



SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
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WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

2/2/2019

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE PERSONNEL

SUBJECT: Leading with an Ethics Mindset

Congress and the Nation have placed their trust in us – trust that we will deliver high performance results and remain accountable to the American people as good stewards of their tax dollars. As we continue translating strategy into action, we must demonstrate our commitment as leaders in carrying this trust forward. A key component of leadership is reinforcing ethical behavior across the full spectrum of our work and recognizing ethics principles as the foundation upon which we make sound, informed decisions.

I ask that you and your teams reinforce this foundation at every turn. Make ethics a natural and constant part of your everyday conversations. Identify gray areas to prevent future missteps. Remain in the ethical midfield and take advantage of the resources at your disposal to gain clarity. We are accountable for our actions as individuals, but we are also strongest when we work as one team to achieve results – ethics is no exception.

Our mindset must focus on more than just meeting minimum compliance standards. Experience has shown that discussions of potential or past scenarios is the most effective way to reinforce a culture of values-based, ethical decision-making. I expect senior leaders to be personally involved in presenting annual ethics training to their organizations and ensuring completion of that training by November 30th of each calendar year. While DoD ethics counselors will participate and provide resources for these events, I expect leaders to take initiative in developing the content. Lead by example with your commitment to ethical decision-making and conduct.

I am proud to serve alongside you as we drive progress along our strategic priorities and maintain the most lethal – and ethical – fighting force in the world.

Patrick M. Shanahan  
Acting



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