

# USC NAVAL ROTC NEWSLETTER

Summer 2023

Edited by: MIDN Bella Sanchez  
and MIDN Rylan Giorgetta

## CORTRAMID

By: MIDN Phoebe Turner

CORTRAMID, abbreviated for Career Oriented Training for Midshipmen, is a summer cruise designed to expose rising Sophomores in the NROTC program to the different communities in the Navy and Marine Corps. The training lasts for 4 weeks, with each week rotating through experiences in Aviation Warfare, Submarine Warfare, Surface Warfare, and the Marine Corps. Although CORTRAMID aims to offer similar exposure for all attending 3/C, due to the inevitable dynamism of the Navy most participants leave Cortramid having seen different parts within each service.

This year, the University of Southern California's 3/C Midshipmen were stationed in both San Diego, California and Norfolk, Virginia to undergo their Summer Cruise training. Some notable highlights of their cruise were flying in Sierra and Osprey aircraft as well as T-34 planes, participating in the Damage Control Wet-Training Simulator at Naval Base Point Loma and the Infantry Immersion Trainer at Camp Pendleton, going underway on the USS Nebraska and the USS Harpers Ferry, and exploring both cities during weekend liberty. As stated by MIDN 3/C Park, "Personally, aviation week was my favorite between the T-34 flight and F-18 tours".

CORTRAMID is a unique cruise because it is the first time that Midshipmen experience not only various career paths in the Navy, but also life as enlisted personnel and Naval Officers. Beyond learning about the inner workings of incredible machinery that propels ships and rapid-fires machine guns, Midshipmen have the opportunity to shadow and talk to crews about their lives. Thus, CORTRAMID, above all, gives Midshipmen the chance to explore the heart behind the Navy and Marine Corps, which lies within the people serving.



MIDN Park and McKernan during CORTRAMID Aviation Week

"Over the past summer, I had the pleasure of participating in CORTRAMID. This experience exposed me to so many different areas of the fleet and helped me better understand what I want to do for a career. It also took me all over the East Coast, as I saw various sites in Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia during my free time. Personally, aviation week was my favorite with the T-34 flight and F-18 tours, and it really motivated me coming back to school to excel as a student and as a midshipman." -MIDN Jared Park



MIDN Walsh, Aragon, Hof & Andrew Villena underway



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# New Student Indoctrination

by: MIDN Matt Villena



*MIDN Villena and Herrington during NSI*

MIDN Herrington, Larratt, Villena, Addington, Wise, and Johnson had the opportunity to serve as Midshipman Instructors (MIs) at NSI this summer. It was a rewarding and demanding role that plays a crucial part in shaping Midshipman Candidates. As an MI you serve as a mentor, guide, and educator to a division of candidate midshipman.

In this role, we had the privilege of introducing the candidates to basic Navy and Marine Corps knowledge, discipline, traditions, and expectations within the NROTC program. We facilitated their transition from civilian to the structured and disciplined environment of what the NROTC program expects. Instructors were expected to lead by example, instilling a strong sense of discipline, integrity and pride in our profession. We not only taught them basic knowledge, drill, and discipline, but also provided them with our lessons learned as current 1/C and 2/C midshipmen. Watching these young men and women evolve and grow throughout the training was an incredibly gratifying experience, knowing that we contributed to the development of their future naval careers.

However, being an MI is not without its challenges. The AMOI's and Recruit Division Commanders (RDCs) set a high standard for the pressure and intensity that the MI's must maintain throughout the training schedule. Balancing the responsibilities of instructing, accountability, and administrative tasks can be demanding, but the opportunity to shape the minds of future midshipmen makes it all worthwhile.



*MIDN Johnson and other Midshipman Instructors*

# Officer Candidate School

by: MIDN James Cook



*Pictured left to right: MIDN Trodden, Parker, Paradis, Rodriguez & Whidden*

This summer, nine Marine options from the USC Trojan Battalion traveled to Brown Field in Quantico, VA for a six-week training increment at Officer Candidate School. On Brown Field, candidates are screened and evaluated in a challenging environment to determine their potential to become Marine Officers.

While at OCS, candidates undergo a comprehensive evaluation encompassing academic performance, physical fitness, and leadership potential. They engage in a variety of classes that span from Marine Corps history to uniform regulations, with their grasp of these subjects tested through four separate exams. Additionally, candidates' physical capabilities are consistently assessed during culminating activities like the obstacle course, endurance course, and weighted hikes. Throughout the instructional period, each candidate is thoroughly screened on their ability to lead under pressure. Various events, including small unit leadership evaluations, leadership reaction courses, candidate billet positions, and peer assessments, provide the OCS staff with valuable insights into each candidate's leadership potential. When combined, these three facets form the basis for gauging a candidate's aptitude to commission as a Second Lieutenant and eventually lead Marines.

OCS is a culminating event for Marine Option Midshipmen and provides the chance to prove themselves worthy of the title. Moving forward, post-OCS Midshipmen will shift their role in the battalion and begin training incoming 4/C Marine Options as their attention turns to The Basic School. Congratulations to all of our OCS graduates!

## Submarine Cruise

**By: MIDN Brice Brown**

The submarine cruise is an immersive experience open to rising 2nd Class and 1st Class midshipmen, irrespective of gender. The experience is unique for each individual, as it is influenced by a multitude of factors including the duration of the cruise, the type of submarine, and the specific mission assigned.

Some midshipmen may find themselves aboard for several days, staying relatively close to the shore, while others might be at sea for an intensive period ranging from two to five weeks. The type of submarine also varies: some midshipmen are placed on fast attack submarines, while others can be on larger, Ohio class vessels. Each type of submarine offers a unique perspective and set of challenges.

Some midshipmen may journey across the Pacific to South Korea, serving a critical role in power projection. Others may be involved in strategic deterrence missions, going "alert," prepared to launch nuclear warheads if necessary. Regardless of the specifics, every cruise is a profound learning opportunity for the midshipmen.



*MIDN Brophy on his 2/C Submarine Cruise*

# SOAS

By: **MIDN Declan Cooper**

SOAS or SEAL Officer Assessment And Selection is a cruise that rising 1/C can participate in if they wish to pursue a career in Navy special warfare. Short but sweet, the cruise is only two weeks long. It is broken up in two segments: assessment and selection, both taking a week respectively. Assessment phase boils down to how well you can perform at a constant eighty to one hundred percent effort for every evolution. It is not enough to be physically fit; you have to be sharp and are expected to be a leader no matter how difficult the evolution is for you. Naturally, there will be evolutions that you did great in or even struggled at but it is up to you to manage your extreme highs and lowest of lows. There is no avoiding the crazy swing of emotions the training is putting you through; it is designed to make you feel this way. Assessment week wraps up with heck day which is made to test your grit in a final culmination of non stop evolutions. Every event is timed and you are expected to beat your peers no matter how tired, cold, or chaffed you are. Assessment week is one most physically taxing and mentally straining military training that the Navy has to offer.

The selection phase is a week determining if you have the personality, intelligence, and heart for Navy Special Warfare. The week is relaxed compared to assessment week. There were light pt sessions but the main focus shifts to interviews and community familiarization. We did a few cognitive tests measuring our IQ and personalities as well as two interviews. We did a community interview where we were presented sets of questions by active duty SEALs and graded on our ability to speak and elaborate. The second interview was a psychological evaluation with a psychiatrist. This week's focus was oriented on getting to know the community. We got to go tour SEAL team three and participate in JO panels. The week wrapped up anticlimactically as we didn't get liberty. In total SOAS was the pinnacle of mental and physical strain. I would not recommend this cruise to anyone who is on the fence for selecting special warfare, if you aren't one hundred percent bought in this cruise will crush you. Personally this cruise was everything I expected it to be and more. Hooyah.



*MIDN observing Bottom Sea mine defusal drill*

# EOD

By: **MIDN Will Durban**

I am delighted to share my experience of attending the NROTC Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Summer Training and Assessment (ESTA) held this summer in San Diego, California. This month-long selection program serves as a first-class cruise designed specifically for midshipmen with aspirations to join the Navy's special operations community.

I had the privilege of participating in the Block 1 iteration in June, along with 12 other NROTC midshipmen from across the country. The first two weeks served as a screener phase, where we became acquainted with the experienced training cadre, each contributing unique expertise and perspectives to our training.



*MIDN Durban standing by for demolition shot*

During this initial phase, we underwent a series of physically demanding PT evolutions, both at the beach and in the pool. In addition, unique community engagement exercises, such as improvised explosive device (IED) training drills, were woven into the curriculum. The first two weeks culminated in the Grit Test—an overnight, 20-plus hour physical and mental screening exercise. This grueling test involved intense water confidence drills, strenuous physical exertions, rucking, and much more. Though it was extremely physically challenging, it also fostered a powerful sense of camaraderie among us.

In the weeks that followed, our training shifted towards mastering the handling and deployment of demolition materials, such as C4, detonation cord, and blasting caps. These sessions culminated in a high-pressure “Stress Test,” where our physical and academic learning were put to the ultimate test.



*MIDN Durban setting up demolition shot using C4 explosive*

After successfully completing the Stress Test, we journeyed to Camp Pendleton. There, we had the invaluable opportunity to apply our newfound skills by detonating actual C4 and utilizing innovative “water tools,” which use water to safely neutralize explosives in the field.



*MIDN Durban hanging rappelling during fast rope exercise*

The final leg of our training involved intense rappelling and fast roping exercises from a 60-foot tower. This session not only honed our physical skills but also tested our mental fortitude and willingness to confront our fears.

The program concluded with high-stakes interviews to evaluate our stress resilience and depth of understanding of the EOD community.

During my time at the cruise, I had the pleasure of meeting USC Trojan EOD alumni, such as LCDR Aaron Dixon (2021 FSEP), LCDR Chris Jones (2023 FSEP), and LTJG Aaron Hobson (2020 NROTC). Their insights into Navy EOD and leadership were enlightening and deeply motivating.

In conclusion, the NROTC EOD Summer Cruise was an incredibly rewarding experience. It offered rigorous training, an invaluable network, and life-changing experiences—all in the backdrop of beautiful San Diego. In my opinion, this is the pinnacle of what a midshipman cruise can offer for those aiming to commission into the coolest community in the Navy.

# Aviation Cruise

By: MIDN Matt Merone

This summer a select group of First Class Midshipman embarked on their 1/C Aviation cruise after achieving satisfactory marks on their Aviation Selection Test Battery (ASTB). The purpose of this cruise was to immerse the Midshipman in the life of a Naval Aviator while providing insight into what leadership looks like in the fleet. The Trojan Battalion sent Midshipman to NAS North Island and NAS Whidbey Island for Aviation cruise this summer. Midshipmen Whelan and Miramadi were able to enjoy sunny San Diego as they joined HSM-49, a MH-60 Romeo squadron, at NAS North Island during early July. Midshipmen Jenson, Johnson, Larratt, O'Brien, and I each spent three weeks in gorgeous Northern Washington at NAS Whidbey island. Midshipmen Jenson and O'Brien were attached to P-8 squadron VP-40 in late June, Midshipman Johnson was attached to P-8 squadron VP-9 in early July, and Midshipman Larratt and I were attached to E/A-18 squadron VAQ-134 and P-8 squadron VP-4 respectively from late July to early August.



*MIDN Larratt and Merone on Aviation Cruise*



*A view of Mt. Rainier from a cockpit of a P-3*

During my time at NAS Whidbey Island I was able to experience the best of what Naval Aviation has to offer. Upon arriving on base I met an outstanding group of Midshipman that I was to spend our three week cruise with. Four of the fifteen Midshipman were attached to VP-4, the Skinny Dragons, with me and partook in the various squadron activities we were fortunate enough to attend. Some of the most notable were a torpedo exercise flight on a P-8, an air to air refueling flight on a P-8, and a sightseeing flight on the soon to be sundowned P-3. These activities gave us a direct view into what the job of a P-8 pilot looks like, both the good and less favorable sides. Some of the most impactful things I took away from these flights were how dynamic the P-8 platform is and how important the role of a P-8 NFO is to the sub hunting mission of the Navy.



*MIDN Ruiz on the USS Green Bay*



*Underway replenishment between the USS Alaska and the USS Gettysburg*

## Surface Warfare Cruise

By: **MIDN Marisol Ruiz**

This summer 1/C and 2/C Midshipmen also had the opportunity to go on a surface warfare cruise in various locations like San Diego, Norfolk, Pearl Harbor, Yokosuka, and even Australia. MIDN Mun and myself got the opportunity to fly to Brisbane Australia to join the crew of the USS Green Bay LPD-20

While underway for 2 weeks we got the chance to do everything the young junior officers of the USS Green Bay did and really immerse ourselves in LPD life. From Khaki calls and department meetings to bridge watch twice a day, the five Midshipmen on the cruise were able to each follow our designated running mate and see the stress and fun that is SWO life. My running mate was an LTJG who was part of the Engineering department. While on cruise I got to stand watch as conn and helm daily, go to briefs, captain's mast, and see amphibious operations. There was a Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) on board with us so there were even more chances to see operations on the Marines side as well as the Navy.

One of the coolest exercises that I got to watch was VBSS, Visit, Board, Search and Seizure where Marines from our LPD went onto USS New Orleans LPD-18 as they played an uncooperative ship. It was a full day of flight and LCAC operations and we got to pull right alongside LPD-18, so close that we could wave to the other sailors on board.

Being on LPD 20 was a very memorable experience that definitely allowed me to apply the knowledge I learned in the Naval science classes and see it be put to use in real life. I really enjoyed my time on cruise and got to connect with a lot of the young officers about their experience in the Navy and ROTC.



*MIDN Sanchez and another Midshipman aboard the USS Gettysburg*