



# CHIEF's Sight Picture

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## **Character -- The Courage to Do the Right Thing**

Our Air Force has a proud history of accomplishments that traces directly to the quality of people that make 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 undergird 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 and reflect 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 the rules are broken, selectively enforcing rules, or turning a blind-eye to marginal behavior or performance can perpetuate negative attitudes that can infect organizations.

We are all responsible for each other and it is essential that 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.



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