

2020 YOUNG ALUMNI Excellence Awards

Early Career Successes Lead to AOG Honor

Six USAFA graduates have been named as this year's honorees for the Association of Graduates' Young Alumni Excellence Award.

The award recognizes graduates for exceptional professional accomplishment, whether in military or civilian life.

Nominees must be within 15 years of their graduation year to be considered. A total of 45 young alums were nominated for the award this year — the most the AOG has ever received. Graduate years represented among the nominees were from 2005 to 2020.

This year's winners will be recognized during our Young Alumni Engagement & Success virtual panel. This is the sixth year for this AOG award and a total of 28 alumni have received the honor so far.

Lt. Col. Andrew M. Gray is the F-22 Branch chief, supervising the fleet modernization for Air Combat Command's Combat Forces Division at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia. He recently completed a U.S. Air Force Fellowship and master's degree.

During his fellowship, he authored a comprehensive and innovative adversary air redesign study that was commended by the commander of Air Combat Command.

Gray participates in Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) working groups synchronizing future air superiority capabilities. As the F-22 modernization lead and subject matter expert, he is responsible for overseeing more than \$1 billion in annual spending on F-22 operations, RDT&E, procurement and sustainment. Furthermore, he provides classified modernization support and guidance directly to the commander of Air Combat Command and to Headquarters Air Force.

Gray flew in support of OPERATION ATLANTIC RESOLVE showcasing the "Rapid Raptor" concept in the face of Russian posturing. Gray also distinguished himself as deputy chief of weapons and tactics for the 525th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron and the chief of the wing's mission planning cell at Al Dhafra Air Base, UAE, flying combat sorties over Iraq and Syria in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE.

He was then handpicked as the legislative liaison to the commander for 11th Air Force, Alaskan Command, and Alaska-NORAD Region. Gray has deployed to the Middle



Lt. Col.
Andrew Gray '06

East three times in the F-22 and been tasked to Korea, Japan and Europe.

Gray is married and is the father to four children. In his spare time, he enjoys volunteering to support youth sport teams and has coached two girls' softball teams, two youth baseball teams, three youth basketball teams, and a High School Football Passing League team. He is also involved in church and global mission efforts.

"I am grateful to the AOG and Academy for this honor and for those I have worked with that also exemplify excellence," he says. "The Academy provided an avenue for me to serve and I am grateful for the lessons learned during my cadet days and those taught to me by those that have gone before. A critical piece to my success and the teams I have been involved with is due to the foundation within my home and family. My wife has helped me remember that the most important work I will ever do will be within the walls of my own home. Her support has allowed me to continue to excel with integrity in my service. I hope my actions continue to inspire others as leaders before me inspired mine."

Everette Richardson is currently a master's in business administration student at The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, where he is a recipient of the Joseph Wharton Fellowship.

Richardson interned as an investment banking associate at Goldman Sachs, and due to his innovative leadership, unmatched work ethic and



Everette Richardson '14

business acumen, he earned a full-time offer to join the Real Estate Investment Banking Group at Goldman Sachs upon graduation.

During his time as a lieutenant, Richardson served as an acquisitions officer at Los Angeles Air Force Base, Space and Missile Systems Center, acquiring technological and manpower solutions. He led the successful delivery of the Transportable RBC Antenna Van where he streamlined a high-risk software development program resulting in an 18-month reduction in schedule, enabling the successful testing of a national security satellite prior to launch. Everette's effectiveness as a leader led him to be recognized as the top 1% of 294 lieutenants at Los Angeles AFB in 2017 and 2018.

As a program manager, Richardson led a 165-member, \$243 million systems engineering and integration contract which ensured the launch of seven national security satellites valued at over \$6 billion.

As a captain, Richardson's last assignment was a combat deployment in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel where he served as the aide de camp to the deputy commanding general, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). Less than halfway into his six-month deployment, Everette was by-name requested to support the CSTC-A commanding general, across 42 engagements with top Afghan leaders, including the president of Afghanistan.

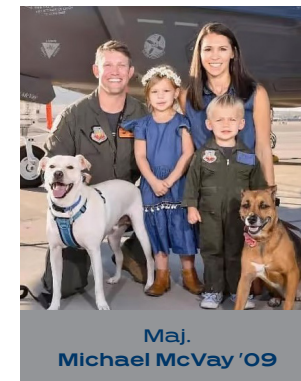
Richardson's commitment to service has extended beyond his military experience. He co-founded the Tens Scholars, a college preparatory program for 10 high achieving minority high school students. In addition, he was a visionary and driving force that stood up a Top MBA (M7) and Law School (T-14) mentorship program, serving 18 USAFA cadets, junior officers and young professionals. As the co-chair of the leadership team, Everette recruited senior executive USAFA alumni as mentors for the group.

Everette founded Diversity Capital Partners, a real estate holding group, with three other 2014 USAFA graduates. They own Monument "Gallery Center" off of Interstate 25.

"It means a great deal to me to get to reconnect with my alma mater as a recipient of this award," he says. "This award acknowledges the incredible momentum I have felt both personally and professionally since graduating from USAFA. To the Academy classmates, coaches, professors and mentors who have helped me get to where I am today, thank you."

Maj. Michael McVay is currently stationed as an F-35 weapons instructor in the 6th Weapons Squadron (WPS) at Nellis Air Force Base, where he trains weapons officers charged with maintaining dominance over future battlefields.

McVay attended undergraduate pilot training and was assigned to the A-10 Thunderbolt II at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia. He deployed to Bagram Air Base as one of only two lieutenant flight leads, flying 111 combat sorties and amassing 458 combat flight hours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. McVay cross-trained into his second weapon system



Maj.
Michael McVay '09

— the F-16 Fighting Falcon.

He then attended USAF Weapons School en route to Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina. As chief of weapons and tactics, McVay helped produce combat-ready pilots for combatant commanders. He was recognized as the wing's 2017 Robbie Risner Award nominee, recognizing weapons of-

ficer who makes the greatest combat impact.

Next, McVay cross-trained into the F-35A Lightning Bolt. In addition to his current role as a flight commander, he is the offensive counter-air subject matter expert for the entire F-35A community, publishing classified tactics, techniques and procedures to prepare for future near-peer challenges.

He has been an ambassador for the Long Blue Line, volunteering for airshows, leading the F-35 flyover for the 2019 Armed Forces Bowl, speaking to groups and providing tours. He champions military spouses' service and sacrifice across the Joint Force. He actively uses social media to share spouse stories to bolster morale and a sense of community for those that support our men and women in uniform. Additionally, he remains active in the various organizations he has served in, continuing to mentor airmen across all three weapons systems.

"It's an honor to be selected for this award and I am very humbled by it," he says. "I have been fortunate enough to be afforded many opportunities to both fail and succeed in this career, and they began the day I walked onto the Academy grounds. I am proud to be an Academy product and hope that I have been a positive reflection on the institution to those I have come in contact with during my career."

Maj. Daniel Walker, a F-22 Raptor pilot, has consistently performed in the top 1% of his peers throughout his career. He graduated pilot training as one of six pilots (of the 1,500 produced that year) selected to fly the F-22.

On his way to becoming the first black pilot to graduate the F-22 Basic Course, he garnered the Air-to-Air Top Gun Award for his "Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals Class." In 2015, he became the youngest pilot in his platform to lead a formation into combat. He has planned more than 6,800 sorties for 16 nations as the Central Command Air Operations Center fighter liaison officer.

He is a four-time recipient of the Squadron Top Gun Award that recognizes the F-22 pilot with the most air and ground



Maj.
Daniel Walker '10

training employment points. In recognition of being one of the best in his career field, then-Capt. Walker was selected as the youngest detachment commander for the Alaska NORAD Region F-22 Combat Alert Cell — a position previously held only by lieutenant colonels. He led the 3rd Operations Support Squadron's Aircrew Flight Equipment Flight to the Pacific Air Force's Large Program of the Year Award in 2019.

Walker is currently a 435th FTS Introduction to Fighter Fundamentals instructor pilot to American, Saudi Arabian, Brazilian, Qatari and Argentinian fighter pilot candidates, providing airborne instruction on surface attack, air combat maneuvers and tactical intercepts. Additionally, he serves as the 12th Flying Training Wing's representative to the 19th Air Force A5 Pilot Training Transformation team. In this position, he aids in the modernization of Air Force pilot training.

Since graduating from USAFA, Walker has remained dedicated to service. He serves as the president of Seed Incorporated, a mentorship program for cadets and young officers. He also serves as the co-director of operations for The Air Gardens Group, a nonprofit dedicated to teaching and mentoring Colorado high school students.

Lastly, Afterburner Inc. has hired Walker as their youngest ever consultant. He is the fastest to upgrade to an event lead that instructs planning, execution and debrief mechanics to corporations around the globe.

"While a cadet, our Air Force Academy ignited in me a passion for service in and out of the uniform," he says. "After graduation, my consistent and impactful interactions with the Long Blue Line have challenged me to relentlessly pursue ways to give time and energy to the people and causes who might benefit most from my good fortunes. In the midst of social and economic tumult, transitioning out of the Air Force, and endeavoring to be a father and husband to my family, I tap into the character, sense of purpose, and integrity the Zoo started instilling in me almost 15 years ago."

J Mintzmyer is a student at the Harvard Kennedy School via the CSAF Prestigious PhD Fellowship. He is researching the relationships between international trade policy and security outcomes to better inform future national security strategies. While completing his master's in public policy, J worked as a research intern at the White House with the Council of Economic Advisors.

Mintzmyer previously served as an MQ-9 evalua-



Capt.
J Mintzmyer '12

tor pilot at Creech Air Force Base where he launched the first RPA survivability cell, coordinated the inaugural Space Operations Officer exchange program to support the RQ-170 and MQ-9, and made significant combat impacts via his leadership in the wing weapons office.

While serving as an MQ-9 evaluator pilot and as an MQ-1 instructor pilot, Mintzmyer evaluated, instructed and flew over 1,000 combat hours across three AORs.

He served as assistant chief of wing weapons and tactics, where he designed a digital strike tracking system to modernize after-action reports, which allowed for improved statistical analysis to maximize combat lethality and mission effectiveness. His efforts led to significant updates to moving target engagements and other weaponeering inputs.

Mintzmyer subsequently served as group chief of weapons where he oversaw a Marine MQ-9 advisory initiative, which ultimately led to the first successful Marine MQ-9 overseas deployment. He also aided the successful stand-up of the 25th Attack Group at Shaw Air Force Base in early 2019.

Mintzmyer has volunteered in the communities where he's lived working as a master resilience trainer. As an MRT, he trained more than 150 resiliency training assistants across Nellis and Creech Air Force bases, facilitated a recovery seminar for sexual assault victim advocates, and advocated for further resiliency training efforts. Mintzmyer has advised and sponsored the Traders4ACause Organization since 2018, greatly benefiting nonprofit organizations.

Mintzmyer is also active as an independent financial researcher and has been widely published on Seeking Alpha and other investment websites since 2011. He has amassed 14,000 public followers across more than 400 published articles and reports.

"I cherish the friendships and lessons from our HAP-tastic experience at the Air Force Academy," he says. "These relationships and impacts have made all the difference in my life. Thank you to the graduate community for this honor and to my lifelong friends for being a continual blessing."

Lt. Col. Chad Reger currently serves as a strategic planner in the Joint Staff Directorate for Global Operations (J-39), where he leads strategic efforts against the Russia problem set. In this role, Reger leads planning for maneuver in the information environment against Russia; coordinates joint and interagency planning efforts to address global influence operations; and provides advice to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the secretary of Defense on operations, activities and investments in support of ongoing and planned influence operations.

Reger has earned recognition for his work on the Joint Staff's Crisis Management Team, authored the Department of Defense's overarching messaging guidance on Russia, penned the Joint Force's military messaging guidance for Venezuela, and

led planning for the Joint Force's initial military messaging on COVID-19. He was recently awarded a secondary AFSC as an information operations officer and was selected for RQ-4 squadron leadership.


An RQ-4 initial qualification training distinguished graduate, Reger volunteered to stand up the 69th Reconnaissance Group in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where he served as RQ-4B instructor, evaluator and chief of stan/eval. He has flown over 800 hours of combat support and sensitive reconnaissance operations, served as initial cadre for introducing the RQ-4B Block 40 into five geographic combatant commands, and was recognized as 25th Air Force's Flight Training Unit Instructor Pilot of the Year in 2014.



Lt. Col.
Chad Reger '07

In 2012, then-Capt. Reger deployed for one year as executive officer to the ISAF Deputy J2, where his duties included supporting eight international general officers and leading their additional-duty personal security detail (PSD). His teams successfully conducted more than 400 outside-the-wire general officer movements without incident. He personally led almost 150 of these missions, for which he received the Bronze Star Medal.

Reger has also impacted his community. He currently volunteers on the board of directors for two different Christian nonprofits and on his church's first response team. In the past, he has served as a youth minister, a church lay pastor and a Bible study leader. Reger is passionate about mentoring, and he loves spending time exploring the outdoors with his wife Alanna and three young children.

"What a surprise to receive this award from the Association of Graduates," he says. "I am humbled and honored! I have had the tremendous blessing of serving on some of the best teams in the Department of Defense, but this recognition really belongs to my faith, friends and family." 

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