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MARINE CORPS BULLETIN 6490

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: Distribution List

Subj: COMBAT OPERATIONAL STRESS CONTROL (COSC) PROGRAM

Ref: (a) DODD 6490.5, "Combat Stress Control (CSC) Programs,"  
February 23, 1999  
(b) DODI 6490.03, "Deployment Health," August 11, 2006  
(c) MARADMIN 283/06, "New Post-Deployment Health  
Reassessment (PDHRA) and Electronic Methods and  
Procedures for Deployment Health Assessments  
(Corrected Copy)," June 21, 2006  
(d) SECNAV M-5214.1

Encl: (1) Supplemental COSC Slides

Report Required: Combat Operational Stress Control (COSC)  
Training and Education (Report Control Symbol  
EXEMPT) par. 5. c. (9)

1. Purpose. To clarify the Commander's responsibilities regarding Combat Operational Stress Control (COSC) as it pertains to our Marines, Sailors, and their families. This Bulletin provides interim guidance pending publication of a more comprehensive COSC Marine Corps Order.

2. Cancellation. MARADMIN 112/07.

3. Background

a. Reference (a) established policy and assigned responsibilities for developing combat stress control programs within the Military Services. References (b) and (c) outline requirements for Deployment Health Assessments. Reference (d) describes criteria for data reporting requirements.

b. Situation. Our Corps is engaged in the "Long War"; accordingly, high operational tempo and associated stressors

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will be the norm for the foreseeable future. We must remain vigilant in ensuring the well-being of our most valuable assets - our Marines, Sailors, and their families. To this end, Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC) COSC directs: the adoption of the Stress Continuum Model (Figure 1); the standardization of COSC training and education in formal schools; and, the modification of deployment-cycle COSC training, program elements, and reporting requirements as outlined in this bulletin.

(1) Marine commanders and leaders at all levels are responsible for promoting and building resiliency in Marines, Sailors, and their families. They must also recognize and take care of individuals' deployment-related stress responses. Commanders' COSC responsibilities are embodied in five COSC core leadership functions: Strengthen, Mitigate, Identify, Treat, and Reintegrate. Although support personnel such as chaplains, medical personnel, and mental health professionals can assist commanders in these core COSC functions, leaders retain overall responsibility for promoting resiliency and making sure those individuals who need help get it.

(2) The Stress Continuum Model provides the foundation for COSC policies and programs in the Marine Corps. The premise is that all Marines, Sailors, and their families will react in some way to the stress of combat operations, and that stress responses and outcomes occur across a broad spectrum. At one end of the spectrum are those personnel who are affected mildly but remain resilient and functional; this is the green "Ready" zone. Of those whose resiliency is exceeded by combat or operational stress sufficiently to impact their readiness, most will experience only mild and temporary symptoms which resolve quickly and can be helped by prompt low-level intervention; this is the yellow "Reacting" zone. A smaller number of individuals who have been affected by especially intense or persistent stress may experience more severe and lasting distress or impairment. These individuals are still very likely to fully recover, especially if provided early intervention; this is the orange "Injury" zone. A critical few will experience stress injury symptoms that fail to heal as expected and impair their function, even after several weeks or more removed from the sources of operational stress; this is the red "Ill" zone, and early professional intervention will improve the likelihood of their return to full functioning and readiness.

(3) The Combat Operational Stress Decision Flowchart, (Figure 2), is a tool for Marine leaders to identify the zone in the combat operational stress continuum in which their Marines, Sailors, and family members are functioning at any given moment. It is imperative for all Marine leaders to become familiar with the use of this tool.

4. Mission. The objective of the COSC program is to maintain a resilient, ready force, and promote long-term health and well-being among Marines, Sailors, and family members. As a result, Marines, Sailors, and their family members will be better prepared for the rigors of combat and operational deployments.

a. Preparation for deployment must include education, mental preparation, toughening, and inoculation to operational stress before it occurs. Much of this is already accomplished through tough, realistic training provided to Marines. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to recognize and respond to stress reactions, injuries, and illnesses, should they occur, must be learned. Training and education in COSC must be integrated into formal Marine Corps schools, as well as unit training throughout the deployment cycle.

b. COSC training and education must be operationally oriented and consistent with our warrior ethos, recognizing the inherently stressful aspects of combat and the inherently resilient nature of Marines and Sailors. It must reduce the stigma associated with stress problems by acknowledging that stress is an expected part of combat and other operational environments, and that no one is immune to stress reactions, injuries, or illnesses.

5. Action

a. Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) (HQMC COSC Branch)

(1) Supported by Training and Education Command (TECOM), develop COSC training products, including standardized briefs and workshops, interactive Internet resources, situational vignettes, videos, and other best practice programs to enhance and expand training quality, consistency, and accessibility.

(2) Update and maintain COSC training and education products for reference and download by unit leaders online.

(3) Periodically solicit feedback from the operating forces, Medical Corps and Chaplain Corps subject matter experts, for further refinement of COSC training products.

b. TECOM

(1) Develop and implement standardized COSC training into formal school and PME curricula.

(2) Assist M&RA COSC in developing COSC curricula and incorporating COSC into the Training and Readiness (T&R) Manual.

c. Operating Forces

(1) For deployments of 90 days or more, conduct COSC training and education for leaders, Marines, Sailors, and their families during the following phases of the deployment cycle, as depicted in Figure 3:

(a) Pre-deployment.

(b) Before Redeployment.

(c) Post-deployment (60-120 days after returning).

Members of deploying units who remain in rear support functions will also benefit from COSC training. They need to understand how to manage the increased operational stress of providing rear support in garrison, and also understand the stress problems that may be exhibited by those who return from deployment or are preparing to deploy again.

(2) Provide COSC training by using the standard Marine Operational Stress Training (MOST) workshops and materials downloadable from the COSC website ([www.manpower.usmc.mil/cosc](http://www.manpower.usmc.mil/cosc)), or by integrating COSC subject matter into existing deployment training at the discretion of the MEF CG or the Commander, Marine Forces Reserve.

(a) It is the intent of this directive to ensure consistency in concepts and nomenclature in COSC training, while affording commanders flexibility to achieve the desired results.

(b) Standardized training goals and objectives are found in the COSC Deployment Cycle Training Goal Matrix online

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as above. The goals and objectives for each phase of deployment include not only standardized briefs and workshops, but also more general knowledge, skills, and attitudes for leaders, Marines, and family members. Selection of who will provide unit training is at the discretion of the unit commander, but typically is provided by the unit chaplain or medical officer.

(c) Other resources to assist with COSC training and education include: Corpsmen, Religious Program Specialists, Marine and Family Services counselors, Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS) Deployment Support specialists, other mental health professionals, Family Readiness Officers, Readiness and Deployment Support Trainers, the Leaders Guide for Managing Marines in Distress ([www.usmc-mccs.org/leadersguide](http://www.usmc-mccs.org/leadersguide)), Military OneSource ([www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com) or 1-800-342-9647), and Veterans Affairs Readjustment Counseling Centers (Vet Centers, [www.va.gov/rccs](http://www.va.gov/rccs)).

(d) Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) is no longer authorized as part of COSC training or intervention.

(3) Ensure effective family COSC training. This is essential to minimize family stress problems before, during, and after deployment, and will help family members better to understand the reactions their Marine or Sailor may experience when they return. The Marine Corps Family Readiness Program has a variety of briefs and workshops to support families during the deployment cycle, available through the COSC website.

(4) Utilize Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) teams as available. OSCAR is a commanders' program that embeds mental health assets in operational commands under the supervision of the unit Medical Officer. OSCAR teams consist of Navy psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric technician Corpsmen, chaplains, and in some cases SNCOs. OSCAR Teams advise commanders on COSC, and are available to provide unit-level resiliency training, early intervention for combat and operational stress problems, continuing care throughout the deployment cycle, and stigma reduction through proactive interaction with unit personnel.

(5) Ensure medical personnel, chaplains, and Religious Program Specialists receive annual training on current COSC programs and practices.

(6) Use Deployment Health Assessments as an integral part of the COSC program to promote early identification of deployment stress problems affecting personal and unit readiness. Ideally, these assessments should be given immediately after their respective COSC deployment cycle workshops. It is important to encourage Marines and Sailors to provide honest responses on the assessment forms. For additional guidance, see references (b) and (c).

(7) In-theater Operational Pause. If operationally feasible, all units should be afforded a 3-5 day operational pause (relief in place) immediately prior to departing theater, as a "decompression" period in conjunction with the Re-Deployment Workshops.

(8) In-Garrison Operational Stand-Down. After returning from an operational deployment, and before granting post-deployment leave, all units should be afforded a second decompression period consisting of five abbreviated work-days in garrison. The post-deployment stand-down is a crucial time for Marine leaders to observe their Marines and Sailors during the transition back to home and garrison and to ensure they receive any needed care.

(9) Reporting Requirement. Unit commanders will document in Marine Corps Total Force System (MCTFS) individual completion of Warrior Transition II Workshop, 60-120 days post-deployment, optimally delivered immediately prior to the Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA). The appropriate documentation will also be made for Sailors serving with Marine units via Page 13 entry in respective service records. This reporting requirement is exempt from reports control in accordance with part IV, paragraph 7.j of reference (d).

d. All Commands. Ensure Marines and Sailors returning or new to your command have received all required post-deployment COSC training. Such personnel would include Individual Augmentees, personnel who return early on emergency leave, and personnel who newly report to your command shortly after returning from deployment. Check for the required MCTFS or Page 13 entry above, and provide and report the training as needed.

e. Additional Requirements for Reserve Component Personnel. Ensure that all Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) Marines, Selected Reserve (SELRES) Sailors assigned to Program Nine

units, and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Marines are contacted at least once per month for three months after return from deployment. IRR Marines are to be contacted periodically for the following nine months by MOBCOM. The intent of such contact is to identify combat operational stress problems early, to ensure that deactivated Marines and Sailors are successfully reintegrating with their families and communities, and to ensure that personnel are made aware of resources available to assist them.

6. Reserve Applicability. This Bulletin is applicable to the Marine Corps Total Force.

7. Cancellation Contingency. This Bulletin is cancelled when the Marine Corps Order for COSC is published.



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# Combat Operational Stress Continuum for Marines

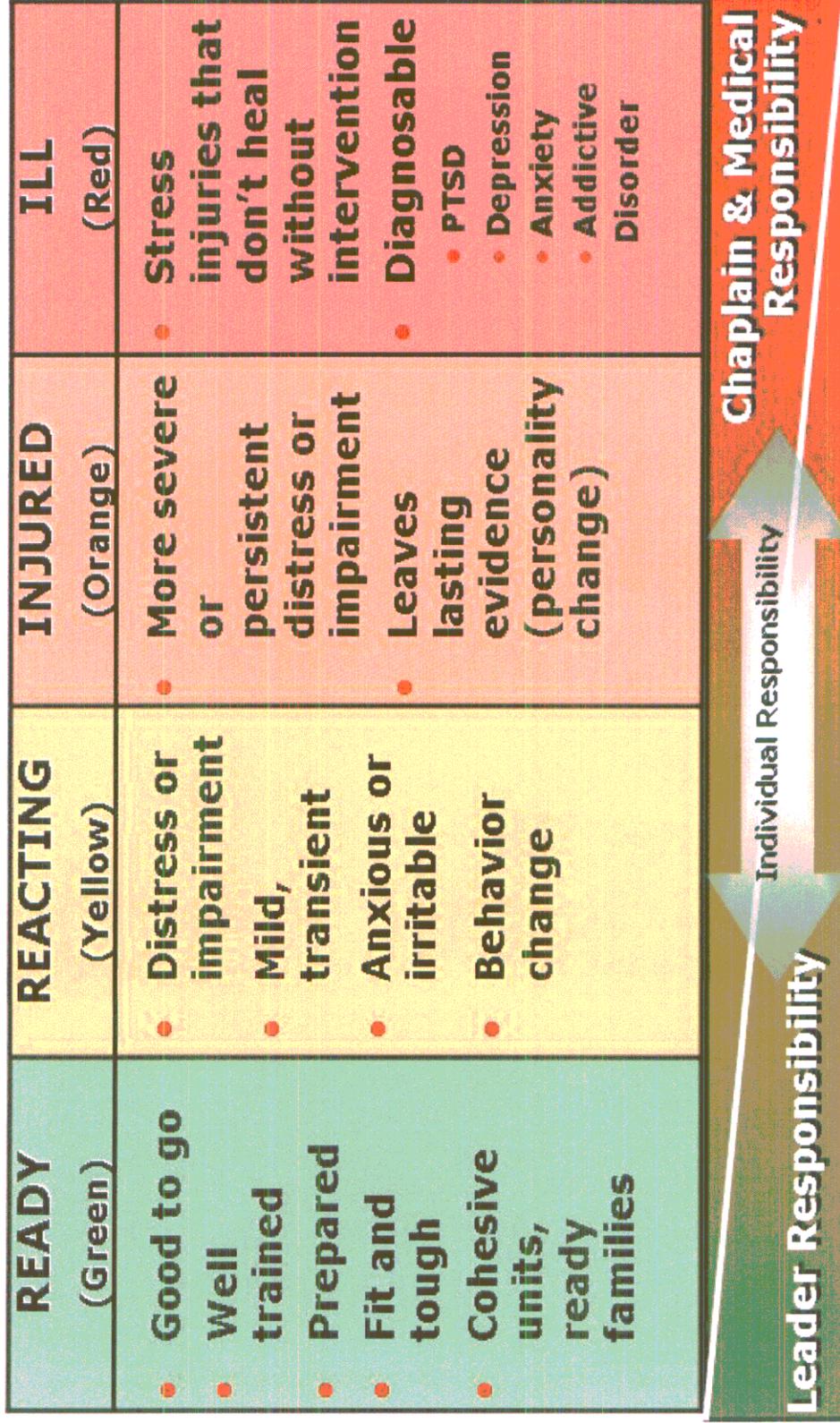


Figure 1.-- Combat Operational Stress Continuum for Marines

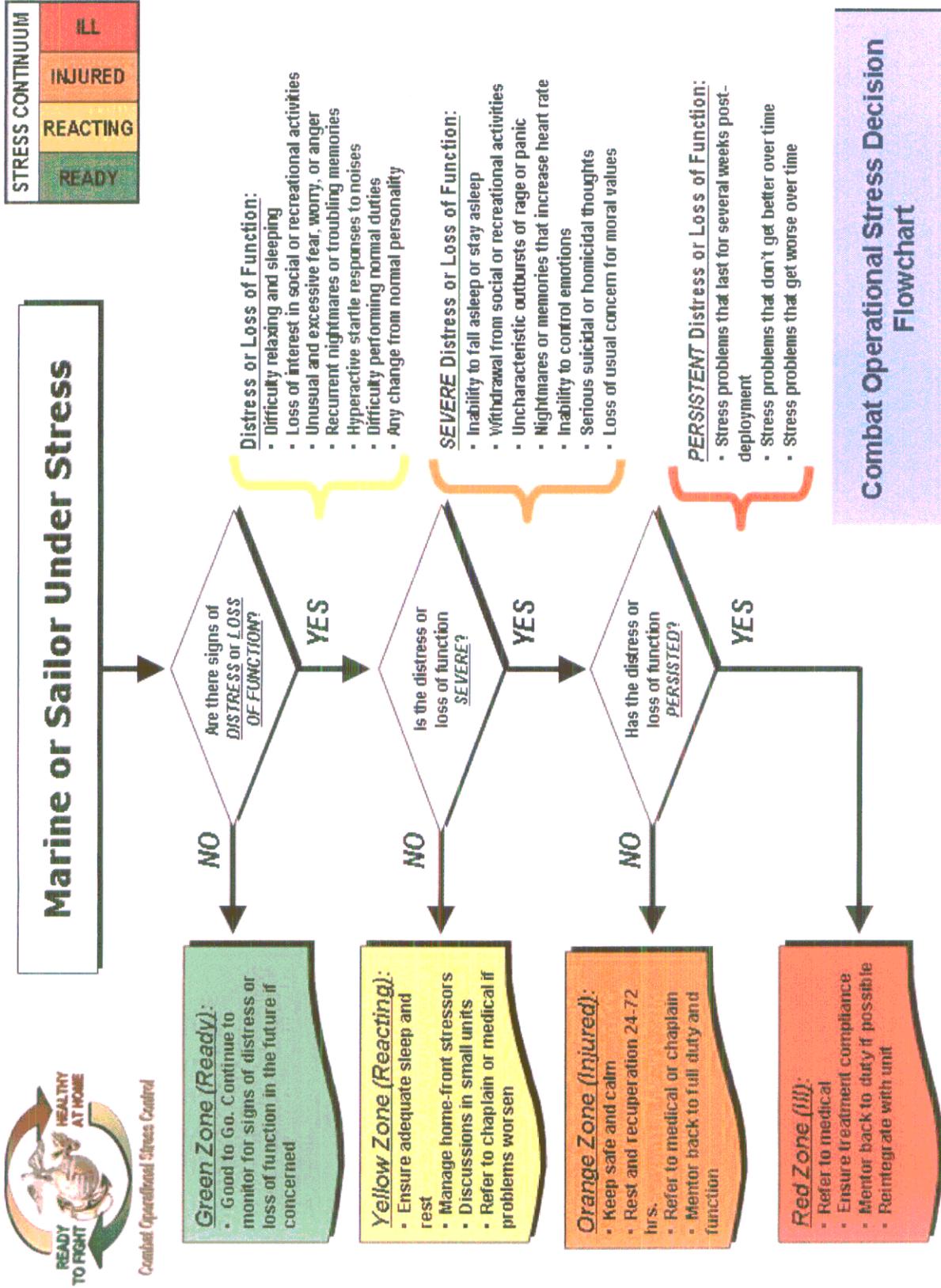


Figure 2.-- Combat Operational Stress Decision Flowchart

# Marine Operational Stress Training (MOST) Cycle for Deployments

## COSC Workshops

- **Pre-Deployment**
  - Leader Preparation
  - Warrior Preparation
  - Family Preparation
- **Before Redeployment**
  - Leader Transition
  - Warrior Transition
  - Family Transition
- **Post-Deployment (60-120 days)**
  - Leader Transition II
  - Warrior Transition II
  - Family Transition II

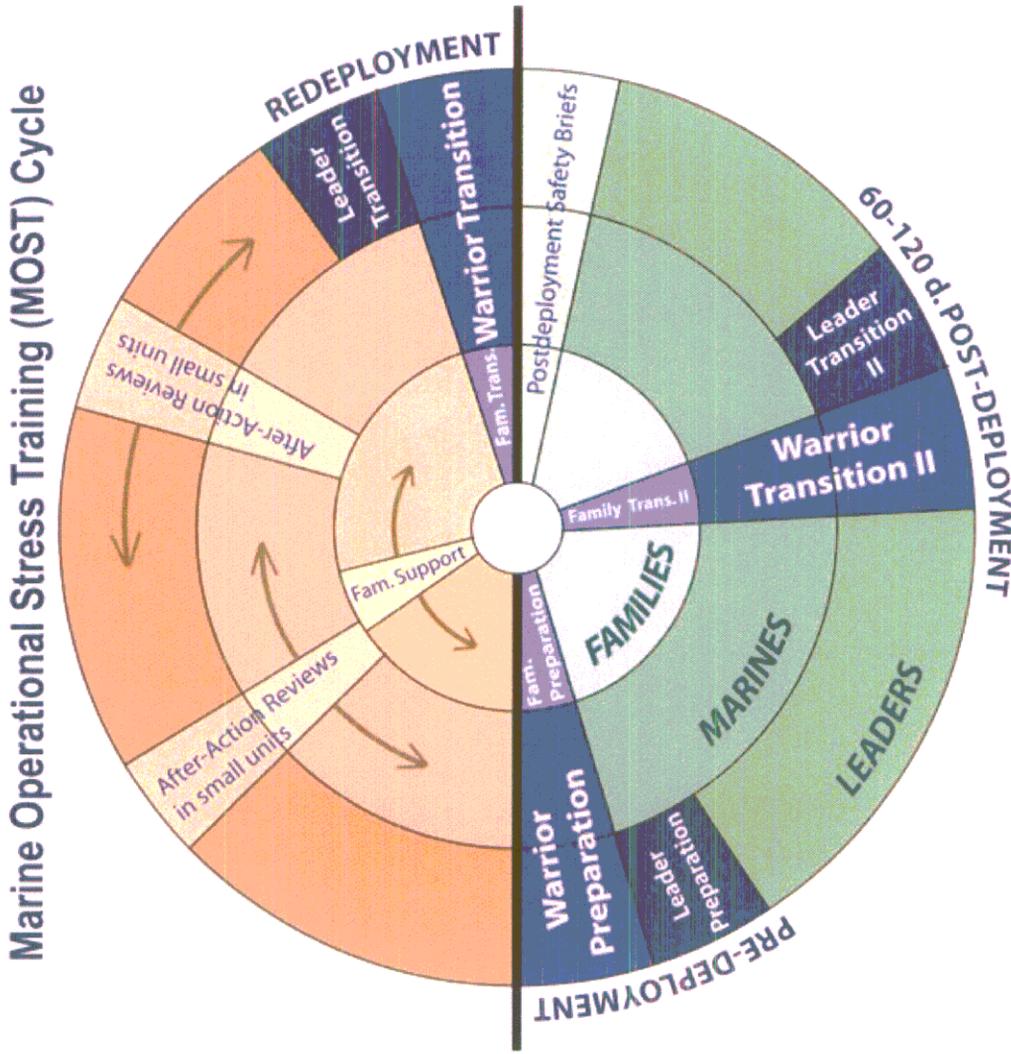


Figure 3.-- Marine Operational Stress Training (MOST) Cycle for Deployments