

International Military Student Badge Ceremony
LTG William B. Caldwell, IV
11 DEC 08
Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, KS
(As delivered)

Thank to each of you for attending today. It's a great day for all of us. Special thanks to Scott Sheridan, our audio visual expert – great job on that fantastic video. We would like to recognize COL (Ret) Roger Donlon, Medal of Honor recipient from Leavenworth who is in the audience. We would also like to recognize our international student sponsors in the audience, please stand. Thank you for what you do.

To our students, I'm glad you all made it today and nobody overslept. I hear I missed a pretty lively and fun rehearsal yesterday, and I doubt we can top that today. Thanks for all your efforts this past year.

To all of our distinguished guests, faculty and students, families and friends, and especially our international sponsors – thanks for joining us this morning. This year marks over 100 years of the international military student program at the United States Army Command and General Staff College.

During those 100 + years, over 7000 international military students have crossed this college's stage. That remarkable body has included representatives of 152 countries...and that's out of a total of a little over 190 countries in the entire world.

Twenty-six of these have become heads of state; over 300 have become senior leaders and representatives of their governments; over 300 have reached their nations' highest military positions, and more than 2000 went on to become general officers. What does that mean for each of you? You have some big shoes to fill. Your nations wouldn't have sent you here if they didn't think that you would excel.

Without question this college has seen the world's best and brightest warriors pass through its doors. Their participation in our college has contributed greatly to the strength of our alliances and to the professional development of our officer corps. Many of you have, or will fight along side us in Iraq and Afghanistan and we are grateful for your contributions.

I am routinely asked by the Chief of Staff of our Army, senior civilian leadership, and folks from think tanks when I'm in Washington D.C. how we can improve the cultural astuteness of our officers. Some propose new programs costing hundreds of millions of dollars, or long-term immersion programs.

Yet with all these great minds and resources available at our disposal, I'm convinced we'll never top the cultural and leadership laboratory we have right here at CGSC with our international military students.

Students in our classrooms get to interact daily for almost a year with the finest officers in the world. At the end of their year at CGSC, meals are shared, holidays are spent together, close friendships developed, and students have broken down stereotypes about each other. Our international program here would rival any public diplomacy program in the world.

Your class of international military students has continued the proud tradition of academic scholarship. Of our international students, we have four graduating from Webster University, one from Central Michigan University, and six have earned a Master in Military Arts and Sciences from CGSC.

You are about to join the ranks of an extremely distinguished group of previous international military student graduates. We have the benefit of hosting the International Hall of Fame Ceremony twice a year here where we recognize previous CGSC international graduates who go on to become the heads of their Armies or the leaders of their countries. In fact, seated in this room today are several distinguished international students who will be back here some day as International Hall of Fame inductees.

The badge you receive today is rich in symbolism and recognizes you as the best of your nation... You continue the legacy of over 100 years of tradition: A tradition of friendship and alliances forged during the tough academic environment found at Fort Leavenworth.

I trust your time here was professionally rewarding, and I hope that you found it personally enriching as well. We like to say that the year an officer and his family spend at Fort Leavenworth is "the best year of your life"; for most of us it was. For many, it is an opportunity to reconnect with family after years spent on deployments or in jobs which demand all our time and attention. It is also a time to grow with peers who have come from all over our military – and in your case – the world.

Many of you brought your families with you, and they became part of our community. Your children attended school with our children. Some of your families increased in size this year; my congratulations to the new fathers from Germany, Belize, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, and Saudi Arabia on the births of their children – to each of you, congratulations! I hope you got plenty of rest while you were here. You're going to need it.

I also hope you had some fun. I looked over your list of extracurricular activities, and many of you have done more than I have and I've been here longer than you all have been. I'm jealous! Kansas City Chiefs games and a trip to Gettysburg! I guess that some people's "Best year of your life" is better than others.

As I have said, your badge represents a long tradition. It is a tradition of achievement and of service. You represent the best from each of your armies, and you have demonstrated this excellence here.

While your achievements have been great, it is important to remember why you came here and what is expected of you. You are your nation's warriors – when you return home you will lead soldiers and defend your homelands.

Remember...

- You came here to grow as a servant-leader; a leader who puts the needs of his country and his soldiers above his own.
- You came to learn from your peers around the world so that – with an open mind – you could take the best of what others have to offer and apply it to your leadership abilities and technical competence.
- You came to share your knowledge and wisdom with others so that they might benefit from your experience.
- You came here to make a difference...so go from here and make a difference in your nations.

Collectively, you represent 39 countries and every inhabited continent on the globe. Some of your countries are at peace; a peace won at the cost of your vigilance. Some of you live in countries in the midst of conflict where hopes of peace will literally rest on your shoulders.

We all live in world that is experiencing dramatic change. Globalization has shrunk our world to the point where nations can no longer live in isolation. Therefore, as soldiers... and citizens of the world... we must think about our neighbors and serve as examples for them.

Nelson Mandela said, “To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” I trust that your year at Fort Leavenworth – and the cultural and professional exchange you have experienced – will help you to serve... and will help you to lead your country in a way which respects and enhances the livelihood of others.

In closing, I would like to say that it has been a tremendous honor for me to have served with you as your commandant. My sincerest congratulations on your great accomplishment, and I wish you and your families the best as you return to your nations.

All of us here at the Combined Arms Center and the Command and General Staff College have benefitted greatly from knowing you and working with you...What an incredible year this has been – and will always be remembered – Congratulations!