



# Basic Training Information

## A/1-79<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery

03 October 2016

### ***FROM THE COMMANDER:***

Greetings!

I am Captain James C. Hayes, your Soldier's Battery Commander during his/her Initial Entry Training in the United States Army. Your Soldier arrived safely at Fort Sill and has begun Basic Combat Training in Alpha Battery, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 79<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment (A/1-79FA). During the nine-week training period, your Soldier will learn the basic skills that are required to survive and succeed on today's modern battlefield. The training will be very strenuous and demanding, but the tasks performed will help each Soldier develop the discipline and self-confidence necessary to be a successful Soldier in today's Army. I want you to know that the cadre who will be training your Soldier are a very dedicated group of professionals who are genuinely concerned about the health, welfare and training of each Soldier. We consider your Soldier to be the Army's most important asset and I will personally ensure that we make your Soldier's basic training experience both challenging and rewarding.

### ***YOUR SOLDIER MAY CALL HOME SOON!***

You should have received a phone call from your Soldier by now. Within the first 72 hours of physically arriving to Fort Sill your Soldier was given the opportunity to make a short phone call. I also ensured that your Soldier made another short phone call, to the person of their choosing, within 72 hours of reporting to Alpha Battery (I cannot control who they call, nor will I track that information for you; if you didn't receive a call, this doesn't mean your Soldier wasn't given a chance to call home). During the cycle, your Soldier will have the opportunity to earn phone privileges during each phase change (about every three weeks). Please know that, although it is rare, this privilege may be denied for misconduct or poor performance.

For the duration of Basic Combat Training your Soldier will not have access to their personal cell phones except when authorized nor can they respond to you on Facebook. Additionally, you may not call to the battery and ask to talk to your Soldier.

### ***FAMILY READINESS GROUP.***

Family and friends are a big part of the Army family and although your loved one cannot call each night to keep you informed of their progress and achievements, we will attempt to bridge that gap through frequent updates to the Battery's Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/alphathunder179>. If you simply type in "A/1-79FA" in the search engines "Google" or "Bing", the first result should be the battery Facebook page. Additionally, if you need to push pertinent, important, non-emergency information to your Soldier, please use the following email address: [alphathunder179@gmail.com](mailto:alphathunder179@gmail.com). Please understand that though we do check this email frequently (i.e. every 3-5 days), we are indeed quite busy and may not respond immediately.

Finally, there is a new program that gives new Army Families the opportunity to learn about the Army called the "**Army Family Team Building**" (AFTB) Program. This program will provide you with a great deal of information about what your Soldier is learning and will help you understand what he/she is talking about when they do have an opportunity to call. I have included a flier in this letter with all of the needed instructions in order to complete this online training. All individuals who complete this online training and inform us in accordance with the flier will not only receive recognition of their accomplishment and a certificate of appreciation signed by the Battalion Commander at Family Day, but will also be rewarded with a picture of their Soldier on our Facebook

page! You will also have an opportunity to earn a 10 second video from your Soldier during Basic Training. You do this by sending in 5 or more completed training certificates (completed by 5 different people/family members/friends) showing that you finished AFTB level 1. You don't need to do more than level 1 unless you desire to do so. So please look at the flyer, look for updates concerning your chances to do this on our Facebook Page and participate in this training!

### ***YOUR SOLDIER WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!***

Whether or not this is your Soldier's first time away from home, I am certain that he/she will miss you a great deal. I strongly encourage you to write at every opportunity and you can be assured that your Soldier will have ample time to write you as well. Please be aware that this training installation receives an enormous amount of mail for thousands of trainees every day. It will take longer for your Soldier to receive mail than it will be for you to receive mail from your Soldier. Rest assured, your mail will find its way to your Soldier as soon as possible. When writing your Soldier, use the following address to ensure delivery:

**Rank Last Name, First Name Middle Initial.**  
**A/1-79 FA, Platoon # (Example: 4<sup>th</sup> PLT), Class 86-16**  
**6007 ROTHWELL ST**  
**FORT SILL, OK 73503-5001**

\* Abbreviations for US Army ranks are PVT for Private (E-1), PV2 for Private (E-2), PFC for Private First Class (E-3), and SPC for Specialist (E-4). If you do not yet know your loved one's Platoon (PLT#), and or rank, don't worry we will ensure they will get your letters; however, it will make it easier to distribute the mail to all 240 Soldiers if you include it in future letters.

Mail delivery to Soldiers is extremely slow. This is a systemic problem and one that I'm sure may frustrate you when your Soldier has sent you letters and states that they have not received any packages from you. I assure you that we are doing everything we can to ensure your Soldiers receive their mail in a timely manner. Please be patient.

Packages are not necessary because your Soldier is able to buy additional items here at our local Post Exchange. However, if you choose to send your Soldier a package, please observe the following guidelines:

- ✓ No alcohol or products containing alcohol, tobacco, or narcotics
- ✓ No weapons to include knives and multi-tools
- ✓ No radios, TVs, cell phones, cameras, or other electronic devices
- ✓ No pornographic or morally questionable materials or any other magazines
- ✓ **No food items**
- ✓ **No medicine (your Soldier can and does go to sick call where they can get issued all of the medicine they need). If you want to send cough drops, you may, however, they must be flavor free and you may only send one bag at a time.**
- ✓ **When in doubt, just send letters**

### ***WHAT CAN I DO TO ASSIST MY SOLDIER DURING TRAINING?***

The best thing you can do is write positive letters. Soldiers look forward to daily mail call. Your Soldier is incredibly busy so if you do not receive a reply within the first couple of weeks, continue to send positive letters to motivate them until they can reply.

### ***HOW ARE THEY TREATING MY SOLDIER?***

Relax, your Soldier is not reliving those first 30 minutes of the movie Full Metal Jacket. Today's Soldiers are treated fairly, firmly, and with dignity and respect. Abuse of any kind is not tolerated. Drill Sergeants are selected from among the best Non-commissioned Officers in the Army, and are highly qualified to train recruits. Only authorized and vetted personnel are allowed to interact in any way with your Soldier.

### ***MAY MY SOLDIER ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES?***

Yes. Soldiers have the opportunity to attend weekly religious services of various denominations. They are allowed to attend a religious service and religious education classes as available through the Chaplain's office. Soldiers are also permitted to seek counseling from an Army Chaplain who is on call 24 hours a day.

### ***WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SOLDIER FAILS A PORTION OF BASIC TRAINING?***

If your Soldier misses or fails a task required for graduation, he/she will receive another opportunity to make up the training. If a Soldier still fails to meet the requirement, I will decide whether or not that Soldier will graduate in accordance with the appropriate regulations. Your Soldier may be recycled to a different unit that has not completed the specified training event/events.

### ***IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES***

Should an emergency arise, the best means of notifying your Soldier is through your local American Red Cross. The field office in your area will contact the Lawton, Oklahoma field office, who will contact me. In extreme cases, such as serious injury or death affecting immediate family members, an emergency leave of absence may be granted (travel to home and back to training during emergency leave is paid for by the Soldier, not the Army). Other leaves of absence during training are not normally authorized. If you are unable to find/reach your local American Red Cross, the national line can be reached at 1-800-733-2767.

### ***WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SOLDIER IS INJURED DURING TRAINING?***

Should any injury occur, your Soldier will receive appropriate medical attention from Fort Sill's professional medical staff. Additionally, Drill Sergeants are Combat Lifesaver qualified and carry medical aid kits to all training.

### ***MEDICAL INFORMATION RELATED TO MY SOLDIER***

Due to the Privacy Act and HIPAA, I nor my Cadre have the legal authority to release ANY medical information regarding illness, injury, or otherwise to you. However, your Soldier is authorized to do so if he/she so chooses.

### ***FAMILY DAY and GRADUATION INFORMATION***

Family Day activities will showcase skills learned by your Soldiers, promotions and award presentations. This will be the first time you will be able to see your Soldier and they look forward to it greatly as I am sure you do. **Family Day will be held at Destroyer Park on the corner of Rothwell St. and Sheridan Avenue FT Sill, OK 73503** and will start at **9:00 A.M. on Tuesday, 22 November, 2016**. This location may change and will be published in the graduation letter and on the battery Facebook page. If they have completed all training and are not facing any administrative actions your Soldiers will have the opportunity to take an off-post pass with you following Family Day but must return to the unit that evening **no later than 7:45 P.M.** Provided your Soldier meets all basic training requirements and is not facing any administrative actions, your Soldier will **graduate at 10:00 AM on Wednesday, 23 November, 2016** at the **Cache Creek Chapel Complex** located at **6043 Rothwell St, Lawton, OK 73503**. After graduation, your Soldier will have the opportunity to take another off-post pass with you following the ceremony if he/she has completed training and is not facing any administrative actions. The same rules apply, your Soldier must return to the unit that evening **no later than 7:45 P.M.**

Please know that there will be some Soldiers who will not graduate due to various reasons. Therefore, please have a candid conversation with your Soldier so that you may make your reservations for lodging in advance. If for any reason it is determined that your Soldier does not meet the requirements for graduation, he/she will be afforded the opportunity to make a phone call to a person of his/her choosing to inform potential graduation attendees of his/her not graduating.

It is recommended that if you are purchasing plane tickets, that you purchase refundable tickets. There have been several instances in the past where I have chosen not to let Soldiers graduate for one reason or another.

If your Soldier is having trouble passing his/her physical fitness tests, they will be given at least two extra attempts. These extra attempts are during weeks 8 and 9 of Basic Training. **You will not receive notice from the Soldier until they have failed the last make up test.** In the past, this has caused issues with friends and families, as these Soldiers were not allowed to graduate and it was too late to change the plans of the families. Therefore, the families still came and attended graduation but did not get to see their Soldier walk across the stage. **I cannot stress enough the importance of making refundable travel plans.**

Please also be aware that if your Soldier is facing any sort of administrative punishment they will not be allowed to go on pass or graduate. Many Soldiers have made the mistake of choosing to not follow the rules the day before or the day of Family Day and have their passes revoked. Some of these violations are severe enough that they have to repeat BCT from day one or are simply chaptered out of the Army. Please encourage your Soldier to follow the rules at all times. These rules exist for their safety, the safety of the other trainees, and as a demonstration of the professional Soldiers they are in the process of becoming. We only accept conduct of the highest standards, deviations from which are not tolerated. **Again, encourage your Soldier to follow the rules!**

### **ON-POST ACCESS PASS**

Last year, Fort Sill made a change to the requirements to gain access to the installation. Each person over the age of 16 must now individually mail/submit a FS Form 118A for a background check to the Visitor Control Center. If you have a felony within the last 10 years, you may be denied on post access.

When filling out this form, please put your Soldier's rank and full name as well as the class number (Class 86-16) underneath "Specify Below" in block IIb (purpose of visit). This will assist the Visitor Control Center in ensuring your pass forms get organized in the right location for pick up. You will also want to make the pass request from 22 November – 24 November, 2016. Due to the Thanksgiving holiday we may be able to issue passes to Soldiers that do not lose their pass privileges on that day.

### **Mail them directly to:**

Fort Sill Visitor Control Center  
BLDG T6701 Sheridan Rd  
Ft Sill, OK 73503

Please do not mail these forms back to the address you received this letter from as this could result in your pass not being received by the correct personnel to process it.

The Visitor Control Center's phone number is: (580)442-9602; 442-9603; 442-9604  
Business hours are 5:00AM-9:00PM Central Time, Sunday-Saturday (hours may change on major holidays)

Once they receive your forms (**they need to be mailed in by 31 October, 2016**), the Ft. Sill VCC will check them for validation. Failure to mail your visitor request form to them in time may delay your access to post. On 04 November, 2016, we will pick up your passes from the Visitor Control Center and begin mailing them out to you. We will only mail out the passes that have been received up until that point. On 11 November, 2016, we will mail out another batch of passes from those of you who missed the original deadline. This is only a two week buffer between us mailing them to you and you attending Family Day and Graduation, so please try to make the deadline marked in red above to alleviate any mailing issues. **IF YOU ARE EXPECTING OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS OR FRIENDS TO COME AND YOU SUSPECT THEY DID NOT RECEIVE A LETTER, PLEASE MAKE ENOUGH COPIES OF THE REQUEST FORM INCLUDED IN THIS PACKET FOR EACH FAMILY MEMBER THAT YOU EXPECT MIGHT COME.**

We will continue to check with the VCC for passes leading up to graduation and will have them on hand personally for you to pick up at the VCC on Family Day and Graduation.

There will be a Liaison from Alpha Battery on duty from 07:00 AM – 10:00 AM on 22 November, 2016 and again from 07:00 AM - 09:00 AM on 23 November, 2016 to help alleviate any issues you may experience trying to come on post.

**ATTENTION ALL FAMILIES FROM THE FOLLOWING STATES: NEW MEXICO, MINNESOTA, WASHINGTON, MISSOURI, AND ILLINOIS**

Effective immediately, anyone over the age of 16 must have an alternative form of identification in order to access the installation. These alternative forms do not negate the need for a driver's license in order to operate a vehicle. Under the REAL ID Act, acceptable alternative forms of identification for access are:

- US Passport
- Permanent Resident/Alien Reg Card
- Foreign Passport
- Employment authorization document
- US Military ID
- Border Crossing Guard ID
- US Military Draft Record
- US Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Card
- Native American Tribal document
- PIV and PIV-I card
- ID Card issued by Federal, State, or Local Government Agency
- Veterans Affairs ID Card

If you do not have the forms of identification, you must produce, **ALONG WITH** your state issued ID, one of the following:

- University, Library, or School photo ID w/name & expiration date
- Non-Government Photo ID with name & address
- Birth Certificate or Other Document w/full name and date of birth
- Utility Bill or other documentation showing person's name and address of principle residence
- Vehicle Registration w/name and address
- Permanent Resident/Alien Reg Card
- Foreign Passport
- Employment authorization document

- US Military ID
- Border Crossing Card
- US military draft record
- US Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Card
- Native American Tribal document
- PIV and PIV-I card
- ID Card issued by Federal, State, or Local Government Agency
- Veterans Affairs ID Card
- Permanent Resident/Alien Reg Card
- Foreign Passport
- Employment authorization document
- US Military ID
- Border Crossing Card
- US military draft record
- US Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Card
- Native American Tribal document
- PIV and PIV-I card
- ID Card issued by Federal, State, or Local Government Agency
- Veterans Affairs ID Card

### ***POINTS OF CONTACT***

A great deal of information is published both on the Facebook page and a follow-up Graduation letter will be mailed later in the cycle. If this letter, the Facebook page, or the Graduation letter do not contain the information you need, or if there is a specific issue related to your Soldier, please feel free to contact any of the following people by phone, mail, or email (if you think it can be answered on the Facebook Page, please ask your questions there; if it is personal, please use the Alpha Email address @ [alphathunder179@gmail.com](mailto:alphathunder179@gmail.com)):

Battery First Sergeant  
***ISG Anthony J. White***  
 Phone: (580) 442-1309  
 E-mail: [anthony.j.white.mil@mail.mil](mailto:anthony.j.white.mil@mail.mil)

Battery Commander:  
***CPT James C. Hayes***  
 Phone: (580) 442-1308  
 E-mail: [james.c.hayes.mil@mail.mil](mailto:james.c.hayes.mil@mail.mil)