

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2004

August 3, 2020

Superintendent Sean S. Buck
United States Naval Academy
121 Blake Road
Annapolis, MD, 21402

Dear Vice Admiral Buck,

We are writing regarding a July 10th Washington Post article regarding racism endured by African American cadets. Five Army officers, who graduated from West Point in the last several decades, shared both the pride of having attended one of our nation's most elite universities as well as the pain "of feeling they could not be their full self in a mostly white school." The article highlights a letter to administrators from recent top graduates sharing personal experiences of racism at West Point as well as proposals to address discrimination.

At the core of the article is the culture at West Point, with examples included of both overt and indirect behaviors that create a challenging environment for cadets of color. Students reported a spectrum of actions, from being forced to call Robert E. Lee Barracks home to having another cadet hang "a Confederate flag on a wall to get a reaction" to being "called the n-word." None of these behaviors, or any other actions, are acceptable at our military service academies. Our service academies must be diverse and inclusive environments that supports all students regardless of their background; they must have a culture that clearly adheres to the precept that discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity will not be tolerated in any form.

We are encouraged by the recent initiatives directed by the Secretary of Defense to improve diversity and inclusion within the Department. This has been and will continue to be a challenging issue for our country but by directing concrete steps for each of the services to take and setting near-term deadlines, the Department is moving in the right direction and demonstrating that these initiatives are a priority. We wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary's assertion that the military, "must lead on these issues as America's most respected institution and as a global leader when it comes to building diverse, winning teams."

Vice Admiral Buck

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Within the military, the service academies are some of the most respected institutions and serve as the incubators of the future leaders of our armed forces. If we cannot effectively identify and address discrimination amongst cadets and midshipmen, then the scourge of racism will continue to permeate our ranks once those students earn their commission.

While we applaud the department-wide efforts thus far, we would like to know more about what steps the service academies are taking to address racism within their ranks at this very critical juncture in our nation's history. Specifically, we submit the following questions for your response:

1. What is the Naval Academy's strategy to ensure that the culture of the academy supports the diversity and inclusion of its entire student body and that discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity will not be tolerated?
2. What is the Naval Academy's strategy to ensure that the diversity of its student body and faculty represents the diversity of the general population?
3. What measurable metrics have been put in place to ensure this strategy is implemented and realized?
4. How is the curriculum training our midshipmen to effectively lead a force as diverse as our nation?
5. What training is being provided to faculty and administrators to ensure they have the tools necessary to create a diverse and inclusive learning environment?
6. Have Naval Academy administrators reviewed the West Point proposal from top graduates, and have you determined which recommendations are applicable and executable at the Naval Academy?
7. Has the Naval Academy assessed the prevalence of Confederate names, memorials, and symbols on campus and what actions are being taken to remove them?

Additionally, we request that you appear before the Members of the House Armed Services Committee in a closed briefing to engage in a candid and open discussion with Committee Members and Staff on your efforts related to these issues.

We also recognize that Congress must be an active partner in increasing diversity at the Naval Academy. As the vast majority of cadets must receive a nomination from a Member of Congress to attend the academy, it is incumbent upon ourselves to ensure that the body as a whole is including diversity as a factor in our nominations. To that end, we have partnered to introduce the PANORAMA Act to increase the transparency of congressional nominations and improve the partnership between Congress and the service academies in appointing classes that represent the diversity of our nation. This legislation has been included in the House passed Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act and we will work to ensure it is included in the final bill signed into law by the President.

Vice Admiral Buck

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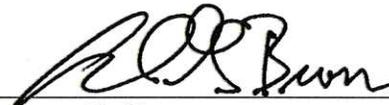
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We know that the answers to these questions do not come easily but it is critical that our service academies are at the forefront of change. Please let us know how we can support you in the push for progress on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

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August 3, 2020

Lieutenant General Jay B. Silveria
United States Air Force Academy
2304 Cadet Drive
USAF Academy, CO, 80840

Dear Lieutenant General Silveria,

We are writing regarding a July 10th Washington Post article regarding racism endured by African American cadets. Five Army officers, who graduated from West Point in the last several decades, shared both the pride of having attended one of our nation's most elite universities as well as the pain "of feeling they could not be their full self in a mostly white school." The article highlights a letter to administrators from recent top graduates sharing personal experiences of racism at West Point as well as proposals to address discrimination.

At the core of the article is the culture at West Point, with examples included of both overt and indirect behaviors that create a challenging environment for cadets of color. Students reported a spectrum of actions, from being forced to call Robert E. Lee Barracks home to having another cadet hang "a Confederate flag on a wall to get a reaction" to being "called the n-word." None of these behaviors, or any other actions, are acceptable at our military service academies. Our service academies must be diverse and inclusive environments that supports all students regardless of their background; they must have a culture that clearly adheres to the precept that discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity will not be tolerated in any form.

We are encouraged by the recent initiatives directed by the Secretary of Defense to improve diversity and inclusion within the Department. This has been and will continue to be a challenging issue for our country but by directing concrete steps for each of the services to take and setting near-term deadlines, the Department is moving in the right direction and demonstrating that these initiatives are a priority. We wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary's assertion that the military, "must lead on these issues as America's most respected institution and as a global leader when it comes to building diverse, winning teams."

Within the military, the service academies are some of the most respected institutions and serve as the incubators of the future leaders of our armed forces. If we cannot effectively identify and address discrimination amongst cadets and midshipmen, then the scourge of racism will continue to permeate our ranks once those students earn their commission.

While we applaud the department-wide efforts thus far, we would like to know more about what steps the service academies are taking to address racism within their ranks at this very critical juncture in our nation's history. Specifically, we submit the following questions for your response:

1. What is the Air Force Academy's strategy to ensure that the culture of the academy supports the diversity and inclusion of its entire student body and that discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity will not be tolerated?
2. What is the Air Force Academy's strategy to ensure that the diversity of its student body and faculty represents the diversity of the general population?
3. What measurable metrics have been put in place to ensure this strategy is implemented and realized?
4. How is the curriculum training our cadets to effectively lead a force as diverse as our nation?
5. What training is being provided to faculty and administrators to ensure they have the tools necessary to create a diverse and inclusive learning environment?
6. Have Air Force Academy administrators reviewed the West Point proposal from top graduates, and have you determined which recommendations are applicable and executable at the Naval Academy?
7. Has the Air Force Academy assessed the prevalence of Confederate names, memorials, and symbols on campus and what actions are being taken to remove them?

Additionally, we request that you appear before the Members of the House Armed Services Committee in a closed briefing to engage in a candid and open discussion with Committee Members and Staff on your efforts related to these issues.

We also recognize that Congress must be an active partner in increasing diversity at the Air Force Academy. As the vast majority of cadets must receive a nomination from a Member of Congress to attend the academy, it is incumbent upon ourselves to ensure that the body as a whole is including diversity as a factor in our nominations. To that end, we have partnered to introduce the PANORAMA Act to increase the transparency of congressional nominations and improve the partnership between Congress and the service academies in appointing classes that represent the diversity of our nation. This legislation has been included in the House passed Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act and we will work to ensure it is included in the final bill signed into law by the President.

Lieutenant General Silveria

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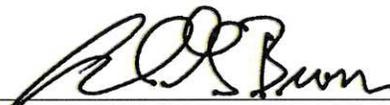
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August 3, 2020

Superintendent Darryl A. Williams
United States Military Academy
600 Swift Road
West Point, NY, 10996

Dear Lieutenant General Williams,

We are writing regarding a July 10th Washington Post article regarding racism endured by African American cadets. Five Army officers, who graduated from West Point in the last several decades, shared both the pride of having attended one of our nation's most elite universities as well as the pain "of feeling they could not be their full self in a mostly white school." The article highlights a letter to administrators from recent top graduates sharing personal experiences of racism at West Point as well as proposals to address discrimination.

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While we applaud the department-wide efforts thus far, we would like to know more about what steps the service academies are taking to address racism within their ranks at this very critical juncture in our nation's history. Specifically, we submit the following questions for your response:

1. What is West Point's strategy to ensure that the culture of the academy supports the diversity and inclusion of its entire student body and that discrimination based on gender, race, or ethnicity will not be tolerated?
2. What is West Point's strategy to ensure that the diversity of its student body and faculty represents the diversity of the general population?
3. What measurable metrics have been put in place to ensure this strategy is implemented and realized?
4. How is the curriculum training our cadets to effectively lead a force as diverse as our nation?
5. What training is being provided to faculty and administrators to ensure they have the tools necessary to create a diverse and inclusive learning environment?
6. Have West Point administrators reviewed the proposal from top graduates, and have you established a plan of action for those that are executable?
7. For those that are not executable, what is the justification?
8. Has West Point assessed the prevalence of Confederate names, memorials, and symbols on campus and what actions are being taken to remove them?

Additionally, we request that you appear before the Members of the House Armed Services Committee in a closed briefing to engage in a candid and open discussion with Committee Members and Staff on your efforts related to these issues.

We also recognize that Congress must be an active partner in increasing diversity at West Point. As the vast majority of cadets must receive a nomination from a Member of Congress to attend the academy, it is incumbent upon ourselves to ensure that the body as a whole is including diversity as a factor in our nominations. To that end, we have partnered to introduce the PANORAMA Act to increase the transparency of congressional nominations and improve the partnership between Congress and West Point in appointing classes that represent the diversity of our nation. This legislation has been included in the House passed Fiscal Year 2021

Lieutenant General Williams

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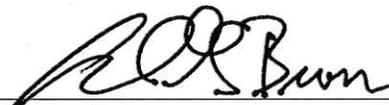
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