

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB LUNCHEON WITH MICHELLE D. JOHNSON

SUBJECT: MICHELLE JOHNSON WILL SPEAK ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ACADEMY AND ITS ROLE IN PROVIDING FUTURE LEADERSHIP FOR THE AIR FORCE AT THIS TIME OF CHALLENGES AND BUDGET CONSTRAINTS.

MODERATOR: JOHN HUGHES, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

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JOHN HUGHES: (Sounds gavel.) Good afternoon, and welcome. My name is John Hughes. I'm an editor for Bloomberg First Word, that's our breaking news desk in Washington, and I am President of the National Press Club. The Club is the world's leading organization for journalists. We are committed to our profession's future through programs just like this. And we fight for a free press worldwide. For more information about the Club, visit our website Press.org. To donate to programs offered through our Club's Journalism Institute, visit Press.org/institute.

On behalf of members worldwide, I want to welcome you to today's luncheon. I'd also like to welcome our C-SPAN and Public Radio audiences. You can follow the action on Twitter. Use the hashtag NPCLunch. And remember, the public attends our lunches. Applause is not evidence of a lack of journalistic objectivity. After our guest's speech,

we'll have a question and answer session. And I will ask as many questions as time permits.

Our head table includes guests of our speaker and working journalists who are members of the National Press Club. Let me introduce them to you now. I would ask each person to stand briefly as names are announced. From the audience's right, Will Watson, Vice Commander of Post 20 of the VFW, a former newspaper editor, and 20 year National Press Club member. Larry Holdren, U.S. Air Force Special Advisor to the Superintendent and a guest of the speaker. Patrick Host, correspondent for *Defense Daily*. Captain Cindy Dawson, U.S. Air Force, Aide to the Superintendent, and a guest of the speaker. Donna Leinwand Lege, breaking news reporter at *USA Today*, a past President of the National Press Club, and Vice-Chair of the Club's Speakers Committee.

Skipping over our speaker for a moment, Jean Tye, U.S. Air Force, retired, and the NPC member who arranged today's Luncheon. Thank you so much, Jean. Lieutenant Casey M. Gurnell, U.S. Air Force Section Commander, 811th FSS Squadron, and a guest of the speaker. Jeffrey Stinson, Editor for *Stateline*. Michael Bruno, business editor for *Aviation Week Magazine*.

[applause]

Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson joins us to mark the 60th anniversary of the Air Force Academy, which she leads. She is the Academy's first female Superintendent. And that's one of a string of firsts that she has achieved at the school. She was the first female cadet to become a Wing Commander, the first women's basketball team member to score 1,700 points, and the first female graduate to be chosen as a Rhodes Scholar.

Johnson was selected to head the Academy in 2013 by then-Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel. This was at a time when the Academy was dealing with scandals involving sexual assault, cheating, drug use, and religious intolerance. Johnson replaced the head of the Athletic Department five months ahead of his scheduled retirement, and ordered changes to fix an Athletic Department culture that she said did "not align with our core values."

Johnson also has begun taking steps to position Academy graduates to deal with issues that have moved from science fiction to real world threats. The academic program now includes classes in cyber warfare and a major in computer network security. Immediately before her appointment to head the Air Force Academy, Johnson was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Intelligence at NATO Headquarters.

Ladies and gentlemen, will you please give a warm National Press Club welcome to Lieutenant General Michelle Johnson.

[applause]

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Mr. President and members, thank you so much for including me in this amazing historic institution. The “Free Press” part is obviously so important to our democracy. But just the history in this building is extraordinary to be included in this number. So I appreciate it very much.

It’s been a wonderful week, actually. We came out a couple of days ago on a C-17 with the football team, and to be able to take the Commander in Chief’s Trophy to the White House yesterday. But in the morning, yes we’re always glad to own that for a while. [applause] So I’ll talk more about that later. There’s more to us than football. [laughter]

But, in the morning, we went to Arlington Cemetery. And the seniors on the football team were there with the coaches. And we went out to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. But we had the privilege of seeing a couple of wreaths presented by some middle school kids. And it was just really powerful. And, as we were walking away from the Tomb, we actually, I spotted a grave from Colonel Jabara, who was the Triple Ace, the Ace in the Korean War. But he had had a couple of kills in World War II.

So for today, it’s so timely, with the fly-by we’ve just seen from the 70th anniversary of the victory over in the European Theatre. So it’s really extraordinary to remind the cadets what we’re part of and what this means. And it’s harder and harder. And I’ll talk about this more in a moment. But this is 40, over 41 years of an all-volunteer force in our country. And it’s really something to think about and to think about the people who sign up and are willing to serve in this day and age. So it’s been a wonderful experience.

And, at the White House yesterday for the President to shake all the cadets’ hands, and look them in the eye, and have them understand that when we take an oath to the Constitution, it encompasses all of this, you know, whoever the elected officials are, it’s by law, by the Constitution, that’s what we take an oath to. So it’s been really exciting to be here. It’s always great to be in Washington. I guess people would say that, when you live in Colorado. [laughter] Okay, great. Thank you so much, though.

So since taking command about 20 months ago, I have been making a concerted effort to help educate people about our Academy. We’re not as well known on the East Coast. And when I talk to my colleagues, the Superintendents of Annapolis, Vice Admiral Ted Carter, or Lieutenant General Bob Caslen at West Point, they have to allow that geographically, it’s easier for academics, for government leaders to go over to Annapolis or to West Point than to make their way out to Colorado Springs. And so that makes it a little difficult.

But also, as I mentioned, it’s an all-volunteer force now. And we need to invite people to know the opportunity to serve, to tap into all the talents of our country, and to have them understand that that’s a possibility. And each one of us has a role in all these things. And, in fact, the Academies have a role that we play. And we’re only one of a sort of a triad of commissioning sources in the services. There is ROTC, Reserve Officer

Training Corps that you may be familiar with in the colleges that you went to. There's Officer Training School where primary enlisted or people with their academic degree already, can go and be trained to become an officer. And then, there are the Service Academies, that are four-year undergraduate institutions that issue bachelor of science degrees, regardless of your major.

So the core curriculum is about 101 of the 146 or so hours needed to graduate. And there's so much foundation in STEM and the humanities that everyone has a bachelor of science degree, even if you're an English major. And so that's part of trying to develop leaders who are balanced. And so that's our job. So we're not as agile as ROTC and OTS to adjust to needs. But we can have a more long-term effect, we think. And that's why we exist.

So roughly one-fourth of the officers in the Air Force each year, the new ones, are graduates of the Air Force Academy, between 900 and 1,000 each year. But, at the end of the day, over half of the General Officers have been Academy graduates. Maybe it's self-fulfilling, because people come with the intent to stay for a long time. Hopefully it's because of some inspiration that we can include in the program. We certainly aim to do that.

The cadets are expecting a meaningful, immersive experience that will provide the foundation for them to graduate and serve as a fabric with which the other service, the commissioning sources can integrate to make an officer corps, especially in our Air Force.

When I arrived, among the other issues that were going on, that actually, if I could say-- and I would love for you to come visit and know that 99 percent of the activities and the cadet activities out there are just like you'd want to be in the brochure. But in our case, we know we're held to a very high standard. And so any divergence from that, you know, gets attention.

But, at the same time, we faced really draconian budget situations. It was a time of sequester and some draconian budget cuts that I think maybe hadn't been thought through all the way. So what my business mentors tell me is that, don't waste a good crisis. So we said, "Let's just get back to basics here. What is it the Air Force wants of the Air Force Academy?" And so I had my team put it together, so that it wasn't me directing top-down.

I said, "You tell-- Put together what we think we're supposed to be doing." And they came up with an eight-point sort of approach that I was able to build on. And I said, "First and foremost, it's leadership and character development. That's what you expect of us." And not just from the military officers in the chain of command in the cadet squadrons, but from the faculty, from the athletic coaches, from the air field instructors, from the prep school, from even the support system that's in our air-based wing. You know, they're the ones who turn the electricity on and the water and make the buses arrive on time.

All of those people who interface with the cadets have a responsibility to help instill character and leadership development. And so that's the foremost purpose, I think. But also, to expose the cadets to all the aspects of the Air Force mission, air, whether they go on to fly or not, just understanding how it works, what it's like to fly, the logistics required, the discipline it takes to go out and do some flying, or jump out of planes with hopefully the parachute opens, powered flight and soaring, that experience.

But also, space. And our cadets fly satellite in conjunction with Space Command, which happens to be across town in Colorado Springs. But it's linked together by cyber. And that domain is so important to everything we do. And it's the interstitial material to make it all work, whether you're the expert in cyber or the IT part of it, or just the practitioner trying to make this work. This new profession of arms is something that's going to require cognizance of cyber. So we're exposing them more and more. And we have work to do on those fronts.

But also, internalizing the Air Force ethos. Airmen are different than soldiers and sailors. We're supposed to be. Sometimes we seem a little incorrigible. But you want us to be resourceful. Airmen were born, not just from the-- I saw David McCullough this morning. He was talking on interviews on the television, and talking about his book about Orville and Wilber Wright. But it wasn't just then, it was in the Flanders Fields. And airmen had to figure out a way to go over, not through those trenches, and to try to find a solution in World War I.

And so we've evolved from there to the beautiful airplanes you saw flying over a while back. But airmen solve problems differently. And so part of being an airman is understanding our traditions, trying to be creative and prepared, because things happen at a high rate of speed. But also disciplined to stay focused on the mission. And that's a balance that we strike.

But also, what's unique about the Academy is it's immersion. It's all the time. We don't just wear uniforms on Thursdays. Not that there's anything wrong with that. [laughter] And it's day in and day out. And that, we find, is one of the interesting areas with the new generation, with the millennials, and how to work in this ethos in this immersion, in a world where you're connected all the time, every minute, with a smart phone or something in your hand, which is different than the cloister model from 1802 that West Point started with. How and should we cloister people away in 2015? Or is adjusting that part of making it relevant to this century and this new profession of arms?

And so we are exploring some avenues that I'll share with you in a moment. We also want to expose the cadets to a professional culture. We march to lunch. We dress like this all the time. We honor the dead. We went to Arlington to not forget what business we're in and what the country expects of us. We have retirements and promotions. We celebrate the promotions of others.

That's a part of the military culture that some of our civilian friends comment on sometimes. Let me get this straight. We're all happy that that person just got promoted. Yes. And the raise that goes with it. Yes. Because the best in each other is the best in all of us. And that's part of our culture as well. But marching to lunch is part of that as well, even though I tell the cadets, "I know you won't be marching into battle. But the discipline, the teamwork, the attention to detail that you show in doing the pageantry and performing the pageantry gives people confidence that you can do the other things with discipline and teamwork and attention to detail as well."

And so far, they've bought that. [laughter] But also, probably most singularly that we're known for, that doesn't come out in the headlines, is the caliber, the quality of the education we provide. From the very beginning, at the Air Force Academy, and it prevails at the other Academies as well, this was meant to be a balanced curriculum, harmonizing technical cognizance and the ability to do specific problem-solving that the sciences require.

But also, balance with the humanities, because we're meant to lead humans. And that most of the things that the President read off had to do with humans, not our math, not our technology, not our science. And so, if we don't understand the human condition, and try to see how ancient writers or modern poets address the human condition so that we can deal with these abstract problems, then we won't have created those leaders that you want from us at the Academy. So this education is of tremendously high caliber. And frankly, a lot of people come not just because they want to serve, but because of the caliber of education that we're able to provide.

And so, to compete, and not just intercollegiate athletics, we have 27 Division I sports, but competition is part of the Warriors' ethos. I'm going to fight to win. And I'm going to do it with perseverance and self-respect and tenacity, and to compete. So, whether it's the forensics team, it's the debaters, our cyber team that were nosed out by Navy, so that Ted Carter was waiting in the wings when we left the White House yesterday, so that he could bring his cyber squad in. Ah, rats. Next year. [laughter] Next year we'll come in. Or clubs, or our music programs. It's competing to be the best. And that's part of what we owe them.

And we do this all on the shoulders of an immaculate installation, which is harder and harder to maintain when there are budget constraints in the DoD. But we have over 400,000 tourists a year. We'd like to have more. But we try to maintain an open but secure base, so that people can come in and see, whether it's conferences, academic conferences, or sporting events, or the iconic chapel, or there's a new building that we're just getting ready to complete, Skylight Tower that aims at Polaris, will house our discussions of character and leadership development, hopefully be a nexus for outreach, and that people come and share with us there. We want people to visit that.

And yet, we need to protect our precious cargo out there. And there are real threats, because we are a very symbolic place. But we need to keep that in good stead. So I think I've rattled off those eight areas of what we think the Air Force wants of us. So I

communicated back to the Air Staff and said, “Is this what you want us to do?” And they said, “Yes, do that.” And I said, “Okay, it will cost this much.” And they said, “Okay. Good work.” And so they’ve been really supportive to make it. Because frankly, the numbers that are thrown in in Washington aren’t huge. We don’t even make the backup slides in the budget discussions.

But it’s important, because it’s strategic, because it’s education and training. And it’s our seed corn. And we’ve been tremendously supported by the Air Force in that. But what are we going to do with all that, then? We know what we’re supposed to do now. The essence of the Academy, those eight enduring values. And we know why we’re supposed to do it. The Air Force has a strategy. They want inclusive, innovative airmen who can think, who can solve abstract problems.

I recently wrote a column in the *Colorado Springs Gazette*, which you may or may not have read. But it had to do with the Legos issues I go through with my 12 year old twin sons. But the idea is, you don’t always have directions for all the problems you have to make it look like the box. How are we going to have them solve problems that don’t have a picture on the box to say what this is supposed to look like? How do we create minds that are integrative enough, and creative enough, and disciplined enough to solve these intractable problems, better than we have?

Einstein has been quoted as saying, “We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. “And that’s the world we face. And we want to live up to that. So we’re attempting to innovate how we deliver this essence of the Academy. And with the changing input signal. For instance, in 1959, our first class graduated with 207 men. In 18 days, we’ll graduate 674 men and 189 women. That’s a change. We have about 23 percent women now, 27 percent minorities, although the nature of minorities is changing in our country, too, isn’t it, because of the blended nature of our country, which is pretty great, actually, that the boxes on the surveys almost don’t apply anymore. So our country is changing.

And we also have over 50 students from other nation partners around the world, so we have international students with us as well. Some stay all four years, some come for a semester at a time. The Western European nations tend to come for a semester, and we likewise exchange with them to make sure that we look like and know the people we defend or the people we will ally with down the road.

And these students that are coming are pretty impressive. You know, our sessions process is like the Electoral College. It’s congressional districts determine which applicants come in. And so I’m told, by the historians, that’s because after the Civil War, it came to West Point’s attention that they had a lot of people from the South and not as many people from anywhere else. So maybe we should have more geographic diversity.

So all the academies have tremendous geographic diversity. And we depend on our congressional delegations to nominate cadets. And then we’ll appoint them if they meet the standards. And this is why, when we want to make sure we get balance and

diversity, sometimes we have other things, like our preparatory schools and other avenues, to try to make sure we look like the country we defend, which may not always happen in that accessions process. And this is, it takes about a PhD to figure out how all the rules work on that. But that's the nature of our accessions.

And so, when I talk to other college Presidents, they have a little different approach to accessions than we do. But these are amazing people that come in. The average high school GPA is 3.85. The average SAT is 150 points higher than the national average. One in ten were class Presidents in high school. One in ten were Valedictorian or Salutatorian. And more than 80 percent earned a high school athletic letter. So very high caliber people.

And our duty is to make sure we offer our accents, those eight areas, in a way that challenges them and ensures that they're ready for a complex, interconnected future. So one of my thrusts this year, my Commander's Intent, was to really innovate and integrate. And we want to do that by how we deliver, again, those eight elements. So academically, we're examining our outcomes. What should someone know to be an agile thinker that the Air Force needs?

Our Dean is a very progressive Dean. And he actually did his doctoral work at MIT. He was a Northwestern graduate. And he's a Brigadier General in the Air Force. And I think it's great that he's not a graduate of the Air Force Academy. We try not to be insular. We try to have some circulation to make sure that we're relevant.

And we're looking at a core curriculum to make it more interdisciplinary than multidisciplinary. So he didn't just take a test in the math course and then, woo-hoo, throw that away, and go to the next one. We want to link it together. If we launch satellites, we want a management major to be along to say, "Someone has got to manage the program." If we look at cyber, we want to have the people focusing on law and political science to say, "What are the other consequences of that technology? How are we thinking about that?"

And new majors like-- and it was mentioned-- the computer and network security and nuclear weapons and strategy as well. So we're ensuring that every graduate has an airmanship experience within the broad definition of air space and cyberspace. All the freshmen go on eight or nine slider rides, which is pretty great. These are acrobatic gliders. Not like in the old day, where the ones we flew plummeted rather than gliding, really. But these actually do-- These actually do acrobatics. And we went positive four to negative 2Gs when I was riding along. And I realized I was not in G shape. But it was great. With the student was the instructor pilot.

But the cadets participate in soaring. They jump. They play power flight and remotely piloted aircraft. And the discipline, the interdependency, the logistics of it, what they need to be aware of. Our astronautics cadets design, build and fly a satellite. We're on Falcon Set 5, and getting ready to do Falcon Set 6. We catch a ride on someone else's rocket when they launch it. And we work closely with Space Command. And then, when

it's up in space, they maneuver it to try to make sure they're ready to go in an understanding of what our missions in the Air Force are.

And all of our cadets are learning more about cyber as a connective tissue for our Air Force and our nation. And we're working to develop and fund a new cyber innovation center based off a highly successful Center of Innovation that we actually do in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security right now. Now that's on the academic side.

On the military training side, it's 24/7, 365, and it's leadership focused in a modern way. When people visit us, they're a little surprised sometimes to say, "Well you just-- you're doing it. You don't just talk about it in classes. You don't just have PowerPoint." And we said, "Right. That's what I'm supposed to do." So we try to live it every day in everything we do.

They have come up with things that are better than when we were cadets. I like to tell them that a lot of the things they're doing aren't weaker, they aren't worse, they're different, they're modern. And I think, in fact, better. So when the squadrons are competing, the 40 cadet squadrons that each have about 100 cadets in it, compete for score for the end of the year, instead of just, you know, doing more pushups and more sit-ups and reciting more rote memory and running more, which they do plenty of, I assure you, they also were able to use-- do competitions that include some mudder courses. So there's a little bit of, you know, rolling in mud and running and pull-ups and things.

But also, they're using a software that's used in national catastrophes for tracking victims, for tracking teams. It's a not quite blue force tracker, but it's technology that's in use in Haiti after the country was so devastated there. And they're learning how to do a control room to say, "Not only are we performing these things, but we're tracking how it's being conducted. We're scoring it. And we can keep track." And you can clearly see that's an analogy for something they'll do in the real world in the Air Force, tracking and operation and exercise. Or, if Heaven forbid, there's another catastrophe, they can use the software to do it even better than we did. And they've understood it's Lieutenants are going to be able to walk out and be ready to go. And they'll know more than the Generals will about that particular thing.

But the other thing we're trying to do in our approach philosophically is sort of take into account a paragraph that Thomas Paine wrote. At the beginning of the paragraph it says, "These are the times that try men's souls." So the part the President said in my introduction, that was that part. These are times that try men's souls. But, at the end of that paragraph, he says, "What we obtain too cheaply we esteem too lightly. It's the dearness only that gives everything its value." You need to have skin in the game.

And I remember, when I was a cadet 35 years ago, and then when I was on faculty 20 years ago, and I see it again now, if we're over-managing and over-scheduling people, especially in 2015, how are we helping them learn to be adults? How are we helping them to be able to walk out the door, ready to go, and not have to find themselves

for a couple of years? And so, how do we balance the immersion and the discipline with relevant leadership and approach it differently?

So we're actually letting go a little bit and saying to the seniors, "You don't have to sign in at Taps. Just be where you need to be at 6:45 in the morning. And still do everything. Don't have an illegal apartment. Don't break the rules. But manage your time. And know that I could run downtown right now. But I have three papers to do. I'm going to stay and work. And start making those priorities." It would sound really simple, but those are the kinds of thought patterns that you need to learn, I think, at this point of your life, between 18 and 22 years old, you know.

And it's working. And we have to be brave. We have to be brave when they scrape their knees, and know the difference between scraping your knee and crossing the line. And they have appreciated that. And we're trying to even look at things like excused absences, which is, I know it sounds crazy to people who have been at Service Academies. But if you have a chance to plan ahead and say to the teacher, "The weather has been bad. If I could miss your class, I can get my last parachute jump in to get my jump wings." "I have three tests tomorrow. I think I'm doing okay in your class. But if I could miss your class, I could focus on them and do better." And start making choices again. These are simple things, but we're an institution of higher ed. And we want to help them make good choices so that they have those skill sets.

We're looking at their schedule of calls, which is, you know, 53 minute classes with seven minutes in between. I asked the Dean, I said, "Does that sound like college to you?" And so, we're actually looking at the way we do classes. You know, longer time for labs, maybe evening classes. They're already doing some flip classes so that, you know, you can get the lecture at night and you do the work in the classroom. We use some MOOC classes, Massive Online Open Courses in the math department, we've used those.

So we're trying to think about how we deliver the essence of this in a relevant way to make-- to prepare them for this new world they'll need. And athletically, every cadet is an athlete. It's a tough physical fitness test to pass. And our teams, all of them, can be great ambassadors for us. They actually do community service projects. The baseball team, every town they went to an away game, they would do a community service project, help clear out, maybe there had been a fire or floods or just helping in soup kitchens and those kinds of things, because we want them to have a servant's heart and to have a habit of thought of service.

They do so in Colorado Springs with, like, 38,000 hours. It's hard to measure these things, but of community service, especially in a place that had been devastated by wildfires and floods over the last couple of years. They have spent a lot of time downtown. They do a lot of STEM outreach with the local schools, K through 12. In fact, got an award from the Black Engineers of the Year Conference, a Golden Torch Award for the time they spent downtown with kids that need to be prepared for the future as well.

So there are so many ways to contribute. And sometimes it's by athletic teams. Sometimes it's just groups of cadets. And then, back to every cadet is an athlete. You know, some of the things you do that just are the trials that you do, you know, is you have to jump off the 10 meter board and swim under a bulkhead and clear the waters so that, if there's a fire, you'll do all the survival swimming things that doesn't come easily to a lot of people. But you just have to do that to face your own fears. To play intramurals and organize an intramural program themselves and do the logistics of that to make it work. Everybody plays intramural sports as well.

So those are the things we're trying to do differently. In terms of culture and climate, we do look forward to opening this new building that's called Character and Leadership Development, which again, it's represented all across the Academy, but this is one place where people can gather to work on that. And it's founded on an honor code.

A lot of colleges have an honor code. But ours is the foundation for the character and leadership development. And we realize it's not sufficient, though. It's not sufficient to follow, "I will not lie, steal, cheat nor tolerate anyone among us who does." You got to live honorably. So what does that mean? And those are the kinds of things we're trying to address with them, how to live honorably, and to live up to the core values of the Air Force, excellence, service, integrity.

And so we're also trying to think about, what is the new Profession of Arms going to be like? Will it require more moral courage and social media than physical courage? How do you measure that? Is it proximity to harm? Is it proximity to danger? Do we value only valor? Or is there some other value you have? How do you measure those kinds of things in this networked, interconnected, joint global Profession of Arms that we're a part of now?

And you could hear that I spent a lot of time in coalition with NATO, but also in Joint over the last decade of my service. And we need to fit these things together and have people be able to think that way.

So we know we need to work with the cadets. But I also realized, and more scholarship has come out on this as well, just as there is scholarship about grit maybe being more important than your standardized testing scores. We also realize that even the philosophers have started saying, "Wait a second. You could have pristine character. But if you're in a toxic environment, the best you could do is maybe not budge them. But the worst thing maybe is you become part of it."

So it's the bad apples versus the bad barrel. And I realized I don't think we had a bad barrel, but I don't think we were paying attention to the barrel. And to talk about the professional development for the faculty and staff and the [00:17:52] party to say, "How are we doing? Are we living up to those things that we've asked the cadets to do?" It's easy to blame the generation to say, "Well, this generation is not as honorable." But how

are we doing? And so, that's what we're focusing on, on the professional development of our faculty and staff.

And a climate of respect includes the points the President pointed out, it's religion, sexual orientation, diversity of thought, your background. That's what we mean by respecting people as they come in. And it's not easy to balance this out. And there are many national issues that are played out on our front lawn, because there are many-- Southern Colorado is an interesting place with kaleidoscopic outlooks on life and politics. We have religious headquarters across the highway from us. And Colorado's legalized marijuana. That's not for us, but it's an interesting place to be in the middle of all that, and try to balance it.

And also, on the issue of sexual assault. It's a plague on campuses nationwide. We have just been screening the new documentary *The Hunting Ground*. If you've had a chance to see that, it lays out a lot of the issues you may know if you've studied this. Just read John Krakow's new book about Missoula. And I will assure you that we're working really hard to figure out how best to discuss this issue with this generation.

Our generation didn't talk to us much about this. And we sort of-- mom and dad-- I don't know about your parents, we did not have long conversations about what a healthy sexual relationship is, and what are the boundaries you need to observe. And oh, by the way, the things you say in social media have consequences in the physical world. You can't be two different people. Or, if you are, then we get ourselves in a tough situation.

So we're trying to be more frank, making myself uncomfortable, making my staff uncomfortable when I talk about these things. But we need to, to talk about these boundaries and how to eliminate key enablers like pornography and alcohol. If you ask experts like Ann Munch, she's a dynamic lawyer in Denver, she says that high school boys see 60 views of pornography a week. And it's not, you know, loving, beautiful, artistic pornography. It's giving them ideas about what is expected, and what you're supposed to do, and who is supposed to like what. And it's dangerous stuff. And we need to understand that and have talks about this.

And alcohol. And I've been working with the superintendents of the other academies very closely on this. In fact, we put together a paper that's just been published by the Inside Higher Education to describe, "Here is what we do at these service academies." We were called out in an op-ed, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* a few months ago for not reporting under the Cleary Act. And so we said, "Why don't we lay out how much and extensively we do report in the Department of Defense, so people can know where we are."

And, in fact, next week, I'll have the DoD biannual survey come out. In alternate years, they do an anonymous survey to understand what the prevalence is that people anonymously say what has happened. And then the alternate years, we then measure it against the reports to see how close we're getting. And it sounds counterintuitive, but we

want the reports to go out so we can know, this is a terribly underreported crime. But we want the reports to match the incidents. And we want them both to go down. And that's the aim.

And so we're all working on that. And again, we've laid it out in an article that we welcome for you to refer to. But we try to refer to the experts in the field, Russell Strand, Chris Kilmartin was a visiting professor for us over last year. And we want to make sure we hold the perpetrators accountable, respecting everyone's rights. And that's great about a democracy, we're respecting victims' rights and the accused rights. But this is an area where it's very difficult, as you can imagine.

Even though there are sort of expectations about, when you hear the word "rape" or "sexual assault," what that is. It's about, you know, being penetrated without consent, you know, frankly in short. About one-fifth of our reports are that. And a lot of times, it's a continuation of a continuum of behavior where someone crosses a line, and then two lives are damaged. And so that's about one-fifth of them.

Another one-fifth of our reports are from things that happened to them before they came to the Academy. Once they go through our system, they say, "Wow, we have all these victim care agencies and protections. And if you can make a report restricted, so that means we don't investigate it, we just take care of you, or if you make it unrestricted, we'll take care of you and we're able to prosecute if we can examine the crime." And so more and more of our reports are becoming unrestricted, so we actually can try to prosecute.

But three-fifths of the assaults are in that area of unwanted touching, unwanted sexual contact. And it's an area we really haven't addressed as a nation that much. And, in fact, I think that's where the conversation needs to go too. What's really happening? And how do people have guidelines on this? Then some things used to be funny. I can't listen to the soundtrack to the musical *Grease* anymore, because that scene at the end of the summer, when the boys are out in the bleachers asking what happened over the summer, the line that says, "Did she put up a fight?" really? That was funny? But see, that's the area we're in. It used to be okay. It was a getting to second base. But it says getting to second base, if the other person doesn't want you to, and it could be men or women, this is not just a women's problem, is a crime.

So that's the kind of stuff we're dealing with. And so ultimately, we want to have a climate of respect and avoid having the marginal issues steal our narrative, because most of our 4,000 cadets are exactly who you'd want them to be. And when it goes wrong, we want to be able to prosecute, to punish, to help, to save, to work, to rehabilitate, to address it and take care of it. We sincerely care about that.

So finally, on a lighter note, we also are trying to think of what other things can we do to try to help people make decisions, practice habits of thought of making good choices, and having a perspective that helps them understand the context of what we're doing, so they don't feel like they're prisoners. They really aren't prisoners. But in this

day and age, can you imagine the difference in life between a regular college student and being someone at a service academy? It's very constraining in comparison.

So we've done some things, just to show we're serious about doing things differently, we've started an ROTC exchange. We have three cadets out in civilian colleges this semester, one at University of South Florida, one at Arizona State, and one at U.T. San Antonio. Our Dean coordinated with the faculties to make sure that their majors can be pursued. But they're leaders in ROTC units. Of course we picked really strong students to go out at first, but to say, "Go out and learn. What are you going to find out about your own maturity, your own commitment, your own sense of responsibility? And what are you going to learn to bring back to us?"

And we're going to invite about six ROTC students to us next year in the fall. What can we learn from you? What are you learning in the free civilian world versus at the Air Force Academy? How can we adjust to this generation? And maybe just give perspective. And this won't be-- This will only be small numbers that we do. But this is just one of a menu of things we're trying to look at.

Cadet summer research and summer cultural immersion are incredibly important to us, with industry, or at the Holocaust Experience, with the NCAA diversity office, I mean all kinds of different experiences with industry, to expose them, and also so they can learn how to cook for themselves and maybe go to a meal on time without someone telling you. And that's what we think they need to have other skills. And, as I mentioned, the schedule of calls we're working on as well.

So to wrap it up, we think it's working. We're repeatedly recognized for our success in academics and research. Forbes put us number three best public colleges, which is about number 34 out of 650. U.S. News and World Report said we're number five in undergraduate engineering. We're number two in aero and astro engineering, but number 27 of 200-plus schools.

Business Insider's mostly standardized tests that they go by, but named us the number four smartest public college. And the guys at West Point and Annapolis think our academics are harder than theirs, because when our cadets go to theirs, they always get on the Dean's List. It doesn't always work the other way. [laughter]

So in the Grad School, often they do all kinds of amazing things. And they do community service, just trying to get ready to be leaders in the Air Force, leaders that you can be proud of, to do the five missions of the Air Force that we want to do, but do them differently, air superiority, like you just watched global strike, rapid global mobility. That's where I grew up, and I flew heavy aircraft, jumbo jets and cargo and air refueling for 20 years I did that.

Intelligence surveillance, reconnaissance and command and control. This is an enduring missions of the Air Force. But we don't do them with the same platforms that you just saw fly by. We do them with new platforms. And we want our cadets to be ready

to rise to that and lead. So I'm so honored you let me tell you a little bit about the Air Force Academy. And I'll be glad to answer your questions. Thank you.

[applause]

JOHN HUGHES: Well thank you so much. Here in Washington we hear so much about budget challenges, sequestration, the military. They're talking about compensation reform. We're sort of in a period of austerity, almost, in the military in some regards. How does this affect the view from the cadets? Does it make it more difficult for you to attract cadets to this type of environment?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Well obviously, we all face the similar challenges. So, as I said, we try to go back to basics and really have discipline in our systems. So, when we ask for money, it really is justifiable. It really makes sense. But I would say the bigger impact isn't on the cadets, because we can double down and work harder to make sure we take care of their experience. But it's difficult to maintain a faculty if you don't have stability.

How do we give confidence to the about 25 percent of our faculty who are civilians, that they'll have a job the next semester? So this is a challenge of sequester, for us, is stability, because we're labor-intensive, we're an institution of higher education. So I don't have fleets of aircraft I can ground. I don't have a lot of O&M funds, as they say, operations and maintenance funds. I'm labor-intensive. So if this has happened in the past, I disrupt the flow for our faculty. That's actually where our challenge comes.

JOHN HUGHES: Last week at this same podium we had Navy Secretary Ray Mabus. And he talked to us about the Navy's future lying in drones and other unmanned aircraft, such as robotic submarines. Now if that's true, what is the future for airmen and women? And if a child born today wants to be an Air Force fighter pilot, will there be a job for him or her 21 years from now?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Well the way it goes with our airplanes, we don't retire them until they're 50 or 70 years old. [laughter] So I think that's-- I think that's a pretty fair bet. But I think one thing I would just offer, is that we so often think of these things as separate. And it's not separate anymore. So remotely piloted aircraft do not act in isolation. And the reason we aren't calling them unmanned anymore is it takes 40 or 50 people to support an orbit from a remotely piloted aircraft. It's the analysts, it's the technicians, it's the-- it's to be able to get the pictures, the connectivity. It's a network.

And so, you know, for someone to be in Rapid City, South Dakota, and have a target at risk in Afghanistan, via cyber links to a satellite, being driven by someone in Colorado Springs, and then it's bounced off a pod, maybe off a coalition aircraft onto the RPA, and then in support of ground forces, it's hard to take any of those things in isolation.

And so that's why we're trying to look at this modern Profession of Arms to see people seeing it as networks. General John Hyten, the Commander of Space Command, who's a fantastic colleague and great leader there, he and I talked about this. An F-35 isn't just an airplane, it's a node. New fighters aren't just like the ones we just saw fly past, which are kind of on their own. It's a node. It's a part of a system.

And so, when you look at the fighters, the F-22s, the F-35s, they are more than ever, they're linked. That's why they're fifth generation fighters. It's not just the stealth, it's the other things that they're linked to. And so, for airmen, there will be a place for a piloted aircraft, especially in heavies. We haven't really made the leap in the commercial airlines either, to let there be robotics pilots in commercial airliners probably in the heavies, because there's some decisions that have to be made that humans need to do.

But, more importantly, if we can think of it as a network, and that's the conversation we need to have, is cyber isn't a separate thing, it's connected to everything. And we're very vulnerable in the United States because, guess what? That's us. And every time we pick up a smart phone, you may not do it-- I'm a little geeky, I guess. But I think wow, which tower, which satellite, which network, which fiber optic cable, which different ones am I tapping into, that I can't even know, because it's the speed of light? So I just think of it, if we could think of it as a network, I think that's the challenge. And knowing how we all fit into that network.

JOHN HUGHES: We did get several questions about cyber. And you mentioned it in your talk and just now, and whether the programs have adapted fast enough at the Academy to meet this new challenge. But also, the interest from cadets in this area. Is this something that they are coming in and really want to go into? Or do we still need to recruit and persuade people to be interested in cyber security?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: The recruiting and explaining isn't as much for the topic of cyber, it's for dressing like this and marching and running and crawling through mud and doing-- jumping off the tower and those things. No. Seriously, when I talked to some of the candidates that would want to come here, the kids talk about that a lot, to want to go into cyber. I think we're probably all behind a little bit. But I will tell you, there are some wonderful things happening in our research. We have 19 research centers. And granted, like sometimes it's a couple of guys in a server, so don't think it's so great. [laughter]

But some of it is phenomenal. And one of the things that they've done is come up with a way to map-- and this is for cyber defense-- map the incidence of malware in a particular network. It's cyber forensics. And so I've got a picture outside my office now that looks like-- it looks like flowers from, like, a Laugh-In set, you know, with crazy flowers from the '60s. But actually, if you look at it, it's the links between bits of malware that are detected in a system, so that you can stop it from happening again. So, if someone wants to invest in that malware, they could do it once, and then you've got it. And you can move forward.

And that's the kind of stuff they're coming up with for cyber defense. And we want to have more of that kind of awareness. And just also, for the practitioners to not laugh that off. That's why I put it by my office, that that's the modern warfare. I want a picture of that right next to an airplane and a rocket, because that's where we're going.

So everybody needs to be linked. So in this new cyber innovation center that we'd like to work with public/private funding, and be able to partner with private industry, because that's where the really great ideas come from, and we're doing this in conjunction with Space Command as well, we'd like that to be kind of like the equivalent of our air field, so that all of our cadets could get a feel for this and realize that anybody who has a computer in the Air Force, or a smart phone, is a soft point, possibly, for someone to try to get in. And it's part of a weapons system that we have as well.

JOHN HUGHES: You mentioned sexual assault, sexual harassment. This questioner notes that Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, in the context of the military, has come out in support of a policy that puts sexual harassment cases in the hands of a private prosecutor, rather than the Commander or in the person's direct chain of command. What do you think is the best way to handle this? And how do you handle this at the Air Force Academy?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Well of course I'd support our position that the Commanders need to own this. I'm a Commander. And I know how difficult it is to prosecute. And if you just talk to the civilian prosecutors, it's no easier to prosecute these cases in the civilian world. Their conviction rate is no higher than ours. I would say, as a Commander, we have programs in place now-- and this is why we wrote it down at length-- Every month we have a case management group. And we talk about our victims. How is the victim doing? What kind of care is the victim getting? That's part of my Commander's responsibility. Not to have reprisal, but to say, "What help does this person need?"

At the same time, our lawyers try to work with investigators to prosecute if we own the jurisdiction of the case, which we normally do. And then see if we can take it to court. And we're held accountable for the choices we make because that also was in language, to make sure that we can account for our choices, if something should go forward or not, to a court.

In our case, as well, there's also disciplinary stuff that we can do militarily to say, if it doesn't rise to the level of a crime, we still want to discipline people, because of this culture of respect we expect, and that they sign up for. So I feel like we have been very accountable and more transparent than ever. And hopefully, we can earn the trust, then, of others as well.

As we try to get best practices from others. That's why we wrote down exactly what we do when we're inspected and surveyed constantly, as you can imagine. And so I think the Commander owes it to the organization to live up to it. And when Commanders are at fault, then hold us accountable too. But I don't know that that would be the panacea

for this. I don't think it would be. And that's why the Department's position has been to continue to have Commanders be responsible for that. I'm a Commander.

JOHN HUGHES: If you had the whole cadet four year experience to do over again, what would you do now that you didn't do then? And how would you change that experience? And also, what was it like for you in the late 1970s as a woman? How were you treated at the Academy? And how has the treatment of women at service academies changed or improved?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So one of the differences, when people ask me that, one of the differences from-- I was in the second coed class, and you were in the third coed class. So Lynn was a colleague from the Air Force as well. I think the difference between then and now is, back then, people would just say, "We don't want you here. Why are you here?" [laughter] And so at least you could see it coming, you know. It's like, okay. And they challenged your existence.

It's changed. It's a huge change. I can't imagine a woman doing that. Therefore, you shouldn't do it. And you'd get these kind of crazy catch-22 things said to you, like, "Women can't do that." "But I can do that." "Oh, then there's something wrong with you if you can do it." And the good news is, we've come through that. I don't see that. And you guys just graduated. Am I doing okay LT? That's not at issue.

It's hard for boys to grow to men and girls to grow to women in a competitive environment. So it's not perfect. But that doesn't seem to be the issue right now of rejecting someone for that. I think this generation seems much more open-minded. We have an affinity group for our LGB cadets. About 200 of our cadets are openly gay, or lesbian, or bisexual. I'm sure there are others who aren't out. Some people can't go home to mom and dad because mom and dad, they're not out to mom and dad. But they feel safe with us.

So there is that level of mutual respect works out pretty well, I think. So, but it wasn't easy back then. And it toughens you up a bit if you can work through that. But anybody who's been "other" I think someone who's been "other," I can't presume to know what it's like to have a journey of someone with a different color skin than I have, or from another country or another specialty.

I do find, as I get more senior, there is this sort of a lack of diversity of professional thought sometimes. If you don't wear the same badge I wear, I don't know about you. And so those are the kinds of things we work through. But it was, I think in that way, there has been a great change with this generation. And I keep looking at these guys, I'm still doing all right, good. Okay, thanks.

JOHN HUGHES: This questioner says the Air Force has had difficulty attracting minority pilots. And you can tell us if you believe that's true. What has the Academy done to try to address that problem?

MICHELLE JOHNSON: So it's a funny thing. And I'm not sure how it comes to this. But this is, the department is concerned about making sure everybody has the opportunity that they can have. So we're trying to reach out more and more and connect with our graduates when they're going off to pilot training, to say, "You can ask for help." Sometimes when you're a minority, and I had a brief experience of that when I was at the Academy, and then over the years in the Air Force, and sometimes you don't want to ask for help because of the many things that come along with that. And so what we've tried to say is, everybody needs help. Everybody needs to know, you need to trim to level the plane off, or try to think about this as you do it. It's okay to do that.

We're trying to reach out to youngsters. And here is one of the challenges of this, people not aware of the Academy or not aware of the military. Less than four tenths of one percent of Americans ever serve in uniform. So they may not know. I mean Washington is very plugged in. You guys are a very informed audience. But many Americans don't know someone in the military. They think of it as "the military."

Well, I'm not the same as an Army private. But we all have a role, that you may not realize that. So we meet with kids in schools. And we try to do as much outreach as we can in underrepresented districts in the country, because again, we can't target protected classes, but we can go to different congressional districts and say, "You know, this is possible." We have some really cool cadets. We have a cadet from Compton, California, who was homeless and the captain of the chess team. And I just went up and talked to him the other day when the Tuskegee Airmen visited us. And he was playing jazz piano with Mrs. Biffel by ear. And he's the Wing Open Boxing Champion. He was homeless. And he's African-American. He's awesome. He's just an American success story.

So we know there are kids out there like that who have the grit and the capability. And we try to let them know. But even [00:54:56] for the Black Engineer of the Year Awards and talked to some kids from middle schools in D.C. And I tried to say what I did. "What did you fly?" And I said, "Big heavy jets." "Like C-130s?" "No, bigger than that, with jets." But they only knew two kinds of military aircraft, because that's what was in their game, 130s and helicopters. [laughter] Because the only way they know about the military is through games or other people only know the military from movies, and where all the Generals are not always held in the highest esteem, sadly. [laughter]

And so this is a real challenge for us to let kids know it's possible, it's fun, it's good. It helps them sometimes to know that I've been married for 25 years this summer. My husband was a pilot. And we have twin boys who are 12. So that keeps us young. And it helps us stay in touch. But they go, "Really? You can have a family? You can be happy?" I go, "Oh yeah, I'm really happy. And you can have a family. And you can be a pilot. And you can have a really amazing contribution to your country."

So we're trying to reach out more and more.

JOHN HUGHES: Before I ask the final question, I want to remind our audience about some upcoming speakers. The CEOs of American, Delta and United Airlines will appear together at a Luncheon one week from today, Friday, May 15th. Garrison Keillor, author and host of The Prairie Home Companion will address the Press Club on May 22nd. And we want to remind everybody that Barry Trotz, Coach of the Washington Capitals, is going to be here on July 8th. And note that that comes after the Stanley Cup Playoffs. [laughter] Just in case he's busy up until then.

I would now like to present our guest with the traditional NPC mug. And I will note only today that it is the color of Air Force Blue. [laughter] [applause] Final question. You worked as an Aide to both President Clinton and President Bush. And, in fact, carried the football, which is a very rare experience not many people get to have. Can you tell us about the best part of working as an Aide to those Presidents? And you can tell us which one you liked working with better. [laughter] We'd love to know that too.

MICHELLE JOHNSON: Sure. I'll say that. [laughter] You know the greatest thing, and it's going to happen for these set of Aides I got to see yesterday, too, is being at a transition of an election. I'd had a chance, I was in Somalia in January of '93, before President Bush '41 left office. And he was doing a trip out there. And I was in Bidoa, Somalia. And a Marine Colonel called me over. I was a Major.

He said, "Major, I know what you do. And I worked for Carter. I want to give you a tip. When the new administration comes in, it doesn't matter"-- He said, "The Reagan administration was very suspicious of anybody from the Carter administration, just because of the party differences." And he reminded me, he said, "They don't get that we take an oath to the Constitution. That the Commander in Chief is the Commander in Chief. And that we have new Commanders all the time. And that's where our loyalty lies. So just be ready to help the new administration understand that you're their Aides because they won. And that's how it works in our system."

And it played out quite that way. So it was extraordinary. I wish I had had that experience before I taught political science at the Air Force Academy. I would have had better stories. But to see the exchange of power in the strongest country in the free world, that it was pretty cordial, it was a little bumpy. But to see the pictures come down on Inaugural Day, and the old staff leave, and only the government people stay and the military aides, and then the new crowd come in in the afternoon, is beautiful. It's an amazing thing we have, this Democratic republic that we live in.

And so that was the greatest thing to me. I got to work for two Presidents of two different generations of two different parties. They both go through the same-- Neither-- No matter how big of an extrovert one was over the other, fundraising was brutal for them, to watch them go through that. To try to have some family space, to try to be able to live their lives, and to try for us to try to stay out of their way for both of them, it was just an amazing experience for an officer in the U.S. military, but just for a citizen.

And then I would just say, the favorite thing I would do, I told the cadets about this the other night, I said, “You won't get to do this. We won't have time. But there are some very real things about the White House that really remind you about why we're here. And one of them, for me, is the original entrance underneath the North Portico still has the soot from when the British tried to burn it down in the War of 1812.” And so, when people got Potomac fever, or maybe I thought I was getting it a little bit, I used to go stand down there and look at that and say, “Okay, wait a second. That's what this place means.”

And George Washington's portrait that Dolly Madison saved is still up there. And John Adams' blessing is still on the mantel in the State Dining Room. And any picture of Abraham Lincoln, you know, brings tears to my eyes. So what an amazing privilege that was. And to get a chance to do that was just extraordinary. So I appreciated that so much. And I appreciate your time. Thanks. And I get the mug. It's awesome. Thank you.

[applause]

JOHN HUGHES: Thank you. Thank you so much. I'd also like to thank the National Press Club staff including its Journalism Institute and Broadcast Center for organizing today's event. And if you would like a copy of today's program, or to learn more about the National Press Club, go to our website. That is press.org. Thank you very much. We are adjourned. (gavel)

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