

Commentary

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Troop Talk



The following information was furnished by GMH to further clarify what a resident who now lives or moves into privatized housing can expect regarding their Basic Allowance for Housing.

Many servicemembers are aware of the BAH rate protection that was put in place Jan 1. This change means some BAH rates will decrease in certain areas; however, individuals currently receiving the higher 2005 rate will be protected and their BAH will not decrease until there is an action to their BAH entitlement at DFAS (i.e. permanent change of station, promotion, demotion, etc.)

To handle this new adjustment, the Military Assistance Corporation has revised some of the rules for how to handle move-ins, promotions, and other items that create changes to a tenant's BAH entitlement.

Beginning this month, your move-in file must contain the year of the rate table you wish Military Assistance Command to use to start the allotment at the appropriate rate to capture rate protection amounts. For instance, if a servicemember was assigned to the installation Oct. 1, 2005, but didn't move into privatized housing until Jan. 1, 2006, the installation must move the tenant in with the 2005 date (if that is the desired rate). This will indicate to MAC to start the allotment at the 2005 BAH rate, not the lower 2006 rate. If rate protection does not apply, the same rules apply for move-in dates now as they have in the past

Questions concerning these changes can be directed to Michael Chesak, GMH community manager, at 564-0795.

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

Provost Marshal Office Update

In response to an increased trend of theft of government laptop computers, the Provost Marshal Office would like to remind users of physical security requirements applicable to laptop computers. Supervisors need to ensure compliance with the following guidelines:

- By regulation, laptop computers must be secured with a CPU computer lock or placed in secured storage cabinets (i.e. wall lockers), when not in use.

- Supervisors need to ensure facilities housing computers have received an adequate rating on their key control inspection conducted by Physical Security.

For more information, contact your Information System Security Officer or the Physical Security Office at 568-5151.



Deployment brings easy question, tough answer

SPC. JENNIFER FITTS

Army News Service

BAGHDAD, Iraq – I've been asked before what makes me stay in the Army through what will probably be, in its entirety, an almost three-year separation from my husband, and I can't seem to explain it.

Why am I in the Army?

The simple answer might be "patriotism." My patriotism toward the Army is the topic of this commentary, but there's so much more to it than that.

Yes, I am a patriot. I love my country and I'm proud of her. I'm not proud of everything that she's done, but I am proud of her as a whole. I am proud of the ideals that my country stands for; proud of the people who, whatever background they come from, stand beside me and say "I'm an American."

I'm proud of the country that my great-grandparents risked their lives to come to, from Holland, from France, from Poland and from Russia. They saw a golden land, one where dreams grew wild in endless stretches of land.

I still see that original promise that brought them here.

I see those very same dreams, though there are days when those dreams don't shine so brightly, and I wonder if the "American Dream" is a shadow that I've been told to chase with no hope of actually catching it.

Then, the sun comes out again, and my dreams, so big that only a land as vast as America could hold them, shimmer in the sun like treasures scattered over mountains.

I love my country.

I love her with a fierce pride and a passion that isn't always explainable to someone who hasn't experienced that

love.

I love my country enough to answer her call, to put my civilian life on hold to respond to the burden she asks me to pick up, regardless of whether or not I agree with why she's asking me.

I love her enough to wear a uniform and to possibly give my life in her service.

But there's more to it than that.

Over the years, I've tried putting it in plain words, with various degrees of success.

I'm a patriot, yes, but it's more than a deep and abiding love of my country and a need to give back to her somehow that keeps me in the Army.

It's not the pay; although for the first time in my adult life I am totally out of debt and living more than just barely above the poverty level.

It's not the education benefits, since I earned them after my first enlistment. The GI Bill is a lovely thing, but it's not why I stay.

It's not the medical care necessarily, since as a National Guard member, I don't get many medical bennies when I'm not activated.

It's the people – the Soldiers. The good, the bad and the indifferent.

It's that human factor that reaches out, across backgrounds and educations and lives, and binds us together.

No matter how fragile those bonds seem, they're still there and they're everlasting.

Get a group of people together and the Soldiers and veterans will congregate, usually trading "No kidding, there I was" stories, peppered with obscure acronyms and coarse language.

It's a uniquely shared set of experiences, shared by individuals who are, forever afterward, part of

something bigger than themselves. It's something that honestly defies my attempts to catalogue, classify or quantify. It's almost impossible to truly dissect.

I've been asked if I could find such fulfilling camaraderie in another field, and I probably could, as long as certain parameters were met. My alternative calling would have to be challenging, both physically and emotionally and involve things that should suck, but somehow, don't.

I'd require that my other calling involve daily "somethings" that, with rare exception, leave me dirty, tired and pissed off at stupid stuff, but still has me laughing my butt off at the end of the day.

I could probably find that dream job somewhere else, but I love Soldiers, like no one I've ever loved before. They are, in my mind, my family. I've been through so many things with other Soldiers. I've been hurt by other Soldiers and also held up by Soldiers when I thought I couldn't take any more.

I've fallen in love with a Soldier, someone who understands the why, the what, and the how of the Army, and I wouldn't trade that for anything.

I've cried because of my love of the Army and I've experienced anguished heartbreak, enduring personal sacrifices that made me doubt my future in the military.

I've laughed and cried and made friends who will be part of my life until the day I die.

So, yes, I am a patriot.

But the men and women in uniform beside me show me why I'm proud of my country. My fellow Soldiers remind me day in and day out why it is that I love America and why I stay in the Army.

For that, I thank them.

(Editor's note: Spc. Jennifer Fitts is an Army journalist with the 100th MPAD. Her article first appeared in the Marne Express, a weekly newspaper for Task Force Baghdad and the 3rd Infantry Division.)

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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, www.lavenpublishing.com.

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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.

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