



HEALTH AFFAIRS

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

1200 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1200

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MEMORANDUM FOR SURGEON GENERAL OF THE ARMY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE NAVY
SURGEON GENERAL OF THE AIR FORCE

SUBJECT Safeguarding Deployment Medical Records

In conjunction with our most important mission of caring for servicemembers who are deployed and engaged in combat, I would like to stress the importance of also safeguarding deployment medical records

I share with you the utmost confidence in the capabilities of our military health care team to prevent, treat, and manage casualties. The health of our fighting forces is of paramount importance and must be our primary focus. At the same time, medical records documenting the care we provide during deployments need to be safeguarded and incorporated into permanent health records following deployment. As we learned from the Gulf War, unavailability of deployment medical records can impede follow-on health services while fueling speculation about health-related events and suspicion about our commitment to protect the health of deployed forces.

Please review your respective procedures for ensuring that deployment health care is appropriately documented, that deployment medical records—both paper and electronic versions—are maintained, and that these records are then expeditiously consolidated with the individual's complete health record at the conclusion of the deployment. While recognizing some degree of service-specificity in medical recordkeeping systems, we can all agree that documenting deployment health services and consolidating deployment medical records are critical elements of overall force health protection.


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