



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON DC 20330-1000

JUN 28 2024

Lieutenant General Bauernfeind,

To defend our nation, both now and in the future, the United States Air Force Academy must develop combat-ready leaders of character for service in our Air Force and Space Force. From its inception, USAFA has successfully fulfilled this vital national security mission. But during that time, the threats confronting the United States, the needs of the military services, and the society from which today's Airmen and Guardians come have all changed. Today, more than ever, the Air Force and Space Force require leaders who are fully prepared to take on their leadership roles immediately upon graduation and commissioning. The time has come for fundamental changes in how leaders are developed and educated at USAFA and you are directed to make the needed changes in leader development.

In this era of Great Power Competition, we cannot specifically assess when or if a conflict will occur, but we must be ready at all times, and we know our junior leaders are vital to our readiness. The potential threats we face are formidable and unlike any we have faced in recent memory. In a future conflict, contested environments will have no boundaries. Combat will not just take place in the air. Our bases will not be sanctuaries, and space and the information space domains will be heavily contested. The Academy experience must build officers who are ready on Day One to lead the Airmen and Guardians of today's Air and Space Forces amidst the challenges of uncertain, complex, and contested environments.

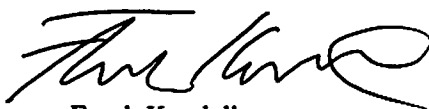
Immediately upon commissioning, our new officers will take responsibility for the standards, performance, and well-being of the Airmen and Guardians they will lead and work beside. Independent of their specific Air or Space Force specialties, our new lieutenants will share responsibility for creating command climates and enforcing standards consistent with our Air and Space Force values. They will be responsible for both following and setting standards for the units and teams in which they serve. It will be their duty to ensure every Airman and Guardian on their team is mission ready, provided the resources, training, and mentoring to grow to the maximum of their potential, and treated with dignity and respect. Our current and future leaders must also be able to lead and support their teams through the challenges and adversity we expect in great power competition, leading forces into harm's way, and conducting daily military operations. The Academy experience provides an in-depth opportunity to effectively teach, practice, assess, and ingrain the culture, habits, and skills that will transition directly to commissioned service and leadership.

To achieve these outcomes, you will make fundamental changes in the leadership development program at USAFA. Leadership at all levels will be reflective of the type and style of leadership that is expected in the Air Force and Space Force. You will implement a four-class development system, establishing responsibilities and accountability for all cadet classes, focused on maturing levels of leadership throughout the cadet experience. New cadets will initially experience a Basic Military Training-like environment. Upon completion of their summer training, they will begin a progression through follower, front-line supervisor, team leader, and unit leader/junior officer roles, culminating in a final year when cadets will be responsible for setting the command climate, enforcing standards within their units, and leading their units to collective success. The intent is to fully prepare our graduates for the leadership roles in the Air Force and Space Force they will assume as soon as they are commissioned.

You will make these advancements and adjustments in cadet military education and training, and in all aspects of the Cadet experience, recognizing the accomplishments of each cadet class as it moves through the four-year leader development program. You will assess all traditions and set aside those traditions that are inconsistent with how our newly commissioned lieutenants will be expected to lead in today's Air Force and Space Force. Shared experiences are a valuable part of all teams, but traditions and leadership styles that do not reflect the leadership skills we expect of our newly commissioned lieutenants are counterproductive.

You will report back to us within 30 days from your Assumption of Command to provide your plans, identify resources you may require, and propose any policy changes or other actions that would require Department of the Air Force level action.

Your mission is to ensure that our USAFA graduates are as ready to lead as they possibly can be – on Day One. Our nation requires this, the threats we face demand it, and it is time to move USAFA forward.



Frank Kendall
Secretary of the Air Force



David W. Allvin
General, USAF
Chief of Staff of the Air Force



B. Chance Saltzman
General, USSF
Chief of Space Operations