

Former Ambassador speaks to students about unified action

By John Goulette - USAWC Public Affairs 12 December 2022



Former Ambassador Michael Dodman speaks to Army War College students about the importance of unified action as a strategic leader.

Retired Ambassador Michael Dodman spoke to Army War College students and faculty about the importance of unified action.

Dodman's last assignment was leading the U.S. Embassy in Prague as Chargé d'affaires, shared how his perspective as a Foreign Service Officer working towards unified action could be useful to strategic leaders in the military on Dec. 8.

Dodman was assigned to his position in Prague just two weeks after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, putting him in a strange and stressful position. Dodman explained how the seriousness of the situation in Ukraine demanded the attention of all government agencies and regional partners, which enabled them to work towards unified action. Unified action refers to the synchronization, coordination, and integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities to achieve unity of effort.

According to Dodman, in the terms of unified action, the approach we have seen in Ukraine is remarkable. It shows an incredible unity of effort and focus, being aligned on our goals, and shows unified action among our partners, says Dodman. According to Dodman, there are institutional barriers that take time, but he believes we are doing a fairly good job working together with allies.

Dodman also discussed his work in Mauritania, where he served as Ambassador from 2018-2021. He emphasized how different it was working there compared to other posts that he served in since the U.S. was not the main player in the country. While the U.S. does show interest in Mauritania and the Sahel region, Dodman explained that it was the French who seemed to be the main player in diplomatic discussions. He also said he worked with U.S. African Command in the area as well.

According to Dodman, the two takeaways from his work in Mauritania are that Africom cared about the area, and that working with other UN agencies and the French brought us towards a mutual understanding, said Dodman. Dodman says he truly believes that the military appreciates investing in their partners, which increases the effectiveness of unified action.

Unified action is an important topic to future strategic leaders because it is something they will surely encounter. Unified action does not just have to be with other international governments but can also be with the different branches of the military, or just other agencies within the U.S. government.

At the War College students are taught the importance of joint collaboration, which is shown by the diverse demographics of the student body. The War College has students from each branch of the U.S. military, senior civilians from agencies like the Department Of State, as well as hosting international fellows from over 70 countries.

Ambassador Dodman retired from the State Department in August 2022 after nearly 35 years as a Foreign Service Officer. He served as U.S. Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Mauritania from 2018 to February 2021, where he served concurrently as the U.S. Representative to the G5 Sahel Permanent Secretariat based in Nouakchott. In 2022 he received a Presidential Rank Award recognizing his work in Mauritania. Ambassador Dodman's diplomatic career focused heavily on economic development and partnership.
