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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Learn about PTSD in military and families at next NAMI meeting on Jan. 8

SAN DIEGO—Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is so prevalent among the military that one in six soldiers returning from Iraq suffers with PTSD symptoms, according to the New England Journal of Medicine. This is in addition to the hundreds of thousands of veterans that are already dealing with what used to be called “shell shock” from previous wars.

PTSD can occur when a service member experiences, witnesses, or is confronted with an event involving actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others. Unfortunately, this scenario can happen on a daily basis for those serving on the front lines in the Global War on Terror.

On Thursday, January 8, 2009, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) in San Diego will hold a special Education and Advocacy meeting about PTSD in the Military, what the NAVY is doing and how NAMI can help.

Speaking will be Captain Paul S. Hammer, MC, USN Director, Naval Center, Combat & Operational Stress Control. Captain Hammer is a psychiatrist with experience in San Diego County's public mental health system as well as in the Navy. He will address some of the well-publicized issues of PTSD among the men and women in our military services as well as the role of their families.

Some of the symptoms of PTSD include:

- Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts and perceptions (seeing a comrade's dead body or experiencing flashbacks of the sounds of explosions and screaming)
- Recurrent and distressing nightmares of the traumatic event
- Intense psychological distress when exposed to cues or reminders of any aspect of the trauma

- Extreme physical reactivity (e.g., racing pulse, sweating, intense fear) when exposed to any cues or reminders of the trauma
- A general numbing in responsiveness; the person feels detached and estranged from others and may have little range in emotion and few strong feelings
- Hypervigilance (constantly scanning the environment for danger)
- Exaggerated startle response (especially to sudden movement or loud noises)
- Poor concentration
- Irritability/anger

If you or a loved one suffers from PTSD, or if you are interested in what the military is doing to help those who have it, please come to this free presentation on January 8. The evening will also include a dialogue with the President-Elect of the NAMI San Diego Board of Directors, Wendy McNeill.

NAMI is a non-profit organization that provides education, support services and advocacy to improve the lives of everyone affected by mental illnesses. They hold Education and Advocacy meetings the first Thursday of every month at no charge to the public. These feature expert speakers on timely topics.

The meeting on January 8 starts at 6:00 pm and will be held at the University Christian Church Friendship Hall at 3900 Cleveland Ave in San Diego (across from the Post Office).

Mark your calendar and if you need more information, contact NAMI San Diego at (800) 523-5933. Or visit www.namisandiego.org

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