

National Security Seminar: Rachel Maddow addresses U.S. military power

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Rachel Maddow disarmed the Army War college audience with her frank statement, "I don't believe any of you regularly watch MSNBC...." and went on to share her thoughts about the media, presidential power, and Congress with respect to the U.S. military.

Dr. Maddow was guest speaker for the National Security Seminar at Carlisle, Pa., speaking with 160 guest seminar participants from across the United States and the 385 Army War College who will complete an 11-month graduate program in Security Studies.

"The prevalent belief, not just abroad about the American media, but increasingly among Americans as well, is that there is a corporate overlord assigning stories, spiking stories and constantly prescribing what we ought to cover," said Maddow, but she countered that has not been her experience, that she has

full control of the stories she covers. But, if you want to talk about stories that are not popular such as national security issues or foreign events, you need to be good at making those types of stories compelling, she said.

Maddow referred to the disconnect between American politics and American national security, and called it a story worth telling and worth talking about. She wrote her book, *Drift*, for a non-military audience, and concluded that five weeks at number one on the New York Times best-seller list means that civilians took the time to read a book about the military.

"Basically, my contention is that we as a country have drifted into a situation in which there is a dangerous gulf in our country between the activity of the military and civilians' sense of responsibility for it."

Not only is this bad for U.S. foreign policy, but it was not the intention of the founding fathers who purposefully wrote the U.S. Constitution to keep the country out of war by giving war-making power to Congress.

She discussed the effects on the Iran-Contra scandal, the Boland Amendment, conscript troops, contractors, and the restrictions the Pentagon has placed on the media, which have minimized the public's exposure to the war. This has resulted in alienating the military from the rest of the population, she said

"Is there a way we can make citizens more involved in the use of the military?" she asked, suggesting that rather than a draft, perhaps a war-time tax would get America's attention.

"There are political consequences to having the world's most superb military," she noted to overwhelmingly-military audience, noting that the U.S. military has built amazing capacity. "Everyone wants to use you for something.

"If you make yourself that big and that good a hammer, how many nails are you going to find around the world?" she asked.