Field Training Exercise and the Leadership Lessons Learned

Friendly competition between the Army, Navy and Air Force ROTC Programs

After the government shutdown and days before Fall FTX, Cadets overcome obstacles and train on

Cadets retell their experiences this past summer

The MSIIIs perform exceedingly well at LDAC this summer, return ready to train others

TIGER ROAR

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For the Cadets of the Tiger Battalion, the fall Field Training Exercise (FTX) is an opportunity to hone leadership skills, acclimate to a field environment and learn basic Army tactical drills. For many new Cadets, it affords many firsts: first time sleeping under a poncho in the woods, first time carrying a fully loaded ruck sack, first time training from dawn to dusk. For many MSIIIs, who lead the training throughout the two day FTX, it is their first time put in a leadership position while under a considerable amount of stress dealing with timelines, accountability and FRAGOs.

MSIII CDT Michael Roberts describes what it’s like being put in a leadership position at the start of FTX. “It’s challenging. I was a Platoon Leader and there were times when I was unsure what was going on but I still had to be confident and composed in front of my platoon.”

This year’s FTX took place in the backwoods of RIT and a local county park. The Cadets marched across campus and deep into the woods of RIT carrying heavy rucksacks consisting of nearly all the gear issued to them at the start of the semester. Braving nasty, muddy trails and puddles deep enough to swallow your leg, Cadets set up a tactical bivouac site and began assembly of their makeshift lean-tos constructed of just a poncho and 550-chord. Then it was off to Mendon Ponds, a county park in Rochester with over 2500 acres of wilderness, for 14 hours of day and night land navigation. Here, MSI and II Cadets were paired together while MSIIIs trekked alone to navigate the woods using only a map, protractor and compass in order to find 8 assigned points scattered throughout the park. Despite setbacks, including a few sprained ankles and blisters, the training was successful in that the number of Cadets achieving the required number of points was markedly better than their last attempt at land navigation.

From Mendon Ponds, it was back to the bivouac site for a short night in the woods and preparation for the next day of training. A short 4 hours later, the Cadets were up and at it again, this time for a full day of Squad Tactical Exercises (or STX Lanes.) Squads of 11 to 13 Cadets ate a quick, hot breakfast catered to them in the field then moved off to the start of their first mission.

Yet again, MSIIIs were placed in a leadership position and evaluated for the duration of the two hour STX lane. MSIIIs must receive a mission from a higher authority, formulate a plan, brief it to their squad and execute it. Evaluators look for how well the plan is communicated, the leader’s confidence throughout the mission among other leadership attributes.

However, it wasn’t just the MSIIIs who learned and grew from STX Lanes. For many MSIs, this was the first they ever took part in a tactical mission and learned the various battle drills, tactical movement techniques and leadership styles of the MSIIIs. Furthermore, MSIs received the opportunity to act as Team Leaders and assist the MSIII Squad Leader in executing his or her mission.

After 10 hours of physically demanding training on little sleep and food, the Cadets returned to the bivouac site for final formation, FTX closing remarks from LTC Whitaker and movement back to their warm, dry dorm rooms at RIT. “Fall FTX is a good training compass for MSIIIs. It directs our training focus for the rest of the year.” said CDT Podolec, the principle trainer of MSIIIs. The lessons learned from this fall FTX will be used to better plan future training exercises and gave all Cadets an indicator on what areas they need to work on in order to become future warrior leaders in the United States Army.
Warrior Day
2013

For the past two years the Cadets from the Tiger Battalion compete in a series of games against Cadets from Air Force ROTC and the midshipman of Navy ROTC with the purpose of fostering camaraderie and friendships amongst the services. Nevertheless, a significant amount of chest puffing and bicep flexing was to be seen on all sides. “Warrior Day” as it is called, manifests itself as a measuring stick for which ROTC program is the toughest, meanest and beastliest.

This year, the Tiger Battalion lost to the Navy in football by a close margin but quickly recovered by clobbering the Navy and Airforce in both soccer and Tug-of-War. Continuing their winning streak, the Army was well on their way to winning the final event, kickball. A win here would mean an overall victory for the Army in the 2013 Warrior Games. However, the Navy conviently called the end of all matches while they were still ahead. Regretably, the Navy beat the Army overall by a single point margin.

All the same, the Warrior Games allowed for the Tiger Battalion Cadets to bond and interact with fellow servicemembers with some healthy competition. This was the true purpose of the games. Not some trophy that would look beautiful in the Cadet lounge.

Despite the government shutdown in Washington, the Cadets of the Tiger Battalion continue training. The Tiger Battalion was planning on traveling to Ft. Drum to conduct their biannual Field Training Exercise. However, just days before departure, the abrupt shutdown of government agencies and the furlough of its employees threw a cog in the well-planned and rehearsed fall FTX. This was especially problematic for the Tiger Battalion as we rely heavily on Mr. James Tibbitt, our Supply Technician and Mr. Robert Hotchkiss, our Human Resources representative. Further complicating matters, many critical personnel at Ft. Drum are General Schedule (GS) employees. Without them and an operating budget, the plan to travel to Ft. Drum was terminated.

“It’s disappointing,” remarked CDT Ted Olney, an MS1 from Whitesboro, NY “I was looking forward to training on an active military installation.”

With only days before the FTX was to take place, both Cadre and MSIVs scrambled to salvage the training opportunity an FTX affords. After countless hours and negotiations with RIT campus officials, a contingency plan was hatched. CDT William Brundege, the Battalion Operations Officer (S3) describes the immensity of the task:

“It was hard. The original plan for Ft. Drum was months of planning and briefings. To condense that much planning and logistics into a few short days on zero notice was a noteworthy feat. Everyone pulled together and pushed through a plan that still gave the Cadets valuable training in a tactical environment.”

The revised plan relocated training to just off RIT’s main campus in a secluded forest.

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ADAPT AND OVERCOME  cont.

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A hasty land navigation course was set up at Mendon Ponds, a county park in Rochester with over 2500 acres of wild terrain. Cadets conducted Squad Tactical Exercises (STX Lanes) on RIT’s campus and bivouacked in the treeline. All this and more were planned and coordinated less than 96 hours before execution.

“I am amazed at the hard work the Cadets and Cadre completed for this FTX,” Cadet Battalion Commander Zacharia Reibsome commented. “The ability to adapt and overcome obstacles is a critical skill to have for Army Leaders. It is clear we have some excellent future officers here at RIT.”

SUMMER TRAINING

The Cadets of the Tiger Battalion traveled the world this past summer completing speciality schools, LDAC, CULP and LTC. Below are the brief summaries of how the Cadets performed and what they learned.

CTD Adriana Natali, MSIV

CTD Adriana Natali, a Chemistry Major at the University of Rochester from Watertown, NY took part in the US Army Medical Department (AMEDD) internship after attending LDAC. While at Ft. Hood, TX for nearly a month, CTD Natali was able to scrub-in on nearly 20 surgical procedures and shadow various physicians in Orthopedics. She was even able to perform a few minor procedures of her own, under the supervision of a physician. This internship is available to all Cadets and is a great opportunity for those who wish to pursue a career in medicine.

CTD Teryn Rynone, MSIII

CTD Teryn Rynone a third year mechanical engineer from Newfield, NY completed the Army Air Assault School this past summer at Ft. Campbell, KY. The school begins with Zero Day at 0445 and consists of a two mile run, obstacle course, and class instruction. The next morning is a 6 mile ruck march then Phase I, a three day period of instruction on aircraft familiarization, MEDEVAC and pathfinder operations begins. Phase II starts immediately after and covers sling load operations. Phase III is rappelling. You work your way from the inclined wall to the 34’ tower then end by fast roping from a UH-60 Blackhawk. The culminating event is a 12 mile ruck march that must be completed in under 3 hours or else you fail the school.

CTD Peter Harris, MSIII

CTD Peter Harris a Business major from Buffalo, NY. took part in a CULP (Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency) mission in Romania this summer. CTD Harris’ team of 10 cadets from across America traveled to Romania to teach Romanian Cadets English and immerse themselves in the culture. After one month they were able to remove the bad stereotypes the Romanians held against Americans. CTD Harris remarks that it was an excellent experience traveling to Romania with the Army. He learned about the Romanian military style and reflects that he is a better Cadet because of it.

CTD Amber Brewer, MSIII

CTD Amber Brewer an International and Global Studies at RIT also participated in CULP by traveling to Tanzania. Africa: Tanzania is an African country on the east coast of the continent. It is a unique country because even though it is one of the poorest nations with one of the worst economies in Africa, it is also one of the most peaceful and friendly nations of Africa, this is due the implementation of one official language spoken by nearly all Tanzanians following its independence. While in Tanzania, CDT Brewer along with 10 other Cadets from all over the United States taught English to high school students attending one of three local high schools run by the Tanzanian Peoples’ Defense (TPDF).

CTD Brewer’s group split into teams of two of three and taught at one of the three schools. Many of the students had a fairly decent grasp on English and were curious about American culture, and asked them many questions about American culture. During her time in Tanzania, she also had the opportunity to take basic Swahili lessons, and participated in numerous cultural events such as the common “bartering and haggling” of market place shopping, a visit to a museum, and some historical former slave trade sites on the island of Zanzibar. The CULP mission to Tanzania not only gave her the chance to experience another culture, but also the opportunity to learn and be sensitive to cultural constructs different from our own. “It gave us the opportunity to make new friends with both US Cadets, and Tanzanian students.
It is hard to believe that we are already halfway through our first semester here at RIT. As you can see from throughout this newsletter, your sons and daughters have been hard at work both over the previous summer and during this academic year so far.

This past summer, our seniors did an outstanding job at the Leadership Development Advance Course – a tribute both to the long hours and early mornings that they spent preparing to excel and the hard work of SFC Dennis Doyle and Mr. Nicholas O’Brien. Additionally, last year’s sophomores made the most out of all the opportunities available to them and we had three students successfully complete Air Assault and Airborne school and three more travel around the world to gain first-hand experience with foreign cultures in Tanzania, France, and Romania. Since the start of the school year, our students have continued to excel especially in the light of the recent fiscal challenges. While we were unfortunately unable to travel to Fort Drum, NY for our annual Fall Field Training Exercise, the Cadet leadership displayed outstanding flexibility and adaptability as we accomplished all of the primary training goals here at RIT. Additionally, our Ranger Challenge team continues to train hard 6 days a week for their competition at Fort Dix, NJ that will be during Veterans Day weekend after being postponed from earlier in October.

While a lot is expected and asked of these fine men and women of the Tiger Battalion, I am sure that they will continue to be successful in all they do with help from their fellow Cadets and the hardworking Cadre and Staff. I wait with anticipation to see what these future leaders of America’s sons and daughters will accomplish next!

LTC Whitaker

WORDS FROM THE PMS

LDAC SUCCESS

The Tiger Battalion achieved high honors at this summer’s Leadership Development and Assessment Course in Fort Lewis, Wash.

Ten Cadets from the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester, which make up the Tiger Battalion, took part in this summer’s LDAC. During the 29 day course, Cadets were assessed on their leadership ability, performance with small and large units, land navigation, physical fitness, administrative challenges and an additional 17 dimensional attributes. Cadets must also be able to react as leaders by completing the Field Leader’s Reaction course. The course is an obstacle that requires an in-depth thinking process which assesses Cadet’s ability to be an agile and adaptive leader.

The Tiger Battalion triumphed in nearly every measurable training category at LDAC. The battalion performed exceptionally well on the Army Physical Fitness Test, scoring an average 285.70 out of a possible 300 points. The battalion also had 50 percent of the Cadets received an overall E ranking, which means they exceeded the standard. Additionally, 50 percent of the Cadets were awarded the coveted RECONDO badge, and 30 percent of the cadets were top five in their platoon.

The final grade at LDAC is determined primarily by their leadership evaluations, but also by two peer evaluations, their physical training score, land nav score and a teacher, assessor and coach evaluation.

While LDAC is the primary focus of the Junior Cadets throughout the summer months, they also have the opportunity to participate in the Cadet Troop Leadership Training (CTLT) Program, where they spend three weeks shadowing an active duty officer in order to get a better idea of how the Army really works. This summer, Cadet Levi Felli was assigned to CTLT at Ft. Campbell, Ky (Infantry), Cadet David Fournier attended Armor CTLT at Ft. Bliss, TX, Cadet Amanda Krol participated in the Drill Cadet Leadership Training program at Ft. Jackson, SC, and Cadet Timothy Sarma was assigned to Ft. Bragg, NC.
The “Tiger Roar” is a non-profit publication produced by the S5 and the Cadets of the Tiger Battalion. Special thanks to all of those he gave input!

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Photo Credit:
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Senior Midshipmen and Cadets join together in a Tug-of-War against Juniors.

ONE TEAM, ONE FIGHT!