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Unit ministry teams are providing religious support to help ease the stress of Reception, Staging, Onward-movement and Integration 2001 as they fulfill their own training mission.

This is a first-time overseas exercise for some soldiers participating in RSO&I 2001. Even for a seasoned soldier, dealing with the stress of a two-week long mission in a different country coupled with being away from family and friends can feel overwhelming.

“We attempt to ground people in their own faith traditions by providing religious support opportunities for worship,” said Lt. Col. Wilfred Brewster, 8th Army deputy command chaplain for plans and operations.

“When people are grounded in their faith, they’re much stronger and able to withstand the rigors of any situation.” he said.

Unit ministry teams provide several forms of spiritual guidance and welfare. By visiting working cells and MWR tents during the exercise, they are also able to assess the morale and welfare of soldiers. Ministry teams can help soldiers get through personal crisis when circumstances and difficult situations arise.

Col. Melvin R. Schroeder, senior chaplain for RSO&I, said they also do simple things for soldiers such as showing them where the post exchange or commissary stores are located.

“One thing we can do is be very practical about some of the suggestions to make their time away from home more comfortable. They appreciate those little things.” he added.

One frequent suggestion is to use phone cards purchased at the post exchange instead of making an operator assisted call. Calling or pre-paid phone cards from the United States typically have higher rates for overseas calls. Cards available at the PX can have a rate as low as 9 cents a minute.

Brewster added that he likes to share with soldiers the advantages of using e-mail and Internet phone services located in the Cyber Cafe at the Community Center.

Besides providing religious support, the unit ministry teams are also revalidating their own Mission Essential Task List. Schroeder said the ties he has with the 70 people from the Indianapolis based 8th Army augmentation unit make it easier to be available for real-life ministry while working on their METL.