

War College students from US, Chile, Sweden merged for strategic wargaming at Carlisle

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CARLISLE, Pa -- From competition to conflict, from warfighting to application of informational, economic, and diplomatic strategies, war college students exercise strategic-level decision-making in a yearlong educational program that builds to an experiential wargame. With JCLASS, the U.S. Army War College turned its wargaming center into a living laboratory for senior military officers. Students converged on the USAWC Center for Strategic Leadership, May 1, for six days to exercise knowledge, critical thinking, strategic resourcing, and joint and multinational collaboration. Students role-played leaders and planners of all US geographical commands, NORDIC Command, and NATO in the world of 2032, when problem sets ranged from cyber and terror threats to escalatory actions by would-be antagonists.

The Joint Land, Air, Sea, Space Strategic Program is an elective curriculum at the nation's senior Service colleges – Army, Air, Naval,

National SSC— as well as Chile's and Sweden's war college equivalents. After a yearlong 'home station' curriculum with special briefings and preparatory work, the JLASS wargame took place May 1-6.

The pronounced international character of this year's game - the first at Carlisle - reflected the realities of modern warfare. Student players represented 60 countries. The cross-SSC collaboration included more than 150 students who tested themselves and learned from each other. Primarily senior field grade officers, the role-players included interagency players who heightened reality with their expertise. In another first, the wargaming center here enabled a hybrid experience; the Chilean students and Distance Education students of the Army War College participated remotely. This first iteration of the JLASS Game at Carlisle built on the experience of many prior years at Maxwell Air Force Base's LeMay Center.

The scenarios themselves were complex. Set 10 years out, they challenged students to integrate many layers of war college studies into decisions and actions. They challenged the students and reinforced the war colleges' curricula.

"I learned a lot about operational planning, and strategic thinking, learning the most from other students," said Finish Lt. Col. Time Hanninen, who role played the US AFRICOM J3

These scenarios are designed to prepare students for what they will encounter in their next assignments. "Some of us will be in a position to influence global competition in the future. Therefore, JLASS gives a first insight into what this will mean and the responsibilities this will bring," said Netherlands' Col. Nettetert Umberto Stam.

No scenario existed in a vacuum, as student decision-makers wrestled with global force management and resourcing priorities, with implications for other combatant commands of any given course of action for these and other scenario:

- Russian invasion of Ukraine and other Russian challenges to global peace and security
- Chinese military escalation throughout the Asia/Pacific region
- Competition and militarization in the Arctic
- Threats to the U.S. Homeland caused by state and non-state actors
- Defense support to civil authorities in the U.S. Homeland
- U.S. and partner support to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
- Opportunities for increased cooperation with Western Hemispheric partners
- Support to and teaming with African partners to enable peace and security in Africa

- Containing Iranian efforts to destabilize the Middle East
- Ensuring free access to the global commons (across the sea, cyber and space)
- Ensuring the protection of women, girls and young boys; empowering women in the peace and security process.

The wargaming design of the experience incorporated consequences of their decisions. Consequences included the response of other agencies and countries (partners, antagonists, and others) and the adjudication of the instructors who facilitated the game. For example, when USAWC Provost Dr. James Breckenridge role-played POTUS, he took briefings from his student-manned National Security Council. His notional presidential guidance was, itself, an experiential learning event. Ultimately, the game reinforced the war college curriculum, noted Brian Foster, USAWC JCLASS instructor.