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Holloman spouse hopes for lots of mail

Alamogordo Daily News
 By John Bear, Staff Writer
 Article Launched: 11/26/2006 12:00:00 AM MST

Being stationed in a maelstrom of violence such as Iraq or Afghanistan is bad enough.

Not getting any mail is intolerable.

Enter Ria Cabral of Alamogordo, the mind behind the Deployed Soldier Network, a consortium of individuals who write letters and send care packages to soldiers.

"It's our way of saying thanks and letting them know they've not been forgotten about," Cabral said.

One of the reasons behind the network is to keep spirits high among soldiers, allowing them to focus on the task at hand and then return home safely.

The program also provides support to wounded and sick soldiers, she said.

Cabral started the Deployed Soldier Network in 2005. It now assists more than 3,000 soldiers, though some of them will be returning home soon, she said.

She said she started off writing to one soldier and that number ballooned to 10. She said some people support entire units, but that all depends on how much money a person has to give.

She found the soldier on anysoldier.com, a Web site that provides the names of soldiers to whom citizens can send letters and care packages. The group specifically targets troops who may not be getting any mail, she said.

"We don't always hear back, but a majority of

them write back," she said.

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Sometimes, soldiers request certain items to give to wounded children in Iraq and Afghanistan, such as toys, clothes and get well cards, Cabral said.

In addition to letter-writing, the group also sends care packages to troops, she said.

"There are numerous items that go into care packages," she said. "Food, personal care items, entertainment, footballs, CDs, poker chips and board games."



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She said participants also send correspondence materials such as pens, paper, stamps and calling cards.

In addition to her own group, Cabral said there are 15 other organizations that conduct the same kind of operation.

Cabral moved to Holloman Air Force Base in October with her husband, Michael, a staff sergeant. She said he is the Webmaster for her Web site, deployedsoldiernetwork.com, adding anyone interested in helping can log on to the site.

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