

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**USAFA Distinguished Graduates announced**

Terrence “Terry” O’Donnell ’66 and Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John D. Hopper Jr. ’69 honored

**U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado (March 29, 2024)** – The United States Air Force Academy and the Association of Graduates are proud to announce Mr. Terrence “Terry” O’Donnell, Class of 1966, and Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John D. Hopper Jr., Class of 1969, as 2024 Class of Distinguished Graduates.

The honor recognizes exceptional USAFA graduates who set themselves apart by making extraordinarily significant contributions to the nation, the Academy and/or their communities. It is a unique distinction bestowed by the U.S. Air Force Academy and its Association of Graduates, recognizing graduates whose accomplishments are inspirational and elevate the reputation and the standing of the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Distinguished Graduates provide an example to all USAFA graduates and cadets of the standards the Academy values and the abilities that made our country and society great. Similar to a lifetime achievement award, the Distinguished Graduate distinction is among the highest honors a U.S. Air Force Academy graduate can receive.

**Mr. Terrence “Terry” O’Donnell ’66** has a long and distinguished history of government service, including in the White House as deputy special assistant to President Richard Nixon and special assistant to President Gerald Ford. When President Nixon resigned in 1974, O’Donnell was selected by President Ford to be his personal assistant.

O’Donnell ran the president’s daily schedule and traveled with President Ford on all trips—foreign and domestic. O’Donnell, a Vietnam-era Bronze Star recipient, later served as general counsel for the Department of Defense, director of the Defense Legal Services Agency and chair of the Air Force Academy’s Board of Visitors. O’Donnell was also executive vice president and general counsel of Textron Inc. and a partner at Williams & Connolly LLP in Washington, D.C. where he now serves as senior counsel. His law specialties include litigation, corporate governance and compliance, federal programs and national defense.

O’Donnell is a member of the boards of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation and the Falcon Foundation at the Air Force Academy. He is a founding director of the Air Force Academy Foundation. He served on public company boards, the Administrative Conference of the United States and as U.S. Representative to a United Nations Commission on the prevention of crime. He continues to stay active in the public arena, serving on several nonprofit boards including as secretary of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Foundation.

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**Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John D. Hopper Jr. '69** was vice commander, Air Education and Training Command, at Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, before retiring from the Air Force in 2005. He flew in combat in Vietnam and as commander of the 1660th Tactical Airlift Wing (Provisional) in Southwest Asia during Operation Desert Storm. He served as the Commandant of Cadets at the U.S. Air Force Academy from 1994 to 1996 and on the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. He is a command pilot with more than 4,000 flying hours in 11 different aircraft.

Upon retirement from the Air Force, Gen. Hopper became CEO of the Air Force Aid Society — the Air Force's signature charity — and became its longest-serving CEO. Throughout his 15 years at AFAS, Gen. Hopper helped relieve emergency financial distress for Air Force members and their families. He led the AFAS's response to numerous major disasters including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Michael. During his tenure as CEO, AFAS raised more money than ever before and significantly increased the percentage of grants issued, benefiting more airmen and families.

Gen. Hopper served with distinction from 2009 to 2011 as a member and chairman of the Civil Air Patrol Board of Governors. He was also part of two commissions that provided recommendations to Congress and Cabinet secretaries. In 2009, he was appointed as a member of the congressionally chartered Military Leadership Development Commission to study and make recommendations concerning impediments to growing senior leaders that reflect the country's diverse population. Most notably, the commission's key recommendations helped open combat specialties to women. In addition, Gen. Hopper was chosen as the first chairman of the VA's Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board. During his six years in that role, he helped establish housing for more than 230 veterans (most of them chronically homeless) and leveraged an out-year budget of \$360 million to continue development of nearly 1,000 more homes.

O'Donnell and Lt. Gen. Hopper will be honored at the Air Force Academy's Distinguished Graduate Dinner on Aug. 16. Dinner registration will open this spring.

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**About the Association of Graduates and Air Force Academy Foundation:**

The Association of Graduates and Air Force Academy Foundation exists to serve USAFA graduates, support the Academy in its mission to develop leaders of character for the Air Force and Space Force, and preserve the heritage of the institution.