MEMORANDUM FOR AIR STAFF DIRECTORS

FROM: AF/CC

SUBJECT: CSAF 22 Guidance to the Air Staff

As mentioned in my introductory memo to the Air Force, I am proud to serve alongside you as the 22nd Air Force Chief of Staff. This memorandum establishes what you can expect from me as your Chief, what I expect from you as senior Air Staff leaders, and how we must work together to address current and future challenges with the requisite sense of urgency, focus, and vision.

Peer competitors, especially China, continue aggressive efforts to negate long-standing U.S. warfighting advantages and challenge the United States’ interests and geopolitical standing. The establishment of the U.S. Space Force presents a generational opportunity for us, as an Air Force, to reconsider our structures and decision processes to ensure that we organize, train, and equip the force we need to compete with, deter, and win high-end fights against peer competitors. Today, the Air Force’s unique value proposition to the Nation—our ability to employ effects globally on near-immediate timelines—is increasingly at risk. We must work together to ensure tomorrow’s Airmen have the tools and concepts they need to preserve the unique value, and strategic options, we provide.

We must make enterprise-wide and clear-eyed judgments about our strategic future as an Air Force and how we enable all Airmen to reach their full potential, quickly adapt to changes in the geopolitical environment, and succeed in a high-end fight. The future will pose far more challenging scenarios than those to which we have become accustomed. We must change now—so that we are prepared when the Nation next calls upon our Airmen to fly, fight, and win.

What You Can Expect from Me

You can expect me to lead by means of four tenets that have served me throughout my career: Execute at a High Standard, Be Disciplined in Execution, Pay Attention to Details, and Have Fun. I believe success is a natural by-product if we always put forth our best effort and ensure the details have been addressed. I will continue to be open, transparent, and biased towards action, not shying away from tough decisions. As I work to build upon our proud legacy and drive change, I will do my best to articulate the why and my intent for the how. My personal credibility, my professional credibility, and the credibility of our Air Force are extremely important to me. As such, I will continually assess myself and our Air Force for continuous improvement. You can expect my actions, decisions, and recommendations to the Secretary of the Air Force as your Chief will remain consistent with the principles articulated above. By the same token, I will strive to create an environment where we have the opportunity to enjoy our successes and maintain proper balance by taking time to relax and have fun. We will work hard, work smart, and maintain a sustainable pace for the force.
What I Expect from You

I am unapologetic about having high standards for those who work with me. Again, our Air Force and our Nation deserve nothing less than our best. As senior leaders in our Air Force, here is what I expect from you:

- As Air Staff Directors, you must be the experts in your areas of responsibility within our Air Force and have an awareness of the entities outside your responsibility that contribute to the success of your Directorate and our Air Force. Most of the issues we must address require cross-functional collaboration. I expect timely and informed staff-developed options that preserve decision space and have been integrated below my level.

- We will be required to make consequential decisions with imperfect information so we must be increasingly comfortable with ambiguity and uncertainty. As I work with the MAJCOM Commanders to set the direction for the Air Force, I expect you to develop options coherent with our guidance and intent acknowledging that, while functional staff leads provide candid advice, the Secretary, the Chief, and commanders own the risk. The developed options should present the collaborative tension versus sub-optimum options resulting from compromised consensus. The presented options should take an enterprise-wide approach articulating risk and how it can be mitigated and/or balanced over time.

- When presenting options for my consideration, I expect the Air Staff to focus on precise diagnoses of the problems we are trying to solve, clarifying and understanding intent early in the process. Always provide me a bottom line up front, and then present to me: your recommendation, the facts and assumptions, the options considered, the views of others, and how you arrived at your recommendation. I expect you to put all relevant issues on the table for discussion knowing that there may be disagreement with the recommendation. In presentation, verbal and written, avoid hyperbole and use precise language to prevent misinterpretation.

- I expect you to confront the challenges facing our Air Force with the sense of urgency they warrant. At the same time, I expect you to flatten communication and share knowledge to develop and empower your staffs. You should proactively collaborate with key stakeholders who may have equities in the decisions we must make. Their feedback and the associated atmospherics will add value to our decisions by increasing our understanding of impacts and risk. Finally, the Air Staff is nothing without the Airmen—uniformed, civilian, contractors—you are privileged to lead. They deserve to work in an environment that fosters diversity, inclusion, and belonging, and I expect you to mentor, coach, and enable all to reach their full potential.

How We Must Work Together

For change to take hold, we need Air Force level buy-in on the nature of the problems we are trying to solve. We must develop materiel and non-materiel solutions that are affordable and ready on competition-relevant timelines. We must leverage the momentum resident in our rapidly-changing world to accelerate the types of changes we have long been interested in making, but have been unable to make due to systemic inertia or the need to address more immediate concerns. Confronting long-term challenges under conditions of deep uncertainty is a daunting task, but not impossible.
To succeed in this environment, we must be willing to work differently to make timely decisions. We must ensure our processes at all levels encourage innovative approaches that are not risk-averse, and embrace diversity of thought and experiences to help us consider broader sets of options. We must clarify staff roles and responsibilities, eliminating unnecessary duplication of effort in order to accelerate staff work and collaborate more effectively. We must be efficient and transparent. Our aim should be to always have candid dialogue to enable the “meeting after the meeting” to occur in the meeting. To avoid decision paralysis and extended timelines, we must have the appropriate governance structures that do not blur or confuse entities who have voting rights with those who have interests. We will seek counsel from those who have an interest and make timely decisions with those who have a vote.

There are very few Air Force decisions or actions we can take that do not require at least some degree of consultation or buy-in from external stakeholders. We cannot expect others to arrive at our position at the end game without early engagement and analytical rigor. Analysis, backed by logic and a consistent narrative, are essential to building the coalitions we will need with external stakeholders to gain traction in pursuing our solutions. This will enable more meaningful engagement in critical Air Force, Joint, OSD, and Congressional processes.

Accountability

I am responsible, as your Chief, for articulating why change is necessary and for directing what we must achieve in order to address the significant challenges facing our Air Force. I am also responsible to the Secretary for providing my best military advice and consultation on issues for decisions outside my authority. I am counting on you and the talented Airmen in your Directorate to answer with a sense of urgency how we will tackle these challenges. We will work iteratively, but I will delegate decision authority to the maximum extent practical; empower you to leverage your diverse, cross-disciplinary teams of experts to devise the best options and solutions; and trust you to do the right thing for our Air Force. Success requires us to be accountable to ourselves, each other, and all our Airmen.

I expect your professional, yet unvarnished, advice as we determine the aim points that will enable tomorrow’s Airmen to succeed no matter the challenge. We will measure our progress both subjectively and objectively with defensible analytics and the operational art from our collective years of experience while also leveraging our debrief culture to assess areas for improvement. I will rely heavily on the Director of Staff to develop, maintain, and update us on our progress toward our collective goals. We must never lose sight of the fact that our success will be ultimately determined by our ability to arm our Airmen with the tools they need to succeed in the high-end fight.

Conclusion

I am proud to serve with each and every one of you. I look forward to the journey ahead, and while I am humbled by the enormity of what we must achieve, I have the utmost confidence in our abilities to preserve and enhance the Air Force’s unique value proposition to the Nation. We must accelerate change to ensure future generations of Airmen remain lethal and effective. We must succeed; our security, our credibility, and our way of life depend on it.

CHARLES Q. BROWN, JR.
General, USAF
Chief of Staff