



Name: Sarah Lawler
Title: Administrative Assistant
Location: Texas
Military Branch: Navy
Military Rank: CM1 Petty Officer
Service Dates: July 2005 – Present



When my husband, CMI Charles (Charlie) Lawler, was deployed to Africa in 2018, I was pregnant with our second child and our daughter Clare was only two years old. I knew the time apart would be one of the hardest things I would ever do. When I dropped him off at that airport and got back into the car with Clare, I sat and cried. She told me it would be okay and to breathe to calm myself down (a technique I used with her when she was upset). At that



moment, I knew she and I were going to share lots of moments like this and we would need to adapt together to overcome the struggles ahead.

I always knew there was a possibility that Charlie could be deployed. But I expected it to come earlier in our relationship and when it didn't, I stopped thinking about it. Then we were married with a child and suddenly he was deployed.

While he was away, I struggled a lot with our communication. I wanted every interaction to be long and significant. I wanted each phone call to be heartfelt and full of emotion. Charlie was also struggling with missing me and Clare. It was easier on him for calls to be short and to the point, so we had to find a balance where we could both get what we needed out of our calls and video chats. For me, parenting, being pregnant and running our household were all very difficult without him. And for Charlie, it was hard being in a different country, missing our daughter's milestones and the birth of our baby boy Hugh. Over time, we both learned to give each other grace and came to understand that our struggles weren't a competition.

On January 31, 2019, our son, Hugh Nevin Lawler, II, was born. Because I had a planned C-Section, Charlie was able to get the day off and watch me give birth via video chat. At that time, we did not know our baby's gender because we wanted to be surprised. I will never forget the joy I felt when the doctor told us it was a boy! Charlie really wanted

a boy. I was heartbroken that he couldn't witness the birth in person or hold our son. Four months later Charlie was finally able to meet Hugh. After hours of delays kept him from coming home on time, our family of four was finally complete.

Charlie's deployment was extremely hard for both of us, but it made us stronger. I was blessed to have so many people rally around me and help while he was gone. Without RNDC and our commitment to the core value of family, I think that deployment would have been a lot worse. I had so much support from my boss and my co-workers, I will be forever grateful to be a part of the RNDC family.

