Staff

Editors
CDT Ruby Matsumoto
CDT Cheyenne Stallworth
MAJ Nathan Rolls

Contributors
CDT Bella Kern
CDT Isabel Teren
CDT Joseph Dinh
CDT Cayla English

For any questions, please contact CDT Matsumoto by email at rcmatsumoto@ucdavis.edu.

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Purpose

Forged serves as a forum for all past and present cadets and alumni and family and friends of the Forged Gold Battalion. The purpose is to show progress and development in a cadet and to cultivate a common understanding of cadets' ROTC experience.

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# Message from the Command Team

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Justin Ottenwalter and Master Sergeant (MSG) Oliver Vogt

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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMAND TEAM

Department Chair and Professor of Military Science
I am excited and honored to be the new Professor of Military Science for the Forged Gold Battalion. Over the Fall Semester and Quarter, I've seen our cadets grow as leaders and individuals, and I'm proud of the progress the Forged Gold Battalion has made over the last 5 months. There's been a lot of new cadets and lieutenants in the Battalion this fall as we've contracted 23 cadets, commissioned 2, and another three cadets will commission in January.

Our cadets have spent the fall honing their individual skills in everything from land navigation to basic rifle marksmanship and have progressed in collective training up to the squad level. They've built these skills through weekly classroom instruction and labs, as well as at our 2-day FTX at Camp Parks. Rather than cover everything that occurred over the Fall, I'd like to cover a few actions from our cadets that stood out to me.

Our labs culminated in the FTX at Camp Parks, and a few highlights were CDT Schenk developing a creative approach to solving a leader challenge obstacle and despite being an MS1, leading her team to victory using this novel approach. The FTX also saw CDT Cao take charge of all the cadets around him following an unanticipated OPFOR Ambush and lead them to conduct a successful reaction to a near ambush despite having no formal leadership role.

Our Ranger Challenge Cadets competed in the Ranger Challenge competition during a blizzard in Idaho. They had the third highest ACFT score despite competing in the snow, which many had only seen a couple times during their life. During the 15-mile road march through the slush, our cadet persevered, and CDT Martinez somehow still had smile on his face until at least mile 12. The rest of our team maintained that attitude throughout the competition, with the cadre at each event telling us our cadets were the most motivated and having the most fun, with the Cadre being particularly impressed by their performance on the medical lane, due in large part to the leadership of CDT Dittman. CDT Ochoa also dominated every physical event with a smile on his face and inspiring those around him to try and keep his pace. Our team eventually placed third due to their hard work and dedication, and especially the leadership provided by the Team Captain, CDT Aragon.

Our Cadets also displayed excellence at Physical Training throughout the Semester. Cadet Sweitzer had the highest ACFT score with a 591, and CDTs Butler, Ochoa, Nolan and Spann were close behind with 580 or higher scores. All the PT events were marked by a spirit of healthy competition, and I can't wait to see if the above cadets will retain their title as our top 5 physically fit cadets, or one of our other cadets can take the title.

The Fall has been a building block towards our events in the Spring, when we'll ramp up the complexity and frequency of our training to prepare our MS3s for CST, and our MS4s to commission. I look forward to seeing what this amazing battalion of Cadets will accomplish, and I'll be sure to highlight their successes to all of you in the next newsletter. “Forging Leaders!”

Senior Military Science Instructor
My family and I have moved across the country and explored nearly 5000 miles this past year (half of which was in California alone). We strive to find new things to do and places to see, gaining different perspectives along the way. One of the most unknown parts we had stressed over was the uncertainty of integrating ourselves into this new environment. I can say without a doubt, this is a great experience; you are all impressive in your dedication, motivation, and education. This standard will be hard to beat for any newcomers.

Listening to feedback it seems like we are all striving to make this transition into the Army, and all its associated ups and downs, less idealistic and more realistic, while at the same time emphasizing the fun factor, the comradeship, and esprit de corps.

We appreciate all your input, positivity, and motivation during long hours when called upon. Several of you have obliterated some expectations. Some have had devastating setbacks that will inevitably become teaching points on recovery.

For the most part I’d have to say relax. Do what’s right, every day. Do the little things that will build good habits. Follow your plan to get to your next goal. Stressing to have your whole life mapped-out is a daunting task. As you learn more, grow, and see new things, you'll narrow down who you are. It takes time.

I've grown with every assignment, mission, and task. You will also. The Army life has been a great opportunity for me and my family, and will be for you as you commission and represent our nation in a positive way.

I'm very glad to have met all of you. I have high expectations that we will only refine and improve the way we do things as time flies by. Reno's frigid winds and Fort Knox’s jungles are right around the corner.

Time to get down to business. Let's do this!

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RANGER CHALLENGE
FEATURED TRAINING EVENT
Ranger Challenge is a competitive team opportunity for ROTC Cadets that encourages leadership and teamwork among its participants. The program is designed to foster a spirit of excellence and a commitment to service, while challenging the physical and mental capabilities of the participants. Cadets work together to complete a series of physical and mental tasks, to include land navigation, the Army Combat Fitness Test, written examination, road march, and obstacle course (to name just a few). The Forged Gold Battalion team consisted of a total of 15 Cadets, with 11 who directly competed against other teams in 8th Brigade.

The Ranger Challenge program is designed to cultivate leadership, teamwork, and physical fitness. Participants must demonstrate a spirit of self-discipline and teamwork in order to succeed in the competition. The competition is also designed to instill pride and camaraderie among its participants as they work together to accomplish the tasks. The team is highly competitive and the teams that perform the best in the competition are recognized with awards. The top teams are invited to compete in the Sandhurst Ranger Challenge. The Forged Gold Rangers competed against nine other teams from November 4th to November 6th. Even with the brutal weather and unfavorable conditions, our rangers placed 4th overall!

An amazing improvement from last year and with much more success to come in the years to follow.

RANGER ROSTER

MS4 Westover (Captain)  MS3 Nolan
MS4 Ochoa (Competition Captain)  MS3 Gorham
MS4 Bohen  MS3 Butler
MS3 Boston  MS3 Dittman
MS3 Miller  MS3 Spann
MS3 Martinez  MS2 Teren
MS3 Murray

By CDT Kern
CURRENT OPERATIONS
Land Navigation | Field Craft | FLRC | CWST
On October 29th, the Forged Gold Battalion conducted land navigation at Camp Parks. Cadets were equipped with a protractor, a compass, a lane strip, and a map of Camp Parks to tackle day and night land navigation. MS1s and MS2s were paired together in groups of two to three, in familiarizing themselves with land navigation, while MS3s conducted land navigation individually, in order to test their readiness for Advanced Camp 2023. Before starting the course, Cadets took their walking pace count for both flat and elevated terrain, attended a safety brief outlining the boundaries of the course, and conducted a compass check to verify their tool for accuracy.

Beginning in the mid-afternoon, Cadets received their first lane strip (consisting of four points) and needed to find a minimum of three to successfully pass the course. Cadets immediately took to plotting their points on their map and planned their route accordingly before setting out over the vast hills of Camp Parks. Camp Parks is a self-correcting land navigation course, meaning that each point displays its accurate grid coordinate, which Cadets use to confirm their location. Cadets returned just before dusk, eager to check with the MS4s, to see if the points that they found were correct.

As the sun set and darkness set about, Cadets received their next lane strip and put on their red lens headlamps to conquer night land navigation. This time, the challenge was greater, as Cadets were expected to find at least two out of the three points, navigating the terrain in darkness.

Overall, the course at Camp Parks was a great experience for all Cadets to familiarize themselves with and execute land navigation in preparation for next semester’s challenge at Judge Davis Trailhead!
ROUND ROBIN

Our Cadets went through a Round Robin where they learned MARCH, radio etiquette, hooch making, and battle drills. Each of these stations were run by our experienced MS4s from Sac State and UC Davis!

MS4 Meneses dutifully instructs CDT Quiambo on how to apply a pressure bandage to CDT Xiong’s wound at the MARCH station.

MS4 Bains and MS4 Palumbo teach radio etiquette to Cadets. In this station, Cadets learned how to assemble and disassemble radios as well as use proper call signs to communicate with HQ.

CDT Wong and CDT Brumell carefully bound through the battlefield as they approach the enemy in the tall grass.

MS4 Thompson and MS4 Decristofaro teach Cadets how to make hooches and plant claymores at the Survival Station.
The ROTC Field Leadership Reaction Course (FLRC) is designed to give cadets the opportunity to practice leadership and teamwork skills in a realistic Field Training Exercise (FTX). This challenging course is designed to test the physical and mental strength of cadets, as well as their ability to think critically and respond quickly in a fast-paced environment. The FLRC is set up with a series of problem-sets that require the cadets to work together as a team in order to complete. The course begins with a physical challenge, such as a rope bridge or an assault course. This is followed by a series of cognitive and problem-solving tasks, such as a minefield or a supply chain.

The cadets must use both their physical and mental abilities in order to complete the course in the shortest amount of time. In addition to the physical and mental challenges, the FLRC also provides cadets with the opportunity to practice their leadership and decision-making skills. Cadets must work together as a team to complete each task and must be able to quickly assess the situation and make decisions under pressure. By participating in the FLRC, cadets gain valuable skills and experience that will help them succeed in their future careers as military officers.

“It was my first time on the FLRC and I wasn’t sure what to expect. But it actually turned out to be tons of fun and incorporated a bunch of skills that we’ll need as future leaders. From communication skills to critical thinking to even creative thinking they all needed for success in the various obstacles.”

- CDT Spurgeon A.
Forged Gold Cadets are consistently challenged, both physically and mentally; the training events they must successfully complete push them out of their comfort zones and to their limits. The Combat Water Survival Test (CWST) is no exception, teaching cadets survival techniques in the event of a water emergency. In order to successfully pass, cadets must demonstrate proficiency in three events while wearing the OCP (Operational Camouflage Pattern) uniform: 15-meter equipment swim, equipment don and ditch, and 3-meter drop.

- **15-METER EQUIPMENT SWIM**
  Cadets are required to swim 15 meters in OCPs with a rifle above water without touching the sides or bottom of the pool.

- **EQUIPMENT DON & DITCH**
  Given the FLC (Fighting Load Carrier) and plastic rifle, Cadets are required to step off the edge of the pool backwards, fully submerge underwater, and release all their gear before returning to the surface.

- **3-METER DROP**
  Cadets walk off a 3-meter diving board with a rifle into the deep water and successfully resurface and swim to safety. For motivation, Cadets may shout their preferred Army branch before hitting the water.

Successfully completing CWST is one of many requirements for Army ROTC Cadets who wish to commission as a Second Lieutenant!
This past November, Forged Gold cadets from UC Davis and Sac State teamed up to celebrate Thanksgiving by going against Air Force ROTC in a friendly sports competition; Cadets played soccer, football, and ultimate frisbee.

Forged Gold ended up winning all the games but there was one challenge left; the tug-of-war. Sadly, the Forged Gold Battalion finally suffered their first defeat with the men's team losing to the Air Force. However, the women's team did not, with overwhelming strength they defeated the opposing team!

Overall, Turkey Bowl sports was a resounding success leading to a 4-1 victory across all competitions.

Following the conclusion of the games was the announcement of the next Chain of Command for the next year. Congratulations to all MS4s!

We finished the morning with a pie-in-the-face fundraiser (Cadre were not excluded!).
"The most difficult event at Advanced Camp was the MOPP gear tests. What made this difficult was the pressure of getting everything right on the first try. There is a specific sequence you must follow. Donning the Pro-Mask is timed, and if the seal isn't tight you have to retry. After that, it is at a slower pace but there are many steps you are expected to memorize and follow.

Work hard now to build a strong foundation on all your basic tasks and skills. When you get to camp, you'll be better prepared. However, it's also important to listen to the instructions you receive from your graders, even if it's different from what you are familiar with.

The most important lesson that stuck with me from camp is how important it is for us as leaders to be disciplined and in control when things begin to go into chaos. From the giant spiders to perfectly planned lanes (that of course went all wrong), keeping your cool and thinking clearly will allow you to succeed."

CDT Dobbins
We held our contracting ceremonies at Lab this Fall quarter and watched as our MS4 Classes received their Active Duty branches!

**CSUS**
- CDT Palumbo - Infantry
- CDT Port - Quartermaster
- CDT Angara - Field Artillery
- CDT Sweitzer - Field Artillery

**UC Davis**
- CDT Thompson - Military Police
- CDT Dobbins - Infantry
- CDT Williams - ED Delay
- CDT Bohen - Armor
- CDT Kwon - Field Artillery
- CDT Park - National Guard
- CDT Bains - National Guard

CDT English receives a $135,000 scholarship from LTC Ottenwalter at the Black College Expo.
The following interviews have been edited for length and clarity. We focused on the experiences of several cadets and how they embody "scholar, athlete, and leader" attributes.

The following interviews have been edited for length and clarity.
**FEATURED CADET**

*By CDT Matsumoto*

We recognize CDT Cao as our Forged Cadet for his invaluable leadership skills. A UC Davis MS2, CDT Cao brings his heart and hard-working attitude to both the classroom and ROTC. Here is what a few of his peers have said about him alongside a personal interview:

**Why did you join ROTC?**

I joined the program because I wanted to be something that is bigger than myself. I always wanted to serve my community in some capacity. Being in the program will provide me with training and future opportunities to help those that are in hard situations. ROTC provides not just military training, but more importantly, teaches students how to be good leaders and hold themselves to a high standard.

“I would describe him as upbeat and really funny. He keeps the energy up and motivates people to keep going when maybe they don’t want to. He has his challenges but keeps pushing through them. Overall, great guy!”

- CDT Koehler

“CDT Cao is a fantastic person, leader, and athlete. He never fails to bring a smile to my face and he comes to ROTC every day ready to put in the work. Although his 6’5 stature may intimidate you, his genuine care for others and kindheartedness shines through. It is an honor and a privilege to work beside him as a peer.”

- CDT Matsumoto

**What is your favorite part about the program?**

My favorite part of the program is the people that are in it. Forged Gold Battalion is a very welcoming and supportive environment where all are challenged to become the best versions of themselves. Peer-to-peer leadership in this program separates Forged Gold from everywhere else. Using our strengths and weaknesses, we built a cohesive and diverse team.

**What is a leader?**

"There are many different definitions of a leader. To me, a leader is someone that is well informed in their craft and has the ability to use their positive influence to help others perform to their highest potential. In addition, transformational leaders help develop other leaders to exponentially increase the effectiveness of one organization. A good leader is essential for developing a long-lasting positive environment. Leaders help everyone become the best version of themselves."
How do you balance school and ROTC and what advice would you give to new incoming cadets?

"I use a planner to organize my daily, weekly, and monthly activities. I also make sure I give myself enough time to relax. Whether that be taking a nap or watching some anime."

"Some advice that I would give to new cadets is to be open-minded. ROTC is definitely a change of lifestyle so having that open mindset can really get you far in learning and making new friendships."

What obstacles did you face during ROTC and how did you overcome them?

"Definitely getting myself integrated into the program. I'm pretty introverted and talking to new people isn't my strong suit. I overcame that by getting out of my comfort zone and talking to people first and putting myself out there. Now, I can say I'm really comfortable with the other cadets, especially those in the FOURTH SQUAD, THE BEST SQUAD!"

What has been one of your greatest accomplishments?

"One of my greatest accomplishments was actually being accepted into ROTC. Back when I was in AIT, a battle buddy and I made a promise that we would both become officers. Now that I've been accepted into ROTC, I can make that promise into a reality."
What does your typical daily schedule look like as a Cadet, as a student, and as an athlete?

"I wake up early for ROTC or class and then work in the afternoons. Then I will go play soccer usually Tuesday, Thursday, and Sunday nights. Sometimes multiple games on Sunday. And then Monday, Wednesday, and Friday night are gym nights."

How do you balance your time between classes, ROTC, soccer practices, and other extracurricular activities?

"I am able to balance my schedule really well because my work allows me to work whatever hour I need in order to put school and ROTC first. I usually only play soccer in the evenings and depending on my school load for the week, I will sometimes skip my weekday games."

How do you stay motivated when things get tough?

"When things get tough I usually use soccer as my outlet. When I'm playing nothing else matters and it's a 90 minute break from life stressors."

What is one thing ROTC has taught you that you can apply on the soccer field?

"One thing that ROTC has taught me that I apply on the soccer field is how to communicate effectively so my teammates know my intentions on the field."

What do you enjoy most about ROTC?

"I enjoy the relationships that I have built within the ROTC program. I have grown some of the best friendships I've ever had."
What does being a leader mean to you and what qualities should good leaders possess?

"A good leader is someone that is respected by his peers and struggles alongside them. No good leader tells his peers to do something they would not do themselves. Additionally, I don't think a leader is defined much by his words, but more so by his actions and how they reflect upon what they've said. Key traits for leaders nowadays definitely include empathy, humility, and adaptability."

How have you used your leadership skills outside of ROTC?

"ROTC has equipped me with leadership skills including proper communication, empathy, and overall having a much more effective presence. These skills have transferred over to my involvement within my National Guard unit and allowed me to aid with planning and taking charge when needed. Additionally, throughout my daily life, I’m able to utilize these skills within my classes for projects and labs. Within these environments, leadership skills aid with planning and the overall process of completing tasks."

What do you think is the best way to keep unity in a team and keep everyone motivated?

"I’d say the best way to keep unity within a team is to provide a common goal and develop a relationship amongst the team over time. No teams develop unity immediately and time is probably the most important resource in allowing a team to come together. Lastly, teams need competition and struggle to further increase unity. Nothing made me closer to those around me within ROTC than the team/squad competitions and the sometimes-miserable field training exercises."
CADRE CORNER - CPT Yashinski

By CDT Matsumoto

CPT Yashinski graduated from George Washington University with a B.A. in Political Science and earned a commission in the Transportation Corps. He is currently a promotable Captain and Logistics Officer and Assistant Professor of Military Science at UC Davis.

What do you enjoy most about being a Cadre at UC Davis?

"The thing I enjoy the most has been the ability to hang out with Cadets to mentor and teach them the basics of being an officer and leader. While serving in other units in the active Army, you take for granted what young officers know when they first enter your unit. Here, I’ve had a direct input on what those young officers know. I’ve had the privilege of seeing my first MS class graduate last year and teaching them their MS2 and MS3 year. It’s amazing seeing Sophomores grow into Second Lieutenants and seeing some at their first unit."

What activities do you enjoy outside of ROTC and the Army?

"My top hobby is traveling. Part of the reason why I wanted to join the Army was to get out of my suburban town in New Jersey and go experience the world, and I pulled it off! Between vacation and Army trips, I’ve traveled to every inhabited continent and 37 countries and was stationed overseas in Italy for three years. While stationed here at UC Davis, my spouse and I have taken time to explore the west coast and California. As both of us are from the east coast, we wanted to see what there is to offer here.

Not so much a hobby but more of self-reflection- I enjoy almost everything considered ‘hipster’. I love craft beer, cooking from scratch with fresh basic ingredients, wearing flannel when I can, growing my own hops, and I even made my own kombucha! Some say my spirit state is Oregon."

What was your most memorable Army experience and why?

"My experience while deployed in Iraq in 2017 was one of my most memorable experiences. As our Brigade’s transportation officer, I was the lead for managing all of the movement requests and trucking with our Iraqi contractors. It was a steep learning curve with many 18-hour days but the impact was huge- the taking of Mosul from ISIS. The average day involved talking with Iraqis on a burner phone and talking to truck drivers arriving at my base to make sure they were loaded with the right equipment - with emails sprinkled in making sure requests and payments were being done on time."

As an Officer that went through the ROTC Program, what were your favorite memories as a Cadet, and what advice would you give to Cadets in the program today?

"My favorite memories involve all of the friends I made in the program whether that was being in the cold in the field as a team or getting an extra-large lunch once we were back on campus. That brings me to my piece of advice for Cadets in the program today which is to make an effort to build strong bonds with each other and make friends. Don’t burn any bridges. I’ve been in the Army for close to ten years and I still talk to a few of my fellow Cadets that I commissioned with. Some are out of the Army while some are still in. I made friends for a lifetime from my program."
# RECENT ALUMNI

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We want to hear from our Forged Gold Battalion alumni and graduates!

Currently serving in uniform or now working in the civilian sector, we want to share your story.

Please reach out for the opportunity to be featured in our next issue!
CADRE AND STAFF

Professor of Military Science
LTC Justin J. Ottenwalter
jottenham@ucdavis.edu / justin.ottenwalter@csus.edu

Senior Military Science Instructor
MSG Oliver T. Vogt
otvogt@ucdavis.edu / oliver.vogt@csus.edu

UCD Assistant Professor of Military Science
MAJ Nathan E. Rolls
nerolls@ucdavis.edu

UCD Assistant Professor of Military Science
MAJ Walter Wade
wbdade@ucdavis.edu

UCD Assistant Professor of Military Science
MAJ Sesar Gonzalez
srangolz@ucdavis.edu

UCD Assistant Professor of Military Science
CPT Stephen A. Yashinski
asyashinski@ucdavis.edu

UCD Assistant Professor of Military Science
CPT Eric B. Park
ercpark@ucdavis.edu

CSUS Assistant Professor of Military Science
MAJ Marshall A. Angerman
marshall.h.angerman@csus.edu

CSUS Assistant Professor of Military Science
CPT Killian P. Burns
kilian.p.burns@csus.edu

CSUS Assistant Professor of Military Science
Mr. Joe Gleichenhaus
jiggleichenhouse@csus.edu

CSUS Assistant Professor of Military Science
MSG Justin E. Spangler
justin.spangler@csus.edu

CSUS Military Science Instructor
SFC Eric R. Vea
eric.r.vea@csus.edu

CSUS Military Science Instructor
SFC Solus Terry
srterry@ucdavis.edu

Recruiting Operations Officer
Mr. Jarrett E. Halverson
jehalverson@ucdavis.edu

CSUS Liaison
Ms. Amber Griffith
abriangriffith@csus.edu

Human Resources Assistant
Mr. Han Xu
hxxuxu@ucdavis.edu

Supply Technician
Mr. Patrick R. Williams
prwilliams@ucdavis.edu

Gold Bar Recruiter
1LT Naomy Rivera
naomy.rivera@csus.edu