FALL 2021: STARTING THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR STRONG

FROM THE PROFESSOR OF MILITARY SCIENCE

Written by Lieutenant Colonel Knieriem

Greetings,

The school year started with a bang and continues to move along at a steady pace with many great training events and numerous activities. In late August, our MS4 leadership set conditions for the Three Rivers Battalion (TRB) by refining our mission statement and assisted in the development of our Lines of Effort for the academic year.

TRB welcomed 64 new students to our formation during our annual TRB Orientation Ceremony. The cadre and Cadet Leadership did an incredible job in-processing, issuing equipment, and executing drill and ceremony activities ensuring our future Cadets were ready for their first year. Following the orientation, we welcomed three new 2LT into the Army. Congratulations again to 2LT Pasek, 2LT Counihan, and 2LT Pecoraro. We ended the day supporting and honoring CPT Erick Foster, one of TRB’s fallen heroes who was killed in action in Iraq in 2007. Members of the Team Foster organization led by TRB alumni MAJ Nick Liermann biked 100 miles from Oil City, PA, (Erick’s hometown) to the University of Pittsburgh in the second annual “Oil to Iron Ride.” Team Foster riders arrived at the Cathedral of Learning front lawn at the University of Pittsburgh while we welcomed the riders as they crossed the finish line following their grueling 100-mile trek.

Our Cadre and MS4s have continued to plan, prepare and execute numerous training events and activities that are crucial to individual and collective leadership development. This semester alone, TRB executed two leadership labs consisting of Land Navigation, Basic Rifle Marksmanship, TC3, and communications familiarity, all in preparation for our Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX) at Fort Indiantown Gap.

On top of this aggressive glide path, the MS4 class executed a very well-planned and organized Staff Ride at Gettysburg. Our team of Cadets raised over $15K in support of our annual Dining-In during our first annual and very successful “TRB Hallo-5K run.” Our Color Guard team continues to support numerous local community and universities events. Our Ranger Challenge team performed admirably, taking home 14th out of 48th place. Many Cadets participated in the Pittsburgh Tuff Mudder and another Team Foster event called the Pittsburgh Ruff Ride. Our TRB Army 10 Miler Team competed virtually this year.

And finally, the Cadre and I could not be prouder of our MS4 class as they have achieved the highest overall Order of Merit Scores (OMS) in 2nd SROTC Bde. This year’s MS4 class had 8 Cadets ranked in the top 10% in the nation with an overall 17 Distinguished Military Graduates. TRB had 56 MS4s that have currently accessed; of which, 98% of their class received their component of choice.
My preparation for Cadet Summer Training was hasty. In those days trivial worries filled my mind and directed my entire energy into trivial pursuits such as cutting off the tags of my t-shirts to improve comfort and thoroughly washing my equipment (which would later become filthy in the field). The journey to Fort Knox was surreal. I traveled with some cadets from our program, caught glimpses of them throughout training, but only saw them as changed individuals on the journey back home.

My experience at CST can be roughly divided into three phases: quarantine, garrison, and the field. The first two were filled with ennui and anxiety. We stood around a lot and walked a lot. (One of the most pleasant aspects was the excellent breakfast — scrambled eggs, bacon, oatmeal, biscuits with gravy, yogurt, and fruit. For those epicures going to Fort Knox next summer, you will not be disappointed.) We did things that you might expect us to have done. We shot, we rappelled, we marched, we navigated, and we sucked in tear gas.

Then we went to the field. Each day we woke to a black, shadowy forest. The forest woke to the creeping hazy sunrise from eastwards. The sun would set the air ablaze with sultry summer heat. The heat permeated every aspect of existence. At the end of each day, we suffered in the balmy twilight, hoping that the platoon leader was competent enough to send us to sleep soon. At night my dreams would be cut short by the pop of blanks from the simulated enemy, OPFOR.

Those last few days back at the barracks were hazy and slow- we were in the doldrums. With newfound freedom, we journeyed to the PX to consume soda, chips, and candy. We cleaned the barracks several times over, and the next day we graduated.

Back home I began my recovery. I wondered about many things then. Have I changed? In what ways? How have others changed? How did conditions arrive such that thousands of cadets suffered through the same experience that summer? Many of these questions I have answered, many I have not. What I can say is that what was once uncertain and undefined has now become inevitable, and very near. Next year, on one summer day, I will become a Second Lieutenant (Edited by the OIC).
The first station was an introduction to Drill and Ceremony, as well as Army customs and courtesies. At the second station, cadets were issued uniforms and taught basic uniform standards from Army regulations. Finally, at the third station, Mr. Zito had cadets complete paperwork to officially become part of the TRB.

Following a short lunch break, the cadets started to learn the Army physical readiness training exercises. Unfortunately, it was cut short by a rainstorm, but that didn’t stop the team captains from pitching clubs like Color Guard and the Ruck Club. Nor did it stop our motivated MSIs, who happily signed up for various activities while the rain was still pouring.

This year, we can proudly say that we had a near-record amount of MSI’s signup to try out for the Ranger Challenge team. I can personally say it was a great experience for the MSIs. We learned the basics and got to meet the upperclassmen, who showed themselves to be great leaders with good character. All the MSIs left excited to start this new chapter.
The Three Rivers Battalion conducted land navigation training in Greensburg, PA on September 11th. It was the first time all cadets in the battalion came together for training in the 2021-2022 school year.

Land navigation tests cadets’ abilities in map reading and using a compass to find given points. Prior to lab, cadets attended classes to learn the fundamentals of land navigation that they could apply once on the course.

MSI and II cadets trained in small groups to practice and gain confidence in their skills; MSIII cadets were able to go out on their own for the first time to build on previous training. Each individual or team was given a map, a compass, a protractor, and a list of five points. Cadets had five hours to plot their points, come up with a route plan, and find as many of their points as possible. All cadets were able to find ways to improve their skills by completing the course.

Following a productive morning of training, MSI and II cadets participated in a tug-of-war tournament to help get to know other cadets in the battalion and build esprit de corps. It offered cadets a chance to let loose following a long day.

The land navigation lab was the first event where cadets were able to go out into the field this school year. It was a great introduction to the training that cadets will complete as they prepare to become officers.

On September 23rd, cadets executed the Combat Water Survival Test (CWST). For a cadet to pass, they are required to endure four different swimming events that test their ability to survive in water along with their determination and courage.

To start, a cadet must perform a ten-minute tread, showing they can swim without assistance. After that, the cadet completes a 15-meter swim with equipment and a weapon.

Following this event is the three-meter drop and pool exit. The cadet is required to jump into the pool from the three-meter diving board blindfolded, keeping their weapon above their head. Even though this is a swimming test, this event is to test the cadets’ courage and trust just as much as their ability to swim. The final event for the cadet is the equipment removal, where cadets must submerge themselves and ditch a weapon and vest before coming up for air.

All cadets must complete the CWST to commission. As a future leader, a cadet needs to be able to overcome all fears, and still be able to lead others no matter the scenario.

Cadets within the Three Rivers Battalion did a great job both with planning and execution of this event. Great work to everyone, and we will see you at the next one in the spring!
FALL FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE
Written by CDT Roland Eberhard (MSIV)

From September 25th to 27th, cadets conducted an FTX consisting of squad tactics classes, a Field Leaders Reaction Course, a rappel tower course, hand grenade qualification, and M4 rifle familiarization and qualification. This weekend furthered the skills and knowledge of all cadets and helped prepare MSIIIs and training MSIVs for Cadet Summer Training 2022.

The FTX began on September 25th with classes on tactical movement and battle drills. With finger guns in hand, cadets took the first steps in their tactics training. Later, cadets boarded buses to head to Fort Indiantown Gap, arriving ready to train the next day.

On Sunday, cadets refined the land navigation skills that they developed at our land navigation lab. The course was more challenging, so cadets needed to have the utmost faith in their land navigation ability. Then, cadets were split into 2 groups, alternating between the hand grenade and Field Leaders Reaction courses. The FLRC was a series of team-building exercises focused on strategy and leadership. The hand grenade course simulated multiple combat scenarios exploring the many ways grenades can be used. Finally, MSIII and training MSIVs were assigned M4 rifles to clean and get accustomed to before Monday’s M4 qualification.

On Monday, MSIIIs and training MSIVs went to the rifle range while MSIs and MSIIs completed the rappel tower course. The rappel tower challenged cadets’ fear of heights, placing them at the top of a 64 ft tower and giving them the tools needed to get down in one piece. Simultaneously, those at the range zeroed their M4s before completing qualification, aiming to hit at least 23 targets to pass the 40 target test.

With the range completed and rifles returned, all cadets reconvened for an awards ceremony celebrating MSIVs who earned the Recondo badge, which indicates receiving top marks at CST, and cadets who stood out during the weekend. Following congratulatory and motivating remarks from LTC Knieriem, TRB headed home, ending a three-day weekend that educated and challenged cadets. The fall FTX was a strong success for the Three Rivers Battalion, and we are excited to continue building on the training throughout the year.
OTHER EVENTS

THE ACFT
Written by CDT Alex Ganten (MSIII)
On the 12th and 13th of October, cadets from the Three Rivers Battalion conducted a diagnostic Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT). This test consists of six events: the hex-bar deadlift, hand-release push-ups, the standing power throw, the sprint-drag-carry, the leg tuck, and a two-mile run. The highest scoring cadet in TRB for this ACFT was CDT David Rager, who scored 593 out of a maximum of 600 points. The ACFT helped the battalion assess its level of fitness and realize where it needed to improve. However, it also gave cadets the chance to demonstrate the work they've put into their physical fitness.

COLOR GUARD
Written by CDT William Guilot (MSIII)
The Three Rivers Battalion Color Guard Team has been representing our Battalion through appearances at various functions throughout the Pittsburgh area. These events have ranged from graduation ceremonies to World War 2 honor ceremonies and Pitt football games. At Washington and Jefferson University, cadets participated in an event that honored alumni who have fallen in the line of duty. The TRB Color Guard has provided cadets not only with an opportunity to practice their Drill and Ceremony, but also to make an impact on the lives of those being recognized in the ceremonies they participate in.

CMU CADETS MEET WITH LTC STEVEN CURTIS
Written by CDT Curtis Lee (MSIII)
On October 19th, eight Carnegie Mellon cadets had a sit-down discussion with Lieutenant Colonel Steven Curtis, CMU's military fellow for 2021-22. In this discussion, the cadets learned about the LTC’s experiences as a Military Intelligence officer with a branch detail in Infantry. This was followed by a back and forth question and answer session, where the cadets were able to gain perspective on several contemporary military topics. The meeting was a great opportunity for CMU cadets to build relationships on campus and develop their knowledge further. Cadets are looking forward to meeting with LTC Curtis again soon.
There is no such thing as a leader without a fantastic team behind them. If there is one thing I have learned thus far, it is that a team that communicates effectively with trust and confidence is a team I would not want to mess with. There are times when a leader is not always going to have that right answer, it is in these times where it takes humility to ask for help. Often asking for help is seen as a weakness, but in reality, asking for help is quite the opposite. It shows you trust that group to get the job done and involves a lot of keeping tally. “Maintaining accountability” means my company First Sergeants and I need to know where everyone is at all times. If a cadet goes to the hospital, or even just home for the weekend, we need to know. For the 2021-2022 academic year, I have been entrusted to be the CSM for TRB. I am responsible for the welfare of the 215 cadets that make up TRB. Additionally, I observe and oversee training plans and schedules to ensure they are in line with Army doctrine and Cadre’s specifications. Other important facets of being CSM include maintaining discipline, customs and courtesies, and the Battalion standards for fitness.

Over this most recent semester, I have witnessed cadet platoon leaders and platoon sergeants rise to the occasion every day at PT, eager to soak up as much knowledge as they can from their OTMs and peers. I have seen squad leaders effectively communicate with their squads during FLRC at FTX. With “normal” starting to look more “normal”, cadets have learned what it means to trust one another and to trust their battle buddies. The army is a team sport and this past semester, we have all learned what it means to be a team.

“Leadership is solving problems. The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.” - Colin Powell

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I am tremendously proud of every cadet in TRB. As outlined in this newsletter, they have all worked so hard this year on many events. Throughout everything accomplished, the biggest thing I have been learning is the importance of numbers. Numbers are important. With a battalion as massive as Three Rivers, maintaining accountability requires immense attention to detail and involves a lot of keeping tally. “Maintaining accountability” means my company First Sergeants and I need to know where everyone is at all times. If a cadet goes to the hospital, or even just home for the weekend, we need to know.

Due to this, I have learned the importance of not assuming anything. It is very easy to just assume we have everyone accounted for and that everyone is where they were an hour ago, but that is often not the case. Accounting for everyone in the battalion requires continuous attention to detail and the ability to organize information.

ARSENAL OF DEMOCRACY!

Although it is not one of the seven Army core values, humility is an essential leadership value that drives success in organizations. People who lack humility will deteriorate an organization through their arrogance, selfishness, and stubbornness. It is human nature for people to look out for their own interests, yet St. Paul challenges people to put others first and seek out their interests as well. ADP 6-22 states that “A leader with the right level of humility is a willing learner, maintains accurate self-awareness, and seeks out others’ input and feedback.” Finding the right level of humility is essential to becoming a good leader.

As the XO, I am responsible for coordinating and directing the staff’s efforts to meet the commander’s intent. It is nearly impossible to succeed without a determined and successful staff. Empowering my peers and subordinates requires humility and trust. From planning to preparation to execution of operations, TRB’s battalion staff works as one cohesive unit to achieve success.

I challenge the Three Rivers Battalion’s cadets to reassess how they are putting the interest of others before themselves and contributing to the greater good. Be a good person, be humble, and inspire those around you to do the same through your words and actions.

**CONTACT US**

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**UPCOMING SCHEDULE**

- **January 7, 2022:** Winter Commissioning
- **January 10, 2022:** Spring Semester Begins
- **April 7-10, 2022:** Spring FTX
- **May 20, 2022:** Spring Commissioning