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SENATE ARMED
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STATEMENT OF
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NAVY REGION SOUTHEAST
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
REMOTE SITE HEARING
ON
SUPPORT TO FAMILIES OF DEPLOYED SERVICE MEMBERS
2 JUNE 2003

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Thank you for inviting me to brief the committee on the provisions in place at our Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers located throughout the southeast region to support family members of our deployed personnel. As the Program Manager for the Southeast Region Community Support Programs, I am responsible for supporting Navy leadership in achieving maximum mission readiness through services provided at Navy Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSCs). Commands, Sailors and family members can and do access a wide range of programs, focused on adaptation to the special demands of military careers and military family life, such as deployment cycles, frequent relocation and the need for rapid response to current world events.

The core programs of the Navy's Fleet and Family Support Centers support our mission of providing deployment support and readiness, crisis response and career retention and support to Navy service members and their families. Under our core mission capability of Deployment and Readiness, we provide services and programs related to deployment, relocation assistance, information and referral, ombudsmen, life skills education and new parent support. Counseling services, family advocacy, victim services, mobilization and critical incident intervention programs are provided in support of our mission to provide

crisis response support. And finally, we provide transition assistance, spouse employment assistance and personal financial management assistance in support of our career support and retention programs.

In general, our FFSCs provide pre-deployment briefs for Navy service members and their families; conduct mid-deployment programs for families and ombudsmen; and offer post-deployment services to Commands upon the return of the squadron or unit. These services are also provided to members of Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force reserve units in the local area. Our Centers also offer Return and Reunion programs to commands while still deployed. This program calls for our personnel to actually meet the ships at designated points and provide one-on-one counseling services and other "skills for living" training that is critical to the service member's successful reunion with their families.

As an augment to our standard services, our Centers have initiated Spouse Support Groups, developed and conducted highly successful "Military Spouse 101" resource fairs and hosted "Family Day" events to provide interactions with families and make information readily available. In direct support of our military children, our counselors have visited local schools to

educate staff on working with military families. We are currently working in conjunction with Florida Inter-service Family Assistance Committee on a handbook to be made available to school personnel in working with children from military families. Some of the additional products provided to both our service members and their families that specifically relate to the hardships of deployment and reunions include materials on "Long Distance Couples," "Dads at a Distance," "Grandparents at a Distance," "Children and Deployment," "Kid's Deployment Coloring Books," and "Welcome Home Mom/Dad" banners.

Our centers have also provided direct support to the many reservists who have been mobilized in support of the Global War on Terrorism. We have provided relocation information and assistance to both individuals and groups of mobilizing personnel. Similar demobilization services have been provided to members who are coming off active duty after their activation period. Some of our Centers serve as repatriation sites and have provided assistance to families returning to the United States as a result of family evacuations overseas.

The school district of Camden County has been very effective at partnering with our FFSC at Submarine Base Kings Bay. There are twelve schools in the Camden County district,

all having been formally adopted by commands at Submarine Base Kings Bay. The FFSC at Kings Bay provided educational materials on "How To Talk To Kids About War and Deployment" and local school counselors used this information to work with the students to better understand the impacts and implications of war. Our FFSC psychologists and school counselors offered special counseling to students. Many of the schools put together displays with pictures of parents who were deployed and placed these displays in the hallways of the school. One teacher actually used her personal funds to purchase diaries for all of her students who had parents deployed so the students could openly express their feelings and emotions in a non-threatening way. There have also been many community partnerships established in St. Mary's and Kingsland, Georgia to include partnerships with the Humana Tricare Office, local child and family services agencies, the Camden County Tribune Newspaper, the Tourism Councils of St. Mary's and Kingsland, the Georgia State Department of Tourism and many local real estate offices. These outreach efforts provide vital information to service members and their families living in the Camden County area of Georgia.

In summary, we have an effective and varied program in place to ensure that the needs of our service members and their

families are met or exceeded. We continue to assess our capabilities and make continuous improvements to our programs and processes to ensure that we are ready to meet future challenges encountered in both conventional and unconventional deployment situations. It's for these reasons that I stand proudly behind our motto of "*Service to the Fleet, Both at Home and at Sea.*"