

USF  
ARNOLD AIR  
SOCIETY



NATCON

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## NATCON Overview

This past April, cadets from the University of South Florida's (USF) Arnold Air Society (AAS) had the honor of attending this year's conclave, ATLANTACON, in Atlanta, GA. It was hosted by a joint NATCON Staff, comprised of Northern Arizona University, UNC-Chapel Hill, Georgia Tech, and Fayetteville State University.

As the premier annual gathering for AAS and Silver Wings, NATCON serves as a powerful launchpad for professional development, leadership immersion, and nationwide advocacy.

The USF delegation proudly represented both AFROTC Detachment 158 and the Waterman-Twining Chapter of the Air & Space Forces Association (AFA), a relationship grounded in mutual support and a shared commitment to developing future Air and Space Force leaders.

## A First-Time Experience That Resonates

For many of our cadets, NATCON 2025 marked their first experience attending a national AAS event — and the impact was immediate.

“NATCON 25' was definitely an interesting experience, especially as a first-time attendee. From a broad perspective, it was amazing - meeting cadets from several Wings, especially those smaller than Det 158. The panels were a great showcase of knowledge, and there were several places that I was able to visit alongside with my friends. I think it was just a great experience overall. I'll definitely remember it for a while!”



- C/O'Neill

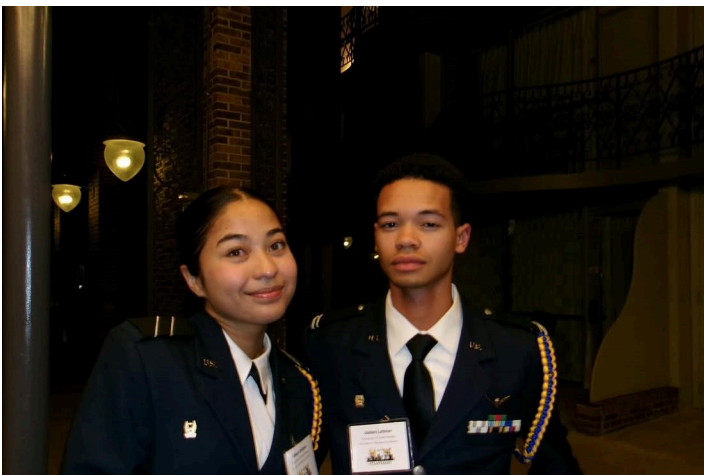


“Yes, this was my first NATCON, but I attended RCON at Embry-Riddle. I really enjoyed General B. Chance Saltzman - he had memes that lightened the mood, and it was amazing seeing someone so highly ranked in the military. Almost every officer I’ve talked to always comes back to this: rely on your wingman and don’t be afraid to ask for help, especially from your NCOs. Also, going to the Georgia Aquarium and seeing whale sharks was a great experience.”

- C/Merritt

# Professional Development & National Networking

Throughout the weekend, cadets heard directly from top leaders across the Department of the Air Force, gaining first-hand insights into leadership, strategy, and the evolving nature of the profession of arms. The conference spotlighted the cyber domain, exploring its role in global communication, security, and innovation. The Guest speakers included General Saltzman - Chief of Space Operation, Lieutenant General Brian Robinson - Commander, Air and Education Training Command, senior NCOs, and officers across a variety of AFSCs who provided candid, real-world perspectives on service and readiness.



“NATCON is a great experience for two main reasons. First, it’s a place for professional development — you get to hear from high-level leaders and interact with them personally through Q&A or informal conversations. Second, it’s an incredible networking opportunity one of the few times you can connect with cadets from other detachments outside of Field Training or ODTs. Exploring the host city makes it all the more memorable.”

- C/Latimer

“My experience at NATCON was truly amazing. I got to hang out with my flight mates and learn so much more about AAS. I also had the opportunity to network with Airmen and cadets from all over the country. I participated in official business sessions, spoke with officers from various AFSCs, and even met several generals. How awesome is that? Traveling to Atlanta and experiencing all this, thanks to being an Arnie, is something I’ll never forget.”

- C/Richardson

# A Shared Mission: AAS & AFA





This year's conclave highlighted the shared mission between Arnold Air Society and the Air & Space Forces Association: to advocate, educate, and support the total force and the communities that support it.

Cadets engaged in official business sessions, voted on national resolutions, and participated in policy discussions including proposals aimed at improving pay for junior enlisted Airmen. These topics mirrored local efforts led by the Waterman-Twining Chapter through their involvement with the Tampa Chamber of Commerce and the Tampa Bay Defense Alliance.



The partnership between the USF squadron and its sponsoring AFA chapter showcases the potential of strong civil-military collaboration. Whether it's funding travel, attending commissioning ceremonies, or volunteering at events on MacDill AFB, the Waterman-Twining Chapter consistently enables cadet success through meaningful support.

## Policy, Collaboration, and Legacy

Throughout ATLANTACON, our squadron had the opportunity to attend various business meetings, collaborating with other regions and squadrons on critical training policies, resolutions, and amendments designed to improve AAS and leave it better than we found it. These moments allowed cadets to take an active role in shaping the future of the society and develop a deeper understanding of leadership in action.

## Hearing from the Nation's Top Leaders

One of the most powerful elements of NATCON is hearing directly from senior leaders within the Department of the Air Force, Space Force, and broader defense and technology sectors. This year, we had the honor of speaking with General John W. Raymond, the first Chief of Space Operations and founder of the United States Space Force. His insights into ROTC, leadership challenges, and building a new military branch were deeply inspiring.

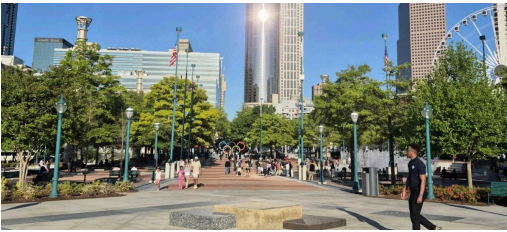
Other key speakers and panelists included:

- General B. Chance Saltzman, Chief of Space Operations
- Lt Gen (Ret.) Burt M. Field, President & CEO, Air & Space Forces Association
- Lt Gen (Ret.) Christopher P. Weggeman, Former Deputy Commander, ACC
- Mr. Bobby Ford, Former Chief Security Officer, Hewlett-Packard Enterprise
- Maj Gen (Ret.) Brett T. Williams, Former Director of Operations, U.S. Cyber Command
- Brig Gen Terrence Adams, Deputy Principal Cyber Advisor and Senior Military Advisor for Cyber Policy

A major theme of this year’s conclave was cybersecurity, explored in-depth during the Cyber Panel. These experts provided invaluable knowledge about cyber defense, career pathways, and how cyber operations are reshaping national security within the Air and Space Force.



## Exploring Atlanta & Making Memories



After the meetings, cadets had the opportunity to unwind and explore the culture and energy of downtown Atlanta. Highlights included visits to the World of Coca-Cola, the Georgia Aquarium, SkyView Atlanta, Centennial Olympic Park, and local restaurants that offered a taste of the city.

## Looking Ahead with Gratitude

Returning from Atlanta, cadets brought back more than photos and souvenirs they returned with new perspectives, broader networks, and a strengthened commitment to the values they will carry as future officers.

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In all, NATCON 2025, ATLANTACON, was an incredible experience. I learned so much, took a lot of notes, and gained many unforgettable memories. With the support from the Air and Space Forces Association, Gen. James V. Hartinger Squadron this year was able to send 18 Arnies to ATLANTACON. This opportunity was a transferable experience that will forever shape these Arnies leadership, character, and professional development. We can take and apply the lessons we learned, connections we made, and inspiration we gained to our futures, pushing our squadrons' Arnie's to excellence”

— C/Grafton

Together, USF’s Arnold Air Society and the Waterman-Twining Chapter are helping shape the next generation of officers one mission, one memory, and one NATCON at a time.



