



Submitted photo
Freshman and sophomore-level Truman State ROTC cadets pose for a photo with members of the senior class who acted as enemy forces for the spring field training exercise April 5 to 6 at an old Air Force radar site north of Kirksville. The exercises were designed to build the skills of the younger cadets, senior Miranda Martin said.

Cadets learn to take charge

BY CHRIS BROWN
Staff Reporter

Younger Truman State ROTC cadets experienced led field training exercises for the first time during Truman ROTC history last weekend.

Every year, freshman and sophomore ROTC cadets participate in Truman ROTC's FTX, but this year the sophomores were allowed to lead the exercises for the first time. Battalion Enrollment Officer Doug Reinsch said he thinks this leadership opportunity will prepare these cadets for the responsibilities they will undertake more regularly during years to come.

Reinsch said the junior Truman ROTC cadets usually participate in the spring FTX and annual combined FTX, which takes place at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. and includes cadets from other schools, but this year, the juniors are not participating in the Truman's FTX. He said the goal of this year's FTX was to give the sophomores a chance to lead while allowing the juniors to have the weekend off, instead of requiring them to participate in the Truman FTX and the combined FTX.

Senior Miranda Martin, who helped organize the Truman FTX events this year, said the exercises included two parts — daytime and evening land navigation exercises and tactical lanes. She said the exercises were designed to build skills the younger cadets have been practicing during weekly labs throughout the year.

During the land navigation exercises at Thousand Hills State Park, the cadets had to navigate a series of points in the woods using only a compass and their own footsteps to measure their way through the terrain, Martin said. She said the exercises began with the nighttime land navigation, after which the cadets traveled to the training facility at the Kirksville radar station, where they camped for the night. The next morning the cadets went back to Thousand Hills for the daytime land navigation and the tactical lanes exercises, Martin said.

The tactical lanes exercises require the cadets to execute a mission as if they were experiencing an actual tactical scenario, Martin said. During last weekend's scenario, she said, the sophomore and freshman cadets faced off with their senior colleagues using Airsoft guns to simulate combat.

Martin said the complexity of the exercises is something the cadets have to get used to as they progress.

"It's something we learn," Martin said. "We live and we breathe it, so it's second nature to us."

Senior Jacob Vogel said the planning for Truman's FTX took a month and included preparing the food, restroom locations, Airsoft weapons and sleeping arrangements for the freshman and sophomore cadets. He said the senior cadets and the ROTC instructors did most of the preparatory work.

Vogel said the juniors were preparing for the more intense combined FTX at Fort Leonard Wood the week after the Truman FTX. The point of these exercises for the juniors, he said, is to prepare them for roles as instructors during their senior year.

Vogel said while upperclassmen typically participate as leaders during the Truman FTX and the Fort Leonard Wood exercises the following week, he said he was pleased to see many of the sophomore cadets performed their new leadership roles superbly.

"This time we gave [the juniors] a break and gave the sophomores a chance to do some things," Vogel said. "I saw that a lot of the sophomores were really stepping up."

Sophomore cadet David Darrow participated in the sophomore-led Truman FTX last week. He said the exercises gave him and his fellow sophomores a chance to have leadership roles for the first time during their ROTC careers.

Darrow said the leadership experience brought out different qualities in the sophomore cadets.

"Seeing your peers being leaders, you get to see a little more into them, who they are and their character," Darrow said. "It brings a team closer together."

Although this year's sophomore-led FTX was the first of its kind at Truman, Darrow said he enjoyed the experience and can't wait for more opportunities to lead.

"I think it was a great idea and I wish that we could do it more often," Darrow said.

Reinsch said the decision of whether to have the sophomores lead Truman's spring FTX during the future still is undecided, but said he thinks the change was a success.

"For the sophomores, it enables them to create their leadership identity," Reinsch said. "I liked what I saw at the FTX. They're a very responsible group."



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From left to right, sophomore Tom Hazen, freshman Dominic Bisesi and sophomore Kaitlyn Hinzman work together to complete a mission April 6 north of Kirksville. The underclassmen were given an opportunity to practice leadership with the spring field training exercises.

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