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APPENDIX F: LEADERSHIP STUDY: STRATEGIC VISION

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Senior Noncommissioned Officer Leadership and Establishing a Strategic Vision for the Enlisted Force¹

The Air Force enlisted corps comprises over 80% of uniformed Airmen (regular Air Force, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve). Within the enlisted force structure, Air Force senior noncommissioned officers (SNCOs) lead an enlisted corps that is professional, technically competent, and highly motivated. The primary role of the Air Force SNCO is to ensure mission accomplishment by providing highly effective leadership. SNCOs are also responsible for evaluating, developing, and executing the Service's institutional competencies through the NCO corps at all levels of leadership. A critical function of the SNCO is to develop an enlisted force with the required skills and abilities to meet today's peacetime, conflict, and contingency requirements. They emphasize developing leaders with tactical expertise early in their careers, and with operational competence and strategic vision when they reach the SNCO ranks and responsibilities.

Strategic Vision Level

The strategic vision level of the enlisted corps involves senior enlisted leaders (SELs) who have responsibilities for large organizations, and who deal with issues requiring inter-organizational cooperation and extended timelines. Although this strategic level of leadership normally applies to chief master sergeants (CMSgts), it can sometimes include senior master sergeants in higher headquarters positions (Department of Defense, combatant commands, HAF, MAJCOM, direct reporting units, field operating agencies, and select agencies and headquarters).

From the SNCO perspective, strategic vision centers on the development of enlisted Airmen. Taking an enterprise and holistic approach, it sets the deliberate development path for the enlisted force. The SNCO translates this effort into an effective enlisted force development plan by shaping, and navigating in, the environment. It is a broad and encompassing concept that is forward looking and focused on the sustainment, re-

¹ Information is a consolidation of interviews conducted in May-June 2010 by Mr. David Scott Johnson, Air Force Research Institute, with 15 chief master sergeants (CMSgts), including the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF). Each CMSgt was either a Combatant Command, Major Command, numbered Air Force or wing-level Command Chief Master Sergeant or enlisted career field managers at the Air Staff.

evaluation, and development of required competencies necessary to achieve the desired effects in support of the joint force commander. Therefore, the strategic vision as espoused by SELs should outline the expectations for all enlisted Airmen, providing them with a logical, consistent, forward-looking perspective that supports the development of the future SELs in the Air Force.

Today's and tomorrow's enlisted Airmen are truly "Strategic Airmen." Our enlisted corps is consistently required to operate outside of the traditional construct of the Air Force in concert with or in support of sister Service, allied, coalition, federal, state, and non-governmental operations. This ability to excel and contribute to our national objectives is achieved by determining the required enlisted force structure necessary to be successfully prepared for future challenges and demands. Once the required force is determined, the SNCO sets the direction, steps, and timeline to reach that end-state. Senior NCOs are leaders.

The Senior Enlisted Leader

The senior enlisted leader understands what it means to be an Airman from a doctrinal, whole of government, and joint perspective. SELs work closely with senior officers, consistently taking an enterprise-wide whole of government approach, which embraces all levels, and understand commander's intent, their unit's mission, vision, and goals. Not only must SELs understand senior officers' intentions, they must also be able to clearly interpret and articulate that commander's intent to the lowest enlisted levels. They accomplish this by understanding and articulating the linkages that each enlisted member, regardless of rank, has to the overall success of the unit's mission.

The SEL understands and appreciates the future requirements of the enlisted Airmen in the joint, coalition, and interagency environments. In doing so, the SEL is able to complement their senior officer's leadership as they pursue their strategic vision. One of the primary responsibilities of the SEL is to champion the continued professional development of the enlisted corps and take up the mantle of leadership to set future enlisted leaders up for success. SELs are the key stakeholder in maintaining the traditions of the enlisted corps, ensuring these traditions are carried on by future generations of NCOs and SELs.

SELs are strategic advisors and provide the enlisted perspective into the overall strategic vision. They are an integral part of the overall strategic-level decision making process, and are expected to serve as an "honest broker" to the senior leader as well as champion and protect the strategic vision.

The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Command Chief Master Sergeants, Career Field Managers, and other strategic Chief Master Sergeants

The Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, Command Chief Master Sergeants, and enlisted career field managers have diverse backgrounds with experience at the squadron, wing, headquarters, joint, and combatant command levels. Having an enterprise-wide perspective, they are politically savvy and have developed relationships with the other Service SELs. These SELs also follow a deliberate developmental path, building on people/team and organizational competencies, which leads to the creation

of effective institutional leadership competencies. Overall, the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force will have a balanced and diverse career built on a foundation of deliberate tactical, operational, and strategic leadership education and training, varying assignments at all levels within the Air Force, and joint experience.

Enlisted Development

The enlisted role is not centered around the individual, it is about service; service to the Nation, the Air Force, and to the unit. As a result, the Air force takes a deliberate approach to enlisted force development, which includes career progression with increased levels of supervisory, leadership, and managerial responsibilities. The foundation of the enlisted force development is the [institutional competencies](#) that provide the common force developmental language and represent the leadership, management, and warrior ethos qualities required of all Airmen.

Professional military education (PME) plays a key role in the overall development of enlisted Airmen. PME is part of the enlisted continuum of education, which begins when they enter the Air Force and continues throughout their careers. Although the Air Force provides a wide range of educational schools, courses, programs and opportunities, each enlisted member also has a personal responsibility for his or her own professional and personal development. Because education is essential for the development of enlisted Airmen, they are not only expected but highly encouraged to actively pursue educational and experiential opportunities throughout their careers. Airmen should also be educated in their roles associated with the Air Force's interagency partners. Off-duty education provides development by enhancing one's intellectual capability, capacity, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, diverse personal and professional developmental paths provide our Airmen opportunities to undertake varying degrees of challenges and build problem solving skills derived from new knowledge and experiences.

Support of Enduring Deployments and Contingency Operations

Support of enduring deployments and contingency operations creates a better, more culturally aware enlisted corps. Due to the wide range of mission sets and support requirements, such as joint expeditionary tasking and coalition support assignments, our combat hardened enlisted corps often performs duties outside of its specifically-trained specialty. The result is a more well-rounded and experienced enlisted member with joint, coalition, and whole-of-government perspectives. As a result, the enlisted corps is capable of taking on new roles and missions in support of the ever-changing global environment. In the past, enlisted Airmen were only assigned duties within their specialty fields. It was uncommon to find enlisted members working outside of their specific specialty code. Today, the Air Force enlisted member can be found across the battlespace supporting the joint force commander in many different ways. The professional enlisted corps has transitioned from an attitude of "it's not my job," when asked to perform non-specialty code tasks to "what can I do to help make the mission a success," regardless of what Service or nation they are supporting.

Enlisted Joint Perspectives

Today's Airmen, across the entire Air Force, develop a joint perspective early in their careers. For some career fields that have similar technical foundations, such as medical and explosive ordnance disposal, initial training is conducted in a joint environment. This joint perspective provides an understanding of other Service cultures, competencies, and terminologies, while preserving the Air Force culture. The enlisted force should understand the core competencies that Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines are educated and trained in and employ. This provides them a much greater understanding of their responsibilities to execute operations with a strategic vision, but also understand how their Air Force competencies merge with our sister Services. Understanding of culture, responsibilities and shared competencies builds early interoperability that is necessary for immediate success in the joint/deployed environment.

Airmen should also be educated in their roles associated with the Air Force's interagency partners. Enlisted Airmen work daily to support U.S. Northern Command as they defend the homeland. Through the National Incident Management System (NIMS) military members are always subordinate to an interagency or local responder. They don't take over; they enhance capabilities to save lives, property and secure the homeland.

All Airmen should have a thorough understanding of the contributions of all joint and total force Services. In-depth perspectives and the ability to think multi-dimensionally are becoming increasingly important as the global nature of Air Force operations demand that Airmen continue to deploy jointly.

Future Role of the Enlisted Airman

Throughout the history of the Air Force, enlisted Airmen have often performed the same functions as officers. For example, during the early days of the Air Force, the first pilots and instructor pilots were enlisted. Since then, certain officer-only career fields have successfully transitioned to the enlisted force. An example of this is in space and cyberspace operations, where a growing number of enlisted Airmen are becoming key to those operations. Undoubtedly, the future will see even more traditional officer-only duties being introduced to the enlisted corps. These emerging career fields will be manned by highly skilled, trained, computer/technology savvy, and adaptable enlisted Airmen.

As the Air Force continues to reexamine technical skill set requirements in the application of airpower across the full spectrum of operations, especially with emerging technologies, enlisted Airmen will have greater opportunities to expand their specialty areas as critical team members. This will allow officers to better function in leadership positions that develop and lead strategic vision while the enlisted Airmen carry out those visions.
