

# Commentary

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## Troop Talk

“Do we still need drill sergeants in Advanced Individual Training?” That’s the question some senior Army leaders are asking commanders to consider.

Currently, it takes two drill sergeant candidates and up to nine months of intense training to produce one qualified drill sergeant. Senior Army leaders are looking at the possibility of removing drill sergeants from AIT and completing the Soldierization process using the Military Occupational Skills instructors. This move could potentially free up more than 180 highly skilled noncommissioned officers for the operational Army.

Additionally, removing drill sergeants from AIT would allow Training and Doctrine Command to increase the number of Basic Combat Training drill sergeants where they are needed most.

Other proposals include extending BCT to 12 weeks before sending the Soldiers to their



MOS training to ensure the basic Soldierization requirements are met.

This new initiative is part of an ongoing effort to provide our young Soldiers in training more privileges, giving them the power to test their judgment and make decisions long before they become members of an operational unit. We want Soldiers to learn from their mistakes while in the training base, not when they reach their first unit. This training concept is not an opportunity to lower standards or change the quality of Soldiers AIT produces, but instead, to place more responsibility in the Soldier’s hands, producing a more mature Soldier, able to act as an adult without supervision.

To capture the challenges associated with this new program, four installations are preparing to conduct pilot programs where an AIT class will be conducted without drill sergeants. The pilots are scheduled to begin here, Fort Eustis, Va., Aberdeen Proving

Grounds, Md., and Fort Jackson, S.C., within the next 30 days.

During the pilot, instructors will manage all aspects of trainee life that drill sergeants would traditionally handle to include physical fitness, troop movement, individual counseling, barracks management and MOS training. Instructors at each installation are scheduled to receive additional training to prepare them for this new task, to include suicide prevention training, Combat Lifesaver training, and classes in the Army’s Standardized Physical Training.

After the first pilot, we will likely identify some areas that require adjustments, which will require additional pilot groups. It’s important that we get this effort right to ensure we continue the successes we have had in the training base in support of the operational Army.

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

### Web sites of interest

**The Monitor**

[www.lavenpublishing.com/fortblissmonitor.html](http://www.lavenpublishing.com/fortblissmonitor.html)

**Fort Bliss** [www.bliss.army.mil](http://www.bliss.army.mil)

**William Beaumont Army Medical Center**

[www.wbamc.amedd.army.mil](http://www.wbamc.amedd.army.mil)

**Department of the Army** [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil)

**Department of Defense** [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil)

**DoD news about the war on terrorism**

[www.defendamerica.mil](http://www.defendamerica.mil)

**Defense Finance Accounting Service**

[www.dod.mil/dfas](http://www.dod.mil/dfas)

**Army Knowledge Online** [www.us.army.mil](http://www.us.army.mil)

**Civilian Personnel Online** [www.cpol.army.mil](http://www.cpol.army.mil)

**Thrift Savings Plan** [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov)

**Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)**

[www.defenselink.mil/brac](http://www.defenselink.mil/brac)

**Fort Bliss MWR** [www.blissmwr.com](http://www.blissmwr.com)

**Armed Forces Vacation Club** [www.afvclub.com](http://www.afvclub.com)



## Letters To the Editor

Happy 23rd birthday Jessica Lynch! I just finished your book *I Am a Soldier, Too*. It was a great book. I started reading it April 25 and finished it the next morning. The part about “birth control glasses” was hilarious. I just want to tell you, you are a beautiful young woman, and when you become a teacher I know you will be a wonderful one. You are a good person, and you are an inspiration to me because you have worked so hard to overcome your injuries. I am an 11-year-old girl, and my name is Jenna Sigmon. Oh, I also watched the movie about your rescue. I know you will look beautiful on your wedding day because you looked pretty even in your uniform. I hope you had a wonderful birthday.

Jenna Sigmon

Happy birthday to a most deserving young woman who captured the heart of America. I can relate to you because I have two sons in your age bracket (22 and a 20 year old). I also have an 11-year-old daughter. May God bless you with continued recovery, both physically and emotionally. I hope you have many, many more happy birthdays and special blessings bestowed upon you and your family!

Jenna's mom

To whom it may concern,  
I wonder if I might be so bold as to call upon the assistance of

your readers to help me with my research?

I am studying military baseball during World War II and looking at the effects of war on promising young players and the morale-boosting quality of military ball games.

A few years ago, I wrote a book that focused on wartime baseball in Europe, *Baseball in World War II Europe*, and my intention is to produce a book that covers the entire spectrum of military baseball, from camps in the U.S., to the Pacific, Europe, Africa and the Mediterranean.

Military service affected people who played baseball at all levels – high school, college, semi-pro and professional, and I would love to hear from the relatives and friends of anyone who played baseball while serving their country. Many of these young men played their last ball game just days before going into combat, and some never returned.

Any help your readers can offer would be much appreciated, and I thank you for your time, trouble and anticipated cooperation.

Regards,

Gary Bedingfield

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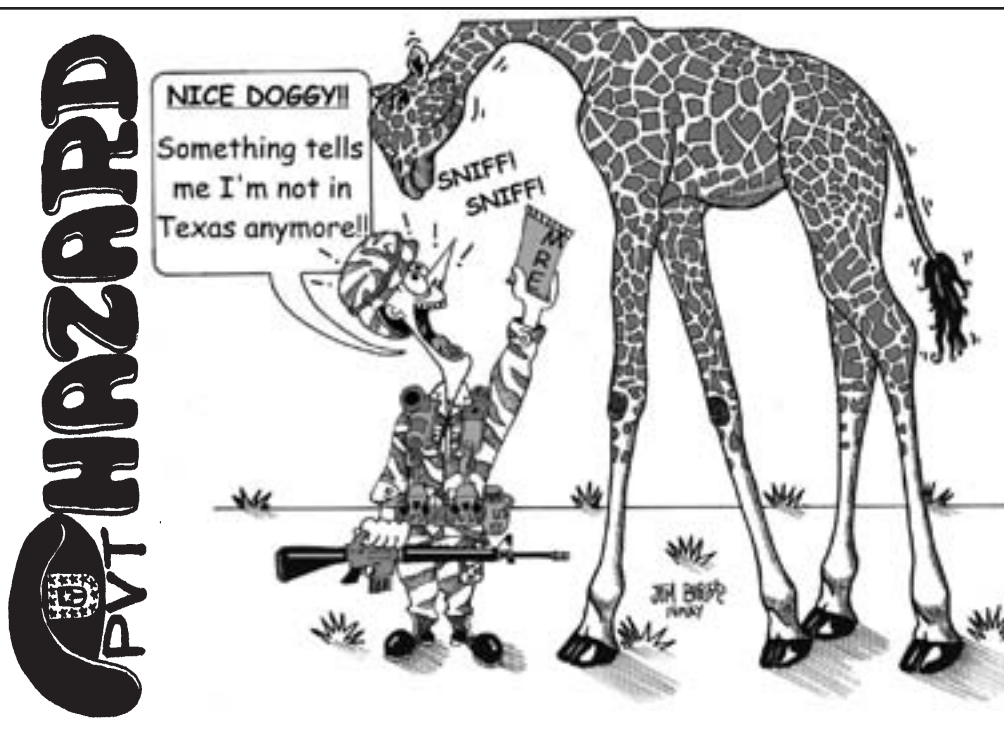
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