

Army War College focuses conference on civil-military relationship

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Lt. Gen. John Sterling, deputy commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command, led a discussion about the Army as a profession during a keynote address during the Army War College Strategy Conference, “American Society and its Profession of Arms.” photos by Megan Clugh.

April 8, 2011 – A year-long review of the military as a profession served as the backdrop for the 2011 Army War College Strategy Conference, “American Society and its Profession of Arms.”

Hosted by the Strategic Studies Institute, the three-day event brought together leaders from the military, academia, and government to discuss topics like the roles of military in society, reintegrating veterans and the impacts of multiple deployments on military families.

“These types of conferences are vital to keep an open dialogue on the issues facing our nation and our military,” said Army War College Commandant Maj. Gen. Gregg Martin about beginning the dialogue on these important issues. “They are not just important for our military, but our entire nation.”

Greg Mortenson, author of Three Cups of Tea talks about the value of education and its national security implications during the opening keynote for the USAWC Strategy Conference.



Greg Mortenson provides opening keynote

Kicking off the discussion about the importance of education to global security was Greg Mortenson, author of *Three Cups of Tea*.



Mortenson focused his remarks on the impact of education in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan and its implications for national security. He shared the experience of helping to build a school in Korphe, Pakistan, and the effects it had on the local community.

"The more I do this the more I understand that education needs to be one of our top priorities," he said. "There are 120 million children around the world who are not in school. We've seen that one benefit of this is that women and those who are educated are less likely to encourage their children into terrorism."

He also said that education would be the key in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"We live in a global society. Education is the intellectual capital of any society," he said. "Education gives you the ability to make choices. It gives you power."

Mortenson spoke about his experience working with the military in these regions and how they were just one part of the solution.

"I think that the American public sometimes places too much pressure on the military. The solution to Afghanistan is much broader," he said. "The solution is in sight, we can't throw in the towel now. We have made a commitment and a promise. We can make it to the end."

After his remarks, local children from James Buchanan Middle School in Mercersburg, Pa, presented him with a jar of pennies representing the money they raised for his "Pennies for Peace" program, investing in education in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

TRADOC deputy leads discussion of Army profession

The Profession of Arms campaign triggered discussion about why the Army has tackled a yearlong review of the Army profession, directed by keynote speaker Lt. Gen. John Sterling, deputy commander of the Army Training and Doctrine Command.

"We have seen some signals that some in our society question that trust," he said. "That's why we are looking at ways to strengthen our profession. We are only a profession if we have the trust and confidence of the American people. Trust is the underpinning of our profession."



Sarah Noll, a student at Old Dominion University, asks a question of Lt. Gen. John Sterling, deputy commander of the Training and Doctrine Command, during the closing keynote address.

Sterling spoke about the Army's special relationship with the American people.

"It has always been important and has grown as we are increasingly relied upon to achieve our national objectives," he said. "The American people trust us to do what is right. We act as a profession, a self-regulating organization that routinely applies our expert knowledge in the efficient application of lethal combat power. If we do not demonstrate that we are worthy of that trust we as a nation have a collective problem.

"After nine years of war we need to look at our profession," he said. "We haven't looked at our Army as a profession since the Vietnam War. It's time to take a look at how we instill the ethics of the profession into our Soldiers."

"We need to look at how we need to adapt in this new era of persistent conflict," said Sterling. "We owe that to the American people."

Civil-military history

A discussion of civil-military relations featured Dr. Brian Linn, Texas A&M University, Dr. Richard Hooker, NATO Defense College and Dr. Peter Feaver, Duke University.

"Many say there is a values gap between the two, but I say no," said Hooker. "The basic conceptions between right and wrong and the two are the same. Many issues and social concerns are seen in the same light."

Hooker suggested there may be class distinctions involved.

"The burden of these conflicts seems to be borne unevenly by the lower class," he said. "Many middle and upper class families appear to discourage military service. The implications from this may be a lack of understanding between the civilian leaders and the military."

Feaver discussed what researchers have learned about the civilian-military gap and why it's important.

"We're entering a post-war debate and it will be ongoing," he said. "The issues that we found in the 90's are very similar today. We're talking about working with NATO, operations with undetermined outcomes and gays in the military. Not much has really changed."



One of the sessions featured Michael Gordon, New York Times, who discussed with New Republic journalist Lawrence Kaplan the view of the military and society from the media perspective.

Media perceptions

New York Times journalist Michael Gordon discussed the civil-military relationship through the lens of media reporting.

The media is a bridge between the force and society, he said, able to explain back home what's happening with deployed forces. The military today expect to see the media, and may say 'our reporter,' he said. Gordon dismissed the notion of military-media hangover from Vietnam, noting that service-members today were not yet born during Vietnam and some, not during the first Gulf War.

Reintegrating veterans

Another panel considered wounded warrior care as the key issue for reintegrating veterans.

"Our findings show that deployment to a combat zone is associated with substantial adverse mental health effects," said Dr. Joseph Sabia, Department of Social Sciences at the U.S. Military Academy.

"The way that we are attacking this issue continues to change and be refined," said Lt. Col. David Lyle, Office of Economic and Manpower Analysis. "We have to look at ways to encourage Soldiers to get care and we're also working to make sure that a gap doesn't exist between when someone returns from theater and they to start receive care. It's constantly evolving."

Dr. George Rutherford of the Institute for Global Health credited technology for making it easier to provide care.

"We've entered a golden age for electronic medical records which really helps us analyze the information," said Rutherford in response to a question about the ease of sharing medical data. "The DoD has really been out in front for this issue."

Military families

"It doesn't take a study to see that the military family is stressed," said Laura Kubica, coordinator of the USAWC Military Family Program. "There is pressure on spouses from all angles -- the unit, the family, the Army. There is an expectation that we have all the answers. A spouse needs to determine if they feel comfortable in taking a leadership role."

"We can't do it all, sometimes we need assistance. We need to continue to fund those programs that have the most impact for our military families."

"The world for us has really changed since 9/11," said fellow panelist, Maj. Gen. Fred Rees, Oregon Adjutant General, who described Oregon's job placement assistance and family reintegration programs for men and women returning from deployment.

"Our biggest challenge was getting people connected to the resources they needed. Programs like Military OneSource have been a great resource ... and many local organizations are willing to step in and help as well," he said. "We created a reintegration program that then became known as the Yellow Ribbon program."

Rees noted the value of gathering a wide variety of expertise and experience to explore the civil-military relationship

"We each bring our own unique perspectives to the table that helps add to the experience of ourselves and others," he said. "We need to work together to solve these very complex problems."

"I really had no idea what to expect, but this conference exceeded anything I could have expected," said Sarah Noll, a student from Old Dominion University. "The range of topics and experiences of the presenters made this a wonderful educational opportunity. I hope to take some of these ideas and

concepts with me as I continue to think and discuss these issues.”

Faith in the military

A panel on faith in the U.S. military balanced tension with a determination to explore the issue.

"The state of the separation of church and state in the military today is a disaster," said Mikey Weinstein, Military Religious Freedom Foundation. He went on to point out examples where he believed that commanding officers had attempted to exert undue influence on servicemembers in the areas of religious beliefs.

"I'm glad to be here for such a low-key subject," said Robert W. "Skip" Ash, with a smile. The American Center for Law and Justice attorney said, "I think it is very important for us to discuss this issue during a conference like this. We need to maximize individual liberty.

"We need to have a balance. This issue is a minefield and needs to be dealt with delicately.”

While they may have differed on some of the details, both Ash and Weinstein agreed with Bush that religious issues have national security implications.

"We perform an important role in advising commanders of the religious implications of military operations," said Bush. "Being aware of the significance of a particular day or season can drastically affect how a military operation is viewed around the world.”

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