

General Information

The mission of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy is to develop agile and adaptive noncommissioned officers and enlisted Soldiers through professional military education opportunities that meet the challenges of unified land operations in an era of persistent conflict. USASMA is acknowledged by military and civilian organizations as the premiere noncommissioned officer education institution in the world. This is a result of our innovation, agility, and forward-looking approach to leader development and education. The Academy is a higher-level learning institution of academic excellence supported by a world class staff, faculty and curriculum. We are committed to producing the right Soldier with the right skills at the right time in support of the Army and a nation at war.

The Warrior Leader Course (WLC) is the first step in the Noncommissioned Officer Education System and represents a Soldiers' first return to formal schooling after Advanced Individual Training (AIT). WLC is geared toward Soldiers preparing for promotion to sergeant. The Fort Bliss NCO Academy's WLC is a non-MOS specific leadership course that provides Soldiers with the basic tools to do what is expected of them as noncommissioned officers. Students are provided opportunities to practice and demonstrate what they are taught in a fast-paced and challenging atmosphere. They are placed in leadership positions and evaluated on their leadership abilities. For more information on the Warrior Leader Course, click below to access the Student Guide for the course.

https://usasma.bliss.army.mil/faculty/downloads/wlc/ncoa_student_guide.pdf

The Battle Staff Course (BSNCO) is a functional course used to prepare staff sergeants through sergeants major for duty as NCOs for battalion and brigade level staff positions. The BSNCO is a two-phase branch immaterial functional course for staff sergeants through sergeants major selected for staff assignments. Phase I consists of 75 hours of self-study utilizing Interactive Multimedia Instruction (IMI) produced by the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy (USASMA). The IMIs go to the Army Training Support Center (ATSC) for issue to the students on day one of Phase I. Students must pass the Phase I examination prior to moving on to Phase II. Phase II is a 177-academic hour course taught through the resident course or via video-conference (VTT) to distant sites from the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

General Information Continued

The Sergeants Major Course (SMC) educates master sergeants and sergeants major in unified land operations and strategic operations to prepare them to take positions throughout the Department of Defense. Course instruction provides tools to develop critical reasoning, creative thinking and decision-making skills, as well as enhanced character, self-expression and teamwork. The course assists in the development of logical, practical and original reasoning abilities necessary for problem solving. Students analyze problems based on available information, arrive at logical solutions and decisions with reasonable speed, communicate reasoning and decisions orally and in writing, and supervise to ensure proper execution. Intellectual honesty, integrity, and professional values and standards are highly stressed. SMC is 10 months long, a total of 1,420 instructional hours, and is also offered as a nonresident course culmination in two weeks of resident instruction at the Academy. SMC prepares master sergeants and sergeants major to elevate from a tactical level of thinking to an operational and strategic perspective thus preparing them for leadership positions in organizations executing unified land operations. What Soldiers learn prepares them for leadership positions in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational organizations (JIIM) as well as battalion, brigade, and division through echelons-above-corps (EAC) staff sergeants major command levels.

Billeting/Housing & Information

1. **Warrior Leaders Course (WLC)** students are provided billeting in the NCO Academy barracks with utilities at no cost. Meal Cards are issued by the NCO Academy Dining Facility. Dependents are not authorized to accompany students to WLC.
Tactical gear will be issued by the central issue facility at Fort Bliss.
Students should bring utility and physical fitness uniforms.
2. **Battle Staff NCO Course (BSNCO)** students are provided on location housing near the Academy at a \$29.00 per day rate. Dependents are not authorized for the BSNCO Course.
3. **Sergeants Major Course (SMC)** Students only: All unaccompanied students live off-post. Students need to bring enough funds to set themselves up in a local apartment, acquire furniture, purchase an auto and auto insurance.

a. Authorized dependents listed on your ITO may accompany you, however, costs associated with family travel and living allowances in the U.S. will be at your expense. After IMSO has been notified of your flight information by either the SCO or yourself, guest billeting will be reserved for you and your authorized dependents for at least seven days while you secure local housing. A family of four (two adults/two children) staying temporarily at the Fort Bliss Inn will pay a daily rate of \$29.00.

b. If guest billeting is not available on Fort Bliss, the IMSO will reserve temporary billeting off post. Comparable accommodations off post will be approximately \$60 to \$100 per day for a family of four or \$60 for a single adult.

(1) **Unaccompanied IMS.** As a single student or, if you initially arrive without your authorized dependents, you will temporarily reside in the BEQ. Current BEQ daily rate is \$29. IMET students will not pay out-of-pocket for temporary BEQ, but must come with funds to acquire an apartment.

(2) All students live off post. Most students living off post live in apartments just a 10 to 25 minute drive from USASMA.

(3) Corporate Rate structures at several local apartment complexes greatly reduce living costs. Corporate rates allow for a single price for rent, utilities, furniture, bedroom linens, bathroom linens, dishes, silverware, microwave, kitchen appliances, TV set, and cable TV service. Some complexes include DSL computer connections and a washer and dryer. Corporate rate structures range from \$1,100 per month for a one-bedroom up to approximately \$1,800 for a three-bedroom. (These prices adjust slightly each year for inflation.) Otherwise, there are a few furnished apartments located off post, but most are unfurnished. Rental furniture will cost approximately \$100 to \$400 depending on your needs, living style, and desires. Most apartments come equipped with a stove or range, refrigerator, and dishwasher but no washer or dryer. Rent for a two-bedroom apartment varies from \$500 to \$1,000 and \$600 to \$1,200 for a three-bedroom apartment or home. In most cases, you will have to pay the first and possibly the last month's rent as a deposit before moving in.

Utilities for SMC students:

Electricity, gas, and water are three necessities. After paying your initial security deposit, the average monthly utility costs are \$45 to \$180 for electricity (strictly depends on usage); \$20 to

\$55 for gas (depending on appliances); \$25 to \$60 for water; and garbage collection is also a separate cost. These costs are included in Corporate Rate apartments.

Telephone

You will have to contact a local telephone company of your choice to set-up a time and date for a technician to come to your or apartment to connect your telephone. You will need to review several long distance plans to select the best long distance carrier.

Climate

Even in El Paso, Texas, a southern city in the US, there are extreme weather changes. Our temperatures reach a high of 100+ degrees Fahrenheit (F) or 38 degrees Celsius (C) in the summer and a low of 15 degrees F or -10 degrees C in the winter. The average high temperature is 76.8 degrees F or 25 degrees C, with an average low temperature of 50.6 degrees F or 10 degrees C.

Cultural Differences

U.S. culture is different from many nations in the world as it places most achievements and responsibilities on individuals, not groups. This may make some of the things Americans do seem strange to an international guest. Americans tend to value independent decision-making more than group consensus. This means that decisions are sometimes made without consulting all personnel affected by a decision. In the interest of making a decision quickly, sometimes the majority of the people involved in a decision agrees to make a decision and do not necessarily include all people in the minority. Everyone still follows the decision on a concept of *consensus or majority rule*. This is the basis for the U.S. political system, which is a constitutional, republican, representative democracy. This may be difficult for people from community-based cultures to accept initially. Military decision-making is even less democratic, with officers in charge frequently making decisions for the good of their entire command.

Religious and National Holidays

Most religions are represented in major areas throughout the U.S. and, as a whole, the U.S. is largely Christian. Your IMSO will be able to tell you where the nearest house of worship for your religion is located. Unfortunately, your training schedule will not always allow for religious

observations such as prayer times or days off. With the large number of international military students in U.S. training programs, it is not feasible to accommodate all religious activities as you may do at home. USASMA can authorize you to observe two religious or national holidays specified and agreed upon by your country and the U.S. Government. However, you are solely responsible for all classes and assignments missed. Permission is authorized based upon academic standing and student success within the respective course.

Dependents

NO Dependents are authorized to accompany a student to either the Warrior Leader Course (WLC) or Battle Staff NCO Course (BSNCOC)

IF dependents are authorized to accompany you to the Sergeants Major Course (SMC), your ITO will say so in the “Conditions” block under “Dependents.”

Civilian housing (other than the Corporate Rate structure) is usually expensive for short-term lease or rental property. Additionally, your training schedule, including reporting and travel dates will not be modified to accommodate special requirements of your dependents. **NOTE: A recent change in ID card issue requires you to present your marriage certificate and children’s birth certificate(s) translated to English.**

Meals

Warrior Leader Course (WLC) students are issued meal cards for use at the local dining facility. Battle Staff NCO Course Students and Sergeant Major Course Students do not have dining facilities available on Biggs Army Air Field, but a medium snack bar at USASMA prepares hot breakfast combinations and hot and cold sandwiches for lunch. There are dining facilities located on Fort Bliss, but the distance from USASMA makes it impractical for lunch hour. The Centennial Club near USASMA on Biggs Army Air Field offers only lunch at a price of \$5 to \$8. The government meal rate is \$10.80 and breaks down as follows:
Breakfast-\$2.30/Lunch-\$4.25/Dinner-\$4.25

Driving

NOTE: Warrior Leaders Course (WLC) and Battle Staff Course: No private vehicles are authorized.

Vehicles ARE permitted for International students attending the Sergeants Major Course

Vehicle(s) and Driving:

There are many requirements associated with owning and operating a vehicle in the U.S. If you are single or accompanied by authorized dependents, you will need to purchase or rent an automobile while training at USASMA. You can purchase a used automobile for approximately \$2,000 to \$10,000 (depending on your needs and tastes) Many unaccompanied students share auto expenses with other international students and those costs range between \$1,000 to \$4,000 depending on the actual number of students who split the cost for an auto and auto insurance. Students must have a driver's license to operate the type of vehicle you choose. The vehicle must be insured and registered as noted below.

Country/International Driver's License

If you choose to drive in Texas you must bring a valid country and international driver's license for the type of vehicle you anticipate driving in the U.S. Students may not obtain a Texas license while in training due to changes in driving laws unless training is one year or longer in duration. These licenses will allow you to rent a vehicle. Most insurance companies will accept an international driver's license. If training is longer than one year and wish to acquire a Texas driver's license, the examination costs \$24 and consists of three parts: a written examination, an eye or vision test, and a driving test. Once you pass the examination, your license is valid for four years and authorizes you to drive in all other states across the U.S.

Vehicle Insurance

Car insurance is expensive, but it is illegal to operate a vehicle without insurance on Fort Bliss and in Texas. You must purchase property damage and liability insurance in all states. In Texas the minimum amounts are \$20,000/ \$40,000 public liability and \$15,000 property damage. Your insurance will cost approximately \$60- \$100 per month and can be obtained from local El Paso insurance companies. If you finance a vehicle on a loan, your lender may require you to purchase additional insurance. Students must have insurance coverage for rental cars or to own a vehicle.

Car Inspections and Registration

You must have a driver's license, proof of insurance, and a state safety inspection before you can register and license a vehicle in the State of Texas and on Fort Bliss. Once you show proof that

you have these documents, you will receive a State of Texas license plate. You will then register your vehicle on Fort Bliss, Texas at the vehicle registration office who will give you military installation stickers that you will place on your vehicle windshield. These military installation stickers will then allow for easier access onto a military installation. NOTE: Driving in Mexico is highly discourage and not recommended. National licenses may not be accepted in Mexico and may present problems with local insurance companies.

More General Information

Issuance of Identification Cards. Ensure ITO's reflect actual arrival dates of students. Fort Bliss ID Section will **not** issue identification card unless ITO reflects actual arrival date. Physical Training is part of the course curriculum. Ensure ITO reflects that physical training is a requirement and IMS will actively participate in the program.

Passport, Visas and I94 Cards

Passports and Visas are the responsibility of the foreign government. Students and their authorized dependents are entitled to A-2, D/S status (DS means Duration of Status). The Visa is good during training covered by the student's ITO plus authorized leave.

I-94 Card

A small green or white card is given to all non-immigrants when they enter the United States. An I-94 card serves as evidence that a non-immigrant has entered the country legally. It is stamped with a date indicating how long the non-immigrant may stay for that particular trip. It is this date and **not** the expiration date of the visa that controls how long a non-immigrant may remain in the U.S. A new I-94 card with a new date is issued each time the non-immigrant legally enters the States. Canadian visitors are not normally issued I-94 cards.

You must obtain your visa and visa for each dependent authorized on your ITO and traveling with you to the U.S., from the Consular section of the U.S. Embassy in your country. Your SAO can assist you and your dependents in obtaining the necessary visa(s).

Do not come to the U.S. with a single entry visa. We strongly recommend a multiple entry visa. This will enable you to leave the U.S. during your stay. This is particularly important if you need to return to your country during class or holiday breaks or tend to a family emergency. You must ensure that the period covered on your visa covers you and your authorized dependents for the entire course of your training or leave time taken after you complete the Sergeants Major

Course (SMC) before returning to your country. We recommend your visa be valid for at least three months after completion of training. An immigration official will stamp your passport or ITO with an entry permit. Please do not misplace this entry permit. This permit is called an I-94 card and is extremely important. Do not lose or throw away.

Medical

William Beaumont Army Medical Center (WBAMC) is a general hospital that offers a full range of medical services. Authorized dependents may seek medical treatment on a space available basis. All dependents need medical out-patient and in-patient coverage either through insurance or agreements between home country and the U.S. Government. Most students overlook the need for in-patient insurance. Students needing medical treatment will use the Health Promotion Office located at USASMA before being referred to the Consolidated Troop Medical Clinic during duty hours while at Fort Bliss. You may seek medical attention at WBAMC for scheduled medical appointments, after duty hours, and emergencies. Medical care in the U.S. is very expensive. In the event that you require care, you will need to find the medical funding authorization information on your ITO and furnish it to the medical care facility when you report for medical attention. The ITO will show your medical funding authorization under "Conditions/ Medical Services". Authorized dependent medical coverage is sometimes afforded at your country's cost and will be so annotated on your ITO by the SCO. Otherwise, SCOs will require students with authorized dependents to show proof of dependent medical insurance prior to issuing an ITO. Our IMSO staff will inspect dependent medical insurance paperwork to ensure compliance during your stay at USASMA. Student medical costs are most usually covered by the FMS or IMET programs or by your country. IMMEDIATE ATTENTION: DSCA Policy Memorandum supersedes DSCA Policy Memorandum 07-27. Use the new policy concurrently with DSCA Policy Memorandum 09-42, Medical Screening of IMS, Civilians and Authorized Dependents. Prior to issuing ITOs for attending students, health insurance documentation must be digitally sent or facsimiled to the IMSO, USASMA at DSN 621-9810. IMSO will notify the SCO or CPM upon review and acceptance of insurance prior to publishing an ITO.

Medical and Physical Examination

You will report with complete medical records and documentation of a recent medical examination in English. If you are over 40 years of age, you must have a copy of a current EKG and a Lipid 2-profile. A Lipid 2-profile is a measurement of high fat content in the blood system such as cholesterol and triglycerides that are major causes of heart disease. If you report with no medical or physical examination paperwork in English you will have to complete them during

your in-processing or you may be sent home. Ensure IMS reports to USASMA with completed DD Form 2808.

More Miscellaneous Information

Warrior Leader Course and Battle Staff Course in-processing

IMSO conducts in-processing at the Sergeants Major Academy in four working days for AKO access and CAC.

Sergeants Major Course

Allow plenty of time to complete all in-processing requirements before the start of the International Pre-Course (IPC). Requirements include obtaining a military identification card, and selecting housing. If you choose not to rent a Corporate Rate Apartment you will need to arrange to have utilities such as electricity, gas, water, telephone, and television cable connected. Buying or renting furniture, immunizing and registering your dependent children in schools is also part of in-processing. Purchasing or renting an automobile and studying for and taking a driver's license examination, along with obtaining vehicle and safety inspections and insurance, licensing your vehicle; and registering your vehicle on Fort Bliss, Texas are all responsibilities you must ensure are complete.

Finances

Warrior Leader Course and Battle Staff NCO Course students are provided \$21.80 per day for living allowances. Sergeants Major Course students (both accompanied and unaccompanied) who draw a Temporary Living Allowance will draw a \$57 per diem and a rent allowance not to exceed \$76 per day for lodging. Bring sufficient money to cover your expenses during the first 30 days. A student arriving with two or three authorized dependents should have at least \$900.00 available for billeting and food. Please consider bringing enough funds to set up your

household and transportation requirements in Travelers Checks. You will need enough money for transportation, the initial month of rent for a home or apartment, rental furniture, vehicle cost, household items, and various security deposits for rent, utilities, and other services, if necessary. Depending on your needs, this total can reach \$4,000 to \$7,000 in traveler's checks. Unaccompanied students need to bring \$2,000 to \$5,000 to facilitate acquiring an apartment and automobile.

Uniform Requirements for all courses

Due to climate conditions, you must have adequate clothing. With a letter of approval from the Academy commandant, you may purchase clothing at the military clothing sales stores located on Fort Bliss. You may not wear U.S. military insignia unless properly awarded. You should bring four complete summer or equivalent utility uniforms and two complete winter uniforms, including appropriate footwear. With extreme summer heat (Jun-October), additional uniforms are recommended as training is conducted in very close quarters. The U.S. Army wears the Army Combat Uniform (ACU) during training or duty hours (0600-1700). You will attend and conduct training in your military uniform equivalent to our ACU. You may wear your county's prescribed physical fitness uniform. The US Army Physical Fitness Uniform (APFU) worn during physical training is the Army black and gray uniform comprised of shorts, T-shirt, sweat pants, sweat shirt, black gloves and a black stocking cap, dependent upon the weather. We recommend you bring at least two physical fitness uniforms and one or two pair of good running shoes. Again, we have cold weather, so ensure you bring appropriate cold-weather physical fitness uniforms to include gloves and stocking caps. Also bring a military and civilian raincoat, as well as a military and civilian winter topcoat or jacket. You must bring some dress clothes and appropriate footwear for special events to include a sports jacket. Taiwan students attending the Sergeants Major Course will graduate in a suit.

You also need to bring underwear, socks, caps, or other headgear, and any clothing or uniform items that you may not be able to obtain easily in the US. This is particularly important with regard to any and all military clothing items, awards, and decorations.

SERGEANTS MAJOR COURSE ONLY: Bring your intermediate dress uniform, what we address as our Class B uniform, with both short and long sleeve (if available), including appropriate footwear. You will wear this uniform once a month during promotion and award ceremonies. (Taiwan students will wear formal civilian dress service Class or Class A uniforms.) The Class A or formal dress uniform with tie or bowtie or other appropriate dress uniform, and appropriate footwear will be worn when attending mandatory formal military functions such as

the dining-in and graduation ball.

Checklist

Complete the following prior to arriving at USASMA:

- (1) Obtain an English Comprehension Level of 80% and attend Specialized English Training if English is not your official language.
- (2) Start a vigorous physical fitness training program. Complete and mail the following required forms to the USASMA IMSO as soon as possible
- (3) DD Form 1396-1 (Student Biography)
- (4) Photo of you and your authorized dependents
- (5) Flight information (airline names, flight numbers, times and dates)

Obtain and bring the following with you to USASMA

- (1) Sufficient funds for the first 30 days of initial expenses
- (2) Visa and passport for you and your authorized dependents.
- (3) Country and international driver's license
- (4) Telephone numbers and addresses of family or friends to contact in case of an emergency while you are at USASMA
- (5) A complete medical and physical examination
- (6) Your International Immunization Certificate
- (7) Your dependents' International Immunization Certificates
- (8) Your authorized (children) dependents' school records
- (9) Physical fitness training, duty, informal, and formal dress uniforms
- (10) Civilian informal (casual) and dress clothing to include sports jacket or suit with tie

Arrival and Reporting

Notify IMSO of your arrival information. Your SCO must provide advance notification to the IMSO by telephone at (915) 744-9055 or (915) 443-6310 after hours or by facsimile at (915) 744-9810. The SCO must provide the International Military Student's (IMS) name, number, ages, and names of your authorized dependents (SMC only) and arrival information. Arrival information must include all airline names, flight numbers, and the time and date of arrival at the El Paso International Airport. The SCO should also email or mail the IMSO a small digital photo of you, the IMS, and your authorized dependents (if possible). This enables IMSO representatives or sponsors to quickly identify you and your dependents at the airport.

Timely and accurate information will assist the IMSO in locating you and your dependents in the

Arriving by air

Most students arrive by air at the El Paso International Airport (Airport code: ELP). An IMSO representative or sponsor will meet you at the airport. If your flight changes notify either the IMSO at (915) 744-9055 or (915) 443-6310

Staff Duty Officer (SDO) at (915) 744-8081.

event of a delay within the U.S. In order to guarantee that you arrive in a timely manner, there is a report date listed on your ITO with each line of training. Pay attention to the “Special Conditions and Remarks” portion of the ITO. It may direct that you arrive early, especially to the first training installation. Reporting earlier than the date specified may cause administrative or housing problems, while a late report may prevent your entry into training. Even if you have a military liaison stationed at Fort Bliss, Texas, you must report to the IMSO first, not the Liaison Officer.

Reporting

You must report a minimum of four working days prior to your course start date. We prefer students arrive during duty hours (0700 to 1700) on weekdays (Monday through Friday).

However, with proper notification from your SCO or yourself, we can accommodate any arrival time outside normal duty hours.

Arriving by automobile (SMC only)

If you arrive by automobile, you need to report to either the IMSO during duty hours (0700 to 1700) or the Staff Duty Officer (SDO) after duty hours in building 11291 of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy which is on Sergeants Major Boulevard located on Biggs Army Air Field, Fort Bliss, Texas.

PLEASE NOTE: Other than during the initial stages of in-processing, we at USASMA do not provide transportation to and from Fort Bliss. There is no public transportation at USASMA or on Biggs Army Air Field. There is also very limited public transportation in El Paso, Texas.

Mail and Postal Services

The U.S. mail system is relatively efficient, but it’s faster to send key documents electronically or by facsimile. International mail and deliveries are subject to customs regulations, and require

addresses in English. Non-government services such as Federal Express and United Parcel Service, allow you to track packages from their origin to their destination. These services also allow you to ship excess items home after training. Students desiring a mailbox at USASMA to send and receive mail should contact IMSO before leaving your country, please contact the IMSO. You may use the following address before your arrival at USASMA: YOUR RANK and NAME Attn: IMSO and Course (WLC, BSNCO or SMC) USASMA BLDG 11291, BAAF Fort Bliss, TX 79918-8002 **Mailing Addresses for International Military Student Office**
Commandant U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy Attention: International Military Student Office Building 11291, Biggs Army Air Field Fort Bliss, Texas 79918-8002

Note: Please contact the IMSO office for an email address.

Standards of Conduct

You are here as a representative of your country. Your actions both on and off duty affect your country. You want your actions to bring credit to you and your country. Standards that apply to your international and American counterparts in training will also apply to you. These may include off-limits establishments where the local military commander has directed that Soldiers do not use or enter. Local travel limitations, polices on financial responsibility, military courtesy, and duty hours will also apply to you. Rules will also pertain to professional appearance and grooming. Acts that bring discredit upon you, or your country, may cause your withdrawal from training and an early return to your country. Training may also be cancelled and IMSs sent back to their countries for those who violate U.S. or military law.