



## Expectations of a Successful Command Team

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*"It is a distinct honor to be chosen to command in the United States Air Force.  
Your job every day is to be worthy of that honor."*

*General John P. Jumper ~ 17th Chief of Staff*

We have very few areas as your CSAF/CMSAF team where we have absolute clarity. This we can state with certainty: *"We have from the moment you read this until the next war begins to prepare ourselves and our organizations to fight and win."* We should treat every week as a blessing and the last week of peace. Improving the lethality and readiness of our Airmen and families is command team business.

Bearing this in mind, Chief Wright and I offer this paper as the beginning in a series of Chief Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs). These NOTAMs intend to share our thoughts on key warfighting issues facing our Air Force and are not staffed products -- they come from our pen. In this NOTAM, we want to offer our expectations for what constitutes a successful command tour. We'll cover each briefly in this paper just to establish the framework, and then follow up in the weeks ahead with NOTAMs detailing each element. When we visit your units, we want to hear from you directly how we can help improve your unit's readiness and lethality in these and other areas.

These NOTAMs should encourage a lively debate at the squadron level as we tackle the challenges ahead. Please share these with your unit command teams so they know how we approach command ... and so we can have a fruitful dialogue during base visits. Here's a framework for how we see command and your responsibilities as leaders.

**Mission** – The Air Force exists to fight and win our Nation's wars. We expect commanders at all levels to practice a "two up and one down" philosophy. Two up means understanding the details of your mission and how your unit supports the next two echelons of command above you. One down means the first echelon below you has your commander's intent and fully understands how it supports your mission. To succeed, you must fully understand all the intricate details required to achieve operational success and how your unit fits into the broader organization both up and down the chain.

**Culture** – The commander, senior NCO, and a lead spouse form the "command team" and set the culture of the organization. A simple question: what does it mean to be part of your squadron? Do your Airmen connect with the mission and its importance as a service and a nation at war? Do Airmen and their families feel embraced and included? Are they part of something truly special? We firmly believe that organizations take on the personality of the commander within six weeks of a change of command. Your squadron will focus on what you believe is important. Of the four elements of a successful command tour, setting and reinforcing the right warfighting and inclusive culture will have the most lasting impact during your tenure.

**Family** – America has entrusted you with the greatest treasure in our Nation's arsenal – Airmen and their families. Today's all-volunteer force is 96 percent comprised of those who joined after we were attacked on 9-11; they have only known an Air Force at war. Our families exhibit a very special kind of

courage when they endure the long hours, the hardships, and the separations that have become so much a part of military service. As a command team, we expect you to get to know and take care of the families entrusted to your care.

**Fun** – Why would a CSAF and CMSAF focused on joint warfighting excellence list “fun” as a command priority? Because it may be one of the most important retention tools in your kit. Readiness and lethality are 100% dependent on a trained and capable force. It takes years to train a 7-level crew chief or an instructor pilot. Every time a good one walks out the door, our ability to accomplish our mission degrades. Great organizations maintain high morale by periodically gathering to celebrate their contributions to the mission and to highlight the accomplishments of their people in an inclusive and respectful way. It is often the difference between a job and a calling -- and is a factor in why many of us have remained to serve.

We offer this framework for your consideration and discussion. In our next NOTAM, we'll dive into mission and offer our thoughts for improving our joint warfighting excellence in this essential element of a successful command tour.

The game-changing idea that will alter the course of history is in the mind of one of our Airmen today. For commanders and senior NCOs, our job is to nurture an environment that unleashes this brilliance and allows the idea to make it to a decision-maker who can act. Said another way, it is time to “squint with our ears”. The challenges we face as a Nation are “wicked hard”, but our Airmen are “wicked smart”.

Thank you for your leadership, your passion for excellence, and your willingness to take on command team responsibilities at a time when our Nation demands the best of us. We're proud to serve with you and remain always on your wing.

Fight's on!

  
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