

## Industry Day: defense industry professionals and USAWC students examine the relationship between industry and the warfighter

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When the war college dedicated a full day to examine relationships with the defense industry, logisticians and acquisition officers and many others were in their element. Other students have never crossed paths with industry. On Jan, 29, 2021, the 25 defense industry participants in Industry Day helped bridge gaps of understanding.

To examine the critical role of industry in providing materiel solutions to the warfighter, the fully virtual academic event devoted the morning to large-group exchanges with four panelists:

- Kevin Phillips, Chairman, CEO and President of ManTech International;
- Kevin Vizzarri, VP of Business Development for AVT Simulation;
- Maj. Gen. Mitchell Kilgo, commanding general of US Army Communication-Electronic Command; and
- Lt. Gen. Robert Marion, Principal Military Deputy to Assist Secretary of the Army (Acquisition, Logistics and Technology) and Director, Army Acquisitions Corps.

If the span of acronyms and processes were new to some students, the

afternoon sessions offered a chance to interact informally and ask questions both candid and important. These seminar sessions linked two industry representatives with each 16-student seminar. Seminar 7 spent several hours online with Christopher Thompson of GE Aviation and Anthony Crutchfield of Boeing.

Discussions were wide-ranging and driven by student interests. Managing competing objectives, legal checks and balances, working relationships, complexity of business operations, and the enormity of ties between the defense industry and DoD were addressed, and more.

Seminar 22 hosted Mary Legere, Accenture Federal Services' managing director for National Security and Defense and Keirn C. Brown, the Senior International and Defense Advisor of the RAND Corporation. They talked about the effects on acquisition of the rapidly changing security environment of technology and multi-domain operations, using Air Force examples to make points that can apply to all Armed Services.

Crutchfield and Legere, both retired general officers, spoke in the language of the military and industry in describing the relationship and its challenges.

"[Students] became aware of these challenges from those who had previously walked in their shoes," said Prof. George Woods. "The guests, graduates of the USAWC, . . . spoke of their passion for why they chose to work in industry as continued service to the nation. That resonated with the students who had a powerful learning experience as a result."

"Industry Day showed me that what I thought I knew about business is very different when applied to work between the government and the defense industry," said student Lt. Col. Rob Gerlach, an Army Reserve officer who works in the private corporate sector when not in uniform.

"Going forward, I'll have a different lens for viewing contractors and partners, and a better understanding for working together," he said, noting a couple of ah-ha moments, such as challenges in retaining talent.

In seminar 7, Prof. Chuck Allen linked the Industry Day insights to both the Defense Management and Strategic Leadership curriculum.

"[L]eaders with different backgrounds, and more in the afternoon session, reflected three leadership meta-competencies," said Allen, listing: "conceptual mastery; technical understanding of systems and processes necessary to solve problems; and interpersonal skill in building change and influencing and communicating to effect consensus."

Phillips, of ManTech International, discussed national security in terms of generational change, to manage near-peer threats in global technology and digitally dominate the battlefield. He touched on the acquisition environment how we deal with rapid change and getting technology into the war fighters' hands and the transformational innovation with other transactional authorities that work in real-time between commercial and government.

Col. Michael Zick developed the concept and participant roster for Industry Day. He emphasized the mutually beneficial relationship between industry and the warfighter. "Neither one could be successful without the other, so the better we communicate and understand one another's needs and challenges, the more effective we both will be," said Zick.

Vizzarri of AVT Simulation represented characteristics of working with small business, such as flat decision-making structure, and outlined the way small business gets work from the U.S. Government.

US Army CECOM's Kilgo offered a strategic orientation, addressing the modernization effort to retool, and maintain the next generation of systems. He segued this into the organic industrial base partnership with industry and how both the military and industry can leverage each other's strengths.