

Building the Next Generation of Leaders

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Dr. Patrick Donley:

Good morning ladies and gentlemen, Airmen and Guardians. It's a pleasure to see such a full house today. I was initially tempted to think that perhaps this was for me, and then General Clark reminded me, "No, they're all here to find out what are they going to do to us next." As the director of AFA's Doolittle Leadership Center, it's truly my distinct pleasure to be moderating a panel on building the next generation of leaders. As we've heard throughout this conference, the challenges facing leaders today, resulting from great power competition, are enormous and categorically different than in the past. So the task of equipping leaders adequately to meet these challenges must be a priority effort. I think you'll agree that we have assembled the perfect panel for the subject matter at hand. And gentlemen, let me start by saying thank you for agreeing to share your thoughts with us today.

Now given the brevity of this panel, I'll now provide a very brief introduction of our four panel members. To my right, Lieutenant General Richard Clark is the superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy, a position he's held since September of 2020. A bomber pilot by AFSC, General Clark has led at the Squadron Wing NAF and JFCC levels, as well as being an Air Force fellow and former USAFA Commandant of cadets. Next to his right is Lieutenant General retired BJ Shwedo. General Shwedo retired from the Air Force after 33 years serving as an intelligence and cyber expert, culminating as the Joint Staffs' director of Command Control Communication Cyber and Chief Information Officer. He is the current and first director of the Air Force Academy's Institute for Future Conflict, an institute that focuses on research and education, that examines the changing character and technologies of armed conflict while providing future officers with the skills to be agile and adaptive throughout their careers. On my left is commander of Air Education and Training Command, Lieutenant General Brian Robinson.

In this capacity, General Robinson is responsible for the recruitment, training and education of air and Space Force's personnel. His command includes Air Force Recruiting Service, two numbered Air Forces and Air University. The command operates more than 1400 aircraft, 24 wings, and 11 installation, and it trains more than 293,000 students a year. Representing the U.S. Space Force is Major General Timothy Sejba, Commander of Space Training and Readiness Command or STARCOM. In this capacity, he's responsible for preparing the U.S. Space Force, and more than 8,600 Guardians, to prevail in competition and conflict through innovative education, training, doctrine and test activities. So with the introductions out of the way, let's get started with some questions. Leaders today faced a host of complex strategic realities, the combination of which pose distinct challenges to leaders of every rank, but particularly to young leaders, who are at the most tactical edge of the spear. Gentlemen, what is your organization doing differently now to prepare Airmen, officer NCO and civilian at the tactical level to meet these challenges more effectively? General Clark, we'll start with you.

Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark:

All right, thank you Dr. Donley, and thanks to my teammates here. It's great to be up here with you, and thanks to you all for being here. I'm a little bit nervous, honestly, but it's good to see everyone here. And to the question, I think for us at the Air Force Academy, it's about a few different levels of things that we're trying to do. And I'll speak for myself, first, as the superintendent coming in the door back in 2020, I had three priorities. The first one was our enduring priority, which is to develop leaders of character for the Air Force and the Space Force. That will always be our number one priority, our prime directive at the Air Force Academy. The next one, though, really gets to the point of what we're talking about here

today, and that's to prepare ourselves for future conflict, to ensure that our cadets, that our staff and faculty, our coaches, everybody, is keeping their eyes on what the future holds for us.

And we have to do that as an institution. And the third priority is to lead with dignity and respect. And no matter what realm or what timeframe we're ever leading in, that is always going to be core and critical to any leader. So those are our three priorities that I brought in. But then if you look at our USAFA strategic plan, talking institutionally, our number two and our strategic plan of our four goals, the number two, not at any priority, is to prepare our cadets for future conflict. So it resonates with me as the leader of the academy, but it's also embedded in our strategic plan as something that we have to make sure that we're doing every day, that we're applying the appropriate resources towards, and that we're shaping our personnel to be ready to do for our cadets, so that those thousand cadets go out and are ready to fight and win our wars.

That is going to be something that will endure at the academy forever. Now, when you talk about how does this happen, the best way that I could explain it is that we look for the outcomes that we expect of our cadets when they graduate. What do those outcomes need to be? What are the core competencies that our cadets need to master when they leave? And it's something, again, that institutionally we have agreed upon, and I wrote them down because I know if you want to remember something, you got to forget something, right? I don't have anything I can forget. So I have these things, these outcomes, that I want to just go down and describe them. The first one is for any warrior, and we all understand this. Warrior ethos as Airmen and citizens. Because we're not just building leaders for the air and space force in the future.

But some of our cadets, like myself in three months, are going to be citizens. But that warrior ethos is something that we should be taking with us no matter what we do. And we see that as a critical outcome for our cadets. The second one is leadership, teamwork, and organizational management, so that they can lead the teams that our air force and our space force are built upon. And it's an outcome that we measure throughout our academy. The third one is national security of the American Republic. Our cadets need to know what they're fighting for. They need to understand the why. They need to understand that their job is to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. And that outcome is critical to us and is embedded throughout our program. Now the next group of outcomes that I want to talk about are really about other cultures and understanding.

And this next outcome, I think we all know, when you deploy, when you have to go somewhere else to fight, you not only have to understand the environment that you're in and the culture that you may be asked to serve in, but you have to understand our allies, our partners. You have to understand your adversary, and be able to take in those cultures. So it's important, the human condition, cultures and societies. That is an outcome that is critical. It's our fourth outcome. But if we don't have our cadets that don't just understand American culture but understand the other cultures that they may have to serve in or support and defend, then they're not going to be successful. We also have to make sure that our cadets aren't just ready to go win wars, but that they're ready to win those wars in a just and ethical way.

And so our fifth outcome is ethics and respect for human dignity. That's important for them as leaders, but it's also important for them as they wage war, so that they understand that when they do this, that they're going to be held accountable for the way that it happens. So that is that outcome. And then the last one is really about the way that they think, how they think, not what they think. We are not trying to build robots here. We want people that understand, that have the skills to think in whatever environment they're placed in, and whatever environment they have to serve in. So it's not about what to think, it's about how to think. And these last ones, clear communications, critical thinkers, scientific reasoning and principles of science and application of engineering, problem solving methods. All of

those outcomes, those four, are intended to help our cadets understand how to think, how to take complex problems and break them down so that they can then lead their teams into action.

So those outcomes are critically important to us. There's nine of them that I listed. And they're embedded throughout the entire academy. Our dean is sitting here on the front row and she is really our lead in ensuring that those outcomes evolve, and that our academy maintains the needs and the requirements of our future fight, but of our air force and space force leadership as well. It's embedded in our athletic department, as they teach PE classes so that they build that grit, that resiliency, that moral courage that we're going to need in that next war. Not if we fight it, but when we fight it.

And it's embedded in our commandant of cadets, in our whole cadet wing, so that in the military training, in their commissioning education, that all of those outcomes are embedded in that, so that when our cadets leave that they have mastered those core competencies that are represented in the outcomes that I just shared with you. So we have it from me as our top leader, preparing for future conflict and that great power competition that we, as an Air Force and Space Force, are preparing for. We have it institutionally in our strategic plan so that we're always evolving, that we're applying the resources and our personnel in the right way and then in our outcomes, so that we are preparing our cadets so that when they leave that they're ready for that future conflict and that great power competition is left in good hands. So I will then turn it over or now turn it over to Lieutenant General retired BJ Shwedo, classmate, Falcon Football teammate, Seventh Squadron when we were cadets.

And I hired BJ, the dean and I hired BJ to come in, former J6 to be the lead for our main effort and our newest effort, the Institute for Future Conflict, which is really the consciousness of the academy to make sure that we are all moving with those outcomes in mind to prepare, not just our cadets, but anybody who comes to the academy, that they understand that we're about the future, that we are looking ahead. Whether we get our cadets from ROTC or some officers who had graduated from OTS, whoever they are, they need to understand that. And BJ, and the whole Institute for Future Conflict team, are here to make sure that we, as the academy, never take our eye off the real goal, and that's to be ready to go out and win wars. So BJ, over to you, sir.

Lt. Gen. Bradford J. Shwedo, USAF (Ret.):

Thank you so much. So thanks so much for the opportunity, and I'm here to tell you that I know there's been a lot of discussion about great power competition, but if you don't think the front row is serious about it, let me share with you what I went through. So I was still on active duty, and he calls me and goes, "We need somebody to stand up the Institute for Future Conflict, because we've got to retool our capabilities to stop doing global war on terrorism and get ready for China and Russia." My first phone call was to some guy that was the J5 when I was the J6, and it was General Alvin, who, not exaggerating, very first phone call. And he goes, "Congratulations, you have a skiff. You now have a weekly phone call with the A5 in the Pentagon and we're going to give you direction."

I have a dean that supports me all the time. I have more adult supervision than I've ever dreamed. But what's beautiful about it is everybody is taking this seriously. Everybody understands. And I've got about a three year headstart. And if you've ever been around the cadets, they're amazing, very humbling, et cetera. They're responsible for about two to three patents a week, a year, I'm sorry. And the bottom line is, I had another meeting with the chief, about two weeks ago, and he started smiling and I was telling him all the great things that the Institute for Future Conflict was doing. And he goes, "This may be a bottom up developed, downward directed. And I always love a bracketed attack." So I think that we're seeing these guys, once they understand the difference in the landscape, they're amazing. And the dean smiles and says, "I'm shaping evil minds."

I'm proud to tell you those evil minds reside. We just need to make them aware of what is out there. So all the tools that we used for ISIS and Al-Qaeda are probably different than the tools and training we need for Russia and China. And as soon as we make the cadets aware of the situation they're in, those evil minds start clicking, and the countermeasures that come up is amazing. And what we're teaching them is, it's not just bombs, bullets and beans that we've done for 20 to 30 years against ISIS and Al-Qaeda. We are going to challenge them across the spectrum of conflict. And unfortunately for us, the Russians and Chinese have been running unopposed in just the competition phase, and they've been pushing their message. We're very good at what we do. And once we get them into the game, you hear these evil countermeasures that are coming through and I'm just like, "I love you, man," but we just got to get them in the game.

We've got to get them understanding what we're dumping them into. The last part is a lot of the things that hindered the cadet experience in the past is now taken away by the supportive leadership. So believe it or not, cadets have TSSCI clearances. I've got a skiff on the fifth floor of the library, and we're giving weekly intel updates on what the bad guys are doing. So we plant the seeds long before. We start campaign planning that I didn't do till I was a major, and they're learning the synergy of air, land, sea space cyber, all showing up at the same time, creating overwhelming dilemmas. And boy, you plug and play these guys, they're going to make your eyes water. And the last part is, with the additional clearances, they start seeing new tools that they had no idea were out there. And I had one cadet, I took one cadet to one of my squadrons from a previous life, and he walked up with big eyes and he goes, "Sir, I had no idea my country does this, but I want to do it really badly."

And what's funny is you start seeing these capabilities now showing up into their toolkit, et cetera, and we have things like the multi-domain lab where there's two AOCs, air operation centers, fighting against each other. There's 24 reconfigurable cockpits. We have a full up SCADA ISIS range, we have cadets that fly satellites. And what I laugh is, when he and I went through our cadet experience, the similar program that they're going through, we rolled dice and moved model airplanes on a board. So the bottom line is there's lots going on. I could talk all day long, but we've got much more distinguished speakers. So I'm going to turn over to the other side of the fight.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

General Robinson.

Lt. Gen. Brian S. Robinson:

Oh, thanks Dr. Donley. Appreciate the invitation to participate in this panel. I'm honored to be up here with these leaders whom, with which we team to get the mission done. So what I would like to say is, air education training command, we take the responsibility of being in the people, the Airman business, very, very seriously. We understand the pride and the consequence that comes with that responsibility. So we grip that responsibility very, very seriously. So we're happy to be able to here to share with some things we're doing. To your question about what are we doing differently to prepare Airmen? I'll start with the competencies that are necessary for great power competition. We're blessed that Air University has the Cassie Institute as part of their formation there. So we went to them. Their whole purpose is to understand the adversary and said, "Hey, what are the competencies we think our Airmen need in their institutional path and development that are relevant to great power competition and being successful?"

And there are six of the 20 that came out right away pretty quickly with a quick snap of the chalk line. And they are accountability, teamwork decision-making, analytical thinking, resilience, and perseverance. That's six out of the 20. I know half A1 and staff MR have some analytic requests out from

Rand and other folks, to give us the rest of that skill sets and competencies we think are necessary to develop our folks for. Why do I point those out first? Because what we're doing differently is we're continuing to be very, very deliberate about how we deliver and train to those competencies, and the technology we use to teach, the processes we use to deliver learning, and the experiential environment that our Airmen go through, and basic training, initial skills training, or at the PME courses that we offer for both NCOs and officers. So that has to be deliberate, has to be timely, it has to be relevant.

So as the environment changes, like we heard about earlier this week, we have to be able to pivot pretty quickly and change the curricula where it's relevant, and we have the advantage of how many people we touch that we can fill. We can fill the bucket from many levels simultaneously, because you have mid-level PME, senior level PME, you have initial skills training, basic training. We hit that, all of those simultaneously. So we're touching more Airmen than we realized we are touching when we first started this journey. So some specific examples. Basic military training has been adjusted, retooled to account for the generation that's coming in. CMSAF talks about Gen Z and their extended adolescence period. If you read the book, Gen Z Generation Z unfiltered. So we, like the army in the Marine Corps, take a week to expose them and talk to them about resilience and the things that they need to be aware of for accountability and self-control as a couple of examples.

But toward the end, we give them an exercise, put them in an exercise called Pacer Forge. Second Air Force and 37th training Wing designed this. And what it does is it takes them, after about five and a half weeks of conform, conform, conform, puts them in the same beast environment, many of the older folks in the room are familiar with. Here's a commander's intent and a problem to solve. You guys figure out how to organize yourselves and solve it. No clear direction, do it this way or that way. Not prescriptive. The MTIs fall back in a coaching risk management mode and let them struggle through the problem and either get to success, or learn from the challenges they have. We're building out the same equivalent of that at initial skills training. It's being developed right now. It's called Bracer Forge. It's going to be stood up at Lackland Air Force Base where we have the career enlisted Aviator Center, the Defender Center of Excellence down there.

So now they've had several weeks of learning their particular skill, come back together and exercise, and again, commander's intent, in that environment with some more specificity and training. Bring your talents, your knowledge, your expertise to the table to solve the commander's intent problem that you've been given. So that's on the enlisted training. 19th Air Force is doing something very similar. The F35 formal training units, in their syllabi, they work into that syllabus, a opportunity where they take off, fly a training sortie, and they execute ACE. They will recover to an auxiliary field or a strange field for a number of days or weeks, and operate out of that field with not all the pristine support equipment and environment that you would normally otherwise have at Luke Air Force Base or Eglin Air Force Base. And they learned how to think through that.

On the pre-commissioning training, you'll hear some overlap here with the competencies within this space as well. Air University, in 60 days, flashed a bang, reconfigured, retooled Officer training school and it's called Officer Training, OTS Victory. A better leadership development model through the five-week course, and it relies on the cadets as they're coming through to exercise leadership as their upperclassmen. So we borrow a little bit from that, and they get at more war fighting in that space and the skills that they're trying to get after and teach and inculcate there. They come out of that course fully qualified in the side arm as opposed to just familiar with the side arm. That's one example of a change. Through all these, we emphasize mission command as early as possible in their careers. We've emphasized joint war fighting in the professional military education courses, so SOS, the Barnes Center, Air Command and Staff College, War College, pivoted that back to joint planning, joint war fighting, and that's the foundation and the core.

Lastly, I end with the foundations course. That is a supplement to the senior NCO Academy PME opportunities, because I think it was, and CSMAF, correct me, but it was about 90 to a hundred days total that a senior enlisted member of our force spent in PME, in the current construct. So again, Air University and the Barnes Center rose to the occasion and designed the foundations course to get out, to interject intermediary courses where we can talk to Airmen as they develop about their experiences and get focused on the skills we want them to have. So we enjoy focusing on that teaching and developing our Airmen. It's in our pride, joy, because in the end, our Airmen are today the comparative advantage, vis-a-vis the adversaries we face, and we want to make sure we do our very level best to make sure it stays that way. So thanks for the opportunity to be here.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

Thank you General Robinson. So a slightly different question for General Sejba. Guardian leaders face the same strategic realities associated with great power competition, so what is STARCOM doing to prepare its Guardian leaders across the entire force?

Maj. Gen. Timothy A. Sejba:

Yeah, thank you. And first of all, on behalf of my command team, general Moore, chief Pogue, thanks to AFA, thanks to our great Air Force partners, General Robinson, General Clark, certainly we can't do leader development without our strong partnership across the Air Force and the Space Force, so thank you. My role as the STARCOM commander is to prepare every Guardian, and when I think about every Guardian, it's officer enlisted and it's civilian, I need to prepare them to be mission focused, especially as we start to look at great power competition. Let me give you an example. Just a couple years ago, just down the road here at Buckley Space Force Base, this is a scenario that played out. During the day at the joint OPIR Planning Center, civilians were responsible for going through and planning out the tasking for OPIR. Throughout the day and into that evening, there was early indications of a missile launch coming from Iran, 12 missiles into Iraq, towards one of our air bases.

A lieutenant on the floor noticed that. That was the first alert. They handed that alert off to one of our enlisted Guardians, who then went through and started to build out the tracks to understand where those incoming missiles were heading, so that we could get the warning, from there, understanding what those tracks looked like, we handed it off to another lieutenant who then called down to Cheyenne Mountain, to the mountain to make sure that we were able to relay that warning back over to Iraq so that in time, at 1:00 AM in the morning, just minutes after the first detection, we were able to give the order to take cover, with no lives lost, no injuries, and minimal damage. That is the power of Guardians, officer enlisted and civilians working together to accomplish the mission. And as we look forward to great power competition, the example I just gave you was 12 incoming missiles. In great power competition that could be hundreds of missiles across multiple theaters with warning, having to go out within minutes to make sure that U.S. and ally lives are not lost.

That is where we're focused, and that is what we're preparing Guardians for, a much different theater and certainly a different environment as we prepare for great power competition. So how are we doing that? As we look at, foundationally, how the Space force is organized, and how we accomplish our mission, the roles and responsibilities of every Guardian is absolutely foundational. We're 14,000 strong. A third of those officer, a third enlisted and a third civilian. And we need to prepare every one of those Guardians in unique ways to take advantage of the strengths that they bring to our service, and really power what our mission responsibilities are. Throughout this week, you've heard General Saltzman, Chief B9, talk about some foundational work that the service has done over the last seven months. We call this the officer enlisted civilian roles and responsibilities. And that was an effort across headquarters

and across all three field commands, across all ranks and types of Guardians, to really think through what are the unique traits that each Guardian brings to our service.

That was published last week. And that sets the foundation of how we are going to develop each Guardian differently as we go forward. You heard General Saltzman talk about officers who are going to be steep in mission planning, who are going to understand all of the key mission disciplines that we have within the service. They'll understand space operations, they'll understand cyber operations, and they'll understand intelligence. That will be a foundational piece that every officer, beginning this September, will come into the service and they'll learn. That's different than how we've developed officers in the past. Next, our enlisted, and I think Chief Bassey said this today. We have the envy of all across the world of our enlisted force, all services. Our enlisted force will be our war fighters. They're going to be deep in technical knowledge of each weapon system. They're going to understand the threats that we face inside and out, and how that could materialize against either the space segment or the cyber element of our ground stations.

That will be the role that we expect out of our enlisted. And on our civilian side, deep technical knowledge, stability experience, especially in some of the key technology areas that we know we have to get after. That is where we're moving when it comes to our officer enlisted civilian roles and responsibilities. Again, it starts with officer training course, where we begin this September by bringing in every officer and training them in those three key disciplines. But right on the heels, we have to look at, if you're going to change roles and responsibilities, what do you need to do to be able to train the rest of your force to be prepared? That's where we are heading as well on the enlisted side. And the same work with our civilians. Again, it'll be a partnership across the Air Force, but I'm excited for it. Thank you.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

Thank you, General. So with the need for leaders to issue and execute mission type orders, it seems to me there is a parallel need to train more senior and experienced leaders in the art of delivering mission type orders, and being comfortable with a degree of subordinate decentralization, risk acceptance, and autonomy that must accompany these orders for successful execution. In a sense, leaders of all ranks need to be in learning mode. So General Robinson, as commander of AETC, you have the most expansive view and responsibility for advanced leadership training and ongoing professional development in military education. How are you catering to the advancement of our most experienced leaders?

Lt. Gen. Brian S. Robinson:

Thanks for that question. That's a really important question, I would say, and the many of the ways I just described those, that is baked in. But really what it comes down to, what I would say is just do it. It's a partnership between the leaders that exist in the seats today, and the force that we're developing, and the changes we're making. So the institutional force, the AETC will design that into the curricula and the syllabi that we teach and deliver through the different levels of learning and PME, as I alluded to earlier. And then the leaders at all level, outside in the operational force, just have to practice it. I work at it every day. I had to actually consciously tell myself to issue some guidance to my staff. I was handed to me in a memorandum. I'm like, "No, the right answer is a task order." That gives the boundaries, the intent, the maneuver space, the risk tolerance, and then let them go do it and empower them.

Because that's how I grew up, and I'm blessed as I've looked back to be able to grow up that way and develop inside our air force. And then after that, again, it's human nature. It's a human endeavor. Then you have to, as the leader, go into be willing to coach, mentor, assess, and debrief the progress. No one's jumping into the deep end of the pool without life preservers, right? You think they're ready

because you know their competencies and their demonstration of their performance, but you have to do that. But it all starts with hand them your guidance, trust them that they're going to do it, give them the opportunity to have that feedback and that feedback process and that role. And usually Airmen, people will knock your socks off.

When I became a squadron commander, the one thing I said I would do when I got in, and it's a rated squadron, so it's different than a large part of the rest of the Air Force. We tend to be lagging in this way in terms of responsibility we give to officers in the flying world. I actually empowered my flight commanders to do more than just OPR writing and decoration writing. Turns out, by the fact that you're a commissioned officer, you have certain authorities that come with the oath of that commission. That I had to give them their boundaries and what I wanted them to do, teach them, organize, train, and equip them to be successful. And it was an amazing experience. Thanks for that question.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

Yes sir. General Clark, General Shwedo, would you like to contribute to that last question?

Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark:

Sure. So for us, our academy is powered by the diversity of the permanent party. So our AOCs, our air operations commanders, our AMTs, the senior NCOs that come to train our cadets, our faculty, our staff, those are the people that set the culture for the type of operation that we're talking about. And the kind of culture that we need is a culture of critical thinkers, people who are bold, people who are innovative, and people who aren't afraid to make a mistake. And sometimes it can be tough, especially when you have 4,000 cadets and you say, "Go, run crazy and don't make a mistake." It could be tough for someone to let go of the reins, but we have to. We have to give them the rope to go out and do things. And it's a cultural, I think, shift that a lot of us maybe didn't have in the Air Force when we were younger, but we have to have it now.

We're going to have leaders that are going to be in situations where they're not able to talk to that senior echelon and they're going to have to make decisions, and they're going to have to make it boldly. And so that's something that we work with our cadets on, but also our faculty and staff, and the permanent party have to have that same mindset. Because they're the ones that are building the scenarios, like General Shwedo talked about, in our multi-domain lab. They're the ones that are planning the culmination exercises that our senior cadets go through so that they can understand AFSCs that they're going into. So that mindset is key and critical for us, but it starts at the top, and it starts with our permanent party members, and we try to ensure that they are free to execute the way that we need them to. So...

Lt. Gen. Bradford J. Shwedo, USAF (Ret.):

So this is a perfect example of what we're doing to retool. So if you look at the difference between the global war on terrorism and great power competition, this is a great example. And if you superimpose 20 to 30 years of the global war on terrorism, you'll find that a standard military career, that's all they've been doing. So you have to retool. I think that it was no coincidence that General Brown signed out Air Force Pub One to let people know we're going to be comm out. Now it's kind of back to the future because we were very used to being ready for that, because we were going to fight the Great World War III, and Russia had a game plan to take comms away, so does China.

So we've got to retool all of these folks, and I appreciate the opportunity because it's much bigger than just the cadets. The faculty have done what this country's asked them to do, fought that global war on terrorism. But when you fight ISIS in Al-Qaeda, two tin cans and a string will work. These guys are ready

to do a full up comms denial. So we not only have to educate them on that, we have to educate them on DeepFakes, all of these other information warfare tools, as we go forward. The last part is we go further than just cadets, et cetera. We do a lot of work with ROTC. I'm boarding a plane for Spain on Sunday to do a NATO targeting conference. And things like PACE, primary, alternate, contingency, emergency has not really been thought of because ISIS and Al-Qaeda couldn't get past primary.

And what we've got to do is retool them for that great power competition. And these are just examples of what we're teaching across the board. And we do a lot of active duty and a lot of reserve and guard things because they need to learn all of these tools. And unfortunately, a lot of the tools we learned in World War III versus Soviet Union is applicable again. And we're dusting off a lot of the lessons we have before and populating it to maybe some faculty or maybe some active duty folks that have never seen this great power competition before in the past.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

Thank you, General. General Sejba, given the newness of the Space Force, how is STARCOM seeking to build a unique warfighting culture?

Maj. Gen. Timothy A. Sejba:

Thanks. When we talk culture, I think sometimes it's best to either experience or see it in action. So if you don't mind, I'd like to show you a video.

Video:

Dear Guardian, congratulations on your graduation from basic military training. You've embarked upon a journey like no other. Steeped in legacy, owned by courage, and defined by a commitment to safeguarding our nation. Amidst the whirlwind of exercises, rigorous trials, sleepless nights, you've discovered a new strength within you, a strength that goes beyond the physical, that embraces the mental moral character essential to our force. You've transformed from a civilian to a Space Force Guardian, a title is demanding as it is rewarding.

You'll be stepping onto a stage where the stakes are higher than ever, where the enormity of your task is only dwarfed by the importance of your responsibility to defend our nation's interests, securing peace and stability from an extraordinary vantage point. You'll confront a new class of challenges, problems that no one on earth has faced before. From sophisticated technological operations to protecting our assets, to securing our communications, you'll be the shield that safeguards our nation, our partners, and our allies, ensuring our ability to effectively harness the space domain.

But remember, you do not stand alone. Our strength lies in our connection, in our shared duty and purpose. We stand together, not just as comrades, but as custodians of the ultimate high ground, each one of us, a link in a chain, stronger together, more resolute together. And as you embark on your journey, I offer you this patch, a symbol of our shared bond. Let it remind you of our collective purpose, because being a Guardian is more than a title, it's a promise, a promise to yourself and to our nation that you will protect, you will serve, and you will secure. Every day, you'll reach higher and strive further, contributing to the peace and prosperity of our nation.

So stand tall, Guardian, embrace your pivotal role among the stars, and let your journey in the United States Space Force guide you, inspire you. Remember, the challenges are many, but the rewards are beyond measure. Sincerely, a fellow Guardian.

Maj. Gen. Timothy A. Sejba:

Thank you for that. In STARCOM and the Space Force, we're setting the conditions for every Guardian, and we're making sure that we're developing a connection that's different than anything we've ever experienced. From the very first Guardians that come in through BMT, to the rest of the force, a simple patching ceremony that drives connection, but also challenging every new Guardian to understand that as we look at GPC, the challenges are many, and we're going to face challenges that we've never seen before. Certainly for many of us that grew up within the space community. And so I look forward to how we continue to develop that culture and build out our war fighting culture for the Space Force on behalf of the DAF. Thanks.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

Well, as I watch the clock timer tick down, let me just say, first of all, how much we appreciate everybody being here. I'd like to thank our illustrious panel members for being a part of this. Thank you so much. And thank you also for what you're doing to build the next generation of leaders. Yes, sir?

Lt. Gen. Richard M. Clark:

One point that I wanted to make that I didn't get to, the thing that is going to allow us to win in great power competition is this generation of officers, senior NCOs, Airmen, Guardians across the board. And I will tell you, I get this question a lot. "What do you think about this next generation? This new generation?" I am about to retire in three months, and I will tell you, I am very comfortable to sit on my rocking chair and let this generation take it to the next level. And I say that with all sincerity. Our cadets are in ROTC, OTS, at the academy. And our young leaders are as good as I've seen in my 38 years. And I couldn't be prouder to see our force where it is now, but that's what's going to win this competition for us.

Dr. Patrick Donley:

And on that positive note, thanks for coming. Let's give our panel members a round of applause.

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