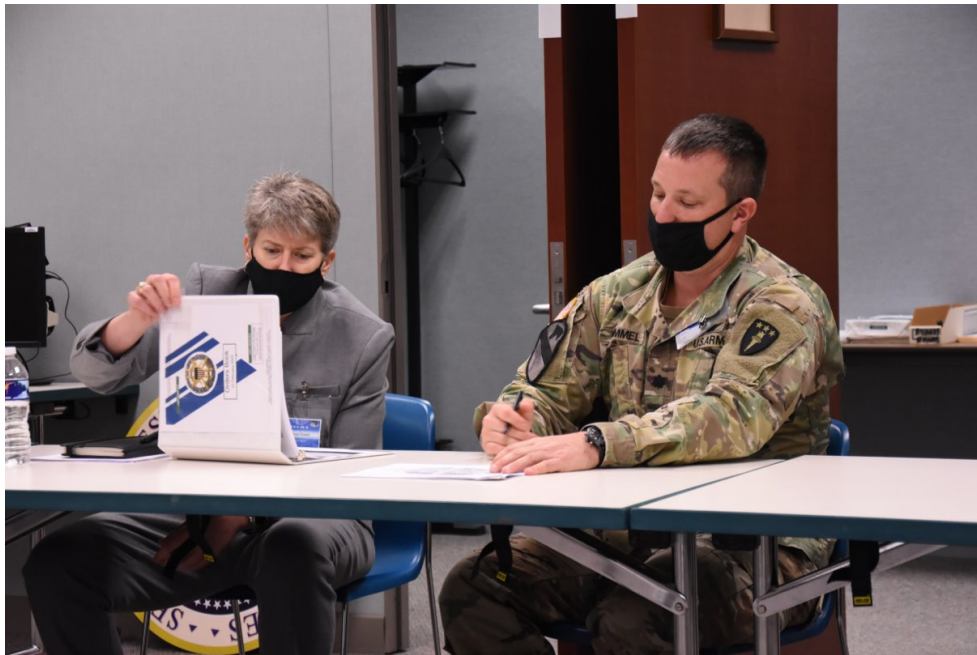


Army War College expands strategic wargame for joint and international war college students

By Col. Tony Verenna and Brian Foster, Army War College JCLASS Exercise Directors 03 May 2021



Roleplaying the Secretary of Defense, COL Stacy Tomic (left) receives a SECDEF Orders Book briefing from Army Lt. Col. Brian Hummel, as Student J35 Global Force Manager.



Students represent USAFRICOM planners building strategy for the Sahel and South Sudan in the ay2021 JCLASS exercise. El Salvador Lt. Col. Roberto Guevara Bardales (l) & Army Lt. Col. Cedric Lee served as USAFRICOM J2 & USAID Senior Development Advisor



Exercise "President" Dr. Jim Breckenridge, AWC Provost, and student Chairman of the Joint Chiefs conference online with National Security Council members played by National Defense University students.

Joint, combined and virtual - a challenging wargaming exercise revealed how well students master Senior Service College knowledge and strategic planning processes and, simultaneously, how the Army War College executes a Defense leaders' version of massive online gaming.

The Joint Land, Air, Sea, Strategic Special Program Exercise recently immersed 122 senior officers into a complex global scenario set more than 10 years into the future. The JCLASS-SP capstone learning event aligned with the Joint Chiefs' guidance for "live, virtual, constructive, and gaming methodologies with wargames and exercises involving multiple sets and repetitions to achieve primary learning outcomes."

JCLASS presented multiple, near-simultaneous global dilemmas that required coordination and collaboration across US government departments and with allies and partners. The problems ranged from

competition to conflict regarding the Baltics, China and Taiwan, Iran and the Strait of Hormuz, Africa and insurgents, and natural disaster within the United States.

“This is the best learning experience of the past two years for students at the Swedish War College,” said Lt. Col. Anders Oltorp, that college’s lead instructor, about working the Arctic scenario. His students worked with counterparts at the Army and Navy War Colleges, National Defense University, and Swedish Defense University to address threats and to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration in the Arctic region.

“It was one hell of an exercise,” said Lt. Cmdr. Erik Dahlstrom, Swedish student who acted as chief of staff for a notional NORDIC Command: part of the Multinational Arctic Fusion Cell which enabled global integration of multiple COCOMs. That multinational team included Army War College distance education students based in Azerbaijan, California, D.C., and Germany working across many time zones to collaborate about Arctic strategy and policy with students stationed at the war colleges in Carlisle, Pa., Newport, RI, D.C. and Stockholm, Sweden. Participation of students in the distance learning program and a partner’s war college were successful pilot programs – and will be expanded next year.

New this year was significant shift in ‘how’ the game played out. Traditionally, hundreds of U.S. war college students co-located for a week at the U.S. Air Force’s Lemay Center. This year, the fully virtual event reproduced the geographical distance as well as the planning processes and decision-making challenges faced by the Services and Joint Staff and joint and international commands in actual strategic crises.

“Strategic wargaming is an important element of experiential learning at the Army War College,” said Maj. Gen. David Hill, acting Army War College Commandant. “Our students build knowledge and skill by interacting with other senior level colleges and international entities by participating in special programs like JCLASS.”

The student challenge is to apply previous learning to analyze the notional threats, recognize strategic implications, address resource constraints, and collaborate across commands, agencies, and countries. The objective is to develop courses of action that combine diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of national power.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Steve Smith served as the exercise Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs and remarked, “JCLASS absolutely tied in all the Army War College Core Curriculum which reinforced core JPME program learning

objectives.”

Each student fulfilled exercise roles as senior leaders in the national security arena, representing the National Security Council Staff, Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Secretary of Defense, The Joint Staff, and the Combatant Commands. JLASS students simulated the Joint Staff’s Global Force Management Process in this year’s exercise, highlighting the role of the Chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff as Global Integrator.

Army War College Provost Dr. James Breckenridge set priorities, acting as a notional U.S president, and evaluated student team’s recommendations for synchronizing, prioritizing and addressing risk in strategies for realistic problem sets. The value of experiential learning was a significant outcome, he said.

JLASS is a mature exercise, refined annually, that follows months of academic studies. Just as students collaborate within the game, Army War College exercise leaders collaborate with faculty at all the war colleges in developing scenarios and exercise design to meet learning objectives.