

## Interns Spread the Word About USNORTHCOM

Press Release

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U.S. Northern Command is tapping virtually every communications route available ? including ?word of mouth? ? to educate Americans about its homeland defense and support to civil authorities missions.

In this case students from the University of Denver Graduate School of International Studies will carry the message to the public. They will, that is, once they complete a 12-week internship with the command. It may be a slow way to advertise but USNORTHCOM officials say at least the message should not get garbled during transmission.

?We have four bright, motivated and hard-working graduate students, who ? when they graduate ? will go into the field with a good understanding of our mission,? said Stan Supinski, Ph.D., education and training division deputy, who also oversees the intern program.

Fanta Orr, Lauren Borgen, Laura Fontaine and Jason Van Norman started coming to Peterson AFB in February to work one day per week in aerospace analysis, interagency, education and training, and logistics.

Although they are not paid for their work, all four interns agree that the experience and knowledge gained at NORAD and USNORTHCOM headquarters will probably help them land jobs when they graduate. Melinda Cain, Ph.D., deputy director of career services for the School of International Studies at the University of Denver concurs. She said students with an internship under their belts are more competitive in the job market.

?The questions most employers ask are, ?What do you know and what can you do?? said Cain. She said students who come to NORAD and USNORTHCOM not only gain ?real-world experience? but also ?meet and network with people in the field and get to see the pluses and minuses of the job.?

Van Norman, who will graduate from Denver University next year, said he hopes to get hired by either the Central Intelligence Agency or Department of Defense. ?Working here is helping me decide exactly where in those agencies I'd like to work,? he said.

Van Norman is currently putting together a training plan for the logistics division, which will be given to new arrivals.

?You get a lot of theory in class, but working here is giving me practical experience,? Van Norman said.

The intern program sprouted from conversations last summer between NORAD, USNORTHCOM and university officials. According to Dr. Supinski, Denver University is one of more than a dozen schools to join the command's education consortium. The group's charter includes ensuring that USNORTHCOM's homeland defense and civil support missions are taught in all homeland security courses. However, the command is working only with Denver University to obtain interns, said Dr. Supinski.

The school referred 17 students for positions this semester and education and training narrowed the list to five candidates. Dr. Supinski interviewed the students and selected four. ?Not only are these students bright, they bring an outsiders' perspective to the issues we're working,? said Supinski. He said the interns are also learning about the military in general, since the headquarters staff is comprised of military and civilian members from all four branches of the services.

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During their orientation to the command, the interns attended a DOD Emergency Preparedness Course, which is designed to help military and civilian employees learn more about homeland security operations. The course includes an overview of the Initial Federal Response Plan and the roles and responsibilities of federal, state and local authorities responding to a presidential declared disaster or emergency situation.

"Prior to coming here, I thought only about getting a job with an intelligence agency," said Ms. Orr, who will graduate in June with a degree in international studies, and a minor in international security. "But after attending the DOD course, I think I might like to work with one of the other federal agencies such as consequence management, the National Security Agency, or maybe even work in public diplomacy," Ms. Orr said.

Laura Verbisky was the first University of Denver student to take part in the intern program. "Laura did such an excellent job for us last fall (2003) that we decided to expand this year's program," said Supinski. Verbisky, who also will graduate this summer with a degree in international security, said "Working for USNORTHCOM was definitely a good experience for me."

Verbisky started the project that Ms. Orr has inherited: tracking down agencies offering homeland security courses. According to Supinski, the command will also contact these agencies about including information on USNORTHCOM in their curricula.

Since none of the interns have a security clearance, they can only work on unclassified issues, said Supinski.

Borgen said she spent the first few sessions reviewing documents on how the command is structured. Now she is helping to clarify guidance to improve cooperation between USNORTHCOM and the 42 federal agencies involved in homeland security, said Army Lt. Col. Robert Price, deputy director, operations and training for interagency.

"Lauren's efforts will help the command and other agencies better share information and coordinate respective actions during a homeland defense or civil support mission," Price said.

As an undergraduate student at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., Borgen majored in international affairs. But her passion turned to international security following the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and the Pentagon, she said.

"I hope my passion will contribute to helping (others) understand the threat and preventing future attacks on this country," she said. The Hendrum, Minn., native said she hopes to get an intelligence job with either homeland defense or homeland security when she graduates.