

LESSON TITLE: AIR FORCE CORE VALUES CASE STUDIES

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

This lesson uses case studies designed to stimulate student discussion on Air Force Core Values

TEACHING METHOD: Informal Lecture/Case Study

CONTACT HOURS: 1.5 Hours

READING:

United States Air Force Core Values, "The Little Blue Book," Air Education and Training Command, 1995

READING RATIONALE:

The Air Force Core Values Handbook is the Air Force's primary source for an explanation and definitions of the Air Force Core Values of Integrity, Service before Self, and Excellence in all We Do.

MATERIALS REQUIRED: Air Force Core Values Case Studies

LESSON OUTLINE:

Strategy: The lesson begins by reviewing the Air Force Core Values and their definitions. Then the instructor uses case studies to highlight the culture of compromise versus conscience that exists in daily activities. The content of the case studies allows the student to discuss one or more Core Values in each case. There are six different case studies. The instructor should intertwine the Air Force Core Values during the lesson. After discussing the cases, answer the "what do we do about it?" question. The instructor should use every opportunity, planned and/or spontaneous, to reinforce the Air Force Core Values.

Sequence of Events: Define the Air Force Core Values (15 min)

Discuss Air Force Core Values Case Studies (65 min)

Discuss Ways to Improve the AF's Ethical Climate (10 min)

LESSON INTEGRATION AND RATIONALE:

This lesson helps students form one of the foundations of Air Force leadership, understanding the Air Force Core Values.

LESSON OPR: National Headquarters, Civil Air Patrol

This lesson last revised: 23 April 2002

Case #1

Lt Johnson is a Civil Air Patrol officer and a scoutmaster for a local Boy Scout troop. His troop recently lost some of its camping equipment when mice invaded their hut and chewed the equipment up. The Boy Scout troop held a number of fundraising activities to replace the damaged camping equipment. The troop now needs some decent, airtight storage containers to help protect the equipment. Lt Johnson is friends with an active duty Air Force officer, Lt Nelson, who is a flight commander in the Security Forces Squadron at a nearby Air Force base. Lt Johnson explains his situation to Lt Nelson and asks him if he knows where he can find airtight storage containers. Lt Nelson knows that his organization has a few of these containers that have been gathering dust for some time. The containers had been used to ship training supplies and then were put into a storeroom to get them out of the way. The containers are recyclable and could be sent back to the sending unit.

#1) Why should Lt Nelson not offer the use of the containers to Lt Johnson and his Boy Scout troop to store their equipment?

Anticipated Response: He doesn't have permission, scout troops are not official DoD-sponsored organizations, this would be a misuse of government resources.

#2) Which Core Values would Lt Nelson have compromised? Explain.

Anticipated Response: Possible Integrity issue, Excellence: Material Resources (Reference page 7).

#3) How should Lt Nelson handle the issue of getting the containers donated to the scout troop?

Anticipated Response: He should use his chain-of-command, relate this to Excellence.

#4) What if Lt Nelson did donate the containers and three months later they were needed for military purposes? How should he handle this situation?

Anticipated Response: He should get the containers back unless they were officially donated.

#5) As Lt Nelson's supervisor, how would you handle the situation if you found out?

Anticipated Response: Counsel on regulations and upholding Air Force Core Values, this may be a legal issue and Lt Nelson may be forced to compensate the Air Force for the cost of the containers. Refer to the legal office.

Case #2

Dr. Stevens is the course director for a tough chemistry class at Colebrook High School. It is one week before the quarterly progress reports are scheduled to be posted. Ten days after the reports come out, Colebrook High's football team will play its rival, Monadnock High in the most publicized football game in the area. The star running back for Colebrook High, Randy Cartwright, failed the examination in Dr. Steven's course today and will be placed on academic probation -- meaning he will not be eligible to play during the Monadnock game. Colebrook High will likely be humiliated on local TV and in the local newspapers. Randy failed by only four points, and Dr. Stevens doubts whether the course is all that relevant to Randy's graduation preparation. He believes that a victory over Monadnock High will have very positive implications for Randy in his desire to receive a college football scholarship. Dr. Stevens considers "finding" an additional four points on the running back's test.

#1) What should Dr. Stevens do in this situation?

Anticipated Response: The focus here is on Integrity - "Do what's right when no one is looking." (page 1)

#2) Do you think there is an Integrity problem if the change in score has no effect on anyone else's course standing? Suppose Dr. Stevens changes the bell curve and re-scores everyone's test to reflect the additional points?

Anticipated Response: Consider the moral trait of Integrity --Honesty. "We don't pencil whip, cover up violations, or falsify documents or write misleading operational readiness messages." (page 1). Also, consider the moral trait of Responsibility.

#3) Dr. Stevens is the course director and may redo the bell curve at his discretion. How may this be viewed from an Excellence standpoint?

Anticipated Response: Dr. Stevens is compromising this Core Value. In the short term, he may be helping Colebrook High and Randy if he "finds the four points", but ultimately he is discrediting himself and Colebrook High and is stunting Randy's personal growth. (Reference page 6).

#4) Service Before Self speaks of rule-following and doing one's duty. How is Dr. Stevens violating this Core Value if he tries to rationalize a way to pass the failing football player?

Anticipated Response: Solicit student feedback. (Reference page 3, "Rule following.")

Saturday morning, Mitch White was planning to sleep-in when the phone rang. Mitch answers the phone and is surprised to hear his Civil Air Patrol squadron commander, Lt Col Sheffield say “I’m looking for volunteers to fill sandbags for a nearby community threatened by a flood.” Mitch says he has plans with his friends for the day and will not be able to help. He will see what he can do the following day.

#1) How do the Core Values relate to a situation like this?

Anticipated Response: We should practice Excellence in all We Do (page 6). We have a moral obligation to help others because people look up to us as leaders, on and off-duty.

#2) Why would a Civil Air Patrol member’s relationship with the local community be part of his/her responsibility to the unit? What if the CAP’s squadron commander believes it is, and prompts regular “volunteer” projects?

Anticipated Response: While it’s not your official responsibility, as decent human beings and good neighbors we should promote good public relations with the community. If your commander prompts regular volunteer projects, you should participate, but not be penalized if you don’t.

#3) Mitch didn’t give a specific reason for not helping. Is he performing less than Excellence in his duty?

Anticipated Response: It is usually a common courtesy to give an explanation for one’s response. However, the question of Excellence is not an easy one in this situation. Many will say Mitch is selfish, but we need to know more about his reasons.

#4) Based upon the Core Value of Service Before Self, when must you respond to requests for help?

Anticipated Response: We all have limitations in ability, time, etc. We should help as much as possible, but we must also know when we’ve reached our limits.

Case #4

Cadet 2Lt Martin is summoned to the unit commander's office and informed of the Commander's decision to nominate her for a local volunteer award at the end of the next quarter. "This should give you enough time to study the awards packages of past winners to figure out what the board wants," says the Commander. "Think seriously about volunteering a few extra hours in the community to beef that package up."

Martin does as the Commander suggests and, at the appropriate time, provides to the Commander a list of accomplishments for the quarter. A week later, she is again summoned to the Commander's office and given the awards package to read. "Piece of cake," says the Commander. "I think you have more than a fighting chance to bring home the bacon!"

At first the Commander's enthusiasm is unavoidably infectious, but then Martin begins to look closely at the specific points made in the awards package. There is no doubt the Commander has "massaged" the truth on some of the bullet statements and, in one or two cases, the truth has been stretched to the ripping point. She points out these problems to the Commander, and he assures her "everything will be taken care of."

Martin goes into the interview for the local volunteer award believing the Commander cleaned up the problems in the nomination package, but that belief is quickly destroyed when one of the board members asks her a question based on one of the problematic bullet statements. After the interview, Martin reports this persistent problem to the Commander, who again promises to "take care of it." Two days later, the Commander relays the information that Martin won at the local level and will compete, the following week, at the state level. "Good luck," he says to Martin, "it's all up to you now."

The next week, Martin wins at the state level, but this time it is impossible to tell from the questions whether or not the package still contains the problematic bullet statements.

#1) What was the primary Air Force Core Value not being adhered to in this case?

Anticipated Response: Integrity

#2) Who was not adhering to this Air Force Core Value and why?

Anticipated Response: Neither the Commander nor Martin was adhering to this Air Force Core Value. The Commander demonstrated a lack of Integrity by trying to give Martin an unfair advantage through asking her to study the packages of past award winners and massaging (pencil-whipping) the truth on some of the bullet statements. Martin also demonstrated a lack of Integrity by not saying anything in the beginning about her Commander's suggestion to study the packages of past award winners. Also, she didn't try and take herself out of the running for the state level award, knowing the problems that were occurring.

#3) Did this case bring the other Air Force Core Values into question? How?

Anticipated Response: Yes, Excellence in all We Do. There is a distinct lack of Excellence in the way events were handled. Interestingly, the Commander sacrificed Excellence by the unprofessional and dishonest attempt to recognize the Excellence of one of his people.

#4) What will happen in the squadron if others find out about the lack of Integrity and Excellence demonstrated?

Anticipated Response: Drop in morale, loss of respect and trust for the Commander and Martin, more situations disregarding Air Force Core Values, degraded mission effectiveness.

#5) Who could Martin have consulted with if she thought she was unable to handle this situation herself?

Anticipated Response: Trusted peer, immediate supervisor, Chaplain, next person in the chain-of-command.

#6) What should Martin do after winning the state-level award and realizing her package may still have contained problematic bullet statements?

Anticipated Response: Pursue the truth since there is a question as to the Integrity of the situation. Ignoring the situation makes Martin just as guilty if the package still contained problematic bullets.

Case #5

Pamela Robinson, a Civil Air Patrol cadet, went to a local Walmart to do some shopping. While there, she ran into a good friend of hers, Trudy Jones. They have known each other since elementary school. The two women talked for a few minutes then said “goodbye.” Pamela went to the make-up section to pick out a new shade of lipstick. While she was looking at the lipsticks, she caught a glimpse of Trudy in the jewelry department. She saw Trudy look around, slowly slip some jewelry into her purse, and walk out of the store. A few minutes later, a security guard approached Pamela and asked her if she had seen anyone taking jewelry from the jewelry department.

NOTE: This case is designed to point out the fact that the lines between right and wrong sometimes become blurred when friendship is involved. However, students should understand there is no right way to do wrong. Small compromises often lead to big trouble.

#1) Do you think Pamela should tell the security guard that she saw Trudy slip some jewelry in her purse?

Anticipated Response: Yes. “A person of integrity possesses moral courage and does what is right even if the personal cost is high.” (page 1).

#2) Do you think this would be a difficult situation for Pamela?

Anticipated Response: Yes, because she is wrestling with her Integrity --doing what is right or helping a friend.

Case #6

Lt Col Grant commands a maintenance unit. Her troops, many of them young airmen living in the dorms with little extra money, don't get to use the Services Squadron's facilities (like the Auto Hobby Shop) very much because they work "odd" hours compared to most other units. Several of the airmen have asked for her permission to use squadron tools to do off-duty work on their private vehicles. Lt Col Grant knows they're unable to use the Auto Hobby Shop because they are too busy supporting the mission when it's open and she has been unable to get the hobby shop manager to change operating hours. She decides to let her troops use squadron tools and make a vehicle maintenance bay available to them.

#1) Assuming there is no adverse mission impact and the commander does nothing to hide what is taking place -- after all, she thinks this is a reasonable accommodation -- do you think there is anything wrong with this situation? Explain.

Anticipated Response: It is against regulations to use government resources for private gain, Lt Col Grant doesn't have the authority to approve this, it causes people to question her moral character and raises questions of preferential treatment toward her troops.

#2) Service Before Self tells us that a good leader places the troops ahead of one's own comfort. What's wrong with taking care of the troops? Isn't the Commander permitted to use her own judgment?

Anticipated Response: There's nothing wrong with taking care of the troops, but the Commander shouldn't violate rules and regulations in doing so (Refer to "Rule following", page 3); appearance of wrongdoing from others outside the unit; there are limits to "using your own judgment;" she must follow set rules and regulations.

#3) Part of Integrity is moral courage--doing what is right, even if the personal cost is high. Did the Commander do the right thing? How could she have been more innovative in coming to a different solution?

Anticipated Response: No. She should have sought other alternatives before making the decision on her own, used the chain of command, requested permission before acting.