

USAFRICOM commander shares strategic lessons with USAWC students

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Gen. Carter Ham, USAFRICOM Commander, speaks to the U.S. Army War College Class of 2012 in Bliss Hall Dec. 7. Carter addressed current challenges and the U.S. role in assisting African partners. Photo by Megan Clugh.

Dec. 7, 2011 – Arab spring, regional conflicts, growing economies, a population of more than one billion, and the threat of violent

extremism. **Gen. Carter Ham**, USAFRICOM Commander, addressed current challenges and the U.S. role in assisting African partners, while at the Army War College, Dec. 7.

Ham spoke to the students of the Army War College class of 2012 about U.S. interests in Africa from a security standpoint, and about what U.S. Africa Command is trying to achieve on behalf of the nation.

“That’s principally the effort to strengthen the defense capabilities of our African partners in order to contribute to increased stability in Africa,” he said.

He noted ongoing events in Libya as an example.

“As we think now about what’s next in Libya, it’s a very perplexing problem,” he said. “It’s compounded by the fact that the Libyans don’t have any experience in running their own government

....

“I think the U.S.’s best military effort would be in helping the Libyans build the institutions necessary

for their armed forces ... a personnel system, a logistics system, a medical system, transportation system, recruiting and training system, none of which exists in Libya today. The Libyans are good fighters -- they don't need a lot of extra training at the tactical level. I think our best effort is at the institutional level.”

Ham discussed the benefits of an Army War College experience for African leaders.

“The Africans would readily send twice as many officers here if we could accommodate that,” he said. “There is a real thirst, a real interest in sending their officers here to learn. I think that’s a great testament to the War College and the staff and faculty here.

Ham referred to the mutual benefit of African officers gaining greater understanding of how the United States operates, and creating new networks. He emphasized the opportunities that will be available through a greater sense of collaboration and cooperation among the African senior leaders.

The address by Ham was an opportunity for international officers from Africa to speak directly to the man in charge of U.S. military interests there.

“I appreciate his insights and discussions of how AFRICOM is interacting and working with the colonial powers in Africa,” said **Lt. Col. Oumar Diarra, Mali**. “In Africa, we recognize there are interests and implications that trace back hundreds of years that are still important today. I feel that he (Ham) understands this.”



Ham met also with students in the Advanced Strategic Arts Program while here to discuss U.S. relationships with nations on the African continent. ASAP is a focused 6-month curriculum, for select USAWC students, in strategic art, theater design, campaign planning, and the policy-strategy interface.

Ham said the USAWC experience was an important step for senior military officers' development for strategic responsibilities.

“Leadership at the strategic level, at the national level, is the most complex endeavor in which I’ve ever been engaged,” he said. “There is a reason that we require our officers to grow over a career of service before they are in these most senior, national-level positions. Unlike many other professions,

you can't just hire somebody without that experience and park them in these national-level positions.

The Army War College exposes officers to the mechanics of the national security decision-making process. "More importantly, they have an opportunity to think, to discuss, to debate in an academic environment—which is largely penalty free—and start to think about when they do advance into these positions. What are the values that are going to guide them as they're making decisions and, most often as military folks, recommendations to civilian leaders?"

"The role of the Army War College in that process is invaluable because it affords the officer that opportunity for personal and professional growth that you just can't get when you're in an operational assignment because you're consumed by the day-to-day activities."

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