate toward the Next of Kin and reflects the Army's concern for its personnel and their families while performing this sensitive and honorable mission. Trained active duty officers in the rank of captain and higher, warrant officers in the rank of chief warrant officer two and higher, and senior noncommissioned officers in the rank of sergeant first class and higher, are charged with personally notifying the Next of Kin. Notifications generally occur between the hours of 0500 and 2400 with the goal to conduct notification within the first 24-hour period following the incident; notification will be made as a matter of highest priority, taking precedence over all other responsibilities the notification officer may have. The Primary Next of Kin is notified first followed by Secondary Next of Kin.

Army Casualty Assistance Officer

Selection of Casualty Assistance Officers is made by a Soldier's chain of command. The Casualty Assistance Center which has responsibility for the geographical area in which the Primary Next of Kin or Person Authorized to Direct Disposition resides will appoint a Casualty Assistance Officer from trained and certified active duty personnel. The Casualty Assistance Officers will be knowledgeable, competent, dependable, sympathetic, and, if possible, able to communicate in the same

language as the Primary Next of Kin or Person Authorized to Direct Disposition.

Casualty Assistance Officers should meet the following qualifications:

- (1) Mature Soldiers with six or more years of service.
- (2) Officers in the rank of captain or higher, chief warrant officers in the rank of chief warrant officer two or higher, and noncommissioned officers in the rank of sergeant first class or higher.
- (3) The grade of the Casualty Assistance Officer will, whenever possible, be equal to or higher than the grade of the casualty and equal to or higher than the grade of the Next of Kin when applicable.

Army Role of the Casualty Assistance Officer

Upon official notification of the Next of Kin, the Casualty Assistance Officer, as a minimum, will—

- (1) Communicate directly with the person making the personal notification to help ensure the first and subsequent contacts with the Next of Kin are productive.
- (2) Call the Next of Kin within four hours following initial notification to schedule an appointment to visit the Next of Kin. The Casualty Assistance Officer will determine the immediate needs or problems facing the Next of Kin and render prompt, courteous, and sympathetic assistance. The Casualty Assistance Officer, with the assistance of the supporting Casualty Assistance Center's Mortuary Affairs Specialist, will obtain the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition's decision on disposition of remains.
- (3) Assist the Next of Kin in applying for all entitled benefits.
- (4) Continue to support the Next of Kin until assistance is no longer required or the case is ready to transition to a case manager for long term management.

Army Extortion 17 Casualty Case Notes

On August 6, 2011, five Soldiers were Killed in Action in support of the Extortion 17 mission. Notification and assistance provided to the Soldiers' Next of Kin were completed in accordance with policy with two items of note:

(1) In one case, Secondary Next of Kin (parents) were notified prior to the Primary Next of Kin (spouse). Standard procedures for notification were followed, however the notification team was unable to establish contact with the Primary Next of Kin. As such, the team made contact with the Secondary Next of Kin for notification and followed up with the Primary Next of Kin with condolences and standard casualty support.

(2) In another case, it was identified that one of the Casualty Assistance Officers, who was properly trained on notification procedures, did not perform specific duties to the expected high level of standards when delivering such sensitive information to a Secondary Next of Kin (parent) under difficult circumstances. When this issue was identified, the Casualty Assistance Officer was relieved and immediately replaced to ensure the Next of Kin were as comfortable as possible throughout the assistance process. These notifications are difficult under the best of circumstances and even with training and guidance the task remains one that demands the highest emotional control and performance from the notifying officer.

Army Conclusion:

The circumstances surrounding the events of Extortion 17 are tragic. To lose even one precious life is one too many, and the United States Army lost five Soldiers that day. The Army recognizes that people are the Army, and our dedicated and talented force is the reason the United States Army is second to none. The Army

remains committed to honor our Nation's commitment to the Soldiers and Families of deceased, injured, ill, and unaccounted-for through compassionate and responsive support.

Navy Casualty Overview

Navy families are, without doubt, an essential pillar of support to our operational readiness. When our uniformed men and women go in harm's way, they have leadership's unwavering commitment that the needs of their loved ones at home will be taken care of, particularly in a circumstance as tragic as a casualty. When a service member dies, is reported missing, captured, or is ill or injured, compassionate and timely care from our casualty assistance network is paramount in helping our families navigate the difficult road ahead.

Navy Casualty Assistance Process

The first priority of the casualty assistance program is to ensure the service member's immediate family is notified of the incident. This is followed by continuous information flow, as well as sustained assistance for as long as needed. To accomplish this, our three-tiered program consists of:

- 1) Casualty assistance staff at the Navy Personnel Command (NPC) in Millington, TN (herein referred to as "Navy Casualty")
- 2) Regional coordinators assigned to Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC) throughout the world
- 3) Approximately 6000 trained Casualty Assistance Calls Officers (CACOs) who personally assist the families.

Additionally, when a major crisis occurs the casualty enterprise is augmented by activation of NPC's Emergency Coordination Center, designed to respond to the significant volume of incoming phone calls that inevitably result from a casualty or disaster. The center is staffed by active duty personnel, 24/7, during an emergency to fill this vital requirement. Navy Casualty also has a reserve unit which specifically mobilizes to provide support during around-the-clock operations.

Casualty reporting, notification, and assistance requirements are outlined in Department of Defense Instruction (DODINST) 1300.18. Navy provides additional guidance in Commander, Navy Installations Command Instruction (CNICINST) 1770.2 and various Navy Military Personnel Manual (MILPERSMAN) articles. When a personnel casualty occurs, the member's commanding officer is required to submit a Personnel Casualty Report (PCR). This PCR is transmitted to all Casualty Assistance units: Navy Casualty (at Navy Personnel Command, in Millington, Tennessee) and each of the 24-hour Regional Operations Centers (ROCs). Navy Casualty verifies the information in the PCR against the Sailor's Official Military Personnel File, and the Regional coordinator assigns officer or senior enlisted CACOs to notify the next of kin. During notification, these CACOs may be accompanied by a Navy chaplain, if available.

Next of kin notifications routinely occur within 6-8 hours of receipt of the PCR; Primary NOK (PNOK) notification is considered the most urgent. Stipulations are in place stating timeliness may take precedence over procedure which enables someone from the command or the command's reporting senior to make initial notification. During this initial visit, the CACO, or notifying official, provides available releasable

details concerning the death and renders immediate assistance to the family as the situation dictates.

Within one to two days of the casualty, the CACO arranges a second visit with the NOK to identify any immediate needs, arrange timely payment of the Death Gratuity (DG), and to discuss arrangements and entitlements associated with funeral or memorial services. At this visit, the CACO also discusses the options for interment (as outlined on the Statement of Disposition) with the Person Authorized to Direct Disposition (PADD) as designated on the Sailor's Record of Emergency Data (DD93).

In accordance with DoD policy, if a fatality occurs in a combat theater of operations, the deceased service member's remains are recovered and returned to the continental United States without delay. A Dignified Transfer of Remains (DTR) ceremony is performed upon arrival at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. The PNOK, plus two additional family members, may travel at government expense to attend the DTR and the Secretary of the Navy may authorize additional family members to travel on a case-by-case basis.

The U.S. Navy has two active duty licensed morticians permanently assigned at Dover Air Force Base. During the DTR, these morticians meet with the PADD, the family, and if present, the CACO, to discuss mortuary affairs, options for funeral arrangements, and the DTR process. If the CACO and/or PADD do not accompany the PNOK to Dover, the Navy Mortician will brief the CACO, PADD, and funeral home via telephone after meeting with the family to discuss family concerns and other procedural issues. Once the DTR is complete and the family has departed Dover, the Navy and Armed Forces Medical Examiner (AFME) morticians begin the process of preparing and

transporting the fallen Hero to his or her final resting place. This includes an AFME identification routine and autopsy, and a preparation of the Sailor's uniform by Navy morticians. AFME officials also provide a letter to the PADD and funeral home with specific details concerning the condition of the remains.

Approximately 10 working days after the member's death, the family receives a package from Navy Casualty discussing all remaining benefits and entitlements. The CACO will then schedule a third visit to assist the NOK in completing the remaining claims forms. The CACOs continue to assist all NOK as needed, until all benefits are paid or the family expressly states they no longer require further assistance. Upon completion of these duties, the CACO completes and submits to Navy Casualty a report indicating they have completed all duties and that all benefits have either been applied for or received.

Navy Actions for EXTORTION 17

Shortly after midnight on the morning of August 6, 2011, Navy Casualty began receiving phone calls concerning the possibility of a mass casualty – a CH-47 mishap in the Wardak Province of Afghanistan. Once the magnitude of the casualty became apparent – 22 Navy service members reported dead – standard protocol was initiated. Upon receipt of Personnel Casualty Reports indicating the deceased were assigned to Navy Special Warfare Development Group (NSWDG), NSWDG assigned CACO-trained personnel from their command to accomplish PNOK notifications and all follow-on casualty assistance. In accordance with the Navy's policy and procedures and based on records of the casualty teams, every family had a trained CACO, a notification official, a senior enlisted member, a cadre of administrative support provided by

NSWDG's Casualty Assistance and Calls Center (CAAC), and standardized regional and program manager level support.

In conjunction with Navy Casualty program managers and Regional CACOs, NSWDG representatives worked together consulting with the families on their remaining issues concerning benefits, entitlements, and travel pay as the cases progressed.

In closing, the Navy would like to emphasize the serious and sensitive approach we take towards our casualty assistance responsibilities. The Navy Casualty enterprise – from the Regions to the Program managers – is a community of professionals dedicated to the full spectrum of compassionate care for each and every family member. The Navy will continue to evaluate our programs to identify areas upon which we can improve – our Sailors and their families deserve nothing less.