

Eisenhower Series creates a dialogue between USAWC, college students

Public Affairs staff report

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Marine Corps Lt. Col. Shane Conrad, Navy Cmdr. Eric Mason, Lt. Col. Peter Evans, and Col. Eric Tilley, members of the Eisenhower Series College Program, talk at Susquehanna University March 31. The panel discussion covered topics ranging from energy conservations of the military to the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

March 30, 2011 - USAWC students Marine Lt. Col Shane Conrad, Navy Cmdr Eric Mason, Army Lt. Col. Peter Evans, Army Col. Eric Tilley, spoke with students at Seibert Hall, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pa. about China, violence and drugs on the US-Mexican border, future challenges of the US-NATO relationship, energy independence and the nuclear challenge.

“This discussion was really valuable because it allowed us to hear the thoughts and ideas right coming right from these officers who have seen these issues firsthand,” said Jennifer West, a political science major at Susquehanna University. “It really made me want to look more into issues like energy conservation and the issues along the US-Mexico border.”

Questions from the audience ranged from whether or not the officers thought China would be taking a more active role militarily in the world to how prevalent they felt gang members were in the military.

Eisenhower Series program students travel across the United States to various colleges, universities and other institutes of learning to engage students and the community on a variety of military issues to promote better understanding between the two groups.



Lt. Col. Harrison B. Gilliam and Col. Eric Tilley take questions after their presentation at the Peters Township Public Library in McMurray, Pa. Gilliam and Tilley, members of the Eisenhower Series program, were at the library as part of the “Threats to National Security throughout the World,” lecture series sponsored by the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh. *Courtesy photo.*

Throughout March, students on the Eisenhower Panel traveled to the University of Mount Union, Ohio; the University of South Carolina; North Georgia College in Dahlonega, Ga., Saint Mary's College in San Antonio. The Eisenhower schedule started Feb. 15 when two members of the program, Col. Eric Tilley and Lt. Col. Harrison B. Gilliam, traveled to the Peters Township Public Library in McMurray, Pa., as part of the “Threats to National Security throughout the World” lecture series.

Tilley, who spoke about the United States’ role in NATO, said he found the experience valuable because it provides an opportunity for military members to have candid exchanges with the public about a wide variety of topics.

The hallmark of the Eisenhower Series is the candid exchange between the experienced military officers and the questioning members of college classes or the general public.

“The discussion we had at the Peters Township Library was an outstanding forum for us to discuss issues and concerns that Americans have on a wide variety of topics such as civilian control of the military,” said Tilley.

Gilliam, an Afghanistan war veteran, discussed Afghanistan policy. He said that the Eisenhower Series program offered an excellent venue for members of the military to interact with the American people.

“It gives us a deeper understanding of what people are thinking, and it provides them the opportunity to get to know us and what we think and feel,” said Gilliam. “It allows us to connect with America.”

“This program provides me a sense of what topics interest college and high school students,” said Army Col. Kristin Baker, a member of the program.

Army Col. Richard Root, Navy Cmdr William Richardson, Air Force Lt. Col. Carl Jones, Army Lt. Col. Shawn Harris, and Air Force Lt. Col. David Rodriguez round out the roster of Eisenhower students, each selected for experience, education, speaking skills, and interest in national security issues. In addition to required coursework, the Eisenhower students undertake an intensive individual study program throughout the academic year.

The Eisenhower Series College program will also visit Texas Tech in Lubbock; Southeast Louisiana University, Louisiana State University and Loyala School of Law in New Orleans; the University of Arizona, Tucson; Seton Hall in New Jersey; and Auburn University in Alabama.

The Eisenhower Series College program dates to 1969 when it was known as the Current Affairs Program. This year approximately 50 students applied for the competitive selection of Eisenhower participants.