

Abstract

U.S. Air Force Security Forces, commonly known as the “defenders,” is the primary organization responsible for integrated base defense, law enforcement, and installation security worldwide. Although defenders have proven themselves capable, the challenging “no-fail” mission of Security Forces requires strong leaders focused on developing an organizational culture that builds a more professional force driven toward excellence. This research investigated the following: What are characteristics of high performing teams? How can squadron commanders develop a high-performance culture within their organizations? What are potential strategic, operational, and tactical level impacts? What are potential areas of concern that leaders must be aware of when shaping their organizational culture? The research also examined and compared the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Enforcement and U.S. Air Force Security Forces. The research discovered that leaders focused on developing an organizational culture that promotes and aligns with strategic objectives can expect to achieve greater success. Additionally, the research identified that both organizations have broad mission requirements that can benefit from promoting the following characteristics: flexibility, delivering a clear purpose, and building greater levels of motivation by promoting psychological safety. Collectively, this may improve the defender’s quality of life and strengthen the enterprise’s integrated base defense posture worldwide.

Methods

- Utilized a qualitative data analysis approach that relied on case studies, literature review, and personal experience as a Security Forces officer, having served in multiple capacities within the Security Forces enterprise.
- The research aimed to understand the impact leaders have on building a culture of high performance. In order to better understand this, the research identified characteristics of high-performing teams, the importance of organizational culture, and strategic management.
- The research compared the organizational culture and strategy of the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Enforcement and the U.S. Air Force Security Forces enterprise in order to determine the connection between organizational culture and strategy, as well as identify areas to strengthen.

Results & Their Impact

- **Question 1: What are characteristics of high-performing teams and how can commanders establish this culture?**
- Characteristics include flexibility, clear purpose, and psychological safety. Commanders should understand the team-building process, conduct initial assessment of the organization, followed by a clearly messaged plan that gets team buy-in.
- **Question 2: What are potential impacts at the strategic, operational, and tactical level as well as areas of concern?**
- Organizational culture must align with the strategic objectives of the organization or the chances of the strategy failing increases. Additionally, organizational culture takes time and leaders must constantly solicit feedback from their teams or risk rejection of the desired change.

Recommendations

Specific to the U.S. Air Force Security Forces, I recommend creating a Phase 0 Course in which new Security Forces ascensions report to the Security Forces Center where they would learn the broad mission, strategy, and organizational culture of Security Forces. The Phase 0 Course would occur prior to the formal training school and would focus on instilling a greater understanding of strategic leadership in order to develop skills towards building teams with the previously listed characteristics of high-performance.