



# WARFIGHTERS TO WIN

FEBRUARY 20-21, 2025

#NCLS2025



NATIONAL CHARACTER  
& LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

# WELCOME LETTER



On behalf of the cadets, faculty, and staff of the U.S. Air Force Academy, welcome to the 32nd annual National Character and Leadership Symposium – Warfighters to Win.

During this year's symposium, you will hear from military exemplars on their warfighting journeys and experiences. Their stories will underscore, that in uncertain, dynamic, and contested environments, our warrior-leaders must be ready to answer our Nation's call to defend our democratic ideals and our way of life. As such, USAFA must equip and train the future leaders of our Airmen and Guardians with the skills and mindsets to deter our adversaries, and should deterrence fail, deliver overwhelming victory for our Nation.

A warfighter that wins extends beyond tactical expertise. It demands unwavering character, ethical decision-making, and an unyielding commitment to leading with honor. At the Academy we forge leaders of character motivated to a lifetime of service, a theme our speakers will repeat. We develop leaders who value team-building, hold each other accountable to our exacting standards, and support every teammate to reach their maximum potential. Throughout this symposium, you will engage in dynamic discussions, presentations, and opportunities for collaboration surrounding our priority of forging Warfighters to Win. I encourage you to embrace the challenges ahead, share your perspectives, and contribute to the development of our future leaders.

Thank you for attending this year's NCLS and developing your warfighter mindset to support our Nation.

TONY D. BAUERNFEIND  
Lieutenant General, USAF  
Superintendent



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# IN REMEMBRANCE AND RECOGNITION



## Honoring the Life and Service of Retired Brig. Gen. Malham M. Wakin, U.S. Air Force 1931–2024

With profound respect and gratitude, we honor the life and legacy of Brig. Gen. Malham “Mal” M. Wakin, whose service to the U.S. Air Force spanned over six decades. A leader of integrity, vision and dedication, Wakin embodied the values of duty, honor and service, leaving an indelible mark on all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Commissioned in 1953, Wakin served on active duty from 1953 to 1995. His early career included assignments as an air rescue navigator, and he completed a combat tour in Vietnam in 1968. His exemplary service earned him numerous prestigious decorations, including the Distinguished Service Medal and three Legions of Merit. His steadfast leadership and commitment to excellence inspired those under his command and established a lasting standard of professionalism and exemplary character.

Beyond his operational achievements, Wakin was a distinguished educator, scholar and the U.S. Air Force Academy’s longest-serving permanent professor. Since joining the Academy in 1959, he held numerous positions, including professor and head of the Department of Philosophy, chairman of the Humanities Division, assistant dean, associate dean and member of numerous academic committees. Wakin authored or edited five books, including *Integrity First: Reflections of a Military Philosopher*, a testament to his critical thinking and commitment to ethical leadership. He served as professor emeritus of Philosophy at the Academy from 1995–2016.

Wakin’s profound influence extended beyond the Academy. He was instrumental in founding and chairing the Joint Services Conference on Professional Ethics from 1979 to 1993 and served as the ethics advisor to the U.S. Olympic Committee for 13 years. Recognized for his impact, he was featured as one of 12 “great professors” in *People Magazine* (1975) and profiled in *Newsweek* (1983). A highly sought-after speaker, Wakin delivered an average of 70 lectures annually to audiences around the world, sharing his wisdom on leadership, ethics and character.

Wakin earned a bachelor’s degree from Notre Dame, a master’s degree from State University of New York, Albany, and a doctorate from the University of Southern California. His academic accomplishments were further recognized through the awarding of three honorary degrees.

In recognition of his exemplary service to the Academy, the CCLD established the Brigadier General Malham M. Wakin Award for Character and Leadership Development. This prestigious award, endowed by the Academy Class of 1974, honors current or former Academy staff, faculty and teams who foster standards consistent with the Leader of Character Framework.

As we reflect on his extraordinary life, we celebrate Wakin not only for his contributions to our nation’s defense but also for his influence on generations of leaders. His legacy will forever endure in the hearts of those he inspired and the countless lives he touched.

Rest in peace, Brig. Gen. Malham M. Wakin. Your service, leadership and dedication will never be forgotten.

# GENERAL INFORMATION



## CONNECTING TO WIFI

1. Open your device's WiFi
2. Connect to **AF\_ACADEMY\_GUEST**



## PARKING INFORMATION

Parking in the Cadet Area is restricted, and there is limited public parking available at Arnold Hall. All guests are required to check in at Falcon Club and take the shuttle into the Cadet Area.



## DOWNLOAD THE NCLS APP

NCLS attendees can easily manage schedules, access event content, stay updated, network and engage with sessions before, during and after NCLS.



Scan to download the NCLS App



## TRANSPORTATION

### Base Shuttle Service:

During NCLS, shuttles will run continuously during the symposium. Bus stops are located at Arnold Hall and the Falcon Club with no sign-ups required. The service will operate approximately from 7:15 a.m. to 9 p.m., Thursday, and until 5 p.m., Friday.

### Guest Departures:

**Feb.** : Shuttles will depart from Arnold Hall circle and base lodging to the Colorado Springs Airport every 2 hours, starting at 9 p.m.

**Feb.** : Shuttles will depart from Arnold Hall circle and base lodging to the Colorado Springs Airport from approximately 4 -11 a.m., based on sign-ups.

Shuttle sign-ups are required at the time of registration check-in. Please note that NCLS **does not** provide transportation to Denver International Airport.

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# MAKING THE MOST OF NCLS

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## Developing Leaders of Character at the U.S. Air Force Academy

Our priorities are to develop and produce warfighters to win, leaders of character and quality, and critical thinkers to adapt. The mission of the U.S. Air Force Academy 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. Our Leader of Character Framework guides the development of Academy graduates who possess the attributes necessary to fulfill the nation's expectations in their service as officers and citizens. It underpins and reinforces each of the U.S. Air Force Academy Institutional Outcomes and provides a platform for the growth of life-long leadership. The Leader of Character Framework's purpose is to provide all Academy personnel, military and civilian, with a deliberate, flexible, and foundational conceptual framework to use in developing themselves and others as leaders of character who live honorably, lift others, and elevate performance.

### How we develop as a leader of character:

Development is a process experienced by an individual, but never an end state. Our organization seeks to do the work of development, by engaging leaders of character in purposeful experiences that assess, challenge, and support. In doing so, we influence their identity, and arm them with the competencies to better practice habits of thoughts and actions in the context of the leadership work to be accomplished for their current and future roles.



Scan to learn more about our Leader of Character Framework.

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# WARFIGHTERS TO WIN

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Our NCLS 2025 theme of Warfighters to Win explores the essence of being a true warrior and developing warfighters equipped to face the challenges of the modern battlefield. Our speakers include leaders who will share inspiring stories of determination and resilience, present thought-provoking ideas, foster meaningful dialogue and provide valuable opportunities to strengthen and cultivate our warrior ethos. Together, we will gain the tools necessary to succeed and defend our nation as warfighters to win, leaders of character and quality, and critical thinkers to adapt.

We hope that you utilize the following pages to document your observations and lessons learned during NCLS so you may reflect on your overall experience and ultimately grow as a leader of character – a leader who lives honorably, lifts others, and elevates performance in every team you encounter. Please take time to provide session ratings, testimonials and complete the comprehensive event survey after your event experience. We welcome your input, feedback and speaker suggestions through the NCLS 2025 app.

# SPECIAL THANKS

The Superintendent, faculty, staff and Cadet Wing of the U.S. Air Force Academy would like to thank the following groups for their generous support:



USAF Academy Class of '59



USAF Academy Class of '73  
NCLS Flagship Sponsor



USAF Academy Class of '74



USAF Academy Class of '77



USAF Academy Class of '83



USAF Academy Class of '93



USAF Academy Class of '04



Muse Family Foundation  
Lt Col (Ret) Earl A. Enix '77 and Mrs. Candy Enix

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual National Character & Leadership Symposium would not have been possible without the following organizations and individuals who graciously gave their time and talents:

10th Air Base Wing  
U.S. Air Force Academy Strategic Communications  
U.S. Air Force Academy Protocol  
U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Chorale  
Fairchild Hall Facility and AV Support  
Arnold Hall Facility and AV Support  
Polaris Hall Facility and AV Support  
U.S. Air Force Academy Admissions  
Mitchell Hall Staff  
Permanent Party and Cadet Speaker Escorts

U.S. Air Force Academy Preparatory School  
U.S. Air Force Academy Cadet Wing  
U.S. Air Force Academy Davis Airfield  
U.S. Air Force Academy Department of the Faculty  
U.S. Air Force Academy Department of Athletics  
U.S. Air Force Academy Chaplain Corps  
Aleut Management Services  
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306th Flying Training Group

*Contents of the event guide, and the words and presentation materials of the speakers are not the official views of, or endorsed by, the US Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.*

# CLASS OF '59 LEADERSHIP KEYNOTE



## **Retired Col. Allison Black**

U.S. Air Force

Retired Col. Allison Black served over 32 years of active-duty military service, commanding at multiple levels within the Joint Force and U.S. Special Operations Command. She culminated her career as the commander of the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida. In this capacity, she prepared Airmen for worldwide missions, specializing in crisis and contingency operations. The wing's mission encompassed planning, posturing and executing precision strike, specialized mobility, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Under her leadership, the wing operated over 78 aircraft, including the AC-130J Ghost Rider, CV-22 Osprey, MC-130J Shadow II, U-28A Draco and MQ-9 Reaper, supporting direct action, unconventional warfare, reconnaissance, counterterrorism, personnel recovery and information operations missions.

Black enlisted in the Air Force in 1992 as a survival, evasion, resistance and escape specialist. In 1998, she completed Officer Training School and Joint Specialized Undergraduate Navigator Training. She joined the Air Force Special Operations Command in 2000 and has flown over 3,400 hours, with 2,000 combat hours in the AC-130H Spectre gunship and U-28A Draco.

## **In the Arena: Leadership Lessons from Retired Col. Allison Black, aka the “Angel of Death,” and her Journey from E-1 to O-6**

Retired Col. Allison Black is a credible career Special Operations leader with over 32 years of active-duty service. She enlisted in the Air Force as a Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape specialist and earned her commission in 1998. As a Master Navigator, Black has flown over 3,400 hours, including more than 2,000 in combat operations in the AC-130H Spectre Gunship and U-28 Draco. Black served as the commander of the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida, and led at multiple levels in the Joint Force during combat and contingency operations. She has a clear understanding of how to build elite teams and inspire trust with those she meets.



# THE FALCON FOUNDATION

## “BUD” BRECKNER KEYNOTE



### Retired Lt. Gen. Robert E. Schmidle

U.S. Marine Corps

Retired Lt. Gen. Dr. Robert E. Schmidle serves as the Arizona State University advisor on Cyber Capabilities and Conflict Studies. He is also a professor of practice at Arizona State’s School of Politics and Global Studies. Additionally, Schmidle serves as the university’s senior fellow at the Future Security Initiative and in the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments in Washington, D.C.

During his active-duty career, Schmidle served as the first deputy commander of U.S. Cyber Command. He later became the head of Marine Corps Aviation, and his final assignment was as the principal deputy director of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation. He has extensive operational flying experience, with over 4,700 hours in tactical fighters, primarily in the F-4 Phantom, F-18 Super Hornet and F-5 Tiger aircraft. A graduate of the Naval Fighter Weapons School or TOPGUN, Schmidle taught advanced fighter tactics for over 35 years.

Schmidle deployed to Operation Desert Storm as the VMFA-333 executive officer, where he led the largest Marine Corps strike on the first night of the war. During this conflict, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with combat V denoting valor in combat. He would subsequently command VMFA251, leading the squadron in combat operations in Bosnia and then aboard the USS America or CV-66 as part of Carrier Air Wing One. Schmidle was then selected for an extraordinary second operation command, this time as the commanding officer of VMFA-115. As a colonel, he commanded the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (experimental), planning and executing the Marine Corps warfighting experiments.

Schmidle’s doctoral thesis, recognized with distinction, was titled *The Power of Context in Shaping Moral Choices*. He is a member of The Golden Eagles, the National Security Agency Advisory Board and the British Wittgenstein Society. His numerous publications cover the fields of moral philosophy, social psychology, cybersecurity and military history. He is also an active certified flight instructor, national air racer, air show performer and aerobatic competitor in his Pitts Special biplane.

### Physical and Moral Courage: What is Your Duty?

Lt. Gen. Robert E. Schmidle will begin the lecture by discussing the concepts of rights and duties, explaining the important differences between them and arguing that it is duty that makes officers of character. He will then examine the distinction between physical courage and moral courage, providing personal examples from his 40 years in the Marine Corps. Schmidle will challenge the audience to think deeply about the moral choices they face and will continue to face. He will do this by suggesting a framework to develop a warrior mindset — one that is grounded in a broad study of history and human nature and infused with a sense of duty.

# CLASS OF '73 MUSE FAMILY FOUNDATION KEYNOTE



## **Retired Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón Colón-López**

U.S. Air Force

Retired Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Ramón Colón-López served in the Air Force for 33 years. In December 2019, he became the fourth senior enlisted adviser to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the most senior enlisted service member in the U.S. armed forces.

Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Colón-López moved to the United States in 1986 and enlisted in the Air Force in 1990. His military trajectory led him to the special operations arena, where he successfully completed some of the most rigorous training the Department of Defense has to offer, including the Air Force Pararescue pipeline, Navy SEAL and Army Special Forces courses and other joint special operations training.

Colón-López served as a special operations pararescueman for two decades in combat, with a decade-long experience in the Joint Special Operations Command as a special tactics team leader, advanced force operations team leader and the 24th Special Tactics Squadron and 724th Special Tactics Group senior enlisted advisor, working alongside the Delta Force and SEAL Team 6 during dozens of raids and missions.

As the senior enlisted adviser to the chairman, Colón-López became the first enlisted member of the U.S. armed forces to be awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the nation's highest noncombat award, for outstanding contributions to national security in a position of great responsibility. He has earned a total of 58 medals, including the Defense Superior Service Medal with one bronze oak leaf cluster, Legion of Merit, Defense Meritorious Service Medal and two Bronze Star Medals for Valor. Colón-López was the Air Force's first-ever recipient of the Combat Action Medal.

Following his special operations career, Colón-López went on to lead at the strategic level in several organizations in the United States, Japan, Qatar, Germany, Africa and other regions worldwide. Throughout his career, he interacted with leaders from 89 countries, building alliances and partnerships to enhance global security.

Colón-López currently serves on the Military Board of Advisors for First Command Financial Services, and as an independent strategic consultant for several multimillion-dollar firms. In addition, he is a member of the Robert Irvine Foundation Board of Directors and volunteers for veteran support and non-profit organizations.

## **The Way of the Warrior: Reflections of a Tier One Special Operator and Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in over 30 years of Service**

Retired Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman Colón-López will conduct a fireside chat on his journey from the elite special operations forces, Tier One, to becoming the most senior enlisted member in the Department of Defense. Topics include leadership lessons learned, overcoming adversity, seeing the Global War on Terror from beginning to end, and his experience in candidly advising the senior Pentagon officials, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the secretary of defense and two U.S. presidents.

# CLASS OF '93 KEYNOTE

## 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year Panel

Join us as representatives from the 2024 U.S. Air Force 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year share how the warrior ethos has been important in their careers. These panelists were selected from across the U.S. Air Force as enlisted teammates who exemplify superior leadership, job performance and personal achievement. Audiences will strengthen their own warrior mindset and develop grit and resilience in both their personal and professional endeavors.



### **Master Sgt. Haley Kallisto**

U.S. Air Force

Master Sgt. Haley L. Kallisto is a Weapons Director at the 225th Air Defense Squadron, Western Air Defense Sector, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington. She initiates and oversees the employment of Air Force fighters in support of Operation Noble Eagle.

Kallisto enlisted in the Air Force in December 2012. Her first assignment was Luke Air Force Base, Arizona where she utilized simulation software to recreate realistic air combat tactics in support of Weapons Director qualification training. Her next assignment took her to Spangdahlem, Germany, where she was deployed as a Weapons Director for combat air operations over Iraq and the Arabian Gulf in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. Upon her return, she assisted in the European Infrastructure Consolidation relocation of \$240 million in equipment and personnel that led to her squadron being awarded the Headquarters Air Force Ground Based Crew of the Year. The unit relocation resulted in her next assignment to Aviano Air Base, Italy, as the assistant noncommissioned officer in charge of scheduling and a deployment to support Operation Resolute Support where she directed air combat operations over Afghanistan and co-managed the Weapons and Tactics office. Prior to her current position, Kallisto served as an Air Education and Training Command Weapons Director Instructor at Luke AFB, Arizona. In February 2020, Kallisto joined the Washington Air National Guard at Joint Base Lewis-McChord.



### **Tech. Sgt. Cory Green**

U.S. Air Force

Tech. Sgt. Cory Green is the noncommissioned officer in charge of future operations for the 60th Security Forces Squadron, Travis Air Force Base, California.

He advises the defense force commander on force protection operations supporting three wings, 26,000 personnel and \$18.5 billion in power projection assets. Furthermore, he oversees the tactics development process by integrating training and evaluations with mission partners to broaden the security forces' capabilities for a 274-member unit. Green was born and raised in Bakersfield, California, and enlisted in the Air Force in January 2008. He graduated from the Security Forces Academy in May 2008. Since then, he has filled a variety of security forces roles and responsibilities. Green has served as an installation entry controller, armorer, patrolman and combat arms instructor. In 2019, Green was selected to be an instructor at the security forces' largest ground combat regional training center, located at Fort Bliss, Texas. During this assignment, he led a flight of cadres in preparing defenders across the security forces enterprise for overseas contingency operations.

Green has deployed three times in support of the Global War on Terror to Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar; Prince Hassan Air Base, Jordan; and Kandahar, Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, he conducted the security forces tactical security element mission, where he led a fire team as the lead truck commander on 103 outside-the-wire missions and 32 high-value target capture operations. Before his current assignment, Green served as a flight sergeant for the Air Force Security Forces Center Detachment 3 at Fort Bliss.

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# CLASS OF '93 KEYNOTE

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## **Tech. Sgt. Joseph Mazure**

U.S. Air Force

Tech. Sgt. Joseph Mazure joined the Air Force in 2007. He worked in Munitions Systems for three years and in 2013, he cross-trained into the Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape Specialist career field.

Mazure has deployed to Djibouti, Afghanistan, and Qatar, and volunteered for a year-long assignment in Qatar. Some notable recent career highlights include collaborating with the Space Force and the National Reconnaissance Office to rectify a critical flaw in survival radios that affected 13 partner nations, revitalizing secure emergency satellite communications coalition-wide. Mazure coordinated personnel recovery for four downed aircraft across three combatant commands, activating 15 Air Force and Navy rescue assets, culminating in the recovery of 15 personnel.

He currently manages one of the largest operational SERE sections in the Air Force, providing refresher training for 2,000 aircrew members. He also develops SERE specialists as personnel recovery experts for multiple deployments annually.



## **Senior Airman Mykhailo Khromiak**

U.S. Air Force

Senior Airman Mykhailo Khromiak deployed in support of Ukraine war efforts as a critical command-and-control liaison for the Air Domain Awareness Cell. His efforts alerted forces to 2,000 air threats and 1,500 ballistic missiles, saving 43 million lives across 24 regions. Khromiak crafted a \$273 million anti-missile translation guide, interpreting unmanned aerial vehicles and navigation manuals for allied pilots, which increased jet survivability.

Mykhailo served as the lead linguist for the secretary of defense and the Ukraine minister of defense, ensuring global alliances. He advanced real-time Ukrainian language support, identifying hostile activity from enemy targets and enhancing the endurance of 40 aircraft. Mykhailo transported 16 tons of munitions and equipment to Gila Bend Auxiliary Field, preparing three major commands with a divert airfield and a safe haven for in-flight emergencies for 20 joint units across five airframes. This effort generated 23,000 sorties and 239 pilot graduates.

# ENIX HERITAGE KEYNOTE

## Senior Leader Discussion Panel

Air Force and Space Force senior leaders will discuss why the Academy must produce warfighters to win future conflicts during this time of great power competition. They will share their thoughts on how the services must re-optimize to succeed in the four core areas of great power conflict: develop people, generate readiness, project power and develop capabilities.



### Gen. David W. Allvin

Gen. David W. Allvin is the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. As Chief, he serves as the senior uniformed Air Force officer responsible for the organization, training and equipping of 689,000 active-duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian forces serving in the United States and overseas. As a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the general and other service chiefs function as military advisers to the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council and the President.

Gen. Allvin graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1986. He has commanded at the squadron and wing levels, including the 97th Air Mobility Wing, Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. He has held major command staff assignments and served on the Joint Staff.

Gen. Allvin served as Commanding General, NATO Air Training Command - Afghanistan; Commander, 438th Air Expeditionary Wing, Kabul, Afghanistan; Commander, 618th Air and Space Operations Center; Director, Strategy, Concepts and Assessments; Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Requirements, Headquarters, U.S. Air Force and Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy, Headquarters U.S. European Command; Vice Director, Strategy, Plans and Policy, the Joint Staff; and Director for Strategy, Plans and Policy, J-5, Joint Staff. Prior to his current assignment, the general was the Vice Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force

Gen. Allvin is a command pilot with more than 4,600 hours in over 30 aircraft, including 800 flight test hours and 100 combat hours.



### Gen. Stephen N. Whiting

Gen. Stephen N. Whiting is the Commander, U.S. Space Command, headquartered at Peterson Space Force Base, Colo.

As the Commander of U.S. Space Command, General Whiting is responsible for defending U.S. and Allied interests in the space domain while providing space-enabled combat effects to joint warfighters around the globe. He exercises combatant command authority over Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, Airmen, and Guardians operating ground and space-based systems around the world.

General Whiting is a 1989 distinguished graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy with a degree in aeronautical engineering. He is a space operations officer and has commanded the 13th Space Warning Squadron; the 614th Air and Space Operations Center and Joint Space Operations Center; the 21st Space Wing; and the Combined Force Space Component Command and 14th Air Force.

General Whiting's staff assignments include positions at Headquarters U.S. Air Force; U.S. Space Command; U.S. Strategic Command; the Chief of Naval Operations' Strategic Studies Group; the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Defense; Headquarters Air Force Space Command; and Headquarters U.S. Space Force. Prior to his current position, General Whiting was the Commander, Space Operations Command.

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# ENIX HERITAGE KEYNOTE

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## **Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force John F. Bentivegna**

Chief Master Sgt. of the Space Force John F. Bentivegna serves at the highest enlisted level of leadership and provides direction for the enlisted force representing their interests to the American public and to those in all levels of government. He acts as the personal advisor to the Chief of Space Operations and the Secretary of the Air Force on all issues regarding the welfare, readiness, morale, proper utilization, and development of the U.S. Space Force.

Chief Bentivegna entered the United States Air Force in 1994 and has served in both Maintenance and Space Operations career fields. He has held positions at the squadron, division, group, wing, Numbered Air Force, Field Command and Headquarters Air and Space Force levels and served as the Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chief Operations Officer and as the Enlisted Space Systems Operations Career Field Manager, Headquarters Space Force, Washington, D.C.

Chief Bentivegna entered the United States Space Force on September 1, 2020.



## **Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force David A. Flosi**

Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force David A. Flosi represents the highest enlisted level of leadership and, as such, provides direction for the enlisted force and represents their interests, as appropriate, to the American public and to those in all levels of government. He serves as the senior enlisted leader and primary adviser to the Chief of Staff and the Secretary of the Air Force on all matters regarding the readiness, training, professional development, and effective utilization of more than 665,000 Total Force Airmen. Chief Flosi is the 20th chief master sergeant appointed to the highest noncommissioned officer position.

Chief Flosi entered the Air Force in May 1996 as a nuclear weapons specialist. His background includes various leadership duties in conventional and nuclear munitions/missile operations, program management, developmental test and contingency operations at all Air Force organizational levels. Chief Flosi has deployed in direct support of operations Southern Watch, Iraqi Freedom, Inherent Resolve and Freedom's Sentinel.

Prior to this assignment, he served as the Command Chief Master Sergeant, Air Force Materiel Command, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

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# SPEAKERS

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## **Capt. Jason Birch**

U.S. Navy

Capt. Jason Birch attended the U.S. Naval Academy Preparatory School in 1995 and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1999. He completed Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S) training with Class 228 in 2000.

Birch has served in numerous command and staff assignments during his 25 years in special operations. Some of his leadership positions include executive officer of SEAL Team 8, flag aide to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, chief staff officer of Naval Special Warfare Group 4, and commanding officer of SEAL Team 10.

Prior to his current assignment at the Naval Academy as a battalion officer, Birch completed a tour at U.S. Special Operations Command headquarters.

### **The Warrior's Path: My Story through a Lens of Faith, Mentorship and Strength**

Capt. Jason Birch, U.S. Navy, will share his experiences and perspective from his time as a Commander in Naval Special Warfare and as a Battalion Officer at the U.S. Naval Academy.

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# SPEAKERS

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## **Col. Charles A. Fallon**

U.S. Air Force

Col. Charles A. Fallon serves as the commandant of the U.S. Air Force Weapons School at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada. In this role, he oversees 21 squadrons across nine geographic locations.

Each year, the Air Force Weapons School trains 300 expert instructors to integrate across all domains through graduate-level courses in 31 aircraft and weapons systems. These include Air Battle Manager, A-10 Thunderbolt II, AC-130 Gunship, B-1 Lancer, B-2 Spirit, B-52 Stratofortress, C-17 Globemaster III, C-130 Hercules, CV-22 Osprey, EC-130H Compass Call, F-15C Eagle, F-15E Strike Eagle, F-16 Fighting Falcon, F-22A Raptor, F-35A Lightning II, Joint Terminal Attack Controller, HC-130J Combat King II, HH-60 Pave Hawk, KC-135 Stratotanker, MC-130 Combat Shadow II, MQ-9 Reaper, RC-135 Rivet Joint, RQ-4 Global Hawk, U-2 Dragon Lady, U-28 Draco, intelligence, space, intercontinental ballistic missiles, and cyber. The Air Force Weapons School is also the sole publisher of Air Force Tactics, Techniques and Procedures.

Fallon graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2003 and is a command pilot with over 2,800 total flying hours, including 616 combat flight hours. Before his current assignment, Fallon served as the chief of the Strategy Integration Division at the Pentagon. He also commanded the 55th Fighter Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, and held key leadership positions, including the F-16 Weapons School Air Combat Command and Director of Operations senior leader management chief.

### **Forging Warfighters for Great Power Competition**

Col. Charles A. Fallon, U.S. Air Force Academy Class of 2003, will speak about the urgency of preparing elite warfighters for the challenges of great power competition. He will emphasize the need for technical mastery, mental resilience and adaptable leadership to counter evolving threats from near-peer adversaries. Highlighting lessons from recent conflicts, Fallon will discuss how the U.S. Air Force Weapons School hones these critical skills to produce Airmen who excel in high-stakes environments. He will inspire cadets to embody the warrior ethos, stressing that their commitment and readiness are essential to America's global strength and security.



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# SPEAKERS

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## **Chief Master Sgt. Robert Gutierrez, Jr.**

U.S. Air Force

Chief Master Sgt. Robert Gutierrez Jr. is the major command functional manager for the combat control career field, A3S Special Warfare Division, Air Education and Training Command, Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. The division is responsible for force development and management of all special warfare enlisted and officer career fields, overseeing and managing all special warfare training pipelines covering 86 facilities and 16 Army, Air Force and Navy training sites across 10 states. The division is also integrated with special warfare recruiting for standards and qualifications for candidates worldwide.

Gutierrez entered the Air Force in 2002 and graduated from the combat control apprentice and journeyman pipeline in 2004. As a combat controller, he is a qualified combat diver, static line parachute jumpmaster, military freefall parachutist, explosive demolition supervisor, joint terminal attack control instructor and air traffic controller. Gutierrez has had multiple combat deployments throughout his career and has repeatedly been decorated for valor.

Prior to assuming his current position, Gutierrez served as the group senior enlisted leader, Special Warfare Human Performance Support Group, Special Warfare Training Wing, JBSA-Lackland, Texas.

### **Find a Way Forward Now, Because there is No Better Time to Prepare than Today**

Chief Master Sgt. Robert Gutierrez, Jr. will share lessons learned from 20-plus years as an enlisted Airman, servant and leader. He will explain how he learned to capture a mindset of solving simple to complex problems through the experiences he learned the hard way and how to find your own strategy to lead from the front to win in any environment.

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# SPEAKERS

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## **Lt. Col. Alea Nadeem**

U.S. Air Force

Lt. Col. Alea Nadeem serves as the commander of the 150th Security Forces Squadron at the 150th Special Operations Wing, Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico.

Before joining the Special Operations Wing, Nadeem was a congressional budget and appropriations liaison to the Senate Appropriations Committee, assigned to the Secretary of the Air Force, Financial Management and Comptroller at the Pentagon. Previously, she served as a policy advisor on the National Security Council, working in the Executive Office of the President at the White House. In this role, she assisted and advised the president and National Security Advisor on defense matters.

Nadeem began her Air Force career in 2004 as a graduate of enlisted basic training. She later commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps. An intelligence officer by trade, she specialized in the Middle East. Her assignments have included roles with security forces, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Headquarters Air Force and a deployment to the Combined Air Operations Center in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

At the age of 8, Nadeem moved to Mosul, Iraq, where she lived under Saddam Hussein's regime and attended school for part of her elementary education. She has spoken to numerous organizations, sharing her experiences of living in Iraq as a child.

### **Growing Up in Iraq during the Gulf War**

Lt. Col. Alea Nadeem was kidnapped to Iraq at the age of 8, where she survived by learning Arabic and blending in. She lived under Saddam Hussein's rule during the first Gulf War. Nadeem will share what life was like in Iraq and how she ended up serving in the Air Force. Audiences will be inspired to identify what their priorities are and make a commitment to achieving their own goals, both personally and professionally.

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# SPEAKERS

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## **Retired Lt. Col. Nathan Schmidt**

U.S. Marine Corps

Retired Lt. Col. Nathan Schmidt graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2002, and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. During his active service, he completed three combat tours in Iraq from 2004-07, including operations in Fallujah, Rutbah, Haditha and Al Asad.

Following his active-duty military service, he joined the Marine Corps Reserve, where he completed 20 years of honorable service, retiring as a lieutenant colonel in December 2023.

His civilian career included three assignments with the Foreign Service, serving at U.S. embassies in Prague, Czech Republic (2013-15); Kyiv, Ukraine (2015-18); and Vienna, Austria (2018-21). Schmidt is fluent in Russian.

In 2021, Schmidt retired from federal service after 21 years and founded the Mountain Seed Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, along with several other for-profit companies. The Mountain Seed Foundation's mission is to support families affected by war through mental health services, therapy and mountain climbing.

### **Mountain as a Metaphor: Moving “Mountains” with Faith the Size of a Mustard Seed**

Retired Lt. Col. Nathan Schmidt, a combat-seasoned U.S. Marine Corps officer and civilian foreign service officer, provides a unique perspective on healing and helping others heal following traumatic, life-altering events tied to experiencing war first-hand. He is the co-founder and chair of Mountain Seed Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit with the mission of helping families impacted by combat through outdoor therapy (mountain climbing), art therapy, and positive psychology (PERMA+). Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine Feb. 24, 2022, the foundation has offered essential mental health support to children and families across six European countries. His experiences will teach the audience about the importance of nature and therapies in recovery and inform perspectives regarding resiliency and how to support others as they heal.

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# SPEAKERS

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## **Retired Col. John Torres**

U.S. Air Force

Dr. John Torres is a self-described “Air Force brat” who graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1982. His 32-year military career in the Air Force included active duty as a C-130 Hercules pilot and service in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve as a flight surgeon. His military service also included a tour of duty in Iraq in 2004, as well as rescue missions at the South Pole and in response to Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.

Leveraging his combined medical and military experience, Torres helped establish training courses for NATO Special Forces soldiers to ensure a high level of consistency across various nations, languages and cultures. He currently teaches NATO Special Forces a range of skills, including tactical combat casualty care, combat simulations and medical leadership. Additionally, throughout his career, Torres has undertaken numerous humanitarian missions to Central and South America, providing medical care for children in need.

Torres is also the author of *Dr. Disaster’s Guide to Surviving Everything*.

## **No Excuse**

“No excuse, sir/ma’am,” were the words Dr. Torres often spoke while a cadet. It didn’t necessarily make sense then, but over the years, he came to realize that one of the first rules of being a leader is to take responsibility for the decisions you’ve made. Whether as a pilot, a flight surgeon deployed to Iraq, an emergency room doctor, or the NBC medical correspondent guiding viewers safely through the pandemic, “Dr. John” has realized the importance of making sure what he says is accurate and to the point and that he is ultimately responsible for what he says.

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# SPEAKERS

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## Air Force Company Grade Officer Panel

Three Air Force company grade officers will share their journeys to careers as an F-15E pilot, F-15E Strike Eagle weapons system officer and intelligence officer. The panelists will inspire and excite audiences to dream big as they consider their own futures. Audience questions and answers are encouraged.



### Capt. Greg Liquori

U.S. Air Force

Capt. Greg “Boards” Liquori is an F-15E Strike Eagle flight lead pilot from the 335th Fighter Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. Liquori was born into a three-generation Air Force family and grew up in various places around the country. As an avid snowboarder, outdoorsman and ice hockey player, Liquori calls Colorado home, where he graduated from Cheyenne Mountain High School in 2014. He earned his commission as a distinguished graduate of the Air Force ROTC program at the University of Colorado in 2018. Two years later, Liquori graduated from Euro-NATO Joint Jet Pilot Training with an assignment to the F-15E. Liquori has completed two deployments to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility and has logged over 950 flight hours and 513 combat hours. He is completing his instructor qualification in the F-15E and serves as his squadron’s chief of mobility.



### Capt. Noel Zamot

U.S. Air Force

Capt. Noel Zamot is a lead weapons systems officer assigned to the 335th Fighter Squadron, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. After graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2018, he attended Undergraduate Combat Systems Officer Training at Naval Air Station Pensacola, and was selected to fly the F-15E Strike Eagle. In 2024, Zamot deployed to an undisclosed location in U.S. Central Command in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. During that time, he flew 48 combat sorties and destroyed four enemy unmanned aerial vehicles.



### 1st Lt. Gabrielle Sutedjo

U.S. Air Force

1st Lt. Gabrielle “DARE” Sutedjo graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2021. She is currently an intelligence analyst for the 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, where she supports four F-15E Strike Eagle squadrons. As an analyst, Sutedjo provides wing and squadron leadership with the latest Top Secret geopolitical reporting, as well as adversary tactics and threat developments around the world, specifically regarding emerging technological advancements and great power competition.

Most recently, she served as the chief of the Combat Intelligence Cell during a deployment to the Middle East, where her team provided real-time and near-real-time threat updates for more than 6,000 theater personnel. Her team provided threat reaction recommendations to wing and squadron leadership, enabling base personnel to plan and conduct operations in a contested environment under a persistent theater ballistic missile threat, as seen during the April 13 Iranian attacks against Israel and again on Oct. 1. Additionally, she worked with F-15E aircrews to plan and execute defensive operations over Jordanian, Syrian, and Iraqi airspaces. Her team enabled the successful engagement of more than 80 adversary one-way attack drones, safeguarding Israel from attack and likely preventing a larger regional war between Israel and Iran.

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# SPEAKERS

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## Naval Aviation Panel

Join us as a Navy F/A-18 Super Hornet pilot and a weapons system officer shares their Naval aviation experiences, helping audiences gain a better understanding of how the service employs airpower and inspires the next generation of fighter aircrews. Audience questions are encouraged.



### Lt. Rodney Hill

U.S. Navy

Lt. Rodney “TROG” Hill was commissioned through Officer Candidate School and serves as an F/A-18F Super Hornet weapon systems officer with Strike Fighter Squadron 32. With more than two years in the squadron, Hill accumulated over 600 flight hours in the F/A-18F and successfully completed 126 carrier landings aboard the USS *Dwight D. Eisenhower*.

During his nine-month deployment in the Red Sea in support of Operation Prosperity Guardian, Hill played a critical role in ensuring mission success, employing more than 15,000 pounds of ordnance on various missions. Notably, he successfully neutralized three Houthi Rebel one-way attack drones using the AIM-9X Sidewinder. Hill’s skill, dedication and leadership exemplify the commitment of today’s naval aviators, ensuring mission success in defense of the U.S. and our allies.



### Lt. Sheridynn Scheppers

U.S. Navy

Lt. Sheridynn “Tee-Ball” Scheppers is an F/A-18 Super Hornet pilot with the Strike Fighter Squadron 32 “Fighting Swordsmen” at Naval Air Station Oceana, Virginia. Scheppers was born in Arizona and raised as a military brat. She has lived in Texas, South Korea, Alabama, Louisiana, Colorado and Maryland. Inspired by her parents, who graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1991, Scheppers followed in their service academy footsteps and graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2019.

In September 2019, Scheppers reported to Pensacola, Florida, for introductory flight screening and aviation preflight indoctrination. After completing both in August 2020, she trained with the Training Squadron 27 “World Famous Boomers” in Corpus Christi, Texas.

Scheppers selected jets in May 2021 and continued training with the Training Squadron 21 “Redhawks” in Kingsville, Texas. She earned her “Wings of Gold” in November 2022 and reported to Strike Fighter Squadron 106, “The Gladiators,” in Virginia Beach, Virginia, for fleet replacement squadron training.

In November 2023, Scheppers joined Strike Fighter Squadron 32 on deployment, participating in Operations Inherent Resolve and Prosperity Guardian. She has logged 593 flight hours, 146 combat hours and 138 carrier-arrested landings.

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# SPEAKERS

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## Master Sgt. John Chapman Panel

Please join us for a moderated discussion featuring family, friends and teammates of Master Sgt. John Chapman. Chapman was awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism as an Air Force Special Tactics Combat Controller, attached to a Navy SEAL team conducting reconnaissance operations on Takur Ghar, Afghanistan, March 4, 2002. Chapman was chosen as the Exemplar for the Class of 2026.

*Panelists are subject to change due to individual availability and mission need.*



### Maj. Gen. Matthew Wolfe Davidson

U.S. Air Force

Maj. Gen. Matthew Wolfe Davidson is the commander of Second Air Force, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. He is responsible for the development, oversight and direction of all operational aspects of basic military training, initial skills training and advanced and supplemental nonflying training for 93 percent of the Air Force across 265 specialties. The Second Air Force delivers over 2,700 courses and graduates 150,000 Airmen, Guardians, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and international students annually. The command includes five training wings at Keesler AFB; Sheppard and Goodfellow AFB, Texas, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, and a network of 103 operating locations around the world.

Davidson is a 1993 graduate of Oklahoma State University's Reserve Officer Training Corps program. He is a career Special Tactics officer and has led air, space and special operations forces during operations Provide Comfort II, Assured Response, Joint Endeavor, Enduring Freedom, Enduring Freedom Philippines, Iraqi Freedom and Freedom's Sentinel. He has commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels, led joint operations as the deputy commanding general for Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan and U.S. Space Command operations as the deputy combined force space component commander and vice commander. Davidson was also the deputy commander for Air Force Special Operations Command. Prior to his current assignment, he was the deputy director for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.



### Retired Chief Master Sgt. Michael R. West

U.S. Air Force

Retired Chief Master Sgt. Mike West is a recognized leadership expert with 30 years of military experience in Special Operations Forces. He has provided oversight at multiple Air Force Special Operations bases, including those in Washington, North Carolina, Florida and overseas in Japan and the United Kingdom. His leadership expertise spans all levels of organizational development, including facilities infrastructure, human resources, logistical analysis, unit deployments, national security strategies, program management and budget management.

As a veteran Airman, West has participated in numerous operational deployments both stateside and overseas in support of training and worldwide operations. He is a highly decorated combat veteran, having served in nearly every operation since joining the military in 1989, including Operation Desert Storm and, most recently, the Global War on Terrorism in Afghanistan. During his combat deployments, West provided direct support to Army Special Forces teams as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller, directing drones, bombers and attack aircraft to strike enemy targets. His heroic actions as a JTAC on the battlefield earned him the Bronze Star and Silver Star medals.

West retired from the Air Force in 2019 at Hurlburt Field. He is currently vice president of the Combat Control Association and one of the founding members of the Combat Control Foundation. The foundation's mission is to support injured and wounded warriors, support active-duty personnel and veterans through resiliency projects, support their families and promote education and fellowship.

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# SPEAKERS

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## **Kevin Chapman**

Kevin Chapman is the eldest sibling of Medal of Honor recipient, Master Sgt. John A. Chapman. He is a small business owner and dedicated Christian mentor, who is also a devoted husband of 30 years and proud father of two adult children.



## **Lori Chapman Longfritz**

Lori Chapman Longfritz is the sister of Medal of Honor recipient, Master Sgt. John A. Chapman. Longfritz is co-author of the *New York Times* best-seller *Alone at Dawn*, the primary source about her brother John's U.S. Air Force career field, Combat Control, and the actions that eventually earned him the Medal of Honor. She knew that story had to be told and occasionally speaks about it but has always wanted to share who John was at his core. That dream is finally coming true with her soon-to-be-published book, *First There: The Life and Legacy of American Hero MSgt John Chapman*.



# WARRIOR WORKSHOPS

## Task Force Hope: Crisis Leadership and Moral Injury Recovery

Task Force Hope equips participants with the tools to face adversity head-on, lead decisively through crisis and recover with resilience from the lasting weight of moral injuries. Forged in the crucible of operational challenges, it embodies 14 years of relentless refinement, evolving from a 2010 Squadron Officer School paper into a powerful SOS elective and further sharpened by the innovative rigor of the 2020 SOS Think Tank. Tested and validated by over 2,000 Air Force captains, three academic years of Air War College students and faculty, the 55th Operations Group Global Squadron Command Summit, and multiple Air Force, Army and U.S. Special Operations Forces units, Task Force Hope empowers leaders to master their craft, make bold decisions amid uncertainty and outpace the chaos of crisis. The resounding feedback from participants underscores its impact: “Why didn’t I hear this earlier in my career?”



### Col. Jonathan Sawtelle

U.S. Air Force

Col. Jonathan Sawtelle is the Air Force Weather Career Field manager at Headquarters Air Force, the Pentagon, Washington D.C. He commissioned in 2003 through Air Force ROTC and has completed four deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He served as an Air Staff program element monitor, an executive officer to the Air Force deputy chief of staff for operations and a legislative liaison on Capitol Hill. Sawtelle’s squadron command was at Squadron Officer School where he invested in nearly 2,000 officers and civilians from every Air Force career field.



### Lt. Col. Brandon Murphy

U.S. Air Force

Lt. Col. Brandon Murphy, Class of 2007, currently serves as the director of operations for the 306th Operations Support Squadron at the U.S. Air Force Academy. He oversees 75 personnel and manages operations for various airmanship programs and flight training across multiple squadrons and airfields. Murphy also supports the Air Force’s Parachute Demonstration Team, the Wings of Blue, as a UV-18B Twin Otter pilot. He graduated from the Academy with degrees in systems engineering management and military strategy and completed over 200 combat missions in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. He is a distinguished graduate of several military institutions and a senior pilot with almost 1,000 combat hours.



### Maj. Tara Holmes

U.S. Air Force

Maj. Tara Holmes is the chief of cadet development at the Center for Character and Leadership Development at the U.S. Air Force Academy, where she leads character and leadership development for 4,200 cadets and oversees a 152-member staff. Holmes plans and executes developmental programs focused on cadet honor education and collaborates with faculty, staff and other military service academies. Holmes has held various instructor roles throughout her career, including as an electronic warfare officer on the B-52H Stratofortress and an instructor combat systems officer on the T-1A Jayhawk. She earned a doctorate in business and management from the University of Maryland and is an Air Education and Training Command Master Instructor with 21 Pacific Power Projection missions.

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# WARRIOR WORKSHOPS

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## Forging Warriors of Change: Mastering Critical Thinking and Leadership through Adversity

In this workshop, you will sharpen your ability to lead yourself and others with clarity and resolve through the adversity and friction of change. You will gain insight into the critical distinctions between change and transition, equipping you to anticipate and overcome resistance with precision and decisiveness. Through two dynamic and engaging activities, you will strengthen your readiness to navigate uncertainty, forge stronger teams and execute with conviction amid challenges. Finally, you will leave with actionable resources to sustain momentum and ensure that organizational and personal transformations are successful and enduring—because true leaders don't just adapt to change; they drive it with vision, courage, and mastery.



### Jacqueline “Jackie” Hooper, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Center for Character and Leadership Development, U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Jackie Hooper is a scholar-practitioner, leader, International Coaching Federation-certified leadership coach and keynote speaker with extensive experience in academic, healthcare and corporate settings. Relevant to her NCLS workshop this year, Jackie is a Prosci Certified Organizational Change Management practitioner and has worked with dozens of leadership teams Amid transformational change and an organizational re-design. Hooper has presented at regional, national and international conferences that address health, individual and organizational performance, and the psychology of excellence. She is also a certified Health and Wellness coach through Wellcoaches® and an expert on sleep and human performance.

## Moral Injury and Warrior Ethos

This workshop focuses on understanding the phenomenon of moral injury and its relation to warrior ethos. We will contrast moral injury with posttraumatic stress disorder, before discussing the relationships among moral injury, just war theory and neuroethics. We will conclude by discussing how to prevent and heal moral injuries. Participants will better understand their roles as warriors, warrior developers and/or citizens.



### Logan Sisson, Ph.D.

Instructor of Professional Development, Center for Character and Leadership Development, U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Logan Sisson is a Center for Character and Leadership Development professional development instructor. Previously, he was an assistant professor of philosophy at the U.S. Air Force Academy and a mobility pilot. He retired from the Air Force after almost 24 years. He has taught courses in ethics, just war theory, cyber warfare, human rights, comparative religion, medical ethics, moral injury, and symbolic logic.

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# WARRIOR WORKSHOPS

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## Crafting Warrior Leaders: Mastering Adversity, Decisive Action and Team Resilience

As global challenges grow increasingly complex and relentless, the call for leaders who embody the warrior ethos has never been more urgent. True leaders thrive in adversity, leading their teams through the fog and friction of crisis with unwavering clarity and purpose — their “north star” lighting the way. They execute with courage, decisiveness and relentless action, understanding that the path may be unclear and that moral burdens may endure for life. Resilient individuals, teams, and organizations are forged to withstand adversity and outpace and outmaneuver any adversary through superior readiness, rapid decision-making and mastery of their craft. This workshop cultivates a warrior mindset, equipping you with the tools to confront challenges head-on through dynamic exercises, high-impact group discussions and practical strategies designed to strengthen your mental resilience, sharpen your decision-making and forge an unbreakable bond within your team.



### Justin Stoddard, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Center for Character and Leadership Development, U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Justin Stoddard serves as a Center for Character and Leadership Development assistant professor and chief of innovation and prototyping. He enlisted into the U.S. Army as a combat medic and commissioned from the Army ROTC program at the University of Colorado, Boulder, with a bachelor's degree in philosophy and Russian studies. As an Army officer, Stoddard served in a variety of assignments including rifle platoon leader, Headquarters Company Commander, and senior intelligence division chief. He earned a master's degree in 2011 from the University of Texas – El Paso in Leadership Studies and Intelligence and National Security Studies, and a doctorate from the University of Colorado – Colorado Springs in higher education leadership and research in 2019. Stoddard began instructing at the Academy in 2015 and completed his doctoral research on the resiliency of cadets and the important role of adversity in building character.

## The U.S. Air Force Way of War

What is a “Way of War,” and why does it matter to those interested in understanding the warrior ethos? The Air Force story stretches back to aerial operations before World War I — well before it became a separate service — and looks forward to a new era of operations in space. But how have Air Force leaders determined the best manner in which to employ air and space power over time? In this workshop, Laslie presents a concise account of this expansive history, offering a new perspective on how President Truman's National Security Act of 1947 created an independent way of warfare.

In this interactive session, participants will be asked to engage in the “wicked problems” our aerial ancestors faced, and future warriors will encounter. From the earliest battles of the Air Force's predecessor organizations to its modern incarnation, Laslie identifies four distinct and observable ways of war that developed over four distinct epochs. Beginning with the development of early airpower (1906–1941), he highlights the creation of roles and missions with bombardment theory and practice ascendant. An era of strategic dominance (1942–1975) followed, in which the ideas of strategic bombardment ruled the Air Force. When such notions were unceremoniously proven false during the Vietnam-era conflicts, a period of tactical ascendancy (1975–2019) began. Finally, Laslie considers the current environment, where much of the Air Force story remains unwritten as it grapples with the prospects and challenges posed by drones and the U.S. Space Force.



### Brian D. Laslie, Ph.D.

Command Historian, U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Brian D. Laslie is a recognized authority on U.S. Air Force history and the command historian at the U.S. Air Force Academy. A 2001 graduate of The Citadel and a historian of air and space power studies, Laslie received his Master of Science in international relations from Auburn University at Montgomery in 2006 and his doctorate in history from Kansas State University in 2013. He is the author of numerous books and chapters on U.S. Air Force and air power history.

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# WARRIOR WORKSHOPS

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## From War Stories to Warrior Narratives: How Personal Narratives Can Foster the Warrior Ethos

How can the act of creating narratives – specifically, the creation of personal narratives – foster the warrior ethos? The importance of stories and storytelling to our culture and essential humanity cannot be overstated, and the sharing of war stories is deeply ingrained in the weekly, perhaps even daily, activities at the U.S. Air Force Academy. Though stories have the power to educate and entertain, the sharing of a story also carries significant benefits for the storyteller, particularly when that story is part of a larger personal narrative. Personal narratives connect experiences, feelings, ideas and impressions to foster a clearer sense of identity, a greater sense of purpose and a firmer understanding of how one's actions impact others.

In this workshop, Napolitano offers an introduction to the relationship between crafting a personal narrative and cultivating a warrior ethos. How can the concept of (and, potentially, the creation of) a personal narrative aid warfighters as they strive toward the ideals of personal responsibility, courage, honor and rectitude? Can the crafting of a narrative make abstract principles more concrete for the person creating and the person receiving the narrative? Participants will engage in reflective writing and consider how writing a personal narrative can promote greater clarity regarding one's identity and values. Participants will also consider how the sharing of personal narratives potentially benefits both the creator and the recipient and how both are primed to develop a clearer sense of self because of engaging with the narrative process.

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### **Marc Napolitano, Ph.D.**

Assistant Professor of English, U.S. Air Force Academy

Dr. Marc Napolitano is an assistant professor of English at the U.S. Air Force Academy. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees in English from Villanova University and went on to complete his doctorate in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research interests include nineteenth-century British literature and theatrical and cinematic adaptations of British novels.

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# NCLS STAFF

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## **Col. Joel Brown**

Director, Center for Character & Leadership Development

## **NCLS Program Director**

Danielle Brines

Tech. Sgt. Alex Arebalo

Lt. Col. Brenda Arincorayan

Kevin Beechwood

Mark Bennett

Tech. Sgt. Brittany Block

Capt. Kaila Bryant

Tali Burress

Capt. Avery Chatmon

Lt. Col. Nicolais Chighizola

Master Sgt. Rebecca Danis

Irina Damy

Lamar Denno

Tech. Sgt. Edward Dwyer

Lt. Col. Brian Fash

Sarah Frazier

Retired Col. George "Rocky" Gaines

Staff Sgt. Parris Gonzales-Miller

Lt. Col. Jill Gorab

Tech. Sgt. Sierra Halstead

Sean Hass

Kristen Hobbs

Lt. Col. Weldon Hobbs

Chief Master Sgt. Patrick Hunt

Dr. Michele Johnson

Master Sgt. Humberto Laviera

Harry "Hodge" Lundy

Erik Marr

Capt. Tyler McGuire

Gina "Nicki" Mench

Mackenzie Mendez

Capt. Danielle Mohr

Kamela Mohs

Maj. Daniel Montano

Dr. Robert Munson

Wendy Neville

Tech. Sgt. Jeremy Neubauer

Maj. Thomas Nichols

2nd Lt. Angelica Noyola

Tech. Sgt. Sandra Paciero

Melissa Parent

Master Sgt. Ashlei Philson

Mark "Ray" Reyes

Maj. Amanda Rodriguez

John Rollence

Randy Roughton

Sondra Rymer

Master Sgt. Lauren Sanchez

Edward Saxer

Maj. Zachary Schneider

John Setar

Maj. Alex Sewersky

Adam Silver

Master Sgt. Alison Soper

Jeff Troth

Lt. Col. Jacque Vasta

Ashlee Voie

Staff Sgt. Michael Ward

Tom Whitmore

Mary Willis

Tech. Sgt. Joshua Woodbury

Sarah Wylie

Amber Zurita

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# CADET EXECUTIVE STAFF

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## **Cadet-in-Charge**

C1C Julia Razzino

## **NCOIC**

C2C Jaime Snyder

C1C Anjulina Abdon

C1C Cort Ballinger

C1C Michelle Cabonce

C1C Reginaldo Capati

C1C Dilan Cinta

C1C Rebecca Collins

C1C Erin Firth

C1C Ashley Hay

C1C Daniel Hong

C1C Kayla Kim

C1C Austin McEvoy

C1C Geun Hyung Park

C1C Zi Phang

C1C Yujin Shim

C1C Maddie Streng

C1C Kylie Swartz

C1C Colby Tell

C1C Samantha Welstead

C2C Emmanuel Achesa

C2C William Beaman

C2C Dakota Biggerstaff

C2C Georgina Buchanan

C2C Elizabeth Canfield

C2C Roy Castellanos

C2C Te'Anne Dailey

C2C Campbell Dorsey

C2C Jacob Dorsey

C2C Fallon Eggett

C2C Abdalla Elrahhah

C2C Parker Fitzgerald

C2C Griffin Greenwood

C2C Ashley Hay

C2C James Holcomb

C2C Ymonie Humphries

C2C Bryce Leapart

C2C Aiyanna McGarrell

C2C Joseph Norris

C2C Abram Schwach

C2C Tyler Spaulding

C2C Destiny Speltz

C2C Alejandra Tirado-Elias

C2C Lilliana Turra

C3C Sophia Brinker

C3C Rhett "Brady" Burruss

C3C Lukas Decker

C3C Matthew Dickson

C3C Dominic Evanina

C3C Walker Henderson

C3C Carolyn Kimzey

C3C Grace Kurian

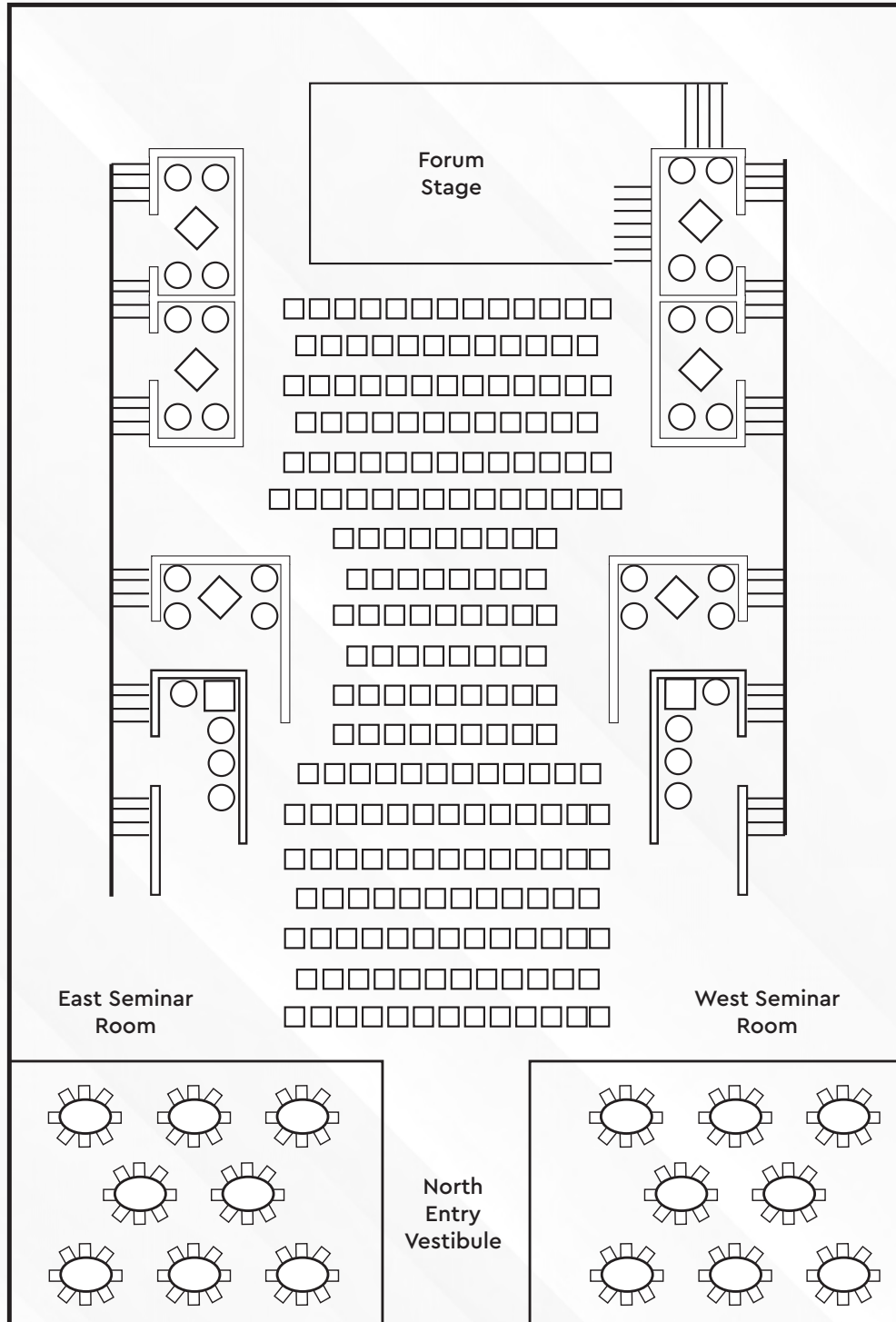
C3C Ava Lawless

C3C Kaci McBrayer

C3C Noel Migliaccio

C3C Marie "Tess" Stolle

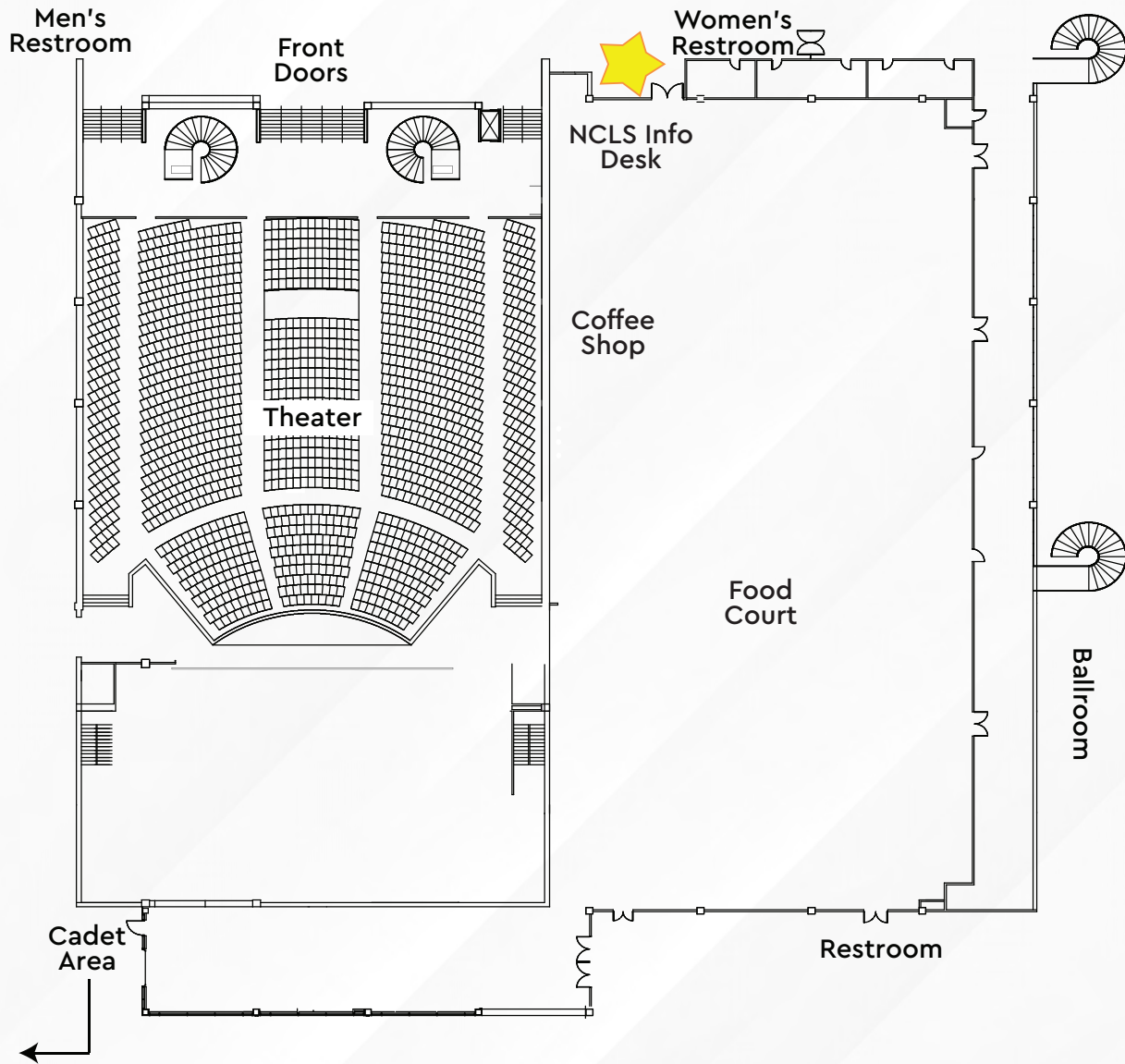
# MAP OF POLARIS HALL



WARFIGHTERS TO WIN

# MAP OF ARNOLD HALL

WARFIGHTERS TO WIN





# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

2025 NCLS Schedule of Events							
		Arnold Hall Theater	Polaris Forum	F1	Ballroom	Polaris Seminar West	Polaris Seminar East
Wednesday 19 Feb	Guest Arrivals 10:00 - 2:00						
	5:00 - 7:00	Dinner (Falcon Club)					
Thursday 20 Feb	6:30 - 7:45	Breakfast (Falcon Club)					
	8:00 - 8:45	NCLS Opening Ceremony: Superintendent					
	9:00 - 9:45	Class of '59 Leadership Keynote: Black					
	10:00 - 10:45	Torres				Stoddard	Holmes/Murphy/ Sawtelle
	11:00 - 11:45	Nadeem					Sisson
	12:00 - 1:00	Lunch (location registration dependent)					
	1:00 - 1:45	Gutierrez					
	2:00 - 2:45	Falcon Foundation Bud Breckner Keynote: Schmidle					
	3:00 - 4:00	Speaker Meet and Greet (Haps)					
	5:00 - 6:00	Class of '74 Wakin Award & Class of '73 Muse Family Foundation Keynote: Colon-Lopez					
	6:00 - 6:40	Social Hour (McComas Lounge)					
6:40 - 8:10	Cadet Engagement Dinner (Arnold Hall Ballroom)						
Friday 21 Feb	6:30 - 7:45	Breakfast (Falcon Club)					
	8:00 - 9:00	Birch	Torres	Gutierrez		Laslie	Napolitano
	9:25 - 10:25	Colon-Lopez	Naval Aviation Panel	Nadeem		Hooper	Holmes/Murphy/ Sawtelle
	10:50 - 11:50	Enix Heritage Keynote: Senior Leader Panel	Senior Leader Panel Overflow	Schmidle			
	12:10 - 1:00	Lunch (location registration dependent)					
	1:00 - 2:00	Schmidt	AF CGO Panel	Black			
	2:15 - 3:30	Medal of Honor Recipient MSgt John Chapman Panel	Fallon	Class of '93 Keynote: 12 OAY Panel	Student Consortium: Dean of Faculty		
	3:45 - 4:15	Sullenberger Award & Challenge Ceremony: Command Chief					
5:00 - 7:00	Dinner (Falcon Club)						

	For select audience, not open for registration
	Cadet Engagement Dinner
	Warrior Workshops

WARRIORS TO WIN







**NATIONAL CHARACTER  
& LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM**