



West Point
ASSOCIATION
OF GRADUATES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**WEST POINT ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES ANNOUNCES
2021 DISTINGUISHED GRADUATE AWARD RECIPIENTS**

WEST POINT, NY: April 27, 2021 – The West Point Association of Graduates (WPAOG) has named the 2021 recipients of the Distinguished Graduate Award. This annual award has been bestowed upon those West Point graduates whose character, distinguished service and stature draw wholesome comparison to the qualities for which West Point strives, in keeping with its motto: “Duty, Honor, Country.” The awards will be presented in a ceremony at West Point on September 11, 2021. The 2021 Distinguished Graduate Award Recipients include a former Secretary of the U.S. Air Force, a model cadet recruiter and supporter, the first civilian CEO of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service, a 40-year officer who served five tours in combat amounting to 127 months of deployment, one of the most recognized officers in the Global War of Terrorism, and a soldier and scholar who became the U.S. National Security Advisor.

Michael W. Wynne '66 – Mike Wynne commissioned in the Air Force upon graduation. He served on active duty for seven years, and his influence on the Air Force remained strong. One of his legacies is the AC-130U, for which he served on the development team while as an astronautics instructor at the Air Force Academy, transforming it from a transport aircraft into a heavily armed, long-endurance gunship. Later, as a civilian with General Dynamics, Wynne negotiated the development of the F-16 and the M1A2 Battle Tank, and as President of General Dynamics Space Systems, he managed the design adaptation of former ICBMs into launch vehicles. In July 2001, Wynne entered government service, being confirmed as Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. Nearly two years later, he was appointed as acting Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics. Finally, in November 2005, Wynne was confirmed as the 21st Secretary of the Air Force, the only West Point graduate to serve in that post. “Secretary Wynne’s career has advanced the defense capabilities of the U.S. military and has laid the groundwork to position our national security for the years ahead,” says Senator James Inhofe, the ranking member of the Armed Services Committee. “From enhancements in ‘real-time’ air-land combat cooperation and integration to the fielding of fifth-generation combat systems to the very first steps in recognizing cyber activities as a critical, emerging warfighting domain, Wynne has led the way,” says General T. Michael Moseley (Retired), the 18th U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff. Today, Wynne is a member of the National Defense Industrial Association’s Board of Advisors and a very generous donor to the U.S. Military Academy, recently endowing the Cadet Cyber Award.

Randall M. Pais '67 – For more than five decades, Colonel Randall “Randy” Pais (Retired) has been an exemplary man of character, leadership, and service to his class, the Academy, the Army, the nation, and his community. “He is an Academy all-star!” says Lieutenant General Bill Lennox '71 (Retired), 56th Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy. Pais served in Vietnam (1968-69) where he received the Bronze Star for Valor as a forward observer for the 36th ARVN Ranger Battalion. He continued in the Army Reserve from 1971 to 1997, serving in battalion- through division-level positions of the 75th Division (Exercise). From 2001 to 2020, Pais served as a Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army (Texas), representing eight different Secretaries during his tenure and named CASA Emeritus in January 2020. According to Colonel Deb McDonald '85, West Point Director of Admissions, “Randy’s 38-year support of Admissions has greatly enhanced the quality of the candidate applications and increased the professionalism of our officer selection process.” Pais is credited with supporting more than 550 cadet candidates – two of who became First Captain – and his recruiting model has been used across the nation. From 1990 to 2005, Pais served on WPAOG’s Board (appointed an Emeritus in 2005) helping develop WPAOG’s “Distinguished Society Award” and encouraging his class to endow WPAOG’s annual Leaders Conference. In 1998 Pais steered a Task Force to study graduate retention rates beyond original commitment. The Committee’s proposal, coordinated with the Superintendent and Army G-1, resulted in allowing Cadets to extend their active duty service obligation by three years in return for an opportunity to select graduate school, or a specific branch or post. Pais has served as class Vice President since 1992. He has enjoyed a distinguished legal career spanning over 46 years, and remains active in Army and Veteran affairs, as a Director on the Folded Flag Foundation and on Exxon Mobil’s Veteran Council.

Thomas C. Shull '73 – A Soldier For Life, accomplished business leader and advocate for all who have served, Shull is “the right leader at the right time for our Army and Nation,” says Sergeant Major of the Army (Retired) Ken Preston, 13th Sergeant Major of the Army. Following graduation, he led several platoons, including a Scout Platoon, and commanded C Company, 1/22nd Infantry Regiment. After graduating from Harvard Business School, Shull was selected as a White House Fellow and served in the Reagan administration. He taught leadership at West Point and, in his last active-duty assignment, served as Military Assistant to National Security Advisor Robert “Bud” McFarlane. Shull conducted a comprehensive review of the National Security Council, coordinated low-intensity conflict policy initiatives, and represented the White House in helping to oversee the construction and dedication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Shull served as CEO of Barney’s New York, Hanover Direct, and Wise Foods, successfully turning around these iconic American brands. In 2012, he was selected as the first civilian Director/CEO of the Army & Air Force Exchange Service. General Gus Perna says, “through Tom’s leadership, AAFES’ profitability nearly doubled since 2011 and the organization provided \$1.6 billion in dividends for critical (military) Quality-of-Life programs.” Shull was the lead advocate in securing a lifelong online military exchange shopping benefit for honorably discharged Veterans. He is a member of the Benjamin O. Davis Giving Society and served on the AOG Board of Trustees from 1997 to 2001, helping to lead the West Point Bicentennial Campaign, the first major WPAOG capital campaign. Shull recently received the DoD Distinguished Service and Reserve Officer’s Association Minute Man of the Year awards. Senator James Inhofe, former Senate Armed Services Committee Chair, says, “Tom is a perfect recipient of the Distinguished Graduate Award due to his selfless service to our nation and his unwavering dedication to service members and their families.”

Stanley A. McChrystal '76 – “Mentor...role model...innovator...national treasure”: These are words used by General Joseph Votel '80 (Retired), former Commander, U.S. Central Command, to describe General Stanley McChrystal (Retired), the officer credited with the 2006 death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. McChrystal branched Infantry upon graduation and quickly began his rise to the four-star rank. After five years, he was Ranger and Special Forces qualified and had successfully completed a unit command. After serving in Korea and an assignment with the 75th Ranger Regiment, McChrystal reported to the Naval War College as a student in the Command and General Staff Course. Upon its completion, he was assigned as Army Special Operations action officer, J-3, Joint Special Operations Command, deploying to Saudi Arabia for Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Returning to the 75th Ranger Regiment in 1994, he initiated a complete revamping of the existing Army hand-to-hand combat method. Promoted to brigadier general months before 9/11, McChrystal became one of the most recognized officers in the Global War of Terrorism, delivering nationally televised Pentagon briefings on U.S. military operations in Iraq as a member of the Joint Staff and later commanding the Joint Special Operations Command in Iraq and serving as Commander of U.S. and the International Security Assistance forces in Afghanistan. He retired from service in June 2010. His awards and decorations for service include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Army Distinguished Service Medal, the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Legion of Merit, and the Bronze Star. Since leaving the Army, McChrystal has remained committed to leadership: he teaches leadership to graduate students at Yale, he chairs the Board of Service Year Alliance, and he founded the organizational leadership consulting firm McChrystal Group LLC.

David M. Rodriguez '76 - The last officer from the Class of 1976 to retire, General David Rodriguez (Retired), “Rod”, accomplished much in his 40-year career. He commissioned Infantry and Commanded two companies (1st Armored Division, 75th Ranger Regiment), a Battalion (2d/502d, 101st), a Brigade (325 AIR, 82d) as well the 82d Airborne Division. He was a planner for Operation Just Cause (Panama) and deployed to Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm as a Battalion Operations Officer. After 9/11, Rodriguez was the Assistant Division Commander, 4th Infantry Division, deploying to Iraq in 2003. Multiple tours in the Global War on Terrorism followed, including Commander of Multi-National Force - Northwest in Iraq, Commander of Combined Joint Task Force 82 in Afghanistan, and culminating as the Deputy Commander, U.S. Forces Afghanistan/Commander, International Security Assistance Force Joint Command. Between combat tours, he served as a senior military aide to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who said of Rodriguez’s service, “His professional competence, humility, and dedication to duty made him one the absolute best of the scores of senior general and flag officers I served with as Secretary of Defense.” Before retiring in 2016, Rodriguez commanded Army Forces Command and Africa Command, the latter for which he coordinated the U.S. response to the West African Ebola pandemic. Rodriguez served six tours in combat - “more combat leadership at a flag officer level than Eisenhower, Bradley, and Patton combined,” noted General Mark A. Milley, the 39th Army Chief of Staff. Today, Rodriguez assists with the Strategic Education Program for the Army War College and the Capstone and Pinnacle courses for the National Defense University. He also contributes his time to Leadworthy, a non-profit that develops critical, life-changing skills for middle and high school students, and Angel Wings for Veterans, a non-profit that provides charitable transportation for Veterans and their families to medical care.

Herbert Raymond “H.R.” McMaster Jr. ’84 – Once picked by *Fortune* magazine as one of the world’s 50 greatest leaders, Lieutenant General H.R. McMaster (Retired) has succeeded in both the world of thought and the world of action, having served his country with honor and distinction as a soldier, scholar, and statesman. McMaster led Eagle Troop of the Second Armored Cavalry Regiment to victory at the 1991 Battle of the 73 Easting during the Persian Gulf War, a battle in which the troop destroyed more than 80 enemy vehicles while suffering no casualties. He was associate professor of history at West Point from 1994 to 1996. He holds a Ph.D. in American history and is author of *Dereliction of Duty*, a book that General James McConville ’81, the 40th Chief of Staff of the Army, says, “...former Chiefs and I frequently recommend as essential reading for our Army’s senior officers.” As the 71st Colonel of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, McMaster commanded a multi-national battlegroup that defeated Al Qaeda-in-Iraq and liberated Tal Afar during Operation Restoring Rights. McMaster also served with distinction as a task force commander in Afghanistan. He later commanded the Army’s Maneuver Center of Excellence at Fort Benning, GA, leading innovations in leader development, training, concepts, and doctrine. After serving as Deputy Commanding General (Futures) of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, he was selected as the 26th Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. McMaster retired in 2018. He is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and teaches at Stanford University’s Freeman Spogli Institute and Graduate School of Business. He is, most recently, author of *Battlegrounds: The Fight to Defend the Free World*. Hoover’s director, Condoleezza Rice, 66th U.S. Secretary of State, says, “H.R. is without question one of the great soldier-statesmen of his generation.”

About the West Point Association of Graduates

The West Point Association of Graduates (WPAOG), is among America’s oldest educational alumni associations. Founded in 1869, the Association was established “to cherish the memories of [its] Alma Mater, and to promote the fraternal fellowship of its graduates,” many of whom had recently fought against each other in the Civil War. Today, WPAOG has evolved into a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to furthering the ideals and promoting the welfare of West Point, and to serving and supporting the more than 52,000 living West Point graduates. Its philanthropic pursuits maintain a Margin of Excellence for cadets attending the United States Military Academy. For more information see www.WestPointAOG.org.

About West Point

The United States Military Academy at West Point is a four-year, co-educational, federal, liberal arts college located 50 miles north of New York City. It was founded in 1802 as America's first college of engineering and continues today as the world’s premier leader-development institution, consistently ranked among top colleges in the country. Its mission remains constant—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 U. S. Army. For more information, go to WestPoint.edu.

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