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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Flexibility, teamwork key to smooth transition for DoD families from Japan**

*By Tom Saunders, AFNORTH Public Affairs*

**TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, CALIF.** -- As family members made their way across the Pacific Ocean bound for the United States, scores of representatives from various agencies awaited their return at the Joint Reception Coordination Center here, led by members of U.S Army North.

A network of experts from the Army, Air Force and Navy, along with civilians from the Transportation & Safety Administration, U.S. Customs & Border Protection, the San Francisco Police Department and United Air Lines joined forces to assist Department of Defense families transiting from Japan after the nation was rocked by a 9.0 earthquake and subsequent tsunami March 11.

To date, more than 2,500 passengers have processed through the JRCC that was temporarily set up at here to execute Operation Pacific Passage, DOD's response to help alleviate the strain on infrastructure and demand for food, water, medical care and other resources in northern Japan.

"This operation is a perfect example of excellent interagency cooperation between a multitude of DOD, federal and civilian agencies," said Col. Warlinde Richardson, defense coordinating officer for the JRCC. "This effort clearly demonstrates the compassion of our nation as a whole, and the tireless work of those who want to assist our military families."

As the DCO, Colonel Richardson has command and control of the JRCC, which has the ultimate responsibility for processing military family members through the airport and assisting them as they transition to their next location. In addition to transportation support, the family members have access to financial assistance, medical aid, veterinarian expertise and child care while processing the necessary paperwork to reach their follow-on destination.

"Our goal is to take care of our families and treat them as if they are our own parents, sisters, brothers and children," said Colonel Richardson. "Our efforts should mirror the treatment and attention the troops who are redeploying from the battlefield overseas receive. With that mentality, we can't go wrong."

When gusty winds and bad weather were forecast March 23 at Travis AFB, military planners began assessing flight operations throughout the evening. Discussion among senior leaders and JRCC officials determined that a forward-deployed JRCC should be set up at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) to ensure families could be received and taken care of regardless final landing location.

Agency officials working with the JRCC during the rapid setup at SFO said it was an honor to support the families and the U.S. military.

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JRCC**

“Everyone at San Francisco International Airport is proud and honored to support our military families as they return to the United States,” said airport director John L. Martin. “Once we received word last week that SFO might become an arrival point for these flights, all airport departments, in particular the airport duty managers, aviation security, community affairs, as well as our outstanding volunteers in the USO, have been dedicated to working with their DOD counterparts to ensure a smooth and seamless operation.”

The JRCC will remain in place until its purpose is no longer needed.