

# Gen Lorenz on Leadership – Thank You

This month I will officially retire and end my time as an active duty Airman in our beloved Air Force. Forty-one years ago I stepped off of a bus at the United States Air Force Academy – although it feels like only yesterday. Every day since then has been a true joy – a chance to share adventures and tackle challenges with each of you.



When I stepped off that bus at the Academy, the Air Force was only 21 years old. To me, the Air Force didn't seem so young ... it had always been there. I studied Air Force senior leaders of the era with awe. They had been through so much . . . World War II, Korea, Vietnam . . . and some even had old green Army Air Corps uniforms hanging in their closets behind the newer blue ones.

Now, I look at each of you with the same awe. The Airmen in today's Air Force have been given challenges like no other during this time of unprecedented regional conflict. And, you all hit the ball out of the park each and every day – I couldn't be more proud or more impressed.

As I step away from active service in the long blue line, I want to leave you with three ideals. These are three unwritten rules I've approached each assignment with. They've helped me maintain a healthy perspective during the daily challenge of balancing limited time, money and manpower, and they complement our Air Force Core Values of Integrity First, Service Before Self and Excellence in All We Do. I hope that these three principles will help you just as they have aided me.

The first rule is critical – we must all cherish our families. Make sure you thank your spouse, children and immediate family every chance you have – let them know how much you appreciate and love them. After all, our ability to serve the nation depends on their support and understanding. In many ways, their service to the nation is much more difficult than ours. High operations tempos, combined with our deployment culture, only add stress to everyone. Be understanding and invest time in their lives, no matter how busy or tired you may feel.

Next, we must try to always leave the campground better than we found it. I often tell people to pick two to three major issues to tackle during an assignment. Prioritize them one through three and integrate the challenges into a long-term vision. Now, it may take several people and more years than you anticipate for the beneficial effects to take hold. Be patient and let your organization get involved. After all, it always takes a team to truly improve the campground.

Last, we must attempt to daily make a difference in people's lives. Remember that each moment is important. Occasionally, you will find that people will come up to thank you for things you've done for them in the past. You may not have realized the significance of that moment, but it really made a difference in their lives. I am continually amazed at the emotions I experience when someone thanks me for words that I shared with them or something I did for their family many years ago. This only further reinforces the value of each and every moment, and how important it truly is. Always speak and act with a purpose; always set the example.

I certainly hope that more often than not I have been able to leave fewer issues for others and help make our Air Force a better place today than it was yesterday. I hope that I've been able to make a positive difference in as many lives as possible, and that while treasuring my family, I've helped others to better appreciate theirs.

As a final thought, I want to express my deep thanks to the American public. It is humbling to know that our country entrusts us with its two most important treasures, the first being their sons and daughters. These young Americans serve gallantly in the face of adversity and are continually postured to carry out military operations across the globe. The Airmen in today's Air Force continue to persevere while challenged with a dynamic and evolving global environment. I can say with the utmost confidence that the future of our nation is bright because brave young people raise their hand to voluntarily serve each day.

Our fellow countrymen also have entrusted us with our national treasury. Public funds are the contribution and earnings of hard-working American families, and as Thomas Paine wrote more than 200 years ago, "Ought to be touched with the most scrupulous conscientiousness of honor." Knowing this fact has compelled me to honor the trust our fellow Americans have bestowed upon members of the United States military. We must never, ever do anything to violate this sacred obligation.

Of course, the things that I've done through the last 41 years are, as I like to say, interesting but irrelevant. What is important are the things each of you will continue to do as servant leaders for our force long after I've hung my blue Air Force uniform in the closet. If you live the aforementioned ideals – cherishing your family, leaving the campground better than you found it and making a difference in the lives of others – then tomorrow's Air Force will remain the premier air, space and cyberspace fighting force in the world. Thank you for serving our great nation and thank you for making a difference in my life. Aim High—Fly, Fight, Win!

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