

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK**

STUDENTS FOR FAIR ADMISSIONS,

Plaintiff,

v.

THE UNITED STATE MILITARY ACADEMY
AT WEST POINT; THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; LLOYD
AUSTIN, in his official capacity as Secretary of
Defense; CHRISTINE WORMUTH, in her
official capacity as Secretary of the Army;
LIEUTENANT GENERAL STEVEN GILLAND,
in his official capacity as Superintendent of the
United States Military Academy; and
LIEUTENANT COLONEL RANCE LEE, in his
official capacity as Director of Admissions for the
United States Military Academy at West Point,

Defendants.

23 Civ. 8262 (PMH)

DECLARATION OF LIEUTENANT
GENERAL DOUGLAS F. STITT

I, Douglas F. Stitt, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare, under penalty of perjury, as follows:

1. I am a three-star general in the United States Army and the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, also known as the G-1. I have served in this position since August 2022.

2. I am generally aware of the allegations made by the plaintiff in this lawsuit. I submit this declaration in my official capacity on behalf of the United States Army in support of the defendants' opposition to plaintiff's motion for a preliminary injunction. The statements in this declaration are based on my personal knowledge, my military judgment and experience, and information and knowledge I have obtained and rely on in the course of my official duties.

I. Army Background and Experience

3. I assumed duties as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, United States Army, Washington D.C. on August 5, 2022. The U.S. Army G-1 is responsible for the development, management, and execution of all manpower and personnel plans, programs, and policies throughout the entire U.S. Army. As the principal human relations proponent for the U.S. Army, my office is dedicated to supporting and empowering soldiers, civilian employees, military families, and veterans worldwide. It oversees recruiting, retention, and sustainment of a high-quality volunteer force through innovative and effective training programs. The primary objective of my office is to ensure readiness of personnel to serve the needs of the Army across the full spectrum of its operations. The G-1 takes responsibility for execution of our assigned functions and achievement of our mission in support of the Secretary of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Assistant Secretary of the Army (Manpower & Reserve Affairs).

4. I graduated from Norwich University in Northfield, Vermont as a Distinguished Military Graduate and was commissioned into the U.S. Army as an Armor officer in 1990. I spent my early years serving as a Rifle Platoon Leader and Executive Officer in the 3rd Battalion, 6th Infantry at Fort Polk, Louisiana, company commander of the 129th Adjutant General Company (Postal), Fort Liberty (Formerly Fort Bragg), North Carolina, and Battalion Commander of the 1st Special Troops Battalion, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Liberty, North Carolina.

5. My key staff assignments include Adjutant, 1-41 Infantry, Fort Cavazos (formerly Fort Hood), Texas; Assistant Professor of Military Science, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey; Chief of Strength Management, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Liberty, North Carolina; Deputy G1 and Secretary of the General Staff, Southern European Task Force,

Vicenza, Italy; Brigade Adjutant, 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment, Deputy G1/AG, 82nd Airborne Division, Deputy Personnel Operations Division, United States Army Special Operations Command, G1 XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Liberty, North Carolina; Director, Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky; Executive Officer, Headquarters, Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Pentagon, Virginia; Director, Officer Personnel Management Directorate, U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky; and Director, Military Personnel Management, Headquarters, Department of the Army Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, Pentagon, Virginia.

6. I have deployed three times to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (2005-2006, 2007-2008, 2014) and once to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom (2009-2010).

7. In addition to my Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Norwich University, I hold a Master's degree in Defense Studies from the Canadian Forces Staff College and a Master's degree in Strategic Studies from the Army War College.

8. I have been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster), Bronze Star (with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters), Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Badge, and Combat Action Badge.

II. Current Force Composition Overview

9. As of September 2023, the total number of soldiers in the Active Component is 453,468.¹ The racial and ethnic distribution of the Army as of September 2023 was approximately as follows: White, 51.7%; Black, 20.2%; Hispanic, 18.7%; American Indian or

¹ Query, Operations Research/Systems Analyst, Army G-1 (September 2023).

Alaskan Native, 0.7%; and unknown/other, 1.4%.² As of October 2022, Asian and Pacific Islanders constituted 6.3%.³

10. Commissioned officers lead enlisted soldiers and serve as the Army's managers, problem solvers, and key influencers. Among other responsibilities, they plan missions and lead and direct enlisted soldiers in the execution of those missions. The racial and ethnic distribution of the Army's officer corps as of September 2023 was approximately as follows: White, 68%; Black, 11%; Hispanic, 9%; and other, 3%.⁴ As of October 2022, Asian and Pacific Islanders constituted 8%.⁵ Hispanics and Asians have increased their representation within the officer corps over the last 14 years, increasing from 5%. Non-Hispanic Black representation has declined slightly, dropping from 12% in 2007 to 11% in 2021.

11. At the general officer level—commissioned officers above the rank of Colonel—as of September 2023, white general officers accounted for 83% of Army general officers, while all other races and ethnicities accounted for only 17% of Army general officers.⁶

III. Preliminary Statement

12. The mission of the United States Army is to deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance across the full spectrum of conflict as part of the joint force. The Army mission is vital to the Nation because we are the service capable of defeating enemy ground forces and indefinitely seizing and controlling those

² *Id.*

³ Query, Operations Research/Systems Analyst, Army G-1 (October 2022). Due to a coding issue that occurred when the Army migrated to a new human resources system in 2023, current numbers are not yet available.

⁴ Query, Operations Research/Systems Analyst, Army G-1 (September 2023).

⁵ Query, Operations Research/Systems Analyst, Army G-1 (October 2022). Due to a coding issue that occurred when the Army migrated to a new human resources system in 2023, current numbers are not yet available.

⁶ Query, Operations Research/Systems Analyst, Army G-1 (September 2023).

things an adversary prizes most—its land, its resources, and its population. A highly qualified, diverse Army officer corps is essential to the Army’s ability to fulfill this principal mission to provide national security. Below, I first explain that the Army, using its best military judgment, has concluded that a diverse officer corps is critical to combat effectiveness and unit cohesion; the recruitment and retention of officers and enlisted personnel alike; and the domestic and international legitimacy of the U.S. Army as an institution. I then turn to why the Army’s need for a diverse officer corps is tied to and necessarily relies on the composition of the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

IV. Using Its Best Military Judgment, the Army Has Concluded That Diversity Is Essential to Accomplishing Its Mission

13. The United States Army is the largest and oldest branch of service. Diversity enables the availability of highly capable personnel and the ability of the Army to leverage those capabilities. Many of the current practices that drive diversity originate from the Army’s need to continuously improve military outcomes and its organizational mission. Therefore, the Army is focused on our soldiers because they provide us our competitive advantage, with a mission and vision to acquire, develop, employ, and retain the diversity of soldier talent needed to achieve and maintain Army readiness. In this effort, the Army has produced several strategic documents that address diversity within the Army ranks, such as the *Army Strategy*, the *Army People Strategy*, the *Diversity Equity, & Inclusion Annex*, and *Project Inclusion*. Diversity, including in the officer corps, is a strategic imperative in the increasingly complex global security environment.

14. Developing and maintaining a highly qualified and demographically diverse military leadership is critical for mission effectiveness and is essential to national security. As Army Senior Leaders with decades of military and national security experience have repeatedly

concluded, diversity in the Army officer corps directly contributes to operational readiness within the Army and provides the U.S. military a strategic advantage over its adversaries. Especially as international and transnational threats continue to evolve, and as international competitors continue to exhibit pacing threats that challenge U.S. defense strategy, the Army must be able to leverage all its strategic advantages to maintain the Nation's security posture.

a. Mission Readiness

15. Military readiness and effectiveness depend heavily upon unit cohesion. Military units are unlike any other organization in that their degree of cohesion influences their ability to accomplish their missions and is, therefore, essential to their survivability. In the end, success or failure is an existential condition on the battlefield. Soldiers fight for the man or woman on their right or left. How hard they fight, and whether they can persevere through the hardships that those in the Army are asked to endure, depend to a considerable extent on the cohesiveness of their team.

16. In my three decades as an Army officer, I have witnessed units that lacked cohesion and those that maintained it. Units that lack cohesion are not able to effectively accomplish their assigned mission, nor the Army's. Conversely, cohesive teams with strong bonds among their members perform better, achieve unmatched levels of synchronization, and demonstrate tenacity and a will to win that surpasses all others. Cohesive teams can absorb more demands, perform with fewer errors, and exceed performance expectations. Further, individuals who report strong unit cohesion were more likely to have lower levels of self-reported post-traumatic stress.⁷ Unit cohesion has been found to be a factor associated with soldiers' decisions

⁷ Clare, R. et al., (Oct. 2021), *Defense Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS) Redesign*, Office of People Analytics p. 150.

to continue serving.⁸ Individuals who report lower levels of unit support (i.e., cohesion), for instance, were more than twice as likely to separate from service as those reporting higher levels of support from their peers and leaders; conversely, higher levels of cohesion can positively impact a command climate and increase retention.⁹ Cohesion is also a factor in mitigating sexual assault, sexual harassment, and suicidal ideation.¹⁰ The Army measures unit cohesion through Army-wide surveys and annual command climate surveys. In particular, the Defense Organizational Climate Survey is a congressionally mandated, unit-level climate survey that collects information on unit climate and cohesion; harassment and discrimination; diversity and inclusion; and other aspects of organizational climate. It uses both quantitative and qualitative measurements to look at unit cohesion, which is defined in the study as “an individual unit member’s perception that unit members care about each other, share the same mission and goals, and work together effectively and is commonly referred to as camaraderie.”¹¹

17. The Army officer corps must continue to be diverse or the cohesiveness essential to the Army mission will be critically undermined. As the *Army People Strategy* states with respect to acquiring talent, the Army must “[i]dentify and recruit the diverse military and civilian talents needed to organize, train, and equip a force ready for prompt and sustained ground combat.”¹²

18. Concerns pertaining to discrimination and harassment in the military, including the Army, are likewise detrimental to unit cohesion and underscore the need for a diverse officer corps. As former Secretary of Defense Mart T. Esper stated, “we are not immune to the forces of

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Army People Strategy*, p. 6.

bias and prejudice – whether visible or invisible, conscious or unconscious. We know this bias burdens many of our Serve members, and has direct and indirect impact on the experiences of our minority members, the cultural and ethnic diversity of the force, and representation in our officer ranks.”¹³ Surveys indicate that isolated instances of white nationalism, racism, and extremism have unfortunately been growing in the military.¹⁴ Perceptions of structural bias and racism also persist. While these and similar challenges have the potential to undermine unit cohesion and the Army’s ability to achieve its mission, diversity mitigates such threats and preserves the cohesion upon which our readiness depends.

19. The Department of Defense affirms that the benefits of a diverse officer corps are widespread.¹⁵ The Army shares the Department of Defense’s views. Research has shown that diverse military organizations “are more effective at accomplishing their missions,” while “highly unequal armies have suffered higher casualty rates and more frequent outbreaks of mass desertion.”¹⁶ Diversity, including among the officer corps, increases team innovation and effective decision-making, as diverse groups—as compared to more homogenous groups—offer

¹³ Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Mark T. Esper Message to the Force on DOD Diversity and Inclusiveness* (June 18, 2020).

¹⁴ See Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Immediate Actions and the Establishment of the Countering Extremism Working Group*, (Apr. 9, 2021); Doxsee, C. and Macander, M., *Assessing the Pentagon’s Progress on Countering Extremism in the Military*, Center for Strategic International Studies (Apr. 8, 2022); Kheel, R., *Many Service Members of Color Are Turning Down Assignments Because of Concerns about Racism*, Military Times (Feb. 7, 2022).

¹⁵ See generally Declaration of Dr. Jeannette Haynie.

¹⁶ Dwayne M. Butler & Sarah W. Denton, RAND Corp., *How Effective are Blinding Concepts and Practices to Promote Equity in the Department of the Air Force?* 4 (Dec. 2021). See also Lyall, J, *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War*, Princeton University Press (2020) (discussing research showing that diversity benefits military tactics and operations at multiple levels, from tactical infantry tasks to overarching battlefield performance).

a large pool of task-relevant skills, knowledge, experience, and unique ideas that enhance military outcomes.¹⁷

20. Multi-domain operations also require a diverse Army officer corps that understands people and their environments. Understanding and effectively navigating diverse people and experiences is therefore a crucial skillset, especially given the various geographic and human environments in which Army forces operate.¹⁸ As recent military operations indicate, Army forces must be prepared to deploy worldwide. The Army currently has 137,000 soldiers in over 140 countries and continues to deploy Soldiers across the globe.¹⁹ Diversity among the officer corps enables our troops to operate in this wide range of diverse environments more effectively and thus more efficiently achieve our mission.

21. As a result, like the Department of Defense, the Army has concluded using its best military judgment that diversity among its ranks, including in the officer corps, is “vital to building trust, developing cohesive teams and sustaining a strong force ready to protect and defend our nation.”²⁰ Further, “[o]ur command is strengthened when every Soldier ... experiences a sense of inclusion where equal opportunities for greater responsibilities and advancements are evident at the highest levels of leadership.”²¹

¹⁷ Slapakova, L. et al., (2022) *Leveraging Diversity for Military Effectiveness*, RAND.

¹⁸ Public Law No. 117-81, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023*, 117th Congress (2021).

¹⁹ Garamone, J. (2023). *Vice Chiefs Talk Recruiting Shortfalls, Readiness Issues*. DOD News.

²⁰ U.S. Army Forces Command, *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Strategic Plan FY2023 – FY2029*, p. 1. *See also* Department of Defense Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2022-2023, p. 1 (“DoD’s strategic advantage in overcoming the myriad global security threats facing the United States is the diverse and dynamic talent pool in our nation from which it can draw.... Advancing diversity ... [is] about obtaining the critical skills and experience to build the Total Force necessary to secure our nation for years to come.”).

²¹ *Id.*

b. Recruitment and Retention

22. A diverse Army and officer corps also improve Army recruitment and retention.

“[The Army] win[s] through our people, and people will drive success in our Readiness, Modernization and Reform priorities.”²² The *Army People Strategy* therefore pursues four strategic outcomes along four lines of effort to acquire, develop, employ, and retain talent. Two of the Army’s strategic outcomes—acquire and retain talent—directly relate to the accession of diverse talent drawn from all corners of our country and its vibrant population.

23. To acquire such talent, the Army must be able to “[i]dentify and recruit the diverse military ... talents needed to organize, train, and equip a force ready for prompt and sustained ground combat.” As such, “a robust pipeline of new talent into the Army is the Army’s main effort through 2028 because it will ensure that we have the breadth and depth of talent needed for the multi-domain capable force of 2035 envisioned by the *Army Strategy*.”²³ Unlike other private and public organizations, however, the military operates as a closed personnel system. Senior leaders are not laterally recruited from the outside but are instead grown through the lower ranks, many of whom are graduates of West Point. Therefore, “each stage of the military personnel life cycle—from who is recruited to who is promoted—is intricately linked to the composition of future military leaders.”²⁴

24. Similarly, retaining diverse talent is essential to sustaining mission readiness and has a positive effect across all other lines of effort. High rates of attrition present a risk to the organizational health of the Army due to the loss of personnel talent and skillsets, the increased costs in replacing lost personnel, and the current recruiting crisis that is hindering the Army’s

²² *Army People Strategy* p. 2 (quoting Gen. James McConville, 40th Chief of Staff).

²³ *Id.* p. 6.

²⁴ MLDC Final Report (2011) p. 39.

ability to replace personnel loss. Acquiring and retaining the right talent thus directly improves the lethality and readiness of our Army while reducing attrition and behaviors inconsistent with the Army Culture and Values. As various studies have shown, diversity climates have a direct impact on retention in the military context.²⁵

25. A lack of diversity within the officer corps, especially among its senior leaders, negatively impacts mentorship and advocacy for diverse service members and junior officers, which in turn perpetuates the lack of diversity among senior military leaders. Strong mentoring programs are critical elements that provide diverse talent the tools to compete for leadership opportunities at the highest levels of the military. “Leaders from racial/ethnic and cultural backgrounds similar to those of the U.S. citizenry have the potential to inspire future servicemembers,” and “[d]emographic similarities between the enlisted corps and its leaders can equally inspire and facilitate greater confidence.”²⁶

26. Conversely, the underrepresentation of minority officers can decrease confidence across the Army formation. “Young people only aspire to be what they can see” and “if they don’t see someone that looks like them in a higher position, or they have not had an opportunity to experience it, then they’re less inclined to do so.”²⁷ That is not to say that majority officers are incapable of or ineffective at leading minority soldiers. Nothing could be further from the truth. To the contrary, the Army prides itself on the fact that *all* of its officers are consummate leaders

²⁵ See, e.g., DoD Office of People Analytics, *An Exploration of the Return on Investment for Diversity & Inclusion in the Military Using Cluster Analysis to Identify Force-Wide Climates, Correlates, and Implications: Executive Report* (October 2022); Keller, K. et al., *Advancement and Retention Barriers in the U.S. Air Force Civilian White Collar Workforce: Implications for Demographic Diversity*, RAND (2020).

²⁶ MLDC Final Report (2011) p. 44.

²⁷ Losey, S. *Recruiting Women and People of Color Has Gotten Harder. The Air Force Thinks Diverse Leadership Will Help.* (Sep. 22, 2021) (quoting Air Force Chief of Staff General Charles Brown).

and professionals who treat their respective units' soldiers with the utmost dignity and respect, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or national origin, which fosters esprit and cultivates an environment of trust. But at the same time, if young recruits and soldiers cannot see themselves represented to a significant degree *somewhere* across the Army writ large—that is, an Army that represents its Nation—they are less likely to have confidence in their future in it.

27. The recent recruitment challenges for the Army underscore the necessity of pursuing diversity throughout its ranks, as diversity increases recruitment and enables the Army to pursue the most talented individuals from all segments of society. In fiscal year 2022, the Army missed its recruiting goal by 25%, the worst shortfall in decades. This year, the Army expects to be short 10,000 enlisted recruits. These challenges are further amplified by the specific eligibility requirements for the military, some of which are statutory, that disqualify a large percentage of young people.²⁸ Only 23% of the target age population are eligible to serve in the military based on recruitment standards that disqualify applicants for a variety of reasons, including mental health issues, age, prior drug use, and obesity. The population eligible to serve is, therefore, relatively small.

28. In 2021, propensity to serve in youth of ages 16-21 dropped to 9%.²⁹ The military competes with civilian employers for the eligible population, which is particularly challenging when the economy and job market are doing well. Further, in a 2022 study completed by the Office of People Analytics, the top ten reasons why an individual would not consider joining the U.S. military included, (1) possibility of physical injury/death; (2) possibility of PTSD or other emotional/psychological issues; (3) leaving family and friends; (4) other career interests; (5)

²⁸ Garamone, J. (2023). *Vice Chiefs Talk Recruiting Shortfalls, Readiness Issues*. DOD News.

²⁹ *Spring 2022 Propensity Update, Office of People Analytics* (Feb. 23, 2023).

dislike of military lifestyle; (6) possibility of interference with college education; (7) too long of a commitment; (8) required to live in undesirable places; (9) lack of confidence in qualifications; and (10) possibility of sexual harassment/assault.³⁰ Notably, diversity and equity initiatives were not identified as important or key reasons why individuals do not want to join the Army.

29. As a result of this shrinking pool of future soldiers, it is all-the-more important to cultivate a diverse environment attractive to the military's target age population.³¹ Failure to outfit the Army has significant implications for national security. A failure to recruit sufficient numbers to keep the Army operationally ready is an existential threat to the All-Volunteer Force.

c. U.S. Army's Legitimacy in the United States and Abroad

30. A diverse officer corps additionally protects the U.S. Army's legitimacy among the United States public and its international partners.

31. The Army recognizes that an All-Volunteer Force, and its leadership, "must represent the country it defends."³² "The more that DoD is inclusive of diverse backgrounds, the more connected we become with the citizens we serve."³³ A "diverse officer corps additionally foster[s] trust and confidence between the enlisted corps and its leaders."³⁴

32. Since the racial struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, the Army has long understood the importance of an officer corps reflective of society and the enlisted ranks and has worked to improve diversity within the officer corps. The Army must maintain a diverse officer corps, or it risks renewed challenges to its legitimacy, performance, and combat readiness.

³⁰ *Fall 2021 Propensity Update* (Aug. 9, 2022), Office of People Analytics, p. 14.

³¹ O'Boyle, E. (2021). *4 Things Gen Z and Millennials Expect from their Workplace*. Gallup.

³² *2011 National Military Strategy* (2011) p. 17.

³³ DoD Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan 2012-2017 p. 4.

³⁴ MLDC Report p. 44.

33. Gallup polls show that confidence in the military has fluctuated since the 1960s. In the 1970s, when the Army confronted significant racial tensions and a pronounced racial and ethnic disparity between the enlisted and officer corps, between 50% and 58% of Americans were confident in the military, a percentage lower than the current confidence level.³⁵ Since the 1970s, the Army has continually worked to increase diversity, and diversity among the officer corps has improved. During the same time, from the 1980s to 2021, confidence in the military generally improved in parallel.³⁶ It surged after the First Gulf War victory (to a record high 85% in 1991) and again after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.³⁷ For the next two decades, confidence generally held above 70%, until dipping to 69% in 2021, and declining further since then following the Army's withdrawal from Afghanistan.³⁸ Declining confidence in the military has notably not been attributed to the military's judgment that it needs a diverse force.

34. A diverse officer corps also provides legitimacy with our international allies and promotes international engagement. Strengthening alliances and attracting new international partners is one of three lines of effort central to the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*.³⁹ The strategy recognizes that, in a rapidly changing world, the United States must defend its interests and values against new threats and competitors, especially from China and Russia; but it cannot do so without the support of existing and new partners and allies.

V. **The Army's Compelling Interests Are Intrinsicly Linked to West Point's Admissions Practices**

³⁵ Younis, M. (Jul. 31, 2023) *Confidence in U.S. Military Lowest in Over Two Decades*, Gallup.

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ The NDS is expected to be produced every four years and outlines how the Department of Defense will contribute to achieving National Security Strategy objectives in order to maintain security and prosperity worldwide. The Army Strategy is produced by the Army in support of the National Defense Strategy. The most recent Army Strategy is from 2018.

35. As discussed above, the United States Army and its senior most leaders have concluded using their best military judgment that the Nation's military strength and readiness depend on a steady pipeline of highly qualified and diverse officers. West Point is a preeminent leader development institution for the U.S. Army, and its mission is to prepare and train a highly selective Corps of Cadets for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as officers in the U.S. Army. Thus, West Point is unlike typical secondary education institutions. While graduates from civilian colleges and universities may go on to work in any number of jobs in a variety of industries and institutions, cadets leave West Point as military officers and are expected to be prepared to wield lethal force in a legal and ethical manner, to care for the Soldiers in their units, and to exercise stewardship over the Army Profession, while seizing the initiative to accomplish missions in a complex, decentralized operating environment. West Point's diverse educational and military training environment, where students of different backgrounds throughout the country come together, is essential to preparing the Army's future leaders to operate in complex human environments and lead a diverse population of soldiers. It is my understanding that West Point has concluded that its use of race in its admissions policies, which merely consider race as one of many factors as part of a holistic assessment, are currently necessary to its mission to train future military leaders. The Army concurs in that assessment.

36. To achieve the diversity critical to military readiness and effectiveness described above, the Army relies on a diverse pipeline of future leaders, including from West Point. This is especially true considering that, as I described in congressional testimony in September, promotions within the Army are strictly based on an individual's past performance and future

potential once their career as an officer begins.⁴⁰ As such, the aperture should be as wide as possible at the accessions stage to provide all who can meet West Point's rigorous admissions criteria and the Army's standards a meaningful opportunity to serve. And unlike the promotions context—where the Army controls the conditions of competition and success between its officers and can ensure an even playing field for advancement—the Army believes it is necessary for admissions officers to account for any societal or institutional challenges and obstacles, including those linked to one's race and ethnicity, that an applicant may have confronted up to that point. West Point's limited consideration of race in its admissions practices thus ensures the diverse pipeline of officers that is vital to the Army's success without undermining the Army's approach to the promotions process. Indeed, no feasible alternative could balance those two competing vital interests as effectively.

37. The Army cannot at present achieve a highly qualified, diverse officer corps without the officers who commission from West Point. Annually, West Point graduates approximately 1,000 leaders who will take their place in the "Long Gray Line" to serve the Army and the Nation. While there are several commissioning sources for Army officers, including Officer Candidate School, Direct Commission, and the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), the service academies account for approximately 18%-20% of all officer commissions. In 2013, former Chief of Staff of the Army General Raymond T. Odierno recognized the lack of progress in increasing demographic diversity among the officer ranks and, therefore, directed West Point to increase accessions of minority officers, specifically women and African Americans. Those efforts continue today.

⁴⁰ Douglas F. Stitt, Testimony Before the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Personnel, Hearing on "Meritocracy in the Military Services: Accession, Promotion, and Command Selection," September 20, 2023.

38. Even more importantly, the diverse pipeline from the service academies becomes the conduit for a diverse future senior military leadership. West Point is a preeminent educational institution and prestigious commissioning source for Army officers. West Point's officer training is second-to-none, and it is therefore no surprise that West Point graduates disproportionately ascend to the upper echelons of Army leadership. Of all Army general officers—commissioned officers above the rank of Colonel—33% are West Point graduates.⁴¹ Of all Army general officers as of September 2023, white general officers accounted for 83% of all Army general officers.⁴² Of the small number of Black general officers in the Army, over 20% are West Point graduates.⁴³ For Hispanic general officers in the Army, 60% are West Point graduates.⁴⁴

39. The disparity in commissioning sources is even more significant at the three- and four-star levels. For example, at the four-star rank, there are a total of 16 generals. Almost 50% of Army four-star generals commissioned from West Point; a similar percentage of Black four-star generals in the Army commissioned from West Point.⁴⁵

40. Further, minority officers, particularly Black officers commissioned through West Point, have often fared better than their Black peers who commissioned through ROTC.⁴⁶ These experiences demonstrate a strong correlation between officers' attendance at West Point, including minority officers, and their competitiveness for future merit-based promotion.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Query, Operations Research/Systems Analyst, Army G-1 (October 31, 2022).

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Smith III, I. *Why Black Officers Still Fail*, US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters, Volume 40, Number 3 Parameters Autumn 2010, p. 8-9.

⁴⁷ See also Chivvis, C., *Diversity in the High Brass*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Sep. 6, 2022) (explaining that general officers who served on promotion boards have noted the influence of an officer's commissioning source on his or her promotion to general).


41. As a result, West Point graduates contribute significantly to senior military leadership and have an outsized influence on Army culture. To achieve a diverse officer force, particularly at the senior grades, therefore, the Army must ensure the development of a diverse pipeline of leaders, including from West Point, at their point of entry into service. Immediate cessation of the use of race in admissions policies at West Point would reduce the already limited pool of eligible and well-qualified minority officer candidates, directly impacting the future diversity of the Army's leaders and, in turn, undermining mission and combat readiness; the recruitment and retention of diverse Soldiers; the Army's legitimacy; and the strategic outcomes articulated through the *Army Strategy* and the *Army People Strategy* overall.

VI. Conclusion

42. In conclusion, it is my professional military judgment—and that of the U.S. Army and its leadership—that diversity among our ranks, including in the Army officer corps, is a strategic imperative necessary to achieve the Army mission to deploy, fight, and win our Nation's wars. Eliminating the pipeline of such diverse future Army officers from West Point would significantly undermine our national security, the operational health of the All-Volunteer Force, and the domestic and international legitimacy of the U.S. Army.

Dated: The Pentagon, Washington, D.C.

November 21, 2023


DOUGLAS F. STITT
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army