



NEWS RELEASE

United States Air Force

Headquarters, Air Education and Training Command

Office of Public Affairs
100 H Street, Suite 4
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas 78150-4331

Phone: (210) 652-4400
Fax: (210) 652-2027
<http://www.aetc.af.mil>

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JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH, Texas – Three commanders at Laughlin AFB’s 47th Flying Training Wing were relieved today following investigations which revealed chronic leadership failures.

Lt. Gen. Steven Kwast, commander of Air Education and Training Command, relieved Col. Charles Velino, the wing commander, along with the operations group commander and a flying training squadron commander. His actions followed a review of the 19th Air Force commander’s recommendation and the outcomes of the investigations.

Effective today, Col. Lee Gentile is the new wing commander. Before this assignment, Gentile was the 71st FTW Vice Commander at Vance Air Force Base, Oklahoma.

“The prior command team chronically failed to appropriately care for people and the mission,” said Kwast. “They failed to correct an evolving situation that led to an environment where some Airmen did not feel safe or respected.”

Kwast determined the command team did not take appropriate actions to respond to, correct and report incidents of officer misconduct at the south Texas pilot training base.

“By failing to address incidents of dangerous behavior and a threatening environment, irresponsible alcohol consumption, and disrespectful treatment of some students, these leaders did not establish and enforce a culture that upheld our Air Force core values,” he said.

The 19th Air Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Patrick Doherty, directed a preliminary inquiry immediately when he became aware of allegations of misconduct at the wing. Subsequent investigations did not identify a wider trend of unhealthy command environments in 19th Air Force.

“Our Airmen, families and the critical mission of the 47th FTW deserve engaged and effective leaders of the highest caliber consistent with our core values,” Kwast said. “Ultimately, every commander is responsible for enforcing good order and discipline and holding those accountable who do not live up to the professionalism we expect of our Airmen. The command team at Laughlin was not leading a healthy culture of accountability, dignity and respect.”

Kwast encourages Airmen who identify unprofessional or inappropriate conduct to report the behavior through their chain-of-command or to their wing or AETC Inspector General.

“All Airmen who come to work for this Air Force should feel respected, protected and connected with their teammates and their mission,” said Kwast. “As the commander of AETC, I take this responsibility seriously and I want our Airmen to know their leaders will be held accountable for failing to enforce a safe and professional environment.”

***For photos to accompany this release, please contact AETC public affairs:
Aetc.pao@us.af.mil***

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