Dear Bushmaster Family Member,

My name is CPT Tobias T. Duncan, the Battery Commander for Basic Combat Training (BCT) Class 47-19 in the 434th Field Artillery Brigade, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. As you already know, your trainee has safely arrived, in-processed, and begun their nine-week journey towards becoming a Soldier in the United States Army.

As a member of B Battery, your trainee is in the capable 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 trainee 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. Over the next nine weeks, your trainee will learn to demonstrate a winning attitude; and be mentally, physically, and emotionally prepared for the rigors of combat used to fight and win on the modern battlefield.

We accomplish this mission by providing your trainee with the most realistic, relevant, and best training available. As you will hear firsthand from your trainee, 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 trainee performs will help develop the discipline, self-confidence, and knowledge necessary to be a successful Soldier in today’s Army.

We consider our trainees to be our Nation’s most precious resource, and a key asset of the Army’s future. Because of this, your trainee’s development only begins with the physical aspects of Basic 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 trainee’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 trainee’s first Army experience, it is likely 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 are sewn into the very
soul of every American Soldier. Your trainee is currently learning about these values while living by the American Soldier’s Creed.

At times, this experience will seem very difficult for your trainee. For many of our younger trainees, this is their first time away from everything they know, to include home, family, and friends. Naturally, your trainee misses you as much as you miss them, so I encourage you to write at every opportunity possible. Simply put, trainees love getting mail. Your sentiments of pride and encouragement provide a great deal of strength in the morale and motivation of your trainee. Rest assured that your trainee will get ample time to read your mail and write to you in return. Please understand that sending and receiving mail is a federally protected right, but access to e-mail and the phone are not. Due to the seriousness of transforming civilians into combat ready soldiers, phone and internet usage is not a right but a privilege that can be granted based on performance, or in emergency situations. **Packages are highly discouraged, please send only letters. There are strict contraband rules and it is highly likely that what you send will not be allowed to be kept.** Your trainee has been issued everything he/she needs to successfully complete basic training. The best things that you can send your trainee are words of encouragement. Please send only appropriate pictures that are not private in nature as your trainee is in close proximity to trainees with various cultures and beliefs.

If your trainee is able to meet all graduation requirements and earns the title of Soldier, graduation will be on 23 August 2019 at 1:00 P.M. Family Day begins on 22 August 2019 at 10:00 A.M. with a ceremony held in the battalion area and our Battery Town Hall is on 21 August 2019 at 6:00PM. **It is highly recommended that family members wishing to attend family day and graduation do not make any travel arrangement until your Soldier has contacted you and informed you that he/she is confirmed to be graduating on schedule.** I will post more detailed information in the upcoming weeks explaining the events you can share with your trainee 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.

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 trainee. 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 trainee.

Sincerely,

Tobias T. Duncan  
CPT, FA  
Commanding
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 taking into consideration on a case-by-case basis, but are not normally authorized.

2. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY TRAINEE 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 trainee 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 Reynold’s Army Health Clinic (RAHC) 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 trainee 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 trainee taken into consideration at all times. If your trainee is admitted to the hospital for a serious illness or undergoes surgery of any kind, the immediate next of kin, designated on your trainee’s personnel card, will be notified by the Medical Staff, not the Chain of Command (Commander, First Sergeant, or Drill Sergeant). If your trainee is hospitalized, you can reach the RAHC 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/her next duty station in order to attend Advanced Individual Training (AIT) for his/her 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). 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/her 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 who are Split Training Option and who are NOT going on to AIT will be provided official government transportation back to their home of record and will remain on official active duty orders until completion of their travel.

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

Only graduating Soldiers may receive a pass. 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. Additionally, do not send any large packages. We recommend only sending letters. Please confirm with your trainee what you can send them. Your trainee has a list of prohibited items and will be able to brief you on what they actually need and have space for.

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

If your trainee is unable to adequately pass a required training event during their 9 weeks here at Fort Sill, he/she 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 trainee will graduate. He/She will contact you and keep you informed of his/her current status.

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

As I mentioned in the letter, all trainee 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 trainee 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 trainee from leaving on their own if they so desire. Trainees come here to stay and train because they want to, not because we make them.
If your trainee 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 trainee 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 trainee in going AWOL because they sincerely believe they are helping their trainee. 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 trainee and his decision to join the Armed Forces. If your trainee 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 trainee. 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 trainee meet all of the goals they set out to achieve when they made the right decision to become a trainee.

8. MAY MY TRAINEE ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES?

Yes, your trainee 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 Chaplain 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 trainee 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 trainee. 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 Tobias T. Duncan
Email: tobias.t.duncan.mil@mail.mil
Phone: (580) 442-1211

First Sergeant
1SG Christopher Kowalczyk
Email: christopher.g.kowalczyk.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

OUR BATTERY FACEBOOK PAGE:
http://www.facebook.com/bravobonecrushers1

VISITOR REGISTRATION WEBSITES:
https://fortsillregistration.com/

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
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!”

TOBIAS T. DUNCAN
CPT, FA
COMMANDING