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A Tribute to Dennis Barlow
by John Noftsinger, Ed.D. | James Madison University |

When I first met Dennis Barlow in the Senate Armed Services Conference Room on Capitol Hill in February 1996, he was dressed in his U.S. Army uniform. He had been summoned from his Pentagon office by Virginia’s Senior Senator John Warner to meet with James Madison University’s then-President Dr. Ronald Carrier and me. We engaged him in conversation, explained our purpose for the meeting and explored several ideas.

JMU had developed a new Integrated Science and Technology curriculum, and we were seeking a real-world, global, interdisciplinary and technologically challenging issue on which to focus. The global problem of landmines and explosive remnants of war was the perfect challenge for our new program to engage the university’s talented faculty, staff and students.

As Assistant to President Carrier, I was tasked with conceptualizing and securing funding for a new center to address the landmine/ERW-remediation issue. On learning that Colonel Dennis Barlow had retired from the U.S. Army and that he had an affinity for Civil War battlefields, the Blue Ridge Mountains and the Shenandoah Valley, I quickly moved to have him appointed as the founding Director of the Humanitarian Demining Information Center at JMU. It was a most fortunate decision for JMU and the global landmine community.

Although the name later changed to the Mine Action Information Center and has now evolved into the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery, the one constant over the last 15 years has been the humble and steady leadership of Dennis Barlow. Two and a half years ago, I was asked to supervise the MAIC; I readily accepted the chance to work closely with Dennis and his talented staff, and ultimately to bookend his career at JMU.

I recently accompanied Dennis to Jordan to contribute to Jordan’s National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation’s ERW training efforts the CISR/MAIC has been supporting. The skills that made him and the Center successful were on subtle, yet effective, display. As always, Dennis brought the right people together to move an issue forward, engaged the participants in lively conversation about the issue, and then gently moved out of the way as others found solutions. Throughout

Congratulations to you on a job well done, Dennis, and on your appointment, Ken. Best wishes to you both as you take up the next steps in your careers.
- Tim Caughley, UNIDIR, Switzerland

Having finished reading the latest edition (Fall 2009) of The Journal of ERW and Mine Action, I had an unexpected thought that I should write to you and your associates to thank you for the information, insight and great stimulus that The Journal has been for me over the 15 years that I, like Dennis Barlow, have been involved with the Ban Mine Campaign. Although I have also moved on, I still try to be of assistance from the sidelines to both the Thailand Mine Action Center and the Thailand Campaign to Ban Landmines.

- Emilie Ketudat, TCBL, Thailand
his long and distinguished ca-
reer, he solved many delicate
and diplomatic challenges with
this understated, deliberate ap-
proach. On the other hand, he
could also be blunt and point-
ed in private, including—and
especially with—his supervi-
sors. I learned to appreciate and
seek his honest and experienced
counsel.

Dennis creatively built a
community of practice in this
challenging and important
area. The CISR/MAIC is high-
ly regarded as a hub for knowl-
edge and information about
landmines and ERW. The Jour-
nal and the CISR/MAIC Web sites
vividly illustrate the organiza-
tion’s success. Over and over, the
MAIC and Dennis Barlow have been sought
to lead conferences and work-
shops, develop curricula and infor-
mational materials, and do whatever
is necessary—wherever necessary—
to move mine action forward. His
recent work with the Humanitarian
Demining Workshop in Bogota,
Colombia, and multiple projects in
Amman, Jordan, are capstones on
an illustrious, global career and just
the tip of the iceberg of Dennis’ and
MAIC’s efforts.

Editor’s Note: Contrary to the
assertion made in several of the
callouts from well-wishers, neither
The Journal of ERW and Mine Ac-
tion, nor the Center for Interna-
tional Stabilization and Recovery
promote the mine ban or any other
issue. By publishing comments pro-
vided to us by our faithful readers,
we present both sides of arguments,
objective information and topi-
cal issues, and allow our readers to
form their own opinions.