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FOUR NFL PLAYERS KICK OFF NFL-USO TOUR TO PERSIAN GULF THIS SUNDAY

Four NFL players who excel on the field and in the community will continue an NFL-USO tradition initiated more than 40 years ago when they embark this Sunday on visits to U.S. troops at military bases throughout the Persian Gulf.

Tight ends **ALGE CRUMPLER** and **BENJAMIN WATSON**, guard **WILL SHIELDS** and linebacker **SHELTON QUARLES** will team up to meet and greet the troops in the annual renewal of the NFL-USO program that began in 1966.

In the past four decades, such NFL stars as **TERRY BRADSHAW**, **DICK BUTKUS**, **LARRY CSONKA**, **HOWIE LONG**, **DON MEREDITH**, **MIKE SINGLETARY** and **GENE UPSHAW** have visited troops on NFL-USO tours in such locations as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Iraq, Japan, Korea, Kuwait and Somalia.

In 1965, NFL Commissioner **PETE ROZELLE** – seeking ways to demonstrate the league's support for America's fighting forces – conceived of 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.

Last year, the "NFL-USO 40th Anniversary Tour" traveled to Afghanistan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, the United Arab Emirates, and aboard the USS Ronald Reagan with NFL players **BRYCE FISHER** (Seattle), **PATRICK KERNEY** (Atlanta) and **MAX STARKS** (Pittsburgh). The trio met with service members at various locations in the regions to provide a valued morale boost.

Thumbnail backgrounds on the players on the 2007 NFL-USO tour:

- **ALGE CRUMPLER, TE, ATLANTA FALCONS:** A four-time Pro Bowl selection, finished second in the NFL last season in touchdown catches by a tight end with eight. Led the Falcons in receptions for the third consecutive year with 56 catches. Serves as a spokesperson for, and actively participates in, the Falcons Focus on Fitness.
- **SHELTON QUARLES, LB, TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS:** Holds a Buccaneers Super Bowl XXXVII championship ring, posting seven tackles in the game against Oakland at the middle linebacker position. Selected to the Pro Bowl that season. Started the Shelton Quarles IMPACT Foundation in 2003 to help at-risk families.
- **WILL SHIELDS, G, KANSAS CITY CHIEFS:** Tied Randall McDaniel this year for the most Pro Bowl games in history with 12. Set the Chiefs' record in 2006 for most career games played with 224. Named the 2003 Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year for his numerous community activities.
- **BENJAMIN WATSON, TE, NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS:** Owns a Super Bowl XXXIX title ring with the Patriots. Finished second in receiving for New England last season with 49 catches for three touchdowns. Has longest TD reception in Patriots playoff history (63 yards in '05 Wild Card). Very active in local Athens, GA community.