

# MOAA-NH holds luncheon at White Mountain Hotel

By Lt. Col. Geoff Corson, USMC (Ret.)  
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CONWAY — The Military Officers Association of America-New Hampshire Chapter (MOAA-NH) held its summer luncheon at the White Mountain Hotel and Resort in North Conway on June 22. Seventy-six members and guests attended.

Local MOAA members include Capt. Jim LeFebvre, (Army); Maj. Frank McCarthy, (USMC, retired); Col. Jim Umberger (USAF, retired); Col. Karen Umberger (USAF, retired); and Col. George Howard (USAF, retired).

The guest speaker was Capt. Mark J. Winter (Navy, retired), former chief of staff to Commander Joint Task Force, Guantanamo, and son of chapter member Cmdr. Steven J. Winter (USN, Retired).

Maj. Winter, a New London area native and 1984 graduate of Kearsarge Regional High School, attended Maine Maritime Academy in 1988, the University of Maine, School of Law in 1998 and served 30 years in the Navy, both on active duty and in the reserves.

One of his last assignments was as Chief of Staff, Joint Task Force-Guantanamo, which was responsible for detention operations in Cuba. He was previously the general counsel at the National Maritime Intelligence Center and served on the Joints Chiefs of Staff in the Detainee Affairs branch.

Winter thanked all service members present and their spouses and families who supported their veterans along the way for their service and “especially the Vietnam-era veterans who were never properly thanked when they came home.”

He gave a thorough briefing of the history of the naval base at Guantanamo and its current use as a detention facility for enemy combatants.

Winter stated that at one time there were nearly 800 detainees there, but today there are only 40. The naval base there was established in 1898 when the U.S. took control of Cuba from Spain at the end of



Retired Naval Capt. Mark J. Winter was guest speaker for the Military Officers Association of America-New Hampshire Chapter summer luncheon in North Conway on June 22. (COURTESY PHOTO)

the Spanish-American War.

The U.S. government obtained a perpetual lease from the Cuban government that began Feb. 23, 1903.

Although the current government of Cuba maintains that Guantanamo Bay is illegally present on the island, the U.S. presence remains. Throughout his talk, Winter emphasized the difference between “policy” and “politics,” and how they influenced decisions regarding the operations at GITMO.

Much of his discussion covered the conflicts between the different presidential administrations, the differing political views of members of Congress and the many legal issues surrounding holding enemy combatants.

Winter discussed examples of these conflicts, which existed between the presidential administrations’ efforts to create policy, as well as the political

climate at the time, legal opinions rendered by the courts, and who we are as a country.

One example he pointed out was the Bush administration’s announcement of the use of enhanced interrogation techniques on some of the high-value detainees. After the 9/11 attacks, it became evident that the captured combatants had been thoroughly trained in how to evade normal interrogation requiring “enhanced” techniques such as water boarding.

The U.S. was unsure how to best balance the need to ensure that no further attacks occurred with how detainees were interrogated, hence the conundrum with the political environment and the enhanced interrogation techniques policy.

Winter did emphasize that enhanced interrogation techniques were performed by other than Department of Defense personnel.

The informative and thought-provoking presentation resulted in a robust question-and-answer period that followed the talk.

MOAA is the nation’s largest and most influential association of military officers. It is an independent non-profit, politically non-partisan and affiliated with more than 350,000 members from every branch of service including active duty, National Guard, Reserve, retired, former officers and their families.

It represents a powerful force speaking for a strong national defense and representing the interests of military officers at every stage of their careers.

The New Hampshire Chapter of the MOAA, founded in 1979, consists of nearly 700 members.

Ten officers of the Green Mountain Chapter (Northern New England) took on the task of forming a MOAA chapter for New Hampshire. The N.H. chapter program includes six meetings per year, usually on a Saturday at noontime, and involves a short business meeting, a timely speaker or various social activities.

For more information, go to [moaa-nh.org](http://moaa-nh.org).