USC NAVAL ROTC
NEWSLETTER

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Edited by: MIDN 3/C Hammond

Trojan Battalion Completes First-Ever Battle Study in France

By: MIDN 2/C Tran

On August 12, the Trojan Battalion conducted its first-ever battle study in France, an immersive professional development experience in which MIDN of all classes immersed themselves in key historical sites tied to Operation Overlord in WWII and Marine Corps' Legacy at Belleau Wood in WWI. MIDN-led presentations discussed leadership, strategies, and heritage.

Day 1: Arrival and Foundation

Each day carried its own theme. On the first day, the midshipmen arrived in Paris and enjoyed some much-needed liberty to stretch their legs and take in the city. Later, USC alumnus Mr. Stephen Kepher '74, a Marine veteran and author of *COSSAC: Lt. Gen. Sir Frederick Morgan and the Genesis of Operation Overlord*, welcomed the battalion with an in-depth presentation on the planning and execution of Operation Overlord. His expertise and perspective provided essential context, laying the foundation for the battle studies that followed. At the end, he gifted copies of his book to midshipmen, leaving them with a valuable resource for continued study. His insights laid the foundation for a week of reflection and learning as midshipmen traced the history of amphibious assaults, joint operations, and the enduring legacy of the United States Marine Corps.





Day 2: The Beaches of Normandy



The battalion's first field study began at Omaha Beach, where MIDN 2/C Heitman and MIDN 3/C MaGill delivered an in-depth presentation on the immense challenges faced during the assault. They described the harsh realities of landing under heavy fire, the steep bluffs that dominated the shoreline, and the extensive German defenses. Through their presentation, the battalion gained a clearer understanding of the courage and determination required to press forward under seemingly insurmountable odds.



At the Normandy American Cemetery, midshipmen conducted a flag-raising ceremony to honor the over 9,000 Americans laid to rest there. MIDN 1/C Briand then delivered a solemn presentation on the cemetery's significance. Walking among the rows of crosses and Stars of David, the battalion reflected on the sacrifices made and the responsibility of future officers to carry forward that legacy. The cemetery was a humbling and inspiring experience that left a lasting impression.



The day concluded at Pointe du Hoc, where midshipmen studied the daring assault by U.S. Army Rangers to seize German gun emplacements dominating the approaches to Omaha and Utah Beaches by scaling the cliffs under fire. At the site, MIDN 2/C Tran and MIDN 3/C Jothiprakasam guided the battalion through the assault, leading them from the cliff to the remnants of German bunkers, bringing the battle's intensity and significance to life.

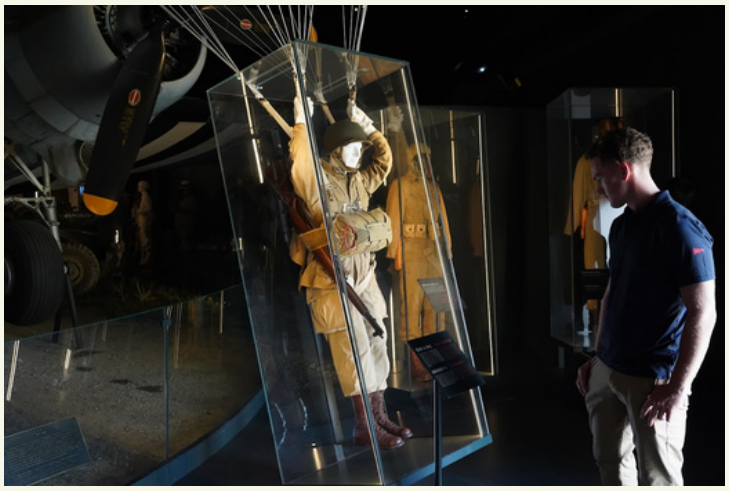
Day 3: Utah Beach and Airborne Operations

The Normandy study concluded at Utah Beach and Sainte-Mère-Église, the first French town liberated on D-Day. MIDN 2/C Scott K. and MIDN 3/C Donahoe explained how strong currents shifted landing craft off course, placing troops in a less-defended sector, and highlighted the critical role of airborne forces in securing key objectives. Standing on the beach, the battalion reflected on the adaptability, coordination, and courage that made the landing a pivotal success. At Sainte-Mère-Église, MIDN 1/C Williams and MIDN 3/C Moynihan presented on paratrooper operations and the use of gliders to put boots on the ground, including the story of the iconic paratrooper hanging from the church.

A highlight of the day was exclusive access to the former German headquarters in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont, overlooking both Utah and Omaha Beaches. This rare opportunity was made possible by Mr. Timothy David, President and CEO of The Greatest Generations Foundation, whose organization honors combat veterans by sponsoring no-cost returns to their battlefields. Midshipmen explored the site, saw original German artwork preserved on the walls, and walked through a studio honoring veterans with photos and personal stories, connecting them to the human legacy of WWII.









the GREATEST GENERATIONS foundation

A special highlight of the trip was the support of Timothy Davis, President and CEO of The Greatest Generations Foundation. Through his leadership, he has gathered the wisdom of veterans, preserved their stories, and enriched the historical context of each site. Thanks to his efforts, walking the grounds and hearing these accounts gave the midshipmen a deeper, more personal connection to the history they were experiencing.

Mr. Davis provided the battalion with exclusive access to the former German headquarters in Sainte-Marie-du-Mont. Behind the building stood a studio dedicated to veterans, a place of remembrance and storytelling. It was there that the midshipmen gained a deeper understanding of what legacy truly means. We look forward to future collaborations!

Their Mission

We do more than preserve memories—we enshrine courage, honor sacrifice, and ensure the legacies of America's veterans endure for generations. Each story stands as a living monument to resilience and unity, compelling us to honor the past, safeguard the present, and inspire the future. Through battlefield return, restoration, education, and connection, we give voice to those who served and sacrificed, affirming that duty, sacrifice, and unity remain the enduring pillars of our nation's character.













Day 4: Belleau Wood

On the fourth day, the battalion journeyed to the sacred ground of Belleau Wood. Their visit began at the Aisne-Marne American Cemetery, where they had the privilege of raising the flag above the resting place of those who fell in 1918. From there, the Marine Option midshipmen led a battlefield study across the terrain, trenches, artillery positions, wheat fields, and foxholes that remain from the fighting of June 1918.

At the Iron Mike Monument, the Commanding Officer, Marine Officer Instructor, and Assistant Marine Officer Instructor led a formal flag-raising and wreath-laying ceremony, honoring all who fought at Belleau Wood, whose valor carved a permanent place in Marine Corps and American military history.

The day concluded with the battalion carrying forward tradition at the famed Devil Dog Fountain, where midshipmen and staff drank from the spring as generations of Marines have done before them.

“Retreat? Hell, we just got here!”

-Capt. Lloyd Williams













Old Breed, New Breed, Near and Far - Thank you!

The Trojan Battalion proudly extends its deepest gratitude to the Alumni League Association, whose support continues to shape and strengthen the next generation of leaders. This recent battle study would not have been possible without their generous contributions, their presence, and their enduring commitment to the legacy of our program.

A special note of appreciation goes to Bob Benner ’45. His remarkable generosity through his endowment fund has enabled MIDN to participate in the immersive understanding of history, leadership, and service..

The battalion was honored to be joined on this journey by Alumni League President Jim Hulls ’81 and Bob Bennett ’79. Their presence underscored the importance of staying connected to those who came before us, as we strive to carry the torch forward.
With alumni spread far and wide, the Battalion had the privilege of being welcomed by Stephen Kepher ’75. His hospitality and support reinforced the idea that no matter the distance, Trojans always look after Trojans.

Together, old breed and new breed, near and far, we honor the past, strengthen the present, and look forward to a future guided by the enduring spirit of the Trojan Battalion.

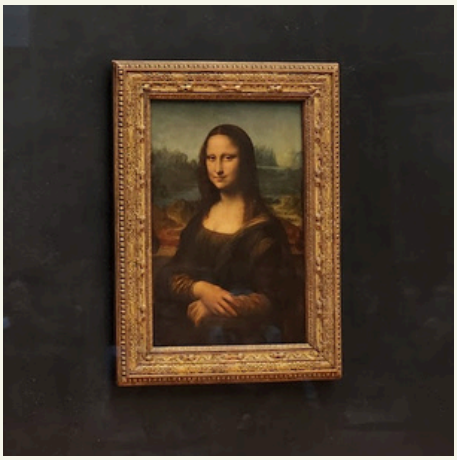


The Battalion also extends its sincere appreciation to Dr. Frank Zerunyan, USC Director of ROTC, for joining us on this journey. His presence allowed him to witness firsthand the impact of the battle study. His fluency in French helped the Battalion overcome language barriers, ensuring the experience was both seamless and enriching.



Day 5: Paris and Reflection

The final day in Paris gave midshipmen the chance to reflect while visiting cultural and historic sites including the Arc de Triomphe, the Louvre, and the Seine. They even witnessed the rekindling of the eternal flame ceremony at the Arc, linking the day's experiences to broader lessons in tradition, service, and remembrance.







This Battle Study was more than a lesson in history, it was a formative leadership experience. Midshipmen connected the sacrifices of the past to the challenges of their future service, learning the importance of courage, resilience, and teamwork in the Navy–Marine Corps team.

The Trojan Battalion is especially grateful for the generosity of the Trojan Battalion Alumni League, the Benner Foundation, and the USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, whose support made this historic first Battle Study possible.

USC Price
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NROTC ALUMNI LEAGUE
EST. 1982
Fight On!
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

THE GREATEST GENERATIONS
EVERY DAY IS MEMORIAL DAY
FOUNDATION

New Student Orientation Welcomes New 4/C Class!

By: MIDN 3/C Romero

On August 20, the Trojan Battalion proudly welcomed the newest class of 4/C MIDN and MECEPs during New Student Orientation (NSO). This three-day program was designed to immerse incoming students in both campus life and unit culture, laying the foundation for leadership, accountability, and cohesion as they begin their journey towards becoming Navy and Marine Corps officers.

The orientation kicked off with a series of presentations, followed by an optional JAMS (Joint Assembly for Military-Associated Students) weighted run. The run doubled as a campus tour and a physical challenge, giving new students a first taste of the teamwork and endurance expected in the program.

Day two was marked by a milestone moment: the swearing-in ceremony on the PED steps, where the 4/C officially took their oath. The day continued with a team-building exercise led by MIDN 2/C Wyman, fostering trust and camaraderie among the new class.

NSO concluded on a high note with the Battalion Beach Day at Dockweiler Beach, organized by MIDN 1/C Turner. The event brought the entire battalion together for one last "hooyah" of the summer with an afternoon of team-building, camaraderie, and fun before the academic year begins.
The Trojan Battalion looks forward to seeing this new class grow, lead, and thrive in the year ahead.









Staff Appreciation: Honoring 27 Years of Service

By: Lisa Kavakelis (Supply Tech)



Life always takes an unexpected turn, and sometimes forced retirement isn't as financially secure as some people would expect. Our dear friend and USC NROTC mom, Marsha Stoughton, unfortunately, is facing her own forced retirement after 27 years, a shock that has put her in a challenging financial position. She has seen hundreds of MIDN graduate and commission as Naval/Marine Officers, and some have even come back to visit her throughout the years. She is an incredibly hardworking and kind person who has always been a source of support for anyone she has ever come in contact with. Let us show her our appreciation for all the hard work she has done over the years. Now, it's our turn to show her how much we care for her.

Marsha has never asked for anything from her USC NROTC Family. She has definitely given more than she has taken. The goal of this fundraiser is to give her a cushion to cover essential expenses. Let's show her that we are here to help her during this difficult time and that her forced retirement can be easier. Please consider donating and sharing this page to spread the word. Thank you for your generosity!

https://gofund.me/a2306aea



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