

Votel talks strategic leadership challenges

By Curt Keester 17 July 2018



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Gen. Joseph Votel, Commander U.S. Central Command, discusses strategic leadership challenges with Second Resident Course students of the Army War College's Distance Education Program in Bliss Hall, July 16.

CARLISLE, Pa. (July 17, 2018) – The operational environment of the Middle East is complex and dynamic. Strategic leaders in the region face many challenges that include conflicts between nations, terrorist threats and violent extremism. These issues create complex problems for U.S. national security strategy, and require multinational relationships to combat.

Which is why the Army War College welcomed Gen. Joseph Votel, Commander U.S. Central Command, to discuss the strategic leadership challenges he faces with Second Resident Course students of the Army War College's Distance Education Program in Bliss Hall, July 16. Votel, a USAWC graduate of the Class of 2001, is the U.S. combatant commander in the region and is responsible for understanding the challenges, contributions and cultures of regional partners in the Middle East.

During Votel's lecture, he discussed the strategic value of the region, where three religions intersect and how conflicts there have displaced millions of people and led to refugee problems throughout the world.

He noted how it contains half of the world's oil and natural gas reserves, and mentioned that many U.S. allies and partners, throughout the world, rely on these reserves to fuel their economies.

He explained CENTCOM's strategy of preparing, pursuing and prevailing, which creates an environment that enables leaders at all levels to execute the mission. This has an added level of importance when dealing with international partners in operations throughout the region he explained further.

He described preparing as making sure CENTCOM has the access, basing and the agreements in place to allow it to operate successfully. He mentioned the importance of building relationships with regional partners, and explained how this preparation, relationship building allows CENTCOM to identify areas and opportunities that it can pursue in order to ultimately prevail.

"It was a good, clear, concise dissertation on the friction points he has to deal with, and what he needs to deal with them," said Col. Michael Dykes, speaking about the complex issues Votel faces as the CENTCOM Commander. He expects key leaders to be capable at certain skills and attributes in order to best support him, Dykes said.