

As the holiday season is quickly approaching, we must remember the brave men and women who selflessly defend our country and daily safeguard our freedoms. Our nation owes an incredible debt of gratitude that can never fully be repaid to all those who have served during the Global War on Terror.

In conflict, these heroic troops are our nation's greatest assets, helping to promote peace, stability, and democracy worldwide. Day in and day out, in the streets of Baghdad, in the countryside of Afghanistan, and in hotspots around the globe, American servicemembers serve our country faithfully and honorably.

It is not just the military that are affected when they are deployed and away from home, but also the families who are left behind. Many children and spouses of servicemembers silently sacrifice their loved one's presence during countless family dinners, birthday parties, and everyday routines.

The holiday season can be especially difficult for those whose loved ones are serving our country abroad. As thousands of families await the safe return of their loved ones, many will celebrate the holidays without an important family member and are reminded of the constant danger they face as our country is fighting two wars.

To bless military families this holiday season, Yellow Ribbon America and the America's Heroes Foundation are again sponsoring "Operation Christmas for Our Troops and Their Families". This project gives statewide and national community support to those who valiantly serve in the Armed Forces at home and abroad as well as their families who make tremendous sacrifices in the absence of their loved ones.

Last year, through the generosity of thousands of Americans, this project collected over 157,000 toys, calling cards, care packages, and DVDs as well as gift cards for military families. This year, Operation Christmas for Our Troops and Their Families will again have toy drop-off locations across Southern California.

To participate in this program, simply bring a new, unwrapped toy or new DVD to one of the statewide drop-off locations by December 21, 2008. For more information on drop-off locations, please call Yellow Ribbon America at (714) 454-1150 or visit them online at www.yellowribbonamerica.org/opchristmas.htm.

By defending our country both at home and abroad, our nation's military continually secure our rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. As the holiday season marks a special occasion to give to those who daily give to us, let us remember the men and women in uniform who put their country first and continually secure the blessings of liberty we Americans so enjoy.

GARY G. MILLER
Member of Congress