

## USO 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY: FACT SHEET

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### **How was the USO formed?**

“Not by machines alone will we win this war.” With those words, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt forged the creation of the United Service Organizations for National Defense in February 1941, which he charged with strengthening the morale of America’s military men and women by keeping them connected the things the President knew they would surely become separated from in service to their country. The U.S. had not yet entered World War II, but in preparation for the inevitable, President Roosevelt challenged six private organizations – the YMCA, YWCA, National Catholic Community Service, the National Jewish Welfare Board, the Traveler’s Aid Association and the Salvation Army – to create an organization that would keep service members in touch with the bonds of family and the comforts of home, no matter where or under what conditions they served.

Roosevelt chose Thomas E. Dewey to serve as the first USO Campaign Chairman. Dewey resigned the post to become governor of New York and Roosevelt soon selected one of his political rivals as the second USO Campaign Chairman. This decision set a tone of nonpartisan unity that proudly persists to this day. Prescott S. Bush – eventual father of one president, grandfather of another – rallied Americans around the cause of the USO and raised millions of dollars to support its growth.

Since the USO’s incorporation in New York State on February 4, 1941, it has grown to what it is today – America’s vital bridge, connecting service members back to the nation and people they have signed up to serve. We operate USO centers and support programs across America and around the world, maintain a satellite communications system, and harness the collective energy of 30,000-plus volunteers who truly serve as the nation’s force behind the forces.

### **What is the mission of the USO?**

The USO strengthens America’s military service members by keeping them connected to family, home and country, throughout their service to the nation.

### **Where is the USO?**

With the support of 600 employees and 30,000 volunteers, the USO provides programs, entertainment and services at nearly 200 USO locations worldwide, including Afghanistan, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Germany, Italy, Japan, Guam, South Korea, Djibouti and the United States. In 2014, USO centers were visited more than 7 million times by service members and their families. USO centers provide a warm and comforting place where they can connect via Internet or telephone, play a video game, catch a movie, have a snack or just put their feet up and relax.

### **What is the USO planning to do during its milestone 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary?**

To mark its anniversary, the USO is inviting Americans to get reacquainted with today’s USO, whose mission is to strengthen America’s military service members by keeping them connected to family, home and country throughout their service to the nation. This mission cannot be accomplished by the USO alone. All Americans can help their military neighbors, friends and relatives – and service members whom they’ve never met – by staying more closely connected to them as they serve the nation. The USO is dedicating itself to making those connections easier to maintain. Key initiatives will include:

- **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Honorary Committee** - The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Honorary Committee membership comprises prominent figures from entertainment, athletics, media, government and military officials, and senior corporate executives.
- **Global USO Center Celebrations** - From cake-cuttings to open houses, our nearly 200 locations worldwide will celebrate on February 4, 2016 in several time zones. Join in the anniversary conversation using #USOconnects.
- **A Campaign to Connect** – Launching on February 4, the USO is inviting Americans to generate 1 million messages of support and gratitude for service members and military families around the world. You can join the USO in this movement by:
  - Visiting [USO.org/connects](http://USO.org/connects) – the USO’s new digital message platform – and send as many messages as you like starting on the USO’s Anniversary, February 4<sup>th</sup>
  - Share a personal message on your own social channels to service members and their families using #USOconnects
  - Help spread the word – encourage friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers to do the same!
- **Launch USO Route 75** - The USO story team will travel to USO locations around the United States to report stories that advance the dialogue on issues facing today’s military, including military transition and the disconnect that persists between America’s military and civilian populations. The journey will be chronicled on social media (#USORoute75) and will culminate in long-form videos that follow two story lines, culled from 75 stories:
  - **Stories of Connection:** We will seek out people who are finding innovative ways to forge connections and better understanding civilians and service members transitioning back into their communities.
  - **Our continuum of support:** We will highlight programming the USO offers across military members’ journey of service, from their points of entry, through their varied assignments, to their transition back into civilian life.
- **USO Transition 360 Alliance & Roadtrip Nation** - USO & Roadtrip Nation will send three transitioning service members or veterans on a four-week road trip this spring. The road trippers will discover compatible careers and interview other veterans who have successfully found meaningful work after their service. The entire trip will be filmed for a public television documentary that illustrates how veterans can translate their unique skills and leadership into new and exciting careers. The documentary will air in fall 2016 and follow with a 10-city stateside screening tour.
- **ON★PATROL 75th Anniversary Commemorative Issue** -The magazine of the USO reflects on our organization’s history, what we’re doing today and what lies ahead for the USO. Personal anecdotes from USO tour veterans and in-depth feature stories about the USO’s long-term partnerships with Coca-Cola and the NFL are among the issue’s many highlights. The digital edition of the magazine will be published Feb. 4 and will be available at <http://bit.ly/OnPatrol75>.
- **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Entertainment Tours** - USO will continue to deliver its high-quality entertainment to locations around the world to give service members a much needed break from the rigors of military duty. Two highlights include the USO and NFL who will celebrate their 50 years of partnership through handshake tours with a robust rotation of NFL players and coaches meeting and engaging with American troops at home and overseas. The Sesame Street/USO Experience for Military Families made its debut in 2008 and it’s the longest running entertainment tour in USO history. In 2016, the tour will

take its latest show centered on the transition from military to civilian life around the United States to service members and their families.

- In the works, a fall **USO Documentary to be aired on network television.**

For any other questions about the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, email [75@uso.org](mailto:75@uso.org).