

Air Force Col. pilot taught helicopter pilots, now teaches USAWC students

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 19 January 2022



Air Force Col. Roderic Butz draws on his previous experience teaching new pilots how to fly helicopters when teaching USAWC students.

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An award-winning instructor at the Army War College and Air Force pilot draws on his previous experience teaching new pilots how to fly helicopters. Col. Roderic Butz educates his class's broad range of students using the building block approach for the core course, "Military Strategy and Campaigning" in the resident program.

The course focuses on translating Presidential directives and strategic guidance into military options to support those policies, working alongside the other services and government agencies.

This course focuses heavily on this military element of the strategy that integrates diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) elements of national power. This course extends the students' focus to consider more than warfighting. It's not our intent to develop myopically focused military officers who don't know how to use diplomacy or

information or economic measures to meet the policy goals, said Butz.

Working to help students understand how the course material fits into the broader national security challenge, Butz created several practical strategic-level exercises to compliment the core curriculum that allow students to connect several lessons together.

In one, student teams represent different regional actors—the Baltic state, Russia, U.S., and NATO—and assess national interests and goals using the Operational Design Framework as a tool to understand a range of options to pursue or maintain regional security.

A series of course exercises iteratively build toward a full-scale war game in the Military Strategy and Campaigning course, taken by all resident students.

Butz attributes his success in the classroom to understanding his students. “I have to empathize with the person in the class who drives tanks, and I need to empathize with the person who sits in an office and does administrative stuff all day,” said Butz, noting the broad range of student specializations within the class.

His time as a 2020 War College Student prepared him for this work. “I came in as an Air Force guy. I didn’t know much about the Army,” said Butz. So, he understands the challenge for those whose professional background didn’t include operational planning.

“[Empathy] gives me that opportunity to recognize their experiences. Rather than merely briefing them, I work to facilitate them to bring out their experience because we can all learn from them.”

Butz has always enjoyed teaching, and he knows how vital this work is. “We all understand the gravity of what we have been asked to do—to teach senior leaders of the military and across the government,” said Butz.

Butz’s military career included piloting special operations helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft in support of USSOCOM, focusing primarily on counterterrorism. He has planned and led operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other locations, providing intelligence on terrorist groups for ground forces. Before coming to the War College, Butz was Commander of the 33d Special Operations Squadron at Cannon AFB, New Mexico. He served as the Assistant Operations Officer, Operations Officer, and Commander from 2013-2019.

“Representing both those things—special operations and remotely piloted

aircraft —allows me to inform students and my peers to break down any misconceptions about either,” said Butz.

Butz earned his B.A. in History from Colorado State University, an M.A. in Military Studies at American Military University, a second M.A. in Military Strategy from the US Marine Corps University, and MSS in Strategic Studies from USAWC. Lastly, he was awarded the academic promotion of Assistant Professor in 2021, following his first year as a faculty member.

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