

**THE AMERICAN VETERAN  
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**SEGMENT: FT. HOOD**

**JIM BENSON, HOST:** FORT HOOD, TEXAS, WHERE SERVICE MEMBERS ARE EITHER TRAINING FOR BATTLE OR RETURNING FROM TOURS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ. SCOTT WALLACE FOLLOWS ONE CAREER SOLDIER ON THE VERGE OF RETIREMENT AND V-A'S EFFORTS TO STREAMLINE THE TRANSITION FROM MILITARY TO CIVILIAN LIFE.

**SCOTT WALLACE, REPORTER:** FT HOOD, TEXAS, IS ONE OF THE BUSIEST ARMY BASES IN AMERICA.

**RIFLE RANGE TRAINER:** WHEN THE BALLOON POPS UP, THE TARGET'S GOING TO DROP.

**SCOTT WALLACE:** IT'S HOME FOR THE ARMY'S THIRD CORPS – INCLUDING THE FOURTH INFANTRY AND FIRST CAVALRY DIVISIONS.

**SOLDIERS:** COMING OUT, COMING OUT!

**TRAINER:** OKAY, WEAPONS DOWN!

**WALLACE:** NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVISTS FROM ACROSS THE NATION RECEIVE COMBAT TRAINING HERE, INCLUDING SHORT RANGE MARKSMANSHIP THEY MAY NEED IN IRAQ.

**WALLACE:** THESE TROOPS ARE ALREADY TRAINED AND LEAVING FOR IRAQ.

**CLERK (TO SOLDIER):** YOU HAVE A GREAT ONE.

**INSTRUCTIONS ON PA:** IF YOU ARE MARRIED, CHECK BLOCK NUMBER ONE.

**WALLACE:** MOST HAVE BEEN THERE BEFORE -- TWICE AND EVEN THREE TIMES.

**LTC JAMES HUTTON, III CORPS, U.S. ARMY:** WE KNOW WHAT IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE, AND I THINK WE'RE REALLY READY TO JUST GET THERE AND GET TO WORK.

**WALLACE:** AND GET HOME SAFELY. FORT HOOD IS A REVOLVING DOOR: TROOPS LEAVING FOR THE WAR, OTHERS JUST COMING HOME FROM IT, RECEIVING A HERO'S WELCOME.

**MUSIC PLAYS AND FAMILY MEMBERS CHEER RETURNING SOLDIERS**

**SOLDIER TO CAMERA:** GOOD TO BE HOME, BABY!

**WALLACE:** MANY OF THEM WILL SEEK SEPARATION FROM THE MILITARY IN THE DAYS AND WEEKS AHEAD.

**TOM EDMUNDSON, VA MILITARY SERVICES COORDINATOR, FT. HOOD, TX:** AT ANY GIVEN MONTH, THERE'S ABOUT A THOUSAND THAT LEAVE ACTIVE FEDERAL SERVICE FROM FT. HOOD ALONE.

**WALLACE:** THAT'S WHY V-A HAS PLACED BENEFITS COUNSELORS LIKE TOM EDMUNDSON IN FORT HOOD'S TRANSITION CENTER.

**EDMUNDSON:** WHAT IS COMPENSATION? COMPENSATION IS MONEY. WE'RE JUST MISSING THE BULLET IF WE'RE NOT HERE TO CAPTURE THOSE AND GET THEM INVOLVED IN OUR PROGRAMS. I TALK TO THEM ABOUT FILING A CLAIM FOR COMPENSATION, THE IMPORTANCE OF IT AND THE EASE WE'VE IT HERE. I TALK TO THEM ABOUT MEDICAL COVERAGE WHEN THEY LEAVE AND HOW THEY ACQUIRE MEDICAL CARE THROUGH THE VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

**ALEC LAZORE, FIRST SGT, U.S. ARMY:** CAN WE HAVE A LOOK AT THE DD214 ONE FINAL TIME?

**CLERK:** OF COURSE. I WANT YOU TO TAKE A VERY GOOD LOOK AT IT. MAKE SURE EVERYTHING IS EXACTLY HOW YOU WANT IT, BECAUSE THIS IS A VERY IMPORTANT DOCUMENT.

**WALLACE:** FIRST SGT. ALEC LAZORE IS RETIRING AFTER 25 YEARS, INCLUDING A TOUR IN IRAQ. HIS WIFE, DAWN, IS ALSO A VETERAN, A FORMER COMBAT MEDIC WHO'S ALREADY BEEN THROUGH THE PROCESS.

**LAZORE:** THEY TAKE YOU THROUGH A SERIES OF TRANSITIONAL BRIEFINGS, INFORMATIONAL BRIEFINGS, EVERYTHING FROM SURVIVOR BENEFITS TO HEALTH CARE, DENTAL CARE, EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS.

**CLERK:** IT'S 55 PERCENT OF HIS PAY.

**LAZORE:** IT LOOKS COMPLETE. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.

**CLERK:** WELL, SGT. LAZORE, CONGRATULATIONS AND ENJOY YOUR RETIREMENT!

**WALLACE:** THEY HAVE A LEG UP ON PLANNING THEIR FUTURE, THANKS IN LARGE PART TO ADVICE THEY'VE RECEIVED FROM VA STAFF.

**LAZORE:** HI, TOM, HOW ARE YA DOIN'?

**EDMUNDSON:** FINE, HOW YOU DOIN'?

**LAZORE:** GREAT. I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MY WIFE, DAWN.

**LAZORE:** THEY WILL CERTAINLY PROVIDE ME WITH MONIES AND A STIPEND TO MY BACHELOR'S DEGREE AND POSSIBLY, MY MASTER'S.

**EDMUNDSON:** IF WE CAN BE OF FURTHER ASSISTANCE, YOU BE SURE TO CALL US.

**LAZORE:** ABSOLUTELY. HAVE A GREAT DAY, TOM.

**PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT (TO SOLDIER IN A WAITING ROOM):** SERGEANT CRENSHAW?

**WALLACE:** VA HEALTH CARE STAFF ALSO PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE IN ASSURING A SMOOTH HAND-OFF TO THE VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

**EDMUNDSON:** WE GOT VA MEDICAL PERSONNEL RIGHT THERE ON STAFF, WORKING HAND IN GLOVE WITH THE ARMY DOCTORS.

**MEDICAL EXAMINER (WHILE PERFORMING A REFLEX TEST ON A SOLDIER):** I WANT YOU TO PULL AS I HIT. GO AHEAD AND PULL.

**KENNETH HAWTHORE, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT, CENTRAL TEXAS VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM:** THIS ALLOWS US, AS MEMBERS OF THE VA, TO CATCH A VETERAN BEFORE HE LEAVES ACTIVE DUTY. WE CAN DO A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION, EVALUATE HIS CLAIMS AND ACTUALLY SEE ALL THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE. IF I HAVE A QUESTION AS TO X-RAYS OR OTHER LABORATORY STUDIES, WHICH INVOLVE THE VETERAN'S DISABILITY CLAIM, I'M ABLE TO ACCESS THEM WITH EASE.

**WALLACE:** IT ALL ADDS UP TO GIVING OUR HEROES LIKE ALEC LAZORE THEIR BEST SHOT AT A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE.

**LAZORE:** I'M FEELING VERY EXCITED. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO A NEW CHAPTER IN MY LIFE. THERE'S GOING TO BE SOME CHALLENGES. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO THOSE.

**EDMUNDSON:** WE RECOGNIZE THE ANXIETY SOMETIMES IN SOLDIERS THAT ARE LEAVING THE SERVICE, PARTICULARLY YOUNG FAMILIES THAT ARE LEAVING. THERE'S AN UNCERTAINTY OUT THERE ABOUT INCOME, MEDICAL COVERAGE AND THINGS OF THIS NATURE. WE TRY TO BECOME PART OF THE SOLUTION, NOT PART OF THE PROBLEM, IF YOU WILL.

**BENSON:** WELCOME HOME, SOLDIERS. WE ARE PROUD OF YOUR SERVICE. VA BENEFITS AND SERVICES ARE HERE FOR YOU WHEN YOU NEED THEM. BUT DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOU DO. TO LEARN MORE ABOUT VA HEALTH AND OTHER BENEFITS AS YOU DISCHARGE FROM SERVICE, GO TO OUR SEAMLESS TRANSITION WEB SITE AT [WWW.VA.GOV](http://WWW.VA.GOV) AND LOOK FOR THE RETURNING VETERANS LINK.

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