

APG SSC fellows visit Europe

Fellows meet with combatant commands and Allied partners, tour World War II battlefields

Defense Acquisition University

Participants in the Aberdeen Proving Ground Senior Service College Fellowship Program, or SSCFP, joined by a host of program facilitators and four fellows from the Warren, Michigan SSCFP, travelled to Europe, April 9-19, to learn about strategic Army, Department of Defense, and allied nation commands on the other side of the pond, and visit World War II battlefields.

APG fellows, along with Jim Oman, APG SSCFP director; Mark Lumb, dean of the Defense Acquisition University-South and executive director Anny SSCFP; Mike Roche, DAU Midwest Region professor; Jeff Caton DAU Capital and Northwest Region professor; and U.S. Army War College Professors Dr. Paul Jussell and Col. Scott Bertinetti, began their trip in Stuttgart, Germany.

In Stuttgart, the fellows visited the combatant command United States European Command, or EUCOM, and also heard from staff officers from the United States Africa Command, or AFRICOM. Later, the group traveled to Grafenwoehr, Germany where they visited the Joint Multinational Training Command. JMTCC Chief of Staff and Deputy to the Commander Col. William "Clark" Linder accompanied the group to the Hohenfels Training Area to observe a multi-aircraft mass tactical airborne operation conducted as part of the Saber Junction 16 exercise, which included equipment heavy drops and personnel drops.

The airborne observation set the stage for a staff ride in Holland later in the trip.

From Grafenwoehr, the group traveled to Wiesbaden, Germany to receive briefings from senior leaders at the U.S. Army Europe, or USAREUR, headquarters. At USAREUR the fellows learned about ongoing troop deployments, the value of partnering, and lessons learned in the region. The fellows said they found the visit to USAREUR to be extremely



Photo by Mike Roche, DAU

APG Senior Service College fellows listen as U.S. Army War College Professor Paul Jussell describes the close quarter combat experienced by Easy Company 2/506th Infantry Regiment near Foy, Belgium where they defended a portion of the perimeter around Bastogne. The fellows visited several World War II battlefields during a trip to Europe in April.

ly insightful in light of the planned and ongoing troop deployments.

Rounding out the organizational visits was a final stop at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, or SHAPE, in Mons, Belgium. The fellows received a SHAPE overview briefing which culminated in a Q&A session and a final briefing on the U.S. National Military Representative.

World War II battlefields

The final component of the SSCFP trip to Europe was a staff ride to several key scenes from World War II, the first of which was Operation Market Garden, the largest airborne operation of the war.

On the way to Nijmegen, Holland, the group stopped at the Netherlands American Cemetery where they gained a deeper appreciation of the cost of World War II. The final two days of the trip took place in and around Grave, Eindhoven, Nijmegen, and Arnhem, Holland where the group learned about the key actions taken by the Allies as well as that of the Germans. Stops with discussions were made at multiple locations where professors Jussell and Bertinetti explained the significance of the events of the operations and provided context, relevance, and the implications for today's strategic leaders.

In addition to the Market Garden terrain walk, the group visited Bastogne, Belgium to learn about the Battle of the Bulge, which was the largest battle fought by the U.S. during World War II.

The fellows toured the Bastogne Barracks Museum and later visited a portion of the Battle of the Bulge battlefield with multiple stops that included a visit to Noville where Team Dcsobry defended a main avenue of approach into Bastogne, the Recognized German war cemetery; a stop near Foy where Easy Company 2/506th Infantry Regiment, the company highlighted in Stephen Ambrose's book "Band of Brothers," published in 1992 and portrayed in the subsequent, highly acclaimed HBO mini-series of the same name, defended a portion of the perimeter around Bastogne; the Mardasson Memorial which honors the sacrifice of the Soldiers, Airmen, and the Belgian resistance, and the Belgian army pillbox on the outskirts of Bastogne where 1st Lt. Boggess, 37th Tank Battalion, 4th Armored Division linked up with Soldiers from the JO 1st Airborne Division on Dec. 26, 1944, thereby breaking the German siege on Bastogne.

The fellows completed their visit to Europe with a historian-led tour of Fortress Eben Emael, Belgium and a self-guided tour of the Ludendorff

Bridge at Remagen, Germany. At the fort the fellows learned about life in the citadel, heard about the first operational use of gliders in combat, and saw the devastation caused by Germany's use of sapped charges which were used for the first time in combat. After the visit to the fort, the group headed south and stopped near Aachen, Germany to view "dragon's teeth" tank traps which constituted a small portion of the defensive fortifications known as the "Siegfried Line" or "Westwall." A final stop was made at the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, Germany where members of the group participated in a self-guided tour of the Peace Museum located within the remaining twin towers on the western banks of the Rhine River.

The 11-day trip provided fellows with a tangible and unique experience of 20th century battlefields and a multitude of information gleaned from visits to military commands. The trip built upon earlier learned lessons on leadership, acquisition support to the warfighter, and national security strategy and provided fellows with an opportunity to reflect upon the complexities of strategic leadership and the strategic leader environment.