

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/ph-d-in-mathematics-and-secretary-of-defense>

Perry addresses the fact that an analytical way of thinking and approaching problems from his advanced degree in mathematics was a huge asset for his role as the Secretary of Defense. He stresses that the logic of going through the steps of problem solving will help one build objective decisions about the problem.



Transcript

So did Dr. Perry find it useful in your career to have a Ph.D. in mathematics? The short answer is yes. I'll qualify that, though. When I was Secretary of Defense, I never solved the problem by solving it with a partial differential equation, which is a subject I wrote my thesis in. But I found many times that the analytical way of thinking and approaching problems was a huge asset to me. And moreover, the tools which are developed in Management Science and Engineering for doing analytical decision-making, even if you can not, don't have all the numbers to apply them, the logic of going through those steps are very, very critical, I think, to coming out with. If not analytical decisions, at least objective decisions about the important problem that you are confronted with. I guess one other advantage it gave me, it made it very difficult for the people that were briefing me to snow me on technical issues, which is an occupational hazard for a secretary of Defense...