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Logistics Glue

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From the E-Ring

LOGISTICS “GLUE”

I wrote about “duty” last time. Some of you have given me your feedback...thank you. This time I want to share some personal thoughts with you on one thing we need in spades for successful logistics. The Air Force Secretary and Chief of Staff wrote about it to me, I see it in commanders but not exclusively, and, like a lot of things, it comes in good and bad flavors. Key to what we all do is leadership.

Soon after coming to my position, the Secretary and Chief of Staff sent me a guidance memo they both signed—guidance in the areas on which I am to focus (and will!). That they, like good commanders, were clear about their intent and expectations should not surprise you. But the point I want to make is that they deliberately sandwiched the focus areas in between something they repeated in the first and last paragraphs of the memo—leadership. They wrote of the need for active, engaged leadership, and they wrote that success hinges on superb leadership. I write the same to you.

You and I will quickly agree that we need commanders who lead, and sometimes we even think being a commander is synonymous with being a leader. To be sure, they go together, but being a leader is for more than just commanders. Take it up the chain to headquarters staff officers, NCOs, and civilians, and take it down the chain to our officers, civilians, NCOs, and even airmen in the squadrons. You are ahead of me in considering formal and informal leaders, in thinking about those who supervise few or none, and even about the ones whose actions influence the behavior of others...leaders all. We manage processes and things, but we lead people. The magnitude and importance of what we do demands leadership of the highest order...at all levels...of all grades. Still ahead of me? Think about how we develop a culture of compliance—an imperative for today. We must have good leadership to change a culture.

You know what I’m going to say about the flavors of leadership. We’ve all seen some leaders who are unnecessarily heavy handed, put self before service, or who demonstrate other “qualities” you decide not to emulate. Good, now set those aside. Recall some who inspire greatness: Doolittle, Andrews, Arnold, Churchill, Marshall, and Marquez. Add in a few from your list...maybe a chief master sergeant, maybe your first squadron commander or coach. Back with me? I’m asking you to be the best leader you can possibly be, right now, right where you are...an inspiring leader with exemplary precision and accountability, willing to take prudent risks, innovative in problem-solving, and loaded with integrity of the highest order.

As we move through our days and duties, let’s sandwich the to-do list between good slices of leadership. Lead well wherever you are. Inspire the best in all our airmen. Why? Because leadership is the glue that holds logistics together...that’s my view.

—LT GEN LOREN RENO

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