

AHEC historian Michael Lynch honored with Army Heritage Foundation writing award

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Dr. Michael E. Lynch is announced as the Army Historical Foundation for Biography awardee, 2019, for "Edward M. Almond and the U.S. Army from the 92nd Infantry Division to the X Corps. Lynch is an Army Heritage & Education Center historian.

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An Army War College historian received top honors in the Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Writing Award for Biographer, 2019. The AHF Distinguished Writing Awards recognize authors who make a significant contribution to the literature on U.S. Army History.

Dr. Michael Lynch was honored for his biography, **Almond and the US Army From the 92nd Infantry Division to the X Corps.**

Lynch is senior historian at the U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC) in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. where he conducts research on national security issues, providing a historical context for contemporary decisions for the Army's senior leaders. He is also an assistant professor at the US Army War College, where he serves as seminar historian and electives instructor and Senior Leader Seminar facilitator.

Lynch lends historical mindedness and research advice to the USAWC resident class, as a seminar historian.

"Mike Lynch is already a noted researcher in our organization. He's done phenomenal work," said USAHEC Director Geoff Mangelsdorf.

"Mike works in our Historical Services Division, a group of Ph.D.-level researchers dedicated to helping Army leaders solve problems. They do quick-turn analysis on the historical context, or historical parallels, for current problems – contributing broader understanding for very complex, wicked problem sets the Army leaders deal with.

"They like to call themselves slash-and-burn historians. Normally historians may take decades to study an issue – and really prefer that everyone be dead first for objective assessment. Instead, this group will tackle a problem within days instead of decades. They analyze the problem to help leaders frame the problem, and bring in a historical perspective

"His book is a phenomenal history of Lt. Gen Ed Almond, covering time periods in which Almond had to deal with controversial issues, which may have great relevance today," said Mangelsdorf. "One of the things he wrestled with was the integration of blacks across the military."

"The assignments for which Ned Almond is most well known were all fraught with controversy," said Lynch,

"Almond was the product of a segregated Army that served a segregated society. Neither he nor any of his brother officers of the time would consider themselves racist, but they saw the world from a distinctly white point of view. Two Supreme Court decisions bookended Almond's world: *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) endorsed the concept of "separate but equal" as the law of the land, and it remained in place until *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) overturned it one year after Almond retired from the Army.

"As the commander of the only African-American division to see combat

during World War II as a full division, Almond received criticism in the black press for not integrating facilities on the posts where his troops trained. The War Department, however, directed him to follow state laws regarding segregation. Almond, however, focused on those aspects of the situation that he could affect, and ignored the rest. He ensured that his troops had proper, separate facilities, but integrated his officers' mess.

"Almond saw unfavorable comparisons to white divisions and War Department doubts about black soldiers' ability. Almond accepted that individual black soldiers and officers could perform well, but he came to believe that black soldiers as a class could not succeed. He believed that general lack of education and lower socio-economic circumstances produced conditions that made it impossible for them to succeed. But he did not believe those conditions could or should be corrected by legislation," he said.

"Almond represents an era and attitudes that we tell ourselves is long gone," said Lynch. The Army as an institution has changed a great deal since Almond's time, with greater opportunities for all minorities.

"But the racial upheaval in the country today, the Black Lives Matter movement, potential renaming of Army posts named for Confederate leaders, and the periodic discovery of white supremacist soldiers and groups in the ranks -- these tell us that perhaps Almond's era has not quite passed after all," said Lynch.

Lynch holds a Ph.D. in History from Temple University, a Graduate Certificate in Public History from Shippensburg University, an MA in History from Virginia Commonwealth University, and a BA in English from East Tennessee State University. He received a regular US Army commission through the ROTC program at ETSU, and retired in 2005 after 21 years on active duty.