



The Anna Sobol Levy Fellowship Program

2014-2015



Hebrew University, Rothberg International School

The Fellows



Alexander Bastoky was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. He graduated from West Point in 2014 and commissioned as an Armor officer in the U.S. Army. He earned a Fulbright Fellowship to study Islamic history in Israel and reached out to the Anna Sobol Levy Foundation to add a vital military and political dimension to his time in the Middle East. Along with the rest of the ASL fellows, Alex will come away from Israel with a master's degree in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies and a host of experiences that will be invaluable for his military and civilian service. After leaving Israel in 2015, Alex will serve as an officer in the First Cavalry Division out of Fort Hood, Texas.



Katy Fanning received her Bachelor's degree in Peace, War, and Defense from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In conjunction with her B.A., she spent a semester studying in the War Studies Department of King's College London. During her undergraduate career and since, she has held a number of internships related to her interests in politics and national security. These have included The Institute for Defense and Business, The National Defense University's College of International Security Affairs, the Hudson Institute, the North Carolina General Assembly, and the Capitol Hill office of a U.S. Representative. She is currently working toward her Master's in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and plans to pursue a career in national security upon completion of her degree.



Andrew B. is a U.S. Navy Ensign and Surface Warfare Officer (in-training). The ASL fellowship allowed him to complete an M.A. in Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, which he looks forward to utilizing as his military career progresses.

November 2014: Yad Vashem

The ASL fellows were given a guided tour of the Yad Vashem Museum, which outlined the history of the Holocaust with an emphasis on the impact of genocide on Israeli culture and psyche, past and present.

This provided a context from which phrases like “never again” can be examined in a more comprehensive light, as the tour guide suggested that the Holocaust informs every aspect of modern Israeli life, culture and government, to include the military. Especially interesting were the changing views of the nature of the Holocaust from the Israeli point of view: from a view extolling the heroes of the Warsaw Uprising and lack of attention to those who were unable to resist, a new perspective examining the resistance of all individuals has come to the forefront.

This tour offered a great introduction to this important aspect of Israeli society, and to how the Holocaust continues to inform Israeli decision-making, both domestically in with regard to foreign policy.



Yad Vashem, The Eternal Flame in the Hall of Remembrance

December 2014: Harzerim Air Force Base Visit



The ASL Fellows with an Israeli pilot near an F-15 fighter jet.

May 2015: Sderot Visit

The ASL fellows conducted a visit to the western Negev city of Sderot and the Gaza border. This visit was meant to serve as an introduction to the security situation in the south with regard to Gaza, and to broaden the fellows' understanding of how the nature of the threat continues to inform Israel's regional security posture and policies. Additionally, fellows were afforded a unique perspective into the complex foreign and domestic media relationship with Israel's engagement with Gaza in the context of everyday life in Sderot.

This visit included an all-day guided tour of Sderot, the surrounding area and the Netiv HaAsara moshav. The guided tour was led by Noam Bedein, a director and photojournalist at the Sderot Media Center, a non-profit news agency and organization of citizen journalists that highlights the experiences of residents of Sderot in the context of the ongoing conflict. The fellows toured the city and saw playground structures which doubled as bomb shelters, and toured the municipal command center where civilian and military leadership coordinate municipal responses to rocket attacks. Mr. Bedein also gave the fellows a detailed look at the rockets themselves and explained the differences between rockets built by separate groups within Gaza such as al-Qaeda, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. At the Netiv HaAsara moshav, fellows had the opportunity to speak with a resident family and hear first-hand accounts of life during the conflict and toured a seed farm.

This tour was extremely valuable in contextualizing the security situation in southern Israel. Mr. Bedein is an expert on the impact that the conflict has on Sderot, and his perspective, in addition to the account of the family living in the moshav, offered a nuanced and engaging look at life under constant threat of attack.



June 2015: Visit to the West Bank Security Barrier

The ASL fellows were fortunate to have the opportunity to visit the West Bank security barrier as part of a program coordinated by the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University. The tour was led by retired IDF Colonel Shaul Arieli, who has served in various commanding posts in the Paratroopers Unit, including Commander of the Northern Brigade in Gaza. He was responsible for the evacuation and transfer of Gaza Strip to in 1994, and served as Deputy Military Secretary to the Minister of Defence and Prime Minister. Mr. Arieli explained the political and social implications of the security barrier and future plans for construction and further engagement with the Palestinian Authority on this issue.

After this tour, the fellows attended a panel discussion between a Palestinian activist and an Israeli settler in an effort to contextualize the environment observed during the morning tour session. This discussion offered valuable insights into the everyday realities and interactions between settlers and Palestinians living in close proximity, and the unique security challenges this presents. This tour and the proceeding panel discussion were extremely valuable in contextualizing the security situation in the West Bank. Mr. Arieli's input was very engaging and he is clearly an expert on the history and development of the security barrier. His observations were expounded upon in the panel discussion.



June 2015: West Bank Tour

The ASL fellows also conducted a visit to several areas in the West Bank and spoke with experts and residents about everyday life and the broader security situation therein. The tour began with a visit to Kfar Etzion, where they met with Jerry Katz, a longtime resident. Mr. Katz outlined the history of the community and its relations with surrounding Arab communities, with an emphasis on how certain entrenched ideological and religious norms inform everyday life.

The fellows then visited the home of IDF Reserve Colonel Bentzi Gruber and received a detailed presentation on ethnics in the Israeli military, drawing from Colonel Gruber's extensive field experience as Vice Commander of Division 252, an armored division of more than 20,000 soldiers. Colonel Gruber discussed specific operational scenarios and how the application of ethical frameworks guides Israeli military policy at the tactical and operational level.

At the Bethlehem Checkpoint, fellows were given a detailed brief by IDF personnel and a representative of the Blue and White Human Rights Association, a group "run on a voluntary basis in cooperation with the State authorities and the defense establishment to strengthen the State of Israel, strengthen its moral conduct, and to improve its image." Fellows toured the checkpoint itself, and were briefed on how its the administration and management structure adapts to periods of high-traffic and increased tension, such as Ramadan.



At the home of Noam Bedein in Nokdim, the fellows spoke with several members of the Israeli political establishment and discussed the diverse political viewpoints currently present within the Israeli government, specifically with regard to security policy.

These activities, especially the opportunities for discussion with IDF personnel brought a practical perspective that was an extremely valuable addition to the academic and largely theoretical study that has constituted the majority of the fellows' exposure to security issues. The opportunity to meet and talk with both Colonel Gruber and the checkpoint personnel in a small group setting offered fellows the opportunity to ask specific questions on a number of topics including the nature of security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the unique challenges present in this relationship, specifically with regard to the role of the United States as security coordinator.