Thinking of our Troops on Veterans Day and for Thanksgiving

November 11, 2011 - Even with the horrible economy, I'm a big believer that things could always be worse. There is no doubt that a large number of Americans are having financial troubles this year, but we still have things that we can be thankful for too. And on this Veterans Day, my mind turned to the less than 1% of Americans who get up every day and put on our country's uniform. I'm also thinking of their families.

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I have to admit that I didn't wake up this morning thinking of these things. What turned my thoughts to this particular subject was a letter that my wife received from her cousin, who also happens to have a daughter that was just deployed to a combat zone in the Middle East. This is her second tour of duty and what I learned in that letter both surprised and saddened me.

In her first tour of duty, she found out that more than half of the people in her unit never received anything from home. Not so much as a letter; let alone a care package. These are people who are willing to fight and die to protect our country and yet they have no support group in the United States willing to make the meager effort to even put pen to paper. That's simply not right.

As bad as the economy is, it's worse for many military personnel and their families. Reservists are commonly asked to leave higher paying civilian jobs to fight for our nation. But their monthly bills don't go down simply because they are deployed.

Making matters worse, there are countless scams that prey upon military families. They are also frequently targeted by

pay-day lenders. Services like this can actually make their economic circumstances even worse.

Given all of this, I was appalled by the idea that a majority, or even a large minority, of those serving overseas might be going through their tours of duty without any expression of gratitude from home. I was also pleased to learn that the armed forces are more than happy to accept anonymous care packages that they will distribute to the troops. That is, provided that those care packages are sent using military guidelines (which I'm including below).

The next section is directly from the letter. It includes a list of supplies that are needed and would be greatly appreciated by the troops. It also includes an address to send care packages or letters. All names have been removed.
This is a list I received from NAME the last time she was deployed, she shares it with the other service personnel but most products they receive are for men so if you could send some female stuff it's really a treat for the women:

- â€¢ The #1 item is wipes - they can never have enough of these, baby wipes are great when it's hot!
- â€¢ shampoo & conditioner
- â€¢ deodorant
- â€¢ body wash
- â€¢ any type of body spray
- â€¢ antibacterial hand cleaner
- â€¢ gum
- â€¢ microwaveable foods that do not need to be refrigerated especially the ones where you just add water
- â€¢ junk food - all types including candy (nothing that would melt)
- â€¢ shaving cream
- â€¢ throw away razors
- â€¢ lotion
- â€¢ tooth brushes & paste
- â€¢ mouth wash
- â€¢ bug repellent
- â€¢ magazines
- â€¢ books

If you have not mailed anything to our deployed military before you need to go to the post office, they have certain size boxes that are free if sending to the deployed military and a form has to be filled out for each box advising the exact content. If your list does not match exactly what is inside when these are scanned, they will destroy the box due to security. These boxes must be taken back to the post office in person for mailing.

If you want to write letters, that would be great, you can just write a letter without a box if you prefer, just put them in a large envelope with NAME's address on the outside - if personal just for NAME please place her full name on the outside of the envelope, if you want to write to those who never receive anything from home, NAME will distribute just write for a female or male service person. She is in an all force unit so it is not just Navy. She was so surprised the first time she was deployed that more than half of the service individuals never receive anything from home, if you would like to include your name and address so they can write back, please include in your letter. How sad that some never receive anything, they can die to keep us safe with no positive items from home.

If you decide to send something, NAME and I cannot thank you enough!!! Please keep all of our deployed military in your daily prayers.
Love to all,
The address to send mail or packages to is:
PRG 6-1-3
APO AE 09354

That may not look like much of an address, but the military will know what to do with it.

I certainly understand that a lot of Americans are having financial difficulty and not in a position to donate. At ACCESS, we're in regular communication with people who are facing real economic problems. But a majority of Americans can probably find a few bucks to help our service men and women out. Just think of it as giving them a happy Thanksgiving too. When you consider all they do for us, the rest of us are getting a great deal!

byJim Malmberg
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