

Pray for our Armed Forces and their Families



Our military forces and their families are in desperate need of your prayer and ministry support! Constant deployments and prolonged exposure to combat in irregular warfare against non-traditional enemies are taking their toll. A Department of Defense (DOD) Task Force recently analyzed data from the Post-Deployment Health Re-Assessment, which is administered to service members returning from deployment. They discovered that **38%** of Soldiers and **31%** of Marines reported psychological symptoms of combat trauma, but that among members of the National Guard, the figure rose to **49%**. Combat trauma was significantly increased for those who had been on multiple deployments.

Another consequence of repeated deployments for the war on terror is the amount of time our troops are actually spending in combat. Lt Col Oliver North recently stated that during World War Two, the average GI was in combat with the enemy for about **6** months. In the Korean War, time in combat was **11** months, and in Vietnam, **13** months. Since 9/11, however, the average soldier in today's Army has spent about **42** months in combat operations.

The Army recently reported that the 2009 suicide rate for active duty personnel is on track to be the highest since the current system of record-keeping began in 1980. Moreover, the Army's suicide rate has more than doubled since 9/11, and now exceeds the civilian rate. The rate among veterans is even higher - a 2007 study by the National Institute of Mental Health revealed that the suicide rate among veterans was more than double that of the civilian population. The Marine Corps revealed that last year they had more losses to suicide than to combat. Most authorities attribute these alarming statistics to the effects of combat trauma.

Psychological problems among the family members of military personnel, while yet to be fully quantified, are also a matter of concern, as hundreds of thousands of children experience psychological stress while a parent is deployed. As a result of these stresses, marital discord is rampant among young military couples, who are separated by repeated deployments when they should be building their lives together. (An Air Force chaplain reports that **67%** of enlisted marriages require counseling.)

Of equal concern are the horrific wounds suffered in the current conflicts, as veterans return home with Traumatic Brain Injury, lost or mangled limbs from IEDs, and other catastrophic injuries. Fortunately, modern medicine and the availability of rapid air transportation to state of the art medical facilities mean that these wounded warriors can survive such trauma. Survival, however, usually means extensive recovery and rehabilitation in a Veteran's Administration Hospital or a military facility. According to the Boston Globe, the ratio of wounded to killed in action for our forces in the Global War on Terror is now **16:1** – in Vietnam it was **1:3**. Clearly our wounded veterans need prayer support as their numbers continue to grow, and VA chaplains find themselves stretched to meet the ministry needs.

These pressures have created unprecedented demand for military prayer and ministry support at a time when military resources are increasingly limited by personnel and budget constraints. The need for military ministry and family support is exceeding the capacity of our chaplains, and requires the combined efforts of our nation's churches, Christian military para-church organizations, and the military chaplains. From Ecclesiastes 4:12, we know that **“. . . A cord of**

Pray for Our Armed Forces and their Families

three strands is not quickly broken,” and in Matthew 18:19-20, Christ reminds us *“. . . that if two of you on earth agree about something, then you can pray for it. And the thing you ask for will be done for you by my Father in heaven.”* Ministering together, churches, chaplains, and para-churches can equip our military families with the *“full armor of God”* for the war on terror, and help reverse the alarming trends outlined above.

Even as we pray for our own forces, however, we remember that the Savior charged us in Matthew 5:44 to *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”* This is clearly difficult in time of war, but we lift our enemies to God, knowing from Romans 5:8 that, *“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Surrendering our enemies to the Savior’s care is the most loving thing we can do for them.



The Association for Christian Conferences, Teaching & Service, (ACCTS), Christian Military Fellowship (CMF), Officers Christian Fellowship (OCF) and other Christian military ministry organizations invite you to pray our military and their families through the war on terror. Your partnership will be an invaluable asset as we pray for the God of all grace and mercy to call down a supporting prayer *“Wall of Fire”* around our fighting forces, our wounded veterans, and their families during these difficult times, even as He did for Jerusalem in Zechariah 2:5.



If you would like to join this important cause, please use the prayer map on the ACCTS website at www.accts.org. You can also register on the website for conference on *“Helping Military Families,”* August 17-21, in beautiful Estes Park, CO. This unique event features a concert by Steve Green, and keynote speakers Dr. Myles Munroe of the Bahamas, Dr. Richard Blackaby, and Pastor Rob Parker of Canada addressing prayer during pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. There will also be roundtable discussions on deployment led by MG (Ret.) Bob Dees, Executive Director of the Military Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, MG Doug Carver, Army Chief of Chaplains, and BGen Dave Kettle, Chaplain General of

the Canadian Forces. With their many years of combined military ministry experience, these “Christian Soldiers” will provide a unique perspective on the growing need for ministry to, and prayer support of our Armed Forces and their families as they fight to preserve our freedoms. Complementary workshops on Military Family Issues, Christian Leadership, Church Military Ministry, and Prayer will further equip you for more effective ministry to military families.

The conference fee is \$50; lodging and meals are \$310 - \$420 per person based on of lodging at the YMCA of the Rockies, (www.ymcarockies.org) in Estes Park. More information about the *“Wall of Prayer”* and the *“Helping Military Families”* Conference can be found on the ACCTS website, www.accts.org. Donations to provide a scholarship for a military member to attend the conference may also be made using the ACCTS website.