



Public Affairs Office  
West Point, NY 10996  
845-938-2006/3808

## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RELEASE NO. 19-18

FORMER USMA DEAN BRIG. GEN. PATRICK FINNEGAN PASSES AWAY – July 11, 2018

WEST POINT, N.Y. – Retired Brig. Gen. Patrick Finnegan, staff judge advocate, professor and head, Department of Law, and 12th Dean of the Academic Board, passed away suddenly on July 2. He was 68 years old. Finnegan retired from the Army in 2010 after almost 40 years of distinguished service to assume the position as the 25th president of Longwood University.

“The entire West Point family is saddened by the news of retired Brig. Gen. Pat Finnegan’s passing last week,” Dean of the Academic Board Brig. Gen. Cindy Jebb said. “As a former dean and head of the Law Department, Brig. Gen. Finnegan was utterly devoted to West Point’s mission of developing leaders of character for our Army. He was a man of great intellect and integrity, and he constantly displayed energy, joy and a wonderful sense of humor.”

“We are truly grateful for his legacy and the many contributions that he made to the academy, the Army, and our great nation,” Jebb added. “We will miss him tremendously. Well done, be thou at peace.”

Finnegan was born in Fukuoka, Japan, on Sept. 20, 1949, and was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy in 1967.

As a cadet, he was the chairman of the Honor Committee and head manager of the Army Football team. After graduating from West Point and being commissioned a second lieutenant in 1971, he attended the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and earned a Master of Public Administration degree in 1973.

Finnegan was selected for the Judge Advocate General’s Funded Legal Education Program and received his Juris Doctor from the University of Virginia Law School in 1979.

Finnegan had an extraordinarily distinguished military career. Through the course of his career, he served in four separate branches: Infantry, Military Intelligence, Judge Advocate General’s Corps, and Professor, United States Military Academy.

Of note, he deployed to the Persian Gulf for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and served as a Staff Judge Advocate on five separate occasions.

Finnegan was appointed as professor and head of the Department of Law in July 1999. During his time as department head, the department developed an academic major; created two academy professor positions; dramatically expanded the AIAD program; hosted several academic conferences; initiated a number of outreach opportunities, including the Sanremo (Italy) Law of Armed Conflict Competition and a faculty

exchange with U.S. Air Force Academy; greatly expanded the teaching of the Law of Armed Conflict during summer training and throughout the curriculum; revised and updated the core law class, LW403, as well as the electives program, adding Comparative Law, Criminal Law, and the Honor's Thesis; and was one of the first to send faculty to support the National Military Academy of Afghanistan.

On July 1, 2005, Finnegan was confirmed by the United States Senate as the 12th Dean of the Academic Board.

During his term as dean, Finnegan greatly expanded international opportunities, to include cadet study abroad programs.

He oversaw the completion of the Jefferson Hall Library and Learning Center; and played an instrumental role in initiating the first phase of the new Science Center.

Finnegan continued West Point's support of the Afghan Military Academy mission, and expanded outreach activities to the Army. In the last year of Finnegan's tenure as dean, West Point was named as the No. 1 Public College in the Nation by Forbes Magazine, and best Public Liberal Arts College by US News and World Report.

"Retired Brig. Gen. Finnegan was the cadets' dean," Dave Dominick, executive assistant to the director of admissions, said. "He had the ability to bring people together and brought out the very best in individuals which inspired them to work even harder. He was a role model, mentor and father figure to me. I will truly miss him."

He was a humble but remarkable Soldier and leader who in the course of his service positively impacted the lives of all who had the good fortune to know him, or serve with him.

Finnegan and his wife, Joan, were cornerstones of the West Point community for 12 years.

His unexpected passing brings great sadness for his family, friends and those who loved him, but there is comfort in having known him, and in recognizing that his many contributions to West Point and the Army, and his legacy in the form of countless leaders of character that he selflessly helped to develop and shape, will endure.

He and Joan were married at West Point shortly after his graduation and commissioning and would have celebrated their 47th anniversary on July 3.

In addition to his beloved Joan, Finnegan is survived by daughters Jenna Finnegan Bechen, and her husband Timothy Bechen; Katie Finnegan Rucker, and her husband Capt. Jonathan Rucker, U.S. Navy; grandchildren Patrick and Connor Bechen; and Alyssa and Jack Rucker.

In terms of the hope expressed in the words of the West Point Alma Mater, of him it can truly be said, "Well done, be thou at Peace."

#### About West Point

The U.S. Military Academy at West Point is a four-year, co-educational, federal, liberal arts college located 50 miles north of New York City. It was founded in 1802 as America's first college of engineering and continues today as the world's premier leader-development institution, consistently ranked among top colleges in the country. Its mission remains constant—to educate, train, and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the nation as an officer in the U. S. Army. For more information, go to [www.westpoint.edu](http://www.westpoint.edu).