

Class of 2015 convocation marks start of academic year

Convocation marks start of USAWC Class of 2015 academic year

August 8, 2014 -- The faculty filled the stage of Bliss Hall at the Army War College, and the USAWC leadership introduced the “amazingly talented group,” ready to assist students of the Class of 2015 in the “movement to contact in the arena of strategic ideas.” The commandant charged the students with three priorities: to pursue strategic thought, to refine your professional identity as a strategic leader,

and to
build
personal



capacities as a resilient leader of character.

The 10-month graduate-level program began today for the Army War College Class of 2015 – comprising U.S. students and International Fellows of the resident program, and USAWC Fellows who will study at other institutions – as well as another 367 students completing the curriculum by distance

learning.

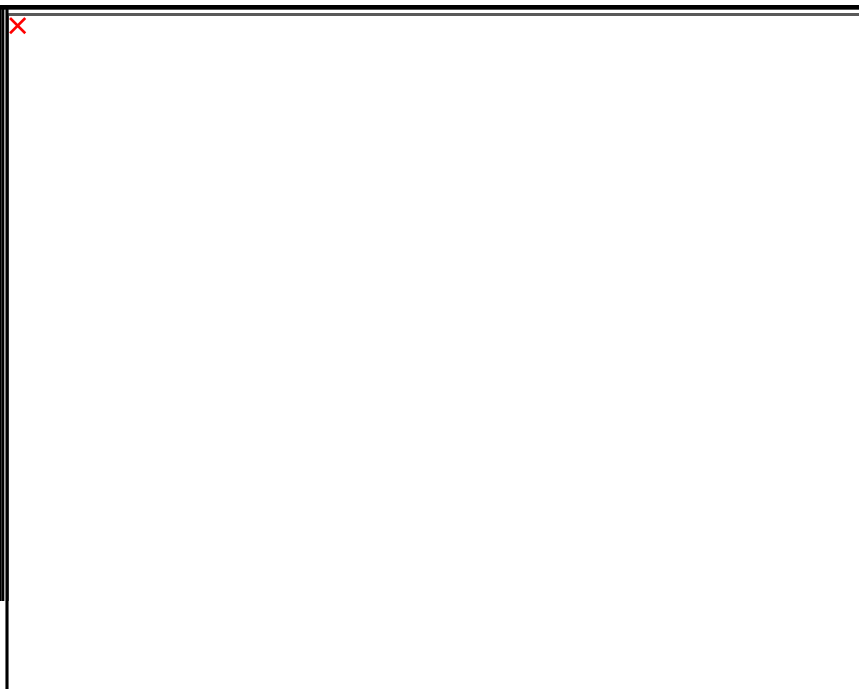
Commandant Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp, at podium, formally welcomes the class of 2015 to studies at the Army War College. The faculty of the School of Strategic Landpower includes civilian scholars, senior military practitioners of all US Services and the armed forces of Spain and Germany, and representatives of the interagency community.

The **Provost, Dr. Lance Betros**, opened the convocation, a formal academic assembly to introduce the faculty and welcome the students to the institution. Students launched studies in their first course, Strategic Leadership, and the day closed with a demonstration by the Old Guard drill team, band and fife and drum corps that celebrated Army heritage and the promise of the Class of 2015.

The full video of the convocation ceremony is at www.youtube.com/usarmywarcollege.

The largest International Fellows group in USAWC history -- and the largest at any US military school -- will integrate 79 officers representing 73 countries into the class. The 308 U.S. students of the resident class represent a cross-section of the national security community: 217 Army officers, 32 Air Force, 17 Marines, 12 Navy and 1 Coast Guard officer from Active and Reserve components, and 29 senior federal civilians. The USAWC Fellows include those US Army officers who will spend their year at universities, research centers, and think tanks around the world although their base institution remains the Army War College and they are an integral part of the Class of 2015.

In his welcome to the class, **USAWC Commandant Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp** noted the diversity of perspectives across the student body, and the potential of those selected for the Army War College education. If historical statistics hold, from this class will emerge about 50 U.S. general officers and admirals, and as many flag officers from among the international fellows.



Dr. Lance Betros, USAWC Provost, formally opens the Class of 2015 at convocation.

“If there is so much talent and potential already present among you, why do we need to take a year out of your lives to hit the books and intellectually explore the big strategic ideas and major issues facing our military and nation?” the commandant asked.

“The world we live in now is hugely complex and uncertain,” he said. “But we do have the means,

skills, and human capital and, dare I say, in many parts of the world the responsibility to shape security environments and prevent wars around the globe.

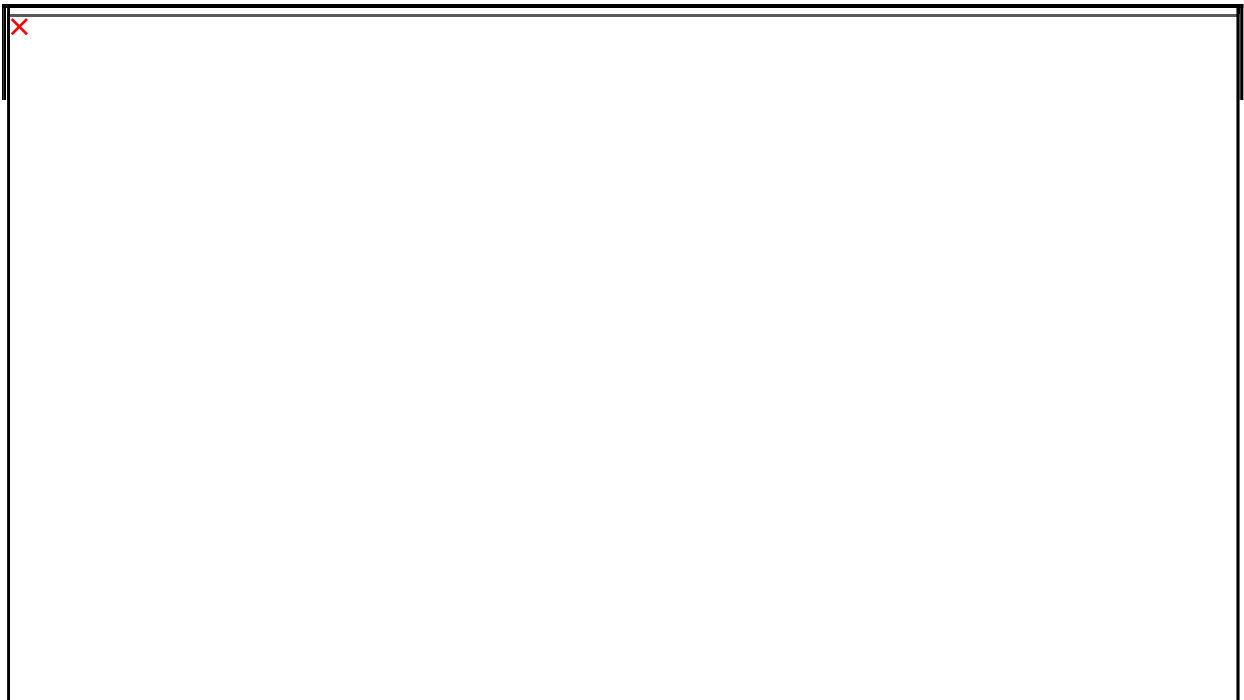
“How, when and where we do that shaping and preventing of conflict, in an era of declining resources not only in the United States but among our friends and allies, is the huge strategic question facing our militaries today.

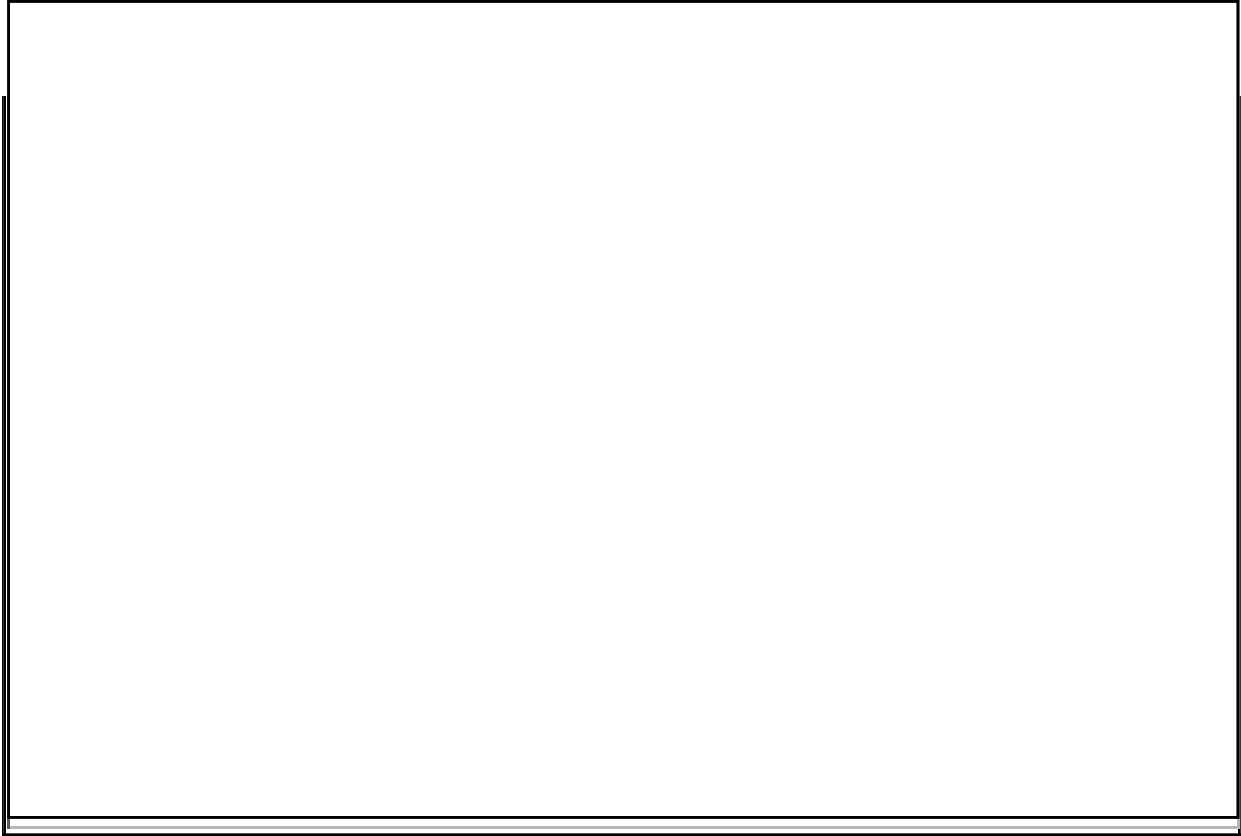
“It is for this reason that Gen. Ray Odierno, Chief of Staff of the Army, has asked The War College to lead the strategic renaissance as we slowly come out of America’s longest wars,” said Rapp. “For us, this renaissance is the renewed intellectual effort placed against the inherently entrepreneurial re-examination of landpower strategy: a much needed deeper look after 12 years of tactical and operational focus due to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“It is a rededication to think through creative ways of employing the joint, interagency, and multinational force to influence the human domain so integral to concepts of strategic landpower,” said the commandant, as he reminded the students that the class of 2015 is squarely in the van of the effort. “The vanguard of any formation explore various routes, develops the situation, and builds options for decision makers. Strategic scouts like you need openness of mind, willingness to explore new concepts, energy to build and unemotionally argue for your positions, and ability to work collaboratively to expand the range of alternatives available for our military and civilian leadership.

Class president **Col. Mark Baxter** represented the students’ point of view about the academic challenge as the convocation ceremony drew to a close.

**Col.
Mark**





Baxter, class president, speaks of the students' breadth of experience, averaging 22 years in military leadership positions, and their anticipation to enhance their ability to problem solve at the strategic level.

"Our class brings with us an exceptional breadth of experience and diversity We bring with us nearly 10,000 years of leadership and service to our fellow citizens – a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience in our class," said Baxter.

"But let's face it, we all came here knowing that we also have much to learn. By and large most of our experience has been at the tactical and operational level, and we all now need to learn how to function better at the strategic level ... and there is always much to be learned."

"In today's complex, hectic, fast-paced world, the Carlisle Experience being offered to us is an amazing opportunity – to contemplate and reflect, to learn how to question and explore assumptions, to participate in dialogue and discussion ... and to develop the skills, attributes and competencies required to become the senior national security leaders that we will be called to be," said Baxter.