Recently, a group of twenty MIT students, military fellows, faculty members and staff returned from the annual SSP field trip. During five days of travel through the southwestern United States, the group visited facilities operated by all four branches of the US armed forces.

At Naval Station San Diego, SSP toured the cruiser USS Lake Erie, as well as the amphibious assault ship USS San Diego. Both ships’ captains provided thoughtful answers to the group’s questions about their ships, their roles, and their experiences in the Navy. At Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, the group observed an ongoing training exercise for Joint Terminal Air Controllers (JTACs), toured the flight line, and received a briefing and F-35B walk-around tour from the commander of VMFA-122, one of the first Marine Corps units to fly the F-35. While at the Army’s National Training Center (NTC) at Ft. Irwin, CA, the group was hosted by the commander of the Operations Group as well as the commander of the NTC’s dedicated opposition force. Stops at a tank gunnery range, a simulated village and the live fire training control facility gave the SSP group a good understanding of brigade level combined arms ground combat training. Finally, at Nellis Air Force Base the SSP group was hosted by 2016/2017 SSP military fellow and current deputy commander of the 57th Wing, Erick Gilbert. Col Gilbert provided a briefing on the most recent Red Flag training exercise, as well as a tour of the Threat Training Facility, Thunderbirds headquarters and the Nellis flight line, where the group took
walk-around tours of an F-15C and an F-15E, while observing take-offs and landings by F-15s, F-16s, F-22s, and F-35s.

The purpose of the field trip is to marry SSP graduate students’ research and coursework on international politics and conflict to a concrete understanding of how military forces train, operate and fight. By this standard, this year’s field trip was enormously successful.

Timothy McDonnell, Graduate Student

2018 Doolittle Award Ceremony

The 2018 General James Doolittle Award for contributions to American Air Power was presented to David W. Thompson, President and Chief Executive Officer of Orbital ATK at a dinner held April 10, 2018. Mr. Thompson’s address, “The Role of Space Systems in National Security,” outlined both the history of space systems, and the need for continued innovation in both the civilian and military sectors. He emphasized the importance of the military space security sector speeding up design, approval and deployment systems in order to keep pace with changes around the world, and to better exploit the more agile civilian space sector.

The General James Doolittle Award dinner has been held annually since 1994 to honor the memory of MIT alum and WWII hero James (Jimmy) Doolittle. In July 1923, after serving as a test pilot and aeronautical engineer at McCook Field, Ohio, Doolittle entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, earning his master's degree in 1924. He went on in 1925 to get the first Ph.D. in Aeronautics awarded by MIT.

General Doolittle remains the only American to receive both the country's highest military and civilian honors - the Medal of Honor and the Medal of Freedom. The Doolittle Award Dinner
honors that spirit by presenting the James Doolittle Award for each year to a person, either military or civilian, who has made significant contributions to the advancement of US Air Power.

Past award recipients include several US Air Force Chiefs of Staff, Air Force generals, and academic and other civilian luminaries.

In 2017, Pierre (MIT SB 1988) and Amy Chao made a generous pledge to the Security Studies Program in support of the Doolittle Award. Mr. Chao, who has had an active career in the aerospace/defense industry, earned dual Bachelor of Science degrees in Political Science and Management Science from MIT. The endowment allows SSP to sustain the Doolittle award event, ensuring that future MIT graduate students and fellows are acquainted with the contribution that science and engineering can make to national security.

2018 Consuls General Briefing

Several members of the SSP faculty took part in the MIT Center for International Studies second annual Consuls General Briefing, held at the Samberg Center on April 10, 2018.

The day-long event hosted Consuls General, or their representatives, from 15 consulates in the Boston area. Organized by John Tirman, CIS Executive Director, the briefing provided the opportunity for members of CIS to give presentations on a variety of current issues affecting the globe, as well as giving the consular staff the opportunity to ask questions of the experts.
The topics included in the discussion were:

- “Illiberal Hegemony? Trump’s Surprising Grand Strategy,” Barry Posen
- “Putin the Disrupter: Foreign Policy Meddling around the Globe,” Carol Saivetz; and “The Russian Politics of Insecurity in the Presidential Campaign Cycle of 2018,” Elizabeth Wood
- “The North Korean Nuclear Crisis,” Vipin Narang
- “China’s Maritime Disputes,” Taylor Fravel “China in Southeast Asia,” Eric Heginbotham
- “Trump, Iran, and the JCPOA: How does the opera end?” Jim Walsh

Where We Spoke

Mark Bell (Alum, ‘16)
“How to Think About Nuclear Crises,” Stimson Center, Washington DC (Feb. 7, 2018); Princeton University (Feb. 28, 2018); Sciences PO (March 13, 2018).

“Nuclear Revolutions: How States Use Nuclear Weapons in International Politics,” Cornell University (March 29, 2018).

Jonathan Caverley (Research Associate)

M. Taylor Fravel (Faculty)
“China’s Calculus in the South China Sea,” Harvard University, March 2018.


Eugene Gholz (Research Affiliate)
“Comments on ‘In Pursuit of Influence: The United States and China’s Competition for Leadership in East Asia,” Bridging Asia Conference at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, March 19, 2018.


Kelly Greenhill (Research Affiliate)
“Taking Fake News to Task” (Interview with Courtney Hollands), Tufts Now (March 12, 2018)

Peter Krause (Research Affiliate)
Peter Krause spoke at the following institutions: University of Pittsburgh, Ridgeway Center for International Security Studies (March 2018); Harvard Kennedy School, Belfer Center, International Security Program (February 2018); University of Chicago, Program on International Security Policy (February 2018; College of Charleston (February 2018).

Sara Plana (Graduate Student)

Barry Posen (Faculty)
Panelist at “The Future of Transatlantic Relations: A Debate,” The Academy of Medicine, Georgia Institute of Technology, January 31, 2018.

Co-discussant in “Understanding the Full Range of Consequences of War,” at Aspen Institute Congressional Conference, Finding a Diplomatic Solution to the North Korean Crisis, Stanford University, March 2-4, 2018.

Joshua Rovner (Alum, ’08)


Carol Saivetz (Senior Advisor)


Joshua Shifrinson (Alum, ’13)

Ketian Zhang (Graduate Student)
Ketian Zhang was the speaker at the Belfer Center “International Security Brown Bag Seminar” at Harvard Kennedy School on March 8, 2018. Her title was “Calculating Bully: Explaining Chinese Coercion.”

What We Wrote
Dan Altman (Alum, ’15)


Mark Bell (Alum, ’16)


Kevin Benson (Army War College Fellow, ’01-02)
Kevin Benson, “It is OUR Fault,” Infinity Journal (forthcoming)

Jonathan Caverley (Research Associate)


Christopher Clary (Alum, ’15)

M. Taylor Fravel (Faculty)

Kelly Greenhill (Research Affiliate)


Paul Heer (CIS Robert E. Wilhelm fellow, ’16)


Gregory Koblentz (Alum, ’04)


Peter Krause (Research Affiliate)


Alan Kuperman (Alum, ’02)


Austin Long (Alum, ’10)


Roger Petersen (Faculty) and Matthew Cancian (Graduate Student) 

Barry Posen (Faculty) 

Jeremy Pressman (Alum, ’02) 


Joshua Rovner (Alum, ’08) 


Carol Saivetz (Senior Advisor) 
Carol Saivetz, “Frenemies: Putin and Erdogan,” *Lawfare Blog*

Joshua Shifrinson (Alum, ’13)


General announcements

Awards and Scholarships

Kelly Greenhill (Research Affiliate)
Kelly Greenhill was awarded an American Political Science Association COSSA Advocacy Grant.

John Henderson (SSP Army Fellow, 2014-15)
John Henderson was nominated by the President and later confirmed by the Senate, to serve as the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Installations, Environment, and Energy. He also received the Federal Engineer of the Year Award from the National Society of Professional Engineers in February, 2018.

Peter Krause (Research Affiliate)
Peter Krause was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

Rachel Esplin Odell (Graduate Student)
Rachel Esplin Odell was awarded a World Politics and Statecraft Fellowship by the Smith Richardson Foundation to fund her dissertation field research in India and China this upcoming fall 2018.

Jeremy Pressman (Alum, '02)
Jeremy Pressman was awarded a Fulbright scholarship to spend Spring 2019 at the Nobel Institute in Oslo, Norway. He will be writing about the US-led autonomy talks that followed the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979.

Joshua Shifrinson (Alum, ’13)
Joshua Shifrinson will be returning to the Boston area as an Assistant Professor of International Relations with Boston University’s Pardee School of Global Studies.

Ketian Zhang (Graduate Student)
Ketian Zhang will be a 2018-2019 Shorenstein Postdoctoral Fellow in Contemporary Asia at the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University.