

MYANMAR NATIONAL DEFENSE COLLEGE SPEECH

26 June 2014

ALO-MINGALABA-KHA-MYA. [GREETING]

GOOD AFTERNOON, AND THANK YOU FOR THIS SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH YOU TODAY. MY PRESENCE HERE IS INDICATIVE OF THE NEW CHAPTER IN OUR TWO COUNTRIES' RELATIONSHIP.

AS A YOUNGER OFFICER, I ATTENDED OUR ARMY WAR COLLEGE, WHICH IS VERY SIMILAR TO YOUR DEFENSE COLLEGE. THE EDUCATION I RECEIVED THERE WAS ENRICHING AND BENEFITED ME THROUGHOUT MY CAREER. I HOPE THAT MY BRIEF REMARKS WILL CONTRIBUTE IN SOME SMALL WAY TO YOUR STUDIES AND SUBSEQUENT ENDEAVORS. I AM TRULY HONORED TO BE HERE WITH YOU.

I AM HERE TODAY, NOT AS DIPLOMAT, BUREAUCRAT, OR POLITICIAN, BUT AS A CITIZEN SOLDIER IN THE UNITED STATES MILITARY, WHICH PROUDLY OPERATES WITH GREAT EFFECTIVENESS UNDER CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. I WILL DESCRIBE MY EXPERIENCES AS AN ARMY OFFICER IN THE CONTEXT OF HOW WE, AS AMERICANS, FUNCTION IN A DEMOCRACY AND AS A PROFESSIONAL MILITARY FORCE.

AFTERWARD, I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU, ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS, AND LEARN FROM YOU. I WANT TO LEAVE YOUR BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY WITH THE HOPE THAT WE CAN LAY THE FOUNDATION FOR AN ENDURING DIALOGUE BETWEEN OUR MILITARIES.

I HAVE SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY FOR 32 YEARS. DURING THAT TIME, I HAVE HAD A WIDE VARIETY OF JOBS AND EXPERIENCES. I HAVE SERVED IN COMBAT IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN, JUMPED

OUT OF AIRPLANES, AND PILOTED AH-64 APACHE ATTACK HELICOPTERS. I HAVE SERVED IN TIMES OF WAR AND PEACE.

I STARTED OUT AS A PLATOON LEADER AND HAVE RISEN IN THE RANKS TO THE POST I HOLD NOW, DEPUTY COMMANDER OF U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND, WHICH OVERSEES U.S. MILITARY ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT ASIA AND THE PACIFIC.

AS A U.S. ARMY OFFICER, I HAVE SERVED AROUND THE WORLD AND INTERACTED WITH A VARIETY OF FOREIGN MILITARIES. THROUGH THOSE INTERACTIONS, I HAVE GROWN TO APPRECIATE THE NUMEROUS SIMILARITIES WE SHARE, REGARDLESS OF THE NATION WE SERVE. HOWEVER, PLEASE LET ME SHARE WITH YOU WHAT MAKES ME PROUDEST ABOUT THE U.S. MILITARY AND CONTRIBUTES TO OUR ABILITY TO FIELD ONE OF THE BEST AND MOST CAPABLE FORCES IN THE WORLD.

WE AMERICANS ARE A NATION OF GREAT DIVERSITY, AND OUR MILITARY REFLECTS THE VAST BACKGROUNDS OF THE AMERICAN POPULACE. THIS DIVERSITY IS OUR GREATEST STRENGTH. WE UNDERSTAND THAT OUR JOB AS MEMBERS OF AMERICA'S MILITARY ISN'T JUST, OR EVEN PRIMARILY, ABOUT WEAPONS OR SYSTEMS – IT'S ABOUT PEOPLE. IT'S ABOUT THE DIVERSE GROUP OF PEOPLE WE LEAD AND PEOPLE WE SERVE. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT'S ABOUT BUILDING AND MAINTAINING THE TRUST IN OUR GREAT AND PROUD INSTITUTION THAT UNDERPINS EVERYTHING WE DO.

SO WHAT MAKES THE U.S. MILITARY SUCH A PROFESSIONAL FORCE? WHAT ENSURES WE MAINTAIN THE GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE, AND OVERALL QUALITY, REQUIRED TO DO OUR JOB EFFECTIVELY? IT BOILS DOWN TO A FEW SIMPLE THINGS:

- 1) EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO INSTILL PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE, VALUES AND COMMAND AUTHORITY
- 2) STRICT ADHERENCE TO ETHICAL CONDUCT AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
- 3) ACCEPTANCE OF DIVERSITY
- 4) RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW
- 5) SUBMISSION TO CIVILIAN CONTROL

FIRST, PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND DISCIPLINE COMES FROM EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EXPERIENCE, BUT ALSO THROUGH ADHERENCE TO A NATION'S VALUES. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING ARE ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL TO WHO WE ARE TODAY. A SOLDIER'S MOST ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT IS NOT A WEAPON, BUT RATHER A SET OF VALUES THAT HE OR SHE BRINGS TO THE MISSION, AND THAT WHICH THE U.S. MILITARY ENDEAVORS TO FOSTER IN OUR FORCES THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

THESE CORE VALUES DISTINGUISH ANY SOLDIER IN ANY ARMY ASA TRUE PROFESSIONAL AND WARRIOR FOR ONE'S NATION. A MILITARY CAN ONLY BE AS GOOD AS ITS MOST HONORABLE SOLDIER. THEREFORE, THE FIRST TASK OF ANY U.S. MILITARY COMMANDER AT EVERY LEVEL – FROM THE COMMANDER IN CHIEF DOWN TO THE LOCAL PLATOON LEADER --IS TO ESTABLISH CLEAR STANDARDS OF CONDUCT, TO LEAD BY

EXAMPLE, AND THEN TO ENSURE THAT THESE PRINCIPLES ARE WELL UNDERSTOOD AND IMPLEMENTED THROUGHOUT HIS ORGANIZATION.

THIS CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED THROUGH EXTENSIVE TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND OVERSIGHT. TRAINING IN VALUES AND ETHICS IS EVERY BIT AS IMPORTANT FOR THE U.S. MILITARY AS TIME SPENT TRAINING IN THE FIELD OR AT THE RANGE.

I AM VERY PROUD OF THE TRAINING I RECEIVED ON HONORING AND EMBODYING THE VALUES OF MY COUNTRY. AS AN OFFICER I HAVE WORKED HARD TO PASS ALONG THESE VALUES TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF MILITARY LEADERS.

THE SECONDPOINT I WANT TO DISCUSS IS OUR RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ETHICAL CONDUCT.HUMAN RIGHTS ARE THOSE UNIVERSAL MORAL PRINCIPLES THAT SET OUT STANDARDS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND ARE PROTECTED AS LEGAL RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL LAW.

THEY ARE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS TO WHICH ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE ENTITLED. THEY DO NOT CHANGE BASED ON YOUR RACE, GENDER, BELIEFS OR POSITION IN SOCIETY. THOSE RIGHTSINCLUDE LIFE; LIBERTY; EDUCATION; SECURITY OF PERSON;FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL TREATMENT, AND PERSECUTION;AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, CONSCIENCE, OPINION, RELIGION, EXPRESSION, AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY.

WITHOUT A RESPECT FOR THESE RIGHTS WITHIN SOCIETY AND ESPECIALLY WITHIN A MILITARY, SOCIETY CANNOT COME TOGETHER AND FLOURISH. NEIGHBORS WILL MISTRUST NEIGHBORS, AND NATIONS WILL STRUGGLE TO REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL. RESPECT AND PROTECTIONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS NOT ONLY PRESERVE OUR HUMANITY BUT FOSTER AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE PEOPLE – ALL PEOPLE – CAN LIVE IN PEACE AND WITHOUT FEAR. IF A MILITARY DOESN'T RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, HOW CAN A PEOPLE RESPECT AND LOVE ITS MILITARY?

RELATED TO HUMAN RIGHTS IS THE MAINTENANCE OF HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS. AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, WINNING TRUST—BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD—REQUIRES US TO UPHOLD THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT WHEN OUR MILITARY IS CALLED TO FIGHT. THOSE STANDARDS REQUIRE US TO DO EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO SPARE CIVILIANS FROM HARM, EVEN WHEN THOSE CIVILIANS MAY SUPPORT HOSTILE FORCES.

THIS PRINCIPLE IS SET OUT IN AMERICAN AND INTERNATIONAL LAW THAT ALL NATIONS ARE BOUND TO FOLLOW - FOR EXAMPLE, THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS. BUT IT IS MORE THAN JUST A PRINCIPLE OF LAW AND ETHICS. WE HAVE LEARNED IT IS ALSO AN OPERATIONAL NECESSITY. WHEN WE COMMIT ABUSES AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION, WE LOSE THEIR SUPPORT, AND OUR ADVERSARIES GAIN POPULAR SUPPORT. THIS MAKES IT HARDER FOR US TO PREVAIL, AND ULTIMATELY PLACES OUR OWN TROOPS IN GREATER DANGER.

I HAVE SEEN WAR AND HAVE LEAD TROOPS IN BATTLE. AS ANYONE WHO HAS SEEN WAR UNDERSTANDS, IT IS MUCH EASIER TO "SAY" WE MUST UPHOLD THESE RULES, THAN IT IS TO DO SO ON A REAL BATTLEFIELD. SOLDIERS WHO ARE BEING FIRED ON BY THE ENEMY, WHO SEE THEIR FELLOW SOLDIERS DIE

BESIDE THEM, SOMETIMES ACT ON THEIR PASSIONS. THAT IS HUMAN NATURE. HOWEVER, A DETERMINING CHARACTERISTIC OF ALL INTERNATIONALLY RESPECTED PROFESSIONAL MILITARIES, IS HOW THEY ADDRESS INSTANCES WHEN PASSION OVERWHELMS DISCIPLINE, HOW THEY CORRECT AND ACCOUNT FOR VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

I WANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT THE U.S. MILITARY IS NOT PERFECT. WE ARE AN ORGANIZATION MADE UP OF INDIVIDUALS WHO SOMETIMES MAKE WRONG CHOICES. BUT LET ME ALSO SAY THAT I AM TREMENDOUSLY PROUD OF OUR MILITARY'S ATTEMPTS TO CORRECT AND LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES AND OUR OVERWHELMING DESIRE TO CONSTANTLY IMPROVE.

LET ME GIVE YOU A CONCRETE EXAMPLE. I'M SURE YOU KNOW THAT AT THE START OF OUR WAR IN IRAQ, WE HAD A PROBLEM WITH ABUSE OF CIVILIANS. IT HURT US. IT FUELED RECRUITMENT FOR THE ENEMY WE WERE FIGHTING. IT DAMAGED THE INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION OF THE U.S. MILITARY, GIVING OUR ENEMIES AN ADVANTAGE. THE LOCAL POPULATION BECAME LESS WILLING TO WORK WITH US. IT MADE OUR MISSION MORE DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE.

WHEN GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS TOOK OVER COMMAND OF OUR FORCES IN IRAQ, ONE OF HIS FIRST MESSAGES TO HIS TROOPS WAS THAT WE DO NOT TOLERATE TORTURE. THAT TORTURE BY ANYONE DAMAGES EVERYONE. THAT SUCH ABUSES ARE NOT ONLY MORALLY WRONG BUT STRATEGICALLY DAMAGING TO THE MISSION. THROUGH FOCUSED EFFORT, INCLUDING STRICT OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY, WE MENDED OUR REPUTATION, AND WERE ABLE TO TURN THE SITUATION TO OUR ADVANTAGE ON THE GROUND.

SO I AM EXTREMELY PROUD OF OUR MILITARY'S VALUES AND HOW WE WORK HARD EACH DAY TO MEET THE HIGHEST STANDARDS THAT OUR CITIZENS EXPECT AND THAT BRING HONOR TO OUR INSTITUTION.

THIRD,THE U.S.MILITARY INCLUDES ALL ASPECTS OF OUR SOCIETY, EVERY TYPE OF PERSON YOU CAN FIND IN THE UNITED STATES, WITH EVERY TYPE OF BACKGROUND. WE HAVE SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATED WOMEN, AFRICAN AMERICANS AND OTHER MINORITIES, AND, MOST RECENTLY, GAY AMERICANS. OUR MILITARY HAS BEEN A MODEL FOR TOLERANCE FOR THE REST OF U.S. SOCIETY. THIS INTEGRATION HAS NOT ERODED OUR PROFESSIONAL CAPABILITIES—BUT RATHER ENRICHED US AND ENABLED US TO DRAW UPON THE WIDE ARRAY OF STRENGTHS FROM ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF AMERICAN SOCIETY.

I AM A LIVING EXAMPLE OF THE U.S. MILITARY’S COMMITMENT TO INTEGRATION, TOLERANCE, AND INCLUSION. MY ANCESTRY IS NATIVE AMERICAN, ONE OF THE SMALLEST AND POOREST ETHNIC GROUPS IN OUR COUNTRY. BUT BECAUSE ANY CITIZEN CAN JOIN OUR MILITARY AND WE ALL START AT THE BEGINNING AS EITHER THE MOST JUNIOR OFFICER OR ENLISTED, I WAS GIVEN THE SAME CHANCE TO SUCCEED AS EVERYONE ELSE.

MY SUPERIORS HAVE JUDGED ME BASED ON MERIT – HOW WELL I CARRIED OUT ORDERS, HOW WELL I SOLVED PROBLEMS, AND HOW WELL I EARNED THE TRUST OF MY SOLDIERS AND THE PEOPLE I SERVE. AS A RESULT, I COME HERE TODAY AS A THREE-STAR GENERAL.

FOURTH, A PROFESSIONAL ARMY MUST RESPECT AND ENFORCE THE RULE OF LAW--BOTH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL. THIS INCLUDES THE PROTECTION OF CITIZENS, THEIR RIGHTS, AND PROPERTY. A PROFESSIONAL MILITARY MUST BE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT, WITH A SYSTEM THAT FAIRLY, JUSTLY, AND EVEN-HANDEDLYPUNISHES THOSE TROOPS WHO VIOLATE THE LAW.

AN EFFECTIVE SYSTEM MUST BE ABLE TO INVESTIGATE AND UNCOVER ACTIONS THAT MAY BE EMBARRASSING TO THE MILITARY, SUCH AS ABUSE OF AUTHORITY, STRAYING FROM THE LAWS OF WARFARE AND HUMANITY, AND STRAYING FROM ONE’S TRAINING. THAT SYSTEM MUST ENSURE THAT THOSE WHO VIOLATE THE LAW ARE IDENTIFIED AND PUNISHED.

SOMETIMES I HEAR THE CONCERN THAT PROSECUTING SOLDIERS WHO COMMIT SUCH OFFENSES HURTS MORALE IN THE FORCE. WE HAVE FOUND IN THE U.S. MILITARY THAT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE. WITHOUT REAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO DEAL WITH THESE CASES QUICKLY AND TRANSPARENTLY, DISCIPLINE BREAKS DOWN, COMMAND AND CONTROL SUFFERS, AND THE MISSION CAN FAIL.

IN THE U.S. SYSTEM, IF A U.S. SOLDIER OR UNIT IS SUSPECTED OF VIOLATING USE OF FORCE OR RULES OF ENGAGEMENT—OR OF ENDANGERING THE SECURITY OF NON-COMBATANTS, WE CONSIDER IT ESSENTIAL TO MOVE SWIFTLY AND IMPARTIALLY TO INVESTIGATE THE FACTS THROUGH ESTABLISHED AND INDEPENDENT JUDICIAL SYSTEMS, AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION AS REQUIRED.

FINALLY AND PERHAPS THE CORNERSTONE OF WHAT MAKES THE U.S. MILITARY A PROFESSIONAL FORCE IS THE FACT THAT IT FALLS UNDER THE CONTROL OF OUR CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT.

TO ENSURE OUR NATIONAL DEFENSE, OUR FOUNDERS CREATED A MILITARY COMPRISED OF SOLDIERS WHO SERVE UNDER LEADERS ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE. THESE SOLDIERS OBEY THE SAME RULES AND LAWS AS THE PEOPLE AND EXERCISE THEIR RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS.

WHILE INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS LIKE MYSELF CAN VOTE—AND CHERISH THIS RIGHT—THE U.S. MILITARY, AS AN INSTITUTION, DOES NOT WEIGH IN ON POLITICAL DECISIONS OR QUESTIONS. SIMPLY PUT, MILITARIES POSSESS CAPABILITIES THAT ARE TOO POWERFUL TO BE PLACED AT THE DISCRETION OF JUST A FEW PEOPLE. RATHER, THEY MUST BE AT THE SERVICE OF ALL PEOPLE AND USED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEMOCRATIC WILL OF THE PEOPLE.

AS A MILITARY OFFICER, I BEGAN MY CAREER BY SWEARING AN OATH TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. IN THAT OATH, I SWORE TO OBEY THE LAWFUL ORDERS OF THE OFFICERS I SERVED, AND THE ORDERS OF THE PRESIDENT – OUR COUNTRY’S HIGHEST CIVILIAN LEADER. MY AUTHORITIES ARE LIMITED BY U.S. LAW TO THOSE SPECIFICALLY GIVEN TO ME BY THE PEOPLE AND PLACES ME UNDER THE DIRECTION OF DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP. IN OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT, ONE OF MY RESPONSIBILITIES IS TO PROVIDE MY BEST MILITARY ADVICE TO MY CIVILIAN LEADERSHIP ON HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.

WE MAY NOT ALWAYS AGREE ON THE SOLUTIONS TO SPECIFIC CHALLENGES, BUT I HONOR MY OATH AS A SACRED DUTY TO OUR DEMOCRACY, AS DOES EVERY MILITARY OFFICER, AND I FOLLOW THE ORDERS AS GIVEN TO ME BY MY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN SUPERIORS. THIS COMMITMENT HAS ENABLED THE UNITED STATES TO BUILD A ROBUST, EFFECTIVE MILITARY THAT, AT THE SAME TIME, IS HIGHLY HONORED BY OUR CITIZENS. I CAN’T IMAGINE IT ANY OTHER WAY.

IN CONCLUSION, I FOLLOW THE PHILOSOPHY OF MY BOSS, ADMIRAL LOCKLEAR, WHO ALWAYS SAYS “TRAIN, TREAT, TRUST.”

TRAIN AND EDUCATE YOUR SOLDIERS SO THEY WILL BE READY TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES IN A WAY THAT DEMONSTRATES PROFESSIONALISM AND HONORS THE NATION'S VALUES. TREAT YOUR SOLDIERS AND THE CITIZENS YOU PROTECT WITH RESPECT AND DIGNITY. THEN INSTILL TRUST NOT ONLY AMONG YOUR SOLDIERS BUT ALSO BETWEEN YOUR SOLDIERS AND THE CIVILIAN POPULATION AND LEADERS. I TRULY HOPE THAT YOUR MILITARY WILL ADHERE TO A SIMILAR ETHOS THAT WILL ALLOW YOUR MILITARY AND YOUR COUNTRY TO ACHIEVE ITS FULL POTENTIAL AND THRIVE.

MANY OF YOU WILL COMMAND AND LEAD SOLDIERS IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS. SEVERAL OF YOU MAY REACH THE HIGHEST RANKS WITHIN THE MYANMAR MILITARY. SOME OF YOU AFTER MILITARY SERVICE MAY EVEN SERVE YOUR COUNTRY AS A GOVERNMENT CIVILIAN.

REGARDLESS OF THE PATH YOU CHOOSE, EACH ONE OF YOU WILL BE IN A POSITION TO ADVANCE THE IDEALS OF PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND VALUES, RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ETHICAL CONDUCT, DIVERSITY, RESPECT FOR THE RULE OF LAW, AND SUBMISSION TO CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY. IN THIS WAY, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO EFFECT CHANGE AND FORGE A PATHWAY TO MEANINGFUL REFORMS THAT WILL BUILD A MORE PROFESSIONAL MILITARY AND A STRONGER COUNTRY.

THESE ARE SOME OF MY REFLECTIONS BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE AS AN OFFICER IN AMERICA'S ARMED FORCES. MY EXPERIENCE IS UNDOUBTEDLY DIFFERENT FROM YOURS IN MANY WAYS. I DO NOT PRETEND THAT WE HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS.

HOWEVER, I DO BELIEVE THE BASIC IDEAS I HAVE MENTIONED ARE RELEVANT EVERYWHERE. I AM CONFIDENT THAT ADHERENCE TO THESE PRINCIPLES WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO ENDING THE LONGSTANDING CONFLICT IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY - IN KACHIN STATE, SHAN STATE, AND EVERYWHERE - AND TO ENABLING RECONCILIATION BENEFITTING ALL OF MYANMAR'S PEOPLE. IN MY EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH OTHER MILITARIES, I HAVE FOUND THAT WHEN A NATION'S ARMED FORCES ARE ABOVE POLITICS, RESPECT THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY OF ELECTED CIVILIANS, ABIDE BY THE RULE OF LAW AND PROTECT CIVILIANS, THEY WILL WIN THE TRUST OF THE PEOPLE THEY SERVE. IT MAY SEEM THEY ARE ACCEPTING SIGNIFICANT RESTRICTIONS ON THEIR AUTHORITY, BUT IN FACT THEY END UP STRONGER, MORE RESPECTED, AND MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN THEY ARE CALLED TO FIGHT.

WITH THAT, I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO YOU AND WOULD LIKE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.