



The Enlisted Perspective

By CMSAF Gerald R. Murray

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Are You Ready?

As Airmen, we raised our right hand and solemnly swore to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Our enemies emerged from the shadows on 9-11 and today, in the Global War on Terror, we are taking the fight directly to them. Our mission is clear – win this war.

We all have a role to play and we must continually evaluate whether we are doing everything we can to support the war and combat operations. If the call comes tomorrow for you to deploy to Baghdad, Kandahar, or wherever our Air Force needs you, are you ready to go? You must be. We are the nation's warriors!

By now, many of you are familiar with frequent or extended deployments. Thank you for your continued dedication and personal sacrifice. Many thanks to your family as well, for enduring many sacrifices as they await your return. You are the Airmen this nation called for and depends on. For those not ready to deploy at this moment, what deliberate action are you taking to be ready? For some, it may be time to reevaluate why you are serving in our Air Force. You volunteered and swore an oath; our nation relies on your readiness and commitment.

Combat operations call for a force with ingenuity and courage ... a force that is trained, equipped and ready to deploy at a moments notice. To achieve this you must maintain your duty and combat skills, health and fitness levels, and take the necessary steps to prepare yourself and loved ones for the road ahead. Your family counts on your plans and preparation for deployments and separation. Finances, housing, legal matters, child-care arrangements, and extended family support needs must all be settled before the deployments orders come down. These are basic responsibilities of being Expeditionary Airmen.

Thousands upon thousands of Airmen have served, fought and sacrificed before us. We owe it to our forefathers who shed their blood so we can enjoy the freedoms we cherish today. More than 2,400 of our comrades have given their lives in this fight against terrorism. We owe it to them to be ready to continue their legacy.

Our first Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Paul Airey, joined the Army Air Corps at the age of 17 to serve our nation during a hellacious time of war, WWII. He left U.S. soil in March, 1944. Soon afterwards, on his 28th combat bombing mission over Germany, his aircraft was shot down; he was captured, and held as a prisoner of war until May, 1945. We owe it to Chief Airey and so many others who endured years of separation and hardships to be ready.

Senior Airmen Jason Cunningham, a pararescueman, answered the call to deploy to Afghanistan in 2002. He continued answering that call even after being mortally wounded while on a rescue mission in support of Operation Anaconda. Jason was credited with saving 10 fellow comrades before he ultimately lost his life. We owe it to SrA Cunningham and his family, who gave the ultimate sacrifice, to be ready.

As the requirements for more six-month and one-year taskings and deployments continue to rise, more

Airmen will be called upon to deploy, and, in many cases, perform duties in different organizations and environments than they've known before. These are different times; the War on Terror is a different kind of war; and, it requires Airmen to be adaptive, courageous, and ready to fight. What has not changed is the fact that we are fighting for fundamental freedoms.

The American public; mothers, fathers, husbands, wives and most importantly, our children, are the beneficiaries of our efforts. I ask you to never forget the people who are counting on us—here at home and in the fledgling democracies abroad. Also never forget those who came before us. They answered our nation's call to fight for freedom. Now we must carry that torch. We inherited an arduous responsibility, but one we must shoulder with courage and honor. In time to come, others will reflect on our service. How will they judge our courage.....our commitment.....our readiness?

You have to be ready to fight today and tomorrow. Keep your focus on the mission, live by our Core Values, and remember how blessed we are to live in and serve our great nation.



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