



IA Family Connection

DECEMBER 2007

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From Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Gary Roughead...

I recently returned from the Central Command Area of Responsibility where I had the pleasure of visiting many of our Sailors serving in Individual Augmentee billets. The experience was inspirational, to say the least.

I expected to be impressed by their pride and professionalism—and I was. I was also inspired by their personal commitment, their successes operating in a very different environment than at sea, and their adaptability as they perform an incredibly important mission that is making a difference.

The contributions being made every day by our IAs would not be possible without support from families like yours. I know it is not easy. Please understand that your deployed loved one is serving our Navy and our Nation at a critical time and it is appreciated. I thank you for your sacrifices and support, as well.

The well-being of our Sailors and their families is one of my top priorities. There are many resources for families to “stay connected” while their Sailor is away serving—this fine newsletter is one of them. In this day of nearly instant electronic communication it is easy to assume others know where to go for information or support, but please, keep your eyes and ears open for those who may not know or who may not be connected. Nothing makes more of a personal impact in the lives of others than for someone to say, “Here, let me help you. I know where to find that.” This is part of who we are, and we must take care of every member of our Navy family.

I’m proud and inspired by the service and commitment of our Sailors and their families. Thank you for everything you do for our Nation and our great Navy. Happy Holidays!



Admiral Gary Roughead
Chief of Naval Operations

Making Christmas Memorable *By Laressa Witt*

Last Christmas, my husband was deployed to the gulf and I was left to navigate the emotions of Christmas without him. As in many homes, Christmas is a very special family holiday. I was concerned that it would not be as meaningful and memorable without Paul. As Christmas approached, I found myself “not in the Christmas mood.” I fought the desire to pass the holiday without much fan fare... but I have children. So despite how I felt, I decided to make this Christmas as meaningful as possible. It may not be the same as Christmas’ past but would have its own memories nonetheless.

Sights, sounds and smells are an important part of Christmas so I made sure all these were included. I felt it was important for my children’s sense of security to continue with the same traditions they always had even in their dad’s absence. On Christmas-tree-decorating-day, I made sure to bake cookies to fill the house with warm Christmas smells and to have Christmas music playing. As I did those things,



RP Ferguson and Chaplain Witt ready for the holidays in Iraq.



Chaplain Paul Witt at work.

I found that it felt more like Christmas for the children and, *surprisingly, to myself*. The smells, sounds and sights warmed and comforted our home. The void in the house was lessened. As we decorated, I gave myself permission to do less decorating than normal. I told myself it was okay to leave several Christmas boxes in the attic. It would still be Christmas without all the extras. The idea was to make the holiday meaningful, not madness.

On Christmas day, I was determined to continue with the same traditions as other Christmas'. Our traditions include having breakfast together, making hot chocolate, reading the Christmas story and then opening presents. My husband told me he would try to call from the Gulf when we opened the gifts; however, with so many possible obstacles, I didn't tell the children just in case he couldn't call. Thankfully, just as we started opening gifts, he called. The kids were thrilled and took turns talking to him, while the other opened the gifts their dad had sent. It was special for everyone; even Paul said he felt like he was actually there.

Although he was not actually present in body, he was able to join us in the celebration after all. I learned an important lesson about Christmas; if I choose to make Christmas memorable, it becomes memorable.

Ten Ways to Save \$ During the Holidays

The average family spends about \$900 on gifts, food and holiday decorations between Thanksgiving and Christmas. To reduce these costs try some of the following ways to save:

1. "Shop after 6 p.m. the day BEFORE the big sale. Usually the special discounts get put into the system after 6 p.m. the day before and you can beat the crowds." says Dan Butler, Vice President of Retail Operations and merchandising with the National Retail Federation.
2. Make and send free holiday "e-cards".
3. Shop online or at the Navy Exchange to avoid sales tax.
4. Pay cash. People who use credit cards tend to spend up to 33% more on gifts and that doesn't include any accumulated interest.
5. Create a shopping list and stick to it. Include who you will buy for and how much you will spend.
6. Buy "family" gifts rather than individual gifts such as a croquet set, a food basket or gift card.
7. Keep it light if you have to mail your gift as it's not unusual to spend as much on shipping as you do for the actual gift.
8. Shop for quantity rather than quality. When buying stocking stuffers go to the Dollar Store and fill a stocking for less. Buy lottery tickets for adults.
9. Bake extra batches of cookies to share with neighbors, colleagues and friends.
10. Shop for next year's holiday supplies the day after the holidays at the 50% off sales.





PS3 Battersby in Kuwait

ASCS Jack Beesley and
SK1 Bernadette Beesley, Kan-
dahar, Afghanistan

What do IA Sailors want for the Holidays?

Inquiring minds want to know, so we went to the source and asked. Here's a sampling of responses:

- All I want for the holidays is to see my family. —PS3 Susan M. Pena, Kuwait
- All I want for Christmas is a brand new set of Callaway Golf Clubs. —“Ralph,” Kuwait
- All I want for Christmas is a happy life for my family and let them have a joyous Christmas! —PS3 Battersby, Kuwait
- Peace on earth, a magic “no more IED button,” Christmas at home and pictures of my family. —Chief Malpica, Iraq
- Books and DVD's —CTOC (SW/AW) Brian Meyer, Bahrain
- All we want for Christmas is peace and security for the impoverished people of Afghanistan so that all US forces can return home. —ASCS Jack Beesley and SK1 Bernadette Beesley, Kandahar, Afghanistan

ECRC Family Readiness... What we can do for you!

As the holiday season approaches ECRC wants to thank all IA Sailors and their Families. The ECRC Family Readiness Team is prepared to support IA Families by providing the following services:

1. The ECRC Family Readiness Department acts as a conduit for resources and information specifically for IA Families.
2. ECRC has an email helpdesk at ecrc.fs.fct@navy.mil for questions such as, “Where can I find an IA support group meeting in my area?” Families can find answers to frequently asked questions as well as other information at the ECRC website at www.ecrc.navy.mil.
3. ECRC also maintains a 24 hour toll free careline at 1-877-364-4302 to provide immediate assistance in case of an emergency.
4. Due to Operational Security, ECRC will never provide IA Sailor contact information. We can only relay emergency messages through your Sailor's chain of command.
5. ECRC cannot confirm or deny operational reports about your Sailor, unit, or location that you may see or hear in the news media.
6. ECRC will never be the command that will notify family members in the event of a casualty. The Navy has trained personnel who provide the family with professional support and assistance in those specific situations.
7. During natural disasters or other emergency situations, ECRC will work with the Fleet and Family Support Center and parent command to assist and support IA Families.
8. Your Parent Command/NOSC, your Ombudsman, ECRC and the Fleet and Family Support Centers are standing by to support IA Families during this holiday season and throughout the coming New Year.



Wishing You the Best of the Holiday Season!—ECRC Family Readiness



IA Family Connection: A Virtual Meeting for Families

DECEMBER

Meet with other IA family members from around the world in the comfort of your own home!

To participate in the IA Family Connection:

You will need:

1. A computer with broadband Internet access.
2. A telephone.

To join:

1. Go to the browser address listed next to the date you want to attend. It will take you to a registration website where you'll be asked for a few pieces of information.
2. You will receive a confirmation email from WEBINAR providing the Internet browser address for the session as well as the telephone number to dial.

To attend session:

1. Insert the website address for the session into your browser window. It will scroll and a box will come up on your screen.
2. Click "Download GoToMeeting". To download GoToMeeting.
3. Click "run".
4. A bar will appear in the middle of the page as it downloads.
5. If you arrive before the facilitator, a window will let you know. Do not exit the window. Just wait for the meeting to start.
6. Once completed, the computer will ask you to enter: Name & email address.
7. "Waiting to View Screen" will appear. You are connected.
8. Dial in on your phone by calling:
1-800-791-2345 Code: 40560

These virtual IA family member discussion groups are hosted by Commander Navy Installations Command and Fleet and Family Support Centers worldwide.

Using the IA/Chat Features on NKO

Navy Knowledge Online is the official source of information for IA Sailors and their families. NKO also offers some cool features such as IA/Chat. Take a "guided tour" of NKO.

Fri, Dec 7, 2007 9:00 PM - 10:00 PM EST

<http://www.gotomeeting.com/register/258677035>

How to Pack Hugs in a Box

Your Sailor may be working with hundreds of people every day, but when is the last time your Sailor's had a hug?

Fri, Dec 14, 2007 9:00 PM - 10:00 PM EST

<http://www.gotomeeting.com/register/866876168>

Top Ten Tips for a Happy Holiday When Your Sailor is Deployed

Holidays are family days, so how can you have a happy holiday when your family is separated? Share tips for feeling connected even when you're not.

Fri, Dec 21, 2007 9:00 PM - 10:00 PM EST

<http://www.gotomeeting.com/register/880694693>

Let's Chat

Share the joys and challenges of being an IA family member with other IA family members. You may not be in the same "boat", but you've likely had similar experiences.

Fri, Dec 28, 2007 9:00 PM - 10:00 PM EST

<http://www.gotomeeting.com/register/830751931>

Bookmark FFSC

The Fleet and Family Support web site—www.ffsp.navy.mil— is a great web site to bookmark. Current information is posted there and updated regularly. On the left hand side of the homepage is a convenient link just for IA families, but don't stop there. Look around as there are all kinds of useful articles and links including information on IA specific family programs at a Fleet and Family Support Center near you.