

Army War College students and 60 American civilians to compare ideas and ideals during Commandant's National Security Program

By Carol Kerr, Public Affairs Office 28 July 2022



AWC student Col. Jacob Johnson sponsored Dr. Frank 'Skip' Bartol of Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine & Dr. Steven E. Taylor, dean of Auburn's Engineering College for the U.S. Army War College's national security program, July 25-28

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The United States Army War College opened its doors to almost 60 civilian participants in an executive seminar in national security here, July 25-28. Seated in lectures alongside almost 400 senior military officers slated for significant national roles, each CNSP participant joined for discussions the 16-17 students of a single seminar group, applying the College's philosophy, to learn from one another.

The Commandant's National Security Seminar linked selected leaders, managers, teachers, and thinkers from across the nation with the student

body of the Army War College Distance Class of 2022. CNSP participants joined the class for its final, resident phase of the two-year master's education in Strategic Studies. The resident phase provided learning experiences designed to capitalize on the exchange of ideas. The week, and the two-year program, come to a formal close with graduation, July 29.

It's a privilege to be here," said Prof. Skip Bartol, Associate Dean for Research for Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine, which executes biomedical research in the security space. "This is just a tremendous opportunity to be immersed for a few days in the thinking of emerging senior leaders of the U.S. Army."

AWC student Col. Jacob Johnson, a member of the faculty of Auburn's College of Veterinary Medicine, sponsored both Bartol and Dr. Steven E. Taylor, dean of the College of Engineering at Auburn University. Some of his 6000 engineering students will serve in assignments in DoD and in the defense industrial base, he said.

"To understand Defense needs and national security needs helps us shape a better program," said Taylor, who noted the breadth of the school's research programs including those for national security purposes. "All the discussions help us better frame our response to make sure our programs are applicable and solving the right problems for the Army and Defense sectors."

"The staff ride at Gettysburg was wonderful from a history perspective and, there were lessons we talked about that apply to us today as an educator, as an engineer – thinking about strategy and thinking about leadership, said Taylor, about the day spent walking the battlefield while examining the strategic leadership dilemmas of both Union and Confederate general officers in July 1863.

"Tying the story of Gettysburg to the context of our current times, there are strings of logic ... that can be integrated into our decision-making, said Bolton, who characterized their staff ride as "platinum level," thanks to AWC faculty member Craig Price.

The CNSP included social events to encourage informal discussions and foster new relationships, and exposure to a wide range of expert speakers whose remarks triggered in-depth discussions in the small seminar groups.

"Each of us can provide a slightly different perspective in seminar discussions," added Taylor, giving an example of enlarging the seminar discussion US aid to African countries. "As educators and sometimes as

researchers ... we're working with fisheries, with aquaculture," suggesting alternative strategies.

Bolton was reminded in one discussion about how organizations talk past each other, he said. It's not unique to national security agencies, he said, admitting that society is suspicious of scientists. We can do a better job of explaining the good work of scientists beyond our own circle, he said.

"That's why meetings like this one are so important and unique. We're all sitting in rooms together, and the size of the circle is bigger than it used to be."

Dr. Steven Metz led a discussion, with all students and CNSP participants, of "American grand strategy in trying times." Later, one guest called the session thought-provoking, and another said that this session, like others, would prompt him to continue to think about the ideas Metz introduced.

Metz reminded the audience of the mixed blessing of 'interesting times' as he surveyed indicators that the United States may be on the cusp of a revolution in grand strategy. The AWC students would become the architects of change for the U.S. military should national strategy change. The time is now to think through implications, he said.

Since World War II, the nation has attempted to integrate national power to attain national interests through strategies of global primacy, strategic focus on national economy, and traditions of realism, crusading spirit, legalism, and disengagement from power politics. Those characteristics influenced U.S military roles and responsibilities. Times may be changing, he noted, pointing to big debates about the wisdom of global primacy.

Is a revolution coming, he asked, pointing out big debates between primacy and projecting power versus restraint toward defending the United States? If we're no longer focused on primacy and on partner operations, he posed, how very different military structure and operations would be? Further, the pivot from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region will change the "ways" in which the military operates. We may increasingly see arguments that we can make what we need here, grow what we need here, but don't need to stabilize countries around the world, he suggested. And that would diminish demand for global military operations.

Special speakers this week included:

- Amb. Donald Koran, former US Ambassador to Rwanda, voiced insights from his experiences in Africa, as did his fellow panelists with USAID service in African countries: USAID foreign service officer Carrie Antal and USAWC Prof. Leigh Caraher.

- Brig. Gen. Janeen Birckhead, commander Maryland Army National Guard, spoke of Army leader responsibilities to the nation
- Dr. Tony Echevarria discussed Ukraine and the future of war
- Col. J.P. Clark, Ph. D, shared recent experience as a strategist on the Army Staff as he addressed his insights about the current and future security environment.
- Retired Army Gen. Carter Ham, former commander of US Army Europe and U.S. Africa Command, about a lifetime of leadership impressions.