

# D.C. academic field trip expands interagency understanding

By Tom Conning

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Army War College students departed Carlisle Barracks again to visit a bustling city, met with senior executives, and expanded their understanding of other organizations' perspectives about national security strategy and policy. The first academic field trip, to New York City, supported the strategic leadership course. This trip to Washington D.C., May 7-9, complemented the strategic perspective of the curriculum by linking 34 small student groups with the leaders and influencers whose work in Congress, government agencies, think tanks and non-governmental organizations has relevance for national security leaders.

Bringing students into contact with members of these organizations is valuable, said **Col. Richard Lacquement**, dean of the USAWC School of Strategic Leadership. "The core curriculum includes a lot of reading and discussing about Congress and the Executive Branch and the different influencers such as think tanks and the media that have an effect on U.S. national security policy," said Lacquement.

"This is a level of direct experience and knowledge that we can't quite capture as easily in the classroom or through readings or even videos, so I think this is a valuable experiential learning event to make "real" key parts of the core curriculum."

### ***N.J. Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen shared ideas with Army War College students during one of several Capitol Hill***



***exchanges. The small group also visited the Deloitte Consulting and the Department of State during their visit.***

The diversity in each small group – each with Army War College Fellows, International Fellows, Civilian students and US military leaders in the Class of 2013 – ensured that a diversity of viewpoints were addressed in each visit.

Together, each group learned more than would be possible independently as they met with Members of Congress, personnel within the Department of Homeland Security, National Public Radio, the Rand Corporation, the Congressional

Budget Office, the Pew Research Center, the Institute for Defense Analysis, Al Jazeera International and more.

Small Group 30 included Army War College Fellow **Lt. Col. Peter Eberhardt**, Army student **Col. Collin Fortier**, Iraqi Fellow **Col. Hajar Ismail**, Army student **Col. Stephen Lockridge**, Finland's Fellow **Col. Petri Mattila**, Czech Fellow **Lt. Col. Roman Nahoncik**, Army War

College Fellow **Lt. Col. Steven Nicolucci**, Army student **Col. Gerald Nixon**, Army student **Lt. Col. Andrew Rendon** and Army student **Col. Robert White** who participated in a total of six visits.

Group 30 met with New Jersey **Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen**, along with several other congressional staff members who offered insider insights about how Congress develops and assesses information, and how they make decisions. Frelinghuysen discussed Syria, sequestration, sexual harassment, resource conservation and the political process.

Understanding congressional perspectives on civil-military relationships is a great opportunity, said Army student **Lt. Col. Andy Rendon**. "Everything that expands your scope I think is good, especially here in D.C. where high-level decisions are made, and where major resources are prioritized and allocated," said Rendon. "Having a basic understanding of how those dynamics work I think will help to serve any officer leaving The War College."

"It was very valuable for me in that I had an opportunity to look inside a politician's mind, and see how the politics are made and how the institution works," said Czech Fellow **Lt. Col. Roman Nahoncik**.

***Army War College students discuss changing business practices at the Washington Post during D.C. academic field trip May 7. Thirty-four small groups met with personnel from the Department of Homeland Security, National Public Radio, the Rand Corporation, the Congressional Budget Office, the Pew Research Center, the Institute for Defense Analysis, Al Jazeera International and others.***

"This whole year, one of my main goals has been that I try to understand better both the military system and our military colleagues' way to think on issues and also with your civilian society," said Finnish Fellow **Col. Petri Mattila**. "To me this was a possibility to understand the civilian society better," he said.

"This is the behind-the-scenes things that we talked about during the course," said Army student **Col. Stephen Lockridge**.

"I always wondered how a politician thought. What are his motivations?" he asked.



"You don't get that type of insight by watching the news," said Lockridge.

Group 30 visited also the Washington Post, Deloitte Consulting and the Department of State.

Effective leaders need to understand more than just the military, said Army student **Col. Collin Fortier** after dialogue with the executive editor and a journalist at the Washington Post. "Getting to understand how the press works and their challenges really broadens a leader to understand the other components that make up the vibrant U.S. cultural and national political debate," said Fortier. "It was interesting to hear the challenges they have in leadership in the business practices with the changing, disruptive technology that the internet is for that business."

"To engage with different environments, civilian, different companies, finance, Congressman, State Department -- to see their vision about the United States and about the world and about the relationship between the military and civilians, and how they see the military: I think is very important," said Iraqi Fellow **Col. Hajar Ismail**.

Students understood their follow-on responsibility to return to their seminar and share key insights with peers.

Sharing information about group visits benefits other students, said Army student **Col. Gerald Nixon**. "I'll take away a few points, share them with my seminar group -- everyone within our seminar will benefit from everyone else's visits also," said Nixon, one of 371 Army War College people learning through exchanges.

Dean Lacquement echoed Nixon's point. "It's not just about the individual visits that each student made," he said. "They were sent with the responsibility to come back to their seminar and report on their key insights and share that with others."

More than 370 students and Army War College Fellows participated in the visits.

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