

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 6

Detachment 045 cadets pose during our visit to Moffett Federal Airfield.

ON THE FLIGHT LINE AT MOFFETT

By: C/Starr

On 5 February 2026, cadets took a trip to Moffett Airfield for a Community Day event. During this event, cadets were able to speak with pilots, view aircraft, and watch a pararescue demonstration. This was an exciting opportunity for cadets to connect with pilots and combat rescue officers and gain insight into these highly demanding AFSCs.

At the event, cadets had the chance to see an F-15, a Civil Air Patrol aircraft, and a C-130. They learned about the roles these aircraft serve in combat, rescue, and supply missions, as well as how they are flown.

One cadet mentioned that these are highly competitive AFSCs and shared their interest in pursuing this path one day. They were able to ask questions directly to the combat rescue officers and benefited from the helpful information provided. The officers discussed their experiences within the AFSPECWAR community, shared personal stories, and emphasized that it takes discipline and dedication to achieve one's goals. They encouraged cadets not to let the difficulty of the career path discourage them from pursuing it.

Another cadet highlighted the pararescue demonstration as the most memorable part of the trip, noting that it provided a glimpse into what the career field entails. They also mentioned that during the debrief, two F-35 jets arrived on base. The noise was so loud that the debrief had to pause, and everyone immediately pulled out their phones to record. Seeing the cadets admire the aircraft up close was a meaningful moment—everything came to a halt as everyone watched in awe.

The trip to Moffett Airfield was a unique change from a typical LLAB. It allowed cadets to interact directly with combat rescue officers and pilots while gaining a deeper appreciation for their work. Hearing their stories, watching the demonstration, and seeing the aircraft firsthand allowed cadets to better understand the significance of these career fields and the dedication required to succeed in them.

Even for cadets not interested in pursuing these AFSCs, the experience fostered a greater respect for the impact these professionals make. When asked why more LLABs like this should be held in the future, cadets replied that events like this increase morale. This trip allowed cadets to connect within the detachment and take a break from the academic stressors they encounter on a daily basis.



2d Lt O'Keefe when she was POC at Detachment 045.

Alumni Success Story - Interview with Second Lieutenant Rhiannon O'Keefe

By: C/Nevin

At the end of January, Second Lieutenant Rhiannon O'Keefe organized a panel event on engineering power, artificial intelligence, cyber, and decision-making in national security. The event was held at Stanford University in collaboration with the Stanford Gordian Knot Center. It was one of many initiatives Second Lieutenant O'Keefe has led during her time as a Gold Bar Recruiter.

In the United States Air Force, a Gold Bar Recruiter (GBR) is a newly commissioned second lieutenant ordered to active duty and assigned to a recruiting squadron for up to one year before beginning technical training. GBRs are placed in specific regions across the United States to support total force recruiting efforts, particularly for Air Force ROTC programs. The Stanford University event also served as a unique opportunity to recruit for Officer Training School.

Returning to her alma mater for the event is just one of the many benefits Second Lieutenant O'Keefe says the GBR program offers participants. Other benefits include “mentorship from senior enlisted members and higher-ranking officers, learning more about the Air Force and broadening one’s perspective on service opportunities, and gaining an understanding of active duty before beginning technical training.”

Although Second Lieutenant O'Keefe admits the role can sometimes feel isolating—particularly because many GBRs work in headquarters environments where they are among the few lieutenants—she notes that regional travel is a major benefit. One of her favorite memories in the program so far was traveling to Oakland, California, to recruit at a public high school. During the visit, she reunited with a cross-country team she had mentored as a college ROTC cadet. Returning to see them, she said, was “Very fulfilling,” as the trip extended beyond recruiting and became a meaningful mentorship opportunity.



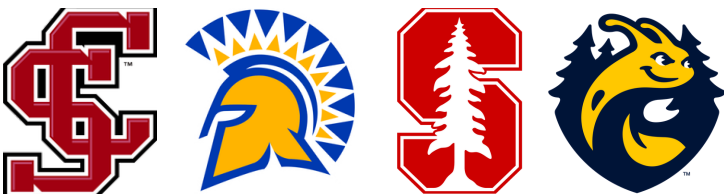


2d Lt O'Keefe and her Gold Bar Recruiting team at a local high school.

Second Lieutenant O'Keefe credits her time in Detachment 045 with preparing her for her current role and helping her discover the GBR opportunity. She said the morale and mentorship role she held in ROTC translated directly to the outreach and event planning she now does as a GBR. In her current role, she sets her own schedule and works toward a quota, requiring initiative, accountability, and strong time-management skills.

She also highlighted the impact of mentorship at Detachment 045. Lieutenant Colonel Hartstein reassured her that serving as a GBR would strengthen—not hinder—her career progression in intelligence, noting that some of her strongest lieutenants began in that role. Second Lieutenant Athena Chang, a mentor, friend, and a prior Detachment 045 alumna, encouraged Second Lieutenant O'Keefe to pursue the opportunity and offered guidance as she planned the Stanford panel.

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Reflecting on her experience, Second Lieutenant O'Keefe encourages “cadets who care about people and are enthusiastic about what the Air Force has to offer” to apply to the program, emphasizing that strong communication skills are essential to success as a GBR. She also stresses the importance of attention to detail during the application process. From ensuring service dress is properly prepared to submitting a polished video component, applicants must present themselves as professional, approachable representatives of the Air Force. Regardless of one’s interest in the GBR program, Second Lieutenant O'Keefe’s journey serves as a strong example of alumni success for cadets to aspire toward.



Our cadets and cadre alongside CSC staff at the Super Bowl.

Behind the Scenes of Super Bowl LX: Detachment 045 on the Field

By: C/Le

More than 130 million viewers watched, 68,500+ fans attended, and tickets were selling for nearly \$4,000 each. Millions of people watched from across the world, thousands were there in person, but only a select few hundred were on the field. A few of us from Detachment 045 were lucky to be part of that group through Contemporary Services Corporation (CSC), which hired cadets to assist with the Super Bowl LX staff.

Arriving at PayPal Park around 7:45 a.m., we took a shuttle over to Levi's Stadium. After getting our gear and orienting ourselves to the high volume of people, the significance of everything—every hallway, every tunnel, and every badge scan—quickly became apparent to me. This was something enormous.

When we received clearance for field access through facial recognition, I realized exactly where I was: a blindingly bright field full of roaming camera crews and professional athletes warming up just yards away. My task for the day was to monitor a camera crew, ensuring they had an unobstructed line of sight—easy to say, but chaotic in practice, especially with 10 different crews running down the sideline trying to capture shots from specific angles.

Traffic slowed tremendously during the beginning-of-game ceremonies. Green Day performed a tribute to previous Super Bowl MVPs, Charlie Puth sang the National Anthem, Brandi Carlile performed "America the Beautiful," and Coco Jones sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing."

For a few moments, the entire stadium stood in awe, silent as the players waited on the field for the coin toss and the first kickoff. The energy of the game was absolutely incredible. The electric atmosphere—from every defensive stop to every interception to long passes—shook the stadium. The excitement roared throughout the first half, combined with an undercurrent of tension. I stayed with the media through each transition of play, keeping lanes clear and doing my best to take in every moment.



A few cadets were stationed at the end of the tunnels, allowing them to see celebrities attending the Super Bowl up close. Some of these included Cardi B, Chris Pratt, and Jay-Z as they walked past within feet of the cadets, waving and smiling at the cadets. Others had the privilege of seeing and meeting the color guard that presented the national colors, as well as veterans being honored during halftime on the field.

The halftime show transformed the atmosphere on the field. Bad Bunny delivered an exciting and culturally rich performance with Latin rhythms, featuring special guest performers such as Lady Gaga and Ricky Martin, along with visual tributes to Puerto Rican heritage and culture. The show ended with a message of unity and love for one another. Even while working, I could feel the sheer energy of the performance—the celebration was just as unforgettable as the game itself.



Our cadets and cadre team are supporting CSC at the Super Bowl.

The second half continued to display an incredible level of intensity, with Seahawks fans cheering for every defensive stop and Patriots fans holding their breath through every play. When the clock hit zero, the Seattle Seahawks won 29–13. Confetti rained green and blue. Players celebrated. Cameras swarmed. Amid the chaos, we maintained safe zones and guided the media until the stands emptied.

We regrouped, returned our gear, and collected our keepsakes—a Super Bowl LX hat, a commemorative pin, and, most importantly, our field-access armband. My legs ached from hours of standing, but it was worth it. We weren't watching from the stands. We weren't viewing through a screen. We were on the field—present for every interception, every touchdown, every roar of the crowd. We didn't just witness history. We helped make it possible.

Some quotes from fellow cadets who participated in this event:

"It was a surreal experience which I never thought I'd be a part of."

– C/Cano

"It felt like a dream, and when I stepped onto the field, I was ready to witness history unfold. I'd relive every second of it in a heartbeat!"

– C/Onyenma

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience! Having my first ever NFL football game be the Super Bowl will be something that I am truly grateful to have been a part of!"

– C/Caballero

"Definitely once in a lifetime—it goes to show the amazing opportunities that come with being in the military."

– C/Sanchez

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C/1st Lt Pruitt-Kennett during her ODT at Edwards AFB.

Why Cadets Should Apply for National-Level Opportunities

By: C/McMahan

National-level opportunities such as Officer Developmental Training (ODTs), internships, and leadership conferences give cadets the chance to experience the Air Force beyond the detachment level. While ROTC builds the foundation of officership through academics, PT, and leadership labs, national-level programs allow cadets to see how the mission operates in real-world environments. These opportunities help cadets develop technical skills, build professional networks, and gain confidence while working alongside active-duty members, civilians, and subject-matter experts across the force.



C/1st Lt Pruitt-Kennett during her ODT at Edwards AFB.

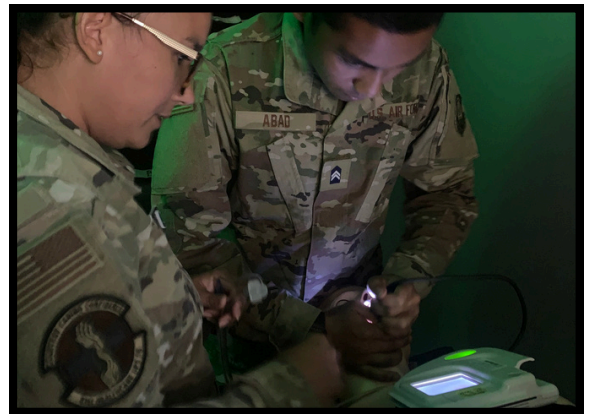
One of the biggest benefits of national-level opportunities is exposure to real mission work. Many cadets assume they will not contribute to operational projects until after commissioning, but programs like ODTs often place cadets directly into mission-support roles. C/1st Lt Pruitt-Kennett, who completed an ODT at Edwards Air Force Base, described how impactful the experience was, stating, "At Edwards, I was able to work on real projects that will impact the future of flight testing. I got to work with TPS students and instructors, officers at the cutting edge of aviation innovation." Experiences like this give cadets insight into how their future career fields operate and help them better understand how their work will support the larger Air Force mission.

Another major advantage of applying for national-level opportunities is professional development. These programs push cadets outside of their comfort zones and require them to operate in unfamiliar environments. Whether working in research labs, operational squadrons, or joint environments, cadets learn how to communicate professionally, adapt quickly, and represent both themselves and their detachment well. These experiences often translate directly back into ROTC performance by improving confidence, time management, and leadership ability.



C/1st Lt Abad during his ODT at Keesler AFB.

National-level opportunities can also help cadets explore potential career fields. Some cadets apply already knowing what AFSC they want, while others use these experiences to discover new interests. Exposure to different missions, career fields, and leadership styles helps cadets make more informed decisions about their future in the Air Force. In many cases, these opportunities confirm existing career goals or open doors to paths cadets may not have previously considered.



C/1st Lt Abad during his ODT at Keesler AFB.

Finally, applying for national-level opportunities demonstrates initiative and motivation. The application process itself builds important skills such as attention to detail, professional writing, and interview preparation. Even if a cadet is not selected the first time, the experience gained during the application process is valuable and prepares them for future opportunities.

National-level opportunities are some of the most impactful experiences available to cadets during their time in ROTC. They provide mission exposure, professional growth, networking opportunities, and career exploration that cannot always be replicated at the detachment level. Cadets should actively seek out and apply for these opportunities whenever possible, as they play a key role in preparing future officers to lead in an increasingly complex and technical Air Force.



C/Caballero at the United States Naval Academy.

2026 Naval Academy Leadership Conference: A Brief Reflection

By: C/Caballero

The U.S. Naval Academy Leadership Conference (NALC) is an annual event held in Annapolis, MD, that brings together cadets, midshipmen, and student leaders from a variety of military and civilian institutions. The focus of NALC is to enhance and develop leadership skills through diverse experiences, including interactive sessions with guest speakers, classroom discussions, and mentorship opportunities. I had the honor of representing Detachment 045 at this event, where we discussed “The Elements of Winning Teams.”

Upon arriving at the Naval Academy in the midst of a historic snowstorm, I checked into the conference and was assigned a midshipman I would be staying with for the remainder of the trip. My “Plebe” (the term used for first-year students at the Naval Academy) took me to his dorm and introduced me to other midshipmen on his floor. It was refreshing to experience the lifestyle of a service academy student, as admission to one is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity compared to my daily life as a college student balancing the AFROTC program.

The first keynote speaker of the event was William Driscoll, a retired Naval Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) instructor and ace pilot, who spoke on “Peak Performance Under Pressure.” Something that stood out to me during his presentation was that high performers are able to do three things at a high level: preparation, mission execution, and debrief. Preparation is the foundation of mission success, and it begins with the basics. High performers are fully committed to understanding and executing fundamentals so that when it is time to carry out a mission, a strong foundation is already in place.

A common theme I noticed from all panelists and guest speakers was that the mission always comes first—you must be almost obsessively committed to your purpose. If one person within a team is not fully invested in the mission, there is room for error. Finally, and most importantly, Driscoll emphasized the debrief, stating, “This is where the growth takes place.” The debrief after every mission is essential, as it allows leaders to reflect on what went well and where improvement is needed. Without taking time to reflect, valuable lessons that lead to future success are lost.



C/Caballero and his “Plebe” at the United States Naval Academy.

The next panelists included high-level law enforcement professionals, retired Navy SEALs, Green Berets, and businessmen. The topics they discussed were “Excellence Through Competition” and “Evolving Emotional Intelligence.” While each subject could fill pages, the core message ultimately came down to three key qualities: humility, excellence, and respect.

Great leaders have the humility to hold themselves accountable and the integrity to do the right thing, regardless of who is watching. Each panelist explained the importance of leaders knowing themselves first, understanding their strengths and weaknesses, so they can build on what they do well while developing areas that need improvement. Excellence was presented as non-negotiable—not perfection, but excellence. Great leaders hold themselves and their teams to high standards and continually strive to be better. One panelist said, “If all you have is 20% left in the tank and you use it all, you gave 100%, and that’s all I ask for.”

Finally, respect is earned, not given. Great leaders take time to know their people—their struggles, what they enjoy, even small details like their children’s names. By building relationships, leaders earn the trust and respect necessary to accomplish the mission. Without humility, excellence, and respect, mission success is never guaranteed.

With one day left, I could not have been more grateful for the opportunity to attend NACL at the Naval Academy and further develop my leadership skills. It was an incredible and humbling experience, and one question NACL left with me is this: What are you doing to develop the next generation of leaders, and how can you make them better?



MSgt Waller’s promotion ceremony.

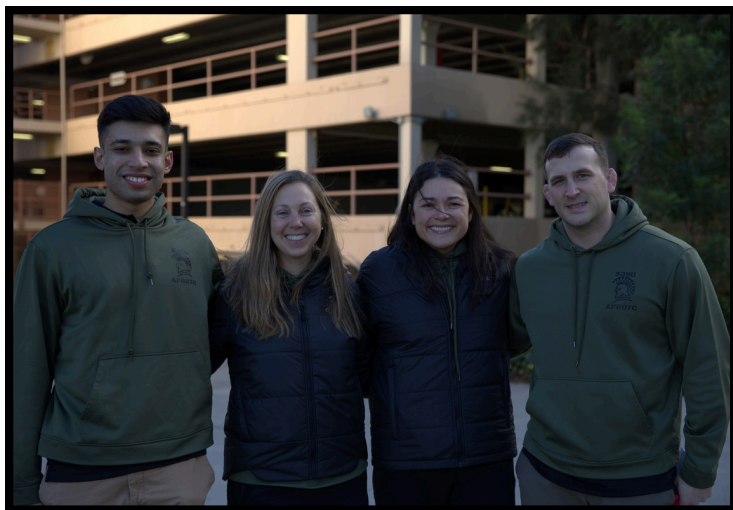
Cadre Spotlight: MSgt Waller

By: C/Sevilla

MSgt Jessica Waller is one of our most impactful cadre members and a cornerstone of Detachment 045’s success and cadet development. For the past three years, she has served as our Officer Accessions Instructor and Senior Enlisted Advisor. As her time with the detachment comes to a close, she will soon transition to Scott AFB, Illinois, where she will serve as a Mission Support Superintendent for 17 OSI units.

MSgt Waller began her Air Force career 13 years ago. Although she initially planned to attend college and completed a year of community college, a summer trip to Italy changed her trajectory. While visiting her brother-in-law, a sensor operator at Aviano AB, she witnessed firsthand the strong sense of community among Airmen. From shared barbecues to time spent exploring local restaurants and building friendships, the tight-knit culture left a lasting impression. Inspired by that experience, she enlisted shortly after returning home, signing an open administrative contract and shipping to Basic Military Training eight months later.

Her first duty station was Vandenberg SFB, an assignment that remains one of her favorite memories. It was her introduction to military life, filled with camaraderie, dorm friendships, and formative leadership experiences. What made the assignment particularly meaningful was the leadership environment. With a smaller ratio between enlisted members and leadership, supervisors invested significant time into developing their Airmen and fostering a supportive team culture.



Our cadre team at the Warrior Challenge 2026.

One of her most challenging and rewarding assignments was serving as a Postal Supervisor at RAF Lakenheath in the United Kingdom. As a newly promoted Staff Sergeant, she supervised more than 30 Airmen—her first experience leading at that scale. Mentored by two exceptional Technical Sergeants, she developed foundational leadership skills and discovered her passion for teaching. That realization led her to pursue a position as a Technical Training Instructor at Keesler AFB before eventually joining Detachment 045.



Our cadre team before our visit to Vandenberg SFB during Fall 2024.

When asked what has kept her in the Air Force for over a decade, her answer was clear: the people and the institution's commitment to rewarding hard work. The same sense of community she first witnessed in Italy continues to define her experience. She emphasized that the Air Force recognizes and develops its Airmen, providing growth opportunities that are unmatched in many civilian career fields.

Reflecting on the differences between military and civilian life, she highlighted leadership development as the most significant distinction between the two. Every Airman is entrusted with responsibility early and often, building leadership competence throughout their career.



For aspiring leaders, MSgt Waller offers practical advice: study those around you. Leadership lessons come not only from formal training but from observing peers and supervisors—analyzing their decisions, communication styles, and how they handle adversity. She encourages cadets to adopt strong leadership traits while adapting them to fit their own personality and style. Just as importantly, she advises reflecting on poor decisions and considering how those moments feel from the perspective of a subordinate or teammate.

When asked what she would miss most, her answer was immediate: the people. The Cadre team has become a second family, and working alongside them—and alongside cadets striving toward their goals—has been deeply meaningful. Her office even displays a flag reading “Fit 045 4ever,” a reflection of the pride and connection she feels toward the detachment.

As the first NCO many cadets have worked closely with, MSgt Waller has modeled what it means to be an Airman and a Wingman. Whether celebrating a lieutenant earning a pilot slot or mentoring cadets through challenges, her impact has been lasting.

MSgt Waller, thank you for your leadership, mentorship, and dedication to Detachment 045. You will be deeply missed.



MSgt Waller with our graduated Field Training 2025, Max 4 cadets.

When reflecting on her time at Detachment 045, one memory stood out in particular. During an LLAB at the beach last year, a cadet received an alternate EA after most of the class had already been notified. The commander made the announcement, and the entire wing erupted in celebration. That moment symbolized what makes the detachment special: a culture where cadets genuinely support one another's success. For MSgt Waller, it represented not only the hard work behind the scenes but the environment of care and unity built within the wing.



Our cadre during our visit to Stanford in Fall 2025

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RAP Overview: The Recruiter Assistance Program

The Recruiter Assistance Program (RAP) is a unique opportunity that allows Air Force members to support recruiting efforts in their hometowns. Participants in the program help recruiters connect with local schools, take part in community and school events, and assist with activities such as Center of Influence programs and Delayed Entry Program Commander's Calls. This program is an invaluable way for Airmen to give back while helping to inspire the next generation to serve. Active duty personnel may participate in the Recruiter Assistance Program to support local recruiting efforts and community outreach. When applicable, RAP participants may engage with AFROTC Detachments, such as San Jose State University, in support of recruiting initiatives. If you are interested in learning more, please scan this QR Code:



The next detachment dispatch issues are scheduled for release by April 1, May 1, and June 1.

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