

# AMERICA'S AIR FORCE

## A PROFESSION OF ARMS



A HIGHER CALLING.

A HIGHER STANDARD.

JULY 2015

# AMERICA'S AIR FORCE: A PROFESSION OF ARMS

## "THE LITTLE BLUE BOOK"

First, we must understand that our chosen profession is that of a higher calling, in which we hold ourselves to higher standards. To serve proudly and capably, our commitment to our cause must be unbreakable; it must be bonded in our mutual respect for each other. Throughout our service we are guided and reminded of this awesome responsibility to our nation. The oaths we take remind us that we serve freely in support and defense of our Constitution. Our Air Force Core Values serve as our compass and provide the fortified foundation of our service. We abide by a Code of Conduct that captures our resolve, while our Airman's Creed highlights the strength of our diverse Airmen who fly, fight and win as one Air Force.

We are the world's greatest Air Force...powered by Airmen, fueled by innovation; this book serves as a guide to the principles that make us so strong. Wherever you are in your Air Force career, it is a reminder to the meaning of service in our profession...The Profession of Arms.

*"They knew not the day or hour nor the manner of their passing when far from home they were called to join that great band of heroic Airmen that went before."*

Quotation from Air Force Memorial  
in Washington D.C.

# A PROFESSION OF ARMS



No profession asks more of its members than the Profession of Arms. As we state in our Airman's Creed, we have answered our nation's call. It is a higher calling, and it comes with a higher standard.

General Ronald Fogleman, our 15th Chief of Staff once said, "We are not engaged in just another job; we are practitioners of the Profession of Arms. We are entrusted with the security of our nation, the protection of our citizens and the preservation of its way of life. In this capacity, we serve as guardians of America's future. By its very nature, this responsibility requires us to place the needs of our service and our country before personal concerns."

That responsibility was given to each and every one of us when we raised our right hand and swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. When we joined our Air Force with a sacred oath, we accepted a sacred trust from the American people, one that goes beyond anything else in society. As members of a joint team, our profession is distinguished from others because of our expertise in the justified application of lethal military force and the willingness of those who serve to pay the ultimate sacrifice for our nation. No other profession expects its members to lay down their lives for their friends, families or freedoms...but it's what our profession readily expects.

And make no mistake, this is a profession. We are professionals. As volunteers, our sworn obligation is to the Constitution. Fighting America's wars is an ugly business - there is nothing pretty about it, cool about it or glorious about it - but it must be done, and somebody must be good at it. We're good at it. Our status as the world's greatest Air Force was earned by the men and women who have gone before us, and is carried on by every Airman who wears the uniform today.

All service men and women belong to the Profession of Arms, from the most junior enlisted to our most senior leaders. We are all accountable for meeting ethical and performance standards in our actions and similarly accountable for our failure to take action, when appropriate. The distinction between ranks lies solely in our level of responsibility and the degree of accountability...not in our level of commitment to the Profession of Arms. We share the common attributes of character, courage and competence. We qualify as professionals through intensive training, education and practical experience. As professionals, we are defined by our strength of character, a life-long commitment to core values and a dedication to maintain our professional abilities through continuous improvement, individually and institutionally.

We must remember above all else, we are patriots first. As service men and women we, more than anyone else, understand the price paid for freedom. We, more than anyone else, understand the sacrifices that come from willingly serving our country. We, more than anyone else, understand what it means to serve in the Profession of Arms.

# RESPECT



Respect is at the root of the Profession of Arms and bonds every Airman who voluntarily serves. Respect is the feeling of esteem or deference for a person or other entity, but in the Air Force it takes on a greater meaning and importance. Respect is the lifeblood of our profession. Without it, we simply cannot stand strong in the defense of our nation. Mutual respect strengthens our team and eliminates seams that reveal a weakness in the force.

Respect in the Profession of Arms goes beyond professional courtesy. It means accepting others for who they are, embracing a heightened personal sense of humility and fostering an environment of inclusiveness in which every Airman is able and eager to offer their skills, abilities and ideas. It means treating the equipment and resources in our possession with care, understanding and embracing the power of diversity and holding those who mistreat others accountable. More than anything, we must respect the humbling mission placed in our hands by the American people, and the impact our weapons and our actions can have around the globe.

Our Air Force is a critical part of the greatest fighting force the world has ever known; it's powered by the greatest Airmen the world has ever seen. Through respect for each other, our resources and our mission, we will continue to provide Global Vigilance, Global Reach and Global Power for America.

# AIR FORCE OATHS



Every uniformed Airman began their service in our Air Force by reciting the Oath of Enlistment or the Oath of Office. They are a humbling reminder of the seriousness of the profession of arms. Throughout our careers we must continually reflect on the meaning of the words, and the gravity of our commitment.

## OATH OF ENLISTMENT

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. (So help me God.)"

## OATH OF OFFICE

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. (So help me God.)"



# AIR FORCE CORE VALUES



Values represent enduring, guiding principles for which we as individuals or organizations stand. “Core” values are so fundamental that they define our very identity. The United States Air Force has clearly defined its identity by these three simple values: Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do.

For those of us who join this proud community of Airmen - whether officer, enlisted, civilian, Active, Guard, or Reserve - being a part of the Air Force family requires we commit to living these values, on and off duty. This is the expectation of our profession, and is the standard against which our fellow service members and the American public hold us. The Air Force Professional is a trusted servant of our Nation who adheres to the highest standards of character, courage and competence. How we act represents to countless others the collective identity of the United States Air Force.

## THE CHALLENGE: LIVING THE CORE VALUES

Understanding the Core Values is relatively easy. The true challenge is to live them. It’s a commitment that never ends, and one that always matters.

We all have the ability to display integrity, both professionally and personally. We have all placed ourselves in a position to serve a greater purpose. And we all have the innate desire to achieve excellence. Yet there will be moments where living and acting by the Core Values will be challenging.

These moments are also opportunities to prove, through our actions, that we truly embody these Core Values. In doing so, we honor the heritage and continue the legacy of those who served before us and sacrificed so much. It is through this alignment of our actions with these values that we, as an Air Force, earn the public’s trust, strengthen our Service, and accomplish our mission. These are the Core Values of our Air Force.

Each of these Core Values is further defined by virtues (desired behaviors and characteristics) we must practice and demonstrate in our daily lives, showing we truly do value Integrity, Service and Excellence. Consistently practicing these virtues results in habits of honorable thought and action, producing an Air Force Professional. Air Force Professionalism is a shared belief in, and a commitment to, honorable service based on our Air Force Core Values.

## INTEGRITY FIRST

Integrity is simply doing the right thing, all the time, whether everyone is watching or no one is watching. It is the compass that keeps us on the right path when we are confronted with ethical challenges and personal temptations, and it is the foundation upon which trust is built. An individual realizes integrity when thoughts and actions align with what he or she knows to be right. The virtues that demonstrate one truly values integrity include:

**HONESTY:** Honesty is the hallmark of integrity. As public servants, we are trusted agents. Honesty requires us to evaluate our performance against standards, and to conscientiously and accurately report findings. It drives us to advance our skills and credentials through our own effort. The service member's word must be unquestionable. This is the only way to preserve the trust we hold so dear with each other and with the population we serve.

**COURAGE:** Courage is not the absence of fear, but doing the right thing despite the fear. Courage empowers us to take necessary personal or professional risks, make decisions that may be unpopular, and admit to our mistakes; having the courage to take these actions is crucial for the mission, the Air Force, and the Nation.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Accountability is responsibility with an audience. That audience may be the American people, our units, our supervisors, our fellow Airmen, our families, our loved ones, and even ourselves. Accountable individuals maintain transparency, seek honest and constructive feedback, and take ownership of the outcomes of their actions and decisions. They are responsible to themselves and others and refrain from actions which discredit themselves or our service.

*"Starting on day one, every uniformed and civilian Airman learns about our Air Force Core Values. They are our first principles, and they guide everything we do - on and off duty, at home, in the office and on the battlefield. As the world's finest Airmen, we must trust each other, and we must never stop working to earn the trust and respect of the Americans we serve."*

Honorable Deborah Lee James  
Secretary of the Air Force

## SERVICE BEFORE SELF

Service Before Self tells us that professional duties take precedence over personal desires. The call to serve is a call to live according to a higher standard. It is not just a job; it is a commitment that takes energy, dedication, and sacrifice. We do not “work” in the Air Force; we serve in the Air Force. A heart and mindset for service allows us to embrace expectations and requirements not levied on the American public or other professions. The virtues that demonstrate one truly values service include:

**DUTY:** Duty is the obligation to perform what is required for the mission. While our responsibilities are determined by the law, the Department of Defense, and Air Force instructions, directives, and guidance, our sense of duty is a personal one and bound by the oath of service we took as individuals. Duty sometimes calls for sacrifice in ways no other profession has or will. Airmen who truly embody Service Before Self consistently choose to make necessary sacrifices to accomplish the mission, and in doing so, we honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

**LOYALTY:** Loyalty is an internal commitment to the success and preservation of something bigger than ourselves. Our loyalty is to the Nation first, the values and commitments of our Air Force second, and finally to the men and women with whom we serve. Loyalty to our leaders requires us to trust, follow, and execute their decisions, even when we disagree. We offer alternative solutions and innovative ideas most effectively through the chain of command. Ultimately, loyalty is demonstrated by helping each other act with honor.

**RESPECT:** Respect is treating others with dignity and valuing them as individuals. We must always act knowing that all Airmen possess fundamental worth as human beings. We must treat others with the utmost dignity and respect, understanding that our diversity is a great source of strength.

*“Treating EVERY Airman with dignity and respect must be at the heart of who we are and how we operate. It isn’t a “tag” line; it’s the core of everything we stand for as a service. Everyone in our Air Force should feel respected. Everyone should feel valued. Every single person around you brings something to the fight that you don’t. Each of them is critically important to mission success, and they deserve to be treated that way.”*

General Mark A. Welsh III  
Air Force Chief of Staff

## EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO

Excellence In All We Do does not mean that we demand perfection in everything from everyone. Instead, this value directs us to continuously advance our craft and increase our knowledge as Airmen. We must have a passion for continuous improvement and innovation that propels America's Air Force in quantum leaps towards accomplishment and performance.

**MISSION:** Mission focus encompasses operations, product and resources excellence. The complex undertaking of the Air Force mission requires us to harness the ingenuity, expertise, and elbow grease of all Airmen. We approach it with the mindset of stewardship, initiative, improvement, pride, and a continued commitment to anticipate and embrace change. Our work areas, our processes, and our interpersonal interactions must be undeniably professional and positive. Our people are the platform for delivering innovative ideas, strategies, and technologies to the fight.

**DISCIPLINE:** Discipline is an individual commitment to uphold the highest of personal and professional standards. Airmen commit to a life of discipline and self-control. We demonstrate it in attitude, work ethic, and effort directed at continuous improvement, whether it be pursuing professional military education or nurturing ourselves physically, intellectually, emotionally, or spiritually. Each Airman represents the entire Air Force. Our appearance, actions, and words shape the culture of the Air Force and the reputation of the entire military profession.

**TEAMWORK:** Teamwork is essential to triumph at every level. Airmen recognize the interdependency of every member's contributions towards the mission and strive for organizational excellence. We not only give our personal best, but also challenge and motivate each other. We carry our own weight, and whenever necessary, help our wingmen carry theirs. We serve in the greatest Air Force in the world, and we embrace the idea that our part of the Air Force meets that world-class standard.

*"As Airmen we step to a higher calling and hold ourselves to the highest standards. We have certain beliefs and truths that strengthen our organization and our nation. At the very heart of this is our Core Values; they are a clear illustration of the price of admission to our Air Force, and the common bond by which we win the fight, strengthen the team, and shape the future. Our values must be much more than words...they must guide us and point us to what is universal and unchanging in our profession of arms. They are the very fabric that bonds our commitment and dedication to duty, honor, country, fidelity and competence."*

CMSAF James A. Cody  
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force



# CODE OF CONDUCT



The Code of Conduct outlines basic responsibilities and obligations of members of the U.S. Armed Forces. All members are expected to measure up to the standards described in the Code of Conduct. Although developed for POWs, the spirit and intent are applicable to service members subject to other hostile detention. Such service members should consistently conduct themselves in a manner that brings credit to them and their country. The six articles of the Code of Conduct address situations and decision areas that any member could encounter to some degree. The Code of Conduct includes basic information useful to POWs to help them survive honorably while resisting captors' efforts to exploit them. Such survival and resistance requires knowledge, understanding and a commitment to the articles.

## ARTICLE 1

I am an American, fighting in the forces which guard my country and our way of life. I am prepared to give my life in their defense.

## ARTICLE 2

I will never surrender of my own free will. If in command, I will never surrender the members of my command while they still have the means to resist.

## ARTICLE 3

If I am captured I will continue to resist by all means available. I will make every effort to escape and to aid others to escape. I will accept neither parole nor special favors from the enemy.

## ARTICLE 4

If I become a prisoner of war, I will keep faith with my fellow prisoners. I will give no information or take part in any action which might be harmful to my comrades. If I am senior, I will take command. If not, I will obey the lawful orders of those appointed over me and will back them up in every way.

## ARTICLE 5

When questioned, should I become a prisoner of war, I am required to give name, rank, service number, and date of birth. I will evade answering further questions to the utmost of my ability. I will make no oral or written statements disloyal to my country and its allies or harmful to their cause.

## ARTICLE 6

I will never forget that I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free. I will trust in my God and in the United States of America.

# THE AIRMAN'S CREED




The Airman's Creed is intended to remind all Airmen that we are not just a conglomeration of diverse specialties, skill sets, or jobs, but we are brothers and sisters in the Profession of Arms. It allows Airmen to think and act with one mind, and with a commitment to fundamental war fighting beliefs. Airmen are warriors, and are dedicated to flying, fighting and winning.

**I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
I AM A WARRIOR.  
I HAVE ANSWERED MY NATION'S CALL.**

**I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
MY MISSION IS TO FLY, FIGHT, AND WIN.  
I AM FAITHFUL TO A PROUD HERITAGE,  
A TRADITION OF HONOR,  
AND A LEGACY OF VALOR.**

**I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
GUARDIAN OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE,  
MY NATION'S SWORD AND SHIELD,  
ITS SENTRY AND AVENGER.  
I DEFEND MY COUNTRY WITH MY LIFE.**

**I AM AN AMERICAN AIRMAN.  
WINGMAN, LEADER, WARRIOR.  
I WILL NEVER LEAVE AN AIRMAN BEHIND,  
I WILL NEVER FALTER,  
AND I WILL NOT FAIL.**



*“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”*

Theodore Roosevelt  
26th President of the United States

# AIR FORCE CORE VALUES



INTEGRITY FIRST

SERVICE BEFORE SELF

EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO