



Freshmen Cadets Jacob Clement (middle left), Blaine Nowak (middle right), and Catherine Benton (far right), with SHSU Alumnus Todd Platzner (far left) holding a print of Airborne Operations donated by Mr. Platzner.

BEARKAT BATTALION



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Stronger Together Strength and Honor!

With another month of training complete, the Bearkat Battalion looks to gain momentum through mid-semester. This month included the George C. Marshall Seminar highlighted on page 4 by CDT Samuel Brink, which brought valuable lessons to the program. Also, the ROTC branching process provides Junior Cadets a peak into their Army careers (page 6). Finally, a long-awaited rooftop contracting ceremony was conducted this month for CDT Neza Espinoza (page 5).

We look forward to seeing the development and progression of our Cadets as they near the midterm!

Eat'em Up Kats!

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PMS Comments

We are nearly half-way complete with the semester and our Cadets continue to hone their leadership skills as they remain focused in their quest to serve our nation as Army Officers. You (families, university leaders/faculty, alumni, and community supporters) directly enable them to conquer their quest – thank you! We want to personally recognize a few of these individuals who went the “extra mile” to support our Cadets this past month. We are fortunate as an ROTC Program to receive first-class support from The Military Science Alumni Club (MSAC). I attended the MSAC Board of Directors and Officers Meeting on 19 February 2022, and the discussion to assist our Cadets by BG (R) Rich Mills, Hal Werlein, Bobby Penry, Jimmy Dinkins, Gonzalo Correa, Buddy McCaig, Larry Booth, Forrest LeBlanc, J.J. Adams, and Brian Leighton remains impressive as this is not the norm at the majority of other ROTC Programs – Thank you gentlemen! Also, a special thank you to SHSU ROTC Alumni, Major (retired) Todd Platzner and Captain Mike Akeroyd for hosting leadership professional development sessions for our freshmen and senior cohorts this past week. Finally, thank you to Leta Reiner, who cares deeply about our Cadets and continues to support them with generous scholarships. We could not produce second lieutenants without everyone’s constant support! Our Cadets truly appreciate everyone’s mentoring and support.

Your support was vital to our program being recognized on 8 February 2022, with the Cochise Award, for best small size program among our Army organization. I encourage you to read the article at the following link, if you have not had the opportunity. <https://www.shsu.edu/today@sam/T@S/article/2022/rotc-cochise-award> Our program is proud of the award; however, as Senior Cadet Sam Brink states, “Proud, but never satisfied!” This could not be more accurate as our program will continue to excel in the future due to the following:

- Our junior cohort has the potential to be largest commissioning class since 2013, when we commissioned 24 second lieutenants.
- Our sophomore cohort is on glide-path to exceed our commissioning mission of 18 second lieutenants.
- Our freshmen cohort – I believe has very good potential to commission more second lieutenants than our junior cohort and the 2013 cohort.

Also, next year’s freshmen cohort is shaping up nicely as Mr. Darryl Derr and Cadet Britney Loerwald are actively recruiting and hosting national scholarship applicants; thus, we anticipate another strong incoming cohort. The size and talent of these cohorts is equally impressive due to the constrained environment the previous years.

We appreciate everyone’s patience as we have limited our external participation due to the environment. However, we are excited to announce that we are inviting donors and guests to our upcoming face-to-face Spring Awards Ceremony on 28 April 2022 and Commissioning Ceremony on 13 May 2022. We sent out formal invitations last week and hope you can attend these special events to recognize the hard work of your Cadets. Have a great weekend!



The Bearkat Battalion being recognized for the Best Small Program “Cochise” Award. Pictured from left to right: Distinguished Military Graduates Samuel Brink, Nathan Frye, Austin, Zirkel, and Noah Abramski with LTC Contreras.



Cadet of the Month – Rashaad Hammond

CDT Rashaad Hammond with Professor of Military Science Lieutenant Colonel Joe Contreras at the 2021 Fall Awards Ceremony during his contracting ceremony and working out in the ROTC gym



CDT Rashaad Hammond was selected as the Cadet of the Month through an extensive selection process. CDT Hammond's first line supervisor personally endorsed and recommended him to the Battalion Leadership as Cadet of the Month. Rashaad's motivation, outstanding work ethic, and embrace of the Army Values improved the Esprit de Corps of the program and strengthened camaraderie within the MSII cohort. CDT Hammond is eager to learn and not only aids underclassmen in their development as ROTC Cadets, but also serves as a mentor.

Congratulations Rashaad!



George C. Marshall Seminar – Samuel Brink (MSIV)

This semester, I had the honor of representing Sam Houston State University in this year's annual George C. Marshall Seminar. Each year, cadets from all 274 ROTC programs across the United States gather in what Cadet Command recognizes as the “Capstone Leadership Development Event.” I fully expected this seminar to be a productive leadership development opportunity, and a great opportunity to represent our ROTC program and Sam Houston State University. The George C. Marshall Leadership Seminar was first held in 1978 in Lexington, Virginia to award the top cadets in the United States, and carry on the legacy of General Marshall, who served as Chief of Staff in World War Two. Due to the current situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the last two seminars have been moved to a virtual platform, however, it remained a great learning and networking experience.

The primary intent of this conference was to shape the future generation of United States Army officers by introducing us to senior military leaders and inspirational guest speakers, providing opportunities to discuss issues facing today’s army, and provide us with the opportunity to foster relationships with other future officers from around the country. Secondly, this seminar honored the legacy of General Marshall and instilled his leadership attributes in the future of the Army. The Army, and the United States as a whole, has known few leaders with the same influence and impact as General Marshall. Marshall was commissioned by the Virginia Military Institute in 1901, eventually serving as the Chief of Staff in World War Two and was partially responsible for raising the United States Army from just over 170,000 soldiers to well over eight million. He then dedicated his life to protecting world peace and held multiple foreign ministry positions under President Truman. He was responsible for developing the Marshall Plan to attempt to peacefully resolve the disputes between Western and Communist Eastern Europe. Marshall deservedly won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.

General Marshall was one of the United States Army’s finest leaders and George C. Marshall Leadership Seminar has influenced some of the finest cadets in our school’s history, and our Army’s history. I am honored to have been allowed to carry on Sam Houston State’s history, as well as the legacy of General George C. Marshall.

Eat’em Up Kats!



CDT Samuel Brink addressing the Battalion during the Fall FTX.



2022 George C. Marshall Leadership Seminar Attendee:
CDT Samuel Brink



Why I Contracted – CDT Neza Espinoza MSIII

When I started thinking of colleges, Sam Houston was my first choice for a couple reasons. Being the best school for a criminal justice degree, the criminal justice program really took my interest. In the beginning, my goal was to graduate college with a criminal justice degree and then enlist into one of the different branches of the military. My freshman year and experiences with ROTC completely changed my mind.

The beginning of 2021 was a shock and complete change in my initial expectations, I experienced a lot of uncertainty. I was unsure of which classes to take, and the steps needed to accomplish my college goals. On the day of my freshman orientation, I took full advantage of talking with the ROTC cadets and cadre that were there to provide information. After talking with them, I decided I would join, but I still wasn't sure if I wanted to commission. I thought I would do a year in ROTC, then enlist.

It honestly surprised me how much I fell in love with this program. The camaraderie aspect of the program is my favorite part; they have never made me feel like an outcast or excluded me in any way and I know I can always count on my fellow cadets to cheer me on and have my back through anything.

That's not the only reason I've stayed with the program though, I have family in the military as well. My grandfather and dad served in the infantry branches of both the Army and Marines, and my older brother is currently serving actively in the Army National Guard.

This program has not only pushed me to be better person, faster and physically stronger, but it's given me one of the best support groups anyone could ask for. I know I can always count on my peers to get me through thick and thin and they are my guide to be the best I can be. It's because of the people that I concluded to sign a contract of lifelong commitment and serve my country. I look forward to meeting more people like this group and leading soldiers in the future.

“Let's Go!”



CDT Espinoza reciting the Oath of Enlistment on February 17th, 2022.



CDT Espinoza conducting the Sprint Drag Carry event of the Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT).



Black History Month – CDT Rashaad Hammond

Approximately 11 percentage of U.S. Army Officers are African Americans. Upon graduation, I am excited to become part of this growing collective. My name is Rashaad Hammond, and I will articulate my experiences and the importance of Black History Month in the United States Army.

Growing up, I was always the minority. I attended predominantly Caucasian schools my whole life, to include daycare. I wish I could say that I have never encountered racism, discrimination, or mistreatment via biased behavior, but that would simply be a lie. Being a black man in today’s world means that you are expected to act a certain way, that you are probably good at sports and like hip hop. Such stereotypes have made me stand out...because I am more than that. I have always wanted people to recognize me as a capable, three-dimensional man. Not just as a good black man or black Army officer, but as a truly noble individual.

One thing I love and admire about the United States Army is the diversity, not just referring to race. I enjoy learning about other cultures and meeting people of different backgrounds. There are so many interesting things to see in this world. I refuse to self-segregate just to be around people of the same color. I want to change this world for the better. Being in a diverse environment creates more opportunities for me and my fellow cadets. I surround myself with people that want to lead. Bearkat Battalion has been that climate for me. Every cadet is becoming a better leader every day. Below is a transformational leader who paved the way.

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans in the United States Army and a time for recognizing their central role in United States history. This February, the Bearkat Battalion acknowledges the first African American West Point Graduate, Lieutenant Henry Ossian Flipper. Today, more than 90,000 African American Soldiers serve in the active-duty United States Army, 39,000 in the United States Army Reserve and 52,000 in the National Guard. Thank you, Lieutenant Flipper, for following your dreams and paving the way for all of us.



CDT Rashaad Hammond conducting Patrol Base Operations.



Henry Ossian Flipper at West Point (1877).



A memorial dedicated to LT Flipper at the Thayer Hotel in West Point, NY.



The Branching Process – CDT Ethan Bahr

This month, the Cadets of the Bearkat Battalion attended virtual branching orientations along with other cadets around the nation to gain valuable information and tips about prospective branches of the US Army. Experienced officers in their respective branches went in-depth on the responsibilities an officer is expected to hold, career advancement opportunities, and daily activities of junior officers to higher ranks such as captains and majors.

With over a dozen branch orientations available, including specialty areas such as Special Forces and Space Operations, Cadets had a multitude of branches to attend. The intent is for Cadets to leave these meetings with a greater understanding of a prospective branch, their mission. Utilizing the Army's Virtual Branch Orientation website, which included intriguing 3D graphics, cadets were able to sign up to RSVP to their branch meeting's Zoom webinars. Once in the Zoom meeting, cadets were met by hundreds of their peers from all around the nation.

Once the meetings began, cadets were met with detailed slideshows narrated by a junior officer. These slideshows held information that many cadets would not have had previous access to. The details of the virtual orientations varied widely per the branches' respective overall mission. For example, the infantry's orientation was heavy on tactics and physical fitness, while the orientation for chaplains focused primarily on soldier personal life and religious support.

Among other details were information on duty stations, initial entry requirements, (especially present for Aviation and EOD), and what's expected of officers in either a staff position or platoon leader. Cadets asked questions ranging from techniques to gain the edge in joining their desired branch, to more specific questions such as details for internships with defense companies. After the roughly hour-long virtual branch orientations, cadets now have a greater understanding of branches and are now better informed to make their decision on what to branch.



CDT Bahr before MSIII Class



Virtual Branch Orientation Room



The Month in Photos



MSIII Cadets Brendan Smith (far left), Melissa Mize (middle left), Giuliana Greco (middle right), and Ethan Bahr (far right) briefing their Operations Order.



MSII Cadets conducting the III Corps Obstacle Course at Fort Hood during a visit to retrieve their Common Access Card.



Winners of the Super Bowl LVI squares. Pictured from left to right: Hunter Milburn, Matthew Pilgrim, and Blaine Nowak.



The 2021-2022 MSIV Chain of Command at the conclusion of the Pinta Trail Staff Ride.



Alumni Spotlight – CPT Christian Bionat

Captain Christian Bionat graduated from Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in May of 2012 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Political Science and a minor in Legal Studies and Military Science. While attending SHSU, he participated not only in the ROTC Program, but served as the President for the Center for Leadership, Engagement, and Politics (LEAP) as well. CPT Bionat served as the Battalion's S3 officer for his meticulous attention to detail and participated in the program's Cannon Crew. During his senior year, he was awarded the coveted Sammy Award for his involvement and character throughout the University.

Captain Bionat then commissioned in the United States Army Reserve in Military Intelligence and was assigned to the 335th Signal Command (Theater) in Houston, TX, where he served as a Battalion Intelligence Officer for the 450th Chemical Battalion (CBRN). While serving as the chief intelligence officer, he assisted in planning multiple combined chemical operations with Canadian partners. Bionat went on to serve as the Company Executive Officer of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company at JRB Ellington Field with the 75th Training Command, a two-star level command that overseas observer controllers across the United States. Later, he became the Aide-de-Camp to the Deputy Commanding General of the 75th Training Command. In 2015, he deployed with Key Resolve to Yongsan Army Garrison, Seoul, Korea and served as the Assessment Team Administrative Officer. In November 2016, CPT Bionat took command of Bravo Company of the 338th Military Intelligence Battalion (Interrogation) in Austin, TX. He then went on to hold a Battalion AS3 position for a year and is currently the brigade S3 for an army interrogation group. In his civilian career CPT Bionat has served in many positions including the Senior Advisor/Strategist for the Olson for Congress Committee, District Director and Deputy Chief of Staff for Representative Pete Olson, and most recently, District Director for Representative Randy Weber.

CPT Bionat is a proud Clear Lake High School Falcon Graduate, class of 2009, and holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Sam Houston State University, and a Master's in Public Administration from Penn State University. His military education includes the Military Intelligence Basic Officer Leadership Course, Anti-Terrorism Officer Basic Course, Joint Interrogation Management Course, and the Military Intelligence Captain's Career Course. When talking to the cadets he emphasized the importance of becoming a lifelong learner. To keep learning habits and skills that will help you be successful as a leader and after your career in the army, learn how to work out, study, sleep, and think critically. Continue to read books such as *Once an Eagle*, *Art of War*, *Dichotomy of Leadership*, and *Callsign Chaos*.

Thank you, CPT Bionat, for your service to our country and to the Sam Houston State University Bearkat Battalion!



CPT Bionat providing a professional development class to the MSII cohort in January 2022.



Then 1LT Christian Bionat.

