

Seminar brings together civilian, military leaders to discuss national security issues

Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office

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Air Force Lt. Col. David Trimble, and Marine Lt. Col. Anthone Wright talk about an issue with Rene Bardorf, National Security Seminar Participant and Executive Director of the Bob Woodruff Foundation, Bristow, Va., during NSS June 9. Photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

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June 10, 2010 -- A diverse group of Americans from education, law, business and other fields traded daily work routines for a week-long experience as new members of the Army War College seminars. Informed citizens, who are interested in national and international issues, came here for an immersion experience with the men and women here who will make the news.

The Army War College welcomed more than 150 new members of the National Strategy Seminar, June 7-11, and sent them into 20 different seminar rooms to exchange thoughts about compelling and challenging topics national security. These discussions provided a mix of opinions and gave the topics new dimension for faculty and students.

“Seminars like this are important because, as you know, we are in an era of prolonged conflict and everyone in this room will play an important role in shaping our future,” said **Maj. Gen. Robert Williams**, USAWC commandant, during his opening remarks in Bliss Hall. “The discussions and relationships formed here will reap benefits as we set the course for our nation.”

The seminar has been held at the Army War College annually since 1954 and serves as a **"final**

synthesis" of the year's education for the Army War College students.

Carlisle Barracks Soldiers participate in a retreat ceremony for the 2010 National Security Seminar. Photo by Erin O. Stattel.



During the five-day seminar, USAWC students and their guests took part in discussions, motivated by a variety of speakers from the civilian and military worlds. Guest speakers included Maj. Gen. Michael Flynn, the top military intelligence officer in Afghanistan, Susan Herman, President of the American Civil Liberties Union, Dr. Norman J. Ornstein, American Enterprise Institute, Lee H. Hamilton, president and director of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and Dr. Jennifer Bryson, Witherspoon Institute.

“Each of the speakers has brought up issues that have made me look at them from a different perspective,” said **Doug LaViolette**, NSS participant and president of the Brian LaViolette Scholarship Foundation in Oneida, Wisc. “This has really helped energize the discussions when we get back to our seminar groups.”

LaViolette, an Army veteran, said he wishes he had the opportunity to attend a seminar like this while he was serving.

“I feel it’s extremely important that there is a healthy and open dialogue between the military and civilian communities,” he said. “We can’t do any of this alone.”

The week started off with a VTC from Afghanistan by Flynn, who spoke to the audience about strategic planning, the roles of the different regional players and the importance of operations in Afghanistan in regional stabilization.

“It was great being able to hear first-hand from a leader who sees every day what is going on in Afghanistan and the issues and challenges that our troops are dealing with every day,” said **Steve Stafford**, NSS participant, a consultant from San Juan Capistrano, Calif. “It really changes your perspective on the situation when you hear about all of the challenges and meet the men and women who will be leading the fight in the future.”

“He (Flynn) brought up a lot of issues that face our troops in Afghanistan that I wasn’t even aware of like the challenges of the terrain and working with local tribes that make their jobs so much harder,” said **David Mulligan**, NSS participant and owner of White Sands Construction, Kamuela, Hawaii.



NSS participants and USAWC students talk while in seminar during NSS. Photo by Amanda Keene.

Herman brought a different perspective for many of the NSS guests and USAWC students as she covered topics like the legal application of the First Amendment, the ACLU’s view on the detainment of terror suspects, and the application of Miranda Rights.

“She really made me think more about some of the issue she discussed from a perspective that I hadn’t considered before,” said **Neil McCollum**, NSS participant and Senior Vice President, AON Corporation, Roswell, Ga. “While I didn’t always agree with her stance on some of them, I think that these types of events help encourage a healthy dialogue on some very important issues.”

“She definitely brought up some topics and some perspectives that energized our seminar discussions,” said **Lt. Col. Carla Campbell**, student. “It was great to see the give-and-take between the students and the NSS guests. It was a healthy dialogue.”

Some of the NSS participants said that the best part of being at the seminar was the chance to talk and hear from the perspective of the military’s future leaders.

“I’ve always had a healthy respect for the military and the tough job they have but I never really understood everything they do until I came here,” said **Frank Padak**, NSS participant and President and CEO, Scott Credit Union, Collinsville, Ill.

“This has allowed me to see first-hand how secure the future of our nation’s military is.”

“This is my first real experience talking with members of the military and I’ve been very impressed with their depth of knowledge on so many topics,” said **David Browning**, NSS participant and Senior Vice President of TechnoServe, Old Greenwich, Conn. “I think the opportunity to talk to someone who has seen the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan first-hand is amazing and an experience I’ll never forget.”

Beltway insider Dr. *Norman Ornstein* brought to the NSS discussion years of working inside the

capital region and writing and speaking about topics from health care to the challenges facing Congress.

“He really provided us some great topics for discussion once we got back to our seminar,” said **Peter Kay**, NSS new member and consultant from Cincinnati, Ohio. “The insight he provided into topics like the 2012 election and issues of increasing importance like immigration were great.”

Apart from the Bliss Hall and seminar discussions, NSS new seminar members also attended a Gettysburg Staff Ride and multiple social events, all designed to share and exchange ideas.

“I think it’s great that we are able to meet and talk over these important issues with the future leaders of our military,” said **Robert Johnson**, NSS participant and Bronx, New York, County District Attorney.

“The ability to spend a week talking with these folks really helps bring an insight into how they think and operate. You just can’t find anywhere else.”

“It’s really a great opportunity to see how we’ve grown and developed as strategic leaders,” said **Lt. Col. Steve Nott**, student. “The time we spent in seminars talking over issues with civilian leaders from all walks of life really helps us see how we all need to work together to solve these issues.”

“This seminar has really helped reinforce for me that the solutions for many of the issues facing national security will take a team approach to solve,” said **Marine Lt. Col. Anthone Wright**. “We’ll need to work with our civilian partners to find the best and most efficient solution.”

Williams closed the National Security Seminar 2010 with his thanks to new members for their earnest participation. “It is our honor to serve this nation in such good company,” he said in the final Bliss Hall session, June 11.

“You have asked the tough questions,” the commandant noted. “You had no reluctance to both assimilate and engage -- qualities we admire in our profession of arms!

“Your lives are all about the rich diversity that makes up our great nation, fills us with great pride, and reminds us of the true strength of this country we serve.

I hope this week has proved useful and I hope we have given you a sense of the kind of strategic leaders who will graduate tomorrow -- leaders who are up to the tough tasks that lie ahead.

Williams highlighted the International Fellows whose contributions were richly valued this week and throughout the year, and who will find themselves in significant leadership positions in their nations. Some will return to nations in difficulty, he added. They represent the rich, diverse, exceptional

strength that is possible, he said, as he led the audience in applause for the 49 international officers in the Class of 2010.

“We cannot do it alone.”

Whatever solutions will be needed for challenges ahead, those solutions will include the competence, courage, candor, and compassion of the great men and women of our Armed Forces, he said.

Williams offered a special thanks to the Army War College Foundation and to the McCormick Foundation for their generous support to the NSS programs.

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