

USAWC International Fellows share USMA commitment: Officers of character to lead armies of tomorrow

By Robert Martin 27 November 2018



Brig. Gen. Dzulkafli Mustafa from Malaysia holds a conversation with three West Point cadets during the international fellows visit to the United State Military Academy, Oct. 16.



Army War College's international fellow German Col. Axel Hardt chats with West Point cadets from Germany after having lunch together in Washington Hall during their visit to USMA, Oct 16.

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On a cool October morning, 76 senior international officers from 73 allied and partner nations gathered on the inspiring grounds of the U.S. Military Academy to learn firsthand about developing the next generation of Army officers and creating leaders of character.

The Superintendent of the Academy, Lt. Gen. Darryl Williams, greeted the foreign officers as they watched 18 to 22-year-old cadets run down Thayer Avenue toward the parade field. Over the next 47 months, a new class of 1,200 West Point cadets will focus on the three pillars of the culture of character: academic, physical and military, he said.

“We say here at West Point that we want to live and lead honorably. Honor is the bedrock of everything we do,” said Williams to the international

officers. "We want to demonstrate excellence in everything we do -- on the athletic field, in the classroom, in the summer during cadet military training.

"Why is this important? Because in today's world one day they could serve shoulder-to-shoulder with your sons and daughters in Europe, in Africa or Asia," he said.

The group of 76 "International Fellows" are studying alongside U.S. officers at the Army's senior service war college this year. As is true for the Army War College's one-year education, USMA fully assimilates international cadets into the Corps of Cadets and their four-year experience is identical to that of U.S. cadets.

Each of the senior officers viewed the USMA program through a lens of more than 20 years of service, on average, since entering their own countries' armed forces. The fellows compared similarities and differences of their countries leadership development practices as the USMA superintendent and his key leaders discussed guiding principles and strategies.

In Botswana, we take graduates directly from college, train them for a year, then put them straight into our military, said Brig. Gen. Edson Molale. "In this way, perhaps we miss the point of where culture building comes from."

"At West Point, they get recruits directly from high school, so they can develop this niche culture of the Academy with cadets while they are here, and it grows through their whole span of service," he noted.

"These are things that we need to look at as we grow our armies as well -- the issue of development of character and officers of repute to lead the armies of tomorrow," said Molale.

After lunch at the cavernous Washington Mess Hall -- many eating with cadets from their own countries -- the international fellows learned more from Col. Scott Halstead, director of the Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic about observable behaviors that build cohesive teams through mutual trust and how West Point develops leaders of character.

"The visit to USMA has been very good for me," said Colombian Col. Harold Rayes. "I saw how the U.S. Army shapes new cadets into their new world, and how their instructors are eager to give their knowledge in order to improve their character and get them ready for new challenges they will face," he said.

During their year of study, the War College fully integrates the international officers into each of its 24 seminars. In addition to the Strategic Studies curriculum, these officers participate in a series of engagements that introduce them to U.S. culture, history and policies, as well as senior US military leaders at selected headquarters.

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