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## **For Immediate Release**

### **Army Efforts to Prevent Suicide Mirrored in Utah**

DRAPER, Utah – The U.S. Army released its suicide data for 2008 late last week and outlined its efforts to reduce such deaths in its ranks.

"We want the families who have lost loved ones to suicide to understand how deeply we feel their loss and that we are committed to doing everything possible to prevent this tragedy in our Army," said Secretary of the Army Pete Geren. "Progress depends on coordinated efforts across our entire Army – across all components, jurisdictions and commands, and on effective work with our government partners – the VA and the National Institute of Mental Health."

To identify Soldiers at risk for suicide and to intervene appropriately, the Army will conduct a "stand-down" within a 30-day window running February 15 to March 15, 2009. The stand-down will include training for peer-level recognition of behaviors that may lead to suicidal behaviors, as well as intervention at the buddy level. The stand-down will be followed by a chain-teaching program focused on suicide prevention.

"Our Soldiers and Airmen and their families give their all to protect us at home and abroad," said Maj. Gen. Brian Tarbet, Utah National Guard adjutant general, "and we will continue to do all we can as leaders to educate our members on how to recognize, report and prevent suicides."

While the Army overall has seen increases in suicide rates for the fourth consecutive year, the Utah National Guard has not experienced the same trend. In 2006, the Utah Guard had four confirmed suicides, with one in 2007 and two in 2008.

How this stand-down and training program will take shape for the Reserve Component, to include the Utah National Guard, has yet to be announced.

As the Utah Guard awaits guidance on implementation of the announced stand-down, it will continue its efforts in promoting awareness and education of its members on the warning signs of suicide. Utah Guard Soldiers, Airmen and families typically receive pre- and postmobilization briefings on suicide awareness and prevention, as well as follow-up classes during deployment.

Other resources available to Utah National Guard members and their families include a full-time licensed clinical social worker, mental health counselors, suicide-prevention counselors, the Post-Deployment Health Reassessment program, Veteran transition-assistance advisor, the VA and civilian practitioners.