

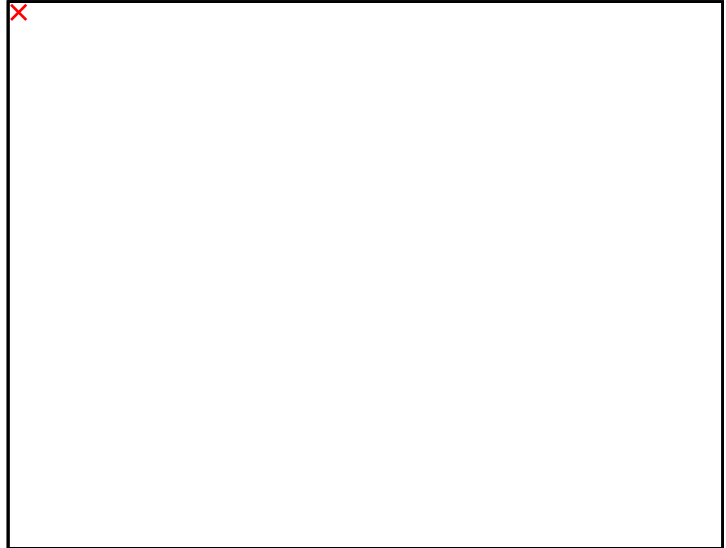
Ted Sorensen speaks ethics to USAWC audience

Thomas Zimmerman, Army War College Public Affairs Office

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Ted Sorensen, former counsel to President Kennedy, signed books after speaking to Army War College students, staff and faculty April 29. Photo by Megan Clugh.

April 29, 2009 -- **Ted Sorensen** spoke to Army War College students, staff and faculty April 29 in Bliss Hall about ethical dilemmas of a commander in chief from the perspectives of an adviser to President John F. Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis.



The now 80-year-old Sorensen is best known as President Kennedy's special counsel, adviser, and speechwriter and provided a framework for leaders to use when making ethical decisions.

"It's important to consider your allies, adversaries, advisors and avenue," he said. "Life is much different today with the 24-hour news cycles, so the decisions you make are much more magnified. You have to pick the right adversary and the right priority to be successful."

"The single most important quality for leaders is judgment," he said. "You need to surround yourself with people you trust. The decisions that President Kennedy made in his first 100 days helped lead to a successful resolution of the crisis. "

The importance of ethics comes into play when making tough decisions.

"Follow the ethical approach; gather the people with the right recommendations, not those that are necessarily the easiest."

Sorensen also stressed the importance of allies.

"He knew that allies can be helpful; they can provide wisdom, intelligence and other important methods of assistance," he said. He pointed to times where Kennedy sent representatives to leaders of countries like France, the Organization of American States and Germany to make them aware of the developing situation in Cuba.

"Working within the framework of international law was very important then and I think that importance is rising again."

How you decide to attack or influence an adversary is important as well. He pointed to the planning of the Normandy Invasion and the blockade that led to the Cuban Missile Crisis as examples.

After his remarks Sorensen took questions ranging in topic from the Vietnam War to President Barack Obama.

Sorensen was the most recent speaker in this year's Commandants Lecture Series which focused on ethics in strategic military leadership. Each year a number of lectures are invited to speak at the College on a designated theme or area of emphasis.

"He is extremely well qualified to address ethical issues and challenges in strategic leadership," said **Jim Sizemore**, student. "We are grateful to have the opportunity to hear from such an experienced, accomplished and reflective public servant. His is an authentic national treasure."