



Bearings

Spring 2024



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3/C Advisor: LT Joseph Ellis

4/C Advisor: LT Roy Richardson

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Leadership Lab 2024

Every Friday, Leadership Lab provides Capital Battalion midshipmen with critical knowledge for their future careers in the Navy and Marine Corps. It gives midshipmen the opportunity to contribute to the unit's performance and continue their preparations for joining the fleet. This semester's labs were no exception.

This semester, the Undersecretary of the Navy, The Honorable Erik Raven, visited the Capital Battalion to talk about developments in the maritime environment. To have someone in such a pivotal role take the time out of his day to speak to the unit showcases the high quality of professional development we are exposed to on a weekly basis. Midshipmen also had the unique opportunity to engage with MajGen David Odom, CAPT John Gosner, and LCDR Robert Bond during an unclassified intelligence briefing to discuss constant competition in the Indo-Pacific region. VADM Melvin Williams Jr. (ret.) returned to the unit during Black History month, sharing his incredible career accomplishments being the first African American in history to command a Nuclear Powered Strategic Ballistic Missile Submarine. He told stories of his illustrious service as well as insights into the environment future naval officers will navigate.

Additionally, MIDN participated in practical workshops focused on financial management. Fleet Master Chief Rick O'Rawe (ret.) taught midshipmen about the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society and the services it provides for Marines and sailors. He shared invaluable guidance on the financial opportunities available as well as how to support fellow sailors and marines who encounter financial and personal challenges.

This semester's Leadership Labs exposed midshipmen to a wide variety of information and pro-fessional development. This weekly event will continue to provide fantastic learning opportunities for midshipmen before they reach the fleet.



*From Top To Bottom:
Undersecretary of the Navy, The Honorable Erik Raven visits the Capital Battalion. Fleet Master Chief (ret.) Rick O'Rawe teaches midshipmen about the Navy and Marine Corps Relief Society. MajGen David Odom, CAPT John Gosner, and LCDR Robert Bond share Indo-Pacific intelligence brief.*

Iwo Jima Reunion

On February 17th, midshipmen from the Capital battalion and United States Naval Academy met with WWII veterans in Arlington, Virginia to commemorate their service. The event, hosted by the Iwo Jima Association of America, celebrated the seventy-ninth reunion of Iwo Jima veterans. The Iwo Jima Association of America represents veterans who fought in WWII and works with them and their families to keep their memories alive. During the event, Midshipmen listened to keynote speakers, who recounted the history of the war with a specific focus on the battle for Iwo Jima. Midshipmen also heard from Marines Louis Bourgault, Frank Wright, Julian Smith, and Ivan Hammond as well Boatswain Mate Juan Montano speak about the hardships of WWII and the brave men who fought and died in the Pacific Theater. Both Montano and Bourgault fought from Guadalcanal to Okinawa, the entirety of the Pacific offensive. In addition to sharing their stories, they spoke of the need for Marines and Sailors to embody the core values of our Naval services and warned about the consequences of not doing so.



Also present was Japanese military attache Col. Nakazato Yuka from the Embassy of Japan who spoke about the Japanese defense of the Island and the significance of the Battle of Iwo Jima for the Japanese people. Col. Nakazato visited Iwo Jima several times in the course of her military studies and was able to present a highly detailed analysis on the events of the battle. Midshipmen were able to interact with the speakers at the end of the event which allowed for a personal connection with the veterans furthering their understanding of the sacrifices of America's Greatest Generation.

Note from the Bearings Staff

We hope you enjoyed reading about the Capital Battalion's many activities and accomplishments this semester. We would like to extend our thanks to those who provided comments and material. Additionally, we would like to thank our officers and staff for their leadership and guidance. Lastly, we would like to thank the midshipmen whose hard work consistently maintains the Capital Battalion's standing as one of the highest performing NROTC units in the nation.

Very Respectfully,

Chief Editor: MIDN 2/C Ryan Marrione
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Journey to the Submarine Community

Every year, the Capital Battalion sees several of its midshipmen selected for submarine duty. The Navy's submarine community is a highly selective organization that asks a great deal from its sailors. Even after receiving the selection by the community, midshipmen and officer candidates must undergo an intensive interview consisting of technical math and physics problems and a professional interview with the Director of Nuclear Reactors, a command held by the legendary Admiral Hyman Rickover.

The current Director of Nuclear Reactors, Admiral William J. Houston, presides over the maintenance and development of nuclear propulsion technology and submarine operations. He, by extension, is tasked with overseeing this intensive interview process for prospective submarine officers and has the authority to handpick them. This process has been a tradition for the submarine community for decades since Admiral Rickover created the command.

Historically, interviewees have been asked questions designed to challenge the mind and find those qualified enough to lead sailors on highly complicated endeavors deep under the ocean surface. One notable account from early interviewees of Rickover recalled the Admiral asking them a series of difficult engineering questions followed by a request to "piss me off." While many were confused by this request, one candidate immediately knocked all of the admiral's belongings off his desk onto the floor. He was accepted.

Today, the directors of Nuclear Reactors prefer less surprising questions when searching for submarine officers. Three Capital Battalion midshipmen completed the Nuclear Reactors interview process this past year: MIDN 1/C Matthew Coughlin, MIDN 1/C Gabriella Barone, and MIDN 1/C Natalie Turner. While Admiral Houston did not ask them to incite his rage, they both received a litany of challenging questions both on technical and professional levels.

Prior to meeting with the Admiral, they each underwent two separate technical interviews designed to test their skills in calculus and physics, both of which are constant factors in submarine operations. MIDN 1/C Barone recalled the first of her two interviews. "My first interviewer was not very chatty and got right to the questions [about four], but after I answered them, he asked me some more personal questions regarding what I wanted to do and how I ended up here," she said. MIDN 1/C Turner, who passed her interviews this past February, described the level of difficulty she encountered in her interview process. "I was asked a range of questions, which I instantly knew how to answer and those that I really had to think about. If I didn't know how to approach a part of the problem, they asked me questions to get my thought process up again," she said. Both midshipmen spent many months studying the various topics required for the interview. In preparation, they regularly met with their Naval Science Instructors to practice questions.

Both midshipmen were asked to provide advice to future interviewees. "Don't jump into studying all at once. [Instead], understand which topics are weaker than others for you," said Turner. "Ask questions! If you are curious, look into what the community offers and the people currently in it," added Barone.

Turner, Barone, and Coughlin's hard work earned them placement in the Navy's submarine fleet. After commissioning, they will head to the Nuclear Power Training Unit in Charleston, South Carolina, where they will continue to develop their technical skills before deploying with the fleet.

USNA Leadership Conference

In January, midshipmen from the Capital Battalion had the opportunity to travel to Annapolis, Maryland to attend the United States Naval Academy Leadership Conference.

Midshipmen heard from ADM James "Sandy" Winnefeld, the chair of the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, LCDR Andrea Howard, one of the first 100 women in the submarine force, and VADM Collin Green, former deputy commander of the United States Special Operations command, among other impressive speakers. MIDN 2/C Laura James, who attended the event, believed it was "a great environment to foster self growth and development."

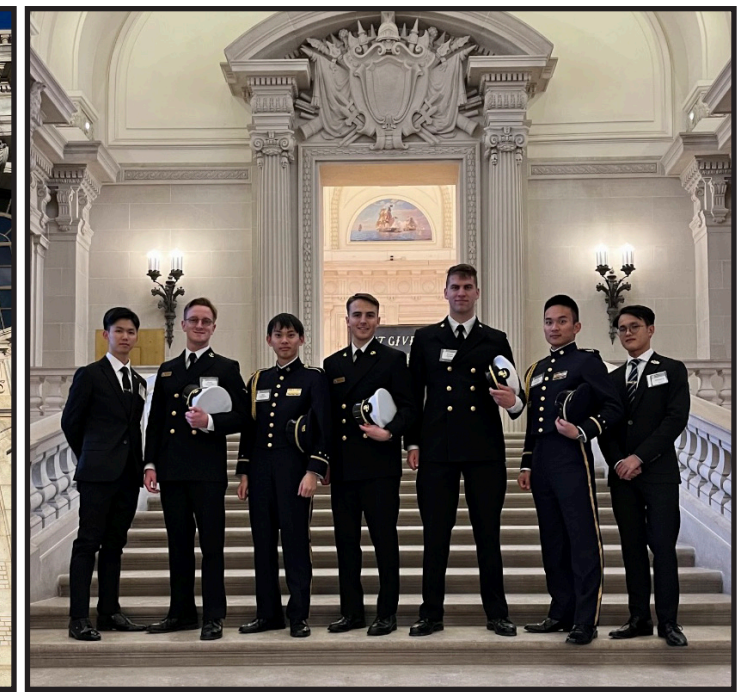
MIDN 1/C Christian Garcia was especially grateful to have this experience before going to The Basic School (TBS) in June. "I found the diversity of participants in the conference, which included civilian, domestic, and international military actors, enriched discussion of leadership topics," Garcia said. He recalled comments made by a civilian working in the private sector, who explained a clear vision statement for employees to find purpose in their work and for companies to retain high quality individuals. Moments like these introduced tenants of leadership from outside the United States military which directly translate to regular operations. "It exposed me to a wider variety of experiences and perspectives towards leadership issues than I would have received had I been with a purely American military centric audience," Garcia concluded.

Midshipmen from the Capital Battalion also had the opportunity to interact with individuals from all over the world. MIDN 3/C Sands Pascucilla traded collar devices with delegates from Ukraine, Taiwan, Poland, Denmark, and Japan.

Each midshipmen attendee left the conference with new perspectives on leadership techniques which they hope to bring back to the Capital Battalion and eventually the fleet. The unit looks forward to joining the next Leadership Conference in 2025.



Capital Battalion midshipmen arrive at the United States Naval Academy.



Capital Battalion Midshipmen exchange insignia with Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force midshipmen.

The Class of 2024 Commissions

At the end of every school year, the Capital Battalion holds a commissioning ceremony for its senior midshipmen. This event is the culmination of four years of training for the seniors in which they officially receive their officer's commission in the Navy and Marine Corps. While this marks the end of their time with the Capital Battalion, it is also the beginning of their active-duty careers out in the fleet. This year, twenty-three midshipmen and two MECEP's from the Capital Battalion will earn their status as Second Lieutenants and Ensigns.

Throughout their time at the Capital Battalion, the senior class has had the opportunity to meet many distinguished guests, train in a premier environment, and prepare for their forthcoming trade in the highest echelons of professionalism. The unit's location has provided opportunities such as access to unique internships and the chance to learn directly from an impressive list of individuals ranging from C.I.A. officers, to the Undersecretary of the Navy. Not to mention, the nation's capital is often the setting of various professional development events which Capital Battalion midshipmen tend to be invited to. These experiences, which feel like second nature to the Capital Battalion, allow midshipmen to enter the fleet with an advanced degree of knowledge and professionalism befitting of Navy and Marine Corps officers. The class of 2024 exceeded these standards.

This year's commissioning ceremony will take place at the United States Navy Memorial. The memorial is adjacent to the National Archives, the home of the United States Constitution which all United States military officers swear their lives and agency to. The newly commissioned officers will be accompanied by their families and friends as well as the Capital Battalion's officers and staff and a distinguished guest speaker. This year the Capital Battalion will have the honor of hearing the Chief of Naval Operations ADM Lisa Franchetti give the keynote speech.

After four years of training exercises, professional development, and deeply rooted friendships, the Capital Battalion is proud to send another class of midshipmen to the fleet and watch them excel as leaders in the greatest fighting force on the face of the earth.



Tulane Drill Competition

On February 17th, twenty-five midshipmen from the Capital Battalion participated in the 50th Annual Mardi Gras Drill Competition hosted by Tulane University. This year, thirty-one NROTC units and service academies met in New Orleans to compete.

In the months leading up to the competition, the Drill Team practiced three times a week in the early mornings. With instruction by then AMOI First Sergeant Bryce Lindsey and MIDN 3/C Nathan Morgan and guidance from MIDN 1/C Darren Tsang and MIDN 1/C Jakob Aggers, the Drill Team practiced its performance in five events: Color Guard, Squad Basic Drill, Platoon Basic Drill, Platoon Exhibition Drill, and Platoon Inspection.

On the weekend of the event, the team embarked on a seventeen-hour bus ride through the night from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans. Once they arrived, they enjoyed the Mardi Gras celebrations. The next day the Drill Team held their final practice before the competition to perfect their routine. On the 17th, they entered the competition with high spirits and prepared mentally and physically to properly execute the drill card and inspection knowledge. The team's top performance was in the Platoon Inspection event, scoring near-perfect. All the practice paid off in the Platoon Exhibition event, where the judge openly complimented the Capital Battalion, saying, "That was perfect. I had to keep my bearing to stop myself from joining in marching with y'all."

The Capital Battalion placed seventh out of thirty-one schools participating and scored higher than it had in previous years. "The team itself was really tight, we had a lot of fun practices in addition to the more strict ones. The bus ride to New Orleans was [also] fun, which I thought created a cohesive atmosphere," said Aggers. MIDN 4/C Lucy McKay stated, "I enjoyed the dedication that everyone on the team put in on social and professional relationships." Overall, the Capital Battalion Drill Team performed exceptionally while building lasting comradery. Next year, the Capital Battalion aims to compete again and perform better than ever before.

Marine Options Prepare for Officer Candidate School

Every summer NROTC units send their Marine Option midshipmen to Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. The Marine Corps takes pride in this program in which Marine officer candidates earn the title of Marines. At OCS, candidates will face several evaluations which they must pass in order to become a Marine Officer. These challenges include the leadership reaction course (LRC), small unit leadership evaluations (SULE), endurance course (E-Course), and the obstacle course (O-Course), which facilitate a well rounded evaluation of each candidate's aptitude.

Within the six-weeks of OCS, candidates are tested on three overarching categories. These tests determine the overall standing of the candidate in leadership, physical fitness, and academic skills. The day-to-day itinerary is difficult. Candidates move an average of eleven miles per day, making their experience at OCS physically taxing all while performing under pressures implemented by the instructors.

Second Class Marine Options from the Capital Battalion prepare fervently for OCS throughout their three years of NROTC. During this time period, they conduct multiple field exercises which enable them to practice the necessary skills. This summer the Capital Battalion is looking forward to the graduation of MIDN 2/C Weston Bush, MIDN 2/C Jacob Doyle, MIDN 2/C Ruby Langhurst, and MIDN 2/C Olivia Saville as they travel to Quantico to earn the title of U.S. Marine. We wish them the best of luck on this endeavor.

Ship Selection 2024

On February 28th and 29th, the Capital Battalion along with the Surface Navy Association's Greater Washington Chapter (SNA GWC) hosted a celebration for 2024 ship selection. GWU NROTC had four seniors picking their first ship over those two days. The SNA GWC sponsored food and surface memorabilia to commemorate ship selection. This event is the culmination of the service assignment process for those U.S. Navy midshipmen selected for the Surface Warfare Community. The ship selection tradition consists of a pool of ships available for SWO-select midshipmen to pick based on their ranking. As midshipmen choose their ships, the number of available ships slowly shrinks. Midshipmen select ships based on their desired platform and homeport. Upon selecting, should the ship have an available spot, the midshipman can celebrate with the knowledge that they have found their new home and family in the fleet. Even more, it is also another step towards the beginning of their careers as naval officers when they will be entrusted with the responsibility and honor of leading sailors through a number of shipboard operations.

This year, the Capital Battalion excitedly witnessed four of its MIDN 1/C Luca Greenspun, MIDN 1/C Matthieu Forgeas, MIDN 1/C Jude DiMedio, and MIDN 1/C Albert O'Rawe, log into a virtual event with over two-hundred other midshipmen from NROTC units across the country. MIDN 1/C Greenspun, who selected thirteenth out of the two-hundred and thirteen total, received his first choice aboard the USS Bulkeley (DDG 84) stationed in Rota, Spain. "To me, ship selection marked [over] three years of effort at the Capital Battalion," Greenspun said.

MIDN 1/C Matthieu Forgeas submitted a request for the USS Raphael Peralta (DDG 115) out of Yokosuka, Japan, which he had been "blue-chipped" for after he spent his summer cruise on board last year. A ship's captain has the ability to reserve a spot for a midshipman who demonstrated superior performance over their summer cruise. "Even though I already knew which ship I'd be going to since I'd been blue-chipped over summer cruise, it was still very exciting to officially pick my first ship. I'm excited to go off and serve on a forward-deployed ship," Forgeas said.

The midshipmen were accompanied by their peers and officer staff, who all joined in the celebration sponsored by the Surface Navy Association. "I felt an overwhelming sense of community and belonging when I heard the cheers as I picked my ship," Greenspun added. The room was packed with overwhelming support and the energy electrified the room. The midshipmen thank the Capital Battalion's commanding officer, Captain Jean Marie Sullivan, for guiding the midshipmen through the service selection process and the SNA for providing the opportunity to celebrate the momentous occasion representing the beginning of their active duty careers in the U.S. Navy.



Joint FEX

This semester Marine Option midshipmen from the Capital Battalion and several other NROTC programs conducted a joint Field Exercise at Marine Corps Base Quantico. Field Exercises (FEX) are an important part of a Marine Option's training and helps familiarize them with professional military knowledge and skills. It also allows midshipmen to put the skills that they have accrued in their regular NROTC curriculum to the test while adopting new skills in preparation for Officer Candidate School and The Basic School.

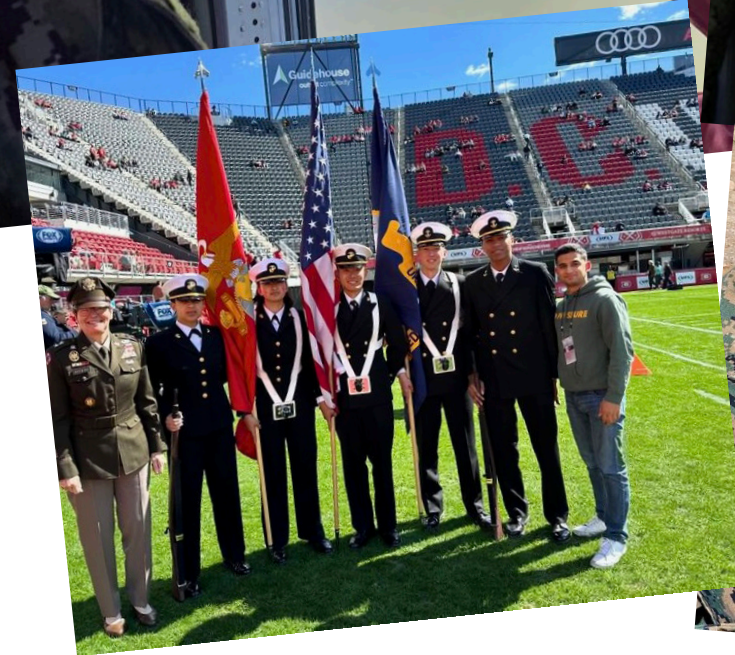
This FEX will be different from the previous exercise held this year in that it will be one of the few opportunities to perform with midshipmen from other units. Usually, the FEX is run exclusively for Capital Battalion Marine Options. However, this FEX will include joint operations with seven other NROTC units from around the country. The integration of the units poses unique challenges in communication and leadership given these midshipmen have never performed together before.

For the Capital Battalion's Marine Officer Instructor Capt Demaris Rocha, FEX is an opportunity to assess the skills of her midshipmen in action. Capt Rocha said that this FEX is, "Putting leadership potential to the ultimate challenge, being able to shoot, move, and communicate with people we aren't familiar with." Capt Rocha also explained the importance of getting field time. "We go to the field so that we can have that exposure to field life and have practice in that environment for OCS and The Basic School (TBS)," she said.

This FEX will be an extremely valuable exercise for all midshipmen participating. In a final motivational quote, Capt Rocha stated, "Train for the best, only the best."



Spring 2024 In Review



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