

Army War College running parallel study on future of Army

David Vergun

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CARLISLE, Pa. (Army News Service, Aug. 27, 2015) -- Army War College, or USAWC, students began research, Aug. 27, on the future size and force mix of all Army components - one of five research projects that faculty-student teams will produce with Army research funding.

On Feb. 1, the students will publish recommendations on the force structure, based on current and anticipated mission requirements, acceptable levels of national risk, in a manner consistent with



available resources, and anticipated future resources.

It's no coincidence that the National Commission on the Future of the Army will also release its report and recommendations to Congress, Feb. 1, said Dr. Lance Betros, a former chair of the history department at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York, who has been assigned as the USAWC's first provost.

Army War College faculty member Dr. Andrew Hill looks over research material before beginning the integrated research project with USAWC students.

"What more fundamental question is there for the Army than what kind of an Army should we be," asked Dr. Andrew Hill, the USAWC professor, who will lead the 17-member group. Having students do parallel research will be of great value in informing Army leaders.

"This is not a rebuttal or a criticism of the commission's findings," Hill said. "In fact, we won't even have access to their report before it's released.

"This will also be a completely independent study," he continued. "The students will not be led or nudged to form a particular opinion or view." The study will provide Army leaders with an "alternative point of view."

"Academic freedom here is alive and well," Betros said. "We want students to question, refute and challenge every assumption." Sometimes outsiders don't understand that. They think because it's the USAWC, it's the Army. "We publish some things that are scathingly critical of the Army."

For instance, this year, two members of the USAWC faculty authored a paper, "Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession," he said. It's an indictment on Army culture that's caused a lot of inward-looking analysis within the Army.

Hill said that while the commission's examination of the transfer of Army National Guard AH-64 Apache attack helicopters from the Army National Guard to the Regular Army has been the media focal point, the USAWC students will focus more on the big picture of modernization, manning and readiness, which could include the helicopter transfers as well, he said.

Coincidentally, Hill had some involvement in advising the National Commission on the Future of the Army on how to structure their approach, a sort of campaign plan. At the time, he said, he thought this would also be a great project for students at the USAWC to look at. When the funding for it came in - that was the icing.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

Selection for those in the study was very competitive, Betros said. Those picked were well-suited based on their professional backgrounds and research experiences.

Students at the Army War College are mostly Army colonels and lieutenant colonels or the equivalent in the other U.S. military services and federal agencies. The student body also includes 79 international fellows: military officers from 73 partner nations.

Hill said the 17 students selected are a "really capable group." Four are international students, one Air Force, one Coast Guard, one State Department and one U.S. Agency for International Development. Army National Guard has representation as well as the active Army.

Some of the international students have made recommendations to their defense ministries regarding restructuring their militaries, so they've actually been through this before at their own national levels,

Hill said. The U.S. military is unique, of course, but their perspectives will be valuable. They understand fiscal constraints, often more than we do.

The Coast Guard officer will bring a good perspective too, since the Coast Guard has been spread thin with many diverse missions at home and abroad. They've had lots of discussions about where to put their resources and they've been very creative about it, he said.

The study cannot focus solely on the Army, Hill said, since the services have become a lot more integrated in the sense of bringing each of their unique capabilities to the combatant commanders. So the Army will need to be examined through the broader lens of the joint force.

The Army isn't the only service with ground forces just as the Air Force isn't the only service with aviation, he said.

"Students will be mentored by faculty members as they progress," Betros said. "All the while, they will be engaging relevant senior Army leaders in their areas."

Carlisle is well-suited for research, Betros said, pointing out that the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center here holds a massive repository of current and historical archives from Army leaders and other sources. "It's like the National Archives at the Army level. It's the go-to place if you're doing any type of research on the Army."

Hill said students plan to develop force constructs that will be "torture tested" through wargaming various scenarios. The wargame will essentially find the boundaries for the effectiveness of a certain force size and mix and will yield risk levels.

Betros said that the wargaming facilities are in the state-of-the-art Center for Strategic Leadership and Development, which, like the Heritage Center, is also in Carlisle.

In preparing these constructs for testing, the students will grapple with what kind of a force the Army will need in terms of future capabilities and what kinds of war will it need to prepare for, Hill said.

These are difficult topics to wrestle with as predictions in the past have not panned out to what planners anticipated, he said. Cold War-era warfare planning against a mass of Soviet tanks yielded to the counterinsurgency strategy throughout the last 12 years, for example.

Should the Army shelve its counterinsurgency strategy or prepare for a variety of contingencies? If

variety, how would it balance size, modernization and readiness? What's the right mix for the Reserve components in terms of manpower and materiel and should it be an operational part of the Army as it has been for the last 12 years? If so, where would the funding to do that come from?

These are also questions the commission is dealing with, Hill said. Because of the wide scope of the study and the time limit, "I don't think we're going to spend a lot of time making specific recommendations regarding the Apache transfer from the Guard to the active, but the other questions, the more conceptual core questions," will be tackled.

"My hope is students challenge assumptions and sensitive issues," Hill said. For example, affordability is not just about size of the force, it's also about compensation reform. "No one wants to touch that in the military, but it gets to the affordability of the force." The students may or may not include this in their scope, he added. It's their call.

The biggest and most obvious challenge for the students is narrowing the broad nature of the study to manageable levels. Hill said he plans to offer them suggestions on ways to do that. "There are a bunch of things the students will just have to set aside or defer to other sources of good research that's already out there. Their focus will be on the more difficult and significant issues, looking at the higher-level concepts like the force structure analysis."

Besides the recommendations contained in the final report that gets published by the USAWC, Hill said he hopes the study raises the right questions for future analysis. "When people read the study, we hope they'll ask themselves questions and form their own analyses. A really good question is worth more than a mediocre explanation."

The nice thing about this study is that it's complementary to the student's academic work and the core USAWC curriculum, Hill said. They'll get a good education and make a significant contribution to the Army at the same time.

Once the work is published, Hill and Betros expect it to be briefed to leaders at the highest level, including Army Chief of Staff Gen. Mark A. Milley, who has expressed support for this and other research at the college.

"We're at one of those inflection points where we can shape strategic thinking," Hill said. "Our students have the opportunity to shape that discussion. That's a great contribution."

GENESIS OF THE PROJECT

Last year, 16 students participated in the new Carlisle Scholars Program, or CSP, led by Hill.

Betros said the students were carefully selected, based on their experience and research background and they did "some fantastic work" in publishing a study, "Project 1704: A U.S. Army War College Analysis of Russian Strategy in Eastern Europe."

The USAWC students briefed the chief on that study for 90 minutes in a face-to-face meeting because of the chief's understandable interest in that topic, Betros said.

"This was really a first-rate product," Betros said. It was published by the U.S. Army War College Press and is available on the USAWC's website now.

It became a sort of pilot project for this year's, Hill said.

INTEGRATED RESEARCH PROJECTS

This year, the college is using the CSP as a model for multiple research projects, Betros said. The future of the Army study is one of the five projects, known as Integrated Research Projects, or IRP.

And, for the first time, the school is getting Army money to do it, Betros said. "So instead of the Army spending millions to hire external think tanks, we're doing IRPs that allow us to funnel some of that money back into the Army."

Students do research projects every year, he said. But they've been more or less individually driven, he said, meaning the students choose subjects they're interested in.

"We decided to make the Army War College as relevant as possible to the larger Army, so we found research topics that were of most interest to the chief of staff of the Army." Former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno approved the five current research projects, which in fact, aligned with his priorities, Betros said.

Besides being of interest to the Army and the chief, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command's Army Capabilities Integration Center will also be closely monitoring the projects and looking at the findings, he said.

Betros said five research proposals have been submitted to the Army Study Program Office, G-8.

That's the office that actually approves research funding. This year, the office will allot several million dollars during fiscal year 2016, and USAWC will receive a portion of that. It's a first for us, he said, calling it a significant development.

The five projects are:

- "Study of the Future of the Army." Funding is \$61,500, which will cover such things as travel time to visit senior leaders and subject-matter experts.
- "U.S. Army General Officer Leadership Assessment" will examine ways to produce and nurture more effective leaders and manage that talent. Army culture and leader development systems are included. Funding is \$50,165.
- "Hybrid and Gray Zone Approaches to Conflict and Their Defense and Ground Force Implications" focuses on conflicts such as those in eastern Ukraine and Iraq and Syria. In those and other areas are a mix of hostile actors, who use a variety of methods and various capabilities, including military, criminal activity, agitation, subversion and so on, to further their goals. China, Russia and Iran also employ complex methods of intimidation to advance regional objectives. The goal would be to formulate a strategic response. Funding is \$60,672.
- "U.S. - China Competition in Indo-Asia-Pacific: Land Force Implications" will look for ways to advance U.S. national interests in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region. This study will examine the interests of regional powers (to include the United States), current U.S. strategies and their effectiveness, and possible U.S. policy options. Funding is \$55,754.
- "Responding to Crises in Europe: Is the Army prepared to execute the full range of military operations in Europe?" will cover not only the extreme behavior of Russia in its former eastern Soviet Socialist Republics. It also will cover the security risks of the massive wave of migrants coming north into southern Europe, and security concerns given that Islamic extremists may be hiding among them. The economic and political crises in certain parts of Europe could also result in regional security concerns. The Army's role in building partner capacity will be explored, as well as the logistical challenges of moving troops and their equipment from the United States to the region if required. Exploring ways of tempering Russian aggression would be at the top of the list. Funding is \$56,732.

The USAWC plans to continue grant-funded research like this in coming years, Betros said.

