

Commentary

Troop Talk

The following answers are a continuation of the questions asked by Soldiers from the 31st Air Defense Artillery Brigade.

There are currently no orthodontists assigned to the dental clinic here. However, Soldiers who move to Fort Bliss and already have braces are not receiving dental care for their braces and are not being allowed to see an orthodontist off-post. Are there any plans to make this care available?

The short answer here is that the Soldier is financially responsible for orthodontic care. An Army orthodontist who initiates treatment must counsel all beneficiaries in writing per DENCOM policy that if they have a permanent change of station or ETS, or if the Army restricts, suspends or terminates orthodontic services at any Army installation, beneficiaries must assume financial responsibility for continuing or completing treatment.

The Fort Bliss DENTAC does not have an orthodontist on staff. In addition, the DENTAC does not expect to receive an orthodontist in the foreseeable future. The DENTAC is not authorized to obligate government funds to pay for orthodontic care in the civilian sector. Therefore, the DENTAC cannot refer Soldiers to off-post civilian orthodontists.

In summary, as per DENCOM Policy 06-08: the Army is not financially obligated to continue orthodontic care should an active duty service member leave the military or be reassigned to a location that does not provide orthodontic care. An active duty service member may elect to continue treatment at his/her expense with an off-post civilian orthodontist or have the orthodontic braces removed if orthodontic care is not available or discontinued. If a Soldier so desires, the Fort Bliss DENTAC may provide an evaluation regarding terminating treatment. A Soldier may visit his/her assigned dental clinic to arrange an appointment for this evaluation.

Why do the AAFES gas stations not keep up with the gas prices off post?

AAFES does a survey of gas prices on a daily basis covering a five mile radius from Fort Bliss. The lowest price is then posted at the AAFES facilities on the following day. This does not include using prices where a membership fee is charged for purchases.

With the influx of Soldiers to Fort Bliss, is there a plan to enlarge the Inn at Fort Bliss?

The Inn at Fort Bliss is part of the larger consolidated Army Lodging Program. Fort Bliss Morale, Welfare and Recreation have management oversight of this program. Aside from the Inn at Fort Bliss, there are also an additional 16 buildings, including the distinguished visitors quarters, which comprise the total Fort Bliss Lodging Program. This amounts to a total of 578 rooms available for Fort Bliss guests. Current occupancy usually averages 70 percent at any one time. Therefore, there are non-occupied rooms that can be utilized by increased troop strength. There is also a Lodging Success Program (LSP) in place whereby if all rooms are occupied, a guest may utilize an off-post Lodging Success Program Hotel at Per Diem rate by calling the 1-800-GO-ARMY-1. There are no plans to expand the current number of rooms at Fort Bliss. The standard occupancy for Army lodging is 80 percent. It is anticipated that during fiscal years 2009 or 2010 the Army Lodging at Fort Bliss will be privatized. At that time, it will become the decision of the new operators of Fort Bliss lodging whether or not to increase and/or



expand the number of rooms at the Fort Bliss Lodging Program.

On other Army posts, E-4s are required to live off-post. Once coming to Ft. Bliss, they are required to live on-post. However, these Soldiers have acquired a lot of furniture and now have to store it because barracks rooms are not large enough. Can an exception be made for these Soldiers to receive Basic Allowance for Housing to live off-post?

Permanently assigned single Soldiers E-1 to E-5 are required to live in barracks. This rule applies to all Army Installations, except when barracks are not available. In order to receive BAH at the without dependents rate while residing off post, brigade barracks occupancy rate must be 95 percent or higher. Soldiers may request BAH through their commanders, who will recommend approval or disapprove the request based on brigade barracks utilization. Recommendation for approval must be endorsed by the battalion commander. This is done by submitting information on DA Form 4187 to the Housing Office. The Housing Office will make BAH decisions for the garrison commander based on barracks utilization. In order to receive BAH, Soldiers E-1 to E-5 must obtain a Certificate of Non-availability (CNA) prior to obtaining off-post housing. The Defense Military Pay Office will not initiate or continue BAH entitlements without a CNA from the housing office. Storage of household goods may be stored at government expense, for more information contact the Transportation Household Goods office in Bldg. 505.

The barracks on post don't match the standards of the barracks in Germany – are there plans to demolish or renovate the barracks on Fort Bliss?

There is one Army standard for barracks. Fort Bliss has about 5,640 permanent party assets. Of these assets, only 876 are two-person room configuration and the remaining assets representing a 1+1 configuration with Soldiers housed in a single room with a shared area.

The issue at hand may be physical condition of the barracks. Condition of the barracks is predicated on three issues: occupants taking care of the asset, occupants identifying deficiencies and reporting them to Directorate of Public Works for repair via Services Orders, and funding. Discussions with IMCOM-West indicate that NATO funds supported/supplemented the funding scenario in Europe. Continental United States funding for facility maintenance and repair is not resourced at 100 percent. As such, those facilities in Europe would be in a better state of repair.

New officer housing is being built on Ft. Bliss – are there plans to build new housing for E-1 through E-4 Soldiers who currently live in bad housing?

GMH is building 528 new homes in Paso del Norte Heights, near Logan Heights Gym; 355 for junior enlisted; and 173 for senior noncommissioned officers and their families. The first new homes are scheduled for completion in May 2007 with all the homes scheduled for completion by May 2009. Main Post homes are currently scheduled for demolition with construction of new town homes projected to begin in 2009. These homes will feature refrigerated air and a one car garage.

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

Bliss on the street

What is your opinion on the surge of troops to Iraq?



"I fully support why more troops have to go [to Iraq] and finish the job. We dirtied it up over there, and we need to go and clean it up."

Spc. Janelle Henderson

"I have to stand behind my president. He is my commander in chief, and if the president says they need more troops, then they need to go."

Gerald Hess



"It is too few troops, too late in the game. Had more [troops] been [in Iraq] early on, things might have been different."

Morris Capland

"I don't have an opinion because I'm not a military analyst. I feel like the analyst at the Pentagon, White House and Iraq know more than Congress."

Lona Kewley



"As a Soldier I don't have an opinion. As an American citizen I believe our commanders on the ground have told our commander in chief what they wanted, and I don't know whether or not he is listening. I know the surge is going to stress out a lot more military families that honestly don't need to be stressed out. I believe the troops that are there now are doing a great job and can continue to do so without the extra 20,000 Soldiers."

Master Sgt. Eugene Hunter

"I think it's too late to send more troops. Many mistakes have already been done [in Iraq] and sending more troops is not going to fix the problem."

Spc. Marie Bradshaw



Web sites of interest

- The Monitor
www.lavenpublishing.com/fortblissmonitor.html
- Fort Bliss www.bliss.army.mil
- William Beaumont Army Medical Center
www.wbamc.amedd.army.mil
- Department of the Army www.army.mil
- Department of Defense www.defenselink.mil
- DoD news about the war on terrorism
www.defendamerica.mil
- Defense Finance Accounting Service www.dod.mil/dfas
- Army Knowledge Online www.us.army.mil
- Civilian Personnel Online www.cpol.army.mil
- Thrift Savings Plan www.tsp.gov
- Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC)
www.defenselink.mil/brac
- Fort Bliss MWR www.blissmwr.com
- Armed Forces Vacation Club www.afvclub.com
www.amigoairsho.org

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Submit articles to monitor@bliss.army.mil.