A phone survey of Army spouses evaluated the association of Army deployment (and specifically extensions of deployment) with spouses' health and well-being, deployment-induced difficulties with daily life operations, and perceptions of the Army during deployment. Survey data were collected in 2004 across 10 major bases from 798 spouses of active-duty Army personnel who were currently or had recently been deployed.

### Key Findings:

- Extensions of deployment exacerbate mental health problems for spouses.
- Extensions were associated with increased feelings of loneliness, depression, and anxiety.
- Extensions of deployment were also associated with difficulties in daily operations at home for the spouses, such as sending and receiving communications, problems with household and car maintenance, and having to stop working or to work fewer hours.
- Spouses' assessments of Army support during deployment were significantly worse if they experienced an extension.

### Implications for Programs:

- Programs that provide services for military spouses could be aware that increased support and resources are warranted during times of deployment and particularly when faced with an extension of deployment.
- Program administrators and clinicians could work closely with military leadership and family readiness groups to stay abreast of impending deployments and extensions of deployment, being clear with families about expected time spans for deployments.
- Preventive and intervention services for spouses could be offered to alleviate anxiety, depression, and loneliness during times of extended deployment.

### Implications for Policies:

- Military leadership should be aware of the negative impact of deployment extensions on military spouses’ mental health and the potential effect this could have on future willingness for service members to reenlist.
- The development and evaluation of creative means of supporting military spouses is warranted when deployments are extended.
- The balance between keeping spouses informed and the constraints of operation security is an ongoing challenge; however, the need for spouses to feel valued and to feel that they are adequately informed are important considerations for family well-being and the retention of service members.

### Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research involving both spouses and service members would be informative for exploring the impact of spousal perceptions of deployment extension on both the service member and on his/her retention in the armed forces.
- Future research could include measures of spouses’ mental health prior to deployment and deployment extensions.
- Replication with a more contemporary era of spouses would enhance our understanding of the current impact of deployment extensions.
Background Information

Methodology:
- Telephone self-reported survey data from spouses of active-duty Army personnel who were either currently deployed or recently redeployed and had experienced an extension of deployment were compared to spouses who had not experienced an extension.
- Analyses explored differences in deployment-specific problems in four steps: prevalence of problems in the overall spouse population; comparison of prevalence of problems across the two subgroups using $\chi^2$ tests; comparison of characteristics across the two groups to determine if subsequent analyses would be appropriate; and comparisons across the two groups using logistic regression.

Participants:
- Participants were spouses of active-duty Army personnel ($N = 744$) deployed since 2001, some of whom experienced an extension of deployment ($n = 355$; $M$ age = 31.2 years) some who had not ($n = 419$; $M$ age = 29.8).
- Extended = (61.4% Caucasian; 15.2% Hispanic; 14.1% African American; 5.2% Asian; 4.2% other) Not extended = (65.4% Caucasian; 14.0 % Hispanic; 12.4% African American; 3.5% Asian; 4.6 other).

Limitations:
- Without longitudinal data, there is no clear evidence of spousal functioning prior to deployment or deployment extension.
- Without a follow-up, it is unclear if some of these difficulties in spouses may be long-term or if they may remit with time.
- Data were self-report, collected via the telephone and with health screening measures. Clinical assessments of mental health could help identify whether and how deployment extensions are linked with clinically significant distress for military spouses.

Assessing Research that Works

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Overall Quality Rating: ★★★