

# About me

안녕하세요! (Annyeonghaseyo!)👋, I'm Sean Kelly, an engineer in the United States Space Force. I have a BS in Electrical Engineering from the University of Pittsburgh (H2P!), a MS in Space Systems Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology, and I recently graduated from the USAF Test Pilot School's space test program. My engineering assignments have spanned from integrating and launching satellites to flight testing the latest and greatest aircraft...but now I'm studying Korean?

I was selected for the Olmsted Scholar Class of 2023 to learn Korean and study in Seoul, and this newsletter will document some of my thoughts and experiences as I go on this latest adventure. I hope you'll join me! (If for nothing else than for lots of pictures of food 😊)



~Sean

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## About the Olmsted Scholarship

"It is not enough to know one's own strengths, weaknesses, and general characteristics. The solutions of difficulties that arise between nations require a knowledge and depth of understanding of the particular nations involved."

~General George Olmsted

In 1959, Major General George Olmsted (US Army, ret) founded the Olmsted Scholar Program to create a cadre of warrior-statesmen throughout the military branches with a uniquely broad perspective gained through cultural immersion and language learning. Why do this? He oversaw the Allied supply chain throughout Southeast Asia during World War II and noticed how Mao Zedong negotiated with Allied leaders. Mao Zedong had a fluency in other languages and a command of foreign cultural norms that Allied leaders sorely lacked. General Olmsted saw this key advantage play out over and over and it inspired him to create the Olmsted Scholar Program from his personal wealth to give the US an advantage in future conflicts. The George and Carol Olmsted Foundation selects 15-20 officers from the US military each year to become fluent in a foreign language and pursue graduate studies in that country for 2-3 years. At the conclusion of an officer's Olmsted tour, they should be better prepared to handle the challenges that complex global conflicts throw at them.

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."

~Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Our nation calls on the men and women of the military to engage with allies, partners, and adversaries from all corners of the globe, so there is a critical imperative to not just understand different cultures on a surface level, but to understand their worldview as they see it. If we aim to defeat our adversaries and support our partners, we must be able to see the world as they do.

I have personally experienced these challenges already. During my deployment to Iraq, I saw firsthand how poorly some military leaders engaged with foreign partners. We cannot keep making these mistakes in future wars where it really counts. To that end, I hope to embody General Olmsted's vision as I undertake this challenge and come out the other side a more "broadly educated" leader.

From the [Olmsted Foundation's website](#):

The Olmsted Scholar Program's impact on the leadership skills of US military officers has been called "the most valuable training an officer could choose" and "the opportunity of a lifetime." Olmsted Scholars are already strong leaders and overachievers. They graduate near the top of their class, excel in athletics and achieve mastery within their military assignments. For them, the Olmsted experience is a new challenge, a higher peak to summit.

But unlike any challenge they've ever faced, Scholars begin their Olmsted experience at the bottom and must rebuild themselves from the ground up by learning a new language, and overcoming even the simplest challenges of daily life in a foreign culture. This process has humbled even the most decorated Scholars and proves to be an enormously beneficial learning and leadership experience.

As Scholars rise to this challenge, immerse themselves in the culture and people around them, their struggles fade and they begin to see the world through a wider lens.

More information about the Olmsted Scholar Program can be found at the foundation's website: <https://olmstedfoundation.org/>