

# Letter to Airmen

## Honorable Michael W. Wynne Secretary of the Air Force

---

Monday, February 13, 2006

### Letter to Airmen: Air Force Core Values

I continue to be honored to serve with you as Secretary of this great Air Force. Whether on the ground, in air or space, or on the new frontier of cyberspace – and whether you wear uniforms or civilian clothes – you respond to daily challenges that embody our core values of *Integrity First*, *Service Before Self* and *Excellence in All We Do*.

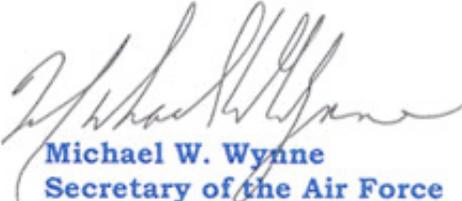
These core values should reflect the values we share from the moment we take our oath to support and defend the constitution. We must continue to reflect on these values, linked to that oath. Sharing my thoughts in this note is part of that ongoing process.

***Integrity First*** reminds us we must "walk the talk" – our words and actions must be *integrated* in our lives. It reminds us of Thomas Jefferson's concept of *moral muscles* – that we build and strengthen our character through the daily exercise of words, actions and decisions. *Integrity first* means not only physical courage, but moral courage as well, so that we sometimes stand up by speaking up. It means being loyal to our friends, to each other – *by being loyal to our oath, our Air Force, and our Nation*.

***Service Before Self*** is not the same as "service," a value also claimed by some civilian institutions and corporations. Our *Service* requires sacrifice and commitment to our Nation. We understand we make decisions in an environment where freedoms are on the line, and lives are at stake. *Service Before Self* begins with duty, but it means more. It means that, in our Air Force, as we fly and fight in war and peace, going *above-and-beyond-the-call-of-duty* is not the exception – it is the rule.

***Excellence in All We Do*** reminds us, at the most basic level, of the old "Hometown Newspaper Test" – imagining our parents reading about our actions, and wanting them to be proud. But it also includes the military concept of honor – knowing our actions reflect on all Airmen – and on the Air Force itself. It reminds us that we stand on the shoulders of giants: heroes like Billy Mitchell, and Doolittle, Spaatz, and Rickenbacker; heroes who faced and beat incredible odds. We have inherited a history of excellence, courage and greatness. We must live up to that heritage, become part of it, and pass it on.

All Airmen are men and women of character. Our enduring *Air Force Core Values* provide a touchstone as we rise to meet current and future challenges, threats, and opportunities. As America's Airmen, it is imperative that we maintain the moral high ground – our nation depends on it. I thank all of you for your contributions and sacrifices. *I salute you!*



Michael W. Wynne  
Secretary of the Air Force