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**AIR WAR COLLEGE
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Core Values
**Foundation for the
Twenty-First Century**

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Foreword

In this important study, Lt Col Daniel R. Simmons, USAF, argues that the United States Air Force (USAF) officer success in the twenty-first century will depend on a robust ethical and professional foundation based on Air Force core values. The Air Force has widely promulgated the following core values: “Integrity first, Service before self, and Excellence in all we do.” However, recently well-publicized cases of core values failures among some Air Force officers suggest a crisis in character that threatens leadership effectiveness in the Air Force. To attack and resolve this core value deficiency and the related character problems among USAF officers, Colonel Simmons recommends that the Air Force significantly increase its focus on core values in its officer accession schools and professional military education programs. While current USAF initiatives to address the character problems are steps in the right direction, the study argues that the Air Force needs to do more.

Referring to the Center for Character Development at the Air Force Academy, and other core value training at Air Force professional military education schools, Colonel Simmons recommends that the Air Force create a center for core value development. This Center for Core Values Development (CCVD) would build a core values architecture that directs integrated training and education across the entire Air Force. The CCVD would be a single, central office in charge of core values education for the Air Force, and would create a close dialogue and better standardization of honor codes and values instruction among the Air Force’s separate schools currently teaching core values. These interesting proposals deserve to be read by a wide Air Force audience.

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About the Author

Lt Col Daniel R. Simmons, USAF, is a command pilot whose previous experience includes operations, deputy commander, and commander assignments with training squadrons and operations groups. With early experience in the Strategic Air Command and flying KC-135s, Colonel Simmons is a 1997 graduate of the Air War College.

Core Values

Foundation for the Twenty-First Century

On New Year's Day, 1997, the Rose Bowl parade and football game in Pasadena, California, included salutes to the United States Air Force (USAF). This salute was just one of many tributes in a year-long celebration of the USAF's 50th birthday. It is a refreshing change to see favorable publicity regarding the Air Force, because some aspects of recent history have not been kind to the nation's youngest service. Claims of gross negligence in numerous tragic incidents—a B-52 crash at Fairchild Air Force Base (AFB), a CT-43 crash in Croatia, a US Army Black Hawk helicopter shoot-down in Iraq, to name just a few—have minimized the overwhelming success the Air Force enjoyed during Operation Desert Storm. It is also a sad irony that the Air Force's greatest publicity event of recent history—the rescue of Capt Scott O'Grady—actually involved a major USAF mission failure, for example, getting shot down, and the real heroes were the Marine Corps rescue team members.

What is wrong with today's Air Force? Is there a fatal flaw or is the Air Force just in a "slump"? And, what is all this uproar over accountability? How can so much go wrong when the Air Force is allegedly getting the "best and the brightest" of America's youth? Or is it?

In September 1996 a USAF Academy cadet was arrested for murder. This incident was the first of its kind in the 40-year history of the academy. If officials had not captured this individual, would he have developed into an outstanding Air Force leader? Fortunately, we may never know the answer to this question. But this incident and the USAF's recent negative track record raise more questions about the health and well-being of the Air Force and the caliber of leadership that will be in charge of the Air Force in the twenty-first century. Cadets at the USAF Academy and the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) who began their education in the summer of 1996 will be the first new officers of the twenty-first century, graduating as second lieutenants in the summer of

the year 2000. In addition, the Officer Training School (OTS) already is producing some of the first captains of the next century. If there is a problem in today's Air Force with the quality of its officers, now is the time to figure out what that problem is. From there, the Air Force can take corrective action to assure that the USAF leaders of tomorrow will possess "the right stuff."

This paper seeks to convince current Air Force leadership that future officer success depends on a robust foundation based on Air Force core values. This paper also recommends how the Air Force can better instill these core values into its officers and its officer candidates. To accept this thesis regarding the importance of core values to Air Force officers, we need to understand that there is a fundamental deficiency in the character attributes of today's new officer candidates. In addition, I contend the study of core values offers the best possible solution to this potential "crisis of character."

While a review of current Air Force officer accession programs and professional military education does reveal the inclusion of some core values education, the effort has not solved the problem. Even with a recent initiative by the chief of staff to address this character issue, there is still considerable room for improvement. I believe the Air Force could best implement improvements in character growth programs by establishing a center for core value development for all USAF officers and officer candidates. While the Air Force does seem to be going through a difficult time, the current ailment is not fatal; it only needs a good dose of core value "medication." This is good news, because an increasingly complicated and uncertain world highlights the importance of having competent young Air Force leaders prepared for the immense challenges of the future.

It would be easy but inappropriate to blame current Air Force woes on today's crazy, mixed-up world. Although the current period in Air Force history does seem to be fraught with many challenges—a potentially unstable global environment, downsizing of military forces, shrinking resources, proliferation of technology and weapons of mass destruction, and an information explosion—this type of turbulence is nothing new. In the Air Force's relatively short

history, leaders have successfully handled the transition from propeller airplanes to jet aircraft, the advent of atomic weapons, and the incorporation of stealth and precision-guided and space-guided weapons, to name just a few of the significant developments. The old adage, “the only thing that remains constant is change,” indicates that change is just a normal part of life. In fact, effective leadership manifests itself during these ever-present periods of change.

Burt Nanus, a professor of management and policy sciences at the University of Southern California, sums up this thought by saying, “If one thinks of the great public leaders of history—Moses, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill, etc.—it is immediately obvious that all of them were effective precisely in times of great change, complexity and uncertainty. In fact, the secret of managing change and complexity is none other than leadership itself.”¹

If leadership is the key to a better tomorrow in the Air Force, the USAF needs to teach the universally approved, time-tested keys to successful leadership. Right? Unfortunately, over the years the voluminous literature on the attributes of an effective leader has resulted in one conclusion—there is no conclusion. There seems to be no closure on whether trait, behavior, or situation approaches provide the answers to an individual’s becoming a good or bad leader. In addition, the question of leaders being born or made has been debated extensively, again with no agreement from the “experts.” Simply stated, the fact that there is a USAF Academy and AFROTC/OTS programs, as well as professional military education (PME), suggests the Air Force believes leaders can be made—or at least improved. Today’s challenge, then, is to determine what lessons the Air Force should teach in its officer training and PME programs to prepare its officers to meet the leadership challenges of the future.

If change and uncertainty are “givens,” there must be some common thread for all leaders, independent of the “changes du jour,” that would serve as the foundation for officer education and training. In my opinion, that common thread is what is rooted inside the individual—in the indi-

vidual's character. According to the great football coach, Vince Lombardi, "Character, not education, is man's greatest need and man's greatest safeguard; for character is higher than intellect."² It is character that stands the test of time and weathers periods of change, complexity, and uncertainty which always seem to be the order of the day. Carl von Clausewitz, arguably the greatest military thinker in history, strongly supports the importance of character in his writings about military genius. During his discussions of the "fog of war," Clausewitz emphasizes the importance of leaders following an inner light leading to truth.³ This statement embodies the essence of character at its best. As the Air Force prepares for the "fog" of the next century, character will be the foundation on which to build a bright future.

While definitions of character are as numerous and varied as definitions of leadership, the best "short list" of principles I have found to describe character is a list the Air Force has already provided—the Air Force core values. "Integrity first, Service before self, and Excellence in all we do" is a superb list of character traits because of its all-encompassing simplicity—unlike the six core values the Air Force initially developed several years ago. Although the previous list—courage, competency, service, patriotism, integrity, and tenacity—was larger, it was overly specific and allowed for exclusions. The current list of three enables the incorporation of all positive character traits. While duty, honor, and country have become the character battle cry for the Army, integrity, service, and excellence can serve a similar purpose for the Air Force.

Essentially, the Air Force core values should serve as a way of work and a way of life, as well as a yardstick for success and a criterion for effective decision making. In the vernacular of an aircrew member, the list of core values can double as an officer's "boldface" checklist for making correct decisions. A boldface checklist offers a list of key steps for a pilot to follow in the event of an in-flight emergency. The pilot memorizes these and relies on them when the going gets rough. Basically, boldface supports the pilots during a difficult situation—when they need to take the right course of action. In this light, officers can use

core values as a boldface checklist in their daily actions. For this reason, training and education on the basic core values, with the resultant positive character development, is where the Air Force needs to focus its preparation of future officers.

A Crisis of Character

The current social climate in the United States indicates the development of core values in future Air Force leaders may be a bigger challenge than before. I mentioned the recent disturbing incident at the USAF Academy; unfortunately, other serious developments have gained national attention. A 1993–94 survey conducted by the General Accounting Office revealed 78 percent of female USAF Academy cadets had suffered sexual harassment on a recurring basis. This result had climbed from 59 percent in a similar survey in 1990–91.⁴ In addition, during the 1994 school year the academy received reports of 15 sexual assaults or incidents of sexual misconduct ranging from rape to improper fondling.⁵ After these incidents, Brig Gen Patrick Gamble, then the commandant of cadets, reflected on the caliber of an enrollee at the USAF Academy. “The raw material is not coming in the door with the same values our grandparents and parents taught us 30 and 35 years ago.”⁶ Certainly, this trend is not limited to USAF Academy cadets but seems to be prevalent among all of the armed services. The past year—1996—was not a good one for any of the services as scandals were all too prevalent. In November 1996 the Army was rocked by sexual abuse allegations at the Army Ordnance Center and School at its Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. A captain and two drill sergeants currently face charges that go beyond sexual harassment into sexual assault and rape. One of the accused men allegedly threatened to kill some of his victims. In addition, when the Army established a toll-free sexual abuse hot line at Aberdeen, more than three thousand calls from all over the country poured in after the first week.⁷

The Navy was not immune from the negative spotlight even while it continued to recover from the Tailhook incident of 1991. The Naval Academy expelled 15 of its midshipmen

in 1996 for their role in a drug and car theft ring.⁸ This latest Naval Academy problem follows a massive cheating scandal at Annapolis in 1994.⁹

Although these incidents received extensive media coverage, readers should not assume that these scandals pose a problem solely with the military. On the contrary, evidence suggests this negative pattern reflects the entire post-baby-boom generation.

Individuals born between 1961 and 1981 make up the 13th generation of Americans and have come to be known by several names—"13ers," "Generation X," and the "Twenty-somethings." No matter what authors call them, they all seem to agree that this generation may not be one of our finest. Dissatisfied, slackers, whiners, unskilled, cynical, and wild are just some of the words authors use to describe this latest generation.¹⁰

Tales of violence and unethical behavior seem commonplace in America's schools today. If these stereotypes are true, we should be careful not to place all the blame on these "kids" who are now growing up. According to Charlie Meier, a member of the first graduating class from the USAF Academy, "Today's societal standards are different than the standards of 35 years ago. White collar crime is tolerated in society today. Our children learn from our behavior. They have different concepts of what is wrong."¹¹ Jeff McFadden, an ex-Navy officer and Naval Academy graduate, agrees. "What we're seeing today in the class of 2000 are the offspring and byproduct of what is probably the most self-centered, self-absorbed, hedonistic culture in American history."¹² What society previously accepted as "givens" in the area of core values—and the difference between right and wrong—cannot be assumed anymore.

Importance of Core Value Education

If the core values and the character of our future Air Force leaders are suspect, how does the USAF develop these attributes? Can it teach core values to members who do not measure up to Air Force standards? I believe the answer is yes! John Gardner, a renowned scholar and author, emphatically denies the importance of an individual's innate attributes. "The individual's hereditary gifts, however notable,

leave the issue of future leadership performance undecided, to be settled by later events and influences.”¹³ People can learn the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behavior and modify their actions accordingly.

Certainly, if we carry this thought to an extreme, we will find countless examples of criminals who have been rehabilitated and gone on to become respected members of society. Furthermore, in an address to the USAF Academy cadet corps, Secretary of the Air Force Dr. Sheila E. Widnall summed up the relationship of habitual behavior and character development with the following quote from a YMCA leader:

Watch your thoughts; they become words.
Watch your words; they become actions.
Watch your actions; they become habits.
Watch your habits; they become character.
Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.
(Emphasis added)¹⁴

If habits do form an individual's character, it makes sense that correcting a flawed character would involve breaking a bad habit, not unlike quitting smoking cigarettes. The challenge is finding the right education and training program to break those “value habits” that counter effective leadership. The obvious and easiest way to stop a bad habit is by preventing it in the first place. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” applies to core value education and is more important than ever as the Air Force faces some significant challenges.

As the turn of the century nears, the Air Force braces itself for a period of turmoil. Although the bulk of restructuring and downsizing is accomplished, the USAF is still not at its end-strength numbers directed by the Department of Defense (DOD) Bottom-up Review. Over the next two years, the Air Force will have to reduce further its numbers by a total of 10,000 members. Not only will the Air Force have a smaller force, but many traditional military services will transition to the civilian work force. “Outsourcing” and “privatization” have been gaining popularity as solutions to shrinking budgets and costly new weapon systems. The Air Force plans to use the savings to help pay

for new aircraft and such systems as the Joint Strike Fighter, F-22, C-17, and the Milstar satellite system.¹⁵

While this study is not the proper forum to discuss the pros and cons of outsourcing and privatization, the point holds that the future Air Force will look very different from the way it looks today. Unlike military members, contractors do not have to swear to “support and defend the Constitution” and “to bear true faith and allegiance to the same.” A smaller, “less military” Air Force emphasizes once again the importance of a core foundation based on positive character values. This increased focus on core values also will hold the solution to another problem the USAF currently faces—the “accountability” issue.

Accountability—the word brings forth emotions among all USAF officers, young and old. Why does this word present such an emotional topic? Accountability is really a straightforward issue that requires us to answer for our actions, and, if warranted, to receive punishment for those inappropriate actions. What is wrong about this? The problem seems to be that everybody is focusing on the wrong side of the issue.

A Core Value Foundation

Put the focus where it should be—on integrity, service, and excellence. Reducing core value “violations” will decrease the need for these accountability cases, and this issue should die a long-overdue death. The current cerebral “feeding frenzy” about accountability is just one more reason the Air Force’s foundation for the future rests with the three core values.

Integrity

The first core value necessary in the character foundation of future Air Force leaders is integrity. Military leaders virtually agree that this value is the bedrock of effective leadership. Gen Ronald R. Fogleman, former Air Force chief of staff, summarized the importance of integrity in Air Force officers by pointing to the business we’re in—the profession of arms: “The US Air Force exists for one reason, and one reason alone. That is to fight and win America’s

wars when called on to do so. That is the only reason we exist as an institution.”¹⁶ Furthermore, former Air Force Chief of Staff David C. Jones provided additional emphasis to the role of integrity by saying, “Integrity is certainly not a unique military attribute, but stakes are higher in our business than in almost any other. We must be right, we must be competent, we must admit our mistakes and correct them when they do occur, and above all we must never permit either the fact or image of duplicity to taint our honor. The watchword must be, as always, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”¹⁷ Integrity does not just mean always telling the truth, although this is important. As General Fogleman and Dr. Widnall have written, “If you always tell the truth, you never have to try and remember what you told someone.” The best definition I ever heard for integrity is also the most simple—doing what is right when nobody is looking.¹⁸ This definition covers a variety of areas—as it should! Integrity involves keeping commitments, which in turn builds trust. When the commitment is to support and defend the Constitution of the United States, the importance of integrity becomes obvious. Pencil-whipping training records, violating technical data, falsifying documents, and making inaccurate reports are all examples of integrity violations. According to General Fogleman, “We can ill afford such behavior in a business like ours that deals in lethal instruments and the lives of people.”¹⁹

Some recent Air Force disasters point to integrity flaws that have resulted in significant loss of life to military and civilian personnel. In 1994 a B-52 crashed at Fairchild AFB during a practice air show flyover, killing all on board. Several times the pilot in control of the aircraft had violated aircraft technical data and performed unsafe flight maneuvers, which investigators revealed was the cause for this crash. Not only was the pilot’s integrity at fault, so was his commander’s. His commander, despite numerous warnings and complaints about this pilot’s inappropriate actions, allowed the pilot to continue flying when he should have been grounded. This multiple breakdown in integrity met with the most severe of consequences.

Another example of an integrity fault having disastrous results occurred in the former Yugoslavia. A USAF CT-43 from Ramstein AFB, carrying Ron Brown, the US secretary of commerce, crashed while attempting an approach at Dubrovnik Airport in Croatia, killing all on board. While the safety report (which was read live on CNN) identified numerous causes for the accident, the most disturbing factor was the Air Force unit's disregard for Air Force regulations. Had the aircrew complied with these regulations, they never would have attempted to approach this airport. Integrity does go much deeper than simply telling the truth, and the penalties for integrity flaws can have dire consequences. This explanation tells why it is so important to drill this particular core value deep into the soul of Air Force leaders.

As examples in the two previous paragraphs illustrate, maintaining integrity is not always easy. Often, it involves making difficult decisions, illustrated all too painfully by a well-publicized case from the Vietnam War. Gen John D. Lavelle, commander of the Seventh Air Force in Saigon from August 1971 to April 1972, faced a dilemma and subsequently failed the integrity test. Restricted by rules of engagement that placed his pilots' safety at risk, Lavelle elected to violate those rules under the guise of pilot protection. He was then found responsible for fostering a command environment that allowed misreporting of the rule violations.²⁰

While it is true Lavelle was torn between a "rock and a hard place," more appropriate options were available. In hindsight, Lavelle should have refused to fly until the obsolete rules of engagement were changed. His ill-advised actions caused him to lose his command and forced him to retire as a major general. And if Lavelle's decision did not seem difficult enough, consider the sergeant who uncovered this incident by exposing the false reports coming out of Lavelle's unit! This young sergeant "did the right thing"; that is, this is the kind of message we need to get to our future Air Force leaders. Integrity, the most important core value, has to be the first brick in the foundation of Air Force leadership training.

Service before Self

The second core value, service before self, is another key attribute separating the Air Force officer from most other professionals. While some people call integrity “the mother of all core values,” service before self may be the “father of all core values.” In fact, if you hold this core value dearly, you should automatically embrace integrity because service before self means you will “do what is right.” Service before self, simply stated, is selflessness.

Gen Duane H. Cassidy, former commander in chief of the Military Airlift Command (MAC), defines selflessness as “putting your own personal desires second to a higher cause or to other people.”²¹ General Cassidy believes Air Force people must be selfless because “we are in a life and death business—our success guarantees freedom for all other Americans—our failure is unconscionable.”²² Service before self is “the mission.” It is a 24-hour-a-day occupation, generating a satisfaction for doing the most important job in the country—protecting its freedom and its way of life.

While movie stars and sport heroes earn millions of dollars but often lead turbulent, unhappy lives, the job satisfaction from serving one’s country is a priceless gem that lasts a lifetime. If the Air Force can instill this value into its future officers, it will assure a major step towards effective leadership. Unfortunately, this objective may result in an uphill battle as well.

The negative trend of values in today’s society does not favor a selfless attitude, an attribute which is so important in the military. In an NBC television report about problems at the service academies, Pentagon correspondent Fred Francis correctly captured the importance of selflessness by saying, “In the military where teamwork is vital to the national interests, a selfish future officer is a formula for future military failure.”²³ Furthermore, in the same NBC segment, Brig Gen Ruben A. Cubero, dean of faculty at the USAF Academy, said, “There is a philosophy of individualism now as opposed to teamwork and caring for the community.”²⁴ Many times this type of selfishness manifests itself in officers who are labeled “careerists”—those who will do whatever is required to succeed. While careerism is

serious in itself, the results of selfishness can be much worse. It can lead to abuse of position, with officers employing their authority to satisfy their own personal interests. This violation of trust by officers can lead to even more serious offenses in the Air Force, including inappropriate sexual behavior.

Dr. Widnall correctly blames self-interest as the cause for sexual harassment by military supervisors. She believes this type of incident “is not measured by the sexual character of it but because it is an abuse of power, a conflict of interest, a violation of trust.”²⁵ It is not hard to see the selfishness inherent in some of the sex-related incidents that became public in 1996. An A-10 pilot faced criminal charges for “conduct unbecoming an officer” stemming from alleged sexual advances against an enlisted woman in the bathroom of a charter aircraft. The aircraft was returning to the United States from a deployment to Kuwait, where A-10 unit members had participated in an illegal drinking party the night before their departure, a further example of selfish behavior.²⁶

In addition, selfish conduct, demonstrated by sexual impropriety, is not limited to junior Air Force officers. A general officer wing commander was found guilty of misconduct with a female subordinate. The commander, who was forced to retire as a colonel, “twice embraced a female subordinate while unsuccessfully pursuing an intimate relationship with her.”²⁷

Selfishness, as evidenced by inappropriate sexual behavior, is totally incompatible with military service. This type of selfish behavior violates the core value of service before self and destroys the foundation so critical to Air Force operations. Although examples of selfish behavior often make the headlines, it is reassuring to know there are also good examples of Air Force individuals who demonstrate the core value of service before self every day.

In October 1993 TSgt Tim Wilkinson, an Air Force pararescueman, demonstrated the core value of service before self during a firefight in Mogadishu, Somalia. While treating injured Army helicopter crew members, Wilkinson was injured in the face and arm by shrapnel. In spite of these injuries, he proceeded through enemy fire to attend

to Army Rangers in need of help. He treated the soldiers, went back for supplies, then returned through enemy fire to finish his work. Wilkinson received the Air Force Cross for his heroic efforts in the line of duty.²⁸ Although few Air Force personnel face the imminent danger Sergeant Wilkinson faced in Somalia, he clearly demonstrated the core value of service before self—an attribute important to all other Air Force members.

Excellence

The third Air Force core value, excellence, also separates the Air Force officer from his or her peers. This “catch all” core value encompasses vision and competence and guides an officer’s daily actions. Once again, as a core value, excellence reflects the importance of this profession, that the nation entrusts its security with the leadership of its military officers. Vision is the ability to look forward and have a sense of direction for where an organization needs to go.²⁹ Although it may not be possible to increase an individual’s capacity for vision, there are ways to focus the direction an individual will take. Emphasizing the three Air Force core values is the right way to focus that direction. “As the pace of change in our world continues to accelerate, strong basic values become increasingly necessary to guide leadership behavior.”³⁰ Vision that is guided by core values will certainly serve the Air Force well as it meets the challenges of the next century. Vision without competence, however, is comparable to a train being on the right track but without a qualified engineer at the wheel.

The other important part of excellence is competence. A leader must have the necessary qualifications to make decisions that could affect the lives of many. For a military officer, these qualifications often include the expertise gained from technical training and follow-on training at the operational unit. Professional military education at the appropriate time during one’s career provides the additional Air Force knowledge to facilitate correct decision making. Once we achieve competence, we must dedicate ourselves to maintain, or even improve, this level of competence through recurring training. Unfortunately, a lack of competence contributed to a tragic mistake leading to the

friendly shoot-down of two US Army Black Hawk helicopters and the death of 26 people.

The story of the military disaster over Northern Iraq in April 1994 is all too well known. Two F-15s mistakenly identified two US helicopters in the no-fly zone as Iraqi aircraft and subsequently shot them down. As the investigation of this mishap revealed, incompetence was evident at numerous levels. According to Secretary Widnall, "This mishap was not the result of any one individual's actions. The conduct of numerous officers and the system itself contributed."³¹ First of all, the Air Force and the Army were operating with two different friend-or-foe identification codes required for all US aircraft entering Iraq. The air tasking order, a USAF product directing all US flights in the area, instructed the helicopters to set a wrong code, leading to the F-15 pilots' suspicions they were not friendly. In addition, officers on board an airborne warning and control aircraft responsible for monitoring all air traffic in the area failed to intervene to prevent the incident. Finally, the two F-15 pilots incorrectly identified the Black Hawks as Iraqi Hind helicopters. The Air Force cannot tolerate incompetence in the profession of arms, as demonstrated in this terrible incident. Should the Air Force somehow instill in its officers the excellence that was so brilliantly demonstrated by Gen Curtis E. LeMay, it can prevent incidents like the Black Hawk shoot-down.

General LeMay will be remembered for many things—Air Force chief of staff, "father" of the Strategic Air Command (SAC), architect of the fire-bombing campaign in Japan—but his example of excellence may be his most valuable legacy to the Air Force today. General LeMay had an incredible work ethic, and he would never tolerate incompetence. His dedication to excellence resulted in SAC's becoming the most powerful military force ever assembled.

Although General LeMay was considered a tough commander, he never expected more from his people than he did from himself. As a young officer, he was considered the best pilot in his unit; he then attended navigator training and afterwards was considered the best navigator in the unit. But, his quest for excellence did not stop there. General LeMay studied the B-17 aircraft systems and was considered to

be one of the best B-17 crew chiefs—he was often seen out on the flight line training young maintainers!³²

Although not everybody can be a Curt LeMay, the example he set for excellence can be a noble target for today's Air Force officers. Like integrity and service before self, the core value of excellence must be an integral part of each officer's foundation. The officer training schools and PME programs offer the best hope for incorporating these core values into the Air Force way of life. Considering the numerous examples of serious violations of Air Force standards, it may be beneficial to review the current core value training of these institutions.

Current Air Force Core Value Education

The current Air Force core value education provides a yardstick by which to advance military education. A careful study of the considerations outlined below enables readers to understand better these core values.

Officer Accession Programs

For a review of core value awareness training at accession and PME schools, the USAF Academy provides a good place to start. The academy has always had an honor code: "We will not lie, steal or cheat, nor tolerate anyone who does." This code is fairly straightforward and covers four important aspects of integrity. Cadets have a grace period of six weeks during initial basic training when they learn the code and the penalty for violating it—expulsion from the academy. Considering the evidence of the questionable values characteristic of cadets entering the academy today, it is debatable whether six weeks is long enough to teach these important values to cadets. According to Brig Gen Jack K. Gamble, "Their definition of cheating and ours is different because their value system is different. You can't say 'don't lie, cheat, or steal,' anymore. You've got to redefining for them what lying, cheating and stealing is all about."³³ This atmosphere of doubt led the USAF Academy to develop a Center for Character Development, an initiative which should serve the USAF well for many years to come.

The USAF established the Center for Character Development in 1993 to instill character into new cadets, with emphasis on core value development. The USAF Academy organized this new agency into three divisions—character and ethics, human relations, and honor education. The impetus for the center’s development was the environment of doubt surrounding the character of new cadets entering the academy. According to Lt Col Terrence Moore, ethics director of the center in 1994, “Blame white collar crime, broken families, MTV, whatever. But the result is we’re fighting trends of extreme individualism in the society as a whole. We’ve gotten away from a focus on those common values that people share. Things like integrity and selflessness, responsibility, decisiveness, honesty—basic core values that everybody agrees on.”³⁴

The Center for Character Development offers training programs to increase cadet knowledge of moral/ethical issues, honor, and human diversity. During basic training the academy tasks new cadets to reflect on situations that test their commitment to core values. Scenarios include actual cases of cadets who have made decisions contrary to Air Force core values. This revelation is certain to be an eye-opening experience for some individuals who realize from the start they are in a whole new ball game. In addition, during their four-year stay, cadets receive a total of 43 lessons on the honor code—as it applies to the academy, officership, the Air Force, and service to country.³⁵

History will judge the effectiveness of this new initiative at the Air Force Academy, but I think the Center for Character Development is right on track for training new Air Force leaders for the twenty-first century, particularly in the area of the most important core value, integrity. The Air Force Academy seems to understand the importance of enhanced core value education. Its Reserve Officer Training Corps is working toward this same goal. The AFROTC program also includes core value training as part of its curriculum. First year cadets receive two hours of classroom time on officership and core values; second year cadets receive two more hours on ethics and values. Most of the core value-related training, however, comes in a cadet’s third year. During their junior year the cadets receive a

total of eight hours on ethics, core values/officership values, and character development. Finally, in their senior year, AFROTC cadets culminate their undergraduate education with a one-hour core values capstone session.³⁶ While the AFROTC program does not have an education asset that is comparable to the USAF Academy's Center for Character Development, it understandably offers more core value training than does the 13-week Officer Training School.

An abbreviated training program like OTS does not have the luxury of conducting in-depth lessons on any one subject. Nevertheless, OTS does manage to include core value training in its curriculum. During their first week, OTS students receive a session on core values from the OTS commander. The commander defines core values and then lectures on their importance to Air Force operations. Later in the program a chaplain talks to the students about ethics and the difference between right and wrong. For many of the OTS students who are former Air Force enlisted personnel, these sessions serve as a review since they are already familiar with these core values from prior experience. To further integrate core value awareness, OTS faculty members also have used the school's leadership reaction course to emphasize proper character values to the students.³⁷ It is evident, then, that like the USAF Academy and AFROTC, OTS does address core values in its program, as do the officer PME schools.

Professional Military Education

At Squadron Officer School (SOS) company grade officers receive core value awareness primarily through the study of the Black Hawk shoot-down and the crash of the Fairchild B-52. SOS also includes additional core value-related readings as part of its "officership" phase of the curriculum. Furthermore, during the students' participation in a leadership exercise known as "Project X," faculty members highlight good and bad examples of core values—as demonstrated by the students themselves.³⁸ SOS is an important part of a young officer's professional development, and core values awareness is included in the agenda, as it is for the Air Command and Staff College (ACSC).

For most field grade officers, ACSC is the sole professional military education they receive prior to assuming command of an Air Force squadron. Arguably, a squadron commander has more impact on the core value climate of the Air Force than any other officer, as he or she is still accessible to most ranks on a day-to-day basis. For this reason, ACSC offers a three-week block of instruction entitled “Leadership and Command” that includes five primary lessons covering ethics and morality. ACSC students also evaluate case studies, including the Fairchild B-52 crash and the Black Hawk shoot-down, to further increase their understanding of the importance of core values.³⁹ For future squadron commanders, this curriculum offers valuable guidance on the standards expected from Air Force leaders.

If core value education is important at the field grade rank level, it may be even more important at the senior rank level. In the Air Force, part of that responsibility rests with the Air War College (AWC). A look at the crash of the Fairchild B-52 and the Ramstein CT-43 makes it painfully obvious that leadership failures occurred at the most senior levels—including operations group and wing commander positions. To help the Air Force to circumvent this kind of occurrence, the AWC program provides the last PME to officers before they assume these senior leadership positions. Although by this juncture in an officer’s career, one would hope the core values would be deeply ingrained, the AWC still addresses core value issues in its curriculum. As part of the school’s leadership and ethics agenda, AWC students discuss core values during case studies of the Lavelle incident, the Black Hawk shoot-down, and the Fairchild B-52 crash. The AWC spreads its leadership and ethics syllabus out throughout the year so students get periodic reinforcement about the importance of core values in the Air Force. AWC, as well as SOS and ACSC, does address core values as a normal part of its curriculum; apparently, this effort has not been enough.

New Air Force Core Value Initiatives

With core values being a part of all officer training programs and all PME curriculum, current character problems

in the Air Force suggest the plans have not been adequate. In the perceived environment of declining character values—so painfully apparent in the highly publicized, sensational cases mentioned earlier—General Fogleman directed a plan to strengthen core value education throughout the Air Force. He released this plan in November 1996 as part of a 26-page document, “Global Engagement: A Vision for the 21st Century Air Force.” While the Air Force has been teaching core values at the officer training schools and at PME, the new initiative goes much further at the unit level.

Commanders at all levels will now get directly involved not only in setting the example but also in teaching lessons as part of a recurring core value education program. The new program requires commanders to give a lesson on core values to their subordinate commanders by June of that year. To standardize the lesson Air Force-wide, the Air Force will provide commanders with lesson material as well as case studies for discussion. The intent of this initiative is for commanders to “make our core values an operational reality within their unit.”⁴⁰ This “top-down” approach is just one of the initiatives General Fogleman directed to make core values a way of life in the Air Force.

The Little Blue Book

Part of the “re-valuing” of the Air Force involves the distribution of “The Little Blue Book” to all Air Force members. This book, which was printed on 1 January 1997 under the official name the “United States Air Force Core Values,” is a 25-page pamphlet designed to serve as a core values guide for the Air Force “family.” The first section of the book outlines the basic definitions of the core values and how they apply in the workplace. The second section explains why core values are important to the Air Force and how a “climate of ethical corrosion” has led to incidents like the crash of the Fairchild B-52 and the Ramstein CT-43. Finally, the little blue book outlines a core values strategy that hopefully will fix the corrosive ethical climate in today’s Air Force. Essential to this strategy is what the blue book calls “The Core Values Continuum.”

Core Values Continuum

The core values continuum emphasizes the need for the Air Force not only to teach core values, but equally important, to live them. Core values education begins at the officer training schools and is continuously reemphasized throughout an officer's career at PME schools, during training, and in the unit. Persons responsible for education and training will be expected to conduct a "schoolhouse weave" to integrate further core values into the curriculum. This statement means core values will be woven into existing courses by (1) creating a short introductory lesson dedicated to explaining core values, (2) building planned opportunities into the course to discuss core values in the context of the subject being taught, and (3) taking advantage of unexpected opportunities that arise in a course of instruction to emphasize core values. In addition to beefing up core values education at the schoolhouses, the core values continuum directs the "operationalizing" of core values.⁴¹

The added emphasis of core values at the operational unit level includes not only a "top-down approach" as previously mentioned but also a "bottom-up approach." While commanders and other leaders are conducting core value lessons and setting the right example, all members of the organization should examine the unit's moral health. This critical look has been labeled a "corrosion analysis" with the goal of surfacing problem areas to the unit leadership. The bottom line regarding the core values continuum is that everybody in the Air Force is responsible for making core values a way of life.⁴²

Air and Space Basic Course

Another initiative by General Fogleman to integrate core values totally throughout an officer's career involves the addition of two PME courses—the Air and Space Basic Course and the Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program. Both courses are in the developmental stages, and although both schools will address a variety of professional issues, initial curriculum plans show core values as key parts of the syllabi. The Air and Space Basic Course wants to get officers to think of themselves first as Air Force officers and second as specialists in their fields.

The course would require that officers attend class directly after receiving their commission. Although the location for this course has not been selected yet, it will definitely be a resident PME school.⁴³ The Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program, on the other hand, will be an in-unit PME course.

Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program

The draft curriculum plan for the Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program identifies a two-phase approach that will be mandatory for all officers before they attend SOS. Phase 1 will be the Company Grade Officers Professional Development Course (CGOPDC), and Phase 2 will be the Company Grade Officers Professional Development Group and Independent Study. In Phase 1, the CGOPDC, officers will receive added exposure both to core values and their role in the Air Force.

The mission of the CGOPDC will be “to improve and broaden the professional competence of company grade officers so they may better perform their duties in support of Air Force Global Engagement and associated mission requirements.”⁴⁴ The course is designed to expand on knowledge gained in officer training programs and to complete the Air and Space Basic Course. The unit commander will be responsible for this new school and will appoint a base course director to oversee the program. Instructors will be senior captains and majors from the unit who will accomplish this as an additional duty. During the leadership phase of the CGOPDC, these unit instructors again will address core value definitions and importance while also leading case studies on relevant core value issues. Dr. Richard I. Lester, from the Ira C. Eaker College for Professional Development, is responsible for developing this new program and believes the core values part of the curriculum is critical to enhanced officer training. “Values build character,” Lester said, and “this new initiative will go a long way to further core values education among Air Force officers.”⁴⁵ The Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program should become a major step in improving the integration of positive character values at the unit level.

Center for Core Value Development A Need for the Future

With all of these new Air Force initiatives addressing core values and their importance, the problem is solved, right? Not necessarily. Although these enthusiastic efforts are positive steps in developing character within the officer corps, the Air Force still has a long way to go to make core values a universally understood requirement for membership in its ranks. A “knee-jerk” reaction to a problem, no matter how noble, resulting in a flood of information from all directions, is bound to generate negative feelings around the Air Force. Gen Billy J. Boles, former commander of the Air Education and Training Command, believes it is important that Air Force people do not view this initiative as just another program. Regarding the new plan that emphasizes core values, Boles says, “The idea is to make it more of a way of life than it is a program. People tend to be skeptical of programs.”⁴⁶

A good example of this skepticism focuses on the ongoing effort to make Quality an integral part of Air Force business. Despite the obvious benefits of a quality-based approach, many Air Force personnel still are not “onboard the quality bandwagon.” I firmly believe this is due to the Air Force not doing a good job of selling the quality program. Air Force units were deluged with reams of quality information, but there was no coordinated effort from the top to implement the program. Nor were there enough Air Force personnel adequately educated to implement quality at the unit levels. The Air Force should not make this same mistake with the new core values initiative.

The new core values awareness plan needs to be directed from a central Air Force office responsible for core values education at all levels of an officer’s career. This office should direct core value curriculums for all officer training programs, all PME courses, and all in-unit initiatives. As the program exists right now, there is no one looking at all core values training to ensure key issues are covered at the right stage of an officer’s career, and there is no unnecessary repetition in the process.

The developers of the Air and Space Basic Course and the CGOPDC have not been given detailed guidance on

what their core values syllabus will include. With a lack of direction, the developers are considering covering such core value definitions and incidents as the Fairchild B-52 and Ramstein CT-43 crashes. These are lesson-plan items that are already included in traditional PME programs. Although there is something to be said for repetitious training, the more likely result will be a decrease in effectiveness. To avoid implementing a disjointed Air Force-wide core values program, a central office for planning and execution of core values education would provide “cradle to grave” management of core value training. Normally, selecting an office to be responsible for directing an Air Force core values plan would be difficult. However, a new Air Force organizational change may have provided the obvious answer to this problem.

In January 1997 Brig Gen (major general select) Ronald E. Keys was chosen to command the new headquarters of the Air Force Doctrine Center at Maxwell AFB, Alabama. In this position, General Keys will report directly to the Air Force chief of staff. As commander, Keys will be responsible for leading an organization tasked with researching, developing, and writing doctrinal literature for the entire Air Force. According to Keys, “Doctrine is the guiding principle of an entire organization—it is what is important.”⁴⁷ This level of importance is exactly where core values belong. Core values should be as much a part of Air Force doctrine as is air superiority and strategic bombing. This doctrine center should establish an office—a center for core value development, or CCVD—to take the lead in building an Air Force core values architecture directing an integrated, well-coordinated training and awareness program across the spectrum of the Air Force. Specifically, the core values architecture should include the proper subjects to be covered in officer training schools, at PME, and in the operational unit. With a single, central office in charge of core values education for the Air Force, this office should consider a number of suggestions to improve core values awareness across the Air Force.

In the area of officer training programs, the USAF Academy’s Center for Character Development is a “state-of-the-art” initiative offering the best hope for positive character

development. The CCVD should look at the USAF Academy program as a benchmark to enhance core value training in all of the officer accession programs. Currently, there is no regular system of review—no sharing of lessons learned—between the academy’s character development center and either AFROTC or OTS.⁴⁸ This is a missed opportunity for the Air Force to benefit from dialogue between the three programs. An annual review of lessons learned should prove valuable as faculty members could incorporate the good ideas into all three curricula. Standardizing core values education to the maximum extent possible should be the goal of the new CCVD office. This concern is particularly important in the area of the most important core value, integrity.

Although it is commonly advertised that the USAF Academy has an honor code, few people realize that AFROTC and OTS also have honor codes. While the honor codes are virtually the same across the board—“We will not lie, cheat or steal, nor tolerate those who do”—the three programs do not enforce this code the same way. The Air Force Academy uses an honor probation system to “rehabilitate” some violators of the code. According to Lt Col Mick Fekula, of the academy’s Character Development and Ethics Division, most probation cases involve younger, inexperienced cadets, but more senior cadets also can be eligible for rehabilitation.⁴⁹ OTS students, on the other hand, do not have a probation option; they will be disenrolled if found guilty of honor code violations.⁵⁰ In the case of AFROTC, administration of the honor code lies somewhere between the rigid enforcement of OTS and the rehabilitation option of the academy. While AFROTC students are to comply with the same honor code, the administration of violations is left at the unit level.⁵¹ This delegation of responsibility to each unit could result in wide interpretation—and enforcement—of honor code violations.

If all graduates of the three officer training programs are going to be officers in the Air Force, why aren’t some of the key standards the same? Despite necessary differences in the three curricula due to course length, student maturity, and cost, there are still some areas ripe for standardization. The first task of the CCVD should be to stand-

ardize the honor code policy among all three of the officer accession programs. All three schools' students should be given a grace period until they fully understand the importance of the core value of integrity. The use of a probation option during this time, along the lines of the academy's, should be considered as a useful education tool. Once the students pass the grace period, the penalty for integrity violations should be expulsion. This is a stiff penalty, but aspiring Air Force officers need to understand early in their careers the importance of honor. Integrity has to be the first agenda item for all officer training programs, followed closely by service before self.

To best instill the service core value into future officers, the Air Force needs to advertise—and emphasize—its mission and vision from “day one.” The words, “to defend the United States through control and exploitation of space,” and “building the world’s most respected air and space force” are powerful; they should set the proper stage for a rigorous training program. This program should then include extensive study of successful leaders in military history and the sacrifices they made in the service of their country. The list of possible subjects is lengthy—Mitchell, Eisenhower, MacArthur, LeMay, Sijan—but the theme would be the same. The attribute of service before self should be emphasized so officer candidates can understand the essence of their profession and the sacrifice required.

The USAF Academy does provide military history courses for its cadets, but primarily to those who declare military history as a major—normally a very small percentage of the cadet corps. The academy needs to strengthen the curriculum so all cadet year-groups receive courses on key military leaders in history. “Stories of events and personalities in the history of the Air Force that exemplify core values validate their importance to the organization. They also serve to inspire those who hear them to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before.”⁵² In fact, no matter what is a cadet’s major, he or she should receive enough courses in military history for a minor in military history. This is the business of the academy—military leadership—and its officer training programs should reflect that. As General Fogleman so aptly stated, “The Air Force

Academy does not exist to provide a first-class education to some of the brightest young men and women in America. It exists to produce leaders of our Air Force.”⁵³ In the case of the AFROTC program, while the cadets receive eight hours of study on Air Force leaders and heritage, it is not enough to cover a 50-year history of service before self. AFROTC cadets need to receive additional military history training that highlights examples of officers who have demonstrated the highest of standards. An extensive education in military history and the Air Force mission/vision will ensure our future leaders understand the core value of service before self. Service before self is so critical to future successful Air Force operations, but this core value will mean nothing without the excellence that must accompany it.

While it is true the USAF Academy has developed an outstanding reputation for academic excellence, it is more important for this institution to be recognized for excellence in military leadership. The USAF Academy offers majors in 23 areas of study—from aeronautical engineering to economics to management. Despite the fact the USAF Academy exists to produce military leaders, it offers no major in military leadership. Why doesn't the academy offer a major in leadership? Why isn't there even a separate academic leadership department?⁵⁴ I mentioned the need for additional military history study at the academy and at AFROTC, but there are also outstanding literary works on the essence of effective leadership. The study of works by Stephen R. Covey, Peter F. Drucker, and Max De Pree, to name just a few, provide invaluable guidance in preparing our future leaders. According to Covey, “Those people and organizations who have a passion for learning— learning through listening, seeing emerging trends, sensing and anticipating needs in the marketplace, evaluating past successes and mistakes, and absorbing the lessons that conscience and principles teach us, to mention just a few ways—will have enduring influence. Such learning leaders will not resist change; they will embrace it.”⁵⁵ Learning about leadership is where excellence will manifest itself because leadership education is a career investment—unlike education in other areas.

While it is valuable to have some academy cadets majoring in special fields of study, the Air Force should reserve this option for a select few who will actually use this degree in the Air Force. While it is debated how much of the academic knowledge gained at the academy is ever used as cadets proceed on to pilot training or other fields, leadership study, on the other hand, will be valuable for all USAF Academy graduates, no matter what field they enter after graduation. Majoring in leadership at the academy should be the norm; this would be a superb way to instill the core value of excellence into future military leaders. The CCVD should look at this option for the USAF Academy and evaluate its feasibility at AFROTC units as well. In addition, the Air Force should consider other suggestions from the CCVD to increase the effectiveness of its core value education.

A number of important core value lessons addressed earlier should be a part of all three officer training programs. The CCVD should ensure case studies covering the Lavelle incident, the Black Hawk shoot-down, and crashes of the Fair-child B-52 and Ramstein CT-43 are a part of all officer training curriculum. These classic examples of core value violations clearly demonstrate the impact—and the lethality—of not doing what is right. In addition, the new core value center could evaluate classic civilian and cadet cases, as well as “issues of the day,” and add them to the three syllabi. This standardization will put all new officers on common ground in regards to “big ticket” core value failures.

This is not to say emphasizing the negative should be the only approach. Officer trainees also should study cases of positive core value examples—like the case of Gen Curtis LeMay. The main point is that the Air Force should evaluate the main lessons it teaches all of its officer candidates, decide what is best, then implement these lessons in all programs. With the CCVD directing the best possible core values education at all three officer training schools, core values will become ingrained in future Air Force officers.

After the officer accession programs, professional military education offers the next prime opportunity to emphasize core values as the foundation for officer decisions and

actions. This scenario is particularly true as the Air Force continues to downsize. According to General Fogleman, "History clearly shows us that when you get smaller, PME becomes more important rather than less important."⁵⁶ Although all current and projected PME programs address core values in their curricula, they appear to be a minor part of the syllabi. If the Air Force is serious about elevating core values to a foundation level, then PME should reflect this effort.

As previously discussed, the Air Force now offers three different PME schools and proposes two more, with the recent addition of the Air and Space Basic Course and the Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program. For all five courses, the CCVD should oversee the core values curriculum to present the right education at the right stage of an officer's career. The CCVD also could promote phased development and prevent unnecessary repetition between the PME programs and the officer training schools. This effort would be a "building block" approach to core value education during an officer's entire career. For example, if all officer trainees already are familiar with such "classic" core value cases as Lavelle and the Black Hawk shoot-down, there is no need to cover them in depth in the Air and Space Basic Course. For the remainder of the in-residence courses—SOS, ACSC, and AWC—the classics should be reviewed only enough to address the preferred behavior at the captain, squadron commander, group/wing commander, and strategic levels, respectively. Since the Company Grade Officers Professional Development Program is a precursor to SOS, core value discussions in this wing-executed course should be restricted to specific cases from each unit, again to avoid repetition. These few examples illustrate how the CCVD could help direct Air Force core values education across the spectrum of officer PME programs. An office like this, one that serves as a central authority for all officer core value education, would be a major step in insuring core value practice and in elevating core value importance.

Conclusions

Core values are the key to preparing tomorrow's leaders to handle the challenges of the twenty-first century. Certainly there will be complexity, uncertainty, and change facing these new commanders, but these concerns are not new. The key to effective leadership tomorrow is the same as it was yesterday—character. While Air Force officer training programs and PME programs address core values in their curriculum, there is still room for improvement. This is particularly true considering the uncertainty of the values held dear by today's youth. General Fogleman's new initiative to instill core values better into Air Force members is definitely a step in the right direction, but the Air Force needs to integrate core values education and awareness smartly into the life cycle of its officers. An Air Force center for core value development would be extremely valuable in directing this effort, outlining the right education and training at all officer training and PME schools. This core values "surge" is critical for future Air Force success because the core values of integrity first, service before self, and excellence will always be in vogue and offer the best hope for outstanding leadership in any century. As Gen John A. Wickham Jr., USA, Retired, so ably stated, "The better the values and character, the more effective the leadership in any organization—military or civilian. But values come first. They are the bedrock for a character of excellence."⁵⁷

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