

# General Paul J. Kern Receives 2002 Alumni Society Medal

U.S. Army General Paul J. Kern received the 2002 Alumni Society Medal at the annual College of Engineering Awards Night presentation last fall. The honor was in recognition of his outstanding contributions to both the military and to ME.

"I'm honored to be recognized by a university which has shaped my life," said General Kern. "I was married and my first son was born in Ann Arbor. The professors and friends I made there have been a part of my career ever since."

In making the presentation, Dean Stephen W. Director noted that the award was being made because of Kern's "outstanding accomplishments; his remarkable ability to adapt, in the face of dangerous, complex and changing circumstances; and his tremendous leadership in service to his country."

General Kern, who earned master's degrees in both mechanical and civil engineering from University of Michigan 1973 and who has served as the U.S. Army Material Command Liaison to the ME External Advisory Board since 2001, assumed the duties of Commanding General, U.S. Army Materiel Command on October 30, 2001. As Dean Director noted, "The Army Materiel Command's responsibility is 'If a soldier shoots it, drives it, flies it, wears it, or eats it,' they provide it."

"General Kern is not just responding to change, but is leading the Army to move in strategic directions it's never gone before. It is a huge task. General Kern is directing supply-chain improvement efforts throughout the Army. His challenges include maintaining field readiness while modernizing weapons systems and controlling costs."

The clear thinking demanded of ME graduates is evident in General Kern's approach to his responsibilities. As he told those under his command, "Change is not easy. Making that change happen is like building a bridge, a

bridge into a new century, without knowing exactly what's ahead. I ask you to always keep in mind that there is some young soldier somewhere, on a mountain top in Afghanistan today, in some other far off place tomorrow. That's why we do what we do."

Prior to this assignment, he served as the military deputy to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology and was the senior military advisor to the Army Acquisition Executive and the Army Chief of Staff on all research, development, and acquisition programs and related issues. He supervised the Program Executive Officer system, and served as the director of the Army Acquisition Corps.

Earlier in his career, General Kern was attached to both field units and the Secretary of Defense office in Washington. He has also taught weapon systems and automotive engineering at the U.S. Military Academy and was the department's research officer.

General Kern has served three combat tours with the U.S. Army. Most recently, he served as the Brigade Commander of the Second Brigade, Twenty-Fourth Infantry Division at Fort Stewart during Desert Shield/Desert Storm. The Second Brigade played a pivotal role in the historic attack on the Jalibah Airfield allowing the Twenty-Fourth Infantry Division to secure key objectives deep inside of Iraq. He also served as the Assistant Division Commander of the division after its redeployment to Fort Stewart. As a junior officer he began his career with two combat tours in Vietnam with the Eleventh Armored Cavalry as a platoon leader and troop commander.

General Kern's memories of Ann Arbor remain vivid. "After two tours in Vietnam, the university was a challenging experience," he said, "but the students and the faculty made my adjustment easy and the education was superb."



U.S. Army General Paul J. Kern

"I still return to the university for advice, and the high academic standards have helped me in all my endeavors."

General Kern was commissioned as an Armor lieutenant following graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1967. During his career, he has received the Defense and Army Distinguished Service Medals, Silver Star, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star Medal with "V" Device (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star Medal (with two Oak Leaf Clusters), and Purple Heart (with two Oak Leaf Clusters). He also received the SAE Ralph R. Teetor Educational Award in 1976.