

## DEPLOYED TROOPS GREET EX-NFL STARS FOR FOURTH OF JULY WEEK CELEBRATIONS

Ex-NFL standouts Chris Draft, Donnie Edwards and Eric Metcalf have joined legendary front-office executive Bill Polian to visit troops stationed in the Middle East as part of a weeklong USO Entertainment tour. Continuing 48 years of cooperation between the USO and the NFL, where celebrated sports figures travel overseas to meet with troops, the group is delivering America's thanks by volunteering their holiday and spending quality time with our servicemen and women.

The locations and time span of the trip are being withheld for security purposes, but some of the work sites visited were the Fire Department, Explosive Ordnance Division and Military K-9 Unit, where the group learned vital life saving techniques, tried on protective armor and participated in live-action demonstrations.

This trip marks the fifth USO tour for Edwards, who has uplifted the spirits of 4,415 troops and military families and has traveled to seven countries since 2007. The tour is the first for Draft, Metcalf and Polian, and commemorates the NFL's 48th year of working with the USO.

"If it weren't for our Armed Forces, I wouldn't know what it was like to have the freedom to vote, much less play football professionally," said Edwards, a former Pro Bowl linebacker with the Chargers and Chiefs. "We, as Americans, owe them our respect and our time. And one of the many ways I honor them is by working with the USO and going out on tours to convey my appreciation."

For fellow linebacker Draft, an appreciation for our troops is homegrown.

"My father was in the Marine Corps, my brother was in the Navy and my grandfather was career Army, so military values have shaped my life," Draft said. Draft played for 12 years in the NFL with seven teams. "It is an honor and a privilege to able to visit our troops abroad and thank them for their commitment and sacrifices that benefit all Americans."

Former Cleveland Browns return man Metcalf professed his respect and admiration for our troops' commitment and dedication.

"People watch the game of football and believe it must be tough to get out there and put your body on the line every play," he said. "I chose to be a part of this tour because our troops are the real men and women putting their lives on the line for our entire country. These brave Americans allow us to sleep comfortably every night and being a part of this tour is the only way that I can begin to repay them. I have been on many football teams throughout my life but I am about to experience a few days with the ultimate team and at the same time celebrate the Fourth of July with the men and women who keep us free. It gets no better than this!"

And for Polian, the upcoming holiday takes on a little more meaning.

"I am honored to be part of this great trip," he said. "I can't imagine a better place to be on July 4th than with our troops overseas."