

Ep. 57: The Tenth Air Force Commander, Maj. Gen. Bryan Radliff

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Welcome to the Sword and Shield podcast, I'm Colonel Rick Erredge and today I have a very special guest the 10th Air Force Commander Major General Brian Radliff. Good afternoon sir good afternoon thanks for joining us it's oh it's my pleasure to be here fantastic team great operation yeah it's really going to be fun here to kind of talk about you and introduce you to the organization we've had a good couple days I think and we've kind of hit you with a lot of information for sure it's been overwhelming I'll just be honest with you there's so much that your organization and your airmen are doing it's really kind of hard for me to take it all in this has been a nice introduction I need a little bit of time to go home and study and make sure I understand everything that you guys are doing on the cyber yes sir you know we wish we had time certainly to give you everything in the depth that you want you need so we try to hit the highlights and certainly this maybe is an opportunity for you to share maybe your leadership philosophy and introduce kind of a little bit about yourself and how you think and so you've been seated about a month and so any initial observations from taking over there and from the breadth and scope of the responsibility of being an ass commander yeah it's overwhelming I'll be honest with you I've been in the air force for a long time I was the vice about five or six years ago as a traditional reservist and now sitting in the commander seat it just amazes me how broad and how diverse 10th air force is and that's one of the things that's when I say it's been overwhelming is because there's so much diversity in the mission there's so much diversity in the manpower people doing different AFSCs AFSC's I've never heard of quite honestly until I started doing deep dives into the organization which is why you know we've decided with chief Malcolm and I've decided to spend three days down here just immersing ourselves in in your world and what your team's doing so I say it's been a bit overwhelming but it's uh the whole point I guess is it's humbling as well because we see the great work that airmen are doing and quite honestly with your team it's a lot of great work that a lot of people don't know is being done and I think that's the other part that I that I've found in the in the month that I've been here is you know my job is to advocate for the people whose missions we don't often talk about and I think that's just been one of the very inspiring things I've seen in the month is that there's so much mission that really needs advocacy yes sir and just you know you just got little snippets of what we're doing certainly um everything's not always rainbows and unicorns like I tell people too so I appreciate you really asking the tough questions of us about how you can help and what the challenges are there that's really helpful to me knowing

you know my boss is interested in the business and where we're going the future too and certainly things in our business are changing all the time yeah I'm not only interested I'm invested I think we've got to get the staff moving you've often heard the terms the speed of relevance to make sure that they are responding to the ever-changing landscape things change so much uh we've heard our chief of staff general brown talk about you know accelerating change and then he's got his action orders that people have to follow and as you go through the action orders and you try to apply them we have to just make sure that as the staff we're going through those action orders to get the impediments out of your way to allow your organization to change to be relevant not only today but tomorrow as well yeah it's I think it's exciting time when I talk to people about sometimes they get in the grind and they kind of feel beat down like no we're at a great time in this business there's so much going on there's so much change we have so many leaders and in in around that are influenced in the business that I think we can really chart the course for the future that's really going to make us relevant and being compelling missions to make sure you know our traditionals want to be part of cyber and IW for the future yeah it's interesting you said the word a lot of our folks feel beat down I hope that's because they're working hard I hope it because they like a good day at the gym or they just they come home and they're worn out because they had a great day and they had a lot of impact not because they feel marginalized or otherwise unvalued or underworked so I doubt that that resonates with individual people that they're undervalued or underworked but uh sometimes in in the missions that we don't often talk about or the or the majority of the air force is not well educated or well versed on I can see how some folks could feel marginalized and I want to make sure that folks know that that's not the case that there is no marginalization everybody is extremely valued the senior leaders like myself chief Malcolm we just have to get more immersed in your world and better understand what it is that your airmen need and what they're going through yeah poor choice awards on my part certainly the folks I think that the mission we talked about the things we do we can't often talk about in a lot of mission sets and sometimes that wears just on uh being able to tell a story so I was looking through your bio here and I noticed you joined the air force reserve in 2003 same year I did as well and so tell us a little bit about that story and how you came to you know you had some international guard time and Reg half time and now it's time to transition and what your thoughts were yeah 2003 was obviously a very good year very good yes sir I got to tell you I really don't like talking a whole lot about myself I'd rather talk about airmen in mission but as a way to introduce the things that aren't in the bio yeah I'll go for it I did 10 years on active duty decided for family reasons just like many of us do in the reserve it was time to get out I had a son in in middle school going into high school and wanted some um consistency and control over where the future went we had a great location I was flying f-15s down to Eglin it was the job of my dreams was able to separate from active duty and go to Tyndall and fly the f-15 as an as an instructor well I did that part-time while I also worked for Boeing as a sim instructor back at Eglin and you know as a contract sim instructor for my old unit I did that for about three years I was I was at uh at home uh September 11th and then you know everybody was recalled we end up going back to Tyndall not much of us not much

for us to do since it was a training unit that kicked off a whole series of events and over the next couple years continued flying that mission at Tyndall and working as an instructor at Boeing and then the job in 2003 opened up as they started a program called the fighter associate program and what that program was in response to is the shortage of experienced pilots at the combat fighter units so I came back as a reservist to try to balance out some of the experience and uh that was 2003 and I stayed at Eglin until end of 2007 early 2008 as the f-15s were going away they were bringing on the f-35 and like any other reservist when your mission goes away you got to go find a job so I did but that was that was the only thing that was going to get me out of the beautiful emerald coast yeah that's awesome we're really happy to have you as part of the team and it's always bittersweet right you you're comfortable with the boss and then all of a sudden somebody new comes in you get excited again and motivated and the opportunity to you know for me show you the wing and represent what cyber's all about especially in our business too we are um we're the only cyber wing and so you have the only cyborg only Intel wing only space wing reserve command so we're excited for you to be that champion for us as well and there's tons of challenges in the future and um and then certainly I think funding budget NDS what 16th air force needs of us and I think those are all things that I think about kind of all the time and then we talked earlier about travel vouchers pay pain or airmen take care of our airmen making sure they have what they need from services and opportunities too so what kind of challenges um really are you focusing on or do you see you know that you want us to tackle and any kind of priorities going forward fantastic questions a lot of breadth of questions in there I may ask you to double back on one or two of them I will tell you the priorities my priorities are my boss's priorities and I and I hope that you know your priorities are mine and yes sir because we all have to have the same message there's I think chief of staff brown talks about there's one message but there's many messengers so that we're all saying the same thing and that's important for an organization like ours that we that we have to be in lockstep with our boss and uh both up and down the chain of command so I think one of my priorities and I in the process of developing my what I call special interest items that I'll send out to the wings it kind of tells you where my focus areas are over the next you know a few months and we'll update them quarterly semi-annual how it turns out but one of the things I'm really focused on is protecting airmen from all these things that you just brought up all the challenges right the budgets the travel vouchers you know I want to make sure that we're doing everything we can so that they don't have the problems and if there are problems and they're brought up and people are listening to this podcast I want them to know that we are diligently working on the problems and I'll give you a perfect example travel vouchers yes sir we championed a project through the air reserve forces policy committee which I'm the vice chairman for it was about addressing travel vouchers so we said my gosh this is this is a big problem we heard from a lot of folks that that there are you know tens of thousands of dollars in some cases of outstanding payment that people have to make and we looked at the process so we took this we said let's study a little bit well we were able to link up with a program called Kesselring which ironically has a whole bunch of reservists and guardsmen as part-timers we presented this program to them told them what

we were looking for and they said we are all over it we know exactly what you're talking about we also are victims of this process so we said we want everything on um on a portable device I want to be with my iPhone or my Samsung or whatever phone kind of phone I have I want to be able to do this on my mobile device so they're working on it right now those are some of the things that we're trying to get after to make airmen's lives better so any thing that you can do with a CAC enabled computer we want through multi-factor authentication and all the other pieces in your world quite honestly what we can do to maximize access for airmen but minimize risk to our networks so we're working on several of those issues so I want to be the blocking and tackling person so that our airmen can go and run the ball yeah that's excellent you know we hear a lot about when they come in on the UTAs they just want to be able to focus on getting their training done and doing any um operational tasks and not be weighed down but all these administrative tasks so um there's been a lot of stuff going on general Scobee and chief white have really championed a lot of you know first sergeants for people putting chaplains in units um focus on getting resources down in the unit so it's great to hear about the travel trees that's something frankly we've been really struggling with based on our geographically separated units and the number of mission partners we have and I know that's a challenge for you as well so my challenge of having 10 GSUs and 1300 person weighing is meg you know multiplied 17 times for you so I'm interested and I'm watching how you approach all your you know all your organizations wings and how you lead and those things that I can pick up that I can I can do as well so I don't know how you're going to tackle getting out to see everybody because I have a lot of anxiety myself about I'll probably never see every airman in my command tour right and I have to just deal with that and find ways to connect with them what's your approach and kind of what's your what's your plan that you want to certainly I do want to meet every airman but just realistically it's not going to happen yeah I think what you can do is the time that you do have with the airmen you can meet is you have to maximize that value if you spend all your time thinking about the things you're not doing you'll miss the value of the things that you are and I think everyone can recognize that you may not get to shake every airman's hand but the airmen that you do shake they are going to talk to those other airmen they're gonna say I had a chance to meet my boss and I had a chance to meet my boss's boss and we've got to be able to have that positive impact with those airmen and I you know I'm a little concerned that if I try to sprint to go see every location and every airman I'll do it poorly and I fully expect to fail in my mission because it's a it's a mission that I've set a very high goal to go visit every unit in the first year I don't know that that's going to be possible but that's what we're going to try for I won't be disappointed if I don't make it because I know it's a difficult goal but what that'll do is that'll motivate me to get after next year's travel plan as well and then figure out where we need to go to pick up to not only reinforce to our airmen to the leaders like you that our appreciation for the work that's being done but also to recognize the great work that again airmen often don't get to tell their story my job is to be able to tell their story we've got a lot of great folks out there and I want to just be able to brag on your people on my people and all the other folks who may be listening yes sir so that's great opportunity for us to get those people in front of you and we really certainly

need to do a better job always a teller story and then I think have an advocate like that for you and chief Malcolm the bill do that we need to feed that to you we need to do a better job of that making sure folks are that we're recognizing the right people for that reasons at the right time too it's got to be timely recognition as well and so um we just had our UEI and so you know I tell people this wing is like a toddler like two and a half years old sometimes we act like we're 20. The toddler is 20 sometimes we act like a toddler and we gotta find what that maturity and that level set is for us to continue to grow mature on a nice smooth path and we want to accelerate some areas and other areas we want to you know take a more measured approach to and then I know relationships is a huge part of that and so certainly you've got a number of relationships you've done some relationship building here already with some of our senior leaders and so what kind of things do you think that you're hearing about or that we need to focus on from a relationship perspective to continue to grow and mature as an organization I am very glad you asked that question to be honest with you so to me relationships start with your command team and I have no better partner than chief Jeremy Malcolm and I want to make sure that when we go traveling to our various places that our airmen see that we are a combined leadership team that our subordinate commanders see we are a combined leadership team and that sets the expectation that you are a combined leadership team and even down to your superintendents at the group at squadron level that is the combined leadership team how do you bring your first sergeants into it and then how do you build around that so I think those relationships matter and once we have our home taken care of and we've got that good cohesive team at home then I think we can we can go out and articulate that message so as I go to my compadres out uh is at the various NAFs centers and locations where we are integrated in our operations I just barely clearly tell them listen I know my place my place is to provide combat rating resilient airmen to whatever mission set that that person is leading it's about supported and supporting relationships I think sometimes we get involved in ourselves and you know our own hubris may be getting gets in our way and we think we should be large and in charge and I think sometimes we just need to back off and understand when we are the supported commander we want everybody supporting us and when we are the supported our supporting unit we need to know our place in that as well so I try to start with that when I take the message on the road and say listen we're here to support your mission what can we do to make it better we're all on the same team yes sir I really appreciate that you've hit some of our mission partners already this week that's really helpful for us so I can go in and when I need help and certainly we need to repay that as well and be good mission partners and good stewards of our resources and so speaking of resources any outlook or anything behind the magic eight ball about what next year looks like and if it's gonna be bad and rough from uh you know from a financial perspective I think that's fine we just need to communicate and understand that we make smart decisions based on what resources now we're focused on spending money for readiness training and making sure we're ready for when that surge is needed from us so what I won't answer rick on this on this podcast is what the budget's going to look like because that's you know that's getting out in front of big because congress is going through the debates right now

our military leadership has already presented their inputs to the 22 budget congress is doing what they're uh by law required to do we'll know what the budget is and then what we're going to have appropriated for our expenditures for next year what I would like to focus on is it doesn't matter how much money we get my focus is on being responsible with what we're given we're all taxpayers every airplane every computer system every network everything that we do is the property of the united states government that is given to us and trusted to us by the taxpayers so we have to be responsible with our resources you know as a commander one of the things that you're graded on is managing your resources and we need to make sure that we are all holding each other accountable through whether it's our civilian and military personnel accounts whether it's our operations maintenance accounts weapons sustainment all the various commodities that we have out there that were given budgets just like we are at home and that we are spending appropriately and accordingly sometimes we will often lament that our government just spends money like crazy well what I would offer to people is we can worry less about what the budget's going to look like in the future as long as we're responsible with the resources we're given today yeah that's a great approach and then certainly you know in our business it's a lot about people and about get training opportunities and then making sure that um we're allocating the money where we need to get people through classes and on time and on target for when the Reg f and our mission partners need us certainly so we can always do better that and we need to continue to up channel those issues when we need more slots or there's a pressing issue and a mission set and we've already made decision resource decisions based on what missions are most important and when people are going in the bucket when people are deploying and kind of getting in a cycle maturing that from a wing that's kind of just cobbled together all these missions and certainly we're going through that process ourselves as well yeah the great thing about serving as a reservist is sometimes you can pick the timing and tempo of when you're available short of mobilization so if you've got the training allocations the one thing that vexes us quite often is we may have a training allocation but it doesn't meet up with an airman's personal schedule life experiences life timing whatever and they may need to move it well every time we bring that flexibility into a system that is you know sufficiently inflexible it creates some perturbations that sometimes it's difficult to recover we want to maintain that flexibility for the airmen sometimes the system just doesn't allow it and we have to do some callings and uh ask for some forgiveness some latitude and maybe some trading around because the active duty they have their pipeline of people coming out of the schools and the same input processes we have and so it's just some of the risk we have to take as leaders to give that freedom and that flexibility to our airmen to make sure that what they're doing uh their ability to continue to serve or start serving for that matter it matches up with what they need for their life at that time yeah that's I think what's great that's why I joined the reserve in 2003 you know I needed to change for my personal family life and this reserve model fit and then I went through my career and then made O6 and like now we're ready for something else and I can jump back into the full-time game and have that flexibility to meet my family needs and serve in a place where I think there's value and that I have a passion for continuing to do that right

and what we found in the reserve specifically is the ability to do those career interruptions if you will for a military career to start a civilian career or a family or build a business or get an education and it allows us again that inherent flexibility to not only serve our families and our future but also serve our nation and I just I think that that appeals to a lot of people that you don't really miss out on a lot if you know serve a little bit of time on in full-time status come back into part time and just you can continue to move to the different parts of the country whenever you want to uh job comes open you can apply for it you can do whatever you and your family want to do at that time some you know some people see that as almost an anathema to service I think of it just the opposite way I think it's the ultimate service when you uh as the nation was founded on the citizen soldier back in the colonial days that we can take up arms whenever we need to but we can also go back and run our businesses or our farms or whatever we're doing for our life and I think that allows us really in particular on the reserve component side to find places where diversity is embraced not um and accepted so you have folks that they just want to go do something different once they're live they want to get off the active duty train well you know congratulations thank you for serving you can do that uh we've got a place for you in the reserve and I just I just think that flexibility that inherent flexibility is really what makes this a great place to work yes sir and that's truly I think the air force and certainly some other services have some of the same nuances but if you want to serve full-time there's opportunities to do that you know regular force and with us there's part-time it's part-time opportunities and if you really just want to live in your community and never ever move like you can do that with the guard and I think when people talk about opportunities as long as we give them all the information that'll make a good decision and certainly we want people to serve in any capacity and certainly rather than serve with us but it's really helpful I think to have to be able to speak to all the opportunities we have here and certainly in our wing we kind of spread around the country so we try to move people and give people opportunities have them go work in comm squadrons other places headquarters and we can really get a really diverse background and making sure that um we're growing the leaders we need for the future and who the next rick is and who the next 10th air force commander maybe not the next one but the next you know they're out there somewhere your replacement my replacements out there somewhere and so I want them to be better than me certainly and how we do that is really been exciting as we implement a lot of new policies and programs to support those things and development opportunities and somebody like yourself being available and talking about shaking hands it's changed people's lives at times and maybe it's just that one thing they needed to stick around and inspire them to do something else yeah and that diversity you're talking about as far as moving and geographic and experience and different uh different organizations we don't need everybody to do that right we want people to feel comfortable where they are we want them to feel comfortable if it's time to go and do something else you'll hear general Scobee often talk about we only need to develop five percent of our population to be the future senior officers uh senior enlisted leaders so we don't want people to feel like they have to move around right and it's if you want to get on the leadership track here's how you do it if you want to stay home and serve in san

Antonio or robin robins Georgia or office wherever you want to serve you can do that and you can have a great career doing it we want you to do that in fact we need you to do that because we talk about that experience and sometimes if we move people around too much then we may be taking away from that experience uh specifically as a is a very skilled craftsman or crafts person yeah so the opportunity is there if people choose to do absolutely and I think there's that balance between developing the right people and making people just move around and having some technical speeds you heard from some of the units this week that we bring that value to the mission partner because we've got continuity and I think that's really important to us so I'm going to leave you with the last word here sir any leadership philosophies or thoughts or any guidance that you want to provide to the wing or certainly anybody listening let me start out just by saying thanks for the chance to come down and shake a couple of hands and get a peek into what your team is doing right now the last time I was here it was still a group uh now to see it grow into a wing and see all the different shields and emblems on the wall growth has been good to your organization but it doesn't come without consequences right a lot of churn a lot of upheaval a lot of uncertainties about what the future holds and I think that you know as much as I thank you for the work that you're doing and uh I also thank the airmen for being successful enough to continue the group because if this organization wasn't successful it would not have grown it would have been scuttled so I think the growth is a testament to the great work that the airmen are doing thanks for that thanks to your team to some of the philosophies I you know I struggle with this a lot because you know how do you say a couple of things that that really hit the point you know I'm not a George s Patton and come up with these great quotes or you know something from the out of Einstein's books but you know I like the maxims of just a good leader is somebody who gives direction and gets out of the way because I've been a wing commander I don't need to do your job again you've been a squadron commander you don't need to do their job again so we give direction we give guidance and then we let our subordinate commanders and then quite honestly the youth and exuberance of our airmen and our and our junior officers to go out and do the mission and that guidance that we give them uh should be enough to allow them to execute within the left right limits that we've set uh and that's all we really ask them to do so quite honestly that's my leadership philosophy is to give direction and get out of the way I think the guidance and direction must be clear and unambiguous as well that's the other part is to leave nothing uh to be to be questioned but not so prescriptive that it that it limits their ability to be thoughtful and deliberate and innovative for that matter the other part is I firmly believe in accountability we have tremendous responsibility given to us for those who wear the cloth of the nation whether it's in the uniform service or our civilian folks who serve with us and I think that accountability is something that often gets overlooked and we as commanders we must hold each other responsible and accountable but we also have to hold our airmen accountable responsible but we set the example and when there are folks in our organizations who decide that they no longer want to serve within the bounds of which we have established and they knew that when they joined then I think we have to make sure that the standard is upheld and that folks are held accountable that accountability to me is the good order and discipline

but we also have to be judicious with it we have to make sure that we're being purposeful and we're not malicious and I think those are those are probably my two biggest things is give direction get out of the way and then make sure we're holding each other accountable because any action that happens that reflects poorly upon our organization or our air force resonates in the community and we don't want to be those people so uh I would encourage your uh your team to make sure that you're upholding that standard that you're holding one another accountable and that you're setting clear and unambiguous guides for your airmen yeah sir that's excellent no problem getting behind that and certainly that that's something that that we're proud to do is wearing the uniform and we should be we should be taking care of that every day and whether you know whether anybody's watching or not you don't have the integrity to continue to be good partners and yeah that's right you know and there there's a speech I heard from a squadron commander years ago says there's a difference between mistakes and crimes mistakes are trainable crimes are punishable and everybody really knows the difference it's not a one mistake air force I'm not a one mistake commander I've made plenty of mistakes but those mistakes have to be trainable and we have to make sure that we can train to standard where we want that airmen to be and allow them to recover crimes are what they are and we have no tolerate tolerance for anybody who commits crimes those are punishable and we will act swiftly yes sir excellent well I really appreciate your time certainly here all week and I know it's been a grind and we've thrown a lot of information at you and certainly for your time here in the podcast and sharing a few minutes with gladiator nation thanks rick and to your entire team of the 960th it's been my pleasure and my privilege to come visit the short time here I look forward to getting out to the rest of the organizations along with chief Malcolm and seeing what all your airmen and all your locations are doing and just thanks to the great work there is nothing better than to know that uh when I pick up my phone or I look at my bank account online that it is as protected as it possibly can be and we've got guardians out there that are protecting the grid each and every day and keeping our adversaries at bay so I appreciate the work that you're doing that's awesome thank you thank you.