

Commentary

Troop Talk

Team Bliss is hosting several upcoming family and team-building events.

Saturday, we will celebrate Armed Forces Day. In addition to the displays and events, I have added something for the young folks I think they will enjoy. On this day, anyone between the ages of 10 and 17 (and maybe even younger) can earn their Fort Bliss Passport. To start, go to the Command Post on Noel Field and pick up your instructions. When you have all the blocks checked; a visit to the rappel tower, the indoor rifle range simulator, the motor transport simulated driving course, static displays of equipment, Old Fort Bliss, and other sites, return the Passport to the Command Post where you will receive your official certificate with prizes.

Shuttle buses will transport participants to all the sites throughout the day, so bring your parents, hop on board and enjoy earning your passport. Leave plenty of time for games, food, entertainment and other events.

Another event is for children of deployed Soldiers. Fort Bliss will hold its first "Team Bliss" Freedom Camp. This camp is aimed at family



members of deployed Soldiers, ages 7 to 18. Freedom Camp will take place at Biggs Park, June 22 through 24. The focus will be "a day in the life" of a Soldier while deployed. Campers age 13 and up will set up camp the morning of June 22 and spend the weekend learning about military life. The younger group, ages 7-12, will begin the morning of the June 23, enjoy a day full of activities and return the morning of June 24 to join the others for the Family Finale.

The camp will have Soldier presentations, team and skill building activities, static displays, special guests, question and answer sessions and a whole lot of fun – climb the new Tango Tower, be on a winning team on the Paintball Field, watch a special movie and talk to the stars or just shoot some hoops.

Registration deadline is June 1. Application packets can be picked up at Child Youth Services Central Registration, Bldg. 1743, Army Community Services building or the Information, Ticketing and Registration office in the PX. Registration fee is \$10 per family. Limited scholarships are available. For more information call 568-9306 or 569-6774.

I also want to remind everyone about security on post. Security awareness is something we should all practice daily. The recent incident at

Fort Dix, N.J., reminds us that determined adversaries can gain access to the installation to harm our team members and disrupt our operations. We are consistently reviewing our procedures to ensure we have the right balance to protect our citizens. Vehicles will be randomly searched and all identification cards will be checked. If it becomes apparent that we need to go to even stricter measures, we will increase security on Fort Bliss. I just want to reemphasize to everyone to be aware of your surroundings, pay attention to unusual activities and if in doubt, report them to law enforcement officials, whether on or off the installation.

And on a lighter note, soon you will see huge floodlights all around Memorial Circle. These lights will illuminate the flag which will fly 24/7. Retreat will still be held at the end of each day, but the flag will not be lowered at the end of each day as it has been in the past. This is in keeping with flag protocol and is being initiated at other installations.

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

April Fool's Day the Army way

NAVY LT. J.G. MEGAN FIELD

Special to The Monitor

The first time I read my Individual Augmentation orders, I noticed I had several months of training before reporting to Iraq. Based on my experiences with the Navy, I was looking forward to the training. I didn't realize until after my arrival at the Army post that Navy and Army training methods are very different.

At Navy "schools," we sit in air-conditioned classrooms and spend the day learning how to operate technical equipment. Written tests ensure knowledge retention. Class sizes are small. We anticipate short days with frequent breaks. Students pout whenever the class wasn't over by noon.

My platoon's first hint things weren't going to be easy came when the Army briefed us on the training uniform. They call it "battle rattle," which included a camouflage uniform, combat boots, Kevlar helmet, bullet-proof vest, a CamelBak filled with water, knee and elbow pads, ballistic eye protection, ear plugs, and of course, weapons. This is about 50 pounds of gear, not including the weapon.

On the first day of training, we realized the Army's

definition of a short training day is from 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and exercises or additional training is common after dinner. We train seven days a week. There are no breaks for lunch, so we snack on Meals Ready to Eat throughout the day. At first, we grumbled about having to use outhouses instead of bathrooms. After the course, where the open desert served as our bathroom, we kept our complaints to ourselves.

There are usually about 100 people in each class, which are very skilled-focused. This results in a lot of time waiting in lines to be checked by the instructor. When there are not skill checks to do, instructors check knowledge retention by the volume of the "hooah" noise we make. The daily safety briefs remind us not to play with rattlesnakes and of the severe consequences for anyone who violates one of the Army's weapon rules. This is serious business.

Army training is difficult for us Navy folk not only because it is physically challenging, but also because we never know what to expect and therefore cannot mentally prepare. This was the case in our recent five-day course called "Convoy Live Fire," where we learned to travel in a convoy of Humvees through sniper attacks, improvised explosive device attacks and barricades.

Our convoy completed its final trip through the obstacle course April 1, and the Sailors were more excited than I'd seen in several days. The course had been grueling and we managed to finish without violating the two most important rules – don't argue with the instructors, and don't violate any weapon safety procedures.

We gathered on the bleachers in front of an adult-sized sandbox with a model of the obstacle course. I passed around an enormous bar of chocolate my dad sent me in a care package the night before. Thinking they had done a spectacular job, the Sailors were chattering happily.

The head instructor gave an after action report, during which he analyzed our performance on the course. It seemed to be going well until he got to the part where we traveled through a traffic circle.

He said, "On the next run, you guys will want to have your first truck pull up farther."

I ignored the comment, thinking the instructor had made a mistake. A few minutes later, much to my dismay, he again said we had to re-do the course.

Our good Sailors, who had survived five days without arguing, immediately started bickering with the head instructor. We tried to continue on with the rest of the AAR, but the Sailors would not drop the issue. The instructor became hostile and I was dreading the outcome of this situation. Then he yelled, "April Fools!" The Sailors laughed nervously. I was too tired to care.

Many times during Army training, our instructors told us to do things we considered ridiculous, so we assumed they were joking. That's why it took almost an hour for the Sailors to believe that the head instructor really was joking about the re-do. I watched them settle into their MRE lunches and only then did I hear them admit that the joke was funny.

Editor's note: This is the first in a series.

2007 DWIs by brigade/unit

DATE	6th BDE	11th BDE	31ST BDE	108th BDE	4/1 CAV	1st AR DIV	GARRISON	WBAMC	FM/CIV	OTHER TENANT UNITS	OTHER MIL	TOTAL
JAN - MAR	3	6	2	5	1	3	2		7	3		33
	HHB 6 BDE	1/44 AMD X 4	13TH MAINT CO	108th BDE	2-12 CAV	1-36 INF BN	MRB GARRISON X2			402 FA X3	63RD REG CMD	
	HHB 2/6 BDE	HHB 11TH BDE	HHB 3/2 ADA	1/7 ADA X2		1ST BDE						
	1/56 BN	5/52 ADA		2/43 ADA X2		HHB FA 5-1 AD						
APR - JUN		3	1	1		1			4			10
		1/44 AMD X 2	31ST BDE	1/7 ADA		1ST BDE						
		5/52 ADA										
TOTAL	3	9	3	6	1	4	2	0	11	3	1	43

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