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Four servicemembers who recently returned from deployments to remote sites in Iraq and Afghanistan were recognized May 10 for their efforts in boosting their fellow troops' morale. SemperComm, a nonprofit group founded to boost the morale of troops deployed to remote duty posts, presented its SemperComm Award to four servicemembers who promoted morale, welfare and recreation projects at their posts. This

year's winners were: Navy Lt. Marc Soss, a reservist who recently returned from a seven-month deployment to Camp Clark, Afghanistan, where he served as morale, welfare and recreation program manager. Retired Navy Rear Adm. Jay Foley, former commander of Naval Surface Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, and a member of the awards selection committee, praised the troops for helping improve the quality of life at their bases. Many, he noted, lacked basic communications, entertainment and recreation support that larger military facilities enjoy. Soss, a reservist from Bradenton, Fla., "worked double-time" to ensure troops at his post had access to recreational opportunities, Foley said. He organized marathons and pool parties, set up a 20-person gymnasium, arranged safe transport, food and lodging to take troops to road races at other bases, set up weekly power tournament nights and developed a base communications system so troops could contact home. Soss also coordinated a fundraiser for the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center's Wounded Warrior Program that enables wounded troops to leave the hospital periodically for recreation and entertainment, Foley said. Foley said this year's SemperComm Award winners worked "tirelessly above and beyond the scope of the regular assignment" to help improve conditions at their posts. "These are the selfless ones, nominated by their units and peers," he said. "Their contributions have inspired and encouraged those with whom they served in Iraq and Afghanistan." SemperComm Foundation Executive Director Lara Coffee praised the winners' efforts to boost morale for deployed troops in remote sites. "The SemperComm Award winners find ways to keep their comrades' spirits up while they're stationed so far away from home," she said. "They exemplify service – the kind of service SemperComm itself provides," she said. "Our award winners work hard to keep unit morale up, which is essential for our uniformed men and women, especially as duty tours continue to get longer." Lara called good morale a key to ensuring troops stay safe and the mission gets accomplished. "Keeping spirits high helps military personnel stay focused on the job at hand and get home safely," she said. SemperComm is a partner in the Defense Department's America Supports You program. The program showcases the myriad efforts of private citizens, schools, churches, corporations and other groups to show support for the men and women in uniform.