



# Contrails Dedication for the Class of 2023

Congratulations on your commitment to become a member of the Long Blue Line! While other excellent universities prepare their graduates for a variety of important professions, the Academy is unique in its focus on character-based leadership and is characterized by core values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do.

The Class of 1973, your Legacy Class, entered the Academy during an era of great civil unrest. Our nation's military was enmeshed in an unpopular war in Southeast Asia, and anti-war protests were commonplace, especially on college campuses. The threat of a nuclear war with the communist USSR had gripped the nation since the 1950s; deterrence of that threat was a key Air Force mission. Against this backdrop, the Class of '73 returned from Jack's Valley to witness, on tiny televisions in our dormitory hallways, as a military academy graduate became one of the first two humans to set foot upon the moon with the culmination of the Apollo 11 mission. On that lunar surface they left a plaque with the following inscription: "HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH FIRST SET FOOT UPON THE MOON, JULY 1969 A.D. WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND." Four years later, at graduation, our nation was in the grip of the Watergate scandal and later resignation of President Nixon. Despite the uncertainties surrounding us, our focus was to proudly serve our nation as brand-new second lieutenants with the leadership expectations of that new mantle.

On June 23, 1969, 1,406 young men walked up the "Bring Me Men Ramp." On June 6, 1973, 844 graduated. The motto on our class ring, "Pax in Tempore Nostro" (Peace in our Time), reflected both our goal and some of our generation's cynicism. For the past 50 years, we have served and continue to serve in many ways, from noncommissioned officers to general officers to titans of industry and other professions serving our nation and communities. We are represented by a recipient of the Silver Star for gallantry in combat operations; the Air Force's 19<sup>th</sup> Air Force Chief of Staff; commanders at squadrons, groups, wings, numbered Air Forces, major commands, and a unified command; a Commandant of Cadets and Superintendent; a 1981 recipient of the Koren Kolligian Jr. Trophy; three recipients of the Colonel James Jabara Award for Airmanship--1981, 1986, and the 2009 recipient, the Captain of the "Miracle on the Hudson"; two astronauts; business leaders; doctors; lawyers; professors; ministers; scientists; elected officials; and published authors.

We have traveled different paths across the world. Yet, one gift kept us united during all this time: friendship grounded in honor. The honorable friendships you will develop during your time at the Academy will sustain you throughout your life. As we reflect on our experiences, a passage by poet T.S. Eliot explains our affection for the Academy: "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

Our work is not done. As we have learned, character-based leadership matters. While peace, like excellence, is an ideal toward which we aspire, it is a worthy cause and one for which you have committed. As your Legacy Class, we look forward to mentoring you through this journey.

The Illustrious Class of 1973