

THE STATUS OF MILITARY SERVICE ACADEMIES

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
PERSONNEL

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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MARCH 26, 2025
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THE STATUS OF MILITARY SERVICE ACADEMIES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

UNITED STATES SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Tommy Tuberville (Chairman of the Subcommittee) presiding.

Committee Members present: Tuberville, Scott, Budd, Warren, Reed, Blumenthal, and Hirono.

Also present: Senator Sullivan.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR TOMMY TUBERVILLE

Senator TUBERVILLE. I would like to call this Committee hearing in session. The Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel meets this afternoon to conduct oversight and receive testimony on the status of the Military Service Academies. Thank you for being here.

The last time this body conducted a hearing on this topic with these witnesses, or with any witnesses with the academies, was more than 30 years ago. We are fortunate to have these three distinguished officers here today: Lieutenant General Steven Gilland, U.S. Military Academy; Vice Admiral Yvette Davids of the Naval Academy; and Lieutenant General Tony——

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Bauernfeind, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE.—Bauernfeind. It is going to be a long day.

As this is the first meeting of the Personnel Subcommittee in the 119th Congress let me begin by saying I look forward to working with you, Ranking Member Warren, thank you for being here, as we continue the bipartisan tradition of the Armed Services Committee in developing the National Defense Authorization Act. Nothing is more bipartisan than supporting our men and women in uniform and their families. This Subcommittee has a long history of prioritizing the well-being and morale of our servicemembers, and I am eager to continue that work as the new Chairman.

The Military Service Academies are foundational to the success of the military officer corps. In many ways, the Service Academies establish the culture of their respected service. Moreover, the academies occupy an important position in our society. They are perhaps the last universities in the country that focus on building character and improving the morality of their student body.

The American people often perceive the academies as being emblematic of the entire U.S. military, for better or for worse. Over the last several years, the academies have lost sight in some areas of the fundamental reason for their existence, which is to commission officers with the education required by the respective military branches.

All three academies have been sued for engaging in race-based affirmative action that is now prohibited at every other university in the country. We have repeatedly heard, over the last several years, that our diversity is our strength. It is not. Diversity can be an awesome advantage, but our unity of effort and shared benefits in our Constitution and common values are our strength. Diversity for the sake of diversity alone weakens us.

A professor at the Air Force Academy proudly authored a Washington Post op-ed proclaiming that she teaches critical race theory to cadets. Both West Point and the Air Force Academy established diversity and inclusion minors which can be trendy in other university settings, but were so unpopular with cadets that when they were abruptly canceled by President Trump hardly anyone noticed.

More importantly, any effort to teach our future leaders to judge or sort people by immutable characteristics like race runs counter to the Constitution and is devastating to good order and discipline. Last fall, the Naval Academy appropriately canceled a lecture after it was revealed that the speaker planned to use the opportunity to make a partisan political speech. But one must ask, why was this speaker invited in the first place? The academies must always remember that they were created in the first place. The American people devote tremendous resources to maintaining all of these institutions. If the academies are not entirely focused on building officers' character and to lead our Nation's sons and daughters in combat, then what is the purpose?

I hope our witnesses will address these criticisms but also tell us about the great things that are happening every day at the academies.

The vast majority of the cadets and midshipmen, faculty and staff at the Service Academies are properly focused on the only mission that matters, which is defending our Constitution and the American people.

I thank the witnesses for appearing here today, and I look forward to their testimony.

Now I will turn the microphone over to Senator Warren.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am also looking forward to continuing the bipartisan tradition of this Subcommittee, and I hope to work with you and all of our members to make sure that we improve the lives of our servicemembers, their families, and our civilian workforce so that they can stay focused on the mission of keeping Americans safe.

I want to start by extending my condolences to the four families that just lost loved ones during a training mission in Lithuania. They remind us, those who go into harm's way and their families are always at risk and put it on the line for the people of this United States of America. We are a deeply grateful Nation.

I am glad that we are starting this year by focusing on how we recruit and retain the next generation of military leaders. Our Military Service Academies are among the top academic institutions in the Nation. West Point, the Air Force Academy, the Naval Academy provide a high-quality education, and they recruit and train almost 20 percent of our military officers.

Currently, our Military Academies are very selective, almost as tough to get into as the top colleges in this country. But that knife cuts both ways. Every student admitted to the Military Academies has other options. Academy students are often highly recruited by other schools. The competition for talent for tomorrow's leaders is already fierce. Attacks on our Military Academies through policies that shrink the pool of young Americans who will consider applying for military service will cause lasting damage to our military and to our Nation.

The latest U.S. census found that the youngest generation of Americans is more diverse than ever. That means we need our Military Academies to continue developing successful leaders from all walks of life, not push away strong recruits because they feel unwelcome or undervalued. Ham-fisted efforts to reshape the academies are bound to backfire. For example, a mix of military practitioners and civilian instructors have successfully worked together for decades to shape students at the Service Academies into a lethal fighting force.

In a same way that competition for talent exists for academy students, the same competition is true for faculty. Well-respected professors have options, and many are aggressively recruited.

When Secretary Hegseth seemed to suggest that academies should have fewer civilian professors, and when the Department of Defense (DOD) imposes a ban on travel by civilian personnel, it suggests that the military does not care about civilians supporting its mission and that it will make it harder to attract and keep top talent to teach tomorrow's military leaders.

The foolishness of the travel ban was immediately apparent. Testing sites for military entrance exams were forced to close or reduce hours, so fewer young people could apply to the military. While DOD has begun to allow civilians to travel to these testing sites again, these attacks on civilian personnel who help to support our military are worrying, and civilian personnel are key to keeping our academies successful, as well.

Our military students deserve the best teachers, people who are experts in their field. Tying the hands of the academies as they compete with other top universities for talented faculty will undercut the academies and, over time, undercut the leaders the academies are teaching.

Students need to develop their skills both inside the classroom and outside, as well. I am sure many of us can think of sports teams and extracurricular activities that helped shape our experiences at school, that helped build our communities, and that made us better leaders. Surely, as a coach, Chairman Tuberville saw students' leadership skills develop and grow through out-of-classroom work.

The executive orders attacks on clubs at academies that it considers Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is not creating more

effective warfighters. It is cutting off students from opportunities to grow as leaders. When we are trying to maintain a military force that can deter China, we cannot afford to be shutting down engineering clubs. But under President Trump, West Point has already disbanded chapters of the National Society of Black Engineers and the National Society of Women Engineers. Both organizations have been praised repeatedly for helping recruit and retain more young engineers for military service. Closing those chapters at the Military Academies, while those chapters remain open at more than 600 other colleges and universities, does not help our military recruit top talent.

This Committee held two hearings on recruiting last year, and both hearings made clear that the United States cannot meet its recruiting goals without women. The Army met its recruiting goals in 2024, primarily because of new female recruits. There was an 18 percent increase in women signing up for Active Duty, compared to an increase of just 8 percent for men. Let me be clear. These women are not looking for a preference or a handout. They just want a chance to compete straight up.

But we will not be able to attract the women we need if they see a new glass ceiling on their opportunity to command. By removing women, like the Chief of Naval Operations Vice Admiral Franchetti, from leadership roles simply because they are women, and confirming a Secretary of Defense who has a long record of opposing women in combat, the Trump administration has already set a tone from the top that women are not welcome. We are already hearing concerns that women are hesitant to join certain military jobs because they believe they will not be welcome, solely due to their identity, not because of their qualifications.

Black recruits face their own challenges. When a Black Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a man who served honorably for over 40 years and who outlined our most successful strategy to deal with foreign terrorists, is fired solely because President Trump cannot imagine that he earned the job on the merits, Black military recruits across the Nation get the message—your race makes you vulnerable.

When national organizations to support Black college students who major in engineering are suddenly dropped at the Military Academies, while those organizations remain lively at 600 other colleges and universities, the message that the Military Academies may not welcome you gets even louder.

Recruiting and retaining talent, including Black and female talent, is a critical job for the future security of our Nation. Pushing away more than half our future leaders is wildly self-destructive.

Mr. Chairman, 24 alumni from West Point and the Naval Academy have written to me, sharing their stories about what the academies mean to them and why they are concerned about the direction this Administration wants to take them. I would like to enter those into the record for their letters and testimony.

Senator TUBERVILLE. So entered.

[The information referred to follows:]

Please see Appendix beginning on page 76.

Senator WARREN. Let me read from just one of them, who wrote that these attacks on diversity are, quote, “a direct affront to the principles upon which our military was built and a betrayal of the sacrifices made by generations of servicemembers.” Let those words sink in—a betrayal. We owe them better than that.

I look forward to this hearing and hearing the testimony of witnesses who are here today. I thank you for being with us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Warren.

Now we will start with our witnesses and we will go to questions and answers. We will start with you, General Gilland.

**STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEVEN W. GILLAND,
USA, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY
ACADEMY, UNITED STATES ARMY**

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for your continued support of the United States Military Academy and Corps of Cadets. I am honored by the opportunity to share how your Military Academy is providing the Army and our Nation with disciplined, resilient warrior leaders of character, ready to fight and win on the 21st century battlefield.

West Point produces the best-trained junior officers, dedicated to the Army values and ready for a lifetime of selfless service to the Nation. Starting on day one, our cadets are grounded in the ideals of duty, honor, country, and our Cadet Honor Code. Our rigorous leader development system ensures West Point graduates are prepared to lead American soldiers.

West Point is not a traditional college or university. We equip our graduates with the skills required to lead small units on the battlefield. Furthermore, we develop and refine the high moral character necessary to lead America’s sons and daughters to fight and win our Nation’s wars.

Through a robust corps curriculum that encompasses warfighting, scholarship, and physical training, underpinned by the United States Constitution, we instill both the warrior ethos and intellectual agility necessary to outthink and outmaneuver our adversaries. Our graduates serve as a testament to the effectiveness of our program, including 77 Medal of Honor recipients, over 100 Rhodes Scholars, 2 U.S. Presidents, and numerous Members of Congress, including 10 current members.

Our team, many of whom are combat veterans, and from my professional experience in the 75th Ranger Regiment, as a former deputy commander of a special mission unit, and the Commander of the Warrior Division in the Republic of Korea, we know what it takes to fight and win in the most unforgiving conditions. That mindset and toughness is what West Point teaches, which is exactly the type of battlefield leader West Point produces.

But what truly sets us apart is our comprehensive character development efforts integrated through all aspects of the cadet experience. I believe a cadet gets a degree in character development and leadership. We charge every member of our community, staff, faculty, and coaches to be developers of leadership and character. These extraordinary young men and women are among America’s

finest, hailing from our states, unified by shared commitment to selfless service, supporting and defending the Constitution, and living and leading honorably.

We invite you to West Point to participate in the classroom and our training, sleep outside on the ground and in the rain with our cadets, and witness firsthand our exceptional future leaders in action. We know that you will be inspired.

Thank you again, Senators, for the opportunity to discuss the United States Military Academy with you today.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Steven W. Gilland follows:]

RECORD VERSION

STATEMENT BY

LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEVEN W. GILLAND
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE

FIRST SESSION, 119TH CONGRESS

UPDATE ON THE STATE OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

MARCH 26, 2025

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the United States Military Academy and how we provide the United States Army and the nation with capable, trained, and lethal leaders of character ready to fight and win on the 21st century battlefield.

USMA'S MISSION

The United States Military Academy contributes to Army readiness and lethality through its mission to develop leaders of character, dedicated to the Army values and ready for a lifetime of service to our Army and the Nation. Through our rigorous, standards-based leader development system, grounded in the ideals of Duty, Honor, Country, West Point graduates are prepared to defend our Nation as they lead combat ready formations across the Army.

While many aspects of West Point evolve to meet the demands of modern warfare, some aspects of West Point remain the same. The Cadet Honor Code remains the unremitting standard starting on R-Day. Cadets are expected to adhere to the Code and strive for an even greater standard of honorable living beyond the tenets of the Cadet Honor Code. Furthermore, "Duty, Honor, Country" is our motto. These three important ideals, which are embedded in the Army Values, continue to inspire our entire West Point Team as they are engraved throughout the Academy's infrastructure and embedded in everything we do. "Duty, Honor, Country" is who we are.

ADMISSIONS

The United States Military Academy (USMA) is committed to admitting the best qualified candidates from across the United States to become leaders of character for our Army. Every candidate offered admission to USMA is fully qualified through our application and selection process.

USMA uses a holistic approach to evaluate each candidate for admission to determine which individuals will become the best leaders for tomorrow's Army. Our evaluation criteria consist of three parts: academics, leadership, and physical fitness. The academic component evaluates a candidate's standardized test scores and high school grade point average. The leadership component evaluates a candidate's extracurricular activities, varsity athletics participation, community and/or church activities, and school official evaluations. The physical component is determined via a standardized candidate fitness assessment. Beyond the whole candidate score, all candidate files receive an extensive qualitative review focused on character, grit, resilience, motivations for service, and leadership potential, as part of this holistic assessment.

Our nomination process, governed by law (Title 10, U.S. Code, implemented in 1956), ensures every congressional district in the nation has the opportunity to be represented at USMA. We truly appreciate the support from all members of Congress in identifying and nominating high-quality applicants, and we encourage all members to submit full nomination slates of 15 candidates each year.

Additionally, USMA shares most of its applicant pool with Army Cadet Command to inform candidates of Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship opportunities.

PREPARING 21ST CENTURY LEADERS AND WARFIGHTERS

West Point is much more than a college or university. We are the United States Military Academy, charged with developing leaders prepared to fight and win our Nation's wars and steward the Army Profession. Our comprehensive leader development system, which encompasses warfighting, scholarship, and physical training, instills the Warrior Ethos and equips our graduates with the foundational professional competence and the moral character to serve our Nation as officers, grow professionally, and lead America's sons and daughters in complex and uncertain environments.

Character development is the most vital component of our mission and leader development system. At West Point, we believe that every cadet graduates with a degree in character development and leadership. Character development is a comprehensive effort that serves as the foundation to leader development and is thoughtfully and deliberately integrated throughout all aspects of the cadet experience. This approach harnesses every activity within the overall leader development system while leveraging specific common events and activities that reinforce and assess character and honorable living.

Our comprehensive character development program is anchored in our motto of Duty, Honor, Country and is coupled with the Cadet Honor Code as its foundation. This system is purposefully designed for each activity or opportunity to build upon previous ones, requiring cadets to make decisions when faced with uncertainty or moral ambiguity.

USMA graduates complete more than 50 courses across our academic, military, and physical programs, earning an accredited Bachelor of Science degree. Our full curriculum during the academic year includes 24 core academic courses, a minimum of a three-course engineering sequence (for non-engineering majors), three military science courses, seven physical education courses, as well as the course requirements for their academic major (typically, a minimum of 13 courses).

Our military program provides cadets the foundational military competencies and skills necessary to fight and win on the battlefield, while inspiring them to professional excellence and service to the Nation. Through a blend of military science classroom instruction, summer training labs, enrichment experiences and leadership opportunities, cadets learn and practice the relevant technical and tactical knowledge and skills necessary to lead, fight, and win in complex, multi-domain environments.

Our military program progressively develops leadership skills across three signature and progressive training events (Cadet Basic Training, Cadet Field Training, and the

capstone Cadet Leader Development Training), along with various developmental schools and opportunities throughout the Army. Our field training events have continued to evolve as we incorporate lessons learned from contemporary operational theaters. These evolutions start with a focus on the fundamentals and include increased night training, the use of drones, and other tactical enablers. In recent years, we have also increased the emphasis on continuous operations rather than discrete training lanes to better develop leaders for the Army's focus on Large Scale Combat Operations.

Our nationally recognized academic program is designed to educate leaders equipped with the intellectual agility needed to make critical decisions in the chaos of war. Cadets explore a wide breadth of subjects through robust engineering, scientific, and liberal arts, education that prepares cadets to outthink and outfight our adversaries as they lead Army formations on complex, multi-domain battlefields. All USMA graduates receive a Bachelor of Science degree; on average, 67 percent of USMA's graduates over the past three years majored in a science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) subject. Each year, approximately 40 percent of all newly commissioned Army officers with an undergraduate STEM degree are USMA graduates. Additionally, since 2005, USMA has produced at least 95 percent of the Army's nuclear engineering undergraduate majors each year.

Most importantly, USMA's curriculum is underpinned by the United States Constitution and educates Cadets on its unique necessity for our Nation. During their 47 months at USMA, Cadets study the Constitution through five required courses: Army of the Republic, American Politics, International Relations, Constitutional and Military Law, and Officership. Additionally, every Cadet takes an oath to the Constitution three times: on Reception Day (Cadets' first day at USMA), Affirmation Day (prior to Cadets starting their junior year), and graduation. Cadets are consistently reminded of their future role in supporting and defending the Constitution of the United States as part of a unified Army.

In addition to military training and military science courses, Cadets also study war in the classroom through the five required courses, as well as two additional required courses: Philosophy and Ethical Reasoning (studying Just War Theory) and the History of Military Art. These academic experiences prepare them for thinking clearly about war and improves their judgement during the uncertainty of war.

One of the hallmarks of USMA's academic program is Cadet research and project-based learning, where Cadets get hands-on experience solving real world problems. Through warfighting-focused projects and research, Cadets are exposed to emerging technology and difficult problems such as ethical artificial intelligence or autonomous drones. This exposure means Cadets are not just in front of a chalkboard – they are in the lab, seeing the future of warfare first-hand. For example, Cadets from USMA's Space Engineering and Research Rocket team recently set a new amateur rocketry altitude record, launching a rocket past the Karman Line, which separates the Earth's atmosphere from outer space. This achievement highlights USMA's leadership in aerospace technology as well as our commitment to advancing STEM and Army space operations.

Enhancing the curriculum are annual intellectual themes, designed to center Academy efforts around a common interdisciplinary focus. This year's theme, "The Human and the Machine: Leadership on the Emerging Battlefield," focuses on this important intersection that all leaders must consider as they operate in the rapidly emerging age of artificial intelligence. Past themes have focused on civil-military relations and the role of military officers in a democratic republic, and innovation and technology, and how they shape warfare.

Our physical program promotes holistic health and optimal physical performance to develop leaders and warfighters who are physically fit and mentally tough. Cadets complete seven required physical education courses, to include boxing and military movement. Additionally, as part of their physical development, all cadets are required to participate in competitive athletics at the intercollegiate or intramural level. Athletic

competition teaches grit, resiliency, discipline, mental and physical toughness, the will to win, and other traits crucial for leadership in the crucible of ground combat.

TRANSFORMING TO DEVELOP 21st CENTURY WARFIGHTERS

From the Academy's early days under Superintendent Sylvanus Thayer to Douglas MacArthur more than a century ago, transformation and change have been an integral part of the West Point story. We continually assess, reorganize, and transform to meet the needs of the United States Army, both present and future.

The United States Military Academy continues to transform its curriculum, programs, infrastructure, and capabilities, to align our leader development efforts to the future battlefield to ensure the United States Army remains the most lethal and effective fighting force in the world and that West Point produces the leaders of character our Army requires, and our Nation expects.

With broad and much appreciated support from Congress and the Army, we continue to modernize infrastructure and expand capabilities to ensure our graduates are prepared to lead, fight, and win on current and future battlefields. Construction progresses on the Cyber and Engineering Academic Center, a 136,000 square-foot facility that will provide state-of-the-art laboratory and classroom space for USMA's cyber and engineering program, which is slated for completion in 2026. Additionally, a multi-decade renovation of our academic buildings, cadet barracks, soldier barracks, and administrative buildings is currently underway. Systemic challenges in construction and inefficient funding for project modifications, experienced on nearly all projects, has forced delays in West Point's modernization program which prolong operational disruptions at the Academy. This places at risk our ability to execute the recapitalization of Thayer Hall, our primary academic building.

Our transformation efforts expand beyond brick-and-mortar projects. We are also transforming our academic programs to prepare future officers to lead in complex

environments. We recently reorganized several academic programs, establishing two new departments. The first, the Department of English and World Languages, aligns experts in literature, culture, and language acquisition. They help prepare graduates to effectively communicate and collaborate with a growing network of allies and partners in support of our National Defense Strategy and U.S. interests around the globe. The second, the Department of Law and Philosophy, provides graduates the tools necessary to remain true to the Constitution, the law, and their ethical obligations when faced with unanticipated challenges.

Later this year, we will establish two new departments: Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, which will feature a new Aerospace Engineering major; and History and War Studies, featuring a new War Studies interdisciplinary major that combines history and theory to study war, strategy, and warfare in the past, present, and future.

To better leverage our resident intellectual capital and research efforts in support of the Army and Nation, USMA recently established the West Point Werx. This is an innovation hub that integrates research efforts from across the Academy. The Werx develops critical thinkers for the Army and the Nation by providing research opportunities for Cadets and faculty that are directly tied to national defense, while creating connective tissue across the Army's innovation ecosystem. The Werx's research portfolios include space; biotechnology; cyber and data; directed energy; human-machine integrated formations; and laws, ethics, and policy. Currently, the Werx has more than 250 partnerships across the Department of Defense, industry, and academia.

USMA's TEAM OF EXCELLENCE

Behind these efforts is a dedicated and talented team of military and civilian professionals who comprise our staff, faculty, and coaches. Every member of our staff and faculty, whether military or civilian, takes an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Just as importantly, everyone on the USMA team – staff, faculty, or coach

– is firmly committed to our mission of developing warfighters and leaders of character for the Army and our Nation.

We refer to our faculty model as a "blend of excellence." Our current force structure authorizes that nearly 74 percent of our faculty are active duty servicemembers. More than 75 percent of our military faculty are rotating instructors, junior and mid-grade officers. Our rotating faculty bring current, relevant operational experiences and perspectives into the classroom to both develop and inspire these future Army officers. Following their USMA assignment, rotating instructors return to the operational force as senior staff officers or battalion and brigade commanders, often leading the young officers they once taught in the classrooms of West Point.

Our senior military faculty (primarily lieutenant colonels and colonels) serve as Academy professors, and academic department heads, providing leadership, continuity, and academic depth. Additionally, our senior military faculty have experience working in the highest levels of the Army and Department of Defense, periodically returning to the operational force to serve with senior Army and joint commands. Our civilian instructors and professors also bring academic depth and expertise in a variety of academic disciplines, primarily in STEM and physical education. Of note, approximately 25 percent of our civilian faculty are veterans or retired servicemembers.

Another important component of the overall developmental team is our cadre of Tactical (TAC) Officers. TAC Officers serve as the legal commanders of cadet companies within the Corps of Cadets. They are post-company command officers who, like our rotating instructors in the classroom, bring current operational experience and perspectives to cadet development. Working alongside each TAC Officer is a senior Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) who not only brings current operational experience but also exposes future officers to the important role of NCOs in the Army. TAC Officers and NCOs serve as trainers and mentors as they lead Cadet companies, providing "front line" leadership for Cadets and helping them bring together all the threads of the developmental experience.

Within our athletics program, our team of coaches, athletic trainers, and staff are also, first and foremost, committed and focused on developing leaders and warfighters as they coach their teams to win on the fields of friendly strife. Additionally, each team has an assigned officer representative who mentors, develops and inspires our Cadet-athletes.

CONCLUSION

This year, the United States Army celebrates 250 years of service to our Nation. For much of the Army's history, the United States Military Academy has produced the leaders of character who have led with honor and distinction in peacetime and war, guided by the Army values and the West Point ideals of Duty, Honor, and Country. Our graduates have the professional competence needed to fight and win, but more importantly, they possess the tremendous character that leadership demands.

This legacy of excellence continues today, embodied in the thousands of graduates who are selflessly serving around the world, leading America's sons and daughters in defense of our Nation. We continue to strive to be the "gold standard" for leader development, preparing and inspiring the next generation of officers who live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence as they are prepared to lead, fight and win in the future 21st Century Army.

We appreciate the opportunity to discuss the excellence taking place at West Point, and we invite you to visit and see for yourselves these outstanding future leaders in action. We are confident they will inspire you.

Thank you for your continued support for your Military Academy and the United States Corps of Cadets.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, General. Admiral Davids.

STATEMENT OF VICE ADMIRAL YVETTE M. DAVIDS, USN, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY, UNITED STATES NAVY

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy.

The Naval Academy's mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically, and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty, in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. We are developing our

Navy and Marine Corps' next generation of resilient warfighters and ethical leaders of character who will preserve peace, and when called upon, prevail in conflict.

I took command of the Naval Academy as Superintendent in January 2024, and I am pleased to report to you today that the Naval Academy is succeeding in its mission. Having graduated from the Naval Academy in 1989, as a Surface Warfare Officer, over the last 35 years I have had the privilege of serving on board 7 Navy ships, including command of a carrier strike crew. My husband Keith, a member of the Naval Academy class of 1990, honorably served as a Navy SEAL for 34 years before retiring this fall, after commanding Naval Special Warfare Command.

I can attest that the Naval Academy has and continues to develop the type of stalwart leaders that our Navy and Marine Corps needs, both today and for a future fight. The Naval Academy graduates and commissions over 1,000 officers each year, ensigns, and second lieutenants to serve in our Navy and Marine Corps. Every member of the Naval Academy team, from company officers to professors to coaches is committed to developing these young men and women to meet and exceed the standards required, as evidenced by an average graduation rate of 89 percent, well above the DOD requirement of 75 percent, and the U.S. 4-year graduation rate of 27 percent.

While we value our reputation in the various college rankings, they are important for our admission efforts. It is important to highlight that we are a Military Service Academy and not a college or a university. Our graduates must be prepared immediately upon commissioning to lead and fight.

As a national institution, the Naval Academy draws applicants from across our great Nation. The Naval Academy uses a comprehensive process, a whole-person assessment, balancing objective factors, including each candidate's application such as grade point average (GPA), with subjective factors such as strength of a candidate's high school and course load. At no time are race, sex, or ethnicity considered in the admissions process. Despite recent challenges associated with COVID-19 pandemic and drops in college enrollment nationally, the Naval Academy has experienced a nearly 47 percent increase in our number of applications over the past 20 years.

Our outreach efforts have been successful in reaching across the country, delivering dedicated, quality, candidates. From the moment a midshipman swears their oath on Induction Day to the day they are commissioned, they undergo experiential leadership development, learning by doing, as an integral aspect of their education and training.

While our core academic program includes required courses in English, history, and government, it also includes an immense focus on leadership development, and is heavily Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) focused. Our graduates will serve on nuclear submarines, fly state-of-the-art aircraft, and command advanced warships. This technical foundation is an imperative.

Our philosophy of education stresses attention to individual students by highly qualified faculty and staff members, and our fac-

ulty is an integrated group of over 550 military officers and civilian professionals, historically designed to be roughly equal in number. Officers typically rotate to the Naval Academy for 2-to 3-year assignments, bringing fresh ideas and experiences from the fleet. We also have a smaller contingent of permanent military instructors and professors, usually assigned for 5 to 8 years at a time.

Our career civilian faculty members, all with doctoral degrees, bring continuity to the education program, the academic and subject matter expertise necessary for our advanced technical courses, and hone teaching skills. Working together, our military and civilian instructors form an exceptionally dedicated team.

The Naval Academy offers 26 majors. Over 75 percent of our graduates major in a STEM discipline, and majors are added or removed in response to the needs of the fleet. Recent examples include the addition of majors in nuclear engineering, cyber operations, and data science. We integrate wargaming into each midshipman's professional development, preparing future officers who can outthink the enemy.

Every midshipman also maintains a high level of physical fitness. They participate in classes and combatives as well as swimming, and must achieve physical fitness standards that far exceed Navy-wide standards. We have 36 varsity sports, among the most of any college or university in the Nation. Developing teamwork, grit, resiliency, and the will to win are all vital attributes for all Naval Academy graduates.

Established by Congress in 1845, the Naval Academy has developed into a 4-year, total immersion program designed to instill professional, physical, and academic excellence required to develop warfighters and leaders of character for careers in our naval service.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Vice Admiral Davids follows:]

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

STATEMENT OF
VICE ADMIRAL YVETTE M. DAVIDS, USN,
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY
BEFORE THE
SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE
ON
PERSONNEL
MARCH 26, 2025

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
ARMED SERVICES

Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy (USNA). The Naval Academy's mission is to develop midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically and to imbue them with the highest ideals of duty, honor, and loyalty in order to graduate leaders who are dedicated to a career of naval service. We are developing our Navy and Marine Corps' next generation of resilient warfighters and ethical leaders of character who will preserve peace, and when called upon, prevail in conflict. I am pleased to report to you today that USNA is succeeding in its mission, and in no small part due to the support of Congress. In spite of the challenges of the recent COVID pandemic, our last four graduating classes have graduated on time, with over 4,000 newly commissioned Ensigns and Second Lieutenants joining our Navy and Marine Corps. Highlights from the Classes of 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 include:

- An average overall graduation rate of 89%, well above the DoD requirement of 75% and the U.S. 4-yr graduation rate of 27%. I believe these statistics speak not only to the quality of USNA's incoming midshipmen, but also to the hard work of our faculty, staff and coaches, and the challenging but supportive environment in which we work, educate and train.
- Average graduation rate for varsity athletes of 90%, a testament to USNA's commitment to the full development of student-athletes.
- An average of 78% of each Class' newly commissioned ensigns graduated with Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) degrees, exceeding the Chief of Naval Operations' requirement of 65%.

The Naval Academy assesses these graduation trends as positive, and attributes them to the effective developmental programs and processes that stem from the initial admissions process and continue through the 47-month education and leadership development experience. Notably, the most recent U.S. News & World Report College Rankings listed the Naval Academy as America's #1 top public college, #4 for best liberal arts college, and #6 for best undergraduate engineering programs.

It is important to highlight that we are a military service academy and not a college or university. Our graduates are highly sought by all of the warfighting communities of the Navy and the Marine Corps. They are prepared immediately upon commissioning to lead and fight, as evidenced by our recent graduates' performance on ships in the Red Sea.

Admissions Process and Criteria

As a national institution, any U.S. citizens may apply for admission to the United States Naval Academy subject to USC Title 10 regulations and DOD/Navy policy. The application for admission opens each year in January and continues to stay open as a preliminary application until the end of December. Using a student portal, candidates must submit the following application components to be considered for admission: college entrance examinations, transcripts, recommendations from school officials, extracurricular activities, candidate fitness assessment, personal history/essay, and a Blue and Gold Officer interview. Additionally, students are required to complete a medical evaluation administered by the DoD Medical Examination Review Board and to apply for an official nomination. Completed applications are processed by the admissions staff and evaluated by the Admissions Board to determine overall

qualification status and assign a score known as the Whole Person Multiple (WPM). The WPM is a merit-based tool that is used to compare candidates when nominations are received.

Whole Person Concept

USNA uses a comprehensive process - a whole person assessment - in evaluating each candidate for admission. The assessment balances objective factors included in each candidate's application, such as class rank/GPA, college entrance examinations, evaluations of school officials, athletic and non-athletic extracurricular activities, athletic and non-athletic achievements, leadership, and candidate fitness assessment results, with subjective factors. Subjective factors include, but are not limited to, the strength of a candidate's high school and course load, written evaluations of school officials, Blue and Gold Officers and other letters of recommendation, personal essays, demonstrated performance in leadership positions, and interest in STEM disciplines. Both objective and subjective factors are used by the Admissions Board in determining if the candidate is qualified for admission and assigning the WPM score to each file. At no time are race, sex, or ethnicity considered in the qualification of a candidate and there are no associated demographic goals or objectives.

Offers of Appointment

Offers of appointment are determined by a committee of Office of Admissions staff members, and driven largely by the Congressional nomination process codified in USC Title 10, which includes both congressional and military service-connected nominations. Priority in offering appointments by the committee is given to nominees of members of Congress, including the Title 10 requirement to select 200 congressional nominees by order of merit, and additional

appointees. Offers to candidates with service-connected nominations are made after ensuring other Title 10 requirements are satisfied. Race, sex, and ethnicity are not considered when making offers of appointment.

Outreach

Like other institutions of higher education, USNA is in a war for talent. We are not only seeking the best and the brightest who can withstand the rigors of the Naval Academy's program, but also those who have the propensity to serve. USNA has boosted its outreach since 2006 to identify qualified candidates as early as middle school from every Congressional District in the country and to expose them to our campus and our midshipmen via a variety of on-campus, community, and virtual experiences.

On-campus experiences include Naval Academy Summer Seminar (NASS), which is conducted in June each year. Led by midshipmen, this program is designed to provide rising high school seniors from every congressional district a midshipman-like experience. NASS is complemented by Candidate Visit Weekends (CVWs), which are conducted during the year for both seniors and juniors, and allow students to room with and follow a midshipman's schedule. STEM Camps, like NASS, are midshipmen-led events on the campus conducted in June and focus on academic preparation for college and exposure to USNA and STEM disciplines for rising 9th, 10th, and 11th graders. During the year, short duration STEM programs are conducted at USNA for middle and high school students. Additionally, over 10,000 school-age youth attend various USNA sports camps each year. A significant investment has also been made to create awareness and support among school officials and community leaders from across the country through the Centers of Influence (COI) orientation program, which is conducted two to three times annually. The value of getting students, their parents, and influencers (school

principals, guidance counselors, etc.) on-campus cannot be over emphasized. Students who have visited USNA, complete applications at an average rate of nearly 70% versus 35% for those who do not. And, while there is no requirement or advantage to attending STEM Camp or NASS, nearly 45% of each incoming class includes students who attended one or both programs.

USNA's community-led programs include Operations Information (OPINFO) in which nearly 500 midshipmen travel to their hometowns to visit schools, appear at media events, and speak to community groups, primarily around the Thanksgiving holiday and during the spring break leave periods. Midshipmen also participate in Admissions Forums held in local communities throughout the year and Congressional Academy Days held by members of Congress. The Admissions Staff also travels extensively throughout the year to conduct school visits, locally hosted STEM events, participate in Navy Week programs sponsored by the Navy Recruiting Command and conduct candidate engagement.

The changing landscape in college admissions has prompted USNA to adjust our outreach efforts with significant expansion into internet and virtual programs. USNA works with a marketing consultant that specializes in internet and social media advertising, mass emailing, and use of texting technology.

Despite recent challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and drops in college enrollment nationally, USNA has experienced a nearly 47% increase in our number of applications over the past 20 years. Our outreach efforts have been successful in reaching across the country, and we're proud that over the past 10 years, the number of Congressional Offices without nominations has averaged less than two per year. And our outreach is delivering dedicated, quality candidates; our yield rate (the percentage of candidates who accept an offer of

appointment) is among the highest in the nation and incoming classes have exceptional academic/physical fitness credentials that lead to impressive graduation rates.

Leadership Laboratory

Developing leaders of character is priority #1 for the Naval Academy. The four-year leadership development curriculum is informed by conceptual frameworks; midshipmen have formal classes in each of their four years to instill principles of leadership. These principles of leadership are brought to life by a case study approach that marries the conceptual study with the practical application of leadership training.

Experiential leadership development – learning by doing – is an integral aspect of USNA's leadership laboratory. From the moment a midshipman swears their oath on Induction Day through the day they are commissioned as an Ensign or Second Lieutenant, they undergo various experiences as an emerging leader. The experiences are rooted first and foremost in the training they receive through their Company Officers, Senior Enlisted Leaders and Brigade leadership, but also extend to the sports fields, on Yard Patrol craft and sailcraft, and during professional development opportunities over the summer training blocks with the operational Navy and Marine Corps forces. Midshipmen also participate in immersive programming through the Center for Experiential Leadership Development that provides real-world leadership experiences that complement training with Navy and Marine Corps units. USNA also recently expanded from 30 to 36 companies to improve the leader-to-led ratio, increase interaction between current and future leaders, and expose midshipmen to more of the cadre's operational Navy and Marine Corps experience.

Academic Program

USNA's vision is to be the premier leadership and educational institution for developing naval officers who will preserve peace and prevail in conflict. Our philosophy of education stresses attention to individual students by highly qualified faculty and staff members who are strongly committed to teaching. Classes are small, with an average size of 18-20 students. In science and engineering courses, the same professor who lectures in the classroom supervises experiments in the lab. All courses at the Naval Academy are taught and graded by faculty members, not by graduate assistants.

Our faculty is an integrated group of over 550 officers and civilians, designed to be in roughly equal numbers. Officers typically rotate to the Academy for two-to-three-year assignments, bringing fresh ideas and experiences from operational units of the Navy and Marine Corps. A cadre of about 50 officer faculty with doctorates adds another dimension to the teaching staff as Permanent Military Professors. The Academy's civilian faculty members give continuity to the educational program and create a higher education environment steeped in professional scholarship, effective teaching, and service to the institution. All career civilian faculty members have doctoral degrees, and many of them are leading scholars in their fields. Working together, our military and civilian instructors form one of the strongest and most dedicated teaching faculties of any college or university in the United States.

The Core Curriculum & Major Programs of Study

The operational environment for our graduates is dynamic, occupying many domains and spatial and temporal scales. Today, perhaps even more so than in the past, a firm foundation in mathematics, physical sciences, cyber and engineering principles, and the humanities is

paramount. Without a firm knowledge foundation in these areas, naval officers will not be equipped to understand the full complexity of the modern world in order to protect America from attack, promote American prosperity, and preserve America's strategic influence. The educational core curriculum at the Naval Academy is designed to provide a robust foundation in these areas for every graduate and future officer.

At the undergraduate level, USNA's core curriculum focuses on principles providing the knowledge base from which to excel in more advanced and specific graduate, technical, or professional studies. Operational and strategic case studies are used to provide operational insights and introduce strategic thinking, and to demonstrate to the midshipmen the application of the principles covered in the core curriculum to their future operations and training. Our mission is to prepare the midshipmen with the foundational skills and knowledge to be successful in any future learning. Graduates who are proficient in scientific inquiry, logical reasoning, communication, critical thinking, and problem solving will provide an officer corps ready to lead in any warfare community of the Navy and Marine Corps.

Courses in a student's academic major also prepare them for advanced professional training and postgraduate education, which is expected of nearly all naval officers. While the majority of midshipmen freely choose their majors, the needs of the Naval Service take precedence. By order of the Navy itself, at least 65% of USNA graduates who are commissioned into the U.S. Navy must complete academic majors in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics disciplines. USNA offers 26 majors, which are divided among three Schools.

- The School of Engineering, Computing, and Weapons offers 12 majors: Aerospace Engineering, Computer Engineering, Computer Science, Cyber Operations, Data Science, Electrical Engineering, General Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Naval

Architecture and Marine Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Ocean Engineering, and Robotics and Control Engineering.

- The School of Mathematics and Science offers seven majors: Chemistry, General Science, Mathematics, Mathematics with Economics, Oceanography, Operations Research, and Physics.
- The School of Humanities and Social Sciences offers seven majors: Arabic, Chinese, English, Foreign Area Studies, History, Political Science, and Quantitative Economics.

Majors are added or removed in response to the needs of the Navy. Since 2010, we have added majors in Cyber Operations, Nuclear Engineering, Foreign Area Studies, Computer Engineering and Data Science, and at the same time retired the Information Technology major.

Increasing the Warfighter Focus

USNA continues to innovate, expanding the focus of our curriculum and extracurricular activities on warfighting. In addition to recently added majors (e.g., Cyber Operations, Data Science), we have developed a Maritime Warfare core course required of all midshipmen. We've implemented a multipronged wargaming effort with a focus on Great Power Competition, including extracurricular activities and classified professional training opportunities. Furthermore, the Academy has a renewed focus in fostering midshipmen and faculty innovation in warfighting problems. Our Capstone Program, consisting of year-long projects that most of our seniors work on, includes projects that are increasingly focused on warfighting, including with Special Operations Command and Naval Special Warfare, and often involve partnerships with industry or research labs.

Students entering the Naval Academy do so with the recognition that the undergraduate educational program is among the best in the nation. A common thread throughout our curriculum is that we teach students *how* to think, not *what* to think. Midshipmen are not required to subscribe to any particular interpretative frameworks. The Academy expects graduates to become critical thinkers who are able to come to their own conclusions based on a wide variety of perspectives and narratives. We are preparing future officers that can outthink the enemy.

The Role of Accreditation

Accreditation is an important process of systematic self-evaluation against externally recognized standards. USNA is institutionally accredited through its regional accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), and every program that is eligible for professional accreditation is also accredited at the program/degree level, including Chemistry through the American Chemical Society (ACS) and through ABET for all engineering degrees and computing programs.

Regional accreditation fosters public confidence in our programs – it signifies to prospective students the quality of USNA’s education and the value of a Naval Academy degree. It is required for institutions to apply for and maintain professional accreditations (ABET and ACS) and National Collegiate Athletic Association membership, and is typically required for student entry into graduate programs. For regional accreditation, accredited status means that USNA regularly examines its programs and seeks continuous improvement within the framework of our unique mission. While having a unique mission, singular purpose, and single employer of our graduates is generally viewed as a strength by the Naval Academy community,

there are potential pitfalls. The Academy strives to ensure that the balance does not tip too far in terms of requiring a narrowly defined vocational/training experience rather than providing educational experiences focused on a strong technical core combined with a broad range of studies intended to ensure that midshipmen can apply their learning in both the standard operating and new, complex conditions that they will encounter during their Naval careers.

Program-level accreditation, through organizations like ABET and the ACS, signifies that those majors programs meet standards of educational breadth and depth for the discipline; that the facilities, faculty, and support structures provide a strong learning experience; and that graduates of the program can demonstrate appropriate skills and knowledge.

Physical Mission

The Naval Academy strives to provide exemplary programs of athletic competition and physical challenge that foster decisive leadership, teamwork, character, resilience, a passion for “winning,” and to promote lifelong physical fitness. The Brigade of Midshipmen continues to excel in physical mission achievement. Every midshipman participates in classes in combatives as well as swimming. Despite physical fitness standards that far exceed Navy-wide standards, the Naval Academy’s five-year average attrition attributable to physical readiness is less than 0.6% per class.

With 36 varsity sports, among the most of any college or university in the Nation, approximately 30% of the Brigade benefits from the challenges of these intercollegiate competitions. The Navy and Marine Corps are teams of teams, and sports develop grit, resilience, leadership skills and competence in building connectedness and esprit de corps critical to our future leaders. This past academic year, Navy’s varsity sports teams won over 60% of

their head-to-head competitions...and 15 Conference Championships. Additionally, with the majority of the Naval Academy's varsity sports competing in the Patriot League, Navy won the Presidents' Cup, awarded to the member institution with the highest cumulative sports point total for their league standings in men's and women's sports, for the tenth consecutive year. The "will to win" is an important attribute for all Naval Academy graduates.

Infrastructure Resiliency

While our attention has been focused on developing ethical leaders of character and warfighters for the Navy and Marine Corps, we are committed to ensuring the Naval Academy has the infrastructure to maintain operations in Annapolis in the century ahead. Located at the confluence of the Severn River and Chesapeake Bay, the Naval Academy is vulnerable to storm surge associated with major weather events and localized, high-tide flooding that is exacerbated by sustained easterly or southerly winds. Since 1929, the relative sea level in Annapolis has risen slightly more than one foot, which has significantly increased the occurrences of high-tide flooding, from 2-3 times per year to 30-40 times per year, and left USNA more vulnerable to major storms. Impacts from storm surges and high-tide flooding affect daily operations through closures of roads, sidewalks and building entry points.

As directed by the FY19 NDAA, the installation undertook a major, long-term planning effort to develop a Military Installation Master Plan. Completed in 2022 through a joint effort between Commander, Naval Installations Command, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Naval Support Activity Annapolis, USNA and the City of Annapolis, the plan provides courses of action and a 40-year execution strategy to cohesively address and mitigate the combined effects of land subsidence, ground water change, coastal flooding/storm surge and inadequate

stormwater management at USNA. The first major project associated with this plan, the reconstruction and raising of Farragut and Santee Basin Seawalls and installation of floating docks, was completed last year. Two additional projects, the rebuilding and raising of the Yard Patrol Craft pier and the raising of Ramsay Rd, are underway. A sustained effort will be required in order for the Naval Academy to continue to exist and operate effectively into the future.

Conclusion

Established by Congress in 1845, the Naval Academy has developed into a four-year, total immersion program designed to instill professional, physical, and academic excellence required to develop warfighters and leaders of character for careers in the Naval Service. Beginning with our admissions process and continuing through our many developmental opportunities, this program is designed to produce resilient officers, nurtured in the basic core values and traditions of the Naval Service. The very nature of the Naval Academy affords every midshipman the opportunity to develop character and employ leadership skills in an environment designed to be a leadership laboratory.

The Naval Academy produces approximately one-third of the Navy's Unrestricted Line Officers every year – a critical mass. And as Admiral Larson, the only two-time Naval Academy Superintendent often said, “if we at the Naval Academy do our job right, we can be the custodian of the core values of the Navy. We can set a standard for professionalism, for honor, for integrity. If we do it right, our graduates go out to the fleet and lead by example.” I would offer that the Naval Academy is in fact, doing it right.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of the United States Naval Academy. While I know many esteemed leaders in Congress often visit the Naval Academy to meet with their constituents, I want to be sure this Subcommittee understands they are invited to visit our campus at any time. We would be happy and honored to support you or your staff for a tour and visit and/or lunch with midshipmen, as your schedules permit. I look forward to your questions.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Admiral. General?

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL TONY D. BAUERNFEIND, USAF, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY, UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, and other distinguished Members, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address this Committee on behalf of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA).

At the Air Force Academy, we are exceptionally proud of our military, academic, and athletic heritage, where we have developed leaders who have served with honor since our first graduating class

of 1959. With our 30 majors and our 19 minors, we are proud to be named amongst the top public colleges in this great Nation, alongside our teammates at this table.

Additionally, our 30 intercollegiate athletic teams continue to showcase our warrior spirit and our athletic prowess with 248 national champions after last Friday night and 928 All-Americans over our short history.

But this is not enough. As a Nation, we are in a time of consequence with global geopolitical instability. Our adversaries have watched the American way of war, and they are challenging our capabilities in every warfighting domain. It is our responsibility to act now. At USAFA, that action is a transformation that starts with our updated mission in which we will forge leaders of character motivated to a lifetime of service and developed to lead our Air Force's Space Force as we fight and win our Nation's wars.

With our mission in mind, and building upon the foundation of our service's core values, our priorities are that we will forge warfighters to win, we will inspire leaders of character and quality, and we will motivate critical thinkers to adapt.

Our mission, our priorities, and our newly injected warfighter training are the bedrock of forging warfighters to win. The warrior ethos our Nation needs must focus on our readiness and driving us to be offensively minded, to be the masters of our craft, and team builders who overcome adversity. Our cadets will be ready for future battlefields with the foundational warfighting skills of shoot, move, communicate, medicate, and automate. These are the skills our joint force requires.

Leaders of character and quality make the right decisions, the right way, even if unpopular. They value teamwork, hold each other accountable, maintain high standards, and build each other up to exceed those standards, and always uphold their honor.

Finally, the dynamic strategic environment of our time demands critical thinkers to adapt. On a modern-day battlefield our leaders must innovate solutions to wicked-hard problems, while operating with limited information. By developing their skills to ensure military readiness, to make rapid decisions with limited data, manage operational risk, our cadets will be ready to face a challenging world.

As a Military Service Academy, our priorities are the foundation of everything we do. Every military training session, every classroom, educational experience, and every athletic competition must support and reflect our priorities as we develop warfighters ready to lead on day one. Woven throughout that foundation is a shared responsibility for instilling a culture of warfighting excellence, team building, and respect to the entire team. To be clear, our training will always be demanding, but it will never be demeaning.

To achieve our goals, our Academy is undergoing significant change. We have returned to the basics of military training and enforcing standards for all Academy personnel. While standards and accountability are critical to good order and discipline, more importantly they are vital to modern warfare, where precision, professionalism, and trust are the foundation of complex military activities.

We are also implementing a four-class leadership development program. We are shifting away from an emphasis on stress-focused training during the freshman year to a comprehensive, military-focused progressive training at the individual, team, and unit levels that spans a cadet's entire 47-month leadership and military development program.

Through 4 years of rigorous military training, a nationally recognized academic program, and highly competitive academics, we will develop graduates who exemplify unwavering courage and integrity. They will be prepared to lead in our Air Force and our Space Force, and they will be ready to lead lethal warfighting teams to deter our adversaries, and should deterrence fail, fight and win our Nation's wars.

Our path is clear. We must forge warfighters to win, we must inspire leaders of character and quality, and we must motivate critical thinkers to adapt, all to ensure that we deliver the decisive advantage over our adversaries. Our Nation deserves nothing less.

I look forward to your questions and sharing more about the incredible Air Force Academy. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Bauernfeind follows:]

STATEMENT OF
LIEUTENANT GENERAL TONY D. BAUERNFEIND
SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
BEFORE THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL
MARCH 26, 2025

SUBJECT: GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE MILITARY SERVICE ACADEMIES

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
UNTIL RELEASED BY THE
SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Tuberville, Ranking Member Warren, and other distinguished members, good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to address this committee on behalf of the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA). Thank you to my fellow superintendents for your statements and your close partnership as we ensure our warrior leaders are ready to lead on Day One after their commissioning. At the United States Air Force Academy, we are in the midst of a transformation with an updated mission and priorities. We are focused on forging the warfighting leaders our Air Force and Space Force need to defend our homeland, deter our adversaries, and should deterrence fail, fight and win our Nation's wars.

At the United States Air Force Academy, we are proud of our military, academic and athletic heritage, where we have developed leaders who have served with honor in every conflict since the first graduating class of 1959. With our 30 majors and 19 minors, to include eight warfighting minors, we are the number one funded undergraduate research institution, the number two public college in the United States (US News and World Report 2025), and the number eight ranked National Liberal Arts College in the United States (US News and World Report 2025). Our academics prioritize warfighter development, while ensuring we remain a premier academic institution.

Additionally, our 30 intercollegiate athletic teams continue to showcase our warrior spirit and athletic talents. Throughout our history we have forged 247 national champions, 928 All Americans, and in the last five years, earned six conference championships. Our outstanding athletes develop the critical leadership and teambuilding skills, while overcoming adversity through physical and mental toughness, to ensure success. But this is not enough.

As a nation, we are in a time of consequence where geopolitical instability exists throughout the world. Our adversaries have watched and learned the American way of war over the last three decades, and they are challenging our capabilities in every domain – from ground and sea, to air, to space, to cyberspace – and it is our responsibility to act now. We are American Warriors in the Air Force and Space Force, and this is reflected in our Academy's updated mission:

“We will 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.”

PRIORITIES

Our priorities are both derived from our mission and are built on the foundation of our Air Force and Space Force Core Values: Integrity, Service, Excellence, Courage, Character, Connection, and Commitment. Building on these foundations, focused on universal military standards, and grounded by our Honor Code, our priorities are:

- Forging **Warfighters to Win**
- Inspiring **Leaders of Character and Quality**
- Motivating **Critical Thinkers to Adapt**

Warfighting is not a job – it is a mindset. The warrior ethos our Nation needs must focus on readiness — physical, mental, spiritual, and within our families — driving us to be offensively-minded, masters of our craft, and team builders who overcome adversity. Our mission, priorities, and warfighting training are the bedrock of developing Warfighters to Win. When our nation calls, we will say, “Send me!”

Leaders of Character and Quality make the right decision, the right way, even if unpopular. They value teamwork, hold each other accountable, and build each other up to exceed the standards. Leaders set the vision for their team, fight for resources needed to succeed, and knock down barriers to ensure their team’s success. As Leaders of Character and Quality, especially when faced with the fog and friction of war, we will uphold our high standards and our honor. To that end, we are revitalizing the intent, execution, and oversight of the cadet-led Honor Code, with an understanding that while sanctions from honor violations may be tiered, to include the ultimate sanction of expulsion, our Honor Code is holistic and will not be parsed.

Finally, the dynamic, strategic environment of our time demands Critical Thinkers to Adapt. On modern-day and future battlefields, our leaders must innovate solutions to wicked-hard problems, while operating with limited information. By focusing on military readiness, rapid decision making with limited data, exercising mission command, and managing operational risk, our cadets will be ready to face a changing world.

Enforcing our Standards

For this Academic Year, we returned to the basics of military training and standards for all Academy personnel. Standards and accountability are critical to good order and discipline. Of greater importance, they are vital to modern warfare, where precision, professionalism, and trust are the bedrock of complex military activities inherent in our tactics, techniques, and procedures. We are laser focused on executing the sets and reps required to instill enhanced standards and accountability in the muscle memory of our Academy and our future warrior leaders.

With our new priorities, we hold everyone responsible for developing a culture of warfighting excellence, team building, and respect. Our training will be demanding, but never demeaning. It is about holding each other to our high standards, being there for one another when times are tough, and ensuring unity across our entire team, where each member is giving their all to the mission.

As a Military Service Academy, our priorities are the foundation of everything we do. Each Major Unit – the Cadet Wing, Dean of Faculty, and our Athletic Department – contributes to our three priorities. Every military training session, every classroom educational experience, and every athletic competition must support and reflect our priorities in the development of our warfighters ready to lead on Day One.

PRIORITY 1: WARFIGHTERS TO WIN**Cadet Wing and Military Training**

To instill the warrior ethos among our future leaders, we are training our cadets in the foundational warfighter skills of Shoot, Move, Communicate, Medicate, and Automate. Some may call this Army training, but the face of modern warfare has evolved – this is joint warfare. These are the skills our joint force requires, where our warriors will fight to deploy *from* their bases, fight *into* theater, and fight *from* theater in pulsed operations to achieve the strategic advantage our joint force requires.

At full capacity, our warfighter training will require every cadet to qualify on two weapons each year. We can no longer afford to provide familiarization training and rely on the active duty units to provide just-in-time training. A more lethal force requires Airmen and Guardians who are proficient and confident in their weapons and engagement techniques.

As the Air Force and Space Force build the capability to rapidly establish and fight from small forward airfields, Airmen and Guardians must be capable across multiple specialty codes. Cadet squadrons, as our foundational Unit of Action, will learn to execute Agile Combat Employment concepts by quickly establishing, sustaining, generating combat power, and defending forward operating locations.

Cadet squadrons will execute command and control, through mission-type orders, at all echelons, to generate combat power. They will understand and execute commander's intent to succeed in an environment where communications will be denied or degraded. While cadets will develop resilient command and control centers, they must also prepare for a "Day Without Space" or a "Day Without Comms" to enable decentralized execution of their mission.

Cadets will learn and execute enhanced life-saving medical skills necessary in combat conditions. As we pivot to high-intensity warfare, the concept of the "Golden Hour," where we had high confidence medical care or rescue would occur within an hour, is not a guarantee. Airmen and Guardians must have the skills to immediately care for their teammates in contested, hostile environments, while still generating combat power to defeat our adversaries.

In our rapidly changing environment, cadets will learn to utilize automated systems and processes to increase their speed of decision making, enable their defense, and assist the generation of combat power. Our cadets will embrace the power of automation and the understanding that the military force who moves out with automation first, gains the competitive advantage.

We are in the crawl-walk phase of our military training efforts. For the run phase, the long-term vision is for our cadets to own their training. They will be resourced appropriately, understand their mission, lead their squadrons through their training and mission requirements, and be evaluated against defined standards through Fall and Spring culminating exercises.

Operationalizing the Academy

As we evolve our training and mindset as an institution, we must also change our structure and nomenclature to best prepare cadets for their time as officers.

The cadet squadron, led by the squadron commander, is our Unit of Action and must represent the squadrons and units within the Air Force and Space Force. We have restructured our squadrons to align with the updated roles and responsibilities, mirroring Air Force and Space Force operational units.

The cadet squadron A-staff provides cadets the experiences unique to staff functions (A1 – Admin/Personnel, A2 – Intel, A3 – Operations, A4/6 – Logistics/Comm). From addressing personnel matters, exercise planning and fixing communication outages, to maintaining our facilities, A-staff opportunities give our future leaders front-line experience on how our Air Force and Space Force operate. Of special note and aligned to our warfighter training, we established the A2, an Intelligence Operations Division, in our Headquarters staff and within each cadet squadron to provide regular intelligence briefs to cadets. These briefs prepare cadets for the complex state of the world and the threats we face.

Culminating Exercises (CULEX - Fall and Spring)

As cadets continue through their leadership development, we are assessing their progress. Their training moves through the crawl, walk, and run phases where they gain the necessary skills for progression. This large-scale event takes place each semester and is designed to evaluate the readiness of the Cadet Wing to operate in contested environments. The 72-hour exercise emphasizes adaptability, teamwork, mission planning, and physical and mental resilience giving our cadets operational experience to gain the sets, reps, and fundamental skills to be successful to lead on Day One.

The spring semester CULEX serves as a comprehensive training exercise, comprised of field training and four focused events to assess cadet readiness, leadership, and operational competencies. As cadets successfully meet the syllabus of instruction standards, they are recognized and promoted to the next class level as an integral part of our four-class leadership development program. Those who fall short are provided a pathway to meet the standards and advance before the beginning of the next academic year. We expect to build on this year's CULEX to develop more challenging and in-depth scenarios. This includes procuring the warfighting equipment necessary for more realistic training.

Dean of Faculty

The Dean of Faculty ensures cadets develop as warfighters first, integrating rigorous academics, immersive training, and cutting-edge research to prepare them for combat leadership. Through eight warfighting-focused minors, including Airpower Studies, Space Warfighting, Cyber Science, and Robotics & Autonomous Systems, cadets gain expertise in critical national defense areas. The Multi-Domain Laboratory (MDL) serves as a state-of-the-art immersive learning environment, where cadets plan, execute, and assess complex warfighting concepts using flight simulators, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)/ Electronic Warfare

(EW) platforms, and cyber warfare tools. This hands-on approach ensures graduates are combat-ready, capable of understanding joint and multi-domain operations on Day One.

The Academy's research portfolio advances warfighting capabilities in autonomous systems, counter-Unmanned Aircraft System (c-UAS), and space operations, directly supporting Combatant Command needs. Cadets and faculty lead counter-drone research, developing low-cost, AI-driven detection and mitigation technologies in partnership with the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL), Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and industry leaders. The Space Systems Research Center (SSRC) and FalconSAT program provide real-world experience in satellite operations, contested space warfare, and hypersonic research. These initiatives, combined with the Academy's partnerships across the Air Force and Space Force, ensure cadets enter the force prepared to outthink, outpace, and outfight future threats. Through this deliberate approach, the Dean of Faculty ensures Academy graduates are Warfighters to Win.

Athletic Department

General Douglas MacArthur said, "on the fields of friendly strife are sown the seeds that on other days, on other fields will bear the fruits of victory." Our Directorate of Athletics provides the competitive athletic experiences that sow the seeds of victory for the future fight. NCAA Division 1 Athletics provides invaluable training opportunities against formidable adversaries. Cadet athletes face situations that mirror some of the pressures of combat: high stakes-split-second decisions, and the need for both individual excellence and cohesive teamwork. The crucible of athletics demands physical toughness, mental toughness, and the ability to perform under pressure – all qualities that speak directly to a "Warrior Ethos."

Whether it is Intercollegiate Athletics, Competitive Clubs, or Intramurals, all cadets push well beyond their perceived limits; they learn to embrace discomfort and cultivate an unwavering commitment to their team and the mission. They will experience victory and defeat, both of which teach invaluable lessons about character, perseverance, and leadership. This experience provides foundational leadership lessons for our future officers to apply critical thinking skills, discipline, teamwork, resilience, and most importantly, the will to win.

PRIORITY 2: LEADERS OF CHARACTER AND QUALITY

Inspiring Leaders of Character and Quality is the foundation that underpins our warrior leaders. This is emphasized through our honor code and within our Major Units. We restructured our Cadet Wing to provide leadership progression throughout their development program, while our Dean of Faculty offers curriculum on leadership through educational courses, and our Athletic Department provides key opportunities for our cadets to demonstrate leadership skills.

Honor

Our Honor Code is foundational to our institution and our history when it was adopted by the first graduating class of cadets in 1959. It is the centerpiece of our cadets' commitment to inspiring Leaders of Character and Quality. Every cadet takes the oath that states, "We will not lie, steal, or cheat, nor tolerate among us anyone who does." This is a fundamental priority of ensuring our cadets lead with honor. Through our initiative to reinforce the Honor Code, we are

instilling a strong sense of accountability and ethical conduct among our cadets. We hold our cadets to the highest standards focused on instilling the character necessary of warrior-leaders.

Our leaders are standard bearers – they establish the standards, uphold them, and build a climate where exceeding the standards is the norm. They hold the team accountable in a way that lifts the team up. Leaders set the vision for the team, fight for resources, and knock down barriers to ensure their team’s success. Our leaders will cultivate climates of excellence where every teammate can give their all...they will be demanding, but never demeaning.

Cadet Wing - The Four-Class System

As cadets gain, improve, and test warfighter skills throughout their time at the Academy, they will also gain, improve and test their leadership competencies. Historically, our Academy placed a great emphasis on stress-focused training, with limited military value, during the four-degree year. We are evolving to an intensive, military-focused, progressive training at the team and unit levels that spans their entire 47-month developmental program.

As Cadets Fourth Class (freshmen), cadets focus on becoming strong followers and good teammates with a focus on basic military skills and junior Airman-level responsibilities. They gain the experience and knowledge throughout their first year to build the confidence and skills to teach and mentor the next class.

As they become Cadets Third Class (sophomores), cadets transition to front-line, engaged supervisors taking on the responsibilities of non-commissioned officers and supervising fourth-class cadets in their flights. As 3-degrees, cadets teach, motivate, mentor, and are responsible for those under their supervision, while taking direction from their upperclassmen.

Cadets Second Class (juniors) focus on being team and element leaders, where they continue to supervise other cadets. They take on increased responsibilities as primary military training instructors (Shoot, Move, Communicate, Medicate, Automate), learn specialized roles within the squadrons, identify resource shortfalls, and begin to manage operational risk.

Our Cadets First Class (seniors) become unit leaders managing every level, while taking responsibility for a healthy command climate. These leaders plan and execute unit training, military exercises, and ensure team success, while understanding and managing risk and resources.

Aligning our four-class system into a follower/teammate, front-line engaged supervisor, team leader, and unit leader model enables us to train, test, and certify each cadet on required leadership skills – skills necessary in our Air Force and Space Force. As cadets progress through their leadership development, we evaluate their progress through Fall and Spring Culminating Exercises (CULEX). These CULEXs serve as comprehensive training exercises, comprised of field training and focused events to assess cadet readiness, leadership, and operational competencies. Cadets who successfully meet the defined standards, are RECOGNIZED for their performance, and PROMOTED to the next grade.

Dean of Faculty

The Dean of Faculty ensures every Academy graduate is prepared to lead with integrity, competence, and respect for human dignity in the profession of arms. Leadership education begins in the first year with **Leadership 100**, where cadets develop self-awareness and moral courage, learning to navigate the complexities of followership and ethical decision-making. As cadets progress through **Leadership 200** and **300**, they build interpersonal and team leadership skills, mastering the ability to influence, manage power, and foster trust within their teams and complex organizations. The capstone **Leadership 400** course challenges cadets to apply organizational leadership principles in real-world scenarios, ensuring they leave the Academy ready to lead Airmen and Guardians in dynamic, high-stakes environments.

Ethical reasoning and national security awareness are also woven throughout the curriculum, reinforcing moral responsibility in military leadership. Core courses in philosophy and military history, instill principled decision-making, while national security studies prepare cadets to defend our Nation in a complex global environment. Across all four years, cadets engage in real-world leadership experiences—from leading teams in operational problem-solving to participating in ethical case studies on life-and-death decisions. By integrating academic theory, experiential learning, and a deep commitment to service, the Dean of Faculty ensures Academy graduates are Leaders of Character, prepared to inspire and elevate those they lead.

Athletic Department

Competitive sports are physically and mentally challenging, pushing cadet-athletes through their perceived limits, redefining possibilities and success. Our sports teams select Captains to lead through challenges in and out of the competitive arena. They have a unique opportunity to lead up, across, and down within their framework while solving unique issues and guiding their teams to victory against determined adversaries at the highest level of collegiate competition. The Team Captain Enhancement Program guides Captains through leadership issues, such as communication difficulties, interpersonal friction, and performance challenges. This program prepares them for a lifetime of service, leading lethal warfighters through the trials of an ever-changing strategic environment.

The Directorate of Athletics employ cadets as Reconditioning (RECONDO) Cadets in Charge (CIC), Cadet Fitness Center (CFC) CICs, and Squadron Athletic Officers to prepare them to lead, while utilizing comprehensive airman fitness tactics. The strength and conditioning skills learned in RECONDO will help them train and lead their peers, and give them the sets and reps in leadership roles that will make for better future leaders. These programs emphasize the mental, physical, and social components needed to maintain Airman and Guardian resilience and lethality.

PRIORITY 3: CRITICAL THINKERS TO ADAPT

Modern warfare is changing and our leaders must find unique solutions to complex problems. If we correctly develop our future leaders, they will not accept the status quo, they will be empowered to find the solutions we need, and to challenge bureaucracy, which by its nature can impede our progress. Our cadets will not wait to be told what to do, but instead bring ideas and capabilities forward to keep our adversaries guessing and ensure our advantage. The time is now for critical thinking and rapid action.

Cadet Wing – Modern and Future Warfare

Warrior-leaders must understand the myriad of effects delivered from Air, Space, and Cyber domains. As we evolve our warfighter training, we will develop programs to ensure our graduates appreciate the organizations, doctrine, tactics, and procedures involved with generating Air, Space, and Cyber effects for the joint force.

Air-Minded

We must understand the influence of air power on joint warfare. USAFA has a long history of ensuring our graduates understand how to exploit the air domain to deliver Air Superiority for the Joint Force. Through education and experience, we will continue to focus on the influence of air power for our strategic advantage.

Space-Minded

We must understand the influence of the space domain on terrestrial affairs. All cadets, not just those becoming Guardians, will understand and appreciate the ultimate high ground, as well as the strategic advantage of ensuring Space Superiority. This includes comprehending the organizations involved, the effects generated from space, the doctrine involved with generating those effects, and the systems employed in and through the space domain.

Cyber-Minded

We must understand the digital domain's impact on all aspects of military operations. Understanding cyber effects is essential to preparing our cadets for the fast-paced, complex, and unpredictable future. With a focus on cyber warfare, artificial intelligence/machine learning, robotics/autonomous systems, and virtual reality/augmented reality, our cadets will be ready to lead in this interconnected environment.

Dean of Faculty

To propel cadets military training across air, space, and cyber-mindedness, the Dean of Faculty lays a firm foundation of critical thinking capabilities to ensure every Academy graduate can solve complex, real-world problems in contested environments. From day one at the Academy, cadets engage in intentionally designed coursework and research opportunities that build self-aware, informed, and reflective reasoning—key to making sound decisions under uncertainty. Core courses embed problem-solving frameworks, while academic majors and interdisciplinary programs, develop cadets' ability to analyze and adapt to emerging threats.

Every first-class cadet completes a Capstone project, applying critical thinking to real warfighting challenges, from developing modular repairs for 500lb Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs) to robotics research enhancing autonomous systems in combat environments.

Experiential learning further reinforces adaptability and innovation. Cadets conduct live-flight test evaluations at Edwards Air Force Base, apply hypersonic research in the Academy's Mach 6 wind tunnel, and contribute to real-world safety investigations like calculating KC-46 component recovery with advanced physics modeling. The Academy's emphasis on research-driven innovation has resulted in 65 patents, with the latest – a robotic bunker infiltration system – enhancing Defense Threat Reduction Agency missions. Through this deliberate, four-year developmental approach, our faculty ensures Academy graduates leave prepared to assess, adapt, and lead in dynamic and contested battlespaces.

Athletic Department

Athletic competition creates a volatile and uncertain environment where cadet-athlete roles and situations change moment to moment, where they lead in one moment and follow the next. Our athletes embody the concept that no plan survives first contact, as the competitive environment requires them to observe, adjust, and execute against determined adversaries actively trying to deter or deny victory. Cadet-athletes and teams debrief and review lessons learned to improve for the next engagement through pre- and post-game analysis. Critical thinking is a focal point of the cadet-athlete experience, and forms habits that mold them into the officers who will fix, fight, and finish our adversaries and near peer competitors and solve our nation's complex issues.

The Air Force Combatives Program Center of Excellence develops the Combatives curriculum for the Air Force and Space Force. These courses provide cadets with an opportunity to practice the ethical application of force, reinforcing the importance of decision making, restraint and judgment in high-pressure situations. The strict enforcement of rules of engagement teaches cadets how to operate, adapt, and succeed while staying within set boundaries.

OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST

Through our transformation, we are committed to ensuring our cadets receive the training and preparation to become warrior leaders ready to answer our Nation's call. In addition to our evolving leadership program and updated mission and priorities, we are prioritizing countering harmful behaviors, investing in our installation infrastructure and security, enhancing the expertise of our permanent party, updating our admissions processes, and ensuring better access and availability for cadet health.

Countering Harmful Behaviors

The Academy is dedicated to fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and proactive intervention to combat any form of interpersonal violence. By equipping cadets with essential leadership skills, creating protective environments, and maximizing access to support services, we are dedicated to developing resilient, accountable leaders who cultivate climates free of violence or harassment, and prioritize the well-being of their peers in the name of mission-

preparedness. These efforts are designed to eliminate harmful behaviors, support victims, and ensure a positive, mission-focused environment where future leaders and their teams can thrive.

Data from the 2024 survey of cadets and midshipmen at the Academies shows the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment declined at the Military Service Academies compared to 2022, disrupting an upward trend in the prevalence of unwanted sexual contact and sexual harassment over the past ten years. USAFA saw a decrease from 22.3% to 13.4% for women and 4.3% to 2.9% for men. This year's reduction in prevalence reflects the ongoing commitment to fostering a healthier environment. Some of our directed efforts include hosting the National Discussion, bringing experts and leaders together to address the challenges of eliminating sexual assault and harassment. Our cadets are taking charge and organizing events like Take Back the Night, creating a space for cadets to support survivors as they share their stories.

We have embedded victim advocates in cadet dormitories, academic buildings, and other areas for easier accessibility. We also expanded the hours of our helping agencies to align with cadet schedules to improve accessibility. We are implementing an Interpersonal Foundations Course to help these young adults appropriately navigate professional and personal relationships. These measures are making a difference, but we must continue to prioritize prevention efforts, support for our survivors, and accountability measures to ensure long-term, meaningful change. We must remain vigilant and dedicated to creating an environment free of harmful behaviors for all cadets.

We are dedicated to our people. By addressing the stigma around help-seeking and improving access to care, we are taking crucial steps in eradicating interpersonal or self-directed violence. By empowering cadets to detect and address risk factors early, promoting leadership at all levels, and ensuring clear support for help-seeking behaviors, the Academy aims to create a supportive and resilient community. We are embedding these actions into our priorities with our long-term focus areas in improvements to cadet training and development, enhancements to permanent party hiring and training, and improved transparency and communication to combat misinformation.

Installation

We continue to prioritize investments in our facilities and infrastructure to meet mission requirements. From enhancing our training equipment and facilities, to ensuring a secure installation and better living conditions, we are focused on every support element to ensure our cadets are ready to lead on Day One.

Security

We are committed to creating a security posture that is focused not just on our installation security, but also our network security. Given recent threat reporting and observed shortfalls, we made modest changes to our installation security to ensure the safety of our people and our unique, 19,000-acre installation. This is especially important given the impact our cadets will have on our National Security for decades to come. With our increased security protocols, we also assessed our network capabilities and security, to ensure we are protecting our networks and

educating our future leaders on the value of computer networks as a weapon system, all while providing access for educational purposes and our unique mission.

Sijan Hall Dormitory

The five-phase project to renovate the 625,300 square foot, six story building housing approximately half of our cadets, is our number one facility priority. Infrastructure systems are in a constant state of repair, incurring significant maintenance and manpower/resource investments to sustain operations and ensure that life/health/safety is maintained for cadets. There are mission critical requirements to upgrade mechanical, electrical, plumbing, communications, fire protection, and interior finish systems to meet current existing code requirements. We are currently in Phase 1 with the authority to advertise in FY25.

Mitchell Hall

The Mitchell Hall dining facility is foundational to our success at the Academy. Whether providing high-quality nutrition, enabling an environment for team/unit table conversations, or surging for special events, Mitchell Hall is a no-fail mission. We are committing more resources to the facility and are focused on providing the quality, quantity, and variety of food - guided by nutritional requirements - for cadets to excel in a demanding Academy environment. Enhancing both the manning and facility improvements required is our number two facility priority.

Madera Cyber Innovation Center

USAFA broke ground on the Madera Cyber Innovation Center in summer 2021. On completion, the three-story facility will present nearly 49,000 square feet of collaboration space to the Department of Computer and Cyber Sciences to serve more than 1,400 cadets who attend courses annually. Air Force CyberWorx, a service-wide organization that brings government, industry, and academic experts together to quickly design and develop creative solutions for our warfighter Airmen and Guardians, will also be housed in the new facility. With a completion date in spring of 2025, collaboration spaces will bring academia, industry, and military cyber operators together to educate and train future officers. Coupled with traditional funding, we partnered with the Air Force Academy Foundation to ensure completion.

Cadet Chapel

Renovations began in 2019 to repair multiple infrastructure issues threatening the survivability of our spiritual center of gravity, the Cadet Chapel. The most visited, man-made tourist attraction in Colorado is currently 83% complete in its renovation. The discovery of asbestos beyond original design plans and structural inconsistencies discovered during renovation added layers of complexity. The plan to restore the building to its original state remains the same, to include replacing aluminum siding, stiffening the steel upper structure, installing a new water barrier, removing and cleaning the building's original 24,000 pieces of stained glass, and restoring the pews and two organs to their original state. The Chapel is currently scheduled for completion in late 2027.

Kucera Legacy Center and True North Commons

The Kucera Legacy Center and True North Commons are two more examples of the Academy innovatively using partnerships outside of government appropriated funding. The Kucera Legacy Center broke ground in January 2023 with a ribbon cutting in September 2024. It is by far the biggest improvement to Falcon Stadium to date and is a great step in modernizing our home field to meet National Collegiate Athletic Association Division I standards. This project was externally funded by its lead donors, Jack and Vianne Kucera, the Air Force Academy Athletic Corporation, and the Air Force Academy Foundation.

True North Commons, located just outside our north gate, is the new gateway to not just the Academy, but also to Colorado Springs as part of their City of Champions effort. This project was also externally funded in a public-private partnership with Blue & Silver Development Partners, the Association of Graduates, the Air Force Academy Foundation, and the City of Colorado Springs. In return for a lease to the land to develop a hotel, office complex, and retail options, the Academy took delivery of the building for our new Hosmer Visitor Center this past fall in the same complex.

Both projects were built to support the Academy's constant efforts to attract the best and brightest of our nation to serve in our Air Force and Space Force.

Permanent Party

Through our transformation, the more than 3,000 members of our military and civilian permanent party have been the foundation for our warfighter focus. Our focus on enforcing standards includes both cadets and permanent party, creating greater unity across the Academy. Permanent party members are the standard bearers, commanders, teachers, coaches, mentors, leaders, and supporters of our cadets, preparing them to lead on Day One. From military training, academic endeavors, athletic exploits, to ensuring a world-class facility, our permanent party deliver excellence for our mission and our people. They have passionately executed our transformation and have taken ownership evolving all aspects of the Academy experience to develop leaders with a warfighting mindset.

Admissions Process

Our Admissions process is driven by annual guidance from the USAFA Superintendent and involves two critical tasks: (1) recruiting/outreach, and (2) selection.

Recruiting/Outreach

The Academy engages in two aspects of recruiting: (1) wide-spectrum recruiting to encourage the best and brightest young Americans to join the Academy, and (2) precision recruiting to include Congressional Opportunity Districts (districts not leveraging their full capacity of nominations), Intercollegiate Athletes, and Prior Enlisted. Our Admissions team publishes an annual Campaign Plan for Recruiting and Outreach. We are updating the Class of 2030 campaign plan to increase outreach and recruiting in Congressional Opportunity Districts and to align with our Academy priorities and Superintendent guidance.

Selection

Selection requires both a nomination (either from a Congressional or Military Affiliated source) and a competitive application. To score the applications, the Academy leverages an objective, merit-based selection process with minimum standards for entry. The majority (75%) of the admissions selection scores are objective, measures based upon a candidate's Academic Record, Extracurriculars, and Fitness Score. The remainder (25%) involves an Admissions Committee Evaluation (review of non-academic factors such as Integrity, Service, alignment to our Core Values, and Warfighter characteristics) and an Air Liaison Officer Evaluation. Leveraging Congressional Nomination slates, we ensure the best candidates are selected for attendance based upon meritocracy. We utilize a data and risk-informed waiver process to assess, and potentially approve, candidates with exceptional characteristics (e.g. Intercollegiate Athletes, Merit Scholars, Prior Enlisted).

Cadet Health

We are committed to ensuring our cadets receive quality medical and mental health care at the Academy. We increased our hours of operation for Cadet Medicine and Cadet Helping Agencies providing greater availability and access for cadets to seek medical treatment. Additionally, cadets have access to a variety of helping resources to include: embedded mental health providers at the Peak Performance Center, Mental Health Clinic, Military Family Life Counselors, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response, and Chaplains.

While different resources cater to a cadet's specific need, we acknowledge the complexity of options. As such, cadets may present to any helping agency and it is the provider's responsibility to appropriately hand-off to the desired helping agency to ensure a continuum of care ("No Wrong Door").

Given the complexity of USAFA's 47-month leadership development program (military, academic, athletic), the enhanced stress our future warrior-leaders face on a daily basis, and the limited time in a cadet's schedule, we are reviewing the manning, processes, and resources our medical teams require to keep our cadets healthy and on mission.

CONCLUSION

The United States Air Force Academy will be America's premier Military Service Academy, forging leaders of character who are motivated to a lifetime of service. From Day One, our graduates will be prepared to lead the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force as warfighting officers, ready to lead lethal, warfighting teams to defend our homeland, deter our adversaries, and should deterrence fail, fight and win our Nation's wars. Through rigorous, adversary-focused military training, a nationally-recognized academic program, and a culture of highly competitive athletics, we will develop graduates who exemplify unwavering courage and a deep commitment to honor and integrity. Our world-class installation, professional and dedicated permanent party, and engaged alumni ensure we will be the nation's preeminent institution for developing leaders prepared to answer our Nation's call.

On USAFA's Terrazzo, you will find the next 40 years of national security leadership for our Nation. These young Americans are our mission. Our mission and our priorities are clear. We must forge **Warfighters to Win**. We must inspire **Leaders of Character and Quality**, firmly rooted in honor and integrity. We must motivate **Critical Thinkers to Adapt** to deliver a decisive advantage over our adversaries. At the end of their 47-month development program at the Academy, our cadets will be the warrior leaders our nation deserves.

Respectfully Submitted by Superintendent #22

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, General. We will start with a few questions. I would just like to say something. I coached for 40 years and recruited all over this country. I did lose recruits to each one of your academies, and it never bothered me because I knew the direction they were headed. They were going to a different team, and all three of you said something about team, and that is what you are. Your entire academy is a team. You are all together in one. When you are at a university, you have athletic teams and all that, but you are a unique situation. I want to thank you for

what you all do, because you are the tip of the spear for the future of our country, the leadership that you are going to build.

So thank you for those opening statements, and let's just talk about some of the inner workings of what you all do. In the last 30 years, the composition and the role of the faculties at each of your institutions has changed significantly. Everything changes. So I want to ask each one of you to answer these questions. How has the military-civilian mix of your faculties changed over that time? General, we will start with you.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator, our civilian faculty, we call it a blend of excellence. Our force structure has uniformed members 74 percent of the faculty, and then the force structure allows 26 percent for civilian faculty. What has changed over the past decade specifically is that the civilian faculty bring a depth of knowledge within disciplines that we are able to use for the benefit of the education of our cadets.

Primarily the force structure I said of 26 percent civilian, about 55 percent of those civilian faculty work in the STEM fields—so as we think about our engineering, mathematics, and such—which has led us to be able to—we have got a cadet team that deals in hypersonics, that has been able to launch a rocket that has exceeded the Kármán line. Sir, the Kármán line is 100 kilometers above the Earth's surface. These are undergraduate students that are competing against graduate students that are able to do that.

The reason they are able to do that is because when we think of the expertise that the civilian faculty, within physics, aerospace engineering, et cetera, they bring that expertise and that knowledge and continuity for our cadets to be able to build year after year, and able to do that.

Also, our title 10 civilian instructors, just as our uniformed instructors, they swear an oath to the Constitution, to support and defend the Constitution also. They are charged, by me as the Superintendent, to be developers of character and leadership. As I mentioned in my opening statement, Senator, they are part of that community to teach character and leadership, not just physics or data science, but also the life lessons that come with being leader in their experiences.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Admiral?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Thank you, Senator. The Naval Academy, since 1845, has modeled a 50/50 civilian-to-military ratio, and we remain pretty close to that now, although we are off by a little bit, I would say, at the moment. Our civilians, very similar to the answer that you just got, bring such an incredible depth. They tend to stay for 30 years or longer. So they bring this longevity and continuity that we need at the Academy that balances the military personnel that either rotate in and out about 3 to 5 years or so, or complement our permanent military instructors and permanent military professors, that will stay a little bit longer, about 5 to 8 years in time, until statutory retirement for some of them.

But it is the military and the teamwork that they have got with the civilian group that really makes this robust, STEM-heavy curriculum work. For us, similarly, they inspire our midshipmen. They provide that continuity. But more importantly, I think, the civilians, in particular, provide this technical expertise that allows us

to change and develop in the STEM areas that we need to for the longevity of the time, and to keep up with these incredible midshipmen that are coming in and need to be more technically advanced.

So the balance that they have is really important to us. We value them working together as this incredible team. It seems to have worked very well in our case, and we are making terrific officers because of this, and warfighters. I would say that every single one of them, if you are part of the Naval Academy, are very much a part of developing these midshipmen into the warfighters, into the leaders of character that they need to be, and thus we have this 50/50 mix.

Senator TUBERVILLE. General?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Tuberville, over time the Air Force Academy, from when I was a cadet in the early 1990's, was very few civilian, and we have now migrated to approximately 38 to 40 percent of civilian faculty is in our cadet-facing instruction that comes forward.

In my first 7 months I have assessed is the two most important things that we provide our future leaders are two things. One is subject matter expertise to challenge them, to educate them, to help them develop those critical thinking skills, but also operationally relevant experience. So as we develop them as future warrior leaders, being able to connect with them, to teach them what it means to serve inside our military as that goes forward. We benefit from that capability from our military instructors as that moves forward as well as a good portion of our civilian instructors, many of which are veterans themselves, before they have become civilian instructors and faculty members, as that develops. Thank you.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Senator Warren.

Senator WARREN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am going to pick up on where you were. We have been talking about the Military Academies are charged with training the next generation of leaders, and together the three of you train about 1 out of every 5 of our military officers. The military spends millions of dollars, many, many years to train our helicopter pilots and our combat leaders, and for a few, the chiefs of staff that we end up with.

But the Trump administration is undermining those investments by tilting at windmills named DEI. In less than 3 months, the Administration has canceled student engineering clubs and purged curricula based on clumsy keyword searches. The Administration sends a strong signal that not everyone is welcome in our military.

So today I want to dig in on how you all think about your mission to develop the leaders who will keep our military strong. Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you consider academic and leadership potential in the admissions process, so that we can develop the next generation military officers who will take on the toughest jobs?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Warren, yes, we do, absolutely, in our admissions process consider leadership and through their 47-month leadership development program.

Senator WARREN. Good.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Make sure your mic is on.

Senator WARREN. Yes. Make sure it is on. We are not getting much sound here.

General Gilland, same answer? Yes?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, ma'am.

Senator WARREN. Admiral Davids?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, ma'am, considered in the admissions process.

Senator WARREN. Good. So you all admit cadets and midshipmen based on their academic and their leadership potential. Then it is your job to turn that potential into reality.

So let's talk about where students develop those skills. One place, obviously, is the classroom. That is one of the reasons, as you have already described, that students learn from both academic experts and practitioners in the field. Military practitioners obviously have valuable experiences to share with students. But the academies also need the best teachers for physics and cybersecurity and electrical engineering and much, much more.

The Department of Defense has recognized this, including in a 1993 report, calling on the Service Academies to ingrate more civilian faculty so that, quote, "the faculties can act in unity but not identically a blend of excellence."

Vice Admiral Davids, does learning from both military and civilian instructors help your students develop the skills they need to become part of a lethal fighting force?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Thank you, Senator. Absolutely, they learn from both, our military and our civilian. It is one team to be able to develop these midshipmen, and they are all in on doing that. So I am really impressed.

Senator WARREN. Good. General Bauernfeind?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Bauernfeind, ma'am.

Senator WARREN. Bauernfeind.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes, Senator Warren. Yes, we value our facility as it comes forward, as it brings forward for the two aspects, as mentioned before, bringing forward that subject matter expertise and that operationally relevant experience to both educate and develop future leaders.

Senator WARREN. General Gilland, are you in agreement with your colleagues here?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, Senator.

Senator WARREN. Good. But leadership is obviously about what you lean in the classroom, but it is also what happens outside the classroom. So I want to talk for just a minute about engineering clubs. They certainly encourage students to learn hard skills, to support each other, and that undertaking can be really difficult. But an engineering club also gives the student an opportunity to take on leadership roles and responsibilities, like being the treasurer, or being the president. That is true of other clubs, too.

One cadet who helped found the Vietnamese-American Cadet Association at West Point said that it helped to make him a better officer and that, quote, "West Point was probably the first place where I had a supportive environment for my identity and who I am."

So Lieutenant General Gilland, do cadets grow as leaders by taking initiative and contributing to their communities, and are clubs a significant part of that?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, Senator. All of our clubs, and I would consider all of West Point as a living, breathing, leadership laboratory.

Senator WARREN. I like that. I like that. Vice Admiral Davids?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. I would agree completely, Senator.

Senator WARREN. General Bauernfeind?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFELD. Senator Warren, I do agree, as well, that our clubs provide opportunities.

Senator WARREN. So I am concerned, because currently the Administration is rolling out Executive orders that have led to dismantling clubs that have been around for decades, and that have successfully supported students at the Service Academies. Those leadership opportunities remain available in more than 600 colleges and universities around the country. Banning those clubs just at our Military Academies does not make it easier to recruit the best and the brightest.

The Trump administration's ham-fisted attacks on the Service Academies undermine our ability to recruit and to train talented young people who will become a critical part of our lethal fighting force. I think that is bad for our cadets and it is bad for our national security.

Thank you for being here, and we apologize for moving in and out. We have got votes going on at the same time. So this is not a comment on what anyone has to say. We just have to play a little bit of tag here.

Senator Reed, I understand—yes, he hasn't even sat down yet. Senator Reed, you are up next.

Senator REED. Well, thank you all for your testimony and for your service. My experience, which has some connection to the academies, is that there are places which build character and also critical thinking. The character is understanding that you must do the harder right rather than the easier wrong. But the critical thinking is absolutely important, because today we are in a multi-dimensional scheme of warfare. We have accelerated technology. We have contested supply lines. The young graduates are going into a much more complicated world than I went into.

Admiral Davids, can you talk about the process that your faculty and dean go through when determining the curriculum for your students?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Thank you, Senator. We have a really robust curriculum. It includes everything that you might need to make a great officer, and having just come from the fleet, I can attest to that. It has got English. It has got government. It has got leadership. It has got STEM-heavy to help develop them and ready them in order to be ready to be these incredible officers out in the fleet on day one, sir.

Senator REED. Thank you, ma'am. General Gilland, please.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator Reed, our curriculum, which spans across not only the academic program but also our physical and military program, is designed to develop critical thinkers, as I stated in the opening statement, to be able to out-

think and outmaneuver our adversaries. That is built into everything that we do at the United States Military Academy.

Senator REED. Thank you, sir. General Bauernfeind.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Reed, thank you very much. We have a robust course of instruction that not only includes our academic curriculum but our physical education and our commissioning education, all designed to meet the three priorities that I laid out in the opening statement, as it moves forward, and we have a very dynamic curriculum for all, because in our connection with our Air Force major commands and our Space Force field coms we are responsive to not only the requirements of the fielded forces but also the direction we receive from the Secretary of the Air Force, as an example, to graduate more of our future leaders focused on STEM degrees, as the way of future warfare is going to rely heavily on that STEM education as it moves forward. Through our integrated curriculum review process, as well as great faculty support, we are able to ebb and flow our curriculum to meet the dynamic requirements of the force.

Senator REED. Sir, can I followup with another question, which is can you tell us a vignette of your own personal experience that you have tried to infuse into the wing at the Air Force Academy?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. So as an example, as we look forward to curriculum review we see an opportunity, as looking to the future of our corps, is a need for understanding that all of our future leaders must not only be air-minded but they also must be space-minded and cyber-minded, to understand how to deliver and understand the organizations that deliver those effects for the joint warfighting campaign.

So right now our faculty are looking through our process to how to ensure that all 1,000 graduates every year come out with that full appreciation of air, space, and cyber, to be effective as joint operators.

Senator REED. Thank you. Admiral Davids, your comments?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Thank you, Senator. I think it is my enthusiasm for the curriculum and for the trust I have got in the faculty that inspires them all to do incredible things.

You asked what we do individually to support. I think one of my big focus areas this year has definitely been wargaming, and it is sort of at a nascent level, but I think we do have one of the largest undergraduate wargaming efforts at one time for our midshipmen fourth class at the end of each year. It is really extraordinary. It is also to support the midshipmen first class as they develop their capstone projects, and this is why it is so exciting, because it is tied completely with the fleet, with our labs, with our research projects that occur, that the midshipmen are incorporating to include in some real-world operational support.

Not to mention we have some incredible extracurricular activities that we talked about before, and one that I just used as an example is something we call SWAT-C but imagine it is a competitive drone group that goes out and competes against these two here but also other schools in the real-world terrain, on understanding how to use that technology in the future. It is about really infusing support to the faculty and staff.

Senator REED. Thank you, and General Gilland.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator Reed, our curriculum is under continuous assessment, and it evolves to meet the requirements of the United States Army. From a personal vignette perspective, at West Point we have what is called MX-400, which is the officer capstone course. It is a superintendent's course. Our first class, our seniors, take that course one semester during their senior year. I address them in specifically the underpinnings of the Constitution of the United States and what it means to be a commissioned officer in the United States Army. Then the vignettes associated with experiences that I have had through almost 35 years of service in our Army.

Senator REED. Just let me make two final points. One of the advantages you have now is a very established and experienced non-commissioned officers corps, who are integrated within the cadet companies and squadrons, et cetera, which is a plus. Second, I have some prejudices among the academies, but Admiral Davids, I think Navy really began to turn in the right direction when in the 1860's you moved to Newport, Rhode Island for a few years. I think that is the key point. Thank you.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Thank you, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Reed. Senator Sullivan.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is good to see you at the helm here, and also as a member of the U.S. Air Force Academy board. I think that is great. Congratulations to Senator Tuberville on both.

I want to just kind of have an honest assessment here, because I think one of the biggest concerns we have in the Congress, certainly the American people have, is our so-called elite universities in our country, the Ivy League, for example, that they have become bastions of anti-Americanism, anti-military institutions, antisemitic institutions, the top universities in the country. I think this is a charge that is not some kind of fake charge. My alma mater, Harvard University, has led the way on being anti-military for decades. They still are, in my view, in many ways. They do not respect the service of people in our military.

I had an experience that I wrote about in *The Wall Street Journal* just last year when I visited Harvard. I mean, you could not believe it, a giant anti-Israel, antisemitic protest put on by a radical group, in Harvard Library's Widener Reading Room, during finals. It was ridiculous. I mean, it was stunning how out-of-touch these universities are. Americans across the country are like, "Wait, these are the universities teaching our leaders?" It is a real shame, and there is a lot of concern, with good reason.

In that *Wall Street Journal* op-ed I talked about the experience I saw there recently at Harvard. I was shocked at the lack of leadership, particularly Claudine Gay, who subsequently got fired after my *Wall Street Journal* op-ed. I wrote, "Not all university leadership is so craven, morally bankrupt, and afraid of the most vocal, radical sects of their own student bodies."

I serve on the Board of Visitors of the U.S. Naval Academy, which—no offense, Senator Reed—is rated the number one public university in America. The contrast could not be starker between the Service Academies and the Ivy League on issues like civil dis-

course, so-called space spaces, trigger warning, American history, and yes, our unique and exceptional place in the world.

So Admiral, I have seen a lot of what the Naval Academy has done. I think for the most part it is outstanding. But we have concerns that some of this DEI, Critical Race Theory (CRT), anti-Americanism, anti-militarism kind of is going to seep over to our Service Academies, which I think is the point of this hearing, and I really appreciate the Chairman for calling it.

We want our Service Academies focused on warfighting, lethality, patriotism, and I think they are still, all three of you, still are at the helm of the top universities in the country. But there can be improvements, and I think everybody would agree with that.

So let me just ask, very quickly, General Bauernfeind, there was a civilian professor at the Air Force Academy named Dr. Lynne Chandler Garcia, published an op-ed in The Washington Post where she stated, quote, “She teaches critical race theories to our Nation’s military leaders because it is vital to cadets to understand history of racism that have shaped both foreign policy and domestic policy.” Do you think CRT is vital for future military Air Force officers, General?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Sullivan, thank you. What we are focused on is developing those warfighters, those leaders of character and quality, and those critical thinkers to adapt. In accordance with law, on the Fiscal Year 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), we no longer teach critical race theory at the United States Air Force Academy.

Senator SULLIVAN. Okay.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. To focus on those critical thinkers, we are delving in hard on teaching our future leaders how to think and not what to think.

Senator SULLIVAN. Good. That is a great answer.

Admiral, you and I have gotten to know each other well. I appreciate your leadership at the Naval Academy. One of the big challenges—we just had a hearing yesterday on it—shipbuilding, and do you think having our future naval officers fully understand naval architecture programs is something that should be, even though it is not a major for everybody, is that in the core curriculum at the Naval Academy now?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. It is part of the core curriculum. I might offer also we have the second-largest wave tank in the Nation, which is a backup to Carderock, which could be helpful in the future when we are talking shipbuilding. It is exceptionally important to us. We do have a cadre of midshipmen who really focus and enjoy naval architecture, sir, and I am so pleased that we offer it.

Senator SULLIVAN. Are there ways to encourage midshipmen, more midshipmen to take up naval architecture as a major? I think it is one of our challenges on shipbuilding right now. If there is going to be a source of military leaders who understand naval architecture to help get us out of this challenge on shipbuilding, it is going to be from the academy you lead. Are there ways to do that?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. There are ways to relook at this. We are looking at our curriculum right now, just to ensure that not only do we follow the executive orders but also that we are completely

aligned with warfighting of the future. This is warfighting of the future. This is a hot button right now. It would be appropriate to reconsider what we do with naval architecture. What I do know is we do have a lot of wonderful midshipmen focused on it right now.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Sullivan. Just to followup, General, is that professor still employed at the Air Force Academy?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Senator Reed, would you like to rebuttal on—

Senator REED. You are very generous, Mr. Chairman, but I think that history speaks for itself.

[Laughter.]

Senator TUBERVILLE. Senator Hirono.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome all of our superintendents.

I want to be absolutely clear. The Trump administration's attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion in our military and our Military Service Academies are not just misguided, they are dangerous. These efforts weaken our armed forces, ignore our history, and undermine the very principles that make our military the most capable in the world.

The claim that DEI initiatives somehow detract from combat readiness is not only false but flies in the face of decades of evidence. Diversity is not a distraction. It is our strategic advantage. The Department of Defense itself has repeatedly affirmed that a diverse force is a stronger force. Even the conservative Supreme Court, in its disastrous ruling on affirmative action, recognized that Military Academies have, quote, "potentially distinct interests," end quote, in maintaining a diverse officer corps.

A Federal district court recently, in Maryland, said just that ruling, that the Naval Academy's limited use of race in admissions was constitutional, citing a compelling national security interest in officer diversity. The court emphasized that unlike civilian institutions, Military Academies must account for how their admissions policies directly affect national defense. Why is that? Because diversity in leadership is not an ideological preference. It is a strategic imperative. Because the ability to lead diverse units, work with international allies, and maintain cohesion within the ranks is not an optional skill, it is a necessity.

In other words, having an officer corps that represents the country it protects and the people it leads is a force multiplier—a force multiplier—which gives our armed forces an advantage over our adversaries.

Yet, instead of embracing this reality, we see efforts to erase and dismantle the very programs that help us build this capability. West Point has disbanded a dozen cadet clubs that supported women, Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTQ+) students, and racial minorities. The Air Force removed a documentary in their basic military training curriculum on the Tuskegee Airmen, Black pilots who had to fight two wars, one against the Axis powers and one against the racism in their own country. The Army, in a so-called, quote, "digital content refresh," end quote, ac-

identally erased the history of the 442d Regimental Combat team, the most decorated unit in U.S. military history, composed entirely of Japanese-Americans who fought bravely while their families, 120,000 Japanese-Americans, were incarcerated in internment camps back home. This is unacceptable and disrespectful to our brave veterans.

I will say that again. The Army took down a page honoring a unit that fought valiantly to prove their loyalty to a country that had imprisoned their families back at home, reinstating the page only after public outcry.

In Secretary Hegseth's message to the forces, he claims to be committed to warfighters, he claims to care about warfighting ethos and lethality. If Secretary Hegseth and President Trump are proud of our warfighters, then why are they erasing their legacy?

This hypocrisy is not just offensive. It is a betrayal of our servicemembers and their sacrifices. It is no coincidence that the same voices attacking DEI today are the ones who stood silent when women in the military were fighting for equal opportunities, when LGBTQ+ servicemembers were forced to hide who they were, and when racial minorities were systematically denied leadership opportunities.

This is not about merit. It is about rolling back progress under the guise of readiness and lethality. Our Military Academies are supposed to be developing leaders of character—you all testified to that—leaders who can navigate the complex global challenges of the 21st century, not just fire weapons or fly a plane. Leaders who can foster trust and cohesion with diverse unit, who can engage with international allies, and who can uphold the values of democracy and equality that we send them to defend. The Department of Defense itself has argued that diverse leadership is a quote, "national security imperative," end quote. Yet we are watching as this Administration systematically dismantles every effort to ensure that our officer corps reflects the America it serves. This is not just a political talking point. It is a strategic failure in the making.

To the superintendents and leaders here today, you oversee the comprehensive training and education of our future military leaders. You are responsible for ensuring that our armed forces remain the best in the world, not just in combat effectiveness but in leadership, character, cohesion. I urge you to stand firm. Do not allow anti-DEI policies to undermine the very fabric of our national security. Do not allow President Trump and Secretary Hegseth to erase history by dividing what we know to be facially true. The strength and future of our military depends on it.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to include in the record of this hearing this list of words that The New York Times printed as words that are disappearing in the new Trump administration. They are words like biases, diverse groups, equal opportunity, immigrants, injustice, victims, women, females, Blacks—three pages' worth of words that are no longer welcome in this Administration. I would like this list to be included in the record of this hearing.

Senator TUBERVILLE. So entered.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration

By Karen Yourish, Annie Daniel, Saurabh Datar, Isaac White and Lazaro Gamio March 7, 2025



As President Trump seeks to purge the federal government of “woke” initiatives, agencies have flagged hundreds of words to limit or avoid, according to a compilation of government documents.

accessible	biases towards	DEI
activism	biologically female	DEIA
activists	biologically male	DEIAB
advocacy	BIPOC	DEIJ
advocate	Black	disabilities
advocates	breastfeed + people	disability
affirming care	breastfeed + person	discriminated
all-inclusive	chestfeed + people	discrimination
allyship	chestfeed + person	discriminatory
anti-racism	clean energy	disparity
antiracist	climate crisis	diverse
assigned at birth	climate science	diverse backgrounds
assigned female at birth	commercial sex worker	diverse communities
assigned male at birth	community diversity	diverse community
at risk	community equity	diverse group
barrier	confirmation bias	diverse groups
barriers	cultural competence	diversified
belong	cultural differences	diversify
bias	cultural heritage	diversifying
biased	cultural sensitivity	diversity
biased toward	culturally appropriate	enhance the diversity
biases	culturally responsive	enhancing diversity

environmental quality	inequitable	promoting diversity
equal opportunity	inequities	pronoun
equality	inequity	pronouns
equitable	injustice	prostitute
equitableness	institutional	race
equity	intersectional	race and ethnicity
ethnicity	intersectionality	racial
excluded	key groups	racial diversity
exclusion	key people	racial identity
expression	key populations	racial inequality
female	Latinx	racial justice
females	LGBT	racially
feminism	LGBTQ	racism
fostering inclusivity	marginalize	segregation
GBV	marginalized	sense of belonging
gender	men who have sex with men	sex
gender based	mental health	sexual preferences
gender based violence	minorities	sexuality
gender diversity	minority	social justice
gender identity	most risk	sociocultural
gender ideology	MSM	socioeconomic
gender-affirming care	multicultural	status
genders	Mx	stereotype
Gulf of Mexico	Native American	stereotypes
hate speech	non-binary	systemic
health disparity	nonbinary	systemically
health equity	oppression	they/them
hispanic minority	oppressive	trans
historically	orientation	transgender
identity	people + uterus	transsexual
immigrants	people-centered care	trauma
implicit bias	person-centered	traumatic
implicit biases	person-centered care	tribal
inclusion	polarization	unconscious bias
inclusive	political	underappreciated
inclusive leadership	pollution	underprivileged
inclusiveness	pregnant people	underrepresentation
inclusivity	pregnant person	underrepresented
increase diversity	pregnant persons	underserved
increase the diversity	prejudice	undervalued
indigenous community	privilege	victim
inequalities	privileges	victims
inequality	promote diversity	vulnerable populations

women

women and
underrepresented

Notes: Some terms listed with a plus sign represent combinations of words that, when used together, acknowledge transgender people, which is not in keeping with the current federal government's position that there are only two, immutable sexes. Any term collected above was included on at least one agency's list, which does not necessarily imply that other agencies are also discouraged from using it.

The above terms appeared in government memos, in official and unofficial agency guidance and in other documents viewed by The New York Times. Some ordered the removal of these words from public-facing websites, or ordered the elimination of other materials (including school curricula) in which they might be included.

In other cases, federal agency managers advised caution in the terms' usage without instituting an outright ban. Additionally, the presence of some terms was used to automatically flag for review some grant proposals and contracts that could conflict with Mr. Trump's executive orders.

The list is most likely incomplete. More agency memos may exist than those seen by New York Times reporters, and some directives are vague or suggest what language might be impermissible without flatly stating it.

All presidential administrations change the language used in official communications to reflect their own policies. It is within their prerogative, as are amendments to or the removal of web pages, which The Times has found has already happened thousands of times in this administration.

Still, the words and phrases listed here represent a marked — and remarkable — shift in the corpus of language being used both in the federal government's corridors of power and among its rank and file. They are an unmistakable reflection of this administration's priorities.

For example, the Trump administration has frequently framed diversity, equity and inclusion efforts as being inherently at odds with what it has identified as “merit,” and it has argued that these initiatives have resulted in the elevation of unqualified or undeserving people. That rhetorical strategy — with its baked-in assumption of a lack of capacity in people of color, women, the disabled and other marginalized groups — has been criticized as discriminatory.

Indeed, in some cases, guidance against a term’s usage has arrived alongside directives intended to eliminate the concept itself. Federal diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives are one example; the Gulf of Mexico is a very different one.

That shift is already apparent on hundreds of federal government websites. A New York Times analysis of pages on federal agency websites, before and after Mr. Trump took office, found that more than 250 contained evidence of deletions or amendments to words included in the above list.

Here are some notable examples. Words that have been removed are shown in ~~red with strikethroughs~~, and words that have been added are in green with underlines.

Federal Aviation Administration’s job page

Working at FAA offers a unique opportunity to experience a career where your impact not only reaches throughout the aviation industry but around the world as well. You’ll be a part of a ~~diverse~~ workforce utilizing the latest technology and systems dedicated to maintaining the safety and integrity of our civil airspace.

National Park Service's Stonewall National Monument web page

Before the 1960s, almost everything about living openly as a lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) ~~transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+)~~ person was illegal. The Stonewall Uprising on June 28, 1969 is a milestone in the quest for LGB ~~TQ+~~ civil rights and provided momentum for a movement.

2021 Head Start memo

The last year has brought significant challenges to the Head Start workforce. ~~The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disparate impact on under-resourced communities including many of those served by Head Start programs. There has also been heightened attention to racial injustice in our country, which has led to calls for major reforms to address long-standing societal inequities. These are particularly important concerns for OHS and the Head Start workforce. All staff have been impacted by COVID-19. Further, 60% of Head Start teaching staff are Black, Indigenous and people of color, and 30% have a primary language other than English.~~ As such, OHS is committed to a culture of wellness that includes holistic support for the entire Head Start workforce.

Key topics page of State Department's Office of Global Change

~~The climate crisis knows no boundaries, and both the challenge and its solutions range from local to global in scale. Because of this, international cooperation and collaboration through negotiation and implementation of international agreements are essential. The Negotiations Team represents the United States in negotiations under the Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and in many other international fora that address climate change, including the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), G7, G20, and others.~~

The total number of web pages identified by The Times as having changed is an undercount. The analysis involved searching for changes on more than 5,000 total pages, but it did not capture the entire universe of the federal government's web presence. In addition, the pages were captured for comparison in early February, and more changes may have been made between then and now.

The president and some of his closest advisers, including Elon Musk, have frequently portrayed themselves as champions of free speech. One of the executive orders Mr. Trump signed on his first day back in office decried what it described as a pressure campaign by the Biden administration to stifle First Amendment rights “in a manner that advanced the Government’s preferred narrative about significant matters of public debate,” by way of putting pressure on tech platforms. “Government censorship of speech is intolerable in a free society,” it continued.

Indeed, the office of the presidency carries with it a tremendous power to drive the discourse. But the pattern of vanishing words established here suggests Mr. Trump and his administration may be more interested in chilling the national conversation — at least when it comes to their own disfavored topics — than in expanding it.

Are you a federal worker? We want to hear from you.

The Times would like to hear about your experience as a federal worker under the second Trump administration. We may reach out about your submission, but we will not publish any part of your response without contacting you first.

Which federal agency or department do you work in? *

Tell us a little bit about your role.

0 words

What changes, if any, have you seen within your workplace during the Trump administration?

0 words

What is your name?

What is your email address?

How would you like us to contact you?

If you prefer to be contacted some other way (such as by phone or Signal), please let us know here.

Anything else we need to know?

0 words

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Methodology: To find federal web pages with changes that reflected the list of discouraged words, Times journalists extracted the text from over 5,000 snapshots of federal web pages — landing pages of major agency and department websites, as well as pages to which they linked — from before and after Mr. Trump's inauguration. We employed a large-language model to search the extracted text for changes, specifically looking for words highlighted by agencies as no longer in use. The large-language model helped us identify changes that were thematically similar to the list of discouraged words. It also surfaced changes made to pages in languages other than English. We then manually reviewed each passage to determine the meaning and relevance of each change.

Reporting was contributed by Julian Barnes, Christopher Flavelle, Dylan Freedman, Apoorva Mandavilli, Katrina Miller and Nicholas Nehamas.

Senator HIRONO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Hirono. Senator Scott.

Senator SCOTT. General Gilland, is the Army-Navy game important?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator Scott, it is great to see you again. The Army-Navy game is important. Absolutely, sir.

Senator SCOTT. It would be really disappointing if you ever lost, right?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. We are disappointed, but we will also come back.

Senator SCOTT. Did you go to the game?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, sir.

Senator SCOTT. Do you remember the score?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. I do, sir.

Senator SCOTT. What was it?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Well, I try to put that behind me, sir, but yes.

Senator SCOTT. Okay. But to Navy, you think it is really, really, really important game, isn't it.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Exceptionally, especially this year, sir.

Senator SCOTT. Go Navy. Thank you guys for what you are doing. I thank each of you for what you are doing.

So, first off, who is responsible for your faculty? I mean, who is responsible for the mission?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Scott, I am.

Senator SCOTT. Okay. Admiral?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. I am, as well, sir.

Senator SCOTT. So you are responsible for your faculty, right?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. How is your faculty chosen?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator, our faculty at West Point is chosen through different hiring processes, as we think about those departments, and department heads lead the respective hiring process. So for both uniformed and civilian faculty, going through the process to identify those people that have the skills, particularly knowledge and experience in whatever the discipline is that we are looking for.

Senator SCOTT. So do you hire them or does the faculty hire themselves, hire new faculty?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Sir, through the hiring process it is brought to the Dean of the Academic Board and to myself for approval.

Senator SCOTT. Admiral?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Very similar. We are looking for individuals that have the expertise in the fields that we need, going forward have the commitment to the Naval Academy and buy-in for exactly our mission set, sir.

Senator SCOTT. Who makes the final decision?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Everything. I am responsible for everything, but it is recommended by panel, sir.

Senator SCOTT. General.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Sir, we have similar processes as our colleagues at the table, and especially our Dean of Faculty has great authority, under my responsibility, to canvas for the best and brightest military and civilian faculty instructors as we move forward.

Senator SCOTT. So ultimately each of you have the ability to pick your faculty.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator, yes, we do, but I think that what is important to clarify is that through authorities that have been delegated, depending on the instructor, the level, I am not personally canvassing captains across the operational force to come teach in a department. I have very capable department heads who execute that.

Senator SCOTT. All right. Do any of you have tenure or are you looking at having tenure.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes, sir, we have both. We have civilian tenure for a small number of our civilian faculty as well as our military permanent professors and senior military faculty that have longer duration at the Air Force Academy.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. We too have a process of tenure for our civilians, sir.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. We do too also, Senator.

Senator SCOTT. So why do you have tenure?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Well, Senator, I think that tenure offers our civilian faculty, specifically, opportunities to advance within their discipline at the United States Military Academy.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. I think it is a wonderful recruiting tool to get in the best and the brightest that we can. They could go to so many other places, but we draw in these incredible talents that want to stay. Sir, I also think it is an incentive to stay, which we want these individuals to buy into the program and be able to learn and advance their skills so that we can benefit from them, sir.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Sir, I would say that is the process at the Air Force Academy, as well, as part of the academic progression for our civilian faculty.

Senator SCOTT. So did each of you come through a tenure system.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. We came up through a professional military system, sir.

Senator SCOTT. You don't have tenure, do you?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. No. Well, I have got 35 years in the Army, sir. Some would probably call that tenure.

Senator SCOTT. Yes, but you had to perform, and if you did not perform you were out.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. That is correct. But tenure within our civilian faculty, Senator, has to be earned. It is not given. It has to be demonstrated that a faculty member qualifies to meet the tenets of earning that tenure.

Senator SCOTT. On any of your areas as a tenured professor ever lost their job while you have been there?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Not during my time, Senator.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Not during my time either, sir.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Neither for me, sir, for my short period.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Just to followup on that, can you fire a civilian, tenured teacher, professor? General, can you fire one?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, Senator.

Senator TUBERVILLE. You can?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes, through the process we have the ability to fire them.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Sir, there is an Human Resources (HR) process in which we can do that.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Absolutely, Senator, there is a process for all civilian and military personnel that do not meet our standards.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. How about your coaches?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. All the time.

Senator TUBERVILLE. I guarantee you they do not have tenure. [Laughter.]

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I asked that question because——

Senator TUBERVILLE. We might have to work on that, though. I am kind of partial to the coaches.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I have some serious questions. You can disregard that one.

I think you have some of the most important jobs in our military, maybe in our country, which is educating our future leaders. They are leaders not only in the military but eventually in their communities, as well. I think your job has been made more difficult by some of the recent talk about a woke military and some of the recent orders that you have had to implement, like the DEI executive orders, eliminating DEI content from your curriculum and campuses, which I think has a chilling effect on the discourse that takes place on campuses, which is really part of the educational experience. What young people say to each other, what they learn

from each other I think is as important as maybe some of the courses that they take.

I trust that you have faithfully executed the orders from your commander in chief to eliminate all the DEI content from your campuses and curriculum. I understand in the case of West Point, sir, you reviewed over 600 courses and you eliminated just 2 that come into compliance, which says to me there was not a lot of this extraneous DEI, woke content in your courses. Is that a fair conclusion on my part?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator, the review is still ongoing, given the timeframe. We are in the validation frame. But of over 600 courses that were reviewed, 2 were determined to not be compliant with the executive order, and thus we eliminated those two courses. They were higher-level electives that had a fairly small population of cadets that were enrolled in that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. What were the two courses?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Sir, one was a history course and the other was an English course. Respectively, the population impacted about 25 cadets in one course and 13 in another.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. What was the title of the—

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Oh, yes sir. The title for the history course was, it was HI 463, "Race, Ethnicity, and Nation," and our English course, which was English 352, was "Power and Difference," sir, and like I said, 25 cadets impacted in the history course, 12 cadets impacted in the English course.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Could you give me, for the Navy, Admiral Davids, the equivalent information, and maybe for the Air Force, as well.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Certainly, sir. Thank you for the question. Out of 870 courses that we reviewed, only 2 of them were canceled. They were NL 445, "Gender Matters,"—that is a leadership course, sir—and an English course, HE 374, "Gender Sexuality Studies." We had a total of 18 other classes that we either needed to modify, very minorly, or make some subtle adjustments to bring it to compliance with the executive orders.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Blumenthal, we are in the middle of our course review. We are conducting a review of our 735, and we are doing two sets of eyes on the review as we go forward. Of the 735, we have assessed that right now there are 55 courses that we have identified for further-on analysis. Of those numbers, right now our initial assessment is 40 percent will require no change, 53 percent will require minor admin or reading change, and only 3 of the courses potentially for suspension. I have not made that decision yet, and once I do, sir, I will followup on the record with the names of those courses.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. If all of you could followup. I know that this review may be ongoing, as you said, General. I would appreciate knowing.

You know, the reason it is a somewhat impossible position, in order to teach about tyranny you have to read books on Nazism, right. Some of the bad stuff has to be learned in order to avoid mistakes that have been made in the past. The military has an extraordinary and proud record of leading our Nation on desegregation. It literally led the Nation, and we should be teaching that his-

tory so that our military can be not only proud but continue to lead the Nation in its values and principles, let me just say, of diversity, which is what you do—you are diverse and you need to teach people how to deal with diverse groups that they will command—and inclusion, because you want to include people from different backgrounds and races and religions, and be able to lead them, as well, and do it equitably.

So I am very sympathetic to your dilemma right now, and I hope that the Congress can help you rather than hinder you with the kind of rhetoric that has become all too popular about woke military and all that stuff. I want to thank you for the great job that you are doing.

I nominate, every year, people to go to your great institutions. I wish all of them could be admitted. But I must say, one of the most satisfying and fulfilling tasks I have is to do those nominations, because they are extraordinary, just exemplary young men and women. Thank you for helping to educate them.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Blumenthal. Senator Budd.

Senator BUDD. Chairman, thank you. Thanks for hosting this. Thank you all for being here, as well, and I would echo those comments. It is one of our highlights. It gives us great hope in our country, every December, when we gather as a large panel, somewhere in North Carolina, to review applicants and candidates. It is one of the highlights from my time in the House and also here in the Senate.

Let me ask about the concept of the military being a great leveler, and I believe that it is. For decades, the U.S. military has been the strongest representation of the very best of our country. Americans from all backgrounds must continue to be evaluated and promoted based on their merit, encompassing their character, their commitment, their ability, and their courage.

General Gilland—and if I could ask all of you, as I ask the questions, to keep your answers concise—you said that all appointees to West Point are fully qualified, based on your scoring methodology, the whole candidate score. So what is the lowest that an applicant can score and still be deemed highly qualified?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Sir, the whole candidate model, which is based on academic, physical, and then character and service, that is one component of the admissions process, of which we use the whole candidate score and then the measure of the tangibles, and then there are the intangibles, such as grit and tenacity, desire to serve our Nation, that are also assessed by our recruitment officers, through our Admissions Department.

When we look at the whole person concept for the cadet candidates that exist across our Nation, and within your State specifically, sir, we look at both the tangibles and the intangibles.

Senator BUDD. It would seem those additional qualifiers of grit, tenacity, and desire to serve, would that not be part of the whole candidate score?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Well, sir, with regards to the whole candidate score, as I said, broken down, there's academic which is 60 percent—

Senator BUDD. Physical—

General GILLAND.—Thirty percent, which is the character and extracurricular activities, and then 10 percent physical, and then there is the assessment of the intangibles as we have seen through letters of evaluation that come in from coaches and teachers, respectively, the interview process, the interviews that go through our field force members that are out within the respective locales. So there are these intangibles that are also considered in the development of a candidate and determining admissions to the Military Academy.

Senator BUDD. General, is there a different minimum score for any particular demographic?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. No, sir.

Senator BUDD. General, roughly 25 to 30 percent of an incoming class at West Point is not required to be appointed based on their order of merit. Do you oppose legislation that would require you to appoint more applicants based on their whole candidate score, and if so, why is that?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Sir, admissions model is compliant with the provision of Title 10, which has been codified into law, as has been stated, sir. If there is a change to any legislation we absolutely look forward to working with you on what that would mean and what it would entail with any modifications.

We continuously assess our admissions process, and, for instance, as we talk about the whole candidate score, each of the academies have different whole person scoring models, and we are looking at ours also at this time.

Senator BUDD. General Bauernfeind, I understand you are looking at some of the Air Force Academy's admissions processes. You mentioned that earlier. Do you have any specific concerns, and if so, what are they? Would you oppose legislation that would require you to adhere to your order of merit in admissions?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Sir, first of all, our admissions process, to go back to the fully qualified, it requires two aspects, a highly competitive application process that goes into not only the academic ability to succeed at one of our Military Service Academies but extracurricular activities, focused on leadership abilities and depth of service. Then, as discussed before, athletic capabilities, an air liaison interview, but then finally a committee score that looks deeper into the letters of recommendation, the interviews, that starts to understand alignment to our service core values, integrity, determination, grit, as that comes forward as we dig into it. So I am very content with our current admissions process for understanding how we are getting the best and brightest.

The second aspect is also the nominations that we get from our congressional leadership, to ensure that we are getting the best and brightest from all the districts in our great Nation as it moves forward. If our elected leaders choose to provide additional guidance, we look forward to working with our elected leaders to comply with that.

Senator BUDD. Thank you. I have additional questions for the record, unless you have other time.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Budd. I have got one question. I apologize for people in and out. We have votes. We have

other hearings going on. But we do really appreciate you coming. We have learned a lot here.

Permanent military faculty are Senate confirmed. Should we have any input toward civilian professors? General, on your recommendation.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Sir, I think that when we look at the confirmation of our permanent faculty, which is a fairly small number, we make that recommendation to you, as Congress. With regards to our civilian faculty, I think even with their swearing to an oath to the Constitution of the United States, I would have to go back and ask about from a civilian hiring practice, because the civilian hiring practices and regulations that govern that are different than from our uniformed members.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Admiral?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Very similar, except that I would say that at the Naval Academy we have a proven formula that works, sir, and that includes these incredible civilian faculty that are charged to support everything that we do there. They are completely in on our mission, and they complement the military aspect of our faculty, as well, sir. So when I say proven, I say that 89 percent graduation rate at the United States Naval Academy, and a great deal of that is because of the incredible coaches, mentors, faculty, and staff that we have there, all focused on that mission set, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. General?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Sir, I am very comfortable under my authorities picking the civilian faculty for our force as we go forward. But if our elected leaders want to have a voice in that, I am also very comfortable working with our elected leaders to detail a process that enables us to move through that process quickly.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Senator Budd, we have got time for one more question, if you want to throw it out.

Senator BUDD. Admiral Davids, how often does the U.S. Naval Academy deviate from the order of merit list when you are permitted to do so?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Sir, we have an incredible system, tried and true. No race, sex, or ethnicity goals associated with this. No race, sex, or ethnicity whatsoever governed in the acceptance of who we actually take in. We have congressional nominations, as you know, and the qualified alternates list, which is by order of merit. Then, once we have offered up the ability to provide opportunities to every district, then we can include our military nominations process, as well.

Then what you are talking about, sir, is the additional qualified individuals there. It comes to about 250 individuals or so. Those individuals are identified also by a whole person multiple and an incredibly active and robust admissions staff of 22 members that go through, similar to them, both objective and subjective insights into each individual record. In some cases individuals do not score very well in an imperfect system, which is the whole person multiple, and they are able to offer up some certain individuals, and that would be in that particular area that you are talking about.

We are looking for leaders of character. We are looking for gems out there that are going to be proven to not only can they succeed at the Naval Academy but they have a propensity to serve their

Nation, for the Navy or the Marine Corps. That is what we are looking for, sir.

Senator BUDD. Thank you very much. If this Subcommittee reached out for data on the class of 2028, I guess matriculating in 2024, would you be willing to provide that for the Subcommittee?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Certainly, sir.

Senator BUDD. Thank you very much. Chairman.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you, Senator Budd. I would be remiss if I did not bring up something about sports, and I would like one of you's thoughts about this. I have always felt that playing sports was invaluable to leadership development. Many of the cadets and midshipmen at your institutions are athletes participating on the various academy sports teams. They represent the best of your institutions and our country.

Occasionally—occasionally—some of these athletes develop to an elite level and are forced to forego living out their dreams of playing the sport they love at a professional level because of outdated, to me outdated, regulations governing their service obligations. I would like to see this year's NDAA reflect a serious commitment to these outstanding individuals. When appropriate, these cadets and midshipmen should graduate and commission with their classes, and defer their service obligation until their professional sports-playing careers are complete. These would be commissioned officers in our armed services subject to the same rules and regulations as their peers, while at the same time providing valuable exposure and increased visibility to the academics, while they play sports at the highest level.

I know that is not protocol for what we do as we speak. But General, I would like to get your thoughts on that. With an all-volunteer military now, we are looking for possible ways to get more and more young men and women involved in our academies.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Senator, the Army is a team contact sport. That is how I view the Army, and those men and women that are coming into the Army, regardless of their background and upbringing, better be prepared to get involved in a team contact sport, because that is what you all, as the citizens of our Nation, ask of us.

As a result, when we think through the development of leaders of character, I am looking for, it may not be the best player, because numbers do not always define somebody's potential. I am looking for the best player for the team, and for those individuals that have the elite capability to pursue professional sports, I absolutely support, and I think we have to look at measures, as you outlined, from a commissioning perspective, that would allow those individuals to go into that professional sport of whatever their talent is in, execute that, and then have them serve in the Army.

I think there are combinations of ways to do that, though not only Active service concurrent with their respective playing for a team. Of course, there are different things that have to go with that, with moving them around and such if they are traded. Or there is the deferral of the respective Active Duty service obligation that they have.

But I think that it results in multiple benefits, not only to each of our academies but I think it benefits our services also, through

deliberate outreach and engagement that we would ask of those talented individuals.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. Admiral?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Sir, when I was a midshipman fourth class, Napoleon McCallum was in my upper class. The original admiral, David Robinson, was also in upper class. They were heroes of mine. I saw how brilliant they did in their careers to not only bring in incredible talent to the Navy, to the Naval Academy, as well as supporting our Nation. There are many ways to serve, sir, and they did brilliantly in that.

So I am a huge fan of it. I appreciate that we may look at this. I think that the return on investment is incredible, and I fully support it, sir.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Thank you. General?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Senator Tuberville, I also, as a freshman, looked up to one Chad Hennings, a monster of a football player.

Senator TUBERVILLE. A big old boy.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes, sir, and benefited greatly. He also, during that time, his value was not only was he an amazing football player but he also went out and served and flew combat operations in Operation Iraqi Freedom Desert Storm during that time, bringing both the recruiting values to bear, the service and the professional capabilities.

I believe where the NDAA is now, by giving us an opportunity of three per year is a great opportunity for us to pick those truly elite athletes that can go on to that next level. As a data point, over the last 5 years we have had 22 Air Force Academy cadets that have moved forward into professional sports. Thirteen met their first seasons, and unfortunately were not able to continue, and they came back to Active Duty, and nine are continuing, and over that time, that two to three is, I think, an opportunity for us to continue to go forward.

I would also ask, sir, as we have this conversation for pro sports, to have a fulsome conversation of the impact of the transfer portal on our Military Service Academies and how that is taking young men and women away from service to the Nation until they have had an opportunity to blossom as leaders.

Senator TUBERVILLE. Yes. Well, that is a great point, and I look forward to visiting with all three of you about this before our NDAA is put together this June. I know it is a huge problem, and I can understand it is a huge problem for you also. Again, I want to sit down with all three of you before we get to that point in June, and hopefully we can work something out. Because I think it would be a great tool for all of you, for recruiting, because you all take our best and brightest. All of us, all the Senators, and Congressmen, we have an opportunity to send the best young men and women we possibly have in our states, and you do a great job with them.

I want to thank you for coming today. This a fact-finding mission. We have not done it in 30 years. We will do it again next year, and hopefully we will make it bigger and brighter. We just want to enlighten people about what you do, because leadership,

discipline, teamwork is everything that goes along with what our country is about. Again, it is so, so, important.

We cannot really do this enough, but thanks again for what you do, how you do it, and tell all of your cadets and midshipmen that we are for them, and I look forward to being on the Board of Visitors at the Air Force Academy this year and visiting with you. Again, you are our future, and we hope you use our young people at your convenience but also give them the best and brightest future they can possibly get. Because we are going to go as a country as how they go.

Thanks again. This has been a good hearing, and this hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 3:57 p.m., the Committee adjourned.]

APPENDIX

Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Personnel
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC

SUBJECT: Academy Superintendents

March 21, 2025

1. I am a 1984 graduate of West Point, retired Army Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel and combat veteran. In my first run with the Army (1984-1991), I served as a Signal Corps officer in the 25th Infantry Division, with multiple deployments to the Republic of Korea. I also served as company commander for nearly 400 Signal soldiers in the Pentagon. In my second run with the Army (2011-2024), I volunteered to deploy as battalion chaplain for 1-52 General Support Aviation in Kandahar Afghanistan in 2014. In 2017, I was selected to stand up the chaplain section for Special Operations Command-Africa, with battlefield circulation to teams located in Djibouti, Chad, Uganda, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Somalia. In my final assignment with 9th Mission Support Command, I was deputy command chaplain and led multiple religious leader engagements with local clergy in the Solomon Islands and Marshall Islands to build partnerships with Pacific Island Nations. During my career, I was awarded the multiple Army achievement and Army commendation medals, joint service commendation medal, 5 meritorious service medals, and the legion of merit. I am married to a 1983 grad and our son is a 2020 grad Army medevac pilot. Our son and his girlfriend, also a 2020 West Point grad medevac pilot, served 3 years in the Republic of Korea and will soon be assigned to the 25th Combat Aviation Brigade in Hawaii. My cousin is a 2022 grad serving as a field artillery officer. I have done West Point ruck marches with young leaders like them and had the honor to raise my right hand with them as they took the oath of office on commissioning day. I have corresponded with them after base attacks during deployments to the Middle East. I have flown with young West Point grads on training missions in Korea and combat missions in Afghanistan. I know a few things about the U.S. Military Academy and how it prepares warrior leaders.

2. LTG Steve Gilland is a badass warrior (accomplished, intelligent, competent, battle-tested), with a distinguished career in the Infantry, focused on lethality, and he ensures USMA delivers effective, smart, lethal warriors to the Army. I've heard the charges that he made DEI a focus. Baloney. His first focus has always been about delivering capable, lethal, leaders of character for the US Army. He has always been faithful to the mission of preparing leaders for war. The Academy my son attended from 2016-2020 and the Academy that today's cadets attend demands far more in the way of hands-on military training throughout the academic year than the Academy of my generation in the early 1980s. I assure you they are bad-ass warriors.

3. West Point IS NOT "woke." Just as it was at its founding in 1802, throughout the Civil War, WWI, WWII, Vietnam, the wars of my era, and the conflicts my son, his peers and current cadets

face today, West Point's highest priority is training and preparing badass warriors who can lead troops to victory. West Point is dedicated to exceptional leadership development in every facet of education and training. I am in awe of the young men and women West Point graduates whom I encountered throughout my vocation as a chaplain and continue to meet through my son's Army connections. They are bright, brave, battle-focused leaders of character who are trained and ready to lead America's soldiers to defeat America's enemies.

4. I am deeply disturbed by anti-DEI actions at West Point. Banning clubs like the Corbin Forum, Contemporary Affairs Society, Society of Women Engineers, National Society of Black Engineers, Asian-American Cultural Forum, SPECTRUM exhibits cowardice. What are we afraid of by allowing cadets with like-minded interests and experiences to meet and support one another through the Academy's rigorous journey? I was in the 5th class to include women. I shared barracks rooms, latrines, hopes and fears with Black and Latina women classmates. I am personally offended and hurt by the removal of images and stories from websites regarding women and minority Academy grads. Again, how is this a threat to creating warrior-leaders of character? 2LT Emily Perez was the fallen hero held up as the model for selfless service and ultimate sacrifice for my son's Beast Barracks cadet basic training summer. Removing inspiring information about her from the West Point website cuts deeply. Dangerous Exclusion Initiatives.

5. I returned to the Army in 2011 after a 20-year break because I was in seminary and heard the Army needed more chaplains. I was pleased to be fully embraced and respected by the commanders, non-commissioned officers and junior soldiers I served. Being a West Point grad helped. I was excited to see competent, qualified, respected women and minority leaders given opportunities to lead at highest levels. It is crushing now to see the firings of four-stars CQ Brown, Lisa Franchetti, Linda Fagan and LTG Telita Crosland. Once again, what are we afraid of?

6. I was an English major at West Point. My English, psychology and other humanities courses did as much, if not more, than my military science courses to prepare me to be an effective leader of character. They taught me how to think critically, how to know myself better, know others better, and better embody West Point's motto of Duty-Honor-Country and the Army Values. Training for war is critical, but victorious leaders need to be critical thinkers who understand their troops and what motivates them to endure the harshest conditions of war.

In closing, implore you to see the incredible value of the education West Point has provided to prepare recent and current graduates and cadets to effectively lead soldiers to victory in fighting our Nation's wars. LTG Steve Gilland has been at the tip of the spear in these efforts.

Andrea Allen Baker, USMA 1984
Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel), Retired

[REDACTED]

Senators Tuberville, Warren, Wicker, and Reed,

I'm LTC (ret) Mark Boeke, a deeply trained top of the food chain warrior who recently retired from a 35-year DoD arc. That time included researching the X-29 aircraft and artificial intelligence in 1989-1990 as a High School student, graduating from West Point as a mechanical engineer in 1995, serving in the 82nd Airborne Division as a Lieutenant, commanding within artillery range of the DMZ in Korea, going to war 3 times with a Joint Special Operations Task Force – to include liberating POW Jessica Lynch – while in 1st Ranger Battalion, commanding Combat Camera for 3 years in which they deployed over 28,000 days and received over 60 combat decorations, serving in both the Bush and Obama White House and traveling with them on dozens of domestic and foreign trips, and performing cybersecurity operations and leading the response to the Snowden leaks while at NSA. After retiring from the Army in 2015, I continued to work at NSA for a decade as a GG-15 until retiring in January. Along with being Airborne/Ranger/Jumpmaster qualified, and having received three Defense Meritorious Service Medals, I've written for Joint Forces Quarterly and have written responses to the SSCI and HPSCI. I was vetted to serve in the JSOTF, passed my YANKEE WHITE for White House duty, and have been scrutinized under more polygraphs than I can remember for NSA service both in and out of uniform. I broke at least 12 bones for my country.

I'm unaffiliated as a voter – you can't ignore what follows because it is borne out of experience and merit, not partisan games.

LTG Steve Gilland is as top shelf as they get. Delta squadron commanders don't just fall out of the sky – well, sometimes they do on their way to work – and they assuredly are not lacking warrior ethos and ability. Though I didn't serve with him directly, he commanded his squadron in the same era I was on the Ranger's staff, and his reputation is extraordinary. We don't just toss anyone in front of an Army Division either; in Korea he was the Commanding General of the same Division that I commanded a Company in a quarter of a century ago, and faced down the same DPRK menace that steely-eyed warriors opposed for almost 80 years. This is exactly who is needed at West Point. Both the Supe and I are from the line of 1987-2011 West Point graduates who all had classmates die on the field of battle.

Nobody – not a soul – is more qualified to ensure the Corps of Cadets is ready for the next gunfight. The Corps is in fine shape – in just the last week I mentored a Cadet on warfare that is not bound by borders: CYBERCOM and

SOCOM, as I worked both problems in my career. This Cadet was bothered about the loss of clubs and associations – I will attest that we can never have the nuanced contextual understanding of different groups if we don't get together to understand them from first hand sources. Before I went to Korea, I read "Ugly Korean, Ugly American" and before I went to Afghanistan I read "Holy War, Inc."

The Corps of Cadets is not weak; the Corps is on azimuth to fight and win our wars. The Corps is not "woke" – a ridiculous concept made up by bigots. Ensuring we have leaders of character to serve the common defense is the only focus of LTG Gilland and his staff, which I applaud.

As for the Superintendents of USMA and USAFA, both of these Officers have commanded absolute acme of the force organizations. VADM Davids commanded a Carrier Strike Group, an immense, complex, strategically critical deterrence element. Choosing who helps a CSG is hardly a casual decision, or an assignment given to a low performer or one of questionable warfighting excellence. As someone who has spent time at sea and formerly owned a saltwater-going vessel, I know the demands. LtGen Bauernfeind was both the vice commander of SOCOM and the commander of AFSOC; when in blazes have we put someone at the helm of Special Operations Forces who wasn't absolutely best in breed?

Regardless of this, all three of these Officers were promoted – and confirmed by serving Senators on this committee – during the first Trump administration. If they were so unfit, then why were they promoted during the first term? There is no satisfactory answer to this, and for this reason alone they must be left in their roles.

This made-up scrutiny of the Superintendents is simply the latest in a salvo of nonsense that has come out of an Administration that is far out of its depth. A sign of leadership is when to stand out of the way and let the actual experts in a leader's ranks do what they do well. The SECDEF has zero time in command; the CINC has zero time in the military. Stop this grievous harm, which is heaped on top of the Orwellian 1984-style elimination of history across the DoD, the harmful cuts at the VA that have already been observed by myself and peers to have caused turmoil and slowed communications, and the insult to the entire Flag Officer cadre by casting 100% of them aside. That's what happened, by returning a basically unknown retired Officer to be the CJCS based on nothing more than favorable impressions he made on POTUS.

I'm going to write about Ranger School, in closing. I spent 5 months there; it is arduous, and I broke and re-broke my foot in this crucible. My best man at my wedding commanded a Ranger Training Company a few years later; my former boss commanded a Ranger Training Battalion; I served in the 75th Ranger Regiment for three years from 2001-2004. There's a bullshit idea going around that there are different standards for women. GEN (ret) Scott Miller was the Commanding General of the Maneuver Center of Excellence, which has dominion over this training, when the decision was made to allow women to attend Ranger School. If any Senators are unaware, he was the Delta commander on the ground in Mogadishu in 1993. This is hardly someone who is not about as tempered by trial as any warrior could possibly be. Scott Miller would never reduce standards for *any* reason. Anyone who suggests otherwise is wrong and has deeply flawed judgement.

This committee needs to stop this charade oriented against these Superintendents. You must *not* relieve these leaders. Remember your oath. I took it three times and it has no expiration date. Nor does yours.

Rangers Lead The Way,

Mark

LTC, USA (ret)

[REDACTED]

March 21, 2025

Dear Senators Tuberville, Warren, and other distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Subcommittee on Personnel:

In 1985, as a young college freshman, I raised my right hand and swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution. I can't say that I fully understood the gravity of those words at the time and I'm sure I had no idea what the future would hold, but I do remember feeling relieved that I now had a way to pay for college and my working-class parents wouldn't have to mortgage our house. I never imagined a fateful run in with an ROTC recruiter would result more than three decades in uniform, two combat deployments, four degrees and every single thing I hold dear in my life including 9 years of service to the world's preeminent leader development institution – the United States Military Academy at West Point.

When I accepted an ROTC scholarship, I barely knew West Point existed and knew nothing about its admittance of women a few years before. No one and nothing prepared me for what it was going to be like for me as a young female officer because I was surrounded by well-meaning leaders without this lived experience. It was just an artifact of the times. Reporting to my very first assignment, my commander welcomed me to the unit by professing how pleased he was to finally have someone "to inspect the female soldiers in the company and talk to them about birth control and stuff". It was a confusing message to receive because for one, they never covered this added responsibility in Officer Basic and I couldn't understand why my male peers weren't enforcing standards for ALL their soldiers the same way I was expected to. But it was my first job, and I wanted to be seen as a team player, so I saluted and moved out smartly.

When I commissioned, I expected serve my initial obligation and no more, but I soon fell in love with the sense of purpose and the camaraderie of the Army Team. In the ensuing 15 years, I deployed to Desert Storm, commanded a company in the 82d Airborne Division and served as a staff officer in both Special Operations and conventional units, navigating the nuances of leading while also being one of the only women in the room, at the table, in or in the tank. Some days were challenging, but all were deeply satisfying and none more so than during my second combat deployment to Iraq with the First Cavalry Division that profoundly changed my career trajectory and my life.

General (Retired) Pete Chiarelli was the Division Commander for OIF-II and the most creative and inspiring military leader I have ever served alongside. He understood Soldiers were more than their job descriptions and we needed to leverage the full potential of every single one to have a chance of success in Baghdad. One day while I was performing my regular duties as a Signal officer monitoring the Division's command and control networks, he approached me with a request: Would I be interested in meeting with a group of local Iraqi women and hear their concerns and report back? Just like in my first company, he was asking me to do this for the sole

Dear Senator Warren:

My name is Tara Dale and I am a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Class of 2000.

I am writing in support of Vice Admiral Davids' exemplary leadership, and the culture and selection process that put her in charge, and which, over many years, has contributed to making the United States Navy, the strongest navy in history.

As a former Surface Warfare Officer and Flag Aide, I can say confidently that in a culture of "SWOs eat their young," it is difficult to make it to the rank of three stars without being extraordinary. As a former Flag Aide, I met and observed many Flag Officers, and the three and four-star officers were a class of their own that can only be attained by being respected by your peers and subordinates, and being exceptionally talented intellectually and professionally.

I understand the Chair of this subcommittee, The Honorable Senator Tuberville, once asked Ole Miss to ban Confederate Flags from football games because it would hurt recruiting. The current efforts to cull female, minority, and non-politically aligned Flag and JAG Officers are effectively waving a flag that you are not welcome, and the rules and laws that protect and guide you, have no meaning. If officers are presumed incompetent because they are women or minorities, or cannot set an example by following military laws and the Constitution, then they have no respect, no integrity and no legitimate authority to lead other officers and enlisted personnel.

Additionally, another red flag is potentially being waved to prospective intellectually gifted officers by threatening to get rid of civilian professors and their unique knowledge and understanding of our allies and potential enemies, and ourselves. **Ex Scientia Tridens**, "From knowledge, sea power" could become an ironic motto. As warfare shifts with AI and other innovations, the Navy needs smart, well-educated, adaptable leaders that can understand their allied and non-allied counterparts, and think dynamically and strategically on the battlefield.

As with college football recruiting you want to have the largest pool possible from which to pick the best players. You have to attract them with a great culture, enticing opportunities and benefits, or they will go into other industries that welcome them. The military certainly does not suit everyone, not many people are qualified to meet the physical and intellectual demands, enjoy the strict environment nor relish getting by on a comparatively low executive pay and constant relocation of their families. I recall a briefing on the Surface Warfare community in the early 2000s and it showed how in order to meet recruiting needs, we needed more women. It would be good to review the data on how recruiting needs could be met otherwise- I'm not sure technology will catch up if there is an exodus of talented officers and a reduction of high quality prospective midshipmen.

However, if the intent of all of the recent purges is to make a more compliant homogenous military with weak service academies and legal structures; then as a USNA political science major, I can understand why a government would not want their midshipmen and officers to be liberally educated. They would then be able to recognise the pattern of past failed governments who initiated their power grabs with weakened military leadership and were led by dictators such as Hitler, Stalin, Saddam Hussein, and Castro, among others, and resist it.

I appreciate your time and consideration, and hope the decisions you make create a stronger Navy and United States of America.

Sincerely,
Tara Dale

Background Summary

I was a Surface Warfare Officer for five years, served on two deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, was the Flag Aide at SPAWAR (now NAVWAR) and was selected for one of the highly coveted SWO MBA billets at The Wharton School. I had to leave the military unexpectedly to support my family due to the death of my father and concurrent health issues. I graduated from The Wharton School, moved to the UK, worked in emerging market finance and then corporate partnerships for King Charles's charity, then named, The Prince's Foundation. I became a mother and after 16 years, have recently moved back with my family to Connecticut.

Dear Senators Warren, Tuberville, and members of the Personnel Subcommittee,

I am writing this letter in support of Vice Admiral Yvette Davids, Lieutenant General Steven Gilliland, and Lieutenant General Tony Bauernfeind. As a proud graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Class of 2006, I have extensive experience and insight into the importance of strong leadership at our Service Academies.

During my time at USNA, I graduated with merit, was elected Captain of the women's basketball team as a four-year letter winner, was a two-time member of the Patriot League All-Academic team, and earned a commission to attend flight school in Pensacola, FL. I earned my wings of gold in 2008 after graduating first in my class in flight school where I was selected to fly FA-18 Super Hornets in Virginia Beach, VA. I spent 11 years flying in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, New Dawn, and Inherent Resolve, amassed over 1,400 flight hours with 300 carrier landings, earned 2 Navy Commendation medals, 2 air medals, graduated from the Navy Strike Fighter Weapons School (TOPGUN) in 2012, and was part of the first crew that launched in response to the March 2017 chemical weapons attack in Syria prior to the completion of my service in June 2017 during President Trump's first term in office. I was ranked as the #1 Lieutenant in both of my fleet squadrons and completed my 11-year career as a Lieutenant Commander.

Since my time in the Navy, I graduated from the MIT Sloan School of Management with my MBA, worked at a top tier management consulting firm, scaled an autonomous aviation defense tech startup from 15 to 200 employees and now work as a Chief Operating Officer for an agricultural technology company in support of enhancing our nation's access to food. My entire life has been driven by missions that support our National Security objectives.

The mission of every Academy Superintendent is, and has consistently been, to deliver graduates who are morally, mentally, and physically prepared for the roles they will serve in after graduation. They've been able to accomplish that mission in an ever-changing landscape where the threat is constantly evolving and the needs and requirements of our country are adapting in response. The single most important responsibility that any good leader has is taking care of the people they lead. This committee is hopefully familiar with the concept of servant leadership, whereby leaders prioritize serving the needs of their team and organization, fostering growth and empowerment, rather than focusing on personal gain or control. Each of these Superintendents has lived and breathed that leadership style during their entire careers. Their resumes and accomplishments as combat tested warriors speak for themselves, but, more importantly for today's session, they have deep support and trust from the people they have led.

What we are witnessing today is an intentional attack on the leaders of our Service Academies. These are men and women who have sacrificed decades of their lives in support of our nation's needs and what is currently being demonstrated to our nation and especially our young men and women in uniform is that anyone who stands up for the folks they lead, whether that's through representation efforts, participation in affinity groups, or anything else that is being deemed as "woke" in today's environment will be silenced and removed from their positions.

This is the most dangerous thing we can be doing to our military, especially at a time when today's adversaries are growing stronger by the day. We are creating a culture where civilians and politicians with little to no military experience are second guessing world-class military leaders instead of focusing on how we can recruit and retain the best potential service members our nation has to offer, an effort that is being actively dismantled and undermined when marginalized groups who make up a significant portion of our military, are being actively targeted.

Thank you for your time.

Deborah Furlan • CDR, USNR (Ret.) • USNA, Class of 82

March 20, 2025

Senator Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member
 & Senators of the SASC Subcommittee on Military Personnel
 United States Senate, Russell Building Room 228
 Washington, DC 20510

cc: VADM Y. Davids

Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Senator Warren:

This is a letter for the record for your consideration while evaluating changes and potential changes to the educational and personnel policies at the U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) and in the Fleet. I am a graduate of USNA's Class of 1982. I have written and posted a separate letter in direct support of VADM Yvette Davids, Superintendent. Please share this letter in whatever way you see fit.

It was of course deeply disturbing to every officer of my acquaintance (retired and active, men and women, every Service) to observe the recent political purging in our highest ranks. Simply, no such relief of duty at this level must be allowed except in a case of negligence. The Armed Forces must remain neutral and apolitical. Senior ranking officers relieved in February, 2025, including our Chiefs, were entrusted with duties at the highest level. All were absolutely competent in their positions, all are now irreplaceable. Each would certainly have continued to do his/her duty regardless of personal or political opinion. Although there are clearly policy issues at stake it is ridiculous to state that they were not focused on our mission as a lethal fighting force FIRST. To assert so is to display gross ignorance. To assert that any one of these officers would have failed in their duty is unthinkable.

I put to you: these impulsive executive actions have undermined the effectiveness of our entire Armed Forces by fostering divisiveness. At a minimum they have cast doubt on domestic certitude and to our enemies, signaled chaos and created new weaknesses. I urge you to immediately put a stop to further incursions into the independent functioning of each Service and to reinstate where possible as possible.

We further learn of the effect of various policies interpreting recent executive orders. I urge you to dampen or halt actions currently being considered (or already taken) by leadership interpreting political executive orders. Slang verbiage including terminologies of the mass media (such as "woke") are meaningless in an operational if not literal sense. Instability and hasty communications damage the functioning of any organization let alone a lethal armed force. Examples:

*orders forbidding the attendance of individuals at well-vetted private events (e.g., the moratorium on active-duty attendance at the AWFND (Army Women's Foundation) annual Hall of Fame induction on March 19, 2025 and other similar events)

*suppressing historic, cultural benchmarks that celebrate individual and group successes, victories, and readiness (e.g., removing dozens of public recognition pages such as the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers, many female-led commands)

Such an incursion into individual and private activity is not appropriate. It is at best a dangerous precedent, at worst the beginning of an utter collapse of the chain of command.

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In the case of USNA, I understand academic and personnel policies are currently being scrutinized. And observe Superintendent VADM Davids has been adroitly and carefully responding to date with an eye towards Brigade stability. No doubt she appreciates that in our Service Academies' cultures, chaos is untenable. Formative minds should not be distracted by precipitate, sweeping change with the anticipation of more sweeping change. Successful peacetime policy must be implemented with reasonable intent. Excepting of course, where battlefield response is indicated. But we are not our own enemy and here should be no battle. The Superintendent must be allowed to do her duty in all matters.

Some personal observations:

1. The academic process of USNA is already very good. While any system can be improved this one has been in constant adjustment for well over 100 years. It will continue to function just fine with little interference and appropriate course corrections taking our constantly changing national culture and law into account. In term of accession: as you know, midshipmen are competitively selected by their respective states, ensuring a fairly even field. They are admitted not only for personal strengths but for individuals' abilities. While not a perfect system, I can't think of a more egalitarian method of assembling a group of accomplished youth from all corners. It's an arduous process and attracts many high achievers. No matter what anyone may assert, every midshipman admitted to USNA has already proven a remarkable record of achievement. In terms of performance: at the end of 4 years the most consistent quality of the Brigade's emerging community is NOT personal accomplishment but rather, consummate loyalty. Individual brilliance illuminates the whole Class: they are stronger together and they know it. 1,000 highly intelligent, highly capable, competitive young people are nearly unanimously, appropriately focused on the good of their Fleet. With those who rise highest being those who do not lose sight of that service ideal. Which is why we cannot afford to lose even one of these senior officers.
2. Regarding the DEI controversy, I offer this observation. The essence of our culture is progress. The evolution of our Service Academies' composition must reflect our culture. A clear, executable policy of inclusion (whatever you call it) must be present to distinguish our modern Forces from the antecedent traditions of exclusion that clearly went before. Just as the Defense Appropriation Authorization Act of 1976 opened the Academies to women 50 years ago, so our current law requires that the Armed Forces remain open to all genders, races, backgrounds, and abilities. There is no question that the best qualified person for any particular billet may be anyone. Excellence must be sought and retained. The issue is that in this context "color blindness" has no practical meaning. Policy must offer actionable elements. Similarly the "DEI" umbrella strives to define methodologies but is in practice a collection of doctrines. Inclusivity and equity NEED ALREADY BE PRESENT in our armed forces however imperfectly; they must be maintained and improved. We may renovate the descriptor "DEI" but the heart of the term is based in the law, standing for equal rights. Hence it is the Superintendents' absolute responsibility to interpret "DEI," "Merit," "Color blindness," "Equity" (all subject to interpretive use and abuse) as he or she sees fit for the good of the Service understanding racial, religious, cultural, or gender discrimination is unlawful and unacceptable. These senior officers need no one to illuminate for them the daily challenges of implementation and the imperfect nature of policy. They must be left to the business of managing its attendant pressures without interference.
3. Notwithstanding, we MUST continue to recognize and honor individual and group contributions. Acknowledging success in any subset promotes success for the whole. Annual competency-based

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individual promotion is a cornerstone of the Service. There are countless unit-specific recognitions of personal excellence such as "sailor of the year," a tool every commanding officer employs. Comradely competition is part of our culture. But the Fleet is not a rat race; it is a mutually supportive, cohesive force. (A ship is a very small microcosm in which to navigate personal space.) Remarkable achievement by individuals or any subset of the whole can only make the whole stronger.

4. USNA must continue to encourage self-exploration through modalities other than academics. As a midshipman I participated in a non-academic dramatic group. Through this "club" I found a distinctive voice, courage to be seen, and an ability to appreciate my peers. It allowed me a time for self-introspection not available in the academic halls, a safe environment. Our annual performance of *The Messiah* each year was another highlight. (Every civilized nation celebrates the voice of its collective youth raised in beauty and praise.) The USNA Glee Clubs, both Men's and Women's, earned marks of distinction many times over many years. The many groupings: cultural "clubs," religious "groups," special interest "ECAs," gender "communities," sports "teams," are simply threads of the whole fabric. What could be more American? These and so many other significant non-academic niches -- some spiritual, some skills-based, strength-based or arts-based -- all contribute to the final result adding richness and depth to the strict disciplines of the military curriculum. To lead others, one must first know oneself. To protect and serve, one must first love.
5. In keeping with this idea, midshipmen need exposure to as many points of view as possible. These would include community service, teaching resources not in the academic canon, intimate familiarity with new technologies, group lectures and visiting dignitaries, and said extracurricular activities. Management of such exposure is the business of the Academy's senior leadership. These officers are well qualified to provide that leadership.
6. A fully developed student program, academic and extracurricular, requires civilian professorial staff. The majority of our greatest scientists are civilians; we deserve the benefit of their expertise. Our academics share the goal of producing superb officers ready to take their place in the Fleet, in the world -- but the synergistic blending of curious, brilliant, dedicated, sober minds, military along with civilian -- is certainly greater than its constituent parts. I even recall one civilian engineering professor who took the time to explain what "gentlemanly" meant when his entire classroom (including me) failed to send a note of appreciation to his generous wife, who had just hosted 30 of us for an evening out. This exposure is crucial; do not remove it.
7. Midshipmen need a broad introduction to fields in business and industry. Surface war fighters, submariners, aviators, intelligence and security officers must manage extensive commands within a few short years. And not all of us become pure combatants. Officers must also lead in logistics, business, finance, personnel, IT, and engineering fields unique to each Service. These engines are powered by civilian expertise without which we would go precisely nowhere. The warrior-class must be intimately familiar with these demographics, ready and able to inspire and lead among them.

Thank you for allowing me this opportunity to contribute. Please do not hesitate to call on me or any of my peers for support. I am one of many in solidarity.

Very respectfully submitted,



Deborah Furlan • CDR, USNR (Ret.) • USNA, Class of 82 March 20, 2025

Senator Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member cc: VADM Y. Davids
& Senators of the SASC Subcommittee on Military Personnel
United States Senate, Russell Building Room 228
Washington, DC 20510
Via email: [REDACTED]

Dear Senator Warren:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement. This letter is in support of US Naval Academy (USNA) incumbent Superintendent, VADM Yvette M. Davids, with my personal endorsement of Superintendent Davids' chancellorship of USNA.

As you are aware, VADM Davids has been assigned this duty as a result of a brilliant career and record of achievement. She has been singled out by her peers as the best officer for this job. She is tasked to lead, advance, and perpetuate the demanding program we expect at USNA. She has a superb staff but as in any command she is the ultimate authority and has the care of the entire Brigade in her charge.

In addition to its vocational role to prepare Naval officers morally, mentally, and physically for the challenges of serving the Fleet, USNA is a unique institution, not only producing warriors but also public servants, not merely patriots but world leaders. In all situations our officers are expected to appear and perform with professionalism and distinction. Our graduates have served brilliantly for over 150 years, the eyes and hands behind the most sophisticated power and weaponry in the modern world. They have stood in the ranks of the nation's greatest statesmen for good reason.

A naval officer is prepared for service brick by brick by experience that come one challenge at a time. The totality of a resume of such breadth at this senior point in VADM Davids' career cannot be replicated in any way: not by any alternative talent, intelligence, boldness, or happenstance. She has passed every milestone of competency and every stage of trial. She has shown that she understands the need for obedience. She appreciates the need for consistency in a formative student population and is prepared to defend it. She does not underestimate the power of her place and standing in the public eye and in one short year she is clearly held in high esteem within her Command, the Fleet, and the greater community. She has remained true to the requisite guidance of every fine officer: service above all personal considerations. She is, in short, irreplaceable.

To begin to appreciate the challenges of our Superintendent one need merely examine those of our times. Cultural polarization, disenfranchised youth, ethical angst, violent dissension. VADM Davids must have all these issues in mind and I assure you, meets them daily. She has led 2025's Brigade to be an even more cohesive community, supportive of each other while achieving ever increasing levels of excellence in service and academics. Deep understanding, a nimble but measured response, extreme competence, an unimpeachable character, and broad experience: she possesses all of these requisites. She must be allowed to proceed without interference to do the job she has been assigned. With 4,000 formative young officers under her wing and everything at stake, she needs to stay on station -- with as much support from her peers and seniors as can be leveraged.

Very respectfully submitted,



[REDACTED]

Senator Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Personnel
US Senate Committee on Armed Services
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

[REDACTED]

March 21, 2025

Dear Senator Warren,

Greetings all the way from Northern Virginia!

As you prepare for the March 26 SASC Personnel Subcommittee hearing "to conduct oversight and receive testimony on the status of the Military Service Academies," I would like to add my voice to the other praise for Lt. Gen. Steve Gilland as the current Superintendent of the US Military Academy.

I served in the Army for 21 years, retiring as the senior military speechwriter for Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. I was also a speechwriter for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Gen. Dick Myers) and chief speechwriter for both Directors of National Intelligence under President Obama (Adm. Dennis Blair and Lt. Gen. Jim Clapper).

USMA has had storied Superintendents over the years, but Steve's unique skills and experience put him ahead of that entire pack when it comes to sheer strength and toughness as a warrior. I truly cannot think of a better example for USMA cadets to have, and it is paying off – he and his team are literally producing the hardest-charging Army lieutenants of character that I have seen in my entire career. The Academy, the Army, the Defense Department and the Nation are extremely fortunate to have him.

Thank you for your important leadership of the SASC Personnel Subcommittee – so vital to national security in so many areas – but right now, thank you especially for your support of the best Superintendent that West Point has had in many years.

V/r,
Randy Lee
USMA Class of 1984



Senator Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member, SASC Subcommittee on Personnel
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren,

I'm writing in support of the Superintendents of the military service academies. I'm writing as a 1982 graduate of the Naval Academy who served for 33 years on active duty, retiring as a rear admiral and the Chief of Civil Engineers and Commander of Naval Facilities Engineering Command. After my retirement from the military, I served for three years as the Chief Operating Officer of a Department of Energy National Laboratory and currently serve as a Senior Advisor to an international engineering and construction firm.

During my naval service I made five deployments with the US Navy Seabees: four to the Western Pacific and European/African theaters between 1994-2001, and one deployment to Iraq in 2007 as the 31st Naval Construction Regiment, commanding a joint force of Navy, Marine, and Air Force engineer battalions in support of the Marines and Soldiers of IIMEF throughout the Anbar Province. I served in command five times and was selected to deploy with the Navy leadership element in response to the Haiti earthquake and the Fukushima tsunami. My other positions held include as the Pacific Fleet Civil Engineer and Commander of Naval Facilities Engineering Command, Pacific, and as a Defense Research Fellow with the Southern Company. My awards include the Navy Distinguished Service Medal and four Legion of Merit Medals, along with the Navy Seabee Combat Warfare Pin and Navy Parachutist Insignia.

These experiences inform my assessment of the importance of the service academies and quality of those who lead them. I'm deeply impressed with the current group of leaders, who have unimpeachable credentials, particularly Superintendent Davids. Her career is remarkable – ranging from multiple shipboard tours at all levels, including several in support of combat operations, to positions in training, policy, strategic planning, and innovation development. She holds multiple advanced degrees and, most importantly, has earned the respect and trust of her peers, Navy leadership, Naval Academy alumni, and the Brigade of Midshipmen through her demonstrated leadership. Indisputably, she has and continues to serve our nation brilliantly in tough, demanding jobs that very few people – men or women – even attempt.

In an era beleaguered by culture wars and political correctness concerns, the service academies have one clear goal – to prepare the next generation of military leaders to defend our nation, our freedom, and our way of life. Throughout their stellar careers, the service academy leaders have not allowed themselves to become diverted by the politics of the day, and today they are working to keep their organizations focused on their job – building leaders. It does them, those they lead, and our nation a disservice to distract these leaders with challenges to their capabilities or qualifications, which seem very readily apparent, and only serves to undermine the confidence Midshipmen and Cadets can feel in their institutions.

I hope you and the other committee members will fairly evaluate the demonstrated performance and qualifications of all service academy leaders during your hearings.

Respectfully,

Kate Gregory

Kate Gregory
RADM, CEC, USN (ret)

Dear Senator Warren,

Thanks for all you do and have done for so many all these years! I'm writing to express my gratitude for the hearing you are holding on the service academies and to briefly share my thoughts and experiences.

I was in the U.S. Naval Academy class of 1983, entering in July of 1979 with about 100 other women. We were the fourth class at USNA that admitted women. I served two years at the academy, but I resigned in May 1981. Forty-some years later, I still feel ashamed that I didn't have the emotional strength that many other women who stuck it out did. My decision to leave stemmed in part from a lack of support for women there and the deliberate disconnection among women that I feel the administration planned, fostered, and enforced. Women's support clubs or groups or help were not available when I was there from 1979 to 1981, but I wonder if there would have been if I'd have made a different decision. For me, Plebe year was great, and I felt so part of a unit, but in sophomore year it's like most of our male classmates decided women shouldn't be at the academy and dropped the team connection that I think is so necessary in the military.

The other women were tougher than me and they stayed, but it would be so much better to help and encourage talented women to stay at service academies by allowing and encouraging support groups. Over the past decades, groups to help women have emerged at USNA, and the administration has changed in many ways in how it treats women. I hope that the DEI changes being forced on the academies by the current government can be reversed. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Hauer, USNA Class of '83

From: Jeannette Gaudry Haynie, PhD
 U.S. Naval Academy Class of 1998
 Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Retired)

March 21, 2025

To: Senator Roger Wicker, Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC)
 Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member, SASC
 Senator Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member, SASC Subcommittee on Personnel
 Senator Tommy Tuberville, Chairman, SASC Subcommittee on Personnel

Subj: Military Service Academy Superintendent Hearing

Dear Senator Wicker, Senator Reed, Senator Warren, and Senator Tuberville,

I am writing to you to express my support for the Military Service Academies (MSAs) and their leadership and to offer my thoughts on current events and the potential impacts they may have on the MSAs and, as a result, on the future leadership of the military services and the MSAs. These thoughts are based on my experiences as a woman, United States Naval Academy (USNA) graduate, retired Marine Corps officer, combat veteran, and scholar. I write and submit this letter in my own personal capacity.

For background: I joined USNA as a Plebe in 1994, commissioning into the U.S. Marine Corps in May 1998 and entering a Corps with few (only 5%) women. After completing The Basic School, I graduated from flight school first in my Marine winging class, earning a slot flying the AH-1W Cobra attack helicopter. I was the third female Marine to fly the Cobra. While Cobras had been opened to women in 1994, by the time I started flight school in 1999, the community only had one female pilot. The Cobra community was slow to integrate and was not, from my experience, very receptive to integration. I share this background about the lack of women and "unicorn" nature of my first decade in uniform to give additional context to my remarks.

My first check ride in the Cobra – the initial flight evaluation that would send me from HMLA(T)-303 to my first "gun squadron" as a newly trained Cobra pilot – was scheduled for September 11, 2001. Within two weeks of 9/11, I had joined HMLA-369, the Gunfighters, and we deployed three months later. From 2002-2004, I deployed three times in succession with 369, twice to various parts of southeast Asia as part of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and once – in 2003 – to Iraq as part of the initial invasion force. In late 2004, I earned the senior instructor qualification of Night Systems Instructor (NSI).

Also in late 2004, I became pregnant, and I continued flying at HMLA-369 as an NSI, teaching new pilots how to fly and fight the Cobra through my first and second trimesters. I was the first Cobra pilot to fly and instruct pregnant, which I did twice – on active duty in 2004/2005 and as a Reservist in 2008. My husband, at the time a Marine Corps infantry company commander, deployed to Iraq in 2005-2006 and again in 2007. To ensure one of us was home to raise our child, I returned to HMLA(T)-303 in 2006 as an NSI and in 2008 transferred to the Reserves; I felt I had no other choice given our family's operational tempo. Throughout these years, with a brief exception, I was the only female pilot in my squadron.

While serving as a Reservist, I began working through my experiences as a woman in a warfighting institution during a time of war, and I returned to school to study conflict and security at the graduate level. I earned my MA in Political Science in 2011 (University of New Orleans) and my PhD in International Relations in 2017 (The George Washington University). I earned these degrees while acting as the primary parent to three young children while my

in uniform, which crossed four different presidential administrations, I never thought about who held the highest office. I didn't worry about which party had power. Because it didn't matter – I believed that the military would be free to operate in accordance with what its mission required. But today, I see and know servicemembers and DoD civilians, to include those serving at the MSAs, who are deeply concerned about their ability to serve under a particular administration. Current events may politicize the military and its members in irrevocable ways.

On (2), the potential removal of certain topics, lessons, and classes from the academic curriculum: the MSAs teach tomorrow's operational leaders. It is critically important that these young leaders learn about war and security as fully as possible. For most of my early career, I learned about war and security through a fairly one-dimensional lens. Our readings, stories, and lectures generally provided only one perspective of the security environment. Men were the primary actors, leading units and doing the fighting. Civilians were non-factors. Women were always protected and weren't found near conflict areas. It wasn't until years after my operational deployments, when my graduate classes exposed me to experiences and research that forced me to question more about how wars are started, conducted, and resolved, that I began to see how much had been missing from my early understandings of war and security.

The MSAs introduce much more of this knowledge now than they historically have. And the critical thinking skills that these topics can build in our future operational leaders can help them better understand the complex and challenging environments that they will serve and lead in. But these topics, lessons, and classes – highlighting the human dimension of war and security - are targets now. The erasure of different aspects of the human dimension, the complex layers that interact to create the operational environment, limits what these future leaders can learn.

On (3) and (4), the pausing and closing of clubs and activities, erasing of stories of leadership and service, and firing of leaders who are women and people of color: the climate and inclusiveness of an organization will attract or repulse people, keep them in or drive them out. It's leadership 101: know your people, know the challenges they face and the strengths they bring, and set the conditions for them to succeed. That's done through building environments where people feel seen and heard, where they feel they can contribute and bring their talents to bear on complex problems. Exclusive environments do the opposite. This deeply matters.

My experiences reflect this knowledge. While I am grateful for the many wonderful people with whom I served and for the fantastic opportunities I have had, not everything has been rosy. As a midshipman, I learned very early that women weren't welcome. Sometime during the first weeks of plebe summer, I was told for the first time that I had taken a spot from a more deserving man. For four years, I heard the term "WUBA" (a derogatory phrase) affixed to women – and I felt the disgust with which it was at times thrown at us. I was sexually assaulted as a midshipman, like so many of my fellow female alumnae. In the Marine Corps, particularly as I integrated the Cobra community, the environment grew tougher. There was always a jury, and it was always still out. The night of my winging, a classmate accused me of sleeping with my flight school instructors to get a Cobra spot. I was stalked on ship and was later accused of getting pregnant to get out of deployment. Once I did have a child, I was written off – despite working my bottom off for the first three years of my child's life (while my husband deployed twice to Iraq) – it took me feeling as though I was completely alone and was going to crash the Cobra with a student in it or crash my car with my baby in it before I gave up and left. Being told in so many different ways that you're not what the Marine Corps wants, that once you have a kid you're useless, that you're not qualified based purely on your sex: it all adds up and it drives you out. For years, I thought my experiences were unique to me, that I just had to deal with them to be a Marine.

Then in 2017, Marines United happened, and I learned that the insults and behaviors I experienced were happening to so many other women. At my 20th USNA reunion in 2018, I learned the same thing about my experiences in USNA. That learning has continued. An exclusionary culture, where we don't exercise basic Leadership 101 skills (know your people, see the challenges they face, set the conditions for them to use their full range of talents) drives people out. It limits who we attract and select as leaders. It hurts us as a force.

As we all know and it is impossible to avoid, we live in a messy and complicated world. The MSAs and their leaders are charged with teaching tomorrow's operational and strategic leaders to lead teams in this challenging environment. I want to close, as I opened, with my support for the MSAs and those who lead them. These key leaders were hand-selected for these vital positions and have the leadership and operational experiences needed to accomplish their missions. I hope that the Superintendents and their teams will be allowed to continue to do the work they have been chosen to do. Let them do their jobs and teach the leaders of tomorrow – the next two generations of our nation's operational and strategic leaders – how to lead.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute and for reading this far.

All the best and Semper Fidelis,

Jeannette Gaudry Haynie, PhD
USNA Class of 1998
LtCol USMCR (Ret.)

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
March 18th, 2025

To: Members of the Senate Armed Services Committee

Re: March 26 appearance of Service Academy Superintendents

Dear Honorable Members of the SASC:

My name is Jim Klingaman. I am very concerned about the state of our Nation, given what I see as chaotic, ill-advised, unprofessional, nonsense from the Trump Administration. I want to ensure that our Service Academy Superintendents are treated with the respect they deserve when they appear on March 26th; and that their devotion to our Nation and our military services is appreciated.

I am a retired Army Colonel and proud member of the West Point Class of 1984. I have served in overseas assignments in Korea, Somalia, Kuwait, and Afghanistan. I am an Infantryman with a Combat Infantryman's Badge, a Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Wings, 2 Legions of Merit, and 2 Bronze Stars. I have personally known LTG Steve Gilland for over 25 years. We served together in the 75th Ranger Regiment in the late 1990s; and we both continued to serve in various capacities in the Army SOF community for many years. After I retired from the Army, I was the Senior Trainer at the Army's Leader Training Program (LTP) at the National Training Center (NTC) at Ft. Irwin, CA. I held this job from 2009 until 2024. In that organization I was responsible for coaching Army Brigade Commanders. In that role, I had the honor to coach then Colonel Gilland as a Brigade Commander.

Steve Gilland is an extraordinary Soldier, leader, and man. From where I stand, Steve has been an outstanding Superintendent at West Point. He has been very straightforward with the priorities at West Point, chief among them being the production of Army Officers of great character that are mentally, physically, and intellectually capable of fighting and winning the nation's wars. He is not wrapped around the axle of "wokeness" or any other distraction to his mission. As a graduate of West Point and career Army Officer, I have full confidence in his ability to continue that extraordinary task.

I am getting dismayed as the Armed Services have some of their very best men and women summarily removed by sycophantic Trump appointees. West Point is in good hands, so please let's ensure we do whatever is necessary for that to continue.

Sincerely,

James Klingaman
Colonel, USA, Retired



Jessica Lane
[REDACTED]

19 Mar 2025

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
311 Hart Senate Office Building

SUBJECT: Academy Superintendents

Dear Senator Warren and members of the SASC Subcommittee on Personnel,

I'm alarmed by the recent efforts to politicize our nation's military. Please do everything you can to staunchly defend the military's politically neutral role at every level.

Selecting (or firing) military leaders must be based on their commitment to the Constitution and never a matter of their loyalty to any individual.

I'm also very concerned about the fear that is playing out within the Department of Defense including recent attempts to institutionalize discrimination and fear on our military service academy campuses.

I am a 1996 Naval Academy graduate and 9-year Naval helicopter pilot who completed two deployments to the Persian Gulf.

I am a woman. I entered the Naval Academy right after Tailhook when sexual harassment training was new and we were flooded with it all 4 years. I remember the Navy having a higher awareness of sexual harassment than many civilian workplaces at the time.

The military has historically been a leader in integrating diversity, including integrating black sailors and soldiers well ahead of American society.

Why? Because American society IS diverse. And therefore the military is too.

Every single military leader knows this and has to deal with this fact on a daily basis. To instill fear in certain slices of society (women, non-whites, etc.) will inhibit military readiness, not enhance it.

Our superintendents have spent their whole careers leading diverse groups of people, members of American society who have been honorable enough to put on a uniform to defend our country, and finding ways to get people to OVERCOME their differences to work TOGETHER. THAT is military readiness, THAT is warfighting.

We can't deal with our differences and come together if we can't talk about our differences. And the military will not be warfare ready if the people in the military are living in fear and lacking the skills needed to work together.

I was also a first-generation woman at USNA and despite the early attempts at sexual harassment training I DID NOT FEEL SAFE. College campuses these days have progressed with safety and inclusivity, including the service academies.

Going back to a state of fear does not help with warfighting. It inhibits it.

And selecting military leaders who put the individual over the country is not in line with the Constitution.

I am deeply concerned for the future of our military. Disbanding innocuous extracurriculars like Women's Engineering club, Firing top officers (former CJCS and CNO), removing information from websites, and other actions like this are sending shockwaves of fear throughout the service, which puts at least HALF of those serving into fear which inhibits military readiness and warfighting skills.

I request that the Senate:

1. Stand up for the military's non-political role and stave off efforts to politicize it.
2. Make sure that military appointments remain based on an officer's neutral commitment to defend the Constitution, never to any individual person, politician, or party.
3. Respect the delicate situation that our superintendents find themselves in, respect their careers of military leadership, and allow them to manage the natural issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the way that is best on their campus.
4. Support student initiatives to meet in harmless groups that are a normal part of any college experience. (disbanding them, and not disbanding white male groups, is discrimination)
5. Protect our future officers and entire military from the fear that has taken hold and highly detrimental to performance.
6. With regards to recruitment, thwart discriminatory practices which will only reduce the number and quality of candidates.
7. Stand up for science: climate change has a tangible impact on military readiness. The Pentagon regularly includes the changing climate in its Quadrennial Defense Reviews (aka National Defense Strategies) because of current and future unrest due to the displacement of billions of people for which it needs to prepare. Not factoring in climate change has a direct impact on military preparedness.

Very Respectfully,

Jessica Lane



14 March 2025

From: Lieutenant Commander Shannon A. Martin McClain, USN (Retired)
Newport News, Virginia

To: Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member, SASC Subcommittee on Personnel

RE: A LETTER FOR THE RECORD REGARDING AFFECTS OF EXECUTIVE ORDERS ON THE
NAVAL ACADEMY, THE FLEET AND THEIR MISSIONS

Dear Senator Warren,

I grew up in a small midwestern town and graduated with merit from the Naval Academy in 1998. I retired as a Lieutenant Commander in 2018. I served as a helicopter pilot flying surface search and surveillance, search and rescue, and logistics missions in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and the Pacific theater of operations. Later, as an instructor at the Fleet Replacement Squadron, I trained newly winged aviators along with those returning to the cockpit after years away. During operations with the USS Bataan, I earned my Officer of the Deck qualification in 2008. I led as a division officer, training department head, and operations department head. In 2010, I was the officer-in-charge of a helicopter detachment providing logistics support during hurricane relief efforts off the coast of Haiti. I was the Air Officer on the USS Ponce (AFSB-1) responsible for all flight operations and flight deck personnel while supporting various missions in the Persian Gulf in 2014 and 2015. My shore tours included staff duty at Naval Forces Central Command and Fifth Fleet, operational intelligence analysis at the Office of Naval Intelligence, and safety analysis and assessment as an Aviation Safety Officer at the Naval Safety Center. I am an Olmsted scholar, having completed a Masters Degree in history at the University of Latvia in Riga, Latvia in 2006 - the first and only Olmsted Scholar so far to study in that country. After retirement, I became an aviation mishap investigator for the Naval Safety Command. I left that position when my husband received orders to Accra, Ghana, where we served for three years and returned back to the U.S. in December 2024. While there, I concentrated on charitable works supporting an orphanage and continuing historical research I began as a non-resident fellow to the Naval Academy Museum.

Shortly after my Naval retirement, I joined with six of my fellow classmates to create the Sisterhood of Mother B (SOMB). With a social media presence, blog, and our podcast, "Waypoints," we hoped to provide a forum for women to share their experiences. For me, the goal was three-fold: be the leader that I hadn't seen, or perhaps just hadn't recognized while I was attending the Naval Academy; help Naval Academy alumnae build on our shared experiences and strengths so each would know that though each experience is unique, no one is alone; and normalize women as leaders.

That third piece is why it was important for me that our forum was public-facing, and it's why I am writing today with grave concern of the affect of recent policies on our leaders, our Navy and our mission.

The president's recent executive order to purge the service of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) negatively affects the lives midshipmen who are women, minorities and LGBTQ+ in and out of the classroom. By preventing them from gathering to celebrate their existence and share their wins and losses. Many of these groups have been in existence 30 years or more, because they existed while I was a Midshipman. My husband, class of 1997, helped found the Naval Academy branch of the National Society of Black Engineers. The existence of these clubs and the existence of the midshipmen, officers, sailors and marines they represent does not reduce the commitment to the mission or our competence at carrying out that mission.

The erasure of our history and our accomplishments along with the inability to meet and celebrate our differences is insidious. It takes away the opportunity to normalize women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ midshipmen as officers and as leaders by erasing how long we have been serving and what we have accomplished. One of the primary functions of the affected groups is to educate and raise awareness for all midshipmen on the military and national legacy of these groups.

As a woman midshipman and a woman officer, I loved nothing better than when my peers and my sailors saw me as normal, when they just expected that I was competent. Our force has to be able to see that women, minorities and LGBTQ+ have been leading with excellence and serving with excellence for a long time. They should know that my classmate, Sara Stires, won the Distinguished Flying Cross in 2001 for heroic actions in Operation Enduring Freedom and that she later became an oral surgeon and the first Dentist to lead the Naval Academy's Brigade Medical. They should know that my classmate Becky Dowling was piloting her F/A-18 fighting against the Taliban in that same time frame before she went to, and graduated from, Top Gun. They should know that my classmate Andria Slough was commanding USS Porter in 2017 when that ship launched strikes on Syria and later commanded USS Makin Island. They should know that my classmate Tina Dalmau has twice commanded at sea, and served as the Reactors Officer on the USS Carl Vinson. They should know about my classmate Jennifer Marino who flew combat missions in Iraq before flying the presidential helicopter. They should know that my classmate and roommate Misty Steinberger wanted desperately to be a submariner, but was unable to serve in that capacity, instead serving with distinction in the Surface Navy before leaving for the civilian sector where she worked with Johns Hopkins Applied Physics Lab where she was finally able to go underway on submarines providing engineering support. These are just a few of the successful women of my class. There are too many to share all their stories.

Frankly, the point isn't that all the women are heroes or destined to be admirals, it's that women, minorities and our LGBTQ+ shipmates are no less capable than the white men whom they serve alongside. That the long history of white men serving and commanding at the highest levels of leadership is as much a result of excluding others as it is of their own merit. That highlighting and celebrating the diversity of our country, our force, and the men and women who broke barriers and succeeded despite the challenges stacked against them does nothing to reduce the lethality of our fighting force. Nor does it denigrate the majority white-male population of our service academies and officer corps and everything to widen the aperture and ensure we are able to have the most capable fighting force.

In addition to the clubs and affinity groups our civilian professors teaching in all areas of the Academy curriculum are under fire from recent executive orders. These professors dedicate their lives to midshipmen. They provide a vital connection to our diverse country, a variety of perspectives and a necessary continuity in the Academy's academic program. They challenge midshipmen to think critically and creatively because those professors are well-aware that today's midshipmen need the best tools to lead in tomorrow's Navy and Marine Corps. Those professors must be empowered to speak truth to power; discuss our nation's successes and our failures; and critically evaluate midshipmen, the institution that trains them and the nation they serve. We are a military under civilian control and our government is one of the people. In my opinion, our leaders must have a connection to those we defend.

Women, minorities, and our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters have been serving since the inception of our fighting forces. Since 1994 women have been serving as pilots in combat units and as crew on surface combatants. In those roles, we have competed with men. The playing field was not equal. Misogyny existed. Equipment was not adapted. There were fewer

opportunities for critical billets due to the availability of female showers and bathrooms. And yet, women performed. They earned ship handler of the year and positions at Top Gun. They became squadron commanders, ship commanders, air wing commanders, battlegroup commanders and eventually, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Chief of Naval Operations and Superintendent of the Naval Academy. The women who reached the pinnacles of Naval Leadership, like Admiral Davids, have exemplary records. There is no room for missteps and learning through failure to reach three stars as a woman in the Navy. Her record speaks for itself.

We have two catchphrases at SOMB. "Be the woman you needed as a Plebe" and "Stronger Together." We didn't invent them, but we use them because they focus us. I have an internal saying that guides me as well, "If you think someone should do something, that someone is probably you." I am writing this letter because we are stronger together. I'm doing it because the midshipmen at the Naval Academy will soon be the leaders of our all-volunteer Navy and Marine Corps. Their sailors and Marines deserve the best leaders the Naval Academy can make for them and these policies detract from that ability. I'm writing because someone must.

Sincerely,

/s

S. A. M. McClain
LCDR USN (Ret.)

I am Lieutenant Colonel Amy McGrath, US Marine Corps (ret.), USNA class of 1997. I served 20 years as a Marine Corps officer, F/A-18 fighter pilot, 8 air medals, 3 combat tours, 89 combat missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Air Combat Tactics Instructor and graduate of the MDTC (Marine COIPS version of TOPGUN 2004) as well as an instructor at USNA teaching midshipmen about leadership from 2014-17.

VADM Davids is an exceptional leader for the US Naval Academy. In my role as a member of the USNA Board of Visitors for the first year of Admiral Davids' tenure at USNA, I can attest to her unwavering dedication and outstanding leadership of this fine institution.

If anyone wants to say that the academies are not being led well, they are flat out wrong. Remind them that the top 3 public colleges in our nation are USNA, USMA, and USAFA as #1 s, #2, and #3. You don't get those rankings by focusing on the wrong things or being distracted somehow. You get them by being excellent...excellent in education and excellent at training and equipping the next generation of our nation's war fighters.

Take it from one warfighter to anyone who hasn't worn the uniform, VADM Davids is a warrior. I have no doubt she will continue to lead with integrity and honor and she will lead ALL midshipmen under her command with dignity and respect.

Respectfully,
Amy McGrath
Lt. Colonel, USMC (ret.)

PS: Do not let them relieve anyone else over this ridiculous DEI purge. These uncalled .for filings are harming not only the senior leaders themselves, but the readiness of their commands. In addition they are hamming the young DIVERSE group of Americans who have the courage to wear the uniform. I just came from a town hall in Florida. You better believe that young sailors, soldiers and Marines are watching this. Our military IS DIVERSE and we need to keep the best talent to fight for our country. These young officers and enlisted are seeing what's going on and they don't like it. They can not speak out. Stop this stupidity now.



Stephen J Monsour
[REDACTED]

18 Mar 2025

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
311 Hart Senate Office Building

Subject: Academy Superintendents

To the members of the SASC Subcommittee on Personnel,

I am a 1996 graduate of the United States Naval Academy. I served for 20 years as a communications officer in the Marine Corps. I deployed to Iraq twice and have served in operational roles at Navy Central Command and Marine Forces Cyber Command.

I am writing since I am deeply concerned for the future of the United States Service Academies. The current administration's actions and policies make me concerned for the preparation of our future officer corps. The purpose of the academies is to install values and knowledge to midshipmen and cadets so they can lead our country's forces in peacetime and in war. This requires a deep understanding of morals and human rights, both to treat members of the military as they deserve and to understand the values that we, as a country, demonstrate to the rest of the world. The Academies are the environment where these future officers learn a higher level of right and wrong and a deeper understanding of their fellow human beings. All young students, by virtue of their age, come from limited backgrounds; their horizons will be greatly expanded at school.

They will be exposed to new ideas from students and faculty that come from other backgrounds, races, religions, and even countries. They will (hopefully) be actively guided in learning the importance of respect for others, the value of new, unfamiliar ideas, and the ability to understand another human's background and motivations. I am fearful that, under the current administration, these concepts are considered pointless and have actually been declared undesirable. The recent memorandum (4 Feb 2025) from the West Point Deputy Commandant disbanding all social clubs related to race or gender is highly disturbing. I have even spoken to a faculty member at the Naval Academy who was concerned about mentioning statistics based on race or gender in class. The Orwellian atmosphere descending on the Academies is appalling. Faculty and students should be free to discuss how differing backgrounds affect them. This is part of the reality of leadership. It can't just be ordered away.

During my time at the Naval Academy in the late 1990s, there were still many examples of racism and sexism at the Academy and in the fleet. Over time I believe that the services have reduced this type of discrimination and built a military that is more cohesive. Military forces operate more effectively when the members feel they can trust each other. I am concerned that the current administration's policies reduce this trust.

I urge the this committee to support the current, active duty officers who have spent years leading our military forces. They have the experience to understand what is required to build and maintain an effective, fighting force. The Superintendents of the Service Academies are highly experienced

officers who take seriously the responsibility of preparing their students for their future responsibilities.

Keep in mind that the military must remain an apolitical entity. Removing officers for perceived alignments, as has occurred within the Joints Chiefs of Staff, is a dangerous precedent. Military officers should be promoted and given positions based on experience and performance, not personal support for a particular political party. Most importantly, we must remember that officers take an oath to support and defend the Constitution. Their first allegiance must always be to the Constitution and the laws of this country. Although the current Commander in Chief directs military operations, officers still have a duty to ensure that these orders are not contrary to established law.

Very Respectfully,

Stephen J Monsour

POLANOWICZ

March 18, 2025

SUBJECT: Academy Superintendents

Dear Senator Warren:

It has been some time since I visited you in your office as the Secretary of EOHHS for the Medicaid Waiver. I thank you for your ongoing incredibly hard work on behalf of our democracy.

My name is John Polanowicz, and I am a 1984 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. After graduation, I went on to train as an Airborne/Air Assault/Ranger prior to attending Flight School. I graduated first in my class from Flight School and went on to fly and command in a Blackhawk helicopter unit at both the platoon and company level. I served on battalion staff as the Flight Operations Officer and was deployed to Panama three times, including the last deployment where I led and flew combat missions in support of Operation Just Cause. All in all, I spent most of my last two years in the military deployed.

After leaving the military in 1990, I went on to Stanford Business School and ultimately was the Chief Operating Officer for an \$8 billion health care company and served as the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I am the proud father of a West Point graduate who went on to serve for over eight years in the Infantry and still have many connections to the West Point community.

Then, as now, West Point has always focused on developing "leaders of character" through the 47-month program. That effort was and continues to be led by the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy, who, as you are likely aware is LTG Steve Gilland. I've met Steve on several occasions and between his extremely distinguished career in the Infantry, he has maintained his focus on lethality, and in my learned position, he ensures that West Point continues to deliver effective, smart, lethal warriors to the Army who also meet the criteria of "leaders of character."

While there is an uninformed undercurrent of individuals who would like to cast West Point as a "woke" institution, I would argue that "leaders of character" must fulfill their mission while understanding that the men and women who will help them attain success in that mission are White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and from other backgrounds and ethnicities. Taken organizational design into account and using it to its best effect isn't "woke"

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it' is how leaders accomplish their respective missions, both in the military and in the civilian world.

I was on a call with the Supe, the Dean and other leaders after the hue and cry about replacing "Duty, Honor, Country" with the Army Values (which are loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage – pretty good set of values if you ask me) where a number of my class decried the "woke" curriculum and agenda – Steve and the Dean calmly pointed out the fallacy of every assumption that was being made, most of which was generated by the rumor mill. He handled the situation with aplomb, grace and toughness, as he continues to do. Every. Single. Day.

I continue to watch my Academy shudder with changes to the Board of Advisors, most recently the addition of General Flynn, who was convicted and later pardoned for lying during an FBI interview. Adding individuals like this who have clearly never embraced the tenets of the Cadet Honor Code – a Cadet will not lie, cheat, steal or tolerate those who do – is an anathema to every leader both past, present and future.

In summary, I and many other graduates of the Academy look at LTG Gilland as a both a distinguished leader and the right person for the job, along with his colleagues at USNA and USAFA. They have served at every level with distinction. They have all made it this far in our Armed Forces by being leaders of character, while accomplishing the missions they have been tasked with. They have the "right stuff" for each of the Service Academy's, notwithstanding the boo-birds that think that leading and fighting with a strong diverse and integrated armed forces is somehow wrong.

Sincerely,

John W. Polanowicz
Sincerely,

John Polanowicz

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

3/20/2025

Dear Senator Warren,

My name is Kelly Keefe Poltrack & I am a member of the class of 1990 of the U.S. Naval Academy. I am writing to the committee to express my concern over the current assault on DEI at the Service Academies & express support for the current Superintendents. I want to make clear that I believe that women & minorities need to be qualified for any role they play in the United States military; however, this requirement should not be confused with the seemingly prevalent notion that because a person is a minority they are automatically not qualified.

I came to the Naval Academy from the hills of Tennessee wanting to serve my country. I worked hard, graduating in the top 10% of my class, & service selecting Naval Intelligence back in the days before the combat exclusion was lifted. I knew going in that women had not been there very long & that military was a male-dominated field, but I planned to attack it the way I always did with hard work & determination.

I turned down golf scholarships to attend the Academy & did not expect to play since they only had a men's team. I pointed out my scores to the coach & after a summer of proving myself was given the opportunity to qualify from the blue tees. I made the team all four years from the back tees & eventually represented Navy at women's NCAA tournaments.

Spring semester my senior year I took a special by invitation leadership class taught by Vice Admiral Lawrence, who to this day remains one of the most impressive people I have ever met. On my way to class one day I was told by the team academic advisor that the Academy had decided not to let me attend a tournament that I had been invited to with the top teams in the country. I left his office deeply disappointed & walked into my leadership class where I was the only woman. The topic that day was women at the Academy. These young men who I never had issues with proceeded to spend the next hour & half ranting about women at the Academy.

Interestingly, their big complaint that day was that women did not actually have to be good to get a letter. I can't remember the exact ranking but our women's xc and swim teams were highly ranked. They competed in D2 but given the number of women in the entire student body that seems appropriate. What the men really didn't like was that a greater percentage of women were varsity athletes. The perception was that the women were not deserving. My roommate was an All-American swimmer who could have swum for powerhouse Indiana University. I had just been denied the chance to compete in a tournament with the top collegiate golfers & I never received a letter since golf was not a women's varsity sport. The truth was that the majority of the men were athletic but were not major-college caliber athletes. Many of the women, like myself, could have played our respective sports many places, yet chose to come to USNA. Not one of the 30 young men that day stepped up to say wait a minute we might not be right. Vice Admiral Lawrence eventually told them they were wrong & they would need to adjust their views to lead in the fleet.

I tell this story for a couple of reasons. One is to point out what it was like for a woman in the

class of '90. That Spring I was the only female company commander, the only female on the golf team, and the only female in that leadership class. It is difficult to never quite fit in. The only people who think that representation doesn't matter have never been the only one of something in a room. The other point is that perceptions of minorities are not necessarily grounded in fact. Often, they had to overcome difficulties on their way to achieving the qualifications; yet no matter what they do the perception exists that they didn't earn it. Sometimes qualifications are very cut and dry - other times more subjective.

The Naval Academy molded me into the person I am today, so I sought to pay that back by serving as a Blue & Gold officer for 20+ years before stepping down. Additionally, I sat on the Indiana 6th District Service Academy nomination committee for about 8 years under two consecutive Republican Congressmen until we were redistricted. Over the years, I interviewed countless candidates. I always enjoyed it because it reaffirmed my belief in our young people. These were highly capable, motivated students, both male & female, who were driven to serve.

As a Blue & Gold officer, I met with parents as well as the candidates. The students were always confident & excited about the opportunity to attend an Academy. The dads were normally onboard but the moms had reservations. Time after time, they would ask if I would encourage my own child to attend. I would look them in the eye & tell them that the Academy was not for everyone but for the right kid it was a tremendous opportunity & if I had a child who wanted to serve I would support it fully. I cannot express to you how saddened I am to say that following the firing of Admiral Franchetti & the stripping of history from DOD websites I am glad that I no longer have to answer that question for a mother worried about a daughter.

Admiral Franchetti's qualifications were impeccable & nearly identical to her white, male predecessor. The perception I have seen by many, intended or not, is that she was fired because she was a woman. I reached out to my own Congressional offices to express my concerns. I explained that no one wants women held to same standards more than the other women. When I served there was nothing that made it harder for other women than a woman who wasn't cutting it, although it would never be held against a man if another man struggled. The women absolutely need to meet qualifications BUT NEVER should it be assumed that because they are a woman they are not qualified & referring to people as DEI hires does that.

My daughter is Naval Academy class of '21 & graduated in the Top 10% of her class. She is a 1st Lt in the Marine Corps who has spent the last three years of her life serving overseas in Okinawa, Japan. The biggest single difference I saw in the Academy from when she went & I did was the way women were accepted. She did not have coaches calling her honey, classmates saying she didn't belong, or O-5 military professors telling her that she was hurting the Academy. Instead, she had classmates calling her a "badass" because she & her triathlon teammates were ridiculously fit. She still can do 14 pullups & run 3 miles in under 18:30 as well as being an expert marksman. She is able to lead her marines by example both physically & in marksmanship, yet her critical-thinking & problem-solving skills as a logistics officer are probably her biggest asset & harder to quantify. Her teammates & female friends from the academy are an exceptional group of young women. They are marines, Explosive Ordnance

Disposal officers, jet pilots, helicopter pilots & surface warfare officers. They are bright, fearless, & ready to take on the world.

This fall, I spoke with a mother of a female Mid who hoped to service select surface warfare on a ship out of Japan. The mother was proud of her daughter, yet wished her chemistry major daughter had tried to go to med school. She said her daughter told her, no, that she was there to be warfare officer. She wanted to be on a ship in Japan because China was the biggest threat & that if you were at sea you had to be ready to fight at all times. This story demonstrates what Admiral Davids & her team are accomplishing. When I hear comments about needing to get back to a focus on warfighting I think what in the world do they think they have been doing.

I have heard about young women debating if they should still pursue an appointment, female Mids concerned about what these changes mean for their careers, active duty women just trying to keep their heads down, hoping that their performance speaks for itself & finally veterans wondering what happened to their hard-earned progress. It doesn't really matter why Admiral Franchetti was fired. It was implied that she was in the position only because she was woman & somehow not qualified. When you erase a former medal of honor winner from DOD websites as if he won the Medal of Honor for being a Mexican-American rather than for throwing himself on a grenade in Okinawa, you are not ridding the Marine Corps of DEI, you are erasing history. I fear that these policies are undoing years of hard work. Women are not asking that the rules not apply to them. They are asking for a chance to be judged on their merit & not have it be assumed that they are in their position because of who they are.

The truth is that we need women & minorities to make up today's all-volunteer force. I fear that these changes both real & perceived will hurt recruiting & retention of the most qualified women. The young women who receive appointments to the Naval Academy can go anywhere, yet they have chosen to serve & to fight if called upon. Let them stand on their merit & let Admiral Davids continue her outstanding work in preparing them.

Thank you for your time,

Kelly Keefe Poltrack, USNA 1990

21 Mar 2025

From: Catherine Ripley, Commander (ret) USN
[REDACTED]

To: The Honorable Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member, SASC Subcommittee on Personnel
The Honorable Sen. Jack Reed, Ranking Member and Co-Chair SASC Subcommittee on Personnel

Dear Senators Warren and Reed,

I am a U.S. Naval Academy graduate, class of 1982 and served on active duty for 27 years. I am respectfully submitting my personal concerns for you to consider before the upcoming SASC Hearings scheduled for next week. My main issues focus on the shameful politicizing of the U.S. military and its grave implications for National Security. This was clearly demonstrated by several events such as the recent Executive Orders leading to the firing of scores of high performing personnel from the Department of Defense due to their association with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to include the Chief of Naval Operations. I am especially and deeply disturbed by the erasure of any current or historic association with DEI both electronically and in printed works and the scorched earth tactics to dismantle all DEI groups, clubs, organizations, events and celebrations from the military.

I was in the third class of women to graduate from the service academies and one of a handful of women of color. Over the past few years, I discovered the existence of several organizations, support groups and events devoted to the education, awareness and support within minority groups at the Naval Academy. My classmates and I suffered untold amounts of harassment, confusion, solitude and loss of identity while at the Academy in the early years of women's integration. There were no such groups for those of us in those first several classes. We were alone, separate, marginalized and oftentimes inexplicably ashamed. I can attest to the amount of literal blood, sweat and tears we endured to complete our education and training while in the throes of resistance, discrimination and hatred from those opposed to the legislation to allow us entrance. We have finally, after 50 years come to a place where we are not only fully integrated in the academies but also into nearly all aspects of our fighting forces. However, we have now witnessed, in a matter of weeks, the beginning of the demolition of the hard-fought efforts to make our military integrated both physically and philosophically. The diversity of our personnel allowed us to tap the most talented, intelligent and forward-thinking citizens for a military once considered undeniably premier.

By erasing the history and powerful memories of those who fought and died for our freedoms based solely on their race or gender identification is an abomination akin to the purges and book burnings that occurred in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. These purges and the recent firing of the first female Chief of Naval Operations, based on her gender is a perversion of everything I and countless military veterans that came before me, to include my father, fought for since the founding of this nation.

I implore you to stand up for what we as women and people of color for so long have fought for, died for and struggled for. Our diversity is our strength and was once what made us the most powerful, reliable, just and admired military in the world. Please don't let them erase us. Thank you for your time, your service and for championing women in the military.

Very Respectfully,

Catherine D. Ripley
CDR, USN (ret)
U.S. Naval Academy, Class of 1982
[REDACTED]

cc: VADM Davids, Superintendent USNA

[REDACTED]

March 21, 2025

Dear Senators Tuberville, Warren, and other distinguished members of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) Subcommittee on Personnel:

In 1985, as a young college freshman, I raised my right hand and swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution. I can't say that I fully understood the gravity of those words at the time and I'm sure I had no idea what the future would hold, but I do remember feeling relieved that I now had a way to pay for college and my working-class parents wouldn't have to mortgage our house. I never imagined a fateful run in with an ROTC recruiter would result more than three decades in uniform, two combat deployments, four degrees and every single thing I hold dear in my life including 9 years of service to the world's preeminent leader development institution – the United States Military Academy at West Point.

When I accepted an ROTC scholarship, I barely knew West Point existed and knew nothing about its admittance of women a few years before. No one and nothing prepared me for what it was going to be like for me as a young female officer because I was surrounded by well-meaning leaders without this lived experience. It was just an artifact of the times. Reporting to my very first assignment, my commander welcomed me to the unit by professing how pleased he was to finally have someone "to inspect the female soldiers in the company and talk to them about birth control and stuff". It was a confusing message to receive because for one, they never covered this added responsibility in Officer Basic and I couldn't understand why my male peers weren't enforcing standards for ALL their soldiers the same way I was expected to. But it was my first job, and I wanted to be seen as a team player, so I saluted and moved out smartly.

When I commissioned, I expected serve my initial obligation and no more, but I soon fell in love with the sense of purpose and the camaraderie of the Army Team. In the ensuing 15 years, I deployed to Desert Storm, commanded a company in the 82d Airborne Division and served as a staff officer in both Special Operations and conventional units, navigating the nuances of leading while also being one of the only women in the room, at the table, in or in the tank. Some days were challenging, but all were deeply satisfying and none more so than during my second combat deployment to Iraq with the First Cavalry Division that profoundly changed my career trajectory and my life.

General (Retired) Pete Chiarelli was the Division Commander for OIF-II and the most creative and inspiring military leader I have ever served alongside. He understood Soldiers were more than their job descriptions and we needed to leverage the full potential of every single one to have a chance of success in Baghdad. One day while I was performing my regular duties as a Signal officer monitoring the Division's command and control networks, he approached me with a request: Would I be interested in meeting with a group of local Iraqi women and hear their concerns and report back? Just like in my first company, he was asking me to do this for the sole

reason that I was an available woman, but this time the logic was sound and completely obvious to me. I was honored to carry the messages of these women and add value to the mission. Deeply moved by this experience I began to feel a strong calling to teaching but I wasn't quite ready to leave the Army. It turned out there was a way for me to do both at the United States Military Academy.

I arrived at West Point in 2008 after earning a PhD in Social Psychology. Without the cadet experience to fall back on, the learning curve of culture and operations was steep. But I also had the advantage a fresh set of eyes and could earnestly question why a certain policy or tradition existed and suggest improvements. I volunteered for every consequential role and committee assignment that the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership offered. I directed the two core leadership courses, the Psychology Program, the Eisenhower Leader Development Program, and served for three years as the Deputy Department Head. I also served on the Admissions Committee, the West Point Leader Development System Committee, the Diversity Leadership Committee, the Institutional Effectiveness Committee, the Superintendent's Strategy Working Group among several others. I advised multiple cadet groups and athletics teams, and personally taught, mentored or sponsored over 1,000 cadets and indirectly impacted thousands more during my tenure. Furthermore, I co-investigated a 5-year longitudinal study on character development at USMA with one of the world's preeminent developmental scientists Dr. Richard Lerner, my (now) colleague at Tufts University where we continue to teach incoming faculty, and I participated in the Academy's most recent Internal Review in 2023. In sum, I have witnessed nearly every facet of this institution over the past 17 years and feel well qualified to reassure any concerned citizen that West Point continues to produce finest and most lethal Army officers in the world.

To paraphrase a famous tenet in developmental psychology "every cadet is like all other cadets, like some other cadets, and like no other cadets." This is evident through an exceptionally strong core curriculum and myriad graduation requirements that every cadet must achieve; in the "blend of excellence" of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities that appeal to different interests and needs; and in the highly personalized leader development strategy that meets every cadet where they are and provides them the resources, challenging experiences and reflective space to grow. I am profoundly disappointed and deeply concerned by recent decisions that now limit some of these opportunities by characterizing them as divisive or harmful. On the contrary, they are openings to educate around different lived experiences and better prepare cadets to lead Soldiers from all facets of society. When cadets feel they are valued for their unique contributions to the larger team, they feel more committed and inspired to serve. And when they can envision their future selves, they report stronger consideration of retention, thereby significantly enhancing military readiness in the long term.

I can specifically speak to these observations through my role as Officer in Charge (i.e. Faculty Advisor) for the Corbin Forum – the cadet club established in 1976 (long before the advent of DEI) - to support the integration of women into the Corps. Our mission for the club was to educate, empower and inspire leaders of character by addressing gender related issues – both the challenging and the positive. Enormously popular, the club excluded no one and of its 400 active

members in a given academic year, approximately 20 percent were men who wanted to learn as much as possible in a supportive environment to scale up their leadership. I was personally thrilled at an event when one young man publicly admitted that he did not know the female uniform standards but realized he owed it to his future Soldiers to learn. I suspect many others shared this same sentiment but were too embarrassed to say it aloud, and these men and then others who weren't in attendance but heard about it, quickly became motivated to improve their knowledge. Hence, these clubs do not just serve a select population, they provide leader development opportunities for any cadets who wish to pursue them which then proliferate throughout the Corps. They are combat multipliers not dividers. Removing these opportunities from the "Margin of Excellence" makes the Academy, and by extension the Army, much less excellent.

Since the days of Socrates, older people have lamented how inferior younger generations are relative to themselves at the same age. Yet behavioral scientists have shown that this assertion is simply untrue, in part because older people tend to overestimate their own abilities, and because environments are in constant flux. At West Point, this manifests in the infamous Old Grad saying "The Corps has" - implying that contemporary cadets aren't subjected to anything close to the rigor that alumni experienced, and therefore become less effective officers. But this is an unfair comparison as our operating environments and society itself become more volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous with each passing day. Our methods must adapt to effectively meet these new realities, which I directly observed happening during my many years of service to the Academy, and through my more recent Internal Review support to Superintendent Lieutenant General Steve Gilland, who is exceptionally equipped to shepherd this cause.

My beloved mentor the late Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient Frances Hesselbein, who herself served West Point as the USMA Class of 1951 Chair for the Study of Leadership, often asserted that the cornerstone of American democracy is built on two specific institutions: a high quality public education system accessible to all, and a strong military, which find their nexus at the service academies. **West Point remains as firmly committed to the ideals of Duty, Honor, Country through the deliberate development of exceptional leaders of character for a lifetime of selfless service to our great Nation as any other moment in history.** Frances called her service to the Academy and the U.S. Army as the greatest privilege in her (107-year long) life. It has been mine too.


I am confident that you will continue to trust the judgment of West Point's battle tested, highly respected and eminently qualified leadership to continue their vital mission. I sincerely appreciate the committee's continued support in ensuring their success.

Sincerely,



Diane M. Ryan, Ph.D.
Colonel, U.S. Army (Retired)

Cynthia E. Sbrocco



March 18, 2025

SUBJECT: Academy Superintendents

Dear Senator Warren: My name is Cindy Sbrocco, and I am a 1984 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. After graduation, I trained in Airborne school and then became an Ordnance officer with the 197th Separate Infantry Brigade. I served my five-year commitment, went on to receive my MBA at Chaminade University in Honolulu and then continued to support the Army as a military spouse while my husband and classmate from West Point continued to serve on active duty for 22 years. We live in the D.C. area and my husband is a contractor with Army staff at the Pentagon while I am a manager at the Fairfax County Animal Shelter. I owe my success in my adult life to the education I received at West Point. The Military Academy has always focused on developing "leaders of character" through the 47-month program. That effort was and continues to be led by the Superintendent of the United States Military Academy, who, as you are likely aware is LTG Steve Gilland. During his extremely distinguished career in the Infantry, he has maintained his focus on lethality, and in my opinion, he ensures that West Point continues to deliver effective, smart, lethal warriors to the Army who also meet the criteria of "leaders of character." While there is an uninformed undercurrent of individuals who would like to cast West Point as a "woke" institution, I would argue that "leaders of character" must fulfill their mission while understanding that the men and women who will help them attain success in that mission are White, Black, Hispanic, Asian and from other backgrounds and ethnicities. Taken organizational design into account and using it to its best effect isn't "woke" it is how leaders accomplish their respective missions, both in the military and in the civilian world. In summary, I and many other graduates of the Academy look at LTG Gilland as both a distinguished leader and the right person for the job, along with his colleagues at USNA and USAFA. They have served at every level with distinction. They have all made it this far in our Armed Forces by being leaders of character, while accomplishing the missions they have been tasked with. They have the "right stuff" for each of the Service Academy's, notwithstanding the boo-birds that think that leading and fighting with a strong diverse and integrated armed forces is somehow wrong.

Please do not let another great leader be politized and forced to retire.

Sincerely, Cindy Sbrocco

Dear Senator Warren,

I'm a 1985 graduate of the United States Military Academy and I'm a woman. Lately, I have felt like the Trump administration is trying to erase that fact from existence and to make sure that the academies become bastions of white, heterosexual men in the image of the Secretary of Defense. History shows that our military was never just white, heterosexual men and that we are the better for including everyone. Also, you can't man (pun intended) a US military anymore with just white males. There are not enough of them who will sign up or who can meet the qualifying standards.

The rush to eliminate what the Trump administration deems to be "woke" (whatever that means) is sloppy, ill thought out, and insulting to all who have served. The firing of high-ranking women and black generals does not reflect well on the administration and the position that service academy superintendents have been put in to meet the requirements of doing away with DEI is untenable. No matter what actions they take, it will not be enough for the Secretary of Defense because women and minorities are still there. Already, parts of the Army's history that doesn't appear white male is being erased. Can you imagine if that was being done to your history?

I'm not sure what your committee hopes to gain by questioning the service academy superintendents. Are you trying to see if they have secretly been "woke" and now you will punish them? How about letting them continue to train military leaders instead of appearing before Congress? Please continue to advocate for all members of the military.

Tracy Seymour
USMA, 1985

21 March 2025

Senator Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Personnel
Via email [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Service Academy Superintendents

Dear Honorable Senator Warren,

I write in support of VADM Yvette Davids, currently serving as USNA Superintendent, and of your efforts to safeguard military personnel policies that allow our best and brightest to serve.

I am a 1987 graduate of USNA, part of the 8th class to graduate with women.

I served on active for 6 years, as an 1140 Special Operations officer, resigning as an O-3 LT. I was a bad ass warrior to get the sole SpecOps billet available to USNA; to graduate from Navy Dive School; to serve and thrive aboard a US Navy diving & salvage ship 1988-1991; and to succeed at a Weapons Station as Special Weapons Department Head.

Serving in the Navy as a lesbian before the Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy was difficult. While aboard my ship, I read a message from the 2nd Fleet Commander (circa 1990) which stated that while some of the fleet's best performers were gay or lesbian, commanders were directed to identify and discharge them from the Navy. That was chilling & presaged my decision to resign.

Americans are a varied population, and variety adds skills, attributes and gifts to any work group, including combat units. Group think is dangerous in the military. A strength of our military has always been the independent, critical thinking and commitment to mission objective of its fighting forces. Lack of diversity will degrade military capability & readiness.

Commitment to hiring and retaining a diverse armed forces is not "woke". It is smart business in a competitive labor market. It is vital to our national defense. It allows us to retain an allvolunteer military. It allows America to tap the potential of those willing to serve.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Skelley

Suzanne Skelley
[REDACTED]

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding USNA and the Future of Our Armed Forces - A Record of Dedicated Service, Resilience, and National Security Expertise

Senator Elizabeth Warren, Ranking Member
SASC Subcommittee on Military Personnel
United States Senate, Russell Building Room 228
Washington, DC 20510



Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding USNA and the Future of Our Armed Forces - A Record of Dedicated Service, Resilience, and National Security Expertise

Dear Senators,

As a 2000 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a veteran with a distinguished 15-year career in the Marine Corps, I write to you with profound concern regarding the recent political pressures placed upon the USNA Superintendent and the Academy. My experiences, and the urgent calls I'm receiving, underscore why it is imperative to protect the integrity and autonomy of this vital institution.

My name is Elizabeth Stephens, and I served as a Marine Corps aviator, achieving several groundbreaking milestones. I was among the first women to earn a Marine Corps aviation contract, the first female MV-22 Osprey pilot in combat in 2006, and, significantly, I am the only black woman to have ever flown the MV-22 Osprey. These accomplishments, along with my service as an Engineer Officer with the 3rd Marine Aircraft

1

Elizabeth Stephens (Major "Cracker" Okoreeh-Baah) USMC Ret

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding USNA and the Future of Our Armed Forces - A Record of Dedicated Service, Resilience, and National Security Expertise

Wing (3d MAW) from June 2011 to June 2015, were earned through rigorous training, unwavering dedication, and a merit-based system that must be the cornerstone of our military.

My journey as a Marine Corps aviator was not without its challenges. As a 2000 Naval Academy graduate, I was among the first women to earn a Marine Corps aviation contract. I flew the CH-46E Sea Knight, completed a year-long combat deployment, and then transitioned to the MV-22 Osprey. In 2006, I became the first woman to pilot the Osprey, an aircraft that at the time was facing significant doubts about its performance and safety. Despite these challenges, I flew anyway. This required not only peak physical fitness and mental toughness but also exceptional leadership skills, adaptability, commitment, proficiency, respect, integrity, and a relentless drive for improvement. These are the qualities that define a "badass" Marine, and they are the qualities we must continue to foster in our future leaders.

5 of the Most Badass Women in the Marine Corps



Marine Corps Captain Elizabeth A. Okoreeh-Baah poses in front of an MV-22 Osprey, March 14, 2006. (U.S. Marine Corps/Jonathan A. Tull)

Military.com by Sarah Blomstedt
Updated March 10, 2023 | Published November 01, 2017

Throughout history, female Marines have shattered barriers, proving their capabilities in combat, command, and specialized roles once deemed off-limits.

Another way of saying this is: Marines are known for being 100 percent badass, but these women take that distinction to a whole new level.

Being a badass woman in the Marine Corps requires not only peak physical fitness and mental toughness, but leadership skills, adaptability, commitment, proficiency, respect, integrity, and a relentless drive for improvement.

1. Capt. Elizabeth A. Okoreeh-Baah

My service with units like Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 263 (VMM-263) "Thunder Chickens" and Marine Aircraft Group 29 (MAG-29), as evidenced by the patches displayed in my shadow box, reflects my commitment to aviation excellence. The numerous challenge coins I've collected represent the diverse units and individuals I've served alongside, further illustrating the breadth of my experience.

2

Elizabeth Stephens (Major "Cracker" Okoreeh-Baah) USMC Ret

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding USNA and the Future of Our Armed Forces - A Record of Dedicated Service, Resilience, and National Security Expertise

My dedication to national security extends beyond my military service. I am a **National Security Fellow with the Truman National Security Project**, actively engaged in addressing critical security challenges facing our nation. My expertise in Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence is further demonstrated by my leadership roles at **Microsoft**, where I served as **Director of Data Center Cyber Risk Intelligence** and **Principal Software Engineer**. I also led global diversity, inclusion, and belonging initiatives, understanding the critical importance of diverse perspectives in problem-solving and innovation. Currently, I serve as **CEO of DBS Cyber LLC**, focused on protecting American families through software and technology solutions.

My transition to the cybersecurity field, coupled with my national security fellowship, has further reinforced the need for expert, apolitical leadership. Cybersecurity is a critical component of our national security, and the future officers trained at USNA must be equipped with the most advanced knowledge and skills, free from political interference.

However, it is not just my professional experience that compels me to write. I am receiving a growing number of calls from Blue and Gold Officers and parents of current and prospective midshipmen. They are deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of their children. The current climate of political interference and the erasure of diverse role models are creating an environment of uncertainty and fear.

The removal of images showcasing the contributions of women and minorities, the banning of clubs that foster inclusivity, and the abrupt leadership changes are not merely symbolic. They send a clear message that diversity is not valued, and that political agendas take precedence over merit. This is a direct affront to the principles upon which our military was built and a betrayal of the sacrifices made by generations of service members.

The diversity of our country is a strength, not a weakness. It is what enables our military to adapt, innovate, and overcome challenges. The actions being taken are irreparably damaging the future of the United States Armed Services. By undermining diversity and inclusion, we are limiting the pool of talent available to defend our nation. We are sending a message to future leaders that their contributions are not welcome and not valued.

My commitment to education and mentorship is evident in my work with initiatives like Cyber Kids and TOVA, as well as my efforts to build a 150+ member Cybersecurity Community at Microsoft. In my application for the Keyser Chair position at the Naval Academy, I proposed to replicate this model to support midshipmen research and faculty development. These endeavors are driven by a desire to foster talent and knowledge, not political agendas.

Furthermore, as the author of "Building a Resilient Digital Future: A Comprehensive Guide to Cyber Risk Monitoring," I understand the importance of intellectual integrity and the need for educational institutions to operate free from political influence. My advocacy against erasing the contributions of women in military history reflects my belief in objective historical accuracy and the recognition of merit regardless of background.

My desire to serve as a Distinguished Visiting Professor (Keyser Chair) at the U.S. Naval Academy's Center for Cyber Security Studies stems from a commitment to developing future naval leaders equipped to face the complex challenges of the 21st century. My proposed contributions focus on curriculum innovation, bridging

3

Elizabeth Stephens (Major "Cracker" Okoreeh-Baah) USMC Ret

Subject: Urgent Concerns Regarding USNA and the Future of Our Armed Forces - A Record of Dedicated Service, Resilience, and National Security Expertise

technical cyber operations and strategic leadership. This should be driven by educational and strategic imperatives, not political directives.

The USNA Superintendent, like all military leaders, must be empowered to make decisions based on the best interests of the institution and the nation. Political interference undermines their ability to lead effectively and compromises the development of future officers.

The Academy's mission is to produce capable, ethical leaders who are ready to defend our nation. This mission transcends politics. I urge you to support the Superintendent and ensure that the Naval Academy remains a beacon of excellence, guided by merit and dedicated to the defense of our country.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Stephens (Major "Cracker" Okoreeh-Baah)

USNA Class of 2000

Former Marine Corps Aviator

National Security Fellow



Patrick Vessels

Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Retired)

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For the Subcommittee on Personnel
Senate Armed Service Committee

SUBJECT: Argument Against Replacement of LTG Steve Gilland as Superintendent of the United States Military Academy at West Point

Senators:

I am LTC (Ret) Patrick Vessels, 1984 graduate of the United States Military Academy. I served over nine years of active-duty time with the United States army and approximately 19 years more in the United States Army Reserves. On active duty and for several years in the Reserves I was an officer in Military Intelligence, working first on plans for the defense of Western Europe and representing the Army V Corps at NATO level Intelligence conferences before working in the Reserves supporting JICPAC and their intelligence-gathering efforts. In the Reserves I served for a brief time in a PSYOP battalion before finishing out my career in Civil Affairs, during which time I was deployed twice to Iraq, first in 2003 and then in 2009. Besides various medals for performance during those deployments, including a Joint medal, I received both a Bronze Star and my Combat Action Badge. My duties included briefings to Commanding Officers at all levels up to four-star and involved personal time with and briefing of ambassadors from several nations along with the Kurdish Prime Minister at the time. Upon retirement I was awarded the Legion of Merit.

In my civilian career I have worked at the executive level in the security field along with a few other positions leading to my latest role as a Postal Subject Matter Expert for Ricoh USA.

During that time, I have maintained some form of contact with military colleagues and fellow USMA alum, and while there are those who support the direction the current Administration is taking, there is a large number who do not. In this case, I oppose the removal of LTG Steve Gilland from his role as Superintendent of the United States Military Academy. I also oppose the removals of the analogous positions at the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy. While I cannot claim to know LTG Gilland personally, I have heard of him through those who do know him, even before this issue came to light. Without exception, assessments of LTG Gilland have been stellar, extolling his knowledge, his intelligence, and his professionalism. I have seen examples of those when LTG Gilland discussed the use of Army Values in lieu of the traditional Duty, Honor, Country. When he did so, he did so calmly, correctly, professionally, and by knowledgeably refuting every objection.

The reasons for this removal seem rooted in a desire to root out Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and if that is correct, I am compelled to say that the reasons are specious. DEI has never been the boogeyman that some, including many in Congress and the Executive Branch, make it out to be. But even if it were as a program, USMA has never fallen prey to its extremes. USMA's mission to mold leaders of the future requires that those leaders be prepared to work closely with and earn the respect of soldiers from all demographics; USMA's programs in that vein have worked toward that goal, not toward some meritless jobs program that it is often falsely portrayed to be.

Rather than a positive step to help the Academy, the removal of LTG Gilland seems just another step to homogenize a non-homogenous institution, along the lines of the recent and spurious banning of several extracurricular clubs.

Patrick Vessels

Lieutenant Colonel, US Army (Retired)

West Point was crucial to my development as a person, a family member, and a soldier. And while I never dedicated my entire life to it as people like LTG Gilland have, I did dedicate much of my life and have never regretted it, nor has the Army. The current decisions made regarding the Academies, including that of replacing the current Superintendent, will not improve them. They will only make them blinkered and fragile.?

I urge you, do not replace LTG Gilland. He will help produce leaders of whom the country can be proud.

Sincerely,
Patrick Vessels
LTC, US Army (Ret)

Support for Service Academy Superintendents

Greetings,

I understand there will be a SASC hearing soon with the combined Superintendents of the US Service Academies. I have heard that one of the intentions is to question their DEI policies and their commitment to some kind of warrior ethos.

I am a 1983 graduate of the US Military Academy at West Point and in addition to growing up in an Army family, I served on active duty as an Armor officer for about 9 years. Never saw combat but trained for it in the US and Germany in Mechanized Infantry and Armor units. I was an M1A1 tank company commander in Germany during the Cold War and commanded a sector for a short time along the then East/West German border shortly before the wall came down. I know something about the warrior ethos.

While you are questioning the assembled Superintendents you should ask them about their careers in the military. To reach the rank they hold, they individually served for around 30 years. I am sure they will be in uniform. The uniform they will wear will read like a resume for those of us who have served. They will wear various qualification badges to show what warrior schools from which they graduated (eg Airborne, Ranger, Special Forces, HALO etc...), the West Point Superintendent also has a Combat Infantry Badge which is only earned if one has served in an Infantry unit at Brigade level or below and been actively engaged in combat (you can't be any more warrior than that). They will also have various ribbons that denote campaign medals earned in a military campaign in Iraq or Afghanistan for example, as well as various medals earned in recognition of accomplishments – some awarded as a result of combat or in a theatre of combat. Ask them about those. For the campaign medals, they will remind those that earned them of the danger or at least discomfort of serving in a combat zone where in addition to long days and sleepless nights, the living conditions for the term of the campaign could be very primitive. Not to mention the sacrifice of the separation from family and the missed milestones of their child's first steps, birthdays, graduations and little league championships. How many of these campaign medals does Senator Tuberville have? How many military qualification "warrior" badges – earned by meeting or exceeding the standards set for warrior skills they denote – does Senator Tuberville have? Please ask him.

I have read LTG Gilliland's bio. Aside from the normal progression of roles in increasingly responsible positions in Infantry units, he was selected, trained and lead a unit in Delta – one

of the most lethal special forces units in the US military. So he knows a thing or two about the warrior ethos. To obtain his exalted rank, he would also have had to obtain at least a Masters Degree in some field. West Point has always promoted the idea of a "warrior/scholar" and LTG Gilliland exemplifies this attribute. I am confident the Superintendents of all Service Academies have at least 1 Masters Degree each. Does Senator Tuberville have a Masters Degree (not honorary) in anything? Please ask him.

I am not sure what Senator Tuberville's qualifications are to Chair the SASC. I am not sure how he can be qualified to evaluate these Superintendents' commitment to instilling a warrior ethos at their respective Service Academies if he himself has never served and never run an academic institution. I know he likes to brag about how his father served in Europe during WWII fighting the socialists and communists. But unless his father was fighting on Germany's side, then he was actually fighting with the Americans against fascists – which would make his father Anti Fascist or ANTIFA. Wonder whether he would own up to that? Please ask him.

The bottom line to my input is no one on the SASC panel – with the possible exception of Senator Reed who I know is a USMA graduate and served his country, is qualified to question these Superintendents' adherence to running their institutions in the best way to produce the best kind of warrior/scholars that the US deserves. There may be questions about the implementation of certain policies that they have been asked to follow under any previous administration. Could/should these policies be changed to reflect priorities or guidance from a new or different administration? Perfectly reasonable and these kinds of changes happen regularly for as long as these Academies have existed. Should they be called out/reprimanded for their adherence to guidance from a previous administration? Unquestionably **NO**.

Please treat these assembled military officers with the respect they deserve in your hearing.

Sincerely,

Michael Woods

USMA '83

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TED BUDD

SERVICE ACADEMY ADMISSIONS PROCESS

1. Senator BUDD. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, during the admissions process, how often does your respective military service academy deviate from the order of merit list when you are permitted to do so, and would you agree to provide this data to the Personnel Subcommittee for the class of 2028?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. USMA conducts its admissions process in accordance with statute (10 USC § 7442). All candidates must be nominated by law. The nomination requirement drives almost all order of merit (OML) deviations.

OML at USMA is measured by Whole Candidate Score (WCS), a quantification that accounts for scholarship, leadership and physical fitness aspects of a candidate's file. We admit candidates outside of a strict OML in the following ways:

- Nominees from Members of Congress (MoC): A cadet candidate from any Senator's State or Congressman's district, may have a lower WCS than a candidate from another MoC's State or district who is denied admission.
- MoC Slating of Own Nominees: USMA is bound by the prioritization of any nominating MoC (assuming minimum standards for admission are satisfied). If a MoC identifies a particular candidate with a lower WCS than another in his State or district as his primary nominee, the lower WCS candidate would displace a higher one. MoCs can also choose to enumerate nominees from within their State or district without regard to OML.
- Children of Members of Armed Forces: Those candidates satisfying the nomination requirement by being the children of Armed Forces members who were KIA, MIA, 100 percent disabled veterans, or a Medal of Honor recipient, may result in an overall OML deviation. There is no OML deviation permitted, however, from within this nomination category. Additionally, candidates satisfying the nomination requirement through the President's authority to nominate up to 100 children of Active Duty and Retired Armed may result in an overall OML deviation. There is no OML deviation permitted, however, from within this nomination category.
- Enlisted Soldiers: Those candidates satisfying the nomination requirement through the Secretary of the Army's authority to nominate enlisted members of the Regular Army, Army Reserve, and from ROTC, may result in an overall OML deviation. There is no OML deviation permitted, however, from within this nomination category.

For those candidates satisfying the nomination requirement through the Secretary of the Army's Qualified Alternate basis (10 USC § 7442(b)(5) permits 200 Qualified Alternates per year), there is no deviation from the OML within the nomination category. Qualified Alternates come from the nominees presented by MoCs, but who do not win the statutorily limited number of cadets from any MoC's State or district.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. When making offers of appointment to candidates who may be charged as additional appointees (10 USC § 8456(b)), the Naval Academy may deviate from the Whole Person Multiple (WPM), USNA's version of order of merit. For the Class of 2029, there will likely be 150–175 additional appointees (the vast majority with congressional nominations), most of whom are well-qualified recruited athletes whose WPMs were affected by their participation in their high school sports activities, which often precluded other activities. Other additional appointees often include Naval Academy Preparatory School candidates who were precluded from being charged against another nomination source, as they are counted as members of the Navy Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve limited to 85 under 10 U.S.C. § 8454(b)(3). The Personnel Subcommittee is welcome to review our appointee data for the Class of 2028. The Department of the Navy additionally provides an annual briefing on the number of appointees in each appointment category as requested in House Report 118–301, the Joint Explanatory Statement accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2024.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA is in compliance with 10 USC § 9442 and 9443. As we ensure the best and brightest across the United States of America are selected to attend USAFA, we rely on three critical aspects:

- 1) Congressional Nominations
- 2) Selection Composite Score
- 3) Unique Skill Sets valued and required by DAF and USAFA

Our first charge is to address the congressional nomination slates to include both Principal and Competitive nominations. USAFA selects all Principal nominations if they meet standards. Principal nominations comprise approximately 30 percent of all nominations. USAFA leverages our Selection Composite Score to select from congressional Competitive nomination slates. Congressional Competitive nominations comprise approximately 40 percent of all nominations. Thus, approximately 70 percent of USAFA nominations come from congressional sources.

Our next priority is to select the Top 200 qualified alternates in accordance with 10 USC § 9443. We use the Selection Composite Score in this process.

We also value those unique skills provided by our prior enlisted who have demonstrated leadership in service, and recruited Division 1 athletes who have demonstrated athletic, leadership, and teamwork skills (grit, tenacity and communication).

We will work with the DAF and OSD to provide the requested data.

2. Senator BUDD. Vice Admiral Davids, in 2020, the Institute for Defense Analyses issued a report on the academy attrition. The report said, “SAT/ACT scores are significantly associated with higher graduation probabilities at USMA [United States Military Academy] based on research conducted by the RAND Corporation in 2015. In a subsequent report, SAT scores were a significant predictor of success at USAFA [United States Air Force Academy], with higher scores associated with a higher likelihood of graduation. The researchers recommended increasing the academic composite weighting of academy applicants, since these increased the likelihood of graduation.” Has the Naval Academy increased the academic composite weighting since 2020? If not, why not?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, the Naval Academy increased the academic composite in the Whole Person Multiple commencing with the Class of 2029.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR ELIZABETH WARREN

TRANSGENDER CADETS AND MIDSHIPMEN

3. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, the Trump administration and Secretary Hegseth have taken several actions to attempt to ban transgender servicemembers from serving in the military. What actions have you taken to implement these executive orders and directives at the service academies, and on what dates?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. None. USMA has no transgender cadets.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. In response to executive orders and directives, I have taken the following action:

- On March 17, 2025, via email I informed all USNA midshipmen and service members of voluntary separation procedures for those with a current diagnosis or history of, or exhibiting symptoms consistent with, gender dysphoria. I also explained that voluntary separation requests must be submitted no later than March 28, 2025. I provided links to the associated ALNAV and NAVADMIN messages and encouraged individuals with questions to engage with a medical provider, legal office, and/or their chain of command. Finally, I provided the contact information of a Navy Judge Advocate who is available to provide confidential legal advice to midshipmen and staff on the matter.
- On April 3, 2025, via email I informed all USNA midshipmen and servicemembers that, due to court order, the Department of the Navy is currently prohibited from implementing policy recently directed through Executive Orders and Department of Defense directives. I also provided a link to the associated ALNAV message and encouraged individuals with questions to engage with a medical provider, legal office, and/or their chain of command. Furthermore, I provided the contact information of a Navy Judge Advocate who is available to provide confidential legal advice to midshipmen and staff on the matter.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND.

- On 4 Feb 2025, USAFA received and complied with the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (SAF/MR) guidance.
- On 2 Apr 2025, USAFA received and complied with SAF/MR Memorandum, Additional Guidance for Executive Order 14183, “Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness,” 2 April 2025, to pause until further notice all actions directed by Executive Orders related to transgender personnel.
- On 8 May 2025, USAFA received the Secretary of Defense memo, “Implementing Policy on Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness,” 8 May 2025, and on 9 May 2025, the DAF received SAF/MR initial guidance on this policy.

4. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you anticipate that transgender cadets or midshipmen at each of your respective academies will be permitted to graduate?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. USMA has no transgender cadets.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Midshipmen who satisfactorily meet all graduation requirements in accordance with USNA Instruction 1531.49C will be permitted to graduate.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes. USAFA’s transgender cadets received their degrees.

5. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, have you removed, temporarily suspended, or taken any other action to pause the ability for transgender cadets or midshipmen to be

enrolled in or participate, in the same location and manner as non-transgender cadets or midshipmen, in programs, courses, and extracurricular activities at each of your respective academies? If so, please provide details on these actions.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. N/A.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. In compliance with initial executive orders and to ensure our transgender cadets could continue to meet their academic requirements, USAFA temporarily paused Military Training activities for our transgender cadets. After receiving the SAF/MR Memorandum, Additional Guidance for Executive Order 14183, "Prioritizing Military Excellence and Readiness," cadets returned to all Military Training activities.

6. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you anticipate that transgender cadets or midshipmen at each of your respective academies will be permitted to commission after graduating?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. N/A

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Midshipmen who satisfactorily meet all graduation requirements in accordance with USNA Instruction 1531.49C and meet medical accession standards are eligible to be commissioned by the President upon graduation.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA received guidance from DOD and the DAF on the commissioning of our transgender cadets. Graduating transgender cadets will not be commissioned.

7. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, have you required or do you plan to require any transgender cadets or midshipmen to attend classes virtually that non-transgender cadets or midshipmen attend in person?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. N/A

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No. I have not required, and am not currently planning to require, any midshipmen to attend classes virtually.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. In compliance with the initial Executive Orders and to ensure cadets could continue to meet their academic requirements, we provided the voluntary opportunity for our transgender cadets to attend classes virtually. One cadet attended classes virtually. After the 2 Apr guidance, all transgender cadets attended in-person classes.

8. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, have you required or are you planning to require any transgender cadets or midshipmen to move to living quarters corresponding to their birth sex?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. N/A

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No. I have not required, and am not currently planning to require, any impacted midshipmen to move to living quarters corresponding to their birth sex.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Since the beginning of the academic year, all three of our transgender cadets have been in single-person rooms, as is typical with some senior cadets. Note, not all senior cadets have their own rooms, as there is insufficient space to accommodate this. Between the time of OSD/DAF guidance and the injunction, we made single-rooms available close to single-occupancy hygiene facilities. After the injunction, cadets returned to their original single-rooms.

9. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, have you required or are you planning to require any transgender cadets or midshipmen to stay in separate or isolated living quarters?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. N/A

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No. I have not required, and am not currently planning to require, any impacted midshipmen to stay in separate or isolated living quarters.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Since the beginning of the academic year, all three of our transgender cadets have been in single-person rooms, as is typical with some senior cadets. Note, not all senior cadets have their own rooms, as there is insufficient space to accommodate this.

10. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, please describe actions you have taken regarding treatment of transgender cadets or midshipmen to comply with orders issued by U.S. District Courts in applicable litigation, including *Talbott v. Trump* and *Shilling v. Trump*.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. N/A

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. In response to the litigation, on April 3, 2025, via email, I informed all USNA midshipmen and service members that, due to court order, the Department of the Navy is currently prohibited from implementing policy recently directed through Executive Orders and Department of Defense directives. I also provided a link to the associated ALNAV message and encouraged individuals with questions to engage with a medical provider, legal office, and/or their chain of command. Furthermore, I provided the contact information of a Navy Judge Advocate who is available to provide confidential legal advice to midshipmen and staff on the matter.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA has complied with all court-ordered preliminary injunctions. Throughout this process we have supported our transgender cadets including access to health professionals, legal advisors, our alumni support network, and academic counselors.

11. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, how many transgender cadets or midshipmen are enrolled in each of your academies? Please provide a breakdown of the number of cadets or midshipmen enrolled by class year.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. None.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. I am currently aware of one transgender midshipman who is a member of the Class of 2026 (junior).

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. We are aware of three (3) cadets (Class of 2025).

SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT

12. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, should cadets or midshipmen who report sexual assault be prosecuted if their report does not result in a successful conviction?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. No.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No, a midshipman should not be prosecuted on the basis of whether a sexual assault report results in a successful conviction.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. No. Lack of a successful conviction only proves the complaint was not able to meet the burden of proof. Any minor collateral misconduct discovered is also not eligible for prosecution under DOD's "Safe to Report" policy.

13. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, how should cadets or midshipmen who report sexual assault be treated if their report does not result in a successful conviction?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Fairly and with dignity and respect.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. The Department of Defense encourages greater sexual assault reporting to connect victims with care and services needed to recover, as well as to have the opportunity to hold alleged offenders appropriately accountable. For that purpose, we have both Restricted and Unrestricted reporting options. When making Unrestricted sexual assault reports, midshipmen should be treated with respect throughout the entirety of the reporting, investigation, and resolution process—regardless of whether their report leads to a conviction. There are many protections, services, and resources available to help victims recover after both kinds of sexual assault reports. Some of the resources that support midshipmen who experienced sexual assault include access to confidential counseling with a staff psychologist, regular check-ins with their victim advocate and SAPR office, and the ability to apply to the Naval Academy's On Ramp Program so they can receive extra time and accommodations with school assignments. We also support victims of sexual assault through our physical separation policies, which include the ability to request class and/or company reassignments, request a leave of absence away from the Naval Academy, or expedited transfer to another Service Academy if the victim filed an Unrestricted Report.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Regardless of conviction results, USAFA's first priority is to ensure cadets who report a sexual assault receive Advocacy and Support Services such as health professionals, legal advisors, support networks and counselors. USAFA recognized the complexity of proving sexual assault cases. Regardless of a successful or unsuccessful conviction, our priority is the care of the cadet and providing a pathway of healing and support. While every unrestricted report is investigated by the Office of Special Investigations and assessed by the Office of Special Trial Council, our first concern is always advocacy, support and healing.

14. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you support allowing women who have become pregnant or started families to return to each of your respective academies?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes. We have a process for when this situation arises that is in accordance with law, DOD, and Army policy.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, USNA follows DOD Instruction 1322.22—Military Service Academies, which allows for midshipmen (both men and women) to request a leave of absence for the delivery and care of their dependent child, and then, after establishing a family care plan (just as single active duty parents provide before deployments), return to the Academy.

Lieutenant General BAUERNEFEIND. USAFA supports the CADET Act to enable cadets to retain their parental rights. The CADET Act allows cadets who become parents administrative time off to focus on themselves and their families until they can return to meet the military, academic, and athletic demands at USAFA (utilizing a validated Family Care Plan).

15. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you support allowing men who have started families to return to each of your respective academies?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes. We have a process for when this situation arises that is in accordance with law, DOD, and Army policy.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, USNA follows DOD Instruction 1322.22—Military Service Academies, which allows for midshipmen (both men and women) to request a leave of absence for the delivery and care of their dependent child, and then, after establishing a family care plan (just as single active duty parents provide before deployments), return to the Academy.

Lieutenant General BAUERNEFEIND. USAFA supports the CADET Act to enable cadets to retain their parental rights. The CADET Act allows cadets who become parents administrative time off to focus on themselves and their families until they can return to meet the military, academic, and athletic demands at USAFA (utilizing a validated Family Care Plan).

16. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, what steps have you taken at each of your academies to implement the requirements in the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act and the Department of Defense guidance in response to these requirements that, “A cadet or midshipman who becomes pregnant may be granted a leave of absence for good cause by the [military service academy] superintendent?”

Lieutenant General GILLAND. We follow the law as implemented by DOD policy and have put cadets on a leave of absence following a notification of pregnancy.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. The U.S. Naval Academy has implemented policy whereupon learning that a midshipman is to become a parent, they are counseled on their options: (1) request a transfer to the Senior Reserve Officer Training Corps; (2) request a leave of absence; (3) transfer parental rights to a legal guardian or caregiver (to include adoption); or (4) voluntarily resign. Midshipmen are able to seek legal advice through the local Navy legal assistance office, and are given resources to develop a family care plan, if applicable. They are also encouraged to speak with a chaplain and counselor.

The Brigade has been briefed on this policy at the beginning of each of the last four semesters, and all staff members in Bancroft Hall (the USNA dormitory) know to inform Commandant’s Legal when a midshipman reports pregnancy or parenthood, such that they can be informed of their options.

Lieutenant General BAUERNEFEIND. USAFA complies with the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act and Department of Defense guidance regarding cadets who become pregnant. USAFA authorizes administrative time off for cadets who become parents to focus on themselves and their families until they can return to meet the military, academic, and athletic demands at USAFA (utilizing a validated Family Care Plan).

17. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, in how many cases have you granted a leave of absence when requested by a cadet or midshipmen in accordance with this policy?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Since the policy’s implementation, three Cadets have been offered a medical leave of absence. One pregnant cadet accepted. The other two refused and opted to stay at USMA as long as possible.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. There have been no requests for a leave of absence during my 15 months as the Naval Academy Superintendent.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Since the Fiscal Year 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, USAFA has granted three requests for a leave of absence in accordance with this policy.

18. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, in how many cases have you denied a leave of absence when requested by a cadet or midshipmen in accordance with this policy? Please provide the reason for these denials.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. None.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. I have not denied any requests for a leave of absence.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. None.

19. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, how do you consider the impact of experiences of sexual assault and harassment on cadets and midshipmen before discharging them from each of your respective academies?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Consistent with Army processes for enlisted and officer involuntary separations, the command reviews the circumstances and grounds for every involuntary separation which includes whether the cadet has made an unrestricted report of sexual assault.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. All midshipmen separations are considered on a case-by-case basis, considering the facts surrounding the separation issue (academic, physical, aptitude, honor, conduct, resignation, etc.), mitigating and aggravating circumstances, in accordance with applicable policy and the midshipman's suitability for commissioning. Our processes take a "whole person" approach that considers all manner of factors impacting the individual. If a midshipman has disclosed an incident of sexual assault or harassment, that information will be considered in mitigation/extenuation, depending on the separation issue.

Specific to disciplinary proceedings, USNA has fully implemented the DOD/DON Safe to Report Policies (DODI 6495.02, volume 1, and SECNAV memo of 29 Jun 22), which prohibit disciplinary action for an adult sexual assault victim's alleged minor collateral misconduct (e.g., underage drinking) that might be in time, place, or circumstance associated with the victim's sexual assault incident. These policies aim to eliminate barriers to victims reporting sexual assault and when such circumstances arise, where the Office of Special Trial Counsel has deferred jurisdiction concerning the issue of collateral conduct to the commander, my staff pauses disciplinary proceedings pending a decision from me, in consultation with legal, regarding whether the application of disciplinary action is warranted under case is the Safe to Report policy.

Finally, if a midshipman is separated from the Naval Academy, I thoroughly review each case to determine the appropriate separation codes and characterization of service (e.g., Honorable, General). Similar to the above separation decision, I consider all mitigating and aggravating circumstances when assigning (or recommending to ASN (M&RA) for cases in which I am not the final separation authority) such designations.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. All cadet disenrollments are considered on a case-by-case basis, considering the facts surrounding the separation issue, all mitigating and aggravating circumstances, and the cadet's suitability for commissioning. A cadet's disclosure of sexual assault or sexual harassment is considered as a mitigating or extenuating factor prior to a disenrollment decision in alignment with DOD's "Safe to Report" Policy. This policy encourages reporting of sexual assault by not penalizing cadets for minor collateral misconduct when their report of sexual assault coincides with any alleged misconduct.

USAFA procedures ensure all disenrolled cadets, both voluntary and involuntary, have access to resources. For cadets who have reported sexual assault and sexual harassment, victim advocacy services continue to be offered. USAFA assists with the transition of care to the local Veterans Administration (VA) via the VA Military Sexual Trauma (MST) coordinator and the VA medical/mental health care. In addition, USAFA provides contact information for local survivors' resources as well as local military sexual assault survivors' resources. In the event an Unrestricted Report is made at the time of out-processing, SAPR follows all processes as outlined in the Department of the Air Force and Department of Defense mandated policies.

20. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, how many cadets or midshipmen who were discharged before graduation in the last 5 years alleged they had been sexually assaulted or harassed before they were discharged?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Of the 82 sexual assaults reported to the command in the last 5 years, 21 cadets were discharged. Fourteen were medical separations, five were Unqualified Resignations (UQR), and two were separated for honor or misconduct.

Of the 32 formal sexual harassment complaints filed in the last 5 years, four cadets were discharged. Two were medical separations, and two were UQRs.

Not all reports and complaints were substantiated. Additionally, there are many reasons why a cadet may be separated that are independent and unrelated to an allegation of sexual assault or harassment. Finally, if a cadet has made a report of sexual assault or harassment, the command considers this fact when determining the appropriate outcome of the action.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. USNA requires that all midshipmen who are voluntary or involuntarily discharged meet with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Response Office as part of the check-out process to receive last minute support and civilian resource information (if needed). In the event an Unrestricted Report is made at this time, the SAPR Victim Advocate immediately notifies the CoC as is standard practice. In the last 5 years, 31 discharged midshipmen reported a sexual assault or harassment.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. In the last 5 years, 7 cadets who reported being sexually assaulted or sexually harassed were involuntarily separated for misconduct unrelated to a sexual assault report or sexual harassment complaint. In the last 5 years, 14 cadets who reported being sexually assaulted or sexually harassed voluntarily separated from USAFA. In total, 21 cadets who reported being sexually assaulted or sexually harassed have departed USAFA over the last 5 years.

21. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you believe that there should be non-mandatory reporters for sexual assault and harassment at each of your academies? If not, why not?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes. Non-mandatory reporters play a vital role in supporting victims and advancing the goals of the SHARP program. They are often the first individuals a victim turns to during a crisis. Victims who feel heard and supported are more likely to seek help through official SHARP channels.

USMA policy mandates that all non-mandatory reporters to contact the SHARP office if they become aware of a sexual assault or sexual harassment. West Point personnel receive specific training to prepare for these sensitive encounters because the initial response can shape a victim's recovery.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. The decision to report a sexual assault is a deeply personal one. Should someone desire to make a report, the Department has provided the means and the resources to connect the victim with the support they need to recover. USNA values the importance in the flexibility that non-mandatory reporters provide to victims of sexual assault. Not only do our specialized support billets (Medical, Chaplains, SAPR Staff, etc.) have confidentiality, but our uniformed faculty and staff members outside the chain of command of the victim also maintain a "non-mandatory reporter" status. As non-mandatory reporters, members outside the chain of command (to include all midshipman), are not required to report a disclosure of sexual assault but may do so as a matter of discretion. Allowing non-mandatory reporters to exist allows for honest conversations between peers and colleagues, allowing the victim space to consider their reporting options.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA values and leverages both mandatory and non-mandatory reporters. A dual system provides cadets with safe pathways to disclosure and support while ensuring accountability where required.

Our non-mandatory reporters include specialized support billets (Medical, Chaplains, SAPR Staff, etc.) and select permanent party members outside the chain of command. Our non-mandatory reporters receive specific training on helping agencies so they can support and direct cadets to the appropriate resource or office.

22. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, have you removed, eliminated, or decreased the scope of any programs, events, campaigns, observances, or other policies relating to sexual assault prevention and harassment since beginning your time as Superintendent at each of your respective academies? If so, please provide specific information on each of these changes and your justification for doing so.

Lieutenant General GILLAND. No.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. USNA has made administrative edits (i.e., replacing "gender" with "sex") to the SHAPE peer-led curriculum and GUIDE training, but our critical work in the mission remains unchanged. USNA observed Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) in April 2025 as an opportunity to fur-

ther expand on sexual assault awareness and prevention education and to show our support for the survivors among us. The events, displays, and speakers for SAAPM 2025 have undergone rigorous evaluation to ensure that they are meeting the intent of SAAPM.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA has not removed, eliminated, or decreased the scope of any programs, events, campaigns, observances, or other policies relating to sexual assault and harassment prevention. We have enhanced our cadet-led helping and support liaison programs to mirror the operational Air Force and Space Force organizational structure. As such, USAFA transitioned the “Teal Rope” program into Cadet Wing Integrated Prevention and Response (IPR) Cadet Liaisons. Cadet IPR Liaisons support their cadet squadrons and advise their cadet leadership to foster a positive unit culture. IPRs act as a resource for cadets seeking information or support related to helping agencies and support services. Overall, USAFA adjusted aspects of certain events to align with uniform standards of the profession of arms.

Furthermore, USAFA hosted the 2024 National Discussion on Sexual Assault and Harassment, held “Take Back the Night” events, and is in the final stages of offering an Interpersonal Foundations Course as part of the core curriculum for all cadets.

USAFA is laser-focused on violence prevention actions, as demonstrated in our institutional efforts on the Climate Transformation Task Force (CTTF), which purposefully aligned the “Let’s Be Clear” campaign with DOD and DAF efforts. CTTF is a USAFA-wide effort to adapt our organizational culture that produce warfighter-leaders who understand interpersonal leadership skills, ultimately leading to enduring change in how we reduce unit level risk factors associated with sexual assault.

23. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, have you signed or do you intend to sign the Sexual Assault Awareness Prevention proclamation?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. USNA has not signed a formal proclamation for Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) 2025. Instead, the Naval Academy internally shared a video featuring USNA leadership that introduces SAAPM and highlights the importance of sexual assault prevention and response.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA institutionally supports several Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention activities, such as the National Discussion on Sexual Assault and Harassment (USAFA hosted in 2024), “Take Back the Night”, and most recently, established the Interpersonal Foundations Course to be launched in the fall of 2025. Additionally, Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) events were executed the month of April. Greater emphasis for educational opportunities extends into the academic school year with the assistance of Cadet Wing Integrated Prevention and Response (IPR) Cadet Liaisons. IPRs act as a resource for cadets seeking information or support related to helping agencies and support services. They support their cadet squadrons and advise their cadet leadership to foster a positive unit climate. Finally, we are in the last stages of publishing our “Leadership Imperative for Violence Prevention” strategy.

24. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, does your academy have a “teal rope” program for peer liaisons for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) office?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. In 2022, USMA created the ACT—Addressing Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment, Creating Healthy Climates, Tackling Holistic Health—program. After undergoing dedicated prevention training, select upperclass cadets serve as company-level peer-educators and conduits to professional resources. Since its inception, more than 250 cadets have been assigned. While select cadets serve as ACT leaders, we emphasize that every cadet is an ACT cadet and has the responsibility to support their teammates, lead by example, and maintain a safe, professional climate built on trust and mutual respect.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. USNA Teal Rope equivalent are the SHAPE and the GUIDE teams. The Sexual Harassment Assault Prevention Education (SHAPE) team consists of 90 Midshipmen peer educators who train the Brigade in small group sessions as part of the comprehensive 4 year/13-hour SHAPE curriculum. The Guidance, Understanding, Information, Direction and Education (GUIDE) team consists of 105 Midshipman distributed throughout every company and provides Guidance, Understanding, Information, Direction and Education to members of Brigade who have experienced a sexual assault or who seek more information/resources on the topic. The GUIDEs wear a small teal pin on their uniforms to distinguish themselves as a resource in the Brigade. Both the SHAPE and GUIDE teams are a part

of the infrastructure within the Brigade to ensure maximum integration amongst all midshipman support programs.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA transitioned from a “Teal Rope” program to a formal cadet squadron Special Staff program in order to enhance the support and better align with the operational Air Force and Space Force organizational structure. USAFA transitioned the “Teal Rope” program into the Cadet Wing Integrated Prevention and Response (IPR) Cadet Liaisons. The Cadet IPR Liaisons serve as advisors to cadet leadership to foster a positive unit culture. IPRs also act as a resource for cadets seeking information or support related to helping agencies and support services.

25. Senator WARREN. Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, what is the status of the Air Force Academy’s “Let’s Be Clear” Campaign?

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. The USAFA “Let’s Be Clear” (LBC) campaign was merged with the DOD-led Climate Transformation Task Force (CTTF), culminating in actions aimed at reducing the prevalence of sexual assault and sexual harassment at the military service academies. The actions targeted known unit climate risk factors associated with incidents of interpersonal violence, such as prolonged stressful training environments, barriers and stigma around seeking mental health support and integrating interpersonal violence prevention skills into cadet professional development curriculum. USAFA took 125 actions, transformed them into a unified effort across the whole USAFA installation, and executed 17 Lines of Effort to robust the initial LBC campaign. Examples of USAFA’s efforts include addressing transparency of accountability, improving hiring practices of training staff, and fortifying interpersonal violence prevention training for cadets and permanent party members.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR MAZIE K. HIRONO

RECRUITMENT IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES

26. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, having an officer corps that represents the diversity of the country it protects and the people it leads is a force multiplier which gives our Armed Forces an advantage over our adversaries. Given the restrictions imposed by recent executive orders targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), are your admissions teams still able to focus recruiting efforts on underrepresented communities to ensure the officer corps becomes more reflective of the diversity of the country?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. The Corps of Cadets represents every part of America, and our goal is to ensure that it continues to do so. However, there are congressional districts that do not maximize their allocations of 15 candidates. To that end, our recruiting efforts are focused on identifying and recruiting candidates from those congressional districts that do not maximize their allocations.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Currently, we are not aware of any restrictions which would limit our ability to recruit any potential candidates from across the country.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA continues to direct our outreach and recruiting efforts to leadership, aviation, and STEM focused events where we are best positioned to find qualified candidates from a wide range of backgrounds who meet our USAFA priorities of Warfighters to Win, Leaders of Character and Quality, and Critical Thinkers to Adapt. This includes USAFA Admissions recruiting in “Opportunity Districts” where we can leverage congressional vacancies where there is an above average propensity to serve in the military, eligibility to serve in the military, and desire to attend a 4-year college or university. USAFA seeks to conduct outreach where all potential candidates are informed of the opportunity.

27. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, do you feel you still have clear guidance and sufficient flexibility to recruit the best and brightest cadets and midshipmen from every corner of this country?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes.

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

28. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, according to the Department of Defense’s 2023-2024

report, an estimated 457 women and 327 men at the service academies experienced unwanted sexual contact. The DOD reports that only 1 in 8 cadets or midshipmen who experience sexual assault choose to report it. Many survivors remain reluctant to report incidents due to fears of retaliation, lack of trust in leadership, or uncertainty about support services. How are each of your academies evolving sexual assault prevention training to better reflect cadet and midshipmen experiences, and what measures are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of those programs?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. While we recognize that the decision to report sexual assault is a personal one that takes courage, the command encourages 100 percent reporting to ensure accountability of actions. Regardless of a cadet's decision to report, we are committed to ensuring sexual assault victims get the help they need. We deliberately and proactively communicate the availability of these resources to cadets in various ways.

USMA has rigorously worked to address the reluctance to report and concerns of retaliation. Our efforts include leader-driven SHARP training informed by our team of professionals and Corps-wide activities to promote a supportive climate. The command's intent is to foster an environment in which seeking support is seen as the enactment of strong character and engaged leadership—whether by leading yourself or leading a cohesive team where members feel equipped to perform at their best. Readiness is best achieved if these foundational conditions are met.

Ultimately, this is about character. We believe and emphasize that character is prevention, and prevention is character. Our efforts and training focus on sustaining and strengthening the professional climate, built on trust, dignity, and respect that is necessary for Cadets to develop into leaders of character who live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence as Army officers.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No midshipmen should have to fear retaliation for reporting a sexual assault or sexual harassment. USNA continues to educate about retaliation and offer support services through the Midshipman GUIDEs, in the supplemental SHAPE curriculum, and through leadership action. The SHAPE curriculum underwent a National Opinion Research Center (NORC) evaluation from the fall of 2021 to the spring 2023 and the training itself has internal feedback methods and program metrics that contribute to curriculum updates. USNA has also taken great effort to comprehensively screen and train all Company Officers and Senior Enlisted leaders and utilizes leadership positions both within and outside the brigade to emphasize the importance of dignity and respect. USNA has created resources to equip midshipmen to engage in bystander intervention and has vastly expanded support services available to victims who file Restricted Reports. By providing additional support for victims who want to maintain confidentiality, USNA hopes to see a higher reporting rate in future reports.

In the last 5 years, there has been 1 report of retaliation associated with a sexual assault case. DOD actively prohibits retaliation and requires the Services to report and investigate retaliation allegations. Anyone who believes they are experiencing retaliation can go directly to the DOD Inspector General—or get more information about available help and reporting avenues from their SARC. Unrestricted Reporting allows victims of sexual assault to report retaliation in the SAPR program. USNA policy immediately escalates any retaliation report to Superintendent/Commandant level for immediate investigative action and appropriate recommendation from the Office of Special Trial Council (OSTC).

The results of the 2024 survey of cadets and midshipmen at the Academies indicate USNA's efforts have increased midshipman trust in leadership. Specifically, as compared to the 2022 survey, trust that the Naval Academy will protect their privacy following a reported incident has increased 25 percent, trust in USNA to ensure a midshipman's safety following a reported incident has increased 29 percent, and trust in USNA to treat a victim with dignity and respect following a reported incident has increased 25 percent.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA is continuously evolving our SAPR training and updating our program evaluation. We execute comprehensive training for both staff and cadets that emphasize regulatory policies and procedures. Additional training includes bystander intervention and helping agency options. Most recently, cadet access to helping agencies was improved by embedding support locations in the cadet area and aligning walk-in hours to our cadet schedules.

USAFA conducts program evaluations using data from various sources to include course assessments, internal feedback and information from official DOD data collection tools such as the annual Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) and the Service Academy Experiences Survey (SAES) of cadets and midshipmen at the Academies. The feedback is used to update curriculum, inform prevention efforts, adjust victim services, and improve processes.

USAFA recently developed the Interpersonal Foundations Course: a graded academic core course focused on cultivating a comprehensive academic understanding of relationships across various contexts including self-awareness, peer-to-peer, professional, and romantic. The course integrates theoretical foundations, practical applications, and reflective components to provide cadets with a well-rounded and impactful learning experience.

29. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, what concrete steps are you taking to challenge harmful cultural norms and build a climate of trust for survivors of sexual assault to come forward and report perpetrators without fear of retribution?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. USMA has made a concerted effort to build a professional climate of trust through formal and informal training; continual communication and engagement with Cadets, staff, faculty, and coaches; and proactive, committed leadership at all levels. USMA and the United States Army are values and standards-based organizations, and sexual assault and harassment are contrary to our values. We reinforce to all members of the USMA Team and West Point community the importance of knowing, adhering to, and enforcing standards; being role models and leading by example; holding ourselves and each other accountable for our actions and behaviors; and treating everyone professionally, with dignity and respect.

We believe we are making progress in this space. For example, the results of the 2024 Service Academy Gender Relations (SAGR) survey show that nearly 70 percent of USMA women who chose to report any experience of unwanted sexual contact did so out of a sense of civic or military duty (nearly triple the number reported in the 2022 survey). We interpret this result as a promising sign that speaking up and seeking support is an embedded part of our military duties as current and future leaders.

Additionally, every individual who reports harassment is protected in accordance with AR 600–52. No Army personnel may retaliate against a victim, a reported victim, or another member of the Armed Forces based on that individual's report of sexual assault and sexual harassment made under the purview of the SHARP Program. These provisions are punitive.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. No midshipmen should have to fear retaliation for reporting a sexual assault or sexual harassment. In alignment with the OSD-mandated Climate Transformation Task Force (CTTF) mission, USNA has amplified and initiated multiple actions over the past 2 years to address unhealthy climates to further reduce harmful behaviors and reinforce a climate of trust and accountability for midshipmen. These include reviewing traditions and eliminating any that may be counter to our desired climate, requiring stand-downs for all sports teams and extra-curricular activities each semester, providing mandatory training in healthy relationships for all freshmen, expanding training in bystander intervention skills, increasing substance misuse education, and providing the Brigade regular updates on accountability for sexual assault cases to increase midshipmen's trust in leadership to take action following reports.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Over the past 2 years, USAFA has initiated multiple actions to address cultural norms and traditions to further reduce harmful behaviors and reinforce a climate of dignity, respect, trust, and accountability for all cadets. These actions included identifying and eliminating traditions that run counter to honorable conduct, eliminating the harmful consequences brought forth by unhealthy power dynamics, and establishing the 4-class leadership development system. This approach provides mandatory training in healthy relationships and unhealthy power dynamics for all cadets, expands training in bystander intervention skills, increases substance misuse education, and informs the Cadet Wing via periodic discipline bulletins.

30. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, what specific trauma-informed resources are available to survivors on your campus, and how is their accessibility and confidentiality actively communicated to cadets and midshipmen?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Trauma-informed resources available at USMA include our Sexual Assault Response Coordinator and Victim Advocates; mental health services, such as our Center for Professional Development, military and family life counselors, behavioral health specialists, and the DOD SAFE Helpline; Chaplains; Family Advocacy Program; Special Victims Counsel; and Cadets' peer support network (the aforementioned ACT program). We actively communicate the accessibility and confidentiality of these resources through cadet and staff orientation and

training; posters, QR codes, and digital signage; SHARP and resource websites and portals; and routine staff and faculty training.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Midshipmen have many protections, services, and resources to help them recover after a sexual assault. As part of the role and in accordance with annual training requirements, midshipman SAPR GUIDEs brief their companies and sports teams on all resources available and the confidentiality associated with each. This information is also disseminated throughout the SHAPE curriculum and by leadership in the form of leadership discussions, command briefings, midshipman handbooks and awareness months. USNA recently hired a trauma specialist at the Midshipman Development Center (MDC) who, in addition to working with victims of sexual assault, trains the GUIDEs, SHAPE peer educators and other support groups on trauma informed care as part of their extensive summer training curriculum.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA's command teams and helping agencies are focused on supporting survivors. Cadets have many protections, services, and resources to help them recover after reporting a sexual assault. USAFA leadership and a group of professional helping agencies engage in the monthly Case Management Group (CMG) focused on supporting the recovery of our survivors. Within the CMG, we receive input from Victim Advocates, Victims Counsel, health professionals, and chain of command in order to provide individualized trauma-informed care. Outside of the monthly CMG, SAPR and command frequently followup with survivors ensuring access to care. Finally, USAFA endorses an open-door policy at all echelons of leadership.

31. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, how are you ensuring consistent enforcement of sexual misconduct policies, and what oversight mechanisms are in place to evaluate progress and maintain accountability?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. At USMA, we ensure consistent enforcement of sexual misconduct policies through a structured approach that combines standardized policy implementation, leader training, and rigorous oversight. The specific measures include the following.

- *Command Training & Policy Alignment:* To ensure our chain of command is fully aligned with enforcement expectations, all incoming TAC Officers (legal Company Commanders) receive mandatory onboarding and annual refresher training focused on SHARP, EO, and related policies. This ensures they are equipped to enforce standards, understand policy updates, and model appropriate leadership behaviors in line with DOD directives and academy-specific protocols. TACs also receive training specific to the management of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Additionally, they are subject to "Positions of Significant Trust and Authority" screening per Army policy.
- *Standardized Enforcement across Cadet Companies:* We apply consistent protocols across all companies, including uniform reporting procedures, command response timelines, and support resource engagement. This eliminates variability and ensures every cadet receives the same standard of care and response, regardless of unit.
- *Oversight Mechanisms to Evaluate Progress and Maintain Accountability:* These include our monthly Sexual Assault Review Board, quarterly Sexual Assault Response Team, the biennial SAGR survey and Sexual Assault and Violence at the Military Service Academies Report, the Defense Sexual Assault Incident Data base, and the Incident Case Reporting System.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. All Naval Academy sexual assault and sexual harassment cases are investigated by Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) and reviewed by the Office of Special Trial Counsel. For lesser offenses, such as engaging in consensual sexual acts within berthing spaces, this type of sexual misconduct is handled internally at USNA and addressed through our Administrative Conduct System. The Conduct System affords alleged offenders multiple layers of due process and appellate rights. The military justice programs at the military service academies are in the midst of an audit by the U.S. Government Accountability Office and we await their findings and recommendations. Finally, Federal law requires that the Department of Defense to visit the Academies every 2 years to determine the effectiveness of policies and programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Academies. The results of these oversight actions are regularly reported to Congress.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA sexual assault and sexual harassment cases, based on the form and substance of the allegation and in coordination with USAFA/JA, are appropriately addressed by either the Equal Opportunity Office, an independent investigator, Office of Special Investigations (OSI), or the Office of Spe-

cial Trial Counsel (OSTC), as required by regulation. In addition, Federal law requires that the Department of Defense visit the Academies annually to determine the effectiveness of policies and programs addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Academies. The results of these oversight actions are regularly reported to Congress.

ERASING HISTORY THROUGH DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION EXECUTIVE ORDERS

32. Senator HIRONO. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, as we've seen with both the temporary removal of the brave 442d Regimental Combat Team history page—a primarily Japanese-American regiment—from a DOD website and the temporary suspension of a Tuskegee Airmen documentary from Air Force training, this Administration is trying to erase history. Will you commit to me that your curriculum will continue to teach the full truth of our military and national history—including not only the valor of these units, but also the shameful moments in our military's history, like the internment of Japanese Americans and racial segregation?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Our curriculum (academic, military, and physical) is designed to develop leaders of character for the Army and our Nation, ready to lead Army formations in our Nation's defense as they support and defend the Constitution. Our academic program equips cadets with the intellectual agility needed to make critical decisions. Cadets explore a wide breadth of subjects through a robust engineering, scientific, and liberal arts education that teaches cadets how to think, not what to think. Underpinned by the Constitution, the curriculum prepares graduates to outthink and outfight our adversaries on complex, multi-domain battlefields.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, the Naval Academy will continue to teach the full truth of our military and national history. An understanding of history and the critical thinking skills developed through studying history are required to be effective leaders for our Navy and Marine Corps.

Lieutenant General BAUERNEFEIND. USAFA will continue to teach our military and national history. USAFA is committed to delivering a world-class education—one that challenges cadets to think critically and engage with complex and difficult topics. We remain steadfast in our commitment to presenting a comprehensive view of American military history.

CURRICULUM CHANGES AS A RESULT OF THE EXECUTIVE ORDERS

33. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Davids, I understand the Naval Academy's curriculum required extensive review after the President's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Executive Orders were signed. I suspect this was the case for all of the service academies. Given the overly broad nature of the recent executive orders targeting DEI, do you believe there is a risk to academic freedom and truthful instruction?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. The Naval Academy conducted a thorough review of the 870 courses in our catalog and found that 20 were not aligned with recent Executive Orders and DOD guidance. There were only two (0.2 percent) that required cancellation. Another nine required restructuring, such as the removal of a module, and nine required very minor modifications. We continue to work with Navy and DOD leadership to sharpen our understanding of the language in these orders so that we can meet their intent and continue to develop critical thinking skills in our students. At present, I do not believe there is a risk to academic freedom and truthful instruction.

34. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Davids, how are you working with your faculty to ensure midshipmen are exposed to a broad diversity of perspectives?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. I'm fortunate to have a professional faculty who are diverse in their disciplinary preparation and life experiences, while united in their dedication to our mission to develop leaders of character for the Navy and Marine Corps. We also invest in the development of our entire faculty throughout their careers to remain current in their respective disciplines and well-versed in the needs of today's military through collaboration with the Office of Naval Research, partnerships with other commands, and frequent opportunities for fleet exposure and service-relevant speakers.

35. Senator HIRONO. Vice Admiral Davids, will you commit to protecting your faculty's ability to teach cadets and midshipmen the great, the good, the bad, and the ugly of U.S. history—even if political directives suggest otherwise?

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, the Naval Academy will continue to teach the full truth of our military and national history. An understanding of history and the critical thinking skills developed through studying history are required to be effective leaders for our Navy and Marine Corps.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH

COMMAND CLIMATE

36. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, can you provide insight into how your execution of the Executive Orders has impacted students and your assessment of the current command climate at the service academies?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. The Corps of Cadets is focused on becoming leaders of character and serving the Nation as officers in the United States Army.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Our midshipmen are young professionals. The Executive Orders have only affected a small fraction of the many activities that occupy the midshipman's busy day. While some students may have concerns about particular changes, as with any change, USNA makes room for feedback and provides leadership discussion and guidance. As a whole they appreciate the clarity of the focus on preparation for facing the national security challenges that are on our horizon. They have always discussed personal topics in their own rooms with their friends and fellow midshipmen. In professional settings, such as the classroom, in King Hall (dining facility), and in the public, they remain exemplars of the future military leadership of our Nation.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA cadets are members of the Profession of Arms. Within the Profession of Arms, service members follow all lawful orders, which include executive orders. When cadets have concerns with directed changes, they express those concerns both in command and helping agency channels, while remaining focused on their primary duty of becoming the next generation of Air Force and Space Force leaders, prepared to defend our great Nation.

37. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, how are you making it clear that all students have the potential to succeed as warfighters and contribute to the mission, when the Secretary of Defense, President and other senior leaders have suggested through both their words and actions that women and servicemembers of color have benefited from DEI policies and endanger readiness and lethality?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. The United States Military Academy develops leaders of character, committed to the Army Values and ready for a lifetime of service to the Army and Nation. The 4,400 members of the Corps of Cadets hail from all every corner of our Nation and from all backgrounds and walks of life. They are united by their common desire to serve as members of the Profession of Arms and by their shared commitment to supporting and defending the Constitution.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. USNA leadership, faculty, staff, and the midshipmen themselves remain focused on developing leaders of character and the next generation of resilient warfighters for our Navy and Marine Corps. We continue to stress that each member of the Brigade and the entire USNA team is important to our mission.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA is focused on our mission of forging 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.

AFFINITY CLUBS

38. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, please describe the criteria used to determine which extracurricular and affinity groups remain and which are no longer permitted?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. The command disbanded any affinity group/club that was sponsored by the former USMA Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity in accordance with executive orders and applicable DOD and Army guidance.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. In support of its midshipmen and their personal and professional development, USNA has retained all of its midshipman activities and groups, but stratified each based on priority of mission.

- Brigade Support Activities are those organizations whose primary function is performing or supporting public-facing USNA events.

- Extracurricular Activities (ECAs) are those organizations with a focus on warfighting, physical activity, professional skills, academic groups, and shared recreational interests.
- Religious ECAs (RECA) are those organizations which support the spiritual readiness of the Brigade.
- Midshipman Groups are those organizations that support connections between midshipmen and mentoring based on shared interests.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. All cadet club activities are in compliance with Executive Orders. USAFA has retained all clubs in support of cadet personal and professional development.

39. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilliland, though West Point has terminated affinity groups like the National Society of Black Engineers Club and the Society of Women Engineers Club, a number of clubs still remain at West Point, such as language clubs or religious clubs, acknowledging that there is still value in some unique groups providing support and community to one another based on shared cultural ties. Can you explain what guidance or justification you have received as to why academies should recognize the importance of students assembling based on religious affiliation but not other cultural ties?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. The decision to disband certain cadet affinity clubs was in accordance with Presidential Executive Orders (specifically, EO 14151 “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing” and EO 14185 “Restoring America’s Fighting Force”), as well as DOD and Army guidance. The disbanded clubs were sponsored by the former USMA Office of Diversity, Inclusion, and Equal Opportunity. A review of the clubs’ charters determined they were not in compliance.

40. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilliland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, please provide a list of affinity clubs that have been terminated or disbanded and which remain.

Lieutenant General GILLAND.

- Asian-Pacific Forum Club
- Contemporary Cultural Affair Seminar Club
- Corbin Forum
- Japanese Forum Club
- Korean-American Relations Seminar
- Latin Cultural Club
- National Society of Black Engineers Club
- Native American Heritage Forum
- Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers
- Society of Women Engineers Club
- Spectrum
- Vietnamese-American Cadet Association

The list of remaining clubs is included as a separate attachment.

USMA is currently undergoing a review process that permits the disbanded clubs to modify their charters and be reinstated in compliance with executive orders and DOD directives. USMA will seek Department of the Army concurrence before reinstating any club.

Please see attachments below:

MILITARY CLUBS (sponsored by Dept. of Military Instruction)

Combat Weapons Team Club	Drill Team Club
Pistol Team Club	Tactics (Irregular Warfare Group) Club
Paintball-Close Combat Team Club	E-Sports Team Club

ACADEMIC CLUBS (sponsored by Office of the Dean)

American Chemical Society Club	American Institute of Chemical Engineers Club
Arabic Language Club	Civil and Military Engineering Club
Astronomy Club	Cadet Fine Arts Forum Club
Chinese Language Club	Aviation Flying Team Club
French Language Club	German Language Club
International Cadets of West Point Club	Mathematics Forum Club
Mechanical Engineering Club	Mock Trial Club
Persian Language Club	Polish Language Club
Portuguese Language Club	Russian Language Club
Society of Physics Students Club	Spanish Language Club
Wargames Committee Club	Amateur Radio/ W2KGY Club
American Society for Engineering Mgmt	Cadet Community on Civil-Military Operations Club
Cadet Competitive Cyber Team Club	Debate Team Club
Domestic Affairs Forum	Robotics Club
Green Environmental Team Club	Ethics & Debate Forum
Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers Club	Investment Forum Club
Model Arab League Club	Model UN Forum Club
Nuclear Engineering Club	Society of American Engineers Club
Cyber Tech Club	Speech & Parliamentary Debate Forum Club
Student Conference on US Affairs Club	Systems Operations Research Club
West Point Pre-Medical Society Club	

HOBBY CLUBS (sponsored by Directorate for Cadet Activities)

Alpine Ski Team Club	Bass Fishing Team Club
Bowling Team Club	Chess Team Club
Club Ice Hockey Team	Fly Fishing Club
Equestrian Team Club	Hunting Club
Combatives-Grappling Team Club	Martial Arts Team Club
Nordic (Cross-Country) Skiing Team Club	Sailing Team Club
Scuba Team Club	Skeet and Trap Team Club
Ski Team Club	Club Soccer Team
Ultimate Frisbee Team Club	Yoga Club
Mountaineering and Climbing Club	Men's Club Lacrosse Team Club
Women's Club Hockey Team Club	

RELIGIOUS CLUBS (sponsored by USMA Command Chaplain)

Baptist Student Union Club	Catholic Cadet Club
Chi Alpha Christian Fellowship Club	Church of Christ Club
Fellowship of Christian Athletes Club	Gospel Choir
Jewish Cadet Club	Church of Jesus Christ of LDS Club
Muslim Cadet Association Club	Navigators Club
Officers' Christian Fellowship Club	Protestant Cadet Club

COMPETITIVE ATHLETICS CLUBS (sponsored by Dept. of Physical Education)

Climbing Team Club	Cycling Team Club
Fencing Team Club	Marathon Team Club
Orienteering Team Club	Men's Team Handball Club
Women's Team Handball Club	Men's Volleyball Team Club
Water Polo Team Club	Boxing Team Club
Crew Team Club	Judo Team Club
Powerlifting Team Club	Triathlon Team Club
Functional Fitness Team Club	

SUPPORT CLUBS (sponsored by Commandant of Cadets/Director for Operations)

Glee Club	Hop & Rock Band Club
Howitzer Yearbook Club	West Point Parachute Team Club
Pipes and Drums Club	Scoutmasters' Council Club
Ski & Snow Sport Instructors Club	Ski Patrol Club
Cadet Spirit Support Band	Cannoneers
Mule Riders	String Ensemble Club
Theatre Arts Guild Club	Media Group-WKDT Club
Black & Gold Obstacle Course Team Club	

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. USNA has not disbanded any clubs or groups. USNA still hosts the following "Midshipman Groups:"

- Alliance Club
- Arabic Club
- Chinese Culture Club
- Eastern European Studies
- Filipino-American Club
- French Club
- German Club
- Italian-American Midshipmen Club
- Japanese-American Club
- Joy Bright Hancock Organization
- Korean-American Midshipmen Association
- Latin American Studies Club
- Midshipmen Afro-Caribbean Heritage Club
- Midshipmen Black Studies Club
- National Society of Black Engineers
- Native American Heritage Club
- Naval Academy Pacific Islands Culture Club
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
- Society of Women Engineers
- South Asian Heritage Club
- Vietnamese Student Association
- Women in Cyber-Security and Computing

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA has not terminated or disbanded any cadet clubs.

TRANSGENDER CADETS AND MIDSHIPMEN

41. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, given the recent executive orders prohibiting transgender servicemembers from continuing their service, how are the academies supporting transgender cadets and midshipmen through their transition from service?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. We do not have any transgender cadets.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Based on the most recent guidance, no steps have been taken to separate any midshipmen from the service. However, we have a standard package of transition support services that are provided to all midshipmen, regardless of the reason for their transition from the Naval Academy.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. USAFA provides individualized support to any servicemember impacted by changes in military accession or service policies. This includes access to health professionals, legal advisors, alumni support network, and academic counselors. Servicemembers are supported through confidential care and coordination with service component leadership to ensure continuity of support during separation, in full alignment with Department of Defense policy and ethical obligations.

42. Senator DUCKWORTH. Lieutenant General Gilland, Vice Admiral Davids, and Lieutenant General Bauernfeind, will you all commit to following up with the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Subcommittee on Personnel to ensure we are kept informed of any changes in reporting trends and any concerns raised by students regarding climate, safety and their professional futures?

Lieutenant General GILLAND. Yes.

Vice Admiral DAVIDS. Yes, I will ensure that the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Subcommittee on Personnel are kept informed of any changes in reporting trends and concerns raised by students regarding climate, safety and their professional future.

Lieutenant General BAUERNFEIND. Yes.

