

Army leader LTG Potter congratulates, challenges Army War College Class of 2021

By Carol Kerr 23 July 2021



Lieutenant General Laura A. Potter, Deputy Army Chief of Staff for Intelligence, speaks to graduating Army War College class of 2021 about the complexities of the strategic environment, July 23, 2021.



Brig. Gen. Janeen L. Birckhead, Army War College Deputy Commandant for Reserve Affairs, congratulated the distance education graduates, class of 2021, for professionalism and resilience, July 23, 2021 at Carlisle Pa.



Maj. Gen. Mark J. Shindler, Pennsylvania Adjutant General (center) congratulates PA Army and Air National Guard officers, following the Army War College graduation, July 23, 2021.

Two Army leaders congratulated the graduates of the U.S. Army War College Distance Class of 2021 while assuring them that their intellect and adaptability will be needed and tested. Savor this success, they said, and know that important work awaits as we face a strategic environment that is more complex now than at any time in the past three decades. Brigadier General Janeen Birckhead, Army War College Deputy Commandant-Reserve Affairs officiated the ceremony, and introduced graduation speaker Lieutenant General Laura A. Potter, Deputy Army Chief of Staff for Intelligence.

Almost 400 graduates were honored by family, friends and mentor at the



BG Janeen Birckhead, Commander of Maryland Army National Guard (right), celebrates with her Maryland ARNG officers who completed the Army War College distance education program, July 23, 2021.

formal graduation ceremony, July 2021. The COVID-safe event took place on the same parade field where thousands have passed: students of the Army War College, at Carlisle Barracks since 1951, and a series of Army training and educational institutions here since 1757.

The variety of uniforms and suits among graduates and guests alike reflected the diversity of the student body and the national security environment: U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps officers; federal agency civilians; and 7 officers from Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Kenya, and Ukraine.

“While our military is strong and ready to meet its enduring responsibility to provide for the defense of the United States, we cannot achieve our national security objectives with the military alone. All agencies and branches within the federal government play a role in winning competitively against the greatest threats to our national interests,” said Potter. “We also need our Allies and Partners – our friends.... Our collective strength provides us all with enduring and strategic advantage and, ultimately, peace.”

The graduates join distinguished alumni like George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin; more than 1000 civilian graduates and sister Service alumni; and nearly 2000 international graduates representing 130 countries, including Canadian Lt. Gen. Peter Devlin, Czech Republic Maj. Gen. Jan Gurnik, and German Lt. Gen. Bruno Kasdorf, she noted.

“You too will be called upon to help lead through periods of profound change and national challenge,” said Potter. “We find ourselves in a world of Great Power Competition and must boldly transform our Army with our partners to achieve overmatch and decision dominance against our near-peer competitors.”

To ensure that great power competition does not devolve into great power conflict, these graduates will drive bold transformation, she said, contributing to this change with the range, speed, and convergence to win.

“This is what is so exceptional about this cohort,” said Potter, acknowledging the large proportion of Reserve and National Guard officers in the class. “Many of you in your civilian occupations help the U.S. government wield soft power left of conflict – specifically in competition, which is increasingly critical to influence and counter our adversaries across the globe. As our adversaries aggressively seek to achieve their



Lt. Col. Michele White departs the stage after with the Army War College diploma. Army War College graduates earned the masters of Strategic Studies degree, July 23, 2021.

RELATED LINKS

[Graduation Video Reels and Photos](#)

[All DDE 21 graduation photos](#)

objectives below the threshold of armed conflict, our national security depends on your strategic minds to create new ways to gain influence.

“... [W]e must contend with climate change, which is opening new regions and opportunities for competition, such as the Arctic,” she said. “We must also confront the rapid and disruptive nature of technology, which challenges us to think differently about our interconnected world and harder about our domestic vulnerabilities.

“If we put people first, build diverse cohesive teams, and drive transformational change, we’ll be successful,” said Potter. “I couldn’t be more proud of you This class faced personal, professional, and national challenges head-on, and prevailed,” she said, echoing the remarks from Birckhead.

An Army War College Distance Education graduate herself, and now dual hatted as commander of the Maryland Army National Guard and USAWC deputy commandant, Birckhead acknowledged the challenge of competing demands.

“Your shared experience of the past two years tested you. Through virtual connections and COVID conditions, you shared commitment to mission support both civilian and military, military readiness training, demanding Army War College coursework, and dedication to family, friends, and community,” she said. You responded with professionalism ... and resiliency.

“We have steeped you in knowledge of the new ‘global normal,’ and have armed you with skills in leading change, critical thinking and analysis, collaborative problem solving and ethical decision-making – skills to lead your organizations in what is promising to be a period of great change.”

Army Lieutenant General Laura A. Potter is the U.S. Army’s 47th Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, G2. A career Military Intelligence officer, her professional life began in this community when she earned her bachelor’s degree and her Army commission at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.

She has served worldwide, led intelligence troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and advised a host of Army and Joint commanders on intelligence. Among her most recent previous responsibilities, she commanded the Allied Command Counterintelligence/650th Military Intelligence Group, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, NATO; she served as G2 for U.S. Army Europe and the J2 for US European Command; and as Commanding General of the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence and Fort

TUCSON, ARIZONA.

U.S. Army War College News Archives