

Fellows trip adds to USAWC experience

Pamella Gray, International Fellows Program

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Col. Pietro Tornabene, International Fellow from Italy, takes notes during a lecture at one of the first stops on the United Command Field Study, a visit to the Asian Pacific Center in Hawaii. Courtesy photo.

March 26, 2009 -- After 22 days of seeing first-hand more than 20 U.S. regional commands or agencies, Army War College International Fellows returned just in time to share their knowledge with their classmates before their capstone exercise.

The Unified Command Field Study took place from Feb. 8-27, and provided the International Fellows exposure to the Department of Defense structure, combatant commands, and regional security issues these commands face.

"I hoped the IFs would gain a perspective of the make-up and complexities of the combatant commands and other organizations in DoD," said **Dr. James Gordon**, USAWC faculty member who facilitated the trip. "I also wanted them to understand the difficulties the U.S. military has with accomplishing national interests with the resources available."

During the three week trip, the Fellows visited the more than 20 commands or prominent agencies, including the Pentagon, U.S. Pacific Command and U.S Joint Forces Command in order to gain this understanding.

"Although I thought the pace and tempo was pretty rapid, it was necessary to cover the many places

we visited in the time allotted. They mentioned on more than one occasion that it is unfortunate that their American counterparts were not able to have the same experience," said Gordon about the Fellows.

The field study built on the knowledge from the previous core courses during the academic year. The trip allowed the IFs the liberty to examine these commands' and agencies' implementation of such subjects as national policy and security strategy.

"One of the goals was to have the IFs learn from first hand observation how the unified command structure actually operates, and first-hand experience how the U.S. military carries out its mission," said **Ambassador Cynthia Efir**, Deputy Commandant for International Affairs.

One of the challenges the group faced was that many of the key decisions were still under discussion, noted Efir. She explained this was because of the timing of the trip and a new administration.

"It was good for our IF's to see this command structure in transition and under development," she added.

However, this tour also rendered a valuable tool for the remaining academic activities and requirements.

Efir explained that each IF takes a regional elective and the exposure to the geographical commands they visited gave a foundation for understanding regional issues.

The trip gave sound footing for the Strategic Decision Making Exercise, conducted just days after their return. Many of the IFs served in various commands as exchange officers during the exercise, added Efir.

"It was a good bridge from the core courses to the SDME and electives," she said.

One of the most important elements of the program is to foster international relationships.

"It's very interesting-- Americans are so curious-- we would walk into a fast food restaurant and people would see the IFs in their uniforms," Efir remembered. "Some of them came up to a few of the coalition forces thanking them for their service."

