

JLASS program: Strategic negotiations highlight role of diplomacy

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Army War College Commandant Maj. Gen. John Kem sits in during the South Sudan ISCNE with the delegates from Ethiopia and the Sudan people's Liberation Movement - North



Members of the Russian Delegation confer before their presentation to the UN concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh crises during the ISCNE at Collins Hall, Carlisle Barracks

Army War College JLASS students tested and refined skills in leadership, team dynamics, and negotiations during an experiential education event, the International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise, or ISCNE.

The strategic crisis scenario challenged two student working groups to address the deadlocked situations in Nagorno-Karabakh and South Sudan. In the ISCNE gaming construct, students who signed on to the Joint Land, Air, Sea, Strategic (JLASS) special program to hone campaign planning skills found themselves applying a wide range of war college lessons as they represented state and non-state actors in a series of negotiations, trying to move forward on the dilemmas.

"It's a great educational opportunity for the students," said retired Amb. Dan Shields, who contributed diplomatic realism in the exercise. "They are trying

to solve a problem that doesn't have an easy diplomatic solution, but they get to try. They get to see if they can inch along forward just a bit through this process.

"The point isn't what results comes out of this simulated conference but the experience of trying to solve this kind of problem. I think that will help them achieve one of the goals of the Army War College which is preparing national security strategists who can help the President – and Washington, more broadly -- using various instruments of power to make progress on national security," said Shields, who contributed extensive foreign service experience as mediator and mentor. The former U.S. Ambassador to Brunei provided confidential instructions to each team in the exercise, coached them, and evaluated students throughout this dynamic scenario.

The student perspective

"Students are placed into roles as members of a diplomatic mission on country-teams invited to the summit," said Chap. (Lt. Col.) Bradley Hanna. "The teams are charged by their governments with negotiating an advantageous solution based on their confidential instructions and publically and privately held positions.

"Students work as part of their team to negotiate the best solution in a tough, real-world, stalemated conflict," said the chaplain. "I had options when picking my electives. Do I pick a subject in my wheelhouse or do I want to stretch myself learn more? I knew I was weak in campaign planning, so I decide to jump on the JCLASS course."

"We could bring to bear a military solution ... it's the gray areas that are the tougher ones to deal with. When you are dealing with national strategy, war termination, you learn that there are a lot of things you would like to be black and white and there not, which is much more difficult," said Hanna.

Hanna discovered a bonus in the negotiation exercise. The Oklahoma National Guardsman noted that his state program partner is Azerbaijan. "The Nagorno-Karabakh region is among Azerbaijan's most difficult problems. So this has given me real-world situational awareness on some significant issue our state partner faces."

South African Army Lt. Col. Emmanuel Sithole is one of the USAWC international fellows comprising roughly half of the JCLASS student body.

"I have had some experience in the training environment where we do exercises like this, and there are a few things I came across for the first

time here, he said. I have learned the importance of bilateral meetings before the main negotiation session. There are milestones you want to reach during bilateral meetings, you bargain there and set the scene for the main negotiations,” said Sithole, who’s already planning to bring JCLASS principles and processes to the South African armed forces.

“The international fellows bring regional perspectives that you can’t get by reading an article. They live the issues that we talk about in ISCNE exercises,” said Verenna. “International fellows and U.S. officers learn from one another as they recognize that there are different ways to think through a problem – and the net effect is a deeper appreciation of the issue.”

JCLASS puts the D in experiential DIME learning

JCLASS director Col. Tony Verenna introduced the ISCNE this year to inject realistic diplomatic insights to further arm the students for the Maxwell exercise and for the students’ post-graduate responsibilities.

“International fellows and U.S. officers learn from one another as they recognize that there are different ways to think through a problem – and the net effect is a deeper appreciation of the issue.” said Verenna. “In the JCLASS special program, we hammer home the idea of global integration – and the ISCNE experience provides a unique way to do this.”

The negotiation exercise requires students to apply Operational Design Framing to assess and understand the strategic environment, he said. It calls for thoughtful application of planning and communication skills in the negotiation process. And, ultimately, it demands attention to team dynamics outside of their base JCLASS seminar teams, added Verenna.

The USAWC Joint Land, Air, Sea, Strategic (JCLASS) special program is an elective program for those students who seek to further develop their campaign planning skills, as well as the skills and understanding necessary for thoughtful planning across the diplomatic, informational, military and economic (**DIME**) elements of national power. The elective course spans six months – a double elective -- with instruction, planning, coordinating with JCLASS students at other senior service colleges.

The JCLASS program culminates in a 6-day exercise at Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama, when the 52 Army War College students engage in a complex strategic planning exercise alongside students from the Air and Naval War Colleges and the Swedish Defense University.

USAWC wargaming department guides exercise development, execution

The Department of Strategic Wargaming (DSW) employs wargames, exercises, and simulations to assist in the development of strategic leaders and advisors, foster strategic innovation, improve strategic planning, and advance understanding of strategic issues for the Army, the Joint Force, and the Nation. DSW conducts a variety of exercises and electives to include the International Strategic Crisis Negotiation Exercise (ISCNE); and the Joint Land, Air, and Sea, Strategic Special Program.

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