

## **FLAG CEREMONY**

**Welcome Comments by LTG R. Caslen**

**9 August 2010**

Good morning. It's an honor to have all of you here today as we begin another chapter in the history of the Command and General Staff College and of Fort Leavenworth with the International Flag Ceremony for Course 2011 dash 01, or 11-01 for short.

First - A special welcome to all of our distinguished guests. Thank-you for taking the time out of your incredibly busy schedules to spend this morning helping us welcome our international military guests. They have come from all corners of the world, to join our military in its professional military education at the mid-career level, and we are honored that you would join us in welcoming them. Thank-you for taking the time to be here.

Second, I would like to extend a special welcome to all of the sponsor families here today.

Whether sponsoring a family for the first time, or joining us here at Leavenworth for the 20<sup>th</sup> time – or more – each of you plays a critical role for our International Students and their families in their Command and General Staff College experience. Your warm welcoming and your generous hospitality have made a tremendous difference over the years and it continues to make a difference even today. But by your efforts, our international students are provided a unique association with the surrounding Leavenworth, Lansing, and Kansas City communities. Their experiences enriched and enlivened by your support. You will have made a difference, as they build memories and create friendships that will not only help to carry them through this year, but help to create memories that last a lifetime.

I would like to personally welcome our two newest partner countries - Suriname and Kosovo. We are excited to have the opportunity to foster and strengthen the ties between our countries and our militaries. I am certain that you will find this course rewarding and relevant to your careers as military professionals. It is my earnest hope that this marks the beginning of a long-lasting and mutually beneficial exchange between our two nations.

Finally, a special welcome to the all the students and families of our incoming class. We are thrilled to have you here with us at FT Leavenworth, and I look forward to welcoming you all both collectively and individually at our formal welcome later this afternoon, as well as our Commandant's welcome at the designated time during the evenings later this week. Both my wife Shelly and I are very much looking forward to you meeting all of you and your families this week.

As we collectively embark into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century, where the world continues to face a myriad of threats, multi-national operations have become the norm rather than the exception. Whether we are confronting the threat of violent extremist movements, responding to natural disasters, or stabilizing failing nation states, the need for strategic partnerships has never been more important.

While working on the Joint Staff in 2004-2006, we had the responsibility of developing the military strategy for the War on Terror, as well as participating in the development of the National Strategy for this war. One of the key strategic issues we had to deal with was how to answer the question of how do you go to war against an enemy threat that resides within a country that you are not at war with? It is a unique question and one that would cause significant challenges – as this threat existed in many of our countries, and certainly has the capacity to threaten each of our national security interests.

At any rate, the answer to this strategic question was not an easy one, but it rested in the relationships we would develop with our partner nations, and in assisting in the development of our partner nation's capacity.

Said another way, our collective future security in the world's complex, uncertain and competitive operating environment will increasingly rest on our ability to effectively cooperate, collaborate, and coordinate our collective actions and efforts by, with, and through one another.

Currently, the United States and many of the countries represented here today are locked in an unrelenting conflict against a global extremist network that is fixed on creating anarchy within the International system. As General Casey stated when he took the reigns as Chief of Staff of the United States Army, "This foe will not go away nor will they give up easily, and the next decade will likely be one of persistent conflict.

At stake are the power of our values and our civilization, exemplified by the promise of America, to confront and defeat the menace of extremist terrorists.”

Many nations here today have realized this threat, and have responded in kind, to stand in the gap between this evil and each of nation’s security. We recognize and honor the tremendous sacrifices that you have made to preserve justice and peace throughout the world. It is an honor to stand beside you as we confront this menace.

No longer on the periphery of military considerations, building partner capacity has become a critical component of our strategic efforts to mitigate and suppress the spread of extremism throughout the world. As military professionals, we are often tasked with implementing this strategy throughout the world. Our collaborative efforts to equip, advise and assist vulnerable nations will play a pivotal role in the outcome in our efforts against extremist networks.

As we stand together to battle this threat we should also be mindful of those nations that lack the ability to stand alone. The overall success of our joint efforts to defeat extremist terrorists will largely be measured in our ability to increase the capabilities of these fragile states to confront this threat.

A part of that collaboration starts here today. The personal relationships we form here, and the knowledge shared with each of you, will have an even greater importance in our future as military professionals confronting the world's issues. The ability to pick up a phone and talk through a problem can be more powerful than battalions of combat power.

In fact, based on my personal experiences working with many Nations' armies such as in the Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, and Iraq, I believe knowing the cultural terrain can sometimes be as important as – and sometimes even more important than -- knowledge of the geographic terrain.

Your presence as exceptional international officers helps our entire student body develop an understanding of each of your nation's culture and the cultural terrain that is so important to both global operations and global security.

Unquestionably, our American officers will learn a great deal from each of you over the next year. I expect the exchange of ideas in the classrooms to be rigorous and relevant as you both develop powerful relationships and understanding that will be vital to your growth as military professionals.

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As I close, I would like to give you some context of the caliber of our international student body, by highlighting a few statistics of previous international officers who have attended and graduated from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

If historic trends are an indicator (***Gesture/point to the students***):

Half of you will attain the rank of general officer in your nation's militaries.

1 out of 10 of you will become the chief of your army or defense forces.

Many of you will go on to become ambassadors and ministers for your countries, and some of you may join our 28 former International students that have gone on to become heads of state.

Many of exemplary International students that have attended CGSC are recognized in our International Hall of Fame, and are highlighted during a special ceremony held each year as we induct new members into the International Hall of Fame.

I mention these historic trends not to put extra pressure on the new international students..... but rather to convey to everyone the caliber of officer who is selected for this program. We have some of the best and brightest military officers in the world with us here today.

For the International Students....while you are here:

- Take every chance to learn about America through your classmates and friends,
- Learn about your other international classmates,
- Travel as much as you can,
- Challenge your colleagues to learn with you,
- And share your experiences and ideas with your American colleagues.

The friendships that will be made here this year, will serve not only our collective national security, but will help to establish the strategic relationship between our Nation's Armies, as well as our Nation's governments. Said another way, our friendship makes us not only friends, but also strategic partners for years to come.

We are very excited to have each of you and your families here -- Again, welcome, and I look forward to meeting each of you throughout the year. I am very proud of your selection to be here, and am very grateful to know you as not only a partner, but also as a friend. I wish you good success and a happy and productive year for you and your family.

Thank-you very much.

***Post the colors.***