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Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools



VIEW FROM THE TOP

- 1 ROTC commander steps down, looks back at tenure

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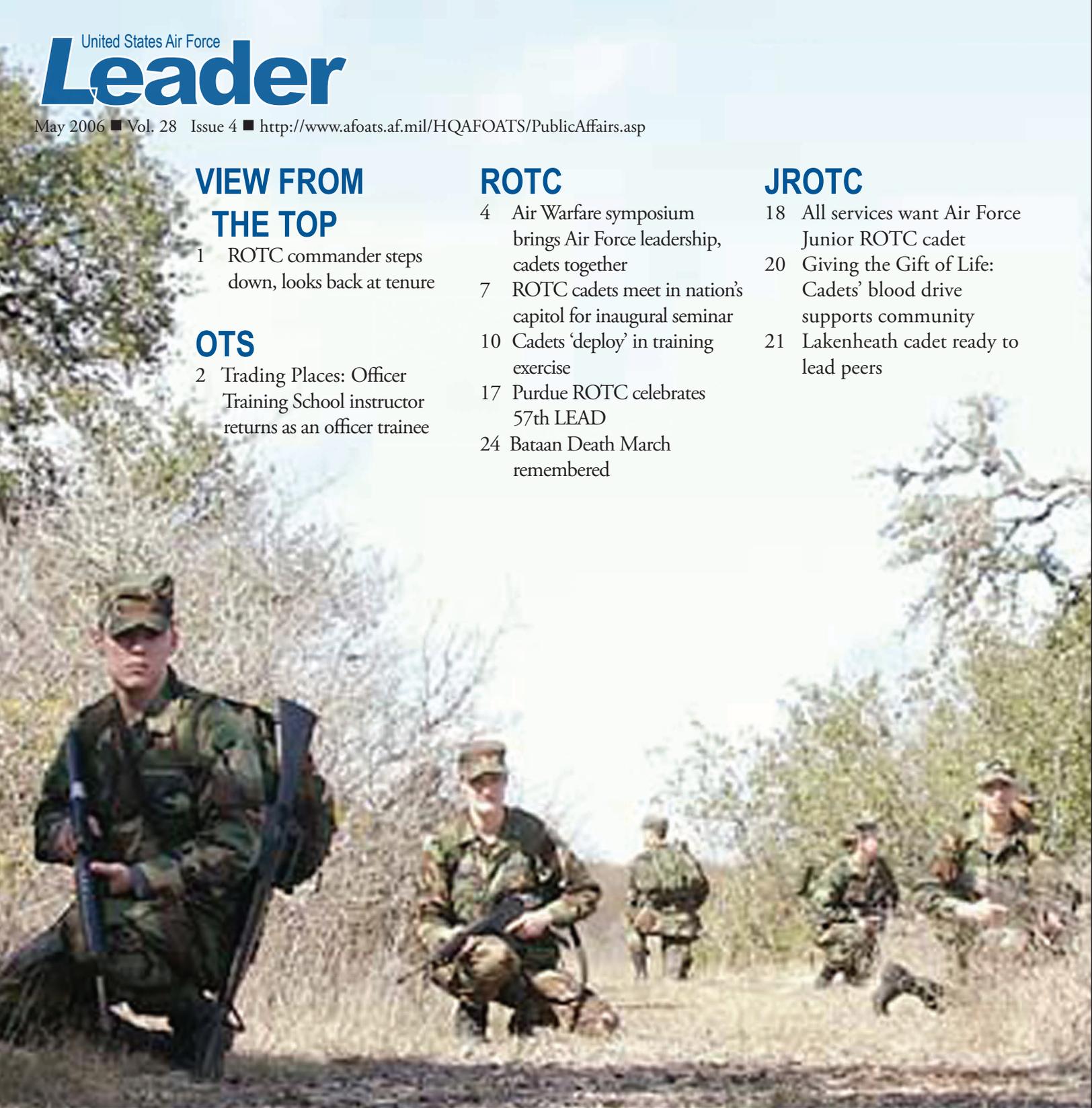
- 2 Trading Places: Officer Training School instructor returns as an officer trainee

ROTC

- 4 Air Warfare symposium brings Air Force leadership, cadets together
- 7 ROTC cadets meet in nation's capitol for inaugural seminar
- 10 Cadets 'deploy' in training exercise
- 17 Purdue ROTC celebrates 57th LEAD
- 24 Bataan Death March remembered

JROTC

- 18 All services want Air Force Junior ROTC cadet
- 20 Giving the Gift of Life: Cadets' blood drive supports community
- 21 Lakenheath cadet ready to lead peers



Leader

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ROTC commander steps down, looks back at tenure

The Leader staff asked Col. Steven Wayne about his tenure as the national commander of Air Force ROTC prior to his retirement April 7.

What is the most significant change you have seen within ROTC during your tenure?

It sounds a bit boring, but I see a more efficient way of conducting our business and managing our cadets and programs. We are saving hundreds of thousands of dollars utilizing the “hub and spoke” process of moving cadets to and from field training. Additionally, we have updated all our instructions and policies to streamline all of our processes. What I am most proud of are the attitudes of the people working in our organization. They are motivated and dedicated to our mission.

How are today's ROTC commissionees better prepared to lead in the Global War on Terrorism?

We are focusing more and more on the expeditionary focus needed to be an Air Force officer. From curriculum changes that emphasize cultural and international studies to expeditionary hands-on field training; all these are designed to better prepare our cadets for the rigors and demanding environment Air Force officers will inevitably face in the decades to come.

What do you feel was your best accomplishment during your tenure?

Transforming the organization to be agile in the way it handles information flow. This has positively impacted the speed at which we accomplish everything we do. It has also prepared us for the issues and challenges we will face in the future. By being more flexible and agile we will accomplish our mission more effectively and efficiently than we

have ever been able to before.

What program or initiative have you started that you would like to have seen through to its implementation and why?

Definitely, I would have wanted to have been further down the road in leveraging our technology to automate and make easier the many processes we have in ROTC. We are on the verge of making this happen.

What do you see as the most immediate challenge facing ROTC?

I believe we are going to be called upon, just like everyone else in the Air Force, to do more with less. We may see a move to reduce our footprint and size of our organization. We may see a reduction in the rank of our detachment commanders, and we may see a tightening of the funding and resources to get the mission done in the way we have been doing it for so long. But this also will create opportunities to leverage our technology and be more innovative in the way we approach recruiting, training, and accessing second lieutenants for our Air Force.

With what thought would you like to leave ROTC cadets?

I would say that, even though they may not believe it right now, they need to understand just how valuable and rewarding a career in the Air Force is. They should not let anything deter them from this and they should commit now to the highest standards of moral character, dedication, and intellectual pursuits.



Col. Steven Wayne

Looking back on the last 27+ years, I can tell you that it has passed very quickly and I have had an exciting and very rewarding time. I would not trade it for anything. I am leaving proud of my accomplishments and ready for the next challenge in my life. Additionally, my family feels exactly the same way. They will miss being a military wife and

brat almost as much as I will miss serving. We work with the greatest people in the world, and we sometime take that for granted. I know that I will miss the people, the Airmen, most.

What have you enjoyed the most about ROTC?

The cadets! I probably have the most demanding job in the organization, but whenever I need a boost, I go out to a detachment and just talk with the cadets. They are excited, motivated, and generally “pumped up” about their future in the Air Force. This just “Fills my Sails” and helps remind me about the value of our mission and what we are doing at the headquarters to support the development of these future Air Force leaders.

Any last words?

I wish cadets, cadre, and our headquarters staff all the best. My prayers will always be that god will continue to bless each and every one of you, the United States Air Force, and our great country. I wish cadets, cadre, and our headquarters staff all the best. My prayer will always be that God will continue to bless each and every one of you, the United States Air Force, and our great country. ■



Trading places

Officer Training School instructor returns as an officer trainee

Story and photos by Senior Airman Krista Coons

Staff writer, Leader magazine



Making the transition from teaching officer trainees to being an officer trainee can be complicated.

“The crossover from a military training instructor to an officer trainee has been more humbling than I thought it would be. Leading and becoming a follower was more difficult than I thought it would be,” said 2nd Lt. Anthony Lamagna.

The newly commissioned second lieutenant was an enlisted member in the Air Force for more than 13 years. He started his career as an F-15 avionic technician, and then he crossed over into the instructor field.

The lieutenant re-evaluated his career goals after talking to his peers and working at the Officer Training School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.

“Being around the students and staff here made me think about another career path beyond being a chief master sergeant of the Air Force,” said Lieutenant Lamagna. “I know regardless whether I stayed enlisted or became an officer I would have an impact on the people I led as well as managed. It just seemed like a big honor to see if I would be accepted into the officer corps.”

Even though the former technical sergeant knew his job as a military training instructor inside and out, OTS kept him on his toes.

“It was very humbling to think that you knew more about the program than you really did, but we only know our part as MTTI’s,” he said. “It was very challenging knowing what I knew going in and that there was even more that I didn’t know.”

MTIs teach the trainees customs and courtesies, bearing and



Above: Capt. Johnnie Dennis, a 24th Training Squadron flight commander at Officer Training School, discussed feedback procedures with 2nd Lt. Anthony Lamagna when he was an officer trainee in February.

Left: Lieutenant Lamagna helps a fellow classmate onto an obstacle in February.

discipline, drill, and dress and appearance; however, they do not teach academic type courses.

“Lieutenant Lamagna was unfamiliar with the curriculum involving flight room instruction and field leadership,” said Capt. Jay Vaughn, a 24th Training Squadron flight commander. “He was amazed with the intensity of the program because you don’t have a spare second as [a trainee].”

During his first week of officer training, he received more than 130 demerits for failure to comply with standards. Experienced upper classmen were available to assist new officer trainees as they transitioned into OTS.

“I thought I knew more than I really did,” explained the lieutenant. “It was the students in the upper class who did a phenomenal job. It was great to see individuals, who have never been in the Air Force before, leading and it was all because of what OTS had taught them.”

Lieutenant Lamagna’s prior-enlisted knowledge gave him an edge over individuals without any military experience because he understood the officer program was designed to test individual’s leadership abilities in all types of situations.

“That is a huge advantage because you know everything is being done for a reason. You may not understand the reason at the time, but later on in your career, or in the program, you understand why things are done the way they are,” he said.

Lieutenant Lamagna graduated from OTS in February. He is now at the 16th Logistics Readiness Squadron at Hulbert Field, Fla.

“I would do this again in a heartbeat. In fact I would recommend anybody who has the inclination to be a leader in the Air Force to put forth the effort to try to get commissioned,” he said. ■

Spotlight: Tech. Sgt. Neil Y. Stanley

By Tech. Sgt. Scott Moorman
Contributing editor,
Leader magazine

Tech. Sgt. Neil Y. Stanley, Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools server administrator, makes sure the computer servers at AFOATS are running smoothly.

“A server is a large computer that serves different functions such as a file server which stores documents or a web server which hosts my unit’s web pages,” he said. “I look to see if the servers need security updates or patches so they will not be vulnerable to hackers and viruses.”

Sergeant Stanley said he must coordinate with other AFOATS computer technicians to make sure those same patches are loaded on all computers.

“All the coordination that we have to do can be a challenge,” he said. “It requires time management and prioritizing.”

Sergeant Stanley said the best part about his job is helping people solve computer problems.

“Computers are vital to the Air Force mission, and it’s rewarding to help people who have run into problems,” said Sergeant Stanley. “I also enjoy working with the other people in my shop.”

Sergeant Stanley applied for this special-duty assignment through the enlisted quarterly assignments listing-plus. He said the position fit the location and duties in which he was interested in.

The San Antonio-native said his proudest military moment was working with the Iraqi army while deployed to Baghdad International Airport.

“I got to see and experience a dif-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott Moorman

Tech. Sgt. Neil Y. Stanley, Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools server administrator, protects the AFOATS computer system from hackers and viruses.

ferent view of what most American people don’t see coming out of that country,” he said. “I will never forget my time I spent there.”

Sergeant Stanley’s previous assignments include Kelly Air Force Base, Texas; Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii; Tinker Air Force Base, Okla.; and Ramstein Air Base, Germany.

The deployment to Bagdad International Airport was Stanley’s third deployment to Southwest Asia throughout his career. Sergeant Stanley’s goals, while at Maxwell-Gunter, are to get promoted to master sergeant and complete his master’s degree in information technology management.

He said his greatest personal achievement was earning his bach-

elor’s degree over four permanent change of stations.

“I have tried to take some college classes at every base I have been assigned to,” he said. “I am currently taking online classes through Touro University International.”

Sergeant Stanley achieved his goal while stationed at Ramstein.

“It took me 11 years to earn it, and I am proud that I never gave up trying to finish,” he said.

Sergeant Stanley said his role model is retired Chief Master Sgt. Doug Stanley, his father.

“Although the eras are different, we have a common bond, and I still look for his advice,” he said.

Sergeant Stanley said he enjoys spending time with his family and grilling out. ■

Air Warfare symposium brings AF leadership, cadets together

By Cadet Christina DeGruchy

Det. 159, University of Central Florida, Fla.

University of Central Florida ROTC Det. 159 cadets assisted the Air Force Association during its 22nd annual Air Warfare Symposium, themed "Forging the Interdependent Air Force: The Path Ahead," Feb. 1-3, in Orlando, Fla.

On the first day of the event, Det. 159 cadets assisted in the annual golf outing at Walt Disney World's Magnolia and Palm Golf Courses. Cadets catered to the needs of participants which included military leaders, defense contractors and local community leaders. UCF cadets helped with registration, distribution of lunches and manned concession stands.

"The Central Florida Chapter of the AFA ensures the day is fun for everyone, from those who are there to golf, to the cadets who are there to volunteer," said Cadet Sarah Reper, Det. 159 cadet wing commander. "The golf outing is always a popular event with the cadets from our detachment."

The golf outing was followed by a reception dinner and awards banquet for all the golfers and participants.

The Air Warfare Symposium featured the Secretary of the Air Force, Michael W. Wynne and Chief of Staff of the Air Force, Gen. T. Michael Moseley. Other notable speakers included commanders of Pacific Air Forces, U.S. Air Forces in Europe, Air Combat Command and Air Force Space Command.

The audience was composed of Airmen, contractors and military



Courtesy photo

University of Central Florida Det. 159 Cadet David Perry speaks with Gen. Duncan J. McNabb, Air Mobility Command commander during the 22nd annual Air Warfare Symposium held Feb. 1-3, in Orlando, Fla.

attachés from around the world. The speeches concentrated on the decisions facing the Air Force to find balance in its portfolio of capabilities in an era of shrinking budgets, aging weapon systems and high operations tempo against the Global War on Terrorism.

Det. 159 cadets distributed and collected questionnaire cards during the briefings and served as ushers.

During the symposium, cadets had the opportunity to network with Air Force officers and learn from their experiences. A black-tie gala was held at a local hotel and

Det. 159 cadets also served as ushers for the dinner and distributed gift bags. Det. 159's color guard presented the colors to a room filled with distinguished leaders of the Air Force and defense industry.

"There are so many cadets in our detachment who have greatly benefited from the support we receive from the Central Florida Chapter of the AFA," said Cadet Robert Caranza, volunteer organizer. "I think we are all grateful to have the opportunity to give back to an organization taking such an active role in shaping our future." ■

U of M cadets tour Dover flightline

By Cadet Mark Wilson

Det. 330, University of Maryland



Courtesy photo

A C-5 pilot at Dover Air Force Base, Del., tells University of Maryland Det. 330 cadets about the plane's capabilities during a base visit, Feb. 17.

The F-22A Raptor, F-16 Falcon and B-2 Spirit are sleek examples of America's aerospace power.

When the public thinks of the Air Force, these types of planes and their missions are often what comes to mind.

However, 17 cadets from the University of Maryland, Det. 330 who visited Dover Air Force Base, Del., witnessed other sides of the Air Force.

The cadets got a chance to see a C-5 Galaxy, the largest cargo aircraft in the Air Force inventory.

"We learned, right there on the flight line, how much the Air Force's ability to move massive amounts of troops and supplies is aiding the Global War on Terrorism," said Cadet Leslie Woll, Det. 330 cadet wing commander. "The C-5 and other Air Force cargo aircraft are providing

American fighting men and women exactly what they need in a moment's notice."

After the C-5 tour, cadets saw Air Force mechanics at work inside the C-5 engine shop. Mechanics showed cadets the highly advanced technology that allows a plane as incredibly large as the C-5 to get off the ground and fulfill its mission.

Cadets also toured Dover's air traffic control tower, where they witnessed C-5's taxi, touch-and-go, take off and land.

"It was an incredible sight seeing something so large launch into the air so gracefully," said Cadet Darian Nastvogel.

Lastly, cadets met the elite Air Force Security Forces Ravens, a squadron that travels to foreign countries to assess airfield security and provide security for distinguished visitors and Air Force

personnel.

The Ravens showed off their high-tech weaponry, and were more than happy to show cadets how, even without weapons, they could take down just about anyone.

"The day was long, but filled with exciting reminders that the Air Force is not all about fighters and bombers," said Cadet Zachary Slentz-Whalen, who has been selected to attend Air Force pilot training. "The Air Force could not complete its mission were it not for the work of airlift pilots and cargo aircraft. Also the Air Force would not be able to fulfill its requirements without the great mission support personnel like the Ravens and firefighters."

"Dover is a shining example of the less public side of the Air Force, the side that keeps our troops supplied and our Airmen safe," said Cadet Abdul Fakunle, an AS250 cadet. ■

ROTC cadets meet in nation's capitol for inaugural seminar

By Jon Sladek
Air University Public Affairs

Air Force ROTC cadets from 140 detachments converged in the nation's capital for the inaugural George C. Marshall/Henry "Hap" Arnold Air Force ROTC Award Seminar.

The four-day event, hosted by the George C. Marshall Foundation and organized by Headquarters Air Force ROTC at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., honored an outstanding senior cadet from each Air Force ROTC detachment across the country and Puerto Rico and provided an opportunity for cadets to network and learn from senior leadership.

The seminar was divided into roundtable discussions and speeches from an array of distinguished guest speakers. Topics covered included: national security and terrorism, Southwest Asia: Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, the impact of NATO on today's mission, media and the battlefield and transnational movements: religion, identity and politics.

"The roundtable discussions were very educational and are ideal for cadets about to be second lieutenants," said Cadet Joseph Schenkel from Det. 780 at South Dakota State University. "I was impressed the guest speakers not only included officers in my chain of command, but also [individuals] who are making the decisions that affect the Air Force as a whole."

The speakers at the event included: Dr. Ronald Segal, Under Secretary of the Air Force; Brig. Gen. Ronnie Hawkins, Jr., Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools

commander; Lt. Gen. Michael Wooley, Air Force Special Operations Command commander; and Maj. Gen. Thomas Dyches, assistant to the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff for Reserve Matters.

"All the speakers allowed time for cadets to speak with them," said Cadet Philip Stephens from Det. 218 at Indiana State University. "I never thought I would be able to talk with the AFOATS commander face-to-face or have the ROTC commander walking around in a very approachable manner."

One cadet with a unique perspective, Cadet Christina Ortiz, a senior at Auburn University at Montgomery, is a former enlisted medical technician with the 42nd Medical Group located at Maxwell Air Force Base.

"I was overwhelmed by the knowledge and professionalism of these young cadets," she said. "I felt I had a good grasp [of the Air Force global

mission] since I've been on active duty, but they certainly surprised me with their questions to our leadership and their contributions to our roundtable discussions."

Capt. Dung Nguyen, an event coordinator for Air Force ROTC, also walked away impressed with the caliber of cadets in attendance.

"They are much more aware of national issues than I imagined they would be as college students," he said. "My peers came up with a Cold War mentality; they [cadets] understand we are fighting terrorism. I told some cadets the answer to defeating terrorism will [most likely] come from them, not from people who came from the Cold War era."

The Marshall/Arnold Seminar is inspired by a similar event conducted the last 30 years by the Army ROTC honoring their top cadets. The Army seminar is also sponsored by the Marshall Foundation. ■



File photo

Operation Iron Sharpener

By Phil Berube

Air University Public Affairs

The Air Force's largest and oldest commissioning source is rallying its forces to improve the way it prepares future officers to tackle global challenges.

Military and civilian members at Headquarters Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools are fully engaged in Operation Iron Sharpener, a process-improvement drill that touches all elements of officer production, citizenship development and public perception.

Similar in design and intent as Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century, or Smart Ops 21, Operation Iron Sharpener relies on a coalition of the commercial LEAN and Six Sigma process improvement models to effect transformation in practices and mindset.

"We want all our people to focus on improving processes instead of trying to change for change's sake," said Brig. Gen. Ronnie Hawkins, AFOATS commander. "We're gathering inputs and thoughts from our people to focus on process improvement and elimination of wasteful tactics, techniques and procedures throughout AFOATS."

AFOATS encompasses Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, Air Force Junior ROTC and Officer Training School. The organization, based at Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., commissions approximately 80 percent of the Air Force officer corps through ROTC and OTS, and teaches more than 102,000 high schools students enrolled in Junior ROTC.

To cultivate a grassroots effort within AFOATS, every member of the organization has signed up to be part of one or more of the teams deployed to examine and track processes in key

functional areas and come up with an improvement plan. The three broad functional areas being scrutinized are

the student, staff and enabler (public perception) programs.

"This entire operation is based on

OPERATION IRON SHARPENER

"Making the Grade ... for Mission Excellence"

individuals making an effort to improve their own work environment and the organization's processes," said Col. Norm Balchunas, Air Force Junior ROTC director and the person charged to operationalize the commander's intent. "Operation Iron Sharpener is a commitment from the top that empowers everyone in AFOATS to improve day-to-day and future operational capabilities."

The thrust of the student initiative team is to review ROTC, Junior ROTC and OTS curricula; see how best to incorporate proven process improvement disciplines; and increase lessons on adaptive thinking in the classrooms. The team is also tasked to evaluate instruction delivery methods and devise a roadmap to bring all delivery methods up to state of the art while determining whether to use distance learning, field activities or classroom instruction to target specific teaching objectives. They are also devising a method to standardize the evaluations of all Junior ROTC units.

"Our focus will concentrate on what skills, education and experience future Airmen will require to survive and prosper in the future, given Global War on Terror and expeditionary commitments," said Lt. Col. John Kiecana, champion for the student initiative team.

A commitment from active duty members to serve as instructors, cadre or support staff in AFOATS is what the staff initiative team is targeting.

To get that commitment, the team is pursuing several initiatives that will help give credibility to an AFOATS' assignment. A few of the initiatives being explored include giving "commander" status to ROTC detachment and regional commanders; allowing special duty credit for assigned personnel; and offering continuing education opportunities to ROTC cadre.

"We've done a phenomenal job of taking care of our external customers – ROTC detachments and Junior

ROTC units – but we've somewhat neglected our headquarters staff and staff in the field," said Lt. Col. Ken Klein, team champion. "The staff initiatives area addresses these 'shortcomings.' For example, we're looking at ways for personnel working outside their career fields to stay current and engaged with their core Air Force specialties so they'll be able to effectively transition back into their career fields after their AFOATS tours."

While the staff initiative team seeks to make AFOATS an assignment of choice, the enablers team aims to better market AFOATS as a commissioning source and highlight its achievements, thereby helping the staff and student teams meet their objectives.

To meet its objectives, the enabler team plans on creating an ROTC/OTS alumni association, publicizing

AFOATS through internal and external media outlets and examining the various scholarship programs offered by ROTC to ascertain which are most effective at meeting AFOATS' commissioning objectives, said Maj. Brian Smith, enabler team champion.

Operation Iron Sharpener is not about getting a "quick fix," and an "end-goal" may never be achieved, said General Hawkins.

"If you read about the civilian companies and military organizations, such as the Air Force logistics community, that have been successful with LEAN and Six Sigma process improvement models, you'll see that you're always in a cycle of eliminating waste, improving processes and exploiting technology," he said. "And this is what Operation Iron Sharpener is all about." ■

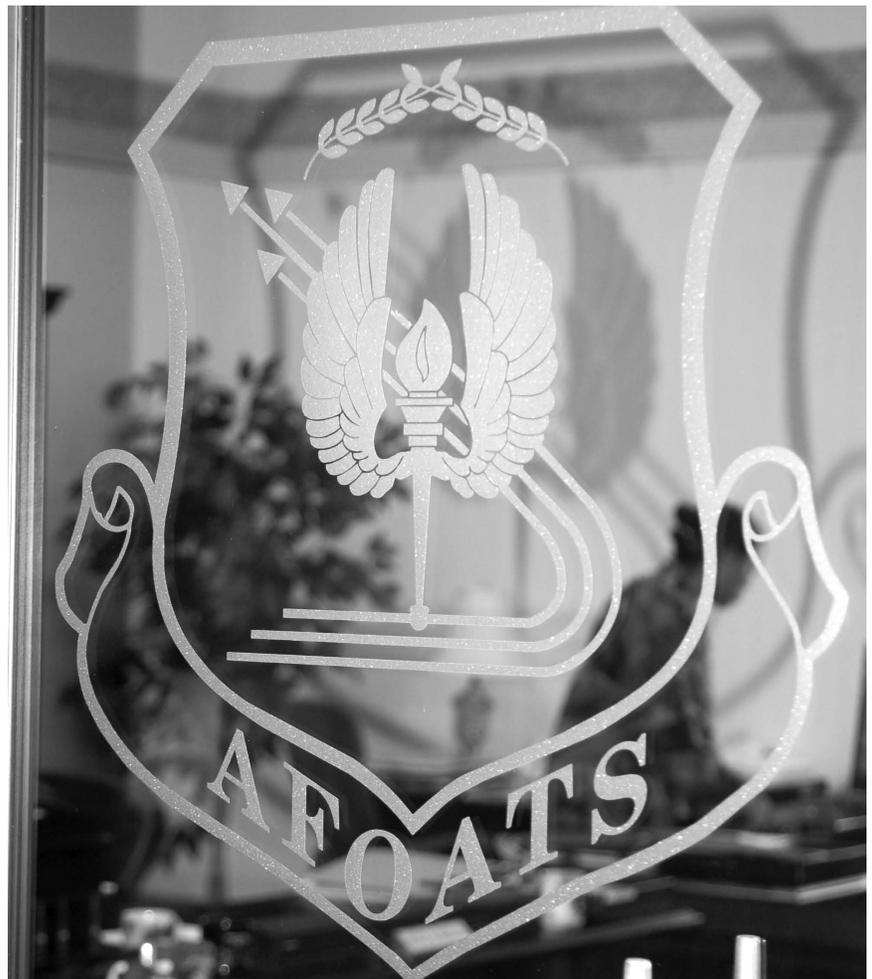


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Scott Moorman

Cadets 'deploy' in training exercise

Det. 840, Texas State University-San Marcos, Texas

Texas State ROTC cadets experienced how the Air Force prepares and deploys forces to accomplish its mission when they held their first field exercise Feb. 24.

The exercise scenario was developed to simulate an actual deployment of troops to a forward location to perform search and rescue operations.

"This 24 hour exercise is designed to give cadets an opportunity to see what it's like to prepare, deploy and arrive in an inhospitable location," said Col. Daryl Hausmann, Det. 840 commander. "You can be deployed in a moment's notice anywhere in the world and you have to be ready."

Det. 840 cadets were recalled to their unit and ordered to bring their personal gear and assigned to a chalk. The cadets processed through a mobility line where personnel records were scanned to make sure

immunizations were up to date, wills and other legal documents were current and issued a weapon.

The cadets were transported to Freeman Ranch, an agricultural area owned by Texas State University San Marcos. This simulated airlift delivered the troops to their Afghanistan.

When boots hit the ground, cadets were required to set up tents, establish command and control, and provide perimeter security while racing against the setting sun.

Camp security was tested by threats seen in the Global War on Terror. At one point, a seemingly friendly visitor brought gifts to cadets manning an entry control point. One of their gifts was a simulated pipe bomb. The security team contained the "bomb" with limited casualties.

The next morning, cadets were awakened by simulated mortar at-

tacks and real-world rain. The 342nd Training Squadron sent Pararescue Indoctrination School instructors from Lackland Air Force Base taught cadets how to survive and operate in a hostile environment and prepare them for the day's mission.

The instructors gave cadets in-depth instructions on various field formations, roles and responsibilities and other information critical to leading small units through enemy territory.

"Attention to detail is the key to survival out here," said Master Sgt. Isaaks, 342nd TRS, PJ instructor "It's critical in any career field you will go into to get the mission accomplished and save lives."

Cadets practice what to do, where to go, and how to communicate when under attack in field, urban and nighttime scenarios.

"Communication is critical and it's the leaders responsibility to en-



Photo by Mark Decker

Cadet Kari Binger takes a defensive position as the team leader signals potential danger ahead. The cadets used silent hand signals to communicate in order to prevent detection by enemy forces. All team members practiced situational awareness and attention to detail while looking out for enemy forces and using hand signals to communicate with friendly forces.



Photo by Mark Decker

Cadet Reshard Wagstaff takes a knee and watches the frontline as his team stops to recover a simulated downed F-16 pilot and cargo.

sure everyone know what they are doing and what needs to be done,” said Staff Sgt. Jason Attinger, 342 TRS PJ instructor. “As the leader, you must know the plan backwards and forwards so you can make sure your people are doing what they are supposed to and have what they need.”

Repetition and constantly rehearsing means you are prepared, said Sergeant Attinger.

After the search and rescue training, cadets were required to locate a downed F-16 pilot by putting the skills they learned earlier in the day. Cadets had to navigate and locate the wreckage and rescue the pilot, while dealing with guerilla forces.

“Overall, the cadets did great,” said Cadet Kevin Murphy, head evaluator. “The whole point of the exercise was to get them out of their comfort zone and get hands-on experience so they will be ready to lead.”

The training experience gave cadets a glimpse into the operational Air Force and some of the things they may face as officers.

“I loved it,” said Cadet Ivan Jorge. “It gave me a chance to see a side of Air Force training we don’t normally get.” ■



Photo by Mark Decker

Cadets Wagstaff and Brandon Glass conceal themselves behind a plant during a simulated hostile attack.

Det. Night builds leadership, friendship

By Cadets Sarah Kline and Garrett Williams

Det. 160, University of Georgia, Ga.



Photo by Cadet Garrett Williams

University of Georgia ROTC Cadet Sarah Kline prepares to shoot the 8-ball into the corner pocket during Det. Night, Feb. 18.

University of Georgia ROTC Det. 160 designated every Friday night of the spring semester as Det. Night.

Det. Night's purpose is to contribute to the production of quality leaders for the Air Force by reinforcing six characteristics of leadership: integrity, tact, decisiveness, initiative, dependability and enthusiasm.

"Det. Night provides cadets with the opportunity for a little friendly competition and a chance to get to know each other better," said

Cadet Luke Williams. "It has had a positive impact on both cadet morale and our interpersonal capabilities."

Det. 160's Arnold Air Society stepped in to increase cadet interest in Det. Night by organizing a trip to a UGA gymnastics meet and held a racquetball tournament.

AAS cadets have scheduled future events to include games of capture the flag, a video game tournament and a crud tournament.

The event also gives those cadets, who have no desire to go

downtown, a place to be on Friday nights.

"We're trying to make sure that our own are kept safe.," said Cadet Scott Craig, cadet wing commander. "With the problems on school campuses regarding alcohol related incidents, cadets need a place to go where there are no alcohol risks involved."

Det. 160's desire is to improve this weekly event by continuing to execute the ROTC mission of promoting friendship and camaraderie amongst cadets for years to come. ■

Top cadets gather at national conferences

By Capt. Eric Fraser

Det. 420, University of Minnesota Duluth

Cadet Lucas Westerman represented Air Force ROTC Det. 420 from the University of Minnesota Duluth at two recent conferences.

Cadet Westerman represented Det. 420 at the The National Character and Leadership Symposium at the U.S. Air Force Academy and the Arnold/Marshall Five Star Award Conference in Washington D.C.

"I selected Cadet Westerman because he is one of Air Force ROTC's very best. He will be an effective Air Force leader. This conference will open his eyes to the real challenges we are facing today," explained Lt. Col. Allan Chromy.

The National Character and Leadership Symposium joined cadets from all military branches and featured speakers from a wide range of life experiences. Included on the list of speakers were disabled athletes, hostage survivors, along with military and civilian leaders telling their stories about obstacles they have overcome in their lives.

"After hearing their stories of immense courage in such difficult times, you reflect on your own life and how the little things you worry about each day are quite irrelevant. Especially when compared to what these people have experienced in their lives," said Cadet Westerman.

The conference included an impressive list of leaders as guest speakers. Dick Vermeil, former NFL Coach of the Year and Super Bowl champion was just one of the many featured speakers.

"Dick Vermeil spoke to us about

"After hearing their stories of immense courage in such difficult times, you reflect on your own life and how the little things you worry about each day are quite irrelevant."

Cadet Lucas Westerman, Det. 420

leadership," said Cadet Westerman. "It was very inspiring to hear that much of what we will do as Air Force officers can relate to what he had to do on the football field."

The conference concluded with Brig. Gen. (retired) Malham Wakin, speaking on Courage in the Face of Adversity. "I took a lot away from the conference that I will apply in my own life. The conference stressed the importance of our core values and how as leaders we must always make sure we are exhibiting these values," said Cadet Westerman.

At the Arnold/Marshall Five Star Award Conference, Cadet Westerman met with senior Air Force ROTC cadets from other worldwide detachments.

"I was extremely honored to attend this conference with 139 of the best and brightest cadets from across Air Force ROTC," said he said.

Cadets participated in round table discussions with experts on subjects such as homeland security, North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Persian Gulf.

Ambassador David Newton, former U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, spoke about his experiences in Iraq. Cadet Westerman said, "He talked to us about what we have

accomplished in Iraq and what the future holds for the Persian Gulf region. I learned a lot of things about the situation in the Gulf from Ambassador Newton. It was very interesting to get his perspective. Cadets that attended this conference will be entering active duty at a time when this area of the world is going to be the focus."

Cadet Westerman was also able to meet many other leaders, both military and civilian. Those featured at the conference included: Lt. Gen. Michael W. Wooley, Commander of Air Force Special Operations Command; Under Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable Dr. Ronald M. Sega; Brigadier General Ronnie D. Hawkins Jr., Air Force Officer Accession and Training Schools commander; and Col. Steven E. Wayne, Air Force ROTC commander.

Cadet Westerman said, "Being able to sit in the same room and speak with these experts will benefit all of us cadets. The issues discussed at this conference are the issues our generation will be faced with when we are commissioned as Air Force officers. Understanding these issues now will help us greatly when we enter active duty. This is an experience I will never forget!" ■

Det. 410

ROTC cadets foster Air Force, community partnership

Cadet Brian Leitzke

Det. 410, University of Saint Thomas, Minn.

Since the establishment of ROTC in 1916, military detachments have been building relationships on college campuses all over the United States. After the Air Force became an independent service in late 1947, Air Force ROTC Det. 410 at the University of Saint Thomas in St. Paul, Minn., was one of the first detachments to be created.

Its first professor of air science, Maj. Frank A. Flower, oversaw the detachment's establishment at UST, July 1948. Three years later, it would gain the official label of Det. 410. Since then, the detachment has fostered a positive university and community partnership.

Air Force Reserve Brig. Gen. Terrance J. Murphy guided the school's transition from a small, 2,000-student college to a 9,000-student university. A major part of Monsignor Murphy's contribution to St. Thomas was his support of the Air Force ROTC program on campus. A statue was erected after his death in February 2004, and it was placed in front of Det. 410.

The tradition of partnership that he inspired is echoed by St. Thomas' current president, Reverend Dennis Dease.

"The University of Saint Thomas is proud of Det. 410, which has provided a strong and vital presence on our Saint Paul campus since 1948," said Reverend Dease. "We look forward to continuing a long and fruitful relationship with the Air Force."



Photo by Cadet Rachel Willenbring

Cadets raise the American flag over the St. Thomas campus during the opening ceremony of the 2005 POW/MIA Vigil.

One of the most significant benefits of the relationship between the university and the Air Force is a mutually funded scholarship program. Det. 410 is able to offer incoming cadets several different scholarship opportunities. Among these are five kinds of pre-college and in-college awards in which the student's tuition, room, board and books are all covered by a combination of \$15,000 from the Air Force with the balance in a St. Thomas subsidy. The scholarship program has been the center point of the recruiting partnership between Det. 410 and St. Thomas. It allows Det. 410 to attract high quality cadets,

many of whom are technical majors, and it provides St. Thomas with a legacy of support for developing future military leadership.

Other aspects of that legacy are the traditions that have grown from the partnership. One of those traditions is the homecoming parade. The 410th Cadet Wing has the honor and the responsibility of leading St. Thomas' Homecoming Parade down historic Summit Avenue in St. Paul. Cadets are organized into three groups and commanded by their cadet wing commander. The cadet corps is led by a four-person color guard, four members of the sabre team and the Black Knights precision drill team. This year, in addition to the march down Summit, the Black Knights performed a drill sequence for the parade crowd.

"Not only did the cadets of Det. 410 represent Air Force ROTC with pride and professionalism as they led the University of St. Thomas Homecoming Parade, but they were also able to exercise their planning and executing skills as future Air Force officers," said Cadet Sarah K. Hoeslcher, Det. 410 cadet wing commander. "It's no wonder this is an event that the cadets and the university look forward to every year."

In addition to the homecoming parade, Det. 410 conducts an annual 24-hour silent Prisoners of War and Missing in Action Vigil. This year, the vigil started on Nov. 10 at noon and ended at noon on

Veterans Day. This vigil is for Det. 410 cadets, UST students and people from the surrounding community to remember those who have been prisoners of war, as well as those who are or have been missing in action.

The POW/MIA Vigil, along with all of the speakers and events that surround it, is planned and coordinated by the Det. 410 chapter of Arnold Air Society. The Richard E. Flemming AAS Squadron was chartered at UST in 1949. Since then it been both a St. Thomas and Det. 410 club dedicated to service on campus and in the surrounding community. Planning large events like the vigil is just one of the benefits AAS at Det. 410 has to offer.

Beyond the single day events that have become an important part of the relationship between Saint Thomas and Air Force ROTC, there are traditions that go on throughout the academic year.

Every Thursday morning, reveille is played as a detail of cadets raise the American flag over the Saint Thomas campus. Retreat is conducted that evening and the flag is lowered by another detail. Live music is played by two trumpeters, Cadets Kylie Bennett and Daniel Zierath. Det. 410 cadets also wear their uniforms throughout the business day each Thursday.

These customs have become a part of every school week at St. Thomas. They serve to remind college students that the freedom they enjoy is not free. They may also inspire the cadets who have taken an oath to defend that freedom with careers of service.

Other ongoing services that cadets perform for Saint Thomas include color guard details at football and basketball games, as well as at commencement ceremonies both at the end of the fall semester and in the spring. ■



Photo by Cadet Bradley Amys

From left to right, Senior Cadets Natalie Blumenstein, Adam Bliss, Anthony Prose, and Anne Dean serve as the color guard detail at the front of the St. Thomas Homecoming Parade.



Courtesy photo

Lewis University Cadet Elizabeth Wiesolek watches as Cadet Catherine Warren from Illinois Institute of Technology makes her way up the spider web.

Iron Oaks course tests cadets' metal

By Cadet Joe Deskin
Det. 195, Illinois Institute of Technology, Ill.

Zigzag, incomplete bridge and spider web are just a few of the obstacles Det. 195 cadets encountered at the Iron Oaks Teams Course in Olympia Fields, Ill.

The Oaks High Ropes Course has a series of 15 obstacles which become more challenging as the team progresses through them. The course towers 35 feet above the ground and is designed to give the participants a powerful experience. Some of the activities are done alone, while others require the assistance of a trusted wingman.

The course also allowed cadets to enhance their leadership skills while testing their strength and confidence.

"These types of activities are a great way to show our true personalities," said Cadet Erik Ruiz.

Cadet Ruiz said most of the newer members of the detachment have a one-sided, intimidated view of the upper classmen.

We all know that in a military climate, we follow our leaders without question, but this environment enabled leadership styles to evolve without having the restraints of rank or structured positions, said Cadet Katie Warren.

High fives and cheers of encouragement could be heard in the calm woodland setting. The course showcased each person's potential to function as current leaders of Det. 195 and future leaders of the Air Force. ■

Purdue ROTC celebrates 57th LEAD

Det. 220, Purdue University, Ind.



Courtesy photo

Det. 220 cadets execute drill commands while in formation during the 57th annual Leadership, Excellence, Awards Day at Purdue University.

Every April, families, friends and distinguished guests travel many miles to Purdue University to honor the achievements of the cadets of Det. 220. Leadership, Excellence, Awards Day, or LEAD, is the result of five months of hard work in leadership laboratory, physical training, academic classes and various staff positions of Air Force ROTC cadets. LEAD is the Boilermaker's official Air Force parade and awards ceremony, and it's one of the only times in which parents get to see their children in uniform at an official Air Force ROTC function.

This year marked the 57th annual LEAD at Det. 220. The motto was "Honor to serve, strength to fight,

courage to LEAD!"

Lt. Gen. John L. Hudson, Aeronautical Systems Center commander and program executive officer for aircraft acquisition and modernization at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, was this year reviewing officer. General Hudson earned a Master of Science degree in aeronautics and astronautics from Purdue.

This year's LEAD was commanded by Cadet Patrick Dixon with help of other cadets.

"LEAD was an extremely rewarding experience and a true test of my abilities as a future leader in the Air Force," said Cadet Dixon.

The Det. 200 drill team performed

a rifle routine for the reviewing officials and spectators.

"I put in a lot of work being on drill team which was very rewarding," said Cadet Wade Morris, Det. 200 drill team member. "LEAD was a good experience and getting the opportunity to do the rifle routine definitely enhanced my experience at LEAD."

"LEAD gives us the opportunity to learn the importance of military parade tradition, and it allows parents and the public the annual chance to catch a glimpse of the highly successful and proud tradition of Purdue University Air Force ROTC Detachment 220," said Cadet Dana Lattibeaudiere, LEAD director of support. ■

All services want Air Force JROTC cadet

By Tech. Sgt. Scott Moorman

Contributing editor, Leader magazine

Durango High School senior and Junior ROTC Cadet Jenny Graves said she joined Junior ROTC for the discipline, drill teams and scholarship opportunities it had to offer.

"I always wanted a military career and I thought that this would be a good way to pursue one," she said.

Cadet Graves has received the Women's Veterans of Nevada Award, the Americans Veterans National Award and the Daughters of the American Revolution National Award; however, she lists one accomplishment above the rest.

"I would say that my greatest achievement would have to be receiving appointments to all four service academies and receiving four-year scholarships from all three branches of ROTC," said Cadet Graves. "I consider this great because rarely anyone does this and it opened up many windows to succeed."

According to Lt. Col. Jim McEvoy, DHS senior aerospace instructor, Cadet Graves achieved one of the highest Scholastic Assessment Test scores in her class, is ranked in the top 10 percent of her class and commanded the unarmed drill team to two consecutive state titles.

"Jenny did everything we told her to do from her freshman year on," said Colonel McEvoy. "She knew that she had to be well-rounded, which meant a balance between academics, athletics and leadership, and she excelled in all three."

Cadet Graves said she really enjoys the structure and discipline that comes with being an Air Force officer would give her; however, she has signed an acceptance letter to the Coast Guard Academy, where she



Courtesy photo

Durango High School Junior ROTC Cadet Jenny Graves commands the Nevada state champion Unarmed Drill Team.

will major in civil engineering.

"I plan to attend the Coast Guard Academy because they are a National Collegiate Athletic Association Division III school and I will be able to compete in the girl's pole vault," she said.

Cadet Graves said her long term goals were to proudly serve her country as a military officer and a civil engineer.

Cadet Graves is the commander of the Nevada state champion unarmed drill team and physical fitness team. She is also a member of the Kitty Hawk Air Society and model rocketry club. Outside of Junior ROTC, Cadet Graves is a member of the varsity bowling team, varsity track and field team and a member of the National Honor Society.

"From the beginning, my instructors in Junior ROTC told me to get involved," Cadet Graves said. "They told me in order to be successful I must be a well rounded person and I must find a balance between junior ROTC, sports and academics.

Cadet Graves said she likes the camaraderie that comes with being the drill team commander.

"It gives me the opportunity to lead my team to championships as well as enjoy my high school time with my friends." She said.

Things have not always gone Cadet Graves's way.

"My greatest personal challenge has been dealing with my father having a massive stroke back in 2001," she said. "It's been hard, but I've had my friends and family to support me."

Cadet Graves credits her mother and Junior ROTC instructors as her inspiration.

"They have all been there for me and have gotten me to where I am today," she said. "Without them, I am not sure where I would be right now."

Cadet Graves said her mother and instructors have been very successful in life and she hopes to have the chance to influence others they way they have influenced her. ■

Utah cadets showcase drill skills

By Amy K. Stewart
Standard-Examiner staff

Approximately 400 high school students aimed for precision as they marched, presented flags and handled rifles — all to crisp commands during a Utah Junior ROTC drill competition recently.

“My daughter has learned pride in her appearance, pride in representing the school. She has learned listening skills from her instructors,” said Gail Ballew of South Weber. Daughter Cadet Katie Ballew, 15, is in the Junior ROTC as a sophomore at Northridge High.

Participating in the competition at Northridge High School were Northridge, Clearfield, Ben Lomond and Ogden high schools, along with several high schools from the Provo and Salt Lake City areas.

Silver belt buckles glistened and shoes were shined until the students could see their reflection. Uniforms were spotless.

“During the inspection, the judges are looking for a minute piece of lint,” Gail Ballew said.

Judges said the students were practically a picture of perfection. But there were a few bloopers — such as one student, who marched his entire group out of bounds, said judge Christopher Haynes, technical sergeant and munitions systems specialist for Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

“He knew he messed up,” Haynes said, “but the head inspector went and talked with him — gave him a little boost to his ego and said, ‘Hey, man, it happens.’”

Another student let one of the unit flags touch the ground, said judge Jori Farquharson, staff sergeant and ground radio maintenance technician for the base.

“If the United States’ colors were to hit the ground, they would automatically be disqualified,” Farquharson said.



Courtesy photo

A Junior ROTC cadet stands at attention as an inspector reviews her uniform during a recent drill competition.

“This was just an organizational flag.”

The students competed in unarmed and armed categories of inspection, regulation and exhibition, as well as routines such as those in color guard.

The students said they learn a lot from being in the Junior ROTC.

“It gives us discipline,” said Cadet Stephen Chase, 18, a Clearfield High junior.

“It teaches us responsibility and leadership roles,” said Cadet Nick Layton, 14, an Ogden High School freshman.

Cadet Hollie Neal, 16, an Ogden High School junior, said she is in Junior ROTC to “make friends, learn leadership responsibilities and better equip [herself] for the future.”

She is one of many students who hope Junior ROTC will help them with their post-high school goals.

Neal said after high school, she wants to go to college or into the Army.

“Nobody in my family thinks I can do it, so I just want to prove them all wrong,” she said.

Cadet Daniel Wilde, 16, an Ogden High junior, said he wants to get into

the Air Force Academy because his brother is going there and his dad went there.

“I’ve always wanted to go to the Air Force Academy,” he said. “I want to be a fighter pilot. I like the thrill of it ... just going fast and controlling something that big and that fast. I’ve always liked flying.”

Cadet Wilde said he has seen “Top Gun,” a 1986 film about the Navy’s flight school, at least 30 times.

Cadet Richard Salvinski, 17, an Ogden High junior, said he wants to join the military and become a surgeon.

“I want to work in an ER,” he said.

Parents milled about the competition shooting photos and filming their children’s routines.

“We’re a family of military,” Ballew said. “My father was World War II, my husband 20 years Air Force, my brother-in-law Navy, his brother 30 years Navy, our nephew is graduating from the Air Force Academy, our daughter is working on a ROTC scholarship for the Air Force Academy. “We have pride in America.” ■

Giving the gift of life

Cadets' blood drive supports community

AK-20001, Ben Eielson High School, Alaska.



Photo by Master Sgt. Greg Corbett

Ben Eielson High School Junior ROTC Cadets Jaimie Huffman, Chad Vance and DeVonna Flannery observe Cadet Jose Cardenas' progress as he donates blood, Mar. 22.

Cadets from AK-20001 participated in the High School Challenge Blood Drive March 22 sponsored by the Blood Bank of Alaska.

This was the cadets' second blood drive this school year. The Junior ROTC cadets helped the blood bank publicize, set up and

pack away their medical gear. They also solicited volunteer donors and were donors themselves.

"I feel like I did something really important," said Cadet DeVonna Flannery.

More than 10 percent of the student population donated their time and red blood cells, which yielded 12 pints of blood.

"Teenagers are the fastest-growing group of blood donors in the United States, supplying as much as 16 percent of the blood supply in some places," said Jean Krumpa, Blood Bank of Alaska-Fairbanks Center coordinator.

The cadets plan on making this a biannual volunteer activity for their Junior ROTC program. ■

Georgia cadet leads community project

GA-939, Green County High School, Ga.

The Greene County High School, Ga. Junior ROTC unit wrapped up their first major service project for the year. The cadets led a community wide can food drive between Thanksgiving and Christmas Break to help replenish the Greene County Community Food Bank during the holidays.

More than 780 cans of food were donated at a critical time of the year.

“The Junior ROTC support of our food bank is so dear to us here in Greene County, and we are so proud of the students,” said Jeni Norris, food bank director.

Each flight challenged the other flights to bring in the most cans. This year the members of Alpha Flight were the winners.

“We are very proud of the cadets’ commitment to the Air Force Core Values of Service Before Self and Excellence in All We Do, which they demonstrated during this community service project,” said Maj. Bryan Watson, senior aerospace science instructor.

The food drive’s success was also due to the cadet’s ability to gather support from the school.

“We are extremely proud of the entire student body for their support of this project,” Pam Byce, a Greene County High School teacher. ■



Courtesy photo

Cadets Bradley Elrod and Brent Driscoll unload cans at the Greene County Community Food Bank in December.

Lakenheath cadet ready to lead peers

Photos and story by Airman 1st Class Michael Hess

48th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



Courtesy photo

Patrick Barone, when he was an assistant drill team cadre, commands his flight of new cadet trainees at the cadet drill camp in August 2004. Two years later, Barone plans to pin on the Junior ROTC colonel insignia to his collar and take command of the group.

Patrick Barone, the Junior ROTC drill team flight commander at Lakenheath Air Force Base's high school, United Kingdom, bought his first 10-pound M-1 Garand ceremonial rifle as a freshman to use with the drill team. He wanted a challenge and professional edge that the 3-pound wood rifles didn't provide.

The detachment followed his lead and went the extra mile. The school has since purchased eight white-strapped replicas for the drill team to twirl, twist, kick and throw while representing the school and RAF Lakenheath in competition.

Cadet Barone is now a junior and he runs a tight ship. His efforts made the RAF Lakenheath drill team one of the top in the command at the 2006 European Drill Competition recently. Thirteen schools competed for the gold in five categories: armed

and duo exhibition, inspection, regulation and color guard. The team took home four second place trophies and an individual medal for the individual drill-off.

The initial \$127 rifle was a small investment for the doors the program opened for the students who participated.

Cadet Barone entered the program as a freshman Junior ROTC-airman basic. Next year he will pin on the Junior ROTC -- colonel insignia and take on the roles and responsibilities of Junior ROTC group commander.

The detachment has the rank and organizational structure similar to an Air Force group with enlisted ranks up to senior master sergeant and officer ranks up to colonel. The organizational structure spans from element to group with leadership positions at each tier.

"The cadets have a lot of respon-

sibility around here. I let them run things," said retired Lt. Col. James Nelson, Lakenheath High School Junior ROTC Senior Aerospace Science Instructor.

The squadrons hold different tasks within the group such as the drill team, which not only performs at official high school functions, but also helps recruit Lakenheath Middle School 8th graders into Junior ROTC.

The team performs several routines to spark their interest in the program and advertises for the cadet training camp in August, which drills the future freshman in the basics of Junior ROTC -- dress and appearance, customs and courtesy and marching movements.

The detachment was unable to host the event last year, but the first thing Cadet Barone plans to do as the new group commander is reinstate the camp.

"You can certainly see the difference in this class of cadets compared to the others who went through the camp. A major part of the camp is dress and appearance, so without that, our first couple inspections of the year were a disaster," he said.

The camp ensures future freshmen not only know how to wear the uniform and march, but also know what they are getting into.

"Junior ROTC is a volunteer program. Cadets are either here because they want to be here or their parents made them," said Cadet Barone.

The class appears on a cadet's report card as a letter grade, so their level of involvement and military bearing is noticed and recorded.

"The biggest problems are cadets who join, then change their minds. Those are the cadets you see with

theirs hands in their pockets walking across the grass,” said Cadet Barone.

Cadets can leave the program at the end of a semester if they don't like the program, but sticking with it carries many opportunities such as scholarships and travel.

For instance, Cadet Barone hopes to receive an Air Force ROTC scholarship while he works toward his psychology degree at Georgia State University. He has traveled to Germany several times for drill competitions and attended leadership workshops in Washington D.C. and Singapore.

“This has been an amazing experience, especially going to Singapore,” he said. These are opportunities available to any cadet who stays involved.

“If the students stick to the program, keep involved and make an effort, then they will succeed,” said Mr. Nelson.

Group leadership encourages ca-

detts to participate in community service projects, which are excellent for college applications and resumes, said Cadet Barone.

Flight chiefs and squadron commanders closely monitor and record the work to log community service points.

The detachments recognize outstanding cadets. The drill team and community service achievers earn a high school letter and medals.

The medals are ranked similarly to the Air Force ribbon program. When cadets wear their racks of ribbons and insignias, the uniforms so closely mirror active-duty Air Force that cadets are sometimes saluted by servicemem-

bers.

“We get saluted by Airmen a lot,” said Barone. “Normally, we return the salute and explain who we are. They usually are a little embarrassed.”

Though slightly embarrassed from the encounters, Airmen pass without thinking about the time and effort required to earn the ribbons and rank. For these motivated teenagers, the rack on their uniform is a testament to their hard work and dedication.

The hop in their gait comes from the bright future. Their overall success can only be from learning by example from the East Anglia military community, Airmen volunteers and their zealous flight (soon to be group) commander. ■



Courtesy photo

The RAF Lakenheath Junior ROTC detachment color guard performs at the European Drill Competition in Bitburg, Germany, March 25. The team placed second out of the attending schools.

Bataan Death March remembered

Valdosta State ROTC cadets march 26.2 miles in honor American, Filipino troops

By 1st Lt. Dustin Hart

347th Rescue Wing Public Affairs, Moody Air Force Base, Ga.

Before the sun rose over the New Mexico desert March 26, more than 3,500 people gathered at the White Sands Missile Range with one mission: to push their bodies to the limit while trekking 26.2 miles over the range's harsh terrain.

For five Valdosta State University Air Force ROTC Detachment 172 cadets, the treacherous journey was the least they could do to honor past heroes.

The cadets competed for the second consecutive year in the annual Bataan Memorial Death March, which honors the sacrifices made by thousands of American and Filipino troops in April 1942. Following months of ferocious fighting in the austere, disease-infested Bataan Peninsula, more than 70,000 Allied troops were surrendered to the Japanese military.

Following the surrender, the group was forced to travel more than 60 miles north to a prisoner of war camp. During the one-week march, approximately 10,000 soldiers died. Many others died while held in captivity.

"To be there and see the opening ceremony (where they announce the survivors present and those who died in the past year), it makes you want to cry," said Cadet Daniel Fischer, a co-captain for this year's team. "You also get to see the survivors throughout the course encouraging you. By mile 12, you are tired, but these guys marched more than 60 miles in much worse conditions."



Courtesy photo

Cadets Daniel Fischer (center) and Robert Meeks (right), Air Force ROTC cadets at Valdosta State University, struggle up a hill nearing the half-way point of the 26.2-mile Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, N.M. A five-man team from the ROTC detachment finished the march in less than eight hours and placed seventh out of 16 ROTC teams in the team-heavy category, which required participants to wear full military uniform and carry a 35-pound ruck-sack.

Honoring the surviving heroes was the common thread which inspired the cadets to keep marching.

"These guys went through one of the toughest events I have ever heard of," said Cadet Alex Early. "This is the least I could do to honor their service."

The five-man team competed in the military heavy category, which required them to complete the march in full Battle Dress Uniform, including combat boots, while carrying a minimum 35-pound ruck sack.

The cadets faced a course which wound more than 26 miles around the White Sands range, mixing a

variety of terrains from asphalt to shin-deep sand with elevation changes from 4,100 to a peak of more than 5,300 feet.

"The physical pain climaxed at mile 11," Cadet Fischer said. "After that it was all mental and whether you had the will to finish what you started. Even if you are the biggest marathon stud, if you are not strong enough to help your teammates finish, it doesn't matter."

The cadets agreed the course's toughest challenge was the "Sand Pit." The approximate mile-long patch of ankle- and shin-deep sand awaited the participants after mile 20.

“I was literally pulled through it by Cadet Fischer,” said Cadet Taylor Poole. “It was mentally challenging but you just have to keep pushing.”

“People who have marched before say the first half is the first 20 miles,” Cadet Fischer added. “The last six miles really tests and deceives you.”

This is the second year a group of VSU cadets competed in the march. Last year, the cadets formed two teams and eight of the 10 participants finished the race, including Cadet Fischer and Cadet Robert Meeks.

The two cadets, who served as this year’s co-captains, used this experience to better the team’s performance.

This year’s team finished the trek in 7 hours and 55 minutes, beating last year’s time by more than 30

minutes. The improved time led to a seventh-place finish out of 16 ROTC teams in the heavy category.

To prepare for this year’s event, the cadets used a training regiment similar to that used by marathon runners.

“We would start with two to three-mile marches and ramp up to the 11-mile marches,” Cadet Fischer said.

“The most important thing was to spend the time being on your feet to get them conditioned for the event.”

The team would also meet early on the weekends to do long marches around Valdosta.

“When we trained on the weekends, it was me and the most motivated group of guys in our detachment,” said Cadet Meeks.

“Their dedication made it that much easier to roll out of bed on Saturday

and devote my morning to a long march.”

Following this year’s improved performance, the group hopes the march will become a cadet tradition.

“If you had asked me at mile 20 whether I wanted to do this again, I would have told you no,” said Cadet Early. “As soon as we crossed the finish line, however, I knew I would come back and do it again.”

This type of motivation and dedication to a cause is hard to explain to the cadet’s colleagues, said Cadet Fischer.

“We try to explain it, but when it’s all said and done, most are not going to understand,” he said. “But if I can do this for 26 miles, why should I just sit on the couch? I need to go out there and show these heroes the respect they deserve.” ■

Final Issue



The May issue of the United States Air Force Leader will be the last issue of the current school year. To submit an article for upcoming issues this fall, e-mail: leader@maxwell.af.mil. Some of the requirements for publication include:

- Photos should be at least 200 dpi at 5x7 inches.
- Photos should show as much action as possible, be in focus, and have complete facial recognition of the highlighted individual(s).
- Photos should include name, unit and brief description of action highlighted.
- Articles submissions should highlight news events and achievements in the AFOATS, ROTC, JROTC and OTS training.
- Articles should focus on one event or concept.



ALI BASE, Iraq -- Airman 1st Class Wednesday Brodenburger, 822nd Security Forces Squadron completes a pre-dawn patrol near one of the interior perimeter fences here. Members of the 822nd SFS, supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, are beginning to return home after serving more than five months here. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Robert Grande)

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