

USC NAVAL ROTC

NEWSLETTER



October 2025

Edited by: MIDN 3/C Kundu & Hammond

Trojan Battalion Successfully Conducts Fall FEX at Camp Pendleton

By: MIDN 3/C Banks, 4/C Nocker & 4/C Holley

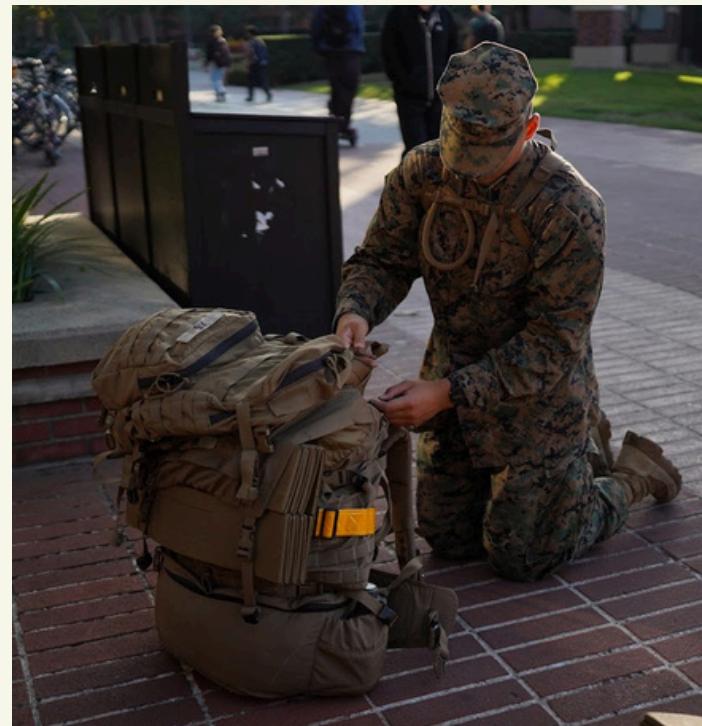
In preparation for this semester's Field Exercise (FEX), Navy and Marine Option Midshipmen complete a series of classes and training sessions designed to build their readiness prior to being evaluated during the FEX. At the beginning of the semester, MIDN Wyman and MIDN Banks delivered a brief on the fundamentals of giving and receiving orders, emphasizing the importance of the five-paragraph order in providing clear guidance during Small Unit Leadership Evaluations (SULEs). MIDN Xie and MIDN Estrada followed with instruction on effective land navigation strategies. SSgt Letizia then led the MIDN through practice ruck workouts to improve both pace and technique. Finally, MIDN Baret and SSgt Letizia taught tactics essential for success during FEX. As the armorer, MIDN Estrada also played a key role by ensuring that everyone attending was properly equipped and fully prepared.



The team stands accomplished after the final awards ceremony.



MIDN enjoy a "Warriors Dinner" following the completion of the training evolution.



MIDN 2/C Xie prepares his gear before departing for Camp Pendleton.

Night Land Navigation & Ruck

Upon arrival at Camp Pendleton and setting up gear, participants immediately conducted pace-count tests to determine how many steps to take on average per 100 meters. After that, the Midshipmen split into fire teams of three and began night land navigation.

They were given three coordinates and tasked with finding each one using only a map, protractor, and compass. They were evaluated on accuracy and execution, a heavy factor of their overall score.



SSgt Letizia briefs and prepares the MIDN for the upcoming ruck.



MIDN 4/C Zhang and MIDN 3/C Banks working together to plot their points.



The next morning, the Midshipmen woke up at 0600 and departed for the ruck at 0700. The hike took place along Camp Pendleton's "Trail of Tears," totaling about 5 miles. The route featured frequent significant elevation changes, with many steep hills. Participants stopped a few times throughout the hike for brief hydration and pocket chow breaks and eventually reached the area to prepare for follow-on evaluations planned for the day.



The team hikes through the hills of Camp Pendleton.

SULEs and Day Land Navigation

After the hike, participants jumped straight into Small Unit Leadership Evaluations. Each Marine option and select Navy options were evaluated on their leadership capabilities and delivering five-paragraph orders. The evaluator would brief the squad leader on the situation and their squad's mission. The squad leader then had five minutes to conduct land navigation, develop a plan, and brief their squad. Once the mission was complete, the evaluator debriefed with the squad leader, reviewing what went well and where to improve. Once the debrief was completed, it was the next squad leader's turn.

At the completion of SULEs, the final evaluated event was day land navigation. Evaluators provided each MIDN with a starting point and five 8-digit grid coordinates, the last being the LZ. Everyone had 2 hours to plot and maneuver their route. One of the most complex parts was navigating the rugged terrain, including steep hills, ditches and draws, creeks, and dense vegetation. The points were spread out, with some 2000+ meters apart, so it was essential to come up with good routes to hit all the points. Like night land navigation, Midshipmen were scored based on the accuracy of plots and finding the correct points.



MIDN 4/C Turk and MIDN 4/C Lee apply camouflage paint to blend in with their surroundings.



MIDN 3/C Estrada provides security for his squad during SULEs.



MIDN prepare their points and routes using various mapping tools.

Awards & Recognition

Captain VanderSchans concluded the Field Exercise with recognition of exemplary Midshipmen who displayed the utmost preparedness and application of land navigation skills and combat scenario critical thinking skills.

The “Gator Navy Award” is presented to a Navy Option MIDN who demonstrated versatility, readiness, and determination in the challenging environment of FEX and who also demonstrated the keen ability to work seamlessly with a team and lead with confidence. The recipient of this award was MIDN 4/C Lee, considering this was his first FEX and his first exposure to the field training environment, it was a worthy accomplishment.

The “Teufel Hunden Award”, recognizes the top Marine Option MIDN who scored the highest cumulatively in land navigation and SULE evaluation. MIDN 3/C Banks was awarded this honor, demonstrating his adaptability, Marine spirit, and sound leadership.

Lastly, Capt. VanderSchans recognized the squad with the highest scores with the “Super Squad Award”; the recipients were the midshipmen of Second Squad. Overall, the leadership regarded the work of every MIDN highly and congratulated the group with a pizza dinner. Congratulations to the outstanding MIDN and great job to all participating parties!



Capt. VanderSchans announces MIDN 4/C Lee as recipient of the Gator Navy award.



Capt. VanderSchans gifts MIDN 2/C Miller new EyePro for his “2nd Lt. toolkit”.



Capt. VanderSchans congratulates MIDN 3/C Banks on his outstanding work.

Halloween PT

On Wednesday, October 29th, the Battalion had its annual Halloween PT. MIDN dressed up in all their favorite costumes for some good-natured dodgeball competition. Operations Platoon won the day, with MIDN 1/C McKernan clinching a 6v1 win against Training Platoon's finest to seal the deal.



Above: MIDN Turk, Tam, Scott C., and Hammond pose for a photo in their costumes.

Left: The impressive costumes of our MIDN, MECEPs and OC.

Below: 3/C and 4/C MIDN line up to square off against 1/C, 2/C, and OC/ MECEPs.



JROTC Visit

On October 23rd, the Trojan Battalion had an opportunity to host Narbonne High School at the University of Southern California. The Narbonne cadets had the opportunity to learn how to apply for the NROTC scholarship, explore Midshipman life, and tour the USC campus. The Battalion looks forward to hosting more NROTC cadets during the upcoming JROTC symposium in November.



The NJROTC cadets of Narbonne.

Welcoming Back a Familiar Face

By: MIDN 3/C Kundu

On October 30th, the Trojan Battalion hosted Col. Clyde M. Woltman, USMC (ret), of the class of 1981 for a Q&A session. Col. Woltman talked about leadership, some key lessons from his time in and out of service, and a series of difficult “Leadership Scenarios” designed to test the Midshipmen’s prowess.

A career Marine and Naval Aviator, he served and commanded in multiple operational units and staff assignments throughout his service. He flew more than 200 missions during Operations Desert Storm, Southern Watch, and Iraqi Freedom. In addition to seven operational and combat deployments, he held roles at the Pentagon with Headquarters Marine Corps; served as a Spanish Navy Exchange Pilot; studied at the French Joint War College and the University of Paris; worked as a NATO Staff Officer in Naples, Italy; and was selected as a Secretary of Defense Corporate Fellow.



Col. Woltman dialogues with the Midshipmen.



A Happy 250th Birthday to the United States Navy

By: MIDN 3/C Kundu

Preparations for the Navy's 250th Birthday at the Battalion began in earnest this month, starting with a Service Dress Blues uniform inspection ahead of the Navy-Marine Corps Ball on November 14th. USC Midshipmen were graded on their uniforms, bearing, and knowledge. The inspection was crucial to ensure that everyone was prepared for the culminating Ball in November.

Later in the month, the Battalion conducted a cake-cutting ceremony during Thursday ProLab. Additionally worth mentioning is the sword detail, which has been practicing for the upcoming ceremony on weeknights.



Training Platoon forms for inspection.



MIDN 1/C Walsh tests MIDN 3/C Hansen's knowledge.



SSgt Arzate inspects MIDN 3/C Williams.

Leadership Conferences at Duke and the Capital Battalion

By: MIDN 3/C MaGill and 3/C Madrigal

Duke Leadership Conference

On 3-4 October 2025, Midshipmen 3/C MaGill and 2/C Tran departed LAX for the beautiful Carolinas. The pair arrived in Durham for the first annual Duke C.O.R.E. (Cultivating Officers toward Readiness and Excellence) leadership conference. At this conference, midshipmen and cadets from schools around the country came together to learn about the past, present, and future of INDOPACOM with a focus on the role of the junior officer.

The guest speakers included highly knowledgeable and experienced military leaders, such as VADM Jeffrey Hughes, LtGen H. Stacy Clardy (ret.), MG Craig Whelden (ret.), RADM Mike Bernacchi (ret.), COL Eric Jnah, and Maj Roger Kerstetter.

"The Duke C.O.R.E. conference was an exciting and meaningful experience. I learned a great deal about INDOPACOM, which is particularly important to us as midshipmen, given the current state of global affairs. I am thankful for the opportunity to travel back to the Carolinas and see my family as well." - MIDN 3/C MaGill



USC MIDN with Duke's CO and XO.



MIDN Magill and Tran in front of the Duke Chapel.

Leadership Conferences at Duke and the Capital Battalion (continued)

Capital Battalion Leadership Conference

Earlier this October, Midshipmen 2/C Deolalikar, 2/C Morris, 3/C Ouchi, and 3/C Madrigal had the pleasure of traveling to our nation's capital for the 2025 Washington D.C. NROTC Leadership Conference hosted by the Capitol Battalion at George Washington University.

During the conference, the midshipmen were exposed to a diverse array of guest speakers who discussed the conference's central theme: winning tomorrow's war today. Over the weekend, guest speakers such as Lt. Gen. Karsten Heckl (ret.) and VADM Thomas Henderschedt highlighted the importance of being prepared for our next fight, both industrially and politically. We need to prioritize shipbuilding, strong leadership development, and adaptability. Throughout the weekend, the midshipmen had the opportunity to network with midshipmen of other battalions across the country. The conference culminated in a spirited barbecue lunch and flag football event, which allowed attendees to get to know each other. USC NROTC is deeply grateful for this opportunity hosted by the Capital Battalion, which helped foster leadership development and camaraderie.



MIDN Ouchi, Madrigal, Deolalikar and Morris in Washington D.C.

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MIDN of the Month: September 2025



The Battalion recognized MIDN 3/C Jerom Jothiprakasam in September for demonstrating exceptional initiative and commitment to the success of his peers. He tutors fellow midshipmen in calculus, ensuring that others can strengthen their academic foundations. As a platoon ATHO, MIDN Jothiprakasam went above and beyond by creating the battalion fitness leaderboard, fostering a spirit of healthy competition and motivating midshipmen to improve their physical readiness. MIDN Jothiprakasam's innovation, selflessness, and drive to enhance the experience of those around him reflect a high level of leadership potential and a genuine dedication to the improvement of the battalion.

MIDN of the Month: October 2025

MIDN 3/C Logan Banks hails from Sacramento, CA, and is studying Real Estate Development. Within the Trojan Battalion, he has distinguished himself as an outstanding Marine Option, excelling as a squad leader during the Fall FEX. He has scored above 290 on every Physical Fitness Test and consistently demonstrates exceptional leadership and discipline. A Dean's List student, he credits his father, a former Marine, as a major influence. Outside of NROTC, MIDN Banks wrestled for 13 years and now trains in MMA with plans to compete soon. He is passionate about fitness, health, surfing, traveling, and camping. He continues to set the standard for excellence within the Battalion. Congratulations MIDN Banks!





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