



DAVE KNACHEL

**Date:** April 21, 2007  
**From:** Maj. Gen. Jerry Allen, USAF (Ret.), commandant of cadets  
**To:** The members of the regiment

It is impossible to make any sense of the tragedy that took place here on 16 April. But one thing is clear: your professionalism and leadership by example are already shaping the future at Virginia Tech. From President Steger's office to alumni worldwide, we have received countless messages of thanks for the leadership demonstrated by the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets. These comments are primarily based on what people saw at the Convocation as the Highty-Tighties and Color Guard did their duty, along with dozens of cadets who added dignity to the event by serving as ushers.

Yet most people are not aware of the many other things you did. One cadet led his classmates out of a Norris classroom. You and your commanders established accountability very quickly and accurately. Cadets helped lead the evacuation of the academic area.

You volunteered to guard the Alumni Association wreath in the chapel and then in front of the cenotaph. There were so many volunteers that the tours of duty were reduced from one hour to 15 minutes.

One of my most emotional experiences in nine years as commandant occurred as the deputies and I marched behind the regiment en route to the candlelight vigil on Tuesday evening. As we came down the hill from the PAB toward Burruss, the entire regiment stretched out in front of us. It was a marvelous display of outstanding cadets in distinctive blue-and-white uniforms. You exemplified the spirit of *Ut Prosim*. I was proud of your professionalism, and the crowds watched you with great respect. And, of course, they were reverent during Echo Taps.

On Sunday [April 22], Col. Roszak, Maj. McNeill, Col. Lentz, several cadets, and I will travel to New Jersey for Matt La Porte's services. Lt. Col. Payne is already there, assisting the family. We expect that the family will also come to Blacksburg for services at the Blacksburg Catholic Church and burial on April 25. The entire regiment will participate in honoring Matt.

Two law enforcement officers have told us they are convinced that Matt La Porte made an heroic attempt to subdue the shooter. Matt's effort to help others was courageous. His family is also demonstrating amazing courage. They have said that they have no anger toward Virginia Tech and that their aim is to help the university recover.

Please keep the La Porte family and the families of all of the deceased and wounded in your thoughts and prayers.

Thank you for your leadership.