

An Army War College send-off for retiring commandant

By Erin O. Stattel, Army War College, Public Affairs

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Maj. Gen. Robert M. Williams honored with ceremony

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Gen. Martin Dempsey, commanding General U.S. Army TRADOC and William Johnsen, USAWC Dean of Academics bid MG Robert Williams and his wife Deb farewell during MG Williams' retirement ceremony on June 17, 2010. Photo by: SSG Corey Baltos

(June 17, 2010)—With the 28th Division Pennsylvania Army National Guard Band playing in the background, the Army War College community bid farewell to Maj. Gen. Robert M. Williams and his family, at a ceremony June 17 on Carlisle Barracks' historic parade grounds. The ceremony

officially marked the end of a 36-year career in uniform for the outgoing Army War College commandant.

“Today’s a day to celebrate and three years ago I thought I was leaving the Army soon,” Williams said. “We came to Carlisle and little did I know how this place would consume Deb and I, nor how hard it would be to leave.”

General Martin Dempsey, Commanding General of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command, officiated the ceremony and called the former commandant “the kind of peer you call to talk about a thorny problem.”

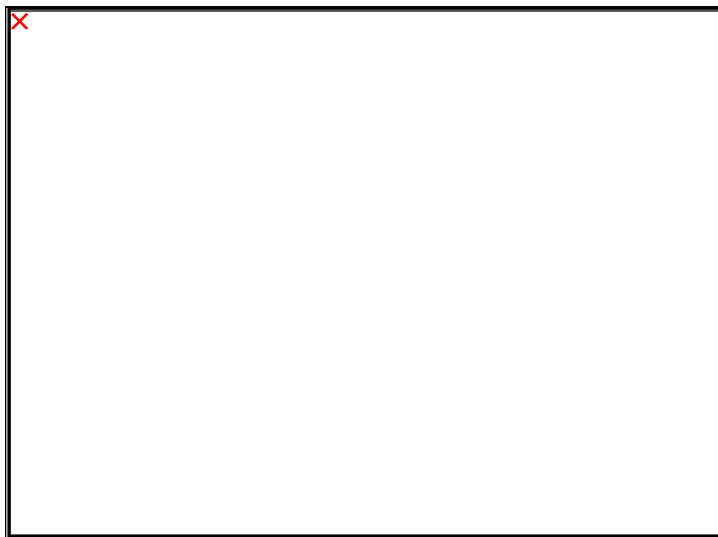
“I always enjoy coming here. Carlisle Barracks is one of those places where you can feel those who

have tread before us on this hallowed ground,” Dempsey said in his opening remarks. “On Monday we celebrated Flag Day and today we celebrate the service of a man and woman for 36 years. That kind of commitment to a single vocation is remarkable.”

“Bob’s lasting legacy is his passion for developing the next generation of leaders: leading, educating and training Soldiers,” Dempsey said. “Bob has said that he’s had the good fortune of being associated with education and training, but the truth is the Army’s been fortunate to have Bob associated with education and training.”

Williams received the Award of Distinguished Service Medal for his years of service in the Army, as well as an honorary degree from the U.S. Army War College. His wife, Deb Williams, received the Secretary of the Army’s Public Service Award in appreciation for her contributions as a volunteer to the Army.

“Deb and I have had this extraordinary life,” Williams said. “We don’t get wealthy as Soldiers, but we lead very rich lives.”



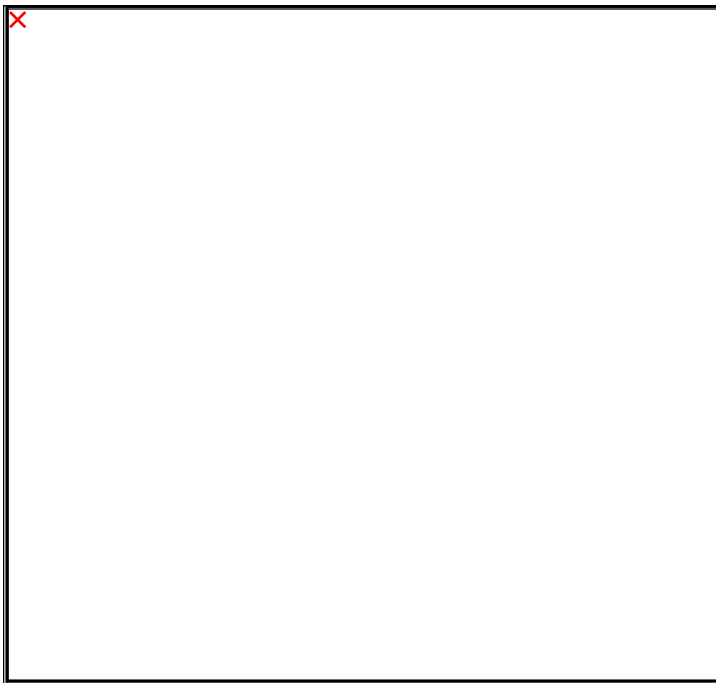
Present at the ceremony were Williams’ former commanders and colleagues, among them former Army Chiefs of Staff retired Gen. Carl E. Vuono and retired Gen. Gordon Sullivan; retired Lt. Gen. John Sylvester; retired Lt. Gen. Ronald E. Adams; retired Maj. Gen. James Kelley; former USAWC commandant retired Maj. Gen. Robert Scales; and retired Maj. Gen. Gerald Sajer.

Williams spoke about his different experiences and of all those who shaped them, and reflected on the memories made.

“The feel and sound of rain on my helmet and the cold wind on my face as I rode in the back of a jeep,” he said. “Some of them would make normal people cringe, but those memories are like home and today it would feel like refuge to be back there. I would live them all over again.”

Prior to his assignment as the 47th commandant of the U.S. Army War College in 2008, Williams served at Ft. Knox, where he was the Commanding General of the United States Armor Center from September 2006 until January 2008. From November 2002 through June 2004, Williams served as the Commanding General, 7th Army Training Command and the Expeditionary Training Center, headquartered at Grafenwoehr, Germany. During this period, he also deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as the C3 for CJTF-7. Additionally, he served as the G3 (Operations) for US Army Europe and Seventh Army from June 2004 until August 2005.

Williams is the son of a soldier and the second generation in his family to continue the legacy of service to the nation. His career highlights include command of 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division; assistant division command of 1st Infantry Division in Germany; service with the Allied Command Europe, Rapid Reaction Corps; leadership of the Battle Command Training Program at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., and joint duty at the Pentagon. Williams also served as the executive officer of the Second Armored Division's, 3rd Battalion, 67th Armor (Tiger Brigade) during Desert Shield, and Desert Storm during their mission to Kuwait City to cut off fleeing Iraqi forces. The events were chronicled by a Newsweek article in 1991.



Williams was commissioned in 1974 from the Citadel in Charleston, S.C. where he earned a bachelor's degree in history. He holds a master's degree in philosophy from Emory University, and a second master's degree in national resource strategy from the National Defense University.

He served as an instructor in the English department at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Retired Maj. Gen. Robert and Deb Williams have two children. Williams, who considers his hometown Jacksonville, Fla., will take a job in the Washington, D.C. metro area.

Williams' decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster), the Soldier's Medal, the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), the Defense Meritorious Service Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), the Army Meritorious Service Medal (with four Oak Leaf Clusters), the Joint Service Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and the Army Achievement Medal.

MG Robert Williams laughs as he shakes hands with Gen. Martin Dempsey during his retirement ceremony. Photo by: SSG Corey Baltos.

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