

## Chief Chat Episode 1 Transcript

Hey , what's up teammates ? Welcome to the Chief chat podcast . I'm Chief master Sergeant , Eddie Diaz Command Chief at the United States Air Force Academy . I'm a student of life followership and leadership . You know , throughout my military career , I've discovered that within every organization , there are enlisted airmen and guardians with lots of experiences who are wanting to share their examples on followership and leadership with you . In this podcast , we'll delve into the dynamic world of enlisted life and the US Air and Space Force giving our enlisted members a voice . So join us as we explore the intricacies of followership , leadership , technical expertise and the unique experience that shape the journey of our military community . Get ready for engaging discussions , personal stories and a deep dive into the heart of the enlisted experience together . Let's uncover the untold stories and valuable insights that make our military community strong . You're not gonna believe who is in the hot seat with me today . Our very own superintendent , Lieutenant General Richard Clark . How you doing , sir ? My chief , how are you doing ? I'm doing well , sir . Welcome to Chief Chat . I'm so thankful that I get the opportunity to sit down and have a conversation with you . Thanks for joining me , Chief . Any day . Any time it was good to talk to you . I do appreciate it , sir . So , you know , the , the thing about Chief chat , as you all know , we're gonna talk about leadership and leadership from an enlisted perspective and where do our enlisted figs get that leadership perspective and guidance ? Then none other than from our commanders . So who best to sit here and have a conversation with us about intent , purpose and how our enlisted leaders uh get after the things that our officers need to need to do , sir . But before we begin , I , I I'd like to ask you just an offshoot question , something I like to ask people like if you had a superpower , what would it be and why ? Oh man , ok . If I had a superpower , I honestly , I think it would be flight personal flight like I could just elevate and go and fly wherever I wanted to at any time , any moment . And I know that's kind of lame . A lot of people are like , ok , that's so

typical , but I don't get to fly airplanes much anymore and I really miss it and I don't see flying an airplane in my future . So personal flight would scratch that itch and I'd be all over the place . Awesome , sir . So are you kind of like a iron man kind of flight or a buzz light year ? Ok . So Iron Man kind of flights . A little fake to me . Right . He puts on a suit . It's like he's putting an airplane on . I just wanna go like superman like pow , I'm gone and I am going fast and far and no limits outstanding . That's why I want to be . I love it . That's a great superpower . You can go and be wherever you need to be and at any point at any time , uh Can I throw one thing ? My second one though would be invisible if I could go invisible . Um That , that would be pretty awesome too . Imagine the conversations you would hear people having because they couldn't see you . And I'd also want to get out of some conversations and just go invisible and leave . But if I could fly and be invisible , oh my goodness man , I'd be all over the place . That's not what we're here . No , but thank you , sir . I appreciate that . Uh You know , initially I mentioned that our enlisted enlisted leaders get their direction from our officers , our commanders . And since I've been here in the team , one thing that I have really taken to our are your three priorities as developing leaders of character , preparing for future conflict and dignity and respect for all . So my first question for you , sir , I'd really like to know . Where did you , where did you come up with that ? And how did you derive those three priorities for our United States air Force Academy . Yeah , that's a great question chief . And , and honestly , when I found out that I was coming to the academy , um , I really started doing my sort of own listening sessions and I started talking to people and just finding out what was going on at the academy where we were going already where the academy was already headed and , and how I could help the most as the superintendent . And those were , uh really the , the areas that I thought , uh you know , had the most promise for me as a leader to help us move forward , lead , developing leaders of character is always , always uh a priority here . So that was kind of a no brainer the preparing for future conflict . Um That's something that our entire Air Force and Space Force were really focused on and the academy was actually

already moving in those directions . And I just thought , you know , if I can help us continue , that is a uh a core of our mission is to be ready . I mean , that that's what we do , that's who we are . We're ready to go out and fight win wars . So I thought that was a natural one and then dignity and respect for all . It's something that I always believe in and try to incorporate into my leadership uh personally . But I think also um as an academy , there's always been things that not just at the academy but in the Air Force , the Space Force and our Department of Defense and Franklin our country that I think dignity and respect our core to solving some of our issues and having leaders that hold dear to that uh was really important to me . So that's kind of where I came up with those three . And , uh you know , I , I've held on to the , in the four years that I've been here and I , and I hope we continue to move forward on all of them .

Awesome , Sarah , thanks . Uh You know , just that you spent the time to think through , you get a sense of where the Air Force Academy was at that time before you on boarded and you really thought through the the process and we've been in conflict for several years now . So it makes sense , you know , developing or preparing for future conflict . Um It makes total sense and dignity and respect for all . I mean , that's , that's just a given . I mean , our parents teach us that our family members are the people that raise us about dignity and respect for all . So just , just tolling completely resonates here even more . So as your chief , right ? When I came on to the team and equally like I started seeing um your priorities and understanding them , I was learning on how to translate that out and into everybody within the United States Air Force Academy . And you talk about developing leaders of characters like , well , how do I develop leaders of character , how do I meet this priority for , for you ? My commander , my superintendent , uh my general and , and I try to translate that down and in for our enlisted airmen uh as uh we focus on their development as well . So you know , what advice would you give to senior enlisted leaders even down to the senior airmen level that you know , become for front line supervisors for the first time , how best to develop leaders of character , not only those that they supervised , but a leader of character within

themselves . Well , so I think leader being a leader of character , um a lot of us might view it a bit differently , but I think there are some core uh qualities of a leader of character that we all can uh understand and believe in and it starts with our core values , you know , integrity first serves our self excellence in all we do that it starts , you know , and , and I think most of us agree and , and honestly , it's not just the air force that agrees with that . I think most people generally would agree that those are core competencies and values for any leader . But the most important thing for a leader that wants to develop other leaders is to set the example . You , you can talk all day . But if you're not walking the walk , it it falls on deaf ears . And so whether you're a front line supervisor at the lowest level or whether you're a four star general leading our air force or a match com , you have to live the life that you're expecting others to live and be the kind of leader that you want other people to be . And so being an example , I think is , is key and it , it is the the first thing that any leader should , should strive to do , build those uh competencies within yourself and live it . Um But then I also think that uh actually expressing it and saying it and saying what you believe a , a leader of character is , is really important because when you say it , honestly , it , it , it , you're in a way holding yourself accountable because once you say it out loud , if you're not doing it , you people will call you out and people will judge you quicker than anything . And you know , that we all know that . And so I think being vocal and , and uh expressing it to people and helping them to understand it is also really important . And then , you know , I'm a little biased , but I really do like our leader of character framework because it , it lays out a way that people not just here at the academy , but we talk about own engage and practice . Um I look at , I'll be honest , I look at my own leadership as um opportunities and , and I come into so many different chances uh to , to demonstrate leadership and I look at those as it's almost like a test . You know , for example , uh , you know , you're sitting , you're at the grocery store , you know , and , uh , you walk up and you're standing in line and somebody in front of you , uh , or somebody behind you has like one thing , uh , that they're gonna go through

the checkout line with and you have a basket of groceries . Now you look back at that person and easily you could go . Oh , ok . Well , I'm in front of them or you might look at that person and go , you know what , um , that person only has that one item . I'm gonna let them go in front of me . You know , that's not something that you have to do . That's not something that anybody would know about except you and , and to me putting someone else , we talk about service before self . You're putting someone else before yourself literally . And , and it's a chance to practice what you're talking about . It's , and it might be just such a small thing , but it's an opportunity to do something right to do to be the kind of leader that you wanna be when nobody else is looking when nobody else would know . But , you know , and , and I actually think about those things sometimes and I'll be honest , I don't always , uh , you know , I'm not always successful . I , I have my moments where I , I don't , um , put those core values into practice but I think we should all look for those opportunities because the more you practice , the more you stretch , the better the leader you're gonna be when it really does count . So , um you know , being in the example , living in the example , talking about what you think that a leader should be and , and what you would expect of yourself , but also of others and then practicing it and , and putting it into action . You know , we talk about um living honorably lifting others , elevating performance as those things , those actions that we can practice . That's what our , our uh leader character framework talks about . Those are the kinds of things that we can try to put into motion every day . Thank you , sir . I mean , that's not just geared towards senior enlisted leaders and senior airmen , like I'd asked in the beginning that that's those are nuggets for anybody . Uh Setting the example , there's our first challenge right there . So thanks for that challenge , sir . A a Absolutely . You gotta set the example for folks if you want to be a good leader and talk about a great character example . Uh So the the other challenge that you gave us is next time you're in the grocery line , take a look at your basket and see what you have in there compared to the folks around you and don't be afraid to say , you know what it's gonna take me a lot longer to go through the

grocery line than it is you . So please go ahead , you know , and as you were describing that , I was thinking that like military uniform go first at the BX or the commissary . We see that throughout our community , but it doesn't have to be just at the installation level . I mean , it could be anywhere . So thank you so much for that great nugget . So I wanna do , I wanna transition now and ask you uh about preparing for future conflict . Yeah , I'm , I'm getting a lot of questions and I've heard things about , hey , how do we prepare our airmen and guardians today for conflict to be mentally prepared and ready ? Because sir , you and I are veterans of operation , enduring freedom and Iraqi freedom and a lot of low intensity conflicts that have happened since , you know , the time that we've been in airmen and guardians of today haven't experienced the things that , you know , those at the senior levels have experienced . And so what advice would you give uh for folks on preparing for future conflict ? How , how would somebody prepare themselves or how would leaders prepare their airmen and guardians for future conflict ? Well , yeah , that's a great question , chief . And there's , we could talk about this all day , but I'll , I'll talk about one aspect of it that I think is vital and critical to us and that's for leaders to be bold and innovative and to be ready to think for themselves and to take commander's intent and turn it into action . And I believe that when we get into that future conflict , that there's going to be more times than we can imagine where leaders aren't gonna be able to communicate with other leaders necessarily . But they're going to have to understand what the intent is . They're going to have to act on their own and make decisions so that we can outthink our adversaries and think faster than them . If we have to wait for guidance for every step that we take or everything that we do , we're going to lose , they're gonna , they're gonna run circles around us . But if we can have our lowest level leaders understand the intent and to be able to execute because of the knowledge that they've obtained because they understand our war fighting plans because they understand the capabilities that we have at our fingertips and be able to put those into use and action in the heat of conflict . That's when we're gonna succeed . And so being bold ,

being innovative thinking um independently as a leader is critical . And I know a lot of times we uh we may stifle that right , because we , we talk about the chain of command and we use that and people kind of get confused , but there's a time to use the chain of command and then there's a time where leaders have to act on their own , they have to act independently and sometimes it's not so much that they have to make the decision to act independent of the chain of command . It's that , that it's a necessity . It's because our communications have been cut off . It's because they're in a position where they can't um talk or communicate or signal to uh hire uh echelons of leadership to , to take actions that they need to take . They just have to be bold and ready to do it and they have to be creative and innovative because the situation is not gonna be uh a , a static situation . It's gonna be fluid dynamic and it's gonna be something that you may never have expected , but you have to be ready to take it on . Absolutely . And you know , I know you've experienced that you , you had to experience that you went through that equally . I went through that until our airmen and guardians are faced with that challenge . That that's the , the best thing that anybody can share with them . And especially the folks that have the experiences , just be bold and , and you're more ready than you realize . And we've been preparing you and you're more ready than you realize . Just , just be bold , be courageous and , and uh just go and get after it and be bold . So thank you so much for that nugget and don't be afraid to fail . Don't be afraid to make a mistake . Because if we're , if we're stifled by that fear , we'll , we'll never , we'll never move out the thing is , you know , you have to measure and you have to be willing to take certain risks , but they need to be calculated risks and they're not always gonna work out in your favor . I mean , I'm certain that I've made more failures than I've had successes in my career . But we have to be bold and ready to go and it's ok that , like you said , to fail , but you have to keep moving forward . You just have to keep and you learn from your mistake and then you keep on going and , and that really , you know , help encapsulates the definition of being bold and being a bold leader and , and it goes into the first part , like developing leaders of

character so that you can be bold and ready for future conflict . You know , sir , the last question or last topic I'd like to discuss with you is dignity and respect for all . And you're , if you're watching a movie in your own mind , what does dignity and respect for all , what does that movie look like to you ? How would you describe that visual of what dignity and respect for all means to you ? Well , I think the the bottom line is that you treat people the way you would want to be treated . You treat people with the same kind of dignity and respect that you would want from someone else or that you would want from someone that you care about or someone that you love , but treat people in a way that regardless of who they are , just because they're a person , you're gonna treat them with dignity and respect . Whether you agree with them on a particular issue , whether you are different than the way you look or think or where you come from , you are gonna treat people with that , that core respect so that then you can go from there and even when you find yourself at odds and you have differences with each other , you're still gonna discuss those odds with respect and you're gonna respect their opinion , you're gonna respect their opportunity to share their opinion with you and you may not always agree . Sometimes you have to agree to disagree , but then you have to move on . You got to find common ground so that you can continue to move forward . But what I see a lot of times is once people disagree on one issue , then it's done , the wall is built and they can't move forward anymore . We can't have that because we're never gonna agree on everything . It's just not , it's not realistic . So , um in , in my movie , when I see that I just see someone treating me the way that uh I would want . Uh or , or how do I treat someone else is the way that I would want them to treat me and , and to give me those opportunities to give me that respect , to show that dignity at every opportunity . Um That , that's what our world needs , we need more of it and it seems like we're , we're losing some of that um in so many different aspects of our lives now and , and it's something that as leaders we have to have um because we , we can't continue to go forward if we don't . Um that is core to everything that we do . And uh I'll be very honest with you . Um As when we talk about leaders of character , when we talk



about future conflict , uh both of those require dignity and respect as we move forward with them . Um And , and I hope that our cadets have nothing else . That that's a , a core part of their character , even though we talk about our core values , integrity , service and excellence , respect is not one of those core values , but I think all of those values are wrapped up with respect and dignity and uh and I think we have to all hold those dear . Awesome , sir . I love your movie . I , I absolutely love your movie , you know , on Rotten Tomatoes . I would give that a , a definitely like a 97 . Yeah , absolutely . I wanna go watch your show . I want to , I want to see that movie . I , I guarantee I'll be there with my paparazzi cameras while you're strolling down the red carpet . You're definitely getting an Oscar today for that , sir . So thank you so much for sharing . Thanks for sharing your , your movie with us . Uh And also sir , thank you so much for being my first guest today at Chiefs Chat . You know , we had a great discussion . Uh We talked about commander's intent and purpose and your priorities and for any leader underneath our leaders , I had our commanders give us their priorities and their intent and it's very rare that we get the opportunity to hear from our commanders , uh our superintendent , like , what is the meaning behind all of your priorities ? And how did you derive those priorities ? So then we can now go out and execute . You gave us amazing examples today on developing leaders of character and what that means . Set the example . Thank you chief . Coming from a chief . You know , you , you laying out some uh leadership principles through the , the voice of your guest . It really does mean a lot to us . And thanks for being that example . I I love having you as my chief and I look forward to our last five or six months together , brother . Thank you , sir . And , and with that , we want to express our gratitude to our dedicated listeners and the incredible enlisted airmen and guardians who are the backbone of our services . Your commitment to followership , leadership , technical expertise , and sharing your experiences is what makes our military community stronger . Remember your stories matter and your contributions are vital too . So until next time , stay resilient , stay inspired and keep making it count . This is your chief Steve . Thanks for tuning in .