

# Army War College leadership transitions from Maj Gen Rapp to Maj Gen Kem

## Army War College leadership shift: MG Rapp to MG Kem

*TRADOC CDR: Kem selected to prepare leaders for relevancy in complex world*



July 28,  
2017 --  
Maj.  
Gen.  
John S.  
Kem  
became  
the 51<sup>st</sup>

Commandant of the U.S. Army War College July 28 in a formal ceremony in Bliss Hall. Soldiers, families, and friends of the Army War College honored the Army's traditions and heritage in welcoming Kem and saluting Maj. Gen. William E. 'Bill' Rapp who has served as the 50<sup>th</sup> Commandant from July 2014 to July 2017.

**Maj. Gen. Bill Rapp passes the unit colors in a traditional representation of the transfer of command of the U.S. Army War College to Maj. Gen. John Kem during a change of command ceremony in Bliss Hall, July 28 Gen. David G. Perkins, commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, presided over the Change of Command event, and Rapp's retirement ceremony which followed.**

Presiding officer Gen. David Perkins began his remarks by noting the significant representation from the United States Military Academy. Colleagues from Rapp's class of 1984 and Kem's class of 1985 spoke to the enduring value of relationships and to the professional military educational thread woven through Army careers, from West Point/ ROTC colleges to Senior Service College.

Kem represents that Army education thread, having stood up Army University which is one of the largest university systems in the nation, said Perkins, the commanding general of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command.

"We only have one war college in the Army," said Perkins, to the hundreds in the auditorium. "We have lots of battalion, brigade commanders and they're all great, do great things but we only have one person that runs the Army War College and all that goes with it .... So, we looked far but we did not have to look long," he said. "We knew right where to look and that is to someone who has been very involved in changing how we develop our leaders in the Army and making sure we are preparing them to be much better leaders."

Perkins referred to both Rapp and Kem as unique individuals, even as he drew attention to similarities in career path and character. Both have outstanding and impeccable academic credentials, he said. "Not only do they move easily among the ranks of academic ... and those who think about the future, but they are combat proven leaders .... They lead the ranks of academic and lead the ranks of soldiers.

"They both are doing, and have done, what they do best – and that is to become visionary leaders and impart their knowledge on to others," said Perkins.

Perkins honored outgoing Commandant Rapp's vision to increase the relevancy of the Army War College. "He set upon a path to do that: revamped the academic program; spent a lot of time getting the right folks in here, instructors and professors -- his reputation was no small part of that, of people wanting to come here and work with him; has increased the outreach of the war college not only within the Army but other academic institutions, think tanks, taking part in the broader discussion about strategic leadership and vision and what's involved with that; has had a significant role in completely revamping our general officer education process to make them better strategic leaders and what we want across our officer corps but not only that: our noncommissioned officer corps ... with regards to our nominative sergeants major, the war college being the center of gravity for that, taking them to the next level.

"For the Army War College, [relevancy] has increased dramatically and its impacts are felt well beyond the Army," said Perkins.

“More importantly, [Rapp] has increased the relevancy of the graduates. That is really what we want, to make the graduates that come out of here more relevant to the world that they’re going to -- this complex world where strategic leadership is becoming more and more important,” said Perkins.

“I had the distinct honor to do the commencement ceremony earlier today – the summer graduating class -- and a couple of the graduates came to me afterwards,” he recounted, and quoted one’s thoughts about his Army War College education: ‘In a logical manner it forced me to think long term and then convey my thoughts in a way that would make a compelling argument to those who don’t have the background that I’m working with’.

“When you think about it,” said Perkins, “that’s the definition of what we want our strategic leaders to do.... thinking differently, thinking broader and thinking longer term, and then having to build a compelling argument out of that. I can’t think of a better graduation criteria.”

“As a senior leader in the Army, I feel very blessed to be able to transition here from a great leadership and mentorship team, in Bill and Debbie to another great leadership and mentorship team in John and Martha. “We want to continue the momentum that the Rapps have started here, and as we bring the Kems on we absolutely know that will be the case.”

## **Major General John S. Kem, U.S. Army** **Commandant,** **U.S. Army War** **College**

MG John S. Kem is the 51st Commandant of the U.S. Army War College. Kem was commissioned in 1985 through the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, NY, where he graduated as a distinguished cadet and earned a bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering. He later earned a Master’s of Science in Environmental Engineering and a Masters of Business Administration



(Kellogg Business School) from Northwestern University. His military education includes the Engineer Officer Basic Course, the Engineer



Officer Advanced Course, the Army Command and General Staff College, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces where he earned a Master's of Science in National Resource Management. He is a registered Professional Engineer in Virginia and a Chartered Financial Analyst.

Most recently, MG Kem served as the first Provost of the Army University and Deputy Commandant of the Command and General Staff College (CGSC). He oversaw the reorganization of the Army's education enterprise into a university structure, maximizing efforts to achieve valid academic credit for Soldiers' education and experience, consolidating and improving the Curriculum and Faculty Development Programs and developing the Army University Press, the publishing arm of the Army University that includes "Military Review," "The NCO Journal," and the Combat Studies Institute. Additionally, MG Kem was responsible for the day-to-day operations of CGSC including: the Command and General Staff School, the School of Advanced Military Studies, the School for Command Preparation, the Army Management Staff College, the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation at Fort Benning, GA, and the Warrant Officer Career College at Fort Rucker, AL.

MG Kem's previous command assignments include the Commanding General United States Army Corps of Engineers Northwestern Division in Portland, OR from 2013 to 2015; the Europe District, North Atlantic Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers from 2008 to 2011; the 16th Engineer Battalion, 1st Armored Division, Germany, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, from 2003 to 2005, and Company A, 307th Engineer Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, NC, from 1991 to 1992.

Previous assignments include serving as Chief, Programs Division, Office of the Chief, Legislative Liaison, Washington; Director, Coalition-Joint Engineering Directorate, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan; Executive Officer to the Director Joint Improved Explosive Device Defeat Organization, Washington; Military Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, Washington; Congressional Fellow, Washington; Operations Officer, 10th Engineer Battalion and Operations Officer, 3rd Engineer Brigade, Fort Stewart, GA; and Assistant Professor, Department of Social Sciences, USMA. During the early part of his career, he also served as a CPT in the 307th Engineer Battalion, 82nd Airborne Division during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm; as a LT in the 16th Engineer Battalion, 1st Armored Division, West Germany, and Boeselager Reconnaissance Platoon Leader, 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, 1st Armored Division.

MG Kem's awards and decorations include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (w/Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star Medal (w/Oak Leaf Cluster), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Army Meritorious

Service Medal (w/7 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal, the Combat Action Badge, Ranger Tab, Senior Parachutist Badge, Air Assault Badge, Pathfinder Badge, and Army Staff Identification Badge.

Kem was born in Chicago. He and his wife Martha have three children.

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