THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
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JUN 22 2006

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
COMMANDERS OF THE COMBATANT COMMANDS
SERVICE CHIEFS

SUBJECT: Reducing Preventable Accidents

I have set some very specific mishap reduction goals for the Department to achieve. My congratulations to those who are progressing toward their respective goals, but others are not. We must rededicate ourselves to those goals – and achieve them.

Too often we excuse mishaps by citing the difficult circumstances in which we operate. We have trained our men and women to operate safely in very trying conditions. There is no excuse for losing lives given proper planning, attention to detail, and the active involvement of the chain of command.

Accountability is essential to effective leadership. I expect all the Department's leaders, from the Commander to the first line supervisors, to be accountable for mishaps under their watch. We simply will not accept status quo.

If we need to change our training, improve our material acquisition, or alter our business practices to save the precious lives of our men and women, we will do it. We will fund as a first priority those technologies and devices that will save lives and equipment. We will retrofit existing systems, and consider these devices as a "must fund" priority for all new systems. We can no longer consider safety as "nice-to-have."

I want to hear what you are doing to improve your safety performance and I want to see the results of your actions.

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