

Deployment

The LORD will go forth like a warrior, He will arouse His zeal like a man of war. He will utter a shout, yes, He will raise a war cry. He will prevail against His enemies.

-Isaiah 42:13-

A military deployment is one of the most challenging events for the military member. Though many military members enjoy the relative safety of their stateside assignments, the deployed member leaves behind the comforts and securities of home and enters a war zone.

Only the best are selected for deployments, and numerous filters are in place to ensure that the deploying member is fully prepared prior to departure. The mere fact of being selected for a deployment suggests that the government trusts the member to do the job at the high levels that are required in a combat zone because lives are on the line. But no deployee goes out unprepared, and the military provides a bevy of tasks to ensure all deployees are ready. Preparation includes special training and the issuance of appropriate gear for the environment and job the member is going to perform.

Deployment training is designed to put the member into situations that simulate the deployment zone. The training includes survival skills, weapon familiarization, teamwork, first aid, radio skills, field maneuvering, and a host of other tasks. For first-time deployees, this training is especially important to ensure they are ready to handle the stress of a combat zone. For repeat deployees, it gives them an opportunity to gain new skills that may prove essential for their survival.

I attended the Combat Airman Skills Training (CAST) at Camp Bullis, Texas (San Antonio) prior to my current deployment. But this is not the only pre-deployment training available. For my previous deployment in 2009, since I was going to a location that was not expected to engage in actual attacks, I participated in a 3-day training course at my duty station that taught the most basic of basic combat skills.

The CAST training is the next level up for combat training. We re-learned the things we learned in basic training: how to low crawl and high crawl, how to use and maintain the M-16 weapon, how to use everything in the first aid kit and chemical protection gear. We also learned vehicle maneuvers. We learned how to plot a course through unfamiliar terrain using a compass, protractor, and map. We learned how to spot improvised explosive devices, which are the bombs used by terrorists. We learned how to properly prepare and dispose of MREs (Meals-Ready-To-Eat), how to bathe head-to-toe with just 3 minutes of water, and much more. And there are more advanced schools that teach even more skills.

I also received several pieces of vital equipment for my deployment. My home duty station provided me with uniform items, some basic survival gear, and of course my weapons. En route to my deployment location, I picked up body armor, chemical warfare protective gear, and winter weather gear. By the time I arrived at my deployment location, I had everything I would need to perform my duties and protect myself if necessary from the enemy.

A military deployment places a lot of stress on the deployed member. The member is exposed to an unfamiliar environment in which it is often hard to know friend from foe. His senses must always be at peak. He must be ready to act without warning. He must be able to defend himself and those with him. Sometimes though people get a little too comfortable in a deployed environment. They let their guard down, they begin to trust, they stop carrying their weapon all time...and that is when disaster happens. That is when people get hurt. That is when soldiers die.

You and I, as Christians, go on deployments too, though we don't generally view them as such. If heaven is my home (and it is!), it is also the safest place for me. It is the one place where the enemy cannot reach me. Heaven is my natural habitat, for I am made in the image of God. But outside of heaven and in this mortal body on earth, I am in a warzone...a deployment! But fear not, for God has provided us the training and the gear we need to not just survive, but to overwhelmingly conquer in our battles against sin!

God has given us ample training. First, He sent His Son to demonstrate how we should live and how to conquer sin. Jesus did it perfectly! If we follow His example, we can conquer as well. But we have more than just the Divine Illustration...we also have written instructions. The Bible contains all that we need to know to overcome sin. It is our instruction manual for how to win. In the church, God has given us evangelists, teachers, bishops, and deacons to help train and prepare us for our daily struggles.

And God has issued us the necessary equipment for victory as well. To each is given the armor and sword of Christ described in Ephesians 6. To each is given the promise of salvation from God (2 Pet 1:4; Jms 1:12). To each is given gifts and blessings as determined by God (Rom 12:6).

And perhaps most importantly for us to remember, God has promised that we will never face an enemy we cannot overcome...we will never face a sin we cannot defeat...we will never face a temptation we cannot resist. "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." There is your guarantee of survival! You have three choices when it comes to temptation: you can give it and let it defeat you, or you can fight back and defeat it, or you can flee so that you may prepare to face it another time. You may find it easy to defeat some temptations, and not so easy to defeat others. You must defeat the ones you can, flee the ones you can't, and seek strength to defeat those yet in your future. There is no excuse for letting any temptation overcome you when God has promised you victory, provided you training, equipped you properly, and guaranteed your way of escape.

You might say we also have a "safe house" in which we can rally together between conflicts. We call it the Church. It is not the building, but the people. We assemble together with other Christian soldiers on Sundays and other days to worship God primarily, but we should also use the assembly as an opportunity to reload our weapons, reinforce our armor, redouble our resolve, restore our courage, refuel our spirit, renew our strength, and rally to the cause of Christ. When first-century Christians assembled, they told stories of their spiritual engagements in the warzone of the world, and they took courage from one another. A victory for one was a victory for all, and

a defeat for one meant next time that one would be better prepared and perhaps even have reinforcements with him to ensure his victory.

When saints assembled, they shared strategies and gave warnings of things to avoid, as well as messages of encouragement and opportunities for service. Who can read Hebrews 11 and not come away with a sense of victory for all of us: “For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets, who by faith conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight.” (Heb 11:32-34). And after hearing such messages, they went bravely back into the world to fight the good fight. For them, it was not just rote ritualistic worship. If you leave a church assembly with a fear of defeat in your heart, something didn’t happen right in that assembly.

But sometimes we get a little too comfortable in the world. We let down our guard against sin, and even invite it into our homes through immoral television shows or movies or other forms of entertainment. We permit our children to be “like the world” by allowing them to wallow in the revelry of the impure deeds of their worldly friends. And when that happens, Christian soldiers die.

Yes my Christian brother-in-arms, it is a warzone out there, and you and I are deployed into it. We must not let our guard down, even for a moment. We must always be vigilant and ready. Our enemy the Devil is always on the prowl like a lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). Sin is ever standing at the door, waiting for you (Gen 4:7). Will you be ready for it? When you leave the assembly of the saints, do you march out with the confidence of victory, or with the weak fear of defeat?

**He says, “You are My war-club, My weapon of war;
And with you I shatter nations, And with you I destroy kingdoms.
-Jeremiah 51:20-**