

Ready, Set, Airlift! Ep.1 – Meet the Commander

(intro music fades in underneath speech)

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the following podcast are not necessarily the views of the United States Air Force or the Air Force Reserve, but rather the perspectives of the individual speakers. No Endorsement of any particular person, business, or interest is ever intended.

(intro music plays in full and then fades out)

Host (Julian Hernandez): Ladies and gentlemen, airmen and friends of the Alamo Wing, welcome to Ready, Set, Airlift! A new podcast from the 433rd Airlift Wing at Joint Base San Antonio, Lackland. I'm Julian Hernandez, a member of the Wing Public Affairs Team and your host. Our vision for Ready, Set, Airlift! is straightforward, to provide you with discussion and guidance on the topics that resonate with the 433rd mission.

Our goal is to help our airmen stay connected with the wing in between training weekends and give them an easy way to get back up to speed as they prepare to come in for a UTA. For family members and friends of the wing, we hope to give you a glimpse of what's going on at the unit. Our topics of discussion will cover everything from the commander's priorities and professional development opportunities to personal stories of achievement and the latest information you need to know before a UTA.

We're excited to take you along as we discuss the latest happenings at the 433rd Airlift Wing, one episode at a time. For our inaugural edition, we sit down with Wing Commander, Colonel William Gutermuth, to chat about his vision for the unit, insight on what the latest developments in the conflict between Israel and Hamas mean for the Alamo Wing, and some key points he wants all our airmen to know.

Host (Julian Hernandez): All right, sir. So welcome to this first edition of the 433rd Ready, Set, Airlift podcast. Thank you for joining us. I want to start out since you've only really been with the wing since March. Maybe some of our airmen haven't had some time to familiarize themselves with you. So, of course, your bio is available online at our website, 433aw.afrc.af.mil. You've got 30 years plus in uniform experience on the C 130, C 17, C 5, more than 5, 000 flight hours, two master's degrees. This is your second stint as a wing

commander. Deployments in support of OIF, OEF, Inherent Resolve, Noble Eagle. But tell us, or tell the airmen. What's not in that bio? What would you like them to know that they can't just look up on the internet?

Col. Gutermuth: I'm impressed with your dive into my history. Well, at least my military history. That sounds pretty impressive, but, It's almost zero me and almost all what the military Has asked of me and how and the things I've done to respond that Bio, that look back at my history makes me feel old and it makes me sense that yes if you were to read about who I am based on my resumes and bios, you might get a somewhat different perspective than who I really am.

So there's a lot that's not in my bio. Of course, my family history is not in my bio, which is important to me. My wife is not in my bio, which is, she's incredibly impactful in my life. And has traveled through many of those events with me, obviously hasn't deployed, but has certainly been a supporter while I was deployed.

So I honor that. And of course I honor all the key spouses and spouses of all of our airmen that have suffered with their children while we're off doing the mission. What is in my bio is what's important to me here at the wing. I, those deployments I'm incredibly proud of. And I've had a great amount of satisfaction in doing them.

Flying in all those various airplanes or at least being in wings that flew those airplanes was an important broadening experience, giving me an opportunity to learn not just about Airframes and missions, but about different people and that's really the foundation of, I guess, what I'd like people to know about me is that I care about people and I've learned through those experiences moving from wing to wing, moving to deployments no matter where it was you have different perspectives and those perspectives are vastly important to the success, not only of the wings where I served, but to me and to those individual airmen. So learning those things is very important to me.

Host (Julian Hernandez): So you mentioned there the recap of your experience made you feel old. I would say it makes you experienced and that puts you in a prime position.

Not only to lead the wing, but to offer insight to airmen who are starting their careers or looking ahead to what they want to do with their next years of military service. What's something that you wish you would have known when you were in those early years?

Col. Gutermuth: I wish I'd known I, there's a handful of things I wish I'd known.

I try to pass it on as a, I meet young airmen that are getting ready to go to basic training. I tell them, Hey, find that thing that you love and run to it. And then when you feel like you've failed, when you're disappointed with your effort, take that and learn from it. And don't take it as a failure.

Don't take it as a roadblock. Take it as an educational opportunity. There have been things that I've bumped into in my career that I have picked up, dusted myself off and learned from and I've grown from those things. And I think that a lot of people can. There are also things that I ran into. I thought can't do it, moved on from it.

And I look back and I wonder, well, what if I didn't say can't do that? What if I had had gone. One thing that I had had an opportunity to go to weapons school back when I was a young major and I thought, man, that'd be really neat to do. I want to do that. But then I, I found roadblocks to doing it.

And now when I look back, I think, you know, I really. Could have had an experience that was very unique. I guess that's really an important aspect of looking back as an older person. The opportunities that are around you may not come back again. So grabbing those opportunities, making the best of those opportunities is hugely important.

to expand yourself, but also to make your organization stronger.

Host (Julian Hernandez): You talked about dusting yourself off when something goes wrong, picking yourself back up. I have some experience in the military myself. That's probably one of the greatest lessons I learned is that resiliency. And I know it's something that we're always hammering for our Airmen to.

to work on and improve upon a key skill. Can you hone in on a specific tough moment, maybe your toughest moment, whether it was in command or just in the service in general, that was really a learning moment for you?

Col. Gutermuth: There's lots of, there's lots of tough moments. My first thought is looking back to being deployed, Sulemani was taken out by the United States.

We went from a very permissive environment to an intensely structured and protective environment cause we weren't sure how Iran was going to respond to us. I'm not sure that there were so much mistakes made, but I looked back in those moments and thought, what could I have done to be more prepared? Here I am in a deployed location one which could easily be under threat. It was very permissive at the time, but up until that moment, I hadn't done a whole lot to prepare for those things that might happen and those things to protect my airmen. And so it was a big hurry up game to make sure had all the protective measures we needed, whether it was flak vests or helmets. We put these T walls around the facility. I wish I had thought to do some of that sooner. Nobody got hurt. It all worked out fine. There wasn't an attack on our location. But in the moment, I thought I felt very responsible and I wish I had done more sooner.

Host (Julian Hernandez): Mentioning Iran very timely just this morning. Not sure if you had a chance to see the headlines this morning, but the U S retaliated with some airstrikes against.

Iranian connected elements based off of what's going on in Gaza between Israel and Hamas. Of course, we can't delve into the operational details of what that may mean for the 433rd, but I'm sure it's on the mind of many airmen and their families. What is that conflict happening overseas going to mean for the Alamo wing?

What would you say to those airmen who are maybe watching the news right now and wondering, is this going to affect me or my family?

Col. Gutermuth: I would assume any engagement that the United States has, whether it's a wartime type engagement or whether it's emergency relief engagement, if it has something to do with hurricanes, bad weather, the Alamo wing should be prepared.

And I harken back to the previous question that you had to ask me about, you know, what are my biggest regrets? It was that being prepared piece. So what I would say to our airmen is, You can be ready for anything, but to be ready for anything, you have to start now. Actually, it would have been better to start then, previously, but we only have the now.

So focus on your core capabilities as an airman, learn your AFSC skills, make sure that you have your basic airman readiness or your RAT training, ready airman training. Make sure your IMR is up to speed. And here's one that we as airmen often neglect, and that is the family readiness piece. What if you have to go?

Is your family ready or the people you care about and not just your husband, your wife, your children, your pets, your neighbors, the people that depend on you. If you visit somebody in the hospital, if you have a grandmother or grandfather that you take care of, having a readiness plan is extremely important to be ready for those things.

I can't say what our play will be, but we will stand ready and we'll raise our hands when the time comes because that's what our job is, is to defend the country.

Host (Julian Hernandez): With that being said, of course, the standing mission of the 433rd is always to provide combat ready citizen airmen anywhere, anytime. I think our airmen understand that intuitively, but maybe there's questions about what does that mean on the day to day?

You know, what does success look like on a normal UTA or if, you know, someone's an ART or on orders, what should they be doing to fulfill that mission?

Col. Gutermuth: day to day, our job is to show up ready to learn. ready to serve and ready to support our other airmen. Yes, we are here to provide combat ready airmen.

We are here to support the combatant commander when called upon. But day to day, our role is to provide training for all flight crews that fly the C 5. And that's the main vector of this wing and our main responsibility. There's a huge number of other mission sets but that's the one that we do day to day.

What can we do to be more ready? Well, it's back to focusing on the AFSC skill sets that you have, making sure that the resources that you have, you use efficiently and working together to make the person next to you stronger. I truly believe in a wingman concept where I will become stronger if I am there to help you.

So we need to communicate as best we can with each other to make sure that those needs that we have are met the best that we can.

Host (Julian Hernandez): From your perspective at the wing level as the commander, what does success look like for the 433rd? When you look at the wing, what are those points that you use to judge we are being successful or maybe we need to be improving?

Col. Gutermuth: I'll start off by saying I think we're hugely successful. I've been extremely impressed in my short time here at the wing with the airmen that have been able to keep the mission moving. Under some of the challenges that we have, obviously, we have challenges financially. We've had the inability to do some hiring that we need to do to carry the mission forward as strongly as possible.

So those are the weaknesses that I think that this wing team. Over achieves to overcome, but I see the future being that we need to make sure that we advocate the best we can for the resources that are available. And then we tailor our mission sets and we tailor our response to mission sets so that the resources we have are a good fit for the work that we're doing.

That is to say simply, you can't do everything with the resources that we have. So if we continue to try to do all the type mission sets, we probably. Won't be as successful as if we narrowed the field of work that we're doing.

Host (Julian Hernandez): You mentioned challenges. But from your perspective, what is your greatest frustration as the wing commander?

Col. Gutermuth: I'm frustrated that I don't have the money. I'm frustrated that I don't have the people. Those are great frustrations from a management standpoint. But I'll tell you the truth. The biggest frustration is... The ability to communicate. That's partly why this podcast is an attempt at being a better communicator.

I feel like I have a lot of growth that I need to have to be a good communicator. Certainly talking a lot does not necessarily translate into communicating well. I've had some sort of changes of course and some decisions that I've made and I try to get those out of the way and then you get the, the phone tree effect where at the end of the line you hear something back from an airman, Hey, I heard you.

Were not allowing us to do this anymore. You're making us do this. And and I think, oh my gosh, that's not it at all. So I'm trying to communicate better. Of course, the extension of that is using Outlook, using, you know, there's various spreadsheets that come through. I know my airmen are probably frustrated that are sending me stuff in what, The AFRC calls a snowflake.

So the snowflake comes up to me and it gives me an opportunity to see the, the ask, the background, and it's got attachments so the documents can be attached. So if I need to do further research, so it gives me some decisional space versus

getting a form that says, Hey, I need a signature for this. And there's no explanation.

So I don't know what it is that I'm approving, but that leads to frustrations for the airmen because now there's more time involved in, in filling out those forms. So I'm still trying to find the right balance of. Asking for information that I need so that I can do my job and support you, the airman most effectively and that part can get kind of frustrating because I don't like to waste people's time.

I want to get stuff done. I want to say yes. I'm always trying to find an angle to say yes to whatever the question is. Can't say yes to everything, but sometimes there's a bit of a yes that you can get out of a question that may not get A hundred percent. Yes. But I might help you find a path that works for you.

Host (Julian Hernandez): Can't miss this opportunity for a little shameless promotion on the wing app, the AF connect app. Airmen do have the opportunity to ask a question of the commander at any time or just express a comment, or frustration, thoughts. So those avenues are open. We're hoping this podcast will also turn into an avenue for airmen to voice their concerns, their perspectives and give the wing leadership across all echelons, an opportunity to respond. But with that being said, you know, when I was in the army, the commander's intent was at the heart of everything we did on a day to day basis. It was something we were thinking about.

If you have an airman out there who's maybe wondering what is your standing intent on something, if they're not sure what the commander's perspective might be on this or that, what's something you would say to them is like your standing intent at all times?

Col. Gutermuth: It's an easy answer. And everybody should have it.

Everybody should be aware of it. It's General Healy's task ord. That document does an excellent job of explaining what our commander's intent is. My job is to follow the intent of General Healy, General Durham, the NAF commander, 4th Air Force commander, and I just pass that responsibility right down to the airmen, which is exactly what the task ord says.

So please, if you're listening, find a way to get your hands on one of those task ords. It should be a pretty easy thing to do. And that will tell you the intent each and every day. It's very basic things. General Durham, our NAF commander, says get back to the basics. And he means do your job and do it right.

General Healy says, ready now, transform for the future. Well, ready now is very well explained in the task for what it is that we're expected to do. Transforming for the future is something that we all work toward, and we don't know what that is, but we're pushing in that direction for innovation.

We see there's a new threat, so, transformation for the future is not doing the same old thing we did to fight the same old wars that we once fought or do the same old engagement. It's looking at what it is to have a peer competitor and that requires a lot of change, infrastructure change, weapon system change.

And the most foundational thing is how we as airmen react. The one thing that we don't want to change is the strength of our NCO Corps. The idea that our folks from the very most junior ranked person all the way to the senior person are engaged, paying attention, and are capable of making decisions.

That's something that we're hugely proud of. It's a force extension for us to give us an opportunity to do things that other militaries can't do. So hugely proud of our folks, but we will transform for the future as General Healy says.

Host (Julian Hernandez): And of course that task org is available on our website.

We'll be posting it front and center for all airmen to reference at any time as the commander standing intent. We've talked about some of the challenges in the wing, some of the frustrations, but you know, let's bring it back to a good note. In your time in the wing, what's something that you've seen that's really made you proud as the commander?

Col. Gutermuth: You know, we talked about how resource constrained we are. We don't have the money. We don't have the amount of people that we need to do this massive mission. I've never seen a wing that had more responsibilities. We share our MSG, our medical, and our FM with the 960th. And that brings a load of a thousand plus people that we wouldn't normally have.

And we're not even resourced for the 2200 or so folks. with overages up to 2,600 people that we have. Our airmen work harder every day to get the mission done, and I'm so hugely proud of that. It's something that I think has got so much value, not just for this wing, for the country, for our communities.

The people that come here and work hard to get the mission done and struggle every day and keep their chins up and keep moving forward. They bring that same attitude with them to their homes, to their workplace. And I think it makes

America stronger. It sounds kind of dramatic, but I'm proud of this wing for generating those kinds of airmen.

Host (Julian Hernandez): And one last question here. What is your vision for the end state of the 433rd? You know, inevitably your time in command will come to an end as is the nature of the military. What are you hoping to see when you get to that point and you hand that guide on off to the next wing commander?

Col. Gutermuth: I'm not looking for a legacy.

You may be aware that this is my last tour. I'll be retiring at the end of this tour. What I want to do is make it better. What is better? I'd like our infrastructure to be better. We've got a hanger that needs to be completely remodeled. We've got the fuel cell that's been in work for a considerable amount of time.

I want those things taken care of. I want safe, I want efficient processes for people to follow. And I, I guess I'm focusing now on making sure that our airmen are aware of what we should be doing and how we should be doing it, trying to get in line with that. And that's why I really push for the task or because that, that helps us focus on the things that we should be doing, because as I mentioned, our airmen work so much harder than they should have to, to do this job. So I want them to find ways that are sort of the, pardon the phrase, by the book ways to get things done so that they know what the things that they shouldn't have to do. This is what we do because this is the way it should be done. Because sometimes you'll do something that is a little bit irregular and you think, oh, it's not a big deal.

I can take care of this problem and do it this way. Well, it has second order effects, which then causes more work for other folks. I had an old commander used to use the word compliance. I don't really like the word compliance because it sounds like, you know, being a strict parent kind of thing. I believe that the discipline that we have in the military, which extends to how we treat each other, how we wear the uniform, how we follow AFIs results directly in the morale that we have.

If we are able to do those things that are. Disciplined in following what we should do that our morale increases. And ultimately, what would I like the most? The highest morale wing in the, in the Air Force, the highest morale organization in the Department of Defense, the healthiest, most excited, most energized airmen anywhere.

And I think we will know we got there when we find. Folks that are giving us their discretionary time to get the job done, you know, we each have say we have eight hours a day. There's a certain amount of discretionary effort that we can either expend or we do not expend. And it's important to know I am doing something because I want to do it, right?

If I'm in that, I could, I could do my job maybe in five or six hours a day. What am I going to do with the other three hours? I could kibitz. I could talk to people. I could. Watch my television. I could play on my personal device, or I could do something to make it better for the organization and better for my wingman.

When we see people that are doing something to make it better for somebody else with their discretionary time, that's when I know we've been a success.

Host (Julian Hernandez): Fantastic, sir. And on that note, want to thank you for your time this morning. I know you're a busy man. So thank you for joining on this introductory episode of Ready, Set, Airlift.

Col. Gutermuth: Awesome. Thank you very much for setting this up. I'm proud to be on the team with you. Thanks for being my wingman, even as a soldier.

Host (Julian Hernandez): You got it, sir. Hey, it's the joint service now, right? We're all in one team, one fight.

Col. Gutermuth: Absolutely. Air power.

1SGT Delbert Templeton: Your 433rd Wing Leadership and Honorary Commanders, including San Antonio Mayor, Ron Nirenberg, will be hosting the annual Feed the Troops event this Saturday, November 4th, at the Live Oak Dining Facility from 1100 to 1300. They'll be there serving Thanksgiving themed meals for all airmen who are here for the UTA.

Enlisted Reservists who have between one and four years of service. There will be a two day Reserve Airmen Development Course for you on December 4th and 5th between 0700 and 1600. Participants can attend in person at the 68th Airlift Squadron Auditorium or virtually. Topics will include promotions, Financial management, resiliency, support and resources, education benefits, and more.

While content is tailored for those between one and four years of enlisted service, it is open to all members looking to better understand the reserves. To sign up for more information, email AlamoWingPDC@outlook.com.

Attention Operation Angel Tree participants. If you applied to serve as an angel tree this year, members are asked to either provide a wrapped gift or a gift card, depending on location of family.

If you have questions, contact a Military and Family Readiness Office via email at 433AW.DPXF@us.af.mil

the Alamo Wing will have a holiday door decorating contest during the December UTA. If your office would like to participate, have your door ready for judging no later than 8:00 AM Sunday, December 2nd.

Each group will nominate their best door for judging in the finalist round. Please assign one POC to send your group nominee to the 433AW.CCC@us.af.mil email box by 1100 on Sunday 3 December 2023. Winners will be announced Sunday afternoon.

Calling all emcees and national anthem singers. The wing needs two airmen: one to serve as the emcee and one to sing the national anthem at the wing award banquet in February. We're scheduling auditions for Saturday, December 2nd in the 68th Auditorium from 0800 to 1300.

Time slots for auditions will be in 10 to 15 minute increments grouped by emcees and singers. Please contact your first sergeant if you are interested. Scheduled auditions will be first and then walk ins may be considered, time permitting.

Looking for some Veterans Day weekend plans? The 323rd Army Band Fort Sam's Own will be joining the UTSA Wind Ensemble for a free Veterans Day concert titled, America, I Gave My Best to You, at 2 p. m. Sunday, November 12th at the Tobin Center for Performing Arts. The concert is free and open to the public, but tickets are limited. Call 210-223-8624 or visit tickets@tobincenter.org to reserve tickets.

There's no shortage of Veterans Day events planned around the San Antonio area. You can visit our website, 433aw.afrc.af.mil for a list of some of what's out there for you and your family to participate in. Just scroll down to the headline section on the main page of the website.

A heads up for all our members who are Texas residents. Several proposed amendments to the state constitution are up for vote. Early voting runs until November 3rd and election day is Tuesday, November 7th. For more information, visit vote.texas.gov

I would like to discuss Master Resilience Trainers, we call them MRTs, and Resilience Trainer Assistants, RTAs. They teach resilience skills to enhance performance and increase resiliency, both personally and professionally. Some of the topics they teach include gratitude, values based goals, reframe, and mindfulness.

If you are already certified as an MRT or an RTA, please email me your information so that I can get you on our trained personnel list. And if you're interested in becoming a trainer, please send me your information as well.

That's all I have for Shirts Corner this month. Get out there, motivate, and kill the UTA.

This is First Sergeant Delbert Templeton. Back over to you.

Thank you Shirt... if you have an announcement for the wing you'd like us to consider including in a future edition of Ready, Set, Airlift! send us an email to airliftpodcast@gmail.com

(outro music fades in)

Host (Julian Hernandez): All right, ladies and gentlemen, and on that note, we're gonna wrap up this first episode of ready set airlift. We really appreciate you joining us. Hey, we want to know what you think about the new podcast. Go ahead and send us any feedback, comments or questions to our email. Again, that's airliftpodcast@gmail.com.

Hey, Alamo wing airmen. We want to hear from you specifically. Let us know what's going on in your flight squadron group. We want to come out and cover it, maybe feature it here on the podcast or put it on our unit, social media pages or website. Go ahead and use that same airliftpodcast@gmail.com to send us any stories you want the public affairs team to cover. On that note, I've been your host, Julian Hernandez, a member of the 433rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs Team. We hope you have a great day.

(Outro music plays in full and then fades out)