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Thank you. Good morning. I'd like to start out by saying I'm proud to be a lifetime member of AFA and I want to thank the AFA for all you've done for our Air Force, in the past, in the present, for the future. You know and also for all you've done in taking care of our airmen and their families. And also I want to start off by talking to General Schwartz. Sir, thank you for your kindness yesterday in the way that you announced my retirement with total class. My wife and I were humbled to serve alongside you and Suzie and every airman in the last 30 years. Thank you.

(Applause.)

Thirty years is a long time. I'm not going to talk about Rod McKinley but I do want to talk about a couple of things during my career which I think were really, really important and I think two of the most important days in my lifetime that I'll always cherish and remember, and No. 1 is a very special day, which was October 14 of 2006. And that was the day that we dedicated the Air Force Memorial to the 55 thousand airmen who have given their lives for our country. And in addition to that that memorial was there not only for the 55 thousand airmen from the past, but also for all the airmen in our future. And that was a very special day because I remember so many parents coming up with tears streaming down their face and thanking me and everybody there for dedication of that Air Force Memorial. And I fly in and out of Washington, DC, continuously, and I look every time I hit the city to look and see those three spires, which mean so many things to all of us. But you know, it reminds me of the Thunderbirds with the starbursts. It reminds me of the core values, integrity, service, and excellence, and there's so many memories for each and every person that goes over there. But for me, for joining the Air Force in 1974 that is the most remarkable day of my Air Force career when we dedicated that Air Force memorial.

No. 2 just happened recently, and that was down at basic training on the second of January, the day that we graduated the very first eight-and-a-half week class from basic training. And I had a vision about a little over a year ago that we should do something for the enlisted heritage of the Air Force, to go out there and really recognize all the airmen from the past who did great things and we should start it right there in basic training. And I had the vision it should be on the parade field, where every airmen—the gateway to the Air Force is Lackland Air Force Base for the enlisted force, where we graduate and go down out there and march down that parade field, and with the help of 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Force, the 37<sup>th</sup> Wing, AETC, we made this happen on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January. And it's called the Enlisted Heroes Walk, and every Friday morning we have brand new airmen graduate basic training and they march in front of the grand stand there proudly to be airmen for the first time. But now we have something very special when they first hit the bricks on that morning we have pavers there, and each one of these pavers is dedicated to our enlisted

heritage. And right now, there are 164 names, different pavers there. And each one of these pavers has a special name on it. Each one is an enlisted Medal of Honor recipient. Each one is Air Force Cross recipient or Silver Star. Right now there's 164 names, so when they take that call on left and they start marching down that pathway in front of the grand stand, when they hit those bricks they already start thinking about all of those great airmen who have come before them, and pretty soon we're going to add one more name to it, and that is Staff Sergeant Rhyner, who you saw yesterday. He will be paver No. 165.

Our enlisted heritage and our Air Force heritage is very important to all of us and we much embrace it. We have to learn about it. As I go visit squadrons and so forth all across the Air Force, a lot of times I'll walk through a squadron and on all the walls we see aircraft. And I love aircraft, I'm in aircraft maintenance, and I love my F-4s, I love my A-10s, but it's not about equipment, it's not about just aircraft. It's about our airmen, and we have such a rich heritage we need to look and put our airmen on the walls and talk about the great things that our airmen have done in the past. We recently created a new Airman's Creed, which we were all very proud of, and it starts, out "I am an American airman. I am a warrior. I have answered my nation's call," and it says, "I am an American airman." It does not say "I am an American troop." It does not say I am an American kid. It says, I am an American airman, and we have to embrace that term "airman." It is so important to each one of us.

I remember I hadn't been in the office very long, only a couple of months, as the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, and I was in there talking to General Moseley behind closed doors, just him and I. We were standing and he kept talking about our kids out there, our kids are doing a great job, and our kids, this. And it finally got to the point I couldn't take it anymore. And I said, "Sir, they're not kids. They're airmen." He stopped dead in his tracks and looked at me, and I'm like "Oh, shit, I'm fired." (Laughter). And I remember that chill that went through my body, and he said, "You know, Rod, you're right. They are airmen." So I ask all of you if you have an opportunity out there and you're going to talk about our great airmen, and you mention them as troops or kids, substitute that word airmen. It is so important to all of us, especially when you think about SSgt. Rhyner and so many of the hundreds of thousands of others out there that are just incredible. Airmen, I'm so proud to be an American airman and wear this uniform. What a privilege for all of us.

I want to talk about the quality of our airmen today. It's absolutely unbelievable; we have not lowered our standards whatsoever. It is difficult to become an airman, it is very difficult. Let me take you down that path and the incredible job that our recruiters are doing. Only 65 percent of Americans graduate high school. That's horrible. We have to improve that as a country, but after you take that, because every one of our airmen basically, 99 percent-plus have a high school diploma, so we've already lost 35 percent of the public. But then you take away another piece of the public that has body piercings, tattoos, they have drug history, they have all kinds of issues. We only have about 15 or 20 percent of the American public that we can actually recruit. We have recruiters out in the audience today and they are doing an unbelievable job, and so when you go and you look at every airman wearing the blue

uniform you know there is quality right there, that these are absolutely fantastic airmen. It is our responsibility as leaders, once we grab those airmen, that we keep them on the path to success because it is difficult to get them. It is difficult to recruit them, and when we get them, we've got to keep them going, because we want every airman to be successful. We do not want any airmen to fail. It's our job as leaders to keep them pointed on the right path. So we're doing a good job out there.

Basic training—just extended basic training to eight-and-a-half weeks. The product that we get from basic training, those airmen, is absolutely incredible. I love going to see the graduations on Friday mornings because they walk across there, they have military bearing. They have customs and courtesy. They have discipline. And guess what? Every single one of them are absolutely physically fit and a terrific specimen. So we have this product from hometown, USA, that we take through basic training and the product is absolutely fantastic. We have to ensure we keep them on the path to success, and that's leadership. And sometimes we think leadership is sending an e-mail. Leadership by e-mail is not leadership. You have to get out from behind your desk, you've got to get out and you've got to (inaudible—press the flesh?) and you've got to talk to your airmen to keep them pointed on the right track. If you see an airman going down the wrong path you've got to do some corrective action and get them on the right path.

As I talk to large crowds, I'm often asked—Chief, what is your greatest accomplishment in your career? And the expected answer is, well, I'm the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force, or I have this many decorations or this many awards. My greatest accomplishment in my Air Force career is people. It's airmen. To have an airman going down one path, and to be able to grab that airman because you care about them and bring them in and you talk to them, you mentor them, and you lead them, and you point them in the right direction. You see that airman go on, and the rest of their career and there is something special, and maybe you see them retire later on, and you know when they were a young airman they were definitely going down the wrong road. That, for me, is my greatest achievement in my career. It's people, leading airmen.

Our No. 3 priority in the Air Force right now is taking—developing and taking care of airmen and our families. And I got to tell you we are doing a fantastic job in that area, and I want to highlight a couple of things that we're doing. One thing that we absolutely it's an honor to do and we must do is take care of our wounded warriors. And we are doing a fantastic job of that, believe me—we track every single wounded airman and every Saturday morning, the boss and I, we get an e-mail letting us know the status of every one of our wounded. And every time when I'm at home and a C-17 comes and lands at Andrews I go out and meet the plane to be there, not only to meet the airmen that are wounded, but also the soldiers, sailors, marines, and coast guardsmen, because it's important we take care of them. We recently changed some policy that I think was a little bit overdue, because we've had wounded airmen out there and for a period of time we didn't even do any type of evaluations on them. They go through years and not even have an EPR or anything else. And they were kind of stagnant; they didn't know how they fit into the promotion

system because they really didn't. So now we've established some new policies that we take care of them and they are fully considered for promotion every single year. Every year, the wounded airmen will get a letter of evaluation to make sure that we are evaluating them as they go, and they will still have the opportunity to test, whether it be SKT-exempt or PFE-only, they will be able to test and be there for promotion. They will also be considered for step, and this is a great improvement for all our wounded that not only are we going to be taking care of them and making sure they heal their wounds and all those other things and take care of their family, but we're also now taking care of them as they're active duty, we're going to follow up to make sure that they still have promotion opportunities. What a great victory there. And I've spoken to many of the wounded, and they think this is a fantastic improvement. We just finished, not too long ago, so we're doing a great job taking care of our wounded.

Education of our enlisted force, the last two years, we've had the highest CCAF graduation—Community College of the Air Force—in the history of the Air Force. About 18 thousand airmen, the past two years, have received a CCAF degree. Our young airmen have got it. They come in and we recruit and most airmen come in, they want an education, and they are getting it. And with the great help of Air University and AETC we've recently last summer established a new program called the ABC, and that's the Associated-to-Bachelor Program, where you take that Community College of the Air Force degree, 64 semester hours, and now we have about 45 universities across this country that will take all those 64 credit hours, and they will apply that towards a Bachelor's degree. And our airmen are jumping off and taking that and going in the right direction and doing wonderful things with that. Now, we have no plan to make the enlisted force a requirement that you have to have a Bachelor's degree or anything. We're not going to do that, but to give our airmen the opportunity to get an education, even if they stay with us for four years, or six years, wouldn't it be great if they choose to leave the Air Force they walk out the door with a degree. They earn that while they were in the Air Force. They're going to be better citizens, they're going to have better employment opportunities, so my hat's off to Air University and everything they've done to help improve the education of our airmen out there, just doing an absolutely incredible job.

Dormitories—we have to take care of our airmen, and taking care of our airmen is not just making it one of our priorities, but it's actually putting funding there. You have to give money, and our Air Force is doing that. This past year we put 1\$40 million into infrastructure to take care of our dormitories across all commands. And that's important because we go to the point for a while where you're taking care of the dormitories and you don't have the money to take care of infrastructure, you have mold and mildew, you end up putting paint over walls. It comes right back; you actually have to change out the HVAC systems and sometimes the best thing you can do with a dormitory is a big old bulldozer, and get rid of it, but it takes money. We are committed to investing in our dormitories for unaccompanied housing to take care of our airmen to make sure they have the proper living facilities out there. Housing for family members, privatization—great victories across the Air Force. We now have some housing out there for families of all ranks that

through privatization we have this, and without it we'd be waiting another 20 to 30 years for military construction, and these homes are unbelievable. We've had some glitches along the way; it's a learning process. But believe me, we are taking care of military families out there with housing and so forth.

Childcare—we have put a lot of money into childcare. We only have 1,900 vacancies out there right now so we are committed and we just recently got more money. As a matter of fact, we had the opportunity, myself and my peers, to testify before Congress on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, and we testified on dormitories, housing, childcare, and in the stimulus bill we just got, we got \$100 million for dormitories; we got \$80.1 million for housing; we got more money for child care, so Congress listens. We have to continue down the road to take care of our airmen and their families.

And lastly, I want to talk about a concern I have, and a concern is stress, stress on all branches of service. In our Air Force, we have stress also. This is a stressful time; we're going through many changes. We're kind of reshaping the Air Force and we need to. The great news is we're no longer going down to 316, 600. We saw that that was the wrong glide path to be taken because we have a lot of new emerging missions out there. The new emerging missions require personnel; they require airmen. We know that we need to put probably 2,500 or so airmen back into aircraft maintenance. We have to put airmen into UAS. This is a growing career field of growing specialty that the UAV is going to continue to grow. It's not going to go away, so we need to put more experts into there. The Nuclear Enterprise, we have the right focus. We are going to make sure that everything dealing with the Nuclear Enterprise is well in hand, that no one has to ever worry about the safety, security, of the Nuclear Enterprise. But that also means we need to put a couple (inaudible) thousand people in the Nuclear Enterprise. Acquisitions—we've got to put more airmen, civilian, officer, enlisted into acquisitions. We need acquisition success.

AFRICOM, cyberspace, see with all these new emerging missions out there it means more airmen. Well, we never got down to 316 thousand. We really only got down to, the lowest we got, was probably around 327 thousand. We're going up to 330 right now, and by about 2013 we'll get to 332-seven. So the reshaping and moving of our airmen from place to place to fit all these emerging missions, that causes stress, because airmen don't know exactly how they fit into that. Am I going to be asked to cross-train, what does this mean for my future, where am I going to be, what are going to be my assignment choices? These are difficult things that lead to stress for our airmen, and at the end of the day, when we tap our airmen on the shoulders and we say, you're going to need to do this, they will do it, because the quality of our airmen is absolutely unbelievable out there and it's the best we've ever had.

Another stress that really concerns me is the financial market out there in America right now, and we talk about all the foreclosures and everything. I had a chance to speak to Secretary Gates and President Obama recently in the Oval Office, and we spoke about this. This is also a big stress on our military members. You know, we also invest. We have money in the stock markets, and we also have spouses that lose jobs. We also have families that have

foreclosures, and sometimes when we tap someone on the shoulder and say, we need you to PCS to this base, this location, sometimes it makes difficult decisions happen. And the decision may be—do I PCS, and I lose \$200,000 on my home? Or do I choose to retire, separate, or another thing that's happened is sometimes we have now a dislocated family, where the spouse and kids will stay in the house and the military member will PCS and they'll find some little apartment somewhere, and so you have a dislocated family.

These things are real; we've lost money in the market and these are stresses on our people out there, and with all the stress out there, it's also to some other problems, and that's something that's dear to our hearts, that we look every morning and we read the casualty report from OEF, OIF, but also suicides. You know, I think, today or tomorrow, General Fraser is testifying on this. We've seen an increase in suicides in our Air Force. It's not a big increase, but no suicides are acceptable. And to stop suicides, in my opinion, being a first sergeant for 10 years, it's not about computer-based training, it's not about special classes you can go to, but it's about supervisors caring about their airmen, knowing their airmen and knowing when that airman has a problem. Because if that airman knows that the supervisor truly knows him, cares about him, if they have a problem whether it be financial, marriage, relationship, whatever, that they can go to that supervisor and that supervisor will be there to help him. That's how we help take care of this. The Army is having very difficult problems right there, and we're trying to attack this from all branches of service, because there is a tremendous amount of stress out there, and we have to recognize that as leaders that these are stressful times for everybody.

Great story—I was fortunate to be the Command Chief, 11<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Alaska, serving with General Chandler. I heard a story in Eielson Air Force Base, and for those of you who know Alaska, Eielson can get very cold. The command chief there was Todd Kabalan at the time, and he is now the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Command Chief, and it was late at night; about 8-9 o'clock in the evening. It was very cold, there was snow, wind blowing, and the commander and the command chief were at the gate, and as people were leaving the gate, they were stopping every car, and they were telling them, we care about you. It is very cold out there, and we want you to be safe, because you are a part of our "ice man" family. We want you to come back safely tonight, and nothing happen to you. So they were stopping every car and doing this, and this was not the only night they were doing this. They did this on a regular basis. It was a lady came driving up in her car, and the chief stopped her and she rolled down the window, it was very cold, and he goes, "Hey I just want to stop you and tell you that we care about you, you are important to us. You are a member of our family. Please be careful as you go out on these dangerous roads tonight because we want you to come back home safely." And she rolled up the window and she drove off. She was a couple hundred yards passed the front gate and they noticed the brake lights came on the vehicle. She stopped, she sat there for a couple of minutes, she turned around and she came back through the gate. And she stopped and she said, "I want you to know that I was on my way off base to commit suicide. My plan was I was going to go as fast as I could and I was going to run myself into an overpass. I was going to end it all, but because you stopped me, and you told me that you cared about

me, that I was part of the family, I'm going to get some counseling, I'm going to work on my marriage, and we're going to try to work things out." If the Chief had not stopped her, had not told that person how much that person meant to all of them, she would have been one of the casualties we would read about in the morning.

You never know the impact you can have on someone's life. It's the little things. It's the little things like, stop and pat someone on the shoulder and say, "How are you doing? How's the family? Happy birthday." It's the little things. Leadership and success is about relationships and how you treat people. You're here early. He is (inaudible). So please as you go out there, care about your airmen, make sure they know you care, and those little things that you do mean the world. Do we have time for a couple of questions? We don't have time for any questions, but I will be here all day. God bless you. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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