

USAFA,

Before I begin my updates, I want to highlight the importance of this month. September marks Suicide Prevention Month across the DoD, and operating under COVID-19 measures makes a key factor in preventing suicide even more difficult: connectedness. I close every email with “Stay healthy, stay connected” for a reason. During these unprecedented times that call for social distancing and covering our faces, it has become that much harder to remain connected to our family, friends and loved ones. Not only are our positive emotions hidden behind our masks, but our negative ones too. We cannot allow the pandemic to fracture the bonds we need to function as healthy human beings—in both mind and body. I have received professional help in the past, and am ready to get help now at any time and no one should be ashamed to say that. So if there is someone you have not caught up with lately or someone about whom you are concerned, send them a text or chat or email, give them a call...or get old fashioned and put a quick note in the mail. Follow-up and know where to go to find or recommend resources when they are needed. Below is a link to the USAFA Helping Agencies website. Despite the difficulty, let’s #BeThere for one another and “Connect to Protect.” As I have said, grace, patience and kindness defeats more than a virus.

[USAFA Helping Agencies](#)

LABOR DAY WEEKEND EXEMPLAR

I wanted to thank you all wholeheartedly again for your continued adherence to the health and safety measures that are currently in place. Hopefully you got a chance to get some well-deserved time-off and rest during Labor Day Weekend. There is one exemplary story that was brought to my attention that I thought was worth sharing: A young man in one of the cadet squadrons found that he had been in close contact with an individual who might have been COVID-19 positive over the holiday weekend. Not feeling sick, it would have been easy for him to brush that thought aside and resume his normal duties around the Academy last Tuesday. Instead, this individual came forward and volunteered to be tested, and that test came back positive. He then followed our established procedures and moved to Q&I for monitoring and treatment as needed. That is the kind of social responsibility we expect. I realize there may be a stigma associated with a test coming back positive or having to go into Q&I. That is true for permanent party and cadets. However, as I have stated before, positive cases will happen and we have plans in place to handle those cases. We must all take responsibility for looking out for each other and do what we can to minimize the spread of COVID-19 as a group, even if that means potentially taking on a bit of judgement as an individual. I commend this future officer who is leading now by his model conduct.

VCJCS VISIT

Despite the snow and coming off of a long weekend, we had the honor of hosting the Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS), Gen John Hyten, and his wife, Mrs. Laura Hyten last Tuesday. They were very interested in what permanent party and cadets had to say during their visit. The Vice Chairman brought a few action items back to Washington D.C. based on your comments, so I’d like to thank you for taking advantage of the opportunity to share your honest feedback and concerns.

17 SEPTEMBER at 1530: CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS AND INTERNAL D&I REVIEW ALL CALL

In June, we stood up a Critical Conversations Working Group (CCWG) within the Center for Character and Leadership Development. Striving towards empathy and understanding should not be something we do reactively based on current events—it should be an ongoing conversation, both internally and with those around us. For that reason, I asked the CCWG to help units across the installation address elements of that Critical Conversation and model how to carry out difficult and uncomfortable

discussions as we move forward together. About a month later, I initiated actions to improve Diversity and Inclusion at USAFA. Every organization on base has had numerous people dedicate a significant amount of time and energy toward taking an honest look at biases that may be found within procedures, artifacts and attitudes around USAFA. I would like to provide an update on the progress we have made thus far on both the internal Diversity and Inclusion review, our Critical Conversations, and what we need to do next. The link to join the All Call is below.

Live Streamed All Call will take place on 17 Sep, 1530-1630: [Attendee link](#)

CHANGE OF COMMAND

The Superintendent Change of Command will take place on 23 September at 0900. The event will be closed to the public, but it will be live streamed and recorded. (Links forthcoming.) As I have mentioned, next Wednesday will be a difficult day for me. Not only am I concluding a 35 year career in the greatest Air Force on the planet, but it is all ending where it first began. I am proud of how our Academy has evolved and grown over the last several decades to meet the changing needs of the Air and Space Forces and the Nation. Lt Gen Clark will continue to innovate and develop the right kind of Airmen and Space Professionals we need to maintain our readiness and superiority in the high-end fight. As we did for the CSAF transition, I encourage you to listen to our Department of the Air Force leadership and Lt General Clark's remarks as he provides his vision as your new Superintendent.

SOCIAL SECURITY DEFERRAL

You may have heard about the recent Social Security Payroll Tax Deferral to provide relief during the COVID-19 pandemic, which takes effect this month. The deferral affects military whose monthly base pay is less than \$8666.66 and civilians who earn under \$4000 in a pay period. Those eligible may not opt out of the initiative. What this means is that for those eligible, members will see an increased paycheck as the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) defers removing 6.2% of those paychecks for Social Security until the end of the calendar year. Here is the important part: collection of the deferred taxes will be taken between 1 January and 30 April 2021, so paychecks during that time will be lower than normal. If you have questions, please contact USAFA Financial Management Services or visit to the [DFAS website](#).

OUR NEW BRIGHT STAR, NOVA!

She has been with us for a few months now, and you might have already heard that our newest falcon mascot has been named, Nova. I appreciate all of those who voted to give Nova a name symbolic not only of this institution, but of the time in which she arrived, shortly after the genesis of the U.S. Space Force. If you are like me and never tire of looking at photos of this rare white gyrfalcon, you can see her in all her beauty at the link below:

<https://www.facebook.com/USAFA.Official/>

In closing, I would like to acknowledge positive leadership around the base, and in particular within the Cadet Wing. Several of you have provided feedback stating that your chain of command functions as a place to grow and develop rather than to just receive taskings, and that the openness and honesty in communication within squadrons is appreciated. That falls directly in line with USAFA's mission. I am always pleased and proud to hear about those who are embodying what it means to be an exceptional role model for the next generation of officers as well as having confidence in those who are ready to lead our next generation of Airmen and Space Professionals. Thank you!

Stay healthy, stay connected, JS