

Courage to do what's right

Character, core values: responsibilities of every airman

By Gen. John P. Jumper
Air Force Chief of Staff

Our Air Force has a proud history of accomplishments that trace directly to the quality of people making up the total Air Force team. At every base, wing and deployed site our airmen rise to challenges every day, demonstrating their loyalty and dedication. I am proud to be part of this prestigious team. But, I am always dismayed when I learn of an airman who, as a result of a bad decision, faces disciplinary action. I wonder if there was a way to help

this person, or if someone sitting down with this airman could have prevented this situation.

Because of this, I feel it is essential

to reinforce the full meaning of our concepts of character and the standards our core values provide us.

Character comprises the emotional, intellectual and moral qualities that distinguish one group from another -- and the judgment to discern them. Our core values and the unique demands of military service are the foundations of our Air Force character. These values -- Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence in All We Do -- endure as the fundamental standards of behavior of our Air Force team. But, character can be an elusive concept not readily apparent, as it encompasses so many qualities.

The true foundation of character is not merely knowing the right thing to do, but also having a firm conviction and the courage to act upon such knowledge. This

conviction requires solid moral fiber and ethical strength to do what is right even if no one is there to witness your actions. Our actions over time define our character, just as our character delineates our lasting reputation. When we make the wrong choices, both our character and our reputation are damaged.

Character can rapidly deteriorate when we fail to hold others and ourselves to the high standards our Air Force profession demands. The responsibility of enforcing core values does not fall solely to senior leaders and commanders. Every airman must embrace these values, both on and off-duty. We must reflect these fundamental values in our daily conduct and help develop those attitudes in others. If you see a fellow worker or friend cut corners and don't say anything,

you are condoning what they are doing. Failing to correct or report instances where rules are broken, selectively enforcing

rules or turning a blind-eye to marginal behavior can perpetuate negative attitudes and infect organizations.

We are all responsible for each other, and it is essential we all share a collective sense of mission, values and culture. If we don't, we become part of the problem, and jeopardize the mission and the lives of our men and women. Every member of the Air Force must embrace our core values as the guiding light that drives what we do. I challenge each of you to apply this philosophy in your service to the Air Force and this great nation.

Building character is a lifelong journey; remember, it is not just knowing the right thing to do; it is having the courage to do it. We have a responsibility to ourselves, the Air Force and our nation to maintain a team of unquestionable character.

“Character is not merely knowing the right thing to do, but also having the courage to act upon such knowledge.”

Gen. Jumper

Commander's Connection

Editor's note: Due to Col. Sam Angelella's TDY, Col. Billy Uhle, 20th Fighter Wing vice commander, will answer Commander's Connection questions.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Josef Cole

Col. Billy Uhle (right) and Mr. Steve Creech, Chairman, Sumter Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee, step to the aircraft for an F-16 incentive flight Tuesday.

“Commander's Connection” is a link between Col. Sam Angelella, 20th Fighter Wing commander, and the Shaw community. Questions or concerns that can't be resolved through normal channels can be called in and recorded at 895-4611 or e-mailed to commandersconnection@shaw.af.mil.

Callers should leave a name and telephone number in case questions need clarification. Comments of general interest may be published in *The Shaw Spirit*.

Q Recently, I overheard a group of military members using profanity. When people are in uniform, shouldn't they behave professionally wherever they are?

A Thank you for your concern. U.S. Air Force members are airmen 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on or off duty. As such, we are responsible to continually maintain a professional image as America's military representatives. This includes respect, proper customs and courtesies and conforming to dress/appearance standards.

The Shaw Spirit

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