

JLASS brings together USAWC, other senior service college students to tackle complex problems

By Thomas Zimmerman

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Army War College students examine a map during a recent session of the Joint Land, Air, Sea Strategy Exercise. JLASS is a five-month war gaming elective USAWC students and their counterparts at the Naval, Air, Marine Corps war colleges and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces.

Jan. 11, 2012 – In a notional 2022, China and Japan are skirmishing over islands in the China Sea. A humanitarian crisis is looming, and the world is on the brink of global conflict. Enter 110 select students from five senior service colleges with a goal to bring the world back from that brink.

This year, 38 Army War College students joined counterparts from the Naval War College, Air War College, Marine Corps War College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces for the Joint Land, Air, Sea Strategy Exercise.

The students play the ‘game’ in two distinct phases over five months. During the first phase, students conduct distributed environmental scanning and strategic planning at their respective colleges using video teleconferencing and internet-based collaborative tools to coordinate their actions. In the second phase, in April, all the schools’ students converge for seven days of intensive scenario play at the Air University’s Lemay Center Wargaming Institute at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama.

Students at the service-specific colleges typically represent geographic combatant commanders, and ICAF students role-play national level policy makers.

“The USAWC teams draw upon their experiences in the core curriculum to develop solutions to these difficult problems, using a whole-of-government approach based upon the DIME Model,” said Navy Cdr. Bruce A. Apgar, Jr., from the Center for Strategic Leadership, referring to diplomatic, informational, military and economic elements of national power.

“JLASS is a great opportunity to apply what we have been learning in seminar for the last six months,” said student **Col. John Prairie**.

“The skills that we have refined and developed through our first half of the year really come together in this exercise,” said **Marine Corps Lt. Col. Wayne Bunker**. “We see how truly important skills like strategy and critical thinking are for leaders. Working with our partners is a very important part of that. You have to know how to establish, develop and maintain relationship with other agencies, nations and partners.”

“The real value of this exercise is that it forces the students to make decisions which have consequences,” said Apgar. “They truly get to see the cause and effect relationship between the choices they make.”

USAWC students role-play key positions in USEUCOM, Allied Command Operations, the Joint Staff and USAFRICOM. The students include military officers of all U.S. services, and 12 International Fellows.

“The fellows add a dimension to the exercise and the entire USAWC experience that you just can’t get anywhere else,” said **Air Force Col. Robert Mallets**. “We have four African fellows working with us in the AFRICOM cell and they bring real-world experience and information to the table, which helps us make informed decisions. I think this experience will serve us well as we continue our careers.”

“I spent time at EUCOM and this exercise has really helped me see the big picture and the challenges that face combatant commanders,” said **Col. Bob Wade**, who is role-playing the EUCOM commander. “As the commander you have to pay attention to multiple flashpoints. You quickly come to understand that one service or nation cannot do it alone.”

“It just reinforces the importance of joint, interagency and international partners,” said Wade.

“I wanted to take part in this exercise because in our next jobs, many of us are going to be serving in commands like EUCOM or AFRICOM,” said **Col. David Price**. “It’s important that we are able to work through and be exposed to the challenges we will face. This is a great complementary program to the core USAWC program.”

For student **Glenn Wait**, the exercise was an opportunity to be exposed to aspects of the military he would not normally know in depth.

“It really opens your eyes to how important the interagency, joint and international partners are,” he said. “I am able to learn from my peers in class and the students we are working with through JLASS to give me a fuller understanding of the complex environment we will work in for the rest of our careers.”

This is the third year that USAWC International Fellows participated in JLASS. Their experiences, perspectives and leadership add a valuable dimension of diversity that was recognized by the students and faculty from all colleges.

JLASS is the only major educational event that integrates students from the different war colleges. In its long history, it evolved from the CARMAX, or Carlisle-Maxwell, exercise series of the 1980s, with a theater-specific Air/Land battle scenario, to today’s global strategic exercise.

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