

Chairman at Army War College – Prepare, lead so it's never a fair fight

By Public Affairs Staff 07 December 2017



Yesterday in Root Hall, USAWC graduate Gen. Joseph Dunford spoke on current issues and offered his insight to the class of 2018, staff and faculty. Root Hall, Carlisle Barracks, Dec 7.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and USAWC graduate Gen. Joseph Dunford spoke to the class of 2018, staff and faculty during his visit to the Army War College, Dec 7. Dunford noted the value of his academic year at Carlisle.

Gen. Joseph Dunford noted the value of his academic year at Carlisle before focusing squarely on the future. He'll pass the baton in a few years, he said, to a new Chairman and a next generation of senior leaders who now sit where he did 18 years ago as a member of the Class of 1999. That compelling fact underscored the insights he offered along with the mandate to maintain the competitive advantage.

The pace of change for the profession of arms and the implications of change in the nature of weapon systems and the character of war compels the intellectual work the students are doing now, he said.

Where do you focus planning to manage issues? he asked. He answered his own question with a master class in how to frame thinking and communicating about the strategic environment and the complexity of regional problems sets with global implications.

Most rewarding for the audience was his decision to answer every question asked by U.S. students and many of the 79 international officers in the class.

Those discussions addressed the responsibility for global integration when few problems exist in a single region; the requirement for a balanced inventory of capabilities; the nature of military advice; and an understanding that the “military dimension” of a problem is part of the solution but rarely if ever the most important part.

In a follow-on interview, he referred to his personal experience here and his expectations of graduates.

“This year, to me, is a critical year in the professional development of O5s, lieutenant colonels, commanders, or their equivalents in the interagency – a critical year in starting to think about problems at the strategic level with a degree of complexity that is in many ways much greater than the challenges they dealt with at the tactical and operational level.

“One of the first qualities that I’d look at is the ability to look at complex problems, identify the core elements of those complex problems, and the implications of those core elements -- and then, to be able to communicate to people about the nature of that particular problem and how to frame it so you can ... solve it.... That’s my definition of critical thinking. The other attributes, of course, are interpersonal skills and the ability to build teams, your understanding and empathy with regard to other cultures. You’re going to find yourself in a coalition or in an alliance in almost everything we do.”