

Command In Brief

JTAGS Schoolhouse relocates

By Ed White

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – The Joint Tactical Ground Station Soldiers have a very stressful and important job. Their mission is nothing less than to protect and support the warfighter around the world. Since 1999, the school where Soldiers and Sailors are taught the skills necessary to do the job has been in El Paso, Texas, but a recent move had brought the JTAGS schoolhouse to Colorado Springs, Colo.

“The move from Texas is good for the unit,” said SFC Todd Avery, chief instructor. “It puts us closer to the company and battalion assets that we can use to support the course.”

The course is a seven week program that is open to Soldiers and Sailors. It teaches the fundamentals of the system and gives the students practice in scenarios that mimic real-world

events. Soldiers and Sailors who complete the course can expect to be put to work in Asia, Europe, the Middle East or Colorado Springs.

“Currently we have six Army and two Navy students in this first class in the new location,” Avery said. “Every move has hassles, but we took care of our Soldiers and their families and we are up and running smoothly again.

“The small staff of six instructors teaching the craft of early warning to a slow but steady stream of students has ensured that Joint and coalition forces around the globe have the capability to defend themselves against enemy missile launches. With the move to Colorado Springs, the capability, the education and the tradition continues.



The JTAGS system (right) now resides in Colorado Springs and the classroom instruction takes place in trailers designed for that purpose. *Photo by Ed White*

Bravo Company welcomes five new members to NCO ranks

SFC Lamar Lauderdale

FORT MEADE, Md. – It was a great day for the Corps of Noncommissioned Officers, especially those from Bravo Company, 53rd Signal Battalion on Aug. 1. On this day, Soldiers and family members converged unto the Fort Meade Museum to welcome five outstanding Warriors into the proud corps of NCOs.

SGT Joshua Crandall, SGT Luis De La Hoz, SGT Christopher Ford, SGT Bryce Howe and SGT Ferdinand Placer assumed the rank, “where the rubber meets the road,” inside the museum that preserves an important part of the Army’s tradition and rich history. CPT Jermaine Sutton, commander of Bravo Company, was on hand to promote the Soldiers to NCO.

Traditionally, the duties of a sergeant have a greater impact on the junior enlisted Soldier than any other NCO rank. It is this rank that a junior enlisted first looks to for hands-on guidance, mentorship and direction. Soldiers choosing to assume this rank must be aware of this and accept this vital responsibility. The five leaders who were promoted to this all important rank have proven that they have what it takes to get the job done.

The Soldiers being promoted stood side by side between two massive tank displays as the narrator announced each Soldier’s name individually. As each Soldier was called to take the most important step of their young professional careers, they were met by Sutton and a family member of their choice to receive their promotion.

“I worked hard to prove that I am deserving of this promotion and I can’t wait to make things happen as an NCO” said Crandall. “It was also nice getting promoted with a good group of guys.”

1st Space Battalion Soldiers Just Say No

CPT Alyssa Aarhus, HHC, 1st Space Battalion

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. — With an Alcoholics Anonymous speaker and specific drug awareness presentations, Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), 1st Space Battalion in Colorado Springs devoted an entire morning to the value of drug prevention. SGT Tasha McNeal, the Company Training Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) and or-

ganizer of the event, gave an in-depth informational brief on drug prevention for children. McNeal stressed the significance of her class, “As a mother of one small child, I believe in the importance of parental awareness for drug prevention. Stopping drug abuse starts with our children.”

SPC Corey Sinnott informed Soldiers with a detailed presentation on marijuana titled, “How Much of a Gamble?” His briefing incorporated facts about marijuana users and the detrimental affects on their immune systems and higher rates of cancer compared to non-users. He also provided information on the hormonal effects of marijuana usage, lower testosterone levels for men, and disrupted hormone production for women. SPC Michael Easley led discussions on the use and production of methamphetamines. SSG Alicia Scott, the Human Resources NCOIC for 1st Space Battalion, referred to her personal experience during the discussion, “I tried to purchase cold medicine at Walgreens and had to provide my ID card for verification of my age. I also learned that certain medications can only be purchased in limited quantities.” Colorado Springs restricts cold medication purchases, a key ingredient to methamphetamine production.

In the last class, SPC Jason Cotto educated Soldiers on the abuse of ecstasy. Cotto cautioned, “Even a small amount of ecstasy can be toxic enough to poison the nervous system and cause irreparable damage.” Soldiers were surprised to learn that ecstasy is sometimes mixed with substances such as rat poison and can trigger death with causes ranging from dehydration and exhaustion to heart attacks.

After a brief discussion on the definition of alcoholism and alcohol abuse by SGT Tonya Castorena, a speaker from the Alcoholics Anonymous organization shared his story. His abuse started with casual drinking at his home, work, social settings, and progressed in a downward spiral to significant alcohol abuse. “Alcohol abuse affects not only the abuser, but their families. It also greatly affects unit efficiency,” the speaker warned. 1SG Allen Kirkpatrick identified with the speaker’s candid remarks, “Our Soldiers need to understand that drinking can lead to unstable family relations, health issues, lack of progression for their careers, and, at worst, dismissal from the Army.” Upon the completion of the class, McNeal presented the speaker with a 1st Space Battalion coin and a Company Certificate of Appreciation.

By the end of the morning, Soldiers held a better understanding of drug prevention and alcohol abuse. SFC John Pitzen commented, “The training was very beneficial for Soldiers. The Alcoholics Anonymous speaker provided an especially sincere and informative brief.” As a parting gift and reminder, McNeal handed out key chains sporting a cartoon animal with the slogan, “Don’t Monkey with Drugs!” The presentations and discussions, however, served as the lasting impression for Headquarters and Headquarters Company Soldiers.