

<https://www.military.com/spousebuzz/blog/2015/02/not-say-national-guard-families.html>



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I don't think anyone denies the fact that the National Guard played an important role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. These men and women trained and fought bravely along side their active duty brothers and sisters. My husband was one of those men.

I've been a National Guard wife for 8 years, and I have a collection of strange things people have said to me.

Here are 5 things not to say to a **National Guard family (and what to say instead).**

1. WHY DIDN'T HE/SHE JOIN THE REAL ARMY?

I kind of understand where you are coming from on this one. A civilian career and military life seems like a lot to balance -- and it is. Maybe you are curious about why someone would choose that balancing act.

However, implying that the National Guard isn't the "real army" also implies that the heat, bullets, IEDs, etc. that our Guard troops face are also not real. If you are curious about why someone joined the Guard instead of going active duty, ask about that. There are advantages and disadvantages to each side, but both are very "real."

So next time try: "Can you tell me more about why you chose the Guard?"

2. CAN'T HE/SHE GET OUT OF DRILL TO COME TO MY PARTY?

Drill almost always lands on a weekend with plans. My husband has missed countless parties, showers, weddings, funerals because of drill or training. I learned to not take his absence personally a long time ago. Drill isn't optional, so please be understanding when he can't come to your event.



Instead, try saying, “We’ll miss you.” And don’t stop inviting us just because we can’t always make it.

3. I KNOW WHAT IT’S LIKE DURING A DEPLOYMENT SINCE MY HUSBAND TRAVELS A LOT FOR WORK.

I got this one a lot every time my husband was deployed. Combat zone or not, a deployment is hardly like most business travel. It is kind of you to try and relate to my situation, but it really is apples and oranges.

Instead, try saying, “I’m sorry he/she’s deployed. Is there anything I can do?” You could also offer to do something that would have helped you during your spouse’s absence.

4. IS IT JUST LIKE THE TV SHOW *ARMY WIVES*?

This one always made me laugh since I’m pretty sure the show doesn’t even resemble active duty life. Is there a character on the show that lives a couple of hours away from the rest of the wives? Does her husband get deployed and she resorts to eating Cheetos and wine for dinner far too often? If there is, then yes, *Army Wives* is just like my life!



Camaraderie is a challenge in the National Guard. Families can feel isolated, especially during deployments, times of extended separation, or reintegration.

If you know a family that might be feeling isolated, reach out.

Next time try asking, “Would you like to come over and watch Army Wives?”

5. THAT DEPLOYMENT LOOKS LIKE A VACATION.

We got this one a lot from friends and family when my husband was in Djibouti. Most of his time was spent working in an office, but occasionally he was able to scuba dive or go sightseeing. Whenever he shared a picture, people would comment about how much fun he seemed to be having on his “deployment-vacation.”

My husband likes to call his four deployments his “backstage tour of the world.” He’s been to some pretty awful places, but he tries to make the most of it by seeing anything worth seeing while he’s there. A new experience or souvenir doesn’t take away the stress that most deployments cause.

Try saying this instead, “I’m so glad your soldier is able to have some fun during their downtime.”



Most members of the Guard have civilian careers, and leaving them during a deployment can be stressful and difficult. We've known small business owners who nearly lost it all during a deployment. Many soldiers return home to a long stretch of unemployment or underemployment. What you say to National Guard members and families matters.

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Her husband has been in the service for almost 15 years and she has been along for the ride for the last 10. She is a former high school physics teacher and current stay at home mom.