



### *On Aggressiveness*

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Of the guiding principles of tactical aviation, the most important—aggressiveness—is one we were taught early on as pilot trainees. I vividly recall the flight where this lesson truly resonated. The mission was a two-ship T-38 formation flight. We were in the early stages of the T-38 phase, about eight months into our 14-month program. My instructor for the ride was Vic Hnatiuk, and he explained how aggressiveness applies even to something as fundamental as two-ship formation flying.

His quote to me was: “Being aggressive does not mean being abrupt or brash. It means recognizing a problem or situation as soon as it starts to develop, addressing it immediately, and persisting until it’s resolved.”

The discussion was framed around formation flying, specifically about recognizing when you’re drifting out of position—or anticipating it—and responding proactively to correct it. Of course, as a former fighter pilot, Vic understood that the same principles applied broadly to tactical aviation: identify the enemy, exploit their weakness, act swiftly and decisively, and persist until victory is achieved. It was a lesson in both formation flying as well as the broader context of warfare.

Now, with my helmet and G-suit stored away, I find myself shoulder-to-shoulder with thousands on the front lines of a different battle—an ideological one. In this conflict, the forces of true “order and discipline” and justice are pitted against those who prioritize self-interest and institutional preservation above all else. To prevail in this war, we must remain aggressive. But just as I learned 25 years ago at Sheppard Air Force Base, aggression does not mean being reckless, arrogant, or brash. It is about recognizing the enemy, identifying their weaknesses, and—most importantly—persisting until they are defeated.

A few weeks ago, we published a piece titled “Why We Fail.” It touched on a similar theme: we often fail because we lack persistence. We are up against a formidable enemy in the form of corruption within our Department of



## The DoD Times (Redacted)



Defense and Coast Guard, an adversary that can succeed simply by outspending or outwaiting those who strive to expose wrongdoing. To win, we must be and remain aggressive, persisting until the foe is vanquished. And in this fight, some conflate aggressiveness with brashness or rashness or audacity. However, one can be aggressive and not be vociferous or boisterous, whether in-person or online. The truly aggressive ones who are those who identify the correct target quickly, lock-on to it, remain locked on, and smirk to themselves as they watch in their targeting pod as it is vaporized.

The takeaway is this: whether it's maintaining perfect position in "fingertip formation," defeating an adversary in air-to-air combat, or confronting the domestic enemy of corruption in our Department of Defense and Coast Guard, the same principles apply: in order to win, we must identify the enemy, exploit their weaknesses, and persist until they are defeated. And it will be through this *aggressiveness*, in which we will be victorious.

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