



Air Force extends basic military training

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11/4/2008 - **LACKLAND AIR FORCE BASE, Texas** -- The first group of Air Force recruits to experience expanded basic military training arrived here Nov. 4.

These new recruits are the first to face the challenges of an additional 14 days of training from 6.5 to 8.5 weeks. The added time will be used to enhance and reinforce BMT's current war skills training.

"I'm excited about it," said Col. Edward Westermann, 737th Training Group commander. "I think our MTIs (military training instructors) are excited about it. We get to be a part of that historic transformation. This is something that 20 years from now, when we're no longer in uniform, we can talk about how we played a part in that change at BMT."

The time expansion in BMT was approved by the Air Force in early 2006, and replaces a program that has been in place since the 1960s, although adding two weeks was a consideration in the mid-1970s before being set aside by funding issues.

"It will enhance the capabilities of these young men and women that we are sending into the Air Force," said Colonel Westermann. "The important thing is we know the current strategic environment that we're in, and we know the challenges these young men and women are going to face over the course of their career. We are going to better prepare them to meet those challenges of the future."

The physical facility additions, such as the Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training course at the Lackland Training Annex, are not the only changes to occur. Class time has been added, instructors have been re-trained and courses such as CPR training have been weaved into the 8.5 schedule.

"This is a long term investment that the Air Force is making," the group commander said. "It is incumbent upon us as an organization to validate that investment."

The expanded training comes at a time when the Air Force is looking to grow. As many as 4,000 more recruits are expected to pass through Lackland's gates for the fiscal year 2009, which would bring the yearly total to 39,000.

"The Air Force Recruiting Service foresees no problems at all in meeting the recruiting goal," said Colonel Westermann. "With the enhanced warrior skills, this is why young men and women want to join the military today. We are prepared to execute for that increase.

"We're ready to go," he added.



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11/5/2008 - Air Force Basic Military Training trainees from the 331st Training Squadron, Flight 077, wait in line for haircuts Nov. 5. They are is among the first group of Air Force recruits to experience an additional 14 days of training as BMT expands from 6.5 to 8.5 weeks. The additional time will enhance and reinforce current war skills training. (USAF photo by Robbin Cresswell)

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