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The former U.S. Central Command Commander spoke candidly with The War College students about being mindful of their future roles as integrated members of the U.S. Government interagency team in an international environment. Retired Gen.

James N. Mattis shared lessons learned in Bliss Hall March 26 as part of the Commandant's Lecture Series.

When you graduate, you'll be expected to be at the top of your game mentally, physically, and spiritually, he said to the class, adding his personal assessment that the curriculum has matured over the years and become "more meaty".

"The operational level was a maturing event. Now you are at a grand strategic operational level," said Mattis as segue into the meat of his remarks about effective joint operations.

Mattis said that each service's doctrine and culture is a starting point to work together to carry out battlefield harmony. He cautioned that doctrine can be the last refuge of the unimaginative if you allow it.

Mattis emphasized the importance of personal relationships at the most senior levels of military leadership. The personality of general and flag officer is critical, especially in multinational and joint environments. He specifically recommended that senior leaders, when traveling, meet with the Ambassador and Country Team before engaging with a nation's military or civilian leadership.

With respect to military ethics, Mattis noted that the U.S. military is defined by all those who do the right thing every day when no one is watching, under sometimes the grimmest possible circumstances.

