



## DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE AIR FORCE RECRUITING SERVICE (AETC)

18 November 2021

### MEMORANDUM FOR SPECIAL WARFARE AND COMBAT SUPPORT APPLICANTS

FROM: 330 RCS/CC  
401 E Sonterra Blvd, Suite 225  
JBSA-San Antonio TX 78258

SUBJECT: Mandatory Reading--Do Not Quit

1. Congratulations -- on starting your journey toward joining the elite ranks among Airmen. This journey could be the most challenging experience, and also the most rewarding experience you will have in your lifetime. You will make some of your best friends, and have some of your most memorable moments in the training pipeline. Your success is up to you – do not quit. Get this in your head, now, DO NOT QUIT. The only one who can make you quit is you. Do not doubt yourself. You will be able to control very little in the training pipeline, but you can control your attitude, so you might as well have a good one. Good attitudes are infectious and can help you get through hard times. Keep your sense of humor. These lessons translate to life in general; do not quit on your teammates or on an effort, finish what you start, self-doubt never did anyone any good, and have a good attitude.

2. There are no secrets -- we are not looking for Jason Bourne, we are looking for you. We are looking for someone with a solid head on his or her shoulders, someone who is looking for a challenge, someone who can overcome adversity, and someone who values the team over him or herself. That is it. We do not care what your race is, what gender you are, or what/who you believe in – we care that you meet the standards and are a good teammate. Separately, the first week of the Special Warfare Candidate Course is not a selection event. The first week of is meant to obtain your baselines and coach you for proper techniques and procedures. There is no reason to psych yourself out; go there with a good attitude, be assertive, lead your teammates and you will be just fine. When you put the team/teammates first, you stop caring about all the things you are struggling with. Reference paragraph one about not quitting.

3. Mental preparation -- some say arduous selection events are 90% mental and 10% physical. I personally subscribe to that. Your body will take you farther than you think possible. Famous successful leaders including Sir Winston Churchill, Secretary Mattis, Admiral McRaven, Steve Jobs, and Nick Saban constantly spoke/speak about the importance of mental preparation and mental toughness. Your development leading up to enlistment or commissioning will focus on mental preparation, physical preparation and learning about given career fields in the Air Force. Surprise, surprise, your training pipeline will also encompass mental and physical preparation and learning about special warfare and combat support career fields. The training pipeline will not involve anything you cannot do. This is why we put you through development, to make sure you are someone we can count on to make it. Have it in your head that you are going to make it. Some days will be tough—on those days, just focus on making it the next step, the next stroke, or the next repetition, better yet, focus on your teammates. Do not worry when an event will end, just focus on what is in front of you in that moment. You will not be able to successfully finish that 15 mile ruck march, at night, when you are cold, wet, tired, and hungry, if you don't get past the immediate 100 meters. You will not finish that 50 meter underwater unless you complete one more stroke that is ahead of you. Slow is smooth, and smooth is fast – this translates from swimming to knot tying, shooting, controlling airpower, parallel parking, and even giving IVs at night under NVGs. Before

your day, visualize yourself getting in that pool, visualize yourself putting on that ruck – there will be no surprises, you will be physically tested on the things you have already been physically tested on or exposed to. Trust me, there is nothing you cannot do. I went through Special Tactics Officer Phase II selection and Combat Control pipeline when I was a skinny, socially awkward, 6' 3" 145lb soaking wet cadet from the Air Force academy. What did I know? In my selection there were non-commissioned officers, with combat experience, wearing dive bubbles; there were officers who had deployed, and many others of this ilk. I could not compete with those accolades or experiences, but I had a good attitude, I kept my sense of humor when times were hard, and I damn sure did not quit. Years later I was a healthy 195lbs and went through an additional selection for one of our units. I was older, a bit wiser, but life happened. I was married with a newborn, who did not stop crying the entire night before that selection. No excuses, have your goal and violently execute a plan of attack to achieve it. You might falter and not go the exact path you set out on. So? No plan survives first contact. Maneuver, come up with a better plan and move out smartly. Whatever you do, go ahead and be sure not to quit. 100% of quitters regret quitting. I know this because they constantly ask me about what they should do after quitting and if they can get back in the pipeline. Reference paragraph one about not quitting.

4. Write down your goals or your “why” -- statistically, you are 60% more likely to achieve your goals if you write them down, then if you do not. Be able to state your “why” confidently, and concisely. Whether it is to a teammate, a recruiter, a developer, or cadre, your statement and tone should remain respectful and confident. If you keep your “why” simpler, then you are more likely to remember it. If you write (with pen/paper, not on a keyboard) just three paragraphs on your “why,” it will be the topic you will have thought most about all month. Write about your “why” and your experiences often. It is a de-stresser, and it is extremely healthy. It also makes for some good reading material when you are 18 years post-pipeline like me. Write a letter to yourself to open upon graduation day when you are awarded your beret. You will not regret this—I didn't. Finally, write down why you will not quit – Reference paragraph one about not quitting.

5. Lifestyle – I do not know operators who regret taking the path they took. No pararescuemen ever thought, “man, this is a dead end job with no excitement.” Many of our operators have the amazing opportunity to sign up for initial enlistment bonuses, and later on, career field retention bonuses. This can all equate to hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of a career, meaning, a paid off house, paid off vehicles and financial security. You also have the opportunity to make an additional \$675.00 of incentive pays on top of your base pay. Many of our Staff Sergeants make as much as other Technical Sergeants, and likewise for our Captains in comparison with other Majors. Additionally, you will get to work with the best operators the Army, Navy and Marine Corps have to offer. You will have the chance to be a part of the most important and exciting missions in the Department of Defense. I do not say this to brag, but to explain the opportunities the Air Force can offer you: I am not a rich man, but my house and vehicles are paid off and I am not yet 40 years old. Not a whole lot of Americans can say that. It is not because I am special or a CEO, it is because I worked hard, saved, and took advantages the Air Force offered me for continued service. I had the opportunity to be a part of rescue missions to save Americans from the hands of our enemies. I got the chance to brief U.S. Ambassadors in Middle Eastern countries to prepare them for impending, important missions. Furthermore, had the opportunity to work with the most talented Army and Navy special operators the Department of Defense has to offer, executing presidentially directed missions. Finally, after those things ended, I took leave, and had dedicated family time where I decompressed and reconnected with my wife and kids. Perhaps you are thinking the lifestyle of an operator is not conducive to family life. There might be training time away from home and deployments. Well, 75% of operators are married with children. If you quit, you might end up becoming a security forces airman, a mechanic, an intelligence professional, or aerial gunner. Guess what, they all have training time away from home, and they

all deploy. Have true priorities and execute them in priority order. For example, after a long training trip, spend some time with your family instead of going for drinks with your teammates you just spent two weeks with. Save the excuses, do not quit – Reference paragraph one about not quitting.

6. No perfect time -- to do anything, much less enlist or commission as a Special Warfare Airman. You might think you are not quite ready, you just want a bit more time, you just... I encourage you to take the leap. Statistically, you are less likely to pursue us, the longer you wait. If you wait, you might become injured, you might have second thoughts, life will happen, and you may lose an incredible opportunity. There will never be a perfect time, so if you meet our requirements and are recommended by your recruiter and developer, give yourself an incredible chance at success...and do not quit – Reference paragraph one about not quitting.

7. You have to earn it -- and you should want it that way. Most things in life worth achieving are hard to achieve. We must sacrifice, we must endure, and we must not quit. We want you on our team, but we will not tolerate those who do not meet standards, those who commit integrity violations large or small, and those who quit. You can be a Special Warfare or Combat support airman. Show up every day or night with a good attitude, ready to meet whatever standards are in front of you, and value the team above yourself. No one can do it for you, you must earn it. You will be vectored to a career field based on the needs of the Air Force, your performance, and your preference, in that order. That is because the needs of the team come before individual needs or wants. You cannot join us if you quit, so one more time, kindly reference paragraph one about not quitting.

8. I am excited for you, and I hope to personally meet you and workout with you. In all likelihood I may not be able to because I am one person and we have folks like you all over the country. But I will do my best, and I will not quit. Lucky for you, we have great recruiters and developers who will be with you in the first part of your journey, and they are all far more talented than I am. Good luck to you – DO NOT QUIT. If I can ever be of service to you, please e-mail me at [steven.cooper.2@us.af.mil](mailto:steven.cooper.2@us.af.mil). I would love to hear from you.

STEVEN M. K. COOPER, Lt Col, USAF  
Commander, 330th Recruiting Squadron