

# Transforming the Way We Think and Lead: Our Participation in the Executive Leadership Development Program

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Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger established the Executive Leadership Development Program (ELDP) in 1985 to train future executive leaders. Under the leadership of Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness David S. C. Chu and sponsorship of Navy Rear Adm. Richard Mauldin, director, operational plans and joint force development (J-7), joint chiefs of staff, ELDP marked 20 years of training future executives for leadership positions in the Department of Defense (DoD).

To deal with today's terrorist and state-based threats, DoD requires leaders with a broad understanding of DoD and the capabilities of our warfighters. They must be able to work with other U.S. agencies, allies, partners and non-governmental organizations and be capable of operations at home or abroad.

The year-long program exposes participants to the roles and missions of each of the armed services, the function of combatant commanders, the military departments' civilian leadership, security concerns, U.S. and allied military capabilities, theater training and preparation for war. Students learned through both traditional methods — lectures, receiving and giving briefings, reading books and writing papers — and, to a large extent, by doing. Exposure to the challenges facing the warfighters and senior decision makers as well as studying the constitutional basis for the employment of our military forces gave students a comprehensive understanding of the DoD mission they all support.

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For this year's ELDP class, 53 students — 46 civilians and seven military personnel — were competitively selected from 564 worldwide civilian and military applicants.



*(Above)* Ms. Brenda Allen-Curtis (second row, second from left) training with German Army soldiers with fellow ELDP 2006 members.

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Activities included participation in a seminar on East Asian security issues hosted by Georgetown University that provided a dialogue with regional experts from academic institutions, think tanks and foreign governments. To fully understand the challenges facing our warfighters, students had to do more than read, write briefs and debate processes. They had to march on the ground, sail on the seas and fly in the air with soldiers, Marines, sailors, airmen and Coast Guardsmen. And so they walked the battlefields of Waterloo, Belgium, and Gettysburg, Pa., and hiked the ridgeline in Korea where Task Force Smith became the first American unit to engage hostile North Korean forces in 1950.

The experience challenged students both physically and mentally as they honed their strategic and tactical cognitive abilities. It infused them with physical and moral courage while filling them with compassion for others — both characteristics of great leaders.

The most memorable deployment for Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) participant Ms. Brenda Allen-Curtis, contract management examiner, DCMA Virginia, were the travels to the Republic of South Korea and the Pacific Command. “At the United Nations Command and Combined Forces Command Korea, we met with Gen. Paik Sun Yup, the Republic of Korea’s first four-star general and a veteran of the Korean War. His discussion of the combined efforts of U.S. and [Republic of Korea] forces during the Korean War and his moving recollections of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur were remarkable.”

Students also attended the 64<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the Pearl Harbor attack,

where Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Mullen honored those who fought and fell on Dec. 7, 1941. They found the experience of talking to some of the Pearl Harbor survivors both incredible and surreal.



“My fondest and lasting memories were those of our training in the field with the soldiers, sailors and airmen of our armed forces and our allies,” said Mr. Steven Abramowitz, industrial property management specialist, DCMA Atlanta. “You cannot fully appreciate the people you support on a daily basis until you have walked in their shoes and faced some of the challenges they go through daily. The program really does channel your focus on the fact that we as civilians support the warfighters, and we must understand and embrace the concept of ‘One Team, One Fight.’”

Students found that ELDP has transformed the way they think and approach their jobs by instilling one simple principle: They must continually work to improve their leadership skills so that they may effectively support the warfighters.

**(Above)** Mr. Steven Abramowitz (left) receives instruction on ship electrical systems on board the USS Lake Erie (CG 70) during a cruise while deployed to Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.