

# Commentary

Editor: Dustin Perry [dustin.perry@bliss.army.mil](mailto:dustin.perry@bliss.army.mil)

## Troop Talk



### What is the status of special salary for Police Officers?

Special salary rates are supplemental rates to basic pay that an organization may request to assist in recruiting or retaining employees.

The request is submitted through the installation to the Office of Personnel Management for final approval. A request for special salary rate was submitted for DA Police Officers in the fall of 2004. However, due to budget shortfalls and the significant cost \$2.3 million that request was denied. In a continued effort to recruit and retain qualified personnel, the special salary initiative remains a critical priority for the Provost Marshal's office and this installation. The special salary rate proposal is currently being revised and will be resubmitted for FY 06.

**What is the status of monetary awards for employees?** There is a cap of 1 percent of total personnel allocations for each organization. Supervisors have the responsibility to award deserving personnel based on this criteria.

**Why do employees not have an opportunity for higher graded jobs, or to advance in the positions they have now?** When management decides to recruit for a position, they have several avenues: Open competition for the general public, open competition for individuals that have status (current federal employees, individuals with Veterans' Recruitment Appointment status, etc.) or by requesting a certain individual (commonly known as "name

request"). However, it is important to understand that no matter how management chooses to recruit, the applicant must be found qualified for the position. Qualification determinations are made by the Western Civilian Personnel Operations Center using the standards set forth by the Office of Personnel Management and the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures.

Most of the vacant positions located here at Fort Bliss are either announced via open competition for individuals with status or open competition to the general public. Employees should ensure that their resumes are kept up to date and apply within the open announcement period. Also, being mobile can enhance the possibility of promotion simply by being able to go where the jobs are. Employees should not expect to be promoted simply by staying in the same position for a long period. We encourage employees to actively seek higher graded position.

Federal human resources classification is the determination of the title, series, and grade of the position. The final determination of the grade is accomplished by reviewing the duties of the position and comparing them to the Office of Personnel Management classification standards. It is important to understand that the grade of a position is determined by the duties, not the individual's skills or background. Additionally, the quantity of the work rarely has an effect on the grade of a position, but rather it's higher responsibility.

**How will the BRAC process impact employees, will there be opportunities for employees who may not want to relocate, if**

**that happens, to fill positions here, and will retraining be made available?** All options are being considered. The resource managers and other entities are working diligently to determine what impact the BRAC decision will have on the workforce here. **Will functions move along with positions?** Employees have a right to be concerned and to want answers and I assure you all that I will be as forthright and open as possible when I have answers to your questions.

Union representatives, contractors and supervisors, in all categories, have a responsibility to work together to ensure the workforce they have work in an environment of trust, and receive the best possible benefits within the guidelines of their agreements. We call ourselves Team Bliss and this means everyone has a voice and a stake in the success of this installation. We all have one goal, and one goal only – to support the Soldier and their family. Differences will arise and problem solving is an ongoing effort, but working together we will succeed. Your service is important and I value each and every one of you for your hard work and dedication.

Thanks for all you do. Keep the lines of communications open and I welcome letters with your concerns and will address them directly, or in this column.

Brig. Gen. Robert P. Lennox  
Fort Bliss Commanding General

## A tribute to Stockdale

Dear Editor,

One month after 9/11 and the weekend of the first air strikes in Afghanistan, I spent three hours with Vice Admiral Jim Stockdale in his home in Coronado, Calif.

I had come to interview him for my book, *Stoic Warriors*, since he was for me the living example of a stoic warrior. As a senior Navy pilot shot down over Vietnam, he had muttered to himself while parachuting into enemy hands, "Five years down there, at least. I'm leaving behind the world of technology and entering the world of Epictetus." Epictetus was a slave who taught Stoic philosophy in the time of Nero. Epictetus' famous Handbook had become Stockdale's bedtime reading in the carrier wardrooms he occupied as he cruised the waters off Vietnam in the mid-60s. Little did Stockdale know on that shoot-down day of Sept. 9, 1965, that Stoic tonics would hold the key to his survival for seven and a half years of POW life. They would also form the backbone of his leadership style as the senior officer in the POW chain of command.

Finding human dignity in slavery became Stockdale's preoccupation in his years as a POW, more than four of which were spent in solitary, and the first two of those in leg irons.

The handbook had been a parting gift from a philosophy professor at Stanford, where Stockdale studied for his master's degree. Stockdale himself was a no-nonsense aviator, a graduate of Annapolis, where engineering and technical sciences were then, as now, the principal fare. After a first and second read through of Epictetus, he was sure that the

ancient philosopher had little to offer him. He joked with me: What did this martini-drinking golfer and tough aviator need with a text like that? But out of respect for his professor, he kept returning to the book, and soon had committed it to memory. During our visit, he recited many of the verses that had been his salvation. His voice merged with Epictetus. The voices had become one.

Physically, too, Stockdale and Epictetus both shared the same fate of being crippled in the left leg (Stockdale's as a result of being pummeled by a street gang as his parachute landed in a village in North Vietnam). When I reminded Stockdale of the uncanny coincidence, again, he shot back Epictetus at me in his Cagney-like voice, "Lameness is an impediment [only] to the leg, not to the will." When Jim sat, his leg would jut straight out, sixty degrees from his hip. But this didn't stop him from swimming most mornings.

Stockdale described to me that morning the ordeal of "taking the ropes" – the euphemism for the methodical torture the American POWs endured: "They would start by clanging a big heavy iron bar down (about 80 or 90 pounds in weight), and then tie your feet to it so that you couldn't lift it. Then they'd sit you up and jackknife you over and tighten the ropes around your arms. Next, they'd put you through extortions to the point that they would be pulling the rope so hard that the blood circulation in your upper chest would shut off." At this point, he continued, the guard would dig his heels into the back of your head and push your nose into the cement. With panic and claustrophobia setting in, the prisoners could be made to blurt out information, some of which would be false, but other bits of which would be true. The

confession was followed by a "cold soak" – six or eight weeks of total isolation "to contemplate one's crimes."

Stockdale was not a preacher, and he never tried to convert anyone to Stoicism, except once, he confided to me, when he tapped out in code to a prison mate whose spirits he was trying to raise. The response through the cell wall was a deadening silence; a boundary had been crossed. After that, he said, "you soon learned that if the guy next door was doing OK, that meant that he had all his philosophical ducks lined up in his own way."

I kept thinking of Jim Stockdale in the wake of the Abu Ghraib prison scandal, and wished that I could have talked to him again. But I knew he was suffering from Alzheimer's. Here was someone who knew all too intimately the inhumanity of torture. And his wife Sybil knew better than many the protections of the Geneva Accords for which she advocated tirelessly on behalf of the men in the Hanoi Hilton. Jim said to me on that October morning in 2001 that his torture had allowed him to become strengthened by Stoicism. In his unwavering attachment to Sybil, and she to him, he was strengthened, too, by the humanity of the deepest kind love. Another famous Roman Stoic, Seneca, writes, "Let us cultivate humanity." Jim Stockdale taught us how.

[Editor's note: Nancy Sherman is author of *Stoic Warriors* (Oxford University Press.) She was the inaugural holder of the Distinguished Chair in Ethics at the U.S. Naval Academy. She is University Professor of Philosophy at Georgetown.]

**The Monitor** is an unofficial publication authorized by AR360-1 and printed each Thursday in the interest of the Fort Bliss and El Paso, Texas communities.

**The Monitor** is published by the Commanding General of Fort Bliss through The Laven Group, LLC, 1420 Geronimo, Bldg. E, El Paso, Tx. 79925 (915) 772-0934, fax; 772-1594 [sflav@whc.net](mailto:sflav@whc.net), [www.lavenpublishing.com](http://www.lavenpublishing.com).

The contents of **The Monitor** are not necessarily the views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, The Department of Defense, the U.S. Army, or The Laven Group, LLC.

The appearance of advertising in **The Monitor** does not constitute endorsement of the products or services advertised. Any article or service advertised in **The Monitor** will be made available for purchase, use or patronage without regard to any non-merit factor of consumers. If a violation or rejection of this equal opportunity policy by an advertiser is confirmed, advertising from that source will be discontinued until the violation is corrected.

**The Monitor** has a circulation of 18,000 copies. Editorial content is prepared, edited and provided by the Public Affairs Office of Fort Bliss, Bldg. 15, (915) 568-4088.

Items submitted for publication in **The Monitor** should be sent to **The Monitor**, Fort Bliss, Texas 79916, by noon on Friday before issue. All submissions become Army property and should be typed, double-spaced with the author's name, signature, and mailing address. Photos should have information attached describing photo and have photographer's full name. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit all submissions or advertising that do not conform to **The Monitor's** journalistic standards. All photos are U.S. Army unless otherwise designated.

**The Monitor's** classified ad page is a free service reserved for active duty personnel, military retirees, military family members and DAC's only. Because there is no fee, the only advertisements permitted to be published on this page are ads that cannot

be considered commercial ventures. Ads must be written on the standard form published from time to time, or located at Bldg. 15. As classified ads are personal in nature, **The Monitor** cannot publish ads received through "Shotgun" mail or by fax.

**The Monitor** is a registered trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office issued Jan. 12, 1988, #1472244.

Publisher/Commanding General	Brig. Gen. Robert P. Lennox
Public Affairs Officer	Jean Offutt
Editor	Jim Gonzales
Assistant Editor	Dustin Perry
Monitor Staff	Spc. Steve Baack
	Virginia Reza
	Wilson A. Rivera
	Catrina Francis
32nd AAMDC	Sgt. Lewis Hilburn
11th ADA Bde.	Spc. Mark Miranda
	Pfc. Jessica Greendeer
108th ADA Bde.	Spc. Jason Stadel
WBAMC	Clarence Davis III
Submit articles to <a href="mailto:monitor@bliss.army.mil">monitor@bliss.army.mil</a> .	