



# ***The Enlisted Perspective***

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## **Now is the time for bold leadership**

Enlisted Airmen,

A week ago I sent an email message titled Leadership vs. Policy to Command Chiefs and Career Field Managers. You may have seen that message, or parts of it, but I'd like to take the opportunity to address it with you directly.

The theme of the message was that too much arbitrary guidance could prove to be counterproductive. As supervisors, the more leverage we have to deal with situations on a case-by-case basis, the better.

## **Junior Enlisted Airmen**

Young Airmen are our most precious resource. We spend millions of dollars recruiting, training, and equipping them to execute the tactical parts of the mission, and they never let us down.

We owe Junior Enlisted Airmen the proper training, education and experiences it takes to develop them into leaders in their field. We owe it to them to explain what is expected of them, and to follow up with how they are meeting our expectations. We owe them the mentorship and guidance they need to succeed, and they should be expected to do everything they can to meet the high standard set by the supervisor.

## **NCOs**

What our Junior Enlisted Airmen learn about leadership and mentorship will shape how they eventually supervise. Therefore, first-line supervisors have an incredible responsibility. NCOs should set young Airmen up for success by outlining specifically how to earn their highest rating. Following that, mentoring and additional feedback should address specific shortfalls and how to overcome them.

We are growing leaders, not judging Airmen on their ability to get it right on their own. As a supervisor, you should do all you can to help your Airmen succeed. When used properly, the formal feedback process is a good foundation for making this happen.

## **Senior NCOs**

Our most senior enlisted Airmen have a tremendous amount of impact on this process. SNCOs should hold their NCOs and Senior Airmen accountable for conducting required feedback sessions, and support their fair ratings. SNCOs should understand that a 4 is not a bad rating, and that some Airmen will earn that rating in a given period. Rating an Airman fairly will not hurt their career; it should help them grow.

## **Commanders**

In addition to the email message I sent to Chiefs, I sent a similar message to MAJCOM commanders, asking them to pass it down to their commanders. Because most of our reports are signed by a commander, I felt it was important that they understand where we're coming from. Commanders are the key and final component of this process, and their support for fair and accurate ratings is critical.

## **Bold Leadership**

Some have suggested we set some arbitrary quota for the number of 5 ratings allowed in a given shop. They claim that would make things easier.

I'm not interested in doing what's easy; I'm interested in doing what's right. Implementing a quota would strip first-line supervisors of the leverage they need to grow tomorrow's enlisted leaders.

We don't need quotas. Instead, we need bold leaders to set high standards and help Airmen achieve them. We need bold leaders to confront those Airmen who don't meet standards and document that feedback. We need those bold leaders to rate each individual fairly and accurately, and that isn't easy. They will need the support of SNCOs and commanders to make it work.

It takes bold leadership on everyone's part to develop Airmen.

Now is the time to do everything you can at your level to make this happen.



  
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of the Air Force