

Assignment Leavenworth

Department employees study at Army college

/// By John Dyson



The Army's Command and General Staff College, in Leavenworth, Kan., offers mid-level Foreign Service officers and specialists and Civil Service employees the opportunity to earn a master's degree during a year of study and join a list of alumni that includes former Secretaries of State George C. Marshall and Colin L. Powell.

Recent alumni include Daniel Ricci, now an assistant political advisor at the U.S. Africa Command in Stuttgart, Germany, and Pedro Erviti, an assistant political advisor at the U.S. Southern Command in Miami.

Another alumnus, Brent Brown, went on to serve as an assistant regional security officer in Afghanistan, where he worked with American and foreign military forces preparing for the opening of the U.S. consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat.

Priceless Experience

"I enjoyed making friends with the individuals in the class and maintain contact with most of them," Brown said. "I maintain contact with many of the foreign officers as well and have called upon them from time to time to assist with official matters. One simply can't put a price on the excellent relationships and liaison gained from this course."

Students from the Department of State fill an important role at the college.

"I often had the opportunity to discuss with students and faculty the Department of State's role in interagency operations, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan," said 2006 graduate Gene Del Bianco of the U.S. Embassy in Manila. Del Bianco, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan before attending the college, said the school helps military leaders understand the Department's importance in volatile regions.

The benefits to Department employees include learning about the Army from the inside out, said 2010 graduate



Top: Department employees receiving 2010 certificates for study at the college included Sasha Mehra, center; Ernesto Pizzaro, second from right at front; and Daniel Ricci, third from right at rear. **Bottom:** Students attending the college from other nations' military forces have lunch during a field trip to the U.S. Pacific Command.

Sasha Mehra of the Bureau of International Organizations. Mehra, one of the first graduates to earn a certificate in Overseas Contingency Operations—Planning, said her cohort group "studied Army doctrine, worked side-by-side with officers to plan complex military operations and acquired planning and critical thinking skills."

As a result, she continued, she and her cohorts can now "liaise with our military counterparts with confidence, understanding and respect, and understand the complexity of planning military and peacekeeping operations and the Department of Defense's capabilities and limitations."

Key Role

Brown said the Department's students provide information on what they do every day. He remembers defending the Foreign Service during a class discussion.

"No one had anything good to say about the Foreign Service, but by the end of the day members of my class were complaining about how we are underfunded and

proposing ways they could assist our efforts overseas," he said.

According to Lieutenant General William B. Caldwell IV, employees of the departments of Defense and State and other government professionals often don't get exposure to other U.S. government cultures until they're in senior positions or studying at the war colleges or National Defense University. Caldwell, past commander of the college's parent organization, said this exposure should begin at the eight- or 10-year marks in these employees' careers through an education like that offered at staff and command colleges.

The current commanding general of the college's parent organization, Lieutenant General Robert L. Caslen Jr., told the college's incoming class to use its year of study to build contacts with their U.S. military classmates and other students, including the 115 international military officers from 81 countries.

The Command and General Staff College has three schools.

Most interagency students attend the Command and General Staff School, a 44-week course that covers the basic capabilities and constraints of the U.S. military and interagency community. The course also has segments on planning for complex operations and on military history, and includes elective courses in such specialties as area studies; diplomatic, economic and interagency theory; intelligence; and special operations.

Critical Thinking

The School of Advanced Military Studies is a follow-on school that focuses on educating American and international officers as leaders who can think critically at the strategic and operational levels and solve complex, ambiguous problems. Because the school is the Army's think tank for planning, its civilian students include those with planning experience in the Department's Office of Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

The third school, the School for Command Preparation, develops and supports the operations of the Army's field-grade commanders and their senior enlisted advisors, including the command teams of the U.S. military's joint force commanders. This three-week course is open to Department officers who will be working with military counterparts. Ideally, they and their counterparts should attend together.

For more information on attending the Leavenworth training, see <http://www.cgsc.edu> and the Bureau of Human Resources' annual Foreign Service and Civil Service Long-Term Training Opportunities Booklet on the Web at <http://intranet.hr.state.sbu/Workforce/Assignment/Pages/foreignserviceandcivilservice.aspx>. ■

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