

USAWC program partners with top universities to educate future diplomats

Col. Sam White, Center for Strategic Leadership

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Gustave Feissel (center at table) presides over the UN Ministerial Meeting at the University of Kentucky as part of the International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise.

In one room, a heated discussion breaks out between diplomats over competition for natural resources. In the next room, top national security professionals discuss regional conflicts that have erupted as a result of this competition. The situation is not playing out in

a United Nations General Session but, instead, in the International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise.

Each year, future diplomats and national security professionals partner with the Army War College's Center for Strategic Leadership to host the ISCNE at top-tier universities and institutes around the nation. The exercise was hosted recently at Georgetown University, the University of Kentucky and for the first time at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

More than 160 graduate and undergraduate students honed their strategic thinking and negotiation skills, "learning by doing." Students, assigned to one of seven country-teams, represented participants at a mock UN-sponsored conference called to address a tough, real-world, stalemated conflict.

A CSL team brings the ISCNE to each university, complete with the scenario, maps, background information, and the special -- and confidential -- instructions that each team will follow to negotiate an effective outcome. As the exercise unfolds, each team develops a strategy and works to negotiate the best solution to the conflict based on the scenario and instructions from their governments.

Career diplomats and regional experts coach and mentor each team through the diplomatic process. The exercise brings in real-world experts, like Gustave Feissel, a career diplomat who spent more than 15 years as a member of the United Nations team working on the issues in Cyprus. Feissel took part in the exercise at the University of Kentucky, which focused on the nation.

“I was very impressed with the way the exercise was organized and with the background material that was prepared,” he said. “I have not seen a better paper setting out the history of the Cyprus problem.”



Delegates from the Russian team negotiate the composition of peacekeeping forces during the ISCNE at the Air Force Academy.

The program is far reaching, with exercises hosted for students at Georgetown University, Princeton University, Texas A&M University, University of Texas, Pennsylvania State University, Syracuse University, among others.