

Class of 2015: First of two resident phases deepens distance students' learning, relationships

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Students in the USAWC Distance Class of 2015 exchanged views on strategic leadership with colleagues, professors, and prominent national security scholars and practitioners at Carlisle, June 15-27. For these veterans of yearlong online engagements, face-to-face engagements were a welcome way to deepen the relationships that will support them in the second year of the two-year program and beyond graduation.

Cmdr. Dave Goodwin briefs students about the Office of the Legislative Liaison during the small group visit to the House of Representatives.

The Army War College Distance Education program delivers the two-year curriculum both online and in two resident sessions. The Army Reserve has the most students enrolled with 151 officers. The Army National Guard is a close second with 140 officers, and 48 active Army officers are enrolled to take advantage of remote learning. Diverse perspectives are introduced to seminar discussions by students from other services and federal agencies, such as the Department of State, as well as officers from countries such as Spain and Moldova. In total, eight Marine Corps officers, two Air Force officers, 10 civilians and eight international fellows joined with U.S. Army colleagues throughout the two-week course.

The resident phase exposes students to lectures and activities designed to give them a grounding in strategic thinking. Retired Marine Gen. James Cartwright, the former Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, opened the first week by speaking with the students about their responsibility as leaders to understand the world and build on their Army War College education. The Army's Inspector General, Lt. Gen. Peter Vangjel, addressed strategic leader ethics, and Dr. Richard Betts discussed American Grand Strategy. Betts is the director of the International Security Policy Program at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Ambassador Daniel Kurtzer spoke to the class about diplomacy as an instrument of power, calling on his current scholar role Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, and on his previous experience as U.S. Ambassador to Egypt and, later, to Israel.

"The number and quality of speakers the past two weeks was phenomenal, as was the opportunity to participate in informal discussion with people like Amb. Kurtzer," said Army student Col. Paul Landry. "A big part of the first resident course is access to a wealth of knowledge and the opportunity to peel back the onion, as my seminar instructor explained."

The speakers' slate included a wide spectrum of expertise and experience, selected to explore the full spectrum of national power – diplomacy, economics, information, and military. Robin Wright, a joint fellow at the United States Institute of Peace and former journalist, addressed Iran's security dilemma in the context of the Arab Spring. Retired Air Force Gen. Michael Hayden, former director of both the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency, discussed information operations; and Dr. Richard Neu, a senior economist with RAND Corp. and professor at the Pardee RAND Graduate School, addressed the economic instrument of power. Dr. Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institute discussed the future of Landpower.

"The small group interaction and the ability to come back into the seminar room and have the faculty facilitate the conversation enabled students to share opinions and experiences in a collaborative learning environment," said Landry, who is chief of the Joint Staff for the Massachusetts National Guard.

“I enjoyed the lecture series’ impressive list of subject matter experts” said Pa. Army National Guard student Lt. Col. Mark Pike, who singled out Dr. O’Hanlon’s presentation as particularly useful.

The students’ Carlisle experience included an Antietam Battlefield staff ride to explore strategic leader decision-making during this historically significant battle which pushed Confederate forces from Maryland.

“I had been to Antietam before, but Dr. Paul Jussel did an amazing job of pulling it all together,” said

Landry about the USAWC faculty member and lead historian.

The National Security Staff Ride to



Washington, D.C. linked students in small groups with leadership and staff of multiple federal and international offices, to include 20 embassies. “The objectives for the Washington D.C. National Security Staff Ride are to give the students a perspective on international and domestic organizations that influence national policy and enhance their understanding of the interagency process, foreign government interaction, and the role of governmental and non-governmental agencies in the national security process,” said Col. Harold Hinton, director of the USAWC First Resident Course.

Dr. Paul Jussel (center) with students at the Antietam Battlefield staff ride.

Two small groups spent a full day engaging with Members and staff of the House of Representatives and Senate, such as Congressman Chris Gibson. Army Chief Legislative Liaison Brig. Gen. Laura Richardson discussed the wide scope of interactions that Army Legislative Liaison office has with Congress – shedding light on relationships unfamiliar to many students, they noted.

“The OCLL briefing was very informative as it illuminated the difference between personal staff, professional staff and other staff members,” said Army Reserve student Lt. Col. Janice Vanalstine, a nurse with the 4225th U.S. Army Hospital in Fort Harrison, Mont.

"Visits to the embassies are important for a couple reasons, both having to do with an opportunity for our students to listen, apply critical analysis and hopefully gain deeper insight and understanding," said Prof. Mark Eshelman. "For example, our students have a chance to consider how our interests match-up with the nations whose embassies they visit, and how they might not match up. We also have an opportunity to gain cultural insight," he added.



“The visit to the Chinese embassy

highlighted the tensions between our two countries, military-to-military interaction, and lots of opportunity to gain a better understanding,” said Army National Guard student Lt. Col Phil Macchi, with the Rhode Island National Guard Special Operations Detachment – Global.

Students meet with an official at the Chinese embassy.

Army Reserve student Col. Jean Henderson, chief of personnel at the 335th Signal Command visited the Israeli Embassy. “I learned the complexity of the strategic problems we have and how difficult it is to negotiate the alliances we currently have when our allies have opposing views on the issues,” said Henderson.

At the conclusion of the First Resident Course, USAWC Commandant Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp spoke with

the class about the importance of a values-based command climate, empowering subordinates, and the moral courage needed for a senior commander to succeed.

As students headed home to begin their second year of studies, the Army announced Senate confirmation of promotion to the rank of brigadier general for the following distance education graduates of the Army War College: colonels James Blankenhorn, David Elwell, Steven Eveker, Darrell Guthrie, Mary-Kate Leahy, Frederick Maiocco, Joe Robinson, Richard Staats, Kelly Wakefield, Jason Walrath, and Donna Williams.

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