Over this past J-Term, cadets from the University of St Thomas Det 410 opted to brave the Midwest weather and participate in a learning experience trip to Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. Wright-Patterson is the Materials Major Command for the USAF which is home to major intelligence, medical and research facilities. Our cadets arrived via coach bus at Wright-Patterson's Hope Hotel and after a well-rested night, eagerly took in all that was offered.

The tours were full of highlights and enjoyable moments, all of which provided insight to active duty life on an air base. Cadets were first led through the large Wright-Patterson Medical Center, while some were hoping to witness doctors in action pull a tooth from the trip chaperone Capt. Priestley; they had to be content with some excellent Q&A from the base doctors and some very cool demonstrations of hospital equipment. Following the hospital visit, cadets were taken to Combat Arms where the base firing range and weapons lockers were kept. The range operators gave a full tour, explaining all of the aspects of the range's equipment, how the weapons are maintained and even shared some personal stories of their time serving. While all of this was very educational, cadets immensely enjoyed being given hands-on and photo opportunities with a wide selection of weapons (unloaded of course).

Saving the best for last, cadets ended their day with a behind-the-scenes tour of the base research facilities. This involved numerous presentations and demonstrations from lab teams in their respective wings of the building where cadets were able to get an idea of the technical fields within the Air Force. Cadets also found some free time in the evenings where they were able to experience the civilian aspects of base life. Included was a visit to the base theater, some competitive games of bowling and two visits to the base workout facilities where a basketball tourney was the exercise of choice.

No trip can be complete without understanding the history and purpose behind it, so cadets were treated to visiting the National Museum of the United States Air Force. One of the most complete collections of air and space history, the museum housed over one hundred planes within three massive hangars. Accompanying the craft were memorabilia and personal stories that dated from the first days of flight all the way up to the present times. The Wright-Patterson AFB trip was very informative and was a wonderful opportunity provided by Det 410 to ensure our cadets are prepared and excited for their futures with the Air Force.

(Article contributed by Cadet Hamilton)

Islam and its Influence In Turkey

This January I had the privilege of traveling to Turkey to study Islam and its influence on the politics and culture of Turkey. During my three weeks in Turkey I had the pleasure of interacting with the incredibly hospitable people, learning about the great religion of Islam, and learning about the thousands of years of world history that Turkey has been a part of.

Turkey is one of the oldest and longest continually inhabited civilizations in the world. It has been home to some of the earliest empires, to include the Hittites, Greeks, Romans, and later the Ottomans. Modern Turkey was founded after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in WWI after the Turkish War of Independence. Today Turkey is a secular, constitutional democracy with the world's 16th largest economy and 2nd largest military in NATO. Turkey has had a rough history of instability due to conflicting political forces in the country. Since its founding it has had roughly one military coup per decade, which has made it difficult for its democracy to progress.

Islam is the religion of 99.6% of Turks. Although the nation is secular, religion is strictly controlled by the government and banned from teaching in both public and private schools. One of the most important things I learned was how misunderstood and twisted Islam is in the Western world. Islam is an Abrahamic religion that embraces all of the prophets of the Old Testament and also Jesus. Jesus is mentioned ninety some times in the Quran and is one of the most revered prophets of Islam, although Islam does not hold Jesus to be the divine messiah as Christianity does. Islam is a very peaceful, unified, and tolerant religion that respects the beliefs of all peoples. It is incredibly important for Americans, military personnel especially, to understand that Islam is a nonviolent and peaceful religion that has hijacked by groups to further political goals, not religious ones (i.e. liberation of Palestine). No true Muslim can use Islam as a reason to commit acts of violence, and any group (i.e. Al-Qaeda) should be not considered an Islamic group but rather a politically motivated movement. Always remember that there are over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world. Only several thousand perhaps are in terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda.

Overall my trip to Turkey was on of the most enriching and eye-opening experiences of my life. I highly recommend it to any cadet that has not yet completed their 300 level Theology requirement, especially since all of us ROTC cadets will almost certainly interact with Muslims while on active duties. Oh, and by the way it was the easiest A of my life.

(Article contributed by Cadet Kline)s