

Ready, Set, Airlift! – Ep.2

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Intro Music Plays

Julian Hernandez (Host): Ladies and gentlemen, airmen and friends of the Alamo Wing, welcome to the second episode of Ready, Set, Airlift! I'm your host, Julian Hernandez, a member of the 433rd Public Affairs Team. We appreciate you joining us and hope you all enjoyed a pleasant Thanksgiving holiday with your loved ones. Coming up on today's edition, 433rd Airlift Wing Command Chief Takesha Williams shares her perspective as the Alamo Wing gets ready to step into a new year of opportunities and challenges.

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I'm not really sure our Airmen truly understand what the high end fight looks like. I think that they struggle. or maybe leadership as a whole is not providing them with the true assessment of what we may be up against.

Julian Hernandez (Host): My full interview with Chief is coming up in just a minute, but first, Wing Commander Colonel William Gutermuth and Chief Williams have a message they want to share with all our Airmen ahead of the holidays.

Col. William Gutermuth: Happy holidays, 433rd Airlift Wing. We are so grateful to be serving along with you. I am here with the command chief, Takesha Williams, and she is gonna give you a rockin podcast. But first, I want you to know how much I care about what you, your families, your loved ones, and friends are doing this holiday season.

I hope you're having fun, I hope you're having time together, and it brings you out full of energy for a Strong new year, chief.

CMSgt Takesha Williams: Alamo wing. Just want to thank you for all the hard work and commitment this past year. And 23, looking forward to all the great things that we're going to do in 24, be blessed during the holiday season.

Spend time with your families. Remember that it's about giving. So if you have an opportunity to volunteer your services, please remember to be a blessing to someone else. Thank you. And have a happy holiday season.

Both (singing): Happy holidays, Alamo Wing. Happy Holidays. Happy

Holidays. Alamo Wing. You're my wing, you're my wing.

Happy Holidays. Alamo Wing. Alamo Wing. Happy Holidays, Alamo Wing.

Julian Hernandez (Host): Well, if that doesn't put you in the holiday spirit, I don't know what will. Before she teamed up with the commander for that cheerful message, Chief sat down with me for a candid conversation about her role as the command chief. She shared some insights on how the wing's enlisted members can set themselves up for success.

Jet whoosh transition

All right, Chief Williams, thank you for joining me today here on this episode of Ready Set Airlift. We're gonna start off with, you've been the command chief here since July of 2021, but we might have some newer airmen who maybe haven't had a chance to, to get to know you or familiarize themselves with you.

What is something about you that you'd like them to know?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I am here to do what's in the best interest of the wing. I'm here to make sure that every airman has an opportunity to live out their dreams in the military. I am here to make sure that I am elevating their concerns and issues, and my door is always open.

Julian Hernandez (Host): As the Wing's senior enlisted leader, you're someone that people look to for guidance, for lessons, maybe advice in certain situations. You've been in uniform since 1993, so no shortage of experience. What is something maybe that you wish you had known when you were just starting out as an airman?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: That I don't count myself out.

I let the powers that be count me out. And when I say that, I mean that a lot of times when we see opportunities, we tell ourselves that we may not be ready, or that we don't have all the information or the resources or skills to be successful. I don't necessarily believe that's true. You apply for any and everything that you believe that you are interested in and capable of doing.

Nobody knows how strong you are but you. But you apply and you let the, those that are a part of the hiring board let you know if you are not ready. But always be mindful that when they tell you that, that you need to be asking for feedback about how you can get better.

Julian Hernandez (Host): In your career, which assignment or maybe time of your career do you think offered you that best opportunity to, to develop or, or learn some lessons about yourself or the reserves in general?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: When I was at the 913th Airlift Group in Little Rock, Arkansas. I was the senior master sergeant first sergeant, but then I had to leave the first sergeant career field and go back to my primary AFSC, so I became the 3F5 Admin Functional Manager. That was truly an opportunity where I felt like I grew.

The things I just talked about, about not counting yourself out and just being more confident in who I was and the skills and the resources that I had available to offer other airmen and the command as a whole.

Julian Hernandez (Host): As the senior NCO for the wing, when you're looking at your NCOs, evaluating them, giving them feedback on how they can develop, what are some of the things that you expect from them?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I expect for them to maintain the highest level of readiness to meet the mission requirements, to meet and exceed standards and expectations. To know and understand the wing concept, to continue to work on their professional development be it military or civilian, to realize that they have a voice and to use it to be heard respectfully to know the core competencies and just help cultivate a culture of respect, empowerment.

And just be an all around team player.

Julian Hernandez (Host): When you have NCOs that are trying to move up, what is something you notice that maybe catches them off guard or something they didn't expect that holds them back from progressing at the pace that maybe they want to be progressing?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I think it's just a lack of knowledge about the Air Force as a whole a lot of times. , Most of these Airmen know their job inside and out. So in their areas of responsibilities, they are subject matter experts. But when we talk about the foundational competencies of the Air Force as a whole and how we got to where we are now. I think that's where we fall a little bit short.

So it's up to us or incumbent on us as airmen in the air force to read the foundational books and get, spun up on what's going on in the air force, be situationally aware of current events and things like that. Just to stay plugged in and communicate with their leadership on a regular basis and ask when you don't know stuff, it's okay.

To not know what you don't know. So we need to make sure that we're asking questions and just being engaged.

Julian Hernandez (Host): You talked about sometimes what holds NCOs back is that, that larger picture, that big picture, what's going on in the air force, what's going on in the world. Maybe what's one or two specific things that you would say every NCO or airman needs to be doing right now to move forward in their career.

CMSgt Takesha Williams: Right now, we need to make sure that we're focusing on the TASK ORD of 23 and 22, where it speaks about the basic foundational competencies of all airmen. Those are the things, no matter what else may be going on in our lives or in our careers short of PME promotion and things like that, those are the things that right now we need to be truly focused on.

We need to be spun up on current events, so we'll know what's going on on the other side of the world. To make sure that we are better prepared for where we go next, making sure that our readiness training is intact, that we're green across the board. And once we do those things, we'll be ready to lean forward better and stronger than we've ever been before.

Julian Hernandez (Host): I know getting those readiness metrics to green is a frustration across all branches of the military. When, when I was in the Army it was something that really frustrated leaders on, on a regular basis that readiness metrics weren't green. What are some things that you would advise NCOs and Airmen as they're, they're trying to get to that green to get there faster, more effectively?

Or if, when they have a problem, where should they turn?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I think a lot of that goes back to you as an individual knowing where to go and look at where the training matrix or the requirements lie. You know, you can go to AFFORGEN, going to your supervisor and making sure you have that conversation about where we are from a, or you individually, from a requirement standpoint.

And talking about what are some of the things that you can actually do to get to the green and maybe it's an opportunity for you as an airman to try to understand what the requirements are and maybe find some ways internally to not only help yourself but the other airmen in your area as well.

Our airmen nowadays are very innovative. They have different resources. Or would I say better resources than we ever had when I started out, you know, 20 plus years ago. I think that having a dialogue with everyone in their area and just finding ways to get to green and recognizing that the old way might not necessarily be the best way.

Maybe there's a new way for us to get after the requirements. that are way more efficient, way more, I don't want to say necessarily quicker. I don't want us to make any shortcuts, but just being engaged and be a part of your own development, part of your own requirements, I think is going to definitely help us to get to us to where we need to be.

Julian Hernandez (Host): You mentioned AFFORGEN. I know that's a relatively newer concept or initiative for the Air Force. Someone as experienced as you, what's some of the differences between the new AFFORGEN system and then how things were done in the past.

CMSgt Takesha Williams: The new AFFORGEN system, , allows everybody an opportunity to know where and when they're going to be tasked next.

It gives them a, definite, you know, we just deployed, we came back, we're in a resting phase or we're about to deploy and things like that. And so before it was a little bit not as as efficient, probably as effective as it is now, no matter what we do, we're always going to have some issues. The system is new.

So there's some things that we're still trying to learn and figure out about AFFORGEN. But I think that collectively we'll get there as long as we continue to communicate and keep the lines of conversation open and being receptive to

just different thought processes and perspectives of how we get after making sure that our requirements are being met.

Julian Hernandez (Host): I want to go back to the TASK ORD. You brought it up. And in my conversation with the commander in our last episode, he highlighted it as. A vital document. Transforming for the future is a critical line of effort in there. How are you transforming for the future compared to maybe how you were doing things two, three years ago?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I am making sure that I'm reading what the requirements are for the Command Chief as well as the SELs and just the basic requirements. To make sure that I am helping our members to make sure that they know what their requirements are. I am having conversations and dialogues about how we can get to making sure that we are AFSC proficient, making sure that our fitness is good to go in solid and not just the fitness assessment, but you know, our fitness from a spiritual or a mental state.

So just having conversations with our airmen. For me personally, I like to run so readiness is my passion. I would probably advocate for our Airmen to find something that they're passionate about. Something that helps them to feel good about themselves. Use that as they think about transforming for the future.

And coming back, you know, look refreshed, resilient. Just doing that whole self care regimen or finding a self care regimen that works for you. To get you in the game and to make sure you stay in the game.

Julian Hernandez (Host): Bringing it to the 433rd specifically, you know, the TASK ORD, obviously relevant across the Air Force Reserve Command, but here at the 433rd, what are some things that you feel really need to be transformed for the future from where they are right now?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: The old ways of training. Again, as I stated earlier, the airmen we have now are more resilient and more technical savvy. So finding new ways to get after the training, I think would definitely boost morale as well as help our requirement matrix. I think a lot of times when we do things the old way we get complacent.

Some of us have been in the reserves for a long time and I think that we need to be a little bit more open and receptive to new ways of receiving information as well as feedback. 433rd, I've been here for about two and a half years. We're leaning forward in a positive direction. And we're doing everything that we possibly can to get after the TASK ORD.

But always we could do better and there's always room for improvement.

Julian Hernandez (Host): As you're assessing the unit and whether it is ready now or not, and as you're advising the commander on where the unit needs to go, what are some things that concern you about the state of the unit right now?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: Complacency. Standards. It's hard for us to, if we can't do the basic requirements, the expectation for us to go down range and do it seems, you know, a little questionable. I'm not really sure our Airmen truly understand what the high end fight looks like. I think that they struggle. or maybe leadership as a whole is not providing them with the true assessment of what we may be up against.

And so just helping our airmen understand the high end fight, where they fit into that, staying connected and being connected. I think a lot of times they come in here on the weekend and they do the weekend thing and again it becomes complacent and so they don't really... feel like they are part of the team, but they are.

I think whatever job you're doing is a part of the team. I mean, those people that are cutting orders are allowing us to go out. Into the the field and do the training and get paid and all of those things. Those people out there on the flight line are turning the wrenches to make sure that the plane gets in the air so we can go to the high end fight or to the training that we're tasked to go to.

The people flying the plane are making sure that we get there safely. The people in the aerial port are making sure that the items on the aircraft are configured properly and don't necessarily harm anyone. So I think everyone truly has a part in the high end fight and that we need to make sure that we understand what that truly looks like, what we're truly asking of each and every airman, and that we continue to convey that message and be as transparent as we possibly can.

Julian Hernandez (Host): You mentioned that connectivity. I've noticed with the reserves that tends to be an issue is someone comes in, they do their UTA, and then they're gone for up to 28 days before, you know, they put that uniform back on and they get back on that military mindset. What are some things that you would advise the airmen to do to stay connected or stay sharp in the time that they're away from the unit?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I would dare to stay to stay in those foundational books. I would say make sure that you're connecting with your supervisor or somebody in your area of responsibility probably on a weekly basis. I would say

check your email at least once or twice a week. You just never know what might materialize.

Sometimes we have group meet and different other platforms where we send out information or just to stay connected with people. Again, always ask questions. You have a voice, use it. Never be afraid to ask questions. And, and I think that's probably all you can do at some point. If you feel like you just, you know, reach out to the command chief, I'm here.

I'm here to help, to assist as best as I possibly can and answer any questions that you all may have.

Julian Hernandez (Host): You mentioned foundational books. Can I get you to maybe list one or two specific ones so that airmen know exactly where they need to go to get them?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: Yeah, the foundational books. And so I've been talking about this probably for the past six months or so.

The blueprint which is a good segue into enlisted development. Of course we have the joint team, which talks about how we as the Air Force fit into the joint fight. And then I would probably we all know what the enlisted force structure is, but it's never too late to reblue ourselves and the core values.

So, I know most people would say I know the blue book and the brown book but again, we can all be reblued.

Julian Hernandez (Host): Everyone is pressed for time, Chief. You know, everyone is being asked to do more with less. What are some good time management habits that you use or that when you're mentoring, your NCOs that you would advise them to use?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: Each morning I like to pray or meditate as some people may call it. I come into the office early. I sit down and think about the things that need to be accomplished. I print out my calendar I look at my calendar and write down all the things that I plan to do on this specific day. And as I do those things, I mark them off.

But it's all about prioritizing your day. Figure out what's most important or what is probably the highest tasker that you have for that day and then go down from there. But recognizing that there are some things that may not get accomplished

today that you can roll over to tomorrow, but prioritize those which can actually, or need to be done today.

Today, go home at a decent hour, go have lunch with somebody. Don't stay in the office all day long. It's good to get out to get refreshed, to come back into the office. Maybe with a little bit more momentum. I think when you stay too long, you just become consumed by the workload. Don't allow ourselves to do that.

Go home. Have a good time with the family and come back tomorrow with the same sense of wanting to complete whatever the tasks are for the day and wanting to get after the mission. I get excited coming here. I think most of it is the people. The people here are great. So there's no shortage of energy for me for the most part.

And I think that that's what fuels me. The people look forward to talking to the people and engaging with the people and being able to assist them and that so I know that everything that I do day in and day out is for our airmen. And so because I get excited about engaging with the airmen, I'm willing to do whatever it takes to get our airmen to where they want to be.

Julian Hernandez (Host): I love that you ended that question on a positive note because I do always like to try to end my conversations on a positive note. What's maybe like your favorite memory or moment that you've had in your time as the command chief here at the 433rd?

CMSgt Takesha Williams: I dare to say all of them. I mean, I can't pinpoint one specific time that that outshines another one.

Just being here is a blessing. Being able to serve here. I was here previously in 2017 as the 3F5 Admin Functional Manager. So to come back and be the Command Chief is... Probably the best job I could ever have, honestly. So, just looking forward to what we will do going forward. In the time that I'm still here.

Just leaving it better than I found it.

Julian Hernandez (Host): Perfect way to end it, Chief. Thank you so much for your time today. Really appreciate you being with me.

*** C5 WHOOSH***

Julian Hernandez (Host): With the last UTA of 2023 upon us, there's a lot going on at the Alamo Wing this December. 1st Sgt. Delbert Templeton has your key announcements in this month's edition of Shirts Corner.

*** Jet Whoosh***

1SGT Delbert Templeton: Hello, and welcome back to Shirts Corner.

Unfortunately, the virtual FSS ticketing system has been suspended and is down, so if you need to submit any of those... Tickets for any FSS needs, please go to their org box. The address for that org box is 433FSS.help.tickets@us.af.Mil. That's 433FSS.help.tickets@us.af.mil

We have a few First Sergeant vacancies that are open for all promotion eligible Tech Sergeants and Master Sergeants. If you are interested in becoming a First Sergeant, please reach out to your First Sergeant or your Additional Duty First Sergeant to find out about the application and the process to apply. Those applications currently are due no later than Tuesday, December 5th, that is for this quarter. We do those quarterly. So if you missed , this quarter, there's always next quarter.

Congratulations to our third quarter calendar year 2023 award winners. To find those winners, if you don't already know, please go to our social media Facebook page. If you look up 433rd Airlift Wing on Facebook. It should take you to our Facebook page, and that's where you'll find all the names for all the award winners for the third quarter. Along with a lot of other information that our PA is putting out.

Speaking of awards, we are having our annual awards banquet in February, the Saturday of February UTA. Our tickets should be on sale now and will be on sale until 19 January. So if you're interested in attending the annual awards banquet, it will be on the Saturday of February UTA.

It's a good time come out and celebrate all of our exceptional airmen. Please get some tickets as soon as you can, because we do sell out. Be on the lookout via email for directions on how to purchase tickets.

The highlight of the month that I want to provide you guys an app called Libby, L I B B Y. You can download the app on Android or iPhones. You can also go to the website at libbyapp. com. It's basically a free library where you can find ebooks, audiobooks, and magazines. Sign up for that. You get a free library card. There's a process to do that. Essentially, you're going to go through, you're

going to say you have a library card, and you're going to use your DOD ID number as your card number, and then you're going to have to put your birth date, and that's it.

Once you do that, you can look for any books or magazines that you want, and most stuff is out there, and I've had some really good success with that.

I hope you all enjoy your holiday parties, and time off throughout December, happy holidays, Happy New Year's and have an amazing UTA.

This is your resiliency integrator first sergeant, Delbert Templeton, signing off.

Julian Hernandez (Host): Thank you, Shirt. One more announcement to add. There is a commander's call this UTA. It's going to be held virtually on Microsoft Teams on Sunday morning at 0900. Check your military email for the link to listen in.

A reminder that we want your feedback, questions, or comments about the podcast. You can send those to our email, airliftpodcast@gmail.com. Again, that's airliftpodcast@gmail.com we hope to hear from you.

On that note, we are going to wrap up this episode of Ready, Set, Airlift. Thank you for joining us. On behalf of the Public Affairs team, I want to wish you all a happy holiday season. I've been your host, Julian Hernandez. We'll have a new episode for you next month to help you start off the new year strong. Until then, farewell.