



HEALTH AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301-1200

JAN 27 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY (M&RA)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY (M&RA)
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE (SAF/MR)

SUBJECT: Requirements for Blood Samples Before and After Deployments

The 2005 National Defense Authorization Act requires a change in the timing of the collection of blood specimens from Service members prior to deployment. Previous Defense policy specified that serum stored in the Defense Serum Repository as a result of HIV testing, which is performed within 12 months of deployment, would suffice for a pre-deployment specimen. The new law requires that a specimen be collected within 120 days of deployment. The language reads:

(b) INTERIM STANDARDS FOR BLOOD SAMPLING –

(1) TIME REQUIREMENTS. – Subject to paragraph (2), the Secretary of Defense shall require that -

(A) the blood samples necessary for the predeployment medical examination of a member of the Armed Forces required under section 1074f(b) of title 10, United States Code, be drawn not earlier than 120 days before the date of the deployment; and

(B) the blood samples necessary for the postdeployment medical examination of a member of the Armed Forces required under such section 1074f(b) of such title be drawn not later than 30 days after the date on which the deployment ends.

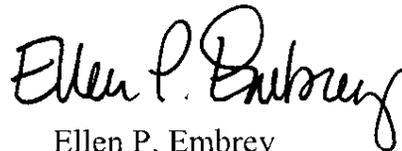
(2) CONTINGENT APPLICABILITY. – The standards under paragraph (1) shall apply unless the Joint Medical Readiness Oversight Committee established by section 1301 recommends, and the Secretary approves, different standards for blood sampling.

Although the provisions of paragraph (B) conform to previous Defense policy, paragraph (A) necessitates this specific notice to addressees to ensure that pre-deployment processing of Service members includes the drawing of a blood sample to conform to the requirements of law.

The law also established the new Joint Medical Readiness Oversight Committee (JMROC) mentioned in paragraph (2). The Department has requested that the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board (AFEB) provide recommendations on the three questions below. In addition, ASD(HA) has requested that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also provide comments on these issues.

- 1) Is there an evidence-based medical reason for DoD to routinely collect and store pre-and post-deployment serum specimens from deploying/redeploying personnel?
- 2) Are there medically recognized biological media that DoD should collect to determine a relationship between post-deployment health outcomes and deployment-related exposures?
- 3) If medically valid reasons exist to obtain biological media before and after deployments, what is an appropriate sampling time before and after deployment, and should we utilize a statistically significant cohort, or obtain samples from all personnel?

The AFEB recommendations will be provided to the JMROC to consider in its deliberations. Until the JMROC makes its recommendations, the Department must comply with the specific provisions of the law with regard to blood sampling, as described above.



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cc:
ASD(HA)
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