

Class of 2013 descends on Big Apple for insights from non-military leaders

Carol Kerr and Thomas Zimmerman

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Army War College students talk national and international issues with Dean Baquet, managing editor of the New York Times during the academic trip to New York City.

The bustling streets of New York City were just a little busier Nov. 14-17 as the U.S. Army War College Class of 2013 descended on the city to learn more about contemporary domestic issues and how that can affect

national security strategy and policy.

For the three-day academic visit, students split into 24 groups and met with organizations like the New York Times, Morgan Stanley, the Council of Foreign Relations, Associated Press and the New York City Fire Department to discuss strategic issues.

“This trip presents a tremendous chance for our students to meet national, international, federal, state and local leaders to discuss the challenges they face and provide different perspectives in strategic leadership,” said **George Teague**, acting director of the Department of National Security and Strategy. “You just couldn’t replicate that experience here at the War College.”

Teague said that the course comes at an appropriate time in the curriculum.

“It really builds and allows the students to synthesize the key concepts they have learned during the previous blocks on instruction,” said Teague. “They are able to speak with these leaders and see how they are able to use their creative and critical thinking skills to solve complex problems.”

During their visits, the students said they found leadership lessons in each unique opportunity for

in-depth conversation with non-military people with significant leadership responsibilities.



The busy streets of Manhattan served as the backdrop for the academic trip, aimed at exposing students to leadership lessons and challenges from non-government organizations.

"It was good to talk with other industry leaders and see how they do things," said Army student **Lt. Col. Craig Merutka**. "It was interesting to see the parallels in long-term planning, change and adaptation."

When War College students met with Associated Press's top leaders, the commonalities of strategic planning and professional standards stood out.

Army student **Lt. Col. Larry Fletcher** once worked as a journalist and noted the AP's planning and initiatives to maintain standards of accuracy as they maintain relevance in a rapidly changing information environment.

"They no longer can count on their evening news and print media with the 24 hour news cycle. They had to move in with new technologies and new ways of doing business, or they too will find themselves fading away.

The AP assessment of issues and new strategies matches discussions in class, said Fletcher. It's an enduring issue to size up a changing environment and maintain the relevance of the Army, or Navy, especially in a post-war situation with demands for down-sizing and expectations to do more with less, he said.

"I learned there's a bureau of the AP in North Korea, which really surprised me ... definitely a move in the right direction," said Army student **Lt. Col. Brett Clark**. "I think it ties directly to our studies at The War College, that it's really all about relationship building -- no different for the AP or FOX News or anyone else."

Several students drew insights from the challenges of budget management for New York City -- described by one student as a grand-scale budget for an entity that could be a foreign county in itself.

"Infrastructure management is part of what I do," said Air Force student **Lt. Col. Monte Harner**, who commented the mayor's representative's insights about public reticence to decrease services. "It's very difficult to cut back on infrastructure. There are those who think we should eliminate base housing, where people can live on the economy, but we have a tradition of providing services and it's very difficult to cut back. Even though fiscally it may make the most sense, politically it may not be possible."

"We all have a solid understanding of the military but I don't have a specific understanding of the economic security of our institutions, and this visit to discuss NYC's budget office put things into perspective," said Navy student **Cmdr. Jonathan Still**, speaking about the Office of Budget and Management. "One thing I was impressed with was his candor about dealing with the cards you're given. There will be challenges; there will be difficulty. But he was optimistic about the future and the U.S. role in the world, and about our economic institutions. His impression of Wall Street and US Banks was particularly strong.

"The U.S. society is pessimistic today," he noted. "No doubt we have challenges, but so does the rest of the world like China and the EU. Our part is not greater and our relevance is secure.

During their visit to the New York Times, a group of students were able to learn more about the challenges of reporting news from around the world, leadership lessons and the factors that affect decisions of news reporting in a 24/7 news environment during the front page meeting that included the managing editors of the paper. Another meeting with Phil Corbett, the Times Standards Editor, shed light about ethical decision making and leadership challenges for a paper with a staff of more than 3,000.

"This was a great opportunity to talk with leaders of the New York Times to see how they deal with many of the same issues the government does – declining resources, personnel management and how to plan both near and long term," said **Jennifer Jessup**, who met with **Dean Baquet**, managing editor of the Times as part of her small group visit.

"The dialogue we were able to have on a first-hand basis with their senior staff was something you could never get without coming here in person," said Marine Corps **Lt. Col. Gordon Miller**, who also visited the Times.

Another key aspect of the trip were the 64 visits to the United Nations Missions for the International Fellows in the class.

"It's important for our students to see issues and challenges from a non-U.S. perspective," said Teague. "By visiting these groups they are able to see what strategic challenges our UN partners are facing and

also receive some direct feedback on U.S, policies. You can't place a value on that experience."

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