



Maj. David Doyle (left) and Maj. J. Keller Durkin, Advanced Military Studies Program graduates, cross the stage 21 May 2009 to be congratulated by (left to right) guest speaker Lt. Gen. (ret.) James Dubik, Dr. Chris King, Dr. Robert Baumann, and School of Advanced Military Studies director Col. Stefan Banach at the Lewis and Clark Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. (Photo by Prudence Siebert)

Whither SAMS?

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Secretary of Defense James Mattis recently wrote, “PME [professional military education] has stagnated, focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit at the expense of lethality and ingenuity.”¹ Concerning talent management, he also wrote, “Developing leaders who are competent in national-level decision-making requires broad revision of talent management among the Armed Services, including fellowships, civilian education, and assignments that increase understanding of interagency decision-making processes, as well as alliances and coalitions.”² In light of these statements, we must examine the state of the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), because the original purpose of SAMS was to develop within the U.S. Army many of the required capabilities to which Mattis alludes.

Soon after the school’s establishment in 1983, SAMS graduates became highly regarded and highly sought-after assets by commanders who desired to elevate the level of sophistication in their planning shops. Early on, SAMS graduates became widely known informally within the Army as Jedi Knights, a moniker alluding to the highly disciplined quasi-religious military order featured in George Lucas’s *Star Wars* film series. The first such reference occurred on 12 May 1992 during a meeting of the Committee on Armed Services Military Education Panel in Washington, D.C. In his opening statement, the Hon. Ike Skelton (chairman of the panel) said:

The panel is quite pleased by the Advanced Military Studies Program concept and I commend the Army Command and General

Staff College [CGSC] for its vision in initially establishing the school of advanced military studies at Fort Leavenworth. Of course, we all know that the real stamp of approval came when General Schwarzkopf requested SAMS graduates, sometimes referred to as “Jedi knights,” be sent to his headquarters in Riyadh to assist in developing the campaign plan.³

Today, SAMS is well into its third decade of existence. The challenge the school faces now is, how do SAMS and all three of its programs address the future in its talent management and adherence to the goals and values of PME?

History of SAMS

Before addressing the future, how the school came into being merits review. With the support of then Lt. Gen. William Richardson, the commandant of CGSC—as well as succeeding commandants and deputies Jack Merritt, Crosbie Saint Jr., Carl Vuono, and Dave Palmer—SAMS was founded in 1983. The founder and first director of the school, Col. Huba Wass de Czege, envisioned SAMS providing specially selected and educated majors one year of additional intensive study beyond the normal one-year CGSC curriculum in preparation for service at Army divisions and corps. In a 2009 article, Wass de Czege wrote that his original intention for SAMS was to develop a course covering the underlying logic of military doctrine and how to judge doctrine critically as well as think creatively about doctrine and military art. Specifically, Wass de Czege said, “It was not intended to be a course of indoctrination for planning specialists. Rather, it was intended as a course for generalists who would lead the Army in every way, especially intellectually.”⁴

After studying other nations’ military education programs, Wass de Czege proposed beginning SAMS with one seminar of twelve officers. After the first year, Wass de Czege’s concept aimed to gradually build the school to a total of ninety-six officer/students in eight seminars of twelve officers per group. These seminars would be led by a lieutenant colonel or colonel who was in the second year of the associated Advanced Operational Studies Fellowship, the war college program within the school. The number ninety-six was based on a U.S. Army of eighteen divisions, five corps, and two field armies.⁵

To educate these specially selected majors, Wass de Czege proposed the Army staff the school with highly qualified active-duty lieutenant colonels or colonels. Wass de Czege realized that he and the other initial faculty members could not remain at the school permanently, but he assumed they would be allowed to get the school up and running before receiving orders for a new assignment.⁶

Wass de Czege stipulated that the three prerequisites needed for a quality faculty were as follows: at least a master’s degree from a “good” school; previous teaching experience; and a demonstrated ability to command.⁷ As a nonnegotiable demand, Wass de Czege insisted that the Army provide faculty members who met these criteria. The minimum tour of duty at the school for these specially selected officers had to be three years.

The first year would be in an understudy role to learn about the curriculum and to team-teach a seminar of twelve to fourteen majors with a more seasoned instructor. The officers would lead seminars during the final two years of their tour of duty and act as mentors for newly arrived faculty members. However, even with support from senior general officers, he could not persuade the Army personnel management division to sustain a three-year tour for very high quality officers whose only task was teaching majors. The personnel managers believed the Army could make better use of such high quality officers in Washington on the Army and joint staffs.

Because of resistance from the personnel managers, Wass de Czege had a Plan B. He proposed establishing an additional program within SAMS. This program would be a two-year-long war college course called the Advanced Operational Studies Fellowship.⁸ During the first year, officers assigned to the Fellowship would study the same curriculum as the Advanced Military

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Studies Program (AMSP), the majors' course. This focused study would serve as instructor preparation because in the second year of the program, the Fellows would serve as the principal instructors of the majors. The Fellows' curriculum would also expose them to the policy-making process and how the major commands in the Department of Defense executed strategy through travel to the global combatant commands of the Department of Defense as a part of the education program.

The program started in 1985. Plan B introduced an element of turbulence into the school as the principal instructors for the majors would constantly turn over. Assignment to the fellowship depended on volunteers from the list of those selected for war-college-level schooling. Teaching the Fellows (and providing a measure of institutional stability) led to the appointment of several civilians to the faculty. Wass de Czege received broad authority from Gen. Richardson, the commandant of CGSC at the time, to hire faculty. The founding faculty and directors of SAMS were also concerned about what to teach.

Wass de Czege, Col. Rick Sinnreich (the second director), and then Col. Don Holder (the third director) all felt that the instruction of tactics in CGSC was lacking. This assessment was substantiated by the Meloy report, especially in Meloy's finding that there were not enough recently branch-qualified officers in the Department of Tactics to teach CGSC students on the execution of tactics in accord with doctrine.⁹ In a March 1986 piece in *Military Review*, Richardson, then commanding general of Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), introduced the 1986 version of Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*.¹⁰ Richardson stated that mastering AirLand Battle was vital to preparing for war. Richardson also announced several initiatives to instill the doctrine into the total officer corps. Among these, he established the Center for Army Tactics within the Department of Tactics at CGSC. He directed the center "to instill the tenets of the AirLand Battle in the officer corps." Richardson intended that the center be "on the cutting edge of tactical study, teaching, doctrinal writing, and evaluating lessons from those recently assigned to combat units." Richardson also required the center to ensure standardization of tactical instruction throughout TRADOC and to set standards for excellence in tactical training for the entire Army.



Brig. Gen. Huba Wass de Czege was inducted into the Fort Leavenworth Hall of Fame in 2017. Wass de Czege's career centered primarily on improving education for military leaders. He is perhaps most remembered for being the first director of the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). (Photo courtesy of Command and General Staff College)

Given the importance of the center, Richardson asserted that "only the Army's finest combined arms tacticians will be assigned" to it, ensuring that "students will learn the most current and sound doctrine and tactics from the Army's best." While not the focus of this article, there is little evidence to support Richardson's assertion. While this change would be in SAMS's benefit as well as the Army's, SAMS directors Sinnreich and Holder prudently kept a focus on large-unit tactics and tactical instruction in AMSP while awaiting evidence of a change in CGSC.¹¹

The fifth and sixth years of the development of SAMS were marked by the decision to put on hold the Wass de Czege vision to expand AMSP to ninety-six officers. The plan to expand was placed on hold based on a decision made by Holder and Sinnreich in consultation with Wass de Czege. The question of expansion was juxtaposed with arguments about keeping the high quality of majors selected for the program as well as retaining the favorable student-to-teacher ratio (i.e., two instructors to twelve officer students). Holder "decided very early ... to keep enrollment at forty-eight majors."

Concurrently, the program was growing in popularity, and other services were becoming interested in having officers attend AMSP. All four AMSP seminars had U.S. Air Force (USAF) officers at the time, although the size of the seminar remained at twelve. The decision to include USAF officers came at the cost of reducing the number of Army officers, again to retain the high level of quality within the AMSP seminars.

The discussion about expanding the program and including officers from other services was heated. In addition to the issue of selecting “quality” Army officers, there arose the question as to how the officers from other services would be selected. The size of the seminar also came up for debate. Sinnreich and then Holder thought that the optimal size of a seminar was twelve. They argued that adding other service officers must not increase the overall size of the seminar and the student-to-teacher ratio. However, the practical impact of keeping the size at twelve while including officers from other services would mean decreasing the number of Army officers selected for SAMS.

In support of remaining at a total of forty-eight officers in AMSP, Holder wrote a memo for the deputy commandant of CGSC informally called the “No Free Lunch” memo. In this memo, which was rewritten into a back-channel message to the commanding general of TRADOC and the deputy chief of staff of the operations of the Army Staff, Holder made the case that the selection process for distinguishing quality candidates and ultimately assigning quality officers to SAMS was the key ingredient in ensuring that the Army received the best possible officers from AMSP.¹²

Consequently, control of admission to AMSP and the size of the program were major points of contention for Holder. As a result, Holder also used the back-channel message to assert that inclusion of officers from other services would come at a price: a loss of seats for Army officers in AMSP due to a competing requirement for high quality officers from the USAF, the Marine Corps (USMC), and the Navy (USN). Additionally, Holder also decided not to have foreign officers considered for inclusion in AMSP for fear of losing control of the admissions process.¹³

Holder described his discussion with Wass de Czege and Sinnreich on the size of the Advanced Military Studies Program. He wrote, “We three agreed

that doubling the size of the School past the four-seminar arrangement would change the character of the program for the worse. We believed that having 100 AMSP students would make it impossible for students to know their classmates well. It would also prevent seminar leaders from getting to know all the students personally.” Sinnreich also noted, “while 96 was indeed the original aim, it became clear even before I became director that 96 would be too large and that 4 seminars of 12 was the desirable ceiling.”¹⁴

In the origin of SAMS, the problem addressed was a lack of tactical excellence and understanding of the operational level of war on the part of the officer corps in general and CGSC graduates in particular. SAMS/AMSP tactical instruction was focused on divisions and corps as well as theory and history. Theory coupled with history provided the lens through which SAMS graduates would view the complexity of warfare. The placement of AMSP graduates in plans assignments was not intended to only make planners for our Army; it was also intended to refine the command skills of graduates through interaction with senior officers. The addition of the two-year senior fellows program was designed to begin this process through direct interaction with seasoned former battalion commanders. SAMS is now attempting to address the challenges of warfare in the twenty-first century.

SAMS Today

There are now three programs associated with SAMS: AMSP; the Advanced Strategic Leadership Studies Program (ASLSP), formerly the Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship or the Fellows; and the Advanced Strategic Planning and Policy Program, a PhD program focusing on developing strategic thinkers and planners for the Army. Each program has its own curriculum.

AMSP approaches the study of twenty-first century warfare through six modules:

- Theory of Operational Art, designed to assess the value of theory for the planning and execution of operational art;
- Evolutions of Operational Art, designed to evaluate the historical and contemporary practice of operational art;
- Strategic Context of Operational Art, designed to evaluate the strategic context for operational art;

- Morality and War, designed to judge the moral implications of operational actions in war;
- Design and Operational Art, designed to employ the Army design methodology when faced with unfamiliar problems to develop a conceptual plan; and finally,
- Anticipating the Future, designed to synthesize elements of the AMSP curriculum to anticipate the future operating environment.

At present, AMSP has a total of nine seminars; eight seminars of sixteen officer/students, and one seminar of fifteen officer/students that includes one warrant officer. The “ideal” AMSP seminar composition is sixteen officer/students consisting of twelve Army officers, two other services officers (USMC, USN, or USAF), one international military officer/student, and one interagency student. The table outlines the make-up of the current AMSP class.¹⁵

The composition of AMSP brings forth four questions, the first three concerning the inclusion of interagency

personnel: While no doubt superb people, what is the utility of interagency students? What do these people contribute to the understanding of warfare? And, how do they advance the understanding of war when they go back to, for example, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Veterans Affairs, or the FBI?

The fourth question is, what is the value of including warrant officers in a program designed to educate officers as commanders and high-level general staff officers? We do not expect warrant officers, all superb soldiers to be sure, to plan our campaigns and major operations. This is not why we have a corps of warrant officers in our Army. While there is immense value in mixing perspectives in a classroom setting, AMSP’s focus on tactics and large units does not seem the right place for such a goal.

The 111 Army officers, from all components, far exceeds the envisioned ninety-six when SAMS began. The current requirements for AMSP-educated officers based on recognized modified tables of organization and equipment and temporary duty allocations is eighty-four Tier 1 (recent graduates of AMSP) and forty-three Tier 2 (AMSP or ASLSP graduates on a second tour as a planner) for the 2019 class. According to the Army G-3/5/7, additional units and headquarters with no documented requirements may receive a SAMS graduate. These include the worldwide individual augmentation system, and taskings and units with a recognized and prioritized need for a SAMS officer skill set.¹⁶

The current ASLSP seminar has senior field-grade officers and one interagency student from the U.S. Agency for International Development. The international officers are from Great Britain, Canada, and Germany. There are officers from the USAF, USMC, and USN in the seminar. Ten of these officers will remain for the second year along with eight U.S. Army officers and the Canadian and German officers.

After a long administrative battle, the senior program in SAMS was accorded senior joint professional military education (JPME II) status in 2016.¹⁷ The road to JPME II status began in 2002. At this time, the decision was taken to change the senior program curriculum and not only move it away from the AMSP curriculum, thus establishing a war college path but also beginning the split between the two programs of SAMS. This move led to the realization that the second-year Fellows could not teach the AMSP

Table. Advanced Military Studies Program Composition

Regular Army	102
Army National Guard	5
U.S. Army Reserve	4
U.S. Air Force	10
U.S. Marine Corps	4
U.S. Navy	0
International military students	14
Interagency	4
Total	143

(Table by author)

curriculum as they were seeing it at the same time as the majors. Thus, in 2003, a move was made to expand the civilian faculty in order to set up a Fellow-PhD pair as the instructors for each AMSP seminar. With the decision in 2007 to expand AMSP to ten seminars, two aligned with the CGSC offset start class (running from January to December), the disruption of the link between AMSP and the Fellows continued. The teaching load in AMSP fell completely upon the civilian faculty. Then, SAMS received another program for oversight.

The Advanced Strategic Planning and Policy Program arrived at SAMS in 2012. This program began at the direction of Gen. Ray Odierno when he was the Army chief of staff. Odierno wanted to know where his “next Petraeuses were.” The focus of the program is on educating and developing strategic thinkers and planners for the Army. This is a PhD-level program that combines enrollment in a range of schools for PhD-level work in history, political science, and security studies. At present, there are over one hundred officers enrolled in the program. There are sixty-three officers in classes at universities; the others completed the course work for their PhD. Once finished with their course work, the officers return to a strategic-level assignment for two years and then come back to SAMS to complete their dissertation research and writing. Those in universities come to SAMS over the summers for six weeks of class in the first year and four weeks at the end of the second year.

As stated at the beginning, in his recently released *National Defense Strategy*, the secretary of defense made the blanket statement that PME has stagnated and is focused more on the accomplishment of mandatory credit than developing the lethality and ingenuity of the officer corps. Further, the *National Defense Strategy* noted the need for leaders who are competent in national-level decision-making. This calls for a revision of “talent management among the Armed Services, including fellowships, civilian education, and assignments that increase understanding of interagency decision-making processes, as well as alliances and coalitions.”¹⁸ The programs in SAMS must be considered in this light.

Recommendations

So, whither SAMS? As our Army faces the uncertain future—but then when wasn’t the future uncertain—the Army should reconsider the size of the AMSP. SAMS should go back to six AMSP seminars of

no more than twelve officers. The seminar can thus accommodate at least ten active component officers with the remaining seats for international, reserve component, and other services. The interagency experiment and inclusion of warrant officers should stop.

SAMS, while rightly working hard to ensure the officers in the senior program receive JPME II credit, should move the senior curriculum closer to the AMSP curriculum and return more of the teaching load to these officers. This reinforces the link between the two programs as well as benefitting the education of the majors by closer interaction with successful former battalion commanders.

The expansion of the SAMS civilian faculty remains a good idea, but the link between the two officer programs must be made stronger. The seniors should provide the benefit of their experience in the application of command and staff roles, the conduct of warfare, and other intangibles that a civilian faculty, no matter how well educated, in the main cannot provide. The initial intent of SAMS and AMSP was to raise the bar of tactical and operational understanding. AMSP and the senior program are supposed to produce well-educated practitioners of warfare, not doctors of philosophy in history or political science.

The SAMS/AMSP/ASLSP graduate must have the ability to think like a commander in order to assist commanders in transmitting their intent and concept of the operation. It is not think *for* the commander but *like* a commander—an important distinction. Someone who thinks he or she can think for the commander is operating on hubris. Someone with the ability to think like a commander is of enormous value and will operate as Field Marshall Alfred von Schlieffen instructed German general staff officers, to be more than they appear to be.¹⁹

Of course, the foundation of the AMSP education is formed during the year of study and practice at the CGSC course. CGSC must prepare general staff officers in the application of methods designed around the science of warfare. How to adapt the CGSC curriculum is another issue and one currently being addressed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

This is why it is vital to the strength of the Advanced Military Studies Program to energize the ability of the senior officer/seminar leader to engage in teaching the majors. The senior course members

are former commanders with a depth of experience beyond the majors. The senior program curriculum in SAMS must have a greater degree of overlap with the AMSP curriculum so skilled, professional soldiers who have had to deal with the issues of command are instructing our majors in the application of knowledge to military problems. The civilian faculty can instruct in the nuances of research and details of history,

political science, and theory. Even those with military experience have a half-life of the utility of this experience—again, the reason why Wass de Czege felt it was important to have the students in the senior course of SAMS, then the Fellows, actually lead and teach the AMSP seminars. Commanders need to teach future commanders. SAMS must remain a school of practice in the art of warfare. ■

Notes

1. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy" (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 8, accessed 16 May 2018, <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

2. Ibid.

3. *Advanced Military Studies Programs at the Command and Staff Colleges, Hearings on H.A.S.C. No. 102-80, Before House Committee on Armed Services, 102nd Cong., 2d sess.* (1993), 5.

4. Huba Wass de Czege, "An Accident of History," *Military Review* 89, no. 4 (July-August 2009): 3.

5. Huba Wass de Czege, Rick Sinnreich, and Don Holder proposed to the commanding general of Training and Doctrine Command and the chief of staff that the Army build up to assigning four graduates a year to each level of command, division through field army.

6. The U.S. Military Academy at West Point instituted a program whereby selected officers would remain as permanent faculty members in the 1950s. Wass de Czege did not want permanent military faculty at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS), but he did want assurances that the military seminar leaders would be high-caliber officers.

7. Lt. Col. Harold R. Winton, interview by Lt. Col. Richard Mustion, 5 April 2001, 36, box 1, Harold R. Winton Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center Library, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. The original faculty members, Winton, Huba Wass de Czege, and Douglas Johnson had advanced degrees from Stanford [Winton, PhD in history], Harvard [Wass de Czege, MA in public administration], and Michigan [Johnson, MA in history]. All three men served in combat in Vietnam and taught at West Point. Wass de Czege and Winton commanded infantry battalions, and Johnson had extensive service in field artillery units and general staffs. A "good" school meant a school of similar caliber as these three officers attended.

8. Officers selected for war-college-level schooling, especially those from the Army's combat arms (those focused on fighting and coordinating battles), are former battalion commanders. A battalion is an organization of between 650 to 1,000 soldiers. Successful command of a battalion is a recognized level of accomplishment that marks an officer for higher-level command. Completion of the war college level of schooling is another prerequisite for higher-level command and promotion. The program was next called the Advanced Operational Arts Studies Fellowship; the change in the name took place in 1995. After receiving joint professional military

education certification, the name was changed again in 2016 to the Advanced Strategic Leadership Studies Program (ASLSP).

9. G. S. Meloy, Memorandum to Chief of Staff, United States Army, "Evaluation of CGSC Curriculum," Tab A, 1 February 1982. Held in the Special Collections Section, Combined Arms Research Library, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Edward C. Meyer directed Maj. Gen. Guy "Sandy" Meloy to conduct an assessment of the Command and General Staff College as a training and educational institution. Meloy visited Fort Leavenworth and the Command and General Staff College from 17–21 January 1982. He was accompanied by four "troop-seasoned officers" to evaluate the college curriculum. He reported that the college was "teaching form more than substance," and the diversity of the course material being presented allowed, "little opportunity for much more than superficial treatment of any given subject (to include command, staff and tactics) ..." Regarding the Staff College curriculum, Meloy wrote that "there is insufficient in-depth coverage of those subjects that contribute directly to killing Russians." An officer/student wrote, "There tends to be a dogmatic approach to tactics." The "dogmatic" or cookie-cutter approach to tactics was a prime motivation on the part of Wass de Czege to recommend the development of SAMS.

10. Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, May 1986 [obsolete]).

11. William R. Richardson, "FM 100-5: The AirLand Battle in 1986," *Military Review* 66, no. 3 (March 1986): 10. In a conversation with Lt. Gen. (retired) Don Holder in April 2010, Holder told me he'd written the essay for Richardson and that at the time he did not expect that the Army would make the effort to assign its best tacticians to the center. He felt that this was due to the impact of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act that mandated joint service for every officer in the running for consideration for flag rank. This requirement reinforced the feeling in the officer corps that teaching at CGSC took you out of the hunt for consideration for command and higher rank.

12. U.S. Army, "Personal For Message" from Maj. Gen. Gordon Sullivan, deputy commandant, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, and Maj. Gen. Glynn Mallory, deputy chief of staff-training, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. The so-called "No Free Lunch" message, it states that the inclusion of Air Force and Marine Corps officers into an Army program in the name of "jointness" would come at the cost of seats for Army officers in an Army school. Held in the SAMS historical files, Muir Hall, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

13. Lt. Gen. Don Holder (U.S. Army, retired), email message to author, 26 March 2008.

14. Brig. Gen. Huba Wass de Czege (U.S. Army, retired), Lt. Gen. Don Holder (U.S. Army, retired), and Col. Rick Sinnreich (U.S. Army, retired), email messages to author, 26 March 2018. Used with permission.

15. Data from Ms. Candace Hamm of SAMS.

16. Col. Keith Detwiler (chief, Strategic Leadership Division, HQDA G-3/5/7 [DAMO-SSF]), email message to author, 27 November 2017. Detwiler also wrote "During distribution, DAMO-SS is focused on being responsive to the needs of commanders and warfighters."

17. Joint professional military education level II qualification is required for any colonel for promotion consideration to general officer. This was mandated in the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The senior course in SAMS was overlooked when the joint chiefs granted JPME II certification to all service war colleges.

18. "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy," 8.

19. The entire Field Marshall Alfred von Schlieffen quotation, "Accomplish much, remain in the background, **be more than you appear to be**" was on a poster prominently displayed at SAMS when the author was a student.