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# International Military Student Office Best in the Air Force

By  
Captain Gabe Johnson  
162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing Public Affairs

They come from Europe, Asia, and the Middle East to learn to fly the F-16 Fighting Falcon from the Arizona Air National Guard, and Guardsmen here serve as their wingmen in more ways than one. When flying over the military training ranges of southern Arizona, international student pilots have experienced instructors to guide them; but back on the ground they need help with housing, transportation, documentation, and adapting to American culture. That is where the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing's award-winning international military student office (IMSO) takes charge.

The wing's seven-member IMSO staff recently took home the 2007 IMSO Team of the Year award in the small activities category for their superior service out of 24 IMSOs Air Force-wide.

The Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron (AFSAT) presented the award to Major Donna Wolslagel, the wing IMSO officer, August 5th during the annual IMSO conference held at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas. The small activities category includes all offices supporting less than 200 international students annually.



We have never won this award before, said Major Wolslagel, a nine-year IMSO veteran. So to us it is a wonderful recognition of all that has gone into building this program over the years and ultimately the service we have provided to our international students.

The 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing International Military Student Office brings home the 2007 IMSO Team of the Year trophy. The office staff, Lieutenant Colonel Donna Rinehart, Major Donna Wolslagel, Senior Master Sargent Teresa Campbell, Master Sargent Deb Alegria, Master Sergeant Marnie Neve, Tech. Sargent Amie Howell, and Airman First Class Jonathan Jackson, worked around the clock to ensure a smooth training experience for international student pilots last year.

IMSO supports about 100 student pilots per year ensuring on-time and complete training. The staff oversees the wing's compliance with all international training requirements. They provide cultural education to wing members before they come into contact with foreign students. They coordinate official visits from international leaders. They are on call 24/7 for any emergency situations involving their students.

Without a solid IMSO program, our students would not be able to focus on their primary mission . . . learning to fly the F-16, said Colonel Randy Straka, 162<sup>nd</sup> Operations Group Commander. They need a focal point where they can go to get help with family problems, buying a car, finding a place to live, health care, and so on. Those things are not easy to do when you are in a foreign country. When their personal issues are taken care of, they can get to work with their instructors.

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At the end of training when students are surveyed about the most memorable part of their experience, they always mention the IMSO office, said Major Wolslagel.

We are the ones who meet them at the airport. We are the ones who take care of them. We are the ones who help them handle family issues. And we are the last ones they see when we drop them off at the airport at the end of training. From start to finish, they are in our care; and it is extremely rewarding to have a hand in showing them the American way of life, said the Major.

Prior to being named the top IMSO in the Air Force, AFSAT singled out the wing's office as a flagship program for others to follow. The staff members are designated subject matter experts and are often asked to assist other IMSOs across the country.

### **About the Author**

Captain Gabriel D. Johnson is a Public Affairs Officer assigned to the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing as Chief of Public Affairs, Tucson International Airport, Arizona. He graduated from the University of Nevada, Reno, in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and Spanish. He soon joined the active duty Air Force earning a commission as a second lieutenant on 5 April 2001 via Officer Training School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. His earlier assignments were in public affairs for Air Force Special Operations units. He served at Air Force Special Operations Command and the 16th Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida, generating positive coverage for units supporting both OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Later he served as the Chief of Public Affairs for the Air Force Inspection Agency, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico. He was responsible for one of the Agency's five primary missions, and publication of *The Inspector General* (TIG) Brief magazine. The Air Force's longest running publication updates active, Guard and Reserve units with the most current guidance and inspection information. In 2006 he completed a voluntary deployment to Baghdad, Iraq, for a six-month joint tour as a public affairs officer for Multi National Force – Iraq (MNF-I). Within MNF-I, he ensured the security, air and ground transportation of international media throughout the country for the purpose of strategically dominating the information battle space with coalition key messages. In March, 2007, he joined the 162<sup>nd</sup> Fighter Wing of the Arizona Air National Guard as Chief of Public Affairs. Since his arrival, he has worked to enhance the unit's internal information, media relations, and community relations programs.