

DC-based national security experts engage Army War College students

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 26 May 2021



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During this year's virtual engagements, May 10-14, USAWC students interacted with key actors in the National Capital Region.

U.S. Army War college students engaged with policy makers and those who carry out the policies, high-profile leaders and influencers in national security. In small group sessions, in-depth discussions and Q&A sessions, students learned from expert knowledge and experienced perspective.

During this year's virtual engagements, May 10-14, students interacted with key actors in the National Capital Region. They included Congressional Members and staff and senior representatives of federal agencies like the CIA and DIA; major news corporations like BBC and Reuters; researchers and analysts with think tanks and global institutions like the World Bank and

International Monetary Fund.

Col. David Knych described three objectives of the academic program he directed. A primary goal was to obtain a broader perspective of government and non-government organizations that impact national security policy and military strategy, particularly those with interagency responsibilities.

“[These exchanges] enhance understanding of the Constitutional roles and responsibilities of Congress, its legislative activities, and its impact on national security policy; and enhance understanding of the full breadth of U.S. national power and statecraft with emphasis on the diplomatic, economic, and informational instruments of power,” said Knych.

Each student participated in four or five unique small group sessions, then compared notes and insights with colleagues in their base seminars as the last element of the virtual national security staff ride.

The students spoke of the link between what they learned about theories and models in the curriculum and the application of those theories and models by those they engaged.

One student noted the connection with the Strategic Leadership Course. “Whether developing routine strategic policies or responding to a crisis, it was evident that students must have a working understanding of the material taught in strategic leadership, negotiations, strategic teaming, and senior leader communications,” said Col. Adam Lowmaster about his group’s discussion with National Security Council staff.

Lowmaster, too, pointed to the lessons of the War, Policy and National Security Course that provided foundational knowledge to understanding the complexity of the national security staff.

Lt. Col. John Wenzel participated in the small group discussion with the American University Center for Security Innovation led by a one of their cyber-security experts. “Given the events with the Colonial Pipeline this week, he was a timely guest,” said Wenzel.

“The presentation added to my knowledge of cyberspace as one of the new domains of warfare we will be dealing with as we move forward in our careers,” said Wenzel.

In the CSINT engagement, Lt. Col. Kathryn Sanborn recognized application of the theories and frameworks and processes for decision-making that were introduced during the curriculum this year.

These engagements shed light on interagency partnership dynamics and how strategic leaders can utilize them, said Lt. Col. Brady Ward who talked with Department of Justice representatives. “As the Army War College curriculum emphasized, strengthening DoD's interagency partnerships is critical to our national security. DOJ is an important partner in this objective.

“I came away impressed with all that DOJ does to enhance the readiness and effectiveness of military operations,” said Ward.

“The discussion of African security and economic prosperity captured a lot of the same issues we have discussed throughout the year, but from a different lens, said Lt. Col. Kenneth Dwyer about his discussions with the African Center - Atlantic Council.

“There are lots of people working on answers to complicated questions, Dwyer noted about all of his engagements. “The hardest part is getting the solutions to support each other in a way that really has positive impact on the situation.”

Discussions with major news organizations, like NPR, gave students an in-depth look at the business of newsgathering and reporting to the American people about diverse perspectives on national security topics, among others.

“It works to shed light on unpopular, unpalatable, and controversial topics,” said Col. John Casiano, about the free press in the United States. “It keeps our citizenry informed about regional, national, and global topics that will likely impact the country’s direction.

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