

OCTOBER 2023

# BEARKAT BATTALION

## NEWSLETTER



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### EAT 'EM UP KATS!

October has been a very busy month for the program with Cadets balancing studying for their midterm exams, completing their required training and participating in special events. Some highlights from this month's edition include: insights from Cadets who ran some of our training events; the progress of our Ranger Challenge team; and spotlights of some of our newly contracted Cadets who have committed to becoming an Officer and leader with our Army. We invite you to learn about a few of our Cadets while we celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month! As always we feature one of our alumni and their Army experience.



**Check out the ROTC  
Tailgating Experience!  
Read More - Page 5**



**Read about the  
Army 10 Miler!  
Read More - Page 8**

# Hispanic Heritage Month

## EJÉRCITO DEL ESTADO UNIDO ROTC\*

The month of October is Hispanic Heritage Month. During this month, the ROTC Program and the United States Army would like to celebrate the incredible contributions and rich cultural diversity of Hispanic Americans who have served and continue to serve in our armed forces. The U.S. Army is proud to honor the remarkable legacy of Hispanic Soldiers who have demonstrated unwavering dedication and valor in the defense of our nation. Their service spans generations and includes a wide array of roles and ranks, from enlisted to General Officers. With more than 17 percent of America's Soldiers of Hispanic or Latino descent, their presence and influence are substantial and growing. Their contribution to the Army's strength and effectiveness plays a pivotal role in preserving our freedom and safeguarding the values we hold dear. During this month and throughout the year, we recognize and appreciate their vital contributions and sacrifices. Here are some below and on the following page are a few Cadets that we would like to recognize for their contribution to the program.



**Cadet Diego Piaz is a Sophomore and MS2 in the program with a major in Criminal Justice and hopes to become an Aviation Officer after graduation. He takes part in Ranger Challenge team and is the NCOIC of our Cannon Crew team.**

# Hispanic Heritage Month

ESTO LO DEFENDEREMOS\*



**Cadet Thelma Gurrola is a Junior at Sam Houston studying Criminal Justice and is a MS3 this year. She grew up in Mexico and brings with her the traditions and cultures to the program and hopes to become either a Military Intelligence officer or Field Artillery Officer after graduation. She is the NCOIC of our social media team and is very involved with the program and supporting our others Cadets and specialty teams. We look forward to her continued success this year as an MS3 and at Cadet Summer Training!**



**Cadet Cinthia Salinas is a Senior and part of the MS4 leadership. She has taken on the role of S-8 this year and has been keeping track of our budget. She will be graduating in the spring of 2024 and wants to branch Active Duty Medical Services. Salinas plays a big role in motivating our Cadets during training and we are excited to see where to future takes her. Remember once a Bearkat, always a Bearkat!**

# Kynnyth LeBlanc

## SUMMER INTERNSHIP

Over the 2023 Summer Break, I had the chance to attend CTLT at Fort Riley, Kansas, where I was attached to the 2nd Platoon, 118th MP Co., 97th MP Battalion. During my time there, I had the privilege of learning from my sponsor, Lt. Melendez, about the daily responsibilities of being a Military Police Officer. I also had the opportunity to participate in a LEE (Law Enforcement Exercise), which included scenarios such as terrorist attacks, DUI incidents, and more. Additionally, I went on a ride-along to observe the daily duties of law enforcement officers. During which, I witnessed several arrests and various MP procedures. Overall, I aspire to become an MP officer after college and recommend that if given the chance, other Cadets should participate in summer training at Fort Riley, Kansas.

- Cadet Kynnyth LeBlanc



Military Police Squad Car



Cadet Kynnyth LeBlanc learning how to write a Police Report



Cadet Kynnyth LeBlanc assisting the Military Police on patrol

# Newly Contracted Cadets



Cadet Haggai Gonzales



Cadet Taylor Knight



Cadet Jesus Ortega-Alvarez



Cadet Lauren Silva

# Newly Contracted Cadets



Cadet Diego Paez



Cadet Thelma Gurrola



Cadet Kaleb Brown

I'm super excited to now be a contracted Cadet here at Sam Houston State University! It is an exciting step in becoming an Officer, and I hope to use this as a stepping stone to get more involved in the program and my community!

-Cadet Kaleb Brown

# Newly Contracted Cadets



Cadet Alexander Cannon



Cadet Michael Kilgore



Cadet Christian Santiago



Cadet Hunter Milburn

# Newly Contracted Cadets



Cadet Matthew Traynor

Since I've contracted it's been a great step into my future career as an Army Officer and I'm now looking forward to finding what job fits me best. I'm doing my part.

- Cadet Traynor



Cadet Matthew Bilke



Cadet Joshua Whaling



# Cadet of the Month

## CAILYN WHITNER

Hello, my name is Cailyn Whitner. I am currently a sophomore, majoring in Computer Science with a minor in Military Science. I am a student worker with the Office of Admissions and a member of the Texas Army National Guard. I chose to join the ROTC program at SHSU not only to commission, but also to learn new skills and improve the skills I already hold to become a more proficient leader and a stronger member of the U.S. Army. I intend on commissioning Active Duty under the Cyber branch so that I have knowledge and some experience from my degree that can transfer over to the field.

As an MSI in the ROTC program, this is my first semester, so far I have had an incredible experience within the program. Part of that experience has been enhanced by some of the specialty teams I have been a part of or preparing to try out for. One such team is Ranger Challenge where I have learned valuable new skills as well as new limits for myself to surpass. Ranger Challenge has made me both physically and mentally tougher. It has helped me to create great relationships which have helped me to learn, teach, grow, and lead. I am also a Color Guard team candidate, as well as a member of the Push-up and Cannon crews. Thanks to both Pushup and Cannon crew I have gotten to have incredible memories and represent the program with each home game we have had this semester.

Lastly, I am glad to have received Cadet of the Month because it shows me that my hard work has paid off but also it helps motivate me because I am very hard on myself and being Cadet of the Month helps me feel accomplished. It also makes me want to work even harder now that I have set a standard for myself in the eyes of others. It also reminds me, I am capable of more than I may realize, which makes me want to set even higher standards for myself. Those standards motivate me to do even better for things such as our Brigade level competition for Ranger Challenge and more training in and out of the program. I am looking forward to the semesters I have ahead of me in the program and the knowledge, leadership, and skills that me and my fellow cadets get to develop before Commissioning.



# ROTC Tailgates and Football

## GO KATS!!!

If you're looking for an unforgettable game day experience at Sam Houston State University, you absolutely must swing by the ROTC tailgate! It's the ultimate pre-game gathering where camaraderie, school spirit, and some seriously delicious food come together. The atmosphere is electric, and you'll be surrounded by Bearkat fans who bleed orange and blue. Whether you're a student, an alumni, or just a fan of college football, the ROTC tailgate is the place to be. Join in the fun, enjoy some mouthwatering Hamburgers, and connect with fellow Bearkats. Make unforgettable memories and help us cheer our team to victory. The tailgate allows the Battalion to show off our hard work and our passion for giving back to the community. Don't miss out on this vibrant and spirited tradition – come join us at the ROTC tailgate, and let's make game day at SHSU one to remember! To learn more about the Sam Houston State University ROTC tailgate event, contact the university's ROTC program directly by checking the university's official website, or look for event announcements and details from official university communications, social media channels, or local event listings.

- Cadet Carson Shell (Tailgate OIC)



**Carson Shell and Jack Boucher flipping Burgers and having fun**



**Emmet Gray serving burgers to a fellow Bearkat**



**Bearkat Dad trying the ROTC Pull Up Bar challenge**

# ROTC Tailgates and Football

## BOOM!!!



**William Mills (on the right), the OIC for the Cannon Crew, Makade McGinley and Joseph Piro touring the tailgate**



**The Cannon Crew preparing for the football game and cheering on the team**



**From Left to Right: Nicholas Watson, Makade McGinley, Taylor Russell, Jackson Hyams, Cailyn Whitner, Katelyn Nitsche**



**The Pushup Crew doing there best to cheer on the Sam Houston Football Team**

# Rifle Marksmanship

## KEEP CALM AND SHOOT ON



### Best Shots in the Program:

1. **William Ratliff 34/40: Sharpshooter**
2. **Michael Huff 30/40: Sharpshooter**
3. **Joseph Locklin 28/40: Marksmanship**
4. **Michael Kilgore 27/40: Marksmanship**
5. **John Wisnewski 27/40: Marksmanship**

On September 15, our Bearkat Battalion MSIII Cadets practiced weapons qualification at the Huntsville Police Department gun range. Throughout the day, Cadets arrived in groups of four and were given an hour to group/zero and run through a practice qualification. During the group/zero, they were given three opportunities to shoot and then adjust their rifle sights to fit them. After the group/zero, the qualification follows; Cadets were given four ten-round magazines and have to shoot at least 23/40 to qualify. The first 10 rounds are fired in the prone unsupported position. The next magazine is used when the Cadets shift to the prone supported position using sandbags. The next 10 rounds are then used in the kneeling-supported position. Lastly, the remaining magazine is used in the standing supported position. The qualification is fast-paced and Cadets must fine tune their fundamentals in order to complete it with accuracy. As this was the first range day of the semester, our Cadets learned a lot and will have more opportunities to gain more proficiency and confidence in weapons qualification and we look forward to seeing their scores rise as they get more practice!

- Cadet William Ratliff

# 6 Mile Ruck

ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER



SHSU Cadets preparing for the 6 mile ruck at 5 a.m.



Cadets about to step off



Ranger Cadets at the turn around point to finish the last few miles



Cadets Jackson Hyams and Cailyn Whitner finished the ruck with Ranger Challenge Team

# Army 10 Mile Run

## WASHINGTON DC

The Army Ten Miler was a great success for the BearKat Battalion. The run is an annual road running race held in Washington, D.C. It is one of the largest and most popular 10-mile races in the United States. The event is organized by the U.S. Army Military District of Washington and is typically scheduled in the fall, often in October. The race draws participants from all over the country and even internationally, with runners of all skill levels taking part in the event. This year our runners performed excellently and finished within an hour and a half, as they maneuvered around thousands of fellow runners. Each Cadet went out confidently and determined to finish the race and did so in the utmost fashion. I thank them for their hard work for many months to complete this task and showed hard improvement from the previous year. The event was a spectacle, with over 20,000 runners running across our beloved capital with high spirits and motivated spectators to cheer them on. The runners passed significant landmarks such as the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials and saw the great Potomac flowing under them when crossing the bridges. The run is not only a prestigious race but also an opportunity to show support for the men and women of the U.S. military and the important work they do. It combines a challenging athletic event with a sense of patriotism and community.

- Cadet James Cooke



Left To Right: William Mills, Michael Huff, Tanner Stone, William Ratliff, Avery Sitkowski, James Cooke, Bailey Pogue, Ryan Coker



Cadets and Cadre before the run!



# Simultaneous Membership Program

## HELP PAY FOR COLLEGE



College is an investment, but it you may not have to pay for it yourself. The Army ROTC SMP, or Simultaneous Membership Program, is a program that allows Cadets to simultaneously participate in both the Army Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program and the Army National Guard or Army Reserve. It's designed to provide cadets with additional training and experience while also allowing them to serve as enlisted members in the National Guard or Army Reserve.

Here's how the program typically works and how a Cadet can join:

1. **Eligibility:** To be eligible for the Army ROTC SMP, you need to meet certain criteria. Generally, you must be an ROTC cadet, be in good academic standing, and meet the age, citizenship, and physical fitness requirements.
2. **Enrollment:** To join the Army ROTC SMP, you'll typically need to follow these steps:
  - a. Enroll in an ROTC program: You must first be enrolled as a cadet in an Army ROTC program at a college or university that offers the program.
  - b. Join the National Guard or Army Reserve: You will also need to enlist in the Army National Guard or Army Reserve. This involves going through the enlistment process and attending basic training (if you haven't already).
3. **Drill and Training:** Once you're enrolled in the SMP, you will be required to participate in monthly drills and training with your National Guard or Army Reserve unit, just like other enlisted soldiers. You'll also attend your regular ROTC classes and training.
4. **Financial Benefits:** The Army ROTC SMP can offer financial benefits to cadets, including:
  - a. *Drill Pay:* You'll receive pay for your monthly drills and annual training as a member of the National Guard or Army Reserve.
  - b. *GI Bill Benefits:* You may be eligible for educational benefits under the GI Bill, such as the Montgomery GI Bill or the Post-9/11 GI Bill. These benefits can help cover a significant portion of your college expenses.
  - c. *ROTC Scholarships:* You can still qualify for Army ROTC scholarships, which can help cover tuition, fees, and provide a monthly stipend.

The specific financial benefits and eligibility criteria can vary, so it's essential to consult with the ROTC program at your college or university and the National Guard or Army Reserve unit you wish to join. They can provide detailed information on the benefits available in your specific situation.

In summary, the Army ROTC SMP is a program that allows cadets to participate in both ROTC and the National Guard or Army Reserve simultaneously. It offers financial benefits through drill pay, GI Bill benefits, and ROTC scholarships, helping to offset college expenses.

# 2023 Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Dinner

## THE FUTURE OF THE ARMY IS BRIGHT

On the evening of September 22, Cadets from the Bearkat Battalion had the honor of attending the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) East Texas Chapter's Bearkat Battalion Scholarship Dinner. This dinner allows Cadets of all levels of the program to interact with retired Officers of all U.S. branches and form connections within the military and local communities. These connections with retired servicemembers and their family members provide Cadets a unique opportunity to discuss each other's career paths and garner advice from the men and women who served before us. The Cadets selected to attend represented our program's best and brightest. They provided each member of MOAA with insight into how the Bearkat Battalion trains Cadets to become young lieutenants, how organizations like MOAA and their support are critical to the Bearkat Battalion's success, and they exemplify this generation's strong desire to carry on the torch and serve as the members of MOAA had served before them. After the dinner, the Bearkat Battalion Commander Avery Sitkowski and Command Sergeant Major Cinnamon Wright-Burwinkel briefed members of MOAA on the progress of the Bearkat Battalion.

Attendees: Chase Davis (MS1), Sidney Blackmar (MS1), Diego Paez (MS2), Taylor Knight (MS2), Michael Huff (MS3), Cinnamon Wright-Burwinkel (MS4) and her fiancé Isaac Perez, Avery Sitkowski (MS4) and his fiancé Zoe Bourdumis, and Major Angel Rodriguez.



From Left to Right: Cinnamon Wright-Burwinkel, Sidney Blackmar, Diego Paez, Taylor Knight, Major Angel Rodriguez, Avery Sitkowski, Michael Huff, and Chase Davis



Avery Sitkowski networking with the guests at the Military Officers Association of America dinner



# Field Training Exercise

## TRAINING UNDER THE ECLIPSE



From October 12th through the 15th, the MSIV Cadet Staff, Cadre, and the McGloin Ranch professionals facilitated the SHSU Bearkat Battalion's 2023 Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX). I would like to thank and acknowledge all our diligent MSI/II/III Cadets for coming out and giving their best efforts while training at McGloin Ranch. Overall, these Cadets effectively executed Land Navigation in daytime and nighttime iterations, along with four strenuous training lanes covering U.S. Army battle drills such as Attack, Raid, Ambush, and Movement to Contact, all at the squad level. After completing their tactical missions and enjoying the unique atmosphere provided by a solar eclipse on the 14th, our Cadets were able to receive extra time training on the M4 range which helped develop everyone's comfort and confidence behind a rifle. I speak for the entire Bearkat Battalion when I say we are immensely proud of the hard work and perseverance that every trainee embodied during the Fall FTX. The various challenges and learning environments provided throughout the FTX have uniquely prepared our current MSIII class for the future obstacles they will face at Cadet Summer Training in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Furthermore, every contracted Cadet attending the FTX should take great pride and acknowledgment in the significant milestone they have just achieved in their journeys toward commissioning into the U.S. Army.

Keep up the good work,

-Cadet Michael Thille, Cadet Officer in Charge of the Fall FTX

# Field Training Exercise

## MCGLOIN RANCH, TX



**Cadet Isaac Siekas completing his weapons qualification**



**Cadet Katelyn Nitsche conducting her OPORD brief**



**Cadet Michael Kilgore watching for enemy movement**



**Cadets transitioning to the next area of operations**

# Ranger Challenge

## RANGERS LEAD THE WAY

The Ranger Challenge team is a competitive group of hardworking individuals who come together to accomplish challenging tactical and technical tasks modeled after the tasks required for the Expert Soldier Badge. Some of the events that we train for include the One Rope Bridge, obstacle course, Rifle/pistol marksmanship, and a ruck march. This year, I am honored and privileged to be our Battalion's Ranger Challenge OIC. I am excited to continue training with our team and to move onto the next level of competition at the Brigade's event where we will compete alongside the other nine teams who qualified to move on. Working with the team has been an absolute honor, and I am proud to see how far they have come and will go. Do not forget to check out the November Newsletter for the results of the Battalion Range Challenge. Onto the next mission!

-Cadet Nicholas Watson  
(Ranger OIC)



# 6th Annual Rowdy Inman 5k

## RUN FOR FUN!!

On 26 December 2007, in Mosul, Iraq, Captain Rowdy J. Inman, a Sam Houston State University alumnus, paid the ultimate sacrifice from injuries sustained from small-arms fire during dismounted combat operations as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Captain Inman was a recipient of the Bronze Star Medal and numerous other military awards and decorations. Captain Inman was assigned, at the time of his death, to the 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment out of Fort Hood, TX. Captain Inman was also a veteran of Operation Desert Storm and Operation Just Cause, earning many accommodations including the Bronze Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Purple Heart, and the Meritorious Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster.

There is still time to register! Come out and join us for our annual 5K in memory of Captain Rowdy J. Inman. Meet us at the Clock Tower on 11 November 2023 at 8:00 AM where we will be holding the 6th Annual Captain Rowdy Inman 5K. This event has been established to commemorate the sacrifice that Captain Inman and other service members have made for this country's freedom. Come out and challenge yourself for a great cause! We'll see you there!

-Cadet Emily Slott



**In Memory of CPT  
Rowdy J. Inman  
"Ironhawk 6"**



**QR Code to the Sign  
Up Sheet**

# First Lieutenant Michael Way

## CLASS OF 2021

To the Bearkat Battalion,

Hello Bearkats, my name is First Lieutenant Michael D. Way, and I first attended Sam Houston State University in the Fall of 2018. I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Management Information Systems and was commissioned as an Active-Duty Signal Officer in May 2021.

My time in ROTC was unforgettable. I enjoyed spending time with my fellow Cadets, learning how to become impactful leaders in the Army, and become the best version of ourselves. Upon graduating and commissioning, I attended Fort Gordon, Georgia's Signal Basic Officer Leader Course (SBOLC). Currently, I am at my first duty station in Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) Washington, just south of Seattle.

My first assignment was as a Platoon Leader in I Corps, HHBN, Signal, Intelligent, and Sustainment (SIS) Company. As a platoon leader in SIS Company, I participated in many Corps-level exercises in countries such as the island of Guam, Japan, Thailand, and the Philippines. I learned a plethora of information, such as Property Accountability, the capabilities of Signal-Intelligence Equipment, and leadership from my Cadre. Leadership is taught and heard throughout ROTC; however, as an Officer, you must apply it daily. I credit the Bearkat Battalion and Cadre for helping me develop and sharpen my leadership skills. The best advice I could give anyone in ROTC and/or about to commission is that "It's real." The levels of responsibility and accountability are heightened, and as an Officer, no matter your branch or rank, you always need to be prepared to make critical decisions.

I also recommend taking advantage of every training opportunity to learn as much as possible while in the program. Training doesn't include weekly labs and classes; it could be strengthening your mentorship skills, increasing your physical fitness, or even learning another position. As a junior officer, you will be tested daily with minimal information, so remaining flexible, having a positive attitude, and being receptive to receiving information will go a long way. I am an Executive Officer (XO) in the 22D Corps Signal Brigade, 51st Expeditionary Signal Battalion-Enhanced (ESB-E), Bravo Company. To conclude, I hope everyone in the Bearkat Battalion has an excellent semester and remember to train hard!

Go KATs!!



First Lieutenant Michael Way in a Platoon Leader position for his Sustainment Unit



First Lieutenant Michael Way receiving a letter by the President



First Lieutenant Michael Way Congratulating his Corporal on his Honorable Discharge

# What to look forward to!

## NOVEMBER



**Check out the Cadets dressing up for our Halloween Lab and Physical Training**

**Read about our Ranger Challenge team as they compete at the Brigade level**



**See what Second Lieutenant Courtney Paulson has been up to since graduation**