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Deployment

Unity among strangers?

posted on January 03, 2008 14:10
 By Pamela McBride

Just when Army wife Gina Redwine thought she had dealing with deployment down pat, her husband's third one threw her for a loop. He was being deployed to Iraq with only 10 other soldiers, which in some ways could be a little easier. After all, it was a small group, right? Well, none of these soldiers or families had ever met. All of them lived in different parts of the country and were being brought together to form a unit. Everything Gina had learned about family support in her 20 years as a military spouse would be very different, so she thought at first.

LTC Jim Redwine; Gina; Nicholas, 10 years old; and Elyse, who will be 6 years old in November.

But, after giving it some thought, she and her husband Jim figured out some easy yet effective ways to establish and maintain unity among the loved ones left behind.

"Luckily, Jim was very proactive in getting the names and e-mail addresses of all the team members, and he contacted them well in advance of their departure for train-up," she said. "I was able to make contact with the families, so they knew we were going to be a 'team' as well."

The Redwines made the right move.

"It is extremely important for military families to align themselves with other military families during deployment, particularly when the service members are deployed in an Individual Augmentee status," said Stanley Beason, deployment coordinator at the Fleet and Family Support Center in San Diego. "Be sure to take advantage of any opportunity to connect and establish support."

It turns out that establishing the connection was easy: a little more challenging was maintaining unity throughout the deployment. Would it really be possible to do so given the fact that all the families were so geographically dispersed and the group also very diverse?

"Not all the family members were wives. They were parents, sisters, brothers and in-laws, and some of them had no military background," she said. "There were even two dual military couples on the team, and one of them had a wife who was deployed to Korea."

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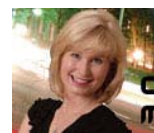
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