

**RECORD VERSION**

**STATEMENT BY**

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SUPERINTENDENT OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

**BEFORE THE**

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**UPDATE ON THE STATE OF THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY**

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Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Calvert, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss with you the mission, goals, and challenges of the United States Military Academy and thank you for your continued support to its programs.

The United States Military Academy was founded in 1802 under the presidency of Thomas Jefferson. He founded the Academy to create a professional officer corps for our Army who were trained in the practical knowledge required for an expanding nation. In his vision, Jefferson also saw West Point as a means to democratize American military leadership and to ensure that it would be representative of American society. Since that time, the leaders who have graduated from the Academy have been representatives of the nation they served. They come from all walks of life – diverse economic, social, religious, and ethnic backgrounds.

Since President Thomas Jefferson established West Point in 1802, West Point graduates have provided exceptional leadership for America through good times and bad, peace and war. Early leaders like William MacNeil and George Washington Whistler helped build the nation in the early 19th century. In the early 1900s, George Goethals directed the construction of the Panama Canal, one of the greatest engineering achievements in history. During the global conflicts of the 20th Century, individuals like John J. Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, and Dwight D. Eisenhower secured the nation. Graduates like “Hap” Arnold and Benjamin O. Davis, Jr. were pioneers in military aviation, while others like Frank Borman, Ed White, Jr., Buzz Aldrin, and Anne McClain walked on the Moon and explored the stars. West Point’s Long Gray Line produced combat leaders like Norman Schwarzkopf, Wesley Clark, Vince Brooks and Martin Dempsey; and individuals as diverse as Luis Esteves, the founder of the Puerto Rico National Guard, Roscoe Robinson, the Army’s first African American four-star general and Lloyd Austin, the nation’s first African American Secretary of Defense. We are proud that the people we taught made much of the history we teach. As we navigate the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, West Point must remain well postured

to continue providing the leaders of character who will lead the nation through our current and future challenges.

Our nation faces a complex set of challenges as it builds and maintains readiness for near-peer combat in an age of persistent competition, while simultaneously confronting a global pandemic, racial tension, and mounting extremism. Our graduates entering this complex environment will be called upon to navigate this new landscape. This increasing complexity reinforces the purpose of the United States Military Academy: to build the leaders of character our Army and our nation require. I am pleased to report that West Point is well-positioned to fulfill this purpose.

The mission of the United States Military Academy is, “to educate, train and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character committed to the values of Duty, Honor, Country and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army.” Our vision is to be the nation’s premier leader development institution.

We accomplish our mission through the West Point Leadership Development System. After spending 47 months in the system, we expect our graduates to live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence. Cadets internalize the values necessary to achieve these outcomes by completing rigorous and challenging experiences tailored to their individual developmental needs. Cadets develop knowledge, skills, and abilities so upon graduation they will possess the intellectual, military, physical and character foundation for professional growth and service as commissioned officers in the Army. They will be prepared for the uncertainty and ambiguity associated with military service, and able to anticipate and lead change within their organizations.

This system would not work without leadership and mentorship—a community of support—that is vital to character growth. We have a diverse cadre of competent, committed, and caring military and civilian staff, faculty, and coaches who provide support, feedback, and mentorship to cadets during their time at the Academy.

When I last addressed this subcommittee in 2019, I articulated five priorities that focused Academy resources. Since then, those five priorities have coalesced into the five lines of effort that comprise the Academy's campaign plan that operationalizes our strategy through 2025.

In **line of effort #1 (Develop Leaders of Character)** we are integrating and synchronizing our four developmental programs (character, military, physical, and academic) to develop principled officers for our Army who are guided by good character and prepared for the "crucible of ground combat."

In **line of effort #2 (Cultivate a Culture of Character Growth)** we are fostering and strengthening a safe and secure environment built on trust and both the Army and West Point Values. Our efforts focus on inclusion, prevention of sexual assault, harassment, and racism while maintaining our commitment to honorable living and a sense of duty.

In **line of effort #3 (Build Diverse and Effective Winning Teams)** we are focusing effort on acquiring the talent of the entire West Point enterprise; our cadets, staff, faculty, coaches, and the West Point community to make them representative of our Army and the nation more broadly.

In **line of effort #4 (Modernize, Sustain, and Secure)** we are investing, with broad Army support, in holistic efforts to modernize the Academy's capabilities and infrastructure to enable the developmental environments necessary to educate, train and inspire the Corps of Cadets most effectively through the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This includes maintaining a secure operating environment through energy resilience and force protection measures.

Finally, in **line of effort #5 (Strengthen Partnerships)** we are seeking opportunities to contribute to the Army profession while sustaining our partnerships with Academe, Alumni, Congress, and the American people. Aligned with the National Defense Strategy, we aim to grow our international partnerships.

While our main effort resides in developing leaders of character and cultivating the culture of character growth, we realize that the enabling efforts in LOEs 3, 4, and 5 are absolutely critical to realizing and sustaining our vision. The United States Military Academy must actively compete in the higher education marketplace to attract the scarce and finite resource of talented young Americans willing to commit to a lifetime of service to the nation. To compete effectively for this talent and posture ourselves to refine it even further once at West Point, we must maintain cutting-edge recruiting and development programs, invest in excellent facilities, attract, and sustain high-quality faculty and staff, and provide first-rate integrated student services and institutionally supported athletics.

We must maintain an infrastructure that remains competitive with other tier one academic institutions while preserving the historic integrity of a 200-year-old institution and national historic landmark. Our robust modernization plan began with the barracks revitalization in 2011 and will finish with the academic building upgrade program in 2035. We appreciate the Army's and your commitment to ensure that the Academy maintains relevance and preeminence for many years to come. We must also cultivate and maintain the strategic partnerships that keep us connected to the nation's toughest problems, provide unparalleled developmental opportunities for our cadets, faculty, and staff, and allow us to contribute intellectual capital back to the Army and nation.

### **Academy Operations in the COVID Environment**

The past year has been extraordinarily challenging as the nation and the world have faced the impacts of COVID-19. One year into this fight, I am pleased to report that the United States Military Academy is thriving. We successfully continue our mission as we adapt to the realities of the COVID-19 environment. At West Point, which resides not far from what was the first national epicenter of this pandemic, we were faced with a dual challenge—protecting the community and accomplishing our mission. During this pandemic, we maintained a responsibility to sustain Army readiness by graduating 1,000 young officers ready to lead and continue the mission in a COVID-19

environment. As the Army Chief of Staff, General McConville reminded us early on: “you cannot telecommute to combat.” The same is true for developing high-quality leaders: you simply cannot do it “virtually.” We knew early on that transitioning fully to remote learning was not a viable option for the Corps of Cadets.

Therefore, last March, we mobilized the entire West Point enterprise to plan and execute Operation Resilient Knight—a team effort to accomplish our mission while protecting the force. As part of this overall effort—our incredible faculty quickly transitioned temporarily into an online learning environment, allowing our cadets—no matter where they were—to continue classes and complete the academic year. We finished the academic year strong while implementing creative ways to conduct some of our end-of-year events virtually. With tremendous help from the Army, we built capacity to test, treat, and monitor for COVID-19 at West Point, which allowed us to return the Corps deliberately and methodically to the Academy.

This return of the Corps was executed in three phases: first, returning the Class of 2020 for graduation and commissioning; second, returning the other three classes for summer training; and finally, welcoming and integrating the new Class of 2024 into the Corps of Cadets. We conducted a safe and socially distanced graduation ceremony for the Class of 2020, which celebrated the accomplishments of our newest graduates and demonstrated the resilience of our Academy and Army to the world. We are proud to report the Corps of Cadets is currently 4,400 strong, learning and leading in-person to allow for the human interaction that is critical to our leader development system. Our current Academic year has been a combination of remote, hybrid, and in-person instruction that provides us the capacity to conduct instruction safely in the COVID environment. Our cadets report that the in-person experience has fostered greater connectedness among the Corps and leading through this adversity is creating lifelong lessons in resilience and leadership.

All of this was possible because of the great support we received from the Army, and more importantly, the herculean efforts of every member of the West Point team. Whether they were on the front lines of this fight or working behind the scenes, every

teammate – Soldier and civilian – stepped up and went above and beyond, often helping in areas outside their lanes of expertise. It is because of their hard work, dedication to duty and commitment to excellence that we continued to accomplish the mission while protecting the force. I am proud to be their commander and superintendent, and we are all truly grateful for everything they do.

### **A Culture of Character Growth**

Since taking command of the United States Military Academy, creating a culture of character growth has been integral to our leader development mission. Each summer, approximately 1,200 diverse, talented young men and women from across this great nation and around the world enter the Academy. They arrive from every corner of the nation and all walks of life with a myriad developmental experiences and backgrounds. At West Point, **we meet them where they are** and develop them into the leaders of character our Army and our Nation require. Our graduates must be able to lead by example and create the cohesive teams that will take care of our Army's greatest strength and most important weapon system . . . its people.

Our young people today are the most digitally connected and technologically savvy in human history, and we bring in the best and brightest our nation has to offer. While this comfort with technology is helpful for the future, it may undermine their ability to develop the healthy, human relationships our Army requires to build cohesive teams that fight and win in ground combat. Early in their development, some cadets tell us they lack confidence in communicating difficult topics effectively with those they lead. Lack of development in critical relationship and interpersonal skills creates vulnerabilities in our population. These vulnerabilities create an environment where corrosive behaviors take hold and erode trust. Our 47-month program provides cadets with the experiences and repetitions necessary to get them where the Army requires them to be. Inclusive and effective leadership requires our graduates to look a young Soldier in the eye, know when the Soldier is confronted with challenges, and make the caring, people-first decision that gets them the help they need and deserve. These actions build trust, and trust is a requirement for winning in combat.

Over the last two years, I have mobilized Academy resources to instill the character attributes and skills necessary for cultivating the healthy human relationships that create the cohesive teams and provide for a safe and secure environment for our Cadets to thrive in. We realize we have some work to do. **Cultivating culture takes time and resources**. To enable this cultural shift, I have elevated the character development program and character integration to my level of command through the creation of a Character Integration Advisory Group (CIAG). This group is comprised of ten newly hired personnel that will integrate character development across our 47-month experience in a deliberate and progressive fashion. Rooted in the Army values and the West Point motto of Duty, Honor, Country, our character development program is predicated on the idea that character is caught through culture, taught through developmental experiences, and sought by inspired individuals. We firmly believe that **character equals readiness** and we are allocating resources accordingly.

Over the last two years, our character development efforts have directly confronted the corrosive behaviors that undermine trust, erode wellness, and make Soldiers vulnerable to extremism. Our four Honorable Living Days brought the entire Corps of Cadets, staff, and faculty together for conversations that confront sexual assault, sexual harassment, and racism. Based on feedback and input from the Corps of Cadets, we will confront suicide and promote wellness and resiliency at our next Honorable Living Day on March 30<sup>th</sup>. These efforts are creating a culture at West Point that encourages the tough conversations that create human connection, build trust, and make people feel like they are a part of a team rather than merely being on a team. These Honorable Living Days are not stand-alone events. Rather they are starting points for cadets and leaders from across the Academy to support each other in their character development and provide them the skills they need to eliminate corrosive behaviors from our ranks. These events provide our cadets the skills, time, and space to think critically and practice the leader actions we seek to instill.

The Corps of Cadets is taking ownership and leading cultural change by embracing these efforts. For example, this summer, Cadet Reilly McGinnis, our First Captain, along with her leadership team, and in collaboration with the CIAG, led a summer Cadet



Leader Development (CLD) detail for the majority of our First- and many of our Second-Class cadets that further dedicated time and resources to addressing honorable living, resiliency and countering sexual assault, sexual harassment, and racism. Reilly implemented daily “Tree Talks” that required small-group conversations where diverse groups of cadets came together to listen with an intent to learn rather than respond. This week-long endeavor set the tone for the First Class as they assumed leadership of the Corps. It provided a foundation for the development of our fourth Honorable Living Day focused on racism. CLD provided our peer support staffs with the confidence and vision they needed to own and fully develop that Honorable Living Day. These two examples illustrate how the Cadets are changing the Academy’s culture to promote and integrate character development as a part of a comprehensive prevention strategy to eliminate sexual assault, sexual harassment, and racism.

The organization responsible for this comprehensive prevention strategy is the CIAG—a newly formed organization that integrates character development and answers directly to me. Since 2019 when I last testified before you, we have made tangible and permanent changes to our organization structure to bolster prevention. Our newly assigned personnel in the CIAG, working in close collaboration with our new SHARP program coordinator and newly hired prevention specialists give us the expertise and capacity to develop and integrate a comprehensive, 48-month sexual assault prevention program within our overarching character development effort. Dedicating full-time personnel to prevention and character development fulfill a key requirement in the Department of Defense’s Prevention Plan of Action (PPOA) for prevention of sexual assault.

Sustainable cultural change and effective prevention require cadet involvement and ownership. We recognize that cadets are often more comfortable discussing personal challenges with their peers, so we continue to build our peer assistance capability within the Corps. Our cadet Trust staff continues to advise the cadet chain of command on SHARP-related topics and serves as a resource for their peers who may be struggling with the impact of sexual harassment or assault. Our peer support counselors receive professional training and certification to provide support for cadets struggling with

mental wellness. Additionally, informed by the Center for Disease Control best practices, we piloted and are implementing a Relational Character (RC101) course to educate our cadet leaders about developing healthy relationships and facilitating difficult discussions. Cadets who completed this pilot course were integrated into all 36 cadet companies to support the chain of command and their peers. By the completion of RC101 this summer we expect to have over 100 cadets trained. We have also brought the Army's Master Resiliency Trainer Course to West Point, allowing cadets to not only receive the Army's Master Resiliency Trainer skill identifier, but more importantly, return to their Cadet Companies with a fresh skillset for identifying and helping those in need.

An important motivation for increasing sexual assault reporting is effective, responsive, and compassionate victim advocacy. We have made tangible and permanent improvements in our sexual assault response capabilities and policies. To encourage reporting, I have instituted a policy that ensures victims will ordinarily not be punished for their minor misconduct discovered in the resulting investigation. Additionally, Keller Army Community Hospital now has a full-time Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner so that victims can get the immediate care they need. Our Criminal Investigations Division now has a special victim's investigator which allows for more timely and effective investigations. We have increased our legal capability with a full-time Special Victims Prosecutor and two Special Victim Counsels. Our campaign to support the DoD "Catch a Serial Offender" (CATCH) program has added sixteen cases to the CATCH database, which helps apprehend serial offenders.

In response to the Fort Hood investigation, we provided all 4,400 cadets with a briefing on the lessons learned in the aftermath of the Fort Hood investigations across 20 separate iterations that adhered to COVID restrictions. These briefings yielded seven new reports of sexual assault and an additional three CATCH entries just last month. Our first semester reporting rate is the highest rate of reports on record. We believe these comprehensive actions are helping to build trust in our sexual assault and harassment response systems that encourage cadets to report. We are grateful to our Army leadership for resourcing our requirements, but we realize that resources alone will not eradicate sexual assault and harassment.

While we have made progress, we still have work to do. As we continue to build on our culture of character growth, we are examining ways to bolster accountability for actions at the squad level. We recognize that sexual assault, sexual harassment, racism, extremism, and suicide will not be solved solely by the actions of senior Army leadership. We as leaders must set the culture that makes treating one another with dignity and respect the norm. We must also have accountability at all levels, and more importantly, we need cadets to have the character and sense of duty required to enforce accountability in un-governed spaces where these problematic behaviors often occur. We are harnessing the latest version of the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) to inform the Corps of its current climate, target areas for improvement, and empower cadets to lead change. We have work to do in this area, and we are committed to continued cultural change.

The same sense of duty that necessitates accountability in others also applies to accountability for personal behavior. The West Point Honor Code and Honor System are integral to the foundation of your Academy. Since taking command of the Academy, I have been reviewing various aspects of how we implement the Honor System at West Point and this fall, decided to embark on a year-long, holistic review of the Honor System to ensure it maintains the basic requirement for Honorable Living while keeping pace with the technological realities of modern society. Last spring, while in a remote environment, seventy-three cadets were accused of cheating on their MA104 Calculus term end exam. We are in the process of investigating and hearing all allegations and the outcome of each case will be determined based on its own merit. The tenets of honorable living remain immutable, and the outcomes of our leader development system remain the same: graduates who live honorably, lead honorably, and demonstrate excellence. The Army, and especially the American people, expect and will not tolerate anything less.

## **Conclusion**

For more than 200 years, West Point has provided our Army and nation with leaders of character who have honorably and courageously led the way through some of our Nation's most challenging and difficult times. Our graduates have always possessed the

strength of character to overcome adversity and emerge victorious in the face of those challenges. They have received the broad education required to think, lead, and win across the spectrum of conflict from high intensity combat to humanitarian support operations and everything in between. They have received the technical education required to integrate new technologies and address emerging threats.

I remain confident that we are preparing our cadets well for both the anticipated and unanticipated challenges of the future. Our cadets are trained, fit, disciplined, and prepared for the rigors of ground combat. General McConville put People First on his first day as the Army Chief of Staff. At West Point, we are cultivating the culture that fosters the People First philosophy in our young men and women so that they will be ready to develop and lead cohesive teams built on trust in the defense of our great nation. I have no doubt that they will do exactly that and do it with distinction.

I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the state of the United States Military Academy with you today. I hope you all will take the opportunity to visit us at West Point and witness first-hand the actions of the tremendous young women and men that you have nominated. We are excited for the future of the Academy and we hope that the Army and Congress continue to view West Point as your Academy and a strategic asset for the defense of the nation. I look forward to your questions.