



Letter to Airmen

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

Monday, April 07, 2008

Attention to Detail

Recently the Department of Defense learned that four non-nuclear nose cones for a ballistic missile were mistakenly shipped to Taiwan in the fall of 2006. Regardless of the results of the ongoing investigation, this situation has identified important lessons for all of the DoD as we increasingly automate procedures and systems - lessons we Airmen must absorb as members of the Joint team. These lessons follow our core values, and they illuminate the critical nature of attention to detail and checking initial entries.

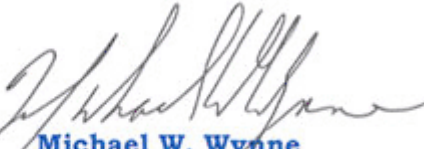
Our values first and foremost encompass Integrity. We must always have the moral and intellectual courage to do the right thing and must continue to follow our moral compass in the decisions we make and actions we take. Integrity also refers to going the extra mile to ensure our work is absolutely accurate. The Air Force is made up of skilled Airmen who perform highly technical jobs. From entering target coordinates on a GPS-guided weapon to filling out forms, they all entail putting precise and sometimes complex entries into a computer. Our data entry actions may have immediate effects, or others may rely on our entry at times well into the future. Often, many people rely on the pinpoint accuracy of just one person's work. Every action of this Air Force is critical for our Nation; as we automate more and more, any data errors become part of a larger error set.

Our values also include Service. Service here means to cross check any part of a process when you are involved. From supervisor to wingman, I need you to be the one to notice when something is not right even if it is not within your immediate purview. We all can assist each other and the rest of our Joint and Coalition forces to do it right. With the right mindset, large organizations can be adept at avoiding mistakes. We can use our judgment to question or ask for supervisory intervention, a paramount service we can offer to each other.

Our values encompass Excellence. Excellence here is about closely following the detailed procedures, and getting it right the first time. Excellence is about getting the right level of training and taking personal accountability for being ready, willing and able to execute the mission, whether administrative or operational, correctly and efficiently. Ask for help if needed. Supervisors must also provide the support needed to assist with mentoring, or cross check as appropriate.

The investigation of the mistaken shipment is ongoing and will be thorough, but all should know that as Airmen we will take ownership where appropriate. On the [Goals Card](#) is a simple statement: "Knowledge Enabled Actions with an Accountable Airmen Ethic"- this summarizes our values well. I am proud to serve with you and know that every day you bring incredible value to our Air Force, and every day, I know you are working hard to enhance that value.




Michael W. Wynne
Secretary of the Air Force