

International Fellows start Army War College year

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Lt. Col. Spero Gouchola, from Benin, holds the baseball he threw out as the first pitch at a Harrisburg Senators game as part of their orientation program. The 71 international officers in the Army War College Class of 2013 will study, learn and live alongside their US peers during the 10-month course.

July 19, 2012-- 71 international officers have already begun their Army War College year, where they will read, study and share their own unique experiences alongside their U.S. counterparts as members of the USAWC Class of 2013.

New this year are officers from Benin, Armenia, Vietnam, and Kyrgyzstan.

Students from Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Austria, Australia, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Republic of Korea, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Zambia, round out the group.

“The International Fellows are a major asset to the Army War College in that they bring an amount of international perspective that no other institution of this type can offer,” said **Col. John Burbank**, IF program director. “With 71 IFs from 67 different nations enrolled in the resident course, the USAWC can offer its students the benefit of being able to draw upon the views and perspectives from highly

successful and experienced officers from every corner of the world.”

The officers are commonly the most experienced and near the top of their nation’s armies.

The IFs learn more about the city of Carlisle during a recent visit to the Borough Offices.

“Well over half of our IF class will become general officers in their nation's armed forces or are currently general officers right now,” said Burbank. “A significant number will become Army Chief of Staff, or Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff equivalents.”



The inclusion of the international officers in the course has a significant pay-off for the IFs and their U.S. counterparts, according to Burbank.

“Not only will our U.S. future leaders learn a great deal from our IFs during the year of their study at Carlisle, but both sides have the opportunity to build relationships that will likely serve them well in their future duties as senior military leaders.”

Before the fellows begin their studies, an orientation program helps them adjust not only to life at Carlisle Barracks, but to the U.S. as well. Guest speakers tackle topics ranging from working with the media to driving laws in Pa., all designed to make their and their families transitions easier.

“The first two weeks are dedicated toward getting the IFs situated into the Army War College structure. This is an incredible process as we integrate them into U.S. and Army society from the ground up by getting them identification and building access badges, creating information technology accounts, coordinating for them to get temporary social security numbers, and integrating them into the medical system.”

“This has been a great program to get us adjusted to living in Carlisle,” said **Lt. Col. Dabbous Aldasam** from Kuwait. “This orientation not only helps you learn more about where you’ll be studying and living, it helps introduce you to the American way of life.”

“It’s been a great experience and the Army War College course hasn’t even started yet,” said **Brig. Gen. Yahya Alqahtani**, from Saudi Arabia. “I believe the education we will receive here will only benefit us in the future.”

The students not only learn from the speakers and USAWC faculty, trips to Washington D.C. and Philadelphia all provide them with an understanding of the responsibilities of the U.S. governments, militaries, and citizens and an understanding of US society, institutions and ideals.

“We accomplish this through visits to activities at all levels of US Government, visits to private industry, health and human services establishments, institutions of higher learning, and cultural activities. We visit the Carlisle Borough and Cumberland County government offices, the Boeing Company, the Hershey Medical Center, the Milton Hershey School, and Fort Indiantown Gap,” said Burbank. “We also incorporate classes on subjects such as the American media and conduct visits that highlight diversity in the U.S. way of life, such as visiting the Amish in Lancaster County and a Native American tribe later in the year.”



The orientation got hands on during a recent softball practice.

But the orientation wasn't all work; the IFs also took some time to learn more about a famous USAWC past-time, softball during a series of practices and a night at a Senators game where **Lt. Col. Spero Gouchola**, from Benin, threw out the first pitch.

“It was quite an experience, one I will never forget,” he said.

The International Fellows Program dates to 1978. The program has expanded this decade from 40 Fellows per class to the 71 Fellows in the Class of 2013.