

Cadets,

When the class of 2020 entered USAFA we were a nation at war. You have all signed up to serve in a time of war - to make a difference. We still battle terrorism and extremism around the world, but today we are at war with another enemy, a global pandemic, and that fight is unconventional. As a commander in conventional conflicts I had years of history to call on when making decisions -- a playbook we don't have as we battle this pandemic. We must make unconventional decisions and take what some would consider extreme measures. We must make bold choices, and we will.

We have asked a lot of all the classes already, and your nation will continue to ask you to lead boldly in this uncharted territory as you continue your careers. In the last two weeks commanders across the force have made some of these bold choices and continue to do so as we navigate this current global crisis.

Here at USAFA we have done the same. In consultation with our SECAF and Chief we have made a carefully considered choice designed to balance our two priorities: health, both physical and mental, and getting the class of 2020 to graduation. After many hours of discussion with leadership up and down the chain of command, I have made the decision to graduate the class of 2020 early.

On April 18th, the class of 2020 will receive their diplomas in a ceremony designed by cadets. It will not be the traditional graduation ceremony you have imagined for years, but it can be one of a kind and unique, like the class of 2020.

That day is approaching fast, and there are still a lot of unknowns. All of the MEs are working on getting done what we can and waiving what we can't. Expect conversations with your faculty and AOCs as we get through the next 18 days together. I'm sure you have a million questions - and the answers may be different for each of you. You've already heard from the Dean, please patiently engage with your faculty and AOCs as we get more answers to you.

I'm proud of you all, and will be honored to serve alongside you. Please continue to care for each other as we move forward.

JS