

USAWC students travel to Big Apple to tackle strategic issues

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Army War College students hear from Amb. Claude Heller, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations, during the United Nations Forum. During the four-day academic trip, students learned first-hand from leaders of local government, national and international organizations and academic institutions what issues and challenges they face. Photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

Nov. 22, 2010 -- Army War College students traveled to the “capital of the world,” New York City, to learn leadership lessons and the challenges faced by local, national and international government and private organizations.

For the four-day academic visit, students split into 30 groups and met with organizations like Time Inc, NBC News, Forbes, Columbia University, the New York Police Department, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Department of Human Services to discuss strategic issues.

“The New York City academic trip is an integral part of the Army War College resident educational experience and accomplishes several learning objectives,” said Dr. Jim Helis, chairman of the Department of National Security and Strategy. “It is a unique opportunity to expose students to large and complex public and private enterprises with the objective of examining local, national, regional and international issues within the dynamic urban environment of America's premier city and the world's financial capital.”

Seeing the lessons in action and how to apply them in their own careers is one of the focal points of the trip.

“The learning occurs there in New York, but part of the experience also occurs here when they share their experiences with the rest of their seminars. We really want them to take advantage of what strategic opportunities there are out there and capitalize on the opportunity to speak with civilian leaders on behalf of the military,” said Helis.

Students met with Linda Mason, CBS Senior Vice President, Standards and Special Projects. Photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

Small Group Visits

During the CBS visit, students learned about how decisions are made on what stories make the nightly news and how stories are developed for programs like 60 Minutes.



“These trips provide a great insight into how these organizations look at issues strategically and plan for the future,” said student Air Force Lt. Col. David Rodriguez, who visited CBS.

“I find it amazing how they go from 5,000 possible stories in the morning to the 16 for the evening broadcast while making sure that they remain neutral and relevant to the public,” said Wen-Chi Huang, International Fellow from Taiwan. “It’s very similar to how we in the military have to take a look at all of the possible issues and conflicts and respond to them, you need to have a strategic plan.”

Brian Dorfler, vice president of human relations for media technology and operations at NBC Universal, briefed students on some of the strategic issues NBC faces when hiring and scouting talent.

“I think the military is a great source of talent, obviously I am biased,” laughed the former Dickinson College ROTC graduate. Dorfler presented small group members with information on the NBC Universal Veterans Network.

“We employ not just veterans, but family members and military supporters as well,” Dorfler said.

NBC Universal has worked with military head hunter Bradley-Morris to create a strategic approach to what makes a veteran successful for the company, Dorfler said. The company is also working with entities such as Student Veterans of America to groom student interns as potential hires in the long run.

“Discussing these strategic issues it is clear to see that they definitely apply to both war fighting and in

the business world,” said New Zealand Col. John Howard, International Fellow. “There are a lot of similarities between the two, despite the differences in our uniforms. What has been briefed here today has been very interesting and the people, who have briefed us, have served their country. The patriotism felt here is certainly etched in the DNA of the country.”

“The differences between the two cultures, business and military, are not all that wide,” said Navy Cmdr. Corry Juedeman. “I liked the point made in the presentation, that the media is all about the individual and a mentality of ‘me, me, me’ and ‘fighting the man,’ but the military is all about ‘the man’ and doing what you are told.”



USAWC students used the subway and other forms of transportation during the visit, giving them the full New York City experience. Photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

“It is fascinating to see the parallels between the military and civilian businesses, but they deal with a lot of the same issues with personalities and developing strategies,” said

Dawn Leach, whose husband, Air Force Col. Harry Leach, led the group.

The group was treated to a tour of 30 Rock and saw the Saturday Night Live set, as well as the set which houses Nightly News with Brian Williams, who sat down with the group alongside Steve Capus, president of NBC News.

United Nations Forum

There was also a United Nations Forum held during the trip, where students heard from Amb. B. Lynn Pascoe, UN Undersecretary General for Political Affairs, and Amb. Claude Heller, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations.

Pascoe spoke about the Sudan vote for independence and the challenges facing the region and Heller spoke about the makeup of the United Nations and whether or not the right countries are serving on the UN Security Council.

“The world is changing and it’s hard because no one wants to give up power, so it’s harder to find a consensus,” said student Col. Shirley Lancaster. “I enjoyed the discussion on the permanent members

of the Security Council and it makes me wonder if the five members are the right ones.”

Further insights to the UN and international issues were brought up during visits to the UN missions of USAWC International Fellows.

“It was very interesting to see the issues faced by a smaller nation like Georgia, when the aggressor is much larger like Russia” said Col. Lance Davis, who visited the Georgian Mission. “We learned about the diplomatic challenges their government faces and how to make sure their voice is heard. Coming from a large nation you don’t always think about how important or hard that can be.”



One of the NYC trip small groups visited NBC Universal at Rockefeller Plaza and were briefed by two former military officers who now call NBC home. Strategic planning for a large media company such as NBC Universal, draws distinct parallels to strategic planning within the military. Photo by Erin O. Stattel.

Urban Affairs Forum

Students also got some insights into the challenges of running a city the size of New York during an Urban Affairs Forum from speakers Robert Johnson, District Attorney of Bronx County and John Mollenkopf, Professor of Political Science and Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University.

"We saw a dynamic urban environment and how they operate and face similar challenges to the military," said student John Plifka, who also visited the New York City Commission on Human Rights and the New York Office of Management and Budget. "We had an opportunity to see issues through a different lens. This is a great investment in future strategic leaders."