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Midshipmen Participate in Turkish Navy Cup Sailing Competition

From the International Programs Office



Midshipmen participate in the Turkish Navy Cup sailing competition this past summer. The Midshipmen as well as Naval Academy Superintendent Vice Adm. Jeffrey Fowler were guests of the Turkish Naval Academy. Photo courtesy of the International Programs Office.

This summer six Midshipmen participated in the Turkish Navy Cup sailing competition held annually in Istanbul, Turkey. Midshipmen from the classes of 2010, 2011 and 2012 attended as guests of the Turkish Naval Academy.

The event, hosted by the Turkish Navy, included 75 sailboats, both civilian-owned and from the Turkish Naval Academy. Considered the biggest offshore sailing regatta in Turkey, the Turkish Navy Cup offered the Midshipmen a unique sailing experience as well as a chance to experience another country and its culture.

The first five days of the event focused on practice. Each Midshipman was integrated into the crew of a different sailboat from the Turkish Naval Academy with a crew size of 14. Practice allowed the Midshipmen to work on their communication skills with the Turkish sailors and to develop as a team prior to race.

The day before the competition the Midshipmen were given a guided tour of historic Istanbul, with stops at Topkapi Palace – the former home of the Ottoman Sultans – the Blue Mosque, and the famous Istanbul Grand Bazaar. A pre-race ceremony was held at the Istanbul Yacht Club

overlooking the Marmara Sea, attended by a Turkish three-star admiral, the Commander of Northern Naval Forces in Turkey.

The race started with a strong breeze and a fast current in the picturesque Bosphorus Strait separating the continents of Europe and Asia. The first leg was approximately 120 miles through the Marmara Sea and Dardanelles Strait to the small Turkish island of Bozcaada in the Aegean Sea. Due to a lack of wind on the third day of racing there was an opportunity for the Midshipmen to explore Bozcaada and experience Turkish island life.

The second leg was 100 miles from Bozcaada to the town of Cesme. With strong winds at 25 knots or more, it provided a good challenge for the multinational teams, with one boat finishing third in its class.

The final stop of the race was in the resort town of Alcati, Turkey, where a closing ceremony was held and gifts were exchanged between the Americans and Turks. Naval Academy Superintendent Vice Adm. Jeffrey Fowler and the superintendent of the Turkish Naval Academy, Rear Admiral Turker Erturk, were in attendance as well as the Turkish Commander of Southern Naval Forces. Midn 3/C Andrew Wessbecher gave a speech, beginning with a greeting in Turkish and ending with the Turkish version of “fair winds and following seas.” The result was a standing ovation from the crowd.

The Academy Midshipmen and the Turkish Naval Cadets developed close relationships during the two-week trip because of their shared experiences. While Turkey learned about the Naval Academy and the U.S. Navy, the Midshipmen also learned a great deal about Turkey and their navy as well.