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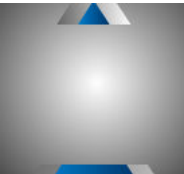
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'SEND A SOLDIER A SMILE' SWEETENS SHABBAT FOR SOLDIERS

Posted Jan 19 2009

All Israeli soldiers long for Shabbat. Every two or three weeks they get a weekend furlough. Some go home to catch up on much-needed sleep; some go to enjoy a traditional Shabbat with their families and friends. All look forward to filling up on Mom's food and desserts.

That uplifting homecoming hasn't been possible for the last few weeks. Tens of thousands of combat soldiers - conscripts and reservists - have been fighting in the treacherous alleyways of Gaza, or are stationed at nearby bases training to go in to wipe out Hamas terrorists. A tank crew charging through a Hamas stronghold, or a commando unit searching out terrorist rocket launchers cannot even dream about Shabbat at home.

Shabbat got sweeter for the young heroes last week. On Friday, 6,000 personal notes from all over the world, as well as mouth-watering goodies were delivered to a major army base near Gaza that serves as a staging area for soldiers going into Gaza and as a rest area for those taking a break from the fighting. The letters and treats came from "Send a Soldier a Smile," a program launched by HonestReporting (www.honestreporting.com), and Gili's Goodies (www.gilisgoodies.com), to provide soldiers a short personal message from Israel's supporters as well as freshly baked treats.



David Ehrlich with soldiers enjoying their snack

According to Ephraim Shore, president of Honest Reporting, another 12,000 letters and packages will be delivered by next Friday before Shabbat. "The response was more than we ever expected. The 'viral effect' of the program has been amazing," he exclaimed.

"The response has been phenomenal," says Gili's Goodies director, David Ehrlich. "We have messages coming in from children, families and Christian friends of Israel from around the world. This has been a wonderful joint project by Gili's Goodies and Honest Reporting. We are doing this as a labor of love, and we extend an invitation to others to join us in sponsoring the project."

Advertisement | "You can't imagine how much the letters and cookies mean to the soldiers' morale," said Colonel B.G., who helped arrange the distribution at the base. "The soldiers feel that they're fighting to protect their families from Hamas and Iranian rockets and terrorism, but now they also understand that they're fighting for the Jewish people, wherever they live."

For more information, go to www.gilisgoodies.com

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