



The Enlisted Perspective

By CMSAF Rodney J. McKinley

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Airmen Pride

Pride in being an Airman in the United States Air Force takes many forms--the way we wear our uniform, the effort we put into our jobs, the attitude we display and the respect we show for our fellow Airmen.

All of us, whether officer or enlisted, came into our Air Force after meeting rigid mental and physical recruiting standards, and being aligned with skills our service needed. Serving as an Airman is an honor that thousands of young Americans want, but do not attain; they are turned away for various reasons at recruiting offices. Those who make it through that door then train hard to develop skills that earn them the right to be called an "Airman."

Nowhere is this transformation more dramatic than Basic Military Training. Earning the title of "Airman" is commemorated with a coin ceremony and the chance to don the Air Force blue uniform for the first time. This emotional event gives the trainees an identity within our organization - they are now Airmen in the greatest Air, Space and Cyberspace force in the world.

The sought-after title of Airman is one that each of us has worked hard to earn. Why then do we sometimes refer to our fellow Airmen, both officer and enlisted, as "troops" or "kids?" Our level of professionalism must equal the immense responsibility each Airman carries as we continue to fight the Global War on Terror. We don't send "kids" into battle; we send highly-trained and motivated Airmen.

Today, more than 30,000 are deployed worldwide with many more deployed in place, and more than 4,000 Airmen protecting America's skies. In the Global War on Terror, we fly more than 250 missions a day, 45 of which are strike missions against the enemy. We conduct vital airlift for equipment and fellow Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors and Marines with one mobility aircraft taking off every 90 seconds. We complete more than 450 satellite supports each day, providing vital data and links for wartime operations. In addition, we have more than 4,500 Airmen on the ground supporting Army taskings in detainee operations, convoys and as interrogators. If you couple that with our direct combat positions, search and rescue, medical and other combat support roles, it's clear to see our Airmen are heavily engaged in winning this war. As Airmen, we have much to be proud of.

You represent our nation and service well. I'm incredibly proud of your professionalism and commitment. Let's continue to respect our heritage and our future in this great United States Air Force by proudly calling each other "Airman."



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