

Foreign officers share knowledge during USMA visit

By Jorge Garcia, USMA 09 October 2022



The U.S. Military Academy welcomed 77 international officers from 74 countries as it hosted the annual U.S. Army War College International Fellows visit on Sept. 28 at Eisenhower Hall and the Haig Room at the Jefferson Library. photo by Jorge Garcia

After the event in Eisenhower Hall concluded, the participants walked to the Haig Room at the Jefferson Library to exchange knowledge and share cultural mannerisms in an informal setting. photo by Jorge Garcia

As military technology, tactics, and cultures evolve worldwide, the U.S. Military Academy continues its mission to foster relations and stay interconnected with its international allies as it hosted the U.S. Army War College International Fellows visit on Sept. 28 at Eisenhower Hall and the Haig Room in Jefferson Library.

During the event, 77 international officers from 74 countries learned about facets of U.S. military life and American culture, spoke on the ethics of war, and shared some key points about culture and how it influences military stratagems, among other topics.

The fellow for the first time watched real-world scenarios on a screen based on past combat events in which U.S. Soldiers were faced with a critical ultimatum that would influence the mission's success.

“This notion of ethics for this particular exercise — this is the first time I think we’ve done this, and I’ve been doing this job 22 years,” Kevin Bremer, the chief of the International Student Management office, said. “I think most militaries have a pretty strong ethical background. Culturally, though, sometimes those ethics could be left or right, of where we stand and again, not to say that there is a right or wrong, it’s just might be different.”

After evaluating the scenarios and discussing perspective courses of action they would’ve taken to complete the mission, participants broke into a questions and answers segment with Dr. Peter Kilner, the William E. Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethics Chair for Character Development.

“There is no right answer,” Kilner said. “Remember, good military professionals can disagree about what should be done in the circumstance. That’s what professionals do, whether it’s medicine or whether it’s law, older, seasoned, wise professionals engage in conversation with less experienced people, but as equals — as professionals...”

Lt. Col. Juan Estaban from the Spanish Armed Forces asked, “How often do you practice this exercise with your candidates? I ask because I think we should probably practice this in our country.?”

Kilner explained that West Point conducts these training events twice a semester, which occurs four times yearly.

“...When we do this, it requires 144 classrooms, 144 platoons,” Kilner responded. “So, some of you have captains, majors and colonels at your tables. These are all some of the people who do this, but it’s pretty resource intensive because it involves all the seniors and a minimum of 144 faculty members.”

Bremer said that as the international officers learn more about the United States, its people, culture and traditions, they get to see the essential qualities that shape the country militarily and nationally. They also get a deep dive into the multiple ways in which the U.S. Army commissions officers outside of West Point.

“The aim is to expose them to facets of American life, with 11 educational institutions of higher learning being one of those facets,” Bremer said. “So,

the military academy, U.S. higher education and the notion that the military academy is not the only source for commissioning in our Army is one of the cruxes we want to hone in on.”

After the event in Eisenhower Hall concluded, the participants walked to the Haig Room at the Jefferson Library to exchange knowledge and share cultural mannerisms in an informal setting.

Bremer added that, hopefully, the international participants take back all the knowledge they gathered during the event to their countries with a clearer perspective on American culture.

“We don’t try to sugarcoat anything. We don’t try and say this is better than what you’re doing back home. We’re just saying, this is how we do it,” Bremer said.