

Knapp to Lead Civil War Conference at VMI

LEXINGTON, Va., Nov. 20, 2009 – Lt. Gen. John W. Knapp has been appointed the Floyd D. Gottwald, Jr. '43 Visiting Professor in Leadership and Ethics at Virginia Military Institute.

Knapp, a VMI superintendent emeritus, has been active in numerous civic and professional capacities since retiring from VMI in 1995, most recently serving as mayor of the city of Lexington.

Chief among Knapp's duties as Gottwald visiting professor will be organizing the 2012 installment of the Commonwealth of [Virginia's Civil War Sesquicentennial](#) Signature Conference Series, which will be held at VMI in March of that year.

Established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2006, the series marks the 150th anniversary of the commonwealth's entry into the war. The first of seven annual conferences, one for each year of the war and the years immediately preceding it, was hosted by the University of Richmond in April and focused on the events of 1859. The second in the series, "African-Americans and the Civil War," will be held at Hampton University next spring.

"Successfully hosting one of the seven conferences requires careful preparation under the direction of experienced leadership," said Brig. Gen. Wane Schneiter, deputy superintendent for academics and dean of the faculty. "Lieutenant General Knapp brings that leadership to the conference committee."

In addition, Knapp, who begins his appointment as the Gottwald visiting professor after the first of the year, will be embedded in the [Department of History](#) and will give three class lectures on a topic relating to the theme of ethical leadership during his tenure.

"The appointment is a signal honor, of course, and especially gratifying because it affords me a part in the heightened leadership component of the core curriculum," said Knapp. "My principal and challenging assignment is to chair the planning effort to bring to VMI in 2012 the Commonwealth's signature sesquicentennial conference.

"The subject of this conference, leadership and generalship during the Civil War, is a truly fitting topic for the Institute and affirmative of our mission and heritage," continued Knapp. "It will be personally rewarding, too, as I stand with those — life-long buffs, I suppose — who believe that the Civil War was a pivotal and defining event in our long march toward a more perfect union."

A 1954 graduate of VMI, Knapp retired from the U.S. Army Reserve with the rank of major general, served as superintendent of VMI from 1989 to 1995 and was appointed superintendent emeritus upon his retirement. After graduation, active duty, and a period in industry, he had returned to VMI in 1959 and served on the faculty until his appointment as superintendent. Gov. Tim Kaine promoted Knapp to the rank of lieutenant general in the Virginia Militia in 2008.

Knapp returns to the Institute thanks to the generosity of Richmond-based Albemarle Corp. and the family of Floyd D. Gottwald Jr., for whom the endowed visiting professorship is named. Established in 2008 as one of the elements of the Center for Leadership and Ethics, the Gottwald visiting professorship program is designed to support the center's programming efforts.