



OUR DISTINGUISHED GRADUATES FOR 2004

The U.S. Air Force Academy and its Association of Graduates formally recognized the 2004 Distinguished Graduates at the annual Founders Day dinner April 1. Col. (Ret.) Fred Gregory, '64, and Gen. (Ret.) Ron Yates, '60, earned this prestigious honor for their singular and distinctive contributions to society and the nation.

Honor, duty, loyalty and integrity capture the essence of these two distinguished graduates. Their accomplishments are testimony to the values the Academy instills in its graduates.

The Association of Graduates established the Distinguished Graduate Award as a way to identify to the public and to the Cadet Wing the broad national impact U.S. Air Force Academy graduates have on society. The individual achievements of these recipients exemplify the qualities and characteristics the Academy strives to imbue in its cadets – the future leaders of our Air Force and the country.

The accomplishments of these distinguished graduates are sketched in the following paragraphs. Their achievements are too numerous to individually list here, but these highlights illustrate Gregory's and Yates' commitment and dedication to the nation and the Academy.



COL. (RET.) FREDERICK DREW GREGORY, '64

Col. (Ret.) Fred Gregory is a national hero and striking role model. A retired Air Force colonel and one of the highest ranking NASA officials, Gregory has served the Air Force and the nation's space program with self sacrifice for others and an enduring commitment to the safety of space travel. He continues to lead America's quest to explore the frontiers of air and space, and his successes have a fundamental impact on the nation.

After commissioning as a second lieutenant in 1964, Gregory went on to log 7,000 hours in more than 50 types of U.S. aircraft, including 550 combat missions in Vietnam. He routinely took on dangerous assignments as a helicopter rescue pilot, combat rescue pilot, fighter pilot, operational test pilot, and a research test pilot, with a selfless concern for saving lives and advancing American technological capabilities and space exploration. In 1978, Gregory was selected as a pilot astronaut, where he continued his career at NASA as an officer in the U.S. Air Force. In 1993, Gregory retired from military service but continued to serve at NASA.

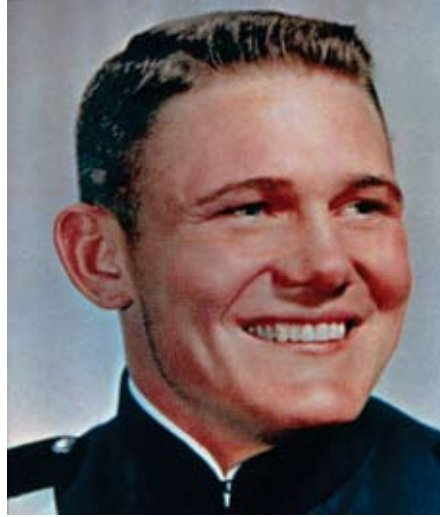
Confirmed by the U.S. Senate in August 2002, Gregory became NASA's deputy administrator, making him the first African-American deputy in the agency. He is NASA's chief operating officer, charged with the

responsibility of – among many activities – implementing the Columbia Accident Investigation Board and the president's ambitious vision for robotic and human exploration of space. Gregory is entrusted with ensuring the safety of some of science's most prized technological assets – the space shuttle and International Space Station – and for setting the course for the next stage of space flight. In February 2005, Gregory was named the agency's acting administrator.

Gregory's passion and service was especially noticed after the 1986 Challenger accident. He worked tirelessly to help NASA return to flight and soon after commanded two space missions. He was the first African American to pilot a space shuttle and the first African American to command any space vehicle. He has logged 455 hours in space as pilot for the orbiter Challenger in 1985, as spacecraft commander aboard Discovery in 1989, and as spacecraft commander aboard Atlantis in 1991.



After graduating from the Academy in 1964, Gregory earned a master's degree in information systems from George Washington University. He is a member or past member of numerous societies, including the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, Tuskegee Airmen, and Association of Space Explorers. Gregory has been or currently is a board member at the Maryland Science Center, Young Astronaut Council, Kaiser-Permanente, Photonics Laboratory at Fisk



University, and the Engineering College at Howard University.

Gregory has been personally committed to conveying to America's youth the importance of staying in school and the excitement of aeronautics and space and has given more than 3,500 presentations to schools, colleges and universities. He also orchestrated NASA's participation in a U.S. Air Force program that funds flight training for minority Air Force Reserve Office Training Corps candidates. Gregory enjoys being a mentor for students who are pursuing careers in engineering, mathematics and science.

His honors include the, President's Distinguished Rank Award, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, two Distinguished Flying Crosses, 16 Air Medals, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Air Force Meritorious Service Medal, the NASA Distinguished Service Medal, three NASA Space Flight Medals, two NASA Outstanding Leadership Medals, National Society of Black Engineers Distinguished National Scientist Award, George Washington University Distinguished Alumni Award, named twice as one of the 50 Top Black Technologists, and holds honorary degrees from the College of Aeronautics, the University of the District of Columbia, and Southwestern University.

In every endeavor, Gregory perseveres with passion and conviction, serves as a mentor to others and exemplifies the highest ideals and core values of the Air Force Academy.

GEN. (RET.) RONALD W. YATES, '60

Gen. (Ret.) Ron Yates, '60, is a highly respected retired U.S. Air Force commander who personifies the noblest values and highest ideals of public service, the profession of arms, devotion to family, and citizenship representative of the citizen soldier. His exemplary leadership, personal courage, and excellent record of service in peace and war will forever stand as hallmarks of all the honorable qualities the Academy expects from its graduates.

After commissioning with only the second class to graduate from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 1960, Yates went on to log more than 5,000 flying hours in more than 50 types of aircraft, including 100 combat missions in Southeast Asia where he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross. As a young officer, Yates quickly established a reputation as a superb pilot and student of aeronautical matters. While serving in an F-102 fighter squadron in the Philippines and Vietnam, he personally developed the F-102 capability to deliver



munitions against hostile encampments at night in South Vietnam.

Yates attended the elite Aerospace Research Pilot School in 1966. While a test pilot, he flew a variety of fighter aircraft modified for testing purposes. He was also the project pilot on the rocketed-boosted NF-104 and flew that aircraft numerous times to altitudes above 100,000 feet. Yates began a very successful career in Air Force Research and Development that continued from the 60s through the 90s. He was testing director for the A-10 and was program director for both the F-15 and F-16 programs. He also served as a test wing commander. He was responsible for all tactical programs and tactical requirements in the Pentagon, and he was deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force for acquisition. Yates played an instrumental role in the development and enhancement of the A-10, F-16, F-15, F-22 and Joint Strike Fighter. These contributions to the Air Force's war-

fighting capabilities stand as a true testament to his contributions to the nation.

Yates' knowledge of all aspects of the development, procurement, production and support phases of the military's acquisition and operations processes led to his promotion to commander of Air Force Systems Command. He was the second Academy graduate to be promoted to the rank of four-star general, and he led the consolidation of Systems Command and Logistics Command into the new Air Force Materiel Command.

During his tenure as an Air Force leader, Yates never asked of his troops what he was unwilling to do himself and mentored the men and women under his care. In recognition of his leadership abilities, the enlisted force presented Yates with the Order of the Sword, an award reserved for only the most revered commanders. Yates also earned the Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medal, Air Force Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, the Army Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters, the Meritorious Service medal with two oak leaf clusters, and the Commendation Medal with two oak leaf clusters.

Although he retired after 35 years in the Air Force July 1, 1995, Yates continues to selflessly serve the Air Force and nation through his many endeavors to advance the applications of science and technology across the military spectrum. He is a member of the Society of

Experimental Test Pilots, the Board of Visitors of the National Defense University, and he has served on the AOG Board of Directors for eight years. Yates also has served on the Board of Visitors for Carnegie Mellon University's Software Engineer Institute, as a commissioner for the National Research Council Commission on Engineering and Technical Systems, and he was a member of the Ballistic Missile Defense Office Advisory Group.

Under Yates' vision, the AOG has actively engaged graduates and friends of the Academy to financially support the construction of a memorial pavilion to be built at the Academy's cemetery. The pavilion will provide a dignified setting for graduates and their loved ones to be honored before being laid to rest. Yates' initiative and leadership have also led to the construction of the Heritage Trail, located on the grounds adjacent to Doolittle Hall. The trail serves as a visual reminder of the lives and accomplishments of the Academy's proud Long Blue Line.

Yates' lifetime contributions to the Academy, the Air Force and the nation will serve as an inspiration to future generations of cadets. The spirit, character and accomplishments of Yates personify the core values and ideals of the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The Academy and the Association of Graduates congratulate Col. Fred Gregory and Gen. Ron Yates on this well deserved recognition of their outstanding accomplishments and service to the nation. ✓