Networking Basics in National Security Law

• Talk with professors in the field and ask for their ideas and contacts. Every school has a few of these, normally teaching constitutional, administrative, national security, foreign affairs or international law. Recognize the remarkable expansion of the national security field into such traditional legal domains as contracts, business, immigration and criminal law. Think imaginatively how you might weave national security law into your career development. Ask your career service professionals for their insights and suggestions.

• Check-in with your school’s career service office for a list of alumni who are working in the field and call them for an informational interview.

• Participate in national security related sections of your local/state bar associations as a student. If in D.C., participate in the Standing Committee on Law and National Security monthly breakfasts and the Young Lawyers Division. The committee’s website is www.americanbar.org/natsecurity. Also, participate in the Bar Association of D.C.’s Committee on National Security Law, Policy & Practice. The website is www.badc.org. Get on their email lists.

• Identify and contact people at law firms, government agencies, NGOs, Capitol Hill committees (especially members from your home state congressional delegation) and other entities that interest you for an informational interview. Mail a “thank you” note afterwards. Tap into your family and friends for possible connections. Apply to summer intern positions on the Hill or in the executive branch. Apply to the Honors Programs at the departments of State, Defense and Justice.

• Polish your resume, print it on bonded paper and always carry copies of it with you (be prepared to tailor a resume to different audiences). Buy business cards and freely distribute to the people you meet. Prepare a 30-second “elevator speech” which quickly markets you, your skills and your goals.

• Write write write. Work to get published in a law journal at least once before graduation on a national security related topic. Writing on a topic gives you a possibly marketable expertise on that topic.

• Join the ABA Law Student Division (http://www.americanbar.org/lisd). Look at the ABA Leadership Directory and contact the sections which interest you. Contact the ABA Law Student Liaison to each committee or section which interests you.

• Volunteer to help with a program on the Standing Committee. Even if you're not in D.C., some work can be done by email (though a word of caution: networking is best done in person).

• Find institutions focusing on national security law, subscribe to their mailing lists and attend events as possible. Use their speaker lists to find professionals in your area to email. Some good ones are:
  • GWU National Security Law Association – reach out to Hayley Hoffman – to get involved - hhoffman@law.gwu.edu
  • Center for National Security Law (http://www.virginia.edu/cnsl)
  • Center for Terrorism Law (http://www.stmarytx.edu/ctl)
  • Institute for National Security and Counterterrorism (http://insct.syr.edu)
  • Center on Law, Ethics, and National Security (http://www.law.duke.edu/lens)
  • Institute for Counter-Terrorism (http://www.ict.org.il).
  • Georgetown Center on National Security and the Law (http://www.law.georgetown.edu/cnsl/)

• Participate in an organization with a national security law focus at your law school. **If your school doesn’t have one, Start One!** In 2005 there were six law schools in the country with national security law student organizations. The subsequent explosion was driven entirely by interested students.

This is a cooperative product of the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Law and National Security and the Bar Association of D.C. Committee on National Security Law, Policy & Practice. This product is not endorsed by any other entities mentioned herein.