

Air Force Academy Response to Gazette article “Honor and Deception”

An article in The Gazette on Sunday, 1 December, titled ‘Honor and Deception – A secretive Air Force program recruits academy students to inform on fellow cadets and disavows them afterward’ talked about an Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) Confidential Informant Program. The program uses people who confidentially provide vital information about criminal activities that would not otherwise be available. AFOSI uses that information to initiate or resolve criminal investigations. This is an Air Force-wide program and is not something unique at the Air Force’s Academy.

The article further alleges that the Academy, via the AFOSI, uses cadets as informants and then “disavows them afterward.” The Gazette focused on an ex-cadet, Eric Thomas.

The article does not portray an accurate or complete view of Eric Thomas’ activities while at the Air Force’s Academy.

Mr. Thomas began his Academy career in 2009 as a member of the Class of 2013. The Gazette article asserts that Mr. Thomas was disenrolled from the Academy because of the work he did for OSI – that USAFA merely used him and then disavowed him.

Eric Thomas was disenrolled from the Air Force Academy on 2 April 2013 for failing aptitude and conduct probation, excessive demerits, and a pattern of military misconduct. In fact, Mr. Thomas’ pattern of misconduct began in his freshman year and he accumulated a significant number of demerits, confinements, and restriction to base **prior** to December 2011. In fact, the demerits Mr Thomas accumulated for misconduct **prior** to his agreement to be a Confidential Informant exceeded the 200 demerit “threshold” noted by the Gazette article. In short, Mr. Thomas did not display the aptitude for service in the United States Air Force.

Eric Thomas met a Military Review Committee in August 2012. This committee is a panel of five officers in the grade of Lt Col or higher. That panel considers the cadet’s military record and votes on a recommendation to the Commandant of Cadets. In Mr. Thomas’ case, the committee recommended disenrollment based on his history of disregarding Air Force Academy rules. Although AFOSI personnel did not appear before the Military Review Committee, they did meet personally with the Commandant and Vice Commandant to discuss Mr. Thomas’ cooperation with AFOSI investigations.

Thomas began work with the AFOSI in December of 2011 and not in 2010 as stated in The Gazette article. Furthermore, The Gazette article creates the impression that AFOSI asked Mr. Thomas “to infiltrate academy cliques” when in fact Mr. Thomas was already a part of these social circles in the months prior to any AFOSI investigation.

At the time Mr. Thomas was approved by AFOSI to assist as a confidential informant in December 2011, he was told that he was not allowed to violate the law, Air Force or DOD policies, or Academy rules. Mr. Thomas acknowledged these instructions in writing. Contrary to what The Gazette article states (“he was regularly directed by agents to break academy rules”), at no time did AFOSI agents ask then-Cadet Thomas to violate this agreement. Nevertheless, Thomas continued to break Academy rules while on probation and while working with the OSI.

In accordance with the Academy’s processes, both the former Superintendent and the Commandant of Cadets considered then-Cadet Thomas’ entire Academy record—military conduct, academic performance, and physical fitness. Although his cooperation with AFOSI was a factor, since much of the misconduct that formed the basis for his disenrollment occurred prior to incurring an active duty commitment at the start of his 2-degree (junior) year, the Air Force Academy recommended that recoupment be waived. In September 2013, the office of the Secretary of the Air Force waived any active duty service commitment as well as reimbursement of the cost of education.