

# RPA Veteran Field Guide

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## 1. Welcome & Identity

You are a remote combat warrior. Whether you flew RPAs, analyzed intel, or operated sensors, your contribution to combat was real. You may have been told that your trauma 'doesn't count' because you weren't physically deployed, but the psychological toll of digital warfare is profound. You're not alone. Thousands of others carry similar wounds.

## 2. Understanding Your Symptoms

Your experience may not fit traditional PTSD checklists. You might feel emotionally numb, struggle with identity confusion, or carry guilt from missions. These are signs of complex PTSD and moral injury. Other common symptoms include:

- Trouble sleeping or recurring dreams of ISR footage
- Detachment from family and friends
- Irritability, emotional flatness, or anger
- Hypervigilance or guilt over inaction
- Difficulty finding purpose or reconnecting with meaning

## 3. Talking to Providers

Not every provider understands your world. If they dismiss your experience, that's a red flag. You can say things like:

- 'I was in combat, but through a screen. I saw death up close every day.'
- 'It wasn't just a job. The emotional toll is real.'
- 'I didn't deploy, but I watched people die in real time.'

Ask your provider:

- Have you worked with RPA or intelligence personnel before?
- Are you familiar with complex PTSD or moral injury?
- Can we explore treatment options beyond traditional PTSD frameworks?

## 4. VA and Civilian Systems

The VA may not fully understand remote trauma yet. Push for recognition by explaining your role clearly. Use terms like 'combat exposure via ISR' or 'sensor-based trauma.' Bring educational materials, like this guide or the RECON one-pager. If you face barriers:

- Ask for a second opinion

- Request a provider with military or RPA knowledge
- Consider connecting with a VSO for claims help

## 5. Tools That Help

There are tools built with you in mind:

- RECON Trauma Screen: Better captures your symptom profile than traditional tools
- Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT): Helps address avoidance and identity issues
- Peer Support: You are not alone. Others are speaking out and finding connection
- Journaling, fitness, and purpose-driven routines can help retrain your brain over time

## 6. For Your Circle


Share this guide or a copy of the RW Family Guide with those close to you. Let them know:

- You carry invisible wounds from war
- It's not about 'getting over it'-it's about learning to live with it
- They can support you by being present, not by trying to fix you
- Confidentiality often makes it hard for you to open up-be patient

## 7. Staying in the Fight

You're not broken. You adapted to survive in an impossible environment. This guide is just a start.

Remote Warrior LLC exists to help you navigate the system, find the right care, and connect with others who understand. We are building community, reforming policies, and creating resources for veterans like you.

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