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Chief of staff cites cyber standards within Air Force

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Air Force Chief of Staff

5/28/2009 - **WASHINGTON,** -- In executing our Air Force mission of fly, fight and win, our Airmen, civilians and contractors, knowingly or unknowingly, engage daily on the cyber battlefield. Computers and personal electronic devices connected to our networks can simultaneously be powerful tools and critical vulnerabilities.

At times, our networks have been compromised by multiple means: Malware hidden in emails, virus-corrupted thumb drives, and media moved incorrectly between networks. We can prevent these events with due consideration and proper procedures, but in the past, we've regarded network protection and security as the "comm guy's job," and as a user inconvenience. This must no longer be the case.

Today, we forge a long overdue Air Force cultural change. Cyber operations reinforce and enable everything we do -- from administrative functions to combat operations -- and we must treat our computers and networks similarly to our aircraft, satellites and missiles. To this end, operations and maintenance will follow standards governed by a tight system of regulations and technical orders.

Compliance with time critical software updates will gain new emphasis and commanders will be held accountable. Command and control relationships will be revised to correctly align authorities and responsibilities. Major commands and subordinate commanders will no longer "own" networks, but will be responsible for their portion of the larger Air Force Global Information Grid. Air Force Space Command will champion our cyber force development and operations.

I have signed a directive memo making an unequivocal statement about the importance of compliance with network related technical orders. This guidance will improve safety and efficiency on the AF-GIG and provide commanders a clear enforcement/disciplinary mechanism. Maintenance Tasking Orders, Network Tasking Orders and Cyber Control Orders issued by the Air Force Network Operations commander now have the same authority as aircraft maintenance technical orders and lawful general orders. I expect this change will increase compliance with network technical orders across the Air Force.

As Airmen, civilians and contractors, you must understand your responsibility in this cultural change. Each time you use a networked device, you are on patrol for our nation.

You must be alert for and report suspicious emails, websites and suspicious attachments. Mission needs may require you to "sneaker-net" information, but you must follow safe and approved procedures for moving critical data. You must not upload data from personal devices for any reason. While training programs communicate information on network security, we depend on you to execute responsibly.

When irresponsible acts occur, I expect commanders to enforce our standards.

This change is not easy, but compliance enables us to defend our networks -- paramount in the face of increasing threats. Networks are a shared resource and a risk assumed by one is a risk exposed to all.

Our Air Force must move to a system of tight network control, personal responsibility and accountability as we execute our global mission on behalf of our nation.