

## Citizen-Guests provide civil-military capstone to challenge Army War College Distance Studies

By Elena Patton, Public Affairs Office 22 July 2021



*Second year distance education students engage in experiential education, strategizing war games between seminars.*

The 15th Annual Commandant's National Security Program anchored the resident phase of the Army War College Distance class of 2021, July 20-22.

The forum consists of distinguished speakers discussing their views on issues of the nation's security and welfare with students and faculty of the U.S. Army War College Distance Education Program and invited guests. CNSP creates dynamic, informed civil-military engagement: guests interact with future senior leaders, and the students learn more about the people they serve.

Nominated by the students in the class and invited by the College leadership, the guests are non-military personnel: academics, attorneys,

law enforcement officers, business leaders, and government officials. Embedded in the seminars, these guests participate in the discussions following lectures and presentations, exchanging experiences and insights with the students.

On July 21, Dr. Risa Brooks, associate professor of Political Science at Marquette University and former scholar at West Point's Modern War Institute, engaged virtually with students. Her discussion centered on military professionalism through the lens of civil-military relations. She outlined the norms, the theories behind them, the strengths and weaknesses of those norms, and a starting point for officers to reconceptualize those norms.

"She wants the military and strategic leaders to recognize that the positions they hold are political tools. Therefore, strategic military leaders need to have an increased political acumen," said one student, identifying the main takeaway from the presentation.

### *CNSP Guests Weigh In*

Dr. David Betz, professor of War in the Modern World at King's College in London, also presented to the second-year distance education students and CNSP guest about "infowar," July 22. His presentation focused on answering the who, what, where, and how of information warfare. Discussing the Gulf War and Global War on Terror, Betz outlined the three takes ON infowar, identifying the means, focus, objectives, and actors of each take. He concluded with a current assessment and expectations for the future.

Following the presentation, War College guest Adele Rapport, director of the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, and Dr. Amin Tarzi, director of Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University, joined a seminar for discussion.

"The most interesting part of the morning was the conversation among the students and their perspectives," said Rapport. "They were very respectful. They had different opinions that were thoughtful and very well-informed.

"In this face-to-face environment, there was this fabulous flow of ideas in a way that was very understandable."

"I really wish we could have something like this at our institution because I think the combination of bringing in outside people and engaging with a

military audience is very beneficial in two ways,” said Tarzi. “It allows the public to understand what is going on within the military in a place where they can actually have discussions with one another. It also allows us to see, hear, and work the whole of government approach.

“The discussion was enriched by this duality of perspectives,” said Tarzi.

“Our CNSP guests both added an important civilian perspective to our discussion,” said student Lt. Col. Mitch Sieglock. “Dr. Tarzi’s insight on Iran and the middle east region gave an enhanced perspective to a region that most of the students in our seminar only understand from a military standpoint.”

### *The Students’ Perspectives*

The student body consists primarily of Reserve and Guard officers, balancing their civilian jobs and military duties with their two-year studies at USAWC. Yet, throughout the two years, seminar structure and online forums leverage the unique experiences of Army officers and the Air Force, Navy, Marine, international and civilian students comprising almost a quarter of the class.

Student Lt. Col. Timothy Ozmer remembered juggling studies and full-time duties as the Deputy of Operations for the Washington Army National Guard. Three months into his studies, he took command of a reconnaissance squadron. Within a couple of months, his unit deployed to Jordan for 11 months, while continuing his War College studies.

During this hectic time, Ozmer devoted Monday and Wednesday nights and the majority of weekends to his studies. When it came to lectures and presentations, he had the added challenge of negotiating different time zones.

“I feel like I have hiked the Appalachian or Pacific Crest Trail, and I just dropped my bag into the bed of the pick-up,” said Ozmer, when asked what it felt to be at the end of his distance education journey.

“My faculty instructors were very accommodating, very helpful,” he said. “They even worked with me through a lockdown, communications blackout.”

“This education has given me the tools to be an effective strategic level leader,” said Ozmer.

“We develop the strategic guidance for the next five years for the Washington National Guard. This AWC education has broadened my perspective -- what are the questions and how do I frame them to my leadership to enable them to craft the guidance that will take the organization in the direction they want to go ?” he said about applying this knowledge.

Student Lt. Col. Corey Swanson balanced his War College studies with his civilian job as a county attorney, his military duties as a Deputy Brigade Commander in the Montana National Guard, baseball coaching, and other family responsibilities.

He had completed both components of the Command and General Staff College in a distance format, but this program was more challenging, he said.

There very times when the chaos of his civilian job dominated his time, he said. A day before his first major War College assignment was due, a homicide occurred in his county. “I thought I was going to have to defer for a year . . . but my faculty instructors worked with me,” said Swanson.

“What I really appreciated about that is that they understood that we all have full-time jobs, families, and lives, and they weren’t intending to treat this as a weeding out process,” said Swanson. “They want us to succeed.”

The broader view of how the Department of Defense works will benefit him in his military and civilian jobs because each requires interaction with state government officials and federal agencies, noted Swanson.