



Summary of Key Findings from the Mental Health Advisory Team 6 (MHAT 6): OEF and OIF

Presented to the DoD Task Force on the Prevention of
Suicide by Members of the Armed Forces

MAJ Jeffrey L. Thomas, Ph.D.
Chief, Department of Military Psychiatry
Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

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Purpose and Methods

- MHAT mission: Provide a theater-wide assessment of Soldier mental health and well-being; examine the delivery of behavioral health care, and provide recommendations for sustainment and improvement
- Mental Health Advisory Team 6
 - OIF MHAT conducted Feb to Mar 2009
 - Sixth MHAT to OIF
 - OEF MHAT conducted May to Jun 2009
 - Third MHAT to OEF
- MHAT 6 first to employ random sample of pre-selected platoons
 - Sampled more Soldiers outside of large Forward Operating Bases (FOBs)
 - Separate samples for
 - Maneuver
 - Support and Sustainment



Key OEF Findings

- Psychological problems: 14.4% of maneuver Soldiers met criteria for depression, anxiety, and/or acute stress—higher than 2005 but similar to 2007. Support/sustainment rate similar to maneuver rate. (**)
- Combat exposure: Higher than previous MHATs. (**)
- Barriers to care and Stigma: Maneuver unit barriers higher than previous MHATs. Increase may reflect change in sampling. Stigma rates held constant. (**)
- Multiple deployments: Higher rates of mental health problems and marital problems for multiple deployers. (**)
- Behavioral health assets: Understaffed IAW Combat and Operational Stress Control Planning Models of 1:700 to 1:1000 staffing ratio. (**)



Key OIF Findings

- Psychological problems: Rate of 11.9% in maneuver units: significantly lower than every year except 2004. Support/sustainment rate is similar. (**) (□)
- Combat exposure: Combat exposure levels lower than every year except 2004. Support/sustainment significantly lower than maneuver. (**) (□)
- Barriers to care and stigma: Maneuver units reported high barriers. Support /sustainment sample report low barriers. Stigma held constant. (**) (□)
- Dwell-time: Related to mental health rates in maneuver units. Near return to garrison rates at 24 months dwell-time: full return in 30 to 36 months. (**) (□)
- Marital problems: Divorce/separation intent steadily increasing. (**) (□)
- Resilience: Positive officer leadership key factor producing resilient platoons. (**) (□)
- Suicide: 2008 rate 21.5 per 100k. Similar to 2007. First time since 2004 OIF theater rate (all services) has not increased. (**) (□)



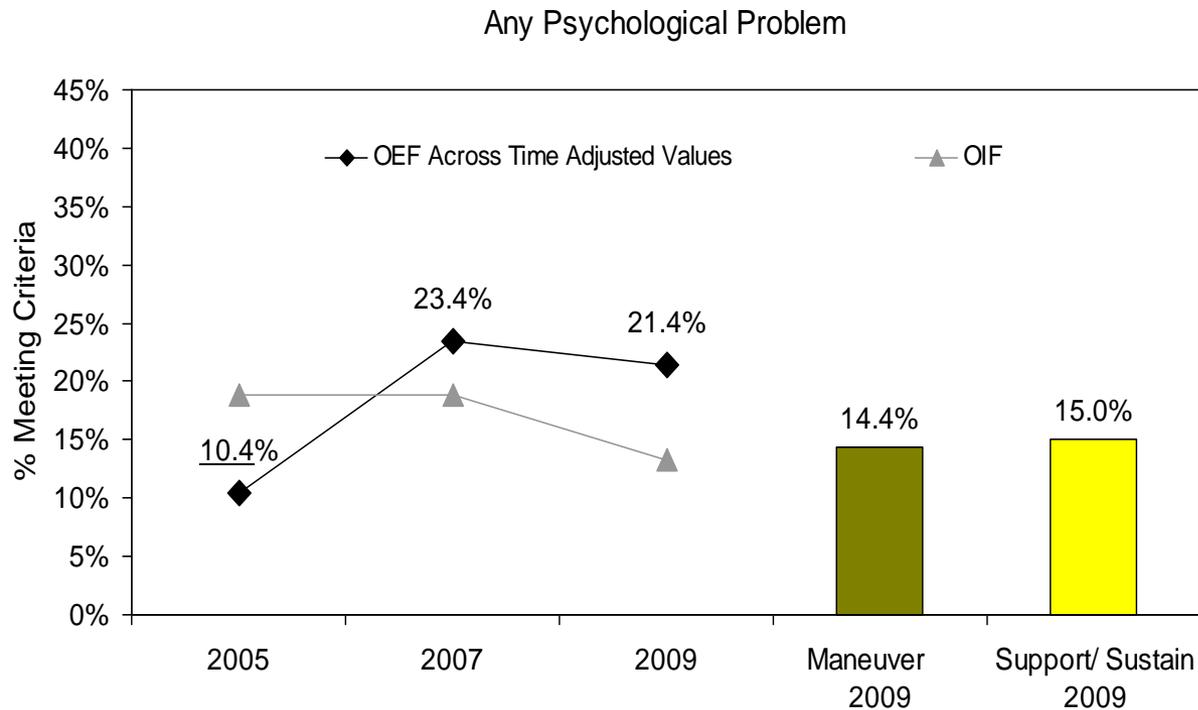
MHAT Recommendations

- MHAT 6 Recommendations (**)
- Status of MHAT 5 Recommendations (**)
- Way Ahead (**)



OEF: Psychological Problems (**)

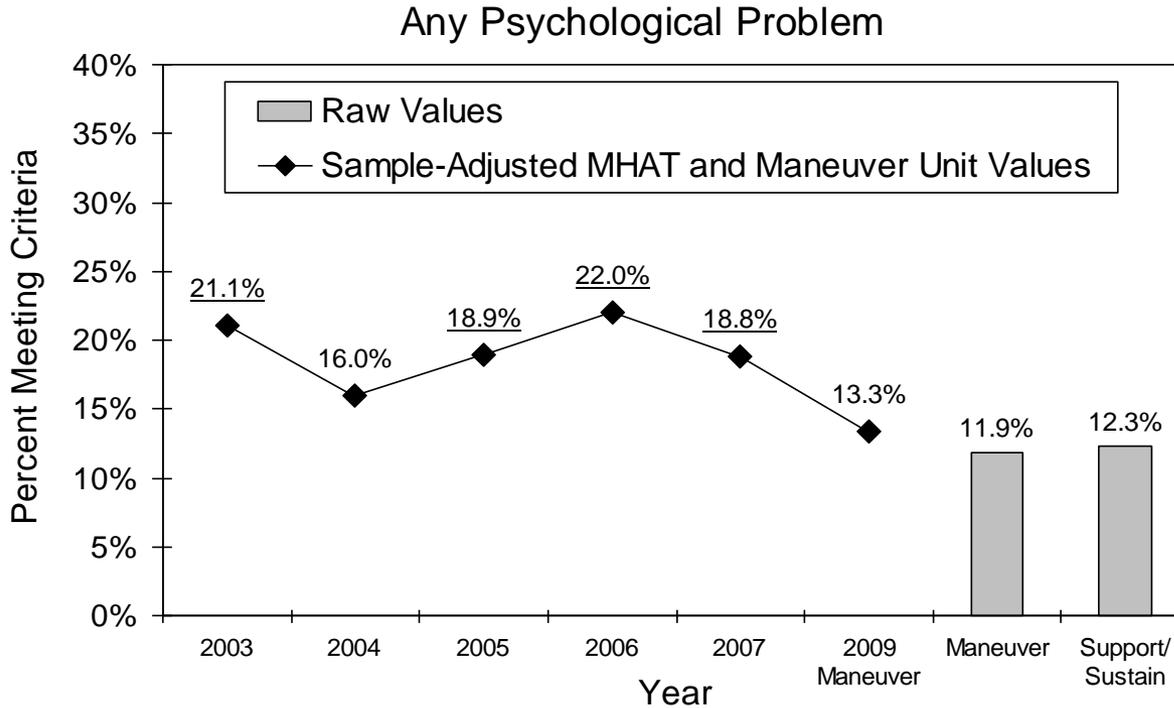
- Rates of mental health problems (acute stress, depression or anxiety) are significantly higher than 2005.





OIF: Psychological Problems (**)

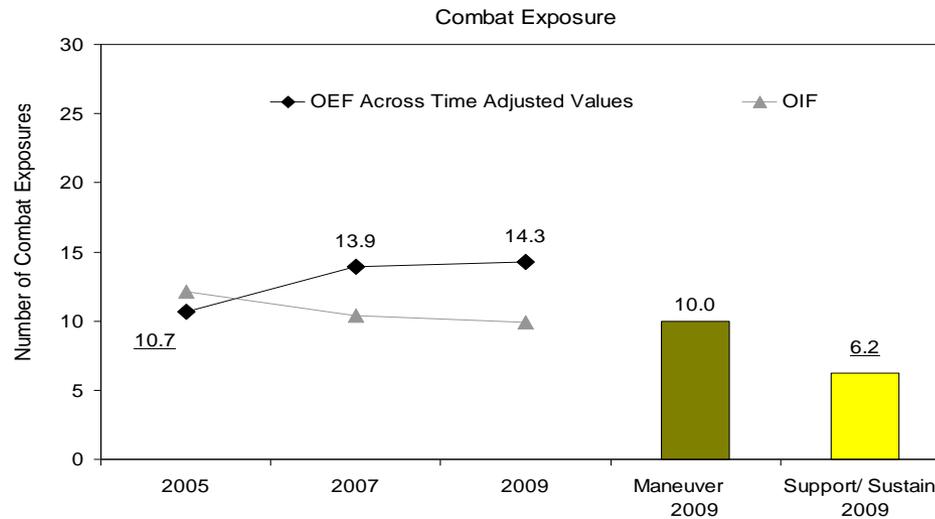
- Rates of mental health problems (acute stress, depression or anxiety) are significantly lower than every year except 2004.





OEF: Combat Exposure (**)

- Reported levels of combat exposure in maneuver units significantly higher than 2005. Support/Sustainment rates significantly lower than Maneuver rates.



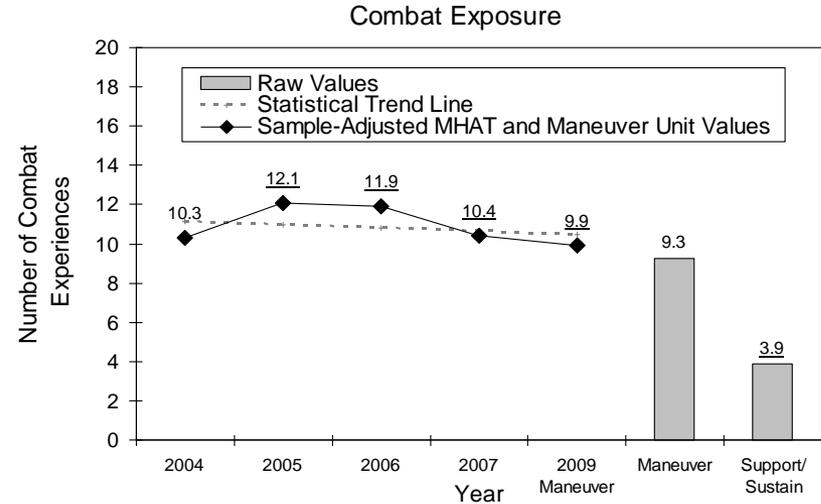
Combat Exposure: Adjusted Percents for Male, E1-E4 Soldiers in Theater 6 Months or Longer.

Combat Experiences (OEF)	Percent		
	2005	2007	2009
During this deployment did you experience being attacked or ambushed	<u>49.9%</u>	<u>74.3%</u>	83.3%
During this deployment did you experience being directly responsible for the death of an enemy combatant	<u>12.9%</u>	<u>30.9%</u>	51.6%
During this deployment did you experience having a member of your own unit become a casualty	<u>56.4%</u>	75.0%	77.1%
During this deployment did you experience having a buddy shot or hit who was near you	<u>8.8%</u>	<u>24.1%</u>	36.4%



OIF: Combat Exposure (**)

- Reported levels of combat exposure in Maneuver units lower than every year except 2004. Support / sustainment rates significantly lower than Maneuver rates.



Sample-Adjusted Percents for Male, E1-E4 Soldiers in Theater 9 Months.

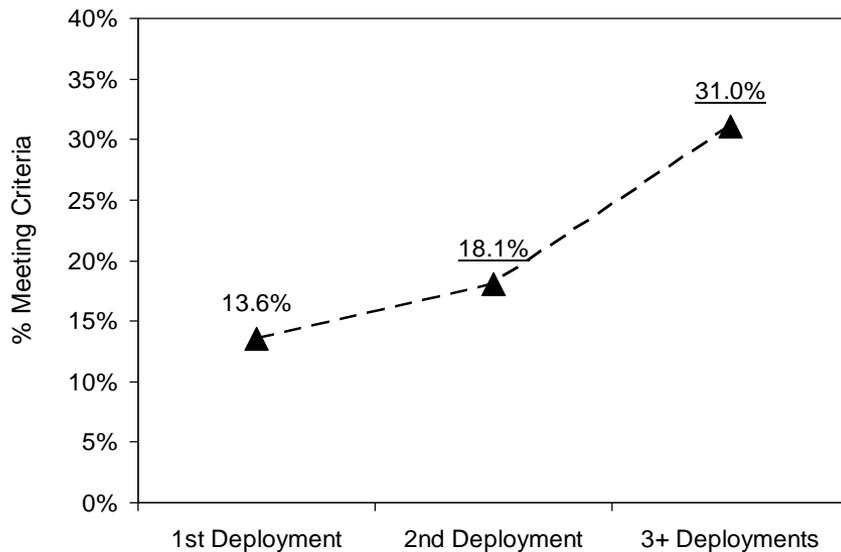
Combat Experiences	Sample-Adjusted Percent		
	MHAT IV 2006	MHAT V 2007	MHAT VI (Maneuver) 2009
Being attacked or ambushed.	66.4%	50.7%	34.0%
Being directly responsible for the death of an enemy combatant.	15.0%	12.3%	9.0%
Having a member of your own unit become a casualty.	59.3%	54.6%	45.4%
Had a buddy shot or hit who was near you.	15.3%	15.6%	8.4%



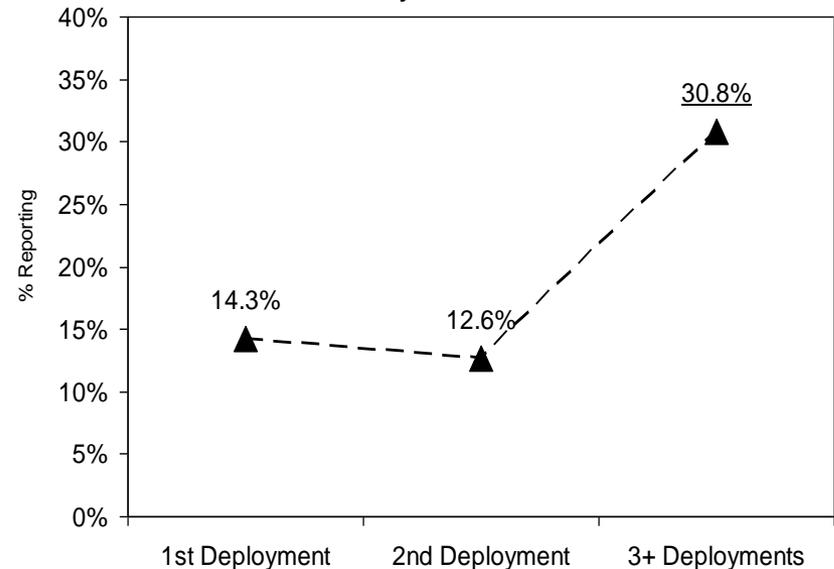
OEF: Multiple Deployments (**)

- Soldiers on second or third deployment more likely to meet screening criteria for psychological problems.
- Soldiers on third deployment were nearly two times more likely to report marital problems than Soldiers on first deployment.

NCO: Any Psychological Problem



NCO: Any Marital Problems

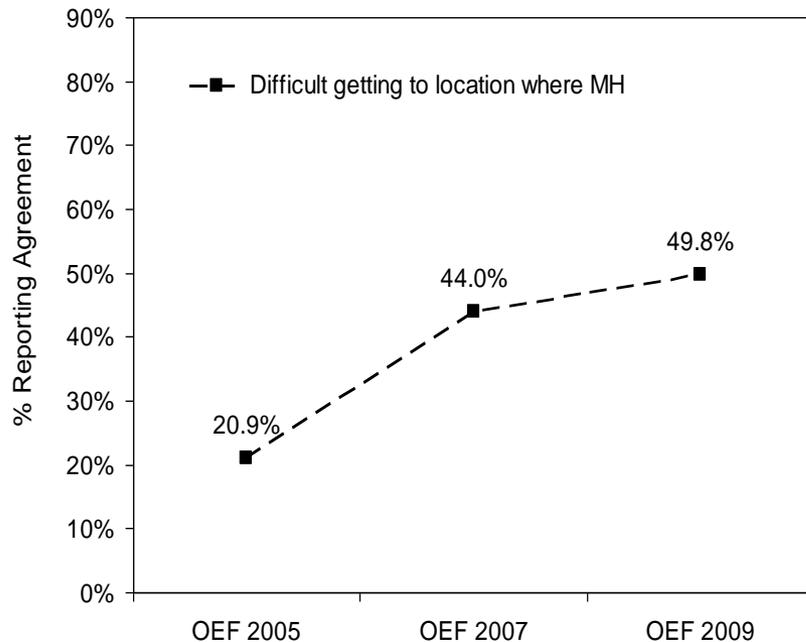




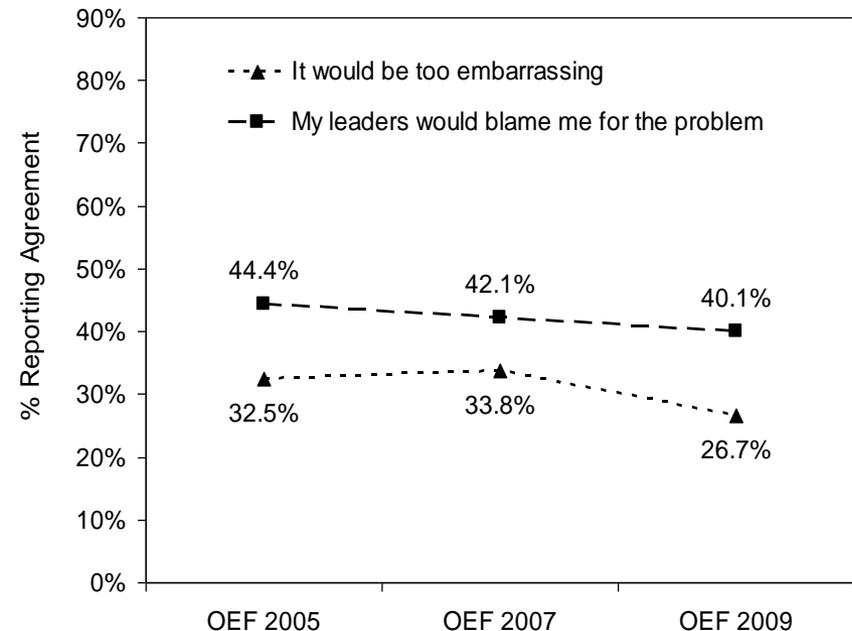
OEF: Barriers to Care & Stigma (**)

- Maneuver Soldiers reported significantly more barriers to care in compared to either 2005 or 2007.
- No significant changes in stigma across OEF 2005, 2007, and 2009. Stigma about receiving mental health care remains a concern.
- More stigma concern in maneuver units compared to support and sustainment

Barriers to Care



Stigma Perceptions



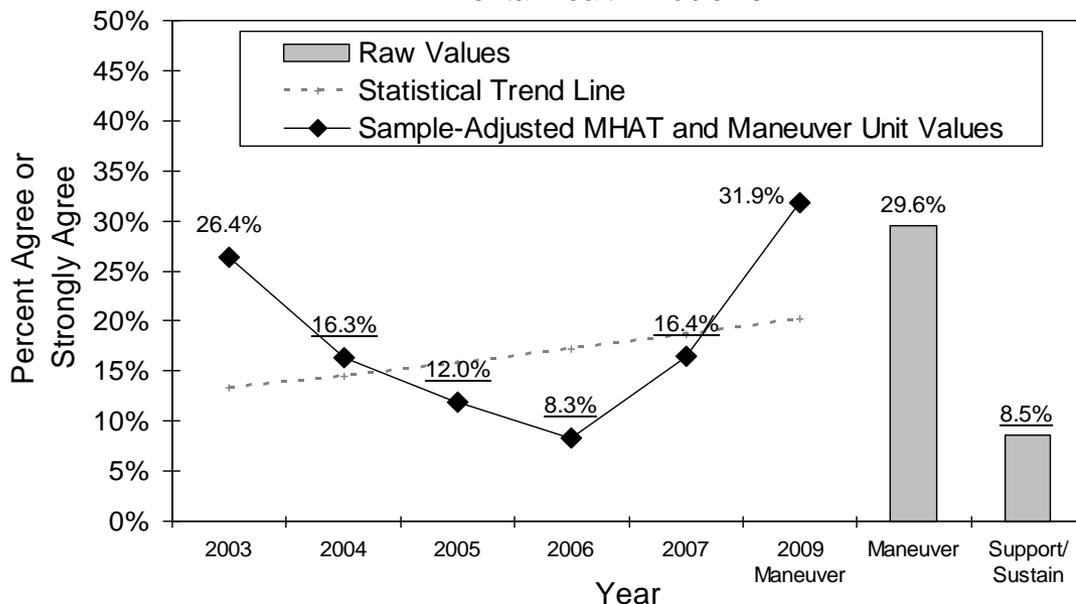


OIF: Barriers to Care & Stigma (**)

- Maneuver Soldiers reported significantly more barriers to care than every previous year except 2003.
 - This is likely due to the sampling design that surveyed more Soldiers outside of FOBs: A group that has difficulty accessing care.

Difficult to get to location where mental health specialist is

Sample-Adjusted Values for E1-E4 Male Soldiers Reporting Mental Health Problems



OIF Stigma

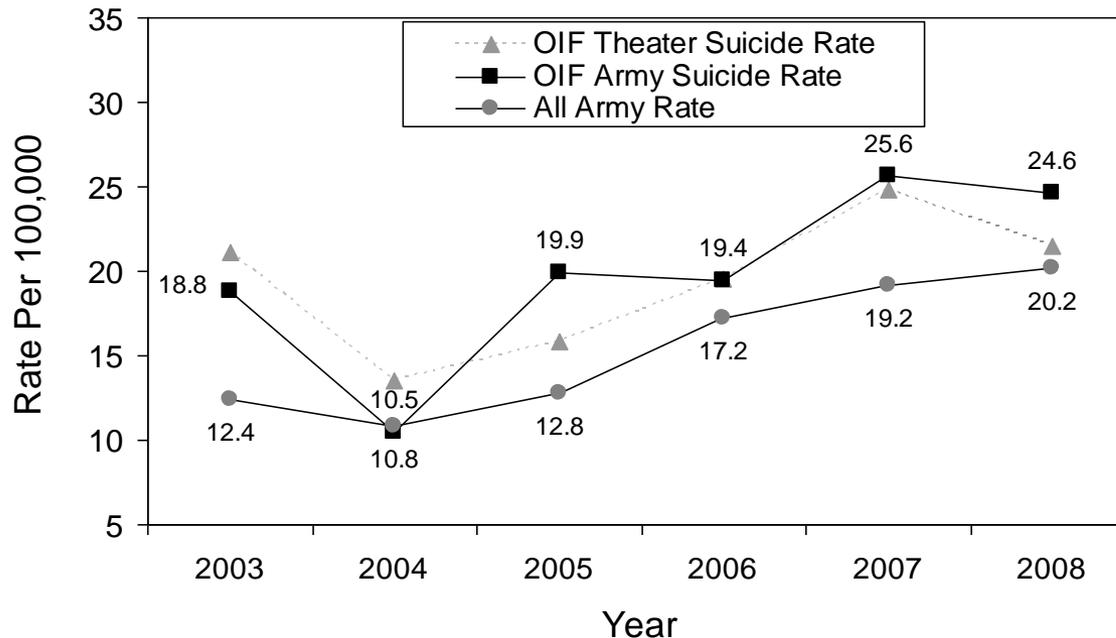
- Same pattern of data as in OEF:
- Overall trend for stigma has not changed over time.
- Maneuver unit stigma higher than support/sustainment



OIF: Suicide (**)

- OIF theater rate (all services) and OIF Army rate in 2008 not statistically different from 2007
 - First year since 2004 that theater rate has not increased.
 - A OIF Army rate of 18.9/100k would be significantly lower than 2007 ($p < .05$)

OIF Army and Theater OIF Suicide Rates





OEF: Behavioral Healthcare Assessment (**)



- Fewer providers per Service Member compared to OEF 07 and OIF 09
- As of 31MAY09, staffing ratio 1:1123—fewer than recommended (1:700)

ATO Behavioral Health Providers

	OEF 2005	OEF 2007	OEF 2009	OIF 2009
Army	9	10	16	168
Navy	0	1	2	27
Air Force	0	18	25	32
All Services Total	9	29	43	227

Number of Service Members per BH Provider

	OEF 2005	OEF 2007	OEF 2009	OIF 2009
Overall	1756	651	1123	627
Independent Practitioner	3951	1452	2194	1424

Note : Rates do not include OSCAR or Coalition personnel

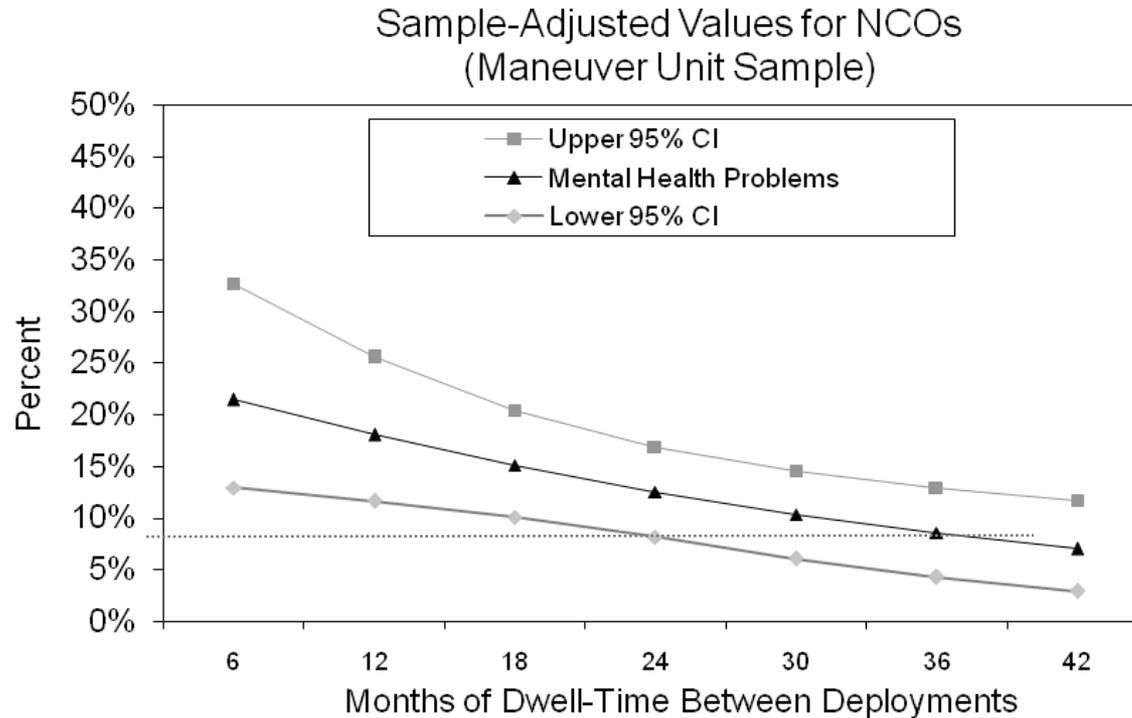
Note : Rates do include Restoration Center, BTIF and SOTF personnel

Note : Independent Practitioners include psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric nurse practitioners, social workers and occupational therapists



OIF: Dwell-Time (**)

- Dwell-time significantly related to mental health problems.
 - Based on Hoge et al., (2004) 10% can be considered garrison norm.
 - A near return to garrison mental health rates occurs around 24 months with full return around 30 to 36 months of dwell-time.

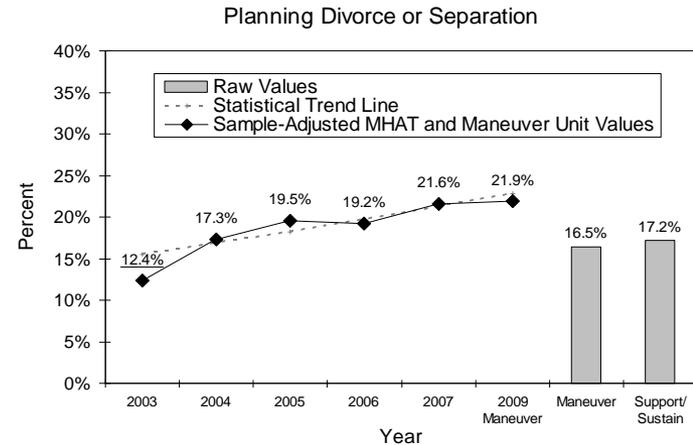
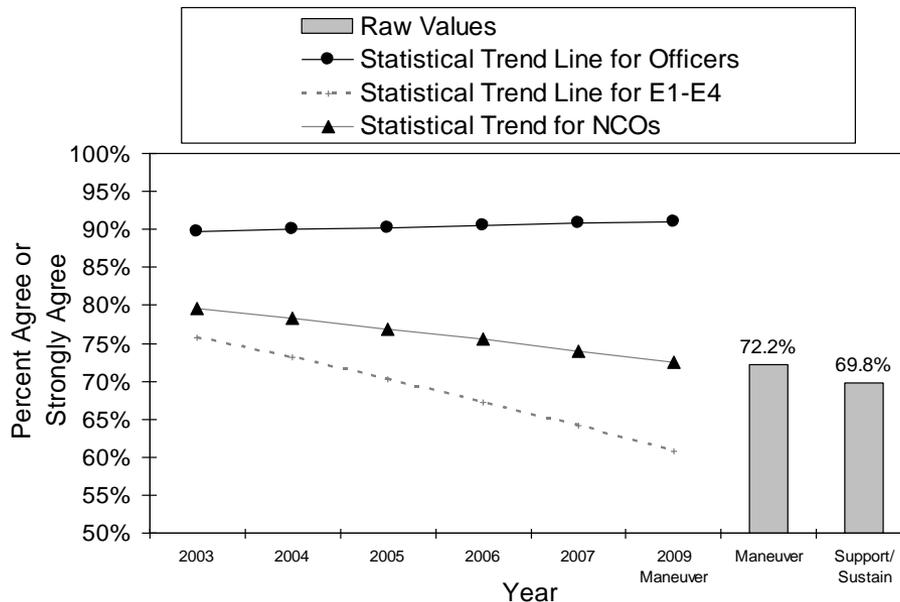




OIF: Marital Relationships (**)

- Marital satisfaction has declined particularly for junior enlisted.
 - Young Soldiers most vulnerable
- Reports of intent to get a divorce or separation significantly increased.

Sample-Adjusted Trends in Response to Item:
"I have a good marriage"

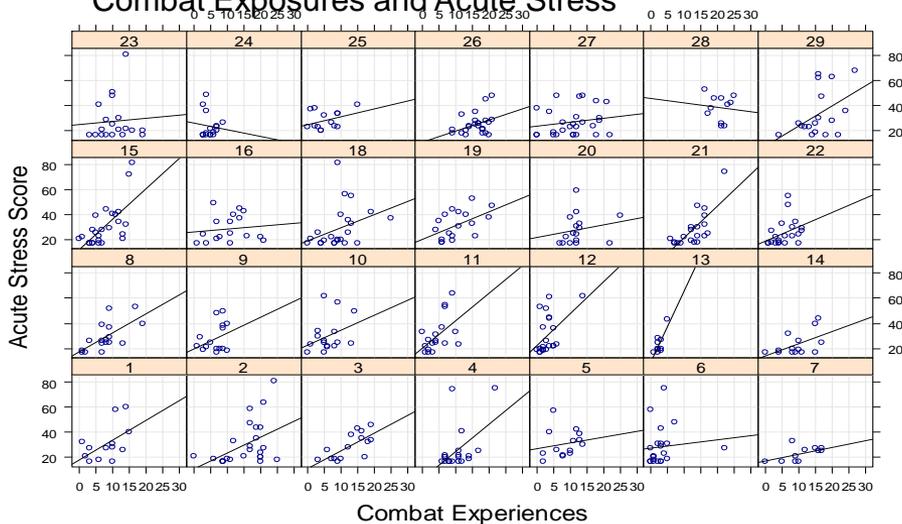




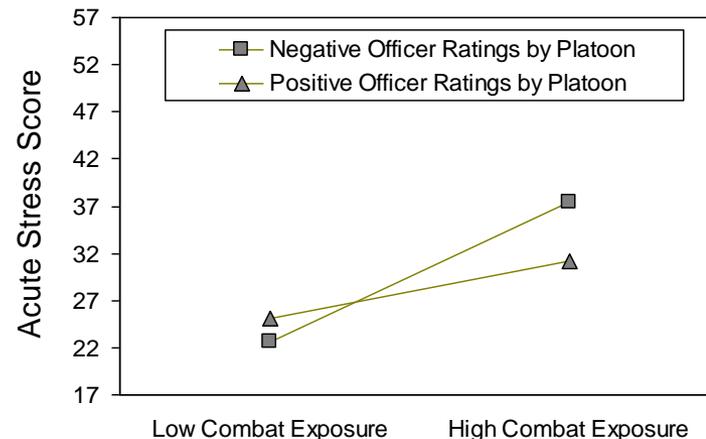
OIF Resiliency Factors: Officer Leadership (**)

- Maneuver platoons differ in resiliency. In some platoons (platoon 27 below), Soldiers with high levels of combat do not report high acute stress scores.
 - Officer leadership identified as the main factor leading to resilience.

Platoon-Level Variation in the Relationship Between Combat Exposures and Acute Stress



Officer Leadership, Combat and Acute Stress





MHAT 6 Recommendations (**)

- Delivery of behavioral health care in theater
 - *Implement a dual-provider model within BCTs*
 - *Create an NCO 68X30 position in Brigade Behavioral Health Section*
 - *Establish organic behavioral health requirement on National Guard BCT TO&E*
 - *Recommend assigning a Behavioral Health Advocate per battalion who has been trained in the basics of behavioral health*
 - *OEF Specific: Add BH personnel in order to meet the 1:700 ratio*
 - *OEF Specific: Maintain 1:700 ratio through the surge in forces*
 - *OEF Specific: Appoint a senior theater-wide BH consultant (appointed June 2009) and a senior Behavioral Health NCO for USFOR-A*
- Training
 - *Develop and validate new resiliency training for at risk groups*
 - *Continue to emphasize leaders' roles in creating resilient units through leadership training*



Status of MHAT 5 OEF Recommendations (**)



- Time off and Down-Time Policies
 - *Access to R&R, sleep hygiene and re-set time*
 - *Directed at Soldiers in remote/outlying locations*
 - *Implementation not being systematically accomplished.*
- Delivery of Behavioral Health Care in Theater
 - *Theater BH oversight, improving outreach, conducting psychological debriefings and travel throughout the ATO.*
 - *Overall, improvements have been made.*
- Training
 - *Develop training for at risk groups (e.g. units that experienced high levels of combat), implement BH training for medics, families, redeploying Soldiers and develop training targeted at stigma and suicide.*
 - *Overall, training developed and implemented to meet the intent of recommendations.*



MHAT 7: The Way Ahead (**)

- MHAT 7 directed by VCSA
- Set for Spring 2010
- Joint Survey
- Survey development and coordination underway