



SMDC / ARSTRAT
Headquartered on Redstone Arsenal, Alabama



CSM Eagle Column December 2008

The holiday season is once again upon us. For most of us, the Holidays are a time of great joy and happiness, a time for being together with families and friends. Unfortunately, there's also an unpleasant side to the holiday season. Many of us will feel a marked increase in stress and / or anxiety, and some will make foolish decisions concerning the use of alcohol and / or drugs.

The causes of stress and anxiety are numerous and varied. They range from not being able to find or afford that one gift your child wants, to being alone or separated from loved-ones for the holidays, to hosting or attending holiday functions or a family get together. The source is not nearly as important as how we deal with the problem.

If you find yourself unable to cope during the holiday season, or at any other time, I urge you to reach out to your Chaplain, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) representative, and / or your leaders. They are all here to help you and they will not judge you. Many have faced the same or similar issues, and all will do everything within their authority to help you overcome the problems that are preventing you from enjoying a happy holiday season.

If you know of someone who is having a difficult time this holiday season, please help look out for your battle-buddy. Don't pretend there isn't a problem. Do that person a tremendous favor. Urge them to see the Chaplain, give them the contact information for their EAP representative, or suggest they reach out to their supervisor for assistance.

As each of you goes about celebrating the holidays, I urge you to enjoy them in a safe and responsible manner. Please don't drink and drive this holiday season. The consequences, ranging from a career ending DUI to the loss of property and even loss of life, are just not worth it! If you must drink, make sure your group has a designated driver or take a cab home! If you see a fellow Soldier attempting to drive after drinking, intercede. Help the Soldier find alternative means of transportation. Don't let him or her behind the wheel.

If your plans call for driving extended periods this holiday season, plan ahead. Make sure you and your first line supervisor's conduct a thorough vehicle inspection prior to long trips. Remember to conduct a risk assessment and management. Tragedy often results from driving an improperly maintained vehicle in winter weather. A survival kit can mean the difference between life and death if you and your family or loved ones become stranded during severe winter weather. Also take breaks from driving to assure you remain alert and focused.

Finally, there are 256,000 Soldiers deployed around the world with some 148,000 who are in harms way in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom – some of them are members of the SMDC / ARSTRAT family. I ask that you keep our deployed Soldiers and Civilians in your thoughts and prayers this holiday season. Please remember their families as well. Many families will have an empty space at the table this holiday season, while they await their loved one's safe return.

Please enjoy a safe and happy holiday season. You are all valued members of the SMDC / ARSTRAT team, and we very much look forward to your return in the New Year. On behalf of me and my family, and the rest of the command team, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

SECURE THE HIGH GROUND!