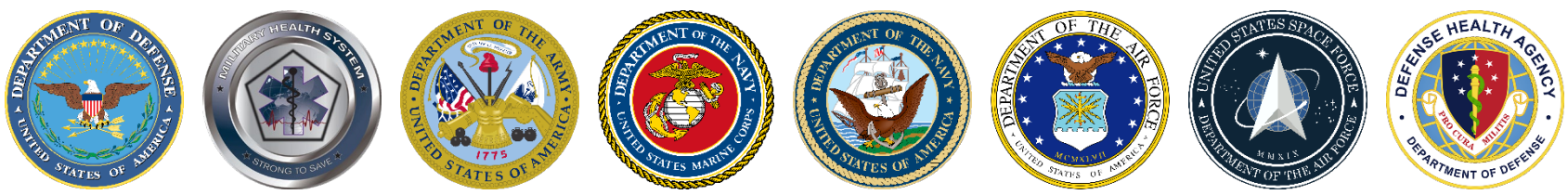


# Combat and Operational Stress 101

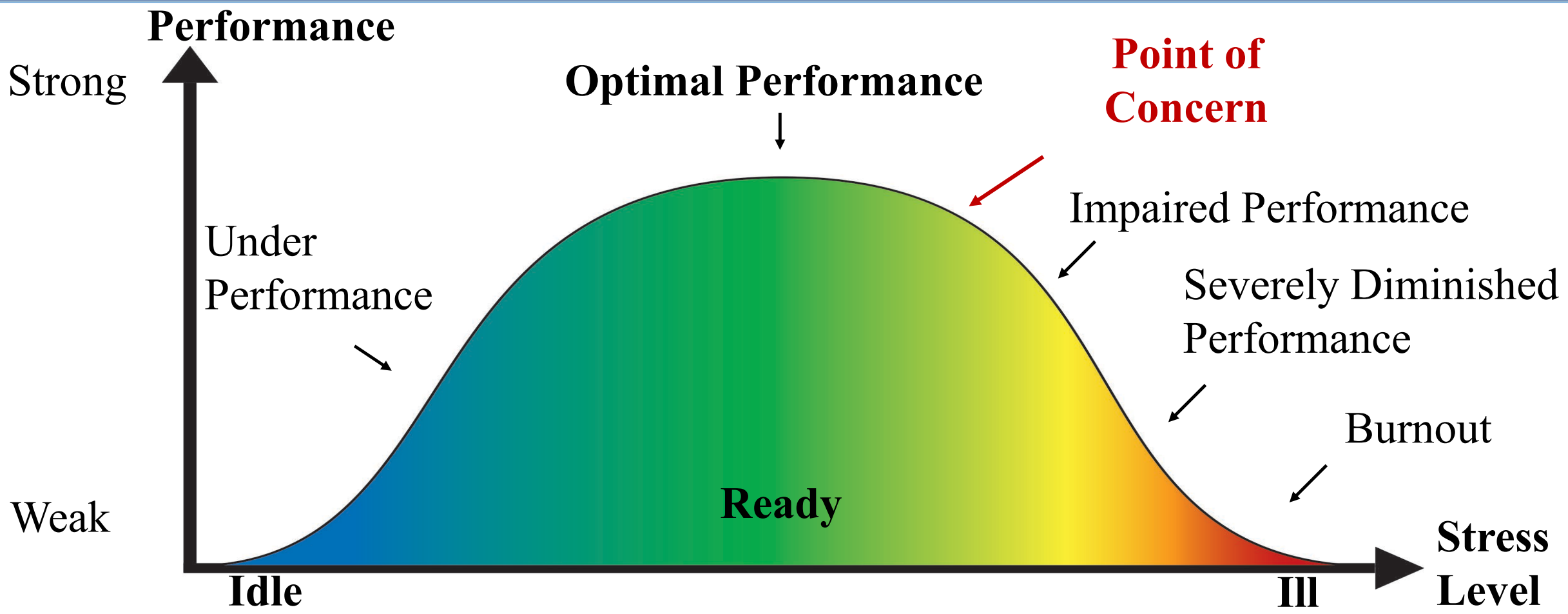
## Part II – Taking Action for Yourself and Your Buddy



# Goals of This Training

- This training focuses on:
- Part I (review)
  - Combat and Operational Stress (COS):
    - What it means
    - How it affects you
    - What to do about it
  - Interventions: Increasing self awareness, focusing on the here-and-now, challenging negative thinking, using tactical breathing and muscle relaxation.
- Part II:
  - How to use the stress continuum to take care of yourself and your buddies
- The overall goal of this training is to encourage you to enhance total fitness by optimizing physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing

# Success Requires Some Stress



# Stress Continuum Model - Be Aware of Your Current Zone and Alert to Changes



Idle	Ready	Reacting	Injured	Ill
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lethargic</li> <li>- Unfocused, not thinking clearly</li> <li>- Unmotivated, apathetic</li> <li>- Bored</li> <li>- Slow, unproductive</li> <li>- Time goes slowly</li> <li>- Not contributing to the unit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good to go</li> <li>- Well-trained</li> <li>- Fit and focused</li> <li>- Cohesive units</li> <li>- Ready families</li> <li>- Personal &amp; social life is good</li> <li>- Optimal performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distressed or impaired</li> <li>- Decrease in function or performance</li> <li>- Mild &amp; temporarily anxious, irritable or sad</li> <li>- Physical or behavioral changes</li> <li>- Trouble sleeping</li> <li>- Difficulty concentrating</li> <li>- Increase in alcohol related incidents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More severe or persistent distress</li> <li>- Serious suicidal or homicidal thoughts</li> <li>- Experiencing panic attacks or rage</li> <li>- Disruption of moral values</li> <li>- May leave lasting memories, reactions, and impressions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experiencing orange zone symptoms for more than 60 Days</li> <li>- Stress injuries that don't heal without help</li> <li>- Symptoms persist, get worse</li> <li>- Feeling depressed or anxious</li> <li>- Feeling suicidal and/or homicidal with a plan</li> </ul>

# **Stress Management: Using the Stress Continuum Model for Self-Care**

# The Blue Zone (Idle)



# Be Aware of Blue Zone Indicators

## Examples of Blue Zone Indicators

### Physical

- Low energy level
- Not working
- Not moving much; body slumped
- Eyes unfocused

### Mental

- Unfocused
- Not thinking clearly
- Not very productive
- Preoccupied and distracted

### Emotional

- Unmotivated
- Apathetic; doesn't care
- Bored

# Taking Action in the Blue Zone

- Look around to find tasks that are more challenging
- Talk with a trusted NCO about career development
- Consult Military OneSource for career advice
- Look for outside career development opportunities (e.g., getting a new certification or going to school)
- Ask your buddies if they have ideas
- Ask your leadership for more challenging tasks/responsibilities



# The Yellow Zone (Reacting)



# Be Aware of Yellow Zone Indicators

## Examples of Yellow Zone Indicators

### Physical

- Too pumped up or tired
- Muscle tension or headaches
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Trouble sleeping

### Mental

- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty remembering or performing calculations
- Difficulty following complex instructions

### Emotional

- Mild & temporarily anxious, irritable or sad
- Being short-tempered
- Apathy or complacency

# Taking Action in the Yellow Zone

- Take a knee: take an hour break or request leave
- Get enough sleep [7-8 hours]. To problem solve obstacles to good sleep, talk with family, buddies, or command; practice sleep hygiene tips
- Practice: focus attention on here and now, challenge your negative thinking, tactical breathing, progressive muscle relaxation
- Check your activities: decrease unhealthy coping behaviors and increase healthy coping behaviors
- Manage home-front stressors (e.g., speak to a financial counselor, marriage counselor)
- Ask for help from family, buddies, or command if needed
- Call Military OneSource for help (800-342-9647); it's confidential and free support available 24/7.
- Additional confidential resources: Military & Family Life Counselling (MFLC) program and Chaplaincy

# The Orange Zone (Injured)



# The Orange Zone

## Examples of Orange Zone Indicators

### Physical

- Heart pounding, even at rest
- Shaking, even when not in danger
- Sweating, even at rest and when not feeling hot

### Mental

- Loss of ability to recall memories
- Memories that are so vivid they seem like they are happening now
- Painful thoughts that keep popping into awareness

### Emotional

- Intense and uncharacteristic anger
- Intense and uncharacteristic fear
- Intense and persistent sadness

# Taking Action in the Orange Zone

- Try short-term stress reducing approaches used in Yellow Zone
- Talk to a buddy or trusted mentor
- Notify leadership and request support:
  - Inform leadership that you would like to see a provider
  - Keep safe and calm, rest and recuperate for 24-72 hrs
  - Schedule an appointment or walk into the BAS or behavioral health clinic, or visit a chaplain
- Call the Psychological Health Resource Center for support and comprehensive list of resources (866-966-1020)

# The Red Zone (III)



# Be Aware of Red Zone Stress Indicators

<b>Red Zone Stress Indicators</b>	<b>Red Zone Stress Conditions Arising From Untreated Stress Reactions</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suicidal or homicidal thoughts, intentions, or plans</li> <li>- Alcohol or drug abuse</li> <li>- Persistent feelings of hopelessness</li> <li>- Excessive, constant worrying</li> <li>- Severe fatigue, insomnia or other trouble sleeping (includes nightmares)</li> <li>- Intense anger and lashing out</li> <li>- Disruptive attention and memory problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acute stress disorder (ASD)</li> <li>- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)</li> <li>- Panic disorder</li> <li>- Major depression</li> <li>- Generalized anxiety disorder</li> <li>- Drug/Alcohol misuse or dependence</li> <li>- Disorders of impulse control (especially aggression)</li> </ul>



# Taking Action in the Red Zone

- *If you believe that you are a danger to yourself or others, seek immediate assistance from the emergency department, or the chain of command, or call the Military Crisis Line (800-273-8255, Press 1)*
- *If you are experiencing any other Red Zone indicators:*
  - *Notify leadership and request support:*
    - *Inform leadership that you would like to see a provider (“I am having a difficult time right now. I have thoughts about harming myself but haven’t acted on them. I would like to see BH before things get worse.”)*
    - *Schedule an appointment or walk into the BAS or behavioral health clinic*
  - *Contact the Military Crisis Line for support via phone (800-273-8255, Press 1) or text 838255*

# Summary: Examples of Speaking to Leadership



Zone	Examples of things to say to leadership
Blue	“I’m feeling idle right now. What other responsibilities can I take on?”
Yellow	“I feel like I’m not at the level I used to be and I think I need to talk to someone to get back to myself.”
Orange	“Hey sir/ma’am, I am not suicidal but I am having a really rough time. I need some help getting stuff off my plate.” “I am having a difficult time right now with some personal things. I am not thinking of hurting myself but I want to talk to BH before things get worse.”
Red	“I am having a difficult time right now. I have thoughts about harming myself but haven’t acted on them. I would like to see BH before things get worse.”

# Pros and Cons of Seeking Help: Possible Barriers



## What prevents you from seeking help when experiencing high levels of stress?

Stigma	Perceived as being weak by co-workers
Trust in leadership	Perceived as being weak by leadership
Self-reliance	Lack of support by command leadership
Access to care	Everyone is stressed
Understanding of mental health	Fear of reprisal
Command climate not conducive to care	Not having awareness of how or resources
Being a burden	Pride, uncomfortable
Time, too busy	Other barriers?

# Pros and Cons of Seeking Help: Motivators

## Factors that encourage you to seek help when experiencing high levels of stress

Personal responsibility	Self preservation
Good leadership	Family/friends
When I am having trouble coping	Co-workers
Realizing I could handle stress and challenges differently	The desire to contribute to the mission effectively





# Buddy Care





# What is Buddy Care?

- Buddy care is being aware of and taking care of your buddy
  - If you notice your buddy is having a tough time, talk to them
  - Know your buddy's regular behavior + Notice big changes = Take action

## Outline of three action steps for buddy care:

1. Observe and be aware. You must notice buddy issues in order to take action! Pay attention to Blue, Yellow, Orange, and Red Zone Indicators
2. Talk and listen to your buddy (Connected Listening)
3. Choose appropriate action plan

Photo Credit: US Air Force photo

# Step 1: Be Aware of Blue Zone Stress Indicators



## Examples of Blue Zone Indicators (Idle)

<i>To Identify:</i>	<i>Watch For:</i>	<i>Listen For:</i>
<b>Current Stressors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very light workload</li> <li>- Boring and repetitive report</li> </ul>	“I’m very bored with my job.”
<b>Level of Distress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Constantly playing on cell phone, sitting idle</li> <li>- Feels bored, underappreciated</li> </ul>	“I feel like my work doesn’t make much of a difference.”
<b>Changes in Functioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Slow</li> <li>- Unproductive</li> <li>- Unmotivated</li> </ul>	“I’m feeling useless at work.”

# Step 1: Be Aware of Yellow Zone Stress Indicators



## Examples of Yellow Zone Indicators (Reacting)

<i>To Identify:</i>	<i>Watch For:</i>	<i>Listen For:</i>
<b>Current Stressors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High operational tempo</li> <li>- Unit mission unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “My head feels foggy all the time.”</li> <li>- “Some of the members in the unit hate me.”</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Distress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased conflicts in unit</li> <li>- Outbursts of temper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Everything makes me angry lately.”</li> <li>- “Can I get transferred to another unit?”</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Functioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of mission focus</li> <li>- Difficulty getting sleep</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “I am not sleeping very well.”</li> <li>- “There’s something wrong with me.”</li> </ul>



# Step 1: Be Aware of Orange Zone Stress Indicators



## Examples of Orange Zone Indicators (Injured)

<i>To Identify:</i>	<i>Watch For:</i>	<i>Listen For:</i>
<b>Current Stressors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Close brush with death</li> <li>- Death/illness of friends/relatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "I almost got killed by an IED."</li> <li>- "My son is very sick."</li> </ul>
<b>Level of Distress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Uncharacteristic outbursts of anger, anxiety, or fear</li> <li>- Loss of interest in work, hobbies, or socializing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "I keep waking up from the same nightmare."</li> <li>- "I don't have any energy anymore."</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Functioning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Significant changes in personality</li> <li>- Poor hygiene or grooming</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "I haven't slept in weeks."</li> <li>- "My appetite is gone."</li> </ul>

# Step 1: Be Aware of Red Zone Stress Indicators



## Examples of Red Zone Indicators (III)

<i>To Identify:</i>	<i>Watch For:</i>	<i>Listen For:</i>
<b>Current Stressors</b>	Stressors are similar to those of the Orange zone, but the level of distress is worse than the Orange zone	“I don’t want to get out of bed anymore.”
<b>Level of Distress</b>	Clinical mental disorders, e.g., major depression or substance abuse or dependence	“I’m getting blackout drunk every night.”
<b>Changes in Functioning</b>	Symptoms and disability persist over many weeks or worsen over time	“I haven’t slept for months.”

## Step 2: Connected Listening

- Demonstrate awareness by listening to the other person and respecting their opinions:
  - Perspective taking** – *Appreciate* another person's reality
  - Stay out of judgement** – *Listen* in an active and nonjudgmental way
  - Recognize emotion** – *Be aware of* the other person's feelings
  - “Reflect” your understanding** – *Express* your understanding of what is being said
- Refer to the Stress Continuum to start a conversation (e.g., “Are you in the orange zone today? You looked stressed.”)
- Be sure to follow up with further conversations or actions, as needed

Photo Credit: US Army photo by Spc. Matthew J. Marcellus

## Step 3: Buddy Action Plan – Blue Zone

- Encourage your buddy to:
  - Look around to find tasks that are more challenging
  - Talk with a trusted NCO about career development
  - Consult Military OneSource for career advice (800-342-9647)
  - Look for outside career development opportunities (e.g., getting a new certification or going to school)
  - Ask his/her buddies if they have ideas
  - Ask his/her leadership for more challenging tasks/responsibilities

## Step 3: Buddy Action Plan – Yellow Zone

- A buddy in Yellow Zone may benefit from:
  - Talking with you, so that your buddy feels heard and understood (“I’ve noticed that you’ve been down lately. What’s going on?”)
  - Guiding them through tactical breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, focusing attention on here and now, and checking/challenging their negative thinking
  - Taking them to visit a chaplain or MFLC for non-emergency concerns
  - Sharing what resources are available to help with certain concerns (financial, marital, etc.)
  - Contacting Military OneSource (800-342-9647) with your buddy; it’s confidential and free support available 24/7
- Continue to follow up with your buddy

## Step 3: Buddy Action Plan – Orange Zone

- Guide your buddy through the short-term stress reducing approaches used in Yellow Zone
- Go with your buddy to the BAS or the mental health clinic (make an appointment or walk in immediately), or visit a chaplain
- Suggest that your buddy inform leadership that they would like to see a mental health provider or to request leave for 24-72 hours for recuperation
- Call the Psychological Health Resource Center with your buddy for guidance, support and a comprehensive list of resources (866-966-1020)



## Step 3: Buddy Action Plan – Red Zone

- *If you believe that your buddy is a danger to themselves or others, seek immediate assistance from the emergency department, the chain of command, or call the Military Crisis Line (800-273-8255, Press 1)*
- *If your buddy is experiencing any other Red Zone indicators:*
  - *Notify leadership and request support:*
    - *Inform leadership that you would like to take your buddy to see a provider*
    - *Schedule an appointment or walk into the BAS or mental health clinic with your buddy*
  - *Contact the Military Crisis Line with your buddy for support via phone (800-273-8255, Press 1) or text 838255*

# Summary: Starting the Conversation

Zone	Examples to start a conversation with your buddy
Blue	“You have looked bored lately. What’s your workload like these days?”
Yellow	“I’ve noticed that you’ve been down lately. What’s going on?”
Orange	<p>“Hey, I really think you should visit a chaplain or go to the BAS. I’ll go with you.”</p> <p>“Look, I’ll call the Psychological Health Resource Center for you and put the call on speaker phone. Will that work?”</p>
Red	<p>“Hey, I really think you need to go to the BAS. I’ll go with you.”</p> <p>“Hey, there’s Chaplain Smith. Let’s go talk to her.”</p>



# Buddy Care Trust and Privacy

- Buddy care is about building relationships, not therapy or counseling
- Trust is the foundation upon which these relationships are built
- Keep your buddy's personal information private; don't spread rumors, gossip, or reveal damaging information! However, for their own safety, consider notifying the chain of command if your buddy is suicidal or in the Red Zone.
- Encourage (but do not pressure) your buddy to seek help from specific resources if they are struggling with problems such as sexual assault, legal problems, thoughts of suicide, or discrimination
- Offer to go with your buddy if they are reluctant to seek help

Photo Credit: US Army photo

# Wrap-Up

- Remember that some stress is necessary to perform optimally
- Stress tells your mind and body, “Danger is near and we need to prepare!”
- Too much stress can lead to stress reactions which can hurt your performance
- Awareness of your stress zone can help you realize when you need to take action
- The earlier you take action the more likely your stress levels will improve as well as your performance
- Keep an eye on your buddy; take action if you see signs of Blue, Yellow, Orange, or Red Zone reactions

Photo Credit: US Army photo