



HBL Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) *(current as of 20 Nov 20)*

Question: What is the best method to receive updates for Soldiers travel arrangements for HBL for specific units? Will HBL be impacted if a shutdown is implemented government wide?

Answer: Since Initial Military Training began enacting COVID-19 mitigation measures, Army training centers have successfully added new Soldiers to the Army's ranks while graduating thousands of new Soldiers and moving them to their first units of assignments. As such, the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) will also conduct its yearly holiday block leave plan for those Soldiers and cadre whose training classes span this year's holiday season. The operational tempo of both the trainees and cadre in the past year makes this leave vital to the well-being of our Soldiers and their families.

Question: What is the best method to determine if there has been a change in the course start date or graduation date?

Answer: Please contact the Trainee's / Soldier's unit for this information.

Question: Is Holiday Block Leave available to all basic trainees or just those in certain phases?

Answer: Holiday block leave is available to all basic trainees, regardless of what phase of basic training they're in.

Question: How can trainees take leave if they haven't earned leave dates yet?

Answer: Trainees are authorized to accrue a negative leave balance which will rebuild at the standard rate of 2.5 days per month upon their arrival.

Question: How long will the HBL approval process take since OCONUS leave requires general officer approval?

Answer: OCONUS leave requests will be processed quickly upon receipt by each respective chain of command based on their recommendation. Keep in mind that OCONUS leave locations are limited to Hawaii, Alaska, and US Territories.

Question: Can Soldier's return/visit Puerto Rico for HBL? Will trainees be tested before traveling to Puerto Rico?

Answer: We are currently working different options but there may be a cost to the Service member or Trainee. Currently Reynolds Army Health Clinic is not equipped to test every trainee prior to departing for HBL. Soldiers traveling to PR should adhere to CDC travel guidance. Latest CDC travel notices are located at:

<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/warning/coronavirus-puerto-rico> .

Question: How does HBL work for Soldiers going to AIT at an Air Force base? My trainee is going to an Air Force course.

Answer: Trainees attending sister service AIT will take HBL, return to Fort Sill, and then move to that sister service AIT once they've tested negative for COVID.

Question: What are the restrictions of picking up our Soldiers from Ft. Sill for HBL? How do I know specifically where to pick him up and what time?

Answer: It will be a fairly simple process. There will be a central location to pick up Soldiers on Ft Sill for HBL. The process will take approximately 30 minutes. Please contact Soldier's unit and visit the unit Facebook page for specific details regarding the pick-up of your Soldier.

Question: Maine currently requires a negative test to enter the state. How can I get tested if I don't have COVID symptoms?

Answer: We are currently working different options but the BLUF is that there may be a cost to the Service member or Trainee. Some states have strict travel requirements that can and will change based on the current situation in that state. For example, New York requires a negative test within 72 hours in order to avoid 14 days of quarantine, but individual still must complete 3 day quarantine followed by another test on the 4th day. This cost is the traveler's responsibility.

Question: How often are trainees tested and what are the procedures when trainees return from HBL?

Answer: Trainees will undergo screening upon return to Fort Sill. They will be placed in small groups for 10 days (2+8 model) for controlled monitoring where social distance enabled training is conducted. If recruits show signs that they might have the virus, they are tested and quarantined or isolated (if confirmed positive) for COVID-19. After this initial 10 day period, the Soldiers conduct additional training in contained groups. Trainees, cadre, drill sergeants and support staff are screened for symptoms and temperatures daily.

Question: What happens if someone gets COVID while on leave? Do they remain at home through the quarantine period? What if it extends past their return date?

Answer: If a trainee develops COVID symptoms while on HBL they should contact a medical provider for COVID screening as soon as possible. COVID diagnosed trainees will be quarantined and not authorized to travel. Should that happen, that SM should immediately notify their respective chain of command for further instructions. Just understand that any delay in their return could potentially impact the resumption of their course which could impact their subsequent timelines, i.e. graduation dates, movement to follow on location, etc.

Question: Are there any new restrictions to Fort Sill for Permanent party?

Answer: Continue to wear masks within buildings. Ft. Sill has increased presence patrols to ensure everyone is avoiding large gatherings, practicing physical distancing and wearing masks. Wash your hands often!

Question: My city or county is in red phase, we have very high cases here in southern Indiana and my son doesn't want to come home just to be stuck in the house the whole time, is it mandatory for him to come home?

Answer: Travel over the HBL period is not mandatory.

Question: What happens with the trainees on Fort Sill who don't take leave? What things are there to do?

Answer: USO will have several opportunities for trainees. Facilities will remain open such as the bowling alley, golf course, the library, etc. We will publish more of this information in the coming weeks!

Question: Where can we find up to date information on each state's travel restrictions?

Answer: You can visit the CDC website for links to each state's travel restrictions.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

Question: My daughter has not been paid yet, will she get an advance to purchase her ticket for HBL or will I need to purchase it?

Answer: She will get an advance, and if you would like to pay for it you just request your daughter to call you when she goes to meet with travel and you can coordinate payment by phone.

Question: My trainee graduates on December 11th. Does she take HBL then return to Fort Sill or does she take it en route to her AIT at Fort Sam Houston?

Answer: It depends on their report date. If a trainee graduates on 11 December with a report date before January 4th, they will be sent to their AIT location prior to HBL, but ticketing and all HBL arrangements will be made from BCT. If their report date is after 4 January, they will report to AIT from their leave location.

Question: My trainee is supposed to depart on December 19th but I'm worried that with numbers increasing, he may become positive before then. Will he still be able to come home?

Answer: We cannot allow trainees or any other person to travel as a known COVID-positive service member. That would be an unacceptable risk not only to other SMs but to the American public as well. If any SM tests positive for COVID, then their travel will be delayed by approximately 14 days. If someone is positive as they are being screened prior to travel, then they will not be authorized to travel. If someone tests positive prior, let's just say on December 10th, then there is a possibility they would be able to start their leave later, just not on the date with their peers. It's important to note that this same logic applies to those who are direct contacts of the positive cases - they would also be quarantined and restricted from travel.

Question: Are trainees already covered under Tricare even though they haven't graduated?

Answer: Yes, trainees are covered under Tricare and can receive medical treatment with a military ID card while on HBL. I would encourage you to call Tricare prior to visiting any treatment facilities.

Question: Are you testing everyone who comes back or just people who come back with symptoms?

Answer: We are not testing every trainee returning from HBL. Everyone will be screened upon their return and we will test those personnel identified during screening. That said, we will test all trainees returning who are attending a sister service AIT. We are, however, exploring other options that allow for testing greater numbers of personnel after HBL.

Question: If my son graduates AIT 10DEC20 and his FDS is Hawaii will he get HBL from Ft Sill?

Answer: If he graduates from 1-78 FA we will let him take HBL before going to Hawaii if that is what he wants to do.

Question: If SITs in AIT are waiting to be “classed” how does this effect their graduation schedule? How long will they typically will wait to start class?

Answer: It depends on the school "MOS" that the Soldier is starting. Recommend you write the specific AIT Battalion, either Field Artillery or Air Defense.

Question: Are there any restrictions on what we can and can't do while on leave?

Answer: The BLUF is that Travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. The CDC strongly recommends everyone wear a mask on public transportation. This recommendation includes passengers and workers on airplanes, trains, ships, ferries, subways, taxis, and ride shares, and at transportation hubs such as airports and stations. The simple fact is that gatherings of any kind where people can't maintain 6 ft (or more) of physical distance or where masks aren't worn significantly increases the risk of COVID transmission. So, wash your hands often, wear masks, and maintain physical distancing to prevent the spread.

Please continue to engage units on their Facebook pages for any questions that were not answered in Town Halls.

30th Air Defense Artillery Brigade (Air Defense Artillery AIT, BOLC, CCC, AMED DCC, WOBC, WOAC) - <https://www.facebook.com/30ADABDE/>

428th Field Artillery Brigade (Field Artillery AIT, BOLC, Master Gunner, Pre-Command Course, CCC, WOBC) - <https://www.facebook.com/428FABrigade/>

434th Field Artillery Brigade (Basic Training) – <https://www.facebook.com/ftsillbasictraining/>