

MAJOR GENERAL ANTONIO M. TAGUBA



Major General Taguba has been the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs (Readiness, Training, and Mobilization) since July 2004. He serves as the principal staff advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs on matters pertaining to Reserve Components' readiness, training, and mobilization.

Major General Taguba was born in Manila, Philippines. He was commissioned as an Armor officer in 1972. He began his career with assignment to the Combat Developments Experimentation Command, Fort Ord, CA, followed by assignment to the Combat Support Company, 1st Battalion, 72d Armor, 2d Infantry Division, 8th United States Army, Korea. He commanded Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Staff and Faculty Battalion, Field Artillery School/Center at Fort Sill, OK; Company B, 4th Battalion, 69th Armor at Mainz, Germany; 1st Battalion, 72d Armor, 2d Infantry Division at Camp Casey, Korea; 2d "St. Lo" Brigade, 2d Armored Division, later redesignated as 2d "Warhorse" Brigade, 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized) at Fort Hood, TX; and the United States Army Community and Family Support Center in Alexandria, VA.

Complementing his command assignments, Major General Taguba has served as Materiel Systems Analyst, Office of the Chief of Staff, Army, Pentagon; Executive Officer, C/J5 (Plans and Policy) ROK-US Combined Forces Command, Yongsan, Korea; Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Reserve Command, Fort McPherson, GA; and Assistant Division Commander-Forward, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and Deputy Commanding General (South), First U.S. Army at Fort Jackson, SC; Vice Director, later as Acting Director of the Army Staff, Pentagon; and as Deputy Commanding General-Support, Third US Army/ARCENT deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom.

Major General Taguba is a graduate of the Armor Officer Basic and Advanced Courses, the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. College of Naval Command and Staff, and the U.S. Army War College. He is a graduate of Idaho State University with a BA Degree in History, Webster University with a MA Degree in Public Administration, Salve Regina University with a MA Degree in International Relations, and the U.S. College of Naval Command and Staff with a MA Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies.

Major General Taguba has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (with 6 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal (with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Achievement Medal (with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster), the Office of the Secretary of Defense Identification Badge, and the Army Staff Identification Badge.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP: YOUR CHALLENGE, YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

Welcome and Introduction, Dr. Albert C. Pierce, Director,
Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics

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Lecture by Major General Antonio M. Taguba

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Questions and Answers

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WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Dr. Pierce

On behalf of Admiral Rempt, welcome to this evening's lecture, which is the eleventh in a series that the Ethics Center began in the spring of 1999. It's one way that we try to contribute to the intellectual life and the focus on ethics here at the Naval Academy.

This evening's speaker, Major General Antonio M. Taguba and his topic, "Ethical Leadership: Your Challenge, Your Responsibility," build on themes from the past several lectures in this series. In the spring of 2003, General Tony Zinni spoke on the obligation to tell the truth, and in fact, he wrote about that lecture in his life story, which he co-authored with the writer Tom Clancy.

In the fall of 2003, Chief Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson, who with his two-member helicopter crew essentially stopped the My Lai massacre, talked about doing what is right, regardless of the risks and the costs.

Last spring, Admiral Hal Gehman drew out some lessons for ethical leadership that he derived from investigating the attack on the USS *Cole* and the Columbia shuttle disaster.

Last fall, Lieutenant General Jim Mattis spoke about the need to fight according to the ethical code you were trained with and brought to the war with you—how and why you should not let the enemy or anything else drag you down to a lower level.

Most of us in this room, I think, probably first heard General Taguba's name after he completed an investigation into one of the most sordid and sad chapters in recent U.S. military history, the prisoner abuse scandals at Abu Ghraib. You and I can only imagine the cross pressures swirling around that controversy, and we can, I think, easily imagine that there were those who thought or maybe even said that telling the truth about Abu Ghraib would taint revered institutions—the U.S. Army, U.S. Armed Forces, the United States of America.

But Major General Antonio M. Taguba rose above all that. He relentlessly sought out the truth, and when he found it, he told that truth in clear, direct, unvarnished prose, and the Army, the Armed Forces, and the United States are better off for it. That is why he is with us here tonight.

You have his bio in the program, so I won't repeat all of that here, but I think one way to capture what this officer is all about is to describe him as the son of a soldier, a soldier himself, and the father of a soldier. From his bio, you know he was born in the Philippines and that he served across the country and around the world. What you don't know from his bio is that he is proud to have been raised in Hawaii, where he first put on a uniform as a member of the Junior ROTC in high school.

So please join me in offering a warm Naval Academy aloha to this proud son of Hawaii, Major General Antonio M. Taguba.

LECTURE

Major General Taguba

Well, thank you, sir, for that kind introduction. I will tell you though that the other rule of engagement that we had was not to say too much about me, because in the end, people still won't be able to pronounce my last name anyway. I am a Filipino-American, born in the Philippines, raised in the United States, and now I call myself an American.

It is truly an honor and a privilege for me to join you this evening. This is quite a thrill for me, even as an Army general, and it only happens once in a lifetime. It's wonderful to be amongst you this evening in the great halls of the United States Naval Academy. I have something to brag about when I go to that place called the Pentagon tomorrow.

As I said, this is a lifetime experience for me. I'm not an Academy graduate, though I had the chance many years ago with an application to West Point. I was not good enough, but I've always said that only in America is there another opportunity, and that is called Army ROTC.

I told my boss, Rear Admiral (retired) Thomas Hall, Naval Academy Class of 1963, the current Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs, that I was making a presentation here this evening. He asked, "Why?" I said, "Well, sir, it was between you and I, and you lost."

(Laughter.)

Major General Taguba

I can tell you that he was a bit envious, because he asked me what the topic was, but I'm sure he'll get over it when I brag about it tomorrow morning. I hope he is not out there in the audience. Just in case he does ask, tell him I did show up, okay? I'm just kidding.

Let me go ahead and ask my assistant here to beam up the special slide. Can everybody see that?

This is and will be the focal point of my short remarks [about] values, ethics, and military leadership. Now, this is a soldier who represents America's young men and women in uniform and epitomizes America's proud military deployed to fight our nation's wars. [This picture] represents our Soldiers, our Sailors, our Marines, our Airmen, and the Coast Guardsmen who are called to duty. They bear the brunt of the consequences of war against terrorism and the long separations from their loved ones. They fight to make the rest of us feel safe at home and guard the very freedom that we cherish and often take for granted.

So the question to our leaders today, to include you in the audience as future leaders, is: How do we lighten this trooper's load so he can continue to fight our nation's wars, win decisively, and then fight another day? How do we shift this burden from our troops and onto our shoulders? It's a tremendous burden, to be sure, and one [to keep in mind] when exercising our values, ethics, and our leadership.

And by the way, we estimated that this soldier who parachuted in to Mosul is carrying around 120 to 130 pounds of equipment, not including his individual body armor, which is another 20 pounds or more. Just take a look at him, [and the other] young men and women who represent our military might. He is tired. He is on one knee, but he is going to stand up and fight again.

President Bush said, "The war on terrorism requires new thinking in the law of war, but thinking that should nevertheless be consistent with the principles of the Geneva Convention," a profound statement that resonates and brings into question the context of fighting in asymmetrical warfare, as we are doing today.

Our military profession has a long history of traditions but also contains instances of imperfections. We are an institution of values, rules, regulations, doctrine, and military laws that are regimented and inculcated throughout our training and education, field exercises, and combat experiences.

There is quite a distance, though, between theory and reality. Our troops in combat are engaged in the brutal reality of close combat, up close and truly personal. Yes, the contemporary operating environment today has ushered in new thinking about war fighting, but has it changed our values, ethics, and military leadership? That is something to think about every day.

All of our services are value-based organizations, driven by standards and principles, such as commitment to service, allegiance to our nation, and our responsibility to those who entrusted to our care their sons and daughters serving in uniform. Each service has its set of values, exemplifying trust, ethics, and public service. In the Coast Guard, those values are honor, respect, and devotion to duty. In the Navy and Marines, they are honor, courage, and commitment. In the Air Force, they are integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do. In the Army, they are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage—which also represent many of the letters in “leadership.”

Now, these values are not bumper stickers or [posters,] merely hung around on walls on offices and headquarters. They have meaning in our thoughts, and [they are] engrained in each of our services, from private and seaman to generals and admirals. The dilemma, of course, is upholding these values, avoiding compromise, and not deviating from them, as reflected in the few despicable acts committed by a few American and coalition troops in combat. [Their actions] have had severe impacts internationally and still resonate today.

It is all about personal responsibility and accountability. In fact, our senior leaders today remind their subordinates and civilian employees of their responsibility to inform commanders and supervisors of problems that affect good order, discipline, morale, well-being, and the readiness of their outfits, without fear of retribution. It is all about fostering a healthy command climate, where troops feel safe and have trust and confidence in their chain of command. Leadership in the military knows no distinction by service, affiliation, or components—active, guard, or reserve. The services’ values may vary, but the practice and

execution remain fundamentally the same: to command, lead, train, and care for [their people] in peace and war.

Those who aspire to lead take charge. They should be fully aware of the responsibility that comes with being in charge. The expectations are significantly higher [for those who lead] than for those who are willing to follow them.

General of the Army Omar Nelson Bradley once said, and I quote, "Military men are expected above all else to be leaders. What they do may well dignify the past, explain today, and secure tomorrow. A good leader is one who inspires others. His worth as a leader is measured by the achievements of the led. This is the ultimate test of his effectiveness."

Jim Collins, in his book entitled *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't*, said, "The good-to-great leaders never wanted to become larger-than-life heroes. They never aspired to be put on a pedestal or become unreachable icons. They were seemingly ordinary people quietly producing extraordinary results."

We're in a profession unlike any other, not only because we took an oath of allegiance, but when required, it is absolutely necessary for us to empower our subordinates to take charge when their leaders are absent or incapacitated. If they are led right, they will do right.

Now, the asymmetrical nature of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan has demonstrated many instances of junior enlisted taking the lead, assuming control during varying scenarios of combat while understanding their leaders' intent, absent the very presence of their superiors. They [junior enlisted] could be in direct combat operations anywhere, or conducting convoy operations when attacked, or ambushed while conducting civil affairs or nation-building operations, or even handling detainees. Leaders are responsible for training our troops, placing them in leadership positions, or in the absence of guidance, allowing them to take the initiative and take charge in the heat of combat or any crisis situation.

For example, in Iraq in May of 2004, Private First Class Christopher Fernandez, from the Army's First Cavalry Division deployed in Baghdad, was awarded the Silver Star for his heroic acts on May 5, 2004. At 19 years old, he had only been in the Army for 18 months. He was a newlywed with a 2-month-old son he had never seen.

That evening, while on patrol in the streets of Baghdad, his mounted patrol was attacked by an improvised explosive device and small-arms fire from insurgents that killed two of his comrades. Private Fernandez immediately returned fire with his machine gun, providing suppressive fire to cover the evacuation of casualties. When he ran out of ammunition, he ran to another machine gun mounted on a damaged Humvee, exposing himself to heavy fire and disregarding his own safety in order to protect his teammates.

An act of bravery for sure. A soldier who was able to become a leader instantaneously [because of] his instincts, training, and values. He took charge without question. There are so many more like Private Fernandez out there, and it's very apparent to the rest of us.

In Iraq, everybody is in the fight—infantrymen, tankers, artillerymen, cooks, medics, crewmen, truck drivers, mechanics, aviators, men and women alike—24/7. The insurgents do not discriminate who they target and kill. They don't play by any rules of warfare or international law. They do not worry about collateral damage, but we Americans have to. There have been times when troops deviated from the norm, but discipline, pride, and honor abound, and caring leaders must ever be present to steer them [troops] back to the right path.

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins, commander of the First Battalion of the Royal Irish, on the eve of the attack in Iraq on 18 March 2003, addressed his 800 men. I am quoting from an excerpt of his remarks: "There are some who are alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly. Those who do not wish to go on that journey we will not send. As for the others, I expect you to rock their world, but if you are ferocious in battle,

remember to be magnanimous in victory. If you harm the regiment or its history by over-enthusiasm in killing or cowardice, know it is your family who will suffer. You will be shunned unless your conduct is of the highest, for your deeds will follow you down through history. We will bring shame on neither our uniform or our nation.”

General Peter Schoomaker, the Army Chief of Staff, talked about the adaptability of our leaders and soldiers, especially the adaptability of junior leaders to take on roles that were far beyond the traditional scope of a company or a battalion commander. Those leaders are running towns in Iraq, helping to organize and working with civic leaders, making tough decisions day and night, even while conducting combat operations around the clock. The adaptability and sophistication of operations require an adaptable organization full of problem-solvers, and he [Schoomaker] said that is “why we focus on teaching our people not just what to think but also how to think.” He goes on to say that America ought to be proud of our troops. They are, after all, the next greatest generation.

And I see in the audience tonight a brigade of the greatest generation, who will represent our nation with enormous pride and great dignity. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shalikashvili, noted in his outgoing remarks in 1997 that future leadership demands would be marked by the unprecedented stress, isolated battles, and dispersions of the battlefield. What a remarkable vision that holds ever so true today.

Personally, I am deeply indebted to the wisdom, values, work ethic, and leadership of several people. They took the time to mentor me and shape my skill sets. They were people like Staff Sergeant Sidney Gilman, United States Army (Retired), my very first platoon sergeant. I can still see him today, telling me, “Lieutenant, this is the way it’s going to be, because I am going to teach you to be famous, and I’m going to teach you right.”

First Sergeant Price and Sergeant Major Archie Widener are both retired now. They were two of the best first sergeants I’ve

had the privilege to serve with. Command Sergeants Major Carpenter and Rufus Dawkins, my battalion and brigade command sergeants major respectively, taught me that they're going to take care of things. They were going to make it right and make me famous as I am today.

[I'm also indebted] to Major General Mike Myatt, United States Marine Corps (Retired), who willingly shared his intellect of warfare with me. [In addition,] Army Generals Fred Wong, Bob Coffey, and Tom Schwartz took the time to chew me out constantly, then hugged me and showed me how to love soldiers and soldiering. [I'm thankful] to my parents, who inspired me and instilled in me their sense of discipline, their love and values, and to my own family who [wanted] me to give up my quest to [make] them my four-man tank crew, yet gave me [the] hope to be a better leader.

One of my favorite films is *Saving Private Ryan*. There is a segment in that movie that really captures the essence of some of the things that I'm talking about tonight. This is when the squad led by Captain Miller, played by Tom Hanks, was on their way to find Private Ryan. Remember that?

A private was openly complaining about their mission to find Private Ryan. When the captain was asked about the mission, Captain Miller told him that he doesn't gripe in front of his soldiers, that griping goes upward, not downward, and if his commander asked about the mission he has been given, he simply says, "Well, sir, it's a good mission, and I will follow your orders."

The moral of this story is to keep your troops focused, be positive about them, and make them be successful. A retired general once said that soldiers don't really care where their leaders come from, or their educational background, or their previous jobs or assignments. What they care about is who their leader is. Is he or she competent? Will their leader care about them and their families? Will their leaders be good enough [for them] to follow in combat? Will their leaders build and foster a safe command environment? These are the questions that are often silently asked by our subordinates, those you're going to lead in the future, and they will know the answer in the end.

Now before I conclude my remarks, let me share some reflections on something I was asked to do last year. Army Regulation 190-8, which is a tri-service regulation, meaning it's a joint regulation, outlines detainee and enemy POW operations. The supporting directives clearly state that the stress of combat is not an excuse to commit egregious offenses in violation of international law, the law of land warfare, and the Geneva Convention. It clearly states that in the second paragraph on the first page of the regulation. That stuck with me for a long time.

Simply put, leaders command. Leaders supervise. Leaders oversee. Leaders check, train to standards, uphold standards, [and] ensure the safety of their troops. [They] exude competence and discipline and [are] unwilling to compromise the values of the institution we hold so dear.

Leadership is about that high level of commitment to serve our nation and to uphold America's trust in its military leaders and in the troops we are entrusted to care and lead. And I believe that those who follow our services' values have an obligation to the institution of military service. And those who recognize the same values but become perverse or persuaded by others to turn a blind eye towards them are then solely responsible for their actions.

The stress of combat is not an excuse to deviate from the fundamentals of America's virtues, since America is the world leader in democratic customs and institutions. We leaders are constantly being watched by our own troops. We can either be revered or despised based on our actions. So let's go back and reflect on this paratrooper right here, with the heavy load he is carrying. Let us help him lighten the load a little bit through our time-proven set of values and caring leadership. We want him to succeed. We don't want him to fail, because as we all know, failure is not an option.

Thanks very much for your attention this evening. Best of luck in your future endeavors. God bless you. God bless our troops deployed in harm's way, their families, and as we say in the Army, hoo-ah. Thank you.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question

Sir, I was just wondering what your opinion is on the effective or ineffective leadership that took place during the Abu Ghraib Prison scandal. Was there ineffective leadership that caused this to happen?

Major General Taguba

I had never been to Abu Ghraib before. When I was directed to investigate the detainee abuse allegations, I spent at least two days looking [at the place], talking to several people, and just observing how people were conducting their daily routine. There was something that was missing, and I kind of sensed right off the bat that a great amount of discipline was missing, and let me tell you why.

People were not saluting, and we were in the compound itself so there was nothing to prevent them from saluting. The soldiers were not dressed properly. I saw many different ways of wearing the uniform. They were not wearing their helmets. Some were not carrying their weapons. You're not supposed to be wearing a weapon when you're [inside the compound] guarding the detainees or prisoners. While soldiers were going about their business outside the prison area, they were supposed to be carrying their weapons. They were not doing that. And the leaders were not taking the time to correct that.

So that was a clear indicator that leadership, making small corrections and instilling a little bit of pride, was missing. It doesn't take a general or flag officer to recognize that. Of course, we were making corrections on the spot.

Throughout the investigation, as I was interviewing people who were either directly involved or indirectly involved, I heard more excuses about why the conditions of the detention centers could not be improved. They had the responsibility to improve the living conditions, not to turn it into like a Shangri La or anything like that, but to at least put a cover on where they were processing the detainees, which was a pigsty to begin with.

But no effort was made. They had only covered it with canvas. They could have done it a little bit differently.

There was a lot of finger-pointing from privates up to the general. So that led me to my conclusion that leadership failure was propagated by a lack of discipline, lack of pride, and lack of caring.

Question

Before, you were talking about junior leaders being taken advantage of in the junior ranks. Would you attribute that to the higher ranks, like maybe the lieutenants and the captains, not doing anything, so the young junior enlisted were taking charge and doing what they thought was right, and they didn't know what they were doing?

Major General Taguba

(Laughs.) I'm sorry. I didn't mean it that way. Everybody has to be able to react quickly because a lieutenant may not be there. A lieutenant, you know, is trained properly, and you go through this whole process. They ought to be decentralized in such a manner that if somebody is not going to be there to lead them, somebody is going to have to take charge. That private could be the one in control of a radio or a machine gun, or he knows where his people are. Because he cannot get hold of his sergeant or his lieutenant or his captain or his colonel, he is going to have to take the initiative. I've seen a lot of that happen, and some of that, of course, is hard to explain. If you train them right, they will do right.

Let me tell you a story. One of my biggest thrills was commanding a brigade at the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. At NTC, you are always competing against the dreaded regiment, the OpFor [Opposition Force], and we were on our last mission. We had already won at least one of the battles, and this was my last battle. [I had] 4,000 people on the ground, about 350 vehicles out there, tanks, Bradleys, artillery on the typical linear battlefield, and we were to penetrate a [particular] battle position. Well, the obstacles were complicated, and we couldn't find anywhere to penetrate until we

used the UAV [Unmanned Aerial Vehicle]. We found a crevice, or wadi, [in which] we could maneuver my attacking force.

Well, I was trying to call my lead battalion commander. I could not get hold of him, because he was in control of the fight, so I turned down to his radio net. I heard this young corporal say, "I am in charge. I am in charge. My company commander is niner niner niner," meaning he is dead. "I have one squad left. I have one squad left. I have one breach opened. Do you want another breach opened? Do you want another breach opened? I am in charge." I still get goose bumps when I hear that. You know he is going to do the right thing because he wants everybody to succeed.

Now after the battle was done, I gave that young corporal an Army commendation medal, even though this was simulated combat. Of course, we won the battle, one of the two that we actually won. Today, that corporal is a staff sergeant. You know, we're the only military that could do that today.

Question

Sir, what is your view of the interrogation techniques used at the camp?

Major General Taguba

Oh, there were many. There was guidance provided by the Commanding General of Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7). Of course, you get that guidance, and now you have to somehow translate that into execution, and somehow you have to train people for that. But the answers we were given were: "Yes, we understood. We tried. We didn't have time, and those were posted in the headquarters, you know, properly displayed." But you think people would read it? Do you think people would understand it? Do you think people would train on it? Do you think people would reinforce it? Was there an oversight to say you were doing it wrong, or you were doing it right? Our conclusion was no.

There are other segments on the tri-regulation I've talked to you about that say that the Geneva Convention must be posted or

[you must have] have copies made in the language of the detainees' origin. That didn't happen either.

As we went along in our investigation, we were also making corrections on the spot. We had to. You can't just say, "Okay, I'm going to conclude my investigation in 30 days, and then we'll wait for the corrective actions." We could not do that. As soon as we uncovered something, we immediately wrote it down, made contacts, and said, "Something is not right." Whether it was substantiated or not, we just took it for granted that something was not right. Then I directed the commander, the new commander, to make corrective actions.

At a particular detainee camp, they had one copy of the Geneva Convention, and it was in Arabic. Well, I speak a little bit, and I can understand some. We asked the question, "Do you have one in Pushtu [language spoken by some Afghans]?" [The answer was] "No. I only have one." So I said, "May I see it?" And the soldier said, "Sir, I loaned it out." His commander asked, "Who did you lend it out to?" He said, "I don't know. I just loaned it out." Okay, corrective action number 1,005: What if the other person wants a copy or what have you? Could you just post it? Just the four tenets of the Geneva Convention, you know, that says I have the right to medical care and that sort of thing, just posted there somewhere in their language. It's not that hard. But then subsequently, of course, when we went back to check, some of it was posted, and some of it was not.

That's also part of the interrogation technique that they're not going to tell you anything, or if they're going to tell you something, they're going to tell you something that you want to hear. But we also found that some of our doctrine was outdated in that regard.

And basically, interrogation techniques or policy applied at GITMO [Guantanamo] may or may not be applicable anywhere else. That's being debated today.

Question

In our classes, we have been talking about just warfare, and one of the elements is clarity of purpose and the belief system behind

a war, and I was wondering if you thought maybe a lack of clarity in that area caused this? What is your view about the purpose of our presence there right now?

Major General Taguba

You know, I had a failing grade in that portion of the ethics class I had in college, because I was always arguing the point. Politics aside, I will tell you that we took an oath, and our troops are going to follow orders, provided that they are properly given the guidance to do that.

We've seen all the debate in the media about weapons of mass destruction, or whether it was a good war gone wrong or whatever the case may be but—what I saw there firsthand [was that] our Soldiers and Marines and Airmen and Sailors and Coast Guardsmen are doing what they think is correct, what they think is right. And they're unequivocally dedicated to their duty; they're going to complete their mission despite the politics, despite the debate 8,000 miles away, because all they worry about is, "Am I going to make it home? Am I going to get shot today? Am I going to see my loved ones again?" That's all they care about.

And they care about their buddies, I'll tell you firsthand. Those I saw going home on leave or PCS'ing [making Permanent Change of Station moves] say, "Sir, you know, my buddy is still there. I don't want to leave him." I said, "Well, you got to go home. Your time is up."

The kids who do mortuary affairs, for example, [are] 18 or 19 years old. When the remains come in, the first thing they do is be sure that they honor that hero and collect all personal effects. They don't worry about how he got killed. They don't worry about where he was killed. What they worry about is that he's going home, and they want to be sure that they've documented everything on this young hero's person, whatever is in his or her pocket, document it properly, precisely. Those remains go in a container, and they do the honors of loading them onto a cargo hold of an airplane. They do the honors that are typically relegated to an honor guard. They do it themselves, absent any politics or any theory or whatever, and they do it with such

precision and with so much dignity that every time I see them, I have a tear in my eye. As a 19-year-old told me, “Sir, if I was in that body bag, I’d want to be sure that my family is proud of me and proud of what these soldiers are doing to send me home.” That’s the kind of stuff that touches you all the time, in the heart. You will never see that in the news, because it’s something that’s a private matter, truly a private matter, and sad, very sad.

I know I didn’t answer your question, but I don’t want to get another failing grade. There are faculty members out there.

Question

You mentioned several values and ideals that an officer has to uphold in order to be an ethical leader. Was there any one situation or any one experience in your career, besides what recently happened in the prison abuse scandals, which shaped the ideals that you attempt to uphold today or that maybe now you see the importance of those ideals?

Major General Taguba

It’s called integrity. I remember as a young captain, I inherited a unit that [had] a lot of folks being chaptered out or tons of article 15s [nonjudicial punishment cases]. It was a headquarters outfit, a unit that a lot of the line commanders would say, “Oh, I got to rehabilitate him. Put him in a headquarters battery.” It’s an artillery unit, and I’m an armor guy, you know. I’m a tanker, but I was told to command this unit.

So I said, “Well, to build teamwork and to keep some of these kids from going to jail, we’re going to have a flag football team. So I got them uniforms, you know, with white pants, the whole thing. I mean, I had to borrow them from the local sports store, and [we had] put some pride in them. Just a flag football team, and we designed plays. We had a play we called the “green weeny.” This is where the center goes up the front, and you just pop him the ball. I mean people were just so darn proud, and we were like 8 and 0. You know, we were leading the whole post. This was at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Until one day, my star running back decides to go AWOL [Absent Without Leave]. He actually went on leave but failed to

come back. So I waited 24 hours. The rule then was [after] 24 hours, you count them as AWOL. But I decided to wait 48 hours, because I had been in contact with him. He went home to Beaumont, Texas, near Houston. I said, "You got to come back." So I did not fill out an AWOL report, and my battalion commander called me on it, and my battalion commander was recommending to my brigade commander that I be given an Article 15 for lack of integrity in not reporting the private AWOL after 24 hours, despite the fact that I had been in contact with him, and I wanted him to come back.

That shaped my thinking. If I counted him AWOL, hell, I could be a lieutenant general by now. I don't know. But that wasn't the case at all. I wanted to ensure that this kid [came back], not because of the flag football team, but because I wanted him to stay. I almost resigned, but then there was a brigade commander who called me in, hugged me, and said, "I will give you a verbal reprimand, and I want you to stay."

Question

Where would you pinpoint the most responsibility along the chain of command for the events at Abu Ghraib, sir?

Major General Taguba

Well, it's already in the report. Because of the scope of my investigation—and it's public knowledge anyway—I'd go from the brigade commander to the battalion commander to the company commander to the command sergeant major and all those people that were inside the chain of command, the leaders who were there. The reason why I say that is they were there. It's sad that the junior enlisted are the ones who are taking the brunt, because they [the leaders] knew. It's impossible not to know what went on in that hard site.

Abu Ghraib was built by the Brits in 1962. It serves one purpose. You go in; you do not come out. That's the purpose. There is no central heating. There is no central air. I did not see any bathrooms inside the cells. It stunk. Tier 1A is at the end of six tiers, and you have to go through a corridor, and you cannot miss the Iraqi prisoners guarded by Iraqi policemen, and at the end, of course, is where we had our security detainees.

When you are being hurt, when you are being tortured, you don't muffle your voice in pain. You could hear somebody talking on the other corridor, because it's so enclosed that you could actually hear people. So there is knowledge there, and that's why I said [what I did] about integrity. People were not disclosing, and so I don't buy it for a moment that they didn't know that that was happening. I will buy it when they said, "I didn't know that was happening, but I should have known it was happening, and I should have checked to ensure that it stopped happening."

There was one officer of the many that I interviewed who said, "I could not imagine, or I could not understand why there were so many prisoners without their clothes on, and I told a commander that that will cease effectively now." But damage had already been done, and I admire that officer. That's why he's not in my report.

Question

Sir, we've heard some reports about how the CIA kind of provided some advice as to how these interrogations should be carried out. We've heard stories about interrogations about Guantanamo Bay and some of the methods that they use and how they're sort of unconventional, to say the least. Do you think it's less acceptable for the military to use such methods than it is for a civilian organization like the CIA, or do you think that the standards should be the same across the board?

Major General Taguba

As I mentioned earlier, we in the military are governed by rules, regulations, policies, doctrine, and the like, and we have doctrine that is in existence today. Some of them are being modified, or at least revised. From my standpoint, I don't know anything about what the CIA or anybody else was supposed to be doing. All I knew was we were supposed to be doing something that was to be reflected within the bounds of our regulation for our soldiers to train on.

I was not able to talk to a lot of the military intelligence people because that was another segment of the investigation. I was only supposed to talk to the military policemen, who then said, "Yeah, we were just following orders." But I wanted them to tell me who

was telling them to do this. Some of you have seen, or most of you have seen, the photographs. It is highly, almost nearly impossible, to deviate from the norm and then have your picture taken, and you're smiling. That's probably the hardest thing to understand. If you are following orders to do something, you would probably send a signal in your facial expression that this is not right. Don't you think? But when you're raising a thumb, or you're smiling and you're waving, as I told those soldiers, "I was born at night but not last night, so tell me the truth and see where we can go from there."

Those were probably one of the most disturbing things that anybody could portray on camera. There is nothing to smile about [at] Abu Ghraib, ladies and gentlemen. I did not smile when I was there. I will tell you that, in my short life in the Army, that was probably the worst event I had to investigate—I don't even call it an honor or privilege. It was just tough to understand. I had 23 people in my team. Not everybody saw the pictures. About four or five of us did. We wanted to gain an appreciation of what the heck we were investigating. I didn't want to jade or muffle or precipitate any opinions that the rest of us or the rest of my team members would have. I wanted them not to prejudge anything.

And then at the end of that whole effort, we were all saddened by all of that, and the question was: How can this happen? Why is this happening? And what do we do now?

Well, the answer was simple. We collect the facts. We do not speculate. Put it all together, and at the end of that investigation, we put it aside. Then we ask ourselves: Will this withstand scrutiny? Will our investigation withstand scrutiny, because we're going to be obligated to tell the ugly truth, because we will expect to testify, to be called and explain this horrendous situation.

If we could not answer that question overwhelmingly, unanimously—if even one guy said, "Sir, it will not withstand scrutiny," then we start all over again. That was our ground rule. That's the demand that we placed on ourselves, because if we had any hint whatsoever of disagreeing with the conclusions of that

report, then it would not be right. Then we go back and touch on those things that were not done right until we all unanimously agreed that it was right. So then we proceeded from there.

I will tell you we were so apprehensive about that report, because it will demonstrate that something horrible happened, something terrible happened, and our investigation will be investigated further. Nobody is going to believe us, but fortunately it's held up so far, and we're now very proud about it. I talked to some of the folks, and we're still sad about it.

But the CIA, OGA, other government agencies—what we saw was what we saw. We did not speculate. We saw what we saw, and we reported it and put that in our report. Rules of engagements, policy, memos, and what have you.

Personally, I think some people exploited an untrained unit. And personally, I think somebody took advantage of an undisciplined unit, for that matter.

Midshipman First Class Kelvington

Sir, on behalf of the brigade of midshipmen, thank you for taking time out of your schedule to invest in our development as future officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. We know we're going to be forced to face many different challenges, especially ethical decisions in the future, and we thank you for sharing your thoughts with us this evening.

Major General Taguba

Thank you.

