

Graduation ceremony reflects class spirit: USAWC Distance Class of 2018

By Curt Keester 27 July 2018



Army War College students show their spirit during a ceremony to celebrate the completion of a two-year distance program in Strategic Studies, July 27. The class represents a total joint force, federal agencies and allied and partner nations.



Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem acknowledged the two-year Distance Education Program student's journey, July 27. The 372 senior officers and civilians of the class of 2018 graduated today during a graduation ceremony at Carlisle Barracks.



Distance Education Program students of Seminar 7 show their excitement after graduating July 27. The Distance Education Program allows students in locations around the world to participate in a two-year Strategic Studies program.

CARLISLE, Pa. (July 27, 2018) – A spirit of community and collaboration grew throughout two years of studies. Families, friends and senior officers of graduates traveled from across the nation to show their support during a graduation ceremony on the historic parade field at Carlisle Barracks today.

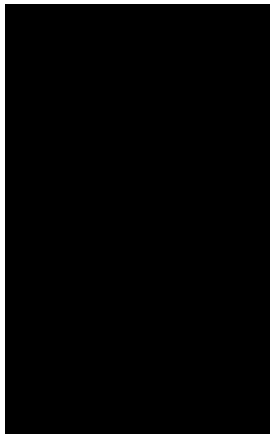
In their last days together, the class spirit was obvious. Army student Lt. Col. A. Scott DeJesse donated talent to create a work of art, "The Lost Battalion." His painting serves as both a commemoration to the armed forces of World War I and an enduring gift to the college. Army Chap. (Col.) Tony Petros, a member of the class, delivered the invocation at the beginning of the graduation ceremony, and USAWC Prof. Burt Tussing,



Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, graduation speaker, noted his ties to the Army War College and those of his father, who once served as its

singing the national anthem. Instructors high five'd their students as they departed the stage, diploma in hand, and Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, graduation speaker, noted his ties to the Army War College and those of his father, who once served as its commandant.

Today's colorful ceremony celebrated the completion of the two-year distance graduate program in Strategic Studies for 372 senior officers and civilians of the class of 2018. The class included representatives of the U.S. Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard; 9 federal agencies associated with national security; and 9 allied and partner nations around the world.



“The biggest thing I took away from this was the dynamic nature of some of the problems we deal with, and our ability to look at problems differently,” said Army student Col. Wayne Don, from Alaska. “The Army is a big family, and at some point I will run across people I was in school with here.”

Several students accepted special honors for their academic achievements: Army Lt. Col. Christopher Libertini, Army Col. Gina Adam, Army Col. Richard Malish, and Royal Netherlands Army Col. Detlev Simons. The ceremony honored three Distance Education faculty members with Excellence in Teaching awards: Dr. Joel Hillison, Navy Cmdr. Christian Cook, and Prof. Donald Boose.

Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem acknowledged the journey for these students.

“Two years ago when you started this program, the faculty, the Commandant, the whole group, challenged you to make a big leap from the operational and tactical to the strategic,” he said to the graduates.

“We asked you to make a leap and become a true lifelong learner, become a better thinker, and become a better leader because, deep down inside, this is a leadership school. We told you that the techniques and skills that

Commandant. Today 372 senior officers and civilians of the class of 2018 graduated at the Army War College.



Army Chap. (Col.) Tony Petros, a member of the class, delivers the invocation at the beginning of a graduation ceremony for the class of 2018. The ceremony celebrated the completion of a two-year distance program in Strategic Studies.



Army War College graduate Lt. Col. A. Scott DeJesse displays his Master of Strategic Studies degree presented to him July 27. DeJesse donated his talent to create a work of art, “The Lost Battalion,” which was given to the college as a gift.

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formed the basis of your previous success at the tactical and operational level weren't sufficient. You needed to be able to rise up and be able to do more.

"Thank you so much for rising to the challenge," said Kem. "Thanks for preparing for this future role as the stewards of our profession, and as strategic leaders in our military that our nation needs."

McCaffrey congratulated the class for their enormous personal commitment to the Army War College education that he characterized as, "arguably one of the best graduate programs in the country on political and military affairs."

"Since you invariably have other responsibilities, Guard and Reserve in particular, or for that matter active duty, or civilian leadership, or international fellows, it has been an enormous personal commitment and sacrifice to zone in on this opportunity, and I congratulate all of you. It is really impressive what you've accomplished. You are going to be better off for it, and so is the defense community that you work with. "

McCaffrey anticipated the graduates' future responsibilities with detailed insight about five points. He noted that it is every generation's responsibility to keep the country safe for the next; that real, lethal military power is what counts ultimately, supported by special operations, info ops, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence and crypto warfare; that ideas are key, such as the concept that will integrate the multi-domain battlefield as did "Air-Land Battle" during the First Gulf War; that strategy always matters and must be precise, succinct, long-term, and inclusive of resourcing; and, that trust among the United States and its allies will remain the vital foundation for all national security activities, he said.

"Thank you for your commitment to keeping this nation and our alliances safe," McCaffrey said. "This war has been a bitter one. We're pushing the end of a generation. There are 60,000 killed and wounded fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere. It has been a bitter long struggle and it's not over yet. So from me, and my generation, thank you for your values, for who you are, and what you stand for."

Adding to the richness of the ceremony, elements of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard's 107th Field Artillery fired an honorary cannon salute on Indian Field, and the Carlisle Town Band provided music for the day's ceremony.

About the USAWC master's program in Strategic Studies

The Distance Education Program allows students in locations around the world to participate in a two-year program that results in the same Master of Strategic Studies degree presented to graduates of the Army War College resident program. More than 80 percent of the U.S. military students are National Guard or Reserve officers.



“In the Army War College I got the strategic level of theory, and knowledge, and understanding of the U.S. strategy, operational design framework, and strategic negotiation, as well as strategic leadership, which is the baseline for strategic leaders in the future of warfare,” said Ukrainian Fellow Lt. Col. Oleksii Nozdrachov.

“I am in a position in the Ukrainian Armed Forces on the level of General Staff.... All of this [strategic studies] is absolutely relevant, especially when you try to reform your Armed Forces, as well as to be interoperable with your allies and partners from the western countries. This is a huge bolster for my knowledge, and it completely changed some of my vision.... I will definitely utilize all materials I got, especially about strategic leadership,” said Nozdrachov.

The program incorporates independent learning, online forums, group work on projects like the campaign development exercise, and two courses in residence at Carlisle.

During First Resident Course, June 2017, students met the seminar colleagues they'd collaborate with during the second year. The Second Resident Course exposed students to national speakers and a cross-section of Americans who joined the students for the three days prior to graduation.

“It is worth the time and effort we put into it,” said Army student Lt. Col. George Boguslawski, referring to the importance of relationships. “While

you're here you're working with a bunch of different folks from varying backgrounds and different jobs, and you get different perspectives from that, and you can use that and also the connections you make here in your future assignments.



Gen. Barry McCaffrey is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College.

McCaffrey served as commander of U.S. Southern Command, responsible for military planning and activities throughout South and Central America, 1994 to 1996. Previously, he commanded the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), which conducted the “left hook” attack 370 km into Iraq during the First Gulf War. After retirement from active duty in 1996, he was director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy from 1996 to 2001. Today, he is president of BR McCaffrey Associates.

