

#USAWC International Alumni Continuing Ed Program teaches in Europe

By Carol Kerr, Army War College Public Affairs Office 03 November 2021



Provost Dr. James Breckenridge presents the USAWC certificate to Maj. Gen. Gheorghita Vlad, Romanian Deputy Chief of Defense Staff, Oct. 22, 2021 in Zagreb, Croatia at close of the Continuing Education Program for USAWC International Alumni.



International Alumni valued informal discussions in USAWC's Continuing Education Program, Oct. 22, Croatia: (l-r) Czech Rep. BG Petr Svoboda, U.S.LTC Patrick Cornwell, Croatian BG Mijo Validzic, Albanian COL Elton Bregu, Slovak Rep. Vladimir Minarik.



Croatian COL Daor Dabo USAWC Class of 2018, Georgian BG Roman Jokhadze USAWC 2015, and Polish BG Grzegorz R. Grodzki, USAWC Class 2019 met in Zagreb, Croatia for on-site seminars of Army War College International Alumni Ed. Program, Oct. 18-22.

International cooperation and collaboration, learning from each other, carving out time for strategic mindedness – the U.S. Army War College refreshed educational themes during its International Alumni continuing education program for 12 European alumni and two US grads, Oct. 18-22, 2021, in Zagreb, Croatia.

Participants were 12 European alumni of the Army War College, now in key positions in their nations' armed forces -- from Albania, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and host country Croatia. They were joined by two Army National Guard alumni from Minnesota, now celebrating a 25-year State Partnership with the Croatian Armed Forces.

This story of leader-to-leader engagements started in Army War College



Oct 22, 2021, International Alumni of US Army War College completed continuing education program in Strategic Leadership in Zagreb, Croatia: Croatian BG Mijo Validzic-USAWC Class of 2016, Hungary's BG Erno Barath-2015, Slovak Rep. COL Vladimir Minar

classes, from 2017 to 2018, when relationships were forged among the international officers and US military officers studying side-by-side in the joint professional military graduate program in Strategic Studies. Now, the State Department and U.S. Army War College collaborated to strengthen regional alumni connections through updates on policy, doctrine, regional issues, and strategic leadership.

The College is now planning with DoS the next continuing education forum for regional alumni in the USINDOPACOM area.

“This is a community of security professionals, enabled by their Army War College experience, sharing regional understanding and a collective commitment to security cooperation,” said **Army Col. Jeffrey McDougall**, the USAWC educational lead.

Brig. Gen. Jeton Dreshaj, Kosovo Security Forces Chief of Staff, gave a strong recommendation for fellow international alumni to participate in future programs for international alumni. “[This] was a great opportunity for me to reflect, debate and update ourselves [about] new security threats and challenges in a competitive world.”

“Most important to me was to receive information on emerging concepts, threats, and technologies,” said **Col. Vladimir Minarik**, Slovak Republic. “The course ... let us think about other perspectives on the same problems, and recognize the commonalities of problems we are facing ... for further discussion back at our national structures with other strategic leaders.”

The graduates’ “Carlisle experience” created the ability to speak the same language of military strategy, noted **Croatian Col. Daor Dabo**, USAWC Class of 2018. Now commander of the Croatia Cyber Command, he said, “It was amazing how quickly we all connected and engaged in a fruitful dialogue. I appreciate the opportunity to refresh my understanding of current AOR issues and discuss with other strategic leaders.”

“Our principal purpose was to strengthen our relationships with our international alumni, and build a broader social network of strategic leadership practitioners,” said Dr. James Breckenridge, USAWC Chief Academic Officer, who traveled to Zagreb to meet with the diverse group of alumni in the eastern European theater and join the discussion about the most important and current regional security issues.

“The discussion was rich with insight and new understanding. I believe all participants came away from the experience with stronger partnerships and a firmer USAWC relationship, said Breckenridge.”



Partners in dialogue on strategic leadership, doctrine and European security issues: USAWC International Alumni , Zagreb, Oct 18-22: Slovenian BG Anze Rode 2018, Lithuanian BG Raimundas Vaiksnoras-2013, US LTC Patrick Cornwell, Czech BG Petr Svoboda.



Kosovar BG Jeton Dreshaj-Army War College Class 2017, Albanian COL Elton Bregu-2016, MG Gheorghita Vlad-2011 and US COL Jason Benson partnered in International Alumni Continuing Education Program-Strategic Leadership, Zagreb, Croatia, Oct. 22, 2021.

Romanian Deputy Chief of Defense Staff Maj. Gen. Gheorghita Vlad

spoke of the shared interests across the European community.

“The discussions about strategic organizations, U.S. strategies and policies, and about the issues that we are facing in our zones of interest were very challenging and gave us possibility to think for future solutions in our endeavor as strategic leaders,” said Vlad, USAWC Class of 2011.

The five days together in Zagreb built on four weeks of online collaboration: readings, discussion, and asynchronous forums.

The online portion was challenging due to other obligations – yet, more than balanced by the opportunity to refresh strategic knowledge, learn about recent issues and policy directions, have a dialogue with other leaders and make valuable connections, said Dabo.

Albanian Col. Elton Bregu, USAWC Class of 2016, appreciated the program’s motivation to learn, especially in the online forum. “I appreciate the chance to get an update on the Army War College concepts and readings,” said Bregu, head of the Armed Forces Academic Military Students Dep.

Albanian Maj. Gen. Jeronim Bazo, now retired was inducted into the USAWC International Hall of Fame in 2015. He joined the group to urge the officers to leverage knowledge and relationships. Former Chief of General Staff of Albanian Armed Forces from 2013 to 2017, Bazo now serves as Director of RACVIAC - Center for Security Cooperation. He shared a memory about entering a headquarters to address a complex situation only to recognize a fellow USAWC alumni; they talked the same language, he said, and came to consensus about how to address the issue to mutual benefit.

Mil-to-mil leader relationships are the backbone of military relationships

“Continuing Education for USAWC International Alumni is a win-win-win for all participants, said **Army Col. Brian Henderson**, director of the USAWC International Fellows Program and coordinator of the Continuing Education Program.

“Everyone gets to talk about how they see things, and hear how other see them. There is no better forum to create this type of dialogue among senior regional leaders. All entities involved benefit from relationships and shared understanding of the security environment: partner nations, Department of

State, Theater Commands, and the War College faculty and programs.”

US. Army Europe’s Chief of Staff **Maj. Gen. John Lamontagne** contributed the USEUCOM perspective to discussions. **Brendan McAloon**, US Army Europe Special Advisor to the Commander provided a wider political-military context to discussions of the region and U.S. policies.

The Army War College partnered with the State Department for this program, leveraging the USAWC expertise in building and delivering hybrid education at the strategic level.

A USAWC faculty team guided discussions and case studies designed for learning from each other, while refreshing knowledge of topics in the current USAWC curriculum. **Army Col. Darrell Driver**, Director of European Studies, guided regional issues; **Army Col. Jeffrey McDougall**, Assistant Professor of Distance Education supported policy and doctrine discussion; and **Asst. Prof. Jennifer Bower**, director of Alumni Affairs and former Distance Education instructor, helped the participants examine leadership at the strategic level.

The Army War College educates 80 International Fellows annually in its Resident Education Program, with additional international military leaders in the two-year Distance Education Program. The Fellows study alongside U.S. colleagues, and additionally contribute critical insights about regional conditions and issues, and about multinational operations of their experience – ranging from NATO missions to peacekeeping operations. The IF Program itself is a State Department – Defense Department partnership.

Contact the US Army War College International Fellow Program Office for planning details about future educational programs for international USAWC alumni: COL Brian Henderson, brian.j.henderson.mil@army.mil.