

Valley Forge reveals historic example - building the Army of the future

By Robert Martin, Public Affairs Office 05 October 2018



International Fellows consider, with the help of Army War College historians, lessons of leadership during the American Revolution during a battlefield visit to Valley Forge, Sep. 28.

Gen. George Washington's leadership would teeter on failure or success in the winter of 1777, his Army was hungry and sick. But, from the dead of winter he still managed to re-organize and re-train and leave Valley Forge with an Army ready to fight.

The 76 international officers studying this year at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pa. traveled to Valley Forge, Sep. 28, for a slice of American history illuminated by Army War College historians, leading small groups in the staffride to guide the international fellows' perspectives on leadership.

Rwandan Lt. Col. Moses Kayigamba was pleased at the opportunity to compare the insights from Valley Forge to his own country, for which October 1 is the first day of liberation, he said.

“At Valley Forge Washington was organizing what we see today, a modern and exemplary Army. He was trying to professionalize the army. This required him to do what he could to get officers who were professional and with experience, like Gen. Friedrich von Steuben, to aid in the training,” he said.

“He also had internal issues, for example the conflict he had with John Adams and Gen. Horatio Gates. There were also logistics and finance issues Washington had to solve,” said Kayigamba. “So Valley Forge is a very good example of how to stick to your plan for any institution in stages of growth.”

“The International Students visit Valley Forge as part of their Field Studies Program,” said Col. Frank Intini, the International Fellows Program Director. “We use history to study the fundamental values and facets of American life while reinforcing many of the learning outcomes from the War College’s courses on Theory of War and Strategy, and Strategic Leadership.

“Valley Forge is particularly valuable because of the dramatic changes in the Continental Army and America's new French alliance during this period – changes that reflected the strategic leaders' understanding of their changing environment,” said Intini.

The International Fellows, drawn from 73 different countries, are fully integrated into all Army War College studies, in seminar cohorts that duplicate the mix of US Army, other US Services, federal agencies, and other nations that engage in the strategic security environment. Throughout the year, they engage in additional experiences as part of the Field Studies orientation to the United States’ culture, economic, history and values.