

ROA Intern and AFROTC Cadet
Air Force Professional Development Training
by
Owen Patterson

This summer I had the pleasure of working in an internship program as a legislative policy assistant under ROA's wonderful legislative team. This team, comprised of the wonderful Susan Lukas and skillful John Rothrock, taught me a great deal about advocacy, the reserve component, and the traits of model officers. I will cherish the experience from this summer with ROA's national staff and hopefully be able return to at some point in my career.



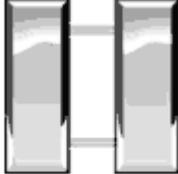
Owen Patterson, author, pictured at far right while on UH-60 incentive flight

As a productive college student, the University of California, Berkeley internship was not the only form of professional development I attended during the summer. From July 17th to August 1st, 2018, I headed down to southern Georgia to participate in professional development training (PDT) at Moody Air Force Base. For those not familiar with the program, PDTs are [Air Force ROTC](#) and [United States Air Force Academy](#) sponsored opportunities to prepare cadets for life as an officer. In many ways PDT is quite similar to the Navy's cruise system or the Army's summer schools. The difference is the AF program lacks the mandatory nature of their service counterparts and is unfortunately less funded. The PDTs can range from a language immersion program, summer internships at AF Research Laboratory sites, the

[Olmsted Foundation Overseas Travel and Cultural Immersion Program](#) and the AF Academy parachute training program.

Specifically, I had the opportunity to participate in the Operation Air Force PDT which involved shadowing [company grade officers](#) (O-1 through O-3) who are currently serving in our military “wish list” [career specialty slots](#). Training also included a number of incentive flights, interviews with enlisted airmen and, of course, plenty of physical training (PT).

Company Grade Officers

O1	Second Lieutenant	O2	First Lieutenant	O3	Captain
					

During training I shadowed an academy grad O-1 serving in intelligence, an O-3 pilot, and an O-3 working in aircraft maintenance. Following these officers throughout their day gave me a real taste of what life is like in the Air Force and helped me wipe the dew out of my eyes about day-to-day life in the military. I would like to say that every single position I saw seemed thoroughly interesting to challenging, such as, managing hundreds of maintenance personnel on the flight line and briefing the navigation plan for the A-10 squadron’s range training time.

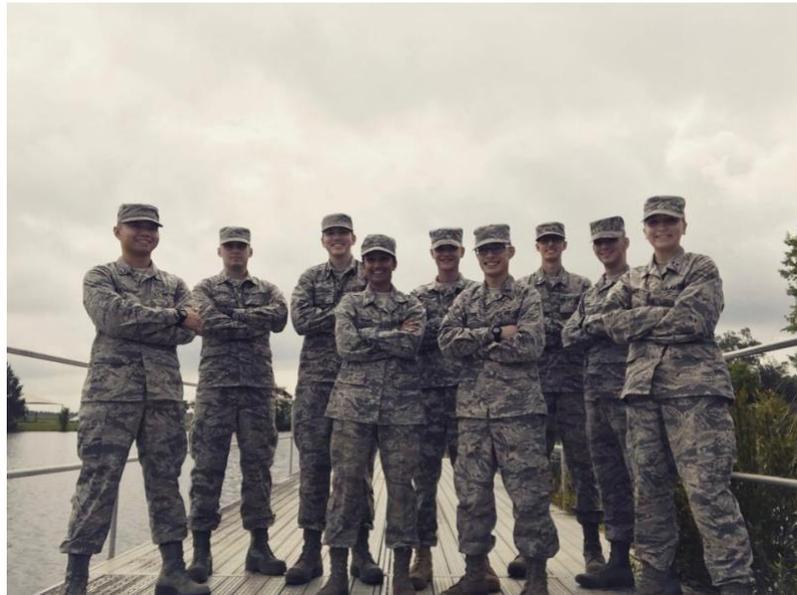
Some of my favorite parts of the trip included visiting air traffic control, getting a ride in an [HH-60G Pave Hawk](#) while they did rescue exercises, and watching an [A-10C Thunderbolt \(Warthog\)](#) tear up the range. Additionally, I now know that I do not want to be a fighter pilot after an intense incentive flight in an [A-29 Super Tucano](#) trainer (fun fact, the USAF trains [Afghan](#) and [Lebanese](#) pilots at Moody for these planes).



The most valuable part of this trip however was not the joyrides, lasting friendships, or exposure to interesting careers, it was getting to see the Air Force as a community. As the child of parents who were Air Force engineers and as part of an extended military family, I really had a great childhood picture of the Air Force. On this trip the Air Force delivered when I came face-to-face with it in southern Georgia. Getting to hear the stories of senior enlisted, hearing from members of the company grade officers club, and participating in PT

as a community really brought the dream to life.

Overall, I am glad I was able to attend this PDT and wish more cadets would be able to participate. It is a small world and the other eight first year cadets who attended this training will comprise my “year’s” class of officers. I built lasting connections and developed an increased connection with both my AFROTC program and the Air Force as a whole. I would strongly suggest cadets participate in this program. Correspondingly I would also encourage the Air Force to increase its funding of cadet PDTs outside of the service academies.



AFROTC cadets participating in the third cohort of Operation Air Force at Moody AFB