



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
BRAVO BATTERY, 1ST BATTALION, 40TH FIELD ARTILLERY
434TH FIELD ARTILLERY BRIGADE
FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA 73503-6202

Bravo Battery welcome letter

October 26, 2016

Dear Bravo Barbarian Family Member,

My name is CPT Billy J. Lewis, your Soldier's Battery Commander for Basic Combat Training (BCT) Class 06-17 in the 434th Field Artillery Brigade, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. As you already know, your Soldier has safely arrived, in processed, and has begun their nine-week journey towards becoming a Warrior in the United States Army.

As a member of Bravo Battery, your Soldier is in the good hands of our Battery Cadre. These hardworking Noncommissioned Officers, Commissioned Officers, and Civilians make up the most dedicated and professional team in the United States Army. We serve as coaches, teachers, mentors, and leaders whose mission is more than just making sure your Soldier graduates from BCT. Our goal is to provide our Army with well trained, highly motivated, and well disciplined Soldiers who respond to leadership, are focused on teamwork and espouse the Warrior Ethos and the Army Values; your Soldier will demonstrate a winning attitude, be mentally, physically, and emotionally prepared for the rigors of combat in order to fight and win on the modern battlefield.

We accomplish this mission by providing your Soldier with the most realistic, relevant, and best training available. As you will hear first hand from your Soldier, this training will be some of the most strenuous and demanding activities they have ever been through. BCT is not easy, nor should it be. However, every task your Soldier performs will help develop the discipline, self-confidence, and knowledge necessary to be a successful Soldier in today's Army.

We consider our Soldiers to be our Nation's most precious resource, and a key asset of the Army's future. Because of this, your Soldier's development only begins with training. What makes the Army a unique organization and culture is that taking care of Soldiers and their families is our foremost priority. Please know that like you, we are genuinely concerned about your Soldier's overall health and well-being and we have a number of resources available to alleviate and mitigate any financial, medical, or personal issues.

This is not only your Soldier's first Army experience, it is yours as well. With that being said we would also like to welcome you to the Army family. Like your family's values, our seven inherent Army values: Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage are rooted deep in tradition are are sewn into the very soul of every American Soldier. Your Soldier is currently learning about these values while living by the American Soldier's Creed.

At times, this experience will seem to be very difficult for your Soldier. For many of our younger Soldiers, this is their first time away from everything they know, to include home, family, and friends. Naturally, your Soldier misses you as much as you miss them, so I encourage you to write at every opportunity possible. Simply put, **Soldiers love getting mail**. Your sentiments of pride and encouragement provide a great deal of strength in the morale and motivation of your Soldier. Rest assured that your Soldier will be given ample time to write and read your mail. Please understand that sending and receiving mail is a federally protected right, but access to e-mail and the phone are not. As privileges, access to the phone and e-mail are granted based on good conduct and performance. Every Soldier will get the opportunity to use these communication privileges with a regularity that is not guaranteed. Please do not send anything edible. Your Soldiers receive more than adequate nutrition from the Dining Facility. Any edible items sent will be considered contraband.

Our Soldiers are scheduled to graduate on 20 January 2017 at 10:00 A.M. I will send you more detailed information in the upcoming weeks explaining the events you can share with your Soldier prior to graduation along with a map of the area for your convenience. We understand that by attending graduation events you are making great sacrifices with your time and money that require adequate planning. Your patience is much appreciated as we work to get the accurate graduation information to you as soon as possible.

Lawton-Fort Sill and our surrounding communities offer a vast array of attractions, activities and accommodations during your stay. As you may know, Fort Sill is located in Southwest Oklahoma and is surrounded by the scenic Wichita Mountains. The Wichita Mountain Wildlife Refuge includes a visitor center and several tourist sites such as the Holy City and historic Meers, Ok. Lawton-Fort Sill boasts attractions such as the Great Plains Museum, while offering many restaurants and hotels to choose from. A "must see" is our National Historic Landmark, Old Fort Sill, which includes the original Cavalry Barracks built by the 10th U.S. Cavalry "Buffalo Soldiers" in 1869, and Geronimo's one-time cell at the Guard House. The Fort Sill Museum also offers many rare artifacts and a "Cannon Walk" with a collection of over 200 historic artillery pieces. For more information on hotels and the surrounding area, please go onto the internet and view the Lawton Chamber of Commerce website (<http://www.lawtonfortsillchamber.com>).

While you are here visiting, it is permissible to photograph and videotape graduation activities, however this permission does not extend to the rest of Fort Sill. While photography is allowed of ceremonies and family or social events, unrestricted videotaping and photography by the public on the installation is prohibited. Photography is also allowed of historical exhibits at the Fort Sill Museum, including those which are outdoors, but not of nearby family quarters and office buildings. You are welcome to bring a camera to the graduation, but please exercise caution and do not point it in the direction of installation facilities, buildings, and artillery equipment which are not part of the graduation activities. In the 1-40th FA Battalion Area, you may freely photograph or video all family related activities.

Enclosed are some reference material containing answers to Frequently Asked Questions, links, and phone numbers that all contain information concerning the welfare of you and your Soldier. Please review it and feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. As always, I will do my very best to assist you in any matter relating to your Soldier.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Lewis", written in a cursive style.

BILLY J. LEWIS
CPT, FA
COMMANDING



BRAVO BATTERY



Frequently Asked Questions

1. WHO DO I CONTACT IN AN EMERGENCY?

Should an emergency arise, the best means of notifying your Soldier is through your local American Red Cross. Call 1-800-REDCROSS (1-800-733-2767) or www.redcross.org. Once contacted, your local area field office will contact the Lawton-Fort Sill, OK field office, who will in turn, contact us. In emergencies affecting immediate family members (sibling or parent), emergency leave may be granted. Other leaves of absence during training are taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis, but are not normally authorized.

2. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SOLDIER IS INJURED DURING TRAINING?

Safety is the number one priority in everything we do in the United States Army. We put a great deal of time, training, and resources into accident prevention, but unfortunately, accidents and injuries do happen. If your Soldier is injured and/or hospitalized, he will receive expedient and appropriate medical attention by trained professionals. All of our Drill Sergeants have undergone extensive training to earn the designation of an Army Combat Lifesaver. As a precaution, we have medical aid kits/bags and other First Aid devices immediately available during all training events. All emergencies are handled at the Reynolds Army Community Hospital (RACH) here on Fort Sill. Depending on the nature, extent, and recovery time, some injuries may result in delayed graduation.

Please do not assume that your Soldier will not graduate on time if he is hospitalized. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis with the best interest of the Soldier taken into consideration at all times. If your Soldier is admitted to the hospital for a serious illness or undergoes surgery of any kind, the immediate next of kin, designated on your Soldier's personnel card, will be notified by the Medical Staff, not the Chain of Command (Commander, First Sergeant, or Drill Sergeant). If your Soldier is hospitalized, you can reach the RACH information desk 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at (580) 558-2000.

3. MAY MY SOLDIER TRAVEL WITH ME OR GO HOME AFTER GRADUATION?

No, your Soldier may NOT travel with you to his next duty station in order to attend Advanced Individual Training (AIT) for his specific Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). Furthermore, Soldiers are not authorized to travel home in between graduation and their AIT report date (see FAQ 4 below). However, please keep in mind that the Department

of Defense (DOD) will provide a plane ticket through a defense contracted travel agency located on Fort Sill. This plane ticket will be provided during graduation week once your Soldier receives his official orders. Soldiers can count on leaving within 48 hours of graduation directly to their next duty station for AIT, even if that means they will be signing into their gaining unit several days before their report date. Field Artillery (13 series) and Air Defense Artillery (14 series) MOS Soldiers that will be conducting their AIT here at Ft. Sill. All other MOS will be reporting to their AIT duty station at an alternate Army installation within the Continental U.S. Soldiers that are Split Training Option (in between their Junior and Senior year of high school and/or college) are that are NOT going on to AIT but are returning next summer for training may travel home with either parents or a spouse provided permission is obtained by the Battalion Commander before graduation/ship day. Your Soldiers will be asked if this is how they are traveling home so we do not obtain an airline ticket for them. Once committed though, the Soldier must travel with parents or a spouse. No last minute airline tickets can be obtained.

4. WILL MY SOLDIER BE ALLOWED TO GO ON PASS AFTER GRADUATION?

Yes. Deserving Soldiers (not pending adverse action or serving punishment as a result of adverse action) will be allowed to go on pass after family day and graduation ceremonies. Our graduation information packet will provide further details regarding pass privileges and family day activities. Again, please do not make your graduation travel plans until you know for sure that your Soldier is graduating on time and we publish the graduation and family day schedules. We are not responsible for any charges or fees you incur.

5. MAY I SEND LETTERS?

Yes, you may send letters. But, please do not send anything edible. Edible items will be considered contraband and confiscated.

6. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SOLDIER FAILS A PORTION OF BASIC TRAINING?

If your Soldier is unable to adequately pass a required training event during his 9 weeks here at Fort Sill, he will be given the opportunity to retrain and pass the event(s) prior to graduation. If he is still unable to meet the prescribed standards, he may be recycled to another unit in order to repeat the training. **Please do not contact us regarding questions about whether your Soldier will graduate. He will contact you and keep you informed of his current status.**

7. WHAT DO I DO IF MY SOLDIER CALLS OR WRITES ABOUT WANTING TO LEAVE?

As I mentioned in the letter, all Soldiers have some level of difficulty transitioning to military life because it is foreign from anything they have ever experienced in their lives. Often times, soldiers find themselves questioning why they are here and whether or not they can or want to continue. In some isolated cases, these thoughts can lead to Soldiers acting upon these doubts by departing Ft. Sill on their own without permission from the

chain of command. Our unit is not run like a confinement facility in that we do not prevent Soldiers from leaving on their own if they so desire. Soldiers come here to stay and train because they want to, not because we make them.

If your Soldier does leave under these circumstances, he is in violation of Article 86 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), Absent With Out Leave (AWOL). Because our nation is at war, he is in violation of Article 85, Desertion. Both of these violations are felony offenses, that if found guilty in a military courts martial can incur the following maximum punishment: dishonorable discharge from the military, forfeiture of all pay and allowances (to include benefits), and a maximum of 5 years confinement. Once a Soldier goes Awol, his pay is immediantly stopped and his name will be distributed to all law enforcement agencies with a warrant for his immediate arrest.

In the past, family members have often assisted their Soldier in going AWOL because they sincerely believe they are helping their Soldier. In actuality, this misguided support only further enables these individuals to quit by running away from commitments and responsibilities.

If you are reading this message it is a strong indication that you care about your Soldier and his decision to join the Armed Forces. If your Soldier falls into this category by considering going AWOL, we suggest that you reaffirm your support and pride for him. Continue to stay in contact with him using positive words of encouragement indicating that they can and will make it through BCT. If they are strongly considering leaving on their own, please discourage them by reminding them of the serious, life altering consequences in this decision. If all else fails, please contact us immediately so the chain of command and/or our unit ministry team can have the opportunity to intervene by simply talking to your Soldier. I can personally assure you that they will not get in trouble as our primary objective is to assist them and ensure their success in BCT, the Army, and in life. Like you, we want to see your Soldier meet all of the goals they set out to achieve when they made the right decision to become a Soldier.

8. MAY MY SOLDIER ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES?

Yes, your Soldier will have the opportunity to attend religious services on a weekly basic, which mainly occurs on Sunday mornings. Locations and times of religious services vary based on denomination, and training being conducted at that time. All matters concerning religious activity are supported by our Battalion Chaplin who can be contacted at the following number: (580) 442-8701/8706.

9. HOW DO I CONTACT MY SOLDIER?

(Soldier's Rank, Last name, First name)
B BTRY, 1-40th FA, PLT # _____
6050 Rothwell Street
Fort Sill, OK 73503-8024

10. HOW DO I CONTACT YOU?

If you have any questions or need information please feel free to contact us at the following number. We'd like to ask that you attempt to go through your Soldier FIRST before calling us as he can answer most of your questions. Please keep in mind that we are NOT an answering service. Please direct all messages that are not an emergency or of a serious nature directly to your Soldier. Remember that if you need to call us, your Soldier will not get in trouble! If the issue is something they can take care of on their own, they will be counseled on that fact, but if it is timely, relevant, and important, they will receive the pertinent information immediately without repercussion:

Battery Commander

CPT Billy J. Lewis

Email: billy.j.lewis94.mil@mail.mil

Phone: (580) 442-1211

First Sergeant

1SG Robert M. Theus

Email: robert.m.theus2.mil@mail.mil

Phone: (580) 442-1213

IMPORTANT INFORMATION LINKS

HOW CAN I SEE WHAT BASIC TRAINING IS REALLY LIKE?

<http://www.goarmy.com>

WHAT ABOUT BASIC COMBAT TRAINING AT FORT SILL SPECIFICALLY

<http://sill-www.army.mil/434>

<http://sill-www.army.mil/>

OUR BATTERY FACEBOOK PAGE:

<http://www.facebook.com/bravobushmasters140?ref=hl>

WHERE CAN FAMILY MEMBERS GET MORE INFORMATION ON LIFE IN THE ARMY AND OUR FIRST DUTY STATION?

The Army provides a number of resources available to spouses and military family members in order to provide the best possible information and conflict resolution. Here are two such links to websites and one toll free number that will answer many of your questions or point you in the right direction to an agency that can. Both websites require a user name and password that you can obtain by providing your basic information to include name, e-mail address, and easy to remember password:

1. www.myarmylifetoo.com – Great place to start. Requires basic registration
2. www.armyonesource.com – User ID: Military, Password: onesource
3. Don't have access to the internet? Contact Military OneSource toll free 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for answers to all your questions at the following telephone numbers:
 - a. From the U.S.: 1-800-342-9647
 - b. Outside the U.S.: (country access code) + 800-3429-6477

REMEMBER – "The Army is all about taking care of Soldiers and Families. We not only train your Soldier, we are here to assist them and you in any way possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us!"



BILLY J. LEWIS
CPT, FA
COMMANDING