

Guardian Culture

Enabling the U.S. Space Force to Deter and Defeat Threats to U.S. Space Capabilities

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Over the past 60 years, space capabilities have become integral to how the United States military operates and succeeds in terrestrial warfighting domains, allowing them to be more effective, connected, and lethal.

As nations across the world seek to assert their power in the space domain, the United States has recognized a critical need to enhance our military space capabilities by creating the United State Space Force (USSF) in 2019 under the leadership of the first Chief of Space Operations (CSO), General John W. “Jay” Raymond.

The USSF is responsible for organizing, training, and equipping Guardians to conduct global space operations that enhance how our joint and coalition forces fight; and offer decision-makers military options to achieve national objectives.

Soon after his appointment as CSO, Gen. Raymond and his senior leadership team, comprised of officer, enlisted and civilian personnel, began architecting and implementing a bold, lean, technologically-savvy, digital-first service, where personnel would be known as Guardians.

As the Service started outlining its organizational processes, digital fluency, and new opportunities to bring advanced space warfighting capabilities to the joint force, questions emerged around what it truly means to be a Guardian and how to achieve those goals most effectively and expeditiously.

Establishing Guardian Culture

Forged out of more than 90 legacy space domain offices across its Sister Services, the initial staffing of the USSF was primarily comprised of Airmen, who inherently brought with them the culture, identity, and ethos of the United States Air Force (USAF). Given the unique mission of the USSF, leadership recognized clarity of Guardian identity and culture as a critical enabler and opportunity to reinforce collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the other military service branches.

Defining Guardian Values

- What underlying behaviors, norms, rituals, artifacts, and shared experiences define a Guardian?
- Beyond core values (i.e., Character, Connection, Commitment, and Courage, as described in the *Guardian Ideal*), what defines and differentiates the Guardian identity and experience throughout a Guardian's career, reinforcing a space warfighting mindset and shared purpose, mission, and goals?
- Are Guardians committed to and accountable for a shared vision and set of beliefs, behaviors, and experiences?
- What are the clearly defined actions and behaviors that align to values and drive recognition and rewards?

To further our nation's advantages over adversaries in, to, and from space, Guardians must act boldly and with a shared purpose. Guardians must conceive, design, develop, acquire, test, field, operate and employ capabilities faster and more effectively than our adversaries and as part of an all-domain joint force.

As the USSF carved out its Guardian Culture, it developed two key objectives:

- 1** Cultivate and nurture a robust Guardian Culture that attracts, motivates, and focuses the Guardian population around equipping joint warfighters with capabilities they need to deter and defeat our adversaries, and
- 2** Prepare Guardians for their specific roles, how they integrate and collaborate with other Guardians across the service, and how they directly contribute to joint warfighting.

Though Guardian Culture will continue to evolve over time, setting the foundation to unify all Guardians will instill a sense of shared purpose and inspire current and future space warriors and pioneers.

Preparing for Cultural Change

The USSF is taking swift action to recruit, develop, and retain the Guardian forces across all space power disciplines and businesses. Training, education, and professional development that starts at recruitment and continues through senior leadership can instill pride, forge unity, and prepare Guardians who will ascend through the ranks to shape the future of the USSF.

Establishing a strong unifying identity and culture takes commitment, intention, courage, and tangible action from Guardians across all levels, particularly senior leaders, supervisors, and new recruits. The USSF is still in its formative years and has the benefit of instilling this culture early and building from the ground up.



Headquarters Space Force | Space Staff

Headquarters Space Force can serve as a unifying force, bringing together leaders from across the USSF, building trust among Headquarters Space Force and Field Commands, breaking down organizational silos, and showing a bias for action to demonstrate tangible impact. At Headquarters Space Force, practical steps that can be taken to advance the USSF's cultural goals include establishing:

- A unified focus and visible commitment from senior leaders.
- A clear definition of a space warfighting mindset that is meaningful, relatable, and actionable across the whole of the USSF.

- Co-developed (together with the Field Commands) roles and responsibilities for defining, embedding, measuring, and sustaining culture across USSF.
- An intentional, human-centric approach to define, grow, nurture, and sustain Guardian Culture.
- An affinity to make Guardian Culture changes based on measurable outcomes.
- Multi-directional feedback loops across Space Staff through Field Commands.
- Clear communications and enablement aids that support strong, successful cultural leadership.
- Infrastructure (e.g., governance, processes, technology) that enables the mission and reinforces desired behaviors.

Field Commands



Space Training and Readiness Command (STARCOM)

STARCOM is making essential strides in articulating, activating, and embedding Guardian Culture among senior leaders, supervisors and new recruits. Through the accessions process, STARCOM is carefully shaping the first 24 months of the Guardian new recruit experience to instill the Guardian identity and affiliation.

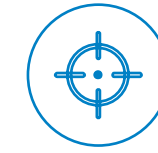
Informed by leading practice and extensive enterprise transformation experience across Federal, Defense, and Commercial sectors, the following are a few key Guardian Culture recommendations as they relate to the USSF training and readiness enterprise:

- Collaborate with USSF recruiters to ensure they provide consistent and thoughtful messaging that reinforces the Guardian identity via recruiting practices, procedures and processes to ensure expectations are precisely communicated.
- Create training and other guidance documents uniquely tailored to the Guardian identity, experience, and mission; do not simply lift-and-shift practices from the other services.
- Tailor training, education, and exercises for inter-service transfers (ISTs) to hone new capabilities and skills—as well as quickly create Guardian bonds, integration, interoperability, transparency, and camaraderie—so they can quickly identify as Guardians.
- Focus on cultivating a space warfighting mindset, clarifying and reinforcing what warfighting means in the Space domain.
- Lay out technological expectations for USSF recruits to enable remote simulation, modelling, and virtual deployment to meet mission needs.



Space Systems Command (SSC)

SSC leadership recently reorganized to realign with the overall USSF structure and provide a modern suite of resilient and effective capabilities needed to address growing threats in space. Looking forward, SSC has the opportunity to institute additional Guardian Culture strategic support and change management as part of a coordinated adoption campaign and reinforce the twin objectives of modernizing and streamlining space system acquisition and launch components, and enhancing Guardian Culture efforts across its enterprise.



Space Operations Command (SpOC)

SpOC's role is to generate, present, and sustain combat-ready intelligence, cyber, space and combat support forces as part of the USSF's organize, train, and equip (OTE) charter; and to present Guardians and forces to the U.S. Space Command (USSPACECOM) and other Combatant Commands to execute mission orders via kinetic and other actions.

SpOC also has a direct role in consistently reinforcing and hardening Guardian Culture as new recruits go onto their initial USSF operational assignments following the accession process, and more broadly as Guardians progress throughout their career within the service.



Field Command Recommendations

All Field Commands must play an active role in clarifying, reinforcing and sustaining the Guardian identity and culture. The following are early considerations for Field Command adoption, in addition to the STARCOM considerations above.

- Clearly and explicitly define the unique role of the Field Command in advancing the mission.
- Visibly reinforce the Guardian identity and cultural expectations, implicitly and explicitly through the words and actions of leaders at all levels.
- Present highly trained personnel to USSPACECOM and other Combatant Commands to execute the mission to defend and protect in the space domain (SpOC specific).
- Provide tailored training, education, and exercise materials and scenarios to personnel that applies to both the USSF mission and their particular job role; i.e., experiences that make clear how SSC personnel's roles in acquisition and launch activities contribute to defending and protecting our Nation and our space assets (SSC specific).

Change for Advantage

Success in establishing a new, formidable warfighting service depends on growing and preparing Guardians to think, act, and fight differently. Guardians must know unequivocally who they are, why their work is so important and urgent, what their role is in the mission, and how to be a force multiplier in times of peace and war.

Determined adversaries are developing a spectrum of threats at an alarming pace, directly challenging stability in space and the many benefits we enjoy as a spacefaring nation. To counter these threats, we must change the paradigm and act expeditiously.

We must prepare for inevitable warfighting in space, and protect against, defeat and deny our adversaries in the domain. CMSgt Jacob Simmons, SpOC Senior Enlisted Leader, reinforces the criticality of purpose and intention, “Change! Not to change for different or change for new—change for advantage!”

Change at this scale is hard and messy, but it is essential and starts with understanding and focusing on the most impactful drivers of culture. Clarity of identity and vision (e.g., values, purpose, warfighter mindset), actionable, measurable, relatable, and coherent expectations, transparency, enablement (e.g., advanced weapons systems, training), and accountability for change will exponentially increase the probability of victory.



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