



IN 40TH YEAR OF NFL-USO PARTNERSHIP, NFL CLUBS SALUTE MILITARY FOR VETERANS DAY

Many NFL players have visited soldiers overseas through the years. And this weekend, many NFL teams will honor the military for Veterans Day.

In 2006, the NFL and the USO mark the 40th anniversary of a partnership that has sent hundreds of NFL players around the world to boost the morale of U.S. military personnel serving far from home.

In 1965, NFL Commissioner **PETE ROZELLE** – seeking ways to demonstrate the league’s support for America’s fighting forces – conceived the idea of sending NFL players to Vietnam on “goodwill tours.” The following year, the NFL teamed with the USO and became the first sports organization to send a group of players to Vietnam and other parts of Asia.

Included on that initial trip to Vietnam were future Pro Football Hall of Famers **WILLIE DAVIS, FRANK GIFFORD, SAM HUFF** and **JOHNNY UNITAS**.

The NFL and NFL Films have created a PSA on the 40th anniversary that will air on NFL Network and during Veterans Day weekend game broadcasts.

The NFL-USO tradition continued this spring when **PATRICK KERNEY** of Atlanta, **MAX STARKS** of Pittsburgh and **BRYCE FISHER** of Seattle – himself a graduate of the Air Force Academy and currently a public affairs captain in the Washington Air National Guard – visited military personnel stationed in the Persian Gulf and the Balkans. On Memorial Day weekend, NFL All-Stars **BRIAN DAWKINS** and **MICHAEL STRAHAN** visited injured American troops at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

“The NFL’s commitment to meet with and tell our military – face-to-face – how appreciative and proud it is of them is clearly evidenced by the league’s annual visits to military installations around the world,” says **WALTER MURREN**, vice president of USO operations in Europe. “Those trips immeasurably increase the morale of service members and their families.”

In addition to providing support to U.S. military throughout the world, several active NFL players, like Fisher, have strong military connections. Redskins linebacker **ROBERT MC CUNE** is an Army veteran who spent six months in Kuwait and one year in Korea during his three-year tour of duty. Texans safety **C.C. BROWN** is a member of the Mississippi National Guard.

New England Patriots linebacker **LARRY IZZO**, whose father was a West Point graduate and retired from the Army as a full colonel, will conduct his annual “Salute To The Troops” this week in Boston with many of his teammates joining him. Nearly 1,000 people attended last year’s benefit at which more than \$200,000 was raised, with funds going to the Fallen Heroes Fund, Operation Enduring Christmas, the USO of New England, and Fallen Patriot.

Titans center **KEVIN MAWAE** was one of a group of players this spring to visit Fort Campbell, Kentucky, home of the Army’s 101st Airborne Division. Born at Hunter Army Airfield in Georgia, Mawae moved to Washington state when his father, a career military man, was stationed in Korea, then to Fort Riley in Kansas, to Hanau, Germany for five years and finally to Fort Polk in Louisiana where his dad retired.

“This was an important visit to me,” Mawae said of his time at Fort Campbell. “My dad was in the Army for 23 years. I grew up traveling all over the country and all over the world. These are people that we don’t want to take for granted.”

Many NFL teams have followed that spirit, and have or will conduct ceremonies in honor of Veterans Day, which is this Saturday, November 11.

A sampling of NFL club activities for Veterans Day:

- **ARIZONA CARDINALS:** Will honor this Sunday former Cardinals safety **PAT TILLMAN**, who, as a U.S. Army Ranger, was killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2004. The Cardinals will place Tillman’s name in the team’s ring of honor at University of Phoenix Stadium. The team retired his uniform number (40) in 2004.

- **BALTIMORE RAVENS:** Had representatives of every branch of service on the field last Sunday in pregame ceremonies while **LEE GREENWOOD**'s "Proud to be an American" was played over the stadium P.A.
- **CAROLINA PANTHERS:** Will celebrate Veterans Day next Monday night in their game against Tampa Bay. There will be a presentation of colors by all five branches of the military in pregame, a chorus group anthem, and POW/MIA recognition. At halftime, the Panthers will present a reading of "Old Glory" by Col. **QUINCY COLLINS** (Ret.), and military bands will fill the field to play all five service songs.
- **CHICAGO BEARS:** Three-star U.S. Army General **RUSSELL L. HONORE** presented a Purple Heart to two soldiers on the field prior to the Bears game last Sunday. Fifty flags were presented on the field during the singing of the national anthem, which concluded with a flyover of four F-16s from the 182nd Fighter Wing of Springfield, Illinois.
- **CINCINNATI BENGALS:** For this Sunday's game, the field will be covered with an American flag held by military personnel during the national anthem, with a military flyover highlighting the ceremonies. The Bengals also will feature scoreboard/PA recognition in honor of Veterans Day.
- **CLEVELAND BROWNS:** On November 19, the Browns will conduct a 21-gun salute to honor veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq/Afghanistan. Patriotic songs will be performed by artists from the Cleveland Opera as military flags and the American flag are presented by a full color guard. A flyover will conclude the ceremonies.
- **DENVER BRONCOS:** Will salute U.S. military families at their game on November 19. Messages from soldiers overseas to their families will be shown on video boards. The flag will be presented on the field in pregame and the military recognized before a flyover.
- **DETROIT LIONS:** In its game this Sunday, the Lions will honor 30 Purple Heart recipients from Michigan at halftime. The U.S. Army band will play the anthem. The team supports the military through its "Hometown Hero" program which honors a veteran at each game. The soldier is the Lions' guest (with four tickets) at the game, and the club conducts a special presentation on the field during a break in the third quarter. The Lions also had an induction of 40 new recruits into the military at halftime of their September 10 game.
- **INDIANAPOLIS COLTS:** A moment of silence will be held at this Sunday's game for **RICHARD BLAKELY**, a local soldier killed in Iraq who was an enthusiastic Colts fan, and all other fallen soldiers. An all-services color guard will present the colors as U.S. Coast Guard Commander **DAVE SMITH** will sing "God Bless America" and the national anthem.
- **JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS:** During pregame ceremonies this Sunday, the Jaguars will have a reenlistment ceremony for the 3rd Infantry Division from Fort Stewart, Georgia.

The Navy Band Southeast will perform the anthem with an Army soldier, **KATHY SMITHSON**, signing for the hearing impaired. There will be a giant US-shaped flag on the field, along with a joint color guard and a veterans color guard from the Northeast Florida Veterans Council. Following the anthem, there will be an Air Force Heritage Flyover with an F-15 Strike Eagle, A-10, F-4 and an F-86. During the game, the Jaguars will show via satellite taped messages from deployed soldiers on stadium video boards.

- **KANSAS CITY CHIEFS:** At their game on November 19, the Chiefs will honor three members of the military – Lt. Col. **BRIAN BIRDWELL**, a survivor of the September 11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon; **ROBERT JACKSON**, a National Guardsman who was injured in Baghdad; and Lt. General **DAVID PETRAEUS**, the Commander of Fort Leavenworth. They will be the honorary captains of the game.

There will be a B-2 flyover after the anthem. The halftime show will be a five-minute military tribute.

- **MIAMI DOLPHINS:** This Sunday, the Dolphins will bring together 100 local veterans and Purple Heart recipients to hold a field flag in pregame ceremonies that will conclude with a flyover by the Navy Fighting Black Lions from Virginia.
- **MINNESOTA VIKINGS:** Will visit the Minneapolis Veterans Home on Tuesday, November 14 to play bingo with the veterans.
- **NEW YORK GIANTS:** At the team's game next Sunday night, there will be an on-field color guard comprised of veterans from the military branches. Military PSAs will be shown on stadium video boards, while recruiting booths will be set up at gates before the game.

- **NEW YORK JETS:** At their game on November 19, Secretary of the Air Force **MICHAEL WYNNE** will accompany the team captains at the coin toss. Each branch of the military will be represented on-field in formations of 20 personnel during pregame. The New York Air National Guard Military Band will perform the national anthem. A-10 Warthogs from Connecticut's Flying Yankees will conduct a flyover at the conclusion of the anthem. Recruiters also will set up at the stadium.
- **PHILADELPHIA EAGLES:** In pregame ceremonies next Sunday, the Riddle Village Men's Choir – comprised of World War II veterans – will sing the national anthem as a large American flag is held by members of the military. A flyover will conclude the ceremonies. At halftime, the US Marine Corps Silent Drill Platoon will perform. The Eagles also have donated tickets to military members.
- **ST. LOUIS RAMS:** At last Sunday's game, the Rams and team sponsor Boeing hosted their annual veterans/military salute. The team and Boeing provided all fans entering the Edward Jones Dome with an American flag lapel pin.

Pregame featured a Salute to Veterans pass-in-review with all five military branches overseen by General **NORTON A. SCHWARTZ**, Commander of the United States Transportation Command at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. Halftime ceremonies featured a Marine Corps silent drill platoon.

- **SEATTLE SEAHAWKS:** The national anthem at next Sunday's game will be performed by a quartet from the Voices of McChord, an all-volunteer group consisting of both active duty and reserve Air Force members. Forty musician-soldiers of the 56th Army Band of I Corps and Fort Lewis also will perform in pregame.

The U.S. Army will fly over four OH-58 Delta Helicopters at the end of the anthem. VFW and American Legion members will present a giant American flag and the VFW Color Guard also will be part of the anthem ceremonies. Two members of each military branch will be recognized before the anthem, as well as all current and retired military members in the stands, who will be requested to stand to be acknowledged.

- **TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS:** The team will host a "Military Appreciation Game" on November 19.

Before the game, all branches of the military will set up recruiting materials and giveaways outside the stadium.

In pregame ceremonies on the field, six Purple Heart winners will be recognized. Six representatives from each military branch will bear a field-size American flag as the anthem is performed. Leading the Bucs out of the tunnel will be members of the 53rd Infantry Brigade.

Participating in the honorary coin toss will be the wife, parents and siblings of Army Staff Sergeant **JOSEPH FUREST**, a local member of the 53rd Infantry who was killed in action in Afghanistan. At halftime, induction ceremonies of several new enlistees for each branch of the military will be conducted. The Buccaneers will then recognize wounded soldiers from Tampa's Haley Medical Center.

- **TENNESSEE TITANS:** This Sunday, ceremonies will include the unfurling of an American flag the size of the field by members of the 101st Airborne who have returned from Iraq. The 101st Marching Band will perform and display a color guard from each branch of the service. A flyover of four USAF F-16 Fighting Falcons will cap off the pregame ceremonies. Special halftime ceremonies will commemorate Veterans Day.

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