

# Admiral Mullen talks with USAWC students

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## ***Admiral Mullen discusses topics of international importance with USAWC students***

May 29, 2009 - Nuclear weapons, the future of Afghanistan, troop morale, and strategic leadership were some of the wide-ranging topics discussed on May 28 at the Army War College's Bliss Hall during a briefing to the resident class by Admiral Michael G. Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff.

With every service represented in the audience along with 42 international fellows and members from civilian organizations, Mullen addressed numerous topics of overall strategic importance for both the United States and the international community.



"I think this is a wonderful capstone to our year-long process of learning strategic thinking," said Col. Scott Main, student.

***Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, discusses the future for the military in Afghanistan and the importance of regional partners during his briefing to the USAWC resident class on May 29. Photo by Megan Clugh.***

"I was really interested to hear his thoughts on senior leadership and the strategic direction the military is going, both here and abroad, for the next few years," said Main.

In his current position, Mullen serves as principal military advisor to the president, the Secretary of Defense, the National Security Council and the Homeland Security Council.

"After a year of studying strategic issues, the interagency, and the relationship between the Department of Defense and civilian organizations, I can't think of a better guest speaker to end our year with than the one individual who is responsible for advising our senior civilian leadership," said Col. Pat Terrell, student.

During the briefing, Mullen discussed the military's role in Afghanistan and the importance of regional partners, especially Pakistan. Students took advantage of the chance to ask questions about the path the military would take the next few years.

"The chairman definitely gave us a perspective on the geo-political level, one that includes many important players to move forward in the region," said Lt. Col. Neil Fitzpatrick.

Facilitating relationships and working long-term with both India and China were also noted to be important part of the overall strategy in Afghanistan.

"He put a lot of emphasis on the future, making the right decisions, and working with the right people so that 100 years from now we won't look back with regret," said Wayne Smith, student.

It became clear for many students that operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan are clearly the priority for the military, as well as having previous experience in the region.

"He placed a lot of emphasis for the need of experienced leaders in Afghanistan, which is different from how we approached Iraq or how we were operating in Afghanistan a couple years ago," said Lt. Col. Lynne Owens, student.

Leadership and the need for strategic thinkers were both echoed throughout the discussion.

"It's all about leadership," said Col. Tom Donovan, student. "Good leadership from all levels is necessary for success."

"He really put an emphasis on what we studied here at the war college and you could tell he is looking forward to the future and helping our troops and families," said Col. Debra Hanneman.

With graduation fast-approaching next week, many students noted that the opportunity with the chairman was the perfect ending to their year at the war college.

"It's a great conclusion to our year here," said Col. Ken Tatum, student. "We have now been in a joint educational environment for a while now and it's very fitting that our final distinguished speaker to be the leader for all the services."