



The Valued Airman:

Fostering Air Force Cultural Intolerance of Sexual Assault

99th Air Base Wing
Air Combat Command
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FOREWARD



We are the most powerful Air Force in the history of the human race. It is not an exaggeration that our actions, Airman Basic through General, impact far more people than just ourselves. However, those impacts are not simply mission-related, but also affect the futures of your family, friends, and fellow Airmen (military, civilian, and contractors).

By no means do I intend this white paper to be considered an immediate reaction to incidents reported throughout the media at other bases or even recent events at our own. Unfortunately, there is still a micro-culture of service members within the military who believe that sexual assault is tolerated. It is not.

It is my belief that many of our Air Force societal ills are brought on by undervalued Airmen. To combat these despicable influences, we need to foster a culture of “Valued Airmen”. A Valued Airman Culture is one in which every Airman is respected, counted on, seeks excellence, and is held to high standards.

This White Paper was written to provide commanders a framework from which to combat the cancer of sexual assault within our ranks. To emphasize the highest priority, I have issued a policy letter withholding adjudication of unlawful sexual contact to the first O-6/Colonel in the chain of command, with me serving as the appellate authority. I expect every subordinate unit of the 99th Air Base Wing, while encouraging our sister Nellis/Creech/NTTR Wings and tenants, to place equal emphasis upon this issue. There is no higher priority than providing a safe and secure work environment for our Airmen to continue winning our nation’s wars anytime, anywhere.

BARRY R. CORNISH
Colonel, USAF
Commander

Introduction



“The number is zero. That’s the only acceptable goal. Everybody in our Air Force needs to think that way and every commander, every supervisor who isn’t actively engaged in being part of the solution of this [sexual assault] is part of the problem.”

*- General Mark A. Welsh III,
Air Force Chief of Staff*

This White Paper presents the “Valued Airman” concept in order to address the cancer of sexual assault within our Air Force. The era of ignorance, regarding sexual transgressions within our ranks, is over. Therefore, we need to attack this enemy-from-within head on. The “Valued Airman” concept encompasses three intersecting spheres of one’s life:

- 1. Value Yourself**
- 2. Value Others**
- 3. Value the Mission**

The “Valued Airman” is the cornerstone of not only sexual assault prevention and response, but also successful mission accomplishment. All three spheres will be discussed in depth as well as their interlocking relationships. Everything stated within this White Paper is of significance from the 99th Air Base Wing Commander to the newest Airman arriving from tech school.

The Air Force definition of sexual assault involves nonconsensual criminal acts ranging from sexual touching to rape. Consent is freely given words or overt acts indicating agreement to sexual activity. Consent is not submission due to force or fear; implied due to dress or previous relationship; or possible if someone is substantially impaired due to drugs, alcohol, or unconsciousness.

Mission and Vision

Air Combat Command’s (ACC) mission is “Dominant Combat Airpower for America” while the ACC vision is “Warrior Airmen, Committed to Excellence, Trained and Ready to fly, fight, and win...anytime, anyplace”. The mission of the 99th Air Base Wing is to “Enable Success through Innovative Base Support”. From the top-down, innovation is an imperative. Nurturing a culture within which sexual assault will not be tolerated requires innovation. It is what we do.

Innovation is finding a new or better way to accomplish the mission. A Valued Airman is an innovative Airman. Innovative Airmen enable successful mission accomplishment. It is an interlocking cycle of value and success.

Sexual assault is the enemy of value and success; the antithesis of the Valued Airman.

Assumptions

This White Paper is based upon the following assumptions:

1. The vast majority of Airmen are the best Americans our society has to offer; including our Total Force of Active Duty, Reserve, Guard, Civilians, and Contractors. Also, do not forget about our dependents and retirees.
2. We are a reflection of society in that a relatively few Undervalued Airmen will enter the system, causing damage along their path out of the Air Force.
3. Sexual assaults happen on our base, reported or not.
4. We are all agents of change; agents of innovation.

Imperatives

The 99th Air Base Wing (99 ABW) is responsible for base support of six Wings and 52 tenant units. We serve 13,000 personnel, 26,000 dependents, 27,000 retirees. 99 ABW Airmen deploy around the globe for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We serve on mountains, in deserts, and jungles to fulfill America's trust in our ability to defend our nation's interests anytime, anywhere. Sexual assault only serves to cripple our mission when we cannot afford failure. Therefore, it is imperative that Nellis, Creech, and NTTR Airmen achieve the following:

1. We will foster **cultural intolerance** of sexual assault.
2. All officers, NCOs, Airmen, civilians, LEADERS will be **change agents**.
3. **Integrated response** to sexual assault is not a vision; it must be reality.
4. All Airmen will be **valued**.

Usually, intolerance is a bad thing. We usually equate it with racism, sexism, or religious bigotry. However, **cultural intolerance** of sexual assault is our desired end-state. "We will not lie, cheat, or steal; nor tolerate anyone who does" is an honor code every Air Force cadet memorizes and, hopefully, lives from Training Day One. Just as we do not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing; we need to be intolerant of sexual assault. Intolerance of sexual assault must be so engrained within our Air Force culture that diversion from the norm will register like a signal flare.

When I took command of the 99 ABW, I charged my Group and Squadron commanders to become **change agents**. However, that charge does not lie solely with them. Every leader, every Airman, must see themselves as agents of change. This concept does not only apply to process improvement like the AFSSO21 program. Instead, we should also improve ourselves and help those around us at every opportunity. Do not tolerate that sexist joke or comment in your section; correct that wayward Airman or supervisor on the spot.

AFOSI, Security Forces, JA, and SARC are not the only Nellis/Creech/NTTR agencies responsible for an **integrated response** to sexual assault. All Airmen must learn their roles within the response and reporting systems. Your role may be as a victim, witness, or alleged offender; or as periphery as a friend of a friend of a friend. You may be asked to testify or simply not to gossip about an ongoing investigation within your shop. Know your role in sexual assault response.

Lastly, it is my belief that a **Valued Airman** will be less likely to tolerate or commit sexual assault. You must value yourself, value others, and value the mission. Sexual assault is such an egregious act that it shows only an offender's lack of value for anything or anyone. An offender does not value themselves or else the need to exert power over another would not be present. An offender does not value others or else they would not commit such trauma to another human being. An offender does not value the mission or else they would not jeopardize successful execution.



Sexual Assault Defined

- Sexual assault is a crime. Sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual contact, characterized by use of force, physical threat or abuse of authority or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault includes rape, nonconsensual sodomy (oral or anal sex), indecent assault (unwanted, inappropriate sexual contact or fondling), or attempts to commit these acts. Sexual assault can occur without regard to gender or spousal relationship or age of victim.
 - “Consent” shall not be deemed or construed to mean the failure by the victim to offer physical resistance. Consent is not given when a person uses force, threat of force, coercion or when the victim is asleep, incapacitated, or unconscious.

The above definition of sexual assault has been directed by DoD and is for training and educational purposes only. This definition does not affect in any way the definition of any offenses under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Commanders are encouraged to consult with their Staff Judge Advocate for complete understanding of this definition in relation to the UCMJ.

Prevention: The Valued Airman Culture



“Inspiring our Airmen to be good Wingmen is not just a worthy undertaking...it is a critical mission enabling task that has hope of one day creating an Air Force without sexual assault, making it a benchmark for all the world to emulate.”

*– Honorable Michael B. Donley,
Secretary of the Air Force*

A Valued Airman places a premium on themselves, others, and the mission. These interlocking values must be balanced or one risks selfishness or possibly sacrificing a happy family life for mission only. We create a Valued Airman Culture through the following:

- 1. You** – You’re important. A lot of people laugh when I say that, out of humility or disbelief, but you are what keeps this whole Air Force moving. I’m not much of a Wing Commander if there are no Airmen to execute the mission. That makes you very much value-added. Therefore, value yourself, so as to recognize potential vulnerable situations and not tolerate others who are out of line. Value yourself enough not to become a predator.
- 2. Your Family** – If you’re about to do something that goes against our Air Force core values or even the law, think about your family. I guarantee you will give that destructive action a second thought which may keep you out of jail or from losing a stripe or traumatizing another human being.
- 3. Your Teammates** – We talk a lot about Wingmen. Part of being a Wingman is to vector-check your friends before they cross that line. Sexual assault involves at least two people. Someone let somebody down. An entire unit, and mission, can crumble due to an act taking no longer than a few seconds. That is not an exaggeration.
- 4. Pride, Devotion to Duty, and Dedication** – Take pride in who you are and what you do for our country. Something must have caused you to take that oath of office or enlistment. We are dedicated to the defense of our nation; don’t distract us from that through a selfish act by either supporting a climate that allows a sexual assault to occur or assaulting someone yourself.

5. Standards and Discipline – Air Force standards are not that far removed from everyday, societal standards of behavior. However, the room for error and divergence is necessarily narrower or nonexistent. Being a disciplined force, constantly adhering to high standards, is what enables us to be the world’s greatest Air Force. Our status as Number One is not an accident.

6. Customs and Courtesies – These are not only about saluting to officers and standing at attention for the National Anthem. Customs and Courtesies apply not only to the relationship between us and our superiors but also among our peers. Treat each other with respect as Valued Wingmen on- and off-duty. Mentor your subordinates about life, not just the latest change to a T.O. (Technical Order).

7. Air Force Core Values – Integrity First, Service Before Self, Excellence in All We Do. About 90 percent of our issues would be solved if we followed the Core Values without hesitation. Do the right thing when no one is looking. Stand up for an incapacitated or vulnerable Wingman who may be within minutes of a sexual assault. Only a mediocre, non-excellent, Airman would ever put another in harm’s way or intend to harm another.

8. Balance – We need balance in our lives. It can’t be all mission all the time or we’ll burnout, not being much use to anyone. On the other hand, we cannot only value our selfish desires such as gluttony or slovenliness, we must adhere to standards and maintain discipline. We often put in long hours to accomplish the mission, but we need to balance that with family time. Fun, balanced with safety, is a great way to blow off steam. Imbalanced fun ends up with someone in jail. We must strive for balance in all aspects of our lives.

9. AFI 1-1 – The very last thing General Schwartz did before retirement was publishing AFI 1-1, the only Air Force Instruction published by an Air Force Chief of Staff. He wanted that much emphasis on this document. It encompasses a lot of the above components of a Valued Airman: standards, discipline, customs, courtesies, core values. Read it. It’s only 27 pages long and is a very helpful one-stop shop on your way to being a better Airman and Wingman.



Cultural Intolerance of Sexual Assault & Change Agents



“We value courage in this business.”

– General Mark A. Welsh III, Air Force Chief of Staff

You're at a party on Saturday night. It was a long week since an ORI (Operational Readiness Inspection) is in a few weeks and no one thinks we're ready yet. Everyone needs a break to blow off some steam. SSgt Smith sends out email invites to most of the Squadron for a party at his place.

You arrive with a few Wingmen to the house party. Almost everyone drinks alcohol, except for a few responsible designated drivers. The next thing you know, you wake up in one of SSgt Smith's bedrooms and think you may have been assaulted.

Accusations and rumors fly throughout your unit. No one, including you, reports the assault to the SARC, chain of command, or law enforcement. The weeks leading up to the ORI are filled with drama distracting your unit.

You fail the ORI.

Your entire chain of command feels the heat and all eyes are on your Squadron. You're now working extended shifts and weekends until the inspection team returns. Stress continues to mount as more and more Airmen are involved in disciplinary issues.

Your unit tears itself apart.

The above is just one scenario in which a lack of courage in Wingmen defending each other (preventing, protecting, reporting, etc) led to the downfall of an entire unit. Sexual assault affects us all, not just the victim and the perpetrator.

How to foster intolerance of sexual assault (with input from Air Force SARC):

- 1. Practice responsible use of alcohol.** Irresponsible drinking is a factor in over 50% of sexual assaults. Alcohol is the most commonly used drug to facilitate sexual assault.
- 2. Challenge verbal, physical, and sexual inappropriateness** that can contribute to a climate that allows for sexual assault. Don't stand by when you observe warning signs of potential sexual assault. It is your responsibility to get involved and encourage others to get involved to protect your fellow Airmen. This is where you become a Change Agent and can really make a positive difference in someone's life.
- 3. If a Wingman is abusive to someone, get involved.** Do not become a contributing bystander to the situation. Be a pro-active bystander and defend your Wingmen if necessary. Think about what you would do if it was your own brother or sister in the same situation.
- 4. Question your own attitudes.** Support sexual assault prevention by first asking yourself how you would deal with borderline situations. Treat others of all sexes equally. Only a coward feels more powerful by degrading another person.
- 5. Mentor young Airmen and other young people.** Listen empathically and ask if you can help. Mentor each other in what it takes to be a good Wingman and what can lead to dangerous situations. Show some courage and LEAD.
- 6. Ask the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) for help.** The SARC is not just there for annual training requirements and victim assistance. Feel free to contact the SARC for help in mentoring your peers and subordinates. Schedule additional training for your section if you feel a negative atmosphere is about to get out of hand. The SARC can be reached at DSN 682-7272 (Commercial 702-652-7272) for 24/7 response or their administrative line at DSN 682-5399 (Commercial 702-652-5399). Use this valuable resource.

It takes courage to be a change agent; to correct your subordinates, peers, and superiors when they're wrong. You will probably feel intimidated, but rest assured, you are doing the right thing by fostering intolerance of sexual assault. A sexually predatory atmosphere only distracts us from the mission. A distracted team will fail.



Conclusion



“Sexual Assault is absolutely inconsistent with our core values and it has no place in our Air Force; in a deployed context, at home, or anywhere in between.”

*- Honorable Michael B. Donley,
Secretary of the Air Force*

This White Paper was written to emphasize our command climate of intolerance for sexual assault. Discussion is highly encouraged among unit commanders, supervisors, and Airmen. I am requesting feedback of best practices and lessons learned concerning sexual assault prevention and response.

We must create a culture throughout Nellis, Creech, the NTTR, and the Air Force that fosters Valued Airmen while generating intolerance of sexual assault. Valued Airmen are safer, more focused Airmen who will continue to amaze us with their innovation and accomplishments. A Valued Airman is less likely to be a predator or place themselves in potentially victimizing situations.

The Valued Airman concept is not a Commander’s Program. It is a way of life that requires buy-in at every level from the moment a new recruit is sworn in at MEPS until that Airman eventually separates from active duty. The Valued Airman relies upon their commanders, supervisors, and peers to help guide them through responsible choices.

I charge everyone to be change agents: Value yourself; Value others; Value the mission. A Valued Airman culture will only serve to produce “Warrior Airmen, Committed to Excellence, Trained and Ready to fly, fight, and win...anytime, anyplace!”

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