



Cadets Unis (left) and Fernando (Right) clear the objective during an ambush

# SAN DIEGO STATE ARMY ROTC APRIL NEWS LETTER

**Happy April Everyone! We are one month out from the end of the semester! Keep your eyes focused on finishing strong and getting ready for Camp and other summer opportunities! Almost there!**

**SDSU** | Army ROTC

## Calendar for April

- 04/21: End of the year BBQ - Mission Beach
- 04/22: ACFT for Ranger Challenge and MSIVs
- 04/22: Commanders Cup Soccer & Trophy Presentation
- 4/23: Service for Armed Services (Solana Beach)
- 04/24-05/01 Sandhurst (West Point Competition)
- 4/28: Equipment Turn in Lab
- 4/29: MSIV Staff Ride



Cadet Hernandez rappelling from a 100ft tower

# Spring FTX

In early April we conducted our Spring Field Training Exercise (FTX) at Camp Elliot located on Marine Corps Air Station Miramar. This event occurred from Thursday April 7<sup>th</sup> through Sunday April 10<sup>th</sup>. At our FTXs Cadets are split up into squads (8-9 person teams) and platoons (30-40 person teams) and given specific tactical missions to accomplish. These missions range from setting up patrol bases (easily defendable areas where Cadets can bed down for the night) to conducting ambushes and raids on enemy held positions. Cadets are given real weapons, ranging from the M4 carbine, M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW) and the M240B machine gun. These weapons are equipped



Cadets from 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon move quickly across a road in order to provide 360 degree security during an ambush

with blanks (blanks are non-lethal rounds used for training purposes). Blanks make a loud noise when the individual pulls the trigger, but nothing actually leaves the end of the barrel. This helps create a realistic training environment.

During this year's Spring FTX we invited fellow Air Force ROTC Cadets to participate with us and be a part of our platoons and squads. This was a very unique opportunity for our two ROTC units to work together in a training environment and it allowed Cadets from both programs to gain a better understanding and respect for one another.

On Thursday all Cadets and Cadre met at the fire station located at Camp Elliot. The fire station is located approximately two miles from the training area that is used for the weekend training. Cadets were issued their weapons, Meals Ready to Eat (MREs), maps, compasses, radios, and water.

Next, Cadets were split into two 25-30 person platoons before stepping off to begin the two mile walk to the area of operations. Over the four-day training exercise, Cadets performed ambushes, raids, movement to contact and reconnaissance missions on OPFOR (Opposing Forces) positions. The OPFOR were played by MSIVs.

We finished the FTX with a platoon-on-platoon engagement where 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon was tasked



Cadet Davis (left) and Cadet Acuna (right) contact their higher headquarters using an ASIP radio

with attacking 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon. The engagement happened early in the morning. At dawn, Cadets from both platoons readied their battle positions and commenced the attack. The attack was initiated by Cadre using yellow and purple smoke grenades. Upon initiation, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon started maneuvering their way towards 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon's hardened positions. You could hear the roar of the M240Bs as you saw Cadets shouting and sprinting to cover. When 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon was no longer able to hold their positions they fell back to more hardened positions located on a nearby hill. Both the assaulting and defending forces sustained multiple notional "casualties." In the end 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon secured the objective.

Cadets concluded the FTX with a two-mile ruck march back to the fire station where they cleaned weapons and turned in gear.

Well done Aztec Battalion and the Air Force Cadets who joined us! This was the last hurdle of the semester and you all finished it with flying colors. Now time for some well deserved rest!

# Cadet of the Month: Ethan Senn

This month's Cadet of the Month is Cadet Ethan Senn from Bravo Company. Cadet Senn is an MSII, attends the University of San Diego and is majoring in Finance. Cadet Senn consistently strives for excellence in everything he does, whether that is achieving the highest Army Combat Fitness Score in the battalion (He scored a 597 out of 600!), to being an effective Team Leader during our last FTX as he helped teach and lead his team to accomplishing their missions.

Along with Cadet Senn's hardwork and determination, he also has high moral character and a welcoming demeanor. Cadet Senn always has a positive attitude and is willing to help fellow Cadets who may be confused or struggling with tactics or other military subjects. Cadet Senn is the



Cadet Senn deadlifting during the Best Squad Competition.

definition of what it means to help out your battle buddy and is a strong role model for other Cadets to follow.

Our Assistant S-9, Cadet Rachel Fong interviewed Cadet Senn about his background, why he wanted to join ROTC and who inspires him on a daily basis. This is what he had to say.

## 1. Where did you go to high school and what extra curricular activities did you do?

I went to Arlington High School in Arlington, Washington. I did rowing, was a part of our student senate, and was the senior class officer.

## 2. What additional extracurriculars do you do in College?

I did rowing my freshmen year of college but now I am in a fraternity (Lambda Chi Alpha).

## 3. What/who inspired you to join the military?

My father mostly inspired me to join the military. He was an Army Ranger and an Infantry Officer.

## 4. What do you want to branch or what branches interest you?

Both the Finance Corps and Infantry are branches that interest me right now.



Cadet Senn pulling security during a Leaders Recon.

## 5. If you could give one piece of advice for someone interested in joining ROTC what would it be?

I would say give back to this country that has given you the opportunity to do and be whatever you want.

Well done Cadet Senn on all of your accomplishments thus far and for many more to come! You are a leader amongst your peers and we are excited to see all the things you will accomplish in the future! Keep it up and always Tip of the Spear!

# Alumni Spotlight: The Fernando Siblings

This month's alumni spotlight is on 2LT Brandon Fernando and Cadet Kiana Fernando. 2LT Fernando is a graduate of the Aztec Battalion and is currently a Military Police Officer with the 89<sup>th</sup> Military Police Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas. Cadet Fernando is an MSII in the Aztec Battalion and is a consistent member of the Aztec Color Guard Team. 2LT Fernando and Cadet Fernando are brother and sister and were both part of the Aztec Battalion at the same time last year. They are not the only siblings who have attended our program at the same time, but they do fall into a unique category of participating in the Aztec Battalion with Family. I asked both of them about their experiences going



2LT and Cadet Fernando at 2LT Fernando's Military Police Basic Officer Leaders Course graduation.

Through the program with their siblings and this is what they had to say.

## 1. What made you want to join the military?

- 2LT Fernando: I wanted to join because I wanted to serve this country. This country has brought my Family so much prosperity, and I wanted to give back to it. In addition, I have always thought it was a cool career and opportunity to see the world.

- Cadet Fernando: From a young age, I have always had an interest in the military but I did not openly express my enthusiasm for the Armed Forces until my freshman year of high school. I originally wanted to enlist in the Navy, then the Marines

and now I plan to commission in the Army.

## 2. What was it like having Family members in the ROTC program while you went through it?

-2LT Fernando: Having my younger sister with me in the program was exciting since it was the first time since elementary, that we got to be together at the same school simultaneously. I got to act as a



2LT and Cadet Fernando posing for Cadet Fernando's High School graduation.

mentor and a brother to my sister.

- Cadet Fernando: It was cool to be with my brother in ROTC. He taught me a lot about land navigation and basic formations before I became a Cadet. I was an MSI when I joined and he was an MSIV so we did not get to work with each other too often, but he was always there to answer my questions and mentor me.

## 3. For 2LT Fernando what words of advice do you have for Cadets about to go to BOLC?

BOLC will teach you the bare minimum relating to your job. Whatever your branch is, be prepared to adapt to how they actually operate themselves. It is not always how BOLC may teach. Additionally, be confident in everything you do and say. You may be a new "butterbar" in the Army, but if you act confidently in every decision, direction, statement, or action you will gain the respect of your Soldiers.

## 4. For Cadet Fernando what words of advice do you have for Cadets interested in Color Guard?

I think anyone who has the slightest curiosity about Color Guard should join the team. It's fun and you get to participate in events that most people don't typically do. I have had nothing but memorable experiences and I am glad to be a part of it. You will not regret it!

## Cadre Corner: Major Kevin Heath



Major Heath giving a thumbs up while on a patrol.

From my perspective as the Operations Officer, this semester has gone really well. We started the semester with a COVID-interrupted return to learning, but rapidly gained steam in February and March. We have had high quality, Cadet-led training on a diverse array of tasks, including rifle marksmanship, rappelling and platoon tactics. We have an intelligent, fit and motivated team. What I see from my foxhole are MS IVs that are ready to lead platoons, MS IIIs that are ready to crush Advanced Camp, and MS I/IIIs that are ready to take on the commitment of being a contracted cadet, and all which that entails.

My advice as we enter the final weeks of the semester is stay humble and stay ready to learn. We are still heading into our most challenging events, including Spring FTX, the Sandhurst Competition, and Cadet Summer Training. Some of you will be attending Airborne and Air Assault School this summer, or interning in a variety of locations across the United States. I am confident that you will continue to impress on as you take on these challenges and continue your journey from aspiring professional to Army leader.

Greetings Aztec friends and Family. My name is Kevin Heath and I have been asked to contribute something for the Cadre Corner of the April Newsletter. I am the Operations Officer for the SDSU ROTC Battalion. I am relatively new to the program,

but I am bringing 20 years of operational and training experience in Light, Stryker, Airborne and Training units with me. This is my first time working with ROTC, and I have been really impressed by the people on this team so far. We have a strategic imperative to produce young leaders of character for our Army, and I am humbled to play a small role in that mission.



Cadets help pass out water and electrolyte drinks as they cheer on runners at the San Diego Hot Chocolate 5k/15k volunteer event.



Cadet Rodriguez participating in the battalion-wide push to answer the Red Cross blood shortage.

**Connect with the Aztec Battalion!!**

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