

New York Guard leaders get strategic education at Army War College

Lt. Col. Mark McCann, Public Affairs

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Mar. 23, 2012 – The U.S. Army War College concluded a week-long Middle Eastern regional and cultural “immersion” seminar here preparing leaders from the New York Army National Guard’s 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) for an upcoming deployment.

The brigade, headquartered in Syracuse, N.Y., with units from across New York and elements of units from seven other states, was in pre-deployment training for missions in Afghanistan when they learned that evolving operations in U.S. Central Command would change their missions. The brigade headquarters and half the unit would deploy to Kuwait to conduct security force and training missions and serve as a Military Assistance Team (MAT) for ARCENT.

Brigade commander Col. Geoffrey Slack and deputy commander Col. Chuck Crosby turned to the expertise they knew from their Army War College education to fill gaps in their readiness to execute an ambiguous, strategic-level mission.

Led by the Army War College cultural advisor, Dr. Adam Silverman, the Army War College presented a week-long program for 27th Brigade leaders’ appreciation of the modern religious, nationalistic, cultural and historical trends and how understanding of these concepts would improve its ability to execute its engagement mission.

“We wanted to give them enough to get them thinking, get them some concepts and tools to think about going forward and also provide them with reach back to get answers,” Silverman said. “We wanted them to walk away with an understanding of the bigger picture, an understanding of history and culture in a broader context as it applies to current conditions in the region.”

The week-long program, hosted at the Center for Strategic Leadership’s Collins Hall here, included:

- Historical, religious, and cultural overviews and conduct of military to military and military to civilian engagements from college faculty Dr. Silverman and Dr. Larry Goodson, USAWC professor of Middle Eastern studies
- “Regional economic inequities as drivers for discontent,” from Prof. Richard Coplen, professor

of economic development at the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute

- “Focus on corruption,” from Col. Louis H. Jordan, Jr., deputy director of the Strategic Studies Institute
- Regional panel discussions with International Fellows in the USAWC student body, and Foreign Area Officers.

“We had a whole-of-U.S. Army War College approach, showing the depth of the ability here,” said Silverman. “Every component of the College was involved here – SSI, PKSOI, CSL, AHEC, and the College – which shows the utility of what we have here all in one place.”

Silverman introduced outside experts from the Defense Institute for Security Assistance Management at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio to discuss security cooperation planning, and a veteran Foreign Service Officer with extensive experience in the Middle East to discuss current affairs in the region.

The officers and senior NCOs of the 27th also established points of contact at the Army War College for “reach back” assistance, should questions arise while they are deployed.

“The holistic approach to what we have here – the broad perspective and specialization in specific areas – makes this more pragmatic for any team conducting a military assistance team effort,” said Slack.

“We made contacts here and encouraged the team to reach back to discuss emerging issues.”

“After they analyzed the situation based on our request, they knew more about what we were getting into than we did, and they pulled the right experts together,” said Slack, about the responsiveness of the Army War College team.

“This turned out to be the ‘crown jewel’ in our military assistance team training and the center of gravity in our reach back.”

The rapid nature by which the program was assembled prompted representatives at the War College to capture the overall framework and logistics of this instruction to be presented as an option for practitioners needing supplemental training or for units who need assistance in preparing for future complex missions in strategic environments.

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