**BACKGROUND PAPER**

**ON**

**AIR WAR COLLEGE (AWC) GRAND STRATEGY SEMINAR**

**PURPOSE:** Provide information about AWC Grand Strategy Seminar (GSS)

**BACKGROUND:** GSS is a more academically rigorous, strategy-focused program shaped by the same objectives as the standard AWC course, but designed to meet the CSAF’s call for a “reinvigoration of strategic thought” focused on developing strategic vision and connecting that vision to strategic and operational art. The program produces JPME II qualified officers and civilians possessing advanced strategic, analytic, and critical thinking skills.

**DISCUSSION:** GSS produces JPME-II qualified senior officers and advanced strategic thinkers with a deeper understanding of the complex nature of strategy, particularly at the level of grand strategy. The curriculum provides in depth instruction of advanced development/implementation of strategy through exploration of the historical practice of strategic art, the challenges of ethical leadership at the strategic level, the relationship between military power & political objectives, military campaign design and execution, and the interplay of global & regional security trends. Several GSS-only engagements and real- world wargames provide venues to actively evaluate, craft, and employ strategic thought and design. It is comprised of 12-14 competitively selected students (6-7 USAF, 1-2 US Army, 1 USCG/USN, 1-2 USMC, 1-2 Int’l Officers, and 1-2 Civilian) and instructed by hand-picked faculty from the AWC.

* + - GSS maintains AWC’s focus on preparing JPME-II accredited graduates to lead in joint, interagency, and multinational environments at the strategic level across the range of military operations, but adds a special focus on strategic thinking skills and the advanced development and evaluation of strategy.
    - GSS selection is a rigorous process, including a thorough records review by AWC faculty/leadership, a graded essay to evaluate writing ability, and a faculty panel interview to assess critical thinking and knowledge on a myriad of national security topics. Once accepted, GSS students must complete a specialized 10-month program in lieu of the standard AWC curriculum. Finally, students must successfully complete a 1.5-2 hour oral comprehension exam administered by select AWC faculty members.
    - Classroom instruction is augmented with GSS-only classified exercises and wargames to provide real world experience so students are prepared to make immediate impact once graduated.
    - GSS staff rides provide venues to examine and evaluate historical campaigns, strategic leadership, and gain insights from senior USG leaders, both civilian and military.
  + Graduates receive an SEI indicating “Grand Strategist/Strategist” to facilitate force monitoring and specialized placement to fulfill Service requirements. Sister Service graduates will receive their service-equivalent designator (e.g. 6Z, AQD, school code, etc.)
  + Grand Strategy graduates are a unique, highly qualified resource for utilization by the National, Joint, and Service communities
  + Senior PME graduates; JPME-II qualified, Master of Strategic Studies w/ “Grand Strategy Concentration”
    - Possess advanced understanding of the complex nature of strategy, particularly grand strategy
    - Strategic thinkers possessing razor-sharp critical thinking and analytical skills
    - Leaders who bring energy, vigor, and deep insight into the security challenges facing the nation
    - Graduates ideally suited for follow-on assignments that demand clear and sustained strategic thinking, critical analysis, and the development and evaluation of advanced strategic concepts andshould provide graduates with the opportunity to influence directly senior leader decision-making.

**RECOMMENDATION:** None. Information only.