

**BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**



AIR FORCE INSTRUCTION 1-2

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Air Force Culture

COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This publication implements Air Force Policy Directive 1, *Air Force Culture* and Title 10 United States Code Section 9233, *Requirement of exemplary conduct*, and builds on the foundation of Air Force standards and values within corresponding AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards*. This publication establishes broad responsibilities and expectations of commanders and applies to all Air Force uniformed (Regular, Reserve, and Air National Guard) and civilian personnel. This AFI may not be supplemented at any level. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the office of primary responsibility (OPR) using the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route DAF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional chain of command. As this is a foundational publication, compliance items herein are non-tiered and commanders/directors are explicitly restricted from applying the non-tiered process for waiver approvals as described in DAFI 90-160, *Publications and Forms Management*. Submit all requests for waivers through the chain of command to the publication OPR. Ensure all records generated as a result of processes prescribed in this publication adhere to AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, and are disposed in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule, which is located in the Air Force Records Information Management System.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This publication has been rewritten and needs to be completely reviewed. Major changes include updated information covering commander's intent, mission command, trust and empowerment, and command team structure. Additionally, information regarding counterproductive leadership behaviors has been added to help commanders identify and avoid such behaviors. Finally, the

commander's application of acceptable risk management to accomplish mission objectives through the execution of data-driven decisions has been added.

1. Scope of Applicability.

1.1. This instruction applies specifically to commissioned officers holding command positions in the Regular or Reserve Components (RegAF, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard). Military and civilian directors of military organizations and Senior Enlisted Leaders should know and apply these principles and methods described below. Leaders at all levels must support commanders in ensuring compliance with this instruction.

2. Commanders' Conduct.

2.1. Special authorities and responsibilities are inherent with command. In addition to leading people to accomplish an assigned mission, commanders have the lawful authority and responsibility to promote and safeguard the morale, physical well-being, and the general welfare of persons under their command. Commanders must exhibit exemplary conduct as outlined in 10 USC § 9233:

2.1.1. All commanding officers and others in authority in the Air Force are required to show in themselves a good example 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 and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices, and to correct, according to the laws and regulations of the Air Force all persons who are guilty of them; and to take all necessary and proper measures, under the laws, regulations, and customs of the Air Force to promote and safeguard the morale, the physical well-being, and the general welfare of the officers and enlisted persons under their command or charge.

2.2. Commanders must be above reproach both morally and ethically by exemplifying Service Core Values in their professional and personal lives. Commanders should actively seek and consider feedback from all levels of their organization, its members, peer leaders, and superiors.

3. Commanders' Duties and Responsibilities.

3.1. Execute the Mission. Commanders hold the authority and responsibility to lead their units to accomplish the mission. In today's competitive global security environment, commanders must think strategically; manage resources; assess, mitigate, and accept prudent risk; and boldly lead their subordinates to meet mission requirements. This imperative requires that commanders accomplish the following:

3.1.1. Primary Mission Execution. This is the mission described in Mission Directives, Designed Operational Capability statements, or orders of a superior commander, to include Mission Type Orders. Day-to-day and in-garrison mission execution should be aimed at meeting wartime requirements. Commanders must use all available resources to ensure their unit is able to execute its primary mission in line with established force-generation, employed-in-place, or alert timelines.

3.1.2. Data-Driven Decisions. Commanders must collect and leverage relevant data and information for every decision and manage risk with the information available to them. Commanders are responsible for conducting risk analysis, applying mitigation efforts, and ultimately determining acceptable levels of risk in accomplishing a mission. Commanders

must make prudent use of experience, exercise professional judgment, assume prudent risks, and overcome obstacles to guide them in deliberate and informed decision-making process.

3.1.3. Force Readiness, Generation, Employment and Sustainment. Commanders must continually assess their organization's overall readiness to compete with a peer adversary, then strive to optimize training and resources for success in the high-end fight. Commanders tasked to support Joint Force requirements must train and develop their units to ensure mission readiness, force generation capacity, employment capability and sustainment of their forces in accordance with mission directives. Commanders must ensure forces at both the unit and individual Airman-levels are ready to support all-domain operations for the Joint Force.

3.1.4. Commanders' Intent. Commanders must provide a clear, concise vision of the operation or task, the desired outcome, and acceptable risks to create a shared sense of purpose for subordinates. Commanders' intent is not static. Commanders should be mindful of the need for continual feedback and refinement of intent as operations progress.

3.1.5. Mission Command. Within the scope of their authority, commanders must empower subordinate decision-making for flexibility, initiative, and responsiveness through trust, shared awareness and understanding of the commander's intent.

3.2. Lead People. The essence of command is effectively leading people to transform human potential into mission accomplishment in the present and preparing them to lead in the future. Commanders must communicate their intent, specify unit key processes, and ensure unit members are disciplined, trained, and developed. Commanders must build and enforce Air Force culture, values, and standards on conduct and performance contained in corresponding AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards*. Further, commanders must establish and maintain a healthy command climate that ensures good order and discipline, guarantees members are treated with dignity and respect, and fosters teamwork, cohesion, belonging, inclusion, morale and trust. To establish and maintain a healthy command climate, commanders must not tolerate harassment, assault, or unlawful discrimination of any kind. Commanders must empower and develop subordinates to adapt, innovate, and apply lessons learned to enable continuous personal and professional improvement.

3.2.1. Communication. Commanders must develop a two-way communication system to transmit intent, goals, priorities, values, expectations, and encourage feedback to ensure understanding and build trust at all levels and across organizations.

3.2.2. Discipline. Commanders must cultivate a culture of responsibility, accountability, and ownership while promoting unit heritage and mission pride. Command climate, customs and courtesies, uniform wear, physical fitness, and attention to detail are some observable indicators of the discipline of a unit.

3.2.3. Training. Commanders must ensure their units are adequately trained. Training programs should ensure individuals are proficient in career-field-specific skills and prepare Airmen for other mission aspects to include Total Force, Joint, or Partner-Nation opportunities whenever possible. Airmen developing the ability to perform tasks outside of their specialties enhance capability and capacity that provide operational resiliency when units are forced to operate in distributed, chaotic, or uncertain operating environments.

3.2.4. Development. Commanders must support the professional and personal development of subordinates. Professional development includes formal mentoring, executive coaching, professional military education, academic, and other broadening opportunities. Personal development strengthens physical, mental, social, and spiritual resiliency, resulting in well-rounded Airmen.

3.2.5. Trust and Empowerment. Commanders that build trust and empowerment allow the impact of their leadership to continue in their absence. Trust is built by the commander's authenticity in both their actions and words, transparency in decision making, and empathy in understanding their people. Trust is essential to empowering others by soliciting input, ideas, and insights, delegating authority and decision-making to appropriate levels, and celebrating experimentation and innovation. Leaders engender trust by encouraging calculated risk-taking and rewarding productive failure in the pursuit of bold innovation toward mission success. Trust and empowerment require continuous conversation to build shared understanding and ensure alignment between the commander's intent and the subordinate's direction. Command teams and leaders must prioritize time with their Airman to build connection, stimulate growth, and enhance the well-being of their people and unit.

3.2.6. The Command Team. At the center of any exceptional organization is a command team consisting of available senior civilians, Senior Enlisted Leaders, First Sergeants, officers, and official volunteer spouses who may support the commander. This team is essential to provide varying perspectives to enhance a commander's decision-making perspective. The command team should offer professional advice and recommendations consistent with their position and experience, even if contrary to the commander's view, while ultimately supporting the commander's decisions.

3.2.7. Collaboration. Commanders must actively drive collaboration within their unit, across peer units, and mission stakeholders in search of efficiencies and mission effectiveness. Collaboration amongst peer commanders creates stronger, more agile, and resilient teams. Understanding and building these relationships prior to a crisis is paramount.

3.2.8. Quality of Life Engagement. Commanders have the unique authority and responsibility to engage in the lives of their subordinates, where appropriate, to improve quality of life, promote unit morale, ensure access to support organizations, and ensure all members are treated with dignity, fairness, and respect. Commanders must be aware of on- and off-duty factors affecting the health, safety, climate, and morale of their units. Commanders should show presence in the work areas, community districts, neighborhoods and dormitories, to assess and address quality of life and quality of work issues.

3.2.9. Guard Against Counterproductive Leadership Behaviors. Counterproductive leadership behavior refers to actions or inactions by leaders that may cause serious and lasting damage to institutions, organizations, teams, and people as well as to those under their influence. While not an all-inclusive list, counterproductive leadership behaviors include pervasive acts such as shaming, bullying, belittling, corrosive negativity, active and passive hostility, demeaning others, public criticism, personal attacks and insults, indifference, dishonesty, distorting information, behaving erratically, poor self-control, and reacting in a disproportionate manner to an issue. Counterproductive leadership

behavior erodes morale and trust and can have long-term negative impacts on the well-being of subordinates. Commanders must remain engaged in identifying and eliminating elements of these behaviors at all levels of their organizations.

3.3. Manage Resources. Commanders are empowered with special trust, confidence, and the resources to accomplish a mission. Those resources include manpower, funds, equipment, facilities, environment, guidance and intent, and the time of the Airmen they lead. Commanders must consider risk in their stewardship of scarce resources to ensure effective and efficient mission accomplishment. Higher echelon commanders have the responsibility to provide adequate resources to subordinate commanders. Subordinate commanders have a responsibility to steward resources provided and inform higher echelons of resource shortfalls.

3.3.1. Manpower. A commander's stewardship of personnel to meet evolving mission requirements is vital to mission success. Accurate reporting of manning levels, personnel rotations, and personnel readiness is vital when communicating with higher headquarters. Any significant long-term change in mission requirements requiring a significant increase in man-hours should prompt commanders to initiate a request for additional manpower or other mitigating measure.

3.3.2. Funds. Commanders must base their budgetary decisions on mission requirements. Budgets must be credible, defensible, executable, and contribute to cost-effective mission execution. Commanders must be responsible stewards of government funds and ensure that expenditures are necessary and lawful. Accountability and judicious management of funds must be command emphasis items aligned with command priorities. Make every effort to return excess funds to higher echelon commanders for reallocation.

3.3.3. Equipment. Equipment and supplies must be properly accounted for, well maintained, and adequate for the assigned mission. Like manning and training levels, equipment status is a vital part of readiness reporting to higher headquarters.

3.3.4. Facilities and Environment. Commanders must develop sustainable and productive work centers across the installation and implement appropriate asset management principles for built and natural assets. Regularly scheduled inspections, maintenance, and upgrades must be coordinated with appropriate agencies.

3.3.5. Guidance. Unit members must have access to all command, technical, legal, historical and procedural guidance necessary for mission accomplishment. When necessary, commanders must publish guidance to document unit-specific processes and standards or when higher level guidance is absent. Commander's intent is one vital piece of guidance commanders must provide to subordinates to ensure unity of effort.

3.3.6. Airmens' Time. While Airmen are always subject to duty, leaders cannot treat their subordinates' time as an unlimited resource. Commanders must strive for a stable and predictable work schedule for themselves and subordinates while balancing mission requirements, duties, responsible time management, and healthy activities and mindsets of whole Airmen.

3.4. Improve the Unit. The pursuit of task mastery and mission accomplishment through creativity and innovation are hallmarks of highly successful organizations. Commanders cannot tolerate wasteful, ineffective, or unsafe ways of doing business and must challenge inefficiencies and foster a culture of innovation. Commanders should establish and personnel

should follow a process for identifying and fixing deficiencies. Commanders must make data-driven decisions and manage risk while ensuring their unit's authorities, missions, plans, and goals stay strategically aligned. A robust self-assessment program identifies the root causes of deficiencies and enables sharing of best practices with other organizations. Commanders must inspect their units and subordinates to ensure maximum effectiveness, efficiency, lethality, and discipline of the force are maintained. Commanders should strive to leave their unit better than they found it.

3.4.1. Strategic Alignment. Commanders must strive for strategic alignment within their organizations. Vision and mission statements should lead to a sense of shared and meaningful purpose included in strategic plans that include yearly calendars and annual budgets. Performance metrics should also be established and monitored to enable data-driven decisions. Commanders should periodically review metrics for mission relevance and assess if they drove the intended outcomes. This includes aligning authorities with mission requirements.

3.4.2. Information Management, Process Operations, Creativity, and Innovation. Commanders must manage vast amounts of constantly evolving information which they must synthesize to make informed decisions and drive the mission forward. This requires fostering a culture of information management to create shared understanding, support decision-making, enhance organizational velocity, and drive agile learning and creativity. Additionally, leaders at all levels must be aware of the unit's key work processes that are critical to mission success and continuously pursue mastering those processes through creativity and improvement to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

3.4.3. Commander's Inspection and Unit Self-Assessment Programs. Commanders have the legal authority and responsibility to inspect their subordinates and subordinate units. A robust commander's inspection program identifies deficiencies and provides recommendations to improve mission readiness. This effort includes a self-assessment program where units and individual unit members report their execution capabilities and shortfalls with recommendations for improvement. An independent verification of those reports provides commanders with additional confidence in their validity. The findings from self-assessments and inspections should drive a root-cause analysis which feeds back into the processes described in paragraphs 3.4.1 and 3.4.2.

4. Summary.

4.1. With a clear understanding of the intent of an assigned mission, commanders have the responsibility and authority to act, to empower, and to trust subordinates to complete their assigned missions. To that end, all commanders must:

- 4.1.1. At all times display exemplary conduct as outlined in U.S. law and defined above.
- 4.1.2. Establish a healthy command climate that encourages the inclusion and contributions of all and is free of counterproductive leadership behaviors.
- 4.1.3. Have a bias for action that favors bold leadership and prudent risk-taking.
- 4.1.4. Deliberately execute the duties and responsibilities outlined above, including all aspects of executing the mission, leading people, managing resources, and improving the unit.

4.1.5. Apply the tenets of effective command and control as defined in Joint Publication 1 Volume 1, *Joint Warfighting* and Air Force Doctrine Publication 1, *The Air Force* to increase the ability of commanders to make sound and timely decisions and enhance the unity of effort.

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Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References

JP 1 Volume 1, *Joint Warfighting*, 27 August 2023

DAFI 90-160, *Publications and Forms Management*, 14 April 2022

AFPD 1, *Air Force Culture*, 16 October 2019

AFI 1-1, *Air Force Standards*, 18 August 2023

AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, 23 March 2020

Air Force Doctrine Publication 1, *The Air Force*, 10 March 2021

Adopted Forms

DAF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AFI—Air Force Instruction

AFPD—Air Force Policy Directive

DAF—Department of the Air Force

JP—Joint Publication

OPR—Office of Primary Responsibility

RegAF—Regular Air Force

U.S.—United States

USC—United States Code

Office Symbols

AF/CC—Air Force Chief of Staff

SAF/IG—Secretary of the Air Force, Office of the Inspector General

Terms

Mission Command—An approach to command and control that empowers Airmen to navigate operational environments with ever increasing uncertainty, complexity, and rapid change. The elements of mission command require high performing teams through mutual trust, shared understanding, clear commander's intent, and using mission type orders, to exercise initiative, discipline and accept prudent risk. Through clear communication of intent and shared understanding, centralized command, distributed control, and decentralized execution are enabled.