The University of Wyoming Army ROTC Cowboy Battalion participated in the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March Marathon. This time honored tradition remembers the events that began on 9 APR 1942 when tens of thousands of American and Filipino Soldiers surrendered to Japanese forces while in defense of the island of Luzon, Corregidor, and the harbor defense forts of the Philippines. After being surrendered to the Japanese, the Soldiers were forced to march for upwards of 80 miles through the scorching heat of the Philippine jungles. Thousands perished throughout the grueling march, and those who survived faced the hardships of a prisoner of war camp and hell ships; others were wounded and killed. In 1989 the ROTC Detachment at the New Mexico State University began sponsoring the memorial march to memorialize the event through survivor stories and remembrance of those who did not make it home. This event has grown from 100 participants at its inception to over 7,000 with marchers from all over the world participating.

This year, the Cowboy Battalion sent one male heavy team, three female light individuals, two male light individuals, and 5 male heavy individuals. Everyone participated on the same course, but the heavy individuals wore a 35+ pound rucksack. The team endured over 11 weeks of training including 40+ miles a week and physically demanding core workouts, 6 days a week. This training brought about the spirit of competition, esprit de corps, leadership, and teamwork. The course consisted of grueling terrain, uneven dirt trails, a four mile long ascent, and a one-mile “sand pit.” The humbling experience to honor the memories of those that survived and lost their lives was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Cadet Anne Lichtfuss scored 2nd place in the ROTC Female Light group out of 22 individuals with a time of 4:23:07. The Men’s Heavy team comprised of Cadets Summerbell, Bryant, Goodwin, Ajax, and Kelchner came in 6th out of 26 teams. There were two Female Civilian Light runners: Cadets Jessica Ernst and Hannah Plush who came in 7th and 8th in their age group. The Cowboy BN sent two ROTC Male Light runners: Cadets Sean Kasprisin who finished 9th out of 30, and Daniel Holderegger who finished 14th out of 30. Finally, there were five ROTC Military heavy runners: Cadet Van Patten who finished 31st out of 110, Cadet Bennett who finished 32nd, Cadet Wilson who finished 42nd, Cadet Carollo who finished 41st, and Cadet Flanscha who finished 80th while being recognized for carrying the second heaviest race ruck sack at 75 pounds. This was an important opportunity to experience military history first hand, and learn from an ever-dwindling cohort of survivors.