

## West Point cadets build important connections with Army War College international fellows

By Brandon O'Connor, U.S. Military Academy 08 October 2019



*USMA Class of 2020 Cadet Adaya Queen talks to fellow cadets and visiting International Fellows of the Army War College Class of 2020: Lt. Col. Berat Shala of Kosovo (front row, right); and (back row, l to r) Lt. Col. Velibor Bakrac of Montenegro and L*

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As cadets at the U.S. Military Academy prepare to become the future leaders of the Army, they must be ready to work alongside America's allies and partners to combat threats in an increasingly interconnected world.

Building the connections and skills necessary to operate in a joint force starts during their cadet careers, including opportunities for American cadets to study abroad at foreign military academies. Foreign cadets from countries throughout the world also attend the academy for four years as members of the Corps of Cadets or take part in semester-long programs at West Point.

Currently, there are 59 cadets from 32 countries across the four classes attending West Point for the entire 47-month experience through the international program.

On Oct. 2, those cadets, along with select members of the Corps of Cadets, were able to meet with the current class of international fellows attending the Army War College during the international officers' visit to West Point.

"It is amazingly powerful," Maj. Gen. John Kem, commandant of the U.S. Army War College, said. "The students here, both U.S. and international students, get to go see somebody who's a lieutenant colonel promotable or a colonel, someone who's 15 to 25 years forward in their career, and interact with them away from their country and away from how they operate there. It allows conversations you can't necessarily have in every country the same way."

The current class of international fellows includes 79 senior officers from 75 of America's allies and partners. The visit to West Point was one of two they are making to Army commissioning sources along with an earlier visit to an ROTC program.

The daylong visit included a command brief highlighting the academy and how it works along with visits to the Modern War Institute, Simon Center for Professional Military Ethics and the Combating Terrorism Center.

During their visit, the international fellows also met with foreign cadets from their home countries and others in their geographic area along with American cadets to talk about the West Point honor system and how the academy develops leaders of character.

"I think this was valuable because I got to hear what the honor system and character development process in academies from different countries are," Class of 2020 Cadet Arelena Shala, from Kosovo, said. "That was valuable because some of the officers brought some really good points about being a team player and humility as a key component of your character development that I do think West Point touches upon quite a bit."

The cadets and foreign officers had the chance to talk about issues that come up when teaching honor, how the rules are enforced and the importance of the West Point honor code when working to develop leaders of character.

"We actually had a chance to talk about what honor means as an officer," Class of 2020 Cadet Jae Wook Park, from South Korea, said. "It was really

interesting because a lot of officers from abroad had a common concept of honor and why it is important to being an officer. Not just because they are seen as a good person, but because of all the burdens, accountability and responsibility given to you as an officer."

The visit concluded with a USMA international day social that brought together the visiting officers, West Point's international cadets and faculty as well as representatives from West Point's various culture enrichment clubs.

The clubs displayed food and dress from their countries along with performing dances and playing music highlighting their cultures. The goal of the event, and the entire visit, was to build connections between future American and international officers and their current counterparts to enable the United States and its allies to face the challenges of the future.

"One of the challenges given to officers these days is not only a single battlefield situation, but multi-domain operations," Park said. "At the end of the day, the military is more like a human resources business. So, having an actual partnership, face to face discussion, and having exposure to those systems, I think it's really good to help build those allied partnerships. Not only on the paper or the contract, but also men to men and people to people. It is really good for this kind of mutual partnership in human areas as well."