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Address to the USMA Class of 2011

“The Need for a Comprehensive Approach”

West Point, NY

31 JAN 2009

Let me first start off by saying thanks to CDT Mike McCullough, your class president. Mike and I served together in the 82nd Airborne Division. He served in the same battalion that I served in combat with earlier in my career. Mike, I’m surprised you made it this far!

I just had a conversation with a young lady named Katie, and she asked if I’d be endorsing the Pittsburgh Steelers tomorrow during the Super Bowl. Is there another team playing?

I hear you have 864 days until graduation. I also hear from the Commandant that your dates are far better looking than the 500th night dates that were here last week!

Thank you for the opportunity to be with you all. It is truly an honor. I would like to thank BG Mike and Brenda Linnington, CSM Martin Wells, distinguished guests, men and women of the corps, and significant others, for the opportunity to speak tonight.

To all the men and women wearing a cadet uniform here let me express my thanks to you. I have an incredible respect and admiration for each of you as you volunteered to enter the United States military with our Nation at war, knowing you will serve in combat. Where we are able to get men and women like you – I don’t know. Yet you still volunteered. To me, that is the strength of our Nation and is why I personally am so honored to be here tonight. On behalf of a grateful Nation, I want to thank you for your service.

I tried to reflect back to my time here at West Point and remember what was said at my Yearling Winter Weekend, and I can’t remember anything, much less who even spoke. I’m sure they all had long, distinguished careers, but I can’t remember what they said, so I’ll try to keep it short tonight.

The dates out there probably don’t know the first thing about West Point and are asking, “Who is this guy, and why do we have to listen to him?” I do remember my date was clueless about the military and West Point. We had a great time, but she was clueless, so I thought, tonight, I’d use a comparison of West Point and another institution to help you better understand and appreciate the unique lifestyle the cadet you are with leads at West Point ... so let’s use a prison.

Prison	West Point
Drab uniforms worn year-round	Variety of drab uniforms worn year-round
Let inmates out once in awhile to walk around area	Let cadets out once a week to walk the area
Tell you when to eat and sleep	Tell you when to eat and sleep
Intra-prison riots, highly dangerous	Intramural rugby highly dangerous

As I prepared for this address, I looked back over my notes from when I was a yearling, and thought surely there's got to be something I could pass on to you. Some of the wisdom I passed on to the young plebes in 1974 is just timeless, so I thought I'd pass it on to you tonight:

We had a study guide then that was developed to assist young cadets such as myself who were not exceptionally bright, and in fact were struggling, but had a gift for interpreting or understanding true meanings. In that study guide it said this:

As seen in the study guide	Interpreted by CDT Caldwell
a. Read - be familiar with the material	a. Read – scan
b. Review - refamiliarize with material in previous lessons/courses	b. Review - time to start reading
c. Scan - know the location of the material in the text or course notes	c. Scan - blow it off

As I return to West Point, I realize that much remains the same – yet much has changed.

As timeless as many things are here at the United States Military Academy... traditions seemingly unchanged over centuries - gray wool uniforms, rigorous academics, and precision drill, it might seem a paradox that West Point and its graduates have also been instrumental in driving change not only in our Army but also in our Nation.

Many of the changes the Academy has seen over the years have been extremely positive – race and gender integration begun here served as a catalyst for our Army and our Nation. From the first African - American cadet Henry O. Flipper in 1887, to the first African - American four-star general, GEN Roscoe Robinson (class of '51), from the first female graduate, Andrea Hollen in 1980, to the first Academy female general, Rebecca Halsted (class of '81), West Point and our Army have always been agents of change.

Today our Army is at another crossroads that demands change, a new type of warfare in the 21st century, one that requires leveraging every element of national power and also includes nongovernment and international organizations, in other words a comprehensive approach to warfighting. This is the only way we will win the wars of the 21st century and win the peace. We will win every tactical and operational engagement. Without this comprehensive approach, the military will never win the peace.

During this challenging time of change, with our Army at war, it is now your generation's turn to embrace and lead change ... "You of the Corps are treading – where they of the Corps have trod." Our country needs the agile, adaptable leaders created here at West Point to lead us into a changing world – the 21st century. After over seven years of war, our country looks to the Army to fight and win our Nation's wars, but it is just as important to win the peace that follows. This is the Army you will lead.

The need for a comprehensive approach to warfare was not discussed at all when I was a cadet or a young officer. Of course, when I showed up at the 82nd Airborne Division as a new infantry lieutenant, they had standard operating procedures for everything from how to take down an airfield in Panama to how to properly inhale and exhale. Anybody ever been in a place like that?

This prescriptive way of warfare was the accepted norm of the day. You could impress people with how well you could memorize the Soviet order of battle. This remained largely unchanged for almost my entire career, but ladies and gentlemen, the current fight we are involved in is ambiguous. The enemy doesn't have an order of battle. There is no more "rear area." This is likely to remain the reality throughout your entire careers and for the remainder of this century. Therefore, our profession must change and continue to change to meet these challenges that you will all face.

Change is healthy, and is necessary. The essence of any successful corporation, like Google, a place I visited just after taking command of the Combined Arms Center, is that they are constantly adapting. We, too, must change to meet the new realities of this 21st Century battlefield.

Our adversaries know they cannot beat us in head-to-head confrontation. Perceived successes of Al-Qaeda and other insurgencies have emboldened our enemies and convinced them that they do not have to fight us head-to-head. Instead they simply have to engage us in a protracted struggle

- To ultimately wear down our national will on the home front.
- To threaten and intimidate local populations to gain sanctuary and support.
- To deny essential services until the suffering gets too great.
- To delegitimize the existing government in any way possible.

This new environment requires agile, adaptable leaders who are critical and creative thinkers, leaders that this institution knows how to produce, and has produced for over 200 years.

Speaking of adaptable leaders, within your class is CDT Trip Johnson. Trip, where are you? O.K. - wake up! I'm told Trip has the most disciplinary hours of any cadet in this class, so, son, I guess you know a thing or two about protracted warfare against a determined Brigade Tactical Officer cadre hell-bent on wearing down your will to live. Good luck leading the insurgency!

Unlike the CDT Johnson insurgency, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan highlight the need for leaders at all levels to understand and use all of the elements of national power – Defense, Diplomacy, and Development. These skill sets are essential to win the peace.

The first of these, DEFENSE, is our profession of arms, it is our destructive arm – our “clenched fist.”

Your service in our Army will likely be defined as a period of persistent conflict against decentralized, “flat” enemy organizations, organizations like Al Qaeda, Hamas, and Hezbollah. To fight and win in this environment demands agile, adaptable leaders who are creative, critical thinkers.

As you have seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, these decentralized wars are being fought and won by junior leaders just like you. Your initiative will be critical. You will become “strategic LTs” in the very near future, and your actions can have significant effects around the world.

As cadets, you will get amazing opportunities to develop your warfighting skills and ethos. You will participate in some very tough, realistic training, work with the latest technology and weaponry, and learn from staff and faculty recently back from combat themselves. Next summer, many of you will train with regular Army units, shadow drill sergeants, and attend military schools. Some of you already have.

Your professional development is a lifelong process. You must continue to read and study long after your last term-end exam. I know that's not necessarily what you wanted to hear. You are apprentices in a time-honored profession. You must master your trade, as human lives depend on your knowledge and skills.

Arguably, nowhere in America is the price of freedom more reflected upon than here at West Point. You unfortunately know the pain of losing friends and loved ones. From this location, 67 names of our fallen have been read since 9/11, and these bustling halls are too often silent in reverent observance as the names of fallen graduates echo these halls for the final time - their place in history established - their honor immortalized.

Fallen warriors like:

- Corry Tyler – Blackhawk pilot killed in Iraq
- David Bernstein – Swimming star, Infantry officer killed in Iraq – awarded the Silver Star for his gallantry
- Emily Perez – Track star, first female graduate to die in Iraq
- Michael Cerrone – Infantry officer killed in Iraq...whose father was my ADC in the 82nd.
- Laura Walker – Engineer officer killed in Afghanistan....whose father was my West Point classmate.

They all were leading men and women - Soldiers whose dedication to duty and commitment to our Nation is reflected in countless homes and neighborhoods across our country.

Who are these Soldiers that you'll lead? Many are ordinary men and women like SPC Ross McGinnis. Ross McGinnis was not the star player on any team, didn't make great grades, and wasn't on the student council, just an average high school student – in fact, he barely made it through. Ross was an ordinary citizen, but an extraordinary Soldier.

On the afternoon of December 4, 2006, McGinnis' platoon was on mounted patrol near Baghdad. During the course of the patrol, an unidentified insurgent positioned on a rooftop nearby threw a fragmentation grenade into the Humvee. As is the standard procedure, Ross yelled out three times, "grenade, grenade, grenade!" He began to exit the vehicle when he looked down and realized his friends had not heard his warning. They didn't know the grenade was inside the truck. Without hesitation or regard for his own life, McGinnis threw his back over the grenade, pinning it between his body and the Humvee's radio mount. McGinnis absorbed all lethal fragments and the concussive effects of the grenade with his own body. Ross died minutes later from his wounds. He didn't join the military with these other Soldiers. He hadn't known them for years before the Army. Their bond was formed while serving together. Ross was an ordinary citizen, but an extraordinary Soldier. I don't know where we get men and women like him, but soon you will get the privilege to lead and guide them.

Somewhere at this very moment, there is a Soldier in training in places like Fort Benning, who is preparing for war and expects a leader of character, who possesses the will to win, the personal courage and mental toughness to inspire, and lead them in the most trying of times. They expect a West Pointer.

Thus, our first responsibility remains to master our trade. This is your core competency – to fight and win our Nation's wars. As you prioritize your precious time between studying, physical fitness, personal reflection, and fun these next two years, never lose sight of the incredible sacrifices of so many. Our Soldiers truly deserve your absolute best. YOU are that leader they are looking for.

However, we as Army professionals no longer have the luxury of only being proficient at our warfighting roles. While your primary task will always remain defeating our enemies, other elements essential to winning the peace demand your mental rigor, involvement, and commitment to success.

The second element of power is DIPLOMACY, or the “extended hand of friendship.” Learning how to work with other agencies and actors you’ll encounter on the battlefield is a critical aspect of successfully implementing a comprehensive approach to winning the peace. This requires leaders who value and appreciate these other elements of “smart power”.

As lieutenants, you must be culturally astute; each of you will be ambassadors. You will be ambassadors of our Nation’s values – you will be participants in public diplomacy. You will participate in city council meetings, train foreign armies, and restore essential services to those in need.

Many people you encounter while deployed will not understand English, but they will watch your actions and judge America by your integrity, your sincerity, and the respect you show their women and children. Many of the diplomatic skills you learn here will soon be applied in a far off country.

Military power can contribute to the resolution of conflict, but it is not decisive.

The third element of power is DEVELOPMENT, or “the helping hand” to those in need. General Eisenhower wrote in a letter to General George C. Marshall in 1942, “The sooner I can get rid of these questions that are outside the military in scope, the happier I will be. . . .What a lot of headaches I’ve found. Water supply damaged. No power. No food. No fuel.” This is the same thing we find today.

History clearly demonstrates we cannot wish these reconstruction and development tasks away as mere civil distractions beneath us as warfighters – as things we do not want to do. They are critical to the overall success of a campaign, and often our military capacity far exceeds our civilian capacity to respond initially, or the security situation is nonpermissive, and there is inevitably a period of transition that will require your expertise simultaneously while you fight a war.

The incredible destructive capability of our modern military must be equally complemented by our incredible constructive capability, and the latter may ultimately be what brings more lasting peace. The American Army is a force for good – each of you will be a force for good. We’ve demonstrated this around the world, from the flooded streets of New Orleans to Baghdad. We are a force for good.

Your seemingly obscure economics and physics lessons may soon be incorporated into real-life problem solving alongside our great partners from the U.S. Department of State or U.S. Agency for International Development. Your ability to critically think and reason, and develop creative solutions to problems may very well result in the ultimate success or failure of our country's efforts.

Last October, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted "Afghanistan is the test, on the grandest scale, of what we are trying to achieve when it comes to integrating the military and the civilian, the public and private, the national and international."

I just recently returned from a trip to Afghanistan where I saw first-hand the enormous challenges facing us. If we can operationalize this "comprehensive approach," we can change the situation in Afghanistan. As the Nation shifts its focus and resources to Afghanistan, it is imperative that our uniformed leaders from platoon leader to general officer embrace the need for a comprehensive approach...and the elements of power – DEFENSE, DIPLOMACY, and DEVELOPMENT.

Our military is beginning to accept the merits of this approach to warfighting. We are slowly changing a culture. Rest assured, however, we are merely catching up to our adaptive enemy. For years, Hamas has built medical clinics and schools in Palestinian refugee camps and has the popular support of many.

In his famous "Marshall Plan" speech that he delivered in 1947, General George C. Marshall noted that our policies are not directed against any country or doctrine, but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos. The timelessness of his wisdom reemerges as once again the world's peace and security depend on the United States planting seeds of hope and prosperity in this soil, that otherwise left untended, will grow the seeds of strife and violent extremism.

A comprehensive approach to warfighting which leverages all the elements of national power as well as the expertise of our nongovernment and international partners is our best hope for peace and security in the 21st century.

Don't misinterpret what I'm saying here tonight – this is not an attempt to expand the role of the U.S. military, or militarize our foreign policy. Let us never forget our first and primary role is to be humble servants. We are servant leaders with a moral obligation to the American people and with the solemn oath to fight and win our Nation's wars, but we now must understand and use all the elements of national power.

The cost, should you fail, will be paid by the blood of America's sons and daughters. You cannot fail. I know you will not fail. Our Nation and our way of life depend upon you as they have depended on the Long Gray Line for many centuries.

The credit belongs to you, those in the arena, and I am humbled, truly humbled, by your willingness to serve during this time of war. Soon you will have the privilege to lead great men and women like SPC Ross McGinnis. Soon you will join the Long Gray Line, a noble lineage of honor, sacrifice, and valor. You alone maintain the honor of the Corps – untarnished and unsullied.

I wish you all the best. Have fun this weekend. I understand the Brigade Tactical Officer has gone soft and that you all will get the rest of the evening off! May God bless you all, and may God bless America.