



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: Your Supervisor

SUBJECT: Integrity

TO: A New Lieutenant

Integrity is one of the most important qualities that an officer must possess. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary defines integrity as "the quality or state of being of sound moral principle; uprightness, honesty, and sincerity." Integrity is the reinforcing steel in the concrete that forms the foundation of our Air Force institution. Although we are all subject to errors in judgment, a good Air Force officer has a basic level of integrity beyond which he will not be moved.

Integrity demands that you tell the unequivocal truth at all times. If your supervisor asks you a question for which you don't know the answer, tell him you don't know the answer, but you will find out. He will respect your forthrightness and know that your answers are ones that he can trust and act upon. Questions from your supervisor also test your job knowledge. If you find yourself saying, "I don't know", too many times, that is a clear indication that you have homework to do in those areas for which you lack the answers.

Integrity requires that you acknowledge your mistakes. If you fail to complete an assignment, make a mistake, or otherwise cause things to go wrong, own up to it. Don't try to transfer the blame to something or someone else. Accept the responsibility for your actions and those of the people you supervise. Mistakes have value if you evaluate your actions, determine the cause of your errors, and decide how you can prevent these or similar errors in the future.

Integrity connotes scrupulous honesty and trust. The value the Air Force places on these qualities is eloquently stated at the beginning of your commission which says in part, "The President of the United States, reposing special trust and confidence in your patriotism, valor, and fidelity..." Think of this as you conduct yourself on and off duty.

Integrity is also synonymous with fair play. It suggests that you always strive to do the right thing and that you avoid personal and professional profit gained unfairly or at someone else's expense. If a fellow officer needs help, provide it promptly and cheerfully rather than work around him to cast a more favorable light upon yourself. When you become a supervisor, offer constructive criticism to your subordinates early to give them an opportunity to improve themselves and achieve your standards before you prepare an uncomplimentary OER or APR.

These few examples have not exhausted the topics which could be addressed under integrity; however, I hope that I have stimulated your thoughts and encouraged you to look within yourself and make sure that integrity is a part of you. If you base your every action firmly upon the principle of integrity, you will do what is right and be a better officer for it. If you choose to do otherwise, you may succeed initially, but you are doomed to abject failure in the end.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul G. Patton". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Paul G. Patton, Colonel, USAF
AN OLD LIEUTENANT