



SENIOR ENLISTED ADVISOR TO THE CHAIRMAN
THE JOINT STAFF
WASHINGTON, DC 20318

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THE JOINT NON-NEGOTIABLES

Who We Are. The Joint Force is the shield and sword of the United States of America, a unified team of warriors from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Space Force. We stand as a single, lethal force, defending our Nation across all domains. Each service contributes unique capabilities, traditions, and expertise, bound by a common purpose: to fight and win, no matter the adversary, no matter the terrain, no matter the odds.

Victory in war is not a product of chance alone. It is earned through discipline, trust, and unyielding commitment to excellence, lethality, and readiness. The Joint Force is guided by enduring principles that have defined military success throughout history: warrior ethos, a robust and resourced military, and a credible deterrence posture. To that end, there are fundamental expectations that define who we are and how we operate. These are not mere guidelines—they are uncompromising Joint Non-Negotiables.

Joint Non-Negotiables. These eight Non-Negotiables embody the unbreakable principles that govern our service, ensuring that we are always prepared to defend our homeland, deter war, and, if necessary, defeat and destroy our enemies. They are enduring pillars of a force that must remain lethal, disciplined, and prepared at all times.

1. **Core Values as Our Foundation.** Each branch of the Armed Forces has its own core values, but at their heart, they build toward a central theme: duty, honor, courage, and commitment to mission, country, and each other. These values are not slogans or talking points. They are the foundation of trust that binds us together as a fighting force. Living by our values means doing the right thing, even when no one is watching. It means holding ourselves and others accountable, making decisions that reflect the seriousness of our profession, and never cutting corners. When we deploy, fight, and lead, our values cause us rise to the occasion, not crumble under pressure. Our enemies watch us closely, looking for weakness. If we fail to live up to our values, they will exploit it. When we stand firm, they will know they are up against a force that cannot be intimidated or broken.
2. **Discipline and Standards.** Without discipline, we fail. Without standards, we fall apart. Personal discipline is the foundation of unit discipline. Before you can be held accountable, you must be countable—reliable in every task, every time. Self-reliance means doing what needs to be done, even when motivation fades. It's what ensures weapons are maintained, orders are followed, and tactics are executed under pressure. Discipline is not just obedience; it's pride in doing things the right way, without exception. Standards exist for a reason. The smallest details—how we wear our uniform, how we maintain our equipment, how we execute our mission—set the tone for how we fight. A force that cuts corners in training will cut corners in combat. When we ignore the small things, the big things—like trust, lethality, and mission success—fall apart.

3. **Professional Military Education and Lifelong Development.** A warrior's mind is just as important as their weapon. We must think, adapt, and outmatch our adversaries. The modern battlefield is complex, and success requires more than raw might. Every warfighter, regardless of rank or specialty, must be a student of war. Professional Military Education (PME) ensures that we understand strategy, tactics, leadership, and decision-making at every level. Yet PME alone is not enough. Every warfighter must commit to lifelong development in a combination of formal education, technical certifications, and hands-on experience. We sharpen our minds as we sharpen our weapons because wars are not just won with bullets—they are won with intelligence, planning, and adaptability.
4. **Physicality and Mental Toughness.** Wars are won by those who can endure hardship (resilience) and fight through pain (persevere). Toughness—both physical and mental—is a requirement, not a suggestion. Physical fitness is more than passing a test. It's about survival. A weak warfighter is a liability to the team. Combat does not care how tired you are, how bad the weather is, or how difficult the mission seems. The enemy won't relent. If you are not fit, you are not ready. But toughness is not just physical—it's mental. It means staying focused under stress, controlling and even leveraging emotions, and making sound decisions while navigating chaos. It means both pushing forward when every instinct tells you to quit and having enough gas in the tank at the end to raise Old Glory atop the hill. War does not reward the comfortable. It rewards those who can endure and, more so, persevere.
5. **Training for Warfighting, Not Just Compliance.** We do not train to check a box. We train to win. Every drill, exercise, and repetition must prepare us for combat. From the Marine Corps culture, "Everyone Fights!" applies to the Joint Force. It means every one of us, regardless of uniform pattern, specialty, billet, or rank, arms ourselves with a weapon and aims toward the enemy. Training must be tough, realistic, and focused on lethality. It must push us beyond our perceived limits so when the real fight comes, we do not hesitate. Training is not about making people uncomfortable—it is about making them unbreakable. We train as we fight, because when the moment comes, there will be no time to prepare, only time to move.
6. **Tradition, History, and Warrior Identity.** We do not serve in just another job. We are part of something greater: the Profession of Arms. The warriors who came before us set the standard. Their sacrifice, their victories, and their discipline built the foundation we stand on today. It is our responsibility to uphold their legacy. That means taking pride in our uniforms, in our customs, and in the traditions that make the U.S. military the greatest in the world. Military drill and ceremony are not just symbolic; they are vital expressions of discipline, camaraderie, and respect. The precision of our movements and the coordinated execution of these traditions foster buy-in to a shared sense of purpose, historic identity, and proud heritage. A warfighter without pride in service risks faltering when it matters most. We don't just wear a uniform—we carry the weight of history in the cloth of the Nation.

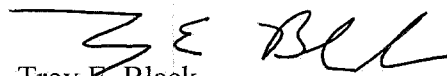
7. **Leadership is an Obligation, Not a Privilege.** Leadership is not about rank—it is about responsibility. The best leaders set the standard, take care of their people, and develop the next generation of warriors. Leadership is about more than making decisions—it is about earning trust, setting the example, and never asking others to do what you are unwilling to do yourself. A leader who does not develop their people is failing their mission, their service, and their country. We lead by example, not by exception.
8. **Lethality and Deterrence Through Strength.** The best way to prevent war is to be so overwhelmingly prepared for it that no adversary dares to challenge us. Deterrence is built on credibility, and credibility is built on capability. We must be ready at all times—not just in times of crisis. We must train, equip, and prepare to win, ensuring that if war comes, we finish it on our terms. We do not seek conflict, but if it comes, our enemies must know that we will dominate them completely.

The Standard is Victory. These Non-Negotiables define the Joint Force. They are the expectations that ensure our collective strength and success. Whether in peacetime, combat, or at war, we stand together ready, disciplined, and committed to defending our homeland, deterring war, and if necessary, defeating and destroying our enemies. Anything less is unacceptable.

We do not rest because our enemies do not rest.
We do not hesitate because our enemies will not hesitate.
We do not compromise because victory is our standard.

Warfighters focused on War Winning, achieving Peace through Strength.

Semper Fidelis,



Troy E. Black
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of the Joint Chiefs of Staff