



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
BRAVO BATTERY 1<sup>ST</sup> BATTALION 40<sup>TH</sup> FIELD ARTILLERY  
6050 ROTHWELL STREET  
FORT SILL, OKLAHOMA 73503

REPLY TO  
ATTENTION OF:

ATSF-KI-B

7 November 2012

Dear Bushmaster Family Member:

I am Captain Richard A. Lopez, your Soldier's Battery Commander for Basic Combat Training (BCT) Class 6-13 in the 434<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. As you already know, your Soldier has safely arrived, in processed, and has already begun their 9 week journey towards becoming a Warrior.

As a member of Bravo Battery, your Soldier is in the good hands of our Battery Cadre. These hard working 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, motivated, and disciplined Soldiers who respond to leadership, are focused on teamwork and espouse the Warrior Ethos and the Army Values: who demonstrate a winning attitude and are 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 and 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.

**Our Soldiers are tentatively scheduled to graduate on 1 Feb 2013 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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>).

As you may know, the security levels have been raised at critical installations throughout the United States, including here at Fort Sill, due to the ongoing Global War On Terrorism. Because of this increased threat level, there are multiple restrictions and prohibitions on where and when you can photograph and/or video activities and sights here on Fort Sill. 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 military equipment which are not part of the graduation activities. In the 1-40<sup>th</sup> FA Battalion Area, you may freely photograph or video all family related activities.

I'm enclosing 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. **Bushmasters!**

Sincerely,



RICHARD A. LOPEZ  
CPT, FA  
Commanding

Enclosure (1)



# Bravo Battery, 1-40<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery



## 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](http://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 Soldiers 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 in to their gaining unit several days before their report date. Field Artillery (13 series) and Air Defense Artillery (14 Series) MOS Soldiers only 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.

### ***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.

## **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 that 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 cannot 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 Without 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 immediately 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 that 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 he can and will make it through BCT. If he is strongly considering leaving on his own, please discourage him by reminding him 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 he will not get in trouble as our primary objective is to assist him and ensure his success in BCT, the Army, and in life. Like you, we want to see your Soldier meet all of the goals he set out to achieve when he 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 basis, which mainly occurs on Sunday mornings. Locations and times of religious services vary based on denomination, and our training being conducted at that time. All matters concerning religious activity are supported by our Battalion Chaplain who can be contacted at the following: (580) 442-8701/8706.

## **9. HOW DO I CONTACT MY SOLDIER?**

(Soldier's Rank, Last name, first name)  
6050 Rothwell Street, Annex B, PLT # \_\_\_\_  
Fort Sill, OK 73503-8024

\*Please annotate your Soldier's **Platoon** by writing 1, 2, 3 or 4. This assists us in sorting mail, therefore getting it to your Soldier quicker.

## ***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 he can take care of on his own, he will be counseled on that fact, but if it is timely, relevant, and important, he will receive the pertinent information immediately without repercussion:

Training Technician

Mr. Charles Loeffke

Phone: (580) 442-1212

## **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/bct%20main.htm>

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

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

### ***OUR BATTERY FACEBOOK PAGE:***

<http://www.facebook.com/bravobushmasters>

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### ***WHERE 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 web-sites 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](http://www.myarmylifetoo.com) – Great place to start. Requires basic registration
2. [www.armyonesource.com](http://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 (dial all 11 #s)

## ***REMEMBER***

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

CPT Lopez