

Candidates for Director



Thomas E. Ayres '84

Tom served over 33 years on active duty, retiring as a major general in 2017. After completing his time in uniform, he was selected by the President and confirmed by the Senate to serve as the 20th General Counsel of the Department of the Air Force. In that role, leading 2,600 attorneys as the Air Force's Chief Legal and Compliance Officer, he led a team to draft and implement the legislation creating the Space Force, simultaneously becoming the 1st General Counsel for the U.S. Space Force. After three years of service as the Air and Space Forces General Counsel, he served as

CEO of Lead-Up Strategies.

Since June 2021, Tom has been the Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel of Voyager Space, Inc., a company selected by NASA to design and build a commercial replacement for the International Space Station.

Tom's final position in uniform was serving in the Pentagon as the Deputy Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army. As a brigadier general, Tom served as commander of the U.S. Army Legal Services Agency; chief judge of the U.S. Army Court of Criminal Appeals; commander and commandant of the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School; and Assistant Judge Advocate General for military law and operations. Other key assignments included: deputy legal counsel to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), Multi-National Corps-Iraq; SJA, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, NC; SJA, 82d Airborne Division, including tours as the SJA for Coalition Task Force 82 (Operation Enduring Freedom), Afghanistan, SJA for Task Force 82 and Task Force All-American (Operation Iraqi Freedom [invasion and Ramadi]). Early career assignments included trial counsel and chief of criminal law, 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized); environmental law and litigation attorney; and Deputy SJA of the 82nd Airborne Division and XVIII Airborne Corps.

After graduating from West Point, Tom began his military career as an airborne rifle platoon leader in Italy. He also served as executive officer and personnel officer before applying for and being accepted to the Funded Legal Education Program. He earned his J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania School of Law, an LL.M. from the Army JAG School, and a Master of Strategic Studies degree from the Army War College. Tom and his wife, Mary, have three children and two grandchildren. Their daughter is married to a USMC pilot, one son is in the USCG, and the other son graduated with the USMA Class of 2023.