

BAY STATE BATTALION ARMY ROTC

Summer/Fall Events Newsletter 2019



“Success is peace of mind that is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to become the best that you are capable of becoming.” -Coach John Wooden

2nd BDE

PMS: LTC Adam Heppe

SMSI: MSG Alan Sutton

From the editor...

As the Battalion's Public Affairs Officer, I have enjoyed capturing all the wonderful moments the Battalion has experienced this past term. From Orientation Weekend to the fall field training exercise at Fort Devens, there has never been a dull moment. The following writers are cadets in the Bay State Battalion with great insight to offer from their summer training event, such as Army schools, Cadet Troop Leader Training, and the Cultural Understanding & Leadership Program. We hope you enjoy the pieces in this newsletter. This newsletter would not have been without the help of many, especially the those who contributed their time to reflect on their summer experiences.

-Bay State Leads the Way-

CDT Ella Forbes - Public Affairs Officer



From our Battalion Commander

CDT Mohammad Elmaola, MSIV

My name is Cadet Mohamed Elmaola and for the Fall 2019 semester, I have had the distinct honor of serving as the c/Battalion Commander of Bay State Battalion. In its simplest form, my intent for the fall semester can be broken down into one word: train. While this task may sound simple, training future officers in a Cadet-Lead program provides unique challenges that can be daunting without the right organizational structure and culture. In order to motivate future leaders to exercise the principle of disciplined initiative within the parameters of mission command, we had to first build a shared understanding of why we train, how we train, and what we train.

Why do we train?

We train our Cadets to become exemplary junior leaders in the United States Army. The gravitas that our impact has on the development of each cadet in our program is the driving force behind our Battalion Staff when planning, preparing, and executing training exercises. Exceptional leaders within our program are those who took full ownership over their ability to have an impact on subordinate leaders and underclassmen.

How do we train?

Bay State Battalion trains with the end state in mind. The key training event that we are constantly using as a frame of reference is Cadet Summer Training. In order to set our cadets up or success, we backwards plan from CST and identify key training milestones and metrics that our future officers should accomplish. After setting these milestones, most notably our fall and spring Field Training Exercise events and record Army Physical Fitness Test, we produce training plans that logically build to these milestones. Given the plans in place, we begin to ensure the resources are set to support our training and rehearse accordingly. Finally, we execute on training and conduct an After-Action Review to identify sustainments and improvements in the training that will help make the next iteration better for the following years.

What do we train?

Most cadets in the Bay State Battalion can tell you my “Big 3” keys to success for both CST and the Army ROTC program: 1.) physical fitness, 2.) interpersonal and teambuilding skills, and 3.) tactics. By sticking to our training plan, improving on our ability to train each day, and fostering a positive environment of collaboration, Bay State Battalion is stronger than ever. We will continue to build on the training we have accomplished this semester bolster our regional presence within Freedom Brigade.

Bay State Leads the Way!



Airborne School

CDT Alex Lima, MSIII

As a Cadet earning the opportunity to go to any U.S Army school is something to take extremely seriously. It will set you apart from your peers as it provides additional experience. Fellow leaders and subordinates will expect more from you not only physically but morally as well.

First off Cadets arrive four days before training starts. These were the hardest four days of my life. We sat in a classroom from 0800-2000 and the only time we got leave that classroom was for chow. When it was time to bed down, we were not issued sheets or pillows. We all used our bags as pillows and towels as blankets. On the third day we met with a full bird Colonel who inspected everyone's paperwork to ensure our ability to continue with the course.

Finally, it was day zero; arguably the most stressful day of them all. This was the day we had to conduct the APFT. We were marched to gravel pits and broken up by roster number. Some let the pressure get to them, 70 people were sent home because they failed to meet the minimum standard. My advice is to take it slow and focus on form. If you managed to earn your spot to attend Airborne school, then you can pass the APFT.

After the APFT everything is smooth sailing. The school is broken up into three phases, each phase lasts one week. Phase one is ground, where you learn proper landing techniques, how to exit and aircraft, how to wear a harness, and exit out of the 34-foot towers. Phase two is tower, which builds off of the skills you have learned in week one as well as introducing a few new things. You will practice mass exit out of the 34-foot tower with combat equipment, how to rig combat equipment, pulling slips, how to pack a parachute after landing, and what to do during malfunctions. Phase three is jump, when you finally get to throw yourself out of a plane. Honestly jump week is a lot of sitting around. You run down to the harness shed, do some practice exercises, then harness up. Once in the harness you cannot adjust it or remove it for any reason. If you have to use the latrine, that's tough luck you've got to wait until you jump out. Everyone has to do five jumps to graduate. I completed two day jumps and two night jumps, both without combat equipment. The last jump is during the day with combat equipment and they tell you that it is the lightest ruck you will ever jump with. It is pretty intimidating considering how uncomfortable it is to lug a ruck in between your legs.

Once all of the stress is over, it is time for graduation. My class started with over 500 soldiers and graduated about 370. All said and done, Airborne School is not hard, it is not there to test you or break you down. It educates you and build, your confidence as a Soldier. As long as you keep a positive attitude and do what your told, everything will be fine.

Airborne!



CDT Lima (center left) with his fellow graduates of Airborne school

(Fort Benning, 2019)



The pin graduates of Airborne school receive (Fort Benning, 2019)

(Fort Benning, 2019)

Air Assault School

CDT Thomas Feraco, MSIII

Over this past summer I was given the opportunity to attend US Army Air Assault School at the Warrior Training Center in Fort Benning, Georgia. This school is a 10-day course that orients Soldiers about insertion, extraction, and pathfinder operations with the use of assault and multipurpose helicopters such as the AH-64 Apache and UH-60 Blackhawk. I learned a wide variety of skills and tactics such as air assault missions, sling load operations, and rappelling. There were numerous tests both physically and mentally that each candidate was put through in order to make it to Graduation Day. Before we were even given the opportunity to be enrolled in the course, we had to pass through an obstacle course and complete a 2-mile run.



During the first phase, we became well orientated with varying helicopters and their functions and capabilities. Skills attained in this phase pertained to the ins and outs of the aforementioned helicopters, the phases of aero-medical evacuation, and assault operations. The next phase was all about sling load operations. This phase which proved to be the most challenging phase, focused on the rigging of various types of equipment to rotary aircrafts with a sling. This phase is also where I had difficulty during the hands-on test, failing the last timed sling load inspection. Thankfully, I was given another chance and was able to pass with time to spare.

The third and final phase was my favorite. I learned the basics of rappelling. We did a number of rappels from a tower and one from a UH-60 Blackhawk. The school was completed after a successful 12-mile ruck, earning the coveted Air Assault Badge. This was the most challenging ten days I have ever experienced, but in the end it was well worth it.

Air Assault School

CDT Ryan Camille, MSIII

Ten days, three phases, and one awesome Army experience. This past summer I had the privilege to attend and graduate from the Sabalauski Air Assault School at Fort Campbell as a member of Class 28-19. This opportunity was only possible because of my involvement in the Bay State Battalion and is one that I will always remember. Over the course of two weeks, I was able to test myself both physically and mentally. Numerous physical tests that needed to be passed to complete each phase and the ever-real threat of a random packing list inspection pushed me to stay sharp and highly motivated.

While at the school I was able to learn different skills and gain knowledge of military operations that will undoubtedly help propel me in my Army career. In Phase One, I learned combat assault and pathfinder operations while becoming oriented with numerous aircrafts. In Phase Two, we received instruction on sling load operations. This phase included becoming familiar with the planning and preparation of operations, learning the capabilities and characteristics of the equipment, and how to rig and inspect different loads. This phase was the most stressful, which culminated with me passing my last sling load inspection in the final seconds of the time frame to be a first-time “Go”. Rappel phase was the final phase and it was easily the most fun part of the school. In this period, we learned different ways to rappel which included one from a UH-60 Blackhawk. To finish it all off we crushed a twelve-mile ruck and then had a small graduation ceremony.

In my short time at Fort Campbell, I was able to get my first real experience with the Army and all that it offers. I am certain that my two weeks at the Sabalauski Air Assault School will stick with me throughout my career and I am confident that when the time comes, I will be able to help plan and execute an Air Assault operation if warranted.

CDT Camille (Fort Campbell, 2019)



CULP Experience

CDT Nicholas Pruyn, MSIV

During my MS3 year I was selected to go on a Cultural Understanding & Leadership Program Mission to Latvia, a Baltic country in Eastern Europe. CULP is a program that allows Army Cadets to be immersed in a country that holds strategic importance, within a theater of operations for three weeks. Any opportunity to immerse in a different culture should be capitalized on. The United States is the most diverse nation domestically, yet it is seldom that Americans interact with people of different nationalities.

Part of my CULP mission was learning about Latvian culture. In the 13th century Latvia was a pagan country that was captured by German Crusaders. From then until the end of the 20th century Latvia has been under the control of four countries in the region (Germany, Sweden, Poland, Russia/Soviet Union). Over its 700 year history, Latvia has only been free for less than fifty years. Because of this history, Latvians are extremely patriotic. In the Latvian capital of Riga, it is hard to find a street corner without a Latvian flag.

During the first week in Latvia the CULP team received a brief at the US Embassy in Riga. We met with members of the US State Department, members of the Special Forces community attached to the Embassy, and a European Union Parliament representative for Latvia. Their briefs all had the same theme; Russia is a significant threat to the sovereignty of former Soviet states. Latvia is not immune to this. A significant effort for the Embassy has is fighting propaganda and misinformation that the Russian government broadcasts to cities and towns on Latvia's eastern border with Russia. When the Soviet Union fell many ethnic Russians remained in the Eastern part of the country. These ethnic Russians create incivility in the region.

Along with humanitarian efforts we spent time conducting military-to-military engagements. One of these was on a Latvian Airbase in Lielvarde. We met with senior members of the Latvian Air Force. To think of the Latvian Air Force in similar terms to ours is misleading. The Latvian Air Force is comprised of 251 service members, four Soviet era helicopters, and 18 Swedish dismount anti-air weapon systems. While this seems minimal compared to other Air Forces, the mission of the Latvian Air Force is to maintain the integrity of Latvian airspace. While our team was in Latvia, an Aviation platoon from the 1st Infantry Division was deployed to the Air Force base. This

coincidence allowed the team an opportunity to ride in a Blackhawk helicopter while they were training. This was by far my favorite day in Latvia.

Towards the end of the mission our team was stationed at a Latvian-led NATO base called Camp Adazi. The street the barracks is on is named “iela Michigan” (Michigan road), because the Michigan National Guard is Latvia’s state partner and has helped build much of the infrastructure at Camp Adazi. Here we had the opportunity to train with Soldiers from 13 different NATO countries.

My CULP experience has had an impact on me as a person, and my future career in the military. My trip to Latvia was the first time I ever traveled outside the United States. It was an incredible experience to soak in a different culture. I now have a better understanding of the challenges our military faces in the region and have become passionate about learning more. When I consider choices for first duty stations, European Command posts will be at the top. The word paldies in Latvian means thank you. With a heavy heart I would like to say “paldies Latvia”. I am forever grateful for being able to learn about the culture and train in this country.



CDT Pruyn aiming a Swedish air defense missile system called an RBS-70

(Latvia, 2019)



A picture from a park in their capital Riga. It is flowers painted in the shape of their flag.

(Latvia, 2019)

CTLT Experience

CDT Matthew Scherrer, MSIV

Cadet Troop Leader Training is the integration of a Cadet into the role of a platoon leader. Cadets are attached to an active duty unit, shadowing a Lieutenant. Depending on how comfortable the Cadet feels, responsibilities of the PL can be delegated to the Cadet, giving them an opportunity to practice their leadership skills.

My CTLT time was spent with H Co, 2nd Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment located at Fort Irwin. The 11th ACR supports Black Horse, the opposing forces, (OPFOR) unit that supports training at the National Training Center (NTC). Blackhorse conducts two-and-a-half-week Field Training Exercises ten months of the year serving as the OPFOR for Brigade Combat Teams preparing for deployment.

While integrated with H Co, I primarily served as the gunner for a main battle tank when performing combat operations. Once I had gained some experience in mounted operations, I was given the chance to become the tank commander for a night movement mission through one of the most treacherous passes inside the training area. Near the end of the FTX, I was entrusted as a Platoon Leader to develop, disseminate, and lead a platoon defense.

Outside of operations, I assisted in the daily platoon operations maintenance of the vehicles. This included conducting pre-combat checks, pre-combat inspections, full gear layouts, preparation for inspections, gear returns, and gear issuing. I also attended leader development meetings and Family Readiness Group events with my Platoon.

Overall, my time at the NTC has solidified my choice to pursue a career as an active duty Armor officer. For any cadets going forward, I highly recommend doing CTLT at Ft. Irwin. If you arrive eager to train and ready to learn, two and a half weeks in one of the hottest places in the continental US will fly by. CTLT with Blackhorse is a great introduction to life in the active duty army.

Fall 2019 Hail and Farewell

LTC Adam Heppe

In units across the Army it is customary to conduct a small ceremony a few times a year to formally recognize the newest members of the unit and to officially farewell those who will be departing shortly. Known simply as a “Hail and Farewell”, this ceremony can take on many forms and can range in various degrees of civility. Not only is this an important event for the Soldiers, but it is also important to recognize and welcome our Army families.



With that said, we have some changes in our cadre. First, I would like to welcome MSG Alan Sutton and his wife Elizabeth to the Bay State Battalion. MSG Sutton arrived in November from the 5th Ranger Training Battalion in Dahlonga, GA and will serve as the program’s Senior Military Science Instructor (SMSI). Arriving swiftly and ready to fight, like a true paratrooper, he immediately hit the ground running. As the third SMSI in the last three years, MSG Sutton arrived with all the pre-requisites of a Bay State Battalion SMSI: Infantry branch, check...Ranger Tab, check...82nd Airborne Division deployment patch...check, full sleeve tattoos...check! MSG Sutton joins us with the small unit tactics experience and instructional background that our Cadets crave, and also arrives with a Master’s degree from American University in Strategic Studies and a Hollywood resume that many reality tv stars would envy. We are excited to welcome MSG Sutton to the team!

Although her time here was short, Ms. Jane Thomas served a vital role as the battalion’s fall semester MS2 Instructor and Officer in Charge at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. As a former Explosives Ordinance Disposal (EOD) Officer and Assistant Professor of Military Science at Virginia Tech, Ms. Thomas came prepared for the high stress environment associated with instructing college sophomores; navigating the treacherous terrain in the Lowell-Dracut forest; and supervising Cadet Physical Training. Unfortunately for us, Ms. Thomas’ position was re-allocated to Boston University’s program and she will join their staff in January. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Cadets in the Bay State Battalion. Best of luck in your next assignment and job well done!

Thank you to all the Cadets and Cadre who made this a great semester. CDTs Elmaola and Scherrer, your leadership set the tone for a successful semester of training, leader development and esprit de corps. I look forward to capitalizing on our MS3s' desire to train and our underclasses' motivation as we transition into Platoon Operations.

Bay State Leads the Way!