

# ALL IN

## JAYHAWK BATTALION NEWSLETTER

"Developing Leaders of Character – One Cadet at a Time"



OPERATIONS  
UPDATES

CADET SPOTLIGHTS

ALUMNI  
ENGAGEMENT



# A Letter from the PMS

**LTC Calvin W. Taetzsch**

Alumni, Friends and Family of the Jayhawk Battalion,

I am proud to share that the Jayhawk Battalion continues to build disciplined, adaptable, and selfless leaders prepared to lead America's sons and daughters as future platoon leaders in the United States Army. This year has been marked by exceptional performance, significant training achievements, and the continued strengthening of a program rooted in excellence and service.

We closed the Spring 2025 semester by commissioning 13 outstanding Second Lieutenants—ten entering Active Duty, two joining the National Guard, and one entering the Army Reserve. Their success reflects the commitment of our Cadre and Cadet to developing leaders of high character and competence.

Over the summer, 32 members of the Class of 2026 excelled at Cadet Summer Training, completing a rigorous program that tested their leadership, tactical proficiency, and resilience. Every KU Cadet graduated from CST, a testament to their preparation and determination. Cadets also distinguished themselves across the Army: earning Air Assault wings, completing Sapper School, participating in CTLT and NSTP, and representing KU in special operations training such as Robin Sage.

The fall semester began at a rapid pace with our largest New Cadet Orientation in recent years, welcoming 48 new Jayhawks into the program. Our early Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX) at the Kansas Training Center brought 144 Cadets together to hone platoon tactics, land navigation, and marksmanship—skills fundamental to leading Soldiers in any formation. This FTX has propelled strong momentum into our Leadership Labs and ongoing training cycle.

Our Cadets continue to compete—and win—at the highest levels. This year, KU earned first and second place at the Task Force Ranger Challenge Competition and dominated the Brigade 7-person competition taking home first place, demonstrating the Battalion's technical expertise, fitness, and teamwork. This fall we also proudly recognized four distinguished alumni during our annual Wall of Fame ceremony, reinforcing the legacy our Cadets strive to uphold.

As we recently concluded our dining-in and witnessed senior Cadets excitedly receiving their branches, I cannot help but remain confident that the Jayhawk Battalion is shaping leaders fully prepared to assume the profound responsibility of leading America's platoons.

Rock Chalk, and thank you for your continued support of the Jayhawk Battalion.





# Welcome New Cadre



CPT Caitlin Hicks is an Assistant Professor of Military Science and National Guard liaison at the University of Kansas. Originally from South Dakota, CPT Hicks previously served on Active Duty at Ft. Carson before transitioning to the Kansas Army National Guard. She has held roles as a Company Commander twice and a Battalion Training Officer, managing sustainment operations and coordinating large-scale training events.

She is currently finishing her MBA with an emphasis in Supply Chain Management and spends her free time working out, taking on home improvement projects, and crocheting. She loves traveling and hiking whenever she can get away, often joined by her dog, Albus. her cat, Fiona, prefers to supervise from home. CPT Hicks is passionate about mentorship, building strong teams, and helping cadets grow into confident and capable officers. She brings energy, creativity, and organization to the battalion and looks forward to another great semester with the Jayhawk Battalion.

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CPT Parker Harris commissioned from the Grand Canyon University ROTC program into the Military Intelligence branch in the United States Army Reserve's Active Guard Reserve program. He earned his Bachelor's degree in History as well as a Master of Business Administration and Master's of Science in Leadership. He has served 10 years in support of Special Operations Command Central, U.S. Army Japan, 500th and 501st Military Intelligence Brigade – Theater. He enjoys spending time with his dog, Shadow, going to the gym, and playing cards.





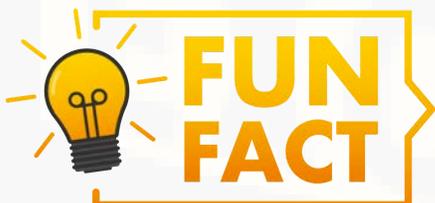
# Welcome New Cadre



CPT Searle has served in the Army Reserves since 2017. She has one deployment to Afghanistan as a Mortuary Affairs officer. Prior to coming onto the AGR program she served as a Company Commander for a transportation unit where she mobilized to the Afghan Refugee camps. On her free time, she enjoys kayaking, snowboarding, and spending time with family.

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CPT Sean McCammond is from St. Louis, Missouri and commissioned into the Army's Ordnance Branch in 2018. He earned his Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from the University of Central Missouri before starting his career as a logistician. From serving as a Platoon Leader to a Company Commander, he's gained experience building strong relationships and leading Soldiers. When he's not at work, he's at home with his wife and two kids, keeping family time a priority while balancing the demands of life in the Army.



The KU Army ROTC program dates back over 100 years, and now spans 8 campuses across Kansas and Missouri with its 2025 expansion.

## A Note From the C/Battalion Commander



The fall 2025 semester was full of great accomplishments for the Jayhawk Battalion!

Some of our more notable training included a highly educational Field Training Exercise (FTX) in a location new to KU, weekly leadership labs increasing cadet confidence in planning and executing platoon missions, and a diagnostic and “for record” Army Fitness Test (AFT). While the Jayhawk Battalion is laser focused on training and preparing the next generation of leaders, we have found many opportunities to enjoy the freedoms we fight for. The Battalion has participated in a KU football Salute to service game, morale raising paintball games, and a dine-in celebrating all that has been accomplished this semester.

Looking forward to the spring semester, we are very excited about the training opportunities we have planned. The weekly leadership labs will help prepare cadets for spring FTX as well as many other skills they will need to be successful in Cadet Summer Training (CST).

During our spring FTX, KU will join several other schools, including K-State, for a weekend in Fort Riley. This FTX will ensure our MS3s have developed an advanced understanding of platoon tactics and leadership skills, as well as giving our underclassmen an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in a field environment and create an ever increasing foundation of leadership.

Additionally, the Jayhawk battalion is very excited about our first-ever Expert Cadet Competition. An event where cadets from all MS levels will be able to test their soldier skills in a week-long event held at the crack of dawn. This will ensure all the skills the battalion has learned over the year are perfected to the standard and give MS3s the confidence needed to be highly successful at CST this summer.

I am extremely proud of the Jayhawk Battalion. The dedication of each individual at all levels has been seen and felt across not only KU Army ROTC but ROTC as a whole. The battalion has worked hard to become the leaders the nation needs, and I am honored to call myself a part of the Jayhawk Battalion. Flock together, ALL IN, Rock Chalk!

**Nathaniel E. Lundgren**  
**KU '26, Mechanical Engineering**





## A Note From the C/Command Sergeant Major

“This semester has flown by for the Jayhawk Battalion!”

Our program grew substantially as we welcomed around 50 new cadets, and we also brought in Rockhurst University, Park University, and University of Missouri-Kansas City into our home program.

Our battalion had some big accomplishments this semester, most notably, the Army Fitness Test. This test evaluates the physical readiness of every soldier, and our cadets blew it out of the water, with CDT Rogers, A, CDT Marsteller, and CDT Gilman, all getting perfect scores of 500. Additionally, 37 of our cadets are in the 465 Club, and the battalion's average score was 428.5. These PT scores reflect the hard work of the MS3s this semester, who created and implemented PT plans three days a week.

This semester, we also implemented Cadet of the Month, recognizing an MS1 or MS2 from each platoon. These CDTs have gone above and beyond the standards of the Jayhawk Battalion; they embody strong leadership qualities, setting an example for peers through discipline, initiative, and teamwork. CDTs applied, were nominated, and had to attend a board. CDTs recognized included CDT Blazic, CDT Shriver, CDT Welter, CDT Gilman, CDT Guggisberg, and CDT Stylianou.

To close out this semester, our Battalion hosted a Dining In to celebrate military tradition, camaraderie, and accomplishments. We recognized our cadets for outstanding academic accomplishments. A total of 18 CDTs achieved Academic Excellence (GPA between 3.2 and 3.49), and 41 cadets earned placement on the Dean's List (GPA of 3.5 or higher). CDTs were also recognized for their participation in Ranger Challenge, 10-miler, and Color Guard.

As we wrap up this semester, I want everyone to take a moment to be proud of what we accomplished together. Use the break to rest, recover, and reset — but don't lose the momentum you've built. Come back ready to lead, ready to learn, and ready to push this battalion even further. I'm confident that next semester will be even better, and I'm looking forward to seeing each of you step up and continue proving what the Jayhawk Battalion is capable of.

**Sophia G. Mendus**  
**KU '26, Law and Society**





# OPERATIONS UPDATE



Operations Officer, Cadet Alayna Clayton, enlightens us on what is happening in the Jayhawk Battalion Operations. The S3 shop led an exceptional coordination and dedication in planning and executing the Fall FTX in Salina, KS during September. Operational critical tasks included BRM and land navigation.

The Jayhawk Battalion conducted their Fall Army Fitness Test (AFT) during a perfect afternoon on November 6th. CDT Andrew Snyder played a major role in planning the AFT, stating it was a success “with the amount of time I was given to plan and prepare” during lab time.

CDT Rother said, “The location was perfect, and the turf field is great.”



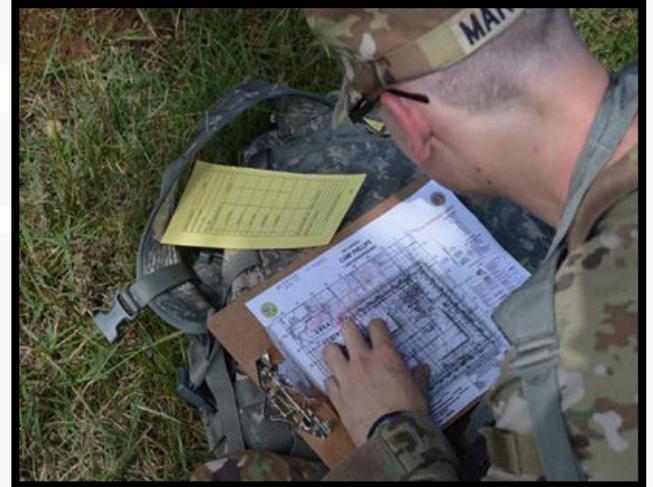
S3 continues to work hard for to keep future operations running smoothly; next on the agenda is the annual dine-in where the battalion gets together to share a toast and enjoy the end of the year festivities!



# FALL FTX 2025

Land Navigation: Cadets race against the clock to find at least 4 of the 5 points for day land navigation and at least 2 of the 3 for night.

Fall Field Training Exercise (FTX)  
Every fall semester, the Jayhawk battalion participates in a 4-day FTX that allows the cadets to train a variety of different skills.



This year's battalion FTX at KSARNG Training Center in Salina, KS trained underclassmen in day and night Land Navigation, Situation Training Exercise (STX) Lanes, Engagement Skills Trainer (EST), and the M4 Marksmanship Qualification range. The September event let senior cadets prep for Cadet Summer Training (CST) at Fort Knox while helping new cadets build their skills and for newer cadets to learn new skills.



Cadets work together as a platoon to complete a successful mission by finding and engaging the objectives.



MS3 Trystan LaCoss engages the pop-up targets for rifle qualification.



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Raider competitions are intense, outdoor athletic challenges that test physical fitness, teamwork, and leadership. These events are a popular part of JROTC programs and feature events like obstacle courses, rope bridge construction, a 5K team run, and a cross-country rescue drill. Jayhawk Battalion Cadets graded JROTC Cadets as they negotiated the obstacle course. Raider Challenge also doubles as a recruiting event with recruiting efforts led by Cadet Snyder.



Recruiting: The Jayhawk Battalion has been conducting recruiting events all over the Kansas City Metropolitan Area. Cadets from the satellite Park University Cadets, had two events. One of which was during the student organizations day. Five cadets from The University of Missouri-Kansas City set up and ran a recruiting table at UMKC's Union Fest. As previously mentioned, Cadet Snyder's efforts scouting high potential talent during the Raider Challenge event.



UMKC sits in the heart of Kansas City, placing Army ROTC Cadets steps away from internships, community partnerships, and leadership experiences you can't get anywhere else.



# RANGER CHALLENGE

Photos:  
Ranger Teams  
work together  
in groups to  
carry logs  
across the KU  
Campus



Photos Below:  
Ranger Teams in action  
at Regional Ranger  
Challenge

Ranger Challenge is a grueling competition that tests cadets' physical and mental toughness through events like land navigation, marksmanship, weapons assembly, and obstacle courses. It aims to improve leadership, team cohesion, and prepare cadets for future military challenges by simulating the rigorous conditions of Army Ranger training.



Jayhawk Battalion submitted a 5 Man Team and a 9 Man Team to Task Force Leavenworth's competition at Camp Dodge Iowa this semester. Here they competed against University of Iowa, Iowa State University, Pitt State University, Kansas State University, and others to see who gets to move on to the 3rd Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition. Both teams showed strong performances with the 9 Man Team placing 2nd and 5 Man Team placing 1st. Only the 5 Man Team will be advancing to the brigade's competition.



Ranger Challenge began in 1982 as a way to build esprit de corps and test Cadets' mental and physical toughness across ROTC battalions nationwide.

Ranger Challenge teams train an average of 10-12 hours per week often before sunrise—just to compete at the regional level.





# RANGER CHALLENGE: INTERVIEWS



Cadet Mortensen (MS3) served as the Officer In Charge of the Ranger Challenge Team this year. He sought out the opportunity to develop and test himself as a leader. In his previous two years, he served as one of the members of the Ranger Challenge Team. He described the shift from follower to leader as “tougher to lead but more rewarding”. Mortensen enjoyed playing a key role in the betterment and development of others, not just the overall outcome of the competition. He’s most fond of the memories of downtime between events, as he realized the camaraderie and esprit de corps is exactly what he’s been chasing in ROTC. Next year, as an MS4, Mortensen will supply the next OIC with his knowledge and expertise to support them after knowing how arduous the position can be.

Cadet Shriver (MS2) joined Ranger Challenge for fun and camaraderie. He thoroughly enjoyed the train up and competition due to the shared struggle and hardship. The moment he enjoyed the most, was taking 1st place on the ruck by 20 minutes as they were driven by the prospect of seizing victory collectively. Shriver will be the OIC next year, he intends to build upon the winning culture and momentum by having both teams take 1st place.



Cadet Gilman (MS1) seeks the tougher experiences in life. Her search brought her to Ranger Challenge as she had done the Junior ROTC equivalents back in high school. She sought to surround herself with those beyond her level and be pushed further by them. Gilman herself stated “Being on Ranger Challenge made ROTC worth it”. Gilman is on the 5 Man Team and will be competing in the 3rd Brigade Ranger Challenge Competition. Gilman has been honing her skills on the 9 Line MEDEVAC, Call for Fire, and working out. Gilman has even taken additional time to go to the firing range with her father to practice marksmanship. Gilman’s eventual goal is to make it to the national competition at Sandhurst.





# RANGER CHALLENGE: WINNING TF AND BDE

CDT Mortensen arranged the training plan and had the competence to understand that physically running them into ground over two weeks was not the best option. He opted for more intentional physical training such as general endurance increasing through long runs. He skewed the training towards improvement on the Warrior tasks and knowledge, that's what culminated into higher scores on the events. He had utter confidence going into the Brigade Competition and did not have a single doubt in his team's victory. As they started each event, they realized they were leagues ahead of the competition as their team was more fit, more confident, and smarter in comparison. Mortensen found victory underwhelming compared to the feeling of comradery and shared fun amongst his team. He plans to implement the same strategies next year focusing on physical improvement and technical proficiency but incorporating active recovery into the training as well. He'll ensure the 9 Man and 5 Man shows up technically, tactically, mentally, and physically ready.



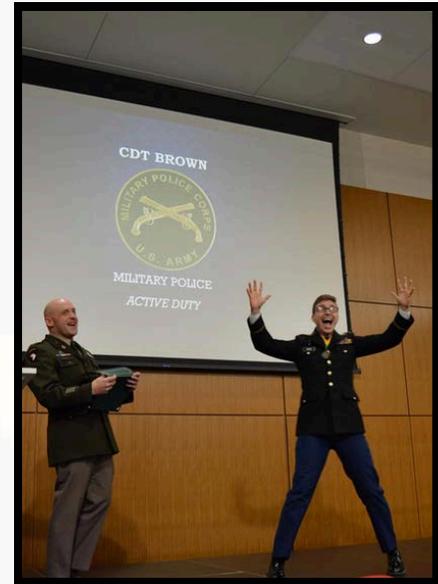
The training Gilman mentioned paid off well, culminating into earning Expert on Marksmanship and a high score on the Spot Rep. The 5 Man used lessons learned to ensure they went into Brigade at 100% physical capacity. The team really focused on getting Gilman up to speed as she was the only MS1 on the team. Although happy to have won the final level of competition for the 5 Man, Gilman loved something else about the experience even more. Gilman experienced "the Army's true Warrior Ethos" as her team did not abandon her when the going got tough as she watched other teams abandon their teammates. Following the well-established culture of KU ROTC, her teammates continued to encourage her and push her through, ultimately culminating in that 1st place finish and even out scoring the 9 Man team's score in the Task Force competition.



# FALL 2025 DINING IN

Before the end of each year, the KU Army ROTC Battalion hosted its annual Dining-In.

During this event, the MS4s formally receive their component and branch assignments in preparation for commissioning at the end of the spring semester. They will then graduate and commission on May 17, 2026.



Most ROTC Dining-Ins include “Mr. Vice,” whose unofficial job is to keep the jokes flowing and make sure everyone ends up at the Grog at least once.



During the Dining-In, the battalion conducted the traditional grog ceremony, calling out grievances and assigning the appropriate “action,” which often involved taking a drink from the grog. The event also highlighted individual excellence, recognizing cadets for their achievements throughout the semester and honoring teams for their dedication and hard work.

We were also privileged to host Kendall Gammon, former Kansas City Chiefs Pro Bowler, who shared his wisdom and guidance with our cadets as they prepare to commission and lead the sons and daughters of America.





# Branching Ceremony Pictures





# **KU ARMY ROTC**

*class of 2025*

## **BRANCHING CEREMONY**

- CDT NGUYEN- SIGNAL, USAR**
- CDT PROCTOR- MILITARY INTELLEGENCE, USAR**
- CDT ST. AMAND- LOGISTICS, USAR**
- CDT BENGI- ADJUTANT GENERAL, KSARNG**
- CDT BODENMILLER- FIELD ARTILLERY, KSARNG**
- CDT CLAYTON- LOGISTICS, KSARNG**
- CDT FLEENER- FIELD ARTILLERY, KSARNG**
- CDT FOSTER- ENGINEER, KSARNG**
- CDT FROST- MEDICAL SERVICES, KSARNG**
- CDT LOPEZ- LOGISTICS, KSARNG**
- CDT MENDUS- MILITARY INTELLEGENCE, KSARNG**
- CDT MESSICK- INFANTRY, KSARNG**
- CDT MUGISHA- INFANTRY, KSARNG**
- CDT NASH- LOGISTICS, KSARNG**
- CDT RICHARDSON- LOGISTICS, KSARNG**
- CDT RIOS- FIELD ARTILLERY, KSARNG**
- CDT ROGERS, L.- CYBER, KSARNG**
- CDT STIEBEN- LOGISTICS, KSARNG**
- CDT BENNETT- AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT BROWN- MILITARY POLICE, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT GOZA- NURSING, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT HESTER- INFANTRY, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT MURFF- AVIATION, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT MURPHY- MILITARY POLICE, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT NELSON- CYBER, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDR RUES- FIELD ARTILLERY, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT SCOBEE- CHEMICAL, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT SNYDER- MILITARY POLICE, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT SWOPE- SIGNAL, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT LUNDGREN- ENGINEER, ACTIVE DUTY**
- CDT ROGERS, A.- INFANTRY, ACTIVE DUTY**





# Semester Awards





# FALL 2025

## Commissioning Seniors

Second Lieutenant Fabrice Mugisha graduated from Washburn with a degree in Legal Studies (Pre Law). He commissioned into the Kansas Army National Guard as an Infantry Officer (11A). He'll be assigned to Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 635 Armored Regiment. He'll be continuing onward to Washburn Law School. Mugisha was most fond of the camaraderie during all the field training exercises.



Second Lieutenant Juan Rios graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. He commissioned as a Field Artillery Officer (13A) into the Kansas Army National Guard. He will be assigned to 1st Battalion, 161st Field Artillery Regiment. His favorite memory in ROTC, eating pizza with his fellow MS5's after the Spring FTX 2025.



Second Lieutenant Rashad St Amand graduated from University of Kansas with a degree in Anthropology. St Amand is in the Active Duty Eligible branching market. He received his Most Preferred rating for Adjutant General and hopes to be stationed in Texas or South Carolina. His favorite memory in ROTC, eating free pizza after the Spring FTX 2025.





# FALL 2025 FUTURE OPERATIONS



Cadets can expect the spring semester to kick off with Land Navigation, followed by STX lanes designed to prepare MSIII cadets for CST. The Joint FTX with K-State, Nebraska, Wichita State, Pittsburg State, and others is scheduled for 26–29 March, with additional late-spring events such as the AFT and CWST. PT throughout the semester will focus on preparing for these key assessments. On the fun side, the Dining Out is projected for 8 May, and the Jayhawk Battalion will close the semester with the Spring Commissioning Ceremony on 18 May—our first to include the UMKC extension. A strong and busy semester ahead—All In.



# JBAA CORNER

*LEADUP and Taylor-Feifer  
Jayhawk Battalion Award*

## MOVING FORWARD



If you wish to contribute to this award as well as help support Cadet development activities not funded by the Department of the Army, please see the newly established LAUNCH KU link below or scan the QR Code above.



The Leadership Excellence Award for Uniform Purchase (LEADUP) was established by Brigadier General (Retired) Chuck Taylor, a distinguished Alumnus of the Class of 1982. This prestigious award honors two Cadets, one male and one female, who scored the highest at Cadet Summer Training, the capstone event for an ROTC Cadet. This Year's LEADUP was presented to Cadet Sophia Mendus and Cadet Alex Rogers.

The Taylor-Feifer Jayhawk Battalion Award not only provides support in the amount of \$2000 annually for Cadet purchase of commissioning uniforms but aims to be a predictable and sustainable support stream to advance program training opportunities and make KU ROTC a premier Commissioning source.





# JBAA CORNER

## WALL OF FAME CEREMONY



Homecoming weekend, KU Army ROTC held the Wall of Fame ceremony. The Jayhawk Battalion Alumni Association (JBAA) Wall of Fame honors four military personnel, either still in service or retired, to be inducted. These four military personnel are extraordinary alumni from the University of Kansas and its extension schools. This year's Wall of Fame inductees included four prestigious KU Army ROTC Alumni, COL (RET) Joseph Walden, COL (RET) Phillip Borders, COL (RET) Thomas Brenton, and Chaplain LTC (RET) Mark Winton.

