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Media Contacts: Liz Carter 202-268-5188
Al DeSarro 303-313-5182
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U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY STAMPS TAKE FLIGHT
**Postage Stamp Honoring 50th Anniversary Issued on USAFA Founders’
Day**

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO. — During a heartfelt anniversary celebration, the U.S. Postal Service dedicated the U.S. Air Force Academy commemorative postage stamp today at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs. The new stamp is available locally today, and will be available nationwide beginning April 2.



“Through our postage stamps, we are proud to honor the people and events in our history who have made this nation great,” said William T. Johnstone, Secretary of the presidentially appointed Postal Service Board of Governors, who dedicated the stamp. “And make no mistake; the Air Force has been a leader for the past 50 years in helping to keep this nation great.”

Joining Johnstone at the ceremony were Lieutenant Colonel Lori Salgado, who served as master of ceremonies, and Lieutenant General John Rosa, Superintendent of the United States Air Force Academy.

On April 1, 1954—seven years after the National Security Act made the U.S. Air Force independent of the Army, and six years after a board of civilian and military educators determined that Air Force needs could not be met by expanding other service academies—President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation authorizing establishment of the academy. Construction began the next year at an 18,000-acre site near Colorado Springs, CO. In July of 1955, the first class entered temporary facilities set up at Lowry Air Force Base near Denver. Cadets moved to the academy’s permanent home in 1958, and the first class graduated from there in June 1959. Women were admitted in June 1976.

Each year, thousands of people visit the Air Force Academy. Many come to see the Cadet Chapel, with its unique visually compelling structure which was recognized in 1996 with a 25-Year Award by the American Institute of Architects. Cadet Chapel draws more tourists annually than any other man-made attraction in Colorado.

From the base of the chapel to the points of its 17 silvery spires, the soaring, wedge-shaped structure ascends to a height of 150 feet. It is, according to the Academy, “the crowning architectural feature of the Air Force Academy campus.” The stamp, which features the cadet chapel, was designed by Phil Jordan of Falls Church, VA, using a photograph by Phillip Handleman of Birmingham, MI.

After 50 years of service, the academy’s mission is largely unchanged. It remains “to inspire and develop outstanding young men and women to become Air Force Officers with knowledge, character, and discipline; motivated to lead the world’s greatest aerospace force in service to this nation.”

To see the U.S. Air Force Academy stamp and other images from the 2004 Commemorative Stamp Program, visit the Postal Service Web site and open this press release at www.usps.com/shop. Click on “Release Schedule” in the Collector’s Corner.

Current U.S. stamps and stationery, as well as a free comprehensive catalog, are available by toll-free telephone order at 1 800 STAMP-24. A wide selection of stamps and other philatelic items are also available at the Postal Store www.usps.com/shop, and www.postalartgallery.com offers beautifully framed prints of original stamp art for delivery straight to the home or office.

Since 1775, the U.S. Postal Service has connected friends, families, neighbors and businesses by mail. An independent federal agency, the Postal Service makes deliveries to about 141 million addresses every day and is the only service provider to deliver to every address in the nation. The Postal Service receives no taxpayer dollars for routine operations, but derives its operating revenues solely from the sale of postage, products and services. With annual revenues of more than \$68 billion, it is the world’s leading provider of mail and delivery services, offering some of the most affordable postage rates in the world. Moreover, today’s postage rates will remain stable until at least 2006. The U.S. Postal Service delivers more than 43 percent of the world’s mail volume - some 202 billion letters, advertisements, periodicals and packages a year - and serves seven million customers each day at its 38,000 retail locations nationwide.

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