

Former SECDEF Mattis Talks About Leadership, Democracy During NPS Guest Lecture

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA, USA, June 3, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Service to country, selfless leadership, and personal integrity define the character and career of retired U.S. Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis, 26th Secretary of Defense, who visited the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) last week and addressed the NPS community in the school's [Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture](#) series on May 28.

Speaking to a full house at King Hall Auditorium, Mattis answered questions in a fireside chat format with retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Eric Wendt, an NPS distinguished alumnus and professor of practice in the [Department of Defense Analysis](#), before taking questions from NPS' warrior-scholar students about national security threats and how to address them.

"My top concern is the rise of the China-led axis with Russia, North Korea and Iran. It is a '1940 moment' for the U.S. and the world," said Mattis. "My answer to this problem can be said in three words: allies, allies, allies."

While Mattis conveyed confidence in democratic alliances to stand against autocracies, he recognized that democracy is often messy and slow. Nevertheless, he expressed urgency to resolve our national debt and differences, and to restore decency to debate necessary to inform rational decision-making and progress on hard issues. A unified voice, Mattis argued, strengthens America's hand.

"Diplomacy is also enabled by deterrence, which requires a strong, credible military and leaders



Retired U.S. Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis, 26th Secretary of Defense, discusses current world affairs with students, faculty and staff at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) during a Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture (SGL).

unapologetic about defending our shared values,” explained Mattis. “We need to build up our forces to be more lethal, agile, and innovative, and I believe you are the caliber of talented leaders with the right ethos our county needs now – be ready to go.”

In addition to NPS students, faculty and staff, the audience included 101-year-old Edward Cavallini, a former Marine Corps captain and infantry platoon commander who was wounded twice during the Battle of Iwo Jima in 1945. Mattis met Cavallini, who lives in the Monterey area, and exemplified him in his talk.

“We have no divine right to freedom,” Mattis said. “Much has been sacrificed by those who stood against tyranny before us, and your country expects no less of you than what has already been given by others like Captain Cavallini.”

Mattis spent more than four decades in uniform, rising to the rank of general after having commanded Marines at all levels, from an infantry rifle platoon to a Marine Expeditionary Force, and ultimately commanding joint forces as Commander, U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM).

During his visit, Mattis engaged in meetings with the NPS President and Provost, received briefings on the school’s future, and spent 90 minutes in a private session with students in the Command and Leadership class taught by Wendt. One of Wendt’s students, Marine Corps Maj. Michael Noblit, a Special Operations Officer and Marine Raider, offered his thoughts on the exchange.



Former Secretary of Defense and retired U.S. Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis meets with Edward Cavallini, a 101-year-old former Marine captain who fought at the Battle of Iwo Jima. Cavallini attended Mattis’ lecture at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) on May 28.



Students, faculty and staff at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) attended a Secretary of the Navy Guest Lecture (SGL) with former Secretary of Defense and retired U.S. Marine Corps Gen. James Mattis on May 28.

"I'm sure I speak for all my classmates in expressing our gratitude to Secretary Mattis for being so giving of his time and wisdom, which speaks volumes about him as a leader and his ongoing dedication to our country's future," said Noblit. "Open and honest, his authenticity is unquestionable, and he didn't pull any punches in sharing lessons from his real-world experiences with insights invaluable to leading in combat or in our local communities."

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