

U.S. Army Offers Ways for Public to Support Troops

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Army Public Affairs Office receive numerous heart-felt requests from Americans who are seeking ways to show their support to soldiers, especially those serving overseas in this time of war.

“At this time of heightened awareness we are hearing from family members, friends and concerned citizens that they want to reach out and show their support for troops deployed overseas,” said Col. Richard H. Breen, Jr., Director of the Army’s Community Relations and Outreach Division. “Knowing this we have identified a variety of outlets that people can use.”

These websites represent several organizations sponsoring programs for members of the Armed Forces overseas. While the items and services are not endorsed by the military, these providers help soldiers and their families keep in touch. You may:

- Donate a calling card to help keep service members in touch with their families at Operation Uplink at <http://www.operationuplink.org/>
- Send a greeting via e-mail through Operation Dear Abby at <http://anyservicemember.navy.mil/> or www.OperationDearAbby.net <http://www.OperationDearAbby.net>
- Sign a virtual thank you card at the [Defend America](http://www.defendamerica.com) <http://www.defendamerica.com> Web site at <http://www.defendamerica.com/nmam.html>
- Make a donation to one of the [military relief societies](http://www.aerhq.org/links.htm) <http://www.aerhq.org/links.htm>:
- Army Emergency Relief at <http://www.aerhq.org/>
- Navy/Marine Relief Society at <http://www.nmcrs.org/>
- Air Force Aid Society at <http://www.afas.org/>
- Coast Guard Mutual Assistance at <http://www.cgmahq.org/>
- Donate to "Operation USO Care Package" at <http://www.usometrodc.org/care.html>
- Support the American Red Cross Armed Forces Emergency Services at <http://www.redcross.org/services/afes/>
- Volunteer at a [VA Hospital](http://www.va.gov/vetsday/) <http://www.va.gov/vetsday/> to honor veterans who bore the lamp of freedom in past conflicts.
- Support families whose loved ones are being treated at military and VA hospitals through a donation to the Fisher House at www.fisherhouse.org <http://www.fisherhouse.org>.
- Reach out to military families in your community, especially those with a loved one overseas.
- Send a personal message via "Stars and Stripes" - U.S. troops deployed to the Persian Gulf region and other overseas locations can now receive personal messages from family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues and supporters via the pages of "Stars and Stripes" as well. "Messages of Support," a daily section that debuted March 17, gives family and friends of deployed service

members a chance to pass their greetings, words of encouragement and announcements free of charge. "Messages of Support" can be e-mailed to "Stars and Stripes" 24 hours a day at messages@estripes.com, are limited to 50 words or less and will be printed on a first-come, first-run basis. "Stars and Stripes" reserves the right to screen and edit all messages and to omit any determined inappropriate.

- Purchase "Gifts From the Homefront" gift certificate – These can be redeemed by troops in their local exchange. Anyone may purchase these "Gifts From the Homefront" with a U.S. credit card or check, but only authorized AAFES customers can redeem them at any PX or BX. Sold by CertifiChecks, these gift certificates can be purchased 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year, and they come in denominations of \$10 and \$20. At this time military authorities have advised that CertifiChecks can only be sent to a specific service member at his or her APO or US mailing address. AAFES officials said they are currently working to find a solution to allow CertifiChecks to be sent to units or non-specific troops.

Breen noted that due to security concerns and transportation space, the military can no longer accept mail to "any service member." Many generous people have tried to avoid these prohibitions by sending large numbers of packages to an individual service member's overseas address, which however well intentioned, clogs the mail system and causes unnecessary delays.