

Altenburg shares lessons on officership, freedom of speech

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Retired Maj. Gen. John Altenburg Jr., the current General of the Army Omar N. Bradley Joint Chair in Strategic Leadership, spoke in Bliss Hall Nov. 2 for the 2010 Sonny and Martha Moore Ethics Lecture, part of the Commandant's Lecture Series. He spoke about the issues and challenges that will face Army War College students once they

graduate and for the rest of their careers. Photo by Scott Finger.

Nov. 2, 2010 – “The environment and the world that we are living in have become increasingly more complicated, much more so than 10 to 15 years ago,” said Retired Maj. Gen. John Altenburg Jr, during a lecture in Bliss Hall Nov. 2.

Altenburg, the current General of the Army Omar N. Bradley Joint Chair in Strategic Leadership, spoke about a variety of leadership and ethical challenges for the Sonny and Martha Moore Ethics Lecture, part of the Commandant's Lecture Series.

“It's important that our senior leaders are thinking about the issues and responsibilities they will face when they leave here,” he said.

He offered guidance and insights from a 28-year legal career in the Army on issues like the rights of free speech for military personnel, the importance of voting, the don't ask don't tell policy and role the media plays in framing public discussion .

“As the Omar Bradley Chair of Strategic Leadership, he is an integral part of the Army War College experience, offering access to the students throughout the year and especially during the elective he will

offer in the spring,” said retired Col. Lee Deremer, a professor in the Department of Command, Leadership and Management. “His career as a Soldier, JAG, and legal advisor to at least seven flag officers who went on to wear four-star-rank exposed him to the details and dynamics of policy decisions at the highest levels of our national security structure.”

Altenburg will also teach a course on Law and National Security at Dickinson College.

The relationship between Dickinson and the Army War College is an example of what needs to happen in today’s ever-changing environment, according to Altenburg.

“These types of relationships ensure an active dialogue between the military and civilian institutes that allow both sides to understand the issues from a different perspective,” he said.

The Commandants Lecture Series brings in nationally recognized experts to challenge USAWC students to examine their assumptions and broader national security contexts of the issues presented.

“The theme for academic year 2011 is "Officership and the Profession," said Deremer. “It covers a wide range of timeless and relevant topics, such as professional ethics, the nature of the military and army professions, officership, dissent, stewardship, and civil-military relations. These are foundational issues for senior service school graduates as they assume duties of tremendous responsibility.”

The topic for the lecture series is one of great importance to Sonny Moore, USAWC Class of 2001, and former Chief Chaplain at Carlisle Barracks. This annual lecture series in Military Ethical Leadership was created in 2003 to honor Chaplain Sonny and Martha Moore and supported by the Army War College Foundation. The series brings in speakers like *Washington Post* reporter Dana Priest and Ambassador R. James Woolsey who examine issues related to ethical leadership of interest to both civilian and military communities.

“Ethics and integrity are hallmarks that form the core of our military values,” he said. “It’s vital that we have these discussions so that we remain focused on the goal of creating a safe and secure world.”

Altenburg background

Altenburg joined the Washington, D.C., office of Greenberg Traurig following a 28-year legal career in the Army. In his role as deputy judge advocate general, he advised senior military and civilian leaders on critical legal and policy issues and directed the day-to-day operations of approximately 1,800 civilian and uniformed attorneys and 3,000 National Guard and Army Reserve attorneys in providing legal services to more than one million commanders, Soldiers and civilians in the Army worldwide. His law practice focuses on contract litigation, primarily in the national-security and homeland-defense sectors

and in international law, representing corporations and the government.

Altenburg, who retired from the Army in 2002, also served as a consultant to the president of the World Bank Group before joining Greenberg Traurig. In 2004, he took a public-service leave from the law firm following his selection by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld to serve as the appointing authority for the system of military commissions that the Bush administration created to try detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba who were charged with war crimes.

Altenburg has experience in both military justice and operations law including service or legal oversight in Vietnam (1969-1970, 9th Infantry Division), Special Operations (1974-1978, 5th Special Forces Group), Operation Desert Storm-Kuwait/Iraq (1990-1991, 1st Armored Division), Operation Restore Hope-Somalia (1992-1993, XVIII Airborne Corps), Operation Uphold Democracy-Haiti (1994, Joint Task Force 180), Operations Joint Endeavor/Guard-Bosnia and Joint Guardian-Kosovo (1995-2001, Army Staff).

He earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in English and international studies from Wayne State University, a Juris Doctor from the University Of Cincinnati College Of Law and a Master's of Military Art and Science in military history from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. A graduate of the National War College, Altenburg's decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (2), the Bronze Star Medal (2), Master Parachutist Badge, Combat Diver's Badge and Special Forces Tab.

Named for World War II hero Gen. Omar N. Bradley, the joint chair offers a visiting scholar the opportunity to encourage civilian-military dialogue and share lessons on leadership, globalization, technology and cultural change with students and faculty at the Army War College and Dickinson College. The Chair is sponsored by the Army War College, Dickinson College and Penn State Law School at Dickinson and supported by the Army War College Foundation.