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FORT RILEY BERETS DELAYED DUE TO SHIPPING

By Christie Vanover
Staff Writer

Fort Riley soldiers will have to wait a little longer to don the new black beret due to a shipping problem.

Gen. Eric K. Shinseki, Army chief of staff, announced Oct. 17 that the black beret would become the Army standard.

“As another step toward achieving the capabilities of the objective force, effective June 14, the first Army birthday of the new millennium, the Army will don its new headgear,” he said.

“The black beret will be symbolic of our commitment to transform this magnificent Army into a new force, a strategically responsive force for the 21st century. It will be a symbol of unity, a symbol of Army excellence, a symbol of our values,” he continued.

While Fort Riley soldiers didn’t receive their berets in time for the Army’s birthday, they too will soon wear this new symbol of unity, excellence and values.

“We’re still in line to receive the berets, but there was a slight shipping problem that has delayed distribution,” said Capt. Joaquin Maldonado, G-4 supply officer.

Fort Riley has requested approximately 13,500 berets, and Maldonado anticipates arrival within the next two months.

Once the berets are shipped, it will take an additional two to three weeks to distribute them to all of Fort Riley’s soldiers.

“We have to count all of the berets, then we’ll begin the issue process to all the major units. Once the major units receive the berets, it’s going to take another three to four days to distribute them to individuals,” said Maldonado.

According to the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, when installations are issued the beret, each installation commander will determine the implementation date for wear.

Additionally, soldiers newly assigned to the installation who have already been issued the beret will comply with the installation commander's wear policy. Soldiers who are TDY will wear the headgear prescribed by their parent unit.

Each soldier should receive a beret and two flashes. One flash will already be sewn on the beret and the other will be handed to the soldier, according to Maldonado.

"The flash has to be replaced every so often, so the idea is that if something happens to the flash, the soldier can replace it," he said.

He also noted that the flashes and berets would not be available in the Clothing and Sales store until 2002 or a little beyond.

According to ODCSPER, soldiers wear the beret so that the headband is straight on the head, one inch above the eyebrows, with the flash over the left eye and the excess material draped over to the right, down to at least the top of the ear, but no lower than the middle of the ear.

In order for soldiers to wear the beret properly, Fort Riley is ensuring each soldier is issued the proper size.

"We asked each of the brigades and the major units to provide a headcount number of people by specific hat size, and we requisitioned the entire quantity to DA. To offset any sizing dilemmas, an additional 25 percent above personnel on the installation was ordered to compensate for any size differentiation," said Maldonado.

The beret will be worn with the utility and service (class A and B) uniforms in garrison environments only.

While in the field, proper headgear remains the BDU cap or Kevlar helmet.

"When we wear the black beret, it will say that we, the soldiers of the world's best Army are committed to making ourselves even better," said Shinseki. "Regardless of rank, regardless of branch, regardless of component, every soldier who meets the standard will wear the Army beret."