

Imaging advising the President on national security matters or planning the defense of Western Europe for the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. Or, as Secretary of Defense, you are called before Congress to voice your opinion on the Strategic Defense Initiative. If you prefer historical precedents, consider your role as an aide-de-camp to Alexander the Great or Napoleon during their great campaigns.

If you are enrolled in the Army War College corresponding Studies Course, you are required to indulge your imagination in representative experiences like the ones described here.

The US Army War college offers a nine-month resident program of study and a two-year correspondence curriculum to hundreds of military personnel annually. Each year a few civilians are also chosen to participate in the programs.

The correspondence course is offered to a limited number of Army officers, lieutenant colonel and above, and Department of the Army civilians, GM14 and above, who are eligible for selection. It offers these men and women the opportunity to study a broad array of subjects such as military strategy, national security policy, and leadership. Based on participation in the course, the graduate gains a global perspective on how the Army contributes to the execution of national security policy.

It was my privilege to be the first of two civilian employees from the US Army Chemical Research, Development, and Engineering Center, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, to participate in the corresponding studies program.

In sharing my experiences during this time, it is opportune to reflect on how the program furthered my appreciation of Army research, development, and acquisition (RD&A) contributions to the overall mission of the Army.

An Army War College Experience

By Richard B. Belmonte

Having worked in this field all of my professional career, it was natural for me to consider RD&A as an entity unto itself. The course allowed me the opportunity to view RD&A from a military planning and strategy perspective. I became acutely aware of the importance of RD&A products in meeting the needs of the battlefield commander.

Completing the correspondence course is very similar to earning a master's degree in one's spare time. The curriculum consisted of eleven courses conducted over a two-year period, with four weeks in residence at the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

The subject matter ran the military strategy gamut: from professional leadership and Clausewitz's concept of war, military forces and doctrine, to global military strategy. Each course consisted of select readings that explored these and other subjects from different perspectives. The readings were thought-provoking and often controversial. Exposure to this material continuously challenged my prior judgments and provided me with the opportunity to formulate new opinions on national security policy and military strategy.

After reading the course material for each topic, I was required to write an essay that corresponded to assigned questions on the readings. I was allowed three months to complete

each assignment for subsequent submission to the Army War College. Once there, my papers underwent rigorous scrutiny as was evidenced by the amount of red ink that accompanied their return to me. Despite the evaluators' affinity for such markings, their intent was always to improve our material rather than to criticize. All students were given one opportunity to resubmit their work if their initial submission fell short of expected standards.

I found it easiest to settle into a routine to complete the course. After receiving the hefty shipment of books, pamphlets, and the directive from the college, I would tear into the package, read the directive, then become mildly despondent at the amount and difficulty of the material. In a few days, I would have recovered sufficiently to begin the assignment.

The corresponding studies course began by examining the philosophy of leadership from a personal perspective. I was required to determine my aptitude for professional leadership by various exercises that probed my capacity to direct others. This self-evaluation proved critical for future analysis of political figures, past and present, who have shaped the course of this nation and the world.

The reading and writing requirements throughout the course constantly challenged my ability to develop effective reasoning and

analytical skills for national security policy, military strategy, and defense organization. I examined Clausewitz's concept of war as an instrument of policy along with the constitutional authority to execute such policy by the President and Congress.

Once the implementation of national security policy was understood, the course required us to devise a strategy for a future limited war. Both offensive and defensive postures were analyzed for their impact on a successful outcome. The use of tactical nuclear weapons in such a conflict was also explored.

Recommendations on effectively deterring international terrorism were also developed by the class. By my third expository paper, I was proffering advice on how an effective anti-terrorism policy should be developed as well as critiquing former Secretaries Schultz's and Weinberger's differing approaches to combatting terrorism.

In our pursuit to understand the theory and evolution of military strategy, we were exposed to the tactics of such superior strategists as Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Napoleon, Ulysses Grant, and Douglas MacArthur. Their personal styles of leadership were significantly reflected in their military campaigns. The strategies they employed were defined by the needs of their governments and armies as well as the physical and moral courage they exercised.

Passing across this historical spectrum provided me with insight on how personal preferences can come to dominate military strategy. To this end, I undertook the role of General George Patton in rebutting a newspaper editorial assailing the lack of militarily strategic decisions in World Wars I and II.

To prepare for the role, I immersed myself in the "Patton" videotape. It was my intention to draft a response as

direct and profane as Patton himself would have done. Consequently, I responded to the editorial by reflecting on the merits of Von Schlieffen's proposed strategy for the 1905 German invasion of France and Patton's own plan of action for invading Italy.

At this point in the course, our efforts were directed toward utilizing our knowledge of defense theory for implementation of the national defense organization. We became familiar with the roles of Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in executing national security policy. In addition, we examined the defense planning, programming, and budgeting system and the combat-based requirements system. It was at this stage of the course that I was able to understand more accurately how materiel acquisition fits into the whole process of raising, equipping, and training an army.

The final phase of the corresponding studies course comprised military forces, doctrine, and regional appraisals as well as US global military strategy. During this time, I came to understand more fully the broad scope of Army doctrine, NATO and Soviet military objectives, and NATO strategic concepts and resources. Conflicts in the Middle East and Central America were also examined for their impact on the US global military strategy.

Through these studies, I came to appreciate the necessity for establishing the precedence of US national political and military interests and how these priorities are dictated by available national resources. This heightened awareness prepared me for the final task in the course of defining a strategic military vision for the future. The most enjoyable part of the entire course was participating in the two week-long resident phases of the corresponding studies course. My class consisted of 240 active, reserve, and National Guard officers as well as

a sprinkling of Army civilians. Getting to know as many of my colleagues as possible was a very enriching experience. Moreover, they brought with them a wealth of practical experience from the Vietnam era on into the classroom. They endowed me with an appreciation for the talent, enthusiasm, and professionalism that characterizes the Army War College Corresponding Studies Course.

Most academic institutions are replete with anecdotal opportunities and the Army War College is no exception. This took the form of the "red bedroom" for those of us participating in the resident phase of the program. The term is affectionately used to describe an auditorium on the college grounds that is unfailingly warm and poorly ventilated. Many a head has been seen bobbing, particularly after lunch. During the second resident period, I was assigned a seat dead center in the front row next to a notorious sleeper. It was there that I met my greatest challenge in not being lulled into an equally obvious reverie.

I enthusiastically recommend the Army War College Corresponding Studies Course to all eligible military and civilian personnel. The two-year program was a superior educational experience for me and culminated in the making of many new friends, a first-class graduation, and memories to last forever.

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