

Military Relationships: Between a Soldier, Their Loved Ones, and Duty

Throughout this history of America and, indeed, the world, young people have been sent off to fight for their nations and their ways of life. Military service can be one of the most formative and critical experiences to a young person's life, also has fascinating and transformative effects on a soldier's relationships with their spouses, and their children. The life of a soldier is such that significant moral questions must be asked regarding which is of higher value, duty to one's country, or duty to the occupants of that country: their loved ones. Enlisted soldiers and officers can spend over a year at a time deployed to remote parts of the world often out of cell service range and thus unable to talk to their families and friends. This distance can cause significant harm to the relationships between military personnel and their civilian spouses. Those in the military are also often required to pick up and move their families around the country or even the globe, which puts the life of a military spouse or military child in flux in a way not easily seen elsewhere. Based on these facts, we must ask the question: what part in the decision to deploy should a military family have?

The life of a serviceperson often deeply impacts that of those close to them, but does that outweigh their duty to cause and country? Some would argue that if someone goes off to serve in the military, they are doing it, while indirectly, to protect their family's safety and security. As a result, if going off to fight would negatively affect a serviceperson's family that they should consider finding a way to serve their country from home. This argument fails to take into account the fact that that many military recruits serve to protect their country and honor their flag, so, does a military person's family come before country? Many military servicepersons would say no, according to Alison Perkins of SaluteToSpouses.com who states that "In a military marriage, duty is first; everything else second." Clearly military personnel are inclined to serve their countries before anything else, even though this has remarkable effects on military marriages. Military divorce rates and civilian divorce rates are roughly equal, demonstrating that even though duty comes first, military relationships are equally strong, if not stronger. Despite all of this, it is truly down to each couple to decide on what is best for them, whether duty to country, or duty to one another comes first.

Another facet of military relationships is that between soldiers and their children. Military deployment can put significant strain on the healthy growth and development of a child. The NCCP reports that one in four military children develops depression, and that one in five develops learning problems. These children also must live under significant stress that their deployed parent or caretaker will be killed or wounded, which can cause other major problems. In addition, children who lose a loved one at a young age are up to seven times more likely to develop PTSD. Just because of circumstance, these children have a relationship with someone who could cause them significant psychological problems throughout their entire lives. We must again question whether it is ethical for a military person to be deployed after they have a child or become a major part of a child's life. The answer to this question is, yet again, that it is up to each individual to decide whether duty to country, or duty to their children and family should come first.

Everyone is entitled to their own opinion, particularly on this topic, but military relationships are between three parties: the couple, and duty. At the end of the day it is between a military person, their loved one, and their sense of duty to decide the right way to serve the cause that they love, and be with the person that they love.