



*"Wives and husbands of servicemembers display an uncommon courage and strength as they steadfastly support their spouses during long and arduous deployments. While they endure separations that are filled with worry and anxiety, they face unique stresses. Foremost is the concern about the safety and well-being of deployed loved ones, but there are many other challenges. From managing household finances to comforting children impacted by a military parent's absence, military spouses take on the burdens of maintaining families largely on their own." – President Barack Obama*

I've long held that our spouses have a much harder job than we, the Soldier, have. Soldiers endure long and rigorous training, and are deployed globally – often in harm's way. Our work is often challenging, and at times dangerous. Some might even call our profession, the profession of arms, prestigious. I think most of us would simply call it necessary.

We serve so that our Great Nation will remain free. We protect a way of life that is unique; where anyone may rise to greatness, and where all enjoy privilege and freedom unheard of in much of the world. We serve at great personal cost; willingly placing ourselves at peril, moving often, and being separated from loved ones for extended periods. We serve so that others do not have to, and we are honored to have the privilege to do so.

Throughout it all, we know where we are going, what we are doing, and why we are doing it. We are well trained, well equipped, and surrounded by peers with the same commitments as we have.

Contrast this to the military spouse. Your spouse may have no idea where you are, what you are doing, or if you are safe in a very hostile world. Even when the Soldier is not deployed, they are often away from home at training and/or temporary duty assignments that require extended absences from the home. In either case, your spouse is left to care for the family alone; raising and comforting children who may not even understand why mommy or daddy has to be away from home, attending to the everyday household "emergencies" like car repairs or broken appliances, and managing family finances.

Return from deployment will often mean moving to a new duty location. While the Soldier focuses on the challenges associated with the new duty assignment. It's often the spouse's chore to settle the family into the new location, setting up new households, finding new schools, and helping children to settle into new routines. If the Soldier is returning from combat, the spouse may have to deal with emotional issues like posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), emotional detachment, personality changes, or a host of other issues associated with a Soldier's time in a war zone.

The military spouse confronts numerous problems and concerns over the course of the Soldier's career. His or her ability to remain positive and supporting of the Soldier, are absolutely crucial.

We ask much of our spouses; far more than most civilian couples could ever comprehend. It takes a special person to be the spouse of a Soldier; an emotionally strong but loving person, a person who can face life's challenges alone but chooses to share them when the Soldier returns from wherever duty calls.

In 1984, President Reagan proclaimed the Friday before Mother's Day of each year to be Military Spouse Appreciation Day in recognition of the "countless personal sacrifices" military spouses have made in support of the Armed Forces. I can think of no individual more deserving of recognition than the spouse of a Soldier. HOOAH!!!

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