

## **SUPERINTENDENT**

### **WELCOME REMARKS AT THE REAGAN CONFERENCE**

**3 November 2014**

Distinguished guests, Cadets, students, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Virginia Military Institute and to this conference on leadership and national security affairs during the Reagan presidency, and on the influence of the Reagan era on today's national security issues. When this conference was first envisioned, few perhaps realized just how far current tensions between East and West would escalate. Russian actions and ambitions in Ukraine and veiled threats to a number of former Soviet Republics have us talking "once more" of an East-West confrontation and give added importance to our understanding of the final years of the Cold War.

This conference, titled "The Enduring Legacy," provides us a timely opportunity to discuss leadership, strategy, and international security affairs between 1981 and 1989. There are some real differences between the Cold War issues and contemporary challenges; thus, we must understand the past to effectively respond to the challenges facing the United States and the world today.

The sessions to come will examine the Reagan presidency and its handling of national security affairs. To do so, we are privileged to welcome a large number of very distinguished scholars and national security professionals. The names of our panelists, chairs, commentators, and hosts are in your program, so I won't repeat them at this time, but I would like to extend a special welcome to our two keynote speakers: former NATO commander Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN (Ret.), Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union Jack F. Matlock, Jr.

- The three panels today will examine:
  - The Leadership of Ronald Reagan,
  - The Organization and Function of the National Security Establishment,
  - and
  - The Soviet Union and the United States
- Tuesday morning's fourth panel in three breakout sessions will discuss Reagan and: the Americas; the Middle East; and Europe.
- And, we will conclude with the discussion of: Reagan, Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War.

VMI is proud to host this important conference. It is a collaborative effort of: the John A. Adams '71 Center for Military History and Strategic Analysis; the V.M.I. Center for Leadership and Ethics; the Wheatley Institution, and the George C. Marshall Foundation. The Adams Center, an element of VMI, focuses on Cold War military history and the connections between the Cold War and contemporary national security affairs; the VMI Center for Leadership and Ethics promotes leadership and character development; the Wheatley Institution at Brigham Young University is devoted to "lifting society by preserving and strengthening its core institutions," and the George C. Marshall Foundation perpetuates General of the Army George C. Marshall's legacy as a military leader, statesman, and author of "The Marshall Plan."

I am especially pleased to welcome the many college students who are attending this conference. Not only will you gain a deeper understanding of the importance of the Reagan years, but as future national security professionals and leaders, you can evaluate and weigh for yourselves the policies and actions taken by the Reagan administration and relate them to the challenges and opportunities we face today.

On behalf of the entire VMI community, I extend to all of you a warm welcome and best wishes for informative and stimulating discussions.