

## 2nd Space Operations Officer Course Graduates

By Capt. Laura Kenney

**F**eet planted firmly on the Army's traditional ground but eyes aimed with precision on the skies, 15 Army officers graduated in early March as fully trained Space Operations Officers. They belonged to only the second class of this elite new specialty to do so.

The seven-week course — which earns graduates Functional Area 40 — equips them with the tools and knowledge to provide future commanders guidance on conducting Space operations in support of the mission. Officers study orbitology, satellite communications, Space-based navigations and intelligence-gathering to include surveillance and negation of the same to opposing forces. The course is designed and instructed by the U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command's Force Development and Integration Center - West, located in Colorado Springs, Colo.

John Coons, Chief of the Training Branch, described the demanding course as 265 academic hours, 264 of which are classified. As a Vietnam veteran and retired commissioned officer, he was emphatic about the value of the training.

“This mission that we're doing here — training — is second only to the bedrock mission of any Army, that of actually waging war. As a young officer, I griped with everyone else about how much training we had to do — but I saw its immediate relevance the first time I was shot at. All of this fancy new equipment we have — and make no mistake, it's incredible — is worthless if they don't know how to use it. Our goal is to train a brand new corps of Space Officers, who will then go out into the field, learn even more, and come back to teach.”

“This class benefited from all the lessons we learned with the first class, and they were also able to train on equipment that was not available to the groundbreaking first class. Both cadre and students gained an advantage

from this, as they'll be able to take the lessons learned here and pass them with an even greater degree of sophistication to the next class starting in June,” said Coons.

The course is divided into three segments beginning with 25 days of classroom instruction. Afterwards, a week is devoted to off-site visits to places such as the National Reconnaissance Office, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency in Washington D.C., the National Security Agency, and U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command Headquarters.

Included are hands-on training sessions with the Army Space Program Office, which develops Tactical Exploitation of National Capabilities Space support systems in use by Army warfighters. The course also includes a 43-hour command post exercise designed to test each student's proficiency in 24 individual critical tasks culminating in graduation and assignment to operational staff and Space systems program offices.

“This high level technology, with its at-times almost incredible capabilities, translates for me into a new way to support the soldier, the warfighter. I've been a logistics officer for a long time, providing beans and bullets to the troops. Now I'll be providing them with the very best of communication and reach-back abilities that are amazing,” said course graduate Maj. Scott Parks of U.S. Space Command.

This group of Space officers, the first to graduate since the September 11 terrorist attacks that, in President George W. Bush's words, “shook but did not break the nation,” feel strongly motivated by that tragedy. This emotional background added an even more intense layer of motivation to what was, for many, an already life-long fascination with Space and technology.

“I've been a logistician for my entire Army career to date, but I've loved Space and anything involved with

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Force Development and Integration Center***

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it probably since high school,” said Col. Patricia Baxter, class leader and presently the Logistics Officer for Army Space Command. “When the opportunity arose to become a part of this new specialty, I jumped at it. It won't be quite the adrenaline rush of actually riding a rocket into Space, but it's the next best thing, and I'm proud to be part of something that will be serving the soldier, and the American public, as nobly as Space Operations will.

“I don't see another incident happening such as took place on September 11, because that was without precedent. Since it happened, the American people have become mobilized, not just the Armed Forces. No future hijacker is going to have an easy time of it, and our best defense is an aware citizenry. Witness how plane passengers took care of that would-be shoe bomber!

“Our job, in this new functional area of Space Operations, is to utilize the vast opportunities of Space, and all the technology that comes with it, to back up that first line of defense,” finished Baxter firmly.

The tour of the damaged but in-construction Pentagon that took place during their visit to Defense Agencies, was encouraging for the Space Officers-in-training.

“Walking down the halls, you could see that all the children's notes expressing grief from across America were still up. That, plus the fact of re-building, sort of tells the whole story,” said Maj. Eric Henderson, commander of the Army Space Support Company.

The speaker at the new Space officers' graduation, Brig. Gen. Richard V. Geraci, underscored the importance of Space to the Army in current and future operations. Geraci is the Deputy Commanding General for Operations, U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense

Command, and Deputy Commanding General U.S. Army Space Command.

“This ceremony is about Army Transformation and your skills are vital to the development of the Army's objective force,” Geraci told the graduates. “Your mission is to ensure that ground force commanders have access to Space-based capabilities.”

Addressing the audience, he said:

“These officers will become some of the most critical players on a commander's staff, as will those who came before and those who will come after them,” said Geraci.

“A colorful present-day example can be found in the ongoing operations in Afghanistan. We've seen U.S. Special Forces soldiers, riding into battle on horseback with our allies, carrying global positioning system receivers, satellite communications terminals, laser designators and laptop computers in their saddlebags.”

Less graphic, but equally important, Geraci said there are other aspects of Space that have had a tremendous impact on current operations.

“The Army Space Command worked with national agencies to produce spectral imagery to help our warfighters on the ground,” he said. “With our friendly force tracking capabilities, we can enhance our efforts to eradicate fratricide. We've also produced near real-time video that allows us to track movement on the ground, and our 3-D “fly-throughs” enable aviators and ground crews to “see” the terrain before they are there. And that's just scratching the surface of what we can do.”

Geraci called the group of new Space officers “Space trailblazers.”

“The Space Commission recently recommended that each service develop a cadre of Space officers,” he continued. “I'm proud to say the Army and the SMDC

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***— Lt. Col. Michael Yowell, Commander,  
193d Space Support Battalion,  
Colorado Army National Guard***

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started the process long before that. Graduates will be spread thin, throughout various Defense Agencies and the warfighting commands. They will be the ones everyone comes to with questions about Space. They will be the ones speaking for the Army, which has a long history in Space.

“Recent events, starting with the Gulf War, and culminating in, most recently, our engagement in Afghanistan, have enlightened U.S. military commanders, and in fact the whole world, about the vast, largely untapped military potential of Space. Its importance cannot be over-emphasized.”

Col. William Partridge, commander, Army Space Forces, presented each new Space Operations Officer with the distinguished Air Force Space and Missile Badge after Geraci awarded them their diplomas.

The badge, which retains its distinctive Air Force blue even on the Army green Battle Dress Uniform, displays the earth as viewed from Space, surrounded by stars and orbital paths, and features a central figure representing both an upward thrust into Space and the launch vehicles necessary for that movement.

The Distinguished Honor Graduate for the course was Maj. Gregory Bowen, a North Dakota National Guardsman assigned to Army Space Command on a three-year tour. Bowen achieved the highest academic score, with a grade point average of 99.1 percent.

“I've been interested in Space my whole life — what kid doesn't love rockets and gizmos? And Space is definitely the future for the Army. The course has given us a good foundation on which to build,” said Bowen.

Four graduates hail from the National Guard.

One of those, Lt. Col. Michael Yowell, commander of the 193rd Space Battalion, a Colorado National Guard unit, commented on the strength that the Guard can bring to Space:

“In the Guard, you don't have the turn-over rate of an Active Duty unit. Most of our unit members are local, and there is a tremendous amount of civilian acquired skills present in our battalion. We have computer analysts, orbital specialists,

even one man who worked on the Hubble Space Telescope. When someone with one of these top skills gets out of the Active Army, we snap them up, and keep their skills in the Guard, so they're still available to the American people. All but a few soldiers in my battalion have been mobilized for the current situation.”

In the graduation address, Geraci emphasized the key roles that National Guard and Reserve soldiers, as well as Joint Forces, are playing in Space.

“Space-smart Army National Guard soldiers have been indispensable in performing current operations. Army Reserve soldiers with Space expertise have filled critical roles. Although the Army has an important role in Space, make no mistake, the 21st Century will see an increasing joint role, and a growing reliance on Space assets.

“The Objective Force paradigm — “see first, understand first, act first and finish decisively” — demands a continuously updated situational awareness distributed throughout the force. Space — and fine men and women like those you see before you today — will enable that to happen.”

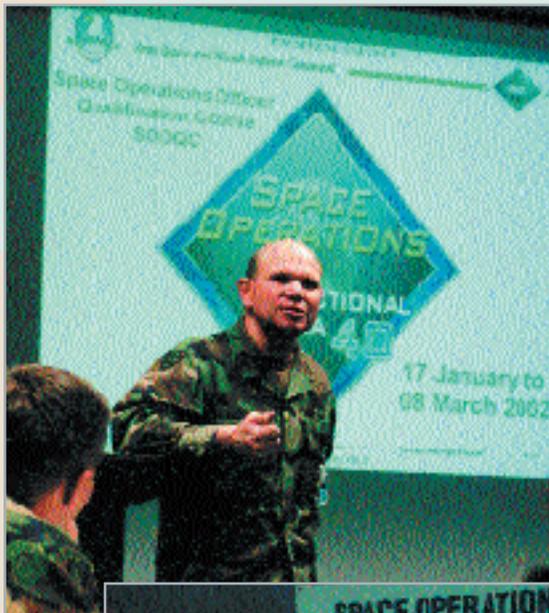
Upon completion of the course, students were assigned to various destinations to include U.S. Army Space Command, Space and Missile Defense Command, U.S. Space Command, U.S. Army Corps Headquarters, National Security Space Architect and National Reconnaissance Office, according to Force Development and Integration Center officials.

The next class is slated for June 2002.

Capt. Laura Kenney served five years Active Duty as an enlisted journalist with Air Defense Command in Germany. Later commissioned in the Reserves, she performed in Public Affairs in the Gulf War theater, and served as Deputy Public Affairs Officer for the American sector in Kosovo in 2001. She is presently mobilized in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, working in the Army Space Command Public Affairs Office.



Front row, left to right: Lt. Col. Michael Yowell, Colorado Army National Guard, Commander 193d Space Battalion, Maj. Gregory S. Bowen, North Dakota Army National Guard, Lt. Col. David W. Reese, FDIC-West, Maj. K. Jay Curry, I Corps, Brig. Gen. Richard V. Geraci, Col. Patricia A. Baxter, U.S. Army Space Command G4, Maj. Shelley L. Volkwein, U.S. Army Space Command, Maj. Joan E. Rousseau, U.S. Space Command. Back row, left to right: Maj. Matthew Nowak, Colorado Army National Guard, 193d Space Battalion, Maj. Ralph Trenary, Colorado Army National Guard, 193d Space Battalion, Maj. Clay Scherer, FDIC-East, Maj. Eric Henderson, U.S. Army Space Command, Lt. Col. Timothy R. Tritch, U.S. Space Command, Maj. George A. Andary, U.S. Space Command, Maj. Gary Arnold, U.S. Space Command, Maj. Scott A. Parks, U.S. Space Command.



**Top left:** Brig. Gen. Richard V. Geraci briefs the students of the second Space Operations Officer Qualification Course.

**Above:** Lt. Col. Michael Yowell and Maj. Joan E. Rousseau, wargame during the final Command Post Exercise for the Space Operations Officer Qualification Course.

**Left:** Maj. Shelley Volkwein, Maj. Greg Bowen and Lt. Col. Timothy Tritch listen intently during the first day of the second Space Operations Officer Qualification Course.