

NEWSLETTER



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CO STATEMENT

Black Dragon Battalion, Family, and Friends,

It has been a challenging, yet successful Fall semester as we work to develop ourselves into better leaders ready to enter the profession of arms. Starting with Black Dragon Orientation, our senior midshipmen staff began to inculcate the newest members of the battalion into our culture of professionalism and discipline. Later in the semester, we shared in a Black Dragon tradition. We ran in the Tunnel to Towers 5k together as a battalion, building teamwork and esprit de corps. The feeling of running through the tunnel with so many cheering participants was incredibly motivating. We also participated in the Cornell Military Excellence Competition, showcasing our physical fitness prowess by achieving overall first place in that category amongst the many universities and colleges present. Finally, we capped off the semester with a well-executed Military Ball celebrating the birth of the US Navy and US Marine Corps. It was wonderful to welcome back CAPT Paul de Marcellus as our honored guest, to listen to his words of wisdom, and to recognize him for his expert leadership.

I was extremely proud of the battalion for our many successes this year, but I was most proud when we banded together through adversity and heartache. I was heartened when we helped each other. If a midshipman fell or faltered, we picked them up and dusted them off. We encouraged them to try again. Strong character is built of the resilience that can only come from failures and disappointments. I was asked by a prospective midshipman recently what sets our Naval ROTC Unit apart from the others. I believe what sets the Black Dragons apart is our willingness to help each other and to lift each other up in the face of striving for success and not always achieving it.

I wish everyone a restful winter break and I hope we all get the chance to spend time with our family and friends. I look forward to seeing how the Black Dragons will “dare greatly” next semester.



By: Captain Jessica Parker

USS NEW JERSEY COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

14 September 2024

Attending the commissioning of the USS New Jersey was an incredible experience that stands out as a highlight of my freshman year so far. Watching the commissioning of a U.S. Navy vessel in person was truly unique, and offered me another glimpse into military tradition and naval power in this modern age. The moment we first arrived on base, we were warmly welcomed by Boy Scouts and JROTC students, who gave us souvenir bags filled with merchandise and drinks for the hot day. The atmosphere brought with the commissioning was one of celebration and patriotism, which really created a sense of pride that made the event even more memorable.

I really enjoyed spending time with my fellow Midshipmen as well, and I believe that having this unique experience with them really made it worthwhile and meaningful for me personally. In addition to seeing the USS New Jersey in person, another highlight of the trip was definitely getting free Jimmy John's and getting a special shout-out from the Secretary of the Navy (which the Naval Academy did not).

By: MIDN 4/C Lake



TUNNEL 2 TOWERS

29 September 2024



On the morning of Sunday, September 29th, the Battalion again participated in this year's Tunnel to Towers, a 9/11 memorial 5k in New York City. The run directly tracks the heroic path of New York City firefighter, Stephen Siller, who ran 3 miles in full gear from the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel all the way to the site of the attacks, where he ultimately lost his life. Even more, however, this event remembers all who lost their lives and all who were affected by the attacks on 9/11.



Before conducting the run, as a Battalion we completed 1000 pull ups together as a small act to remember the thousands of steps that those heroes climbed in full gear in order to save the lives of others. Then, following pull-ups, we conducted the run itself, starting in Brooklyn, running through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel and ending in front of the Freedom Tower. We ran in formation singing cadence as a Battalion with other military units in front of and behind us. As you can imagine, running as a group, screaming cadence at the top of your lungs in a hot tunnel, surrounded by active duty service members and veterans, was extremely powerful and moving.



**By: MIDN 3/C Bassi &
MIDN 3/C Jungels**

Following the run, we were given speeches by our Battalion Commanding Officer, MIDN 1/C Casano-Boris, our Battalion Executive Officer, MIDN 1/C Kwon, our XO, CDR Eaton and our CO, CAPT Parker. Each speaker encapsulated the importance of remembering those who have gone before us who gave their lives for a greater cause. This Professional Military Education (PME) served as a reminder of why we train the way we do as midshipmen in the pursuit of working for a greater cause. The event as a whole instilled in our minds the importance of taking our training seriously, so that when we are called to give ourselves for a greater purpose, like those first responders did on 9/11, we will be ready.

All in all, we are very privileged to experience this very somber, powerful, and motivating event year after year.

MILITARY EXCELLENCE COMPETITION

26 October 2024

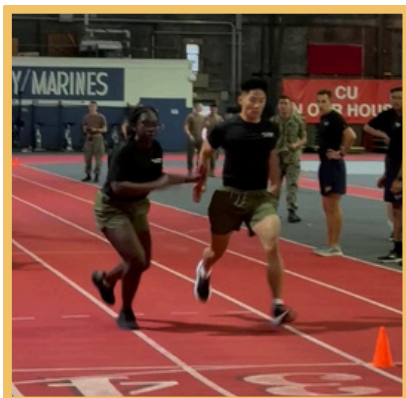
On October 26th, Rutgers/Princeton NROTC Midshipmen participated in the 43rd annual Military Excellence Competition (MEC) hosted by Cornell University NROTC in Ithaca, New York. The Black Dragon Battalion has a reputation of never leaving a MEC without some impressive trophies, and we certainly did not let that legacy die after an exhilarating day of competition! The MEC consisted of various physical competitions to showcase the undying strength of our battalion. There was a 5K run through the beautiful scenery of Ithaca where MIDN Balmaceda left her competitors in the dust, a weightlifting competition where MIDN Redillo, MIDN Coppola, and MIDN Jones absolutely crushed their competitors, and some motivating rounds of tug-of-war where the Black Dragons gave it their all to literally sweep the competition off their feet.

In addition to tests of physical strength, Rutgers and Princeton Midshipmen, including myself, also displayed their discipline and teamwork in the drill and color guard competitions. Although we did not secure trophies from these events, it was incredibly rewarding to show off all that we had learned from our few weeks of practice in one crowning moment. I really enjoyed the sense of accomplishment felt by both teams after we had finished our cards and our excitement as we waited to hear the results of our hard work.

It was great to see units from around the country come together for the day, and some of my most memorable moments were reuniting with some friends from NSI and watching them compete with their units. The morale at the MEC was very high, and everyone had fun spectating the different events, touring the campus at night, and celebrating our accomplishments at the closing ceremony.

Transportation to and from Cornell University was another aspect of the MEC I thoroughly enjoyed. The four-hour drive on the way there was full of anticipation for the next day's events, and the drive back was full of some questionable music choices, an unforgettable Chick-fil-A stop, and high spirits as we reflected on our achievements. The drive up and back to Rutgers held some of my favorite memories from the MEC, and I can't wait to make similar memories and to see what more successes the Black Dragon Battalion secures at the Villanova MEC!

By: MIDN 4/C Welch



MILITARY APPRECIATION GAME

09 November 2024



Attending the military appreciation game was an unforgettable experience. From the moment I stepped onto the field, I felt an overwhelming sense of pride and honor. Being immersed in the pre-game ceremonies and standing shoulder to shoulder with my fellow midshipmen and cadets from other ROTC branches was an absolute privilege. The atmosphere was electric, charged with camaraderie and mutual respect.

As we lined up, the crowd's applause echoed through the stadium, a powerful reminder of our community's support and appreciation for those in uniform. It was a touching moment that made me reflect on the significance of our roles and our commitment to serving our country. Experiencing the ceremonies, from the presentation of colors to the national anthem, instilled a profound sense of unity and purpose. Being part of such a grand event, surrounded by enthusiastic supporters and fellow service members, was incredibly motivating.

By: MIDN 2/C Bhuyan



TURKEY BOWL

25-26 November 2024

After last year's devastating loss in the finals to Army ROTC, the Midshipmen of Naval ROTC Rutgers were determined to etch their name on the Turkey Bowl trophy once again. Although practices were limited this year, with the first session held on November 15th, team morale was at an all-time high.

In their first game on November 25th at SHI Stadium, the Midshipmen faced the Air Force ROTC Cadets. Unfortunately for the Air Force team, they couldn't meet the seven-player minimum and were forced to forfeit, granting Navy ROTC an automatic ticket to the finals. However, in good sportsmanship, the teams played a friendly match, with MIDN Iacobucci, Donofrio, and Shultis stepping in to support the Air Force team. Donofrio and Shultis even scored for the Cadets, leading to a final score of Navy 28, Air Force 21.

In the other semifinal, the Veteran's House stunned the defending three-time champions, Army ROTC, with a narrow 19-14 victory.



On the evening of November 26th, under the lights at SHI Stadium, the Midshipmen, led by team captain and quarterback MIDN O'Neil, took the field against the Veteran's House in the finals. Despite a valiant effort, the Midshipmen fell 27-7, securing second place for the fourth consecutive year. The lone touchdown for Navy ROTC was scored by active-duty staff member LT Cisneros, who also converted the extra point. MSgt Taylor, another active-duty staff member, delivered a remarkable performance on the turf, contributing significantly to the team's efforts.

Looking ahead, there is optimism for the Midshipmen. They are set to lose only three players this year, two of whom are rotating centers. With a talented young core, the team is poised and ready to claim the Turkey Bowl trophy in 2025.

By: MIDN 1/C Leaver

FALL FEX

07 December 2024

On December 7th, Marine Option Midshipmen took on the cold weather and conducted their fall field exercise (FEX). MIDN began at 0530 with a 5-mile movement under 65 LBS, where they hiked with rifles from Busch Campus to the Rutgers University Ecological Preserve on Livingston Campus. After the hike, MIDN conducted land navigation using grid coordinates, maps, and compasses in order to find points placed within the preserve. Later in the day,

MIDN were evaluated through small unit leadership exercises or “SULEs.” During SULEs MIDN were tasked with leading a squad of 3 fireteams to achieve an objective using skills such as navigation, buddy rushing, and hand and arm signals. Senior OCS graduates tested their leadership abilities as they provided mentorship to underclassmen MIDN throughout land navigation and SULEs. Overall, the weather was no match for Rutgers and Princeton MIDN. Equipped with delicious MREs and a dedication to improvement, MIDN were able to develop their tactical and physical proficiency during the fall FEX to prepare themselves for the upcoming rigor of OCS.

By: MIDN 3/C Morros



MILITARY BALL

08 December 2024



On December 8th, the Black Dragon Battalion gathered at Princeton for the 2024 NROTC Military Ball. This night was dedicated to celebrating 249 glorious years of the Marine Corps and Navy and the end of a fantastic fall semester as a unit. We listened to a powerful POW speech from Midshipman Labissiere, watched some motivating messages from the Navy and Marine Corps for their respective anniversaries, and watched the cake-cutting with our oldest and youngest Midshipmen. Then we saw a familiar face for the guest of honor speech, our beloved Captain de Marcellus, who had taken the time to return from the Virginia Military Academy. During his speech, he talked about how he was proud of each and every one of us and how he still always hears about the unit and our doings. As a fourth class this event was put together perfectly by the Princeton Platoon and really exhibited the battalion's hard work over the semester. Overall, it was a great experience as a freshman to spend a night out with the other midshipman, whether singing “Unwritten” at the top of our lungs or taking silly photos with my fellow fourth classes. The night was unforgettable and the perfect way to close out a successful semester.

By: MIDN 4/C Balmaceda

CLOSING REMARKS

December 2024

As the Fall 2024 semester ended, another remarkable newsletter was published. This semester, through rigorous training, challenges, and opportunities for growth, each Midshipman has not only developed their individual skills but also contributed to the strength and cohesion of the entire unit. We have embodied the qualities of selflessness, teamwork, optimism, integrity, and concentration, which will serve them well in their military careers and beyond. Throughout the year, the bond within our community has only grown stronger, fostering a lasting sense of camaraderie and mutual respect.

A special thank you goes to our Top 5 and the incredibly motivated Midshipmen who make this unit what it is. Your dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm inspire us all. I am confident that the leadership lessons learned here will continue to guide and inspire us as we move forward, ready to take on new challenges and lead with honor and excellence. Keep pushing forward, embracing every challenge with resilience and determination, and never forget the importance of the values that bind us together as we continue to grow and serve.

By: MIDN 2/C Hilderbrand

