

# The MILLINI



A publication from  
**THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC**



University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Department of Military Science

## Message from the Professor of Military Science

*By LTC Randall M. Smith*

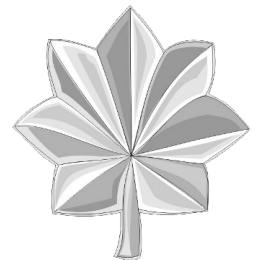
Greetings to the friends, family and members of Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion. I want to welcome back all our returning Cadets and especially welcome the newest team members. You should be proud of your decision to better yourself and to serve your country. Based on the Cadet and Cadre experiences over the past year and this past summer, there are some exciting changes being made to how we train our future leaders. You will see these changes in the next editions of The Millini showing our Field Training Exercise and Leadership Labs.

This past summer all the military Cadre attended training at Fort Knox. This proved critical as Major General Hughes made drastic changes to Advanced Camp. This experience will allow us to better train our Cadets to succeed at camp, achieve their goals in commissioning, and be better officers. 19 Cadets completed Advanced Camp this summer. Camp was a stressful, demanding 31 days with 18 of them being spent living and operating in the field. Despite the demands and bug bites, they came back to campus better leaders and motivated to lead the battalion.

We had 11 Cadets attend Cadet Troop Leadership Training (CTLT). They spent almost a month training with a serving lieutenant at operational units gaining real life experience. **Cadet Alex Kim** and **Cadet Hannah Wright** participated in the Cultural Understanding and Leadership Program (CULP) getting to travel to Guatemala and Indonesia respectively. **Cadet Ben Guo** earned the opportunity to participate in Project Go, a language study with national security implications. Eight of our Cadets completed Basic Camp this summer. **Cadets Iraklis Analitis, W. Mason Potts, Daniel Lee, and Vinay Prabhakar** attended Basic Training and Infantry Advanced Individual Training this summer as part of being a Cadet in the Illinois National Guard. **Cadets Sushruth Pattekar, Samuel Chung and Michael Hill** earned the coveted Airborne Wings and **Cadet Corey Maisch** earned Air Assault Wings this summer. Somewhere during all this training the Cadets worked jobs and took classes in order to achieve their goals of graduating and becoming lieutenants.

As you read this our school year is well under way. Our Cadets are training hard and improving themselves as students, leaders, and citizens. They voluntarily give up a lot of their own time to train, take part in physically demanding events like Ranger Challenge, raise money, conduct blood drives, and so much more. Thank you for the support you provide the Cadets and this program. The Cadre remain dedicated in ensuring our Cadets earn a degree and then a commission in the Army if that is their goal. We remain focused on Being a Learning Organization; Getting Better Every Day; and Never Quitting.

Illini!



## Message from the Senior Military Instructor

*By MSG Bruce Hutcherson*

First I would like welcome all new cadets to the Fighting Illini AROTC program. You've made a monumental decision to embark on an adventure that will potentially, take you out of your comfort zone. To our returning cadets, you are one step closer to fulfilling your quest to become a commissioned officer in the greatest fighting force known to mankind. This will be a challenging, but rewarding experience.

We begin the semester with our Cadet Orientation Program (COP), introducing most of our newest members to the unit. Its main goal is for cadets to become familiar with the campus and receive a better understanding of what is expectation of them in AROTC. COP sets the foundation of your potential career with in the military. Intertwined with COP, MS-IIIs will receive instruction from the Cadre on the different levels of leadership that they will have the opportunity to excel in throughout the school year. This will be the first year that we conduct the small unit training for incoming MS-IIIs. I believe it will beneficial in the development of our future officer that will only increase their level of preparedness.

The first week of September presents the opportunity for a few of our MS-IVs to earn the German Armed Forces Badge for Military Proficiency (GAFBMP). I invited the Air Force cadets to compete as well, in which some of their cadets received a badge. I'm not one to be out done, so start preparing none for the competition that will take place toward the beginning of next school year, its coming!

The third week of September is always a joyous period of the fall semester. Our Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX) was conducted at magnificent recreational facilities provided by Camp Atterbury, IN. Last year, our Cadets navigated through one of the toughest land navigation course on Camp Atterbury, where the weather conditions were favorable. They also negotiated through the Field Leader Reactionary Course (FLRC), road marches, and Basic Rifle Marksmanship ranges. For the individual who never fired an M-4/M-16 rifle before, they not only fired it, but learned how to accurately engage targets to employing them with live ammunition.

Lastly, every experience is an opportunity to develop something that you never knew that you had. This program will only make you better prepared competent leader, but mostly a better person. I look forward to assisting you in becoming both.

Air Assault!!!



# ARMY ROTC



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Inside this issue:

Message from the Professor of Military Science	1
Message from the Senior Military instructor	2
Basic Camp Perspective	4
Fighting Illini Cadets Complete Advanced Camp	5–6
WHINSEC Training Opportunity	7
CULP Mission to Kediri Village, Indonesia	8
Study Abroad in Switzerland	9
The Store	10
Fighting Illini Cadets Experience Cadet Troop Leadership Training	11-12
Three Cadets Experience Airborne School	13-15
Air Assault School	16
Fall Preview	17
Update on Armory Renovations	18
Alumni Update	19-21

*The Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion*

*Forging Strong Leaders Since 1868*

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# Summer Training Highlights

## My First Experience at Fort Knox: Basic Camp Perspective

*By Cadet Maritza Palafox*

Basic Camp serves as an intense four-week introduction to Army life and leadership training of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps. The main purpose of basic camp is to qualify Cadets for entry into the Senior ROTC program; it fulfills all basic course requirements of Military Science I and II year. Basic Camp is for Cadets to gain an introductory experience into what the Army is about and to challenge the Cadet both physically and mentally. **Cadet Palafox** wrote about her experience at Fort Knox Below:



**Cadet Palafox** (far left) poses for the camera ready to start her day surrounded by friends who made her experience special.

During the beginning of my spring semester, I vividly remember when Captain Elkins came into my Military Science class to quickly brief the MS-1 Cadets about Cadet Summer Training and how we should all try to go this summer. When I heard about this opportunity, I did not hesitate to email our Professor Military Science Instructor about how interested I was in going. **Cadets Zamora and Pattekar** would tell me about their Basic Camp experiences and how they learned a lot from their month of training. These two Cadets are leaders that I greatly look up to and I know that I wanted to obtain the knowledge that they learned from their summer training.

When I entered Fort Knox, I recall feeling nervous and excited all at once. I told myself that I was going to go into training with an open mind, complete every task that is thrown at me, and never give up. I knew that this was going to be a challenging time because this was my first time ever leaving home for a full month. As the first week went by, I met many people who had just graduated High School, people from other countries, and people who were much older than I was. I grew close with my Battle Buddy, Cadet Flores. She and I were constantly mistaken for one another for the fact that we were very similar in appearance. As much as that made us laugh, her and I knew that we were very different in personality. I can honestly say that the females in my platoon kept me sane from the constant yelling and "half-right" faces. Cadet Flores and I would learn and motivate each other in every task that was given to us. She struggled a lot in Physical Training and Rucking- and although I struggled as well, I had to stay strong in order to show her that every challenge was possible. Every morning the females would go down the barracks and help the other females in other platoons; which started off the day very motivated. I admired the driven attitude and how they would not look down upon your weaknesses but helped you improve instead. There were days that we stayed up doing pushups, reciting the cadet and soldier's creed, and helping each other fix our rucksacks.

I learned about teamwork and how the battle buddy system is really an important factor for every Cadet/Soldier. It was an honor being one of the top females in my platoon, but I can honestly say that my motivation grew from interacting with the males and females in the Company. This motivation made Basic Camp the best experience even-including getting gassed, being punished by the Drill Sergeants, and heat rashes. Fort Knox was definitely a bittersweet experience, and I cannot wait to feel that once again when I return for Advanced Camp.

# Summer Training Highlights

## Fighting Illini Cadets Complete Advanced Camp By MS-IV Cadets; Edited by Cadet Christopher Kerasotes

Advanced Camp is required by Cadet Command for every Cadet to complete before they are allowed to Commission. This is typically done the summer before Senior year. Advanced Camp is a month long experience of being graded by Cadre and assessed by peer review. Cadets also complete training such as First Aid, Rifle shooting, Rucking, and a 12- day field exercise. Below **Cadets Andreas Silbermann , Craig Muncaster, Andrew Jacobs, Alex Kim, and Isaac Choi** tell a unique story from Advanced Camp.

### Andreas Silbermann—My Growth as a Leader

This past summer at advanced camp was my first long term military training experience. I became close with all the cadets within my platoon and squad throughout the difficult training we endured. During the 30 days at camp, I learned more about military tactics through multi day Field Training Exercises, Artillery “call for fire” classes, and land navigation techniques. One of the more memorable activities I did was go through a gas chamber, one of the required events to graduate camp, since it was my first time going through a gas chamber to gain confidence with my protective mask.

I had a very successful camp experience ranking among the top fourth out of my peers. I excelled in all areas during camp and especially at physical fitness and marksmanship. Living outside in less than favorable conditions pushed me close to my limits. This test of leadership under pressure proved I could get through anything.

Overall, the entire experience helped me better understand who I am and how far I am able to push myself. I came out more confident in my leading abilities and identified my strengths and weaknesses I will have a chance to improve on over this next year before graduating.

### CDT Craig Muncaster—AAR Bonding Experience

My favorite part of the whole experience was the men and women who went through it with me. My platoon was composed of some of the greatest people I have ever had the honor of knowing, and I know they will all go on to be excellent leaders in the United States Army. We all worked together to achieve every mission, and when one person failed, we all failed.

During one particular mission we were defending a village and one of our squads managed to discover the enemy platoon’s rally point. The squad then proceeded to do the unthinkable and scattered the enemy platoon through a combination of surprise and effective squad level tactics. However, as anyone who is in the military knows, taking on a platoon with a squad is frowned upon as it has a high chance of failure. So even though they succeeded they were severely reprimanded in the AAR of the mission. The rest of us in the platoon did not silently sit by and let them be called out, we all stepped up and banded together to defend the squad in question. While we understood the Squad’s decision was not the most tactically sound, they displayed a great level of teamwork and aggressiveness that deserved some level of recognition.



**Cadet Muncaster** (back row second to the left) takes one final photo with his squad before they depart back home.

# Summer Training Highlights

## Fighting Illini Cadets Complete Advanced Camp (Continued)

### Andrew Jacobs—Successful Camp experience

Advanced Camp, while challenging, was one of the best experiences I have had as a Cadet. The atmosphere at camp gave me an exposure to the many intangibles that normally one would not be exposed to back at their respective university. Factors such as living in barracks and working with peers you have never met before allowed me to sharpen my skills as both a leader and a follower. On top of this, being able to be in so many leadership roles allowed me to train to standard, constantly improve, and learn from others. At camp we are all “thrown in the deep end”, we are made uncomfortable, but that is the purpose. By listening to my Cadre, taking my training seriously, and by being willingly and able to learn from my mistakes and those of others, I could finish in the top 15% of my cohort. I owe this completely to my Cadre and my training regiment here at the University of Illinois.

### Alex Kim— An Exercise In Leadership

My first mission as a platoon leader during Advanced Camp was a simple movement to contact mission. I decided the most reasonable course of action was to send a nine-man squad out to combat a three-man team (keeping in mind the army standard of the three-to-one ratio) with a weapons team as back up. However, upon briefing my plan to our Observer/Trainer/Controller, he told me that my plan was a no go. Having only a third of our platoon go on this mission would take away training value from the rest of the platoon.

So, I called in all the squad leaders and told them our new requirement. Having used up most of my time in planning the original concept, I decided to lean on my squad leaders to help me come up with a plan. This ensured that whatever plan we would come up with, they would have just as good of an understanding as I did. So when it came time to execute, I could trust them to know what to do. I laid out an initial plan, and the squad leaders were all eager to provide me suggestions and feedback, taking the time to fill in gaps that I hadn't considered. There was one point where one of the squad leaders suggested using phase lines, and I asked him three times to clarify what he meant because I was unfamiliar with it. Despite me being difficult, he was incredibly patient in his explaining to me, and the concept ended up being incorporated into the final plan. What surprised me most about the planning process was that same squad leader came up to me later and told me how much he enjoyed working with me, and how he hoped that we'd get more opportunities to work together. What I came to realize later was that the cooperation of my teammates during my time as platoon leader was simply a payoff of an investment that I had unknowingly been making since the beginning of camp.

### CDT Isaac Choi—Reaction to Day 1

Immediately upon our arrival to camp, we were placed into the roles of Platoon Leader, Platoon Sergeant, Squad Leader, Team Leader, or a Squad Member, and would be assessed by the Cadre in our ability to plan, rehearse, and execute missions. Initially, I thought it would be as simple as directing orders and waiting for it to happen since we were all senior cadets. However, it was the complete opposite. I was faced with difficult challenges that most definitely tested my leadership skills on a whole new level. Some Cadets were motivated, some were always complaining, some didn't want to follow orders, and others didn't even know very much. Nonetheless, it was a challenging task being forced into a leadership position such as Platoon Sergeant or Platoon Leader while being expected to lead despite the lack of motivation or experience amongst all the cadets. The most important lesson for me was no amount of individual accomplishment or experience can outweigh working cohesively as a team. As a future leader, I must cater my leadership style in a way that brings everybody together to accomplish the mission and that I am ultimately responsible for my platoon's motivation, successes, and failures.

# Summer Training Highlights

## WHINSEC Training Opportunity

*By Cadet Brian Bell*



**Cadet Bell** and a Colombian cadet practice Tactical Combat Casualty Care while others provide security in a simulation room.

Before shipping off to Advanced Camp this last summer, I had the opportunity to spend one month in Fort Benning, GA as a participant at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC) Cadet Leader Development course. I was one of four US Army ROTC cadets to participate in this program; alongside us were over 110 Columbian cadets, nine Peruvian cadets, and 10 cadets from the Dominican Republic. This course was completely in Spanish and covered both U.S. Army classroom learning and tactical training. The goal of this program was to expose these foreign cadets to US Army leadership styles, ideals, and methodologies. Along with building positive relationships between the future officers from all four countries.

During my time at Fort Benning, we completed a variety of events and activities that made us better soldiers and leaders. These were taught and led by a group of highly qualified Cadre from the USA, Chile, Columbia, El Salvador, and Panama. On the classroom side, some of the items we went over included planning operation orders, the Army Troop Leading Procedures, the U.S. Governmental system, human rights, rules of engagement, and the Army Values. The tactical events included a Field Leader's Reaction Course, room clearing drills, individual movement techniques, tactical combat casualty care, both live-fire ranges and electronic shooting simulators with the M4 rifle, land navigation, and several others. Just about all of the topics we covered were topics required in order to succeed during my following month at Advanced Camp—so WHINSEC worked as a great refresher!

Comparing the differences in how cadets from each country's military operated was definitely a new experience for me. At first it was strange, but as we completed different events together the group quickly became a team. Although these foreign cadets were at WHINSEC to learn about the U.S. Army and how it functions, I can safely say that myself and the other three U.S. cadets definitely gained invaluable experience and learned a lot from the others there with us. WHINSEC is a program I would definitely recommend to any ROTC cadets with, at least, basic conversational Spanish skills.



WHINSEC cadets are tested on their map reading and land navigation skills.





## Summer Training Highlights

### CULP Mission to Kediri Village, Indonesia

*By Cadet Hannah Wright*

The Cultural Understanding Language Proficiency (CULP) program is an opportunity for a Cadet to spend an allocated amount of time immersed in foreign cultures learning more about how others around the world view the United States and, in the process, leaning more about themselves. This opportunity exposes cadets to everyday life in different cultures and intensifies language study. In turn, helps produce commissioned officers who possess the right blend of language and cultural skills to support global operations. **Cadet Hannah Wright** tells her story of the time she spent in Kediri Village, Indonesia:

Without a doubt the hospitality, kindness, and warmth displayed towards us in Indonesia was nothing shy of exceptional. From the moment we entered the first hotel, the U.S. Army personnel were treated with the utmost respect. For the second week of our CULP mission, we spent our time at Sekolah Tinggi Teknologi Angkatan Laut (STTAL) working in conjunction with Naval non-commissioned officers and officers. On 26 July 2017, the cadets from the U.S. Army ROTC program and the STTAL students visited Kediri Village, an English speaking village. To our understanding, Kediri Village was a place that Indonesians came to learn, improve, and perfect their English speaking ability. As soon as our boots hit the dirt, we were greeted by a large group of villagers with radiant smiles. After shaking their hands, mingling, and snapping what felt like millions of photos, the ROTC cadets and STTAL students broke off into small groups to speak



**Cadet Hannah Wright** strikes a pose for the camera surrounded by friends.

with the English learning villagers. Among many topics, we learned that the students would stay in the village from three to nine months, depending on their goals. What many of us found especially intriguing was that in order to “graduate” or pass their final exam, the English students are to visit Borobudur and maintain a conversation with a complete stranger who speaks English. This day was one of the most humbling and worthwhile experiences of my Army career thus far, with one memory sticking out in particular. As we were saying our goodbyes, one of the younger girls shook my hand and said “I will cherish this moment for the rest of my life.” That one sentence reminded me of the importance of sharing knowledge, learning about cultures other than your own, and most importantly, of kindness.



**Cadet Hannah Wright** stands with her new found Indonesian friends from Kediri Village.

# Summer Training Highlights

## Study Abroad in Switzerland

*By Cadet Cullen O'Connor; Edited by Cadet Christopher Kerasotes*



**Cadet Cullen O'Connor** stands overlooking the Swiss Alps.

During Summer Cadets get the opportunity to travel to various military bases and experience different military training such as airborne school or advanced camp. However this fall semester, **Cadet Cullen O'Connor**, is studying abroad in Switzerland as part of his degree requirements in Global Studies. While **Cadet O'Connor** may physically be away from our Fighting Illini Battalion he is making sure to stay emotionally connected as he shares his journey through the Alps. In **Cadet O'Connor's** words:

As part of my degree, I am required to spend at least one semester abroad, and I could choose from anywhere in the world. I chose to study in Geneva, Switzerland, for its outstanding international relations program. I am currently enrolled in courses that cover the fields of international security, international affairs, and international law. My

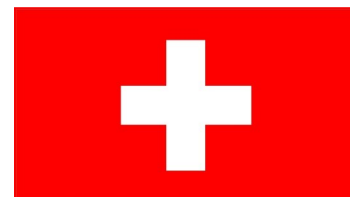
professors have great records and experience in their field of study, and provide excellent opportunities, such as giving me access to the 36th Session of the Human Rights Council at the United Nations here in Geneva, and preparing statements for NGOs to present. Small and diverse classes and phenomenal teachers have greatly influenced my desire to pursue a career in foreign affairs.

Longer weekends allow for a group of friends and I to visit somewhere new every four or five days. The central geography of Switzerland within Europe makes it a great place to start. So far I've experience fantastic places in several countries including the Lake Geneva region, Zermatt, Les Diablerets, the Interlaken area, Bern, Munich, and Chamonix. As a group, we spend the days climbing, hiking, and mountain biking, and skiing once it gets colder. Making it to the top of the tallest reachable peaks is the group favorite. We have many future trips planned out to discover much more of Europe.

With a new perspective of the world, I have learned and have grown more than I have ever anticipated, and I'll have much to bring back home from this experience. As great as my time is over in Europe, the Cadet Battalion is greatly missed, and I'm anxious to get back to Illinois.



**Cadet Cullen O'Connor** sits down for a break with one of his new friends while hiking through the Swiss Alps.



# THE STORE

“The Store” has been an ever-growing success among our alumni and supporters. A portion of the price (\$3-5) of each item will be allocated to supporting Cadet training, development, and related activities. All funding will be used for cadet activities.



If interested in purchasing any of these items, fill out an order form by going to the following website: [teshurt.com/uiucrotc](http://teshurt.com/uiucrotc) You will pay and receive your order straight from the vendor. If you have questions, please contact Eric Ashworth at [eashwort@illinois.edu](mailto:eashwort@illinois.edu).

# Summer Training Highlights

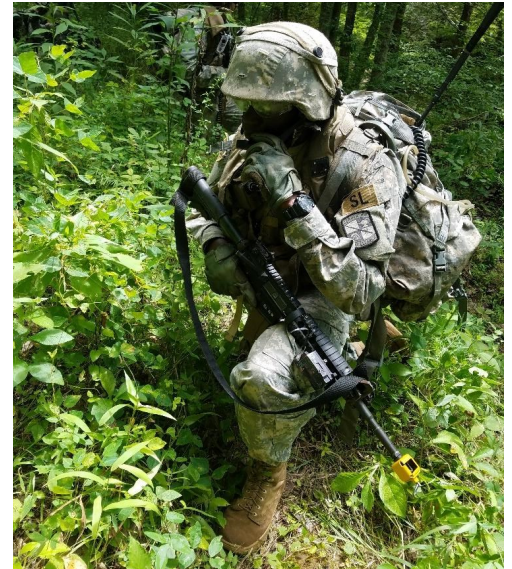
## Fighting Illini Cadets Experience Cadet Troop Leadership Training

*By Cadet Christopher Kerasotes*

Cadet Troop Leadership Training (CTLT) provides Cadets the opportunity to experience lieutenant level leadership positions in active-duty units for a 3-4 week duration. is an excellent way for Cadets to receive hands on experience in what their military career is going to be like after they graduate and commission. Below **Cadets Fidel Toto, Alejandro Nava, and Kurt Kuzur** share their amazing experience:

### CDT Fidel Toto—CTLT Reactions

I spent 52 days in both Fort Knox, Kentucky and Fort Polk, Louisiana for Cadet Summer Training and Cadet Leadership Training respectfully. My time in Fort Polk was where I gained the most knowledge of being a Platoon Leader. I worked with the 1-509th Infantry Airborne Delta Troop and received an in depth understanding of how a platoon functions and how a company synchronizes in order to be successful. I learned the importance of the relationship between the Platoon Leader and the platoon. The Platoon Leader affects the morale, productivity, and openness of the soldiers. I also got the chance to conduct a company sized inventory inspection and a .50 caliber range operation. In all, I am very fortunate I had the opportunity to meet the people I did this summer and will use my experiences in order to develop into a stronger leader for my soldiers.



**Cadet Fidel Toto** communicates the current situation over the radio.

### CDT Alejandro Nava—Learning from CTLT

I went to Fort Bragg, NC for my Cadet Troop Leader Training. I had the privilege of shadowing an Airborne Engineering Platoon Leader. After my MS-3 Advance Camp requirement I would not have minded ending my summer and going home. However, right after advanced camp I was to go to Fort Bragg to receive follow on training. Upon arriving I immediately discarded any feelings of wanting to go home as the next few weeks would be some of the most rewarding experiences of my life. I had an awesome time and had the opportunity to meet an great person, which was my roommate at Fort Bragg.



**Cadet Alejandro Nava** (on right) standing next to his roommate at Fort Bragg.

At Fort Bragg, I had the opportunity to see what an Engineering Support Platoon Leader does. I had the chance to conduct Preventive Maintenance Checks and Services (PMCS) on different equipment, listen to the planning process for Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) , and most importantly see the interaction between the NCOs and Officers. I would definitely recommend any cadet to go and have an amazing experience.

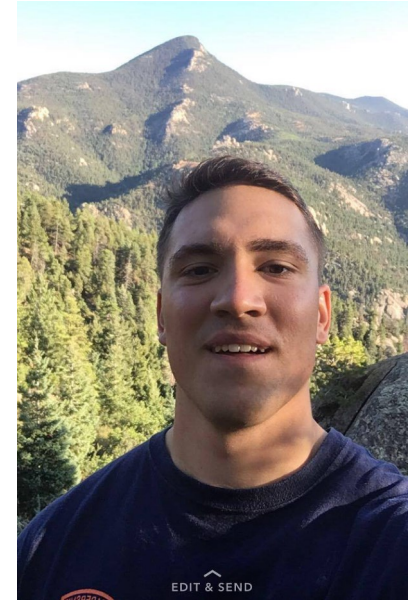
## Summer Training Highlights

### Fighting Illini Cadets partake in Cadet Troop Leadership Training (Continued)

#### CDT Kurt Kuzur— Working with the 2-1 Cavalry Battle Troop

Finishing up my time at Advanced Camp for the summer, I was able to attend CTLT in Fort Carson, CO. During my time in Colorado, I was fortunate enough to shadow Armor officer 1LT Matt Kozar and be a part of his squadron, 2-1 Cavalry Battle Troop. The unit was just coming off their National Training Center (NTC) rotation and about to begin their recovery operations when I arrived to begin my training. This was a great time for me to experience the administration aspect of the job for a platoon leader as it was a necessary process to ensure the unit equipment was maintained. In addition, I got to attend a squadron ball and also compete in a Raider Brigade Physical Training event which my troop persevered and won first place. These events allowed me to build a sense of camaraderie with the soldiers and allowed me to get to know them on a personal level. I realized the importance of getting to know your soldiers and looking out for their well-being.

During the end of my training, I was able to experience the first five tables of Stryker Gunnery with my squadron. This was the time where the unit was preparing their weapon systems and vehicles before they would head out and conduct further training. For myself, I was able to ride in the back of a Stryker vehicle for the first time and learned how to operate a remote weapon station to identify and engage on targets. I was also given the opportunity to help run a range for the Stryker vehicles during table V of gunnery. With all this training going on, CTLT also gave me the experience to enjoy Colorado. With my free time, I was able to ruck through the Garden of the Gods and enjoy the beautiful scenery at Red Rock. I was also able to climb the Manitou Incline with my platoon sergeant which was one of the scariest things in my life. All in all, CTLT was an amazing experience and has made even more excited to the many opportunities the Army creates.



**Cadet Kurt Kuzur** enjoying the Colorado scenery.



**Cadet Kurt Kuzur** takes one final photo with the 2-1 Cavalry Battle

# Summer Training Highlights

## Three Cadets Experience Airborne School

*By MS-IV Cadets; Edited By Cadet Christopher Kerasotes*

Becoming a paratrooper at Airborne school is a unique experience requiring special dedication and a desire to be challenged mentally and physically. It is a rare for an Army ROTC program to send more than one Cadet to this school. But this summer the Fighting Illini was able to send three Cadets to Fort Benning this past summer. This three-week course, also known as Basic Airborne Course, teaches Soldiers the techniques involved in parachuting from airplanes and landing safely. Cadets **Samuel Chung, Sushruth Pattekar, and Michael Hill** each share their own unique story:



**Cadet Samuel Chung** takes time to pose for the camera at Fort Benning, GA.

### **Cadet Samuel Chung —Mastering the Basics**

Sitting in a C-17 Globemaster in the air, my heart pumps hard and loud. As the emergency doors open, gas hisses out, clouding the view. All the previous two weeks of jumping, falling, and running is finally being put to the test. Jumping off of a two-foot platform and falling to the ground safely and successfully, my neck strained with pain as I make slight movements. Running everywhere, my legs get tougher so that when I hit the ground, it would be the ground that hurts. The actual jump from a perfectly good airplane after a grueling, sweaty, and hot two weeks is finally here. “Hook-up! Check static line! Check equipment!” The safety NCO yells various commands as I ponder about what I got myself into, and as soon as I know it, the green light turns on. People start

moving and jumping out the door. With no time to think, I jump and trust all of the training that Airborne School provided for me. Wind gushes past me as I free fall for a few seconds. My mind does not even comprehend what is going on because of this incredible and wild experience. My parachute opens up, and my harness securely slows my free fall. In an instant, everything becomes quiet. The view and feeling of being up at an altitude of 1200 feet is absolutely stunning, forever engrained in my memories.

This past summer, I had the opportunity to attend Airborne School at Ft. Benning. The first week of this school was Ground Week, where I learned the basics of how to jump out of an aircraft and conduct a safe parachute landing fall. It is not uncommon for soldiers to break bones while landing, so it was crucial that the basics became second-hand nature. The second week was Tower Week. During this week, I practiced the mass exit out of an aircraft with four people at a time. In real life, soldiers will not be able to take their time when jumping out due to the limited time the aircraft has before clearing the area. Also, I learned how to recover during emergency procedures, such as colliding with other paratroopers or the main parachute not deploying. The third and final week was Jump week. This was where all the training was finally put into play. I was able to successfully and safely complete five jumps out of C-17 and C-130 aircrafts. This school was by far the scariest and most amazing experience I have ever had in my life. I never pictured myself jumping out of airplanes by myself, parachuting down, and surviving. I definitely confronted and conquered my fear of heights and the potential injuries from poor landing. Army Airborne School gave me the confidence to face so much more than my fears and the memories to carry throughout my whole career.

# Summer Training Highlights

## Three Cadets Experience Airborne School (Continued)

### Cadet Sushruth Pattekar—Overcoming Fear

As I stood with my knees shaking and hand gripping the cord running from my parachute pack to the static line above 1200 feet above the ground in a rickety shaking C-130 transport plane, I wondered why I ever thought volunteering for Airborne School was ever even an idea that crossed my mind. Looking around the confined fuselage of plane, the sweaty faces and heavy breathing of the previously smug Recon Marines on the inboard side reassured me that I wasn't the only one regretting every life choice I had made that led up to this point in my life where I was about to jump out of a perfectly good airplane.

"30 SECONDS," yelled the jump master standing by what seemed to be the gate to another dimension which I would soon be sucked in to, as everyone fearfully echoed his warning. This was the point where I began debating if being a jump refusal really was that bad of an idea. Next thing I knew, just like the retro 70's Airborne ad repeatedly played in the harness shed, the red light near the exit door turned green as everyone's eyes popped out of their heads. At this moment, my mind went into autopilot, and two weeks of muscle memory training kicked in as I hobbled my way behind the rest of the paratrooper hopefuls towards the exit door, handed off my line to the Safety NCO, executed a 90 degree turn, took a step, and was sucked through what seemed like time and space in a confusing blur...and just like that, the greatest sense of calm and peace overwhelmed me as an undisturbed white canopy inflated above me, with little white cloud like canopies gently floating to the ground all around me. Truly, one of the pinnacle moments of my life which will forever be engrained in my memories.

And so began the final stage of the Basic Airborne Course, a three week Army school at Ft. Benning, GA which makes paratroopers; soldiers trained to leap from the sky to engage the enemy "behind, before, and above the foe's front line." Death from above.

These three weeks would be some of the most pivotal days of my life. I faced my most crippling phobia head on and conquered. I learned and picked up wisdom from several NCOs and officers in my "stick," including a Marine Corps special operations Captain. I learned much from and received awesome advice from a Sergeant First Class who had recently served as a platoon sergeant in a cavalry unit (he would be instrumental in my affirmation of Armor as my first branch choice). In addition, being airborne qualified allowed me to do Cadet Troop Leader Training with an Airborne engineering company at Ft. Bragg later in the summer, and even got to execute a sixth jump while there. I took part in the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne's Deployment Readiness Exercise where I took part and experienced airborne support engineering operations as part of the rapidly deployable Global Response Force. Hopefully I will continue to jump as a paratrooper upon commissioning with the 173<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Combat Team in Europe in my crosshairs.



Cadet Sushruth Pattekar (center) proudly shows off his wings after he graduates from Airborne School.

# Summer Training Highlights

## Three Cadets Experience Airborne School (Continued)

### Cadet Michael Hill —Reminiscing Air Borne School

This past summer, I enjoyed the wonderful opportunity of being able to attend the U.S. Army's Airborne School. Airborne School is a three week course split up into ground week, tower week, and jump week. In short, I would describe it as three weeks of hazing and five minutes of fun. However, those five minutes made it all worth it.

I arrived at Fort Benning on August 9 for in-processing. There in the holdover barracks, the Black Hats, which were our instructors, gave us the rundown of how things work, rules, and so-on. On August 12, we had the first test used to determine whether we would stay or get sent home; the PT test. A little advice for anyone hoping to go to Airborne: push-ups are graded very strictly. You must hit the ground with your chest for every repetition for it to count, otherwise the Black Hat grading you will say "41, 41, 41, 41" and you will lose strength and fail. It was tough seeing Cadets getting kicked out for failing push-ups because for us, getting a slot for Airborne is a gift. NCOs and officers will often get recycled rather than sent home. After completing the Army Physical Fitness Test, ground week had officially begun. That same day, we ran around in the intense Georgia heat singing the Airborne cadences and jumping out of mock doors designed to be similar to the C-130 and C-17. The rest of the week consisted physical training in the mornings and training which included jumping from 34-foot towers and practicing how to land.

As for PT, the Black Hats had us run five miles on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, while doing strength training on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is important to sing cadence very loudly and not fall behind on the runs. If the Command Sergeant Major saw anything he did not like, he would steal your soul (dog tags) and drop you from the course. Do not upset the Command Sergeant Major.

Tower week consisted of the same drills seen in ground week in addition to more apparatuses that involved developed technique as well as ones that were designed to drop students from a few feet to solidify the training previously learned. Students did fail on these apparatuses and were dropped as a result, so it is important to pay attention to the blocks of instruction in order to do everything correctly. Once tower week is completed, it's all downhill from there. When saying downhill, I mean you have to sprint about a mile to the harness shed come jump week in ACUs, and there is a part of that sprint that is downhill. Once at the harness shed, students will wait for hours to get the chance to jump. The first day of jump week, we were at the harness shed from 0500 to 2200 but we got to jump twice.

Jumping was exhilarating. Leaving the door of the C-17 felt as if I was being sucked through time and space for a few seconds until my canopy opened. At that moment, I felt a sense of relief come over me as I was cradled in the hands of the U.S. Army's T-11 parachute all the way to the ground. If I had it my way, I would have done it fifty times, even though the wait was rather awful. The whole experience of getting to go to Airborne is something I will always be thankful for. Feel free to contact me for any advice on how to get the chance to attend Airborne school, but if there is any advice I can leave here, it is "keep your feet and knees together!"



Cadet Michael Hill poses before conducting a dead lift.



# Summer Training Highlights

## Air Assault School

*By Cadet Corey Maisch*

The Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion also had the privilege of sending **MS-V Cadet Corey Maisch** to Air Assault school in Fort Benning, GA. U.S. Army Air Assault School is a 10-day course designed to prepare Soldiers for insertion, evacuation, and pathfinder missions that call for the use of multipurpose transportation and assault helicopters. Air Assault training focuses on the mastery of rappelling techniques and sling load procedures, skills that involve intense concentration and a commitment to safety and preparation. **Cadet Corey Masich** shares his amazing experience at air assault school.

### Cadet Corey Maisch — Experiencing Air Assault



**Cadet Corey Maisch** practices Air Assault tactics within the barracks.

Ever since I was a boy, I wanted to jump out of a perfectly good airplane. My step-father got his airborne wings about 21 years ago and I hoped to have mine by now. Although not quite airborne school, I was very grateful to have the opportunity to attend Air Assault School this summer at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Air assault school was my first "Big Army," classic experience. The Air Assault Sergeants were in my face and screaming almost every day; the heat, humidity, and gnats of Ft. Benning sucked. They say that shared pain and suffering builds a team, and it is absolutely true.

While at Air Assault school, I learned a lot about rappelling, sling load operations, and the capabilities of our Army's rotary wing aircraft. The Air Assault sergeants stressed how practical the training was and told many stories about how especially useful sling load operations are. Passing the Air Assault course is one of the few ways to become qualified for inspecting sling loads. The evaluations were very difficult and stressful. If we failed both chances, we would be sent home. The things we learned at this course involved risk; overlooking one small detail in a real situation could be the difference between life and death.

More personally, I learned how hard and how far I can be pushed to achieve excellence, especially while on the 12-mile ruck march. It was one of the most difficult things I ever had to do. Honestly, I hope I never have to do that again, but I know that I am able. I sincerely believe that it was not by my own strength that I was able to make it through Air Assault School. I was amazed how Air Assault students banded together and pushed each other through the difficulties, no matter what part of the country they were from. Overall, I received good, practical, military training this summer that I look forward to putting into practice after I commission. To my fellow Cadets, I say strive to be the best you can be so that you can have this experience. It was worth the hard work, sore muscles, and blistered feet. I still hope to jump out of that perfectly good airplane one day.



**Cadet Corey Maisch** takes time to pose in front of a Huey helicopter.

## Fall Preview

### Fighting Illini Battalion Looks Ahead to Event-Filled Fall Semester

*By Second Lieutenant Jonathan Rodriguez, Gold Bar Recruiter*

This fall, the Fighting Illini Army ROTC will mark the 150th school year the historic program has been forging strong leaders since 1868. To help commemorate the 150 years of history, the program will honor its great past by looking forward to an excellent and productive semester. Cadre and the MS-IV Battalion staff are planning many events and training opportunities for this upcoming semester, which aim to forge these young leaders into future Army Officers. The fall calendar includes events such as the 9/11 Memorial Run, the Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX), the Ranger Challenge Competition, the POW/MIA Vigil, the Veterans Day Ceremony, the Salute to Veterans Football Game Loyalty Oath Ceremony, and Dining-In.

One of the first events the Fighting Illini Battalion conducts is the Fall Field Training Exercise. The Fall FTX offers many Cadet leadership opportunities during a long weekend and is conducted at the Army National Guard Training base at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. The FTX provides a unique planning experience for seniors in the MS-IV Class, who coordinate, collaborate, and organize, with Cadre guidance and oversight, all training events. The FTX is designed to challenge all Cadets from junior Military Science Classes in leadership and problem solving skills. Some of the events include the Land Navigation Course, the Leader's Reaction Course, the Confidence Course, learning to shoot and qualify with an M-16 rifle, and a six-mile ruck march.

Another event the program participates in is the Ranger Challenge Competition. This Competition is a tough and gruesome event filled weekend where cadets are tested on leadership and soldier skills. The Fighting Illini Battalion will send its Ranger Challenge team to Marseilles, IL to conduct various events such as: a 10-KM ruck march, the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT), a grenade throw, land navigation, assemble/disassemble of a M-16 rifle, Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC), and a written test on platoon and squad tactics.

The 9/11 Memorial Run, the POW/MIA Vigil, and the Veteran's Day Ceremony are all Tri-Service events that the Fighting Illini Army ROTC conducts with the university's Naval and Air Force ROTC programs. These three commemorative events serve to remember the heroics of Soldiers, Officers, Police Officers, and First Responders, and those who have made the final sacrifice in an attempt to serve their country. To go along with these commemorative events, the Fighting Illini Battalion also participates in the Salute to Veterans Football game at Memorial Stadium by holding a loyalty oath ceremony on the field of the football stadium for newly contracted Cadets. We will have over 20 Cadets participate in this year's ceremony.

At the end of the semester, the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion will have a formal dinner, known as Dining-In. This dinner is a chance for the Cadets to learn about Army traditions and to recognize Cadets who excelled in academics, physical fitness, and leadership. Dining-In is an event designed to help build esprit de corps within the Battalion and allows each Cadet the chance to reflect on all their accomplishments over the entire Fall semester.

We are very excited for these events this upcoming Fall, and we look forward to sharing our experiences with you in our December *Millini* issue.



Chaplain Scott Boyd joins the Fighting Illini Army ROTC Battalion at their 2016 Dining-In

# Armory Renovations Update

## An Update on the Armory Renovation

*By Mr. Eric Ashworth*



A view of the East Corridor of the 3rd floor. The Army ROTC offices have temporarily move to the location.

2014. Most of the work occurred on the first floor as the main floor offices were modernized to house the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL). With the north-side of the building nearing completion, it was time for the south-side to modernize.



Central heat and cooling are being installed in The Cadet Lounge and other ROTC offices.

The renovations are expected to be completed by late summer of 2018, when the Army and Air Force Programs will return to their original locations on the main floor.

The renovation project is a significant venture. Walls are being adjusted, centralized heating and cooling are being installed, double-paned windows are replacing the current windows, walls are being repainted and new carpet will be installed. Although it is too early to determine if the project is on schedule but the work that remains seems significant. Once completed, the Armory will continue to support the university and remain the home for all the ROTC programs; the CITL; the Department of Recreation, Sports and Tourism; the Arms Control & Domestic and International Security (ACDIS) program; and other teaching departments. Until then, if on campus and you need to see us, follow the signs on the east side of the building to the third floor.

Many of you may not be aware that the Armory Building on the UIUC campus is part of a major renovation project. This historic building, built in 1913 and then expanded to its current size in 1926, has needed a facelift for some time. The Armory Building has been home to the Army ROTC Program here at UIUC from the creation of the Reserve Officers Training Corps. The Armory assisted in the mobilization efforts of the country during World War II and continues today to support the ROTC programs for the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines.

The renovation of the building started in the summer of 2014. Most of the work occurred on the first floor as the main floor offices were modernized to house the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CITL). With the north-side of the building nearing completion, it was time for the south-side to modernize.

In May 2017, the Army ROTC Department moved within the Armory Building so that renovations to the south-side of the building could begin. The office of the Professor of Military Science, the main administrative offices, the James McLain Memorial Library, and the conference room from the first floor along with all the instructors' offices and the Cadet Lounge from the second floor were temporarily moved to the third floor of the Armory Building. The supply room was also moved to another building on campus. During this time, all Air Force offices were moved to the third floor as well.



Newly renovated classrooms show the modernization taking place in the Armory.



Old offices are becoming completely renovated to accommodate modern office standards while maintaining the historic look of the Armory.

# Alumni Update

## Fighting Illini Alumni are our Unsung Heroes By Mr. Eric Ashworth

Every summer the Cadets and uniformed Cadre head to summer training to develop our next generation of Army leaders. Many of these training opportunities have been mentioned within this publication and others can be found on our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FightingIlliniArmyROTC/>). However, as one of two rear detachment personnel, it was impressive to see the work that our alumni continue to demonstrate as we prepare for the fall semester.

The biggest is the generosity of donors towards the **Army ROTC Endowment Fund**. This fund established by **Colonel (Retired) Deborah Olson Read** in the spring of 2017 is already closing in on the required deposit of \$25,000. This is impressive as the university requires funding to be raised within five years, and with your continued support, we should reach this amount during the fall semester. What you may not realize is every dollar that is added to this endowment after the minimum amount is reached, the Cadets will receive an increased interest payment from the fund. So, your support will continue to improve the training opportunities of our Cadets. So thanks in advance.

Several of you visited campus over the summer. It was great getting the chance to hear your experiences while a member of the Fighting Illini Battalion. **Mr. W. Charlie Greer** (Class of 1971) supports the Engineering College over the summer and stopped by the Armory to inform us what it was like being an Engineering Officer in the early 1970s. **LTC Tom Edwards** (Class of 1997) visited the Armory during his Permanent Change of Station (PCS) from Okinawa, Japan back to the United States. Finally, **CPT Evan Ringel** (Class of 2012) also returned to campus to discuss current roles of Armor Officers to Cadets looking to serve in the Armor Branch. Others attended the 7 August 2017 Commissioning Ceremony, which meant a lot to our graduating seniors.



Veterinarian LTC Tom Edwards during a recent deployment

The offer remains open that we would like to include your thoughts on your experience with Army ROTC while you attended U of I. Our alumni continue to support the Army on our Nation substantially so we would like to publish your story. All we need is a standard Microsoft Word document, 1-2 pages in length, and maybe a photo or two. Current serving UIUC officers and veterans seem to be the most popular with the Cadets. Your perspective on serving in the military is valuable to a cadet who often sees the Army as overwhelming.



Fighting Illini Army ROTC  
Hall of Fame Medal

**Ways to Help during the 2017-18 Academic Year:** I'm not telling you something new when I say there is always more to do. A few items of support to consider:

**Hall of Fame:** The Cadet Battalion is developing the plans for the next Hall of Fame induction ceremony. We expect the date to be on one of the weekends in March or April of 2018. What we can use from you are your nominations. We have received no other applications since our last edition, so we are establishing a board to review the two nominations we have. Additional applications would be appreciated. An application can be found on page 21 and we will continue to take applications until the 1<sup>st</sup> of January.

## Alumni Update

### Fighting Illini Alumni are our Unsung Heroes (Continued)



Army ROTC Alumni at the 2016 Dining-Out

#### Support to the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the study of Military Science at UIUC:

In 2018, the Army ROTC Program celebrates our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of graduating students with a background in “military training.” Several events are being developed to highlight the role of the military at UIUC. If you would like to be a guest speaker or involved in some of these events, please let us know. The spring Dining-Out has been tentatively scheduled for Friday, 27 April 2018. More specifics on the Dining-Out and other key dates will be provided in the Winter 2017 edition of the Millini.

#### Continued Donations towards Cadet Training:

Not all training events are covered by military funding. Last year, your generosity allowed the Fighting Illini to participate in the Ranger Buddy Competition, the Bataan Memorial Ruck March, the Scabbard and Blade Honor Society, the Norwegian Ruck March, the Tough Mudder Competition, and field a rifle team. These events were excellent leadership development opportunities for the cadets and require significant training to prepare the teams. This year we will coordinate teams to participate but it will be through your donations that these training opportunities will occur. If you wish to help, please visit <http://www.giving.illinois.edu/> for the certified University link and be sure to indicate to which fund your contribution is directed towards—**Army ROTC Cadet Endowment Fund (11774561)** or **Army ROTC Alumni Fund (11330418)**. Both of these funds are not included in the drop-down menus, so you will have to type the name into the “Search” box. Your donations make an impact, and are greatly appreciated by the Cadets. Thank you for your time, your financial support and your interest in the Fighting Illini Battalion. If you ever have questions or would like more information, please contact us at [arotc@illinois.edu](mailto:arotc@illinois.edu) or by phone at **(217) 244-1407**.



The Ranger Challenge team poses after completing a long and tough weekend competition.



The Norwegian Ruck March team competes in the road march competition in March 2017.



Cadets visit the Middle East Conflicts Memorial Wall at Marseilles, IL

# Hall of Fame Update

## Fighting Illini Battalion Army ROTC Hall of Fame *Nomination Form*

1. Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your Email: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Your Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOMINEE INFORMATION:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Graduated UIUC (if alumnus): \_\_\_\_\_

Degree(s) Achieved at UIUC (or other University): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will this award be Posthumously? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If no, do you have contact info for Nominee (Address, City, Zip and/or email/phone):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, do you have contact info for Nominee’s Family: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, please provide any info you may have (Family member’s name, address to include city and zip/email/phone number):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

On a separate sheet of paper, please TYPE a brief military biography listing the awards the nominee received during service along with a short story on why the nominee should be considered for the Hall of Fame (e.g., contributions to the community where the nominee may have retired, significant contributions to the US Army and/or significant contributions to the University of Illinois).

*If the nominee is selected, you may be contacted to provide a picture (recent or historical) of the nominee or for direction to where a picture may be found of the nominee.*

Please return this form with the nomination biography to [arotc@illinois.edu](mailto:arotc@illinois.edu).



# Support The Fighting Illini Battalion

University of Illinois  
Foundation

Recruiting, Donations  
Visits, Expertise

Fighting Illini Army ROTC has strong roots, dating back to the founding of the University under the Morrill Land-Grant Act. This coming academic year, 2018 marks 150 years of military training at the University of Illinois. Be on the lookout for the 150th anniversary MILLINI articles, 150th anniversary commemorative clothing offerings in “The Store,” distinctive logos, and historic photo essays.



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# THE FIGHTING ILLINI ARMY ROTC



## FORGING STRONG LEADERS SINCE 1868

