Change of Command

This fall, the WGNB is proud to welcome Captain David J. Casteel as our new Commanding Officer! He assumed command from Captain Anthony Corapi during a change of command ceremony held over the summer.

Captain Casteel grew up in Bartlett, TN and graduated from Duke University in 1998 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. Following his commission, he attended flight school in Pensacola where he earned his Naval Flight Officer wings in January 2000. Captain Casteel’s operational assignments include time as a Radar Intercept Officer in the F-14 Tomcat and Weapons System Officer in the F-18 Hornet and F-18 Super Hornet. He served with the “Jolly Rogers” of VF-103 and deployed once on the USS George Washington and once on the USS John F. Kennedy while participating in Operations Southern Watch, Enduring Freedom, and Iraqi Freedom. As an Operational Department Head he served with the “Diamondbacks” of VFA-102 based out of NAS Atsugi, Japan where he deployed three times aboard the USS George Washington in support of Forward Deployed Naval Forces. Captain Casteel returned to the Jolly Rogers as Executive Officer and Commanding Officer during his last operational tour making a historic deployment aboard the USS Harry S. Truman for Operation Inherent Resolve. While on shore assignment, Captain Casteel served with the “Dust Devils” of Test and Evaluation Squadron THREE ONE (VX-31) and NORAD-

Summer Training

With the cancellation of most summer training in 2020 due to the pandemic, our midshipmen were eager to finally get some fleet experience and represent the WGNB. Here are some of the awesome things our mids got to see and do this summer:

**Officer Candidate School:**

For Marine Option midshipmen, the foremost requirement to become Marine Officer is successful completion of Officer Candidate School. All Marine Option rising 1/C must attend this intense 6-week training program in Quantico, VA, where they prove themselves fit to hold the title of United States Marine. MIDN 1/C Gerst, MIDN 1/C Alisbrooks, and MIDN 1/C Kane proved their mettle as they endured countless hours of intense drill, tactics, and physical fitness. These three midshipmen overcame the challenge and showed themselves to be among the best the WGNB has to offer.

**1/C Aviation Cruise:**

With so many of our 1/C looking to fly, the majority of our seniors were attached to aviation squadrons for their summer training. MIDN 1/C Hudson, MIDN 1/C Jenkot, and MIDN 1/C Lalumandier had a great time with a fighter squadron in Lemoore, CA. In addition, MIDN 1/C Carpenter, MIDN 1/C Colin, and MIDN 1/C Gould had a blast with helicopter squadrons in beautiful San Diego, CA.

**Surface Nuclear Cruise:**

Two of our 1/C got a ride on an MV-22 to join an aircraft carrier underway for their Group Sail exercise. MIDN 1/C Deal conned the carrier during flight ops numerous times, and August 16th marked the beginning of this year's New Student Orientation (NSO). We began with 15 Midshipmen Candidates: 14 of them graduated from this intensive program to become Midshipmen 4/C. For many of these former Midshipmen Candidates, the week started off as a total culture shock. For five days, the candidates endured a stressful environment created by training staff and followed a strict schedule that MIDN 1/C Carpenter planned out with the help of 12 Company Staff members roughly six months before NSO started. The schedule emphasized drill, PT, and a camping trip. The purpose of all this was to break the candidates down as individuals, in order to build them up again as one cohesive team. In addition, they were also taught new skills such as hiking, land navigation, and marksmanship, to give them a small taste of the training they will undergo during their time in the Battalion. After NSO, many of the 4/C felt at ease. MIDN 4/C McReynolds said that she felt proud of herself and the other graduates for finishing the grueling week. Another 4/C, MIDN Mumford stated, “I felt relieved, excited, and most of all, accomplished. Relieved because the long week was over, excited because I, along with the other graduates, were now official candidates, the week was a small taste of the training they will undergo during their time in the Battalion. After NSO, many of the 4/C felt at ease. MIDN 4/C McReynolds said that she felt proud of herself and the other graduates for finishing the grueling week. Another 4/C, MIDN Mumford stated, “I felt relieved, excited, and most of all, accomplished. Relieved because the long week was over, excited because I, along with the other graduates, were now official members of the WGNB, and I felt a great sense of accomplishment because I had just finished maybe one of the hardest weeks of my life so far.” However, now is not the time to rest. Even though NSO is over, their time in the Battalion has just started, meaning they all still need to prove themselves to be dedicated and disciplined Midshipmen. The real expectations have just begun.
U.S. Northern Command. He also served as Assistant Commander of Navy Personnel Command for Career Progression (PERS-8) and Commanding Officer of Enlisted Staff/Executive Assistant to Commander Navy Personnel Command. Captain Casteel is a graduate of the prestigious United States Naval Test Pilot School, Air Force Institute of Technology, Naval War College, and Joint Forces Staff College. He has accrued over 2,700 hours in 25 different aircraft and has personal decorations that include the Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Strike/Flight Air Medal, Navy Commendation Medal, and Navy Achievement Medal along with numerous unit, campaign, and service awards.

During the first drill period of the fall semester, CAPT Casteel introduced his command philosophy and underlined the importance of “Victory” to the battalion. The WGNB is excited to welcome such a decorated and experienced Commanding Officer to our battalion and look forward to working under him during his time here. We would also like to thank CAPT Corapi for his years of dedicated service and congratulate him on his military retirement. We wish you fair winds and following seas, Sir!

Do YOU want to be part of the WGNB?
You can apply for the 4-year national scholarship online and list your top school as UIUC. If you are accepted, you will get your tuition paid for, a stipend during the year, and you will begin training over summer to become a future naval officer. Even if you don’t get accepted, don’t worry! You can still pick up scholarship during the year. Also, if you are a resident of Illinois and not on scholarship, the University of Illinois offers in-state tuition waivers for ROTC students! We look forward to seeing you at the World’s Greatest Naval ROTC Battalion!

Midshipman Candidates conduct PT on a foggy morning at Camp Drake.

Featured Summer Cruise photos:

MidN 1/C Hudson, MidN 1/C Lalumandier, and MidN 1/C Jenkot can’t get enough of aviation life!

MidN 1/C Hoffman rappelling during his EOD cruise. Not for the faint of heart!

MidN 2/C Weiss poses for a picture on the flight deck of CVN-75.

MidN 3/C Roberson in the cockpit of a USMC AH-1 Cobra.

MidN 1/C Yim was able to gear up and integrate with the Shooters for the best seat in the house during aircraft launches. MidN 2/C Kim and MidN 2/C Weiss also loved their time on enlisted cruise aboard another aircraft carrier.

EOD Cruise:
As an aspiring EOD officer, MidN 1/C Hoffman attended a grueling 3-week cruise in Coronado, CA to screen for the community. MidN on this cruise are constantly evaluated and pushed to the limit both physically and mentally, so we are proud to say that MidN 1/C Hoffman excelled under pressure and advanced to the next stage of the EOD selection process.

Marine Month:
A new opportunity this year for 3/C and 2/C Marine Options, MidN 3/C Roberson attended the Marine Month program in Camp Pendleton, CA, where he experienced an exciting taste of each major Marine community and learned a little bit of what it’s like to be a United States Marine. Range time with various weapons platforms and hands-on experience with equipment were some of his highlights.

Those were only some of the trainings our midshipmen attended. We also sent some mids to CORTRAMID and others to submarine cruises, just to name a few more. As always, our battalion provided Midshipman Instructors to train candidates at nationwide New Student Indoctrination. We are proud of our diverse accomplishments this summer, and eager for another successful semester back at UIUC!