



BACKBONE UNIVERSITY



Noncommissioned Officers

Feb. 26-29, 2024

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Executive Summary

Noncommissioned officers play a pivotal role in the success of USFK and supporting organizations across the Korean Peninsula and serve as the backbone of the organization's operational effectiveness and cohesion. They bridge the gap between officers and enlisted personnel, embodying leadership, expertise, and experience. Backbone University strengthens these contributions through four days of coaching, team building and organized classroom discussion and facilitates collaborative decision-making and mission success in complex operational environments.

BACKBONE UNIVERSITY IN FOCUS

The 2024 iteration focused on educating noncommissioned officers in the rank of E6 and E7 on the Combined and Joint War-fighting environment and the foundational leadership- common to all service members. Strengthening this shared understanding enables effective coordination and communication in the joint environment and enhances operational efficiency and integrated expertise within unified framework.

BACKBONE UNIVERSITY 2024 MANNING

Backbone University saw an increase in participation from across our formations to include members of our U.S. Forces Japan counterparts. This year, Backbone University hosted 89 participants to include 44 from the Republic of Korea, 42 U.S., one New Zealand NCO, one Thailand NCO and one NCO from the Phillipines. BBUs influence also expanded to members of USFJ and III MEF.

CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

Who: ROK-U.S. E6/E7 population from all service components across the Korean Peninsula and select members of USFJ

What: Educate NCOs and POs in the Combined and Joint Warfighting environment and fundamental leadership skills

When: 26-29 February 2024

Where: U.S. Army Garrison-Humphreys

Why: To strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance, increase combat readiness, maintain, and grow the coalition and reinforce tactical and operational-level leadership attributes



Tri-Command LOE/LOO

Line of Effort:

**Mission First,
People Always**

**Taking care of the
Servicemembers,
Civilians, Families,
and Contractors who
support the Forces
on the Korean
Peninsula – our most
precious resource!**

Line of Operation 1:

**Defend the
Homeland(s)**

The force is postured to deter aggression, defend the Republic of Korea, protect U.S. interests, and if called upon, defeat any adversary. The U.S./ROK Alliance remains vigilant, determined, and steadfast in our defense, of the Korean Peninsula and across the INDOPACOM region.

Line of Operation 2:

**Strengthen
the Alliance**

The US commitment to the security of the Korean Peninsula and to the people is **IRONCLAD**. The U.S./ROK Alliance is the linchpin of peace and stability in the region.

Line of Operation 3: Main Effort **Prepare for Combat**

We must train – joint/combined, live, virtual, and constructive – at the individual, unit, and combined level to achieve integrated deterrence posturing the joint/combined force to deter aggression, preserve the Armistice, respond in crisis, and allow the diplomatic process to endure from a position of strength.

Line of Operation 4: **Build Coalitions**

Forged in combat and maintained with trust; the three commands – UNC, CFC, and USFK – provide international legitimacy and demonstrate an unrelenting will to the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.



Endstate:

**Peace and Stability on
the Korean
Peninsula /
NE Asia / INDOPACIFIC**

Sequence of Event

Day One "Mission First, People Always"

- Reception
- CSEL Opening Comments
- UNC leadership discussion
- CFC Leadership Discussion
- *Senior Mentor Time*

Day Two "Strengthen the Alliance"

- Physical Fitness Training
- *Gen. Paul LaCamera*, UNC, CFC, USFK CDR
Guest speaker
- *Lt. Gen. Derek MacCaulay*, UNC DCDR Guest Speaker
- CSEL Leadership Discussion
- *Senior Mentor Time*

Day Three "Prepare for Combat"

- Physical Fitness Training
- Engagement Skills Trainer
- Call for Fire Trainer
- Close Combat Tactical Trainer
- Water Survival Training
- *Senior Mentor Time*

Day Four "Build Coalitions"

- Physical Fitness Training
- USFK History
- Senior Q&A Panel
- Medical Simulation Training
- Graduation



"A true leader has the confidence to stand alone the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others."

Gen. Douglas MacArthur



Day 1 “Mission First, People Always”

Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Love, senior enlisted advisor for UNC/CFC/USFK, delivered opening remarks to 89 noncommissioned officers, setting the tone for the four-day training event. His words resonated with the weight of experience and wisdom as he underscored the pivotal role NCOs play in fostering effective leadership within military ranks. Command Sgt. Maj. Love emphasized the critical nature of their responsibilities in maintaining discipline, cohesion, and morale among their units.



Following opening remarks, senior leaders from the United Nations Command and Combined Forces Command initiated a discussion on the paramount importance of strong leadership in the military landscape.

Their dialogue highlighted the indispensable role of leadership in driving operational excellence, fostering teamwork, and ensuring mission success in complex and dynamic environments. Emphasizing the need for adaptability, integrity, and decisiveness, the senior leaders underscored that leadership serves as the linchpin for international cooperation in pursuit of peace and security.



DAY 2 *“Strengthen the Alliance”*



Troops started day two with combined physical fitness training led by Marine Forces Korea. The training session emphasized the importance of Physical fitness and how it is paramount in the military as it enhances combat readiness, toughness, and overall operational effectiveness, enabling service members to perform demanding tasks and endure rigorous hardships. Carrying over from Mangudai lessons, we continue to develop the combined formation through shared understanding and shared hardships. Following PT, the USFK, CFC, UNC, USFJ and III MEF teams received leadership briefings from Gen. Paul LaCamera as well as senior leaders from 7th Air Force, Marine Forces Korea, Eighth U.S. Army, Navy Forces Korea, Space Force Korea and Special Operations Command Korea.

“The Greatest Leader is not necessarily the one who does the greatest things. He is the one that gets the people to do the greatest things.” – Ronald Reagan



Day three of Backbone University focused on the core tenets of the preparing for war LOO by honing skills critical to the joint and combined objectives.

The aim was to foster camaraderie, strengthen cultural bonds, and develop adaptive leaders, capable of navigating the diverse leadership challenges within a dynamic learning environment.

Training identified as critical to the senior NCO group included:

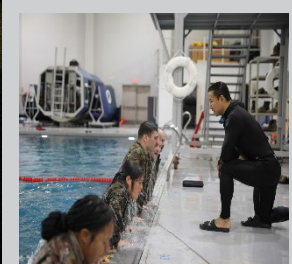
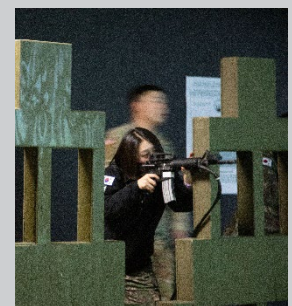
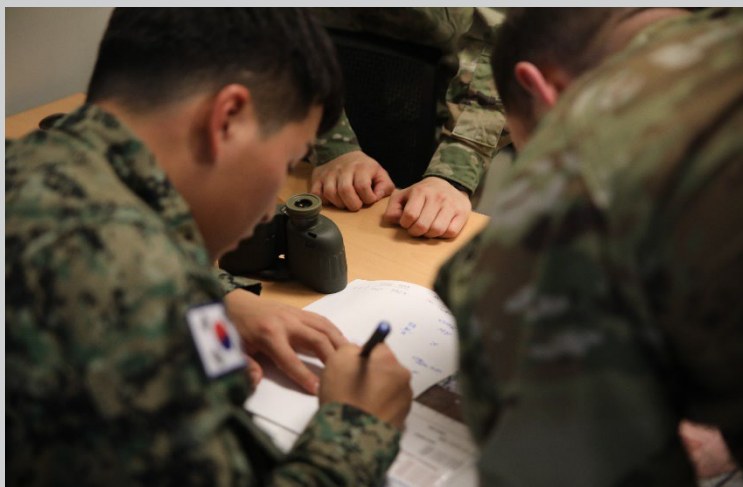
- Combat Water Survival training
- Close Combat Training
- Call for Fire Training,
- Engagement Skills training



Day 3 Cont. "Prepare for Combat"

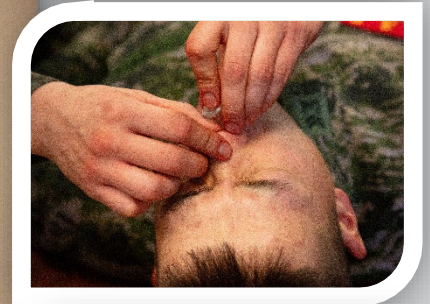
These training opportunities crucial components for military NCOs, emphasizing readiness and effectiveness in diverse combat scenarios. Tri-command noncommissioned officers must understand their role in multi-domain operations and develop competencies to prevail in Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) and the knowledge to collaborate effectively with other branches, units, and allies in joint operations. BBU challenged the critical and creative thinking of its leaders to solve the complex problems in MDO and the Joint/Combined environments.

(Source NCOs' Roles in Multi-Domain Operations- Sgt. Maj. Clayton Dos Santos, Feb. 21, 2023)



Day 4 “Build Coalitions”

To build coalitions we must come together in tough times and maintain the lessons learned and shared understanding with mutual trust. To further ensure this LOO we must understand not only where we are going together but, where we started. Keeping with that theme, Day 4 hosted several key discussions including the USFK Historian briefing and a combined senior leader question and answer segment. Our aim for day four was to build on the core competencies of military leadership and ensure shared experiences and leadership lessons were passed down to the future generations for their application, study, and practice.



Following the briefs, the BBU participants completed one final shared hardship as they navigated the Medical Simulator. This brought classroom discussion into practical application in a realistic combat environment furthering our objective of training as we fight. Upon successful completion, the participants graduated Backbone University and returned to their formations more well-rounded and technically and tactically trained leaders. These NCOs should immediately return to their units and be more value added as leaders, better suited to take care of the servicemember and their families.

THROUGH THE LENS



"Attitude is an intellectual choice," Unknown.

15 Secrets to Leadership

By Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Love

Inspect what you expect!

Know what you don't know & then

do something about it

Guard your integrity & character

Focus on your people, not on self

Operational, institutional, and self-learning always

Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual fitness

Build teams focused on excelling

Little things. Units that do the little things well, do the best

Whatever you're doing today is what's important

Understand the roles of other Leaders

Trust the bedrock of the Profession of Arms

Training is the #1 priority

Have Fun

Attitude matters and is contagious

True secret to leadership: only YOU can figure that out

REFLECTING ON BBU 24

Backbone University (BBU) brought 89 NCOs and Petty Officers together, from across all services, both the ROK/US, to include Thailand, the Philippines, and New Zealand. The theme this year was the “profession of arms”. Although we wear different uniforms, and we relate to different cultures and values, we all belong to the military profession of arms—a brotherhood and sisterhood of selfless service that links us all together. This collective group of NCOs serve in the armed forces and dedicate themselves to the defense of our homelands. These NCOs encompass the values, ethics, and standards that guide military personnel in their conduct and behavior; they are leaders, trainers, coaches, and confidants who hold a unique position that bridges the gap between Commissioned Officers and enlisted personnel, playing a pivotal role in maintaining the tactical and operational efficiency, discipline, and morale of service members. NCOs ensure that service members are not just following orders but understand the mission, the Commander’s intent, the why of the operation and the unique importance of their roles. In essence we explain why---what they do matters. More importantly we hold them and ourselves accountable for accomplishing the mission.

As Senior NCOs we must routinely reinforce the importance of our chosen profession and why the profession exists--whether as part of an all-volunteer force or one requiring compulsory service. BBU allowed us 5 days where Command Senior Enlisted Leaders (CSELs) spent 24/7 immersed with our BBU NCOs, we covered Joint classes, physical training, medical simulation training, combat water survival, close combat tactical trainer, marksmanship, conducted panels with CSELs--- sharing experiences about combat, shared vulnerabilities, and discussed different leadership styles and approaches from each service.

My Ranger buddy, the UNC/CFC/USFK Commander, Gen. Paul LaCamera, spent over an hour talking to BBU NCOs about being experts at the basics; marksmanship, physical fitness/toughness, medical lifesaving skills, and being an expert at their Battle Drill #1. Our UNC Deputy Commander, Lt. Gen. Macaulay also spent time talking with the NCOs, all to make our NCOs better and gain a robust understanding of the Joint, Combined, and Multinational environment.

These NCOs are the future senior enlisted leaders. Spending the week with them gave me tremendous pride; their professionalism, willingness to compete, intelligence, humility and care for their fellow service members is unmatched; they all have the skill, will and teamwork needed to fight and win, in large scale combat operations, anywhere in the world.

For over 73 years, the Republic of Korea and the United States have worked shoulder-to-shoulder, along with our allies and partners to secure the defense of this Peninsula and to advance the values and ideals foundational to our way of life. That’s only made possible by exceptional Servicemembers, like the NCOs who attended BBU. I hope each of them learned something about a different service, created a new friendship, or learned different ideas on how to lead, both from each other, their facilitators, and the CSELs. Gen. LaCamera and I are incredibly proud to serve alongside each of these phenomenal NCOs. The future of our military is in great hands moving forward, this I am sure of.

CSM Jack Love

Katchi Kapshida, We go Together.

Fight Tonight!

Sharing the Message on AFN



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