



Trust implies instinctive unquestioning belief in and reliance upon something

**Objective:** While participating in a guided discussion, each airman will discuss the importance of trust within the junior enlisted ranks (peer level) and AF.

**Facilitator Aides**

[Movie Clip from "300"](#)

[The Secret Behind the Shield](#)

[Portraits in Courage](#)

[Pace Video "Trust"](#)

**Lesson Outline**


**Ideal Lesson Time: 50 min.**

**Introduction**

**MP 1. Trust - Small Group Discussion**

**MP 2. Trust - Facilitated Discussion**

**Conclusion / Closing Activity**

**Boot Stomp**  "The leaders who work most effectively, it seems to me, never say 'I'. And that's not because they have trained themselves not to say 'I'. They don't think 'I'. They think 'we'; they think 'team'. They understand their job to be to make the team function. They accept responsibility and don't sidestep it, but 'we' gets the credit.... This is what creates trust, what enables you to get the task done". - *Peter Drucker, author of Managing for the Future*

**Set-Up Required:** Designate and/or map out a course for Three-Legged Race.

**References:** AFH-1, AFI 1-1, AFI 1-2, AF Doctrine Vol 2, CJCSI 3405 01

## Introduction

**SURVEY QUESTION:** Do you feel that your personal experiences so far in the Air Force orient you toward trusting your peers?

When a safe space is created to discuss your story and/or experiences how likely are you share with/open-up to your fellow Airmen? 1-5 scale (1-will not share, 5-very likely to share)

How important is it to your success in the Air Force to be able to trust your peers? 1-5 scale (1-do not need to trust peers, 5-absolutely need to trust peers)

**Facilitator Note:** Discuss the importance of the shield and provide facts (Katakis, T., 2018. History funnel: Sparta, The Secret Behind the Shield).

### *With the Shield or On the Shield*

*“Training in pairs and in groups emphasized the bond and trust with their brothers in battle. Furthermore, the entire group was held accountable for the errors or underperformance of any single person in their team to emphasize interdependence. And there was a reason for that. Spartan foot-soldiers held their shields in a way that defended half of oneself and half of the soldier to his left at the battlefield, creating a continuous wall of shields. If this wall broke, the whole army was doomed and not surprisingly, “dropping the shield” became synonymous with treachery in Sparta. Even the mother’s farewell to her son before he went into battle included a severe message, that her son had to return either “carrying the shield” (victorious) or “on the shield” (dead). Personal superiority, strength and bravery were valued only as far as it didn’t jeopardize the coherence of the team. They fought and died as one, to the very last man.”*

*Overview: Today we are going to talk about trust and how important it is among peers.*

## Anticipated Replies and Side Notes

## MP 1. Trust – Small Group Discussion

**Facilitator Note:** Break into groups of three to four and provide each group with a Portrait in Courage article (only use Airmen ranks). Ask the groups to read the article and discuss the trust that was required in each situation. (15 minutes)

**Portraits in Courage:** Five vignettes are attached at the end of lesson plan; more can be found at the web site.

## MP 2. Trust – Facilitated Discussion

**Facilitator Note:** Bring the small groups back together to a large group and encourage one member from each group report on what was discussed.

**Faciliator Note: Have Airmen give examples of anticipated responses.**

**Lead off Question (LOQ):** Why did we have you read stories about junior-enlisted Airmen? (Anticipated responses will vary.)

**LOQ:** How do you relate to the stories you just read? (Anticipated responses will vary.)

**LOQ:** What is possible when you can trust your peers? (Anticipated responses: achieve greatness: feels like a team.)

**LOQ:** What happens when trust is broken? (Anticipated responses: Cannot do anything: people do not want to be on the team.)

**LOQ:** How can you build trust with your peers/fellow Airmen? (Anticipated responses: accomplish a challenge together: share your story with others.)

**LOQ:** What do you see occurring at Tech School that keeps you from trusting your peers? Where are your peers letting their “shields” down? (Anticipated responses will vary.)

**LOQ:** What are your peers doing that reinforce trust? Where are your peers holding their “shield” well to protect the person fighting next to them? (Anticipated responses will vary.)

**FINAL QUESTION:** How does trust contribute to the identity of Airmanship?

## Anticipated Replies and Side Notes

## Conclusion / Closing Activity

**Closing Activity:** Three-Legged Race Obstacle Course

**Facilitator Note:** Drawing upon the symbolism of the shield in Sparta and needing to work together, the three-legged race has two members work together and model some trust to complete the course in a timely manner. You can have them all race at the same time or run chalks with two or three groups racing at once for the best time. Airmen can use their belts to help tie legs together.

**Follow-up Question:** While not the same as a Spartan's shield, how much did you need to trust and work together with your partner to be successful in the three-legged race?

**SUMMARY:** Today we used our personal experiences and Potraits in Courage vignettes to discuss trust, the importance of having trust between peers and wingmen, and the importance of trust in the military.

**REMOTIVATION:** Show PACE Video, *Trust* (2:35)

## Anticipated Replies and Side Notes

**ASSESSMENT QUESTION:** Do the participants better understand the importance of trust and how this supports a culture of professionalism?

## Portrait in Courage Vignettes:



**AIRMAN FIRST CLASS  
BENJAMIN HUTCHINS**  
82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION, 4TH BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM  
TACTICAL AIR COMMAND AND CONTROL SPECIALIST

In the summer of 2009, Airman First Class Benjamin Hutchins deployed to Afghanistan as a member of the Tactical Air Control Party in support of the 82nd Airborne Division's 4th Brigade Combat Team.

During one incident of his deployment, two Soldiers attempting to recover cargo containers from a river were pulled into the water by a strong current. Despite several entrenched Taliban fighting positions on the east side of the river, Airman Hutchins immediately removed his body armor and helmet and dove into the water in an attempt to save his teammates.

After scouring the area for almost an hour, Airman Hutchins attempted to cross the river back towards friendly forces on the west when he encountered heavy enemy fire. To survive the attack, Airman Hutchins drifted northward with just his mouth and nose out of the water as bullets splashed within three meters of his body, until he finally reached the safety of a Coalition position.

During another firefight, Airman Hutchins and three teammates charged a machine-gun nest, where the group engaged two enemy fighters attempting to fire rocket-propelled grenades at a friendly patrol. The American squad neutralized the machine gun team, but before they could reach adequate cover, the squad endured heavy sniper fire from an insurgent on a rooftop. While seeking cover and under fire, Airman Hutchins accurately called for a precision missile strike from an orbiting MQ-1 Predator, neutralizing the target and saving his platoon.

For his multiple acts of heroism, Airman Hutchins has been submitted for the Bronze Star Medal with Valor, the Airman's Medal, the Combat Action Medal and an Army Commendation Medal.



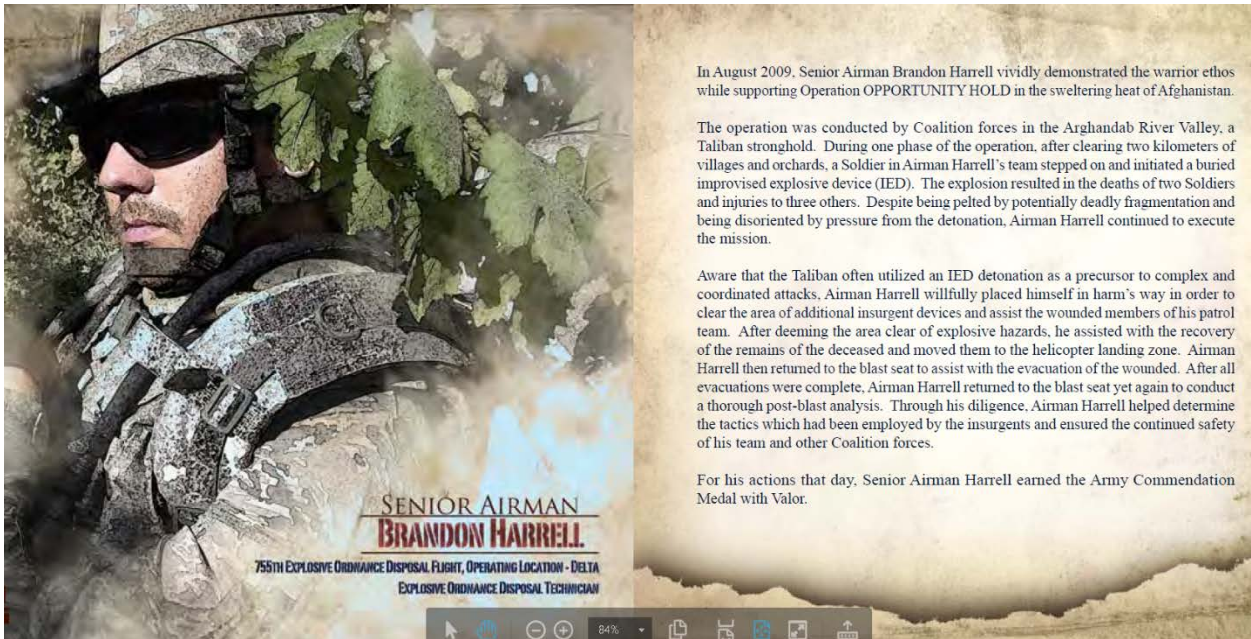
**SrA Travis MANNING**  
COMBAT CAMERA

Senior Airman Travis Manning was assigned to the 11th Combined Joint Task Force—Horn of Africa, Djibouti, as a combat camera videographer. His mission was to document the efforts of the United States and Coalition Forces in Djibouti.

In April 2007, he traveled to a small village in northern Djibouti to document a local veterinary civic action program. The team found a routine crossing point along their route flooded out. They also saw a man frantically signaling for help. Airman Manning and his team quickly followed the locals to a point where many people had gathered. Once there, they saw an injured youth stranded on a bank on the opposite side of the rushing waters. Under Airman Manning's leadership the team quickly jumped into action. With only a rope for security, he crossed 75 meters of rising, fast-moving, chest-deep water to reach the stranded youth.

Airman Manning quickly assessed the victim and immediately provided first aid. Seeing he was too weak to cross the river, Airman Manning heaved the youngster on his shoulders and, blocking out the fear and pain, he ignored the danger of the rapid current and began his way back across the river to deliver the young man to safety.

"Anyone of you would have done the same," he said to his fellow Airmen when safely back at their encampment. Airman Manning was later awarded the Airman's Medal for this heroic act.



In August 2009, Senior Airman Brandon Harrell vividly demonstrated the warrior ethos while supporting Operation OPPORTUNITY HOLD in the sweltering heat of Afghanistan.

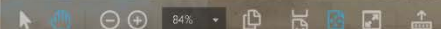
The operation was conducted by Coalition forces in the Arghandab River Valley, a Taliban stronghold. During one phase of the operation, after clearing two kilometers of villages and orchards, a Soldier in Airman Harrell's team stepped on and initiated a buried improvised explosive device (IED). The explosion resulted in the deaths of two Soldiers and injuries to three others. Despite being pelted by potentially deadly fragmentation and being disoriented by pressure from the detonation, Airman Harrell continued to execute the mission.

Aware that the Taliban often utilized an IED detonation as a precursor to complex and coordinated attacks, Airman Harrell willfully placed himself in harm's way in order to clear the area of additional insurgent devices and assist the wounded members of his patrol team. After deeming the area clear of explosive hazards, he assisted with the recovery of the remains of the deceased and moved them to the helicopter landing zone. Airman Harrell then returned to the blast seat to assist with the evacuation of the wounded. After all evacuations were complete, Airman Harrell returned to the blast seat yet again to conduct a thorough post-blast analysis. Through his diligence, Airman Harrell helped determine the tactics which had been employed by the insurgents and ensured the continued safety of his team and other Coalition forces.

For his actions that day, Senior Airman Harrell earned the Army Commendation Medal with Valor.

**SENIOR AIRMAN  
BRANDON HARRELL**

75TH EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL FLIGHT, OPERATING LOCATION - DELTA  
EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL TECHNICIAN



While assigned as a vehicle operations apprentice to Task Force Mountain Warrior, Provincial Reconstruction Team Laghman, Afghanistan in October 2009, Airman First Class Jeffrey Leigh demonstrated gallantry and professionalism during an ambush by enemy forces against his convoy.

While Airman Leigh performed duties as a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected driver rifleman during a mounted patrol to Kotalay Village, three insurgents initiated a complex ambush in rugged mountainous terrain. The attack included a command wire improvised explosive device (CWIED) and effective AK-47 fire from an elevated position.

Immediately after the CWIED detonation, Airman Leigh assisted with the evacuation of the injured members of his team. Without regard for his own safety and ignoring the injuries he sustained in the CWIED blast, Airman Leigh proceeded on a 500 meter assault to locate the enemy forces. His tenacity contributed to his element locating the firing point of the CWIED, at which time Airman Leigh came under automatic small arms fire from an unknown location. In response, Airman Leigh established a secure, support-by-fire position to facilitate the advance of secondary friendly forces.

Airman Leigh's decisive actions caused the enemy forces to abandon their fighting positions and retreat. His actions were directly responsible for reversing the outcome of the engagement, providing protection of the casualty collection point, and enabling the safe recovery of an Afghan government official.

For his actions in Afghanistan, Airman Leigh earned the Army Commendation Medal with Valor and the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

**AIRMAN FIRST CLASS  
JEFFREY LEIGH**

PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM LAGHMAN  
VEHICLE OPERATIONS APPRENTICE



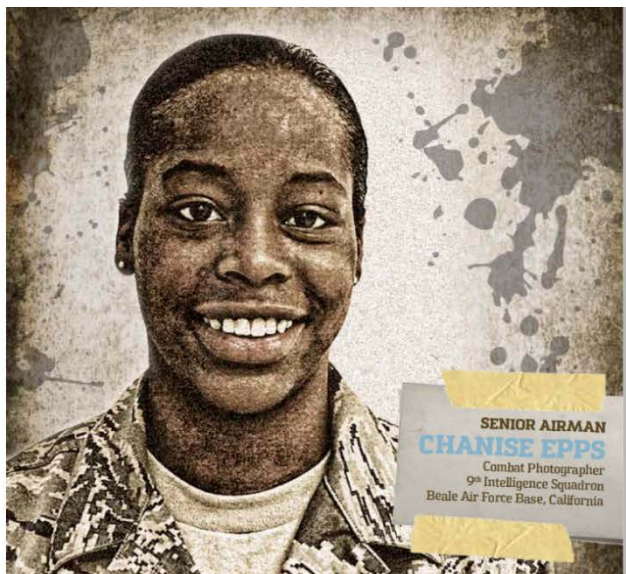
During her deployment with a provincial reconstruction team in Afghanistan in 2010, Senior Airman **CHANISE EPPS** proved that a simple hand-held camera can be just as effective in war as the high-tech U-2 imagery she normally worked with back home.

On December 28, 2010 while assigned to a small forward operating base, Airman Epps' FOB came under heavy mortar and small arms fire from insurgent forces. For three intense hours, she courageously performed combat camera documentation, capturing more than 600 images of base defense and firefighting efforts.

In the first two hours alone, several mortar rounds caused a massive fire on the FOB that destroyed the fuel storage depot, vehicle maintenance facility, and several fighting positions.

Airman Epps willingly put herself at risk, moving to a fighting position that had been abandoned due to heat and explosion hazard, all the while ensuring a better angle for intelligence collection. She quickly processed the imagery and provided it to FOB leadership. The images provided a crucial assessment of the damage and magnitude of destruction, enabling leadership to enhance the FOB's defenses in near-real time, including reinforcing garrison battle and counter-firing positions. Later her photographs were used as evidence to prosecute insurgents detained during the attack, and the images aided interrogations of the detainees in order to identify other violent extremists.

Airman Epps' actions were commendable. Armed with a camera as her primary weapon, her bravery and quick thinking were in keeping with the highest values of an Air Force combat photographer. For her actions, she was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal, as well as the Army's Combat Action Badge.



## A1C Chad **KUYKENDALL** TRANSPORTATION SPECIALIST

Airman First Class Chad Kuykendall, deployed to the 424th Medium Truck Detachment at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, was assigned to conduct routine line haul convoy missions into and out of Iraq.

On July 6, 2007, Airman Kuykendall was performing duties as a truck operator on a nighttime convoy mission. His vehicle commander alerted Airman Kuykendall to sparks trailing their truck, indicating a possible insurgent attack against the vehicle. At that moment all electronics and communication equipment in the truck became inoperable, making it impossible to contact the convoy commander and alert him of the attack. Though traveling at high speed without running headlights, Airman Kuykendall expertly maneuvered his tractor trailer to a safe stop on the highway.

The truck's cab filled with smoke and fire. Airman Kuykendall collected his weapon and additional sensitive items and quickly exited the truck. He realized his vehicle commander was still trapped in the burning cab sitting on top of a 100-gallon gasoline tank. Airman Kuykendall entered the burning vehicle, cut away her gear and freed her. With his vehicle commander injured and unable to walk unassisted, Airman Kuykendall supported her as they moved to the nearest gun truck approximately 100 meters away. Shortly after their escape, the tractor trailer he had been driving was completely engulfed in flames.

Airman Kuykendall's heroic actions saved his comrade from serious injury and possible death despite great danger to himself.

