

VCSA at Army War College Graduation: Leaders are our asymmetric advantage



**Army
War
College
faculty
team**

Dr. Craig Bullis, Col. Joseph Secino and Navy Capt. Wade Turvold congratulate seminar 5 graduates Col. Yacouba Sanogo of Mali, and Army Lt. Col. Andrew Saslav, June 9.

VCSA: Leaders are the US asymmetric

advantage

Strategic education and 15+ years in crucible of combat prepared Army War College graduates for challenge ahead

Over 2,000 graduation photos uploaded @ <https://www.flickr.com/photos/usawc>

Story by Curt Keester

CARLISLE, Pa. (June 9, 2017) – The flags of U.S. states and territories and 70 countries fluttered in a cool morning breeze as the Army War College resident class of 2017 arrived on a perfectly sunny day, soon to assume a proud place among strategic leaders. A crescendo moment after 10 months of graduate-level study, the [Army War College Graduation](#) unfolded with historic Carlisle Barracks’ parade field as back drop for families, friends and professional colleagues.

This class will always hold a special place in my heart, said Commandant Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp, noting this would be his last resident class graduation before retirement. His remarks celebrated the students’ significant achievements in a tough but vitally important curriculum, and highlighted the faculty’s professionalism and skill as teachers and mentors.

Almost 400 military officers of the U.S. Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard; 70 armed forces of



allied/partner countries, and multiple U.S. federal agencies walked the stage to receive a USAWC diploma and, for most, a Master’s degree in Strategic Studies. Several handfuls of students accepted additional honors for their [writing, public speaking or leadership achievements](#) during the academic

Army War College graduates give “thumbs-up” as they complete 10 months of graduate-level study. During the June 9 graduation ceremony, nearly 400 students received USAWC diplomas.

“These are our credentials,” said Rapp, about the graduates who are about to depart for leadership across the globe. He echoed the words of Brig. Gen. Charles Canham, who pointed to his Soldiers during the surrender of the German forces at Brest, France, July 1944.

Rapp introduced [graduation speaker Gen. Daniel B. Allyn](#), Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, with a description borrowed from William Tecumseh Sherman: “It is enough for the world to know he is a Soldier.” Rapp recounted Allyn’s leadership of combat formations from platoon to corps, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his leadership of U.S. Forces Command. “His steady leadership of Soldiers at all levels has been remarkable in these turbulent times.”



Allyn weaved personal and

aspirational themes in his comments to the students. He looked back at his own post-war college years as a strategic leader, and anticipated the graduates’ service at the strategic level.

Gen. Dan Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, congratulates Army Col. Collin Hunton as he accepts his diploma during the Army War College Graduation, June 9.

‘Warfighters are why we exist’

“My war college class [of 2001] fulfilled our role as military leaders, learning to be comfortable in uncertainty and changing environments during an extraordinarily challenging period in our nation’s history,” said Allyn.

“We must transition leaders for our future responsibilities to your capable hands.

“The leaders seated among us this morning will soon be responsible for leading change with an uncertain mix of forces, an even more uncertain budget, and in an arguably more dangerous and more complex world than the one we faced at the turn of the millennium.

Allyn urged them to take his lessons and apply to their future, whether at Joint duty at a



combatant command or service, as a division chief in the Pentagon, or in any number of awaiting duties.

Col. Romeo S. Brawner of the Philippines accepts his Army War College diploma and congratulations from Gen. Dan Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, June 9.

“What you do as strategic leaders determines where Soldiers fight, how they fight, and with what equipment they fight,” he said. “The warfighters around the globe today are why we exist In our profession, we spell TRUST in all-caps. It is foundational to what we do and unconditional. As strategic leaders, we maintain trust with the All-Volunteer Force by doing everything we can every day to fight for their best interests.

“Strategic leadership matters,” said Allyn. “It determines whether our joint force wins or loses; personalize your commitment, be a passionate advocate, and maintain the trust of those we lead by doing all you can to fight for their best interests.”

“You have many difficult tasks ahead of you, but we know this terrain and you and your teammates are more than ready,” he said. “Network daily and remember to stay connected to your war college classmates. Leverage this elite team to achieve exponential results no matter where you find yourself in need -- or able to help others.”



“I sleep well because the leaders we are



blessed with in our joint force, molded by 15 plus years in the crucible of combat, and now,

broadened with a strategic education, remain our asymmetric advantage,” said Gen. Allyn.

Gen. Dan Allyn, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, addresses students, families, faculty and friends gathered for a graduation ceremony in Carlisle, Pa., June 9. These leaders, molded by 15+ years in the crucible of combat and broadened with strategic education are the nation’s asymmetric advantage.

Following Allyn’s remarks, family and friends cheered as each graduate received congratulations from Dean Richard Lacquement, Provost Lance Betros, Commandant Bill Rapp, and Vice Chief of Staff Allyn.

They walked onto the stage as students of strategic thought; they walked off as graduates of the Army War College, ready to fill the role of strategic leader.

In the graduates’ words

“I got to interact with my Army





counterparts and also the International Fellows,” Navy Cmdr. Shannon Corey said.

Ruth Collins, Chief Executive Officer of the Army War College Foundation, presents Col. Stephanie Ahern with an award for academic excellence during a ceremony June 9.

“Relationships and friendships forged here are something you walk away with and you have for the rest of your life.” He talked about better understanding of the strategic environment, instruments of national power, and how the Defense Department works,” but emphasized the broadening experience of the war college year.

“I came in as an officer trained and functional at the operational level, and now I’m going back as an officer trained to be functional at the strategic level,” said Nigerian Col. Kapeh Kabaju Alwali Kazir.

“The American environment and the American people have been very, very friendly,” he added. “I sincerely appreciate everything that has gone on here.

“I have tremendous respect for this college and the United States.”

“We’ve heard over and over throughout the year that it’s not what you know, but who you know: the people that I’ve met here and the relationships built over the year, both in seminar and then in electives and all the different social functions,” said Army Lt. Col. Anne Hessinger. The future ability to pick up a phone with a fellow graduate, and start with a shared experience, is the best part of the resident education, she said.

“The support of the community here, the access to the park, the library, the YMCA: that total support of the community made it a great family experience, and central Pennsylvania is a beautiful area,” she added.