

MilitaryTimes

For families, toughest times may lie ahead

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The wife of the Army chief of staff warned Wednesday that the worst problems for military families may lie ahead.

Sheila Casey, the wife of Army Gen. George Casey Jr., said in testimony before a Senate panel that military families are tough and generally resilient, but the cumulative effects of eight years of war are showing.

"Families are stretched and stressed," she said. "I often refer to them as the most brittle part of the force. ... We can no longer ask them to make the best of it."

Her fear that the worst is yet to come is based on her belief that the current stress levels are causing some families to avoid dealing with issues that will resurface when the pace of deployments drops.

"What I hear from people is they don't have time to divorce," she said.

A crisis is avoidable if the services put in place strong and fully funded family programs — health, education and employment — that get even more resources when families most need it, she said.

The families that may need help the most are the youngest — those who "don't enough time together to build strong bonds," she said.

Casey's testimony before the Senate Armed Services personnel panel comes at a time when the Obama White House, Defense Department and Congress are all looking at ways to improve family support.