



Inside SWCS

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Experts and Professionals



Special-operations Soldiers begin SWCS master degree program

Special Forces, Civil Affairs and Military Information Support officers and noncommissioned officers from the first master of arts in strategic-security studies course face faculty from the National Defense University, which is running the fully-accredited academic program through SWCS, during the program's convocation ceremony Sept. 10 in the John F. Kennedy Auditorium at Fort Bragg, N.C.

By Dave Chace

USAJFKSWCS Public Affairs Office

Soldiers have started earning masters degrees through the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

In partnership with the National Defense University, special-operations Soldiers are studying the global threat environment, and the roles of power and ideology under the guidance of five instructors from NDU's College of International Security Affairs.

The result: after 10 months of study, 20 special-operations Soldiers will have earned a fully accredited master of arts degree in strategic-security studies.

"These students have all of my support, and none of my sympathy," said Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau, NDU President, during a convocation ceremony Sept. 10 at SWCS formally recognizing the start of a new semester. "This is an academically aggressive program."

The 20 students beginning the degree program come from throughout the Army's special-operations community. During the ceremony, officers and noncommissioned officers wearing Special Forces, Civil Affairs and Military Information Support insignia stood shoulder-to-shoulder.

Rondeau praised these men and women as "people of action," who do more than study and learn for the sake of academic initiative.

"You understand what applied knowledge is all

about," she said to the students.

Rondeau, who holds a masters degree and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree from Northern Illinois University, said the masters program will teach students to question everything they've learned in their special-operations education.

"Question the Army. Question special operations. Question the very doctrine that has built your training," she said. "By doing so, you will give it a sharper edge."

The convocation ceremony, held in the John F. Kennedy Auditorium at Fort Bragg, N.C., welcomed academics and professionals adorned in the an array of colored robes and caps, sitting among Soldiers and students in their Army green Class A uniforms.

Upon graduation next spring, those students who complete the masters program will have earned the right to wear the peacock blue and purple colors of the National Defense University on robes and hoods of their own.

Brig. Gen. Bennet S. Sacolick, SWCS Commanding General, said the convocation marked one of the most important days in the history of SWCS: the official beginning of a relationship between the U.S. Army Special Operations Command and the National Defense University.

"We have an expertly trained force, and we have Soldiers at SWCS who have seen more combat than most World War II veterans," Sacolick said, "but we can't ignore our Soldiers' education."

Sacolick said special-operations Soldiers distinguish themselves from other forces with their problem-solving abilities and regional and language expertise.

"This program is huge for us," he said. "We've been working on this for a few years."

Col. Michael Bell, senior director of the College of International

Security Affairs, told the students to get used to working outside their comfort zones.

"This is a tremendous personal and professional opportunity," Bell said. "Through this program, you will develop the habits you'll need to become life-long learners."

Bell said the five faculty members at Fort Bragg were backed with the support of the entire NDU.

"NDU is honored to contribute to what you bring to the fight every day," Rondeau said to the students and faculty present for the ceremony.

"This is a force taught and trained to use their adaptability as a tactical tool," she said. "Now, you'll be able to use that adaptability as a strategic weapon."

"Question the Army. Question special operations. Question the very doctrine that has built your training. By doing so, you will give it a sharper edge."

Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau
President, National Defense University