

# VFW National Commander Visits Troops at Fort Irwin

## 'Talking to troops on the ground-level helps us better advocate for them on Capitol Hill'

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VFW Commander-in-Chief B.J. Lawrence visited with Army units during predeployment training at the nation's largest Army training center.

Fort Irwin's National Training Center (NTC) is the only U.S. military training facility that supports brigade-level, live-fire exercises ranging from small arms to aircraft-launched bombs.

Lawrence met with the Commanding General of Fort Irwin and the Army's National Training Center (NTC), Brig. Gen. Jeff Broadwater, to talk about troop readiness and morale.

"Talking to troops on the ground-level helps us better advocate for them on Capitol Hill," Lawrence said.

Lawrence also met troopers of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR), including Col. Scott Woodward, to talk with him about the realistic training Army brigades endure during its month-long visit. The 11th ACR acts as a lethal and professional opposing force to train the Army's Brigade Combat Teams.

"NTC is the only place for brigade-size training," Woodward said. "The entire focus of this whole post is to make sure training objectives are met by the training units. We replicate the entire environment for each unit that comes through."

During Lawrence's visit, he spent time with the soldiers training with their infantry, tank and artillery units. Lawrence spoke to soldiers about scholarship opportunities through the VFW's "Help A Hero Scholarship," and the Unmet Needs program available to them.

While in the training area roughly the size of Rhode Island, Lawrence learned about field

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artillery from Pvt. 2nd Class Gretchen Szabo, a 17-year-old gunner of 3rd Bn., 29th Field Artillery Regt.

“A lot has changed since I’ve been in the Army,” Lawrence said. “Soldiers today are taught to think for themselves. Those skills are required of every soldier who deploys overseas.”

Lawrence’s visit to NTC is part of an initiative to visit an armored brigade combat team next year during an overseas deployment.