

Woodward speaks of challenges

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October 9, 2009--To publish or not to publish, that, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bob Woodward told Army War College faculty and students, is the question for many journalists who have gained access to questionable government intelligence.

"Do we publish or not?" he said. "When troops lives are at risk, how do we make that decision?"

Washington Post writer Bob Woodward, perhaps best known for his work on the Watergate scandal with fellow journalist Carl Bernstein, spoke to USAWC students and faculty in Bliss Hall on Oct. 8.

Woodward spoke about the predicament that journalists may find themselves in when asked to divulge sources, choose between disclosing sensitive material or sitting on a potential story, and challenging authority when it needs challenging.

Students said they appreciated the opportunity to hear someone of Woodward's status speak about journalism and his experiences.

Bob Woodward shared stories of his dealings with administrations past during the Oct. 8 presentation.
Photo by Megan Clugh.

"I really enjoyed it," said Marine Lt. Col. Jim Zientek. "I think the point about dissent was important."

Woodward offered an example from Gen. George C. Marshall after his appointment to General of the Army.

"After one week on the job, Gen. Marshall told his staff, 'I am disappointed in all of you. You haven't disagreed with a single thing I've done all week,'" Woodward recounted. "Disagreement is a necessary part of the process."

Woodward also quoted Adm. Mike Mullen on the aspect of risk.



"[Mullen] said that risk is inherent and that we should neither run from it or toward it, and I agree with that," Woodward said.

Students discussed many topics with Woodward and one student asked the seasoned journalist if he would go to jail if it meant protecting his source's identity.

"Absolutely," Woodward responded.

Another student asked Woodward how he handles the authority that comes with the amount of free speech in his position and accusations of abuse of that privilege.

"If something is wrong, it comes out in the reporting," he replied. "Facts matter and that is what counts."

Lt. Col. Bret Ackerman said he enjoyed the presentation.

"I enjoyed it," he said. "I think this kind of thing is important for us to hear."



Students had the opportunity to question Woodward on issues such as divulging sources. Photo by Megan Clugh.

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