



The 2023 fellows participate in "Hedgemony: A Game of Strategic Choices," at RAND Corp. in Washington, D.C.

The McCain Institute National Security & Counterterrorism Fellowship program invests in young women and men of extraordinary achievement and promise who – in the mold of Senator John McCain – have demonstrated their commitment to national security and public service.



Program Purpose

To identify the most promising character-driven young leaders in the national security community of Five Eyes nations – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States



To provide those young leaders with a substantively rich fellowship experience over the course of a calendar year, to include tailored leadership training and intensive engagement with senior government officials, national security professionals, subject matter experts and others who will expand both the intellectual horizons and the professional networks of the fellows



To create an enduring international network of national security decision-makers by linking fellows with peers and colleagues across the Five Eyes partner nations



"The programme so far has been an invaluable opportunity to understand how our close allies approach shared challenges. Learning with and from experts across the Five Eyes community has been a unique experience, and I have no doubt that the relationships we build will have a long lasting impact at individual and international levels."

- 2019-20 Fellow Chris Selim, Head of Operational Policy and Secretariat, Home Office, United Kingdom

Eligibility

Young professionals with exemplary character and a record of leadership, distinction and achievement in national security and counterterrorism.

Class Composition

The 2023 cohort includes 15 fellows from agencies such as the Australian Federal Police in Canberra; the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in New Zealand; the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and Home Office in London; and the State Department, Federal Bureau of Investigation and National Counterterrorism Center in Washington, DC.

Program Structure

The fellowship spans the course of a calendar year — from January to December — with weeklong visits to three Five Eyes capitals: Washington, DC, in Spring, London in Early Fall and Canberra in Winter. In each capital, fellows have the opportunity to meet with senior leaders at key government agencies, attend briefings with top journalists covering counterterrorism and participate in innovative leadership training with premier scholars and national security practitioners. The fellows also travel to nearby cities like New York, Belfast and Sydney for conversations with local law enforcement and counterterrorism officials.



15 fellows each year



3 week-long
international
training modules



Briefings with senior
officials & top experts



Program Founder - Nicholas Rasmussen

Nicholas Rasmussen is a national security professional with over 27 years in U.S. government service. He was previously the executive director of the Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism (GIFCT), the director of the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) from 2014 – 2017, and a former White House senior counterterrorism official under Presidents Bush and Obama. In 2018, he designed the McCain Institute's National Security & Counterterrorism program.

"America and our Five Eyes partners face a multitude of challenges, and we need our next generation of national security leaders to be ready for them. We are proud to work with the talented men and women who participate in the National Security and Counterterrorism Fellowship and steward this growing network of professionals across Washington, Canberra, London, Ottawa, and Wellington."

- Dr. Evelyn Farkas, McCain Institute Executive Director



"One of the greatest benefits of the McCain Fellowship is the opportunity to learn from incredible and inspiring leaders across the National Security realm. Hearing these leaders talk about how their values have driven their leadership is truly motivating as I think about the type of leader I'd like to be."



- 2022-23 Fellow Padmini Rajan, U.S. Government



The 2023 fellows attend a welcome reception with alumni and embassy representatives at the McCain Institute in Washington, D.C.



Assistant Attorney General for National Security Matt Olsen meets with the fellows at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Washington, DC

In Washington, the fellows engaged with both current and former **senior leadership at key government agencies**, attended **panel discussions on a range of counterterrorism issues** and participated in **leadership and executive management training**.

Speakers included National Counterterrorism Center Director **Christy Abizaid**, the Deputy Chief of Analysis at the CIA's Counterterrorism Mission Center, the Deputy Director of the CIA **David Cohen**, former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy **Michele Flournoy**, Office of the Director of National Intelligence COO **Lora Shiao**, U.S. Department of the Treasury's Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence **Brian Nelson**, and FBI Assistant Director of the Counterterrorism Division **Robert Wells**.



Fellows explore the International Spy Museum

"The NSCT Fellowship provides an incredible platform to both learn and teach about all things national security, including how to be an exceptional leader in such a challenging profession. The cohort is made up of a diverse and expert group of professionals, and the facilitators and presenters bring a whole other level of experience ... that's not easily found in our day to day!"

- 2023 Fellow Joselyn Eling, Counterterrorism Investigations and Intelligence Operations, Australian Federal Police



The 2019-20 fellows in Central London.

London

In London, the fellows attended private meetings with senior leadership at key government agencies, including the **Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO)**, the **Home Office**, the **Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC)**, the **Metropolitan Police**, **MI5** and Vauxhall. Speakers included Director for Defence and International Security **Samantha Job** and Director for National Security **Simon Shercliff OBE** at the FCO; Director General **Tom Hurd** at the Home Office; the head of JTAC; Assistant Commissioner **Neil Basu** QPM, head of Counterterrorism Policing at the Metropolitan Police; and **Sir Andrew Parker** KCB, director general, MI5.

The fellows also engaged in discussions with premier national security scholars and experts from the private sector, including **King's College London** Professor Peter Neumann on terrorist radicalization and recruitment; **Pool Re** on terrorism reinsurance; and **Moonshot CVE** on digital efforts to respond to and mitigate violent extremism.

Belfast

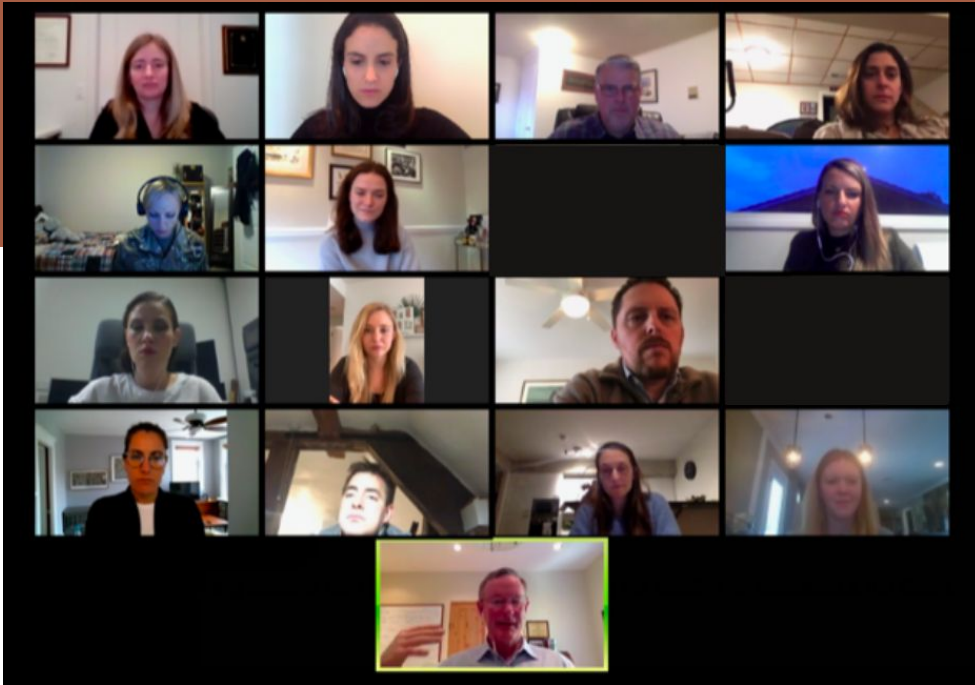
At the end of the week, the fellows flew to Belfast for a daylong briefing on the current terrorism threat in Northern Ireland.



Former head of JTAC Suzanne Raine discusses leadership in counterterrorism with fellows Anna Dietrich and Chris Selim.



Fellows engage in a conversation on the importance of future collaboration across the Five Eyes partner nations.



Admiral William H. McRaven with the 2019-20 fellows over Zoom.

Zoom

From across various time zones in Washington D.C., Ottawa, London, Brussels and Canberra, the McCain Institute National Security & Counterterrorism fellows convened on April 1 for a special Zoom session with **Admiral William H. McRaven** on leadership under crisis conditions and personal resilience during times of adversity. McRaven, the former Navy SEAL commander who oversaw the operations that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden and the capture of Saddam Hussein, drew on his 37 years of his experience in the U.S. military to offer a range of lessons on leadership.

McRaven stressed that “everything about leadership is tough.” Great leaders, he told the fellows, understand the importance of fostering teamwork, setting high standards and holding people accountable, communicating “up and down the line,” taking ownership of problems, being “brutally honest” while still inspiring hope, and remaining the calmest person in the room at all times. In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, fellows described the discussion as especially timely and meaningful.



“Hearing from Admiral McRaven was an incredible opportunity in its own right, but resonated even more strongly now as we all reflect on the importance of leadership during crisis. His perspectives on maintaining transparency, owning failure, and building strong teams were particularly poignant in this moment.”

- Fellow Anna Wallis Dietrich, analyst at the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center



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#InTheArena

Inspired by the leadership of Senator John McCain and his family's legacy of public service, the McCain Institute advances character-driven leadership based on security, economic opportunity, freedom and human dignity around the world.