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Wife Says Military Spouses Also Face Suicide Risk

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS**Filed at 11:56 a.m. ET**

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The wife of the chairman of the [Joint Chiefs of Staff](#) had a message Wednesday for those trying to prevent military suicides: Don't forget the spouses.

Deborah Mullen said Army leaders told her that they lack the ability to track suicide attempts by family members of Army personnel.

"I was stunned when I was told there are too many to track," Mullen said, speaking on stage at a military suicide prevention conference next to her husband, Adm. [Mike Mullen](#).

She urged the military to get a better handle on the problem and implement prevention measures with spouses in mind.

"There's another side to this and that's family members who commit suicide," Mrs. Mullen said. "It's our responsibility. These are our family members."

Military-wide, she said, it's not clear exactly how many military family members killed themselves last year. Some military spouses, Mrs. Mullen said, are reluctant to seek mental health help because it still carries an unfortunate stigma.

"Spouses tell me all the time that they want to get mental health assistance," she said. "As incorrect as this is, they really do believe if they seek help it will have a negative impact on their spouse's military career."

The military has had an increase in suicide rates among all branches since the start of the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Army had a record number of suicides last year. About 1,000 people are attending the four-day suicide prevention conference.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: (800) 273-TALK (8255).

On the Net: Conference Web site: <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/training/upcomingconferences.aspx>

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors: <http://www.taps.org/>

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