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## **Nonprofit Looks For Support To Protect Cigar Donations To Troops From FDA**

*Group fights to continue cigar shipments to troops in combat zones*

*Homosassa, Florida-* For over four years, the only IRS registered 501(c) (3) charity of its kind, Operation: Cigars for Warriors, has brought comfort to thousands of combat-deployed US service men and women through donations of premium cigars and accessories. Op: CFW proudly sends to our deployed Service Members their Number 1 Requested item, "Premium Cigars", 100% requested.

These morale-lifting donations are visible in the photos sent to Operation: Cigars for Warriors, and proudly shared on the Operation: Cigars for Warriors Facebook page. "We call those photos from the troops *stogie smiles*, and they really motivate us to keep working hard to serve our deployed service members who sacrifice so much for us," said Operations Cigars for Warriors, Director of Operations, Robert Allan.

However, Allan commented on the lack of inventory and the inability to fulfill requests for donations during the upcoming holiday season for one simple reason; the sweeping and far-reaching new regulations of the premium cigar

industry by the FDA this summer, that appears to make donations by manufacturers impermissible, and by some interpretations, illegal.

Operation: Cigars for Warriors relies on donations from cigar manufacturers to fulfil the 25,000 cigars, on average, needed for care packages to deployed troops each month. Those donations have dramatically fallen off, as many manufactures feel that the uncertainty of the FDA deeming may threaten their respective businesses. After the FDA deeming went into effect on Aug 8, 2016, premium cigars became part of the 2009 FDA Tobacco Policy, which prohibits any tobacco company from donating to charities.

Not giving up without a fight, Operation: Cigars for Warriors has reached out to several members of Congress to seek clarity on how donations fare in the FDA ruling, and to craft legislation that would lead to an exemption for cigar donations for charitable purposes for the troops.

U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-California) asked FDA Commissioner, Dr. Robert Califf, to clarify whether or not the agency intended to ban cigar donations to deployed troops, and to request the agency clarify and justify its actions. U.S. Representative Kathy Castor (D-Florida), introduced the *Restore Charitable Contributions of Premium Cigars to the Troops Act* (H.R. 5955) to House Energy & Commerce Committee, Chaired by Michigan Representative Fred Upton, last week.

Many of the service men and women who are recipients of Operation: Cigars for Warriors become volunteers, and ardent supporters of the charity when they return stateside. “The moment of relaxation and comradery the cigar care package provided was important to them during their deployment and they want it to be there for the troops taking their place,” said US Army Veteran and Operation: Cigars for Warriors Board Chair Storm Boen. “We look forward to working with Representative Upton, Representative Hunter, and members of Congress to gain clarity on how cigar donations fare in the ruling and to get an exemption for charitable donations of cigars if that is what is needed.”

*Operation: Cigars for Warriors in a nation-wide 501c3 nonprofit organization headquartered in Florida, serving U.S. soldiers who are in combat or long-term deployments. Visit [cigarsforwarriors.org](http://cigarsforwarriors.org) for more information.*

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