



RAMSTEIN AIR BASE

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## Commander's Spouse Guide for the 86th Airlift Wing

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## DISCLAIMER

The views in this guide do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the United States Government. Every effort has been made to ensure accurate information, but it is recommended that you consult the appropriate resource(s) within your organization before taking significant action.

People are often unreasonable and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are honest, people may cheat you. Be honest anyway.

If you find happiness, people may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway.

For you see, in the end, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway.

~ Saint (Mother) Teresa

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## Introduction

**W**elcome to Ramstein Air Base, the home of the 86<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, USAFE, 3<sup>rd</sup> AF, 521 AMOW, 435 AGOW and NATO Partners! This guide was put together simply as a tool to help you with your role as a commander's spouse. This is an exciting time in your spouse's career, and you are both in for a lot of hard work. You will build lasting friendships and create many wonderful memories for you and your family! Most of this information was taken from the "Wing Commander/Vice Commander Spouses' Seminar" presented to senior spouses at Maxwell AFB, AL. Unfortunately, most of the materials did not have each author's name on it, so I am unable to give proper credit to all of the wonderful people who contributed to the program. It was tailored to make it more pertinent to Squadron, Group, or equivalent Commander spouses at Dover Air Force Base.

When your military husband or wife reaches the level where he or she is considered a "senior military leader," what does that mean for you, the spouse? In today's military, it can mean different things. If you choose to participate in the role of a senior spouse, your role is strictly voluntary. Military spouses do not have specifically assigned duties or responsibilities; this can be both good and bad. There are no job descriptions, no contractual assigned duties, or legal responsibility. However, being married to someone in the military often comes with certain expectations resulting from the military spouse's duty position and rank. **The role that you choose and the extent to which you choose to fulfill that role is up to you.** *(Confusion often occurs when the desires of the senior spouse are not articulated. Don't be afraid to articulate your desired role with the squadron, group or even wing early to avoid misunderstandings and confusion.)*

On occasion, the senior military leader may not be married, and another individual may be asked by this leader to assist with the expected "duties" of the senior spouse. If this occurs, and you are that individual, make sure that your expectations and those of the military senior leader are discussed and clarified to avoid role confusion.

The term used above--"senior military leader"--can mean either a Commander or a non-Commander in a senior staff position. There are often expectations of senior spouses, just because they are senior, whether their military spouse is in a Command position or not. Command has additional considerations and responsibilities when discussing a senior spouse position. Command is also for a limited amount of time; whereas you will always be regarded as a senior spouse after a certain point, no matter where your military spouse is in his/her career. You are often thought of as experienced and informed, if it is assumed or you actually have been, married to the military leader for awhile. (There are more "late," second, and third marriages, and combined families in the military now.) It is also sometimes assumed that you have access to "inside" information. While this is usually not accurate, experience does count. You can inform yourself and become aware of available resources to assist military family members, if you do not have much experience, and always improve your knowledge or gain new insights if you are an experienced spouse. As a Commander's spouse, you can be very important to the "climate" of the unit by your participation and attitude if you choose to volunteer your time.

The preceding three paragraphs were taken directly from 'The Battlebook IV - Spouses' Update - AY 2009.

## The Air Force Spouse: From Past to Present by Dr. Richard I. Lester

Air Force spouses, and perhaps especially commanders' spouses, have traditionally shared a strong sense of responsibility for the welfare of the Air Force community. Moreover, they have acted upon their feelings by volunteering for all sorts of charitable activities and by participating in the social life of Air Force units and the local community. This tradition of helpfulness continued for so long that it came to be taken for granted and, until recently, was even considered a fundamental obligation.

Commenting on the situation, Edward Aldridge, Jr., former secretary of the Air Force, said, "Over the years, there has developed a set of attitudes that spouses of military members in certain leadership positions are expected to fill preconceived roles in terms of volunteer work, social functions, and membership in social organizations to ensure the career success of military members. This set of attitudes had gained such widespread acceptance as to constitute unwritten 'policy.'"

The historical reasons for this tradition are easy to understand. Military organizations have almost always consisted mainly of single, male members. Even up to World War II, a comparatively small number of officers were married, and for that reason, their spouses' role was important. They were in charge of the social life of the base where their husbands were stationed, and they worked together to help meet community needs.

By the late 1980s, conditions had changed so much that the Air Force had more than 385,000 spouses, and 64 percent of its members had family responsibilities. Many of the spouses, including those of commanders, now wanted to pursue their own careers by seeking employment outside the home. Unsurprisingly, concerns arose during this period of spousal transition.

On 3 August 1987, the *Air Force Times* reported that two Air Force spouses were pressured to quit their outside jobs in order to participate in base activities. One week later, that same newspaper reported that, in a letter it received from the two top Air Force officials—Gen Larry D. Welch, the chief of staff, and Secretary Aldridge—those leaders assured Air Force wives that their holding jobs would not affect the careers of their husbands and that the Air Force supported the work aspirations of spouses. The officials went on to describe the Air Force as a family community that reflected American society and then said, "Accordingly, we do expect the spouses of commanders and others in key leadership positions to participate in activities which support Air Force activities. Regardless of where and when the spouse works, there are opportunities to participate in the Air Force community in a constructive way."

This was the Air Force's first official written policy on spousal employment. Reaction to it was interesting. People who heard or read about the policy statement described it as unclear, contradictory, or ambiguous. Many believed that it was an endorsement of the traditional unwritten policy that expected wives of commanders and senior leaders to forgo employment opportunities and careers in order to participate more fully in Air Force activities. The statement that spouses are "expected to participate" caused uncertainty about how much participation the Air Force expected, what it required, and when in the military member's career that participation should begin.

On 15 September 1987, Secretary Aldridge and General Welch announced the names of members of an Air Force Blue Ribbon Panel appointed to examine issues affecting Air Force spouses. The panel's charter was to examine the range of activities in which spouses have traditionally participated; identify the extent and causes of pressures and conflicts between employment or career aspirations and participation in the Air Force community; and recommend how to resolve or minimize those conflicts. (This author served as an adviser to the Air Force Blue Ribbon Panel.)

On 22 October 1987, the secretary of defense signed a Department of Defense (DOD) policy statement on Employment of Spouses of Members of the Armed Forces. Subsequently, the DOD issued a Department of

Defense Directive (DODD) addressing, Employment or Volunteer Work of Spouses of Military Personnel, 10 February 1988, and Air Force Regulation (AFR) 30-51, Air Force Members' Marital Status and Activities of Their Spouses, 6 June 1988.

The three documents are clear and unequivocal. The policy statement of the AFR, adopted almost verbatim in the published policy recommendations of the Air Force Blue Ribbon Panel, reads in part,

It is Air Force policy that the choice of a spouse to pursue employment, to be a homemaker, to attend school, or to serve as a volunteer in Air Force or local community activities is a private matter and solely the decision of the individual concerned. No commander, supervisor, or other Air Force official will directly or indirectly impede or otherwise interfere with this decision.

The panel's recommendations go even further, stating that the Air Force should actively support the career and employment aspirations of spouses. In addition, the panel recommended that the Air Force promote among civilian business leaders the importance and benefits of hiring military spouses and that it encourage the Civilian Personnel Office to actively promote hiring programs that place military spouses in government jobs.

These policy statements, directives, and recommendations, as well as provisions of the regulation, boded well for the Air Force spouse's freedom to decide whether to pursue employment or career aspirations or to participate in Air Force community activities. Ideally, the Air Force spouse—male or female—should not have to worry about whether these personal decisions will have an adverse impact on the Air Force member's career, or whether the spouse will come under external pressure from any source.

How did this newfound freedom of choice work in actual practice? Not perfectly, at least not yet, though perceptions and practices have definitely improved. Time-honored traditions and their associated values do not just disappear overnight. According to several spouses recently interviewed for this paper, the policy of 1988 is being implemented (or not implemented) in different ways. Some spouses have suggested that senior leadership is fooling itself if it thinks that simple verbiage from the secretary's office will change the way spouses (male/female) are utilized or perceived in some organizations. Ultimately, transition and implementation of the policy in the field is the responsibility of squadron commanders and the commanders above them. Their attitude and behavior will affect the policy's speed of implementation. It is also true that different sets of circumstances create different needs and make different demands on spouses. One need only imagine (or remember) the differences among isolated stateside locations, overseas tours, large metropolitan areas, alerts, extended tours of duty, deployments, and classified missions to understand that sometimes Air Force spouses will face unique and unexpected demands.

Often, many of the conditions cited above are not unusual, describing everyday life for many members of the Air Force. The duty of commanders, supervisors, and other Air Force officials to comply with the policy, in force since 1988, is clearly spelled out (along with penalties for noncompliance). Before publication of the regulation addressing this issue, the role of Air Force members' spouses remained unclear. Now that role is whatever they want it to be, free from pressures of any sort, either on themselves or their spouses who are military members. This situation can only lead to a better Air Force, expediting an invigorated approach to volunteer programs and enhancing opportunities for those who genuinely wish to participate in Air Force community activities, as well as for those who wish to seek employment, be a homemaker, attend school, or pursue other interests.

A key point of this paper is the recognition that spouses afforded these options of choice will be more likely to participate voluntarily whenever they can in those areas of Air Force community life that interest them and that will benefit from their meaningful contributions. Prior to the Blue Ribbon Panel, part of the problem related to spousal involvement in Air Force activities was the perception that spouses were expected to participate. Part of today's dividend is the spouse's freedom to "pick and choose." This development has contributed to more willing and better participation by a variety of spouses instead of their simply going through the motions to satisfy a

perceived requirement. By encouraging spouses to develop and pursue their own personal interests, the Air Force validates their worth. Thus, the shapes in the puzzle have been shifting, resulting in the promise that spouses are now in a better position to realize their full potential.

It is gripping to note how things change slowly, until one day we realize they have changed significantly. Within the last 20 years, the perception of the role of the spouse within the Air Force has been tantamount to a sociological revolution. This now also includes male spouses, although in significantly smaller numbers, who have become “Mrs. Mister.”

Heeding the work of the Blue Ribbon Panel and noting the changing attributes and needs of both the civilian sector and the Air Force, the service’s leaders took steps to further empower women, enabling them to participate as architects of change within the Air Force community. Thus, volunteerism, participation, and dual-income families clearly affect today’s spouses. Without their spouses’ support, patience, understanding, caring, and love, many service members—and, for that matter, Air Force civilians—would not be where they are today.

Volunteerism has always been and remains a key aspect of the Air Force—and American—way of life. Most people have a need to give back some of the best that life has given them. Today, the Air Force needs an active, involved volunteer program, but the key word is *volunteer*. Commanders must ensure that volunteer programs are not abused, but at the same time they should foster the spirit of reasonable volunteerism. It is essential that the spirit and intent of spousal volunteerism be maintained, supported, recognized, and appreciated.

Spouses should participate in current Air Force activities to satisfy a particular need and to help make the Air Force a better place for its people, not to enhance their personal status or to improve their position or rank. Because spouses differ, their aspirations vary. Thus, spouses, in consultation with their families, should decide what role, if any, they play. Suzie Schwartz, spouse of Gen Norton Schwartz, the current Air Force chief of staff, speaking recently at Maxwell AFB, Alabama, during a Key Spouse Forum, made a telling point: “Find your passion. Find something you’re good at. Find that way you can give back.” This is the essence of participation. Some of the more active areas of spousal interest and participation include becoming involved with Airman and Family Readiness Center programs, the Red Cross, schools, and chapel; clarifying the role of the spouse; and working spousal, officer/enlisted, and family issues. Many spouses I have encountered in spousal courses endorse Air Force–sponsored programs that assist in these activities. Spouses simply want to be taken seriously. They believe that spousal courses recognize their need to grow and better cope with a career and home-management responsibilities. Also, this type of development helps them better fulfill the “team partner” concept. However, given the quickening pace of Air Force family life, finding time to “help out” is a problem for many spouses. They are well aware that balancing a career and family, plus “helping out” takes good planning. Furthermore, modern life in a globally engaged Air Force is more stressful for everyone. The leadership challenge involves finding ways to blend organizational goals with personal goals so that everybody wins.

Today’s spouses receive help with federal employment through new programs such as the most recent Office of Personal Management rule that allows the direct hiring of spouses of active duty, Guard, and Reserve personnel (called up for more than 180 days). (*Individuals who desire more information on this and other new programs should call or visit the Airman and Family Readiness Center, an employment-assistance counselor, the Civilian Personnel Office, or the USA Jobs Web site.*)

Dual-income families are an Air Force reality today. The number of such families has grown rapidly in the Air Force within the last 20 years. A recent survey for NBC Universal gives new meaning to the power of the purse in the civilian sector, where 65 percent of women reported being their family’s chief financial planner, and 71 percent call themselves the family accountant. Additional research data reveals that, currently, 3.3 million married couples in the United States have only one earner—2.4 million more than in 1970. This national trend has an impact on Air Force families as well. Survey data indicates that military-spouse earnings constitute about 48 percent of the

total family income. Approximately 40 percent of Air Force spouses work outside the home today—a percentage that will probably increase. For some spouses, a paying job is now an economic necessity. The recession has fueled this need.

In summary, Air Force spouses are increasingly stepping out of their traditional role. But in some cases, the more things change, the more they remain the same. In a recent family-oriented article, Gen Stephen Lorenz, commander of Air Education and Training Command, made a compelling statement that summarizes the points made in this paper: “Our lives need balance, and our spouses help provide that balance.” How true and how critical this is. Many spouses whom I interviewed have learned—sometimes the hard way—that military service is more than a job. Iraq and Afghanistan are more than places on a map. They represent mortality, acute pain, and unbearable instability, affecting not only families but also entire missions. Although spouses are now free to redefine and limit their roles, I have found that many spouses still feel a sense of commitment to other Air Force spouses, families, and units. Our spouse volunteers are the best because their hearts are in what they do. They may not always be good at it, but that does not really matter because they are doing their best. As one seasoned spouse observed, “When a husband and wife love each other and love their jobs, they want to support each other and give what they can—they want to make themselves a team.” I believe this is true because, essentially, they are Air Force spouses and helpmates; what unites spouses on these issues should matter more than what divides them.

*Dr. Richard I. Lester is the dean of academic affairs, Ira C. Eaker Center for Professional Development, Air University, Maxwell AFB, Alabama. Dr. Lester studied at the University of London and completed his doctorate at the University of Manchester. He served as an adviser to the Air Force Blue Ribbon Panel appointed by the chief of staff and secretary to examine Air Force spousal issues. Dr. Lester also has served as a discussant on and moderator for panels that considered those issues for a variety of Air Force organizations. The views expressed here are solely those of the author, and may not represent the policies of the US Air Force or the Department of Defense.*

# Military Command Spouse Tips

Our mission, if we so desire to do it, is to help support your organization's families. One of the hardest things to accept is realizing you are no longer "one of the girls/guys." Your unit spouses will probably not call you to go out for lunch, and, if they do, it is not appropriate unless it is a unit social event where all spouses are invited. Don't be discouraged about this. Whether you like it or not, people are going to pay attention to what you do, have expectations of you, and will talk about you. You have to be very careful to not give the appearance of showing favoritism or acting inappropriately. Realize, too, that your spouse is in the same boat. Sometimes, it is very lonely at the top, and it is best to reach out to your spouse or other senior spouses that are outside the unit for support. Here are some tips that may help:

## 1. **Communicate**

- ✓ Discuss expectations, command goals, and family goals with your spouse. Command is a special and busy time. Often times, your spouse will be obligated to attend military functions, he/she will have emergencies come up, etc. You will need to learn how to be very flexible and understanding!
- ✓ Decide what type of 'command couple' you will be... how often you will entertain, financial budgets, etc. Between entertaining, gifts, and functions you attend, it can get quite expensive. The wing leadership spends an average of \$600-800 per month on these types of expenses. Squadron and group level leadership will usually spend less. It is very important that you budget and spend your money wisely.
- ✓ Keep an eye on your spouse! Watch for signs of stress, and help manage it when you see it. Nurture your marriage during command times. Your spouse is for life!
- ✓ Be the eyes and ears of the commander. You can pass on things that you see and hear that your spouse may not hear otherwise.
- ✓ Talk with other spouses. They will also be facing similar challenges. Don't be afraid to ask senior spouses for help!
- ✓ Write thank you notes, RSVPs and emails. Spouses need to be appreciated when they step in to help.
- ✓ Have a contact/business card available. Hand it out to your spouses. You never know when someone might need a friendly person just to listen to them.

## 2. **Tour the Organization - Be Proud of the Mission**

- ✓ Ask your spouse for a unit briefing and tour. Our Airmen and our spouses work hard. They have trained all their lives to work up to this job.
- ✓ Meet the administrative staff, Secretary, Executive Officer, First Shirt, Command Chief, and Superintendent. These are the people that take care of your spouse, so be sure to let them know how much you appreciate your support!

- ✓ It is highly recommended that you visit the places which support the families. The Airman and Family Readiness Center, Education office, Youth Centers, Fitness Centers, Child Development Centers, recreational facilities, and the Airman's Attic are a must visit if you are a leadership spouse.
- ✓ Invite other spouses to attend the briefing and tour with you. Be respectful of the time and effort it takes to put on a tour. Try to stay on time, be polite and attentive, do not talk or TEXT during the presentations, etc. Be sure to keep track of the speakers and organizations that you visit, and send thank you cards to all who were involved. It is okay to do thank you cards with other attendees.
- ✓ Get an organizational roster. Understand the chain of command.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to ask questions. Be informed concerning organizational goals.
- ✓ Participate in 'spouse talks'...reassurance measures are just what our spouses' need. They need us to keep them grounded.
- ✓ You *can* make a difference: provide support, ideas, be present, cookies, welcomes, farewells (you may not remember the gesture, but they will).
- ✓ Pray for our men and women who are deployed as well as their families.
- ✓ Find out how active the various spouses groups (Squadron, Base) are, and get involved.
- ✓ Learn about the local community's relationship with the base and your spouse's organization.
- ✓ Find out about the Community Partners. Your unit will likely have an honorary commander, and you should know who they are and their business. Honorary commanders and others in the community can be a great asset in their support for your unit and the base.

### 3. Calendar Meetings

- ✓ Coordinate with spouse's administrative staff to attend monthly calendar meetings. Ask staff for possible list of reoccurring events – long range or annual, if possible. At a Squadron level, this should be minimal. As you move into Group and Wing level, you are more involved in some meetings.
- ✓ Schedule vacations, personal and family time, children's school breaks, special family events (it's easier to take things off the calendar then add them on later).

### 4. Don't Try to Do Everything

- ✓ Do the best/most you can... Prioritize and balance your efforts.

- ✓ Form a partnership with your DO spouse and senior enlisted spouse. The better the three of you work together, the better everything will be.
- ✓ Attend everything at least once ...awards, committee meetings, etc. This way, you can decide what is most beneficial or interesting to you.
- ✓ Try to limit official evening commitments to once during the week and once on the weekend.
- ✓ Try not to plan more than two official commitments per week (spouse group, meetings).

## 5. **Allow Time for Yourself**

- ✓ Invest time into your marriage and family.
- ✓ Faith, spiritual wellness
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Enjoy a hobby, set goals... run a half-marathon....
- ✓ When things seem to be too much, it probably is...let something go.
- ✓ Make a date with your spouse or spend time with your friends.
- ✓ Live in the “Now”, slow down and appreciate what life has to offer.
- ✓ Find your “niche.”
- ✓ If you choose to volunteer in the community or on base, do something you enjoy.

## 6. **Involve the Senior Enlisted Spouse**

- ✓ The senior enlisted spouse is an integral part of your command team. Make sure you reach out and involve the senior enlisted spouse. Involve the senior enlisted spouse in planning activities (Holiday parties, unit picnics, etc). Keep the senior enlisted spouse in the loop.
- ✓ The senior enlisted spouse hears things differently than you ever will. Their experience is different than yours. Make sure that spouse offers their ideas and brings issues to your attention or to the attention of the First Shirt.
- ✓ Make sure the senior enlisted spouse is mentoring the junior enlisted spouses (as you should be mentoring the junior officer spouses). Ensure the senior enlisted spouse is keeping an eye out for issues. Some of the enlisted spouses will be very young (just out of high school) and may need extra help or just someone to talk to.

## 7. Offer Command and Spouse and/or Support Groups

- ✓ The commander's spouse does not interact as often or as directly with families in the unit, and is more of an adviser, coach, and mentor to the spouses.
- ✓ Discuss the amount of time you can devote to the command...set some boundaries.
- ✓ Most people want to belong to some sort of group. Try to encourage the spouses to be active within the spouse network, whether it is within the Squadron, Officer or Enlisted Spouses Club, church groups, etc. Be active in it yourself. The Officer and Enlisted Spouses' Clubs give away thousands of dollars in scholarships, donate money to throughout the base and community and champion programs that support the dependents of all the Airman on the base. They are wonderful organizations, and you would have a lot of fun and be a role model for other spouses if you were involved.
- ✓ Try to offer spouse support groups monthly, if needed. Often times, there are other resources you can encourage participation in like PWOC, ESC, OSC and community organizations. Build an email list for the spouses if one does not exist. Be careful to use it for official business only, and make sure that all member spouses understand that rule. The last thing people want is 15 emails a week with this or that party, items for sale, etc.
- ✓ Get involved (welcoming, party decorating, and Christmas party)! Help your spouses with projects. You will meet a lot of great people, build lasting friendships, and have a lot of fun!
- ✓ See who is already active within your Squadron, and get them on your team. You want to be careful not to squash initiative. It is best to carefully insert yourself, and keep the momentum going.
- ✓ Involve the quiet ones. Many times, they'd love to help, but are just too shy to ask.
- ✓ Look at your spouses' command as an opportunity to affect people's lives.
- ✓ If you are not able or interested in leading a group, ask the DO spouse, Chief's spouse, Key Spouse, or simply a willing spouse.
- ✓ Know your Key Spouse, and try to communicate quarterly. Be careful not to overwhelm your key spouse(s) as they work directly for the commander.
- ✓ Find a mentor, be a mentor, be open to the ideas and concepts of other people.

## 8. Be Available, Accountable, and Care - Be a Good Role Model

- ✓ Don't start anything you can't finish. Don't make promises you can't keep!
- ✓ Refer issues to the proper organization, then follow-up if needed. Don't try to handle issues yourself if there is an agency who is better equipped to handle the situation.
- ✓ People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

- ✓ Show concern through making a phone call or provide a Key Spouse contact.
- ✓ Be a cheerleader.
- ✓ Remember what you do for one, you do for all. In a leadership position, you have to be very careful. For example, it is not a good idea to host or promote a "\_\_\_\_\_ party" (insert ThirtyOne, Scentsy, Stampin' Up!, etc.). You are in a leadership role. If you host a party for someone, you never know who has the same type of business. This could be perceived as favoritism. In addition, someone may feel obligated to come to your party and purchase, because your spouse is their spouse's commander. A good rule of thumb is to not put yourself in that position. It really doesn't seem fair, but it is part of being a commander's spouse.
- ✓ If your children are involved in activities (such as Scouts) or have a school fundraiser, before you start selling contact legal. You will have to be careful how you approach fundraising. A better option might be to not have them do the fundraiser and just make a donation on your own to the organization. Again, it doesn't seem fair, but you wouldn't want someone to feel as though they must buy from your kids because of who your spouse is.
- ✓ Be careful of asking for favors from spouses within your unit. Again, you are not a friend doing a favor for another friend. You are the Commander's spouse asking for a favor.
- ✓ Be open and friendly.

## 9. **Stick to the Script**

- ✓ Don't let problematic issues become personal.
- ✓ Ask yourself, "Does interaction on my part help the total military community?"
- ✓ Let your spouse know of major issues or of things that are being said out there (good and bad), sometimes the commander is the last to hear.
- ✓ Be careful not to express too much personal anguish over issues, spouse conflicts, etc. The truth always comes out in the end.
- ✓ Be professional.
- ✓ Remember to stay in your lane.
- ✓ Stop any negative talk, and never enter into the discussion. Change the topic.

## 10. **Be Yourself**

- ✓ Decide what you would like to accomplish regardless of what the previous or current spouses are doing...no two people are the same.
- ✓ No matter what, 25% of the time people will not like what you do. You can't please everyone.

- ✓ Be able to forgive yourself, have no regrets, and move on.
- ✓ Whatever we are saying "Yes" to, we are saying "No" to something else.
- ✓ Know why you serve...
- ✓ Family first! Our active duty take an oath of "Service before Self." Taking care of family first gives our spouses relief, sets an example for others, and helps our families succeed.
- ✓ SMILE..... This is important to remember even on days when it's tough, because people will notice.

## Protocol

This word should not strike fear in your heart and make you want to run for cover! Protocol is a mix of common sense, military traditions, and etiquette. It helps you to know what to expect as you attend various functions. If you are ever in doubt, take your cue from a senior spouse or simply ask. Here are a few tips to help you out:

- ✓ Try to attend your organization's functions, such as change of commands, hail/farewells, promotion celebrations, Airman Leadership School graduations, etc. These are special times, and you will be able to meet other spouses, celebrate high points, boost morale, and foster teamwork.
- ✓ You will receive invitations for various functions during your spouse's command. Always RSVP yes or no. Never ignore the invitation. The host/hostess of the event needs time to plan for the event, purchase food, etc., and, simply put, it is rude to ignore an invitation. Also, if you RSVP'd no and later decide you can attend, contact the host/hostess to make sure that is okay. Do not just show up at the function.
- ✓ Do not respond in person to the invitation. Respond via the method specified on the invitation, so that the host/hostess does not forget. If you catch the host/hostess at the Commissary, for example, he/she may not remember by the time they get home.
- ✓ Only the people on the invitation are invited to a function. Do not call and ask to bring other guests.
- ✓ Do not bring your children to a function unless it is specifically put on the invitation. If it is a child-friendly function, be sure to keep a close eye on your little one(s)!
- ✓ Be on time or slightly late (up to 10 minutes). Do not show up early! The last few minutes before a function are hectic for the host/hostess.
- ✓ Pay attention to the dress code on the invitation. You will not want to feel out of place if it was a formal event and you dressed casually or vice-versa.
- ✓ Be sure to be respectful and courteous at the event. For example, do not try to take over conversations, be extremely loud, say inappropriate things, take "food for the road," etc.
- ✓ Be sure to send a thank you to the host/hostess after the event.
- ✓ Remember that you have a "personal brand." Your personal brand is not only how you view and describe yourself, it is how others perceive you. The way you dress, your body language, what you say and how you act, your online presence -- it all adds up to the package you are communicating to others (*Promote Yourself: The New Rules for Career Success* - Dan Schawbel). Be aware of whom you are speaking to at functions, be courteous and attentive, and present yourself in a professional manner that conveys to others the wonderful, caring person that you are. You are a member of the command team, so do your best to not to accidentally do something to jeopardize that team.

## Hosting Events

You may want to host several functions during your command. Friendships formed at these functions will unite you more closely with other spouses, which will be especially important when your unit deploys. Here are a few tips for that:

- ✓ It is best to send out your invitations early, so that the attendees can work it into their schedule.
- ✓ As your spouse goes higher in rank and/or position, the number of functions you host will likely increase. This can become very expensive. Don't be afraid to borrow items rather than buy items for your function. Many of the other spouses, especially senior spouses, will have tablecloths, decorations, serving dishes, etc., that they would be happy to let you borrow.
- ✓ Ask other spouses to help you! It can be a lot of fun to plan an event with other spouses. The point of hosting a function is to spend time with other spouses, not hide in the kitchen the entire time. Try to plan ahead and cook ahead so that you can enjoy yourself!
- ✓ Consider having name tags. It is nice to help the attendees out with names!
- ✓ Invite the wing leadership spouses (commander's spouse, vice commander's spouse, command chief spouse). They may or may not attend due to their schedules, but it is always nice to invite them. They attend a lot of formal functions on behalf of the wing, and it's nice to spend time with the spouses within the wing on a less formal basis.
- ✓ Typically, hails and farewells are done on a monthly basis for all spouses coming and going. You can do it however you wish.

## Booster Clubs

Senior spouses usually serve as informal advisors to the booster club activities. In that role, you need to be careful to "advise" and not tell them what and how to do it. This is easier said than done sometimes. Keep oversight and offer assistance when necessary:

- ✓ Make sure they are following the Private Organization guidelines (AFI 34-223) at all times. The by-laws and financial information has to be reviewed on a regular basis and approved by the Force Support Squadron.
- ✓ Make sure all activities put on by the Booster Club are ethical and run properly.

## Resource Guide

**Ramstein AB Website:** [www.Ramstein.af.mil](http://www.Ramstein.af.mil)

**Ramstein Officers' Spouses' Club:** [www.RamsteinOSC.org](http://www.RamsteinOSC.org)

**Ramstein Enlisted Spouses' Club:** [www.RESA.org](http://www.RESA.org)

**Ramstein Force Support Squadron (MWR):** [www.86FSS.com](http://www.86FSS.com)

**Ramstein App:** Ramstein Air Base-app (Visit it the app store and search for Ramstein Air Base)

**Ramstein AB Facebook Pages:** Ramstein AB Spouses, Ramstein/KMC Spouses

**Air Force Association:** One of the main pillars of the mission at AFA is to SUPPORT the total Air Force Family. They are committed to taking care of Airmen and their families, from legislation on Capitol Hill, to continuing care for Wounded Airmen, help with transitioning to civilian life, education for spouses, awards, educational grants, scholarships and more. Their website is <http://www.afa.org>.

**Air Force Aid Society:** Assists Airmen and families as financial emergencies occur and offers community enhancement programs that supplement childcare, educational needs and deployment support of family members. The program is administered through Airman & Family Readiness Centers on Air Force installations. <http://www.afas.org>

**Air Force Casualty Assistance:** Provides information on Casualty Assistance Representatives and Survivor Benefit plans. <http://www.afpc.af.mil/library/casualty.asp>

**Air Force Sergeants Association:** Represents the professional and personal interests of all enlisted grades of Air Force Active Duty, ANG, and AFRC, retired, veteran, and family members. <http://www.hqafsa.org>

**Air Force Services:** Provides mission sustaining combat support and community service to Airmen and their families every day at deployed and home station locations. <https://www.usafservices.com/Default.aspx>

**Air Force Wounded Warrior:** Provides resources for seriously wounded, ill, and injured, their families, and families of the fallen. <http://www.woundedwarrior.af.mil>

**Air Force Villages:** A military retirement community, we welcome retired and honorably separated military officers from all branches of military service, their spouses, widows, widowers and eligible dependents. <http://www.airforcevillages.com>

**Armed Services YMCA:** Provides support services to military service members and their families for more than 140 years. The essential programs are childcare, hospital assistance, spouse support services, food services, computer training classes, health and wellness services, and holiday meals. Find a local branch at <http://www.asymca.org>

**Army Spouse Battle Book:** While originally developed by spouses of students of the U.S. Army War College, this valuable resource guide is helpful for all military spouses to address the many challenges that face today's military leaders, service members, and their families.

<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/mfp/battlebook/default.cfm>

**Boys and Girls Clubs of America (BGCA):** Air Force Youth Programs and BGCA began their partnership in 1995 to provide a variety of programs, training, and grant opportunities to installation youth programs. BGCA programs also support AFR/ANG families who do not live near a military installation, and those who move to off base locations during the deployment of their parents. <http://www.bgca.org>

**Fisher House:** Donates "comfort homes" to allow family members to be close to a loved one during the hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease, or injury. There is at least one Fisher House at every major military medical center. <http://www.fisherhouse.org>

**Military Child Education Coalition:** A non-profit, worldwide organization focused on ensuring quality educational opportunities for all military children affected by mobility, family separation and transition. <http://www.militarychild.org>

**Military Impacted Schools Association:** Military Impacted Schools Association (MISA) is a national organization of school superintendents. Our mission is to serve school districts with a high concentration of military children. <http://militaryimpactedschoolsassociation.org>

**Military OneSource:** Provides access to web-based Department of Defense resources for the Total Force and their families. It is a virtual extension of installation services. [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)

**Military Officers Association of America:** The "leading voice on compensation and benefit matters for all members of the military community." The association provides expert advice and guidance to its members. <http://www.moaa.org>

**Military Spouse Corporate Career Network (MSCCN)** Provides employment referral and job placement solutions to military spouses, war wounded, caregivers of war wounded, and veterans and transitioning military through Vet Connect Jobs program, at no cost to them. <http://www.msccn.org>

**My Air Force Life:** "My Air Force Life" website offers up-to-date information on contests and programs sponsored by Services and Force Support Squadrons and is designed to help members stay connected, informed and engaged in the many programs offered to military families by Force Support Squadrons. [www.myairforcelife.com](http://www.myairforcelife.com)

**National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRRA):** Provides two programs to help geographically separated Air Force members find childcare in their communities. Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) meets child care needs of Airmen living in off-base areas where on-base military childcare is not available. Operation Military Child Care supports Guard and Reservists when activated or deployed. In both cases, childcare subsidies are paid directly to the childcare provider. [www.naccrrra.org](http://www.naccrrra.org)

**National Military Family Association:** Represents the interests of family members of the uniformed services. Activities revolve around programs to educate the public, the military community, and Congress on the rights and benefits of military families.

<http://www.militaryfamily.org>

**Operation Homefront (OHF):** Provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of our service members and wounded warriors. <http://www.operationhomefront.net>

**Specialized Training of Military Parents (STOMP):** Federally funded Parent Training and Information (PTI) Center established to assist military families who have children with special education or health needs. <http://www.stompproject.org>

**ThanksUSA:** A non-partisan, charitable effort to mobilize Americans of all ages to "thank" the men and women of the United States armed forces. <http://www.thanksusa.org>

**United States Department of Agriculture/4-H:** Air Force Youth Programs and 4-H partnership provides grants to states and territories establishing 4-H clubs on military installations and support for youth ages 6-18 years. The partnership also provides collaborations with land grant universities throughout the country for a variety of research and family related programs. <http://www.4-h.org>

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs:** Principal advocate for America's Veterans; ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of all Veterans in recognition of their service to this Nation. <http://www.va.gov>

**United Service Organizations (USO):** The USO is a private, nonprofit organization whose mission is to support the troops by providing morale, welfare and recreation-type services to our men and women in uniform. <http://www.uso.org>

## Summary

The fact that you have read this far into the guide implies that you want to jump in and help where you can during your command tour. The spouses in your unit and in your wing thank you! This really is an exciting time in your family's life, and you are in for a lot of fun! If you have any concerns or questions, feel free to contact the wing commander's spouse or the POC for this guide.