

The most concrete goal I have in terms of continuing my academic interest in the Middle East is to continue in the Arabic language program and eventually earn a second major in the Jewish Islamic and Near Eastern Languages and Cultures department on the Jewish and Arabic Comparative Studies track. Part of the major requirements include courses such as 'History of the Jews in Islamic Lands' and 'Empires in Comparative and World History'.

During ROTC summer training between my junior and senior year there is a field training portion. As part of that exercise Cadets are put on a simulated deployment to a foreign Arabic speaking country called "Atropia." During that training, Arabic speaking soldiers are hired to play the parts of the local populace, as well as the insurgency the Cadets are engaging. There are several 'Key Leader Engagements' in which Cadets are expected to interface with what are essentially local Sheiks and develop a positive relationship. I would very much like to improve my Arabic to a conversational level for that training, as I believe it would partially represent the accomplishment of my goal of leveraging Arabic in a tactical situation to my advantage. Because of my ROTC requirements, I won't be able to study abroad during any other time over the course of my college career, which is why the opportunity provided by the Ibrahim scholarship is so important to me.

I believe my future as an Army officer puts me in a uniquely powerful position to develop cross-cultural and interfaith relationships. As the face of war starts to change, the need for conflicts to be fought as part of a joint effort rather than a unilateral mission increases. In the last decade and a half of fighting in the Global War on Terror, Coalition forces have fared much better than just the United States acting alone. With this understanding in mind, the US has pushed for more opportunities for joint training with other countries. I was lucky enough to go on a Cultural Understanding and Language Proficiency program last summer to Slovakia, a joint training program for Cadets. I was able to train with the Slovak Special Forces, Chemical Biological Radiological and Nuclear forces, Rocket Launcher forces, and their Corps of Cadets.

Throughout my interactions with all of these elements of a foreign military, I was able to gain a better understanding of how a small military is able to operate in a global threat environment. The need to fight terrorism as a coalition, rather than as a unilateral force, is higher than ever. The integration of Slovak forces in European Union and NATO Battlegroups allows them to field a full-spectrum force where they otherwise could not. Spending time abroad is by far the best way of understanding the perspective of a foreign country. More specifically, I hope to gain a nuanced understanding of the issues that face the Middle East. The only way to defeat an insurgency is to have that level of understanding of politics and society. In the likely occurrence I am deployed to the Middle East, I sincerely hope I will have accumulated the academic and on-the-ground experience to make as much as a difference as I possibly can.

I am extremely excited about the potential for the opportunity to spend time in the Middle East and learn about all of the topics I am interested in outside of a classroom environment.

Yano Windmiller