

Goldfein to commanders: ‘Rise to the occasion’ during coronavirus crisis

[Stephen Losey](#)

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Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein, visits Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, March 11 to observe and discuss current operations in the shadow of COVID-19. (Air Force)

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Dave Goldfein is calling on the service’s leaders to be ready to “rise to the occasion” during the [rapidly unfolding coronavirus crisis](#).

In a letter Friday to wing commanders and their civilian equivalents, Goldfein said it is most important that leaders must keep their heads to [hold their organizations together](#).

“This is where you make your money as a commander,” Goldfein wrote. “The organization is going to ride on your calm, cool, collected and measured, while intense, [approach to the crisis](#). If you are frazzled and all over the map, you are part of the problem.”

However, Goldfein continued, “if you are the adult in the room that provides direction but empowers your subordinate leaders to take action, you win. Your wing will remember this time and how you responded for the remainder of your tour and beyond.”

Goldfein said the advice he shared in the letter was learned from his own experience commanding during similar crises.



[Nellis briefly closes to non-essential personnel, keeping retirees out of the commissary, before reopening](#)

Nellis' move to bar retirees from the commissary, which was later rescinded, sparked anger and frustration among some.

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Squadron commanders are key to the success of a wing or other organization, Goldfein said. Wing and group commanders must keep squadron commanders informed and up to date on what is expected of them.

Higher-level commanders need to delegate authority down to levels such as squadron commanders, he said.

“Arm them and support them and you will set the conditions to win,” Goldfein said. “Try to do everything at your level and you will have someone fall through

the cracks. Provide your commander's intent and then step back as they execute."

Leaders need to be candid, set realistic expectations and not try to "coddle" airmen and families.

"We don't know when this will end," Goldfein said. "We don't know a lot. Don't make things up. Tell them what you do know and share what you don't. Not your job to fix this. Your job is to lead."

But through it all, Goldfein said, commanders need to take care of themselves so they can take care of others.

"Doesn't do us any good if you work 14-hour days and then catch the virus or go down for the count," Goldfein said. "Show the way by your strict adherence to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines] and demand your leadership team do the same."

"We're in this for a few months, maybe longer ... nobody knows," Goldfein said. "Get your personal OPTEMPO right so you can lead by example and have the physical and mental fitness to endure."

About [Stephen Losey](#)

Stephen Losey covers leadership and personnel issues as the senior reporter for Air Force Times. He comes from an Air Force family, and his investigative reports have won awards from the Society of Professional Journalists. He has traveled to the Middle East to cover Air Force operations against the Islamic State.