

AFRICOM commander shares strategic lessons with USAWC students

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Gen. Carter Ham, Commander of U.S. Africa Command, speaks to Nigerian Fellow Col. Solomon Udounwa before talking to the U.S. Army War College Class of 2013 in Bliss Hall .

Oct. 24, 2012 – 2011 in Africa was a year dominated by headlines of the Arab spring, regional conflicts, and an extremist

organization stifling progress in Somalia.

Gen. Carter Ham, Commander of U.S. Africa Command, came back to the Army War College Oct. 24 to talk about the progress being made there and the challenges still ahead.

Ham discussed the role of AFRICOM and how a secure and stable African continent was important to not only the region, but to the world. He said that the U.S. plays an important role in supporting these nations and helping them find African solutions to African problems.

The stand-up of African Command in 2006 demonstrates a U.S. commitment to the continent according to Ham.

“A safe, secure and stable Africa is in the best interest of the world,” he said. “We are there to help strengthen the defense capability of our African partners and to contribute to regional security.”

He also stressed the importance of collaboration and partnership in the region.

“These nations are committed to security and solving their problems along with their neighbors,” he

said. “But they are looking for partners, someone who will stand with them as they confront challenges. We can be that partner.”

He pointed to a situation in Somalia as a perfect example of this in action.

“The African Union and surrounding countries wouldn’t stand for the occupation of the capital and key ports of Somalia by al-Shabaab,” he said. “They worked together to collectively dislodge them from these locations in an effort to bring more stability to the nation. What is present there now is hope. ”

Ham’s experience with the African continent stretches all the way back to his days as a student at the Air War College when he visited South Africa, Botswana and other African countries.

“I’m beginning to understand just how much I don’t know,” he said. “When you think you understand the complexity and diversity of the continent, another layer is added.”

He pointed out that six of the top 10 fastest growing economies are in Africa, has a population of more than one billion people and has both a strategic location and materials.

“Those facts alone help illustrate the increasing importance of Africa to not only the U.S., but the world as a whole,” he said. Ham pointed out that nearly 40 percent of the European Union business community uses the East Coast of Africa as a primary shipping route.

“The U.S. and the world needs to care what happens in Africa.”

The address by Ham was an opportunity for international officers from Africa to speak directly to the man in charge of U.S. military interests there.

“It’s important for both the African nations and the United States to talk and help find creative solutions to the challenges facing Africa,” said **Nigerian Fellow Col. Solomon Udounwa**. “We all want peace and stability and together we can work to make that a reality.”