



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY



07 August 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR DISTRIBUTION

FROM: HQ USAFA/DSX

SUBJECT: United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) Board of Visitors (BoV) Meeting Minutes

1. **Meeting:** Wednesday, 07 August 2025 at 0833 (MST). Board members attended in person and virtually via Microsoft TEAMS. Members of the public were also able to participate in the meeting as registered in-person participants or online via live streaming.

2. **Agenda:**

07 Aug 25 - Board of Visitors Meeting: Agenda Summary	
Item	Description
1	Board Opening Remarks BoV Chairman
2	Superintendent's Update
4	USAFA Mission Brief: Cadet Wing
5	USAFA Mission Brief : Academics
6	USAFA Mission Brief: Athletics and Physical Fitness
7	USAFA Mission Brief: Resources
8	USAFA Mission Brief: Admissions
9	Public Comments
10	Action Item Review
11	Final Board Member Remarks
12	Chairman's Concluding Remarks

3. **Designated Federal Officer's Remarks:** Dr. Raquel Rimpola, Designated Federal Officer of the U.S. Air Force Academy Board of Visitors (BoV or Board), provided administrative remarks and opened the meeting. For the record, a quorum of the Board was present. The 07 August 2025, Board of Visitors meeting was live streamed and was open to the public and media.

4. **Opening Remarks:** Congressman August Pfluger, USAFA BoV Chairman, opened the meeting by welcoming board members, members of the public, members of USAFA, and all other participants. As a member of the Board for the last three years, he stressed that the Board needs to take a reset button on its functionality and how it interacts with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of the Air Force (DAF) just as it was designed over 50 years ago. Congressman Pfluger is honored and humbled to serve as the Chairman, and as the first member of Congress to serve as the Chairman of the Board of Visitors, takes his role very

seriously. He expressed that the Board wants to make a difference to advance the efforts to restore America's fighting force and, while we can't predict where the next conflict may arise, our cadets must be ready to lead in any environment, to think critically, and to have the grit to overcome adversity. The Chairman explained that the Board, by law, is tasked to inquire into a variety of matters pertaining to the Academy including morale, discipline, social climate, curriculum, physical equipment, academic methods, and any other item that the Board decides to consider. The Board will carry out its duties with a diligence and effort level that has not been seen for the last few years. Congressman Pfluger has met with Secretary of Defense (SECDEF), and shared that the SECDEF is highly supportive of the Board, and wants to see the Academy succeed, and is looking forward to the report from the BoV. Congressman Pfluger is impressed by the caliber of leaders from the Academy, as seen from a cadet who interned with his office, and believes the cadets deserve the BoV's unwavering commitment to ensure that they receive a world class education, military training, and leadership development. He recognized that U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) installation requirements are different from other Air Force installations, and that the Board will focus on the Academy's resourcing and revitalization initiatives to ensure that the Academy remains the gold standard of institutions. Congressman Pfluger acknowledged tough topics may be discussed at the BoV meeting, but it is not meant to be adversarial. He concluded his remarks by thanking the Board members and staff, USAFA members, and the Vice Chairman.

5. Superintendent's Update: Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, USAFA Superintendent, opened his remarks by thanking Congressman Pfluger for his leadership in elected service, the long blue line, and BoV. He then thanked the other Board members for spending their time on the Board, and that he looks forward to sharing the transformation taking place at the Academy and appreciates the oversight, the hard questions, and the support from the BoV. Lt Gen Bauernfeind listed the topics that he will share with the Board including the leadership team, updated mission, vision, priorities, and mission sets, how they are creating warfighters to win, leaders of character and quality, critical leaders to adapt, and how they are transforming the Academy. He then introduced the leadership team and proceeded with the USAFA Mission Brief.

The Superintendent began by acknowledging that the USAFA was transforming because of the uncertain geopolitical environment and that the world right now is especially dynamic. He explained the "why" of the SECDEF, Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF), and Chief of Space Operations (CSO) and shared that it is important to understand these "whys" as we prepare our future leaders. The Superintendent shared that the USAFA mission statement was updated to "USAFA's mission is to forge leaders of character, motivated to a lifetime of service, and developed to lead our Air Force and Space Force as we fight and win our Nation's wars." The USAFA Vision was also aligned to the USAFA Mission. The USAFA Mission and Vision then fed into the USAFA Priorities that were grounded in the core values of the Air Force and Space Force, which built the Academy's foundation focus areas of standards, honor code, respect, and teamwork. These lead to USAFA Priorities of warfighters to win, leaders of character and quality, and critical thinkers to adapt. These priorities then developed into three key mission sets of foundational warfighter training, a nationally recognized academic program, and competitive athletics. He then delved deeper into the individual USAFA Priorities.

6. USAFA Mission Brief: Cadet Wing. Brig Gen Gavin Marks, Commandant, provided an update on the transformation of the USAFA Cadet Wing specifically on the implementation of a

4-class system. The fourth class focus on being followers and teammates and developing into cadet Airmen. Their job is to build basic proficiency and develop foundational military skills. The third class will learn to be front-line supervisors and developing into cadet NCOs. They develop advanced proficiency to make corrections to their followers. The second class will become team leaders and develop into cadet Senior NCOs. They learn to maximize the skills and mitigate weakness of their team and team members, understand the resources necessary to develop a team, and have advanced proficiency that they can use to instruct. The first class are cadet leaders such as DO, Sq/CC, and A-Staff leaders and they focus on developing into cadet officers. They are responsible for the mission, people, and unit culture, utilizing their advanced proficiency to not only instruct but develop training. Gen Marks then went into depth on the military training cycle, a cadet's daily schedule, and military training culminating exercise (CULEX).

6.1.Board Member Comments:

- 6.1.1. Congressman Pfluger expressed concern about cadet time and stressed that balance is very difficult. He questioned if there was duplicative training that could be redefined to ensure better use of time, and if the culminating exercise is shaping air and space mindedness or if they are land focused. The Superintendent explained that part of joint warfare is the ability to succeed in all domains. The Air Force has realized in agile combat employment that it no longer has the luxury of protected space. That its underlying doctrine is to be able to fight out of the United States into theater and be able to generate combat power while moving forward. The Academy is currently weaving in air, space, and cyberspace mindsets. Currently, USAFA is in the crawl phase and as they move into the walk and run phases, they will inject more air, space, and cyberspace aspects into the exercises.
- 6.1.2. Mr. Nikolai expressed the need to celebrate air and space mindedness and the ability to do that through uniforms. He then explained the uniform restrictions in USAFA policy and stressed that these instructions may need to be relooked at. He expressed the importance of allowing the cadets to celebrate air mindedness through uniform wear. Lt Gen Bauernfeind looks forward to following up on this conversation. Mr. Kirk echoed the same sentiment as Mr. Nikolai, based on some of the conversations he has had with cadets.
- 6.1.3. Mr. Kirk questioned when the 4-class system was implemented, asked if we were sure this is the best system, and how we were measuring the effectiveness of this new system. Lt Gen Bauernfeind explained that the 4-class system was implemented when he arrived at the Academy and that it undergoes continuous assessment. The system is well informed by what is being done inside the Air Force through Airman Leadership School, NCO Academy, Squadron Officer School, and other professional military education. Mr. Kirk then questioned whether the new system is breaking from the tradition of the other Service Academies. Lt Gen Bauernfeind explained that the Academy has moved between the models over the course of its history, and that when USAFA aligns training to relevant outcomes it becomes more productive. USAFA is preparing its cadets to lead not just at the Academy but in the Regular Air and Space Forces. Mr. Nikolai echoed Mr. Kirk's comments and stated that cadets are supportive of the 4-class system; however,

they feel that the pendulum has swung too far in one direction. He expressed that perhaps USAFA can swing a bit back towards 4th class system without overdoing it while recognizing that the added stress brings a class together and gives them a common experience with the long blue line.

7. **USAFA Mission Brief: Academics.** Col Steven Hasstedt, Acting Dean of the Faculty, provided the Board with an explanation on curriculum, air, space, and cyber mindsets, and the majors/warfighting minors. He highlighted that the Academy takes deliberate feedback from external partners and rolls it into its curriculum development process to ensure that the institution remains current. He stressed that the core courses within the course of instruction (COI) remain consistent in course description and that the content within is dynamic and changes regularly based on continuous assessment and integration of new components. The academy is focused on establishing fundamental patterns of thought for critical thinking through academics. The COI is a deliberately constructed curriculum that is constantly revised to ensure that USAFA is meeting the needs of the Air and Space Force.

7.1. Board Member Comments

- 7.1.1. Congressman Davis highlighted the refreshing positive visit to the Multi-Domain Lab (MDL). He stated this type of instruction is very helpful to provide early on to cadets especially considering the increasing threats across the globe and believes this is at the core of protecting the American people. Lt Gen Bauernfeind will share what they have planned as well as some of the aspirations that they have, especially with the burgeoning relationship with NORTHCOM. Congressman Davis also has concerns with faculty professionalism, and states that there is a professional decorum that all faculty should uphold in an academic classroom regardless of academic freedom and that they must respect both other faculty and students. He asked what professional development is taking place at USAFA for faculty members, and what the policies are that outline the standards and expectations for the faculty. Lt Gen Bauernfeind and Col Hasstedt explained that faculty development begins with a 5-day orientation course that assists new staff in acclimating to the Academy. Each faculty is assigned to learning teams formed from different divisional hemispheres to provide ongoing professional development. Some faculty are designated to assist others in becoming better educators. The standards across both military and civilian faculty members are consistent. Gen Bauernfeind shared that all members of USAFA are 100% professional, and any breaches in professionalism will be addressed based off the significance and severity of the breach using a multitude of tools available.
- 7.1.2. Congressman Bacon expressed concerns about the changes in the curriculum with the history courses. He stressed that U.S. history should be mandatory, but worried about the removal of world history from the mandatory courses. He asked what changes have been made to the history curriculum and why these changes were made. Lt Gen Bauernfeind expressed that they are still in the planning process for this potential change to make sure that USAFA understands the value of American history in establishing a common ground with all cadets. While the intent is there, the hard work of assessment of the development of curriculum is still ongoing. He highlighted that there are only so many hours available in the academic timeframe and USAFA must align that going forward as well as leverage

other classes to enforce the intent. Col Hasstedt concurred that they are on target for planning purposes and they will be conducting standardized assessments across the incoming classes to assist in establishing the baseline perspective.

- 7.1.3. Mr. Kirk asked for the USAFA staff to explain how they are following the President and SECDEF's directives on critical race theory and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) when it comes to curriculum and how the Academy is ensuring compliance with the faculty to ensure USAFA doesn't push the worldview of oppression, oppressor/oppressed dynamics, anti-western, anti-American, and gender ideology. Lt Gen Bauernfeind expressed that the Academy is compliant with all executive orders. The Academy stood up a task force to review the curriculum, library, and facility spaces under the leadership of a senior leader (O-6 and above). USAFA has captured the outcome of that task force in a series of logic papers. Mr. Kirk asked how much was found. Lt Gen Bauernfeind said he would follow up on the record later but expressed that they discovered 2 non-compliant courses, 10 to 12 readings, and more administrative action with these being expressed in the logic papers that would provide a historical record of the action. He then expressed that while he was sure the Academy was compliant, he can't say 100% that everything was captured. He explained that if new non-compliant items are found they will be corrected.
- 7.1.4. Ms. Powell wanted to understand how the Academy thinks about Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how critical it is to train in it. She wanted to know how the Academy thinks about AI, how deep USAFA goes in terms of adversaries, and if USAFA coordinates with the other Service Academies to learn and share best practices and exercises. Lt Gen Bauernfeind explained that AI is at the forefront of what they are looking at and, from a practical aspect, that it is here and now. AI is tied hand and hand with data science and data science is permeating all aspects of the war-fighting environment. While USAFA partners at some level with other Academies it is not at the level the Academy needs it to be. He shared that the USAFA cyber team beat NSA, West Point, and Annapolis teams at the most recent competition. Col Hasstedt expressed that all cadets have used some form of generative AI and USAFA has developed a policy letter regarding the use of generative AI. The developed policy is a seven-level scale with the lowest level being 0 with no use of generative AI allowed, and the highest being 6 with full use of generative AI allowed. It should be noted that level 6 will not be utilized at USAFA.
8. **USAFA Mission Brief: Athletics and Physical Fitness.** Mr. Nate Pine, Athletics Director, provided an update of the USAFA Athletics program. USAFA is competing at the highest level of intercollegiate athletics. The Academy has 30 total sport programs with 28 teams competing in NCAA sponsored sport. The Mountain West Conference is the primary conference that USAFA competes in, and historically the Academy has been best team in the conference, has won the LearField Cup, and has been the number one Service Academy. The USAFA Athletics Department acts as a marketing arm of the Academy with exposure having a direct impact on admissions to the Academy. Ms. Jennifer Block, USAFA Executive Director of Athletics, discussed the Academy's physical education coursework and fitness testing. There are ten physical education courses in the core curriculum of the Academy with 4 advance warfighter courses being added to the curriculum, advanced water survival, rated physical readiness, close quarters battle combative, and advance warfighter capstone. She

then provided an update on fitness testing and the fitness improvement plan used to get cadets back on track physically.

8.1 Board Member Comments

8.1.1 Mr. Kirk asked if the athletics department has an NIL (name, image, likeness) arm. Mr. Pine replied that USAFA and other Service Academies do not participate in NIL for additional compensation as government employees. Mr. Kirk asked if this was a legal decision or a philosophical one. Mr. Pine replied it was a legal decision. Lt Gen Bauernfeind expressed that conversation on NIL and the transfer portal should continue, and he appreciates Congress' ability to give pathways to professional sports via the transfer portal. Mr. Kirk then asked to confirm that once a cadet commits that they can't transfer and this was confirmed by Lt Gen Bauernfeind. Lt Gen Bauernfeind then explained that once a cadet commits, they are on the pathway to commission and the two alternate paths if they don't commission are paying back the tuition or enlisted service time with very few exceptions. Congressman Pfluger explained that it is a statutory matter, and that Congress is worried about the negative impacts it could have on the Service Academies. He did express that having a competitive sports program at the Academy assists in the recruiting effort. Mr. Kirk said that there must be a way to fix the NIL issue. Mr. Clark gave the example of "Paul Skenes" as a positive impact on the Air Force Academy and setting a positive example. Mr. Pine commented that the bigger challenge now is the transfer portal and the immediate eligibility. Mr. Nikolai commended the coaches in the department for their commitment to service and commended the culture set by Mr. Pine.

8.1.1. Mr. Kirk then asked about SECDEF's order to review all the physical fitness standards for active combat units to try and have the same standard for both males and females, and how this order is factoring into a female cadet potentially being placed into a combat role, taking into consideration not all military members will be entering into combat roles. Lt Gen Bauernfeind replied that there are two fitness tests per service, a service-based test and a job specific test. If a cadet is entering a career field with a job specific test, such as EOD, fire fighter, or special warfare, then there is one standard, and it is based on the tactical and objective requirements. Mr. Clark commended the Athletic Department and their focus on training.

9. **USAFA Mission Brief - Resources.** Col Ahave Brown, 10th Air Base Wing Commander, proceeded to give an update on the USAFA installation and Base Operating Support-Integrator-USAFA (BOS-I-USAFA). BOS-I-USAFA is taking a data driven approach to applying 10 ABW existing resources to the aging facilities of the installation with a focus on training modernization, academic enhancements, and infrastructure maintenance. Major construction includes the Madera Cyber Innovation Center, Hosmer Visitors Center at True North Commons, and the Cadet Chapel. Upcoming major projects with Fix USAFA 2.0 include the renovation of Sijan Hall. Lt Gen Bauernfeind explained that the support team does a good job of maintaining the facilities, but USAFA must get serious about revitalizing the installation. The first step in that revitalization is Sijan Hall with the next step being either Vandenberg Hall or Fairchild Hall. Once those are completed, USAFA will need to determine what to prioritize next out of Clune Arena, the cadet fitness center, and headquarters building.

USAFA needs to establish a fifty-year infrastructure plan about how to maintain and replace the facilities on the installation. Lt Gen Bauernfeind expressed excitement over some of the potential planning exemplars such as the space education center and the creation of classified teaching environments.

9.1 Board Member Comments

- 9.1.1 Congressman Pfluger thanked Lt Gen Bauernfeind for a tour of the USAFA chapel construction but expressed disappointment that several graduating classes will be unable to experience it during their time at the Academy. He explained that the Board is here to help advocate for the resources necessary to complete such projects. Mr. Kirk added the chapel was able to be built in 2 years, but it will take 9 years to fix. Cadets have expressed a visible disappointment at not being able to step foot in the chapel during their time at the Academy, and this has had a depressing effect on the psyche of the cadets that must be acknowledged. Mr. Kirk acknowledged the history of building that President Trump has. He wants to rally around the chapel and make it a top priority of the SECDEF or the White House. He requested a checklist be sent to the Board of what is preventing the chapel from being completed and what can be done to enhance construction outside of additional funding. Lt Gen Bauernfeind said that they would love to swarm and to evaluate the project with the Board and acknowledged while it would take additional resources that there are pathways through swarming. Congressman Davis asked for the results of the September tests on the chapel to be shared with the Board.

Mr. Nikolai asked that the Academy prioritize the cadet living quarters in the revitalization efforts and highlighted Vandenberg Hall. He suggested that the Academy explore creative financing in their efforts, for example USAFA potentially working with alumni groups or public/private partnerships, and that the Academy explore all funding options. Lt Gen Bauernfeind said that this is a twofold problem, to revitalize the facilities and to develop a plan so that USAFA does not have another 50-year problem 50 years from now. Congressman Pfluger supported the idea of a 50-year plan and asked for a copy of it to assist with the Board's advocacy. Mr. Kirk asked for the Academy to send the BoV an action item paper outlining the challenges with the USAFA chapel and potential solutions, to facilitate advocacy through Congressional and Executive channels.

10. **USAFA Mission Brief: Admissions.** Col Candice Pipes, USAFA Director of Admissions, proceeded to give an update on the basic admissions steps, the selection composite score (SCS), the types of nominations, and a breakdown of the Class of 2029 profile. She acknowledged that the Congressional Winners nominations and the Top 200 nominations account for 70% of the selections and thanked the Congressional members for their outstanding nominations.

10.1 Board Member Comments

- 10.1.1. Congressman Pfluger stated that admissions is probably the most important topic to the BoV. The Board is requesting a report looking back 20 years (2005-2025) on Academy admissions that looks at data and demographics state by state of the background of those members who have been nominated and gone through the full admissions process to seek

appointment as a USAFA cadet. The Board wants to understand how USAFA makes admissions decisions. Is USAFA aligned with statutes, governing principles, and admissions criteria? If USAFA isn't, why? Is the Academy aligned with current law, executive orders, and the Supreme Court decision? This information will help inform the Board when making recommendations to the SECDEF and conversations that need to be had with Congress with the intent being merit admissions is the only consideration for admissions. Lt Gen Bauernfeind replied that they will follow up with the Board on this request, and that the Academy is currently doing a similar project with SAF/MR and OSD/P&R on the admissions process. He did acknowledge that there could be some data gaps in a look that far back.

Mr. Nikolai praised the Falcon Foundation's scholars as having the highest retention rate, the highest promotion rate to major, and the highest 20-year service commitment for Air Force Officers. Lt Gen Bauernfeind expressed appreciation of the Falcon Foundation. He explained that the decrease in Foundation scholars is because of a loss in one of its schools, and the numbers should normalize when the Foundation identifies a replacement school.

- 10.1.1. Mr. Nikolai asked about the SCS and a confirmation that the maximum number of points is 1000. This was confirmed by Col Pipes. He asked if there was a minimum score and if admissions ever dipped below that minimum score. Lt Gen Bauernfeind answered that there is not a minimum SCS but there is a minimum academic score, fitness assessment, and body mass assessment along with the appropriate medical requirements. The Academy admissions team is currently wrestling with merit with an example being IC athletes and prior enlisted members in which both categories bring something special to the table but are difficult to quantify. Col Pipes further explained that admissions is a highly dynamic process. Mr. Nikolai asked if exceptions are baked into the SCS. Lt Gen Bauernfeind explained that they are utilizing an algorithm that gives them the information they need, but it isn't perfect.
- 10.1.2. Mr. Kirk pointed out the positive aspect of a 90% reduction in non-medical waivers. He reiterated the point that for the Class of 2026 when they entered in 2021 that 10% were not even in the top 50% of their class implying this was a major slippage in standards in the years prior that has been corrected. He asked if race was at all a factor for USAFA admissions. Lt Gen Bauernfeind replied that it is not, but it has been in the past. Those types of demographics are masked during the admissions process. However, there were some areas where the mask has failed, and demographic information could be inferred in some sections of the application. This is constantly being improved to prevent issues from happening. The Academy is aligned with the DoD guidance and that is what is being demonstrated to SAF/MR and OSD/P&R.
- 10.1.3. Congressman Crank appreciated the attention being paid to this and asked if the Superintendent had seen the language that the House put into the NDAA bill on admissions standards and would like his thoughts to be shared with the Board. Lt Gen Bauernfeind stated that he has seen a version of it but cannot attest if he has seen the latest version of the language. He then said that he believes that Congressional language

was aligned to the DoD guidance USAFA has already received and that they are currently aligned with.

- 10.1.4. Mr. Clark expressed concern about the Academy missing the intangible qualities of an applicant during the admissions process and gave the example of a disciplined athlete who may need additional help with grades to transfer the discipline that they know from the field into the classroom. Lt Gen Bauernfeind agreed with Mr. Clark's statement and said it was a great bumper sticker for the Academy Prep School and Falcon Foundation because sometimes individuals need a bit more time and help to get them ready to attend USAFA.
- 10.1.5. Mr. Kirk asked the Academy to confirm that throughout the application process for admissions that it is the policy that the individuals making the admissions decision will not know the race of the applicant and that there is no formula to weigh towards a specific outcome. Lt Gen Bauernfeind confirmed that this was 100% accurate. He then restated some questions Mr. Clark asked the day before about when the Academy should gather demographic information and whether that data should be gathered during the application process or after the appointment has been confirmed. Mr. Kirk then asked if prior to Lt Gen Bauernfeind tenure if there was an affirmative action formula and if there was if it could be given to the Board. Lt Gen Bauernfeind stated that there was no formula but there was a conversation that admissions took into consideration the background of the applicant. Mr. Kirk then asked who made those considerations what the criteria were, if any of those individuals were still in the admissions office at USAFA. Lt Gen Bauernfeind stated that the Academy will follow up. Mr. Nikolai stated that based on the 06 December 2022 Board of Visitors meeting minutes, Colonel Arthur Primas was the Director of Admissions and there were questionable admissions information/applicant pool goals that Mr. Nikolai and Mr. Kirk can discuss offline. Colonel Pipes explained the goals for admissions were given and that the Academy was executing guidance they were provided at the time to recruit to certain goals. She noted that the guidance memorandum was rescinded as of January 2025, and the Academy executed the executive orders they were given. The goals were never applied to selections and there have never been points associated with any gender, ethnicity, or race as part of the admissions process.
11. **Public Comments:** Thirteen comments were submitted and these were categorized into three topics that align with the agenda items - curriculum, resources, and climate. The resource category comments were further subdivided into comments about the chapel, faculty, and general.

Designated Federal Officer (DFO) Administrative Note: Pursuant to 41 CFR 102-3.140d, and as stated in the Federal Register announcement for the 7 August 2025 USAFA BoV, the committee is not obligated to allow a member of the public to speak or otherwise address the committee during the meeting. Consistent with the USAFA BoV Bylaws, the DFO and Chairman may, allotted a specific amount of time for members of the public to present their issue for BoV review and discussion. The Chairman and DFO deferred comments to USAFA for response, as needed, during the meeting.

Chairman's Comments: Congressman Pfluger thanked the public for being here and said that the Board needs to understand these comments and appreciates that hearing from the public has been a part of this meeting. He said that the Board will take these concerns, comments, and testimonies very seriously as a part of their duties.

11.1. Curriculum

11.1.1 Mr. Mark Clodfeter: Lt Col (Ret.) Clodfeter is an Academy graduate from the class of 1977, and he requested that the Academy expand its core requirements in humanities by requiring all cadets to take a history course in American history, military history, and world history. He also requested that a literature course be added that focuses on combat and warrior ethos.

11.1.1. Mr. Donald Bishop: Mr. Bishop requested the Air Force Academy follow the example of both West Point and Annapolis and asked that three history courses be included in USAFA's core curriculum: American history, military history, and world history.

11.1.2. Ms. Amy Hornburg: Lt Col (Ret.) Hornburg expressed concerns about the discussions and proposals that devalue academic rigor, minimize the importance of terminal degrees, and reduce opportunities for graduate school. She stressed that the Academy should not have to choose between producing expectational officers and scholars, it can do both.

11.1.3. Mr. Mark Wells: Brig Gen (Ret.) Wells requested that the Air Force Academy curriculum include three history core courses: American history, military history, and world history. Brig Gen Wells also provided comments in person during the meeting.

11.2. Resources: Chapel

11.2.1. Mr. Robert Waller: Mr. Waller expressed concerns about the delays in the Chapel construction.

11.2.2. Mr. George Wagasky: Col (Ret.) Wagasky is an Academy graduate from the class of 1972 and expressed disappointment at the time it is taking to complete the Chapel renovation. He asked if the USAFA BoV can do anything in Congress to provide temporary relief to some of the regulations associated with renovating buildings on a National Historic Landmark and getting the USAFA Chapel project completed before 2028.

11.3. Resources: Faculty

11.3.1. Mr. Ken Davis: Lt Col (Ret.) Davis is an Academy graduate from the class of 1977 and requested that the BoV evaluate the changes to the USAFA faculty makeup and whether these changes would be beneficial, especially regarding the faculty military/civilian composition.

11.3.2. Dr. Kent Murphy: Dr. Murphy asked the BoV to stop further cuts to faculty and advocate for restoring faculty levels to those of August 2024. Dr. Murphy also provided comments in person during the meeting.

11.3.3. Mr. Thomas Bewley: Mr. Bewley requested that there be a pause on the letting go of core long-term civilian/veteran faculty at USAFA. Mr. Bewley also provided comments in person.

11.3.4. Anonymous Submission: This individual asked the BoV to petition to grant USAFA a temporary budget exemption and to pause the firing of any further civilian faculty.

11.4. Resources: General

11.4.1. Mr. Doug Truax: Mr. Truax made recommendations for consideration on the high quality of education, admissions, and staff.

11.5. Climate

11.5.1. Ms. Kathryn Smith: Ms. Smith is an Academy grad from the class of 1982 and provided questions on the Academy Climate with an emphasis on the Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) Survey, the Healthy Relationship Training Program, and the “Let’s Be Clear” campaign.

11.5.2. Mr. Mark Stoup: Mr. Stoup requested a review of the due process in a case regarding the men’s soccer team. Mr. Stoup also provided comments in person during the meeting.

11.5.3. Mr. Aric Southworth – He requested a review of the due process of a case involving a cadet. Mr. Southworth also provided comments in person during the meeting.

12. **Action Item Review:** Captain Daniel Cassidy, USAFA BoV Executive Secretary, facilitated a review of the following action items.

Item	Recommendation	Status	Category	Brief Explanation
1	<u>SAPR Budget and Resources</u> – 2018 Provide financing status update	Open	Resource	The Board is requesting a briefing on the financial status of the SAPR program.
2	<u>Space Education Center</u> – 2022 Provide plans/funding update	Open	Resource	Design funds secured, 2807 Form required to move forward in design process...in coordination
3	<u>Military Professor Copyrights</u> – 2022 Provide status on securing copyrights by military professors	Open	Curriculum	Language was included in the House version of the NDAA Section 1750
4	<u>Update on Strategy for the Prevention of Harmful Behaviors</u> – 2024: encapsulates Let’s Be Clear Campaign. Climate	Open	Climate	The Academy’s CTTF submitted their final report. The Board is requesting to review a copy of the report.

	Transformation Task Force efforts			
5	<u>Update on USAFA's Progress in Response to SECAF's direction for Re-optimization – 2024</u>	Open	Resource	New SECDEF and SECAF in place.
6	<u>Update on BOS-I-USAFA – 2024</u> Establish BOS-I-USAFA as a new framework to improve AF's focus on USAFA's focus on most important issues of health and safety	Open	Resource	The Board is requesting a brief on the ongoing progress to BOS-I-USAFA.

13. Board Member Final Comments:

Per the USAFA BoV Bylaws, statement of members will appear only in summation form, except any member may exercise the right to have views incorporated verbatim in the minutes.

13.1. Mr. Nikolai shared the closing remarks below and requested to have the transcript incorporated verbatim in the meeting minutes.

I wanted to say thanks to General Bauernfeind, General Evans, General Marks, appreciate the hospitality, tours yesterday were very revealing and very encouraging, and I like the direction we're moving in the tactical environment. As Vice Chairman of the Board of Visitors, I'm 100% behind the Chairman. His opening remarks, and I want to affirm that I not only support his efforts, but I want to be the engine that power his vision, vector, and oversight. It's also my desire that every member of the Board fully support and are committed to supporting USAFA's mission. I think we're all there. That said, support and oversight go hand in hand. The Board is devoted to detailed, rigorous oversight coupled with insightful, constructive advice. We expect not only transparency, but also timely and forthright responses to our questions and requests for information. This is not to hinder leadership. It is to uphold accountability, ensure alignment with our national defense priorities, and reinforce the trust to the public and to USAFA alumni. This is why I firmly believe that "trust but verify" is not just a cliché, but it's a guiding principle. I'm deeply honored to have received the presidential appointment of the Board of Visitors, and I fully embrace the vision laid out by President Trump and Secretary Hegseth. A vision to restore America's fighting force to greatness and combat effectiveness through merit and adequate resources. In that vein, I want to prioritize the eradication of DEI not just on the surface but underneath, and it's also merit-based admissions. And I want to recommend that we combine with Annapolis and West Point to establish a blue-ribbon commission entitled "Duty, Honor, Country Commission" to deep dive into those areas. In support of this effort, we are not here to preserve broken and failed ideology. We are here to repair, reform, and reinvigorate this academy with the timeless principles that have always made America exceptional and that define our republic; what some patriots have called the American Trinity. In God we trust, our moral compass and recognition of a higher calling, Liberty, the hard-won freedom that we fight to preserve, and E Pluribus Unum, out of one many. The enduring truth that unity, not diversity is our strength. These ideals are not abstract, they're actionable. They must be lived, taught, and

defended, especially here at USAFA, where we forge the next generation of warrior leaders. In closing, this Board of Visitors is not here to mimic past behavior and simply observe. We are here to lead, to hold accountable, and to safeguard the future of this academy, and by extension, our Air and Space Forces. We will be the Board that stands firm. With eyes wide open, strong backs, and resolve unshaken in service to a nation that still believes in its founding truths. Thank you and may God bless the United States Air Force Academy and the country it so nobly defends. Thank you.

- 13.2. Congressman Davis thanked the USAFA team. He is reassured that by looking at the cadets he knows that our future is bright seeing the basics celebrate an accomplishment during the review. He would like to discuss with the Chairman the amendment process to the bylaws. He also thanked the public for coming to support, participate, and for providing comments during the Board.
- 13.3. Mr. Clark said that the cadets are extraordinary and that they perform at the highest level. He congratulated the Superintendent's focus on warfighters and his focus on preparation. He wants to remind all in attendance, "discipline is to teach not to punish; that training can't increase a person's performance by making them feel worse and humiliating them. USAFA needs to keep the humanitarian side in its decision and to have compassion in leadership to allow members to learn the life lessons that could change a person's path forever." He said that once the Board get the "whys" right that the Board can accomplish what it needs to do to benefit the cadets.
- 13.4. Mr. Kirk thanked the USAFA staff for their transparency. His advice to USAFA, based on his time with the cadets, is that "when you make dramatic changes you do not strip the connective tissues of tradition alongside it. Cadets need to feel connected to those who came before them to maintain the unbroken chain of excellence. We need to educate the cadets towards being something, towards being a warrior but for what. We want them after four years to be able to articulate and feel in their soul American exceptionalism. What are they willing to die for and what is the Constitution they are swearing an oath to? We want them to be on fire because good leaders can articulate the why. After the cadets graduate, we want to see them advocate for the success of the institution, and not just a tool for the military. To be able to explain why we are fighting so hard and why we are sacrificing. We want America to dominate this century, and we can't do that without knowing what we are and who we are. It is imperative that these cadets know that we are the greatest nation ever. That they are here to understand the beauty of this country." He thanked the USAFA again for their time and their transparency.
- 13.5. Ms. Powell expressed how honored she is to be a member of the Board of Visitors and to be appointed by President Trump. She can feel how serious everyone is taking the Board. On the topic of AI, Ms. Powell said there was a lot of focus on preventing AI from being used for cheating, but there needed to be a focus placed on using AI to train the next generation of leaders and advocated to be part of a working group on AI if created. She echoed what Mr. Kirk said on the Academy instilling traditions in cadets, letting the cadets know they are a value to America, and that they hold the future of the country in their hands. Lt Gen Bauernfeind expressed that he is excited to work with Ms. Powell

especially as they open up the Madera Cyber Innovation Center and utilize her expertise in helping drive the Academy forward.

- 13.6. Congressman Crank thanked the Chairman for leading the meeting. He agreed with many of comments that were made especially Mr. Kirk's comments on American exceptionalism. He stated that "we have talked about the eradication of DEI, the important reason for having the Service Academies and why we have a military, being to fight and win wars rather than to be played with by politicians, and this Board is committed to that." He feels that it is important to have a good mix of civilian and military faculty as it makes the Academy special. He represents the Air Force Academy and expressed the recapitalization of the Academy is important and that the BoV can assist in making it a priority to make use of the limited resources. He said that USAFA is the crown jewel of the community, is proud of the Academy, looks forward to working with the Board for years to come to advance USAFA and the men and women who come out of it.
14. **Chairman's Concluding Remarks:** Congressman Pfluger thanked the USAFA team for planning the BoV meeting, opening the institution for the first in-person meeting of the current Board, and their continued commitment to supporting the BoV. The experiences during the visit were incredibly insightful and the discussions and questions from the meeting are a representation of that. He thanked the USAFA team for the job they do, day in and day out, to train the next generation of leaders. He said that the Air and Space domains will always be a factor in every theater that America may need to fight and win in. The Board will continue to have hard conversations and provide the necessary advice and recommendations to USAFA. He explained the upcoming meeting schedule, with four meetings per year, one at the Academy, one in Washington DC, and two virtual meetings. He thanked all in attendance and expressed his honor at being able to serve as the Chairman of the BoV.
15. **Adjournment:** The DFO declared the meeting closed at 1220 (MST).

Certified by:



HONORABLE AUGUST L. PFLUGER
Chairman, USAFA Board of Visitors

Prepared by:



DANIEL B. CASSIDY, Capt, USAF
Executive Secretary, USAFA Board of Visitors

Attachment:

1. Board of Visitors Attendance Roster, 07 August 2025
2. Public Comments
3. Board of Visitor Meeting Slides

DISTRIBUTION:

USAFA Board of Visitors Members

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Attachment 1: Board of Visitors Attendance Roster – 07 August 25

Title/Rank	Name	Position	Attendance
USAFA Board of Visitor Members			
Congressman	August Pfluger	Chairman, USAFA Board of Visitors U.S. House of Representatives - Texas, 11th District	Present
Senator	Tammy Baldwin	U.S. Senate, Wisconsin	Not Present
Senator	Steve Daines	U.S. Senate, Montana	Not Present
Senator	John Hickenlooper	U.S. Senate, Colorado	Represented
Senator	Roger Wicker	U.S. Senate, Mississippi	Not Present
Congressman	Don Bacon	U.S. House of Representatives - Nebraska, 2nd District	Virtual/ Represented
Congressman	Jeff Crank	U.S. House of Representatives - Colorado, 5th District	Virtual
Congressman	Donald Davis	U.S. House of Representatives – North Carolina, 1st District	Present
Congressman	Gabe Vasquez	U.S. House of Representatives – New Mexico, 2nd District	Represented
Senator	Tommy Tuberville	U.S. Senate, Alabama, Presidential Appointee	Represented
Colonel (Ret.)	Doug Nikolai	Vice-Chair, USAFA Board of Visitors, Presidential Appointee	Present
Mr.	Dan Clark	Board Member, Presidential Appointee	Present
Mr.	Charlie Kirk	Board Member, Presidential Appointee	Present
Ms.	Dina Powell	Board Member, Presidential Appointee	Virtual
Mr.	Robert Bigelow	Board Member, Presidential Appointee	Not Present
USAFA Board of Visitor Support Team			
Dr.	Raquel Rimpola	USAFA BoV Designated Federal Officer (DFO) SAF/MR	Present
Ms.	Blaire Brush	USAFA BoV Alternate DFO, USAFA	Present
Capt	Daniel Cassidy	USAFA BoV Executive Secretary, HAF/A1	Present
Maj	Mahogany Swanson	SAF/LL	Present
Lt Col	John Hamilton	SAF/LL	Present
Col	Kimberly Young	HAF/A1	Present
USAFA Senior Leadership			
Lieutenant General	Tony Bauernfeind	Superintendent, USAFA	Present
Chief Master Sergeant	John Alsvig	Command Chief, USAFA	Present
Brigadier General	Gavin Marks	Commandant of Cadets	Present
Colonel	Matthew Husemann	Special Assistant to the Superintendent	Present
Colonel	Steven Hasstedt	Acting Dean of Faculty	Present
Mr.	Nate Pine	Director of Athletics	Present
Ms.	Jennifer Block	Executive Director of Athletics	Present
Ms.	Analynn Donohue	USAFA HQ A1 (sitting in for Director)	Present
Lieutenant Colonel	Walter Trey Darnell	USAFA HQ A2	Present
Colonel	Evan Gardner	USAFA HQ A3	Present
Colonel	Alex Liggett	USAFA HQ A4	Present
Lieutenant Colonel	Max Renner	USAFA HQ A5	Present
Colonel	Jon Goodman	USAFA HQ A6	Present
Lieutenant Colonel	Dawn Tanner	USAFA HQ SG	Present
Colonel	Candice Pipes	USAFA HQ Director of Admissions	Present
Colonel	Ted Richard	USAFA HQ JA	Present
Major	Nicole Ferrara	USAFA HQ PA	Present

Ms.	Sonja Strickland	USAFA HQ Integrated Prevention	Present
Lieutenant General (ret)	BJ Shwedo	Director, Institute for Future Conflict	Present
Lieutenant Colonel	Leah Pound	CTTF Lead, USAFA HQ CAG Director	Present
Ms.	Sonja Strickland	USAFA SAPR	Present
Members of the Public			
	Rich Haynie	Public Attendee	Present
	Mark Stoup	Public Attendee	Present
	Ron Olds	Public Attendee	Present
	Lee Krauth	Public Attendee	Present
	Ron Scott	Public Attendee	Present
	Kent Murphy	Public Attendee	Present
	Aric Southworth	Public Attendee	Present
	Mark Wells	Public Attendee	Present
	Rod Bishop	Public Attendee	Present
	Claude McQuarrie	Public Attendee	Present
	Tanya Regan	Public Attendee	Present
	Thomas Bewley	Public Attendee	Present

Tab 1

Dear Dr. Rimpola:

In accordance with Section 7 of the US Air Force Academy Board of Visitors Bylaws, I would like to file the attached written statement to the Board for its meeting scheduled on August 6-7, 2005. My statement is a typeset article examining the Academy's core curriculum that will appear in the forthcoming issue of Air University's new publication that will replace its previously-titled, *Air and Space Power Journal*. In the article, I argue that for USAFA to succeed in its mission of producing competent warrior-leaders to guide our nation's Air and Space Forces, the Academy must expand its core requirements in the humanities, specifically by assuring that *three* history courses (American, world, and military) are required of all cadets, and by adding a literature course that focuses on combat and the warrior ethos.

I am a 1977 Air Force Academy graduate who twice taught in the Academy's history department and directed its military history branch. I also was one of the eight original professors at Air University's School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) from 1991-1994 and led the Air Force ROTC detachment at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill from 1994-1997. I further served as a professor of strategy and policy at the National War College in Washington, DC, from 1997-2019. I've written extensively on the history of the US Air Force and air power in general, and many of my works have been used as texts at the Air Force Academy, Air Command and Staff College, and Air War College, as well as the war colleges of allied nations. My 2022 novel, *Between Two Shades of Blue*, examines life for an Academy cadet in the 1970s.

Please include this letter and the accompanying article as part of the pre-meeting packages prepared for Board members, plus add it to the subsequent permanent record or meetings of the proceedings. In addition, I would also like to virtually attend the public BOV session on Thursday, August 7th, from 0830-1130 MST that morning. Please send me the necessary link so that I can "tune in" to those discussions.

Sincerely,

Mark Clodfelter, Lt Col, USAF (Ret.)
Professor Emeritus, National War College

April 22, 2025

Lieutenant General Tony D. Bauernfeind, USAF
Superintendent, United States Air Force Academy
Harmon Hall, 2304 Cadet Drive
USAF Academy, CO 80840

Dear General Bauernfeind:

As USAF Academy graduates, former USAFA faculty, and American educators and leaders, we thank you for your decision to restore a course in American History to the Academy's core curriculum. You have rightly corrected an ill-advised decision made almost four decades ago.

Yet in re-shaping the core curriculum, making room for the new American History course by dropping the core requirement in World History would be an error of equal magnitude to the omission of American History in 1986.

To be fully mission-ready, Academy graduates must have a fundamental understanding of more than just our own nation's past. They must also understand how the past has shaped the motivations of other nations — allies as well as foes. Facing potential threats from Russia, China, Iran, North Korea, and a proliferating number of terrorist entities, our national security demands a knowledge of world history. Sun Tzu compactly addressed this imperative: "Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril."

The Air Force Academy's founders understood this essential need, and they included World History in the core curriculum in 1955. No other courses in the Academy's curriculum provide this critical strategic requisite. We cannot afford to assume that cadets will have been exposed to world history and any sort of military history in their high school years. West Point and Annapolis both require three core history courses — in American, World, and Military history. So should the USAF Academy.

America's wisest senior leaders — George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, and Hubert Harmon among them — knew that understanding world history is vital for officers who will serve around the globe. As you have written, "We are in a Time of Consequence, facing threats from every corner of the world and in all domains. . . . At the end of their 47 months at our USAFA, our cadets will be the warrior-leaders our Nation deserves."

To make your objective a reality, our graduates must have a sound appreciation for those they may fight against — and those they will fight with. Retaining the core course in World History will help ensure that future USAFA graduates will continue to be the world's unrivalled warrior-leaders. We can do no less.

Very Respectfully,

Norman R. Seip, '74. Lieutenant General, USAF, Retired
Commander, 12th Air Force

David A. Deptula, Lieutenant General, USAF, Retired
 Dean, Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies
*Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance,
 Headquarters U.S. Air Force*

Davis C. Rohr, USMA '52, Major General, USAF, Retired
*Deputy Commander, U.S. Central Command
 Instructor, USAFA Department of History
 Command pilot, fighter wing and reconnaissance wing commander*

Jacques Paul Klein, Major General, USAFR, Retired
 Minister-Counselor, Foreign Service of the United States, Retired
*Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
 Special Representative and Coordinator of UN Operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Irving L. Halter, Jr., '77, Major General, USAF, Retired
Vice Director, Operations (J3), Joint Staff, The Pentagon

Carl W. Reddel, Brigadier General, USAF, Retired
*USAFA Permanent Professor of History
 On-Site Inspection Agency Team Leader for the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty
 Executive Director, Eisenhower Memorial Commission*

Mark K. Wells '75, Brigadier General, USAF, Retired
*USAFA Permanent Professor of History
 Author of Courage and Air Warfare, winner of the Society for Military History's 1997
 Distinguished Book Award, twice selected by the USAF Chief of Staff for his Recommended
 Reading List*

James B. Smith, '74, Brigadier General, USAF, Retired
*Deputy Commander, Joint Warfighting Center, US Joint Forces Command
 U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia
 President, National War College Alumni Association*

Larry A. Weaver, '76, Colonel, USAF, Retired
 Assistant Professor, Naval War College
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

Mark Clodfelter '77, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired
 Professor Emeritus of Strategy and Policy, National War College
*Associate Professor of History, USAFA
 5th Tactical Air Control Group, Korea
 2016 Air Force Historical Foundation Major General I. B. Holley Award recipient for
 sustained, significant contribution to the documentation of
 Air Force history during a lifetime of service*

Donald M. Bishop, Minister-Counselor, Foreign Service of the U.S., Retired
4th Foreign Policy Advisor to the USAF Chief of Staff
Distinguished Fellow, Brute Krulak Center for Innovation and Future Warfare
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA
37th Security Police Squadron, Vietnam

Walter T. Hitchcock, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired
 Professor Emeritus of History, New Mexico Military Institute
Tenure Professor and Deputy Head, Department of History, USAFA
SECAF Project Officer and Speechwriter
Intelligence Analyst, FTD, HQ PACAF, UNC Korea

Richard Kohn
 Professor Emeritus of History, University of North Carolina
Chief, Office of Air Force History
President, Society for Military History

Jeanne T. Heidler
 Professor Emerita of History, USAFA
Deputy for American History, USAF Academy

G. Philip Hughes
Ambassador to Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean
Executive Secretary, National Security Council
Department of Defense Medal for Distinguished Public Service
Adjunct Professor of Diplomacy, Institute of World Politics

Larry C. Skogen, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired
President Emeritus, Bismarck State College
Interim Chancellor, North Dakota State University System
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

Alan T. Wood
 Professor Emeritus, School of Interdisciplinary Arts and Sciences,
 University of Washington Bothell
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of Washington Tacoma
US Army intelligence officer, 1968-1970

Edward P. Brynn, Ambassador, Foreign Service of the U.S., Retired
U.S. Ambassador to Burkina Faso and to Ghana
Associate Provost for International Programs, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

David A. Tretler, Colonel, USAF, Retired
Professor Emeritus of National Security Strategy and Policy, National War College
F-4 pilot, 250 missions, Vietnam

Cynthia G. Efird, Ambassador, Senior Foreign Service of the U.S., Retired
U.S. Ambassador to Angola
Deputy Commandant for International Affairs, Army War College
Marquette University

Richard E. Porter '64, Colonel, USAF, Retired and Senior Executive Service 3
Director of Counterterrorism, National Security Council Staff
Director, National Security Affairs, White House Drug Policy Office
Director of Special Operations Division, Special Plans, Headquarters USAF
Director of Military Liaison, Office of Counter-Terrorism, Department of State
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

Thomas Niblock, Minister-Counselor, Foreign Service of the United States, Retired
Senior Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chief, National Guard Bureau
Visiting Professor of International Relations, U.S. Military Academy

Mary Kathryn Barbier
 Professor of History, Mississippi State University
Distinguished Visiting Professor, USAFA
President, Society for Intelligence History; Co-editor, War in History
Co-director, Second World War Research Group, North America

Kevin Reilly
 Professor of Humanities, Raritan Valley Community College
Founding President, World History Association
Author, The West and the World: A History of Civilization from 1400 to the Present

Daniel R. Moy, Colonel, USAF, Retired
 Lecturer, Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, University of Virginia
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA
Contributing author to DoD's joint publication, The Armed Forces Officer, 2007

Edmund Burke III
 Professor Emeritus, University of California at Santa Cruz
University of California Presidential Chair in World History
Founding Director, Center for World History

Thomas A. Keaney '62, Colonel, USAF, Retired
 Senior Fellow, Philip Merrill Center for Strategic Studies, Johns Hopkins University School of
 Advanced International Studies and Associate Director, Strategic Studies Program
Associate Professor of History, USAFA
B-52 Bomb squadron commander and base commander

Robert S. Bartanowicz, Federal Aviation Administration Senior Executive Service, Retired
Superintendent, Federal Aviation Administration Academy
Regional Administrator, FAA New England Region
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

Peter Maslowski

Professor Emeritus of History, University of Nebraska
Author of For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America
University of Nebraska Distinguished Creativity in Teaching Award

Christopher C. Harmon

Professor and Instructor in Military Strategy, Institute of World Politics
Author of War in Peacetime and The Terrorist Argument

Robert C. Ehrhart, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired

Assistant Professor, Animal and Range Sciences, Oregon State University, Retired
Project Warrior Coordinator, Concepts and Doctrine Division, Air Staff
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA
Radar site commander, Alaska

Stanley J. Underdal, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired

Professor Emeritus of History, San Jose State University
Associate Professor and Deputy for American History, USAFA
Professor of Strategic Intelligence and Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs, Defense Intelligence College

John G. Albert '73. Colonel, USAF, Retired

Foreign Affairs Officer, Department of State
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

John D. Plating, Colonel, USAF Retired

Director, Center for Calling and Career, Covenant College
Associate Professor and Deputy for Military History, USAFA
Author of The Hump, winner of the 2013 Best Air Power History Book Award

John E. Norvell, Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired

Director of Alumni Relations, Hobart and William Smith Colleges (Hon. LHD)
Assistant Professor of History, USAFA
Instructor Navigator, F-4 WSO Air Combat Veteran, SEA

Alex Roland, USNA '66

Professor Emeritus of History, Duke University
Historian, National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Distinguished Visiting Professor of History at West Point and Annapolis

Bruce D. Grossetta, Colonel, USAF, Retired

Assistant Professor of History, USAFA
Air Attache, Argentina
Olmsted Scholar, Universidad del Salvador, Buenos Aires, Argentina
F-4 pilot, Vietnam; fighter squadron and Wild Weasel squadron commander

Larry Berman
Professor Emeritus of History, University of California-Davis
Author of Zumwalt and four books examining the Vietnam War

Gerard J. Gendron, Jr., Colonel, USAF, Retired
Program Director, Tactical Exploitation of National Capabilities, Special Operations Command
Deputy Director of Intelligence. US Space Command and NORAD
Military Assistant to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Associate Professor of History, USAFA

CC: Members of the Board of Visitors

Donald M. Bishop

24 June 2025

Dr. Raquel Rimpola
Designated Federal Officer, USAF Academy Board of Visitors

Dr. Rimpola:

I am forwarding a copy of the 22 April 2025 letter sent to the Superintendent, Lieutenant General Tony D. Bauernfeind, by 39 USAFA graduates, former members of the faculty, and American educational leaders urging that the Academy's core curriculum include a course in World History.

The bottom line: Like both West Point and Annapolis, three history courses should be included in the USAFA core curriculum. USAFA fails in its mission to produce competent officers unless its graduates know their country's past, how history has shaped potential enemies and allies, and how the profession of arms has developed through the centuries. All are vital components of a future warrior-leader's education.

American History: Katherine Boyle of Andreeson Horowitz affirms "We don't win a war against bad ideologies unless we know who we are, what we stand for, and where we're headed. And if we lose this silent war—the ultimate war for American ideals—it's not because we don't have the know-how to build missiles and hypersonics and attributable systems and drone swarms. It will be because we doubt our inheritance. Because we doubt the beauty and nobility of what we're building. Because we doubt that American Dynamism is true and the key to a safer, more prosperous civilization."

Military History: Core courses in military history are included in the core curriculum at West Point and Annapolis. The parallel course at USAFA should continue.

World History: The Department of the Air Force Posture Statement for Fiscal Year 2026, referring to USAF and USSF missions and challenges, uses significant terms: "global" (8 times), "world" (14), "allies" and "allied" (14), "partner" (17), "adversary" or "adversaries" (31), "Russia," "Iran," and "Korea" (15), and "China" (32 times). It states, "While we must keep pace with the growing military capabilities of China, we must also acknowledge the threats posed by Russia, Iran, North Korea, and other hostile regimes." The threats are more than technological; they have been shaped by history. Having a basic knowledge of World History is thus a *strategic prerequisite* not provided by other USAFA core sources.

Under the provisions for public comment, please assure the issue will be included on the agenda at the next Board of Visitors meeting and that members receive a copy of the letter in their meeting packages.

Respectfully yours,

Minister-Counselor, Foreign Service of the U.S., Retired
Former Foreign Policy Advisor to the USAF Chief of Staff
Former Assistant Professor of History, USAFA

Atch: 22 Apr 2025 Ltr to LtGen Bauernfeind

Donald M. Bishop

July 18, 2025

Dr. Raquel Rimpola
Designated Federal Officer (DFO)

Dear Dr. Rimpola:

Please add a copy of this op-ed, "Three Essential History Courses for Cadets and Midshipmen," to the materials that will be provided to the members of the Board of Visitors for their meeting on August 6-7. It ran on the RealClearHistory website on July 14.

This is the link:

[https://www.realclearhistory.com/articles/2025/07/14/three essential history courses for cadets and midshipmen 1122073.html](https://www.realclearhistory.com/articles/2025/07/14/three_essential_history_courses_for_cadets_and_midshipmen_1122073.html)

For your convenience, I am also sending a PDF copy.

Respectfully yours,

Donald M. Bishop

Donald M. Bishop

Minister-Counselor, Foreign Service of the U.S., Retired
Former Foreign Policy Advisor (POLAD) to the USAF Chief of Staff
Former Assistant Professor of History, USAF Academy



Three Essential History Courses for Cadets and Midshipmen

By [Donald M. Bishop](#)

July 14, 2025

To say the international environment has become more challenging is an understatement. China, Russia, and North Korea explicitly challenge American leadership, and they aim to erase America's military lead. Iran and its proxies have been wounded by recent attacks, but they also wish to degrade American power. The U.S. must up its game in appropriations, technology, rapid acquisition of new weapons, shipbuilding, training, doctrine, and recruiting. Equally important is the sound preparation of new officers at the Air Force Academy, West Point, and Annapolis. Three history courses are essential, but one of the academies falls short in a vital academic area.

Facing new battlefield threats like drone swarms, network intrusions, next-generation combat aircraft, and operations from space, the temptation is for the

service academies to teach more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Yet war is more than weapons and combat. Many social, political, and behavioral factors affect mobilization, training, and morale. Ethics and law bear on operations in order to prevent war crimes and curb battlefield excesses. English courses teach clear communication and the literatures that animate societies. Learning foreign languages spoken by adversaries and partners introduces different cultures and other modes of thinking. A fully effective officer and leader, then, needs a full education.

This necessity includes the most important field of study for warfighters -- history. To adequately prepare officers for the challenges they will face during their careers, the Air Force Academy must ensure that its graduates all have studied three areas of history: American, world, and military. Otherwise, there will be a critical gap in their preparation.

American History: Katherine Boyle of Andreeson Horowitz recently spoke to our moment, “We don’t win a war against bad ideologies unless we know who we are, what we stand for, and where we’re headed. And if we lose this silent war—the ultimate war for American ideals—it’s not because we don’t have the know-how to build missiles and hypersonics and attributable systems and drone swarms. It will be because we doubt our inheritance. Because we doubt the beauty and nobility of what we’re building. Because we doubt that American Dynamism is true and the key to a safer, more prosperous civilization.”

Archibald MacLeish provided another insight soon after World War II: “Wars begin in the minds of men.” In the past, Americans defeated many minds poisoned by slavery, militarism, fascism, ugly nationalisms and racisms, communism, and religious hatred among them. Studying history reveals how those malign notions gripped entire nations and led them to war.

American minds defend different values. The Declaration of Independence expressed fundamental principles embraced by the founding generation and by Abraham Lincoln. President Franklin Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms inspired Americans during World War II. Studying history informs us of the long – and yes, checkered -- progress from generation to generation and reveals how the Constitution, laws, institutions, and the armed forces reflect the free American mind. In short, American history explains “why we fight.”

World History: The Department of the Air Force Posture Statement for Fiscal Year 2026, referring to Air Force and Space Force missions and challenges, uses significant terms: “global” (8 times), “world” (14), “allies” and “allied” (14), “partner” (17), “adversary” or “adversaries” (31), “Russia,” “Iran,” and “Korea” (15), and “China” (32 times). It states, “strategic alignment and partnerships between Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China creates dangerous synergy as an emerging anti-western coalition” and “we must also acknowledge the threats.” These threats are more than technological; they are also driven by ideological, cultural, and organizational factors, all shaped by history.

Studying world history can provide essential insights into those adversaries while it reveals the values those nations fear -- and we defend. The “west” in the posture statement is more than countries on a map; it’s a cluster of values with origins in Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem, forged over many centuries of European and American – Western -- history. Having a basic knowledge of World History is thus a *strategic prerequisite* for future officers of the Air and Space Forces.

Military History: Core courses in military history are included in the core curricula of each academy. These are not simply about wars, campaigns, and battles. They address strategy, operations, logistics, forms of war (conventional, irregular, hybrid), and leadership – allied and enemy -- in circumstances as diverse as the American Revolution, the Civil War, the world wars, Korea, Vietnam, and conflicts in the Middle East.

Military history taught at the academies also addresses America’s approach to war, the organization and weaponry of the services, war aims, and how strategy reflects choices made not only by the Commander-in-Chief but also by Congress and political leaders, all responsive to public opinion. Those who study military decisions discover the background, upbringing, and beliefs of presidents and generals. How did colonial Virginia shape Washington, Springfield affect Lincoln, the cowboy west impact Theodore Roosevelt, and Missouri dirt farming influence John Pershing?

A military history course both dovetails with and strengthens understanding of American history.

Three history courses in the core: West Point and Annapolis both require three one-semester history courses for all cadets and midshipmen. Having dropped American History from its academic core almost four decades ago, the Air Force Academy currently requires only two. The Superintendent has recently decided to

stream more cadets into an American history course, but to make that change, world history – taught continuously at the Academy since 1955 – may not be taught to all cadets.

The Academy leadership, the Board of Visitors, and the Congress must correct that deficiency and ensure that American history, World history, and Military history courses are all in the required curriculum in Colorado Springs. Otherwise, the Academy fails to produce officers who are fully prepared to deal with the challenges that they will face on the world stage.

Cadets become leaders. President Harry Truman, who knew the face of war as an artillery battery commander in World War I, noted that “Readers of good books, particularly books of biography and history, are preparing themselves for leadership.” The Air Force Academy should remember his counsel – and take action to implement it.

Commissioned through Air Force ROTC, Donald M. Bishop served in Vietnam and Korea, and his final assignment in uniform was teaching history at the Air Force Academy. Later in the Senior Foreign Service, the State Department detailed him to the Pentagon as the Foreign Policy Advisor to the USAF Chief of Staff. His degrees in history are from Trinity College in Hartford and Ohio State University.

Link:

https://www.realclearhistory.com/articles/2025/07/14/three_essential_history_courses_for_cadets_and_midshipmen_1122073.html

Tab 3 Comments for BOV 7 Aug meeting

Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,

As an Air Force veteran, a former Air Force Academy faculty member, and the spouse of an Academy graduate, I write to you not only with personal respect for the Academy but also with a deep investment in its future. My husband and I both served our nation in uniform for over 20 years, and our family's commitment to service spans generations—my father retired as an Army Colonel, and my father-in-law retired as an Air Force four-star General. Two of our three children are now in high school and beginning to explore their college options. They are proud legacy candidates—the very kind of young men and women the Academy hopes to recruit.

Yet, for the first time, I have actively discouraged them from pursuing the Air Force Academy. My concern is not with the mission of forging warfighters of character, but with the growing uncertainty surrounding the academic direction of the institution. Discussions and proposals that appear to devalue academic rigor, minimize the importance of terminal degrees, and reduce opportunities for graduate school deeply trouble me.

The Academy has always set itself apart by producing officers who are not only skilled leaders but also critical thinkers—graduates equipped to face the complex moral, strategic, and intellectual challenges of modern warfare and global leadership. Diluting academic standards or reducing access to supportive programs and services that promote retention risks undermining the very qualities that make our graduates exceptional. If you send a message that academics are secondary to producing officers, you will drive away many of our brightest young minds—the very cadets who could become our most innovative leaders. As a parent and veteran, I believe strongly that the Academy's dual mission of academic and military excellence must remain inseparable. Unfortunately, after 6 months of inadequate attempts by Academy leadership to communicate a clear and coherent strategic plan to employees, parents and alumni, I felt compelled to share my decision to guide my legacy children away from the Air Force Academy in the hopes that this anecdote strikes a chord with those in power who want to preserve the institution's reputation as an academic powerhouse.

I urge you, as members of the BOV, to take a hard look at any proposal that diminishes the value of a broad, high-quality education taught by credible subject matter experts. The Air Force Academy should not have to choose between producing exceptional officers and scholars—it must do both. We owe it to the next generation of cadets, to the Air and Space Force, and to our nation.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the enduring success of the Academy.

Respectfully

Amy Carpenter Hornburg, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)

Tab 4

Having been advised that the USAF Academy's upcoming Board of Visitors meeting will now permit in-person public attendance, I formally request permission to be present at the 7 August 2025 session (0830-1130) as well as any other session similarly open. Additionally, I ask that this letter become part of the pre-meeting packages prepared for members of the Board and that it be included in the subsequent permanent record or minutes of the proceedings.

My interest in the meeting relates to the ongoing discussion of the Academy's history core curriculum. USAFA currently has the smallest number of history core courses of any of the nation's three major service academies – only two. A recent proposal would make these Military History and American History, effectively eliminating the previously required study of World History, a 50-year intellectual and academic bedrock for globally deployed AF Academy graduates. Worse, it's openly contradictory to the Superintendent's goal of producing warrior-leaders ready on day one. He recognizes that, "We are in a time of consequence, facing threats from every corner of the world in all domains." Cadets cannot be truly "adversary-focused" without having first studied their potential enemies culturally and historically in the classroom, guided to make insightful judgments by a qualified History Department faculty. To operate successfully in the challenging global environment facing our graduates, they must be fluent in our nation's history, the history of the military profession, and how past events and motivations have influenced the current views of potential world wide friends and foes alike. No other Academy course or combination of courses details the background of our possible enemies and can equip our graduates with this absolutely essential knowledge necessary to operate in an increasingly dangerous and unpredictable world. In short, to truly achieve our mission of providing our nation with competent warrior-leaders, the Air Force Academy needs THREE history core courses: American, Military, and World.

Sincerely,

//SIGNED//

MARK K. WELLS, Brigadier General, USAF Retired

Professor Emeritus of History, USAF Academy

Tab 5

Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,

Thank you for all you are doing for the Academy and for your efforts to make USAFA a top-notch service Academy that produces leaders of character for the challenges of the future.

Since the Academy's focus is to produce men and women of solid character, why are we so tolerant of the embarrassingly slow pace on restoring the Chapel, which is the focal point of the Academy's Character and Spiritual formation? Word is that the project, that was to take 3-5 years, has now been extended to 2029, almost 10 years! If that is correct, why is this tolerated? On many occasions Cadets have expressed their disappointment with having to attend services (of all faiths) in a conference room, lecture hall, or ballroom setting. Sadly, they often vote with their feet.

I realize that the project is very complicated, but there seems to be little motivation to meet deadlines. When the nation faced a crisis in WWII, manufacturing armaments and building the Pentagon, etc, we met the challenge! I realize that was a very special case, but that drive certainly seems missing in restoring the Chapel. Can longer and/or extra work shifts not be undertaken? Priorities seem to be working/have worked successfully on the stadium update, the hotel, the visitors' center and Wecker Hall. What are our priorities? Is there no one advocating for the Chapel? Its absence certainly hurts the Character Development of the Cadets as well as the reputation, attraction for, and the appearance of the Academy.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Robert L. Waller, PhD,'72

Tab 6

As my class's Senator for the AOG Class Advisory Senate, I am in communications with over 525 of our 660 living classmates.

Their topic of second most concern, right behind the administration of the toleration clause in the Honor Code, is the time that it is taking to complete the Chapel renovation. We understand the problems encountered with asbestos, and that the Chapel as part of a National Historic Landmark makes that renovation more difficult.

However, here is my question:

“Can the USAFA BOV do anything in Congress to provide temporary relieve to some of the regulations associated with renovating buildings on a National Historic Landmark, and get the USAFA Chapel project completed before 2028?”

Respectfully,

Col (Ret) George “Ski Wagasky
Association of Graduates Class Advisory Senator
USAFA Class of '72

Tab 7

From: Faculty

“Man’s flight through life is sustained by the power of his knowledge”....or so it’s inscribed on the Eagle and Fledglings statue. A robust education has long been a linchpin in producing our nation’s military leaders. In fact, in addition to enviable character, military, and leadership training, USAFA has long touted its prestigious Ivy League-quality academics. And as this nation faces evolving 21st Century threats, we need gifted military leaders steeped in knowledge, wisdom, and critical thinking skills....the very leaders the Academy is charged to produce.

So before making potentially arbitrary and politically-motivated USAFA faculty makeup changes, I’m requesting the BoV evaluate whether these changes will be beneficial and contribute to the Academy’s mission to produce the best leaders possible. I can’t escape the obvious conclusion that arbitrarily reducing the civilian faculty amounts to “watering down” the faculty.

Sincerely,

Ken Davis

Ken Davis, Lt Col USAF (retired)

USAFA Class 1977

AOC, Dep Group AOC 1992-1994

NCLS Facilitator, BCT Basic Cadet Honor Training Facilitator 1998-2014 USAFA Admissions Liaison Officer 2015-2025

Tab 8

Dear Members of the Board of Visitors,

As a faculty member at the Air Force Academy for nearly four decades—spanning the Reagan administration through today—I write to you with deep concern about the Academy's current trajectory. The events of the past academic year raise urgent questions about the future of USAFA's mission and its ability to deliver world-class education and leadership training.

In January 2025, the word "*educate*" was actually removed from the Academy's mission statement. Faculty were not informed—many only learned of the change through a Colorado Springs Gazette article published three months later.

Soon after, in April 2025, the Academy was hit with a wave of unplanned and poorly coordinated deferred early retirements that disproportionately affected our most senior civilian PhD faculty. Some departments now retain as few as 43% of their faculty compared to just a year ago. STEM-heavy departments such as Systems Engineering have been particularly hard hit. The line Air Force missions are quite dependent on these kinds of technical engineers.

Concurrently, newer civilian PhD hires were warned—some with explicit threats like "you'll probably lose your job this week"—that their employment could be terminated abruptly. In May and June, closed-door meetings were held with dozens of civilian faculty, informing them they *might* have a job after December. Unsurprisingly, many have since resigned, unwilling to wait for the ax to fall.

Alarming, a similar exodus is occurring among senior **military** faculty. The Astronautical Engineering Department, for example, is losing its O-6 department head and four of its five most senior Lt Col PhDs by Graduation 2026, along with multiple civilian PhDs. A former department head has confirmed the department will likely be unable to cover its major courses in Fall 2026.

Computer Science and other engineering programs are facing similarly destabilizing losses. One-third of faculty in some departments—over half of their remaining PhDs—are projected to depart by Spring 2026. These losses come just as national ABET accreditation visits are scheduled to occur in August 2026.

The proposed solution—replacing departing civilian experts with junior active-duty officers—appears increasingly unrealistic. Departments are already seeing little interest from the field. It is doubtful that the Air Force can fill even the 54 positions already vacated by resignations, let alone the 50+ more expected to follow soon.

The toll on morale is severe. Among the remaining faculty, there is widespread anxiety over increased teaching loads, reduced research time, and a general decline in instructional quality. Air Force-relevant research—critical for academic advancement and mission alignment—is already being devalued.

Cadet morale is also visibly declining. Faculty in STEM departments question how many rising sophomores will actually return to begin their junior year and incur a long-term service commitment. Alarming, of the 30 top-rated incoming cadets selected for the prestigious Martinson Scholars Program, **only 10** showed up for in-processing, according to a recent Registrar's briefing to academic advisors.

This rapid unraveling threatens the Academy's core mission and credibility. If we continue on this path, the Air Force risks losing the very institution that has trained generations of leaders who can think critically. Taxpayers fund the Academy expecting an education on par with institutions like Annapolis, West Point and MIT. That

Tab 9

Dear Sir/Ma'am -

I request that an immediate 9-month pause be put on the letting go of the core long-term civilian/veteran faculty at USAFA, to give time for a thorough transparent public review of the ongoing fundamental restructuring and refocusing of USAFA, and the many apparently still unforeseen impacts of this restructuring, by a focused committee representing the broad community of USAFA stakeholders.

I have written up my reasoning for this request, which is available here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/14nTCMfgTd7lq-IBn3liYh8mNAU7sK5bYMrtvVeynSKQ/>

In short, our next war will be nothing like our last. Modern warfare is highly technical, and increasingly autonomous, and much of what is taught at USAFA, with unique perspectives fine tuned for our modern military, is essential to prepare the USAF and USSF elite officer corps to meet mission. Our future ability to fly fight and win will be significantly impaired if their education is unnecessarily compromised.

I thus request permission to attend the upcoming BoV meeting to make the above request in person. My name is Thomas Bewley (tbewley@ucsd.edu, m: 858.997.8369, home address: 8262 winding passage dr, Colorado Springs); I am a full professor in MAE at UC San Diego (currently teaching remotely), and I was a DVP in DFME at USAFA for AY '24-'25.

Please feel free to text or call or email with any questions concerning this request.

Best regards,

Tom

Thomas Bewley <tbewley@ucsd.edu>

Tab 10 Anonymous

The battlefields of the future will be highly technical – including Artificial Intelligence, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, and dominating Space. It's going to take an incredible education to equip our Academy graduates to win decisively on them.

Unfortunately, in January of this year, the word "educate" was quietly removed from the Academy's mission statement. Over the past year, over 50 of our carefully selected civilian faculty have resigned, and not a single position has been refilled. Each week, we see more and more of them quietly leaving. Those remaining live in fear of looming forced cuts of another 50 or more positions.

Why is this? Is it because comments were made in confirmation hearings that the academies have become "soft, or woke"? Are the civilian faculty somehow to blame for this? Nothing could be further from the truth - many of them are retired military, and all of them take their responsibility to graduate leaders of character very seriously.

The civilian faculty at all 3 service academies provides valuable continuity when our military educators rotate every few years. They are frequently PhDs with cutting-edge knowledge in their fields - uniquely qualified to teach higher-level courses in STEM majors like Aeronautics, Computer Science, and Mechanical Engineering, among many others. We clearly need a healthy blend of both military AND civilian educators.

I'm asking the Board of Visitors to petition Air Force Secretary Meink to grant the Air Force Academy a temporary budget exemption and to pause, for now, the firing of any further civilian faculty. This reengineering of the faculty is a very complex task, one with significant ramifications for national defense. It deserves nothing less than a reasoned and transparent review involving all the relevant stakeholders.

Tab 11

July 30, 2025

Doug Truax
Founder and CEO
Foundation for the Restoration of America/Restoration of America

Subject: USAFA BOV Public Comment

Dear Board of Visitors,

I am Doug Truax, USMA 1992 graduate and CEO of Foundation for the Restoration of America/Restoration of America.

USAFA has made great strides in eliminating divisive Critical Race Theory and DEI courses, which have proven two of the worst obstacles in creating a unified fighting force. In that spirit, I wish to provide the USAFA BOV with our recommendations to reestablish USAFA as a great service academy and erase the cloud of negativity that has hovered over the academy in recent years. We request USAFA take the following actions:

High Quality Education:

1. Conduct an immediate, thorough, and independent review of curriculum and instruction to make sure cadets are receiving the highest quality education focused on creating the best leaders and warfighters for America.
2. Conduct a thorough assessment of all professors to make sure they align fully with the mission above and not "social justice" agendas.
3. Eliminate the Rhodes Scholar program that seeks to indoctrinate students in Marxist ideals.
[Read our report on the topic here.](#)
4. Increase the percentage of professors who have a previous or current military background.
5. Evaluate and reconsider the use of the Higher Learning Commission as the accrediting agency of the Academy—specifically, if the Commission's requirements for accreditation violate civil rights laws and executive orders. [Read our report on this topic here.](#)

Admissions:

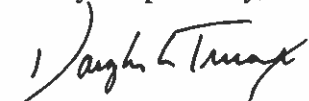
1. Conduct a thorough review of the recruitment and admissions process to make sure employees are seeking candidates that align with USAFA's traditional mission without regard to non-merit factors such as race or gender.
2. Immediately remove all data tracking related to race and gender for admission and appointments.
3. Remove the requirement for photos to be submitted with applications.

Staff:

1. Remove any staff member with a political agenda.

It is our desire at Foundation for the Restoration of America/Restoration of America to be a resource and advocate for the Air Force Academy. Please reach out if we can assist in any way.

Very Respectfully,



Doug Truax

Tab 12

Pursuant to 41 CFR 102–3.105(j) and section 102–3.140 and section 1009(a)(3) of FACA, and per the stated agenda regarding matters relating to the mission of U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), including morale, discipline, and social climate, the curriculum, instruction, physical equipment, fiscal affairs, and academic methods, we submit the following questions:

1. The APY 23-24 Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) Survey prevalence rates for USAFA indicate that current prevention efforts may be producing positive results. What specific prevention programs are in place and has USAFA leadership analyzed those programs to confirm whether a correlation exists between specific prevention efforts and prevalence rates?
2. The APY 23-24 SAGR Survey indicated that reporting rates at USAFA for unwanted sexual contact (USC) have decreased slightly. Per the survey, 61% of Military Service Academy (MSA) women and 54% of MSA men who reported their USC perceived experiencing retaliation of some sort including 31% of MSA women and 11% of MSA men who experienced prohibited behaviors and could result in punitive measures. What policies are in place at USAFA for preventing retaliation?
3. Cadets/midshipmen who experience USC prior to entry are more likely to experience it at an MSA. Are there targeted efforts to provide support to this group?
4. USAFA's SAGR response rate jumped from 66% (62% for men and 75% for women) in APY 21-22 to 95% (93% for men and 97% for women) in APY 23-24. Was there a concerted effort to cause the huge leap in participation? If so, what changed?
5. Is USAFA leadership collecting data on current and new programs to evaluate their effectiveness over time e.g., the athletic program (Healthy Relationship Training) that was expanded to the entire cadet wing?
6. What is the status of the "Let's Be Clear" campaign?

Respectfully submitted,

Kathryn L. Smith, USAFA '82

Executive Director

ZASA (Zoomies Against Sexual Assault), an AOG affinity group

Letter for US Air Force Academy (Academy) Board of Visitors

Author: Mark Stoup

Parent of a Cadet and Air Force Attorney

I am submitting the attached statement in my personal capacity and not as an employee of the United States Air Force.

"The discipline which makes the soldiers of a free country reliable in battle is not to be gained by harsh or tyrannical treatment. On the contrary, such treatment is far more likely to destroy than to make an army."

Major General John M. Schofield
Address to the Corps of Cadets, U.S. Military Academy
August 11, 1879

Pursuant to the 10 U.S.C. §9455, "The **Board** shall inquire into the morale and discipline . . . relating to the Academy (emphasis added)." I respectfully request the following information be provided to the Board for its consideration at the August 2025 Academy Board of Visitors meeting.

Senior leaders at the Academy are not providing Constitutionally required Due Process to cadets. This must change. Further, those same leaders are not properly administering discipline. This has a significant negative impact on morale and discipline and results in a failure of the Academy's mission of developing "leaders of character, motivated to a lifetime of service. . . ." I will use an ongoing issue with the Academy Men's Soccer Team to highlight this serious and systemic problem. In short, nine seniors from the soccer team were denied graduation and commissioning for allegedly observing and condoning conduct of underclassmen. The Academy acted without considering all the available evidence. This led to a significant injustice. If the Academy continues on its current course, all nine will have been punished for 19 months from the beginning of an investigation for things **they did not do**. Providing Constitutionally required Due Process would have prevented this injustice.

- **Disclaimer:** I am the father of one of the seniors on the Academy soccer team. I am writing this letter in my personal capacity. I am also an Air Force attorney who has served in the JAG Corps for more than 30 years. My entire career has been centered on providing disciplinary advice to commanders. I served as a Trial Counsel (prosecutor), Academy Assistant Professor of Law, Deputy Staff Judge Advocate (General Counsel), 3-time Staff Judge Advocate, Deputy Commandant of the Air Force JAG School and for the last 10 years as an instructor at the Air Force JAG School. 21 years of my JAG Corps career have been at training bases. Due to my relationship with the soccer players and my professional experience, I have significant insight into the following situation - procedurally and factually.

- **Relevant facts:** In October 2024 an underclass cadet at the Academy made an allegation of sexual assault against another underclass cadet. The issue was a hazing incident that was eventually determined to be "consensual" – and not sexual. **None of the senior cadets on the team was involved in that allegation.** Pursuant to evidence discovered in that investigation, all seniors on the Academy soccer team (nine total) were disciplined because they allegedly "observed and condoned" long standing Academy traditions. These traditions took place for years prior to the seniors arriving at the Academy. The seniors were taught these traditions when they arrived at the Academy and the coaches were aware of and allowed that. The traditions that the seniors were punished for were a "pile on" welcoming new cadets to the team room and wrestling matches that occurred between different graduating classes. All the conduct in those traditions was consensual. In January or February 2025, Academy leadership knew that the investigation of the sexual assault

allegation and related misconduct was wrapping up. Academy leaders had at least three full months prior to graduation to complete disciplinary actions against all nine seniors. In late March 2025, cadets began to hear that they might not graduate on time. At the beginning of April, cadets made formal requests through counsel to be informed of the status of graduation. The Academy Commandant of Cadets issued all nine seniors Letters of Reprimand (LORs) on 24 April 2025 – 6 months after the “misconduct” was discovered. Despite continued requests regarding graduation, Academy leadership (legal office, Commandant, and Superintendent) refused to provide a decision on graduation. The leadership stated that the cadets were getting Due Process and that a decision on the LOR would be issued. The LOR and graduation were two separate actions, and no Due Process was given for the graduation decision. This situation left families with a difficult choice. Without knowing if their seniors would graduate, families needed to decide if they should travel for potential graduation or stay home. I chose to travel 15 family members from Montgomery, Alabama. Most of the seniors also had numerous family members travel to graduation because an official decision wasn’t rendered until after families already traveled. After graduation, the Superintendent was very dismissive of the situation he put family members in by stating “the cadets knew they were at risk of not graduating” or words to the effect. In 2024, nine Honor Guard seniors were facing a late graduation for what the seniors believed was similar misconduct. The Commandant allowed all nine Honor Guard seniors to graduate on time. The Commandant’s actions from the previous year led our families to believe the soccer team seniors might also be able to graduate on time. On 23 May, the Commandant completed actions on the LORs and informed all nine seniors that they would not graduate on time, despite having completed all graduation requirements. The cadets were also denied their commission. This decision took place only three duty/business days prior to graduation. This situation prompted many family members to reach out to their respective U.S. representatives. A number of the representatives’ staff members replied to the soccer team parents that the Academy informed them the cadets were getting Due Process, so communication stopped. Family members attempted to contact the following representatives: Senator Tuberville (AL), Representative Schweikert (AZ), Representative Stanton (AZ), Senator Scott (FL), Senator Crapo (ID), Representative Fulcher (ID), Senator Risch (ID), Senator Paul (KY), Senator Warren (MA), Senator Kaine (VA), Representative Wittman (VA). Finally, Eric Trump spoke with the President about this issue the weekend prior to graduation.

- Definitions and important concepts:

- 5th Amendment, US Constitution: “**No person shall . . . be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.**” Case law has clearly established that Due process is considered to include notice and an opportunity to be heard. Additionally, more due process is required when the deprivation is higher. This means notice must be more specific and the opportunity to be heard increases. Increased Due Process also includes additional protections such as discovery rights, rights to call and confront witnesses, juries, increased burden of proof, and appellate rights to name a few. Due Process is required individually for each action the government takes. For example, a service member who commits misconduct might receive a Letter of Reprimand (LOR) for the misconduct, have the LOR filed in an official “Unfavorable Information File”, and eventually have the misconduct documented in the member’s annual evaluation. The

government is Constitutionally required to provide Due Process individually for each one of these three actions.

- Preamble to the Manual for Courts-Martial: **“The purposes of military law are to promote justice, to deter misconduct, to facilitate appropriate accountability, to assist in maintaining good order and discipline in the armed forces, to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the military establishment, and thereby to strengthen the national security of the United States.”** According to Websters Dictionary, justice is defined in part as the “impartial adjustment of conflicting claims” (emphasis added).

- Rule for Courts-Martial 306(b): **“Policy. Allegations of offenses should be disposed of in a timely manner at the lowest appropriate level of disposition listed . . .”** (emphasis added).

- USAFA Mission: “To forge leaders of character, motivated to a lifetime of service, and developed to lead our Air Force and Space Force as we fight and win our Nation’s wars.”

Material to consider: In considering this situation, the Board should consider the following additional information that can be found at the Academy legal office. First, information collated and reviewed by Lt Col Nicole Mouakar, U.S. Air Force Reserve Judge Advocate temporarily assigned to the Academy in July 2025. Her orders end on 1 August; however, if asked she will be able to assist the Board in some manner. Lt Col Mouakar was tasked by the Academy to review all the available evidence involving the soccer team. She was tasked to complete this project in preparation for a potential report to the organization U.S. Center for Safe Sport. She listened and viewed all audio/video recordings and read all available evidence to include response from the cadets and their counsel. She has a broader understanding of the case than anyone at the Academy. She was tasked to look into the material, but not to write a report. Additionally, she was not asked for an opinion or recommendation regarding the case. When she attempted to provide an opinion about the case, Academy leadership did not appear to want the recommendation. If asked, Lt Col Mouakar would state that she believes the seniors were not afforded Due Process and that the seniors were punished much harsher than they should have been. Finally, she would state that a review of all the material led her to believe that the Commandant did not read the responses submitted by the seniors. Lt Col Mouakar also collected two additional documents that should be considered. First is the legal response submitted by attorney David Sheldon. Second is the affidavit submitted by me (Mark Stoup).

Additional matter includes: An Article 138, UCMJ, Complaint for Redress filed with the Superintendent requesting he allow the seniors to graduate on time. That document shows what the Superintendent was aware of prior to the May 2025 graduation date. I will cite several instructions below. They are Air Force Instruction 1-2, *Command Responsibilities*, Department of the Air Force Instruction 90-201, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution*, Air Force Cadet Wing Instructions 36-3501, *Cadet Standards and Duties*, and AFCWI 51-201, *Administration of Cadet Discipline*. The instructions can also be provided by the legal office.

Due Process: As stated above, nine seniors were denied Due Process when their graduation was denied. A quick review of AFCWI 51-201, shows that Due Process is afforded for a number of disciplinary actions; however, there is no Due Process provided for late graduations. The process is vaguely outlined in AFCWI 51-201, para 3.7. Although the process speaks to notification, it is silent on providing an opportunity to be heard. AFCWI 51-201 provides an opportunity to be heard for the most minor deprivations **but provides nothing for a senior who earns a degree after four hard years of work.** The “property interest” of an Academy degree is significant and depriving a cadet of that degree and at the cadet’s graduation warrants significant Due Process. The Academy needs to change AFCWI 51-201 to comport with the 5th Amendment of the Constitution. Additionally, the cadets were primarily reprimanded for observing and condoning disgraceful behavior. This behavior was a team pile on in the locker room. Freshmen cadets are required to line up as described in the LOR. Also, cadets are often partially clothed in a locker room. The incident in the LOR was as simple as the light being tuned off for 30 seconds or so and cadets jumping on top of underclassmen – which is what soccer teams do. The touching makes the incident sound sexual, but that is not the truth of what really happened. Cadets don’t know exactly what they touch since it is a pile of people in the dark. AFCWI 36-3501 does not prohibit what the seniors believed happened, a simple pile-on that seniors couldn’t really observe and did not participate in. The incident wasn’t a sexual assault, hazing, or unauthorized tradition. See paras 2.3.4 Hazing and 2.3.8 Traditions. Notice requires Academy leaders to articulate what standard was being violated. The Academy needed to put cadets on clear notice in advance of what conduct is acceptable. Then if the Academy believes conduct is unacceptable, notice must be specific. The Academy failed in both areas. It is very difficult to know what that standard is in this case or to know specifically what the seniors did. In summary, when responding to information about late graduation, Academy leaders routinely told outside organizations that the cadets were receiving Due Process. That statement is patently false. The Due Process provided was not related to graduation or commissioning.

Disciplinary failures of Academy leadership: According to Rule for Court-Martial 306(b), “Allegations of offenses should be disposed of in a **timely manner at the lowest appropriate level** of disposition listed. . . .” This means the lowest level of command and the lowest level of outcome. This principle was not followed in the discipline against the seniors. Action should have been taken at a much lower level and immediately. Instead, action was handled by the two top commanders at the Academy. Action was also delayed significantly – 6 months after discovering what happened. In addition, Academy leaders did not consider information that was available to them, meaning Academy leaders acted in an arbitrary and capricious manner.

The Academy violated Due Process Clause AND took action without considering all relevant data and factors. According to AFI 1-2, para 3.4.4, “Commanders are expected to make data driven Decisions.” Academy leaders violated this provision by ignoring available data. DAFI 90-301, Attachment 1 (Terms), defines an abuse of authority as an action that was not based on relevant data and factors. The Academy legal office, Commandant and Superintendent were all made aware, in writing, that there was relevant information they did not have that would benefit the outcome of their decisions. **Lt Col Mouakar’s evidence includes a 5-page affidavit listing the**

evidence the Academy refused to consider. The Academy was not aware of most of the information. These facts were readily available to Academy leaders through a simple phone call, yet the facts were simply and negligently ignored. Several cadets provided complete defenses of some of the alleged misconduct. Despite this information being in the hands of the Academy, the Commandant failed to modify any allegations against the seniors. Academy leaders were very sloppy with the disciplinary tools. LORs and other paperwork signed by the Commandant were replete with errors, including misspelled names, wrong names, wrong ranks, and in one case paperwork being given to the wrong cadet. The most prevalent allegation against the seniors is that they allowed certain conduct to take place. The misconduct described was a singular event, but the dates in the letter cover a two-month period making it very difficult for the cadets to appropriately respond. This also allowed the Commandant to conflate two incidents. The pile on was conflated with the alleged sexual assault allegation (which the seniors were not involved). There was no evidence showing that all the seniors were present during the pile on, but all were punished. Seniors were reprimanded for not stopping the underclassmen from certain traditions. However, many seniors stated that they actually told underclassmen to stop some of the longstanding traditions. All the allegations remained on the reprimand and the exact same allegations were the basis for a disenrollment action the Commandant initiated after graduation.

The additional evidence detailed in the affidavit and the cadet responses to the LORs make it clear that Academy leaders made their disciplinary decision early on and were not going to change their mind. That violates a commander's responsibility. It is clear that the Academy refused to hear about the team culture that was already present when the seniors arrived at the Academy and what the true facts of the case entailed. It is shocking that the Academy refused to hear about the knowledge and involvement of coaches and that the coaches ignored Academy policies directly related to the conduct for which the seniors were punished.

Appearance of vindictiveness: The actions taken by the Academy leadership give the appearance that leaders were being vindictive toward the seniors. Some examples are: The LORs issued on 24 April stated that the Commandant would make a decision in 3 days; instead the Commandant took 30 days. The Commandant waited until the last minute to tell the seniors about graduation, only 3 business days in advance. The Commandant informed the seniors late in the afternoon on the Friday before a long weekend. The Superintendent and the Commandant refused to take substantive action on the Art 138 complaint. Instead of actually providing a response (which would have required the case to go to the Secretary of the Air Force), they used procedural gamesmanship to delay their decision until after graduation. The Commandant punished the seniors by giving them 6 months of probation, 100 hours of marching tours, and 110 demerits. This is an extremely harsh punishment only reserved for the most egregious misconduct. The Commandant's vague allegations allowed him to categorize the punishment at any level he chose and thereby making his actions look as if they comport with AFCWI 51-201. Specific notice under the Constitution would have helped to prevent this. After graduation, the Commandant gave a Letter of Notification (LON) to all nine seniors stating he was considering disenrolling them from the Academy. On 3 July, most of the seniors were submitting their response to the LON. Also on 3 July, the Superintendent notified all the seniors that he was going to suspend disenrollment proceedings and that he was

putting them on 10 months of probation, starting that day. **The Superintendent doubled the seniors' probation without even considering their responses.**

I respectfully request the Board review the relevant facts and data that the Academy refused to look at. A neutral party should review this case to determine an appropriate outcome, a party who has not predetermined the outcome like the Academy leaders did. The instructions at the Academy need to be changed to provide required Due Process.

In conclusion, I respectfully request the Academy Board of Visitors to thoroughly consider the Due Process violations and disciplinary failures outlined in this letter. This will help ensure a fair and impartial review of the evidence, **including Lt Col Mouakar's evidence , cadet LOR responses disregarded by Academy leadership, and additional evidence the Academy refused to consider.** These systemic issues, exemplified by the unjust treatment of the nine seniors on the Men's Soccer Team, undermine the Academy's mission to forge leaders of character motivated to a lifetime of service. **These issues also erode trust in the Air Force's commitment to justice and discipline.** I request that the Board recommend the Academy revise AFCWI 51-201 to align with Constitutional Due Process requirements. I also request the Board recommend the Academy appoint a neutral third party to reassess the cadets' case to rectify this injustice, restore morale, and uphold the integrity of the U.S. Air Force Academy. **The best outcome for all parties concerned, cadets, the Academy in general, and the Air Force, would be to immediately graduate and commission all nine seniors and to ensure they get their post-graduate assignments. There is no way the Air Force can replicate a graduation for the nine seniors and their families. The moment they worked so hard for even prior to arriving at the Academy is gone. There must be some avenue to recognize their hard work and the resilience they displayed during their "entire" time at the Academy.** "Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small number formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all." (George Washington), but only discipline done with justice.