

Colonel Gerald Gibbons Chief of Staff 9th Regional Readiness Command, U.S. Army Reserve

STATEMENT BY

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CHIEF OF STAFF

9TH REGIONAL READINESS COMMAND, U. S. ARMY RESERVE

BEFORE THE

COMMISSION ON VETERAN'S AFFAIRS

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Statement By:

Colonel Gerald Gibbons

Chief of Staff

9th Regional Readiness Command, U.S. Army Reserve

Good Morning. I appreciate being given the opportunity to speak before the Senate Committee on Veteran's Affairs. I am Colonel Gerald Gibbons and I am the Chief of Staff with the 9th Regional Readiness Command (RRC). As you are probably aware, the 9th RRC is responsible for Army Reserve units in American Samoa, Guam, Saipan, Alaska, and Hawaii. Additionally, many of our members live and work in Japan, Korea, other Pacific Rim countries, and CONUS. We are responsible for 3400 soldiers serving proudly in the Pacific and other parts of the world.

This morning I will limit my comments to the issues of returning 9th RRC Army Reserve veterans and the necessity for collaboration between the Department of Defense and the Veterans Health Administration to prepare and take care of their future needs.

Since 9/11, 9th RRC reserve soldiers have answered the call and were mobilized and deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

There have been approximately 2440 9th RRC Soldiers returned from active duty and there are approximately 460 9th RRC Soldiers still mobilized and deployed. Within the past 2 years, over 2/3 of the Pacific based 9th RRC Soldiers will have served on active duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

As Soldiers returned from theater, they completed the Post Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) before being Release From Active Duty (REFRAD) and approximately 838 soldiers have completed the required Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) at 3-6 months after coming home from theater.

There are currently 23 Army Reserve Soldiers in the Warrior Transition Unit (WTU) at Tripler Army Medical Center (TAMC). These Soldiers are being continued or brought back on Active Duty status for evaluation and/or treatment for medical, mental health or behavioral health problems which have significant impact on their performance of duty. Assignment to the WTU is for 179 days with a possibility of extensions until they are found fit for duty.

Soldiers diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) requiring in-patient care are enrolled in the PTSD Residential Recovery Program (PRRP), a VA Pacific Health Care System, at the TAMC Campus. There are currently 6 Soldiers in the program.

The VA Pacific Islands Health Care System Community Based Outpatient Clinic was recently dedicated on 21 July 2007 in Pago Pago, American Samoa and is scheduled to be fully activated in the very near future.

While it may not be possible to predict the specific number of Army Reserve Soldiers who will need to access VHA services in the future, it is critical that we continue to work with the VA to ensure that we understand the processes and procedures to enable our returning Soldiers to receive care through the current VHS system in the 9th RRC's area of operations.

Thank you. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.