

Talk provides former ambassadors view on issues

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Burns provides a former ambassadors view on global issues

Dec. 16, 2009 – Former diplomat R. Nicholas Burns talked with Army War College students Dec. 16 in Bliss Hall about the importance of the U.S. remaining engaged in global leadership and the possible challenges that may lie ahead for the nation as part of the annual Commandants Lecture Series.

The focus of this year's CLS is "the Future World: National Security Implications" and Burns discussed current events in both historical and societal contexts. He spoke about how the changing nature of the global economy and rise and fall of traditional world powers should lead to some changes in the structure of organizations like NATO, the UN and the G-8. He pointed out that many of these systems reflect a post-World War II world and don't account for the rise of nations like China, India, Brazil and the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Burns also talked about the challenges facing President Barack Obama after inheriting a "combination of national security and domestic challenges not seen since FDR." He pointed out that the weak economy, fighting two wars and a decline in the world's view of the US have made progress slow, but important for the new administration.

He talked about how recent economic and political changes have many calling for a more inward focus but that would be a mistake. According to Burns, the US has an obligation to reject an isolationism and assume a mantle of global leadership, but be smart about it at the same time. He reminded the audience about the importance of working with global partners saying that "we can't do it all alone."

Georgia Fellow Lt. Col. Zurab Agladze said that while he didn't agree with everything Burns said that he felt it was important for the US to remain engaged in global issues.

Burns also stated that a key to the US maintaining its status in the world is to rebuild our economy, maintaining a strong military and stay strong diplomatically.

Student Col. Eric Judkins said that the discussion made him look at some of the issues from a new perspective.

"Many times we focus on the military solutions but he made me realize that the issues are at times so more complex than we realize at first," he said. "It's important to remember how important the economy, the military and diplomacy are so inter-related and one doesn't always work without the other."