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MILITARY COMPETITION MOVES BEYOND TACTICAL ASPECT OF WAR – April 8, 2016

WEST POINT, N.Y. – Hundreds of future military leaders from around the globe came together at the U.S. Military Academy to compete in the annual military skills competition and an inaugural conference Monday.

The Sandhurst competition started in 1967 as an internal cadet event, but today is a diverse multinational and joint service competition that attracts teams from across the country and across the world to test their physical fitness, military proficiency and leadership. For the first time, the academy made a noncompetitive addition, the inaugural Sandhurst Conference.

“This conference leverages the uniquely diverse and international audience of Sandhurst teams to enhance cadets’ critical thinking and complex problem solving skills,” said Lt. Gen. Robert L. Caslen Jr., superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy. “I can’t imagine that a group made up of motivated, young, future officers, with representation from five continents, talking about the things we talked about, exists anywhere else in the world.”

The theme of this year’s conference was, Preparing our Future Leaders for Modern War.

“We’re complementing the main focus of the competition with an academic component to examine the critically important question of how to prepare our next generation of leaders to win in a complex world,” said Col. Liam Collins, director of West Point’s Modern War Institute. “In today’s environment, technical and tactical competence alone is no longer sufficient for junior officers to meet the challenges of 21st century warfare.”

Throughout the day the attendees participated in discussions on topics such as: fighting in a densely populated urban environment, the challenge military academies have fostering innovative and creative thinkers, the importance of crafting information operations, security challenges posed by Iran, and cyber operations.

The conference was a popular addition among the USMA cadets who attended.

“Every year we always bring all these countries’ teams together to do obstacle courses or run 35 miles, but we don’t usually get to get that cross-cultural communication and interaction,” said senior Cadet Charlene Coutteau. “I found it really interesting and useful to hear what other countries had to say. You don’t always see so many international junior officers assembled in one place to discuss such important issues relevant to how we fight.”

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Cadets from international teams were pleased to have the opportunity to participate in topics that are relevant to their country.

“We're discussing the same themes in our military, and so it was good to get the point of view of the Americans. I especially liked the discussion on the use of special forces. Overall, I really liked the conference. I think it's good to develop the intellectual sphere and not just the physical,” said Latvian Military Academy Cadet Lauris Ozolinsh.

Capt. Stuart Warders, an assistant professor of military science at Penn State University, appreciated the wide-range of backgrounds and experiences of the presenters as well as the attendees.

“I thought it was really enlightening and eye-opening for our students to hear viewpoints not only from American cadets but from the cadets of our allies, considering the discussions we heard on the recent attacks in Brussels or on Russian military action,” said Warders. “The topics were diverse, and the discussions were so varied that it gave our cadets a unique and new perspective that they do not get here in the States.”

Attendees included:

U.S. service academies: Naval Academy, Air Force Academy, Coast Guard and USMA Preparatory School

ROTC: Texas A&M, Penn State, Marquette University, University of Delaware, University of Texas at Austin, Augusta University, Michigan State and Gonzaga University

International: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, Royal Military College, Royal Military College Duntroon, Escuela Militar, Offiziersshule des Heeres, Latvian Military Academy, Korean Military Academy, Japanese National Defense Academy, Turkish Military Academy, Heroic Military Academy and Peoples Liberation Army University of Science and Technology

As a complement to the competition, the Sandhurst Conference highlights the mission of MWI, which is to provide intellectual tools on modern conflicts to educate present and future leaders on military problems and the necessary problem-solving skills to win in a complex world. Moreover, it served as a demonstration of how that mission can directly contribute to the professional development of cadets from across the country and across the world. For more information, follow MWI on [Facebook](#).

About West Point:

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point is a four-year, co-educational, federal, liberal arts college located 50 miles north of New York City. It was founded in 1802 as America's first college of engineering and continues today as the world's premier leader-development institution, consistently ranked among top colleges in the country. Its mission remains constant—to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the U. S. Army. For more information, go to www.westpoint.edu.