SQUADRON OFFICER COLLEGE
14C THINK TANK GROUP 2

**CONNECTING UNITED STATES AIR FORCE CORE VALUES
TO MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent violations of the Air Force Core Values by Airmen at all grades have caused some observers to question the ethical and moral health of the US Air Force. By introducing the Core Values, the US Air Force established an ethical foundation for all Airmen. Both intrinsic moral values and external drivers influence the decisions and actions of an individual. While many different factors may influence an individual to violate the Core Values, the common theme is that the Core Values, especially Integrity First, have lost connection to mission accomplishment. We define this disconnect as the Core Values Gap. Airmen often do not connect the Core Values to mission accomplishment and as a result many may not have a deep understanding or adoption of the Core Values in their work and personal lives. Four main drivers of this gap are examined and a four-step approach aimed to empower leaders and reform policies is recommended to enable the US Air Force to address the problem.

By reviewing research on the theory of moral decision-making, examining case studies, and discussing ethics in the Air Force with two focus groups of Senior NCOs and Air War College students, a clear picture emerged that leadership is a key center of gravity to establishing an ethical climate. In addition, policies and institutional mechanisms play a major role in either incentivizing or discouraging ethical behavior. A four-step approach to address the problem is proposed; namely, equip commanders with a tool called the Core Values Check; educate them on how to instill the Core Values into their unit's daily operations; provide commanders with a Core Values Toolkit to help them start regular Core Values discussions; and reduce barriers to reporting infractions. By focusing on commanders as centers of gravity for influencing moral action, the US Air Force can create an environment that improves and promotes ethical behavior.

INTRODUCTION

 Recent highly publicized examples of moral and ethical violations have cast the US Air Force in a poor light and exposed issues that call into question the organization's ethical and moral climate. In today's Air Force culture, the Core Values, especially Integrity First, have lost connection to mission accomplishment. The Core Values exist separate from mission success, as evidenced by the incidents of cheating at the US Air Force Academy and Malmstrom AFB, Montana and the sexual assault scandal at Lackland AFB, Texas. Air Force leaders must analyze violations of the Core Values to find the root causes and implement solutions to improve the moral environment. This paper outlines, from a Company Grade Officer (CGO) perspective, external drivers of the problem and recommends a multi-faceted approach to correct the Air Force's problem.

 Ethical infractions within the Air Force are not isolated to a handful of high profile cases in the news. A poll of Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) students in 2007 indicated that 78 percent felt pressured to compromise integrity in a job-related situation (York, 2007). This result is not new – in 1981, 77 percent of NCOs answered the same way to the same question (York, 2007). More recently, interviews with Senior NCOs and current Air War College students provided further evidence that minor integrity violations appear across the service (SNCO Interview, 2014; AWC Interview, 2014). The purpose of these interviews was not to assign blame on the individuals involved, but rather to establish that the Air Force faces a pervasive, historical problem with acting on its Core Values in daily operations.

 The US Air Force established an ethical and moral foundation with the introduction of the Core Values in 1997. Upon entry into the service, Airmen are expected to internalize the values of Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do. The Air Force

defines integrity as doing what is right even when no one is looking (USAF Core Values, 1997). The Air Force and the nation expect all Airmen to execute sound moral and ethical reasoning, identify the difference between right and wrong even in ethically gray areas, and act in accordance with the right choice.

However, the majority of reasons people make immoral or unethical choices is not due to faulty reasoning – additional external factors largely drive unethical behavior. Sean Hannah and Bruce Avolio, researchers on moral decision-making, concluded that, "by just focusing on capacity for moral judgments, we in effect leave about 80 percent of the variance in ethical behavior unexplained" (Hannah and Avolio, 2010, p. 292). In essence, moral reasoning only accounts for about 20 percent of the variability in ethical versus unethical behavior. They theorize that moral action involves three factors – ownership of the problem, perceived ability to carry out a decision (efficacy), and the courage to act.

Moral and ethical decision-making is not translating to moral action in line with the Air Force's Core Values, as evidenced by Air Force scandals and incidents in the media. External factors may drive Airmen to actions and decisions that can adversely affect mission accomplishment – this is the Core Values Gap. Airmen need a way to connect the Core Values to mission accomplishment and develop a deep understanding and adoption of the Core Values in their work and personal lives. The challenge is in understanding the Core Values Gap and finding a way to connect the Core Values to mission accomplishment that develops individual fortitude to connect moral reasoning to moral action.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The development of this paper relied on scholarly articles, historical case studies, and focus groups with senior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs). The scholarly research

was primarily used to inform the authors' understanding of ethical decision-making, both in general and in relation to the military environment. The reviewed research articles ranged from well-established psychological frameworks such as Kohlberg's developmental model of ethical decision-making (Kohlberg, 2008), to published works with a specific focus on ethics in the Air Force. The case studies referenced throughout the paper are used to provide tangible examples of what drives ethical decision-making in the Air Force. The case studies highlight specific behaviors or ethical climates and do not necessarily characterize the culture of the Air Force as a whole. Two focus groups were conducted to assess the extent to which the Core Values inform operational decision-making, as well as how the Core Values could become more relevant to operational units. The first focus group consisted of three senior NCOs at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, with personnel and manpower, basic military training, and first sergeant backgrounds. The second focus group was composed of students from the Air War College at Air University. This group included ten O-5s and O-6s from various Air Force career fields, along with one O-5 from the U.S. Army. Both groups were chosen because of their longevity in the Air Force and their ability to speak to the issue from a senior leader perspective.

Lastly, the authors drew on personal backgrounds and experiences as CGOs to assess the problem and formulate a way forward. The group of eight members contained Captains from various career fields, including medical services, pilot, judge advocate, logistics, Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), and intelligence. The group's diverse experience, coupled with connections to Airmen at home units and fellow CGOs at Squadron Officer School, provided a broad picture of the ethical state of the Air Force at the unit level.

DRIVERS OF THE CORE VALUES GAP

The issue of moral decision-making has been well researched in academia, and provides a useful backdrop for solving this problem. Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist, experimentally derived a model for moral development based on the cognitive reasoning one employs in making moral decisions and solving ethical quandaries (Kohlberg, 2008). How one thinks through moral and ethical quandaries is referred to as moral reasoning. The study of moral decision-making has largely been focused on moral reasoning, and assumed it is the main factor leading to moral action (Hannah and Avolio, 2010). However, researchers have concluded that the majority of reasons people make immoral or unethical choices is not due to faulty reasoning, but attributable to other factors (Hannah and Avolio, 2010; Mazar, Amir, and Ariely, 2008; Gino et al., 2011; Gino, Ayal, and Ariely, 2009; Coleman, 2009; Bradley, 2009). There is often a distinct difference in the way people think they should act versus the way people actually act (Ajzen, 1991). Culture, environmental factors, individual factors, and psychological mechanisms all influence an individual's moral reasoning and moral action (Haidt and Kesebir, 2010). Addressing all possible factors contributing to the Core Values Gap is outside the scope of this article; therefore, the discussion which follows focuses on four external factors which contribute to the Core Values Gap and can be mediated through actionable recommendations for leadership.

The four factors identified that drive the Core Values Gap are: (1) a zero-defect standard, (2) misapplication of the Wingman concept, (3) extended gaps in time between education and training, and (4) reporting programs that inhibit root-cause investigations. The Core Values Gap generates the perception that the Air Force Core Values, especially Integrity First, have lost

connection to mission accomplishment. Addressing the drivers that contribute to the gap will help leaders in the USAF identify potential solutions.

Zero-Defect Standards

A zero-defect standard exists when organizational culture will not tolerate error. These standards instigate micromanagement down the chain of command and emphasize the *appearance* of perfection. The pressures of perfection can lead to an environment permissive of integrity violations in exchange for actions that enhance the unit's image of achieving perfection. Achieving perfect standards becomes the organization's all-consuming focus at the expense of actual mission accomplishment and the holistic development of Airmen. Units that confuse perfection for excellence ignore the fact that the Core Values are symbiotic and not mutually exclusive. Additionally, the high-pressure environment for perfection greatly diminishes an individual's courage to act morally, as any moral action that compromises the desired image of perfection can generate an immediate, negative response. However, integrity is part and parcel of organizational excellence in a healthy unit, and vice versa.

The recent cheating incident at Malmstrom AFB, Montana illustrates this issue. The Command-Directed Investigation (CDI) describes organizational leadership – and, subsequently, organizational culture – paralyzed by a zero-defect standard. The CDI concludes that in much of the culture, "an unrealistic emphasis on perfection drives commanders at all levels to attempt to meet the zero-defect standard by personally monitoring and directing daily operations and imposing an unrelenting testing and evaluation regimen on wings, groups, squadrons, and missile crew members in an attempt to eliminate all human error" (Holmes, 2014, p. D–13). The report further concludes, "if the system rewards leaders for achieving short-term results at the expense of long-term unit health and leader development, it teaches the following generations of leaders

to adopt successively harsher approaches—further increasing the alienation and dissatisfaction of subordinates" (Holmes, 2014, p. D–15). Not only did the zero-defect standard contribute to unrealistic expectations that drove unethical behavior, but it also had a long-term detrimental effect on the morale of the unit and hindered future leader development.

While it is tempting to view the Malmstrom case as an outlier, varying degrees of this zero-defect organizational culture can be found in other areas of the Air Force. It occurs in metrics and reports such as Defense Readiness Reporting Systems and training statistics; it is evident during inspection preparation with the pressure to perform perfectly during inspections. As the US Air Force becomes a "one-mistake Air Force" during the ongoing manpower and resource reductions, the appearance of perfection is perceived to be essential to career progression. To ensure the overall ethical health of a unit, commanders must steer organizational culture away from a zero-defect standard that perpetuates the Core Values Gap.

Misapplication of the Wingman Concept

All Airmen recognize a Wingman as a fellow Airman who looks out for another Airman. The value of fostering an Air Force culture of being a good wingman is almost self-explanatory; it encourages Airmen to look out for and take care of one another, both on and off duty. When correctly applied, this makes for an easily understandable guide for behavior, even in the most challenging circumstances. However, a dangerous misapplication of the Wingman Concept at the unit level encourages violations of the Core Values in spite of standards for mission accomplishment. The Wingman Concept can lead an individual to reason that it would be better to protect a fellow Airman from potential punitive action than to report a violation of the Core Values. In this situation, individuals face a dilemma as loyalty to peers may conflict with loyalty towards the organization.

A prime example of this misinterpretation is the repeated reports of cadets cheating at the US Air Force Academy. In May 2007, eighteen cadets were expelled or submitted their resignations as a result of cheating on a weekly exam (Wasley, 2007). These cadets failed to make the connection between their decisions and the impact to their organization's mission—instead, they opted to be "good Wingmen" by covering up each other's integrity violations. Even though those involved were cadets, unethical behavior would likely continue into the operational Air Force. For example, it was discovered that at Malmstrom AFB, many of those who participated in cheating established their network and participated in unethical behavior while at the US Air Force Academy (Holmes, 2014). The toleration of Core Values violations under the guise of being a good Wingman is a trend that unit leadership must actively combat.

Gaps Between Core Values Education and Training

A key problem affecting Air Force members' internalization of the Core Values is that discussions about the Core Values primarily occur at accessions and developmental education sources. A recent panel of senior NCOs identified Air Force technical schools as a key center of gravity where enlisted Airmen often forget their newly learned basic training skills and revert to pre-Air Force ways of thinking. These pre-Air Force habits in turn follow them to their first unit, and can manifest as Core Values violations (Interview with Senior NCOs, 2014). It is the responsibility of individual Airmen to live the Core Values, but lacking continuous guidance on proper application to their unique operational mission contributes to the Core Values Gap. Furthermore, commanders are responsible for operationalizing the Core Values (Holmes, 2014), but have minimal formal training with respect to crafting a Core Values initiative in their unit capable of accomplishing this goal.

Air Force members understand right and wrong and possess the skills necessary to apply the Core Values to daily operations; however, the ability to overtly link the Core Values with mission accomplishment fades with lack of reinforcement. Even with robust training programs included in officer and enlisted professional military education (PME), the average 5-7 year time span between PME courses is too great for the Core Values to remain in the forefront of an Airman's decision-making process. Like any skill, ethical decision-making and moral action require constant practice to maintain proficiency. For the Core Values to be embodied by every Airman, they must be constantly employed as part of a decision-making framework.

Disparate Reporting Programs

In addition to training and education deficiencies, driving the Core Values Gap are disparate reporting programs. In all of the aforementioned case studies, a single infraction infected the unit due to repetition and expansion of the violations by other members. Although commanders have a number of conventions and institutions available to deter, investigate, and punish violators of standards, these agencies have overlapping and often conflicting policies and goals.

To deter, discover, and investigate violations, commanders rely on organizations such as the installation's servicing Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), Inspector General (IG), the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), and Security Forces (SF). The SJA and IG provide ethics briefings to selected career fields and enlisted personnel (DODD 5500.7-R, 2011). To discover and investigate violations, the IG complaint process requires all Air Force members to "promptly report" any misconduct to their chain of command or the IG (AFI 90-301, 2012). They may report to the IG anonymously or request whistleblower protection, but the IG and

members must also "promptly advise" the AFOSI and SF of suspected criminal misconduct"
(AFI 90-301, 2012).

These institutions and conventions aim to connect the Core Values to mission
accomplishment but create strong disincentives for Airmen faced with ethical decisions in
practice. Ethics training by the SJA and IG fails to provide motivation to report on misconduct
observed other than implied threats of negative action for failing to report. In any case, Airmen
who make a report to the IG may find themselves as subjects or witnesses in a criminal
investigation under AFOSI or SF depending on the decision of the investigative agency.
Furthermore, Airmen who testify as witnesses in courts-martial may find their own credibility
attacked through cross-examination in a public forum for their mistake or simple lapses of
memory. Airmen who have failed to report the misconduct for an extended period of time or
have aided others in the commission of their misconduct are faced with the increased pressure of
knowing that reporting the violation may result in the end of their military careers. It is thus
difficult for a well-intentioned Airman to have the courage to report.

Nevertheless, several laws and policies exist to encourage honest discussion of past
behavior to prevent further violations of standards, such as testimonial and transactional
immunity for courts-martial witnesses (Manual for Courts-Martial, 2012, R.C.M. 704),
confidentiality for interim safety board and safety investigation board witnesses (AFI 91-204,
2008), and the Air Force Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Program (ADAPT) self-
identification program (AFI 44-121, 2011). In an Air Force that competitively selects those who
earn the right to pursue a military career, these policy choices at the senior leadership level foster
courage to act morally by alleviating, at varying degrees, the threat of negative consequences for
honesty. However, because immunity and safety board confidentiality may only be granted after

an investigation has begun, these programs provide no incentive to Airmen to report misconduct. The ADAPT self-identification program encourages reporting, but it is limited to reporting one's own substance abuse. These laws and policies are reactive in nature and are unable to balance the disincentives that exist for Airmen to report Core Values violations.

HOW TO CLOSE THE CORE VALUES GAP

This paper proposes to close the Core Values Gap with (1) the introduction of a "Core Values Check," (2) equipping squadron commanders to train the Core Values at their units, (3) provide leaders with a Core Values Toolkit to help facilitate regular Core Values discussion, and (4) reforming institutions to reduce barriers to reporting infractions.

Research suggests that enhancing moral ownership, efficacy, and courage can bridge the gap between moral thought and moral action (Hannah and Avolio, 2010). It is moral ownership, moral efficacy, and moral courage that overpower influential drivers and lead to appropriate moral action. Hannah and Avolio (2010) outline how to enhance and develop these characteristics. They state that ownership is enhanced by modeling and interacting with subordinates – in essence, "leadership by walking around" – and engaging in ethical discussions. They suggest that dilemmas be debriefed and discussed using real-world, work-related examples. To improve moral courage, leaders should coach followers through moral dilemmas and delegate ethical challenges to followers or include them in the decision-making process. Finally, efficacy is developed by providing increasingly more challenging ethical opportunities or examples (Hannah and Avolio, 2010). In sum, in order to bridge the gap between moral reasoning and moral action, leaders must actively seek to model ethical behavior, delegate and debrief dilemmas, and reinforce ethical and moral action.

Step 1: The Core Values Check

A successful organization that provides a healthy ethical climate views ethics and morals

as symbiotic to mission accomplishment and not mutually exclusive – integrity, service, and

excellence are part and parcel of organizational success in a healthy unit. The primary concept

that would translate this symbiotic relationship between Air Force Core Values and mission

accomplishment is a Core Values Check. This would be encapsulated as an informal addendum

to already existing decision-making processes that serves to refine and deepen thinking.

The essence of the Core Values Check concept is captured by the question, "Which option best

satisfies the Air Force Core Values?" or "Is this decision or action in line with the Air Force

Core Values?" This question should enter every Airman's mind when facing a decision, thereby

influencing moral ownership, courage, and ability to affect change. Figure 1 depicts the

rearrangement of priorities, or filters, that are considered when an individual turns moral thought
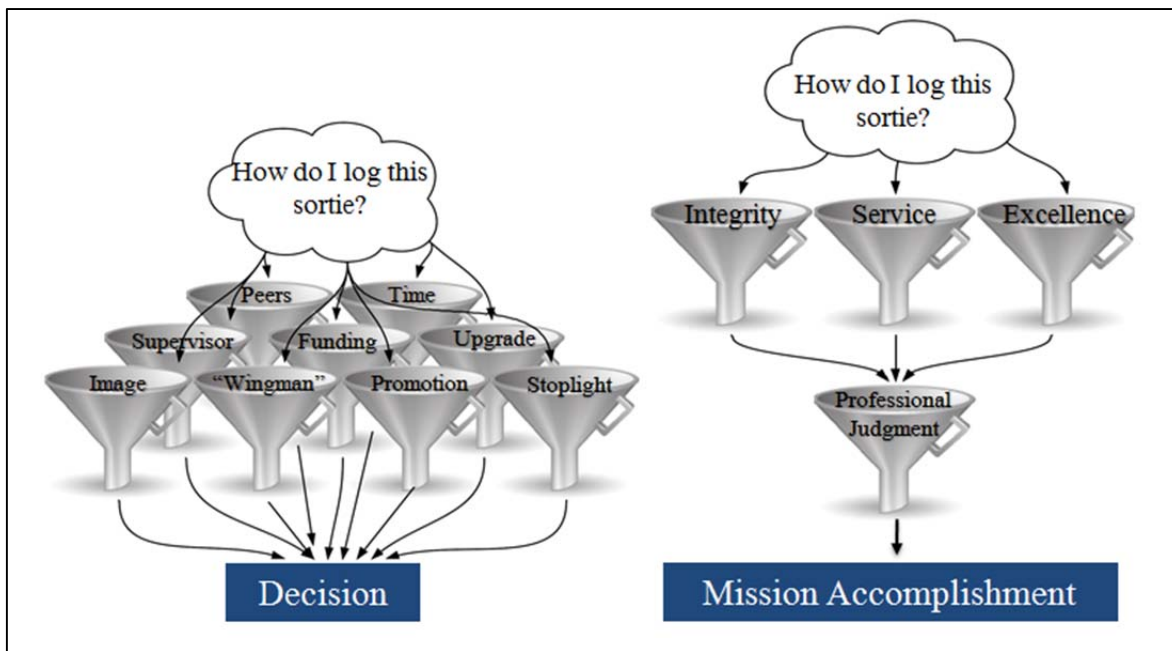
into moral action.

Figure 1. The image on the left depicts the numerous possible filters through which operational
decisions can be made; the image on the right depicts utilization of the Core Values Check by

checking operational decisions against Integrity, Service, and Excellence before professional judgment.

The Core Values Check, in effect, embeds Integrity, Service, and Excellence into the Air Force's "driving force" for ethical and moral behavior (Paine, 1994). It encourages Airmen to check key decisions with the Core Values and is a way of reminding individuals that morals matter. It also pairs the Core Values and mission accomplishment together into a mutually dependent decision-making process for Airmen to internalize and employ on a daily basis. More importantly, Airmen utilizing this tool can realize that individual moral decisions have an effect on organizational success or failure.

Step 2: Equip Commanders

In order to disseminate the Core Values Check to all Airmen, the first step will be to incorporate it in training and education at all commanders' courses. Squadron commanders in particular are key centers of gravity in implementing leadership concepts. At each level of training, commanders must be taught or reminded how to build and implement this framework as it relates to daily operations in their respective units. From there, commanders can pass the framework on to flight commanders, who in turn pass it to element leaders and NCOs, who continue the progression down to every Airman. The Core Values Check concept will guide thinking and likely lead to further discussions of ethical dilemmas at all levels.

There are several tangible ways that leaders can operationalize the Core Values Check. For end-of-year budgeting decisions, resource questions can be framed in terms of the Core Values. During feedback, supervisors can review the Core Values in the *Primary/Additional Duties* section of the AF Form 931. To teach and reinforce use of the Core Values Check, a commander or supervisor can highlight specific Airmen who demonstrated integrity, service, or

excellence. Stories of individuals making correct moral and ethical decisions can be shared on a regular basis during commander's calls, meetings, feedback, or informally while speaking to others one-on-one. When faced with ethical decisions, leaders can mentor and model the desired thought process by soliciting the help of junior leaders, which allows for junior leaders to practice ethical decision-making with oversight. Individuals can also practice moral and ethical decision-making through real-world vignettes that are job-specific. The possibilities of implementing this strategy are limited only by the commander's imagination.

A crucial component of the Core Values Check is that it should not come packaged with specific instructions for implementation. Successful implementation of this framework requires latitude for commanders to adapt the concept to their units. A successful application would entail a list of behavioral changes: Airmen need to have more conversations about the Core Values, share ideas on how to build integrity, receive feedback on their current level of integrity development, hold each other accountable for shortcomings, be provided with opportunities to practice ethical decision-making and action, and factor integrity into day-to-day decisions. No single plan could map out all the behavioral changes required for every unit in the Air Force; therefore, commanders must be allowed to tailor their plan to the specific needs of their units.

The Core Values Check is a tool that addresses the drivers of the Core Values Gap by establishing a culture focused on ethical and moral decision-making and reinforcing desired moral action. Before implementing new standards that strive for zero-defect perfection, supervisors at all levels can use the Core Values Check to ensure the new standards reinforce all three Core Values—not just excellence. Airmen who need to look out for a Wingman can use the Core Values Check to ensure that their decisions and actions align with the Core Values and mission accomplishment.

Formal and informal feedback is a prime opportunity for commanders and supervisors to help develop moral and ethical courage in Airmen. Valuable feedback and honest performance reports are another key area where leaders can mitigate the Core Values Gap. The feedback process is possibly the strongest tool a leader has for sharing experiences, personal and career goals, and most importantly, encouraging critical thinking and sharing of ideas – during all of which the Core Values can be discussed. Encouraging the Core Values Check as a tool for feedback will also address the lack of discussion about the Core Values. Lt Col Bridget Gigliotti, in a recent Air War College paper addressing ethics, highlighted the need for more ethics-based discussions by stating, "Operationally, squadron commanders should talk about ethics more in their squadrons. They should have discussions with their officers during officer professional development time. Discussions are key; computer based training will not work on a topic such as this one" (Gigliotti, 2014, p. 15). Moral and ethical behavior is developed through gradual clarification of what constitutes ethical behavior; it is a growing process based on experience in dealing with dilemmas. During feedback, leaders can utilize the time to model, debrief, discuss, and reinforce moral and ethical decision-making.

Step 3: Develop a Toolkit

The Core Values Check is an integral start to changing the organizational culture to focus more on ethics and moral action. In order to foster moral action leaders must model moral action with stories of real events and descriptions of the decision-making process and resulting action. All Airmen need practice resolving ethical and moral dilemmas in order to develop the skill; thus, it is imperative that leaders delegate minor dilemmas. This allows for practice in ethical decision-making with oversight and mentorship from leaders. It is also important to debrief real dilemmas. Leaders can do this in many ways: from formal reviews of CDI investigations,

talking about real dilemmas, to discussing minor infractions and near misses. Finally, leaders are

encouraged to find creative solutions to reinforce moral and ethical behavior. Leaders should

examine the processes in their units that may be reinforcing unethical behavior or punishing

honesty and integrity. For example, a commander may set up ways to reward ethical behavior or

self-reporting with "good catch" programs or awards. Leaders are key to closing the Core

Values Gap; however, it can be a daunting challenge for a leader to independently generate ideas

on how to operationalize the core values.

To mitigate the impediment of a "blank canvas," it has been proposed to develop a toolkit

for commanders. Lt Col Gigliotti (2014, pp. 15-16) recommended the development of a resource

toolkit for commanders to lead their officer development programs. This toolkit could be created

by a future Air Force Ethics Office or the Center for Character and Leadership Development

(CCLD) at the US Air Force Academy (Gigliotti, 2014, p. 13). The only cost would be the time

in which it would take to develop the resource; and it would be available for commanders and

units to reference as needed, thereby avoiding the simple addition of more things to the schedule.

Another great starting point for commanders is to disseminate and use the *United States
Air Force Core Values* publication, also known as the Little Blue Book (LBB). The LBB has

seen diminished force-wide presence since its initial publication in 1997. General Fogelman, as

Chief of the Air Force, introduced the Air Force Core Values via this document in response to

several high profile incidents that had sullied the Air Force image in the mid-1990s. Almost two

decades later, while the LBB is readily found in many First Sergeants' offices and AETC

classrooms, the booklet and its main concepts are a mystery to many Airmen at the unit level.

Airmen can readily recite the Core Values as learned in training, but may not be able to connect

integrity, service, and excellence to mission accomplishment.

The LBB divides the training of the Core Values into two sections: the *Schoolhouse Weave*, and *Operationalizing the Core Values*. The *Schoolhouse Weave* includes accessions and PME sources, but operationalizing the Core Values can only come from within a unit, which requires deliberate focus and attention from commanders and leaders to explicitly address these values regularly. A renewed strategic communications plan, supported at the highest levels of AF senior leadership, should promote the LBB and highlight its enduring relevance to mission accomplishment. It is proposed that an initiative which leverages social media be used to re-introduces and revitalizes the Core Values; for example #LittleBlueBook - utilizing the common hashtag metadata tag found throughout modern social media. #LittleBlueBook would essentially be a social media initiative that encourages all Airmen and units to use social media to post on the core values. Squadrons, groups, and commanders are increasingly utilizing social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. As an example, to help re-vitalize the heritage of Mustache March, Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. Mark Welsh III recently used Facebook to post pictures of himself with a moustache and used the hashtag, "#MustacheMarch," to increase morale across the Air Force (Welsh, 2014). Leaders should be encouraged to use social media to disseminate good examples of integrity, service, and excellence. Posts can be as simple as inspirational quotes, examples to emulate, public praise, links to websites and articles, or stories of integrity, service, and excellence in our Air Force heritage. Airmen use social media daily, and the Air Force should increase its presence and encourage the dissemination of the core values through social media.

<u>Step 4: Reform institutions</u>

Several simple reforms to existing Air Force-wide processes will reduce barriers to reporting ethical infractions and free commanders to shape their organizational culture according to the Core Values.

<u>Encourage reporting of systemic issues.</u> By utilizing the authority and structure of the IG program and making a policy change to AFI 90-301, *Inspector General Complaints Resolution,* senior leaders can create a system that will empower Airmen to report systemic misconduct and integrity violations before they become major scandals affecting the entire organization. This reform will establish limited protection for voluntary disclosures to a member's first sergeant, commander, or installation IG personnel of a member's participation in, or failure to report, a crime against the United States when the purpose of the disclosure is to prevent further crimes against the United States. By applying the model of the Air Force's ADAPT self-identification program, Airmen have a direct avenue to positively affect their organization's climate and honestly report their knowledge of misconduct. They will also be encouraged to report because the limited protection will prevent the use of the statement—and any evidence obtained through the statement—against the member in a UCMJ action or as an independent basis for administrative demotion or separation.

To limit the scope of the protection to Core Values investigations, the policy would not apply: (1) if the person were not voluntarily making the statement; (2) if the statement covered a crime or infraction against a victim other than the United States; (3) if the person reporting was predominantly responsible for either soliciting the commission of the infractions or for creating the conditions under which further crimes would continue; or (4) when the person, without proper authority, continues to aid and further the activity in question. Also, much like the

exceptions to the ADAPT self-identification program, this policy will also not prevent the commander from using independently derived evidence against the member or prevent the commander from taking action to safeguard Department of Defense assets and personnel, such as reassigning a member from positions of trust or directing a Report of Survey to recover lost or stolen assets. With a system designed to give Airmen the tools necessary to take moral action, commanders will have the ability to positively change their organization's ethical climate.

 <u>Investigate root causes of Core Values violations.</u> By applying the model of the safety investigation board, the second policy change will establish a special investigation that may be ordered by the IG or commander with the approval of the command's General Court Martial Convening Authority (GCMCA). This change would apply the principles embodied in the testimonial immunity and safety privilege conventions, a logical model for Core Values related investigations. Under this policy, upon a grant of testimonial immunity by the GCMCA to the relevant subjects and witnesses, the IG may appoint an investigating officer (IO) to conduct an investigation independent of any ongoing or concluded commander-directed or law enforcement investigation to identify root causes affecting systemic, morale, or other problems impeding efficiency and mission effectiveness. The IO will require minimal training or experience in legal investigations, and will more readily be able to perform a root cause analysis in order to provide recommendations to senior leaders.

 Redacted results of these investigations could be included as part of the toolkit as realistic ethics examples for commanders to discuss with their units. This would provide a resource of tangible examples of how failure to uphold the Core Values affects mission accomplishment. It would also allow and encourage commanders to publicly address integrity issues thereby

reinforcing the Air Force's commitment to the Core Values and their impact on mission accomplishment.

CONCLUSION

The disconnect between the Air Force Core Values and mission accomplishment is not insurmountable. The organizational divers of this gap can be overcome by equipping commanders with knowledge and tools to address the problem while modestly reforming some institutional mechanisms that stand in the way. The introduction and dissemination of the Core Values Check, increasing ethical discussions across the Air Force, and allowing commanders to establish integrity initiatives will help Airmen navigate difficult ethical dilemmas and build confidence and courage to take moral action. The above policy changes will help remove the institutional barriers to reporting ethical violations. These recommendations bridge the gap between the Core Values and mission accomplishment by providing the tools to model ethical behavior, discuss and operationalize the core values, and reinforce ethical and moral action. These steps will help develop in all Airmen the characteristics of moral ownership, efficacy, and courage needed to act ethically and morally when faced with a dilemma. Reconnecting the Core Values to mission accomplishment is vital to ensure that Airmen and leaders are empowered to think, act, and educate within an environment that embraces ethical and moral perspectives.

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