

Chief of the National Guard Bureau to USAWC Grads - Innovate, adapt, compete

By Carol Kerr 26 July 2019



Officers of New Jersey's United States Army and Air National Guard and Reserve stand with friends and family members following their graduation from the Army War College Distance Education Program July 26, 2019.



Graduation speaker, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Gen. Joseph L. Lengyel's remarks emphasized the Army War College graduate's necessary commitment to leading change July 26, 2019.



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CARLISLE BARRACKS, Pa. (July 26, 2019) -- The graduation ceremony for 367 members of the U.S. Army War College Distance Class of 2019 was a personal triumph of “amazing accomplishment,” according to Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem. It was equally a time to celebrate a new sense of purpose for the assignments that await this cohort of U.S. military officers of Active, Reserve and Guard components, international officers, and civilians of multiple federal agencies.

History and tradition abounded at the graduation event today on the Carlisle Barracks field that witnessed a parade of Army units and Army schools since 1757. The ceremony began with a traditional artillery salute, by the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, for graduation speaker Gen.

Joseph E. Lengyel, Chief of the National Guard Bureau. USAWC President Dr. Jacqueline Whitt led the faculty procession, while the Carlisle Town Band played traditional military tunes, and Prof. Bert Tussing sang the national anthem. The 367 students walked the Wheelock Bandstand stage, named for the bandleader during the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1890-1919. They received the master's degree of Strategic Studies as well as the traditional USAWC diploma earned by earlier leaders and thinkers, like Creighton Abrams, Norman Schwarzkopf, and Dwight Eisenhower.

Today was a better-than-perfect day in late July – a stark contrast to the hot and steamy day when the student body walked the Gettysburg battlefield in a staff ride that engendered empathy for Civil War Soldiers' well-being, and understanding of the 19th-century strategic leaders' assessments and decision-making.

Today was a great day to be at Carlisle Barracks, the home of the Army War College since 1951, said Kem, to the graduates and their families as he spoke of a new level of success – possible because their educational experience was neither historic nor traditional.

“Thanks for preparing for your important future roles as the stewards of our profession and the strategic leaders our military and our nation needs,” said Kem.

“Two years ago when you started the program, we challenged you to make the big leap from the operational and tactical to the strategic,” said Kem. We asked you to make the jump and become a true lifelong learner, a better thinker, and a better leader. We told you the techniques and skills forming the basis of your previous success were no longer sufficient. Thanks for rising to the challenge.”

Gen. Lengyel linked the graduates' two-year study of complexity in today's national security issues and multi-domain operations to the challenges that await.

“I know in that time you engaged in a wide range of topics focused on national security, and as you dove deep into the relevant topics upon which you wrote your papers, you discovered how to think strategically,” said Lengyel. “Your organizations will look to you to effectively communicate your understanding and vision to help set the strategic context of the global issues around us.

“I also trust you made lasting relationships and networks of strategically-minded leaders and thinkers with whom you will continue to

incubate the very ideas and concepts that will drive innovation and change.

Lengyel's remarks emphasized the graduates' necessary commitment to leading change.

"Adapting to the 21st-century security environment requires a significant and disciplined shift in how we do business," he said. "For while we are not newcomers to great power rivalry, the complexity of the competition space is far more challenging to navigate.... We must alter course ... to compete successfully within this transregional, multi-domain, multifunctional environment."

"In this era of great power competition, you will be required to think well beyond our typical near-term planning and programming cycles," said Lengyel. "You will need to anticipate how technology and innovation will evolve and, then, with speed and agility harness its potential – before our adversaries do. You will need to understand how all the levers of national power and influence must work together to achieve national objectives, and you must endeavor to synchronize them.

"Finally, you will need to become a true believer in the value of partnerships, and guard those critical networks and alliances against unraveling – for this truly is our greatest advantage," he said.

Through relationships, you will produce some of your most meaningful work in the years ahead, said Lengyel, in a nod to the collaborative problem-solving engendered by the war college curriculum.

This Class of 2019 included three officers from allied and partner nations: Germany, Netherlands, and Lithuania, fully integrated into a joint and multi-component student body: 33 active Army, 134 Army National Guard, 129 Army Reserve; 9 Active Marines and 14 Marine Reserve; 1 Active Navy and 3 Navy Reserve; 2 Active Air Force with 1 Reserve and 1 Air National Guard; and 38 students from the departments of State, Army, Justice, Homeland Security, Defense, intelligence agencies and Congressional staff.

The graduation was attended by a host of Adjutants General, General Officers, official colleagues and the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, from Delaware: Since Reserve and Guard members of the Distance Class continue in both full-time job and military duty, their military colleagues are especially understanding of the commitment and sacrifice that the Army War College diploma represents.

Pennsylvania was represented in the class by four Army Reserve and four

Pennsylvania Guard officers. Maj. Gen. Tim Hilty, USAWC Class of 2005, is Pennsylvania's Assistant Adjutant General. "It's a great opportunity to come down to Carlisle and see our officers graduate. They've got a bright future. Every one of them competes very hard to get to this position – and they competed hard for two years to get thru here – because one of the graduates is currently deployed to Poland and he came back for two weeks and will go back to Poland. Hard work for every one of them -- and their families.

U.S. Senator Pat Toomey's state director Bob DeSousa acknowledged the transition to readiness for strategic leadership. "I think the distance learning is especially important. These are good people who put in two long years learning army strategy and it's really a huge accomplishment for them to get this diploma," he said. "It makes them an integral part of the fighting force."

Chap (Brig. Gen.) Ed Brandt of the National Guard Bureau and member of the Delaware National Guard focused on the people-first commitment of all military leaders. "This provides a background and depth so these leaders can begin planning at the strategic level to meet the needs of soldiers, airmen and servicemembers across all [components]. Because we care about families and service members, we want to do it in a strategic way," said Brandt, who noted the five chaplains in the class.

The two-year curriculum was primarily online learning, with two resident phases at Carlisle. The work spanned international relations studies, military planning, military exercises, case studies, and individual projects.

Four students were singled out for excellence in their strategic research and writing: Lt. Col. James K. Perrin, Jr., for "Land Power Modernization in an Era of Change;" Col. Robert A. Gleckler, for "Pragmatism of Paranoia: United States Approach to European Defense Institutions;" Col. Joseph L. Leardi, for "United States Army Foreign Police Assistance;" and Col. Rex A. Eiserer, for "A Proposed Risk Framework for Army Modernization."

Lengyel pronounced the graduates to be, "thoroughly tested and found completely worthy of the distinction of 'Graduate of the United States Army War College.'"

"... I am inspired by all of you.

"We are the greatest military force the world has ever seen. And our competitors watch us, learn from us, emulate us – all for a reason. We are simply the best. But history is replete with great militaries that were

relegated to the graveyard of complacency. So we must overcome this tendency.

“We must continue to innovate and adapt. We are a nation of risk-takers. We thrive on competition. It’s in our DNA and it’s what drives us to greatness,” Lengyel concluded.

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