

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2023

LTG Steven W. Gilland
Superintendent
United States Military Academy
West Point, NY 10996

LTG Richard M. Clark
Superintendent
United States Air Force Academy
2304 Cadet Drive
Air Force Academy, CO 80840

Dear General Gilland and General Clark:

We write with concern about U.S. Military Academy's (USMA) Annual Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Conference, held August 30, 2023.

The conference was hosted by USMA and attended by personnel from the U.S. Air Force Academy, USMA, U.S. Army officers, U.S. Air Force officers, as well as USMA faculty, civilian professors, Veterans Affairs staff, NASA staff, and professional DEI speakers.

During the conference, in front of 400 attendees, an Air Force cadet in uniform spoke contemptuously of Members of Congress for performing their constitutional oversight duties.

An audio recording of the incident shows that the cadet addressed guest speakers stating: "So, the United States Air Force Academy has a Diversity and Inclusion Minor that teaches classes on gender, race, and nationalism in the class, and these teachings have been incredibly controversial across the U.S. with an outright ban in Florida and the Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy being questioned for it in Congress and the video going viral. Can cadets and service academies safeguard the teachings of these topics, or, if we get a particularly bad batch of Congressman, are these teachings like (sic) screwed?" Per the recording, the crowd in attendance erupted in laughter at the cadet's comments, and it is not apparent that any senior officer attempted to correct or counsel the cadet, nor did anyone take the opportunity to educate the group of cadets regarding civilian oversight of the military or the constitutional duty of elected officials to conduct legislative oversight.

As veterans, we find USMA and the U.S. Air Force Academy's apparent acquiescence of demeaning statements aimed at Congress troubling and emblematic of the increasing politicization of our academies. The apparent failure of any senior officer to correct the highly inappropriate behavior of scorning lawful, civilian authorities amounts to turning a blind eye to conduct that could be a violation of Article 88 of the UCMJ.

Additionally, the recording reinforces and validates the statements of a number of cadets who have reached out to our offices over the last several years. These cadets and their family

members feared that voicing a dissenting opinion regarding the teachings of DEI or Critical Race Theory – even in an academic setting or seminar - will lead to mockery by their peers, faculty, and would be detrimental to their fledgling military careers. As we discussed during a Congressional hearing this year, I hope you will ask yourselves as commanders, why these cadets are so uncomfortable sharing their concerns with their chain of command.

Additionally, USMA's selection of speakers for its "DEI conference," as well as the nature of the conference itself, suggests that USMA fostered an environment that encourages partisanship. One of the speakers on the panel titled "Diversity in National Security: Views from Academia and Practice", Dr. Nakissa P. Jahanbani, has a history of divisive public statements. On social media, she has blamed the "rise in anti-black, immigrant hate" on former President Trump's "bigoted opinions" and stated that "white identity and grievances," explain his political success. Another participant on that panel, Dr. Rachel Yon, has published "classroom exercises" based on the work of Derrick Bell, who has been described as the "Godfather of Critical Race Theory." A third member of the same panel was Zainab Ahmad, a former federal prosecutor who worked on Special Counsel Robert Mueller's very controversial investigation into the Trump campaign, the premise of which was later discredited by the Durham report.

Given the example that has been set at an official USMA event, it's not surprising that a cadet felt it acceptable to attack elected officials while in uniform.

In that regard, we request timely answers to the following questions:

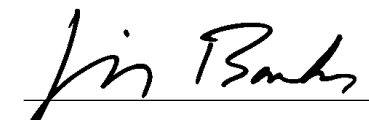
1. Did you or any senior officer counsel the cadet on appropriate references to elected officials while in uniform?
2. Should this have been an opportunity to present alternative viewpoints to the group of cadets?
3. After the cadet's comments about "bad congressman," did you take the opportunity to educate cadets on the U.S.'s long history of civilian oversight of the military and Congress's constitutional role of legislative oversight?
4. Do the USMA and USAFA condone the highly partisan statements of the conference's guest speakers?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Chair, Readiness Subcommittee



Chair, Military Personnel Subcommittee