



VOLUME 2 LEADERSHIP

THE TOTAL FORCE

Last Updated: 8 August 2015

The total force consists of the people who make up the Air Force. It is defined as “the US Air Force organizations, units, and individuals that provide the capabilities to support the Department of Defense in implementing the national security strategy. Total force includes regular Air Force, Air National Guard of the United States, Air Force Reserve military personnel, US Air Force military retired members, US Air Force civilian personnel (including foreign national direct and indirect-hire, as well as non-appropriated fund employees), contractor staff, and host-nation support personnel.”¹ In addition, the total force includes the Civil Air Patrol, as the official Air Force Auxiliary.²

The regular Air Force is defined as the component of the Air Force that consists of persons whose continuous service on active duty in both peace and war is contemplated by law, and of retired members of the regular Air Force.³ The Air National Guard is an organized state militia and a reserve component of the Air Force. The Air National Guard of the United States is a federal organization that is also a reserve component of the US Air Force. Air National Guard Airmen serve in both organizations, and can move between them as duty requires.⁴ The Air Force Reserve is a component of the United States Air Force as prescribed by law.⁵ They are represented by a mix of Traditional Reservists, Individual Mobilization Augmentees, participating Individual Ready Reservists, Air Reserve Technicians, Title 32 Excepted Civil Service Technicians (Guard Technicians), and Active Guard/Reserve, both Drill Status Guardsmen and full-time forces.

DAF civilians are members of the total force, but are not members of the above elements of the Air Force. Regular Air Force, Guard, Reserve, and DAF civilians fall under the use of the term Airman when force development issues are discussed or general inclusiveness by senior leaders is required for clarity in communication. In addition, Civil Air Patrol members, when executing Air Force-assigned missions, are civilian volunteers (with a small paid staff) of the official Air Force Auxiliary. Air Force Auxiliary members fall under the use of the term Airman in the same manner as DAF

¹ AFI 90-1001, [Responsibilities for Total Force Integration](#), 29 May 07 (IC 1, 25 Apr 08).

² [10 U.S.C. §9442](#).

³ Title 10, United States Code (U.S.C.) §8075.

⁴ 10 U.S.C. §101(c)(4) and (5); [Perpich v. Department of Defense](#), 496 U.S. 334, 110 S. Ct. 2418, 110 L.Ed.2d 312 (1990).

⁵ [10 U.S.C. §10101](#). In addition, non-participating and inactive members who are part of the Individual Ready Reserve, the Standby Reserve, and the Retired Reserve are subject to recall as authorized by law. See 10 U.S.C. §§ 10144, 10151, and 10154.

civilians, when general inclusiveness by senior leaders is required for clarity in communication.

Air Force contractors are also members of the total force, but their connection to the Service does not rise to the same level as that of regular Air Force, Guard, Reserve, or DAF civilians, who are required to swear an oath of allegiance. Contractors support the missions of Airmen. Managing contractors requires a different leadership approach because they are not part of the military chain of command. Contractor personnel should be managed through the terms and conditions set forth in their contract. They do not normally fall under Uniform Code of Military Justice authority. Therefore, it is imperative Air Force leaders ensure a strong contractor management system is in place in both peacetime and during contingency operations.

Upon entering the Service, Air Force officers, enlisted members, and DAF civilians take an oath,⁶ signifying their personal commitment to support and defend the Constitution of the United States and a commitment and willingness to serve their country for the duration of their Air Force careers. The oath is a solemn promise to do one's duty and meet one's responsibilities. The oath of office for officers and civilians and the oath of enlistment for enlisted personnel are in [Appendix A](#).

Officers

A military officer⁷ has responsibilities as a warfighter, a servant of the Nation, a member of the profession of arms, and a leader of character. Frequently, these roles are carried out simultaneously. While officers often shoulder our Air Force's leadership responsibilities, that leadership role must be earned through demonstrated adherence to our core values and proven followership abilities. One must be a good follower in order to be a good leader. Preparation to fulfill the role of an Air Force officer is a continual developmental process. Air Force officers are raised with an Airman's perspective and grown in the culture of the Service. This perspective is developed through education in how the Air Force operates and honed through operational experience. Leadership opportunities grow throughout this developmental process as does an officer's ability to articulate the capabilities the Air Force brings to the joint fight.

You were chosen to be an officer because you have the potential qualities of a leader, just as an athlete is "signed" by a big league team and the aviation cadet is selected for flying training because they have certain innate abilities.

**—Air Force Manual (AFM)
35-15, Air Force Leadership
(1948)**

⁶ [5 U.S.C. §3331](#), [10 U.S.C. §502](#).

⁷For a thorough analysis of officership in the United States military, see *The Armed Forces Officer*, National Defense University Press, 2007.

Within the Air Force, only an officer can command Air Force forces.⁸ Command is defined as “[t]he authority that a commander in the armed forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel.”⁹ To command, an officer is educated in the Airman’s perspective and trained in Air Force capabilities. This training and perspective, combined with years of experience, produce an individual able to accept the responsibility of sending Airmen into harm’s way, the sole purview of a commander.

The function of command requires continuous alertness and willingness to accept changed conditions. Our commanders must exert superior leadership; they are expected to know and influence their soldiers. Exert your leadership—see that your soldiers ‘think straight.’ You won’t have all the answers, but you can at least tell your soldiers that.

**—General H.H. “Hap”
Arnold, from Army Air Force
Letter 35-280,
19 September 1945**

Federal law states commanders in the Air Force are required to be good examples of virtue, honor, patriotism, and subordination; to be vigilant in “inspecting the conduct of all persons who are placed under their command”; to guard against “dissolute and immoral practices” and correct those guilty of them; and to promote and safeguard the morale, well-being, and general welfare of the officers and enlisted personnel under their command.¹⁰ Such tasks are sufficiently daunting that it behooves a commander to take advantage of the expertise available to him or her in an organization, informally known as a command team. The command team can consist of formal and informal members critical to maintaining the good order and discipline of an Air Force unit. The members of the command team should possess the experience, functional prowess, and maturity required to make decisions of great impact to the organization, the individuals

in the organization, and the Air Force. Operating together, a commander with his or her command team leads Air Force organizations in the execution of Air Force duties.

Enlisted Members

The Air Force’s enlisted members provide the Service with the highest degree of technical expertise within their respective functional areas. Inherent in the oath of enlistment (see [Appendix A](#)), enlisted members are bound to the ideal of followership. Although not commissioned and thereby not entitled to be in command positions, enlisted members perform leadership roles across all Air Force organizational levels and are highly respected members of the Air Force leadership team. Education, training, and an Airman’s perspective, combined with a wealth of technical expertise,

⁸ The ultimate source for command authority is the [U.S. Constitution](#), Article II, §2, making the President the Commander-in-Chief of the US military. For military discipline purposes, [10 U.S.C. §801](#) states, “The term ‘commanding officer’ includes only commissioned officers.”

⁹ Joint Publication (JP) 1-02.

¹⁰ [10 U.S.C. §8583](#).

sustain enlisted members in the leadership of other enlisted forces who support their unit, the unit's mission, and the Air Force at large.¹¹

The Air Force enlisted members are true to a professional calling that encompasses a high degree of specialized training, Service orientation, and a distinct subculture. Enlisted members demonstrate dedication to this calling through hard work, loyalty, and mission accomplishment regardless of hardship or adversity. Often referred to as the “backbone” of the Air Force, enlisted members are grounded in the Air Force core values and are bound to the idea of followership. Enlisted members are also brought up with an Airman's perspective and receive professional military education and training tailored to appropriate levels of leadership and responsibility in accordance with AFI 36-2618, *The Enlisted Force Structure*; this document provides guidance and direction for all enlisted ranks. Enlisted members are Airmen first and specialists second. Lastly, they carry a strong belief in setting aside their own wants and needs in seeking the greatest good for their subordinates, peers, and leaders in defense of the Constitution of the United States and the officers appointed over them.

Commanders depend upon noncommissioned officers (NCOs) to lead Airmen to accomplish the mission.

—Air Force Pamphlet (AFPAM) 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide*

Civilians

DAF civilians are indispensable to the management and operation of the Service. As civilians, they cannot exercise command authority over military members¹² but do perform in leadership roles throughout the Service and across all organizational levels. The US Air Force employs civilians in a full range of occupations providing stability and continuity in an organization for long durations with the ability to support multiple commanders over years of service. They fill positions in staff and base sustainment operations that would otherwise be filled by military personnel. Their leadership skills are enhanced through an education and training regimen suited for their growth in the functional areas in which they provide expertise.¹³ Their experiences, often honed through many years in a given functional area, give them a level of knowledge developed to an extensive degree. As stated in the oath of office, civilians are to understand and value the essential role of followership in mission accomplishment.

¹¹ See AFPAM 36-2241, *Professional Development Guide*, Chapter 10, for a discussion on leadership and followership for the enlisted force.

¹² There are two exceptions to civilians being prohibited from commanding military forces: The President, as Commander-in-Chief under [Article II, §2 of the US Constitution](#). In addition, [10 U.S.C. §113](#) and [50 U.S.C. §401](#) place the military departments under the direction, authority, and control of the Secretary of Defense.

¹³ Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-26, [Total Force Development](#), addresses how to create a total force, including DAF civilians, “successfully prepared to accomplish the Air Force mission and to lead in a rapidly evolving global environment with a vast range of missions, balancing individual needs – personal and professional – to the greatest extent possible consistent with mission accomplishment.”

DAF civilians respond to the needs of the Air Force across the range of military operations. As an example, the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce initiative is designed to enhance the number of civilians augmenting operational requirements in contingency operations.

President George H. W. Bush proclaimed December 4, 1991 as “Federal Civilian Employees Remembrance Day.” This recognition was bestowed upon Federal civilian employees because of the manner in which they responded to rescue and reconstruction missions with distinction and valor during the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Department of Defense civilian employees made vital contributions to the Allied war effort by performing critical administrative and technical duties in support of military operations.

**—Information derived from Proclamation 6387;
Federal Civilian Employees Remembrance Day, 1991**

Followership

Followership is as vital to the Air Force as is the status of an individual as an Airman. It is implicit in the duties of all officers and DAF civilians, and explicit for the enlisted force. The oath of enlistment’s language makes followership a necessity of service: “...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.”¹⁴ All Airmen are followers as well as leaders. The followership qualities outlined below distinguish an effective from an ineffective follower: ¹⁵

- ★ Self-management
- ★ Commitment
- ★ Competence
- ★ Courage

Effective followers are “...intent on high performance and recognize they share the responsibility for the quality of the relationship they have with their leaders... they know they cannot be fully effective unless they work in partnerships that require both a commitment to high performance and a commitment to develop effective relationships with partners (including their boss) whose collaboration is essential to success in their own work.”¹⁶

Research reveals specific follower attributes that produce the most effective personnel. A follower should exhibit loyalty that incorporates a high organizational commitment, a

¹⁴ [10 U.S.C. §502](#).

¹⁵ Kelley, Robert E. “In Praise of Followers.” In *Military Leadership: In Pursuit of Excellence*, 3rd Ed. Edited by Robert L. Taylor and William E. Rosenbach, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996, 136.

¹⁶ Potter, Earl H., William E. Rosenbach, Thane S. Pittman, “Leading the New Professional.” In Taylor and Rosenbach, 148.

loyalty to the senior person's vision and priorities, a willingness to disagree in an appropriate and polite manner, and an ability to align personal goals with organizational ones. A follower should function well in a change-oriented environment where the person can be an agent for change and be agile in moving between the roles of leader and follower. A follower should function well on teams, collaborating with others, sharing credit, and acting responsibly toward others. A follower should exercise independent critical thinking, be willing to express honest dissent, take the initiative in tasks, and self-manage rather than wait for guidance. A follower should ensure the core value of integrity is paramount, being trustworthy and truthful, setting and maintaining the highest performance standards, and admitting to mistakes where appropriate.¹⁷

Follower development is a leadership responsibility, and willingness to move out of one's comfort zone is fully expected of tomorrow's leader.¹⁸ As loyalty is an essential quality of followership, the return loyalty of the leader is a necessary leadership quality.



Core values make the military what it is; without them, we cannot succeed. They are the values that instill confidence, earn lasting respect and create willing followers. They are the values that anchor resolve in the most difficult situations. They are the values that buttress mental and physical courage when we enter combat. In essence, they are the three pillars of professionalism that provide the foundation for military leadership at every level.

—Dr. Sheila Widnall, SECAF, 1993-1997

¹⁷ Latour, Lt Col Sharon, USAF, and Lt Col Vicki Rast, USAF, "[Dynamic Followership: The Prerequisite for Effective Leadership](#)," *Air & Space Power Journal*, Winter, 2004.

¹⁸ Ibid.