

Military Times: A Day in the Life of an ROTC Captain and Army Reservist



(Above) Brown carries the map of Mount Pleasant Training grounds. The 403rd Civil Affairs Battalion that Brown now works with recently returned from a tour of duty in Afghanistan. Civil Affairs works distributing aid, digging wells, laying irrigation, and other needed help in post-war countries. Their job is not to reconstruct, Brown says, but to support maneuver forces.

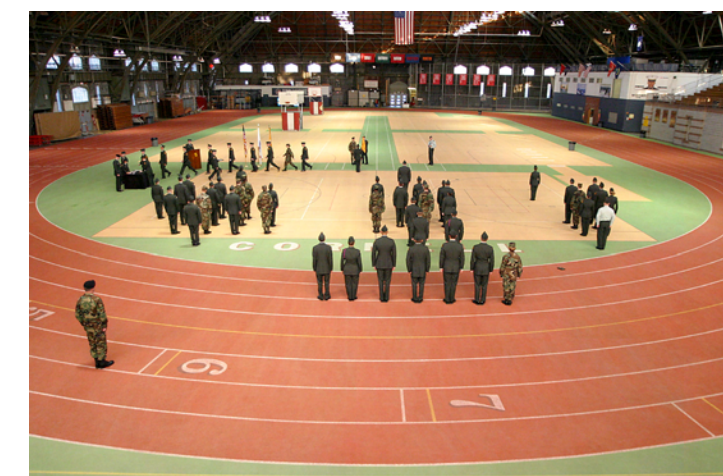
“This is where I want to be,” says Captain Richard Brown. As a professor of military science and an officer in Cornell’s Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) program, Brown combines his two passions: teaching and the military. At home, Brown and his girlfriend, Roxanne Kabanuk, raise two six-year olds. But though everything seems to be in place in Brown’s life, in the spring of 2003 he decided to transfer to the Civil Affairs branch of the army, knowing that he would soon be mobilized and sent abroad for one year. This coming summer he will find out where his unit is needed and in the fall he will depart from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina to begin his first tour of active duty.

Seventeen years ago, as a college student studying abroad in London, Brown found himself face to face with “a new perspective on being an American.” Brown’s 72 year-old landlord, a Hungarian survivor of a concentration camp in Auschwitz, gave him an appreciation of the freedoms the United States enjoys.

Before the trip, as an eighteen-year old living at home, Brown was almost kicked out of his house for not wanting to register for the draft, a view he looks back on as naïve. Within three weeks of returning from London, however, Brown enlisted in the Army. Seventeen years later he says that “never once has it disappointed [him].”

Brown also hopes that serving abroad can help bring valuable experience back into the classroom when he returns to Cornell. Choosing to serve his country will be “an honor and a privilege,” for the true blessing of the military, Brown says, is that it is comprised of all volunteers.

Text and Photographs by Dave Nelson





(Above) Captain Brown and Ashley Fox take time to review Fox's performance as company commander. For two weeks, every cadet gets a turn in one of six leadership roles where they can gain real experience as an officer. "ROTC is a place for them to learn how to teach others," Brown says. "It's all blue grenades."

(Right) Every Wednesday at six AM, Brown and several other ROTC officers take time to participate in physical training with the cadets. Physical training used to be scheduled three times a week, but starting this year the officers count on the cadets to train twice a week on their own. Brown had initial doubts about the cadets showing up regularly, but he gladly admits they proved him wrong with their rising performance scores.



(Above) Brown stands by the annual awards given out to the cadets. Although the stripes don't carry over after graduation from ROTC, Brown believes that they give the cadets something immediate to strive toward. The awards honor both academic excellence and ROTC performance.



(Above) On Tuesdays, cadets in leadership positions gather to review the schedule of the coming week. The meeting simulates a real world situation as closely as possible and includes weather forecasts, local terrain attributes, and synchronization of watches to the second.



(Left) In addition to physical training, Brown teaches military history to the junior class. Topics from the U.S. hierarchy of command to the Korean War are covered throughout the ROTC program. Brown told the cadets that the U.S. will be in Iraq for a long time, and they can count on taking their turn there after graduating and becoming second lieutenants.



(Right) Back at home Brown, spends time with his daughter, Samantha, his girlfriend, Roxanne Kabanuk and her son, Nicholas. Brown says that his daughter knows what he does for a living and is aware that his job could take him away for awhile. In the summer of 2004, Brown will find out where he's to be stationed and he has decided to wait until that time to tell his daughter.