



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

7 January 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR AFSOC SPECIAL TACTICS AIRMEN

FROM: AFSOC/CC  
100 Barley Street, Cmd Suite  
Hurlburt Field, FL 32544

SUBJECT: Letter to the Force—Air Force Special Tactics Standards

Teammates,

By now, many of you have seen an anonymous email, apparently sent by either a serving member of our force or someone closely connected to the force, to a wide but undisclosed recipient list earlier this week. Within hours, this message was widely proliferated on social media. I want to directly address the content of the email and provide a view on the underlying concerns raised in the email.

Our standards seem to be the email-writer's main concern: the perception the author holds that we've lowered standards to accommodate women in the operating force. This is an understandable concern and would be troubling if true. But, it's not. The high standards we have for every operator in the force—regardless of demographic makeup—must be tied to the mission. Lowering the standard to accommodate an individual would be negligent because it would put the mission and the larger team at risk. Our standards in the operating forces are tied to mission requirements and the only time we should change the standards is when the mission changes. We do make changes in how we train Airmen in order to improve the effectiveness of our training, but we do not lower our standards. Our standards have not changed to accommodate women. Period.

But beyond standards, there are norms, which are those things which reflect something usual or expected. It's easy to conflate standards and norms, because over time, the norms we establish can come to be viewed as "the standard." The norms of how we train Special Tactics operators have certainly changed over time. Years ago, the norm was to assess candidates via "Indoc." We learned there was a better way to assess and select candidates for Special Tactics training and we migrated away from Indoc. The norm became what we know today as "A&S."

The anonymous author asserts we have changed the standards to accommodate an individual trainee. I believe the author is wrong. Nevertheless, as I am part of the chain of command which would have changed the standards to accommodate an individual, I am not a disinterested observer in this matter. Therefore, to ensure the integrity of the process, I have

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asked the Secretary of the Air Force to direct his Inspector General to conduct an independent review of the allegations contained in the email. The results of that independent review will be provided to the Secretary and we can trust the Secretary will take steps he believes are in the best interest of the Department.

Finally, the email spotlighted—by name—a fellow Airman attempting to become the first female Special Tactics Officer. Publicly criticizing a fellow Airman in this manner is abusive bullying and vindictive harassment...doing so without factually correct information is irresponsible and slanderous. Had the author elected to challenge the command's position on women in the career field, or the command's process for assessing, selecting, and training Airmen who wish to join our formation and contribute to our mission, I would have welcomed the opportunity to engage in the conversation. As it is, I am simply left profoundly disappointed someone in our community would treat a fellow Airman in this fashion. To the author of the anonymous email and those who share the same perspective, please know *it is you* who haven't met our standards.

In closing, it is imperative you know I view standards as the fabric of our profession. Our standards must always be connected to the requirements of the mission and we have not and will not adjust standards to accommodate an individual or a demographic. I don't believe that's happened in this case, but an independent review will discern whether it has or hasn't. In the meantime, remain focused on the mission. Our credibility as a trusted partner on the joint team depends on our excellence in that arena.



JAMES C. SLIFE  
Lieutenant General, USAF  
Commander