

McEldowney takes USAWC experience, knowledge to Afghanistan

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Lt. Col. Eric McEldowney, director of the maintenance and logistics division for the Center for Strategic Leadership, poses for a photo with Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai during the planning and construction of the Afghan Presidential Information Coordination Center, which McEldowney was the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan lead for. courtesy photo.

March 30, 2011 -- You don't have to be an Army War College graduate to be able to apply what you've learned here. That's what Lt. Col. Eric McEldowney, director of the maintenance and logistics division for the Center for Strategic Leadership, learned while on a one-year deployment to Afghanistan.

McEldowney returned in February after serving as the executive officer for Plans and Policy (CJ5) for the NATO Training Mission- Afghanistan.

In this role he was responsible for everything from synchronizing the efforts between the planning and assessment sections of NTM-A to working with the Afghan National Security Council.

“My two and a half years here at the Army War College really helped prepare me for what I experienced while deployed,” he said. “I’ve been able to learn so much here about thinking and planning at the strategic level that I wouldn’t have been able to get anywhere else.”

Prior to his deployment, he served in a variety of roles, including as the coordinator for the strategic leader staff ride program at CSL, and coordinating the special education events and international fellows “white cell” for the Strategic Decision Making Exercise. He was also able to affiliate with a USAWC seminar which he said he also found very beneficial.

During his time in Afghanistan, McEldowney undertook a variety of projects.

“One of the things I’ll remember most is being the NTM-A lead for the development and construction of the Afghan Presidential Information Coordination Center, which is very similar to the White House situation room,” he said. While briefing his plans for the center to the Afghan Deputy National Security Advisor, he was informed that he’d be briefing Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai himself.

“That was a pretty exciting experience,” he said. “It’s not often you get an opportunity like that.”

McEldowney was also picked to escort a group of 11 Afghan National Army Officers from the Afghan National Army Training Center and the Afghan National Security University, their equivalent of West Point, to NATO Headquarters and SHAPE in Belgium.

“They were the first group of Afghan Army officers to ever visit there,” he said. “It was an honor to not only be a part of the historic event, but to also spend a week with the Afghans learning from their perspective.”

McEldowney said that the deployment was valuable for him and those at the Army War College as well.

“I was able to carry a lot of knowledge with me from here down range, and also serve as a conduit for my fellow officers in Afghanistan to reach back here to the War College for assistance,” he said.

McEldowney said that he was also contacted by staff and faculty members from the USAWC while deployed for assistance and up-to-the-minute updates on events.

“It was really a great situation for everyone, I’m fortunate to have been able to do this.”