

International officers at US Army War College interact with leaders at U.S. Unified Commands

By Robert Martin 19 April 2019



Mr. Joseph Martin, director of the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance, engages in conversation with Col. Federico Bernacca from the country of Italy, Feb. 26, 2019.

Each year, the Army War College International Fellows divide into two groups. One group heads to the southeast and the other to the western United States. Participation by the 76 international students in the Unified Command Course is intended to strengthen alliances, exchange ideas of effective leadership in coalition operations, and to build relationships.

“Our group had the opportunity to interact with the CENTCOM commander and the Commander of Fleet Forces Command,” said Colombian Col. Ronald Diaz Reyes, an International Fellow. “From these two flag officers, I could understand how to link the operational level with the strategic level in order to contribute to accomplish the strategic guidance.

“They explained to us how to apply strategic leadership in contested operational environments in order to lead an organization that needs to

said that among allied countries, he said.

The international fellows who went to the Southeast visited the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command and NATO's Allied Command Transformation in Virginia. Traveling further south, they visited the 45th Space Wing and NASA in Port Canaveral and U.S. Central Command and Special Operations Command in Tampa next. The final stop in Miami included an engagement with the leadership of U.S. Southern Command, and a panel discussion at Florida International University.

"The visits to all of the Unified Combatant Commands are very useful," said Amb. Donald Koran, who is the Diplomatic Advisor to the Commandant. "No other country has anything similar to our four star geographic combatant commands, so it was all new to our International Fellows.[The trip] provided a link between the Washington-level policy and the tactical and operational activities on the ground."

"The fellows learned that even when DoD doesn't have authorities, it can provide a crucial support to those entities that do," said Koran. "The fact that one of the senior SOUTHCOM officers is a Colombian general and AWC graduate resonated with the group."

The western directed International Fellows visited San Diego's U.S. 3rd Fleet, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol and the defense contractor General Atomics Aeronautical before heading to Honolulu and for a visit to U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. There, they visited Joint Interagency Task Force West, and the U.S. Army Pacific National Disaster Center and participated in seminar with students at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies.

"The UCC trip was about interacting with leaders at the strategic level," said Brig. Gen. Prashant Srivastava of the Indian Army, who traveled to San Diego and Honolulu. "Acquiring their take and perspective on some of the complex issues that we confront or are likely to confront ahead."

"The strategic leaders that we interacted with 'lived' the qualities which we have studied," said the Indian Fellow, after returning to the Army War College. "They were great communicators, had a vision for the organization and their stress on mission command and mentoring subordinates was evident during the dialogue."

"Their understanding of global complexities and their emphasis on partnership and interoperability was evident. Most threats are not regionally confined but are trans-regional, which merits unified action employing all the elements of national power," he said.

Once back at Carlisle, the fellows shared insights with each other.

“Each student shared their thoughts by writing a personal blog so we could share our own experiences and provide feedback of every visit. I believe that is a terrific method to boost critical thinking in future senior military advisors,” Reyes noted.

The UCC course provides International Fellows an appreciation for security challenges and decisions that strategic leaders face in the contemporary environment.

“The intent of the Unified Command Course is to provide our international officers with opportunities to explore how leaders from the Combatant Commands and Army Subordinate Component Commands, civilian industry, and academia view the strategic challenges and opportunities within their regional or global purview,” said Col. Frank Intini, director of the International Fellows Program.”

“The course also seeks to enable students to understand how these institutions collaborate and cooperate to shape how the U.S. holistically perceives and responds to regional and global situations,” he said.