

Army War College students travel to DC, Jordan for engagements with commanders, officials re Syrian Civil War and more

By Chris Bolan, PhD, Professor of Middle East Security Studies 13 April 2018



USAWC students and faculty pose before the Treasury at the ancient Nabatean city of Petra, Jordan.



USAWC students share thoughts and experiences with Jordanian graduates of the U.S. Army War College at an alumni dinner in Amman, Jordan.



USAWC students Pete Dillon and Col. Travis Habhab, along with other USAWC students, receive a briefing by commanders and staff from Jordan's Northern Command, with the Golan Heights in the background.

RELATED ARTICLES

23 Mar 2018

[New course adds travel, deepens international perspective](#)

02 Apr 2018

[\[Jordan's Foreign Minister\] Safadi meets US war academy delegates](#)

02 Apr 2018

[Fakhoury meets US Army WarCollege delegation](#)

Less than a day after landing in Jordan, a group of US Army War College students were overlooking strategic terrain near the Jordanian border with Syria and Israel while being briefed by senior commanders and staff from Jordan's Northern Command.

This Advanced Regional Studies Course is part of a new initiative to provide students the opportunity to more deeply examine regional security issues and consider how the interests and approaches of our allies might overlap or diverge from our own. The first two advanced regional studies courses focus on the Middle East and Latin America. Both courses culminate with trips to the region that include discussions with US government, foreign officials, and key representatives from civil society.

The Middle East course centered on Jordan and Israel – both important U.S. regional allies confronting a complex set of security challenges. Before traveling to the region, students analyzed the regional security environment with a particular emphasis on the challenges associated with the deadly civil war in Syria and the unresolved Palestinian question – critical security issues for both of these countries. Students were challenged to assess Jordanian and Israeli perspectives, interests, and policies related to these issues.

Before traveling to the region, students traveled to the White House for meetings with senior members of the National Security Council and other interagency officials. While in Washington, D.C. students also met with scholars and former policymakers at the Middle East Institute. The final preparation for their regional travel included video conferences with military planners from both EUCOM and CENTCOM to gain a more granular feel for the U.S. security cooperation and assistance programs being provided to these close American allies.

Undoubtedly, the highlight of this educational experience is the opportunity to travel to these countries and talk directly with U.S. and foreign government officials who are dealing with these security issues on a daily basis.

On the very first day of the visit students were expertly briefed by senior commanders and staff from Jordan's Northern Command while overlooking the Golan Heights, the Sea of Galilee, and the Jordan River Valley. This allowed students to both intellectually and visually confront one of the major contemporary security issues impacting American, Jordanian, and Israeli interests – the Syrian Civil War.

Meetings with the Minister of Foreign Affairs (the equivalent of the U.S.

Secretary of State) and the Minister of Planning and International Cooperation provided detailed insight into the security and economic challenges confronting Jordan. Almost as if planned, these meetings took place on the same day that Congress announced approval of a five-year plan for economic and military assistance to Jordan amounting to no less than \$1.5 billion annually. This economic assistance will immediately help Jordan cope with the burden of hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya. The military assistance will assist Jordan in securing its borders with war-torn Syria and bolster its capabilities to further contribute to the global coalition to defeat the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) or Da'esh. A tour of the UNHCR facility near Amman processing over 3,500 Syrian refugees put a very human face on the humanitarian costs of the civil war and highlighted the efforts made by the international community, the U.S., and Jordan to alleviate this suffering.

USAWC students also met with their counterparts at Jordan's National Defense College and exchanged perspectives on both their experiences at these senior professional military educational facilities and the mutual security challenges confronted by Jordan and the United States. Students also hosted the first-ever assembly of more than a dozen former Jordanian graduates of USAWC over dinner at a restaurant in Amman. Jordanian graduates represented classes from 1980 (the very first Jordanian International Fellow) through 2016. Many fond memories of shared war college experiences were exchanged between bites of delicious traditional Jordanian dishes. When retired Major General Deeb Sulieman Salman (class of 1980) was asked why he wanted to go to Amman to this alumni dinner, he responded "They have not forgotten me, how can I forget them?"

Beyond these official meetings and social gatherings, students also met with scholars from one of Jordan's premier policy institutes, as well as with the editor of Jordan's leading English-language paper the Jordan Times.

In addition to a full schedule of meetings, the trip also included stops at several of Jordan's archeological treasures giving students a sense of the culture, traditions, and deep history that continue to shape regional perspectives on contemporary security issues. Perhaps the most evocative experience for many was the Easter Sunday tour of Mount Nebo where Moses first overlooked the Promised Land. Students also visited the world's best preserved provincial Roman city at Jerash and toured the Roman amphitheater and Citadel in downtown Amman.

Students rounded out this fantastic experience in Jordan with a visit to the lost Nabatean city of Petra, travel through the famed Wadi Rum of Lawrence of Arabia fame, and a tour of Jordan's coastline on a naval patrol boat led by the commander of Jordan's Marines at Aqaba on the Red Sea. From here students cross into Israel where they will spend a week delving into Israeli perspectives on its security challenges. We'll be certain to provide an update on that visit in the very near future.

U.S. Army War College News Archives