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Phenomenological Study of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Military

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Phenomenological Study of Toxic Leadership in the U.S. Military

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

The current literature shows toxic leadership is surprisingly more prevalent than previously believed. This subset of organizational leadership studies revolves around leadership styles that poison the employee, the organization, or both. This study captures a common phenomenon for toxic leadership (symptoms) useful for diagnosing or addressing toxic leadership in organizations. My goal is to better understand toxic leadership to inform potential mitigation techniques that are applicable to business and military environments. My research suggests toxic leadership exists because senior leaders, those leaders above the toxic leader, allow it to exist, either unwittingly or knowingly. Furthermore, leaders can create toxic environments by their inaction or inability to make timely decisions. That inaction allows problems to develop, then fester and ultimately, creates a toxic environment. Also, non-toxic leaders can create toxic environments by not dealing with incompetent subordinates, like the senior leader who allows a toxic leader to continue to act out toxic behaviors. Incompetent subordinates generate problems that can contribute to a toxic environment due to their technical shortcomings or low EQ (emotional quotient). The most effective mitigation is confronting and reporting toxic leader behaviors when they occur.

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Prologue

My hotline rang loudly, breaking the silence in my office and my concentration as I worked on a performance evaluation for one of my pilots. I quickly answered, “Yes Sir.” My boss fired back, “Did you authorize Exon 14 to takeoff?” “Yes Sir,” I responded. He shouted angrily, “That’s what I thought!” as he slammed his phone down. “Now what,” I wondered silently as I got up from my desk, grabbed my ‘commander’s book’ with the flying schedule and select regulations, and walked out of my office. I told Judy, my secretary, that I was headed to the Colonel’s office.

As I entered the lobby of the Operations Group headquarters, the deputy quietly greeted me with, “Tony, I’m glad you came over; the boss is pissed”—a polite way of saying he was ‘pissed’ at me. I walked up and stood just outside the Colonel’s open door waiting for him to waive me in. He stood up from behind his desk as I walked into his office so that he could look me in the eye. Then, he asked, “Why did you direct Exon 14 to takeoff?” I started to explain, “The IP (instructor pilot) had a pressurization problem so he landed at....” Visibly angered, the Colonel cut me off, “I know that—you weren’t authorized to approve his takeoff; why didn’t you call me?”

“Sir, I am authorized,” I replied. “No, you’re not—damn it!” The Colonel retorted as he picked up an open binder containing his reference regulations and pointed to a paragraph that said only the Operations Group Commander could authorize the takeoff of a jet that made an

unscheduled stop for maintenance. I opened my binder to the same paragraph and showed him where it stated the Squadron Commander is the approval authority. Instinctively, the Colonel flipped to the cover page to check the date. I followed suit; the Colonel's regulation was out of date. Obviously upset, he said loudly, "You're dismissed." As I walked out of his office, I heard him yelling into his phone, chastising a fellow Squadron Commander for not keeping his regulations current. I made a mental note to call Dennis when I returned to my office and apologize for the "chewing out" he received.¹

Background

Unfortunately, examples of abusive leadership are far too common and, unlike my experience in the prologue, can be extreme. See Appendix 1 for a redacted witness statement that is extreme and graphic but demonstrates toxic leadership at its worst.² In over 40 years in the workplace, I have witnessed creativity and communication stifled because of poisonous leadership. Though my experience was in the military and the focus of my research is the military, my goal is to better understand toxic leadership to inform a future study of potential mitigation techniques at the personal and organizational levels.

The term "toxic leadership"—coined in 1996 (Green, 2014)—is a relatively new focus area in the crowded organizational leadership field. Generally, no accepted definition exists for "toxic leadership;" however, Boddy and Croft provide a good working description:

Toxic leaders are those who embody dysfunctional characteristics, exhibit destructive behavior and so generate a poisonous effect on the organizations and individuals they lead. (Clive Roland Boddy & Croft, 2016)

¹ I experienced the event described above in the late 1990s.

² DoD released an Army investigation report on 16 Aug 2019 after receiving numerous Freedom of Information Act requests. The statement in the Appendix was pulled from this report. (Weisgerber, 2019)

This definition is striking because of the medical euphemism of something that poisons the body. In other words, toxic leadership poisons and potentially sickens or even kills the organization where it exists. I use this definition for this study.

Surprisingly, toxic leadership is more prevalent than previously believed. This subset of organizational leadership revolves around leadership styles that poison the employee or the organization. The toxic leadership common phenomenon this study produced can be used to inform future research on mitigation strategies useful to organizations and individuals. For example, this study can inform potential antidotes to prevent development and effectively deal with the problem if it arises. *One topic lacking in the literature is a discussion of the potential benefits of toxic leadership.* Following the medical euphemism, a vaccine injects a small amount of poison into the body, so the body can develop its own immunity from the toxin. Likewise, can a dose of toxic leadership actually help an individual or organization? This is one area I explored as part of my research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Protocol

My literature review was conducted primarily online using the University of South Florida (USF) Library's "Find It!" search tool and the key word "toxic leadership." I limited the search to scholarly, peer-reviewed articles. My initial search resulted in 16,335 hits. I narrowed the results to 9,039 by limiting the search to academic journals only and further reduced it to 324 by changing the "Subject" to "leadership-research." The sources I cited are included in the references.

I supplemented this research with unclassified articles found on Department of Defense (DoD) sites with the use of a DoD Common Access Card that gave me access to data not easily available to the public.³ The primary sites I pulled data from included the DoD Research Surveys & Statistics Center at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/surveys.jsp> for survey data on the status of military forces; the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center at <https://usacac.army.mil/organizations/mccoe/cal/ldrdevelopment> was especially helpful as it included studies on toxic leadership in the U.S. Army. Finally, I pulled data from the Defense Technical Information Center's site at <https://www.dtic.mil/dtic/search/search.html>, which is DoD's primary archive for research projects.

³ I have a DoD Common Access Card as a Strategic and Cyberspace Advisor (Principal) who provides direct support to the Department of Defense. Much of this DoD data is available to the public via a Freedom of Information Act request.

Summary

The literature on toxic leadership reveals several interesting points. First, there are many different definitions. Some definitions merely highlight bad leadership in general. Second, toxic leadership is more common than one would think. One study suggests the percentage of leaders in the U.S. Army may be as high as 30 percent (Erickson, Shaw, Murray, & Branch, 2015).

Third, several studies reveal toxic leadership can generate physical effects on employees, like high blood pressure, alcoholism, and increased absenteeism for medical reasons. In turn, these effects contribute to decreased employee performance and higher overall costs, in lost productivity and higher health care products. (Gallus, Walsh, van Driel, Gouge, & Antolic, 2017; Webster, Brough, & Daly, 2016; Yavaş, 2016)

Fourth, toxic leadership poisons the organization. It negatively impacts employee morale, creativity, productivity, cohesiveness, and overall performance, which leads to high employee turnover that contributes to higher recruiting and training costs. In its worst case, toxic leadership can lead to employees sabotaging organizational goals, leading to the company's demise (Clive R. Boddy, 2013) and (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013).

Several studies propose potential antidotes to prevent or mitigate the effects of toxic leadership. These antidotes include screening out future toxic leaders during the hiring process (Clive R. Boddy, 2013), training (Edwards et al., 2015), early identification by management (Erickson et al., 2015), and the use of 360-degree feedback (Mueller, 2013), which is anonymous feedback provided to the leader by his or her boss, peers, and subordinates. *Finally, the current literature lacks discussions on the potential benefits of toxic leadership.* My literature review is summarized in the following three tables. The sources listed in the table summaries below were most relevant to this study.

Table 1 lists various descriptions of toxic leadership in the current literature. It highlights that there is no generally accepted common phenomena for toxic leadership. Consequently, there is no generally accepted definition for toxic leadership within academia or practice. I found Boddy’s description as poisonous and Padilla’s Toxic Triangle Framework most useful for this study.

Table 1. Toxic Leadership Descriptors / Manifestations

Description	Sources
Toxic leaders as those who embody dysfunctional characteristics, exhibit destructive behavior and so generate a poisonous effect on the organizations and individuals they lead.	(Clive Roland Boddy & Croft, 2016)
Toxic leadership is a combination of self-centered attitudes, motivations, and behaviors that have adverse effects on subordinates, the organization, and mission performance.	(Erickson et al., 2015) (R. C. Riley, Katelyn; Fallesen, Jon; and Jones, Rachell L., 2016)
Toxic leaders are authoritarian narcissists who unpredictably engage in political behaviors and authoritarian supervision.	(Gallus et al., 2017)
Corporate Psychopaths (1% of population that have no conscience) express intolerable cruelty and establish a bureaucratic audit culture that leads to negative outcomes.	(Clive R. Boddy, 2013), (Stoten, 2015), (Yavaş, 2016)
There are five dimensions of toxic leadership: Abusive Supervision, Authoritarian Leadership, Narcissism, Self-promotion, and Unpredictability.	(Dobbs, 2014)
The four patterns of toxic leadership are: egotism, ethical failure, incompetence, and neuroticism.	(Green, 2014)
The four themes of toxic leadership are: (1) toxic leader’s leadership, (2) leader competence, (3) the organization’s competence, and (4) the emergence of the phenomenon as related to the lived experience of registered nurses.	(Roter, 2012)
Toxic Triangle—Leader, Follower (colluders or conformers), and the Environment that facilitates it.	(A. Padilla et al., 2007), (Stoten, 2015)
Demagoguery, Bad Leadership, Dark Side, Harmful, Destructive.	(Edwards et al., 2015),(Goldman, 2011), (Hadadian & Zarei, 2016), (Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013),(Mueller, 2013), (Webster et al., 2016)
In its worst case, toxic leadership in the military can lead to mutiny and death.	(Steele, 2011)
Only a small percentage of U.S. Army leaders rate their immediate superior as demonstrating behaviors associated with toxic leadership; however, these negative behaviors are associated with low unit cohesion, low subordinate motivation, low work quality, and low commitment to the Army.	(R. C. Riley, Trevor; Hatfield, Josh; Keller-Glaze, Heidi; and Fallesen, Jon J., 2012)
Verbatim descriptions of toxic leadership from U.S. Army survey: • “Serving as primary staff officer in a maneuver battalion where all decisions were very centralized, primary staff officers would have to wait two weeks for an appointment with the battalion commander. Initiatives, suggestions, opinions not vetted by the Executive Officer were crushed with prejudice. Honest mistakes resulted in comments like “CPT [Captain] if you do that again, I will put a gun to your head and pull the trigger,” collective “reamings” of the staff and attributional behavior. One of the officers was also sleeping with subordinates’ wives which divided the battalion as well.” • “Lack of concern; self before service; he was out for #1 - made the statement “I do not have to develop you, just work you til you drop; when you drop, I will just replace you with another officer.” • “Domineering, distrust of other, and uncompromising behaviors led to a work environment of paranoia and leadership by fear and intimidation.”	(Steele, 2011)

My initial findings from the literature review on toxic leadership are organized and displayed in Table 2. Most interesting was the finding by Boddy that up to 3.9% of senior managers are corporate psychopaths (Toxic Leaders) while they only comprise 1% of the general population. Green observed that 64% of his respondents stated they were suffering under a toxic leader. One study suggests this rate is even higher in the military (Gallus et al., 2017).

Table 2. Findings / Results

Finding	Sources
Psychopaths make up 1 percent of the population, assuming normal population dispersion, 1 percent of corporate employees should be psychopathic; however, there is evidence that at higher levels, one is more likely to come across a corporate psychopath; research suggests that about 3.9 percent of senior managers may be psychopathic, and this may vary by industry sector.	(Clive R. Boddy, 2013)
The problem of worker cynicism appears to be pervasive; polls report that over 50% of survey respondents describe themselves as cynical at work as a result of suffering under toxic leadership.	(Dobbs, 2014)
Various studies estimate the number of toxic leaders in the army ranges from 10% to 30%.	(Erickson et al., 2015)
Though the clear majority of service members report having observed an exceptional leader within the past year, 83% of uniform personnel reported having witnessed a toxic leader.	(Gallus et al., 2017)
Toxic leadership is not rare, a study reported that 64% of the respondents in their study stated that they were currently suffering under a toxic leader.	(Green, 2014)
A 2003 study reported that 91% of nurses reported having experienced verbal abuse that left them humiliated. In a study conducted at the Army War College consisting of senior officers with over 20 years of experience in the Army, 100% of the participants had experienced toxic leadership.	(Green, 2014)
A study found around 5% to 10% of employees experience bullying at least once on the job; another study found 89% of those experiencing bullying at work, perceived leaders as the main bully.	(Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013)
A 2005 study stated at a rate of 18 to 26%, nursing turnover is one of the highest of all professional occupations; one of the main factors leading to high turnover and job dissatisfaction is leadership.	(Roter, 2012), (Dobbs, 2014)
Targets of toxic leadership have higher stress, greater instances of alcohol abuse, reduced self-esteem, and abuse their peers.	(Gallus et al., 2017), (Webster et al., 2016), (Clive Roland Boddy & Croft, 2016)
Organizations lose competitive advantage over rivals because leaders do not encourage innovative and creative behavior because it could affect their control for power over their subordinates.	(Mueller, 2013), (Chua & Murray, 2015), (Roter, 2012)
Toxic leadership increases workplace deviance by subordinates to include sabotaging operations, providing inaccurate information, and not cooperating with a co-worker.	(Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013), (Clive R. Boddy, 2013)
Toxic leadership decreases personnel efficiency, adversely affects cost-benefit relationships for organizations: high absenteeism rates, increased personnel transfers, poor performance, groupthink, decreasing satisfaction, and decreased organizational commitment.	(Yavaş, 2016)
Toxic leadership promotes lack of trust; increased political behavior; cronyism & nepotism; instability; decreased work cohesion & performance; and employees become more risk adverse & less creative.	(Erickson et al., 2015), (Dobbs, 2014)

Table 2 (Continued)

<p>U.S. Army key findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency in views regarding toxic leadership behavior in the Army between the 2010 and 2011 surveys. • Perceptions of toxic leadership are more frequently found among junior leaders and are less pronounced at senior levels. • Junior NCOs are more likely to be perceived as demonstrating behaviors frequently associated with toxic leadership. • In comparison to other officer positions, brigade and battalion commanders are infrequently perceived as toxic. • The negative impact that toxic leadership has on Army individual and organizational outcomes is strong. 	(R. C. Riley, Trevor; Hatfield, Josh; Keller-Glaze, Heidi; and Fallesen, Jon J., 2012)
<p>Toxic leaders are usually not incompetent or ineffective leaders; they are often strong leaders who have “the right stuff” but the wrong intensity and wrong desired end-state (self-promotion).</p>	(Steele, 2011)

Table 3 highlights potential treatments for toxic leadership found in the literature. One novel concept is to use movie clips in corporate training that highlight good and bad leadership traits to raise self-awareness and demonstrate what is and is not acceptable behavior (Edwards et al., 2015). Especially promising are Erickson and Mueller’s recommendation to incorporate 360-degree feedback into performance evaluations—that is anonymous feedback from subordinates and peers in addition to the supervisor’s feedback.

Table 3. Potential Treatments / Mitigation

Treatment	Sources
Screen for Corporate Psychopaths in senior positions in corporations.	(Clive R. Boddy, 2013)
Gender-specific communications may help to offset perceptions of negativity toward leaders.	(Chua & Murray, 2015)
Marketing may, through research, identify toxic leaders through their effects and behavior.	(Clive Roland Boddy & Croft, 2016)
Managers should purposefully examine leadership development, training, and opportunities to stem the tide of undesirable (toxic) behavior among its leadership.	(Dobbs, 2014)
Use movie film clips to illustrate the ambiguous nature of “good” and “bad” leadership; managers can recognize toxic leadership more readily through viewing, discussing, and analyzing film clips.	(Edwards et al., 2015)
Early detection of destructive leadership depends on the ability of senior management to identify & deal with destructive leaders; there are 3 key stages where destructive leaders can be identified: 1) those tasked with selecting new leaders need training on how to identify destructive leadership traits, 2) employ 360-degree feedback mechanisms to ensure employees can anonymously evaluate their superiors, and 3) senior management must be seen dealing with the issue.	(Erickson et al., 2015)
Leader performance measured by both mission accomplishment and their ability to develop, grow, and set an example for their subordinates.	(Gallus et al., 2017)
Build psychological and human capital with employees.	(Goldman, 2011)
Understand the full extent of the damage that toxic leaders can inflict; recognize toxic behavior and address it.	(Green, 2014)
Create processes and systems to identify, control, and eliminate toxic behaviors before these leaders ‘climb up the ladder’ and make toxicity part of the culture.	(Mehta & Maheshwari, 2013)

Table 3 (Continued)

Perform 360-degree feedback, modify personnel evaluation system to include leadership traits, and provide training & mentoring.	(Mueller, 2013)
Provide executive leadership development and ensure Human Resource Department can provide support when an employee reports it.	(Roter, 2012)
Initiate cultural change program within organization with a range of 'hard' (ex., formal policy protecting whistle blowers) and 'soft' (ex., professional development) strategies for institutions and individuals that highlight the ethical context to professional practice.	(Stoten, 2015)

Research Questions

During my literature review, I discovered a useful conceptual framework described as the “Toxic Triangle” that consists of *destructive leaders*, *susceptible followers*, and *conducive environments*; together, they enable abusive leadership (A. Padilla et al., 2007).

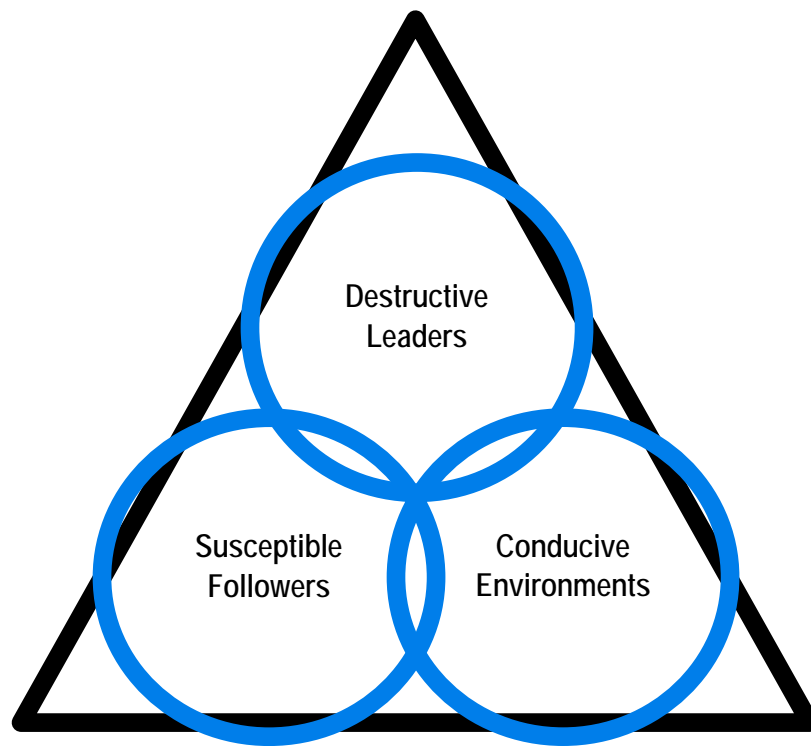


Figure 1. The Toxic Triangle (A. Padilla, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2007)

The Toxic Triangle framework is oriented towards destructive leadership at the nation-state level or large multi-national corporate leadership, where each of the three domains plays a significant role in enabling destructive leadership. Some of the domain sub-components do not

translate well to the tactical level, which is the focus of this study. Nevertheless, the three domains provide a useful framework around which to organize my research data. I utilized this framework to help categorize the toxic leadership data I collected as part of this study to answer the following questions:

1. How is toxic leadership manifested in the military at the individual level?
2. How do these subordinates respond to toxic leadership at the individual level?

CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

I used a qualitative, phenomenological approach to capture individual experiences that describe the essence of toxic leadership as lived by each individual I interviewed (Creswell, 2018). I utilized a semi-structured interview process with 10 formal questions to guide these discussions (see Appendix 2). My interview questions were designed to open up participants to discuss their experiences with “good” and “bad” leaders. Interviews ranged from 28 to 69 minutes and averaged 46 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted in-person where possible or via the phone and recorded with a digital recorder—a Sony Digital Dictation Machine model number ICD-UX560.

Data analysis was accomplished using the *In Vivo* coding process to divide the data into categories or themes using modified versions of the participants’ words as the category descriptors (themes). The coding process was informed by the Toxic Triangle framework. This analysis led to a toxic leadership common phenomenon grounded in the interview data (Saldana, 2016).

Prior to conducting the interviews, I submitted the required documentation (informed consent document and interview questions) to the University of South Florida (USF) for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval using the University’s Applications for Research Compliance (ARC) system. A USF approved Informed Consent form was used. The form was presented with time for the candidate to read and fully appreciate what they were consenting to. The forms were signed before interviews were conducted. The physical forms are securely stored

at USF; digital copies are located at <https://usf.app.box.com>. I was the only person conducting interviews. The interviews were recorded with a digital recorder. Interview data was encrypted and will be maintained for five years at <https://usf.app.box.com>. No potentially vulnerable subjects, such as children, prisoners, the cognitively impaired, institutionalized, or critically/terminally ill, were used in this study.

Sample Size

I conducted 15 interviews; that number was determined when I reached saturation of information—the point where I began to hear the same information and was no longer learning anything new (Seidman, 2013). According to Seidman, the theoretical minimum is 10. Again, the purpose of my interviews was to capture participant experiences in order to distill their individual lived experiences into a common phenomenon (Creswell, 2018, p. 75). The interviews totaled 694 minutes, nearly 12 hours, and when transcribed, produced 117, 260 words across 270 pages (single spaced). The word and page lengths are based on the original transcripts. The interview transcripts in the appendix have been edited to protect the anonymity of the participants, which resulted in some paragraphs being omitted in the transcripts in Appendix 5.

Table 4 summarizes the interview statistics. The first column lists the interview number, the second column is the date and time (e.g., 180317_1505 is March 17, 2018 at 1505 hours, which is 3:05 pm), the next three columns are the length of the interview, followed by the number of words in the transcript, and then the number of pages. The final column shows a “Y” for telephone interviews and a blank for in-person interviews.

Table 4. Interview Summary

Interview #	ID (Date/Time)	Minutes	Words	Pages	Phone?
1	180317_1505	32	06,629	16	Y
2	190208_0925	54	10,707	23	
3	190213_1521	48	08,073	19	y
4	190225_1243	43	07,109	17	
5	190301_1232	38	07,309	20	
6	190307_1218	69	15,619	35	
7	190320_1154	44	08,509	22	
8	190321_1121	29	04,117	19	
9	190321_1510	66	09,425	11	y
10	190503_1956	57	07,341	19	y
11	190606-2159	57	07,082	17	y
12	190617_1543	43	08,847	20	
13	190626_1433	28	04,570	09	
14	190627_1403	50	06,420	12	
15	190628_1450	36	05,503	11	
Totals		694 Minutes	117,260 Words	270 Pages	5 Phone

Study Population Inclusion Criteria

I selected participants who were active duty, retired military, or Department of Defense (DOD) civilians with at least 15 years of total service, either all military or military/DOD civilian combined. Potential candidates who did not meet these criteria were excluded, which ensured my participants had a depth of experience and maturity to provide meaningful data relevant to this study. I selected interview candidates randomly from colleagues known by my associates or me; some participants recommended another person or persons to interview. I conducted interviews in-person or via the phone at locations and times convenient to participants. Subjects were not required to participate and could terminate the interview at any time without repercussion.

Expected Benefits of the Research

The toxic leadership common phenomenon this study produced can be used to inform future research on mitigation strategies useful to organizations and individuals. For example, this study can inform potential antidotes to prevent development and effectively deal with the problem if it arises. *One topic lacking in the literature is a discussion of the potential benefits of toxic leadership.* Following the medical euphemism, a vaccine injects a small amount of poison into the body, so the body can develop its own immunity from the toxin. Likewise, can a dose of toxic leadership actually help an individual or organization? This is one area worthy of further research.

Preliminary Study

I conducted a preliminary study to solidify the qualitative, phenomenological processes I would use in my primary research. Specifically, I wanted to exercise the interview process, test the voice recorder and transcription process, and test the coding software to support my data analysis. I conducted three telephone interviews with one military and two academic individuals. In the preliminary study, I captured participant encounters with toxic leaders to practice the distilling of their individual lived experiences into a common phenomenon (Creswell, 2018, p. 75).

For the preliminary study, I utilized a semi-structured interview process based on 29 questions I developed to guide me through each interview. My interview questions related to the worst person the participant worked for, someone particularly ineffective, who sowed discord within their organization. The interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded with a digital recorder.

The digital media files derived from each interview were transcribed online at <https://www.rev.com>. The coding process was informed by *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (Saldana, 2016) and aided by QDA Miner Lite software. I initially followed the *In Vivo* technique of using the participants' words as the code, which I later modified by editing the code to a shorter phrase and made it gender neutral. This modification allowed me to group similar codes together to aid analysis. The coding analysis for the preliminary study is located in Appendix 3.

Each of my three participants were affected deeply by their experience with a toxic leader. For Participant 1, his experience lasted six months during a temporary duty assignment where he worked 2,300 miles away from his home. He is a Lieutenant Colonel in the United States military and has worn the uniform for 34 years. My interview with him lasted 32 minutes.

Participant 2 experienced a toxic leader for three years out of 28 years with his place of employment. He is in his seventies and a tenured professor at a large university. My interview with him ran 51 minutes.

Participant 3 worked for a toxic leader for her first three years in her organization. She is Asian and a relatively new, non-tenured professor at a large university. My interview with her lasted 31 minutes.

This preliminary study was not informed by the Toxic Triangle; consequently, I grouped the 205 codes from the three interviews into four groups or themes: Toxic Descriptor, Health, Communication, and Mitigation. Overall, I was surprised that the experience of the professors was worse than the military participant. *This result suggests that industry setting may have less of an impact on toxic leadership than I originally suspected and is worthy of further investigation.*



Figure 2. Word Picture of Preliminary Study Interview Results (sourced from QDA Minor Lite)

The Toxic Descriptor group captures toxic leader traits, actions, and participant reactions. This group included 120 of the 205 codes (59%). These codes were designed to relate to my first research question: How is toxic leadership manifested in organizations at the individual level?

The Health group captures physical manifestations of toxic leaders on the health of the participants. The Health group included 12 codes (6%). This group of codes was used because of my literature review where I attempted to capture physical (in a health sense) reactions in the interview questions I asked.

The Communication group was separated from the toxic descriptor group because of its potential relationship to potential mitigation treatments. This group included 22 codes (11%). My thoughts related to the generally accepted view that leadership problems often are related to communication issues.

The final group, Mitigation, included 51 codes (25%). These codes were designed to address my second research question: How do victims respond to toxic leadership at the

individual level? This study suggests a few potential prescriptions that may be useful and will be further developed in a follow-on study.

The most frequent response from all three participants were expressions of being “totally broken down” or something to that effect, which occurred 29 times and represented 13% of the total responses. The participants felt defeated, exhausted, and at their wits’ end. It was painful for them to relive those experiences as they described the hellish conditions under which they worked.

One person who was just totally broken down. Every day she would spend most of her time looking for another job. She’s 60 years old, she’s a mature adult and has her education. She’s a staff member. But because the [toxic leader] had, had more of an impact on her than anyone else, had more contact with her than anyone else, nothing that she could do was right and she was just always very, very frustrated and it was amazing that she made it through mentally. Because she was just under so much pressure and being demeaned and it was just a sad situation. (Participant 2)

So, it was just not a good situation. And the...main thing was that she [the leader] was really frightening because you didn’t know what she was going to do or say.

(Participant 2)

The second most repeated code, at 8%, was “narcissism,” which is excessive interest in oneself. The participants described their leader as totally self-absorbed; you had to do things their way and could not do anything without their permission, which had a suffocating effect on personal initiative and creativity.

Now, when our people started, people on the faculty and staff found out about her leadership style, her narcissistic tendencies, they contacted some of the friends that she had worked with. And they talked to one person who was a past [supervisor] of hers, and this person, someone from our school asked her, “What can you tell me about this person?” And this person said, “I can tell you two things about her. One, she’s emotionally unstable and two, everything is me, me, me.” (Participant 2)

I never had a chance to say anything. Even if I did, he would just discard it immediately. So, you just quit trying. You just listen to what he has to say, turn around and walk out of his office. So, a leader like that, it shuts down the creativity. It shuts down the extra initiative that...you know, there’s a lot of people like I described that will go the extra mile for a leader that they know respects them, and they respect the leader back. (Participant 1)

The third most repeated code, at 7%, was “we’re all afraid of him / her.” Participants expressed fear that the toxic leader would verbally assault, threaten to fire, or worse, terminate employment.

Everybody was on pins and needles, because...every staff meeting, he’d jump all over someone—at least one person in that staff meeting. And, you know, it was usually just one person, and you were wondering if it was your turn that week. So, of course, staff meetings were really stressful for everybody. (Participant 1)

He’d do it in front of... It didn’t matter who was in the room. He’d jump all over you and belittle you as much as he could in front of the whole staff, for that matter. (Participant 1)

The fourth code, at slightly less than 7%, was “leader felt he/she could do anything.” Even when the participants tried to report the toxic leader, nothing happened. Consequently, the behavior worsened over time.

...the faculty set up [a] private meeting with the dean to tell him what was going on. And that's when the dean didn't do anything. And then it just allowed her the ability to do even more. I mean, she felt that she could do anything. (Participant 2)

The fifth code, at just over 4%, was “nothing you did was right.” Participants tried to do what was right and give the leader what he/she wanted, but it was never good enough.

No matter what you did, you weren't... No one could do as good a job as her. So, she was constantly demeaning people for not doing as good a job as she thought they should do. (Participant 2)

...she was like, “Oh, you should do that. You should do that.” So, I went over this like step by step, like one by one. So, I already did that, but she was still saying, “You should do, go over like every single thing, like one by one...” (Participant 3)

Toxic leadership also produced unhealthy physical manifestations in each participant.

The literature review highlighted stress related health issues were common, which were born out in the experiences of the participants.

And it started impacting me physically because I started having migraine headaches virtually every morning. I'm still, after she's left, it's been three months since she's left, I still have some migraines. Not as bad, but I still have headaches, not migraines anymore. (Participant 2)

So, I had headache[s] all the time but I just ignored it because I thought, “Oh, it will go away,” right? But eventually, it happened in my first year, I was so

stressed out...I couldn't do my research at all because she just pushed me a lot in terms of teaching. So, during the semester, I...fainted, so I had to go to the emergency [room]. (Participant 3)

I don't want to get into too [much] detail because it could identify people but serious illnesses that are related to stress. I don't...I'm trying to think of a way to go further than that without pinpointing something that... Where people would have to go see their doctor, they would be under medication. (Participant 2)

Preliminary Study Impact to Primary Study

As a result of the preliminary study, I scaled my research focus from toxic leadership in general to toxic leadership in the military. I framed the primary study using the Toxic Triangle (A. H. Padilla, Robert; Kaiser, Robert B., 2007) to better organize the interview data and build on Padilla's work. This study also validated my research processes and better prepared me for follow-on interviews. Another consequence of the preliminary study is I reduced the number of interview questions from 29 to 10 (see Appendix 2) since many questions were redundant; I allowed participants to talk more freely while minimizing any potential influence on my part. I also validated the Rev.com transcription service's ability to support my research. Finally, I switched to a more capable qualitative analysis software program; I moved from QDA Miner Lite⁴, a free program with basic analytical functions, to NVivo Plus⁵ (version 12), a paid subscription program with advanced capabilities that include additional visual presentation formats to aid data analysis. NVivo Plus also includes a Concept Map function that helped me organize my codes into themes aligned with the Toxic Triangle.

⁴ For information on QDA Miner Lite, see <https://provalisresearch.com/products/qualitative-data-analysis-software/freeware/>

⁵ For information on NVivo Plus, see <https://www.qsrinternational.com/nvivo/home>.

Primary Study

For the primary study, I used the one military participant⁶ from the preliminary study and added 14 interviews for a total of 15 (see Table 1, Interview Summary). I included Participant 1 from the preliminary study since he met all the criteria for the primary study. Although he had more questions (29 total versus 10 in the primary study), they were materially the same since many of the original questions were redundant. The 15 participants represented all military services—U.S. Air Force, U.S. Army, U.S. Marine Corps, and U.S. Navy. They included active duty and reserve component members (guard and reserve). Also, one third of the participants had transitioned to Department of Defense (DOD) government civil service positions, which gave them an additional perspective as a DOD civilian. Participants included 11 current or former commissioned field grade officers⁷ and four former non-commissioned officers (NCOs)⁸—12 males and three females.

Ten interviews were conducted in person on the campus of United States Central Command in Tampa, Florida. The phone interviews were conducted with participants in Florida, Nevada, Texas, Utah, and Virginia. The transcripts were edited to preserve the anonymity of participants and are included in the Appendix. The transcripts were formatted to enhance data analysis with NVivo Plus, which included the removal of interviewer questions unless needed to make sense of a participant’s response. This deletion minimized the inclusion of interview questions in word queries performed in NVivo Plus. Also, headings were added—“Background,” “Bad Example,” “Good Example,” and “Recommendations”—to enable the auto-code function on NVivo Plus. I used the auto-code function to accomplish the initial coding,

⁶ Participant 1 in the preliminary study is Interview 1 in the primary study.

⁷ Field grade officers are senior to company grade officers but junior to general officers; they generally correspond to the ranks of major (O4), lieutenant colonel (O5), and colonel (O6).

⁸ NCOs (E4-E6) are subordinate to both senior NCOs (E7-E9) and commissioned officers.

which informed my initial concept map. I followed up with manual coding of all transcripts to support my analysis of the data.

Table 5. Participant Demographics (AD = Active Duty, GR = Guard/Reserve)

Interview #	Gender	Race	Service	Status	Military Grade	Civil Ser Grade ⁹
1	M	White	AF	GR	O5	
2	M	White	Army	AD	O5	
3	M	White	Army	GR	O5	
4	M	White	Navy	AD	E7	
5	M	White	Army	AD	O5	
6	M	White	AF	AD	E7	GS15
7	F	Hispanic	AF	AD	E5	GS13
8	M	Black	AF	AD	O4	
9	F	White	AF	AD	O5	
10	M	White	AF	GR	E9	GS12
11	M	White	AF	GR	O6	
12	M	Black	USMC	GR	O6	
13	M	White	AF	GR	O5	
14	F	Black	AF	AD	O6	GS14
15	M	White	AF	GR	O5	GS13

⁹ GS12 through GS15 roughly equate to the military's field grade officer ranks.

CHAPTER FOUR:

RESULTS

I used the concept map in Figure 3 as the framework around which to organize my interview data. The green elements represent the primary focus of this study to address the research questions. The blue elements are participant explanations of why the leader was toxic and recommendations on how to deal with it. This framework was inspired by Padilla's "Toxic Triangle" but is initially shaped like a rectangle since, for the analysis, I used two themes to capture leadership attributes instead of one. I used two leadership themes to allow for greater fidelity in my analysis since it initially appeared that much of my data fell into the leader domain. Then, I combined the two leadership themes in the end to build the toxic leadership common phenomenon. See Appendix 4 for the expanded concept map.

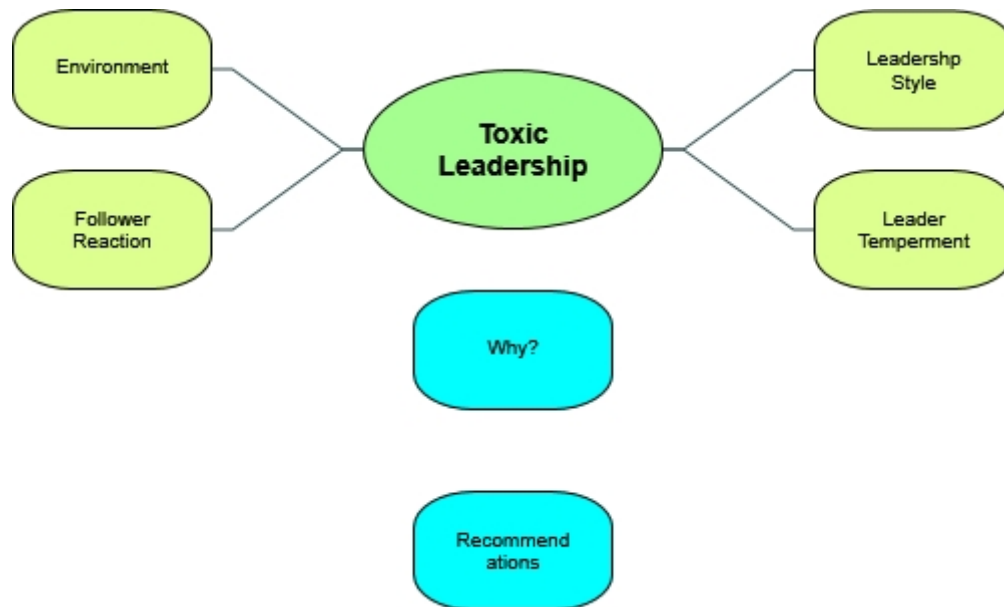


Figure 3. Toxic Leadership Concept Map (sourced from NVivo Plus)

The interview data (Appendix 5) produced 518 toxic leader references that were assigned to one or more of 50 individual codes. Again, data analysis was accomplished using the *In Vivo* coding process to divide the data into categories or themes using modified versions of the participant's words as the category descriptors (themes) (Saldana, 2016). These codes were further organized into one of eight themes or sub-themes. The Environment theme had 2-levels of sub-themes while the Follower Reaction, Leader Style, and Leader Temperament each had 1-level of sub-themes. This division was necessary because the Environment theme was more diverse and had a broader range of themes.

Themes

The table below summarizes the definitions used to classify the 518 toxic leadership references to a specific theme and/or sub-theme (code).

Table 6. Code Definitions

Code	Description
Environment	The setting or conditions in which leadership is exercised.
Command Climate	Accepted behaviors established by the commander.
Communication	How information is exchanged between the leader & follower.
Hostile	Communication using threats.
Kills Messenger	The deliverer of bad news is "attacked" regardless of their role in the news.
Liar	The leader is intentionally untruthful in his or her communication.
No Guidance	The leader provides no guidance when the situation warrants it.
Screamer	The leader raises his or her voice in anger when communicating.
Withhold Info	The leader withholds information the follower needs.
Senior Leaders	The leader's leader.
Unit Impact	The effect the leader has on the organization's performance.
Demotivates	Followers accomplish the minimum required work and no more.
People Hurt	Followers' career impacted negatively.
Performance -	Unit performance declined.
Performance +	Unit performance improved.
Transference	Subordinate leaders adopt the leader's negative behaviors.
Follower Reaction	Follower response to the leader's negative behavior.
Complain	Follower files formal complaint.
Confront	Follower deals directly with leader.

Table 6 (Continued)

Demotivated	Follower is less eager to work.
Effects - Physical & Emotional	Negative physical and psychological effects manifested in the follower.
Fear	Follower anxiety over potential loss of their job or worse.
Inappropriate	Follower responding in an unsuitable or improper manner.
Quit	Follower quits their job or relocates to a different leader.
Uncomfortable	Follower is uneasy or distressed.
Leader Style	How the leader leads.
Blindsided	Follower is caught unprepared or attacked from an unexpected position.
Bushido-like	Leader demands unquestioning loyalty and obedience.
Incompetence	Leader does not have the technical skills required.
Indecisive	Leader can't or won't make a decision.
Isolate	Follower is separated from others by the leader.
Moral Failures	Wrong or bad behavior that is not necessarily illicit.
Uncaring	Leader has no concern for his or her followers.
Leader Temperament	The leader's nature with respect to their permanent behavior.
Demoralizing	Follower loses confidence or hope.
Disrespect	Leader acts in an insulting way to followers.
Megalomania	Leader's obsession with the exercise of power & dominating followers.
Narcissist	Leader who has excessive self-interest or admiration of him/herself.
Passive-Aggressive	Leader uses indirect aggression toward a follower.
Perfectionist	Leader expects flawless products/behavior from followers.
Pins & Needles	Follower is nervously anxious.
Recommendations	How to deal with a toxic leader.
Be Flexible	Creative response to leader demand.
Communicate	Talk to leader in a non-confrontational way.
Confront	Stand-up/defend yourself when "attacked" so dealing with it cannot be avoided.
Defuse	Reduce the tension in a difficult situation.
Document	Record information about negative events when they occur.
Don't Internalize	Don't accept an opinion or belief so that it becomes part of your character.
File Complaint	File a formal complaint in writing, for example, to the Inspector General.
Focus on the Mission	Don't take it personally; focus the negative energy on accomplishing the mission.
Learn from It	"Make lemonade out of your lemons."
Seek to Understand	Try to understand why the leader is acting the way he or she is.
Support System	Develop a support system (family, friends, church) to deal with the toxic leader.
Miscellaneous	Things that don't fit in the above categories
Why	Participants view on "why" the leader was toxic.
Good Leader Traits	Participants view on what makes a good leader.
Academy Grad	Is the toxic leader a Military Academy graduate?
Interview Impact	How the interview impacted the participant.

Environment

The Environment theme is defined as the setting or conditions in which leadership is exercised. It addresses both research questions: 1. How is Toxic Leadership manifested in the military at the individual level? 2. How do these victims respond to toxic leadership at the individual level? Data in this theme was pulled from 14 of the 15 interviews (93%) and represents 27% of the total toxic leadership references in the data. It includes Command Climate (7% of the total references), Communication (9%), Senior Leaders (3%), and Unit Impact (8%). The Communication theme is further divided into subthemes that are self-evident: Hostile, Kills Messenger, Liar, No Guidance, Screamer, and Withhold Info. Command Climate is defined as accepted behaviors established by the commander. Communication is defined as how information is exchanged between the leader and follower. Senior Leader is defined as the leader's leader. Unit Impact is defined as the effect the leader has on the organization's performance. The Unit Impact is further divided into subthemes: Demotivates, People Hurt, Performance-Minus, Performance-Plus, and Transference (subordinate leaders adopt the leader's negative behaviors).

Communication (9%), Unit Impact (8%), and Command Climate (7%) were the major contributors of Environment references. Examples that highlight the phenomena associated with each of these sub-themes follow:

“Communication” exemplar: The rest of it's all just mostly the guy screaming at the top of his lungs, kicking people out of his office, throwing things...those kind of things. Just complete tantrums from a, you know, 40-something-year-old senior officer in the United States Army. (Interview 5)

“Unit Impact” exemplar: *...it just shows you that if someone’s not willing to listen, they scare everybody away and nobody wants to bring them good or bad news, it just tears down the organization, makes them a lot less effective and...In our business, could cost lives. It could definitely...I mean this is real stuff we’re talking about. We’re not talking about the stock market... We’re talking about if people are scared to come to a leader and say, “This is what I think is going to happen,” without the fear of being fired, or yelled at, or anything else, you know, we might go [down] the wrong path and get Americans killed. And that’s a fact. That’ll happen. (Interview 2)*

“Command Climate” exemplar: *...there’s one anecdote whether it’s related or not related...who knows but there was one...female officer that killed herself after getting an ass chewing by this guy, so...that wasn’t the only thing that probably put her over the edge, but the fact of the matter was she got an ass chewing, got raked through the coals on that [day] and killed herself that night or the next day. So, it was an awful command climate. (Interview 2)*

Follower Reaction

The Follower Reaction theme is defined as follower response to the leader’s negative behavior. It directly addresses research question 2: How do these victims respond to toxic leadership at the individual level? Data in this theme was pulled from 13 of the 15 interviews (87%) and represents 13% of the total toxic leadership references in the data. It includes Complain (<1%), Confront (1%), Demotivated (3%), Effects—Physical & Emotional (3%), Fear (3%), Inappropriate (1%), Quit (2%), and Uncomfortable (1%). Complain is defined as follower files a formal complaint. Confront is defined as follower deals directly with the leader.

Demotivated is defined as follower is less eager to work. Effects—Physical & Emotional is defined as negative physical and psychological effects manifested in the follower. Fear is defined as follower anxiety over potential loss of the job or worse. Inappropriate is defined as follower responds in an unsuitable or improper manner. Quit is defined as follower quits the job or relocates to another leader. Uncomfortable is defined as follower is uneasy or distressed.

Demotivated (3%), Effects—Physical & Emotional (3%), Fear (3%), and Quit (2%) were the major contributors of Follower Reaction references. Examples that highlight the phenomena associated with each of these sub-themes follow:

“Demotivated” exemplar: *But every day when you come to work, you know it’s gonna happen. You just knew you were gonna get called out for something. It’s just not ... Yeah, it demotivates you. And you do the best you can to do the ... You know, to make a difference, and keep going. But it’s very difficult.* (Interview 1)

“Effects—Physical & Emotional” exemplar: *Yeah, to this day, my wife is convinced that I have some sort of PTS [post-traumatic stress] from that experience. And that’s not in jest, she legitimately believes that...so [for] me personally, it was very stressful, and I took, as the executive officer, I took the brunt of her wrath...it was very, very stressful. I gained a lot of weight, and my doctors definitely attributed that to my stress levels. And I did not have a healthy existence, emotionally or physically in that time period.* (Interview 3)

“Fear” exemplar: *Now, how did this affect me? A great deal. My husband and I spent about \$23,000 on security systems. Cameras, motion detectors, a number of different kinds of sensors on every possible access to the house and on the grounds. Before that, we didn’t bother to buy firearms because it’s a remarkably*

safe neighborhood. But we bought several after that, and we got the concealed carry licenses and that kind of stuff. (Interview 14)

“Quit” exemplar: Some of my younger...folks in the office said, they quit, and they never came back. They thought it’s not worth it. Their stress and their... [Did they quit the civil service, or just quit their job?] Yes. They quit civil service altogether. (Interview 7)

Leader Style

The Leader Style theme is defined as how the leader leads. It directly addresses research question 1: How is Toxic Leadership manifested in the military at the individual level? Data in this theme was pulled from 13 of the 15 interviews (87%) and represents 14% of the total toxic leadership references in the data. It includes Blindsided (1%), Bushido-like (1%), Incompetence (4%), Indecisive (2%), Isolate (3%), Moral Failures (1%), and Uncaring (2%). Blindsided is defined as follower is caught unprepared or attacked from an unexpected position. Bushido-like is defined as leader demands unquestioning loyalty and obedience. Incompetence is defined as leader does not have the technical skills required. Indecisive is defined as leader cannot or will not make a decision. Isolate is defined as follower is separated from others by the leader. Moral Failure is defined as wrong or bad behavior that is not necessarily elicit. Uncaring is defined as leader has no concern for his or her followers.

Incompetence (4%), Indecisive (2%), Isolate (3%), and Uncaring (2%) were the major contributors of Leader Style references. Examples that highlight the phenomena associated with each of these sub-themes follow:

“Incompetence” exemplar: ... finally, I’m at the point where...I feel compelled, the [adversary’s] reconnaissance plane is gonna be close enough now, I feel

compelled to go brief the actual captain of the ship. And so...I went in and...briefed the captain. It's now two hours later, our division officer shows up. As soon as he stepped in the door, [I said] "Sir, this is the action that's going on, these are the processes...I followed to notify everyone in the chain of command. I looked for you, I couldn't find you." He just pauses and looks at me and, you know, this is mission support, it's direct operations, he stops what I'm telling him, and he looks at me and he goes, "Petty Officer, why does the passageway look like garbage?" I said, "Well sir, I'm in here working, I don't know what the other guys are doing, but this is what I'm focused on," and he says, "Well somebody needs to go fix the passageways." "Yes sir." So, in the middle of an operation, I shut down our early warning system that was providing us the information of where this reconnaissance aircraft was, just turned it off cold and went out and started stripping and waxing the passageways. So, to me that was just a clear...I don't know where his head was at, I, for the life of me I've spent the rest of my career trying to grasp what he was trying to achieve and what was on his mind that took his focus away from the mission? (Interview 4)

"Indecisive" exemplar: I don't think he was a toxic leader, so to speak. I think he was just...indecisive to the point where it created a toxic environment because there were all these problems that weren't getting resolved and they continued...to fester to the point where the organization...became less effective.

(Interview 15)

"Isolate" exemplar: He would isolate each of the company commanders in making them think that they were...that the other two company commanders were

talking about them or getting preferential treatment or doing things. So...it broke down trust between the three companies—the three company commanders that were trying to work together. We were all Majors at the time, in Special Forces a company [is commanded by a Major]. And...he made each of the companies feel like they were being undermined by another company. So [it] put a lot of distrust throughout the organization. That was the first thing that really stuck out.

(Interview 2)

“Uncaring” exemplar: I was a single mom, so I absolutely needed to make sure that I could be on shift on time, as well as...get back to my daughter in enough time to either pick her up, or drop her off from daycare. So, I had asked her...what shift would she like me to work so I can get the information. A week prior to [a 13-day] Tier 1 exercise, I still didn’t have a shift assignment. So, I need to fly somebody in to give me a hand. I asked her on a Wednesday before the exercise began over the weekend. “You know, Ma’am, I need my schedule so I can plan accordingly for my daughter.” And she exploded in the office, “I told you that I would give it to you when I felt like you needed it. You don’t need it right now, and how dare you bother me again, with your schedule. You know, what is it with you people?” ...So, I let the day pass. The next morning, I asked her to meet me in the conference room with her supervisor present, to be a mediator. I said, “Ma’am... I’m looking for my schedule...This is my situation. I’m just trying to make sure...I can get ahead of it, so I can have the adequate coverage to report in” ...and you know, she just exploded again, “How dare you bring somebody else in here. I already told you. I’m not going to give you what

you're asking for—you're being a pain.” Very toxic. Then, at the end of that conversation, she...never did give me my schedule, but she did pull me off the exercise and made me sit in the back office for the entire exercise while everybody was gone. She's like, “Fine, are you happy, you get to not be a part of the exercise, I'll just ground you. You can work 4:00 AM to 4:00 PM, sitting in the back office.” I thought, well that doesn't solve anything either. And now you're short-handed because you're a little angry. That was very upsetting. (Interview 7)

Leader Temperament

The Leader Temperament theme is defined as the leader's nature with respect to their permanent behavior. It directly addresses research question 1: How is Toxic Leadership manifested in the military at the individual level? Data in this theme was pulled from 14 of the 15 interviews (93%) and represents 20% of the total toxic leadership references in the data. It includes Demoralizing (2%), Disrespect (2%), Megalomania (4%), Narcissist (7%), Passive-Aggressive (2%), Perfectionist (1%), and Pins & Needles (2%). Demoralizing is defined as the follower loses confidence or hope. Disrespect is defined as the leader acts in an insulting way to followers. Megalomania is defined as the leader's obsession with the exercise of power and dominating followers. Narcissist is defined as the leader who has excessive self-interest or admiration of himself or herself. Passive-Aggressive is defined as the leader uses indirect aggression toward a follower. Perfectionist is defined as the leader expects flawless products or behavior from followers. Pins & Needles is defined as the follower is nervously anxious.

Demoralizing (2%), Disrespect (2%), Megalomania (4%), Narcissist (7%), Passive-Aggressive (2%), and Pins & Needles (2%) were the major contributors of Leader Temperament

references. Examples that highlight the phenomena associated with each of these sub-themes follow:

“Demoralizing” exemplar: *I remember one with Sam, this one agent. He was in charge of...firearms training, and he didn't get something scheduled in time and they lost the range time or whatever, no fault to Sam, and he [the commander] immediately...jumped on him and...yelled at him. Said, “What the hell's wrong with you? I told you I want this. I told you this. You didn't do this.” ...He was yelling and...basically making Sam feel inferior or that he was...a screw up or whatever the case may be. It really demoralized him...He'd only been an agent for two years, so it really impacted him more than anyone... (Interview 6)*

“Disrespect” exemplar: *Lack of respect for their people. I mean, people weren't positive contributors, they were just tools in the tool belt. And...you use them until you wear them out, then you get rid of them. (Interview 1)*

“Megalomania” exemplar: *[He was] asked to resign his commission and get out of the Air Force before they court-martialed him is what it came down to. And the reasons for it was he had this megalomania type of attitude about himself that he could do anything and his [un]doing was using people to do things for him personally that was illegal, and that's what got him in trouble in the end. But [it] was his...attitude and he treated people that way. (Interview 6)*

“Narcissist” exemplar: *He was so narcissistic and...he was a tyrant...basically he was threatened by anyone else's successes or what not...he was very controlling, in fact, I can relate to you, he told myself and my counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel C, to make sure that we get with our counterparts in big Army at Bagram Air*

Base [Afghanistan] ...and we're doing that. We're at this meeting and the meeting breaks up and we're exchanging information with our counterparts in big Army. Pretty soon he comes flying back into the room and goes, "Where are you guys? What are you doing here?" Basically, he says, when he gets up to leave the room, you get up to leave the room and you leave immediately. And he's berating us all the way to [the vehicle]. I went over to Bagram for years, and over the years it grew, and grew, and grew. Now it's a monster base. So basically, when we get back to the vehicle, he looks at myself and Lieutenant Colonel C and says, "You're not riding in my car. You walk back to where we're billeted." And where we were billeted was, we were on the north side of the base at the time, it was clear across the runways in the south [part of]...the base, it [would have] taken us six or eight hours to walk there. Luckily, I commanded the squadron, the C-130 squadron there, just previously so I went there and had guys I knew, and they gave us a ride. (Interview 11)

"Passive-Aggressive" exemplar: I had put in for a pass and she kept not accepting it and not approving or not denying it. She just kept sitting on it. So, I went behind closed doors, asked her if she had received that and her words to me, "Well, I was hoping you would come to the conclusion on your own that you shouldn't go." So, okay...a little passive aggressive but that's alright. (Interview 3)

"Pins & Needles" exemplar: Everybody was on pins and needles, because he usually... Every staff meeting, he'd jump all over someone. At least one person in that staff meeting. And, you know, it was usually just one person, and you were

wondering if it was your turn that week. So, of course, staff meetings were really stressful for everybody. (Interview 1)

Recommendations

The Recommendations theme is defined as how to deal with a toxic leader. Data in this theme was pulled from 15 of the 15 interviews (100%) and represents 19% of the total toxic leadership references in the data. It includes Be Flexible (1%), Communicate (2%), Confront (4%), Defuse (1%), Document (2%), Don't Internalize (1%), File Complaint (3%), Focus on the Mission (1%), Learn from It (1%), Seek to Understand (2%), and Support System (2%). Be Flexible is defined as creative response to leader demands. Communicate is defined as talk to leader in a non-confrontational way. Confront is defined as standup/defend yourself when attacked so dealing with it cannot be avoided. Defuse is defined as reduce the tension in a difficult situation. Document is defined as record information about negative events when they occur. Don't Internalize is defined as do not accept an opinion or belief so that it becomes part of your character. File complaint is defined as file a formal complaint in writing, for example, to the Inspector General. Focus on the Mission is defined as do not take it personally, focus the negative energy on accomplishing the mission instead. Learn From It is defined as "make lemonade out of your lemons." Seek to Understand is defined as try to understand why the leader is acting the way he or she is. Support System is defined as develop a support system (family, friends, church) to deal with the toxic leader.

Communicate (2%), Confront (4%), Document (2%), File Complaint (3%), Seek to Understand (2%), and Support System (2%) were the major contributors of Recommendations references. Examples that highlight the phenomena associated with each of these sub-themes follow:

“Communicate” exemplar: *I think, probably the best thing we ever did to help him understand what was going on, [was] when...we made [use of] the white board...[to show] what we were working on. And that probably was the biggest thing I learned...and the best thing we did... you need to tell the boss what you’re doing, because he doesn’t know what you’re doing. And to put it on a whiteboard out in the open, he could walk by and look at it, which I know he did. Probably when we weren’t around. Then he realized just how busy we were. And why we couldn’t always turn things around as quickly as what he thought, because we had so many tasks. So, maybe that’s it, is to provide him with more information. And, verbally, I wouldn’t have been able to do that. We wouldn’t have made it through the conversation. He just wouldn’t have listened. And maybe in an email, but...out in the open like that was the best way to do it. Because then everybody saw, not just him. And then he had to acknowledge it, I guess. And an email, he could just delete it and not pay attention to it. Maybe that’s it, to help him understand what we’re doing. (Interview 1)*

“Confront” example 1: *Honestly it just comes down to one word, bullying. It’s this person’s technique and style. Yes, it’s unprofessional. When no one around this person and above this person puts that person in check because people are weak in a lot of cases, that kind of behavior is allowed to continue. (Interview 9) And...*

“Confront” example 2: *But like I said to a point you owe it to yourself and you owe it to everyone else to stand your ground to a point. Because if you don’t, you just bend like everyone else, guess what? He keeps going, he keeps getting another star. (Interview 12)*

“Document” exemplar: *Document, document, document. Keep a log. Keep a running log of what’s happening. Protect your troops. With great privilege, comes great responsibility. If you’re in the position, your job is to catch all that shit before it flows to your troops. Understand that you’re there for a purpose. And do everything you can not to take it personal.* (Interview 10)

“File Complaint” exemplar: *Because I saw how things were going, I began to tell the staff anytime an incident happened where she was abrasive...just blatantly caustic...to write memorandums detailing the circumstances of the event. What they were doing, what she did, and any other subsequent results. So, then toward the end of her command, before her change of command, I requested an investigation for toxic leadership in our battalion. I didn’t make any accusations. I just requested that the Inspector General come out to our battalion and do an investigation to see if there was a toxic environment occurring. That was really strategic because then if you don’t point fingers at anybody then that makes people a lot less defensive. So, we got that investigation and then they talked to everyone in the battalion and because of all the documents that I had people write for months, and because I initiated the investigation, a year and a half later, I received a letter from the Inspector General stating that the...findings were substantiated. So,...she was forever deemed a toxic leader. And as a result, she ended up not getting promoted to 06.* (Interview 3)

“Seek to Understand” exemplar: *So, I think when I came here, I had heard from the grapevine, of just how toxic that particular individual was. And I thought, okay, everyone deserves a fair chance. That maybe not everybody sees through the*

same lens. So, I think...I took the Franklin Covey Series when I was newly appointed...NCO. So, I took it, and it says, "Seek first to understand and be understood." So that was my initial intent, "Let's find out what's going on."

(Interview 7)

"Support System" exemplar: One more thing, I would just say this, and that is, you can't go wrong with a support system. You know, to know who your support system is and use that support system, I guess would be the other thing. I always had my wife to go to at home, somebody outside of work. You know, you can't use your support system at work because then it just becomes a gripe fest. You know, it's like, "Who can complain the most?" You know? And that's not healthy or helpful either. To be able to break from all the complaining and the angst that is occurring in the organization, to break from that and rely on a support network so that you know who you are and you know that you're doing the right thing and you get that confirmation and that affirmation. I think that is the other important thing to remember. (Interview 3)

Miscellaneous

Data in the final grouping was pulled from 13 of the 15 interviews (87%) and represents 8% of the total toxic leadership references in the data. This final grouping of miscellaneous themes includes Why (4%), Good Leader Traits (1%), Academy Graduate (2%), and Interview Impact (1%). Why is defined as participants' views on why the leader was toxic. Good Leader Traits is defined as participants' views on what makes a good leader. Academy Graduate is defined as whether the toxic leader is a Military Academy graduate. Interview Impact is defined as how the interview impacted the participant.

Why (4%) was the major contributor to Miscellaneous references and is the theme with the strongest relevance to this study. Examples that highlight the phenomena associated with this sub-theme follows:

“Why” example 1: *[Do you think his behavior was related to his addiction?] Oh yeah. And guys at my shop when I came into work that day there was a U.S.A Today hanging from my computer and little jokes like, “I just want to apologize to all my soldiers,” and guys in my shop wrote “And [my name]!” But all my guys would write all these little anecdotes in the margins of the U.S.A Today article and making jokes about the things they saw just how ... And again, it took the life out of me. (Interview 2)*

“Why” example 2: *I think maybe in his case he just...I’m not necessarily saying that’s ever a great leadership style, but that can be employed in cases where they are correct in their estimation that things are really screwed up... You know, nobody enjoys that...I’m trying to think of cases where I’ve worked for some people that...that were real tough and to some...would seem insulting but everything they’re doing is right on the mark. It has a reason and a purpose on it, and they’re not wrong. (Interview 5)*

“Why” example 3: *It sounds silly, but I always thought it was the difference between, as I tell my platoon leaders—there’s the way you interact with your guys. If you find yourself in an ugly situation and you’re separated from them, you’re wounded and you need help, when they’re making that decision to run across the road to come get you, is their calculus “Because it’s my duty as a*

soldier, and that's what I got to do," or is it because they love the guy they're coming to get? And that's the difference. (Interview 5)

"Why" example 4: They don't know that from age 5 until age 17, I was screamed at by my mother and that's the reason why I can't handle that. They don't know that. Okay? So, therefore, they didn't know the impact it was gonna have on all those different people, and also the impact in the office. I did talk to him about the impact. (Interview 6)

"Why" example 5: So now, as a civilian, we have...civilians that probably need to find a different job, but because no one had ever documented their behavior over time, it's impossible to help that engagement to occur. To help them out the door. And...that's a problem because that breeds its own toxic work environment. (Interview 7)

"Why" example 6: ...that individual was made aware of their personality flaws, so to speak. It was... a humbling experience for that individual. It was also very telling. Sometimes people are just not self-aware that they're causing that kind of damage and destruction because they're facing so many challenges on their own. They can't understand that they're causing challenges as well. There was an awareness, there was a paper trail, there was paperwork, that had occurred. That person will not promote and is now stagnant in their position, which I'm pretty sure is not what they wanted for their career. (Interview 7)

"Why" example 7: It was like her head wasn't in the game. She had just gone through a horrible divorce. Her husband was having affairs. I think she had a lot

of personal issues that clouded her thoughts and distracted her from focus. I felt bad for her. (Interview 9)

“Why” example 8: ...they mask their ignorance of their job through threats through...I won’t call it bullying to a point, but that’s kind of what it is. It’s like I’m going to get my way regardless. (Interview 12)

“Why” example 9: It’s CENTCOM¹⁰—lots of classified, darn few secrets. (Interview 14)

Analysis

The table below reflects the concept map in Figure 4 and is expanded in Appendix 4, with all codes organized under their assigned themes and sub-themes. To produce this table (Table 7), I exported the “Codebook” I developed with NVivo Plus into an Excel spreadsheet, which enabled further analysis and refinement. The Data Source column identifies which interviews sourced the associated code. The Files columns show the number and percentage, respectfully, of interview files that include this code. The Reference columns identify how many times this code was referenced (coded) across all the interview files and what percentage of the total codes it represents.

Table 7. Code Summary

Code	Data Source (file ID)	Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
Environment	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,15	14	93%	138	27%
Command Climate	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11,12,14,15	11	73%	38	7%
Communication	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,13,14,15	14	93%	46	9%
Hostile	3,5,6,7,8,12,13,14,15	9	60%	18	3%
Kills Messenger	2,5,6,	3	20%	7	1%
Liar	3,12,	2	13%	3	1%
No Guidance	1,3,4,5,15	5	33%	8	2%
Screamer	2,3,5,6,11,	5	33%	6	1%

¹⁰ CENTCOM is an acronym for United States Central Command in Tampa, FL.

Table 7 (Continued)

Withhold Info	2,4,9,10,	3	20%	4	1%
Senior Leaders	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,	08	53%	15	3%
Unit Impact	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,11,12,14,15	12	80%	39	8%
Demotivates	1,5,6,	3	20%	8	2%
People Hurt	2,4,6,	3	20%	4	1%
Performance -	2,3,4,5,6,7,8,14,15	9	60%	19	4%
Performance +	2,3,5,11,	4	27%	5	1%
Transference	2,7,12,	3	20%	3	
Follower Reaction	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,14,15	13	87%	69	13%
Complain	7,14,	02	13%	02	0%
Confront	6,7,10	03	20%	03	1%
Demotivated	1,2,5,6,7,8,	06	40%	13	3%
Effects - Physical & Emotional	1,2,3,6,8,10,11,12,	08	53%	16	3%
Fear	1,3,5,6,11,14,	06	40%	13	3%
Inappropriate	2,4,6,10,15	05	33%	05	1%
Quit	4,6,7,10,12,14,	06	40%	11	2%
Uncomfortable	1,2,5,6,	04	27%	06	1%
Leader Style	1,2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14,15	13	87%	71	14%
Blindsided	1,9,10,	03	20%	06	1%
Bushido-like	2,4,7,8,14,	05	33%	06	1%
Incompetence	2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10,15	09	60%	22	4%
Indecisive	3,4,6,7,9,15	06	40%	08	2%
Isolate	2,6,10,11,12,15	06	40%	15	3%
Moral Failures	4,9,11,	03	20%	06	1%
Uncaring	1,4,7,8,11,	05	33%	08	2%
Leader Temperament	1,2,3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15	14	93%	103	20%
Demoralizing	2,3,5,6,10,14,15	07	47%	11	2%
Disrespect	1,2,3,5,7,15	06	40%	11	2%
Megalomania	2,3,5,6,7,9,11,12,15	09	60%	21	4%
Narcissist	2,3,5,6,7,8,10,11,12,15	10	67%	37	7%
Passive-Aggressive	3,5,6,10,14,15	06	40%	09	2%
Perfectionist	5,6,	02	13%	04	1%
Pins & Needles	1,2,13,15	04	27%	10	2%
Recommendations	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15	15	100%	96	19%
Be Flexible	2,5,7,12,	04	27%	04	1%
Communicate	1,2,4,7,11,12,15	07	47%	10	2%
Confront	2,3,9,11,12,13,14,	10	67%	23	4%
Defuse	3,4,10,12,	04	27%	04	1%
Document	3,7,8,9,10,12,	06	40%	10	2%

Table 7 (Continued)

Don't Internalize	2,9,14,	03	20%	04	1%
File Complaint	3,7,8,11,12,14,15	07	47%	14	3%
Focus on the Mission	10,11,15	03	20%	04	1%
Learn from It	11,12,13,	03	20%	03	1%
Seek to Understand	1,2,6,7,8,	05	33%	11	2%
Support System	3,5,8,9,12,	05	33%	09	2%
Miscellaneous	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,14	13	87%	41	8%
Why	2,5,6,7,9,11,12,14,	08	53%	20	4%
Good Leader Traits	2,3,4,5,8,10,	06	40%	07	1%
Academy Grad	1,3,4,5,14,	05	33%	09	2%
Interview Impact	2,6,12,14,	04	27%	05	1%

Finally, to better appreciate the relationships between only the domains in the Toxic Triangle, the Leader Style and Leader Temperament themes were combined and the % Ref. values for the three Toxic Triangle domains were normalized. To normalize the data, all toxic leadership references not in a Toxic Triangle domain were removed by subtracting all the references in both the Recommendations and Miscellaneous themes. The normalized summaries of the three Toxic Triangle domains is shown in Table 8 below. Based on the interview participants' reflections, the most impactful domains in decreasing order are the Leader at 46%, the Environment at 36%, and Followers at 18%.

Table 8. Normalized Domain Summaries

Normalized Environment			
Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
14	93%	138	36%

Normalized Follower Reaction			
Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
13	87%	69	18%

Normalized Combined Leader			
Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
14	93%	174	46%

A word picture of the data confirms the Leader domain as the most significant of the three for understanding toxic leadership in the military. The size and position of each word in the picture below relate to how often that word appeared in the data—larger/centered is more while smaller/off-center is less. Thus “commander” and “officers” are the largest font size and located at the center of the picture since they occur most frequently with respect to all the words in the picture.



Figure 4. Word Picture of Interview Results (sourced by NVivo Plus)

Discussion

I can tell you just before I went on this deployment...I did my Air War College. And there was a lot of reading in Air War College about toxic leaders. I remember discussing this with people and saying, “These people...they’re talking about in these books do not exist.” I truly believed that this toxic leadership that they had been writing about and I had been reading about did not exist. I did not

think it existed in the military; I didn't think it existed in our culture. And then I went over and was deployed under an Army 06 who probably was the poster child for toxic leadership. (Interview 11)

The quote above is from a 20-plus year veteran Air National Guard colonel (one grade below a general officer). I, too, was surprised by the severity of some of the experiences shared with me during the interviews. As the preliminary study suggested, the Environment domain is not as significant as one might believe. The data suggests that toxic leaders tend to be toxic regardless of their environment. The low score for the Follower domain can be explained by the idea that people rarely blame themselves for their leader's toxic behavior, and only one participant hinted that toxic leadership might be needed in special circumstances where the unit is performing horribly. This positive outlook on toxic leadership relates directly to the idea of toxic leadership as a vaccine mentioned in the introduction but is a concept that is not supported by my data. Nonetheless, it is an idea that warrants further investigation. By far, the data shows that toxic leadership is a result of the leader's leadership style and temperament. From this data analysis, a toxic leadership common phenomenon was developed and aligned with the Toxic Triangle.

Common Phenomenon

The toxic leadership common phenomena identified in this study are grouped under the three Toxic Triangle domains of Leader, Environment, and Follower originally developed by Padilla (A. H. Padilla, Robert; Kaiser, Robert B., 2007).

The Leader common phenomena are summarized as a narcissistic megalomaniac, an extremely self-centered, domineering, power obsessed leader. I subjectively organized all the leader phenomena (codes) under either the narcissist theme or the megalomania theme to better

represent this summary. I based this ordering of codes off the knowledge I gained during this study. See the table below for the results.

Table 9. Leader Phenomena

Leader	14	93%	174	33%
	Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
Narcissist	10	67%	37	7%
Incompetence	09	60%	22	4%
Passive-Aggressive	06	40%	09	2%
Uncaring	05	33%	08	2%
Indecisive	06	40%	08	2%
Moral Failures	03	20%	06	1%
Sub-Total			90	17%
Megalomania	09	60%	21	4%
Isolate	06	40%	15	3%
Demoralizing	07	47%	11	2%
Disrespect	06	40%	11	2%
Pins & Needles	04	27%	10	2%
Blindsided	03	20%	06	1%
Bushido-like	05	33%	06	1%
Perfectionist	02	13%	04	1%
Sub-Total			84	16%

Other explanations: Steele notes that toxic leaders usually are not incompetent or ineffective but are often strong leaders who have “the right stuff” but the wrong intensity and wrong desired end-state (self-promotion). (Steele, 2011) Although Incompetence scored relatively high, there were several examples in the data where the toxic leader was described as very competent. Also, one participant felt a particular leader was not toxic, yet the leader created a toxic environment through his indecisiveness. In other words, the leader’s inability to make timely decisions allowed problems to fester to the point where the organization became less effective (Interview 15). Also, it was observed that the leader’s inability or unwillingness to

remove incompatible workers can create a toxic environment (Interview 7). This idea was validated by one participant's experience (Interview 14).

The Environment common phenomena are summarized best as the setting or conditions where the toxic leader's leader is either unaware of the toxic leader's behavior or allows the leader's toxic behaviors to continue. The following table illustrates this area by the relatively low Senior Leader score as compared to the Communication, Unit Impact, and Command Climate themes. The low score is further reinforced by the Follower phenomena of not confronting or reporting the toxic leader. Thus, the Senior Leader unwittingly or knowingly enabled the leader's toxic behaviors.

Table 10. Environment Phenomena

Environment	Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
	14	93%	138	26%
Communication	14	93%	46	9%
Hostile	9	60%	18	3%
No Guidance	5	33%	8	2%
Kills Messenger	3	20%	7	1%
Screamer	5	33%	6	1%
Withhold Info	3	20%	4	1%
Liar	2	13%	3	1%
Unit Impact	12	80%	39	7%
Performance -	9	60%	19	4%
Demotivates	3	20%	8	2%
Performance +	4	27%	5	1%
People Hurt	3	20%	4	1%
Transference	3	20%	3	1%
Command Climate	11	73%	38	7%
Senior Leaders	08	53%	15	3%

While the toxic leader's leader enabled the toxic environment, the toxic leader's communication style and command climate—accepted behaviors established by the

commander—created the toxic environment. The communication style and command climate are best described as hostile.

The Follower common phenomena are best summarized as subordinates who are unwilling to confront the toxic leader or unwilling or unable to file a formal complaint. This unwillingness or inability allows the toxic leader’s behaviors to continue since neither the toxic leader is aware of the impact he/she is having on personnel, nor do the leader’s leader learn of the toxic conditions in the subordinate organization. This reality is demonstrated by the relatively low Reference scores for the Confront and Complain codes from the data. In one case, confronting the toxic leader directly resulted in the leader examining his leadership style and changing it for the better (Interview 6). The Follower phenomena are rank ordered in the table below.

Table 11. Follower Phenomena

Follower	Files	% Files	Ref.	% Ref.
	13	87%	69	13%
Effects - Physical & Emotional	08	53%	16	3%
Demotivated	06	40%	13	2%
Fear	06	40%	13	2%
Quit	06	40%	11	2%
Uncomfortable	04	27%	06	1%
Inappropriate	05	33%	05	1%
Confront	03	20%	03	1%
Complain	02	13%	02	0%

The remaining Follower codes describe reactions to the toxic leader but generally had no effect on the toxic leader. For example, the suicide reported in Interview 2 did not change the toxic leader’s behavior.

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSION

Areas for Future Research

In evaluating my review of toxic leadership, I found Nassim Taleb's "Narrative Fallacy" concept described in *The Black Swan* (Taleb, 2007) and Daniel Kahneman's "Two Systems" concept in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Kahneman, 2011) informative. They both give insight into how toxic leadership manifests in organizations and provide a context for understanding this behavioral problem.

The Narrative Fallacy refers to the human attraction to simple explanations at the expense of a genuine understanding of complex and unknown factors. This propensity goes badly when it increases one's impression of understanding. It reflects a desire to make sense of the world rather than acknowledge one's limited understanding. The toxic leader cannot see a sequence of facts without weaving a negative causal explanation on them.

Kahneman's System 1 and System 2 thinking also could partly explain why some leaders are toxic. According to Kahneman, System 1 operates automatically with little or no effort and without voluntary control. Conversely, System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it. Often, System 2 is associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration. Specifically, Kahneman's thoughts on self-control and bad intuition related to System 1 merit further study as they relate to toxic leadership. *Thinking, Fast and Slow* concepts may inform potential mitigation techniques for toxic leadership. For example, testing for "lazy thinking"—those who rely overly on System 1 because they are unwilling to expend

the mental effort required by System 2—to disqualify potential toxic leaders during the hiring process.

Toxic leaders tend to draw conclusions hastily without thinking about viable alternative conclusions. They tend to weave a negative story out of the facts known to them and not appreciate that there is information or facts they do not know. Below is an example from Interview 1:

[I had] no opportunity to...explain. A lot of times he didn't have all the facts, so he'd just bring you in the office. Basically, it was a one-way conversation. And he didn't give you a chance to say anything.

With respect to mitigation, teaching leaders about the potential pitfalls of the Narrative Fallacy and the Two Systems of thinking may help those who genuinely want to improve their leadership skills. Understanding these concepts should help the individual to not reach a conclusion prematurely, to realize the information they have is limited, and to force them to think about the facts without trying to link them together into causal relationships that may be wrong.¹¹

Final Thoughts

The data from my research is inconclusive regarding why some military leaders exhibit toxic behaviors, but it suggests what enables them. Toxic leadership exists because the senior leaders, those leaders above the toxic leader, allow it to exist, either unwittingly or knowingly. In some cases, the senior leader allowed the toxic behaviors to continue because the toxic leader delivered successful results to the larger organization. In other cases, the senior leader did not believe the reports on the toxic leader or felt the follower was overly sensitive—in this situation,

¹¹ Think of the colloquialism, “What happens when you assume? You make an ‘ass’ out of ‘u’ and ‘me’.”

the senior leader often had a positive personal relationship with the toxic leader. However, in the majority of cases, the senior leader was unaware of the toxic behaviors within their organization. An unexpected surprise was the finding that non-toxic leaders can create toxic environments by their inaction or inability to make timely decisions. That inaction allows problems to develop, then fester and ultimately, creates a toxic environment. Also, non-toxic leaders can create toxic environments by not dealing with incompetent subordinates, like the senior leader who allows a toxic leader to continue to act out toxic behaviors. Incompetent subordinates generate problems that can contribute to a toxic environment due to their technical shortcomings or low EQ (emotional quotient).

With respect to the environment, in the military, it is understood that the commander establishes the environment and provides the resources for the organization to accomplish its mission. Consequently, if toxic behaviors exist in an organization, then every senior leader in the chain of command is responsible. The military understands this and takes a top down approach to deal with the problem of toxic leadership. For example, the United States Army added a definition of toxic leadership to their regulations in 2017; it includes the following: “These leaders are also usually bright and energetic, as well as goal-oriented and boss-focused. Capable of producing spectacular short-term results, but are arrogant, abusive, intemperate, distrusting, and irascible. They are typically distrusting micro-managers never burdened by introspection” (Army Chief of Staff, 2017).

Concerning followers, the most effective mitigation techniques to address the problem of toxic leadership is confronting and reporting toxic leader behaviors when they occur. In the military, confronting and reporting can be difficult because of the rank structure, the power and authority granted to commanders, and the self-sacrifice and loyalty expected from subordinates.

Consequently, the fear of retribution resulting in the end of one's career or the ability to advance one's career is present. Also, there is the understanding that the current environment is temporary since either the toxic leader or the suffering subordinate will eventually rotate to a new assignment. Together, these factors form a powerful deterrent to confronting or reporting the toxic behaviors. The military is addressing this fear of reporting through its professional military education programs.

Finally, one topic lacking in the literature is a discussion of the potential benefits of toxic leadership. A vaccine injects a small amount of poison into the body, so the body can develop its immunity from the toxin. Similarly, my experience has shown that toxic leadership can positively affect organizational performance in the short term.

To illustrate, I was in the commanding general's headquarters talking to his executive officer¹² in an outer office about 75 feet from the general's desk. The general was a rare charismatic general who had the ability to inspire tremendous loyalty from his Airmen; he certainly had mine. As I looked out of the exec's office into the hallway, I saw a young Airman in his Service Dress uniform (coat and tie) being escorted by his First Sergeant to the general's secretary. Moments later, I heard the general uncharacteristically shouting at the Airman that he could have killed his wife because he decided to drive his car back to the base from a local bar while intoxicated. He yelled so loudly I could understand clearly what was being said though I was in an office 75 feet from the general's office. The general's diatribe went on for what seemed like an eternity. I had never seen this side of the general before but was convinced that Airman would never again think about driving after having a drink. I have heard the saying, "put the fear of God in him;" well, that is what the general did with respect to this Airman's drinking

¹² An executive assistant who helps author the general's correspondence.

and driving. The general created a significant emotional event for the Airman that he would never forget.

Although I found virtually no evidence to support this view in my interviews, the idea of using toxic behavior in a controlled setting for a specific purpose is an area worthy of future investigation. Lastly, I hope this research informs future investigations into potential individual and organizational antidotes for toxic leadership.

Summary

The current literature shows toxic leadership is surprisingly more prevalent than previously believed. This subset of organizational leadership studies revolves around leadership styles that poison the employee, the organization, or both. This study captured a common phenomenon for toxic leadership (symptoms) useful for diagnosing or addressing toxic leadership in organizations. In summary, a toxic leader is a narcissistic megalomaniac, an extremely self-centered, domineering, power obsessed leader. Personnel must operate in an enabling environment of a toxic leader because senior leaders are unaware of the toxic leader's behavior or allow that behavior to continue against followers who are unwilling or unable to confront or report the toxic leader.

Epilogue

Dennis was a talented squadron commander who was so negatively impacted by this particularly toxic leader that he left the Air Force shortly after his command tour ended. And he wasn't alone. I'm aware of at least one other squadron commander from that wing who left the Air Force early and two more who decided to leave the executive track they were on to become full-time Air Force pilots with no organizational leadership responsibilities—a role normally filled by much junior pilots.

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APPENDIX 1:

REDACTED WITNESS STATEMENT (BG BOWEN, 2018)

SWORN STATEMENT

For use of this form, see AR 190-45; the proponent agency is PMG.

PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT

AUTHORITY: Title 10, USC Section 301; Title 5, USC Section 2961; E.O. 9397 Social Security Number (SSN).
PRINCIPAL PURPOSE: To document potential criminal activity involving the U.S. Army, and to allow Army officials to maintain discipline, law and order through investigation of complaints and incidents.
ROUTINE USES: Information provided may be further disclosed to federal, state, local, and foreign government law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, courts, child protective services, victims, witnesses, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Office of Personnel Management. Information provided may be used for determinations regarding judicial or non-judicial punishment, other administrative disciplinary actions, security clearances, recruitment, retention, placement, and other personnel actions.
DISCLOSURE: Disclosure of your SSN and other information is voluntary.

1. LOCATION (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC	2. DATE (YYYYMMDD) 20180124	3. TIME 1041	4. FILE NUMBER
5. LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE NAME (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC	6. SSN	7. GRADE/STATUS (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC	
8. ORGANIZATION OR ADDRESS (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC			

9. I, (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC, WANT TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT UNDER OATH:
 On 19 Jan 18 at 1200 PST, I participated in a telecon interview with BG Bowen (USSTRATCOM DJ3) regarding an Army 15-6 investigation of COL Kathryn Spletstoser. I was assigned to the USSTRATCOM Commander's Action Group as (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC from (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC and reported to COL Spletstoser in her position as CAG Director. BG Bowen asked a series of questions during the telecon interview, my statement will reflect the questions and my answers to the best of my recollection. 1) What was the command climate in the CAG? COL Spletstoser was restructuring and reorganizing the CAG when she interviewed and hired me into the (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC position. As part of the reorganization, for example...the Legislative Affairs element was moved into J82, the speechwriter position turned over and the new speechwriters were moved into CAG spaces, several personnel were deliberately moved out of the organization and others who were slated to be moved out (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC (b)(6),(7) remained in CAG spaces. Several new members were hired into the CAG...myself included. As an overall scene-setter, this situation and these factors caused tension in the CAG. The command climate was bi-polar and toxic at times. Throughout the day there were interactions with COL S that were normal and routine...eg. good morning, looks like rain in the forecast. During the same day, COL S might have an aneurysm if, for example, the latest draft of a trip book was coordinated with the front office without her review or if the SECDEF weekly email didn't include some key piece of information that only she knew from a meeting Gen Hyten had in D.C. When COL S was in the office (she traveled on every TDY with the commander) it would not be uncommon for her to have multiple episodes of yelling, expletive-laden outbursts at the CAG staff over some administrative or seemingly trivial matter. I would expect her to go mental on a daily basis and I made it my responsibility to keep those outbursts confined to her office or the SCIF to limit the exposure to the CAG staff or any passers-by in the hallway. Gen Hyten described his redlines during his first commander's call and highlighted to his staff the imperative of treating all members of USSTRATCOM with dignity and respect. I started to record instances in my journal where COL S went beyond her normal inappropriate outbursts. I wanted to record certain events in preparation for a one-on-one confrontation with COL S regarding her behavior and failing to treat others with dignity and respect. I spoke to (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC and confided in (b)(6) discussing at length about COL S crossing Gen Hyten's redlines and how to manage the situation while preserving the staff's dedication to supporting Gen Hyten. I did not discuss the command climate or the situation with other members of the CAG to preserve solidarity with COL S in carrying out her directives and supporting her decisions. 2) Characterize COL Spletstoser's leadership style. COL S has extraordinary talent and experience. She told me when I was hired that she wanted me to lead the CAG - administratively day-to-day, processes, task management, personnel accountability + care and feeding (reports, I.V, decorations, Civilian appraisals. I was also the (b)(6),(b)(7)(C) with other directorates and (b)(6),(b)(7)(C) USSC at all meetings that were not chaired by GEN Hyten except for the USSTRATCOM CUB (I was the (b)(6),(b)(7)(C) USSC). She attended key events with the 4-star during his duty day and all travel events. I provide that context because the CAG was only a shop of 10 people...we were a cohesive team eager to support Gen Hyten. When she engaged the staff, COL S's leadership style was to belligerently order you to get something done and threaten a consequence if timelines aren't met. For example, "Get me a fucking

10. EXHIBIT	11. INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC	PAGE 1 OF 3 PAGES
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ADDITIONAL PAGES MUST CONTAIN THE HEADING "STATEMENT OF _____ TAKEN AT _____ DATED _____"
 THE BOTTOM OF EACH ADDITIONAL PAGE MUST BEAR THE INITIALS OF THE PERSON MAKING THE STATEMENT, AND PAGE NUMBER MUST BE INDICATED.



USE THIS PAGE IF NEEDED. IF THIS PAGE IS NOT NEEDED, PLEASE PROCEED TO FINAL PAGE OF THIS FORM.

STATEMENT OF (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC TAKEN AT _____ DATED 20180124

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

strawman agenda for this trip to Barksdale at the end of the month...I want that shit today. What the fuck do you fucking do all day...it's not like you are fucking working? Don't give me some hot-mess bullshit (b)(6),(7)(C) agenda either, this is staff work 101, Jesus Christ none of you know what you are doing. You can't accomplish basic shit, the most basic fucking tasks. No one fucking leaves until I get that strawman today...I should bring your asses in on the weekend because you don't do shit during the week. If you show the draft strawman to anyone in the front office before I see it, I'll have your ass." COL S storms out of the office, CAG staff says...we had the strawman for the Barksdale trip done 4 days ago and coordinated through the front office, we haven't pushed it to COL S because we are 3.5 weeks out. Her leadership style was comical/ridiculous, outrageous/inappropriate, surreal as I could not believe it was happening as daily events unfolded. Talent and experience notwithstanding, her applied leadership style was the worst I've witnessed in my (b)(6),(7)(C) years of service. 3) Did I witness bullying or unprofessional behavior? During my telecon interview, I said no, but I'd like to share another incident that describes bullying behavior. After a COL S finished her routine outburst with the speechwriter, COL S observed a smile on my face three desks away. She asked my why I was smiling, and in an attempt to lighten the mood in the office, I answered with a quote from Buddy the Elf, "Smiling is my favorite"...that drew laughter in the CAG. She asked if I thought this was funny...."Do you think this is fucking funny?" She then yelled..."I ASKED YOU IF YOU THINK THIS IS FUCKING FUNNY?" I answered, tragically...yes. She lost it...screamed that I follow her to the hallway..."get the fuck up and take you ass outside...now!" She continued, how dare you...are you fucking serious? Get out here!" I followed her to the hallway and she turns around and says (calmly)..."sometimes you just need to light motherfuckers up", she poked my chest with her finger turned around and walked away down the hall. I'm still not sure what that meant...she had those outbursts several times a day, so it didn't feel special, except it was directed at me. 4) Did the CAG work environment affect other areas of the staff or directorates? YES. We worked hard to remedy and repair relationships with Legislative Affairs (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC after repeated negative interactions with COL S. Similarly, we struggled to keep strong ties with J53 international engagements, Public Affairs, Protocol, Office of the Chief of Staff, and the Front Office. There was definitely a tension between (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC and COL S that affected the working relationship between the CAG and the Front Office. This friction potentially started over (b)(6),(7)(C) (b)(6),(7)(C) desire to accompany Gen Hyten on a specific TDY, but COL S was the self-proclaimed authority on who would/would not attend trips with the CC and also who would be manifested on the CC's aircraft. On 21 Apr, the CAG held a staff meeting that was chaired by COL S...she described the transition period in the CAG to address the low morale and difficulty recruiting talent, but most importantly, she discussed new ROE with the front office due to their "inefficiencies and dysfunction." She directed "any interaction with the front office before COL S can coordinate is FORBIDDEN." During Gen Hyten's congressional testimony session (b)(6),(7)(C) (b)(6),(7)(C) held a CAG/Front Office VTC to discuss schedule, travel, read aheads status, etc. The meeting was scheduled during the actual testimony that COL S was attending, and the CAG was watching live. I attended the meeting/VTC with (b)(6),(7)(C) US as directed by the executive officer. COL S went mental. She directed me to not attend any meetings with the front office without her consent etc, don't talk to (b)(6),(7)(C) US or (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC. COL S described any interaction with the Front Office would "blindsided" her and was not allowed. We were ORDERED not to go direct to the front office with anything. This was challenging because any request from the exec was in support of the commander. All trip books and drafts MUST be coordinated with COL S before going to the Front Office for a pre-vector - this was to adjust the agenda, meeting attendees, flight manifest, etc to suit COL S desires. Suffice to say, our collective relationships with other directorates and offices were affected by COL S's interactions with those personnel, and her guidance and directives to the CAG when dealing with the front office. 5) Did COL S manipulate TDY travel for her own benefit? COL S traveled exclusively with Gen Hyten. She insisted on accompanying him on EVERY TDY without exception. During my hiring interview, I asked COL S about opportunities to accompany Gen Hyten on specific (b)(6),(7)(C) related TDYs where my expertise and presence may be useful as the CAG representative, (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC visit, (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC etc. She indicated that she would consider me for a trip (no guarantees) and she would always travel on every D.C trip. I wasn't allowed on any TDYs with Gen Hyten, my responsibility was to (b)(6),(7)(C) CAG (b)(6),(7)(C) US. COL S would control the aircraft manifest and seating arrangement on every flight. She would routinely bump GOs on the flight to commercial travel if there was a space issue on the jet. 6) Did she comply with staff processes? Generally speaking, COL S prided herself on working outside of staff processes, the rules did not apply to the special status of the CAG director...unimpeded access to the commander, her ability to monitor his electronic correspondence, control of the calendar + meeting attendees, access and edit over RAH's and products for the commander gave her an exceptional sense of power. Behind the scenes, the CAG was still working TMT staff processes, scheduling Big Rocks and calendar synch, etc. 7) Do you have concerns of reprisal? No (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC CAG and Gen Hyten signed a superb performance report. I was matched (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC (b)(6),(7)(C) CAG COL S certainly threatened bad paperwork to members of the CAG (including me). Before I departed, she specifically threatened me with a sub-par performance report when she suspected disloyalty to her as the director in favor of the Front Office. I reminded her that we all work for Gen Hyten on the same team...together with the front office. No one was being disloyal to anyone. As you can imagine, my comments weren't received well...COL S had a verbal meltdown. When I interviewed officers for CAG

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT
(b)(6),(7)(C) USSC

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STATEMENT OF (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC TAKEN AT _____ DATED 20180124

9. STATEMENT (Continued)

vacancies, COL S told me that she preferred upwardly mobile candidates (need a push for SDE/school, a DP for Colonel, pending command, etc) specifically to be able to threaten and hold those next steps hostage. I thought she was joking at first. 8) Did she send any inappropriate emails? Not to my recollection. 9) Did she have a positive impact on the CAG or any other areas of the command? Again, COL S is very talented and experienced. She wanted the USSTRATCOM CAG to be on par with CSAF, CSA or Chairman's CAG. She carried herself as if she was wasting her time in her current role...she was above being at USSTRATCOM, her duties and responsibilities...this posting was beneath her. She wasn't afraid to give an opposing viewpoint and that was a strength. She has a great network that she uses to her advantage. She stays connected to senior leadership in the Army. Her good qualities as an officer are dwarfed by her inappropriate outbursts and treatment of personnel. END OF TESTIMONY----(b)(24jan18

AFFIDAVIT

(b)(6),(7)(C) USSC, HAVE READ OR HAVE HAD READ TO ME THIS STATEMENT WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 1, AND ENDS ON PAGE 3. I FULLY UNDERSTAND THE CONTENTS OF THE ENTIRE STATEMENT MADE BY ME. THE STATEMENT IS TRUE. I HAVE INITIALED ALL CORRECTIONS AND HAVE INITIALED THE BOTTOM OF EACH PAGE CONTAINING THE STATEMENT. I HAVE MADE THIS STATEMENT FREELY WITHOUT HOPE OF BENEFIT OR REWARD, WITHOUT THREAT OF PUNISHMENT, AND WITHOUT COERCION, UNLAWFUL INFLUENCE, OR UNLAWFUL INDUCEMENT.

(b)(6),(7)(C) USSC

(Signature of Person Making Statement)

WITNESSES:

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this 24 day of January, 2018 at HQ USSTRATCOM, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska

BOWEN,GREGORY,SCOTT (b)(6),(7)(C) USSC

(Signature of Person Administering Oath)

BG Gregory S. Bowen

(Typed Name of Person Administering Oath)

Art. 136, UCMJ

(Authority To Administer Oaths)

INITIALS OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

(b)(6),(7)(C) USSC

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APPENDIX 2:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Preliminary Study Questions

1. First, I'm recording this interview and want to ensure you approve of me capturing our conversation with a digital recorder?
2. Please introduce yourself and tell me about your work history leading up to your current job and duty title?
3. My questions relate to the worst person you've worked for, someone particularly ineffective, who sowed discord within your organization.
4. With that in mind, have you worked for a particularly egregious person?
5. Describe what that person did that was so egregious?
6. Describe how that leader impacted your coworkers?
7. How did your coworkers respond?
8. How did that make you feel?
9. Describe how that leader impacted you?
10. How did you respond?
11. Did it impact you physically or your health? If so, how?
12. How did that leader impact the organization?
13. Did that leader impact other leaders? If so, how?
14. Did that leader impact or change the culture of the organization?
15. To your knowledge, how aware were senior leaders of this person's behavior?
16. Was there an avenue available to report this individual?
17. Why did you answer that way?
18. What, if anything, did you do anything to defend yourself?
19. Did you feel you could adequately defend yourself?
20. Did anyone else defend or attempt to protect you from this person?
21. Can you describe a specific interaction with that leader that exemplifies his or her poisonous leadership style?

22. Describe how you dealt with this person?
23. Did you learn any techniques to deal with this person?
24. What have you learned from this experience?
25. Describe anything positive about this experience?
26. What would you recommend to someone who is going through a similar experience?
27. Is there a question I should have asked?
28. Do you have anything else?
29. Can I contact you if I have any follow up questions? If so, how would you like to communicate?

Primary Study Questions

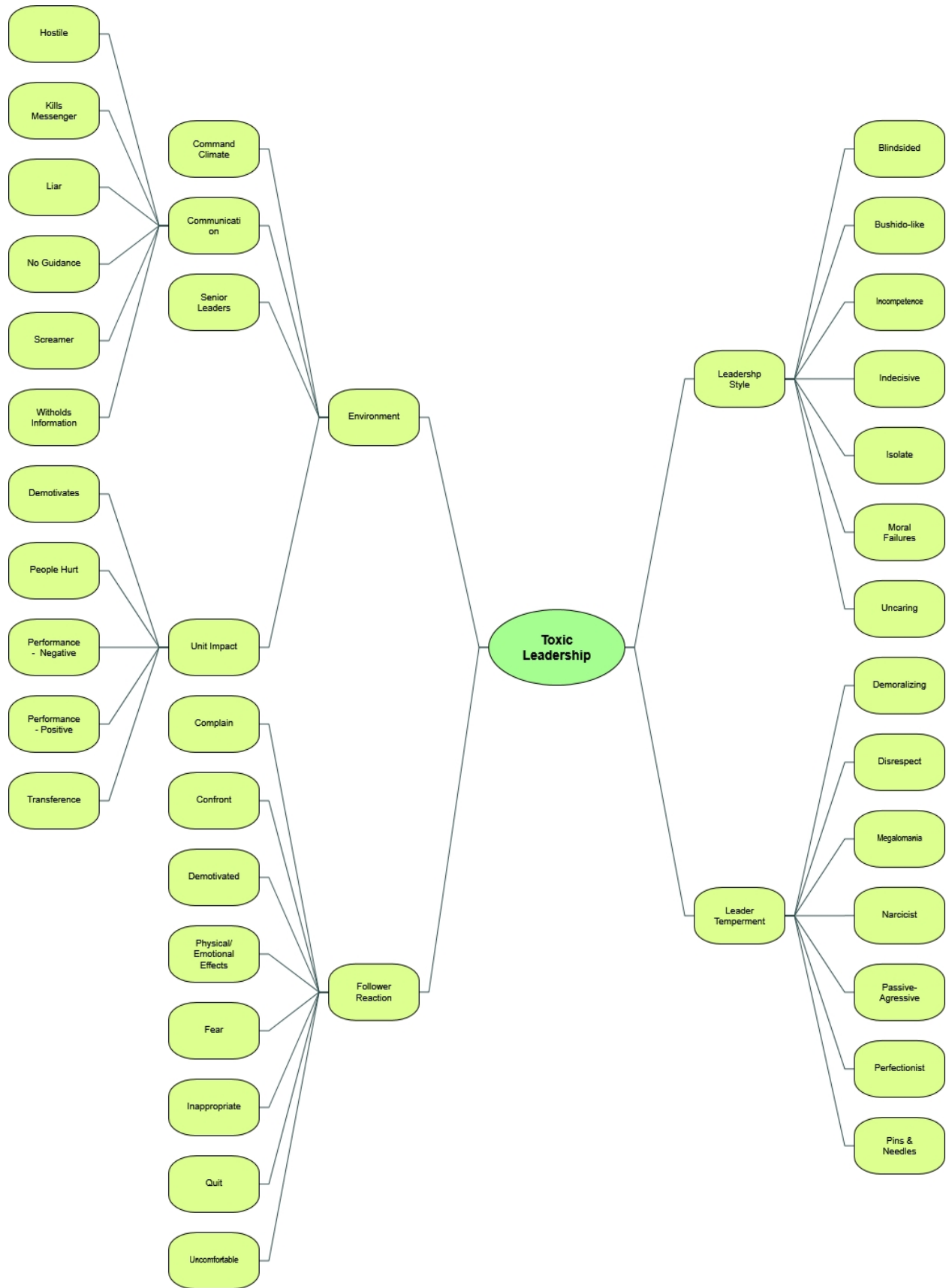
1. I'm recording this interview—do you approve of me capturing our conversation with a digital recorder?
2. Please introduce yourself and tell me about your military career?
3. Did you experience military leadership that was noteworthy in either a good or bad sense?
4. Can you tell me a story that describes your experience?
5. How did that experience impact you personally?
6. How did that experience impact your unit?
7. Why did you answer that way?
8. What did you learn from that experience?
9. Is there a question I should have asked?
10. Can I contact you if I have any follow up questions? If so, how would you like to communicate?

APPENDIX 3:

PRELIMINARY STUDY CODING ANALYSIS

Group	Code (modified In Vivo)	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
Toxic Descriptor	totally broken down	29	12.70%	3	100.00%
Toxic Descriptor	narcissism	18	7.90%	2	66.70%
Toxic Descriptor	we're all afraid of him / her	16	7.00%	3	100.00%
Toxic Descriptor	leader felt he/she could do anything	15	6.60%	3	100.00%
Toxic Descriptor	nothing you did was right	10	4.40%	3	100.00%
Toxic Descriptor	belittle you in front of the staff	10	4.40%	2	66.70%
Toxic Descriptor	intimidating people	10	4.40%	2	66.70%
Toxic Descriptor	embarrassing the school	6	2.60%	1	33.30%
Toxic Descriptor	no previous leadership experience	3	1.30%	2	66.70%
Toxic Descriptor	Life is better now they're gone	2	0.90%	1	33.30%
Toxic Descriptor	irrational decisions	1	0.40%	1	33.30%
Health	physical manifestations	7	3.10%	2	66.70%
Health	really stressful	5	2.20%	2	66.70%
Communication	not listening	6	2.60%	1	33.30%
Communication	You're done. I'm gonna replace you with somebody else	5	2.20%	3	100.00%
Communication	The times that I'd try to, he/she would shut me down.	4	1.70%	1	33.30%
Communication	wouldn't have a conversation, just tell you something, turn and walk away	3	1.30%	2	66.70%
Communication	didn't talk about good things, only talked about bad things	2	0.90%	1	33.30%
Communication	wouldn't give you any feedback	2	0.90%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	I know there's an Inspector General	13	5.70%	2	66.70%
Mitigation	tell the boss what you're doing	9	3.90%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	my one respite from the mental harassment	8	3.50%	3	100.00%
Mitigation	He felt that his job was to protect, to protect us	5	2.20%	3	100.00%
Mitigation	Don't worry, you're going to out last her	3	1.30%	2	66.70%
Mitigation	quit or retired early	3	1.30%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	ignore something, maybe it will go away	3	1.30%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	they become experts at covering up their situations	2	0.90%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	would have been appropriate on a battlefield, if we were getting shot at	2	0.90%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	it's never appropriate, in my opinion, in an office environment	1	0.40%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	gone to an attorney	1	0.40%	1	33.30%
Mitigation	background check	1	0.40%	1	33.30%
Total Code Responses		205			

APPENDIX 4:
EXPANDED CONCEPT MAP



APPENDIX 5:
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

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Interview 1

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Background

I've been in the National Guard for almost 34 years now. I was a traditional member for about the first 25 years. And then I went full time Air Reserve Technician. I served as a Commander of the Con Flight for about four years. And then I went on to Engineering and Installation Squad for about three and a half years. I have about seven and a half years of leadership in command experience, besides the other office or leadership opportunities that you have throughout your career.

I'm currently working on a project at Vandenberg Air Force base. I'm a project manager for a pretty large project, about 900 people involved in the move. And uh ... And I've also been a manager in the corporate world. I've worked at IMA Corporation where I led a staff of communications type people. And then, uh, I was also the Deputy Mission Support Group Commander at the Guard before I came out to Vandenberg. Does that cover what you want?

Bad Example 1

Yes, I have, several times. Couple different times I have and I think that the most ... The hardest one, the most toxic one, I guess, would be the ... My experience at CENTCOM, for the six months I was deployed there.

You know, I think the first thing that comes to mind is, there was always a dark cloud over the leader. Whenever he'd walk out of his office, we were in an open office area, I think everybody shuddered a little bit to see which way he was gonna go, because they didn't want him to come visit you. Normally when he would come he wouldn't have a conversation with you, he would just tell you something, turn out and walk away. You know, ask you to do something, or basically order you in the worst possible way that he wanted something done.

I also remember staff meeting. Remember, we had staff meeting once a week. Everybody was on pins and needles, because he usually ... Every staff meeting, he'd jump all over someone. At least one person in that staff meeting. And, you know, it was usually just one person, and you were wondering if it was your turn that week. So, of course, staff meetings were really stressful for everybody.

I know his leadership style as far as removing and adding people to positions, he basically wouldn't give you any feedback. There was no mentoring. There was very little back and forth sharing of ideas, and agreeing or not disagreeing. And he would just pull you into his office ... If he didn't like what you were doing, he'd pull you into the office and basically say, "You're done. I'm gonna replace you with somebody else, and I'm gonna have you go do this." And it happened several times when I was there in the six months, I saw that happened. And it also happened to

me, where he pulled me in one day and said, "You're done. You're gonna be going to another area."

Um, couple other things ... Yeah, it was just ... You know, you dreaded going to work. I was there on a six month employment. I volunteered to leave my family and my home.

And I was ready to serve and do whatever I could do. I was 100% on board. I wanted to make a difference, because I was away from home, and I wanted to serve. And, when you have a leader like that, take that and basically just throw it away. You know, he didn't appreciate that. He didn't care about that. It was just really ... It was really hard.

Even though ... And I'm the type of person if the leader shows me the appropriate amount of respect, I don't ... I'm not a high maintenance type person. Just a little bit of acknowledgment ... And say that they're appreciative of what I've done. And I'll do the extra mile. I'll stay late, I'll do whatever it takes to get the mission done. And I still did that with this particular leader, but not to the extent that I could have, because you never really knew what ... If what you were doing was the right thing, or enough.

He'd blindside you a lot. You would work really hard. I know there was, during that ... About a two week period, we had a really ... Something critical happened, and we were working 24 hours a day, and we were giving briefings to the four star. And he really wouldn't have ever tell you what he wanted or needed, but he would tell you when you failed. Even though I did everything that I thought possible that ... To try to second guess what he wanted or needed.

And he'd just ... And he'd call you out. I always praise in public, you know, criticize and correct in private. He'd do it in front of ... It didn't matter who was in the room. He'd just ... He'd jump all over you and belittle you as much as he could in front of the whole staff, for that matter. Or other coworkers, and that's at the piece of the talks of leadership.

You know, I ... As far as, I think my peers, you know, the other leaders at the same level, I think we all felt about the same. You know, we're all afraid of him.

We were scared. Like I said, when he walked out of his office, we were in an open office area, and you could see him come out of his office. I think everybody kind of held their breath to see which way he was gonna go.

And as far as the people that worked for me, I tried as much as possible to take the heat, and not have to have them get that leadership style directed at them.

You know, I tried to be- be the cushion between them. I'm not sure that I was always successful in that, but I always tried to make sure that he went through me instead of my people as much as possible. But they noticed it. I've got a new deputy, and right before I went back home again, and she caught it right off. That she noticed that way he was treating ... You know, lack of respect-

You know, I think everybody understood the picture, and everybody was uncomfortable.

But I think they still, you know, they still did a good ... They still worked really hard, most of them. And wanted to do the right thing. I think it was less of an impact. I think just the overall environment to be the leader of the whole office environment, it was an impact overall.

Because I don't think people felt comfortable. You know, they definitely didn't want to get in his cross hairs. You know, they didn't want to experience that. So everybody was a little bit on edge. But where they weren't directly working for him, maybe a little bit less than the leaders directly work for him.

Well, you know it effected me honestly, physically. My stress level was through the roof. There would be times that I'd finish the day, and I'd just go home and just sit. And then I'd ... And thankfully, I was a runner then, and I'd go out on a lot of extra runs just to get the feeling at the end of the day out of me, so that I could have an evening of peace and quiet (laughs). So yeah, it really did affect me. And it ... The good thing with me, I guess, the good point is I was only there for six months.

If this would have ... If this would have been a two year assignment, I probably would've asked to be transferred out. I would not have wanted to put up with it for two years. It just would not have been healthy. Wouldn't have been a good thing to do, so.

You know, I'm not ... I'm the type of person that if I think something's not right, then I'm not afraid to go to the leader and talk to them about it. Not really confront him, but just talk to them about it. I didn't feel like I could ever do that with him. The times that I'd try to, he'd shut me down.

Had no opportunity to, maybe, explain. A lot of times he didn't have all the facts, so he'd just bring you in the office. Basically, it was a one way conversation. And he didn't give you a chance to say anything.

And I think, granted there are times when you have to be that way as a leader, but very rare. And that was every time. I never had a chance to say anything. Even if I did, he would just discard it immediately. So you just ... You quit trying. You just listen to what he has to say, turn around and walk out of his office. So-

[How do you think he impacted the organization? In term of the organization being able to function properly, as well as the relationships in the organization?]

You know, a leader like that it shuts down the creativity. It shuts down the extra initiative that ... You know, there's a lot of people like I described that will go the extra mile for a leader that they know respects them, and they respect the leader back.

He really stifled a lot of what we were trying to do. And that was ... You know, a leader sets the direction and the- and the intent, and he didn't do a very good job of that.

And then ... And you know, a little bit in his defense, maybe he didn't know what to do. And he expected us, the experts, to help him know what to do. But there was never any honest

conversations or brainstorming sessions. He just demanded it to be done, but he didn't know what he wanted to have done. So it definitely ... It stifles an organization's creativity and productivity.

You know ... Like I said, I think that we all were on the edge of our seats. I mean, everybody dealt with it a little bit differently in that case. And I think I did see a little bit of an impact on some of the other leaders.

You know, I know that there was ... and I'm not very good with names. There was a Navy guy that was there when I first got there. The one that was over ops before me.

He hit him pretty hard. And that ... He basically, one morning, he pulled him in the office and said, "You're done being the office leader." Then he pulled me in right after, and he said, "You're it now."

So I think he really leaned hard on him. And I know ... my deputy, what was her name? I'm sorry.

Yeah, she mentioned that, he told her that he liked to give me a hard time. It was, he did it on purpose. So I don't know that maybe he picked me out as well, it's kind of hard for me to say that, because I wasn't outside looking.

In the staff meetings, he took turns who he, you know, basically degraded in the staff meeting and put on the spot. And, you know ... And hammered it pretty hard in front of everybody. It wasn't always the same person. It was kind of a round table. I mean, we never knew who was gonna be the unlucky one for the day, so ... Usually, he did treat people ... I noticed the ... We just got in ... The Lieutenant Colonel just came from...

He seemed to be able to relate with the commander better. I didn't see it with him as much as with the others. And I don't know if it was the Army, maybe they were both Army. Or because he just ... I think he just finished up his ... Was it his Masters or his Doctorate degree?

[He just finished his PhD.]

That's what I thought. And I think, maybe, that might have made a difference with the commander treating him a little differently. He [LTC] didn't seem to get as stressed and ... Yeah, the stress with the commander, so.

Yeah. You know, and it was ... That would be hard for me to tell, because I got there and he was there.

He actually ... He came about the same time I did. So I didn't have a good feeling for the culture before I got there, and after. And I'm trying to remember back, you know, the things that I heard about the previous leader. I don't really remember much about the culture.

No, no. And I have some pretty good proof on that (laughs). And in fact, toxic leadership, that's usually what happens is, looking up everybody loves, and looking down nobody likes him.

Absolutely. My exit interview with the General. He asked me, and I was completely honest with my feelings. And I basically told him I've been working in a toxic environment because of the leader. And from his reaction he did ... He had no idea. In fact, I think he even said that, he had no idea.

That was going on. And I explained and gave him some examples, and he was pretty surprised. And I wanted to be honest with the General on the way out the door because I was going home, but everybody else had to live with it. So, I wasn't afraid of what I said to the General, very upfront and honest.

You know, I ... And I still remember that. And I just ... I told him the truth. And that's why I say I'm pretty sure he had no idea.

So like, I started off with, he keeps ... He just asked me how my experience was, how my, you know, my six-month deployment was, any feedback that would help. And I just was honest. I said, "Sir, it's a toxic environment." And that we have a toxic leader, and that ... We talked about the leader by name. And I just explained a little bit of what I've told you in this interview. I explained some of that to him as well, and his reaction ... He basically, I'm pretty sure he said, "I had no idea." And, just by his reaction and- and the questions he asked, I could tell that he didn't know what was going on. And the ... you know, the impact it had on everybody. And, you know, it really ... When you say toxic leaders, he knows what that is obviously. He's a General. And then we just got into a few examples. Similar to what I've given you, just about the dark cloud that...

You know, if he didn't come to your office, when he walked out of his office. And just some of things that ... You know, the criticism in front of everybody. The belittling in front of everybody. I gave you those examples, and ... You know, and I know that the leader we're talking about was getting ready to retire.

I know he was gonna retire, so I didn't really know if the General would do anything about it, or just let it go to the ... His retirement. You know, just let it end when he retires. I don't know.

Well, I don't have much to back this up, but my feeling is that the commander we're talking about was, in his whole career ... If you look at his bio he ... You know, he was ... He went to different classes. He was a West Point grad, and he never had any leadership experience that I can see, other than ... He really didn't. And he went to all these different classes. And he went in residence, you know, to different PME.

He came out, he did his Master's Degree or something. One time, I reached ... just to see. I can never see where he was a leader. And I think ... I'll go ahead and just say it. But I think he ... It was just lack of self-confidence. And maybe even lack of even knowing how to lead. And I think his ... Some of his style would have been appropriate on a battlefield, if we were getting shot at.

Some of his style, what he did, and how he'd bark things at us. Okay, if we ... If our life was in danger. But it's never appropriate, in my opinion, in an environment ... In an office environment.

We were fighting the war, to act that way all the time puts us under stress every day. And that's not required, it's not needed in my ... In what we were doing. And that's just my opinion.

Yeah, you know ... And I know. As a military member, I know there's an Inspector General, there's his supervisor. I think we had the conversation. I was ready to go to personal.

And I would have went to personal with the request to be transferred somewhere else. I mean, I wanted to do the best work I could do while I was there, and make a difference. But I wasn't very successful under him. So I was gonna go to personal and have a conversation. And I would have told personal that, again, while I was on the ... Where I was only there for six months and I had a way out, I just endured it. And it was the most painful experience I've ever had to endure.

In my whole military career. And I've had other bosses that were toxic. But you could ... Yeah, it was just different. It wasn't to this level. This level was the worst I've seen it, but I had other toxic leaders that ... Sometimes they're rational, and they're easy to get along with. They're only toxic at certain times. And you can deal with that.

But every day when you come to work, you know it's gonna happen. You just knew you were gonna get called out for something. It's just not ... Yeah, it demotivates you. And you do the best you can to do the ... You know, to make a difference, and keep going. But it's very difficult.

You know, I mentioned this earlier, I'm not afraid to go to somebody and shut the door, and say okay, let's talk about this. I don't agree with this, let's talk about it. I never felt safe doing that with him. In fact, I think if I would have done that with him, he probably would have threw me out of his office.

That's really ... I never tried. The couple of times I tried to, you know, push back and say you don't understand, you know, my thinking on why I did what I did, he shut me right down. And, like I said, you basically, all you do is have one way conversations with people. And being a Commander, I understand that. When you're ... When you're given discipline, you need to do that. But you don't need to ... You don't do it all the time with you people, I don't think.

You know, I've worked ... I've been a follower and a leader enough to know that you just try to ... You try to figure out what he wants and give it to him. And that was the most difficult thing was that you ... He a lot of times changes his directions. You know, I think I just ... Which probably I could've done better. I realize that, I could've done better in this situation. But it all banked on I had six months there. And I just had to survive it. I just had to stay out of his cross hairs.

I know there for a while we have meetings about a project every day, we were putting on our progress. And I think ... I think, probably the best thing we ever did to help him understand what was going on, when she came we made the white board of what we were working on.

And that probably was the biggest thing I learned in, and the best thing we did was you need to tell the boss what you're doing, because he doesn't know what you're doing. And to put it on a whiteboard out in the open, he could walk by and look at it, which I know he did. Probably when we weren't around. Then he realized just how busy we were. And why we couldn't always turn things around as quickly as what he thought, because we had so many tasks.

So, maybe that's it, is to provide him with more information. And, verbally, I wouldn't have been able to do that. We wouldn't have made it through the conversation. He just wouldn't have listened. And maybe in an email, but it think out in the open like that was the best way to do it.

Because then everybody saw, not just him. And then he had to acknowledge it, I guess. And an email, he could just delete it and not pay attention to it, that ... Yeah. Maybe that's it, to help him understand what we're doing. I mean, we can always do something to make the environment better, too. Not always just the top leader's issues, so...

Oh yeah, I did. You can learn as much from a challenging leader as you can from a good leader. I've learned how to treat my people better. And I make sure that I never even get close to the way he was to me. You know, the things that he did to me. You gotta listen to your people, you gotta respect your people. The ... You know, that, again, praise in public, criticize in private, that's huge. You just gotta bring people in the room and have a conversation with them. You don't have to yell at them. You don't have to ... His tone of voice and his mannerisms when he would talk to you were ... You could just tell he wasn't a happy person (laughs). He wasn't happy, I mean, with himself, or in the environment situation. But, you know, a lot of the way ... Most of the way he led you can learn to not do that (laughs). You're gonna be better off.

You know, I really enjoyed what I did. I liked the mission, the people. I still miss the people from CENTCOM. They were just a great group of people. And you know, and that's something. The toxic leader, it makes people come together to survive. And you get closer. And everybody goes through the bad situation together. I think we kind of got closer. You know, we tried to protect each other more, which you may not always have that in a different environment. So, yeah I think it was ... I learned as much from that experience as I did from other deployments that have went really well, I think.

You know, and that's a tough one, because I would give the advice of you need to talk to the person one-on-one. But I wasn't able to do that with him, so that ... I really couldn't say that. And you can go to HRO. I mean, you can go to the Inspector General. But that will, long term, could affect your career. That's a tough question.

Well you gotta be careful, and you gotta know your environment. If I would have went running to the I.G., and I was you know, a normal two year/three year tour there, I guess it would have to have more faith in the system to make sure that it wouldn't get back to him.

Bad Example 2

I mean, I have another ... I've had another toxic leader that we had a pretty sensitive issue, a couple of us did. And we went through the whole process of we went into his office, and we talked to him. You know, we gave him the opportunity to help fix this situation. And he wouldn't do anything about it, so we went off, and we met with some other leaders in private ... In confidential. And we said, "What do we do?" You know, and he was a toxic leader. And I don't think the other leadership knew this. We told him what was going on, and we basically said what do we do? How do we fix this? And we asked them, don't ... Please don't let him know this. This is in confidence.

Well, the first thing they did when they got back, is they told him. And he came back, and the one person ... There's two of us that went forward with it. The one person he basically ... He didn't fire him, but he moved him out of- out of the unit to another unit. And he pulled me in the office and- and yelled at me for doing that.

And, that's the thing is, you've gotta be really careful who you talked to, to make sure that it doesn't get back to the leader, and you don't have any way to defend yourself.

Lack of respect for their people. I mean, people weren't positive contributors, they were just tools in the tool belt. And, you know, you use them until you wear them out, then you get rid of them. They never really listened to your opinion. I mean, as a leader you gotta realize you're not always right, and there's ... The two striper might have the best idea in the whole squad room. You need to listen to everybody, and give them their time.

You know, the ... And he never really treated ... Neither leader treated us with respect. He just used us. Never acknowledged the good stuff. And they both ... You know, when you criticize in public, that really hurts, I think, a person's attitude. You know, and the other situation, it wasn't as bad. You know, once in a while he was more normal.

But in my situation with CENTCOM, I don't ever remember a day that he was normal and reasonable. He was always the same. He'd come out of his office with a chip on his shoulder, and a dark cloud over his head. He'd go find somebody to dump on. And he'd go right back in his office again. So-

No, I think we covered it. I said it was one of those ... It was the worst experience I've ever had. In my whole career I've never had anything that bad. The only savior was it only lasted six months, and that's kind of a cop-out on my ... I just dealt with it. Didn't know how to fix it.

Recommendations

As we talked, some advice I would give to someone in a toxic leadership situation would be to try and get to know the person better, maybe find a common interest. I run about 3-4 marathons a year so obviously I enjoy running. I recall a conversation at my going away luncheon when the leader and I were talking for the first time about other than work stuff, and he mentioned that he had ran a marathon, this knowledge might have softened our relationship in the work environment if we would have had it sooner. I think that if the leader knows you better he sees you in a different light and treats you like a human rather than just a resource for the organization to be used and abused. Almost like in a hostage situation when it's best to share as much as possible with your capture....

Interview 2

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Background

I'm an Army Special Forces Lieutenant Colonel, that's Army Special Forces Green Beret types. I came in 1990 and retired in 2013 and during that time I had, you know, prior to 9/11 lots of deployments to Africa, and during the fun times, and then after 9/11 is all Afghanistan and Iraq and so forth. I have, a great. Ah, yes. I believe I had, I think, well I had a lot of great leaders but one specifically jumps out at me as being a great leader, and I have two that would stick out as being destructive.

Bad Example 1

The first was back in the Third Special Forces group, we had a battalion commander when I was a Major that basically he would burn down bridges instead of building them. He would isolate each of the company commanders in making them think that they were ... That the other two company commanders were talking about them or getting preferential treatment or doing things. So it made each of them, it broke down trust between the three companies. The three company commanders that were trying to work together. We were all Majors at the time, in Special Forces a company commands their Majors, O-4s. And it really, he made each of the company's feel like they were being undermined by another company. So put a lot of distrust throughout the organization. That was the first thing that really stuck out.

Second was he would do the same things as individuals. So he would try to dissuade, or not dissuade, undermine the leadership ability or what somebody's doing. One Major with us would say with another leader. It could be done at O-3 level or O-4 level. But it was ... he would. I'll just give you a quick example. Um, we ... I was .. my company was left behind um, during a push to Afghanistan, so as a rear detachment commander and during that time, so all ... so he took most of my company forward with him. Left only a few of us behind. But he didn't tell nobody. He didn't tell his Chief of Command, he didn't say that. So he officially took two companies, because that's all he could take. But he gutted mine and took all my equipment and all my operators, except just for a handful of people.

Um, so during that time was when all the officer um, OER's, Officer Evaluation Reports, are going up. And you know, promotion potentials and where the officers could be placed in their next assignments. That kind of competition was beginning to occur a while. They were down the range in Afghanistan. So instead of having this colonel call back to the O-6 at Bragg and talk about these things he had me represent them. So I had to go in and represent each of the other majors of which I'm competing with for who should go to the next higher position, who should move to different locations around Bragg in terms of promotion and so forth like that.

So I had to go and talk to the group commander about all these things. Meanwhile, he's down in Afghanistan telling everybody that I was undermining their efforts for command and all these other things he said. He made distrust through the guys that were overseas and me in rear det when reality what I did was I went to the group commander and said "I think I need recuse

myself, this is not appropriate for me to be coming in here." And he said, so basically there's a list of officers from like one to ten on it, and said, the colonel's like. "Just give me the list," (laughs). "I got it, bye-bye."

So then, I went back and told To-the colonel that was in Afghanistan, my guy and said uh, "Hey sir, we- just letting you know we- I passed the list.". He said "Well did you get to stay in the meeting?" I said "No, I didn't get to stay in the meeting with the other ten commanders I thought ... I don't think it's appropriate." And then he went and told everybody that I wasn't supporting the folks down range. You know, all those guys and all their efforts. It just made - this whole thing is just gut-wrenching because he was putting you in positions that were just awful.

Um same thing we had, uh, one of our soldiers killed and so I was running the uh Family Readiness Group. We had a few guys wounded and he called me up and said "Hey make sure you tell FRG, The Family Readiness Group, that this is just a- this is a bad time. There's probably going to be a lot more guys coming back dead."

And you know, it's just kind of, that kind of guidance and the way he was treating me. Um, he sent me an email once that said "I expect Bushido-like officers." And I think just before Google I was like, what is Bushido? But if you look at it, I believe it's the Japanese um, it's not even ... it's beyond just honoring or respecting your chain of command it's actually, it's almost a religious thing. Like you uh, you honor them as a uh, god. It's almost ... it's beyond a normal chain of command it's like a god-like thing. And he said "I expect you to have a Bushido-like um, respect for me.". In so many words. I was like oh my gosh. This guy's out of control.

So but, this was- these are my personal examples. He had the same reflections when we went down to range. He had- there was three battalion commanders in- in Northern Iraq when we went in and he had um, near fist fights where the group commander physically got between him and other battalion commanders and said "Hey you guys, you need to break this up or take it outside," so you know, the whole- the whole relationship at the personal level, at the company and battalion level, the tactical level, it had effects at the upper-tactical level when you had a CJSOTF being run in Northern Iraq and we couldn't relate or get along with the other battalions. And if the battalion commanders aren't communicating well, their subordinates are going to be ... reflect that same behavior.

So then the majors and the other staffs couldn't get along well. So it- it did have a net effect on the operation. You know, it wasn't just an isolated "this guy is a bad leader". Um, the same individual moved forward and eventually got to, um, SOCPAC in PACOM. Eventually did the same type of behavior that he was doing with our element and eventually there was uh, um, what do you call it. Uh, when you have an investigation, uh ... IG ... oh, it was an IG complaint investigation. Eventually he was lat- put somewhere laterally. But he was still never punished. Um, but they moved him laterally and that took him off whatever GO ranks- general officer ranks, that they thought they might need for him. So he was off the track definitely, but you know, that problem continued throughout his career all the up until.

No I think he was- he was a uh, had no prejudice when it came to offending everybody. (laughs). He would do it all. So, yeah. I don't think there was any, uh, EO issues at all in his body. That's not his issue. He treated everybody poorly.

[And did the O-6 above him know what was going on?]

No, I, what's weird is that I know that the relationship was not good. I know his relationship was not good with the other battalion commanders, that was well ... well understood. Um, however, I did see his OER, his Officer Evaluation Report because ... because I was rear det commander, rear detachment commander, and it came in. I'm like going- just going through stuff and I saw it. You know, the guy's two up, the general officers, you know, giving him, one blocks, top blocks, everything, because all they're seeing is this guy who's just taking the- taking the world by storm, but not seeing all the negative impacts it's having down three or four levels below them.

So they were seeing multiple deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq. I mean this guy came out with three or four bronze for one tour of battalion commander. He had three or four bronze stars. Regular bronze stars and then um, the Legion of Merit, for one deployment. And then a Legion of Merit for leaving battalion commander or something like that. So I mean, he got- he walked out with uh, a lot of bling. (laughs). But the guys above that weren't seeing it. They were just looking at kind of the numbers, and seeing th- the uh, all of that. Um.

[How did he impact you personally?]

Definitely emotionally. I mean going to work everyday was like your guts in your throat. You felt very insecure. And I think that insecurity, when I was talking about the undermining people and putting- causing descension literally in the ranks, makes you very unsettled because you don't know if your friends are with you or against you. And it kind of perpetuated this notion that you can't trust anyone to your left and right. And so, on a personal level, it made me very- it made me insecure. Um, it made it ... um, just the stress involved with this whole situation was just awful. Um, but did have impacts you know, operationally too because um, the way he was doing things, um nobody wanted to um, make him mad. Or- so everybody starts hiding stuff from him, or d-done doing things behind the scene. It definitely makes people stop operating totally in the clear truthful. So you start trying to work behind the scenes.

Um, we would- we would ... if there's bad news we'd try to pick specific days when you might be able to get to see him and maybe in ... or you might send a sacrificial lamb or someone like this. I was a sacrificial lamb a lot of the time. But you know, you would not ... you tried ... you just couldn't come in there and tell some bad news without knowing that it's just going to snowball downhill and get worse and worse and worse. So you have to really pick and choose.

What also impacted me um, picking my battles. And I- I have some regrets with this, um, to this day that I- I was a commander um, and I wound up really trying to pick and choose my battles because I knew I couldn't win them all. And so, I think that made me less of a good commander because I stopped doing maybe some things I should've been doing because I didn't want to fight those fights. And I think my soldiers probably didn't ... I don't think they saw um, how much I was trying to do for them, but at the same time, I- I could not explain that. I just couldn't fall on

my sword for every one of these battles with him. I just couldn't do it. Um, w- we would get nothing.

[How did your unit perform under his leadership?]

Yeah. I mean, like, the company really kicked butt in Iraq and Afghanistan. Or my company um, I mean, we had at one point like 18 silver star nominations. I think three silvers came out of it. So I had three guys in my company get silver star. Tons and tons of V-devices on ARCOMs and bronze stars and so, um, we got one of the biggest battles at the time was in the Becca Ridge in Northern Iraq and we got- we killed like 19 tanks and APC's and things. I mean it was ... so if you're getting those headlines from several layers up you're like oh my god, these guys are just bringing in great press for you know, U.S. Green Beret-type people you know I mean. So.

Recommendations

Uh, uh, I'd say the first thing is um, what I personally am awful at so, do as I say and not as I do, is I internalize too much. Um, you just got to let some things go. I mean, when you're dealing with people like that I mean, you just can't ... y- you want, I'm a proactive type-A guy and uh, I want to get things done and I want to find pathways, thing is when I can't find a pathway I get just ... as you know, (laughs), it's very frustrating if you can't find a way forward.

I would say you can't ... you got to let this stuff go and not internalize it and just play your own game and say, "you know what? I'm not worried about OERs or ratings or anything else.". Just go with the punches. You know, odds are, you're going to wind up as lieutenant colonel probably you know, if you do great or you do mediocre you'll probably be a lieutenant colonel coming out of that SOF Green Beret land. So don't sweat it. Go in there and just be the best you can be for your soldiers, and let that be your guide.

And then number two, I probably would've been more assertive upfront, and more in his face and more combative. Because I think he- I think people cowered away. Like I told you, four people kind of stayed away from him more. I think if I'd bowed up and actually got in his face and closed the door and said, "Hey let's handle this right now, let's do it.", you know? I think he would have more respect for me than- than what he had.

[Did you ever see anybody do that to him?]

No. None of us. I think every body was ... and again I think it goes back to how he isolated each of us. You know, it wasn't like a combined front where three guys, three majors walking in go, "Hey this is BS," or "No friggen way we're going to do this, you can do whatever you want, kiss my ass." you know? None of us ... because we all felt isolated I mean we felt like- I felt like the other two guys were on his team. And in talking to those guys later on, they thought I was on his team. You know, and he made it like that way. He liked having that strife. He liked having that ... Because if you look at it he could manipulate each of us individually. Which is very uh, just poor, poor command environment. It's just awful.

Bad Example 1

Um, he- he, he was a constant fighter for ... Let's put it like this. He was tactically proficient. He was ... The good thing ... the thing about him was he was not ... I mean, he was, let's put it positive. He knew his trade craft. He knew how to operate. He was not- he was a ... He was sound tactically and operationally. Um, no doubt he knew how to maneuver ground forces and do that sort of thing. So he was a fighter and a proponent for all that, so. He- he was just not a cheerleader trying to get along with people while he was doing it but he did fight for our equities.

Um, he did from my company, get dollars and resources and things to experiment with some stuff and build things like vehicles that were like, mi- was a mighty max. What is that thing from the movie? Um, Max. Whatever it was. This big old apocalyptic-looking vehicles. We built all sorts of crazy stuff. So he did get behind this. Get the dollars flowing our way. He harnessed the resources and uh, he was hard on the training, made sure the training would be taking place. So in terms of tactical proficiency he did, he put a lot of that fight into the soldiers in terms of beans, bullets, and ranges and opportunity to go train and everything else like that. He was ... Because he is so singularly focused on that mission he was- he was going hell or high water to make that happen.

[How would his casualty rate as a commander in the war zone compare with other units?]

I would say it's about the same. I don't think that it was plus or minus, um, I do know that ... you're asking for another example in that question. At the time- that time ... at that time in Afghanistan the casualty rate wasn't nearly has high as it became. This was 2003 or 4. No, no, no. 2002. 2004. I was there I guess. So it was in that range. It was early 2000's when it got a lot worse. And so.

Yeah. I was in Fort Brag as a rear detachment commander in Fort Brag. So I basically put on the battalion hat- the commander hat, and took care of all the admin stuff while he was forward.

[So you were both rear and forward under this guy.]

Yeah. Yeah, both. No, you triggered something about the casualty rates, uh that- that you're asking for specific examples. He ... And this is kind of the ying and yang, you also asked about what were the things he did well. You know, operationally, tactically he's sound. But by God he wanted his way.

And I remember this time, I was listening over the radio when he was trying to do this movement against the Taliban and he had to be there forward doing it himself. By God he's a centralized kind of guy, he can't delegate to anybody. So he would be forward, and I remember there's IED's all over the place there. And you know, some routes you'd have to go slower on and some routes you'd go faster.

So you can't just say "Hey, conventional infantry attack. We're at phase line A. Phase line B. Phase line C. Everyone needs to be on line at phase line at the same time.". You know, you- if you're going to sync up in operation like a old infantry tactics, y- you, it doesn't really work like

that in Afghanistan because if you have three different axis of advance you're moving in on, some might be completely immobile. If you want the teams to get there alive. They're going to have to take their time to get through IED-laden places and put scouts out forward and walk through places. I mean, you got to do a lot of stuff.

And I remember some team that was not moving as fast as he wanted it to, him saying "You need to be phase line, plan says you should be here at this time," and I'm hearing back channels, you know, they're trying to wade their way through IED-laden areas and no-go terrain, because all you're going with is with a map. And then you get stuck there and your team can't ... You know these roads are crazy in Afghanistan, you know, you've flown over it a-zillion times. So, y- you know you just can't do that. But that's kind of how it manifests itself. He's very centralist. Went his way, and if he didn't he'd say "I'm going to fire you.". And so you got this team, we were out there doing the best we can to protect his troops.

So I think he was reckless. And I think if he had been there later on in the war we would have taken a lot more casualties because he would have put people in harms way and I don't think he really gave a crap. I don't think he really cared about the other guys.

Oh yeah. Oh yeah. He threaten to fire me, fire all of us. Um, team leaders, yeah. He ruined team leaders careers. And we say fire him, I don't think there's ever anything like I'm tossing you out of the Army on an article 15 or a court marshaling, it was never like that. But it was um, he put people out that ruined their careers as oh O-3s that could never recover again. So a lot of guys got out and went to other places where- .

[So what was a team leader--an O-3?]

Yeah.

[How many people in a team?]

Uh, 12.

In three battalions. So you got six teams per battalion. I'm sorry. Six teams per company. Three companies per battalion. So six and three, that's 18. 18 team leaders. So if you got on his bad side as a team leader, he would just wreck you. And so, so you talk about some of the battles I had to fight, I had to go fight for team leaders because I was a radar for these O3s and I would have to go in there and he wanted to tube some of these guys, I'm like "How're you going to tube this guy? He had two guys off his team got silver stars, everybody on the team got bronze stars with V. He got one. And you think he's the worst guy in the battalion?" (laughs) "How's that possible, sir?". Yeah that's exactly how the conversation would go. H- how can you even say he's sub-center of mass? I mean look what his score is. He should be up here. I- I mean, you know, I don't think he's the best guy either but look what he did. You're grading him on what he did and then potential, so. Y- you score him less on potential maybe. But you can't take away from the guy that he made three deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq and came out with two bronze stars with V and he got two soldiers with silver stars or whatever. He's just ... you know.

He did. He got promoted in '06, put out at PACOM in SOCPAC and then that's when they had IG inspection out there. IG complaint. And eventually probably close to a year for that investigation, eventually they moved him elsewhere and that's where he retired. I'm uncertain, unsure where that elsewhere is.

It was actually against him and the other awful leader I had at one point. They were both together. One was uh, the J-3 and the other guy was a chief of staff and I forget which was which, but it was a ... it was a combination of the two at SOCPAC that just um ... just caused all sorts of problems. (laughs).

[So was this other guy the other person you were going to talk about?]

No, the ... no. That was another side guy. No. But the other one was uh, how we doing on time? We doing okay?

Okay. The other guy was a general. Over at SOCOM. And uh.

No. I- I think you got the gist of it. You triggered things I hadn't thought about in a long time. You got ... Frankly don't enjoy talking about it because there's nothing could be done. It also brings back some personal regrets that I have that I wish I had done better. Um, I wish I could go back now knowing what I do now and I had to put in that situation now, it would ... I think it would be different. But at the same time, he might've just squashed me. You know, it could've worked great. Or it could have been ... you know, he just dismissed me even worse.

So I have regrets. I don't like living with regret but there are some things I just w- I wish I'd just done better. My career kind of ended anyway. I didn't make it up to general officer level or anything else so all that anguish and worry at the time, um ... And it wasn't like you were worried about getting promoted but you're trying to do a good job and the back of your head is you're a major. You know, at some point in there you're thinking about retirement. You're thinking about how I'm going to make a career out of this thing and heres this guy standing in the way of that. So it does have an impact on the way you handle it even if you want to say it doesn't, I think.

I would be disingenuous to say "Yeah I don't care what anyone says about me," but that's ... you know, that would be disingenuous. Once you get over 20 you're kind of like, okay, you can have a little more ... you can puff out your chest a little bit more and say "No, I'm not going to take that from you," because you probably can more. Anyway that's ...

[Did he have any impact on your career do you think?]

He actually, um ... you know, in a weird way, he didn't want to make give me the top box I got. But you know, funny again, you just triggered this, his boss the O-6, disliked him and so disrespected everything ... was so pissed at this- O-5, and he saw everything I was doing in rear and trying to do for him. The O-5 recommended on my OER that I was a little lower ranking. The O-6 bumped it up a level and said "No, this guy's one of my top guys." So it was almost like a bird finger to the O-5 saying "No, I'll take care of this guy." Whatever. So it was just kind of funny that he went ... that he uh, inversely- inverse ... He actually because of his problems ... The

O-6 actually took care of me more than he did. So, it (laughs) it's just kind of funny. That I was with O-6 every day in the rear you know, when I was, when they were deployed. Anyway. That's that.

Bad Example 2

The other one was ... I was a special operations command at SOCOM and uh, this guy was a major general. And I was a lieutenant colonel. And I was in one directorate—Exercises—and this individual, this general was uh, in the operations side as the J-3. They changed the names of these organizations but in fact he was the J-3 I'll just leave it at that. And then ... and as it turns out, kind of skipping towards the future, it turns out he has a drug ... He got hooked on opiates, you know, the kind of ... the end story of this thing is it turns out he was on opiates because of back problems and other things. And he was turning pretty manic depressive and he would just lash out. But this guy is another example of a leader that h- he would take no bad news.

There's no way to talk to him about bad news. And so, kind of everything I talked about in my first story apply this now, instead of O-5, O-6 relationship you're talking about an O-5 to a major general relationship. And um, and how tough that was when the staff wouldn't go talk to them. So at this level you got the J-3 of SOCOM that nobody, none of the O-6s would want to go and talk to them and they would not bring issues up to his level because of the command environment. He would snap on them, he would ... he would have hissy fits. He would uh, just go completely ... I mean it was literally seething, spitting, red face in your face yelling at you kind of behavior.

Um, there's one antidote whether it's related or not related, you know, who knows ... but there was one lady that, one woman, another female officer that killed herself after getting an ass chewing by this guy, so ... She obviously ... that wasn't the only thing that probably put her over the edge but the fact of the matter was she got an ass chewing, got raked through the coals on that and killed herself that night or the next day.

So, it was an awful command climate. Um, the O-6s were ... would not offer things up and then I was a sacrificial lamb sometimes by the ... I had a G-O ... I had a two-star G-O. So another major general in another directorate I was working for and I would go in there and that major general wouldn't say anything. And just watched me get ... um, crushed. Uh, for about a ... the example always is- is turned into comical routine. But I was in there briefing what was supposed to be a good news story. And I started talking, I was on the very first slide. It was only like eight, nine slides saying how great things were going. You know, this exercise program, blah, blah, blah. And he start yelling at me on my- my agenda slide.

So like, (laughing) slide two after the cover sheet. And he is in my face. I'm sitting down. Just yelling, yelling, yelling. You know, like spit on the table kind of yelling. Where you're like holy crap. And then ... Now I'm like next slide. And I was talking on that slide and he'd go at it and go at it and go at it. And I go next slide. So I literally made it to the last slide and I was like ... By that point, my knees are shaking under the table. I'm like, this is ridiculous. And my major general didn't say one word. And uh, I got to the last slide. It was the way ahead slide. So I was

like, "Sir, I don't think we need this last slide. I think I got your point today. I understand all this.". And I just turned it over like that. He said "Okay, then we're done here."

And uh, sitting outside, major general whatever your name is, you sit here with me. So you got a major general talking to a major general. And um, so I walk out into the little alcove outside, this little glass room outside the office. And about 10 or 15 minutes later my major general walks out and goes "Oh hey, well that didn't go too bad at all did it?". And I said, I said, "What f**king brief were you at?" (laughs). So, yeah. That was uh, that was a real ... that's how it went. And so.

No. He just ... Nobody ... Everybody just coward out. They just figured this guy was uh, manic. I mean just crazy. Just it's like ... Get out of the meeting. Um, the best I ever saw it was there was one Lieutenant Colonel that ... He's uh, a Navy pilot. And he uh, this General was going off on and I was in a ... with a group of other Lieutenants.

So picture for whatever reason that day, there was maybe one O-6 and maybe three or four O-5s in there briefing. I don't even remember why we were in there for what it was but this guy was briefing the General, and General starts barking back and then Lieutenant Colonel starts saying, "Well that's your job Sir. That's what you should be doing. I don't know why you're coming to me with this. That's your job." So the Lieutenant Colonel starts barking back and he barks back and barks back. And finally the Major General puts his hand on the table, looks down, doesn't look at anybody and says "We're done.", and doesn't move. So we all lift up, make sure we grab all of our little pencils and things. (laughing) We don't want to go back in that room for your little bags, you know? Grab your paperwork and go.

So that guy was never able to brief the General again. He was put in another directorate, into another floor. Um, but yeah. This guy ... and the biggest operational repercussion is he wasn't getting the best intel then. He isn't getting the bad news stories from the field. He isn't getting the true poop. He is truly living in what he wants to believe and I can make it allude to politics a bit here but I won't. But you know there's- when you know ... senior leaders won't listen to their subordinates and won't have a cordial arrangement where people can talk back and forth, and actually have a conversation you know, that is a very uncomfortable conversation, they've got to be had, or else the guys below will like I did with that Lieutenant Colonel, you start freezing up and say you know what? I don't want to fight this fight. And that's what would happen.

So it was like. With these guys, these O-6s we would ... and actually even these other General Officers would not engage him on these things. We were two weeks before an exercise, as an example. And we finally get in there, and so these exercises at SOCOM involve the whole battle staff. So they're not little things. These are four star level exercises, and we're doing this internal CPX-like thing that involves hundreds of people within the headquarters. And ... and this General um, said that he was not happy with the scenario and blah, blah, blah, these other things. And that we had to re-do it all. Two weeks out. It had already been scripted.

I already spent several hundred thousand dollars with contractors coming in there scripting this whole exercise. Injects written, intel prepared, everything's done. And I had to um ... and that Saturday morning I had the uh, Deputy J- the J-33 O-6, me back in my SCIF with a couple other people. Fixing everything. Re-doing it all. On Saturday morning—and that's two weeks out. And

he just did that to prove that he could, you know. There was no reason why he had to do that. He had been briefed up to then, he was just trying to show that he was boss. And that by God, um, I'm going to make my point here. And that's what he'd do.

We got ... We had ... We wanted to go there less because there's a weird reverse proportion or weird reverse reaction to these kind of environments. You see the leaders going "I should see you more, you're giving me ...", that's where I learned the term 'Fait Accompli'. You're not getting enough touches up here. You're not getting ... I'm not understanding what you're doing and you're bringing this to me too late for me to actually do anything about it. Well flip that around. Why are people not getting in there telling me what to do? Because he's going to flame them.

So nobody wanted to go in there. So you'd wait until the last possible minute to give him something and hope it floats by and hope he's in good mood. So you have this ... you know this opposite intended effect ... net effect of this whole thing. Where he wants to see you more often but nobody wants to see him more often because you're going to get flamed and get nowhere. And that's what ... that's what happened with this one. It's bizarre.

No. This was not effective because he did not, I ... it would have to be ... The only reason I think there was effectiveness I should say because the O-6 would ... inversely the O-6s would rally together and try to sort things out without taking anything up to him that needed to go up to him. I mean, he would, it would ... The O-6s I felt like were doing a really good job working together and trying to smooth things over at that level and they had my back as best they could but I was in another directorate. And my directorate didn't have the horsepower because I was in the seven, they were in the three.

Everybody knows there's a class order within the J codes, and the J-3 is much higher than J-7s. So our guys couldn't hold a candle to those guys. So I- I embedded myself with the J-3s and just did everything with the you know, J-35, J-33, those types, J-36, I got to know those guys really well and I'd follow up under their wing and try to have them brief my stuff. Um, get it through.

The other thing I had to do was. This guy's a Green Beret, I'm a Green Beret, and at some point I just figured that I- I'm ... for whatever reason I'm ineffectual. I couldn't get in there. I couldn't get ... I couldn't get permission to go to the bathroom from him if I wanted to right. So what I did was ... I put in a Marine aviator. So I did all the slides. Did all the planning. This guy was not a strong long ball hitter. Um, he didn't want to do anything. He was in retirement mode, he was getting out. But, but he could talk some smack. And so what I would do, is I prepared the slides, told him everything, said "Hey man, hey Chet, I need you to ... Here's what I need you to do, I'm going to get you on the calendar, can you do this with the General?". He's like "Yeah, I'll give it a shot. Why not?" Didn't care. He was getting out anyway.

He went in there, I- I don't know, an hour later he comes back, everything's approved. He loved it. We talked and BS'd for a while. We talked about everything and he's like "Yeah, he loves this plan this is great.", and I was like "You got to be kidding me.". So that's how ...

[Was the General a Marine?]

No he's SF. Army SF. So he liked the Marines. But I was an Army SF guy so he didn't like me. He wanted somebody else who looked different, or acted different, or different service.

Well yeah, yeah. Obviously he had a different approach but you know, the same exact material, because I mean, I ... It was my style. It was everything in there. But I think I don't know. I think he just went in there ... Chet had this kind of attitude like I don't give a s**t whatever you can do whatever you want to do, I don't care. You know, and, it would be like it just bounces off his back. And I think there's a commonality between my first story and this one is that both those guys were, if you want to say, megalomaniacs or something.

If you push back and show your strength back to them they probably cut you more slack in the future. Cower in any way whatsoever, they just pried on this joy going for that. And the same with some of my first story in the second is, I was getting nowhere ... My leadership was getting me nowhere. And so I just started pulling out all the stops and going "Well, okay, let me get at it.", and it, to be honest with you, kind of reminds me of my job in here now too.

I've always said if I'm not the one that's effectual briefing this stuff I just want to get it to go. I don't care who does it. So.

Oh yeah. He would just attack and attack and attack. And um ... And I think he was very ... you asked about in the first story about um, race, color, creed or prejudice or anything like this. This guy didn't have any of that. Except one towards rank structure. He is going to talk to O-6s. If you were not an O-6 he was not going to talk to you. He would literally walk past me in a hallway and if there was an O-6 next to me or behind me, he'd look right over my shoulder and I'd say "Good morning, sir," and he'd look right past me and he could shake the hand of the O-6 behind me. That's how he was. So once we kind of figured all that kind of stuff out that's when I started playing ball differently and I teed up for the O-6s and other directorates.

Um, and h- he knew our Major General was weak and he preyed on that and he assumed everybody below him was weak. So that was just his time to get off and get his energy out I think for the day. So, I- I embedded myself with the J-3 side. Got to know those guys well. Used the O-6s. Um, the O-6s that were there, there was one specifically. Um, I'll just call him Lee or whatever.

And Lee was really good at knowing when to walk out of the office. So if he saw that it was not going to be ... that this General wasn't in one of his moods, he would bring the conversation to the point, say "Yeah, so we'll just get right back to you.", like he just had this very chill mellow approach and he'd just walk back out and say, "We'll give him another day, we'll get back-".

So he had to play the game. But he wouldn't cower, but at the same time he wouldn't show a lot of emotion back either. He's keep it pretty ... he wouldn't show weakness either but he'd be like "Okay sir, well I think we've got the message on this. We'll get right back on it.", and he'd just kind of float right back out.

Recommendations

No. I think there's probably two decent points. Always look for another approach you know, I mean you probably ... You know me pretty good now. I don't- I'm always trying to find another way of ... If I'm hitting a brick wall I'm gonna try and find another way around it. I'm not going to just keep hitting that brick wall the same way every time. This was way frustrating because it took so long to figure him out, to figure out how to get through those problems. Um, and then like I said. I started off with the in state first and the story was, he was on the front cover of U.S.A Today, felt self-admitting as a Lieutenant General at the time that he was a drug addict.

[Do you think his behavior was related to his addiction?]

Oh yeah. And guys at my shop when I came into work that day there was a U.S.A Today hanging from my computer and little jokes like, "I just want to apologize to all my soldiers," and guys in my shop wrote "And [my name]!". Oh, sorry, there goes my name again. You're going to have to strike that. But all my guys would write all these little anecdotes in the margins of the U.S.A Today article and making jokes about the things they saw just how ... And again it took the life out of me.

This sucked the life out of me. Um, and again, I internalized this stuff and thought it was about me and it turns out it wasn't about me. That was about him. You know? But I let it take it out of me, which I- I again, I talk to my son about this stuff. And um, I say, "Hey don't follow my model on this one. This is one of my do as I say and not as I do situations.". And I'm trying to do better.

I mean, you can see me at work, it ... this is real frustrating work we do. Um, and actually what I'm doing now is probably one of the most frustrating of any of the work- compared to any of ... These are personality problems, but the work was fairly fulfilling in each of these. What we're doing now the frustration sometimes can just be so much. And again, you're internalizing things. So, if I was doing leadership studies and how you get- I'd probably work out with the junior officers and teach them how to ... better coping skills, better to deal with stress, um, wicked tough bosses.

Because you're not- these two examples I had, you're not going to teach them... These two examples you're not going to teach these guys in staff school about leadership. You know what I'm saying. These guys think they know everything.

[So what kind of coping skills do you think you've learned out of this?]

I'd say number one, and everybody- people would tell me this back then so I don't know if telling this really helps or not helps, but I would say just ... you got to let your little internal compass, your internal compass um ... always give you direction and not do it because of a rating or what's something on your potential job ... I mean professional development of ... I'm sorry I'm getting ... I'll say it again. Um, you got to allow ...

I would say one is that do it because of the right reasons and not the wrong reasons. Don't get internalized. Internalize things you can't control that are out of your spectrum. You're going to do okay in your career. I tell them this, "You're going to do fine in your career.". And if you define fine as retiring maybe someday or not, you're probably ... don't sweat it. Don't ... So that would be number one. Don't sweat this. You're going to get bad bosses and you're just going to have to deal with it. Don't internalize it as best you can.

Two, I'd say, there's nothing wrong with talking about it with other people. I'd say that's important. And it's not bad getting therapy. Getting a shrink to talk to, you know. If you start feeling like it's out of control, even today I was reading about um, DOD retired people have the highest suicide rate you know, it's way over the national average. So those types of things are you know, if you start feeling that way, get help. It's ... it's not a sign of weakness. It's a sign of strength.

More on the micro level I'd say, look for other ways of getting your job done. Don't ... Doesn't have to be all on you. So if someone else can get the job done, and you are meeting your mission, let them do it for you. You know, get somebody else. It doesn't have to be a Lieutenant giving a brief, or a Captain or a Major, or just whoever's in charge. It's got to be the guy who's the right guy or gal.

So there's a few things I think I think I've learned. Get some PT every day. Get away from it. And don't- Try not to take it home. And I'm telling you, these are all the things I suck at. So, you know, I- I'm definitely not holier than thou when it comes to these things. (laughs).

No, I think you got the gist of it. I- it just shows you that if someone's not willing to listen, they scare everybody away and nobody wants to bring them good or bad news, it just tears down the organization, makes them a lot less effective and uh, it-it ... In our business, could cost lives. It could definitely ... I mean this is real stuff we're talking about. We're not talking about the stock market going up and down or something. We're talking about if people are scared to come to a leader and say "This is what I think is going to happen.", without the fear of being fired, or yelled at, or anything else, you know, we might go the wrong path and get Americans killed. And that's a- that's a fact. That'll happen. So.

Good Example 1

My favorite, if I could- if I could pick just one. There's uh, a Lieutenant Colonel I had when I was an O-3. So he was an O-5 at the time that I was a Captain. And this guy uh, name's Jack.

Yeah, battalion commander. I was a lowly Captain in the SF battalion. So he's a battalion commander in third group, I was a detachment commander, and I became his HSC commander, his Headquarters Support Company Commander. This guy cared. He cared about everything you said. He listened to everything you said. He did ... If he didn't understand something he was self-deprecating, is that the right word? Deprecating? Self-deprecating. He's like, "Guys, I know I'm not the smartest guy in this room, I'm pretty dumb ... Hey help me out,", you know what I mean?

He even came across like that. He- he knew my family, he knew my soldiers. He cared about everybody and um, but he's a great listener and he didn't act like he knew everything. Um, he had this calm demeanor that could not upset ... That was never upset. Um, he's willing to admit his mistakes which I thought was ... you know, for a number three he was like "God, I can't believe I did this.". I mean he put me in his room and started talking to me like that and I'm like "Sir I can't believe you did that, really?" (laughs). "Yeah I know, I know. I shouldn't have done that. My wife's pissed at me.". I'm like "Oh sir, I'm sorry.". You know, it was like that you know. But he was a human being and to this day he's a mentor of mine. I talk to him to this day.

{[as he effective as a manager?]

Yeah, he wound up as an O-6. Um, and became an IG at Fort Bragg. But yeah, because nobody wanted to let him down. And he's very decentralized, that was a key thing. My other two examples of bad guys were very centralized. This guy's decentralized and he's like let the guys do the things. I trust you guys. And you- you really felt like he trusted you and so I'm not going to let that guy down at all, ever. You know what I mean. I'm like oh my gosh I never want to let that guy down.

I mean we got a chain of command now and here I really like those guys too and I don't want to let them down you know? That's what's kind of ironic with some of our work, but um, yeah. Never let this guy down and know that the guys in my command, and you know ... just permeated the whole battalion. Nobody wanted to let this guy down, and he knew that he had their back. So if somebody would mess up, he would take the fall for it. He would go and try to explain it to whatever, somebody messed up, and he would come back and tell you, you know, I'm disappointed in what you did this is ... Guys I can't believe you did this man, I really ... there's got ... I have to say I never got one of those but he would, do it in a very non-confrontational way in which people were like yeah, I shouldn't have done that kind of thing.

He ... I wouldn't say ... No, I- I never saw it directly but I had some uncomfortable things I was dealing with and he advised me on a couple things. Um, on how I should go to my senior rater and talk to him about some stuff, and in turn, and he was 100% right. And actually, one of those was a doomsday scenario, maybe one of the reasons why I didn't make O-6 was because uh, my- my senior rater at the time, just, you know, gave me a kind of middle of the road block check after I had been at the top blocks forever. And after I was already picked up below the zone. I was already picked up BZ, um, one of what four-five SF guys my whole year group that year.

[To Lieutenant Colonel?]

Yeah. So I was going Major Lieutenant Colonel, and you ... But the command board doesn't coincide with the promotion board, I don't know how it is in the Air Force but for us it doesn't coincide. So for us it's like this weird three or four month grace space between the two so branch rates said you're going to get picked up from BZ group commander said um ... said "This isn't going to hurt you anyway. You're already got uh ... you're already going to be BZ," so I went to Jack and said "How should I handle this?" He's like tell him you're going to get tubed. Tell him this is going to ruin your career.

And so I went back to my group commander and told him that. He said "No, no, no, that was a personnel guy. That's not true, this won't ... You're going to be fine.". Well guess what. (laughing). I didn't come out on the Battalion command list because I guess they looked at me, said "oh my god, this BZ guy? Got his center mass from this guy, his OER? Oh my."

So the point was that wasn't a ... that guy was a bad leader for different reasons, but. You know, he wasn't a bad mean guy. Battalion commander, Jack was trying to help me out with him. Gave me some advice on how to deal with that and his advice, to answer your question I would say is more um, related to explain- explain things. Don't get all upset. Explain to him the repercussions of things. And then Jack was such a good leader. I mean I bet you if he was dealing with a bad guy he would walk back to his office and say "I did everything I could.". And he would probably have left it in the office and went home and hung out with his kids.

No, no. I appreciate it. I don't know what the heck you're going to do with all my stuff. I just said, this is more I've ever talked I think about this stuff in one fell swoop. I don't particularly like listening to myself talk. But I'd be interested to see what comes out of this. I ... Even when I was talking I ... heard myself repeating themes which I had never really put together. So I think you'll have a ... you know, the correlation between these guys, good and bad, I hadn't really thought about. Um, then never juxtaposed it with a good one that cleanly either.

[Whatever happened to the General?]

Uh, I'm Facebook friends with him. (laughs). You got- you got to forgive everybody. I can't be not- forgive people. So uh, I think he became ... he retired. I think he's a senior consultant or something else for one of these companies, you know one of these. So. And hopefully, he seems to have learned from it. I don't want ... I don't want to say that. That would be a bad assumption. He seems happier now. He seems like he's gotten his life a little more together, just from watching his stuff on Facebook. And it seems like he's ... he's doing okay.

[Did he ever comment to you about how he treated you?]

No. No. Just I think ... the only time, I can see through the lines in the U.S.A Today that he ... that he regretted the way he treated a lot of people in his life.

Interview 3

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Background

I've been in the Army for 20, almost 27 years. I started out enlisted, uh, and then I went to the Officer candidate school and, uh, then I've been, uh, commissioned officer ever since 1999. Any more details than that?

Yes, absolutely. So, I have had very good leaders and I've had extremely bad leaders, uh, and a few that are in between.

Bad Example 1

So, I've had two or three, um, really, uh, caustic, uh, I think is a good word, uh, leaders. One, um, stands out as probably the worst. That's probably because I had, uh, her the longest and, um, it was my battalion commander when I was a battalion executive officer, uh, so, um, it ... it probably the worst, uh, uh, and just the details about her and the ... the experience or ...

I could probably write a whole book on that. So, um, so first of all, um, the battalion commander, uh, was a graduate of West Point, uh, the United States Military Academy, which I think is of particular note. Um, because actually two or the three leaders that I have had, um that were that way are both graduates of the academy. So, um, I ... I ... that's just ... that's just my personal beef I guess but, um, of note nonetheless, um, (laughs) 'cause you know those academy grads but anyway, I digress. The, um, the climate right off the bat when, uh, she took command was extremely tense. And some of it when she first came onboard you could have chalked up to, come in hard and back off. Uh, 'cause you know, asserting her authority or whatever you wanna call it. It's a technique that's very common. So I didn't think too much about it when, uh, the, uh, when the year started. Um, and that was back in, uh, July of 2013, 2013.

And, um, so the, um, it ... she just was very, uh, harsh and spoke to people very harshly and, um, uh, would make various comments that this was ... just reminding everyone how important the mission was, et cetera. Um, a couple of things that stood out, uh, were that I was ... I had put in for, uh, for a pass and, um, she kept not, uh, accepting it and not approving or not denying it. She just kept sitting on it. So, I went behind closed doors, asked her, um, if, um, she had received that and, uh, her words to me, "Well, I was hoping you would come to the conclusion on your own that, um, it ... it ... you shouldn't go." (laughs) So, uh, okay.

... little passive aggressive but that's alright. Um, probably the worst thing that happened though was, uh, and that was very early on. And then as time went on, uh, she would ... we would be in staff meetings and she would give out guidance and sa- ... and approved courses of action. And then in the next week, the next staff meeting, completely deny that she approved it and say, "I never said that." But everybody else in the room had heard her say that, uh, she had approved it but she would deny that she had ever approved it. And then say she wanted to go a completely different direction or whatever. Even though there were notes and minutes and everything taken.

She would deny it and that we ... she would tell us that we obviously did not understand her or did not hear her correctly.

Um, so that's another example that happened routinely for the year and a half that she's in command. She was consistently inconsistent in that respect. The, um,

Ooh, (laughs) she would n- ... that's funny, because she would never put anything in ... she would never put anything in writing and sign her name to it. It is required for commanders to have various policy letters, uh, on certain things, uh, equal opportunity, harassment and sexual harassment, et cetera. Um, and, uh ... and, uh, then, um, and ... but she would never put ... publish those policies and those policies were supposed to be documented and ... displayed for all to see. Those were never done in the time while she was a commander. So, she would never put anything in writing and put her name to it because then she would have to be beholden to it. So, yeah, that didn't happen.

Um, the, um, the other thing that, uh, probably, uh, the final thing that I will tell you about and that'll be three examples for you, um, and ... and there's so many and I'm probably not gonna remember all of them but is, uh, we were at a, um, ... so my wife and I were going through, um, adoptions, we were fostering, at the time we were foster parents, and, uh, we, um, had a ... we had two, uh, chil- ... foster children with us at the time, I believe. And, uh, we were at a formal function, it was a, um, a battalion formal, uh, function that we were at and she met my wife and, uh, she said, "Okay, well, no more babies until the war fighter exercise is over." And, um, some would say she was trying to be funny but most of the people who knew here, knew she really meant it. She did not want me to have any other distractors, um, until the mission was over, until that particular mission was over.

So, um, she wasn't just, uh, just abrasive with me and the staff, uh, and the soldiers, she was abrasive with spouses ... you know, I can give you another example and I ... I will just because just to let you know the kind of person that she is. So, I was going to go to the headquarters, uh, which was ... so we were in, uh, we were in the Midwest and the headquarters was in D.C. that we reported to and so we, um, ... I was going back to the headquarters 'cause I had to do some coordination's, some meetings there. She pulls me aside and says, "When you go to the building t- ... go talk to some folks and find out what find out how I'm doing." Like, she wanted to know how she was doing and what their perceptions were of what she could do better to be a better commander. I said, "Ma'am, you got it." So, I did and I went and I spoke to two or three people about her, um, and, uh, there were a few people who wouldn't talk to me about her because they had nothing good to say so they held to the, uh, can't say anything nice don't say anything at all philosophy.

Uh, but then I spoke to a couple... few people and they were all ... consensus I got back was, uh, whether this is right, wrong, or, indifferent, this was the feedback that I got, as a female, um, she should, uh, consider a few other approaches, uh, and, uh, so, uh, I take that information back to her. And, uh, I give that feedback to her, I gave her some of those suggestions that, um, were ... were given to me for her and her approaches, um, and ... and ultimately it kinda boiled down as like that because, um, because she was a female she was viewed differently but the people we- ... that gave me advice weren't being like, "Stop being a female." It was because this ... "Here's

what we can help you do so that it ..." 'Cause they acknowledged that it wasn't right that she ... that that perception ... that perception was out there.

But, um, to help her overcome that, that's where the suggestions came in, just to be clear there. So, um, I take that back to her and, uh, she was, um, discontent with the advice but, um, let it be. So, at the end of the day I'm driving home and I get a phone call from her and she goes, "If they don't understand ..." Basically, "They don't know what they're talking about. We're gonna do this my way no matter what." So, even though her superiors, her superiors gave her advice on how to, um, overcome, uh, certain obstacles that she had, she chose to say that they didn't know what they were talking about and that they didn't know ... her words were, "They don't understand." So, um, and she preceded to do pretty much the exact opposite of all the advice that she was given.

Uh, they were giving her advice on how she approached superiors and her subordinates, um, 'cause they were getting a lot of complaints on her, uh, from subordinates. Um, oh man ... I don't remember specifics to be completely honest with you about some of these things but, basically, "Soften your approach. Don't be so abrasive." Um, you know, just ... that ... that kind of ad- ... that was basically their ... their guidance, um, "Don't be so abrasive and soften your approach."

Yeah. So, the mission there is we were basically a war fighter training battalion. So, we were a simulated, um, training facility is what we were. We had a facility that where we hosted, simulated, war fighter exercises. It is basically a training battalion and it was really a battalion equivalent 'cause we were more contractors than, uh, soldiers.

{[ow ... how effective was your unit?]

Extremely effective.

Um, you know, the thing is, is that, yes, were they effective? Yes. And, um, the entire ... the entire organization, the battalion ... entire battalion was very effective. We put through a lot ... we put through more people and, um, more trainees in the, uh, well I was there a total of two years but, um, in the to- ... two years I was there, about a year and a half of that was with her leadership. And, uh, um, very successfully, great reviews, and, uh, great training.

[Would you consider her competent in her war fighter skills or the skills, you know, not ... not her leadership skills but her actual ... the skills to get the job done?]

I would. Um, it ... yes, I mean, she very much had a knack for, um, securing resources and, uh, she had great skills in administration, um, so, yeah, I would say she had the requisite skills to get the job done.

[And how did her leadership style impact you?]

Yeah, to this day, my wife is convinced that I have, um, some sort of PTS from that experience. Um, and that's not in jest, she legitimately believes that, um, there's been no diagnosis, nor would I know how to begin that route but, anyway, um, so me personally, it was very stressful, um, and,

uh, ... I took, as the executive officer, I took the brunt of her wrath. Uh, with the exception of another major that was there, that I just ... I could not ... I could not get in front of on her but, um, it ... it ... she, uh, ... it ... it was just very, um, yeah, for me personally, it was very, very stressful. Um, I, uh, I did not ... I was ... I gained a lot of weight, um, and my doctors, uh, definitely attributed that to my stress levels. And I did not have a healthy, uh, existence emotionally or physically in that time period.

Uh, she would openly ... op- ... unabashedly, yell and berate people, anyone, but mostly the, uh, field grade officers. That ... those were her primary targets. A lot of the enlisted soldiers, um, she was actually extra kind to, um, it ki- ... from the officer's perspective, it kinda came off as a little patronizing. It's like she pitied them and she's like ... she had extra grace for them because they were just, "poor enlisted soldiers."

I would love to be making that ... I would love to be making that up, I just can't.

[Did she exercise that wrath on people outside of her unit?]

Oh, no, why that would ... no, because then that would destroy the persona, um, you ... you have to understand the ... this, uh, this woman was about five foot three, five foot four, and she was a poster child. She was blonde-haired, blue-eyed ... she was Barbie doll, right? Uh, and I ... that sounds very, uh, stereotypical ... I mean that in a very stereotypical way but it's very reflective. She had this persona that she was ... she was a poster child for the Army and, um, it would ruin the persona if she a ... you know, lashed out at other people outside the organization. Inside ... you know, when you're inside your own house, you can say whatever you want to to your own kids and tell them, "Don't you dare tell anybody else." So ...

[So who ... who did she ... where was her boss?]

Geographically separated. We were ... we were in Kansas, he was in D.C.

It was at Fort Leavenworth, yeah. There was an O6 that was the senior, um, advisor ... so we were active guarders of our soldiers and, uh, he was the senior advisor as the O6 up there and she interacted with him. And he fully recognized and realized that there was things going on and, uh, so, um, but he had not authority over her. He just was the only touchpoint there at Leavenworth for us.

Uh, yeah, she was actually nicer to me than she was a couple of other people. Um, there was one, uh, major there that, uh, she, um, she just took after. I mean, she just had it out for him and, uh, she ... at one point in time, he had gone to mental health, um, because of the severe lashing, verbal lashing that he would get and, um, he was standing in the hallway there and she walked in and he saw her and he, literally, ran and hid from her. So, that might sound a little extreme and dramatic, uh, but the man literally was traumatized by this woman. Um, and ... and, again, I just ... I don't have any specific examples of her exact words that I could give you that would be credible but, I mean, she just had it out for him.

In another situation, there was another major, again, it was always the field grade officers that she targeted and I say targeted because I truly believe that. Um, the ... it just so happens they were ... they were TDY and they ended up at the same restaurant. It wasn't planned or anything and she was there with some friends and, uh, he stopped by as he was leaving to say goodbye to her and everything just to show professional courtesy, um, and, uh, she off- ... she said to him, "Why don't you join us for a drink?" He said, "Uh, I would like to but I need to go where I'm going to go, um, say goodnight to my kids and everything. They're going to bed so I'm going to go say goodnight to them over the phone." Et cetera and she goes, "Uh, so your wife is more important than me?" And he goes ... and he thought she was totally joking and he goes, "Yeah (laughs), afraid so Ma'am." And she goes ... serious as a heart attack said, "Interesting."

So, to the point where, "Interesting" became kind of an inside joke amongst all of us that, um, and she, oh, yeah, it was all ... it was all bad. It was all bad.

[Did race or gender play an issue?]

Um ... so, we didn't have ... the only other female was a company grade officer and, um, she did not have the same issues that the rest of us did but the female enlisted soldiers, she thour- ... I mean, they ... she thoroughly protected and, uh, yeah, in fact to this day I still keep in touch with one of the female NCO's that were in that unit and, uh, she really likes her.

Because she was nothing but good to her. So, I don't know that it's safe ... or fair to say it was purely gender, um, ... but there definitely ... I would not rule it out either.

[And you said she was a lieutenant colonel, again, is that right?]

That is correct. And then the three staff officers that I referred to, myself, and the other two majors, we were all majors.

Uh, so, as far as physical effects, I don't know, um, uh, the emotional and mental, uh, distress that permeated the battalion though there were several memorandums that were, uh, for record that were written, uh, to document things that were done. I don't have all of those, um, but, uh, but they were part of ... so but they were submitted as evidence in an inspector general investigation. Uh, so ...

[Can you talk about IG investigation?]

Yes, I can. Um, so, because I saw how things were going, um, I began to tell the staff to anytime an incident happened where she, um, where she was abrasive, you know, just blatantly caustic, that, um, for them to write memorandums detailing the, uh, circumstances of the event. You know, what they were doing, what she did, and, um, any other, uh, subsequent results. So, um, then toward the end of her command, um, before her change of command, um, but like just before I had ... Um, and their, um, ... (laughs), uh, I'm sorry, one of my kiddos just came home from school.

I lost ... I lost my train of thought. Oh! So, just before her change of command, I requested an investigation for toxic leadership in our battalion. Um, I didn't make any accusations. I just requested that the Inspector General come out to our battalion and do an investigation to see if there was a toxic environment occurring. Uh, that was really strategic 'cause then if I don't ... if you don't point fingers at anybody then that makes people a lot less defensive. So, um, we got that investigation and then they talked to everyone in ... in the battalion and because of all the documents that I had had people write for months, um, and because I initiated the, um, the investigation, a year and a half later, I received a letter from the Inspector General stating that my, um, that the investigation that they had, um, initiated and the findings were substantiated. So, um, she ... tech- ... technically what that meant was, she was forever deemed a toxic, uh, leader. Uh, and, uh, as ... as a result, she ended up not getting promoted to O6.

Did it ... did her leadership style impact me professionally?

Professionally, no, I think it helped me. Uh, because I, uh, because I did the right thing and I did the IG investigation, uh, it kinda ... everybody knew that there was an IG investigation, right? And because I stuck with it and, um, I was able to, um, to lead people through that experience then, um, ... because that's what I did. I, basically, would stand in the gap between the staff and her and help them and lead them through to get ... to be successful. Uh, ... trust me, uh, people shut down on you if you, um, ... if you don't treat people well then they will be okay if you fail. And everyone knows that when you're a leader, your success is dependent upon the people who are helping you or working for you.

In this case, we did not do that. Uh, and we led through it, uh, I led them through it. So, as a result of that, when that experience was over, I had so many people, uh, from the headquarters acknowledge what ... acknowledge my, uh, my strengths or my ability to push through that experience. And they ... 'cause the woman had a horrible reputation. And a lot of people felt sorry for me and, uh, you know, I ... I will tell you that since that time, since I was in that position, I have had four or five evaluations, all of them being top block evaluations. So, I don't think it hurt me professionally because I continued to do the right thing and because I re- ... I think because I reported her and I'm sure ... I'm sure everyone knew that I was the one that reported it. So ...

Recommendations

[Can you describe ways that you coped with her leadership style?]

Alright, I will speak for myself first, I prayed a lot and I would come home and talk to my ... my wife and she prayed. I am probably sure that my wife praying for me in those times got me through that more than anything else. Um, I tried to maintain a level of fitness and, uh, I truly decided to keep things in perspective, uh, based on what my job responsibilities were. As well I knew the future would hold, uh, ... which would be ... it would end. It would end. At some point in time, she and or I would PCS. So, uh, and I would never have to work for her again, um, and that would, uh, ... honestly, just very candidly speaking, had I not known the Lord, I could not have gotten through that. I wouldn't ... the guy that was in mental health, I would've been like

him. I would've had a mental and emotional breakdown. Um, ... I mean, the man got quarters and everything for it. It was ... it was ... it was ugly. (laughs)

But I didn't and I'm convinced that it was ... it was ... I don't even wanna say my faith but I wanna say it was just because God ended up taking care of me. So ...

Yeah, so, if you were to ask me wh- ... wh- ... if I were ... so, if I were teaching a seminar, here's what I'd say, "Number one, be confident that you are doing the right thing. And if you're not doing the right thing, start doing the right thing. Two, keep a record of the bad things ... of those things that are wrong. If there are things that are being done wrong and I mean, legally, morally, ethically, uh, that are not correct, document those things. And then, three, don't be that guy ... that guy is the one who says that is a problem someone else will take care of. Know the right time and the right way to report a problem. And then, finally, never stop praying." Th- ... that would be what I would tell you.

[Let me bring it down to a tactical level. You know, when you're in ... you're in a staff meeting and you're being berated publicly, is ... did you find anything that ... that would help diffuse the situation?]

Don't escalate, yeah, um, I ... I actually have found, um, ... in a couple of ... so, since then, I've found that I've made a decision, and that's one ... I would never be, um, bullied by a boss again. Um, so I have found that the louder people get and they're out there, I'm telling you. And I had it in another job where I had one lady, I did not work for her, but there was a lady that ... and she was a civilian that loves to just get loud and just boisterous and ... and, uh, I found that the louder that the get, the quieter I would get, it would began to diffuse the situation. Um, it ... don't escalate, that would be what I would say.

The other thing I would say is, do not lose your footing. In other words, stand firm to not be bullied without ever losing any respect. So, if you can stand firm, get quiet, and be respectful, then, usually, I have learned starts to ... it will de-escalate a situation, typically. And there are some people that that doesn't work with but it has seemed to work for me since then.

One more thing, I would just say this, and that is, you can't go wrong with a support system. You know, to know who your support system is and use that support system, I guess would be the other thing. Um, you know, I always had my wife to go to, uh, at home, somebody outside of work. You know, you can't use the ... your support system at work because then it just becomes a gripe fest. You know, it's, uh, it's like, "Who can complain the most?" You know? And that's not healthy or helpful either. To be able to break from all the complaining and the angst that is occurring in the organization, to break from that and rely on a support network so that you know who you are and you know that you're doing the right thing and you get that confirmation and that affirmation. I think that is the other important thing to remember.

Bad Example 2

Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, um, I worked for a brand new 06, I mean, when I say brand new, uh, when I deployed in, uh, January of 2010, uh, I arrived in at the end of January 2010, the

previous November, uh, this individual was promoted to 06. So, he was brand spankin' new 06 and, uh, I worked for him in theater. I was the Ops officer in a ... it was as a contingent, it was a kind of a weird set up but, nonetheless, I was the Ops officer, and, uh,

[And was this in Iraq?]

... my desk which, the way that our very, very tight quarters were, my desk, uh, my back was to the door and, uh, one example of this individual it ... he would always be like, "I am an 06, you are an 04." Like, reminding me of our rank because it wasn't on our chest, I had no idea. Um, so, it ... he would do things like that but in this particular case, I'm at my desk and I'm working, he comes in and says, "Hey, can you print the slides out for that meeting that I have this afternoon?" I didn't turn around or anything I just said, "Oh, roger sir, I'll do it right now." He goes, "Well, if you're working on something else, it ... it can wait." I go, "No, sir, it's no problem, I got it right now." (laughs) Then he goes, "Is there a problem?" So, I stop and I stand up and I turn around and I go, "No, sir, what's wrong?" And he goes, "Well, if there's not a problem then look at me when I'm talking to you."

So, those ... that ... there's ... there you go, there's two examples, I won't even tell you about how there was another, uh, 04 there that he would send him to go get, uh, Dr. Pepper from the ... from the dining facility or that'd be sitting there eating and he would look at the guy's dessert and be like, "That looks good." And he'd just take a bite of it. (laughs) I can't make that up either but that's really what he did. So, yeah, he was a gem.

[Did you ... did you see anything in common between the ... these various leaders?]

Uh, between those two, um, ... (sigh) yeah, the military academy. Um, but, uh, I'll ... 'cause I'll tell you this, that guy, his dad was a military academy graduate and he talked all the time how he just wanted to make his dad proud. So, he wanted to make General Officer. He ended up not making General Officer because he ended up with too many complaints against him and they actually threw him out of the Army, uh, as an 06. But, yeah ...

It was leadership climate because he was not ... they ... they ... he was not gonna make ... he was up, he was an 06 promotable and he was going through, you know, the background checks and everything like that and, um, he had ... had been nasty to enough people that had ... he had, I'm sure, had a wrap sheet. But I was told that he was put out because he was labeled as a toxic leader.

And, uh, and he was not going to get promoted. So, if you're not gonna get promoted, you gotta go. So ...

Bad Example 3

No. I ... I ... jus- ... just the third crappy leader that I've had and this guy that I work for now who, um, basically tells you to go do something, gives you no guidance, and then tells you, you completely messed it all up and missed a task and that happens frequently. And, uh, high

expectations with no, uh, with minimal guidance. So ... um, oh, by the way, he's an academy grad also.

Good Example 1

So, I will start with the first one, um, so fast forward three months in theater, that 06, he rotated out with a different 06. That 06 came in and, uh, he, um, actually he's met the guy that came in, um, he's the guy that did my promotion. The ... the big guy but, anyway, um, he comes in and, uh, just ... one of the first things he says to ... he calls me in his office, he needs all this stuff, and he's going over the ... the list of tasks that need to get accomplished for the day and the week and so we're just going over it and, uh, he asked me a question, I answered it, and we kinda just were talking and then at the end, he goes, "Hey, look, I know that you some conflicts with the previous guy." He goes, "But those are over now. We're moving forward."

And that's all he had to say. And, uh, he was very patient. I remember having one particular task, that I had to accomplish and I was trying to put this huge, uh, report together and I mean I stayed up late working on it and, uh, I ... he comes in the next morning and I'm showing it to him and he goes, "Okay, this isn't quite what I'm looking for yet. Um, can you just give me, uh, just give me some time, I'll call you back." I come back and he had gone through and done a whole section of the report exactly how he wanted it so I would know. So, and ... really unbelievable, uh, that he took the time to do the work so that ... to give me a solid example of what he needed. So, very clear guidance, uh, not afraid to work, and just ... I mean, just that is just one example of multiples that that individual did, um, ... very calm, cool, and collected. And very ... I think the biggest thing is he would give clear guidance, he would be consistent, and he would be fair.

[Did you ever see him discipline anybody?]

Um, so, no, first of all, I think, one reason is because I think that he endeared people so greatly that he never had to but if he would've had to have, and I wouldn't ... I don't know of any time that he did but if he would've had to have, he would've been so professional and discreet about it, no one would've know.

No one except he and that person would've ever known.

And once it was o- ... once it was done, I'm sure it was done, I have no doubt.

It was Afghanistan. It's Bagram, Afghanistan.

No, we didn't have to worry about it at all. They were coming all the time. You just knew they were coming. (laughs)

[No, just the element of combat raises the stress level so this kind of leadership in extremis or leadership under fire, is another whole topic altogether.]

Yeah, so, um, I will tell you this, we were ... so I also traveled around the country with him. Uh, we had gotten shot at a few times while we were traveling and we were bombed ... were

mortared, um, routinely. So, combat stress, yeah, it was ... it was real and it was real threat as opposed to perceived threat that the other two leaders I had had.

[How did he react under fire?]

He ... um, I ... how do I put this? Um, like he reacted to everything else. I mean, he was calm, cool, and collected and even keeled about everything. He was phenomenal.

So ...he's absolutely awesome. He gave credit where credit was due and sometimes where it ... he'd give you credit for something that, you know ... you know you probably didn't get completely right but he would ... he would give you words of affirmation and encouragement no matter what and, uh, if he ever had anything to say that wasn't overly positive, it was so ... you know, it was, you know, it ... did he just say that? I don't think it but ... so ...

[And just to kinda compare between the ... the good colonel and the not so good colonel, did ... did the ... did the performance of the unit change at all as far as mission performance between the two colonels?]

Oh yeah. Oh yeah because with the first colonel you were afraid to do anything, you were afraid to take any initiative because you knew you were gonna just get ... if it didn't go perfect, that you were just gonna get, you know, blasted. With the second colonel, you were empowered to take initiative so you could go do innovative things. I mean, I brought on a whole new, uh, way of ... I ... I leveraged a whole new technology to track, uh, to track people coming in and out of theater while I was there and I was able to set up, uh, a policy for how forces were requested and ... and tracked. Um, whereas I would've never done that to the other guy because I'd just ... I would've never been empowered to do that.

Recommendation

Yes, be patient, give clear guidance, and don't be afraid to work. That sounds simple but, I mean, I learned to be ... I ... I probably became more even keeled and was able to resp- ... so that ... those two guys were before I had the battalion commander problems.

So, probably, what I learned from them, prepared me a lot for my reactions ... interactions with her.

[And what ... what happened to the good colonel?]

Well, he got ... well he kinda got better than that, he, um, he ... he was gonna have to wait a whole ... so, by the time he was promotable, which would've been a year or two after we got back from our deployment, I can't remember the timeline exactly but instead of ... he would've had to have waited another year to get promoted to, um, to one star or they, uh, he could retire and they give him and SES job instead. So, he basically got promoted and got his retirement all at the same time.

They totally took care of him and, uh, it ... it ... he's ... he's doing great.

I don't think so, um, you know, obviously, if you have any follow up questions, please let me know. But, you know, the reality of it is, is I ... I've talked to ... I haven't talked about a lot of good leaders, um, uh, they are out there, um, but I will tell you that ... you know, the sad thing is, is the common denominator, it's usually a couple of things, one, uh, one, lack of leadership opportunities where they were ... where that ... the individual was truly mentored. You know, if they were, uh, platoon leaders or company commanders that they, um, they did not get good mentoring when they were in those positions. Or if they go past that ... so like I have a general officer now that was never a battalion commander.

And it shows, I mean, there are fundamental leadership basics ... leadership fundamentals that are missing when you are not properly mentored as specific leadership milestones. So ... and, uh, yeah, and the other thing I would just draw your attention to is, there is always ... with the really bad leader ... so the really good leaders that I've had, there is not a tie to the United States Military Academy.

The ones that were, there is a tie to the United States Military Academy.

Background

[The IG report that you were apart of, is that available?]

No, so that was done through the National Guard Bureau and, uh, I would be very, very surprised if they would release any of that information. I was not given ... I was not given a copy any ... any type of information other than the fact that I got a letter stating that the, um, the findings were substantiated.

[Did that Lieutenant Colonel Battalion Commander ever actually write a performance report on you?]

She did. Back handed and mediocre

[Did that stay in your record? Or did they, as a result of the IG evaluation, did they pull that report?]

Nope, still in there, still gets looked at. But following those, uh, you can totally tell because of the reports I had before that time and then all the reports that I had afterward. You can tell that it ... it ... there was something that doesn't fit there.

Interview 4

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Background

I am a retired Navy chief petty officer [E7] and, uh, I served 20 years in the Navy, joined when I was 18, retired when I was 38. I served consistently on active duty. Uh, my primary focus of my rating was an intelligence specialist and I had the opportunity to serve primarily on ships, which is almost a choice in the Navy because if you, if you choose certain ratings you can decide to go to sea (laughs) or you can stay on shore duty.

Mine was pretty equally balanced. I made sure to stay on sea duty, rotate to shore duty for three years and then rotate back to ships. I did three ships and three shore duties essentially, retired here at Central Command in 2009.

So the whole time I was active duty, spent a lot of time at sea. I've done several Navy deployments and I think some of the examples I'll cite later on are actually when I was a contractor here, uh, locally, after my service. So I've been a contractor for 10 years, in the same type of job I did when I was in active duty. As a matter of fact, I retired one day as active duty military and then the next week I was in the seat, the same seat as a, as a defense contractor. So some of it, at least two examples I have of caustic leadership focus on one active duty and, and one as a contractor working for a government employee.

Bad Example 1

Absolutely. So, uh, in the military, my first ship I was assigned to, uh, so I'd been in the Navy for about four months, uh, and all through basic training and through, uh, basic training, er, the, the school training for, to be in an intelligence specialist and I reported to my first ship, uh, in the Philippines in 1990.

I met them on deployment and, uh, I met my first division officer, um, keeping his name out of the conversation, who, uh, who seemed very standoffish at fist, uh, not very interested in, in his new sailor that checked aboard, um, and I started working with, uh, my officemates who happened to be all the same pay grade all at the same time. We all kind of advanced together, we all had just gotten to the ship essentially at different times over the past six months.

And, uh, I think it's interesting to note that like some of the guys had college, some of them didn't, uh, but we were all enlisted and we didn't ... very junior enlisted, uh, um, I'm talking like E2s and E3s, and we didn't have a permanent senior enlisted person in our division. So it was, it was us, we had a temporary E6 and then straight to the division officer, and, uh, the division officer is probably my prime example of a caustic leader.

He, uh, he had no sense of organization, he had no sense of direction, and, uh, he would routinely change direction in mid-stride, uh, honestly to the detriment of the mission. Uh, he was, he was kind of laughed at by the staff around him on the ship, he was not respected in any way amongst

the other officers and the few chiefs, or, senior NCOs that we dealt, uh, just couldn't stand the guy.

Um, we had routine occasion ... Um, so we're underway, we're, we're on deployment, our mission really was to support the Marine Corps and whatever functions they had to do. It was our first deployment was mostly training exercises. The Marines would go to things like go to Thailand, do COBRA GOLD go to Korea and do, um, what's the big Korean exercise ... um, anyway the, the big Korean exercise was like a month long.

Our job in, in the intelligence center was really to, you know, help with the exercise and pass information to the Marines that are ashore, yet he wouldn't even talk to the Marine intel officer, not even talk to him, not address him, they wouldn't work, they wouldn't collaborate. Uh, so the Marine Corps ran the intelligence center and allowed, handpicked actually two of us Navy intel guys to work directly for them, but the hard Navy division officer would routinely countermand the direction of the Marine intelligence officer, um, because he wanted to retain ownership of us.

I- it seemed to me very confusing, it was very frustrating. There were times that, uh, I was working directly for the Marines and the division officer would pull me out of a, of a, a task directly supporting the current mission to go do something as silly as strip and wax the passageways. It was more important to him that the approach to the intel center was spotlessly clean. And so we would routinely just quit what we were doing and walk, everybody would walk outside. I mean all the ... imagine the entire workshop, outside scrubbing the walls, dusting, cleaning the floors and then stripping and waxing off of tile decks.

It actually takes a couple of hours and you've got to set it up where you have to either secure the whole passageway, do the whole wax, strip it, clean it, wax all at one time, or which we kinda preferred was wax half of the passageway on one side so that you could have somebody walk by and not close down the whole area, and then wait, let that dry and then switch and go wax the other side.

Our division officer absolutely hated us trying to do, uh, secure the whole passageway ... actually, so our preference was to wax the whole passageway at one time because if you did the half and half you left a streak down the middle and you could never get rid of it and you would have routine inspections and somebody would hit on that overlap and you'd have to redo it anyway.

So our division officer ordered we do half and half and we're, we're trying to sneak in at night to close down the whole passageway and, and just do the whole thing at one time and he would, he would routinely come up there to catch us go-, you know, and, and to inspect our work and if we weren't doing it exactly his way he would intentionally walk all over our waxed deck, no matter how, what state it was in, what condition it was in, just to make us redo it.

So we would waste hours that really we were off shift (laughs), we weren't, you know, we weren't supposed to be, uh, in the spaces doing anything. It was our, our, essentially our time and we were having to do maintenance constantly and redo it because it wasn't his standards.

Wh- another example of his kinda caustic leadership, uh, this was back ... so this was 1990, we were operating in the Central Pacific Ocean and we had indications that a Russian collection platform was gonna fly out and take a look at us and this is, you know, almost 30 years ago, so we're well in the clear of what happened and it was, uh, this reconnaissance aircraft is coming our way, I was on watch and my job was to, uh, notify everybody that this platform was coming our way.

So I made sure to go to combat, uh, and the whole process at, there's like 10 different people have to notify, you know, sometimes walking to the spaces because we didn't have the direct phone line or you know just notifying other people on the phone, every step I took I tried to call him and find my division officer because he's the intel officer, he's supposed to know this stuff right off the bat, and, uh, I spent the p- a process of two hours looking for our division officer and couldn't find him anywhere, state room, the ward room where he should be eating, the gymnasium, you know, maybe he's working out. Um, he didn't smoke, so I didn't have to check for the smoke break, but two hours I can't find this guy and, uh-

... finally I'm at the point where I, I feel compelled, the, the reconnaissance plane is gonna be close enough now, I feel compelled to go brief the actual captain of the ship. And so, uh, I did that. Uh, I felt, you know, mission supported it and so I went in and I briefed the captain. It's now two hours later, our division officer shows up. As soon as he stepped in the door, "Sir, th- this is the action that's going on, these are the, the processes that I followed to, to notify everyone in the chain of command. I've looked for you, I can't find you."

He just pauses and looks at me and, you know, this, is, this is mission support, it's direct operations, he stops what I'm telling him and he looks at me and he goes, "Petty Officer, why does the passageway look like garbage?" I said, "Well sir, I'm, you know, in here working, uh, I don't know what the other guys are doing, but this is what I'm focused on," and he says, uh, "Well somebody needs to go fix the passageways." "Yes sir."

So in the middle of an operation, I shut down our early warning system that was provided us the information of where this reconnaissance aircraft was, just turned it off cold and went out and started stripping and waxing the passageways. So to me that was just a clear ... I don't know where his head was at, I, for the life of me I've spent the rest of my career trying to grasp what he was trying to achieve and, you know, what was on his mind that took his focus away from the mission? And, and frankly I've never been able to grasp exactly...

[What was his rank?]

He, he started out as an O3 and ended up being an O4, uh, lieutenant commander when I left ... or actually when he transferred. It was odd because in the Navy if you're an O3 you don't get selected to O4 within so many looks by a review board, then you're asked to retire or to leave service and h- our division officer and we had a- he was in that, uh, in that last look scenario and we had another intel officer who was part of the staff in a, an exact same peer group both being looked at.

The other intelligence officer for the staff was supportive, directive. I mean he would come in, he would mentor all of us junior enlisted people, he helped us with the briefs, he focused, the, uh, operational mission, he functioned on a level that was personable and never, you know, obscure. You always knew exactly what we was, you know, focused at, exactly we were to work on, and, uh, he didn't get selected for O4 and was forced to retire. And our division officer, who we thought was extremely caustic was allowed to, uh, stay, at least got selected for O4 and got to stay in. So it took...-

[Whatever happened to that story, when you shut down the, the equipment?]

So, uh, at the point then-

[Did the captain notice of that]

Absolutely. So there's a gap between long range sensors, uh, one that I was monitoring and the ship's internal, uh, radars. So they had not gained it on ship radar yet. So the phone is going off the hook, literally where people are walking out in the passageway trying to bring me back in to find out exactly what's going on. And, uh, I just told them flat out, "Look my division officer told me to stay down here and clean the passageway, so I can't support the mission."

And, uh, at one point one of the combat information center, uh, watch standers physically came down and grabbed me and took me back into the information center to answer to the operations officer on what the status was and I had to explain to him that I was taken off that detail and forced to go clean the passageway, which I don't know I think at some time or another I had to go turn the equipment back on and stop what I was doing in the passageway, but it seemed to be very, uh, you know, just back and forth between our division officer and other officers in the, in the ship.

[Do you know how he was perceived by the leadership above him?]

I know how he was perceived by his peers. He was, he was avoided like the plague. Um, on the ship, at least in operational units in the Navy they select the most junior ensign-

... uh, I get the terms wrong, but they designate him and he's got different jobs to do until the next ensign uh, gets, comes up in the ranks, or, or the newest ensign comes back onboard and gets replaced.

So they, they disliked my division officer so bad that they always put the most junior ensign with him because nobody else could stand to live with him. He also had personal hygiene issues. He ate oysters and clams right out of the can (laughs) so he had this oily texture, but he was extremely just detestable kind of personality (laughs), so they a-

[What kind of communicator was he?]

Not at all. I have to say, um, he was never. He was always, um, short, uh, as far as ... well, he was short and concise honestly. When he gave direction it was, "Go do this, knock it out," and

that was it. He never, uh, explained anything, he never, uh, took the time to, uh, help you understand what objective you were trying to achieve. He just, "This is what we're doing. Go do it."

Um, and again we never interacted personally so he had no, you know, foundational support from us, I mean we had, other than him being an officer and us being an enlisted, we had no drive whatsoever to support this individual.

Recommendations

[And how did you deal with him? What was your kind of response mechanisms to him?]

Well, uh, I don't know if you know this, but I'm extremely sarcastic, uh, so it just amplified (laughs) more often. Um, you know I routinely responded in inappropriate ways. Uh, I often played pranks on him. (laughs), I, uh, I instigated pranks on him, even being the, the most junior enlisted guy in the office, I ... all kinds of things. Uh, often his desk when he would organize his desk in a certain way, um, and it wasn't secured for sea, which means nothing can slide around on your desk, nothing is supposed to be able to move. So I would often take his personal items and just throw them in a desk drawer just to kinda routinely reiterate that he's breaking the rules and he's pissing us off. You know, quit-

... quit doing, making life harder on us. So, uh-

[Did you ever get caught?]

Not personally. He'd mentioned several times that, you know, he didn't appreciate his things being moved, but he, uh, he never associated it to an individual. Um-

Um, well I think lessons learned from him. I mean I talked a little bit about, you know, trying to understand his style of leadership and, uh, that kind of thing. I, I, alwa- so when I became more senior enlisted I always took that as an example of, uh, the caustic leadership and I always applied some moniker of understanding with everybody I worked with so that they knew what our objectives were, they knew what we were working for. Even if they were ba- you know, er, not bad choices or bad leadership, but you know, um, tasks that made people feel uncomfortable or tasks that frustrated people, I always made sure that they understood why we were trying to achieve it and move on from there.

So I think I wish there had been some sort of middle enlisted, senior enlisted that could have interfered or you know blocked this officer from directly influencing junior personnel. I think that was, that would been key to, uh, improving that kind of work environment.

[It's interesting the concept of having somebody, uh, that could screen...]

Bad Example 2

So my second example I'm, uh, was a contractor and, uh, I worked over here in the J2 and, uh, you know, of course by law I'm not allowed to lead as a contractor, but, uh, you know, as, as a retired person and someone who's worked in this target set for multiple years and you know have the experience, you try to, you try to lead through influence and pushing people in certain directions.

And, um, my second example (laughs), I actually had, uh, the government lead for the entire branch showed me this guy's resume, put it down in front of my desk when I f-, uh, was working there as a contractor f-, and he was actually asking me for my opinion on if this guy was qualified to be our, uh, government lead and I read his resume and I was like, "Wow, this, this looks a lot like my resume. I mean this guy's ... Based on his resume, he looks very qualified to be here, he's got the right job types to support the mission, uh, he's had the right kinds of jobs," but something seemed off, like this guy sure has bounced around government jobs a lot. Uh, you know, a year on each post and then he moves on. That's odd.

Uh, he had a lot of reserve time as compared to my active duty time and I said, you know, reservists are just as capable as active duty and yo- you don't know if they've gone on active duty and, and pulled those jobs that you didn't have access to and, you know, he may be more, more qualified. So, "Yeah, this guy looks great, go ahead please branch chief, hir- our division chief, hire this guy. This guy looks great."

So he shows up at work and, uh, now I had been the unofficial task or the unofficial lead for the team for several years, uh, and I knew that I had to, I couldn't speak for the government, but I could make things happen and I could accomplish tasks without too much interference, uh, and he shows up and I start doing what I consider turnover. You know, here's the things that I've done and how we've done it and it's now you're the leader, now you get to do it.

And he leaned on me a- and used me to continue to run the team even though he's supposed to do that and I, there were certain requirements I laid out, I said, "You know, you, you need to get our team established in a manning document. We're not- we're kind of a piecemeal team, the first step you need to do is insure everybody's jobs basically and are, are we mission critical enough to have us on paper instead of piecemeal."

And he ignored that advice. Um, he routinely ignored, uh, s- you know, suggestions for the team and, and slowly over time we went from a 20 person analytical cell who worked three different mission sets down to a two person team with two other civilians as l-, as supervisors.

So we went from 20 to 2 in the span of three years while he was the leader of that, that program, and it's a direct result of him not managing the, the team as far as manning, uh, our production. He never reported, uh, in a, in a consistent basis to the leadership what we were accomplishing and really what we were focused on and let our entire mission slide down to where it was perceived that it was useless when, you know, how, how can you go from 20 people to 2 in such a short span?

But come to find out (laughs) the reason it went to such a small scale was leadership perceived him as absolutely abhorrent. They hated this guy. He routinely had EO violations filed against him. Now he's permanently paid government employee. So he would have an EO violation at least every year and not, you know, generically making people uncomfortable, he would openly sexually harass females. There wasn't a female that could, that walked by our section that wasn't commented on her physical appearance and how it attracted him, (laughs) and I just, and I'm a retired Navy chief. Comments don't usually make me uncomfortable, but they routinely made me uncomfortable and we'd tell him, "You stop that. Tha- that's way over the line, you know stop doing this."

The ultimate, ultimately, he got a, an, a JAG investigation against him and he was finally separated from leadership and that was the death nail for our team. Our team was disbanded, we were scattered out to different analytical teams and our mission set just completely evaporated because of his active EO investigation.

[Let me ask you for both the first guy and the second guy, how would you characterize their competences in their work in, in what they were trained to do?]

Absolutely not and no, that's a great question. So, and it's very interesting. So, the first one was an intelligence officer, um, military O4 and although he was trained in the intelligence community he did not have the s- trade craft to function and sup- operationally support missions and now that I'm thinking about it, the government civilian was a reserve intelligence specialist who had the training and again was ineffective in executing mission support, which that's kind of ironic that you pointed that out (laughs) because I used to routinely comment on at least the government civilians' lack of understanding of what our mission was and how to support.

Um, one of my comments to him directly all the time was, "When's the last time you talked to the J3 or the J5 element? You know your job is to support them," and he would shrug his shoulders, "I don't know, I don't need to talk to those guys. I don't work for them. I work for the J2." Well, wrong answer (laughs), if you don't support a mission then you're not, you know, gonna be here very long.

Recommendations

[What were your lessons learned from that second guy?]

I, the second guy actually taught me... He was a GG14. Um, and he's still employed in the J2. They have tried everything they can do, but he has successfully navigated the redress system to stay employed, uh, to th-, to the point of threatening lawsuits to keep his job. So, uh, he's one of those skilled litigious kind people.

He was a reserve chief petty officer [E7] and it's embarrassing for me (laughs). So he had, like I said, we had identical resumes, but he was a reserve Navy intelligence chief and I had been an active duty intelligence chief and it just frustrated me to no end.

I'm always applied, even though I routinely engage in office talk and I try and always identify where people's lines are at, um, and I've often told people if I accidentally come close to your line, just look me in the face and tell me that that's your line and I need to stop. Uh, sometimes you know you just get carried away and I try never to of- directly offend. I know I can have side effects, you know, just conversational wise, but, uh, I've always asked people to communicate.

Um, I've always focused on, you know, his lack of support to the mission, uh, always irritated the, uh, my core being, so I constantly focus on what did I do to support my mission today and who, you know, how far did we get down the road to get things accomplished?

I front-loaded him with the right answers to where he was forced to recognize that I was there to support him and he should just sign-off on things and let it go. So at the point where he was a hindrance, uh, I made sure that he looked good enough operational wise that our team looked good. So I really did the work for him and just presented it to him, said, "Here, sign this," and often I would take my name off products, if it looked like it would support the team in more cases.

Bad Example 2

[How was he at recognizing the contributions of the rest of the team?]

He was actually supportive of training people and you know in a mission accomplishment sense he at least understood and recognized training members and supporting their decisions. He would routinely do that.

He just, every single female that ever worked in our section was absolutely just disgusted by him, to the point where people would stop coming into work, they were filing complaints with every place they could. Uh there were cases where we had only female contractors because they had no redress, they couldn't do anything. So they took away all the military and civilian females out of our team just to get away from him.

Recommendations

[Do you know how the females within the division handled that situation or how they dealt with him?]

Well, they would avoid him at all costs. Uh, they would routinely just send him an email as opposed to directly convers-, you know have conversation with him. Um, they would, you know, of course if they were military or civilian they would file complaints with his leadership on a weekly basis and paperwork just piled up.

[It'd be interesting to know why the supervisor above him didn't take action or it would appear not to take action.]

Well my understanding was that he was routinely counseled and documented. Unfortunately, the system didn't allow for him to be utterly fired. That's my understanding.

I could be wrong because of course I didn't, I wasn't in the position to see what his leadership was doing.

Bad Example 2

[Do you know how the work was perceived that was coming out of your division?]

The work was pretty important...which was amazing. I mean we were, we were going after some big ticket targets. We made the news every other month, uh, on things that we were ... not us personally, but the actions we were taking had international ramifications a- and was in the news routinely. Uh, we were routinely called to go, you know, stand the 24-hour watch and manage the actual targeting process for certain things. Uh, so it was odd that they put somebody so inept in the position.

Um, and, uh, there was a point where the J3 himself was having a conversation with this government employee and I walked in to go man the 24-hour watch and, uh, the government employee goes, "Isn't that right, Chris?" And I said, "I'm sorry, I'm gonna have to hear the question," (laughs) and he repeated the question in front of the J3 and I said, "I'm sorry, but that is actually incorrect, and here's the correct answer," and, uh, he actually got really frustrated with me and, and expressed his, uh, that I was not supporting him and it was one of the first times that we really disagreed and, uh, "I can't believe you left me hanging like that," was his quote. It's like, "Well, I'm not gonna tell the J3 something that's not accurate. (laughs) that's just not, I'm not that kind of person."

So it was, he was an interesting character and it's, it's interesting to see the differences er, the, the actual similarities between those two folks.

No, he was quiet and direct person. He, um, he wouldn't yell at us, uh, frankly because we'd just were a bunch of adults, who re- you know, at this point, you know, you're talking about people with 20-plus years experience.

That's not a yelling situation. Uh, he's boisterous, he would, he was a large statured person and he would, uh, try and look intimidating, uh, but he never, he never yelled and screamed.

Good Example 1

[You got any examples of any leaders you've worked for that were just outstanding?]

Absolutely. I've, uh, I've had the experience of being a senior NCO at sea and, uh, that was probably the highlight of my career. I had actually two Naval officers who were academy graduates who, it's funny in the, in the ship community academy graduates are often made fun of, um, but these two guys were academy graduates, they were both ship navigators and the most responsive, the most open leadership I've witnessed in my career.

And had I seen that style when I was a junior enlisted person, I would have probably strived to stay in shape and become, you know, a master chief or, or, or you know go into the officer ranks

because they, they genuinely cared for everybody, they genuinely showed attention to mission and detail and personal care. I mean there was not a, a single enlisted person or individual that, you know, if you had a problem, it was fixed, and they were after it. It was no-, you know, they always looked after their sailors with, you know, for awards and correct, you know write-ups for evaluations, uh, which is a big ticket, you know, in the military.

So making sure that everybody gets advanced and cared for, um. I, you know, in a, (laughs) I, my job was to mentor and to gently influence them ... not to, you know, have open contests between each other. I would often bring my electric razor in my pocket because my division officer was coming off watch and he was routinely unshaven, uh, you know, his five o'clock shadow, now he's been on watch for four or five hours, so it's pretty healthy stubble and we're supposed to go to quarters in the morning, and I'd hand him my electric razor (laughs), which I didn't use at that point anymore because now I had all his (laughs), his skin on it and I would just hand it to him and go, "Here you go, boss. Knock that out before we go to quarters, before the kids see you," and he was, "Oh yeah you're right. Yeah, let me get that." (laughs).

And he never argued. It was just this point of, you know, uh, he could, he could influence me with a subtle, you know, discussion, uh, just as easily as I could influence him with a subtle, you know, reference.

[Is that because you knew he cared?]

Absolutely. I think we both appreciated, uh, the support for the mission and support for people, absolutely.

You know I've lost track of, uh, I think both of them got out actually because, uh, there was a draw down of, uh, Navy ship drivers, uh, right after I left the Destroyer, and I think both of them were a part of that reduction and I've lost track of them. So-

Bad Example 1

[With any of these guys that you've explained, the good or the bad did you ever see any situation where somebody's life was threatened or, or in a dangerous situation?]

Uh, no I haven't. Um, I've been blessed by not being exposed to a lot of life threatening situations. Um, I mean we've had some almost industrial accident like things on the ship that neither one of those leaders were involved in any of that.

[Did you see any correlation with their ethics?]

No, not at all. I think, uh, I think the division officer example was very regulation oriented. He was very by the book, uh, except that he was just impersonable. The second example in the government civilian, he was, he really didn't care what the instructions said, he was, wa- was just, uh, "Let's just do what our boss tells us to do, get the heck out of here," kind of guy. So ...

I don't think we would have minded if he was consistent, you know, uh, we, we understood regulations. Um, you know we appreciated regulations. His, I don't know if maybe by the I don't know if by the book is necessarily the, the correct phrase. He was consistent in that he (laughs) focused on one thing and that was the cleanliness and maintenance of the ship. Um, probably by, by the book is probably a bad reference.

[What was his impact on the division?]

Well, uh, so I, I can clearly state the division officer rotated, uh, and we, uh, were in the middle of a deployment cycle, so we were back at home and we actually had to deploy almost immediately for Desert Storm when we got back and he had left the ship and now we had a new division officer who was ready for operations and intelligence integration and only one or two of us out of the division were prepared to do mission support, uh, because the division officer insisted that, you know, we didn't work with the Marines, you know, the prior division officer.

So we really were almost lost (laughs) when we deployed for Desert Storm to support, directly support the operation based upon his lack of leadership, lack of ability to train us, focus our mission and support the individuals.

Recommendations

Well, in general I think it's interesting because, you know I've been retired now for almost 10 years and it's interesting to work with a different branch of service now because the Navy is very rank and position focused for leadership and, and their relationship to juniors is, is very segmented. Um, g- I, segmented is the wrong word, compartmentalized is a better word.

Um, you know Navy officers eat separately from everybody else, uh, even Navy senior listed E7 through E9 eat by themselves, uh, and then that leaves the E1 through E6s eating in the general mess facility. You don't generally socialize outside of those brackets. Uh, where the Army is completely reversed. Uh, if you're a di-, you know, if you're in a position of leadership your troops eat first and you go in behind them and you sit with them and you eat with them and you converse and you engage with every single member, so that you know their names, you know, what, what's going on in their head, uh, you know, you routinely engage.

So to me, had I served in a joint command earlier in my career, I think I would have been a, a, uh, I would have been a much better (laughs) senior enlisted leader, I know that for sure. Although I had those traits I think, I, I really think the example of the Navy leadership really burned me to, you know, working with senior officers when I, when I came here. You know I was very still understanding that they were compartmentalized when they weren't. I mean some of the senior Navy intel folks here were engaging, they've been in joint commands, they had lost that, that Navy culture that separated, segregated them, so it was really enlightening to see an integrated team.

You know you might have a Navy enlisted intelligence specialist that's an E5 who knows more trade craft than a, than a Navy officer O4 or even O3. So it's nice to see those people empowered and engaging in mission support. I mean it-

[Do you think there's a link between the culture and the, the leadership styles?]

Absolutely. And I'm assuming the Navy culture has changed with our integration in the joint operations. I haven't been to the fleet in 10 years, I haven't engaged with those folks that much, but I'm guessing (laughs) that their exposure to joint operations has exposed that negative Navy culture and kind of changed it a little bit and I'm really hoping it has.

Interview 5

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Background

Okay. So, I'll start with National guard, time. So, enlisted in the National Guard, spent four years enlisted artillery in the Guard while in ROTC, commissioned, uh, from ROTC as a lieutenant in the infantry branch, United States Army. Spent the first 10 years as infantry, so with the firm lieutenant, uh, through major as a infantry platoon leader, company commander, and then various staff positions. Then, was functional area selected to information operations, and then I've done that for that little, la- the next 10 years. So, first half infantry; second half information operations.

So, I was a platoon leader at Fort Irwin, California, as the opposing force of a national training center. So, we, in my time there, we basically attempted to replicate, uh, what were modifications on Soviet Cold War maneuver, armor formations for, uh, friendly forces to train against; and from there I went to Hawaii, uh, for se- spent seven years in Hawaii in the infantry battalion. Started out on the battalion staff, then commanded the company, then was back on the battalion staff. Um, during that time we did a little over a year in Afghanistan, um, then a little over a year in Iraq, and then a year and a half in Iraq again, like, before leaving Hawaii.

Then, after that was to California for the Navy Post-graduate School, where I did my, um, intermediate-level education stuff when I was brought into major, and after that it's been various IO-related jobs.

Bad Example 1

[Have you worked for any leaders that were noteworthy in either a good or a bad way?]

Well, ones that sticks out were going to be the bad ones, I guess. They, they leave a mark. So, as a infantry captain there, when I first arrived in Hawaii, the battalion commander there was, uh, hard on everybody. I don't, I say "hard on" not like he was just hard work so that it was a good org, good unit, but, uh, I don't know. I mean, ty- tyrant comes to mind.

I mean, I can only ... emotional, manic depressive, in a way. Like, he was really high or he was really on a low, and then when he was on a low is, us, when being his aggressiveness towards his subordinates. Um, so it was no benefit of the doubt, and treated everyone as if anything that was, didn't go smoothly or he didn't like it was because it was personal intention on the part of those under him, and that's the way he treated it and responded to it, and it would be over the top, uh, um.

[Did you ever experience that?]

Um, I managed to dodge most of it directly, I think, although I witnessed a lot of it. Um, for me it would have been the most, uh, at least for me may have been just in a brief, like, normal battle rhythm, briefing-type things. He's one of those who, so you're going to have a weekly battalion

training meeting, and the briefing starts, and he's, was, he's going to get hung ... He would get hung up on something as minuscule as a typo or a certain color that was used on the slide when the only SOP colors were something else, and then he would just derail the whole thing, and he'd lose the whole purpose of the briefing. The briefing wouldn't even occur.

So then, those things that were meant to drive the organization wouldn't happen; also that he could get the gratification of berating someone over an oversight on a PowerPoint. So, it wouldn't be a fun- a, uh, a substantive oversight. I don't ... I mean, it would make sense, maybe, to ha- that still, maybe not the best leadership style, but expressing frustration and agitation at something that's undercutting the, uh, ability of that forum to accomplish its purpose, as in essential pieces of information missing that you needed to know in order to make decisions, that's one thing; but this is over, over irrelevant things, right?

I mean, maybe there was an at- an attention to detail factor in 'em, but his response would be over the top. Again, as if he accu- as if he thought people were purposely trying to undermine him by doing these things. So, I'm trying to think of some examples that, how that would come out.

Um, his headquarters company commander, when I first arrived, that, early, yeah-

[What was his rank, by the way?]

He was a lieutenant-colonel. Lieutenant-co

[Okay, so what would a company commander be?]

A captain. O3 for the army. Um, so the headquarters company commander, shortly after my arrival, maybe, you know, a few weeks to a month or two, there was a change of command. That commander was outgoing, uh, the new guy coming in. So, at the change of command, this battalion commander specifically did not like that company commander for reasons I'm not 100% clear, to me, but it was obvious immediately from my arrival that tension was always there, so that he just mistreated the guy all around, either flat-out ignored him in different, uh, battalion forums, or insulted him openly, you know, wherea- within view of others; and to the point that at that formal ceremony, at that change of command, um, he snubbed him there.

Uh, and then, particularly by ... You know, so, you're on the parade field, you've got the battalion formation, you've got the ceremony that goes on, and at the time, you know, that ... So, side-arms would be worn, you know, obviously, ceremonial or whatever. But that, so when the actual handing of the guidon this, the symbolic change of command, and the other guy's leaving the field, this battalion commander basically mock pu- he pulls his sidearm and, like, basically mocks executing the guy, right there in front of everyone. So, then that's just one example of his, his-

[That was from the, from the stands he did that?]

No, he's on the field because he's the presiding official. So then, the old company commander's passing the guidon to the new company commander, and then he leaves, walks away. As he's walking away, the lieutenant commander imitates, you know, shooting him right, right there in front of ... I mean, I don't know ... You know, there ... Again, from the battalion commander's point of view, maybe it's sick, sick, you know, an ugly sense of humor, but just another example of his-

[Did he actually pull his weapon out?]

Yes. Exactly, exactly, right. Which it, which it ... Perhaps to some degree, perhaps it, something, you know, pursued in some manner. Might even be a, a punishable offense, right? I mean, I don't know, whatever. Nothing came of it, but it's just one example. The rest of it's all just mostly the guy screaming at the top of his lungs, kicking people out of his office, throwing things. That, you know, those kind of things. Just complete tantrums from a, you know, 40-something-year-old senior officer in the United States Army.

[Does his boss know that he was-?]

I'm unaware of that. So, at that time I'm the junior captain, so I, most of my purview's immediately what occurs within the battalion, um, and I can't say I ever was witness to much of the interaction between the, you know, between the battalion commander and the brigade commander.

[How effective was the battalion overall in accomplishing its mission?]

Um, well, so ... so, whether or not it's a, uh, we'll say "accomplishing the mission", um, you could tell it was the least favored battalion in the brigade. Um-

[And how many battalions were in the brigade?]

Roughly about ... It varies but you're going to have three, uh, maneuver battalions that consist of maneuver, infantry maneuver forces, and then you'll have a, uh, headquarters battalion and a support battalion.

But, it's a bit of those maneuver battalions, of which there are three. He's obviously the ... His is the bl- you know, the unit we're in, his is the black sheep of them all. Now, what I would, what I know for sure is how much of that was already in place before him, assuming, you know, command, or how much of that he perpetuated or created based on his leadership style and interaction.

Oh, obviously his leadership style was a morale sink to the entire battalion, right, because there's no one that truly ... I mean, it's one of the dif- you know, just in general, philosophically, one of the differences when you have the toxic or the bad leadership is, are those people in the organization now just doing their job because it's their job, or are they doing it also because there's some aspect of loyalty to that, and support to that man as an individual, because you want to see him do well, because he's a, you know, a liked figure in the organization?

It's not, you know, people who are, take that extra step and that extra, extra interest, because it's more than just the job, it's, you know, because the guy is-

[Did he seem competent in his war-fighting skills?]

As much as I ... Yes, I believe, I believe so. I mean, I seen ... so, but ... But then, part of that compliment, com- again, gets, maybe bleeds over into leadership. Some of that competence is in being able to implement that. It's one thing to be able to quote and verse, you know, the theory of warfare, or whatever you want to call it, or doctrinal maneuver theories and stuff, and put it onto paper, "This is how we want to do things." It's a whole nother thing to get the organization to do it. So. Yeah, I don't know. I mean, I guess it depends on your mark for competence. Nothing ever-

So, because I was in a position ... I wasn't in, under him I was never a staff, uh, lead of any particular staff section, so in a way I was sort of a, you know, enough removed from his direct interaction that it was just me observing what's happening to others, and you know, cringing through, you know, a little bit of empathy or whatever, and then avoiding that contact with him.

Um, but yeah, it, I mean, it obviously had a negative effect. For instance, once we were into Afghanistan, and you've got a little, you know, the battalion is now spread out, decentralized a little bit more, and so, you know, some of the manifestations of that is none of these company commanders are coming to him voluntarily to seek his guidance, or interaction, or exchange of information, right? They're only going to come when beckoned because they understand any interaction with him to be a horrible pain, right? They're only going to do those things if they see necessary to accomplish their mission and take care of their, their own organizations.

[When you guys were in Afghanistan, did you ever actually see combat, or did you lead troops in combat?]

Uh, well, yes, but then the intensity of it, right? Pretty, fairly low intensity at the time. So, it was 2004, 2005, so most of what we encountered was low intensity, and we're ... I mean, in a lot of cases, like most of the War on Terror stuff is, the advantage is overwhelmingly in our favor, so-

Yeah, he was promoted to O-6, but I'll caveat that with, who wasn't being promoted under any circumstances at, with those points of time in the army? Short of legal infractions, right? I mean, everybody ... Promotion rates were 95% or better. So, the ... so, those, tho- in a way that, that time period then masks some of the negative leadership, right?

Because you're going to keep those, the people no matter what, even if it was recog- I don't know, and I'm assuming that the brigade commander recognized that and reflected it in any type of evaluations or anything. It still has a min- minimal impact because this, there's a manpower need that has to be filled.

[Did, did you see any change in his behavior post-deployment?]

Um, yeah, a li- I mean, I guess. Some of it, sure, because everybody's a little bit euphoric coming back; and then also, post-deployment, you know, within three or four months he's changing out of command and going on anyway.

So, he's kind of lost his whatever ... I don't know. He's not, you know, there's not a lot going on, because when we come back most of our equipment goes into, like, uh, we, we would call, like, depot-level maintenance, when it's out of our hands, you're not doing any training or anything like that, so to speak. It's kind of an administrative reset of everything, so he doesn't have a lot to get upset about.

Mostly probably just because it wasn't a real cohesive battalion. You know, and people aren't ... You got ... Things kind of coalesced around at the company level, is what those little in-groups were. I mean, there's always ... Companies are always tied to the battalion, but the battalion as a whole never saw itself as a, an entity or a team in the same way, because of that, that dynamic-

Where people weren't going to come interact with headquarters, they didn't have to.

[Was there anybody else that people would go to instead of the commander?]

Yeah, they ... Yeah, somewhat. The XO was probably the most into being the most, uh, the peacekeeper, I guess, if you want to call it that, right. So, if you had to play the sort of the good cop-bad cop leadership dynamic sometimes between the, you know, top three in the organization, then, yeah, the battalion commander definitely had the bad cop one, but to an extreme that made it dysfunctional. It wasn't just because he was a, you know, respected, stern elder, you know. It was just because he's out of control, mostly.

[Let me go back, and only because when I did change of command ceremonies, normally it's the two commanders, and then the, the commander of those two commanders is the one who would actually be on the field, and would accept the guidon. The outgoing commander would take the guidon from the senior enlisted individual, hand it to the commander, and then that commander would turn and give it to the incoming commander. So, it sounds like it was, in this particular chain of command you described, it was just the two, the outgoing and incoming commander, and was there anybody else?]

Yep. See, the outgoing and the incoming, but then you had the battalion commander there. And basically the guidon went from the outgoing to the battalion commander, to the incoming commander. Yeah.

[Okay, so he's standing up.]

Yeah. He's standing at the--and he draws his weapon. With the guy just, like, literally a couple of feet away as he's departing the, yeah.

[So, the guy doesn't actually see it?]

No.

[Because he has his back to him.]

Right. Yeah. Yep.

Yeah, so, I, I ... Now, you know, looking back at it then, now, so I'm a junior captain, and then I'm all like, "What the ... Is that supposed to be funny, or what is that?" And I never, and there was a little, you know, there's obviously the drama and the intrigue around it in the rumor mill, or whatever, but it wasn't til a lot later on that I stopped and reflected and was like, "How could have, an 0-6 or others witnessing that, how could that not have been made a big deal of?" You know, at some sort of reprimand level. But it wasn't, or at least not in a way that was visible to me-

In, from inside the battalion at the time. So, I don't know how ... I don't know if there's a dynamic there of getting caught up in, they know that the organizations are deploying and there needs to not be a bunch of controversy, so chew his ass behind closed doors and let things continue on. I, I don't know. I never knew of any.

Um, nothing I would consider to- like, toxic in that, in that way. That guy set a bar for me. There's been a, like, uncomfortable or more frustrating ones, where, um, like, I worked as an assistant S-3. The S- the brigade S-3. Was sort of a, I guess, a smart, intelligent guy, but to a fault the intelligence went to a fault, but the fault of he's always got to know better, anything anybody else does is inadequate, and that's just the ... And he's completely, uh, uh, unaware of that dynamic, that that's what he's presenting constantly, right?

So, no work was ever good enough, nothing near, nothing anybody that worked for him ever did was done right, so he ended up doing it himself anyway, and that attitude pervade ... so, that's not a ... You know, and again, you don't get the most potential out of your s- smaller staff organization that way, which is pretty ... at some point people are just like, "Well, I mean, I mean ..." Thoughts had cross my mind. It's like, "Well, I can spend a lot of time and put extra effort into this, and stay a little late and try to really make a big deal out of it, or I can realize this doesn't freaking matter, so I'll just give him the bones, because he's going to do it all, he's going to really re-do it anyway, so."

Aggressively hostile, yeah. Because I, I don't know how to ... I mean, that guy. He never ... well, I'll say that I don't think the first example, I don't think he ever physically, um ... the only case I can think of was we had a ... One of the company commanders that worked for that same commander while we were in Afghanistan, um, ended up inadvertently, with mortar fire, ended up killing some, uh, like, teenagers.

[Afghan teenagers?]

Yeah. Yep. So, because they weren't identified at the time as appropriately too far away. They did a hip shot, which is, like, not ... Uh, it's just kind of Kentucky windage for a mortar, right, and ended up killing the kids. I think it was three. And so, all the mess that goes on with that, oh, is he stressful ... there's an investigation and stuff like that, and, uh, I don't know. Didn't witness it, right, so this is just rumor mill stuff, but that same guy, it's the only instance I'm aware of of

maybe physically threatening somebody he worked for, besides the pistol thing, if you consider that physically threatening.

Uh, he, uh, stood up, came around his desk, grabbed ahold of the guy by the lapels, but then that guy that company commander of the captain at the time was a much larger individual, and subdued the ... Supposedly kind of subdued the battalion commander until he backed off, realized-

[So, he grabbed the guy that actually fired the mortar.]

Right. Well, he didn't fire it. It was his men that did, right.

So, they're having that ... So, he grabbed him out of whatever. Anyway, basically it sounded like he was about to attempt to ... Not beat him up or anything, but just, whatever. Shove him around or something like that.

It turns out comm- commander is much bigger or stronger or whatever, and then re- battalion commander realized it wasn't going to go his way, so he backed off on it, but I didn't witness that. That's just one of those rumor things. But, it would fall in line with his very emotional up or down ... Up in, you know, when he ... tyrannical way of responding to things.

Recommendations

[Did you learn anything, any lessons from that?]

Basically, to make the battalion work in spite of the battalion commander, in a way, right, because he's going to give some over the top, angry tirade of, of guidance, and so he's, people just take that and think, "All right, well, this is what we need to do, so we'll do that." Make, make it happen. Never 100, never directly ... I won't say directly. You're not, nobody's disobeying any direct, uh, any directives of any kind, but it's kind of an interpretation of an over the top rant. It's like, "What the f**k did he mean by that? Okay."

Then, you know, we can all figure out what needs to be done here. So. Yeah, I don't know. As far as ... Um, as far as learning from it, I, I mean, that's such an extreme example, or at least that there wasn't ... It's just kind of like, "Yeah, I know that's not right, and I'm not, I can really see it doesn't work," so.

Bad Example 1

[Did he treat everybody the same, or did he play favorites, or did it matter if it was a male or a female, or officer or enlisted?]

Uh, so, so at the time there were still, it was, there were no female, there were no females of any kind in an infantry battalion.

[What year was that?]

Even in, even in supporting elements. 2004, 2005. So, it's all guys. Um, I mean, there were those who took less ire than others, but I never saw him, like, have a favorite or somebody that completely went without, you know, that same. So, he was consistent, I guess you could say, in that respect.

[Let me ask you one other thing. Do you know if he, was he a West Point grad?]

I believe so, but I'm not 100% sure. But, I think, I believe so, yeah. But, so, but then I'll, you know, prior to this, when you were asking phone in the interview, I mentioned, like, but that was also stock and trade of, like ... I got the impression that his, um, or at least army-wise, particularly within the infantry, his cohort, or his age group, that that, that wasn't a un- that was not an uncommon leadership style, I think, of just a real hard "You really screwed up and now I'm going to give it to you", you know, kind of thing.

But, I think maybe in his case he just ... I'm not necessarily saying that's ever a great leadership style, but that can be employed in cases where they are correct in their estimation that things are really screwed up. Yeah, I don't know how that ... You know, nobody enjoys that, but at the same time it's ... I'm trying to think of cases where I've worked for some people that are, that were real tough, and to some, some would seem insulting, but everything they're doing is right on the mark. It has a reason and a purpose on it, and they're not wrong.

It's a real aggressive way of dealing with these is- but once you get used to the aggressiveness and you see the underlying, you know, the actually, you know, there's actually a purpose and a reason for what's happening, then that's a ... I mean, there's several combat arms outfits that'll operate that way, but he takes it to a ... He was just totally misguided in his ... I don't know how to ... you know.

[Do you have any idea of what might have been in his motivations for communicating that way?]

No. I think he just saw it as ... I don't know. I mean, it's how you get your point across, and a little bit of fear. Is how you motivate people to change their behavior, maybe. I don't know. I can't think of any other explanation. I don't know that, how he didn't recognize that it was, uh, causing people to avoid interaction with him, and how he would think that would be functional for, for the organization, but I don't know.

Recommendations

[You know, we mentioned before as, on the way down here, you made a comment about, uh, how you've seen leadership change across your career. Can you kind of expound on that?]

So, so only from the front ... Well, obviously from just the one thing ... the, the few eyewitnesses is a very small number, right, of battalions and company commanders and stuff, so when I first started it, it seemed to me that lesser versions of his leadership style were pretty common in the infantry. Sort of a, "You screw up, I'll kick your ass and let's," you know, "Let's keep going" kind of, kind of attitude.

Um, but it appeared to me, you know, and so, and some ... Okay, and some that ... So, you're in a peacetime army, and this is ... I'm a lieutenant, so I'm a platoon leader, and those things that your performance, or you as an individual will, are being judged on, right, are really relatively small, insignificant things, relative to actually the war, the war-fighting, right? But that's all that there is to be graded on at the time.

So, you're in, you're in an environment where just the act of taking your platoon to the rifle range and conducting marksmanship training and returning is, like, a career-ending or making event, because those are the most complicated things they have, short of a annual training exercise-

You know, to grade your performance on. So, everybody's, everybody gets wrapped up in those things, and so those little, what should be learning and mentoring opportunities, uh, that are low-risk, right, you'd go and the range- the range doesn't go smoothly because, oh, the ammo support guys didn't get the ammo delivered at exactly the time we thought it would, so we had to wait 30 minutes before we could start training.

That becomes a "You're so f***ed, you're so screwed up, lieutenant. Your, I'm going to make sure you never get promoted." That kind of crap, right?

Which, it's common and that's just the way things are. Well, when the frick- when the war broke out, that changed. All of a sudden ... Because that partic- everything got put into perspective. I, I'm a ... that's my thoughts on it.

Things got put into perspective, so now all of a sudden all those things that were such a big deal aren't a big deal anymore-

And so people become more reasonable, and if there is an actual, truly harmful mistake there, it's used as a mentoring opportunity or a teaching point, or something like that, or, like, "Yeah, man, that didn't go well. Could have gone better. Here's how it could have gone better, but let's move on." And the next thing, because we've got to get trained, and we've got to go, and then it will be high stakes. So, and so it appeared to me ... And maybe it's just because I had a, those first couple places I were were unusually harsh for some reason, or it changed overall, and ... Because people just stopped being worried about that, those kind of things and having those tantrums. So, over it.

Good Example 1

[Did you ever work for anybody that just really stood out in a positive way?]

Um, plenty that were good. Like, or, you know. None that really stood out as, like, "Man, I wish I could go work with that guy forever." Yeah, the closest I came was a, a brigade commander who I was attached to while in Iraq. So, my company left the, our parent battalion, and then we were attached to him as a, an additional company for his brigades, or whatever. So, he came ... so, he even came out and bothered as, you know, as the brigade commander, to come out and talk to us, and see what we were up to, and stuff like that, and he was real ... He took more interest ... So, a guy who didn't even technically own me.

Took more interest in us than our parent organization had previously, and took the personal time to mentor not only me, but the lieutenants in my company, too. So, then we were in the middle of Iraq, dealing with the daily business of commanding a brigade in Iraq, and he still took the focus and the time to come down and, whatever: give leadership lessons, you know, war-fighting lessons, all those kind of ... Just character development and that kind of stuff.

So, I thought he was great. I mean, for whatever reason he had the charisma to show up, and even if it was only for four hours in the afternoon, make the entire organization feel like he'd been there forever and gave a crap about what was happening to everybody. So, that was pretty, that was interesting. Uh, and that was unique, unique to his personality, but in his case, uh, must be recognized, because I believe he's up to three stars, now. So, yeah.

Recommendations

Right, it's all ... Yeah. I've been trying to ... I don't ... So, now I'll just philosophize a little bit. The, uh ... so, I'll see them, say peers. What did I think I saw in my ... so, I'm a company commander, right.

I've got other company commanders around me, and you see their organizations, watch out what they do, how they act, and I, in trying to ... You're always going to compare yourself somewhat or not. And then, I started en- enlisted anyway, so enlist, I've always had an, more of an affinity with the soldiers than I do with the fellow officers.

Just because, probably, just comfort. I understood their jobs, understood them better than this officer thing, where now I have to, I'm competing with you, and whatever kind of stuff. So, I was never much of an A-type, um, "I'm the officer, I'm in command. You're my underlings." That never really ... It was more of, like, "Hey, we're all here.

I happen to be the guy who has the burden of making decisions and trying to keep everybody aimed in the right direction," and stuff like that, but it's only because my duties and authorities are different, not because I'm some sort of privileged elite, or better than ... You know, that, whatever.

But, I would witness in my others, and I hate to make the West Point distinction, because it's easy to make, but it's not true, because it happens ... You see it from all commissioning sources, right, but it's easy to make the West Point distinction because the one guy that I'm thinking of sticks out in my head. Pretty much had that, the difference and the ... Because you can be personal and interact, and work alongside the people you're responsible for, and still maintain the appropriate line of ... Because you get the old familiarity, breeds contempt, right?

Too much familiarity, then yeah, you will be questioned in ways that you shouldn't be questions, and they'll have other, you know. There's a fine line between letting the, everyone see the boss as a human, who's a human like them-

Then, has the same thoughts and aspirations and such as them; but then also, or letting them too far inside and letting them see the flawed human, you know, and then those flaws can undermine

your authority, I think. But then there's the guy who puts, keeps the old ... Like, almost old traditional class system separation, and that always seemed overboard to me, and it never seemed to me that ... And again, it's only a small handful, right? Less than a dozen that com- at the company level and the platoon level, the guys who tried to handle things in that way, that, that distinct separation there, they may have had the, the ... What's the right word? Trust isn't the right word. They didn't have the same kind of loyalty and respect, though. They had respect that the institution, um, demands, right.

Like, everyone is professional. They didn't end up with the same bond of ... It's one thing with the US Army: we're here to accomplish the goals of the nation, you know, and that kind of stuff. It's another thing, then, to get that next layer on it, which is to recognize yourselves as a smaller tribe or a family within itself.

That, I think, maybe gets the extra mile ... It's the difference between ... It sounds silly, but I always thought it was the difference between, as I tell my platoon leaders: there's the way you interact with your guys. If you find yourself in an ugly situation and you're separated from them, you're wounded and you need help, when they're making that decision to run across the road to come get you, is their calculus "Because it's my duty as a soldier, and that's what I got to do," or is it because they love the guy they're coming to get? And that's the difference.

[What's the rank of a platoon leader, normally?]

First lieutenant, second lieutenant. O1, O2, yep ... So, but anyway, and I would say those du-, those pe-, those guys ... and that can only, this is only from an infantry, small unit maneuver, respectively. Those guys who kept that hard separation, almost elitism there, don't, are not going to get the same, are not going to get that familial bond that has people basically willing to make that sacrifice, to ... but that's in a small unit. At least, at level. So.

The same thing. I mean, maybe even the same thing with that battalion commander. His way of dealing with everyone, his, basically, being a tyrant and throwing tantrums, you're not going to get many people that are going to go the extra mile.

You know, for him. So. Unless it's just somebody who's really, like, coming up, yeah.

Not that I can think of. I was trying to think of some of those other platitudes that come up with myself. Shared sacrifice: if you don't share the sacrifice of the people that are working for you, then you don't, you're not going to get that trust, respect, and loyalty, because they need to understand and see ... And you, and you should just do it so you understand them. You've got to share the same circumstances that they're living, and if you separate yourself ... Because it's easy to do.

Number one, you just naturally don't come in contact, and then, number two: in harsh environments, in harsh situations, if you're not careful you're not going to realize that you've, you know, you're, you're one deviation removed from the hardship that they're experiencing, and they know it. They'll recognize it very quickly. So, you have to be aware that you're ... anyway.

Bad Example 1

[Do you think he had any mental problems?]

So, the most I could speculate would be some sort of manic depressive type, type deal, right, because the-

[You mentioned he was kind of a yeller and a screamer.]

Yeah. Any time he was agitated. So, yeah, so, yeah. I, I guess ... It's hard to s- not to think about. I don't know. I mean, obviously I don't think he was throwing tantrums the majority of the time. It's just that when it happened it was, you know, it happened over minuscule ... He would think of just minuscule things that, what the hell you getting so amped up about, and it would be so over the top that it was ridiculous. I mean, we had in the battalion operations center, which at the time was just a little, um, two GP-medium tents stuck together. So, it's almost like two campers back-to-back, or whatever.

Uh, enough for maybe, like, 10 people to sit in and have a little projection screen up front. Uh, as you came in the door, in order to warn the rest of the battalion what they were walking into, and there we had, like, the frickin' thermometer for the battalion commander. We had yellow, green, and red flashcards, and we'd stick one up where you could see it as you were walking in, so you'd know, like, red was, like, frickin' mind yourself and stay quiet and avoid the guy, because he's already been set off; or, you know, or green is like, "He's having a good day, so don't worry."

[Was this when you were deployed?]

Yeah. This was in Afghanistan, yeah. Yep.

We were in, uh, it was ... FOB Ripley was the name of it. Uh, Tarin Khot was the Afghan name for this town nearby, and it was in Urozgan. It was the capital of Urozgan province. So, it was, uh, it's basically the province that's north of Kandahar.

Yeah. No border stuff, but the home of, uh, Mullah Omar, and, and a, and a province that was never ... For whatever reason, it was never, uh, focused on. And, I mean, through the years now, like, they've had, had to blow up and it's ... In the first, like, "Oh, let's go in and get things settled", or whatever, we focused on, focused kind of on where the ring road was being built, so you had to, Bagram to Ghazni, down to Kandahar and everything; and Urozgan was kind of, like, left alone even though that was Mullah, Mullah Omar and his family were really the heart of a lot of the Taliban was.

It wasn't focused on because it was never seen as a problem, but I think the reason it was never seen as a problem was because there was no fighting going on, because nobody was messing with them there. It was sort of their internal safe haven, or whatever.

Interview 6

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Background

Okay. Sure. Right now, I'm a 59-year-old, but I'm going back to, uh, 1976 when I joined the, uh, Air Force as an enlisted member, and I was in the Air Force for 20 years until 1997. I retired when I was 37 years old and then, uh, of course, uh, after that, joined the Federal Service, another 20 years Federal Service. So, I have to-, 40 years total. I, when I retired from Federal Service, I was a GS-15, uh, senior manager for a couple of intel community jobs. But going back to the Air Force, uh, went all through the enlisted ranks, uh, retired as a, as an E7, uh, from the Air Force. Uh, during that time, I was ... the majority of my time, I was an Air Force, I was a special agent with the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and my main focus was counterintelligence and, uh, worked with many different people. Uh, did that a majority of the time, uh, in my time in OSI, and I continued to do counterintelligence all the way until the time I retired from Federal Service, so about 30-something years total in counterintelligence.

Bad Example 1

As you can imagine, I've met tons of, uh, Type A personalities in that type of work, um, some good, some bad, some ugly, I mean, all kinds of different ones, and, uh, I learned a lot during that time frame of, of mostly, um, how did I let them affect me, how do they affect me and my family, the people around me and so forth. I know you asked me about, um, one in particular. Uh, if there's any other detail, please let, let me know and I'll, I'll include that in there about myself-

... if there, I'm missing any. And, if it matters, uh, a bachelor's degree in, um, in, uh, business administration and a master's in criminal justice administration, which is basically how to run a law enforcement department, so it's half sociology, half actual law enforcement, so. Um, so, anyway, going back with this, uh, I was a, uh, E5, uh, back in, um, 1987, which I would've been in the Air Force about 10 years at that point. Um, I was working in, in, in a place in Asia, um, at a district headquarters, if you will, uh, running a ... and I was in charge of a pretty good, uh, counterintelligence program at the time, uh, myself, the stuff I was doing. My boss, who was a, uh, prior enlisted, an O3 at the time or captain in the Air Force at that time, uh, came in, a new guy came in, and basically, um, immediately from the get-go changed everything of how we do work.

Uh, I know ... and that was hard because they always say, when you come in as a leader, you evaluate, you look at things, don't make huge changes right away, it's really hard on the people. He didn't. Uh, it was, uh, it was all about him, and I say that on purpose, all about him, because throughout my whole time that I've known him, and I've known him up until last year, okay, uh, with him ru-, running for, I said, running for, uh, uh, a political office for the country. But, um, he was very, very egotistical as in it was always about him, his expectations, his requirements. Whether it be his work ethic or whether it be how he, you know, does things with his family, it was all about pushing that upon whoever worked for him or, or even around him.

Harder for those, of course, that worked for him than anything else, um, being that he expected you to work, you know, six, seven days a week to put in all the same efforts that he was, uh, again, work the same hours, the same travel schedule, everything, and, if you weren't, then you were not a good employee. And he would use multiple manipulation techniques to try to get you to feel bad to get you to motivate to work. So it could be patriotism. It could be, uh, you know, you're enlisted. It could be whatever the case may be, he would come up with whatever he could to kind of bring you down so, that way, you would fit his expectations, uh, which is a really weird, weird situation and very stressful for a lot of people.

And, of course, I'm giving you my perspective. Now this also impacted other people. He only had two people that worked for him at this beginning point. It was myself and another, uh, uh, airman first class, which is somebody who's in the Air Force, what, three years I think, something like that, who is an administrative person. I was a special agent, different situation. But, again, he would, um, uh, push-

[What was his rank?]

He was an O3, uh, yeah, the, um, the person, John. I'll use the name, John.

Uh, John was an O3, a captain. He was prior enlisted. So he'd only been a, uh, officer for about four years, but he spent, uh, about 10 years enlisted and got the rank of E, E6 before he moved over to become an officer. So, um, that's basically his personality, very, very, uh, selfish, uh, all about him, including what I saw with his family life too. It was just ... he was that way everywhere. So the hard part was he created new jobs, new things to do to keep constantly busy, uh, not things that were essentially needed by the, by the organization or wanted by the organization or tasked to him. He created new things just to stay completely busy all the time. He was running at, you know, 100 miles an hour kind of person. I mean, it was non-stop, which is okay and I don't have a problem with people like that, but the problem was, he pushed that expectation to every single employee.

So in a basically one-year time frame, he almost burned out the, his entire staff, which was, by then, about four people and all almost in open revolt against this guy, uh, because of that, that reason. And it was not just that we were working hard, but we were not seeing our families, we were not getting anything for it, any benefit, we, we were losing leave. You know, you get a certain amount of leave, uh, per year and, if you don't use it by, by the first of October, you can lose that leave. We were losing leave. I lost ... I remember, that first year, I have 17 days of leave, which is, um ... I caught hell from my wife for that one. But because, again, he pressured us to stay at work, to do all these things, um, no matter what they were, to include, on one of our Korean staff, to do something illegal, which later on got him in trouble and got him kicked out of the Air Force. Um, so that was a, that was a interesting situation.

But, um, a very, very manipulative person, incredibly manipulative. Never yelled, uh, except at himself. I never saw him yell at anybody. He was very loud though, uh, very, uh, aggressive, um, and he just literally can manipulate you. He just did everything he could.

[Can you share a story, a specific story, that kind of exemplifies those characteristics you described?]

Um, sure. So I think I gave you the one, like the one I told you before? Okay. So there was one we were working, and it had to be about the one year ... actually, this was the end of it. It was ... so it was a little over a year, uh, with him and this is illustrative of how he is. He was pressuring us to no end. I was working basically seven days a week, which is six full days and about four hours on a Sunday. Uh, I was stressed out to no end. I wanted to quit actually. I wanted to get out of the Air Force. I just wanted to quit it got so bad.

And what happened was ... the result first and I'll tell you how they got there, but the result was I went home, I think I told you this, I, I went home from work on a Sunday and my wife was, was completely dressed. She had our 18-month-old boy completely dressed. She had a suitcase in her hand waiting for me to open the door. I opened the door and she ... and I looked and said, "Hey, what are you doing?" She said, "Well, I'm leaving you until you can decide what's more important, you or that job or you or John?" So she recognized the pressure from, from, from him as well in that regard. Um, I went back. I said, "That's it. I, I've had it." I went back to the colonel, uh, who was above, uh, uh, John and said, "Hey, I can't do this. My wife's going to leave me. This has to stop," and he put a stop to it.

But, interestingly, I got blamed for it by John, if you will. Like I was the ... I couldn't handle it, I couldn't hack the work, I was trying to, um, uh, sabotage all the good things he was trying to do, which there weren't any, uh, unfortunately, at that point. Um, so what happened was, because of all of his pressure, and I forgot the one part, uh, he created, he created the, the opportunity for me to have a security incident 'cause I was so pissed off on a particular day. Our airman first class, unbeknownst to me, wanted to get kicked out of the Air Force, just flat out wanted to get out and he thought, "Here's a good way. I'll take this, this material that's got to be accounted for every day and I'll leave it out and I'll lock up the safe. They'll find it the next day that it's out, I'll get in trouble, and they'll kick me out of the Air Force."

So he left it out, but I was the last one to leave the office that day. I was so mad at all the crap we were doing. Of course, John had already left, you know, 'cause he, he would always do that. He would want all this stuff. He would work his six or seven hours, leave, and I'd have to stay there for 10, 12 hours. Um, and then, uh, I, so I was so mad, I just slammed shut the safe, didn't check the ... see if that material was in there. The next day, I come in and look for that material, it's not in the safe. I panic. I couldn't find it. I asked another captain in our, in our area to help me out to search for it. I did find it out of the safe. Long story, to say that I ended up with a, with a security incident or a letter of reprimand because I didn't lock that stuff up, all because of the amount of pressure and the amount of crap we were going through with, um, with this individual, with John.

Uh, me and, uh, our airman first class, who subsequently did get kicked out of the Air Force and he was happy to get away from John, so, uh, I mean, he, he succeeded, but that ... the tension in the office because of this manipulation, high expectations, um, and a lot of it all ... there was a lot of lying going on too when I say manipulation. He was a, uh, almost pathological liar to get people to do things, uh, but me, at the time, you know, you consider I'm, um, 27 years old, you

know. I'm still, still young. I'm not an idiot, but still young, but actually doing the work because, guess what, he's an officer, I'm enlisted, I got to do the job, um, but then coming to the point where I can't live like this anymore. So it was incredibly stressful.

[Was his boss a lieutenant colonel or a colonel?]

His, his initial, his, uh, immediate boss was a lieutenant colonel and then that boss was a colonel, so we only had the two steps to our, to our O6 district command.

[Was the lieutenant colonel aware of what was going on?]

No. Uh, he was not aware of it at all. He wasn't surprised by it, but he was not aware of it, 'cause he knew John's personality, uh, as in just being a headstrong, manipulative, pushing and so forth person. Uh, he kind of avoided it. Our, his boss, the lieutenant colonel, was a very, very laissez-faire, um, non-confrontive, quiet man, so, again, he was also railroaded by (laughs), by, uh, John as well, not just, uh, not just the John's staff.

[Was, was the captain competent? Was he skilled at the actual work itself?]

No.

[How would you characterize his actual skills?]

Yeah, I, yeah, I would characterize his skills as limited. Um, for what we were doing, he had no, he had no background for it. He didn't have the time on doing the actual work, if you will, running ... either running investigations or running the, the counterintelligence stuff that we were doing or I had done before. So he didn't have a background in that, um. The only skills that he had were the, the soft science skills that we need to do that, which is, um, being able to talk to people, but, of course, he took it one step further. So, no, I would say he was not, he was not qualified to do it, but I think his lack of experience or lack of qualifications, he made up with with his ability to, uh, just bullshit everybody. I think that's the best, the best term.

[And did the detachment perform its mission?]

Well, we were in a district office, so we weren't in an actual detachment, if you like, an OSI detachment. We were in a district office, so you had ... and we were, we were broken down, and so we had a, a counterintelligence division. That's where I worked in, and we have a criminal and fraud and protective services and we had different things. All of the other branch chiefs, none of 'em would talk to him. Uh, they all, uh, our whole, our whole district office did not like him because of the way he behaved, being caught in lies at different times, trying to manipulate people, trying to steal, trying to ... That was the other thing he was trying to steal people from other units, other divisions, and put 'em in ours.

He was ... there was a whole lot of conniving and a lot of work going on that he was doing, so he had ... almost everyone disliked him in the office. Everyone almost literally felt sorry that I had

to work over there, uh, with him. He was very difficult. Uh, there was no, uh, there was no shedding of tears or loss of sleep when he finally got relieved, uh, at all.

[How did you deal with, uh, deal with that kind of leadership?]

Well, the onl- ... it was, um, let me just say I didn't deal with it properly. Uh, realistically, the way I should've dealt with, with it was had a sit-down with him and the lieutenant colonel, said, "Look, we can't work this way. Uh, this is just not going to work. You know, we can't ... we have families, we have whatever. Although he doesn't care about his family, I care about mine." Um, I should've done that from the get-go, but I took more of, um, um, I'm ordered to do it. I got to do the work. Uh, I don't ... I wasn't afraid of doing the work. It didn't bother me, working hard, uh, putting up with the, you know, putting with up with him. I was very tolerant, I think, of just getting the work done. Uh, I had control of a lot of it, a lot of the actual work, the actual doing the, the work itself. I had control of that, which is common where I was at in OSI, but, um, I just basically put up with him.

I just literally tolerated and just put up with him knowing that, okay, I only have two years on this assignment and I'll leave sooner or later and I don't want to create waves. I want to get a good performance report. Uh, all the things that you shouldn't do basically, uh, is what I did. Um, but, again, I had-

[How did, how did it impact you? Did you have any physical problems, health issues?]

Oh, yeah. I had, yeah, the normal health, the normal health, the like sleep problems and, and, uh, drinking and smoking, uh, actually. That's when I started taking up smoking cigarettes and, and that was it and, after that, I never smoked again. But, um, yeah, it, it affected it big time in many, many different ways. Yeah, physically for sure. No major illnesses around like that, but the stress type stuff, uh, the sleep, lack of sleep, not eating properly, I mean, all those kind of things. It was just ... it created a stress that I was not finding a relief for, if you will. You know how some people will internalize it and they're just keeping it in and they don't talk about it, they don't vent, they don't get ... they go out and exercise it off or whatever, I wasn't doing that, so, therefore, you know, it was making it worse on me physically, so.

[And did you say he, did he get thrown out of the Air Force from that job?]

Yeah, yeah. From, from, uh, later on, uh, not directly from that job 'cause he got moved. He got relieved and moved to another job. From that job, then he did the same kind of things, um, and then, uh, he got finally, uh, asked to resign his commission and get out of the Air Force before they court-martialed him is what it came down to. And the, and the reasons for it was he had this megalomania type of attitude about himself that he could do anything, uh, and his doing was using people, using people to do things for him personally that was illegal, uh, and that's what got him in trouble in, in the end. Uh, but was his kind of his attitude and he treated people that way.

So when it comes to workers, like myself, the other people in the other divisions that were not counterintelligence, he looked at them that they were below us, they were below him. So he c-,

so he rationalized it, "I can behave this way. It's no big deal because I'm smarter, I know better, my program's more important," literally, and I mean literally that, that way, you know, he was up-front about it, at least speaking to me and the other people in our office. So it did not bother him whatever. And he never saw that no one in the place would support him 'cause they all hated him, right? He didn't ... no one wanted to work for him, so therefore we couldn't get new employees.

We had the employees in the office, which were myself, uh, who's, who is a, uh, staff sergeant. We had another junior, uh, we had a first lieutenant. We had another captain, a junior captain, and we had the airman first class administrative person. They were all ... the, the two officers were forced to work for him and they all literally left. They found other ways to get PCSs or get out of there. Um, one of 'em, I'm still good friends with actually. Uh, he retired as an O6, uh, commander in OSI, uh, at the time, but, uh-

What can you share kind of the details of what got him thrown out?]

Um, yeah. Like I said, um, let me think of it to think of an easier way of putting it. Um, asking an employee, uh, "I'm writing a, I'm writing a book and I want you to do all this research for me and during duty hours. We're paying you to do Air Force OSI work, but, yet I want you to go away from that and only work to, uh, to help me write this book," which was a personal thing, which he would make money from, okay? Uh, that's, that-

Bad Example 2

[Let's pick up with telling me a little bit about the major.]

Okay. So, back, um ... I was stationed in Texas, uh, special agent. Again, I was though, it's called a Noncommissioned Officer in Charge of the Detachment. Uh, above me would be a 2nd lieutenant, a new person usually, we called the 2nd officer, and then the Detachment Commander, in this case, would've been a major position, uh, O4.

So, um, back when I was there, we had a new Detachment Commander coming in, and it was interesting 'cause we had a pretty good unit. We su ... had a lot of good agents. Well, we're always busy as a training base, as you know, Sheppard, so we had a lot of ... a lot of crimes going on over at Sheppard Air Force Base. It was pretty wild, but, um-

[And what year was this?]

This would've been 1991, if I remember correctly ...

... when he ... when he first got there. So, as I mentioned, the major, who was, um, um, slated to come in, it was interesting because he had a reputation of being a difficult person or an angry person. He would yell at people a lot. Um, he had a bad reputation is what it comes ... what it comes down to. He just had a bad reputation. Um, in OSI, uh, it's a small community. There's only a few thou ... uh, maybe a thousand people, a thousand different agents that are enlisted, so, therefore, news travels fast if you have a leader that's bad as you can imagine.

So, it was interesting that even among our second officer, when it was announced that this major was going to be the new Detachment Commander, it literally and immediately had a negative impact on our, not productivity right away, but on our morale. First off, it was like, "Oh, gosh. We have to endure this. We have to have somebody who is just, you know, uh, high strung and yelling a lot, and all that kind of thing." And we just didn't wanna deal with it.

Uh, over time, this was about three months prior to him actually showing up, over that time in three months, I could see visibly that it was impacting the morale of everyone. They were all just like dreading that when he was coming. Uh, it started to slow down our production. When I say production, by the way, or our investigations, I'm kind of referring to our proactive work.

As you know in OSI, you have two types of investigative work. You have reactive or crimes are committed, whether it be homicides, suicides, whatever, and then you have the proactive stuff where we go out and try to stop crimes, uh, wh ... look at whether it be contracting on base or, um, uh, whatever other type of proactive things, a th ... you know, thievery or whatever the case may be.

So our proactive started slowing down because of that 'cause people didn't want to. Uh, enter the major. Uh, he comes in to detachment. Uh, immediately he was very demanding. Uh, started with the, uh ... the basics of yelling at people, or rather, which would be getting mad at them, not so much yelling, and over about a course of about two months, it grew up into he was just yelling at people, and I mean yelling at people. Uh-

[Can you give me an example of a situation where he blew up?]

Sure. Like, for example, if somebody, uh, disagrees with something he wants to do, or, um, uh, they ... For example, uh, I remember one with Sam, uh, this one ... one agent. Uh, he did. He was in charge of training, the firearms training, and he didn't get something scheduled in time and ... and they lost the range time or whatever, no fault to Sam, and he immediately just jumped on him and just yelled at him. Said, "What the hell's wrong with you? I told you I want this. I told you this. You didn't do this." I mean, just absolutely, just loud yelling. Okay?

Uh, so not even just like being angry and pointing at, "Sam, I'm disappointed with you." That would be, you know, a proper way of ... of saying it, but no. He was yelling, and, you ... you know, basically, making Sam feel inferior or ... or that he was, you know, a screw up or whatever the case may be. It really demoralized him, and Sam was only ... He'd only been an agent for two years, so it really im ... impacted him, uh, more than anyone in that case.

So that went on, those kind of situations went on, uh, very similar. Something that you would cons ... you and I may consider, uh, minor, uh, would be, whether it be a mistake, a real mistake, whether it be an accident, whether it be whatever, he would just fly off the handle and yell at somebody in the office. So, of course within two, three months, it just, I couldn't get ... I couldn't get the agents working for me, I couldn't get them to do anything. (Laughs). I mean, they just ...just, it's like, "Why bother? I'm going to this proactive work, and I'm gonna get yelled for ... no matter what I do."

And it's like the child. You know, I thought about this afterward. It's like the child who can't do anything right for that demanding parent. Does that make more sense?

That demanding parent and that's kind of the way he was, and he would just yell. So people are demoralized and I guess that's the ... another good word for it.

[What were the ... what were the staff meetings like? Or did you have staff meetings?]

Oh, they were quiet. Nobody would, uh ... we would always have staff meetings, you know, at least minimal, once or twice a week, uh, more if we had an operation or if we had a particular, like a sting operation or something going on, we'd have more, almost daily, but, um, they were just quiet. I mean, nobody wanted to input. Nobody wanted to say anything. They would just basically, "Just the facts, ma'am." They would just say, "Here's what I did, here's what's going on," and not ask for opinions, not ask for input, not ask for help. Just try to get ... The whole purpose was surviving him, uh, surviving the meetings, surviving interaction with him.

That was the other problem. Nobody really wanted to talk to him, and that makes it harder. Now, as you can imagine, it put me in the middle. Although, we have a second officer, so to speak, or you might consider a deputy, the NCOIC is kind of like the ... the first sergeant, if you will, of the unit. So, I'm in the middle between all the enlisted agents and civilian agents and the commander. So, it made my job a bit difficult because I had to keep them motivated, like you're supposed to. You have to keep them motivated, going, "Okay, I understand that we're gonna do the best we can with this. We're gonna work it out," but it was just getting harder and harder for me too and frustrating. Um-

[How many agents were on the ... in that group?]

We had, at that ... at that time, we had, um, probably seven, I think, uh, enlist. So we probably had about six or seven enlisted agents. I mean, it flows in that regard, and then the commander and the second officer. Uh, second officers, again, in that situation, it's usually a second lieutenant or first lieutenant who's going through their probationary period, uh, and getting ... cutting their teeth on what it's like to lead a detachment.

Um, but yeah. All the enlisted folks, and it's interesting because, we have some really good outgoing, um ... What's the word I'm looking for? Outgoing. I don't wanna boisterous, but ... but, uh, extroverted agents, and they were really good. They were really good people. We had some really good ones, and for them to shut down was interesting because of the ... his behavior.

Again, if you think about it as in equated it to a ... a demanding yelling parent, what does a child normally do? They get into survivor mode, okay? They get into, "I will not talk much." They got quiet. I mean, that's exactly what everyone did. So, therefore, when you get quiet in this kind of work that we do, you're not gonna have proactive work because nobody wants to reach out and do anything if they're gonna get ... keep getting hammered. "Every time I do something, I get hammered so I'll stop doing it." You know, I only have to get hit with a brick only a couple of times before I realize it actually hurts. Right?

So, and that was what we went through. We went about, uh, I think four mo ... I forget how long, how long we went, but a few months, and I had a major op ... I had a major investigation going on, and, uh, we're ... it involves selling automatic weapons to bad guys, uh, who were trying to steal stuff. So, we had undercover sources, we had, uh, undercover agents. I mean, you name it. Technical. I mean, all kinds of surveillance, you name it. We had all that stuff that I was running. I was in charge.

So, I remember one time, uh, we worked with the undercover agent and undercover source one particular night. I never slept, so I came in. That was the other thing. He was demanding as no matter what you did at night, you had to be work at 7:30. So if I worked a crime scene investigation all night, I don't get to go home and go to bed. I have to go to work at 7:30, which is abnormal. They tell you to get out of here, get some sleep, get some rest, come back, but he was very demanding in that regard.

So I came in there at 7:30 to brief him on a particular activity that was going on and here I am standing there in front of him at his desk, uh, talking to him about it. He's sitting down, that was the other thing. Uh, he would, um, take positions like that where you have to ... uh, what's it like? He's on his throne and you're talking to the king so to speak. He would do that a lot.

Um, so I was briefing him and he was, uh, sitting at his desk and, uh, I ... he asked me a question, "Did you get it ... Did you get a chance to brief Colonel So and So," was the hospital commander, and I said, "No," and I can never get the "but" out. Okay? "No, but I'm scheduled in 45 minutes to talk to him." He ... I never got that out, 'cause before I could get it out, I said, "No, but," 'cause I had to reschedule with the colonel, he wasn't available, uh, he immediately stood up and started yelling at me, you know, "I told you this was really important." You know what I mean? Just dressing me down, just yelling at me really loud.

And I ... I ... I had snapped. I just lost it. You know, I can take a bully just so ... so long and that's what he was and I snapped and literally just came up to the desk and almost went over the desk at him. Uh, my ... I remember my knees, I had a line in my, eh, you know, that feeling of a line in your knees. I was so pressed up against his desk and I was yelling back at him. I said, "Don't you dare talk to me that way. Nobody talks to me that way. My mother, own mother doesn't talk to me that way. I'll come across this desk and kick your ass." I mean, I went full on with this guy, just yelling right back at him. Shut him down, he sat down while I was doing that, while I was saying that to him and yelling at him, pointing. Here I am pointing on a tape recorder. Um, you know, pointing and saying, "Hey, knock this off."

Uh, this scenario situation scared our secretary so bad, she ran out of the room 'cause her ... her office was like attached to the commander's. She took off and ran out the door, went to the bathroom or something. It upset her so much. He quieted ... He quieted down immediately. I mean, that was it. He quieted down, he didn't say anything to me at all, and I just turned around and walked out.

Now, I think I men ... as I mentioned before, I'm standing there talking to him while wearing a 9 mil sidearm. Okay? This is how stupid, (laughs), this ... a person like that can be. Screaming at somebody, berating, belittling them, somebody who is armed standing in front of you. That

makes no sense. I mean that, you just don't do that. Now, obviously, I'm a more of a professional than that and of course that was not an issue, but again, he didn't consider all that. He just would yell at somebody.

So fast forward just a tad. Um, it was real quiet the next ... that day. He left the office early and came back, um, uh, the next morning and wanted to talk to me right away. Uh, I ... of course, I wanted to him to ... to kind of clear the air. We sat down and he first apologized for his behavior. He told me he literally went home and sat down and ... and thought about his personality, uh, kind of how he was, how he was behaving, that he was, you know, known to be a yeller and he didn't understand why, and wanted to change that behavior. We saw a marked improvement in him after that. I mean, a marked improvement as in he stopped yelling, he was more introspective of people, he listening to more people. If he would get mad or get angry, you'd see him catch himself, uh, and he was making great strides and, uh, changing that.

Uh, that doesn't mean he wasn't difficult in some other areas, whatever, but it made ... it ... it was ... it was night and day in the office. I mean, the ... the guys in the office, it was all ... all ag ... all male agents, literally that big huge sigh of relief, went, "Ah," like this burden was lifted off of their shoulders and he started getting better. And it was amazing. I mean, they ... they were really hap ... obviously, they were real happy with me.

But then again, I was ... I thought that was the end. I thought it was done. You know, I'd been in the Air Force, uh, maybe 15 years at that point. Yeah. Probably about 15 years at that point, um, and I thought I was done. Insubordination, you know, he's gonna get me. Right? So, and I ... but I didn't care at that point 'cause it's ... it made me snap so bad and what's interesting is a lot of leaders don't think about that. They don't know the person they're yelling at, they don't ... if they're aggressive people or they're bad people, they don't know what that person's gonna do in front of 'em they're yelling at or they're treating poorly or they're demeaning. They have no clue what that person's going through, how they feel, what they've been through on their life. Okay?

They don't know that, you know, from age, you know, 5 until age 17, I was screamed at by my mother and that's the reason why I can't handle that. They don't know that. Okay? So, therefore, they didn't know the impact it was gonna have on all those different people, and also the impact in the office. I did talk to him about the impact. I remember, el ... later on, telling him about, "Look, before everybody got here, man, everyone's just absolutely dreading you coming here. You know, your reputation preceded you from Germany." He came in from Germany, and, um ... and everyone was really upset about that, and the only good part is he was able to see that, um, what we call it, self actualization, right? He's able to see that like, "Holy crap, am I that bad?" And he made huge strides. I can't fault without, he made huge strides to try to fix that and we got along great the rest of his time there. The detachment ran really well afterwards. We got some really good things done.

This particular case I'm talking about, I was talking about it turned out great. Uh, put about three or four people in jail for about 10, 20 years, uh, and got some bad guys off the street and he was a big part of that, you know, helping with it. He was not incompetent. He knew the job. He was a good investigator. He just had that one flaw that we got lucky in a fixed, you know, during that time.

Yeah. Oh yeah, totally different. I mean, really, I remember a couple of one probationary agent who was there and it's hard. You get a brand new agent, you know when they first show up at the OSI Academy to come into your unit during the probationary status for one year and a half to do tons of different things in that one year. Recruiting sources. I mean and certain investigations, duty H, I mean you name it and you don't, you have to track them through that. And that was my job as a trainer for them to track them through that. Well, I have to deal with them being holy crap. Everything I do as this new kid I'm getting yelled at, you know? So it was hard on people like that, but at least folks just turned around and the absolute turn around and they were working hard. They've got a lot of good things done. I'm laughing to myself here because I'm thinking of some of the funny things that happened because of that. There was no humor in the office either.

[Can you Share some of the things that were making you smile?]

Well. Um, well some of the funny things that ... We had, uh, one of the agents that we had in the office was ... And I'm not kidding about this, he was the grandson of Larry Fine of the Three Stooges. I'm not kidding. Okay. I, I don't know. Hopefully nobody will, nobody will talk to any him about that, about this. But he knows it, he remembers all this shit. So lots of stuff, excuse me. Um, but, uh, he was really funny. He was as funny as Larry Fine, guy was just incredibly funny. Um, and then after it came up, his humor and his personality, that humorous personality was injected to his work. So when he was working with sources, they're going to coordinate with the first sergeant or get somebody on your side talking to a lawyer or whatever.

You could see his personality was coming out more. So he was talking, he was joking more. He was getting these people on a sidewalk, which he didn't do before. And some of the others did not do before because they were just so beaten down, you know? And so it enabled these folks to, for their actual abilities to come. Maybe that's the term I'm looking for, their abilities to come out. You know, that's just one, you know, that particular story. I remember him talking to a, um, he was talking to one of the first sergeants and joked about something and created a great, a great environment for us. And when that's what we wanted. We wanted the, all these units, who know, normally, as you remember, probably remember most people on a base do not like OSI, okay, we're always the bearer of bad news. We're always investigating. We're doing something—right? Like GIG, if you will. Okay.

So we always had to overcome with our personalities. "Hey, we're here to help you." We're here. We're here to help, to get the bad people out of their deal with these things. But you have to sell that constantly without having that ability or that feeling. You can't get a ton and people will see it, right? So if you go and you're kind of beaten down, oocyte aging, the other folks pick up on that and they're not going to want to help you. So I made a drastic improvement in that overall for the base as well. Uh, maybe not seem directly, but...

[How did he relate to his lieutenant before and after?]

Oh yeah, there was no difference. Yeah, there was absolutely no difference. Absolutely no difference. Um, I remember one, you know Sam, this one guy I was telling you about, I remember one time, uh, we were in the front walking in from coming back from going to the range, right? To do, um, uh, our monthly shoot or, or quarterly shoot, I can't remember what it

was. We were coming back and Sam was talking about something and who, which was disagreeing with a belief that he had about the air force. And I remember he yet, I remember the major yelled at him and said, "You don't like anything kind of off." I could say this, "If you don't like it to get the fuck out of the air force." And we just screamed it out. Uh, Sam was like.

[And Sam was the lieutenant?]

Sam was the, the one of the younger agents...that to your agent? Enlisted guy. Um, the second lieutenant we had actually at that point, he was, uh, he was, uh, an OSI, excuse me, an Air Force Academy Grad. We don't get too many of those in OSI. And he was literally kept his mouth shut, you know, he came from, you know, he's right out of school. Okay. I mean within a year of out of the academy. Right. So for him, you know, he was used to, he didn't learn how to shut up when needed, you know what I'm saying? So I think he just, he just avoided the guy altogether. Just stayed out of it. And again, look to me. And that was the hard part. Everyone looked to me to be that buffer with this guy. So yeah, it was funny.

She [secretary] said, "You's guys, you scared me so much." He goes, I didn't know how it was going to end, you know, and she 'cause she knew, she knew how, um, tired I was cause she knew what I was doing all night. So she had sympathy with that and she was just worried it was going to go south and a bad way. Uh, so she took off. And um but Kathy, she was probably the closest person in there that I could talk to. She was the one that said mostly that, um, it was a good thing overall in the end it was a good thing that he needed it and, and it helped our unit. Um, but again, I think sometimes I really think I got lucky, you know, I really end a unit, not just me, but also the unit got lucky and dealing with that.

[How long was he there before this incident occurred?]

Uh, he was here maybe three months. Yeah, it wasn't that long. That's the funny part. He stayed another two years. A little more than two years after that. And I was there in a year after, I think I was here a little less than a year after that before I left.

No, just, um, those stick out the most in my mind, those, that, that situation and the time that, um, you know, he went after, you know, now that I think about what we discussed before, uh, I mentioned about, you know, did he pick on a weak person? Did he remember, think we'd discussed that a little bit. And he would do that. I mean, don't get me wrong, he would, when he leaped on, Sam was the weaker of the bunch and he would leap on Sam a lot. I mean, and now that I think of it that when I, I, maybe that's the reason why I brought up Sam's name is that he would leap on them a lot. I mean, he got yelled at a lot. I mean he yelled a lot. Sam [enlisted agent] is a, is just a beaten down puppy at that point. By the, by that ending.

No, no, that was a different person. Different person. Yeah. Yeah. Uh, it was interesting, really interesting. Actually, the um, the grandchild of Larry Fine, he went on to be a, I retired as the chief Mater Sergeant, adviser of all, OSI at the headquarters. I went to his retirement ceremony as matter of fact, many, many years after that. And we, and while I was at his retirement sooner ceremony to talking to him and his wife in the hallway, we both said, "Hey, you remember major so-and-so." You know. So we it and had a, I think when I hadn't seen John in like 18 years, 18

years or more, no, it had to be more than 20 years because he was in the air force for 30 years. So yeah. So I hadn't seen it, but after 20 years when he saw me, that's one of the first things that we talked about. That's the impact to me, that's the impact somebody like that can have on an entire unit, you know, uh, negatively, you know, in that, in that regard. So, yeah, I think that's the reason why, because you get, so you go through that, it's ingrained in your mind, you know, it's just burned in there.

Recommendations

Um, yeah, it was a lesson learned. It was a lesson learned for, from a leadership standpoint. And I'll, I'll give you two to two different ways there. Number one is lesson learned for leadership for me. So, you know, after I got out of there for a while, it was in the air force that time and from the, the next, I dunno, 20 year, 25 years, I've been a supervisor the entire time or a leader or senior management. Okay? And I took that with me. I took that time with him, that incident with me through that amount of time, which is number one, you don't know what that other person's experiencing. You don't know what they're going through, you don't know how they're going to react because that's a given situation. So you need to treat them respectfully. You need to listen to them. You talk to them ahead of time and if you, if you don't think they're getting the job done, do you need to make sure the number one, understand your expectations, what you, what you need to get done.

And secondly, ask them for input. If I'm not, if your expectations are wrong or if you can't do something or you need help, you contact you, you coordinate with me as well. So I took that from that, from that day on. And number one is treat people with respect. There's no need to yell at anyone cause you're not going to get anywhere with them all. You're going to shut them down. You know, if you piss people off, they're just going to shut down and not gonna do anything for you. Whether yelling or whether you're ignoring them, it doesn't matter. People have the ability as, as employees to shut down, okay? Shut down being, "I'm not going to be productive. I'm not going to be proactive. "I can always be, every job is reactive, right? But how proactive am I going to be to make the mission better to make myself better?"

And that's the other thing. Think of it like this. We had enlisted Agents, uh, during that time period. They're supposed to be studying for promotion and a lot of them just didn't give a shit. I mean, they just didn't care because they were beaten down so much by the way he behaved in the office. Um, yeah. So I took that to myself as make sure, number one, worst case scenario, don't be that guy, right? That's number one. But secondly, what did I learn from it? Okay. Be Respectful, listen, provide expectations, engage people, communicate. Okay? Uh, don't ... It's not about you. Don't be selfish and that's hence world at selfish stuff came. Don't be selfish, period. I mean, that's just the way it is. Um, for him I, I got lucky. Maybe he got lucky too, that he was able to have enough self actualization to go, "You know what? I'm screwing up. I don't want to be this way. I didn't mean to be this way. I didn't know I was doing this."

Bad Example 2

And I think he went through all three of those. I didn't, I didn't think I was this way. I didn't think I was doing, I didn't know why I was doing this. And, um, now let me mention that he did follow that up a month or two later with basically going to see a therapist, if you will, to talk about

where that came from. I mean, it impacted him that much. He went to seek therapy, uh, regarding, "Hey, help me out here. I didn't know I was this way, what, What caused this, why was I being this way?" And it made him better for it. And that included on top of it made him a better leader later on. So...

[Did you ever run into him later on?]

Uh, I did only one time, uh, you know, bumping into hallway headquarters, OSI and, uh, again, same thing. It was like he was mean old buddy or something like that, you know, and I was kind of like, "I don't know how he's."

[Did he get promoted?]

Uh, yeah, he made lieutenant colonel, he retired as a lieutenant colonel. So to my knowledge, that's what he did. And I don't know where he went to. Never kept up with them after that. So..

[Before that conversation occurred, did you have anybody actually try and leave the unit or actually PSC or transfer out?]

No, cause everyone is fairly new. I mean most literally when I, because yeah, at that point, at that point everyone's fairly new. So there was no one who was going to leave. Nothing I remember at all. During his time, during the announcement of him coming and the time up until the my blow up with him, there was nobody discussing leaving. Now I can't say that they weren't thinking about it-

...because a lot of times rats from a sinking ship, they're like, "Oh how, how do I get out of it? They're going to volunteer to get deployed. They're going to volunteer." Yeah. Cause this was right after Desert Storm. Yeah. It was right at literally right after Desert Storm. Matter of fact, now that I think of it. So yeah, there were people saying that he send me to Saudi. This is semi me to rock. This would be better (laughing). I mean, they're thinking it, but nobody really, you know, tried to leave. That was funny.

Bad Example 1

[Let's go back to the captain.]

Yeah, yeah. You know, I think I had mentioned, um... We had, uh, we had some people leave. Uh, we had one airman who attempted to, to create a security incidence where he can get kicked out of the air force.

That impacted me. That impacted me. So as I said, the captain was a very selfish megalomaniac type of person. Uh, who's, um, would, you couldn't change, I mean, you couldn't change his personality. He pissed off everybody in the office. He was trying to, everything from takeover positions to, to make his unit more important and just all the other branches, Crime, fraud, uh, protective details. I mean, they were all dislike this guy. Uh, we couldn't, which means we

couldn't get people to come into our office and we couldn't keep the people that were coming. So that came in there. We had a couple of folks that did leave.

We had one staff sergeant, we had another airman and we had a, uh, another captain, a junior captain, and said, "Okay, I got to get, get me out of here. I can't stand this guy." Uh, but we had this one airman first class. It was, he couldn't take it and he wanted to get kicked out of the air force because of it. He didn't know, no other way to get out.

Uh, he was being treated poorly. Uh, not being yelled at and all that, but demeaned in a way that you can't get the job done. "No, you're a failure." Uh, you know, you can do that and that people can do that in a nice way to, you don't have to yell at somebody to make them feel that way. So his, he can't, he, he left a work on a Thursday night and he decided, "Okay, I'm going to get kicked out by leaving out these, um, uh, particular highly classified tapes." Probably know what I'm talking about there for communicate system. So something that we have to check every night when we, before we lock up the safe and make sure they're in there and then we sign off to safe.

Uh, he decided to take that tape canister and leave it in, in, in a desk drawer, you know, somebody else's not knowing that was there an empty desk drawer and then, you know, hopefully we would miss it or we would catch it and say, "Why is this in this desk, you know, and you get in trouble for it." Um, I was going through so much stress with this captain, that particular day at work on my butt off. He left early while I slaved to stay and work 12, 14 hour day. And um, I was all pissed off at life in general, I mean, you name it because of this guy. And I went ahead and slam the safe shut, locked it, signed it off, and didn't look to see if this tape canister was in there. So of course, next day I come in and this is a serious violation, right, for leaving that out. The next day I come in and I go, we're now, it's in a vaulted area.

So it's not as bad as what I'm saying, but I come in and go, I can't find this tape canister, shoot, what do I do? So I said, um, we had this one, another captain that came in, uh, John, he came in and, and uh, I said, look, I can't find this thing now. I need help. So the two of us search started searching the whole office. That captain was not there, he didn't come into work until later. So this was going on before he even showed up. So finally I find the tape canister, it's in that desk. And I said, ah, she does a problem opened up, lock it back up, and then I report it. Okay. So it's just basically a, um, a security incident. And not an end of the world security incident but a security incident.

And I've been busting my hump for this guy, this captain who's really difficult, uh, for like, I don't know how long months, uh, at least at least three, four months. And it's impacting my family. It's impacting my health. Like I mentioned earlier, a family more than anything else. And I ended up getting a letter of reprimand from it, from this, from the colonel, the district commander who I thought was on our side and he would be a little more concerned about this. And I remember, you know, I don't know how far I went into the discussion, how I, I pissed him off and almost gave him a heart attack.

Yeah. So he had a heart issue going on and he, this colonel, right. And he told me, and I was really, really upset but calm and he's given me this letter of reprimand. I'm steaming because letter reprimand. Here I am probably their best worker in the whole Damn district and I'm getting

a letter of reprimand for something like this. Right? And he's treating me like I'm in a serious offender or something. Right? And he's giving me this dress down of, "What you did was wrong. You should know that, that Da da Da, and I'm going on and on. I'm just steaming." But I'm sitting there calmly and he said, "I hope you learned something from this." And he said, "What did you learn, Bob?" And I said, "I learned that if I noticed that there's something missing like that, I will find it myself, not tell anybody in, lock it up and no one will know."

And he literally lit off the chair turn red face. The secretary came in. Um, I'm pretty sure Kirk was there or the, I told you, I think I mentioned that. I think he may have been there outside for that one too. But um, yeah, that was, it was really ugly. And then of course within, uh, within two weeks was the incident where I came home on a Sunday. Again, he was making us work seven days a week basically to keep up with everything. Uh, and we were working more-

His work schedule was usually Monday through Friday, sometimes on a Saturday, uh-

[How many hours?]

Eight to 10, maybe we're doing like 14, normally 12, 14 a day. Just about, uh, one of the three is while we were working so much is that we lost people and we couldn't get people. So myself, the other captain, John, uh, another staff sergeant we had, we were working the job of two extra people on top of ourselves. So we're trying to make up that difference. And we couldn't get anybody because this guy was so difficult or rather nobody wanted to work with them. So as I mentioned, I, you know, I came home on a Sunday morning, I worked like three or four hours. I came home, my wife was ready for me. You know, I don't know if you've ever met my wife, but she was ready for me. She was standing here at the front door with a suitcase in one hand, our 18 month old baby and the other hand.

And I was like, "What are you doing?" She goes, "I'm leaving. Going to stay with my mother. To you decide which is more important, your job or us." And that was the wake up call for me. And I went and talked to our deputy commander who's a lieutenant colonel and I, and I laid it all out so I can't do this anymore. He stopped the whole thing. They called in the captain, they called in, you know, the colonel district commander said, "This shit's got to stop. We can't be doing this. We're ruining people." And uh, that's when he, um, they attempted to say, "You're not going to do, there's no more of this work around weekends. Shit. You know, if you need do tenant and you're going to coordinate with me being the, uh, the commander." Now, he didn't stop his behavior. Okay.

As in the expectations to demeaning that, you know, I'm better than everyone else, kind of Megalomania type of thing. Wanting to take over the world, if you will, to the point where I said, "Look, I need, this is in conjunction with that. I need out, I need a break." So they reassigned me to the detachment there in a Seoul, to an OSI detachment. And I ran all the CIA counterintelligence stuff that detachment is doing to give me a break for a year away from the guy. And then -

Um, he would, he would create work that wasn't necessary or it wasn't important to the command. There were no requirements for it, but it was important to him. He created his own mind and then he would say, "We got to get this done, we got to get this done." He would never

yell or anything like that. As in you have to stay here. That's an order or nothing like that. But he would shame you and demean you to a point of, "Oh, this is so important. If you don't get this done, we're not real good. Patriots were doing this for this reason." He was incredible manipulator. Incredible manipulator. Um, and that's-

Everything, everything we do is classified. So that's what I'm trying to think of an actual, uh, I think it evolved the, uh, Olympics may have involved the Olympics too. It's a matter of fact. Um, he had us doing something that should've been handled by Army MI, and we got involved in it and kept saying they're going to, it's going to piss off him. I, it's going to cause all of these different rifts and while they don't know what they're doing and we know how to do it, we need to get a ton and we know this is a problem. And finally, you know, MI commander, a colonel came to our colonel, said, you tell us idiot to knock this off. Um, I mean that was one simple simplified.

[Why do you think he was pushing you?]

He was just...He just, the, the, the Megalomania is incredible. I mean, just that he sees an opportunity to make himself look good. You don't have to get this work done to do something to show he's better than somebody else. Uh, I mean, the metal or like I said, the Megalomania got to a point which kind of kicked out of the air force. Um-

Yeah. So what, what he was doing another thing on the side because he thought he could just do anything he wants. So he moved over to, uh, the detachment as well. And um, later on I moved back to the district and he had them doing basically illegal things. He, we had Korean, uh, excuse me. We had employees, foreign national employees. There were our interpreters, translators, investigators for national investigators that, uh, work for us. And he had a couple of them doing work on his personal, on personal things. One was writing a book. One, we had one employee working all day long for research for his book to write his book. Well, that's the way illegal.

I mean, it's just the way it is. You can't do that. That was the downfall of him. That particular incident, uh, regarding the book research... uh, somebody dined him out. Uh, he had a civilian employee working for him, a civilian, who hated him and who was also a bad person. He was doing some illegal stuff too. And who got caught and he told the detachment commander or this captain, "Look, if you get me in trouble, I'm taking you with me." Sure. Shit he did. He brought out all of the things this captain was doing and he, the captain got relieved at that point.

uh, of, of the, the, um, it was mostly the research for the book.

Yeah. That was the main, the main thing. And there was also some, uh, inappropriate, uh, behavior I'd rather not get on tape-

...that he was doing with the, didn't involve his wife. Um, so there was a, there was a few different things, but again, it came from that feeling that I could do whatever I want, you know. Uh, and then he was told, "Get out, get court marshaled or resign and get out of the air force." So he left with 16 years in air force, uh, no retirement, nothing. So he had to get out. Um, I met him a couple of other times. Um, he came by and he acted like nothing ever happened in his life. Like

nothing, nothing was his fault. And he wanted to talk to me like he was a friend of mine. This was back when he was, and he was a private citizen, but working, doing something. He spoke very fluent Korean and he was like, you know, three plus level in Korean, blonde hair, blue eyed guy. Right. It was funny.

So he came back to do some work and um, he got no, he got in some trouble doing that work and the Korean government kicked him out of the country. But again, it was never his fault, nothing was ever his fault. And that was sad. That was really sad. But you know, and after he got kicked out, they moved me to run to detachment until they could until six months later. And we got a permanent detachment commander. So I had to rebuild the detachment because everybody had so many problems because of him. So it was interesting. I kept in this loop, this awful loop at that time, you know, same kind of thing. Um, you know, I had mentioned before the differences between these two, uh, the major and the captain, if you will. One, I felt later after I blew up on him the major, he was worth my investment in my emotional investment. Right?

To help them I think. Okay. Yeah. He, I think he can get somewhere he can make himself better and it'll make the unit better. But the other guy, there's no way. I mean, nobody will try to help them. There was just no way you could change his behavior. Um, that's just the way he was. Okay.

[How did you come to that conclusion that one you could help and the other you couldn't?]

Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist sometimes to figure that out when, you know, you're, how old was I? I was like 30 something years old. Uh, early 30s. Um, I had a lot of education. Uh, I did a lot before I went and know what sign on. If I ever told you this before I went, oh, aside, I was a drug and alcohol counselor and social actions. So I had a lot of time with psychological stuff. I had a minor in psychology, my four year degree. And so I had, I knew enough about it. I knew enough about, you know what, here I am with my little enlisted guy at this unit. I cannot change this guy. So therefore I better not invest any more time. It's hurting my health, it's hurting my family and I can't change him. So, you know what, I'm not going to, I stopped. I literally, that's it. You made your own bed. You live with yourself. You know, I couldn't do it.

[What was the health issues?]

Uh, I mean, stress, insomnia, you back then I was younger, so what's that? You know, any major things, but lack of sleep. I'm worn out. You get sick a lot. It gets a lot of colds and things like that, which I had to work through. Uh, I still remember that. Um, so with, with him, those are mostly the major health problems.

Uh, not like ulcers, nothing like drastic like that, but it was all like, you know, sleep problems. Uh, I was angry a lot, you know, with family and stuff like that. Little things would set me off at home, things like that. So it did, it does impact you. It really does. When you're, when you're stress is ramped up that high through somebody who was even that way. Not even a yeller, but somebody who's that way, you know, can it really impact you?

Bad Example 3

[Do you have any leadership examples from your federal service time?]

I know I talked about Dennis, the guy that couldn't make a decision. I think we discussed that.

Yeah. Yeah. The um, so Dennis was a nice man. Okay. Good family man. But same thing. He was retired. He was retired OSI agent, uh, lieutenant colonel and the reputation preceded him. He got hired in a, um, uh, we call it an SES job....if you will, in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.

So, um, and I was the chief of training. I ran this huge training, uh, division, uh, both an actual school house and uh, um, everything from writing policy for the US government on counter intelligence train. So, uh, so I was heavily involved with that and we had like three other division chiefs divisions within underneath him and a deputy terror. And he was a nice guy but he couldn't make a decision. So whenever we were trying to get anything done, it was just taken months. if not a month, maybe I'm exaggerating. It was taking way too long to get simple decisions, things done. And he wanted to think about it and talk about it more than done and just beating it to ground and just get it done. The example I gave you was this, when I, before I became the chief of training, I was in a job over at another building, another headquarters, if you will, in northern Virginia and running a particular program.

So I moved to be the chief of training and another man moved in to replace me, similar, similar, not the same kind of background, but similar background. So while she was training about three years into it or so, the other man died at the job, unfortunately. Okay? So there was no one in the DNI at that point that was cadre that could fill that job sent me. So I knew I was going to go back. The people, the employees or three employees that were still there knew that Bob needs to come back if temporary temporary if needed, but just to fill the vacancy, right, get to get the job done. So they went to Dennis. Uh, the deputy are the deputy underneath. Dennis talked to [inaudible 00:40:31] move Bob there. Oh No. I don't know if we could do that. Maybe we have to announce the job. Maybe we have to do this. And he was hemming and hawing and making a decision.

That was in April. He finally made the decision to do the move of me in September. I moved on the 1st of September. So the office during that time from April, September was so overworked that two of the employees quit. One was by himself and screaming, get this done. And that employee finally had to go above Dennis to the, to our executive and say, "This is killing me. I'm going to leave. You're going to have no one just move Bob." And finally, he, Dennis was pressured into moving me there and, and everything worked itself out. And of course I had to rebuild everything. We're so backlogged. I mean all kinds of things had to happen in that time period. A lot of different issues. Um, but the impact was incredible. You lost two employees, you have one. It's overwork burning out.

You have me on the sidelines. You know, I talked to him, I talked to Dennis like multiple times. I think after the third or fourth time he just told me to shut up. "I don't want to hear anymore. Stop. Stop talking to me about it because I haven't made up my mind yet. Um, I mean, I want it

to say, make a damn decision. I did. I went to Tara and just mentioned it to her and the deputy and she was like, threw up her hands. She didn't know what else to do. So all I could do was behind the scenes try to help that unit out without telling Dennis because they still had access to all this stuff that they had. So I was helping out little by little. Um-

[Do you have any idea why he was that way or not willing to make a decision?]

I don't know. I mean, he was a very, I don't want to say he's a laissez faire kind of guy, but real slower, you know, um, say like introverted type of personality maybe. I mean, it just wasn't in him, which just wasn't in him to, to, to make military decisions, you know, maybe that's really what I'm getting at. I mean, you've probably seen that in your own career in the military sometimes. You know, in the military you can't, you can't hem and Haw, you gotta get, get it done. You just got to get it done and then you can adjust fire later on if you need to. But if you belong, are you waiting on a decision? Could have just as much impact. It's making the wrong decision. So you got to have that middle ground. You gotta be able to listen to people, make the proper decision and understand that, hey, as we go along with this, if it's not the right one, we'll adjust it as we go. Even what we do now in our current shop of similar, similar situation.

But yeah, it was, it was awful. Now that's just my division now he has the same, the other division chiefs were having the same issues with him, but not as drastic as mine. Um, but yeah, it was a huge impact on a mission that was with another agency that we owned, but we did it at another agency and it was not good for them either. It was bad credibility, but a lot of different things and hurt our reputation there. So yeah, it was, uh, it was not fun in that regard, but it was simple. That's the funny thing was getting so frustrated. Imagine that just making decisions. I could see how to do this, you know, I know how to do this, listen to us.

And he just wouldn't do it. You just would not do it. I don't know what, I don't know what cost him to this day. He's still that way. And he works in Melbourne right now, Florida. And to this day I hear the same things from other people about you had an employee over there that worked for him over at the company. He works side that left. It was a good friend of mine who was an OSI NCI employee and he left, couldn't take it anymore, for that same reason, they're not wild. Same reason. Indecisive.

[What caused him to leave ODNI?]

Um, he had a medical, he had a big medical problem. He was out for about two months. This is later on. He had a medical problem and then when he came back they just said, "Yeah, you need just need to move on." So he just, he quit. He didn't, he was a retired lieutenant colonel and then he just quit from DNI. He didn't have enough time for any kind of retirement or anything from civil service. So, uh, he just quit and moved on to Florida. So, yeah, he had a really, it was a really bad health issue that happened to him unfortunately.

Recommendations

Well, I had that I created when I was working at, uh, when I was working at a three letter agency. It starts with the NCIS with... Um, I went through the instructor training program. I've always

had this in my back pocket. I've done an a couple of different places. So it in front of about a hundred something people. I did this whole talk about, uh, the selfish leader. It was what the, what the name of it was and basically the basic, basically the basics. The basic was there was a, there should be an 11th commandment. "Thou shalt not be, thou shall not be sel-selfish." Because if you look at all the commands and all the rules in our life, all the things that we violated because we're selfish, it's for what we want. Okay?

I, if I was not, so ... I wouldn't kill somebody if it was, if I was, if I wasn't selfish, right? I'm doing it because that's what I want. Okay. Marriage, you can go through all the different things just from selfishness. Well, we take that into leadership as well. The selfless leader, the one who motivates that people is the one that does better. And even the one that confronts bad people or, or non, you know, people aren't performing. It's better. Okay. This is not being selfish.

....and I'm not doing this because I don't because for me I'm doing it because it's the good of the rest of the unit, right? You're getting the selfless, selfless, a leader to show the difference between selfishness and self interest. That there is a difference and a huge difference. But really the key is not to be selfish. I gave examples. Uh, I have a funny sheet that I use where write down selfish or self interest. And one of them was, um, one of the things in there was I a, I leave that I leave the toilet seat up, right? This is a guy from a guy's standpoint, I leave the toilet seat up, selfish or self interest and people put selfish. And then I put, I leave the toilet seat down. All the women put self interest. They all changed it. It was funny how the whole thing went. It was pretty cool. I still have that.

But really that's the key. I focus on selfishness and, and if a leader or if anybody in life, if we're not selfish or life is easier, I'm just flat out easier. And if we have the ability to understand when we're being sold, there's no, there's nothing wrong with being selfish at times because you understand that you are, and don't let it, don't let that selfishness affect or impact somebody else negatively, especially negatively. Right? Uh, and that's really the basis of the, of the talk is that, "Thou shall not be selfish." I gave a good example. Um, I have a story, have like a two minute story that I give out. Uh, there's a little acting, it's involved with it that I give out about a selfish leader, about my example of a selfless leader, but I experienced as a child. So, um, that that usually gets a little interest.

Well, I would have to literally do it. That's the hard part to really talk about it. I really have to do it, but it comes down to basically a mother, a single mother who's raising two kids, don't have much money at all. We're at Thanksgiving time. She makes us small Apple Pie. I mean a smaller, not a full size of a small apple pie with the money that she has in this little one bedroom apartment that we're living in. I'm five years old, my sister is seven and she cuts it into four pieces. Um, thanksgiving. We each have two pieces.

I have a piece, my sister has a piece, she puts the rest of the refrigerator and then later on of course, the next day we say, can we have some more pie? She brings it out. She cuts the, it was actually half. She cuts it again, gives one half, one part to me, one part to my sister. And what's the first thing that two kids do? "She's got a bigger piece. That's not fair. Mom, you gave him this." And we're arguing with her and not realizing that she gave us nut. She ate nothing but she

gave as a selfless leader, gave all of it to her children. And that to me was a selfless leader. But it's a longer story.

But that's really what it comes down to.

But it's not fair. I used that as an example. It's not fair. No, you're, you're being selfish. That's why it's not fair.

Good Example 1

Leadership ... I'm trying to think of an ineffective leader I guess would be the case, right? Is that what you're looking for? Um, we had a ... One guy will give a guy in the DNI, uh, who you've met and he was an effective leader, and he was literally, uh, he would listen to people and ask their opinions and make decisions though. And he would confront people saying, "Look, no, I need you to do this or I need to do that. No, you need to focus on here." Or "Here's how we need to get this done." He would engage in power. All those positive qualities you that you learn in leadership school. Right? Which I think is very interesting. All of those leadership qualities he had, and he was a great example. I never worked for him. I saw him act as a leader. Okay. I saw him do all the things that I, the values I shared as a leader. So he was really, he was good example to this day. It's a good example.

That was Dr XXXX. They came through here before. Really good guy, really good leader in that regard. Um, and it was interesting. I've always thought of myself that I understand and I try to practice qualities, the good qualities of leadership. I've always felt that way about myself. And I thought, "Okay, well that would be the case." And I went through, here's the interesting story. I went through at Disney course at Disney Institute called Disney's, uh, leadership, Disney's leadership excellence, right? And they talked about all these same qualities. And I went, I went away from it going, I'm doing it right. You know, I have, I have a pretty good book about their leadership style. Uh, they're not in the office, but, and, uh, I learned that all these things, the way Joe is way, I am, the way they practice leadership was effective.

It was literally effective. And I thought it was funny, especially my time in the military, both the 20 years in the air force and the time and the DNI, our time and the other agencies. I have four, three or other agencies, right. Um, that we all went through leadership training. Right? We went through whether if you're listening you through professional military education or officers go, uh, to one of Maxwell, I forgot the name of it. Uh, officer.

...squadron officer school. I was thinking SOS. Yeah. Then stay command and staff college. I mean all the things where they cover all the leadership. And then you go and you meet somebody, think about it. You meet somebody who was just an awful leader, right? Or a jerk supervisor, aggressive and effective, whatever, and you go, "I know that person went through to the same school as I did. I know that captain went through the same school as I did." He was prior enlisted. I don't know if I mentioned it to you.

He went through the same school as I did. But why is it, it's sunk in with me, but never with some of these other people, because they go to these things. They don't have the personality type

or the psychological ability to intern to take that stuff in and go, "Oh, I'm going to make myself better." To them, they showed up with knowing everything and they can't be taught anything. Hence, again, I'm not going to waste my time with that kind of person. I thought it was interesting how that, uh, valid, you know, validated everything I thought about leadership. You know, Disney, Joe Helmet. I mean, all those.

Interview 7

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Background

I came into the United States Air Force in 2000. Um, get to serve my country in lots of different locations. Uh, I came in to do linguistics, and transferred over to communications, and then eventually counterintelligence. Um, traveled all over the world doing different types of missions, and then landed at U.S. Strategic Command, uh, as my final act of duty assignment, and then switched over to being a federal civilian. I've been a federal civilian for 10 years.

[What was your rank when you were enlisted, your last rank?]

My last ... I, I departed the Air Force as a staff Sergeant...E5.

Bad Example 1

[Can you give me an example of either good, or bad leadership that you experienced?]

Sure. So as a federal civilian, working same job, same, uh, mission, just not in uniform anymore. I worked for a woman who had also been in the military. Uh, separated from the military at about 15 years. She was a provost marshal in a location overseas at a women's prison, an Army officer. She came in, and she was a division chief for our area.

And although everyone was concentrating on the mission, she did not take the element of taking care of her folks. At the time she was my supervisor, or everyone's supervisor. She was a civilian, and she did not take the approach of taking care of the people, the people take care of the mission, kind of thing. And, um, it became a very hostile work environment.

Comments that were not anything you would see at headquarters command being made against particular people, or types of people, or race, or gender, or creed, or punishing people for not doing what she thought was the right thing to do at the time. And I don't mean like ... more like retaliatory type. I don't like you, so I'm gonna give you extra work, kind of task.

So I thought that that was inappropriate, having been serving in the military, or DOD for the last 20 years. So I approached her and told her, "Hey," you know, I just ... first I like to seek first to understand, and then, you know, where she's coming from and what her intent is, or maybe what her vision is so I can be as close to on par with her.

She'd let me know that, and then I tried to make myself understood of where it was coming from, and why I thought that was inappropriate for the work place.

And she challenged me about it, and said, you know, her name was on the door, and not mine. I thought, "Okay, that's great, but that's really inappropriate," and we have command, you know, regulations, and roles, and laws against stuff like that. And I probably need to see-

[What was her rank, her civil service?]

She's a GS14. And so I took it to civilian personnel.

Um, they would make a lot of really crude comments. So it was ... That particular division in STRATCOM was not very diverse-

... and not very open to diversity. So as soon (laughs) as I got hired, I was the only other female in the division. I am also Hispanic, and brown, so (laughs) the only one that was the odd one out. And the first thing she told me when I got hired, was I got hired through affirmative action for being a female a Hispanic. And I got lucky to work there. And I thought, well, that's not a good start. Considering that I had been at STRATCOM, at that point, for almost seven years, when I transferred to her section. It was pretty bad. Lot's of comments against, you know, particular groups of people, or minority groups.

So I pulled her aside, I said, "Hey look, you know, I'm concerned about you being my supervisor because I fall into one of these groups of people that you've made a lot of disparaging remarks against, and I'm concerned that there might be some kind of unfair, you know, bias against you writing my appraisals, and maybe we need to shift supervisory roles here, and I need to fall under a different section." And she declined it, and said that's just the way she was. That's how the Midwest is, and if I didn't like it, I could leave.

So I held on for about three years, and clearly things weren't gonna change. My daughter was in the ICU for sometime as an infant, and she told me I had to pick between my job or my kid. I took that to civilian personnel, as well. I came back and said, "Hey, look, this isn't working. It's a very toxic environment."

It wasn't just me, but it seemed like she centered on me 'cause I sat the closest to her-(laughs) in the office, and, ah, when ... The interesting part is, when I left, my last day at work, we had a going away, and she cried at my going away. She was actually really upset that I was leaving because there was not going to be anybody else that would do the job and put up with her.

I found out later that it took them 15 months to refill that seat, 'cause nobody else wanted to work for her either.

[What kind of communicator was she, her communication style?]

Very hostile. Like you either did what she told you to do in a very barking manner, or you just were quiet. So a lot ... So you could walk into that office on any given day and hear a pin drop in there. Nobody would converse with anybody, unless she was out. Then everybody would talk to each other and help each other out.

But, um, it was kind of an issue because she would, instead of saying, "Hey, look, I need this. This is our mission. This is what we're working on. Let's get after it together." Instead of fostering teamwork, or collaboration, or anything, she would say, "You go do, I don't care how

you get it done. I need it in 15 minutes," and yell at you. She was very ... known very well for yelling, very unapproachable, a lot of people would say that she was not approachable.

So we had an older gentleman that was working with us. He was a lawyer at one point, and came back to work because that's where his calling was, to be with at STRATCOM. And he was struggling with trying to get some information. We were working together on a project, but it seemed like, this gentleman just, he was struggling to understand the intent, or the requirement of the mission at the time. And she called him an idiot, and began to berate him in front of everyone in the office. So, I, I stood up and said, "Hey, this isn't okay. You know, if you have a problem, you probably can document that, or, maybe have a private conversation about it." And then she turned her focus (laughs) onto me. Someone else stepped in and said, "Hey, we think Ma'am, you know, you're a little upset. You probably should cool off before you start approaching anybody else in the office."

And she would just, you know, the comments that she would make were completely irrelevant to the work place. You know, "Oh, you're from the country," you know, "You don't have a high IQ," or "You're old, and you don't understand." Very discouraging type remarks. It was very toxic.

[How did her leadership impact your office, or your organization?]

We were direct support to the 4-star, so we would yield a lot of results. But after time people stopped coming to work. People wouldn't come to work on time. People were calling out sick all the time. So it was really hard to get anybody in the office. When they were in the office, they seemed to be withdrawn, or not motivated to seek and get ahead of things. So then time length started slipping, um, deliverables weren't getting done. And she was directly responsible to that, so she started to get approached by the senior leadership, "Hey, what's going on in your office?"

There were a number of complaints that had come from the 45 person office we were in. There was an IG complaint that was filed. Um, about, you know, ageism in the workplace, or ethnic challenges in the workplace, and if you don't like it, get out, was kind of her band of people. Eventually, you know, the senior leadership started to catch on, and slowly started removing those tasks from her. Pulling us aside, um, all the worker bees, or all the AOs aside, and say, "Hey, like this is what we need. Can you help us get it done if we move your seats."

We had seat reassignments in there. We had shift changes in there. A lot of people volunteered to work in another office, but still complete the same mission, 'cause they couldn't sit next to her. Eventually, the mission suffered over that. People weren't happy, and a lot of people quit.

She left service as an O4, after 15 years. She was in the Army.

[So she left at 15 years, but she didn't retire?]

No. So it was ... It's very telling in and of itself. You know, most people just stick out the last five years, they retire. But she was very angry. You know when ... and I'd try to get to know her, you know, maybe figure out where she was coming from. What ... People, I don't believe people

are born that way. Pep- ... believe environmentally become that way through different transitions they've had in their life.

And I realized, you know, she had been through some hardships in her past, and, you know, had try to overcome them by bearing it, or lashing out on people. It wasn't just either. It turns out she had ... You know, she was doing the same thing to her family, and it was causing her some significant family strain, as well.

Some of the co-workers, some of the more ... the co-workers that had been around a little longer, the older generation, seemed to say, "You know what, we're just collecting a paycheck. I'm not going to do anything more than I already have to do. I'll do exactly what's told of me, and I'm gonna sit here and be quiet and take it and leave. If I don't talk to her, then you know, she won't say anything. I get chewed out."

You know, "It's just a job, I'm collecting a paycheck." I believe some of the younger generation though, this isn't how we do business anymore. That might have been acceptable during a different time, but we won't stand for that, and we need to say something.

I took the approach of directly confronting her, in a quiet independent setting to say, "Hey, you know, I think this is wrong, this isn't right. We need to get past this." Um, some of my younger, you know, some of the younger folks in the office said, they quit, and they never came back. They thought it's not worth it. Their stress and their-

[Did they quit the civil service, or just quit their job?]

Yes. They quit civil service altogether.

Recommendations

[And you've actually alluded to this a little bit, but can you ... How did you deal with it, and how did she respond to your interventions?]

Oh. (laughs) so, my first approach was, like, ah, for instance, we had an issue with an exercise timing. I was a single mom, so I absolutely needed to make sure that I could be on shift on time, as well as, you know, get back to my daughter in enough time to either pick her up, or drop her off from daycare. So I had asked her to help me, you know, what shift would she like me to work so I can get the information. A week prior to a Tier 1 exercise, which is 13 days. I still didn't have a shift assignment. So I need to fly somebody in to give me a hand.

Um, I asked her on a Wednesday before the exercise began over the weekend. "You know, Ma'am, I need my schedule so I can plan accordingly for my daughter." And she exploded in the office. I told you that I would give it to you when I felt like you needed it. You don't need it right now, and how dare you bother me again, with your schedule. You know, what is it with you people?" Those type of comments.

So, I let the day pass. The next morning I asked her to meet me in the conference room with her supervisor present, just so to be a mediator. I said, "Ma'am look. I'm looking for my schedule. This is my situation." And I sat right next to her mind you, probably less than two feet away from her. I said, "This is my situation. I'm just trying to make sure that I can get ahead of it, so I can have the adequate coverage to report in. I need to know what the products are, the deliverables," and you know. She just exploded again, and, "How dare you bring somebody else in here. I already told you." You know. "I'm not going to give you what you're asking for." You know, "You're being a pain." Very toxic.

Then at the end of that conversation, she said, "You know what ... She never did give me my schedule, but she did pull me off the exercise, and made me sit in the back office for the entire exercise while everybody was gone. She's like, "Fine, are you happy, you get to not be a part of the exercise, I'll just ground you. You can work 4:00 AM to 4:00 PM, sitting in the back office." I thought, well that doesn't solve anything either. And now you're short-handed 'cause you're a little angry. That was, that was very upsetting.

[What did the supervisor say, her supervisor in that meeting?]

Nothing. It wasn't until we went two supervisors up, and got a GOFO involved, that things started to change. So the first thing we did is, okay, I contacted her supervisor. Her supervisor was in the room. She knew that she had a hot-tempered type of personality, very toxic, very hostile, and he just said, "Hey, she delivers results, we'll keep her on."

Unfortunately, because she was a division chief, she had a branch chief who also operated in the same fashion, who was actually on the watch floor, which is a very critical place to be for operations. And people would come to her all the time, "Hey, this guy's being, you know, really difficult. He's very toxic. He's talking down to people. You know, he's probably incited a couple, you know, high volume arguments on the watch floor. This is not acceptable to the battle watch commander. Please get him off, off of the station," and she said, "No. You guys quit, he stays."

So a lot of people did quit. They had an incredibly high turnover rate. It was very unfortunate. It wasn't until after I left, that the investigation found that there was some toxic leadership examples that were going on at the time. General XXXXX XXXXX was our J3 at the time. She didn't ... That's not in her, or her, um, her vision of how she carries her directorate.

[Was she a two star?]

Yes.

And she nipped that in the bud pretty quick.

[How did you get to her?]

I ended up asking the GS15, then the O6, then the one-star, then the one-star took it from there. And I had quit by that time. I had taken a DOD transfer to CENTCOM.

Best move I ever made, though. I love it here. So ...

Recommendations

[Let me, let me maybe transition ... this is a good point to transition to CENTCOM. I happen to know that you work for somebody that you got along really well with, but who had a reputation for being really toxic. And I'm just curious if you can describe any examples you saw that toxicity, and then how, how you dealt with it.]

So, I think when I came here, I had heard from the grapevine, of just how toxic that particular individual was. And I thought, okay, everyone deserves a fair chance. That maybe not everybody sees through the same lens. So I think ... I took the Franklin Covey Series when I was newly appointed as an NCO. So I took it, and it says, "Seek first to understand and be understood." So that was my initial intent. Was, "Let's find out what's goin' on."

I went into his office. I was new. I had accompanied a couple staff meetings. I could see, you know, his boiler plate overflowing. (laughs) He was very angry. And I went back into his office after a couple meetings, and I said, "Hey, Sir, this, I think this is what you need. I hear what you're asking for, based on me being brand new here, but having had 20 years of COCOM experience, what I think you really need is, a, b, and c. I'm prepared to provide you with an update, every day, at the same time, until you feel like we're on track to what your focus, your mission, your goals are, and then we're going to operate that way."

I also saw a team that had been haggard. It had been beaten up. I thought, "You know what, I'm not in a leadership role here, but, you know what, I could boost moral if I can, so let's, let's see people. People are human beings. There's a human element to work. Even though we are here, we're on mission, it doesn't mean that we have to treat each other poorly."

So I started talking to people, getting to know the team. Figuring out was going on. Unbeknownst to me, about two and a half weeks later, I was the new division chief for that section, which is not what I came here for. I said, "Okay, we got this." And I think it was a matter of information flow. The O6 that was in that position, wasn't getting the right information flow, in his right timing. Although, his timing, his timeframe, was a little more aggressive than what was required.

It was also important to have these conversations with him after hours to figure out where he was coming from. He was under an incredible amount of pressure to deliver, on mission, from much higher senior leaders than him. At that height, and end of his career, he wanted to leave on a good footing. So he was under a lot of pressure. I think, at that point, his frustrations probably got the best of him. He was very angry.

[I remember there was a lieutenant colonel who was in charge for a while and he became the recipient of a lot of the colonel's ire, and there were times when you were there.]

So, I- I understood the lieutenant colonel's point at that time. He had been beaten down to such a point. Toxic work environment. Hostile comments made his way. That's demeaning. It's

demoralizing. It's sucking the morale right out of an organization. And I think he- he was starting to slip down that slope of, "I have no fight left. Just get me out of here."

And I understood that. I mean anybody in his position would feel that way. I think him and the O6, at the time, were talking past each other. So nothing either one of them said was gonna ever translate 'cause I think the patience meter had already run out.

Bad Example 2

We had a particular meeting. There was a bunch of us around the table, and the O5 and the O6 were engaged. And the O6 started berating the O5. And I banged on the table, like a neanderthal, but I banged on the table to get everyone's attention. That really made the O6 angry. And he looked at me like, "I will fire you, after I chew you up and spit you out." (laughs) I said, "Hey, Sir, what I think, what I think you need is this. And this is what, not only, this is what I think you're saying, but this is what I'm gonna do for you." Because he's tired of hearing, or not hearing that people are understanding where he's coming from. But also he was tired of not getting the deliveries he was asking for.

So I thought, "This is what I'm gonna deliver to you, and if I mess this up again, feel free to relieve my position." And he, he was so shocked by that because I don't think anybody had ever towed the line with him to say, "Hey, I see you. I hear you. Let me take it from here. And if I, let me be the forward face of the team. So if something's wrong, you come to me, not the rest of the team." It gives me the opportunity to build up team. It gets him to have a single point of success or failure, and it frees up a lot of time in his face, so he doesn't have to keep redoing work that other people were doing. And I think he seemed to respond really well to that.

So we learned in all kind of school, like there's four types of learners, right. You see, you do, you hear, or you repeat something. Right. So, I thought, okay, clearly the power point slides, and the word documents, and 10,000 emails a day, aren't working. I have this great whiteboard here. Some people are just visual learners.

So I started to write down all the tasks, the goals. Not only that, but goals as a team. Goals as individuals. Who is working what? So it was clear in the definition of who had what responsibilities. Um, and I utilized this whiteboard to say, "Hey, this is our division in a snapshot. Without it being another paper product, without it being another email, and you could come over here at anytime of the day or night, and either, A, see us here, huddled together as a team, getting after what's going on as a unit," or, you could say, "Hey, you're off track. Let me help adjust this for you, go do," or "I really like what you're doing. I will carry on and go find someone else to harass (laughs) for the moment." Which is really telling ... it was also telling that we wanted to play to the strengths of a team at that time. So some people are really great at somethings, but those highlights weren't, weren't, nobody was aware of that.

There were other members of the team who were really junior in their career. They had incredible strengths, but need to bridge the gap with some of the information that they needed. So it gave us all the opportunity to come together and says, "Hey, look, you're good at this, you're good at this, let's link you all together." So It's a learning opportunity. It's a team building

opportunity. We work as a partner, as a team. And then, there's no critical failure if one of us is out for any reason. And I think that gap was demonstrated, it was displayed on the board, and the O6 really responded well to that.

Plus then we found out he was a visual guy, so our pictures and our diagrams got more simple. We used colors and big bold letters, (laughs) and it really worked out for him. So I thought that was helpful.

[What would you recommend to someone going into a similar situation?]

I think it's taking a step back from what everyone is saying. You're standing outside of the tornado, and you're looking in. You say, "Wow, that's pretty destructive." But when you finally can step in, it's starting with the little things first. How's the team doing? How's the help? How's the mission going? What are the products? What are they really asking for? So defining, clearly defining what the requirements are is very important because if you have a whole team of people, they don't know what they're supposed to be doing. Everybody is super frustrated.

I think taking ownership and responsibility for some of the things that haven't been getting done, and then turning that around and encouraging the team to help support those things. When they see you take leadership, then they know that they have some top cover. To ... I think also, just being a team player. You can't ask people to do escort duty and vacuum the rug, if you're not willing to do it yourself. So when your folks see you escorting for bathroom crew, they're like, Hey, that person is not too big in their position. They have humility. They're willing to do the same stuff we're willing to do.

I think too, seeing the gaps and what can be fixed, and making little wins over time, add up to really big wins because if it's little things, it can affect like personnel, like attitude, or morale in the office. You do those little things, people have a better attitude. They have ... They feel like they're part of a greater whole. Then they start to produce. They want to work. They want to get after the problem. They're gonna help you overall.

Being up front and standing for their crew, sometimes somebody needs somebody to yell at, and if you stand up and say, "Hey that was our fault," or "We will fix that," or "We will get after that," gives the person who is frustrated a single point to say, "Okay, somebody's got that responsibility pinned on them." But also giving the team a buffer so they're not getting berated. So they're not getting, you know, all this negative input, which they don't really need, because it's a matter of communication.

I think at the end of the day, people communicate differently. People, especially here, come from all walks of life. All, you know, all different nationalities, and places that they've lived. They need that. So, just step in and start little, and work your way up. Eventually somebody will notice and either fire you, or promote you. But I think it's really helpful, helpful for the organization, 'cause at the end of the day, it's one team, one fight.

[How did you know, or decide when it was time to elevate a problem?]

So, I think it's important for me ... You know, I don't assume anything, so I wanted to make sure it wasn't just me first. So, I started documenting what was happening. I would keep a little log of date and time, and what was said. After it got ... That log started to grow, I thought, hey, maybe there's a problem. I talked to a co-worker of mine, "Hey, maybe it's just me, what do you think?" "Oh, I'm having that problem too. Let me tell you my story." I think that's pretty telling, if there's more than one person in an organization that's feeling the same way. And maybe nobody else has had the encouragement to say something, or do something about it. I took the log, I confronted my supervisor, in a closed door setting. I wanted to respect her privacy and engagement, and to give her a safe and neutral place that wasn't our specific office, to be free to communicate what was going on.

I talked to her. I thought, okay, maybe it's a bad day because that conversation didn't go well. I waited, probably two months, and I tried to pull her aside and talk to her again. I would ... Every time I did talk to her, I would send an email, "Ma'am, requesting a formal feedback, or requesting a formal sit down." So that way, there was a date-time stamp recorded. You know, documentation that I could use to say, "Hey, look, I've tried to resolve this at the lowest level, it's not working."

The next iteration was to contact the supervisor, "Hey, we're having this, you know, dispute at work. I think it's a problem." That fell on deaf ears. I took it to the O6. It went from a 15 to an O6. The O6 was aware that there was an issue, but didn't have the time to get after that. So then it ended up going into the O7 level.

But the important thing for me was, by the time we hit the O7 level, I had pages and pages of logs of events that had occurred. Emails of requesting formal feedback, or formal sessions, to communicate the issue. I would always follow up with an email. "Ma'am, per our discussion today, this is what I received out of this." You know, um, conversation, it was fruitful, it was not fruitful, or we were at a stalemate. So I was able to submit that documentation to say, "Hey, you know, I'm, I'm doing my best, but this is out of my hands and now it requires some intervention."

It gives the next level of leadership the opportunity to engage after they know that the due diligence has been done in advance.

[How did you know to do all this, this process?]

So, part ... So my first, one of my first big missions, I worked active duty Air Force was I had to testify to a court marshal for an individual who had committed a felony, and, ah, at the end of the court marshal, which is a great disservice to everyone involved, both the person who was sentenced to prison, and the victim, were both discharged from the Air Force.

And when I had a ... had that engagement, that victim, at the very last trial, she stopped me in a hallway, and grabbed my arm, and said, "You need to get out of the service, there are no protections here." And when she said that it made me think, what kind of protections was she talking about because she ended up getting discharged from the service.

And I held on that, until I did my second investigation with the Air Force, and it was one of the largest drug busts in the Air Force at the time. And the first sergeant said, "Where's the documentation?" And I remember thinking, we have positive evidence that people have not passed the urinalysis, but no one had ever been counseled before. No one had ever had, had any paper trail of any evidence suggesting that they were going down a path that was not within the Air Force's core values. And I thought, that's a problem. The Air Force has a history of not documenting problems when they arise, and building a case. So now, as a civilian, we have ... sometimes civilians that probably need to find a different job, but because no one had ever documented their behavior over time, it's impossible to help that engagement to occur. To help them out the door. And that, that's a problem because that breeds its own toxic work environment.

I encourage everyone to document if there's an issue, or there's an observation that doesn't seem in line with the core values. And, if at the end to the year, you do a file review, and it's not necessary because it's an isolated incident. Not a big deal, you can always toss that paperwork. But if it is an issue, now you've built a case to elevate that up.

[Did you ever get any feedback on your IG complaint in STRATCOM? Did that ever get validated, or anything ever happen to that person?]

So, from the folks there, because I- I'd left, and ... did not want to be a part of that anymore. From the folks there, they said that that individual was made aware of, um, their personality flaws, (laughs) so to speak. It was, it was a humbling experience for that individual. It was also very telling. Sometimes people are just not self aware that they're causing that kind of damage and destruction because they're facing so many challenges on their own. They can't understand that they're causing challenges as well. There was an awareness, there was a paper trail, there was, um, paperwork, that had occurred. That person will not promote and is now stagnant in their position, which I'm pretty sure is not what they wanted for their career.

[Was that person prejudicial, biased, against either race or sex?]

Yes, or creed, or sexual orientation, or handicap. It was, it was, race, gender, ah, sexual orientation, ah, beliefs, if you weren't a certain religion, or a spiritual faith.

[So she made disparaging remarks. Did she visibly treat people ... differently?]

Yes. It was very noticeable. It was, it was heartbreaking. People would just quit. They didn't want to work in it. I think it's important that when something like that is going on at a work place, that people stick together, not all just quit.

You know, I just recently heard a story about this, where seven people quit in an office between January and March. And even though it had been elevated to HR, nothing was done about the principal concern in that office. And I thought, that's unfortunate because it's really hard to get anything done if nobody works for you, or with you anymore.

[Was that here in CENTCOM?]

No. It's a corporate situation. But I thought, that's unfortunate, that everybody quit in a short period of time because the environment was toxic.

I think for every toxic leader that's out there, whether it's a misunderstanding, or just a way of life for that individual, there's 10 other wonderful examples of leadership. You know, I've seen so many examples of leadership, of taking care of their people, and the people taking care of their mission. People just generally want to get out of bed, and go to work, and be a part of something greater than themselves, and I really do believe that, especially in the military culture.

I think, nobody does this for the pay. Everybody does this because you're a patriot at heart. They want to come back. They want to serve other uniform members, even when they're out of uniform, and I think that's really telling because they believe in the cause. So you see really great leaders. We have a phenomenal deputy now.

Good Example 1

So we have a phenomenal, phenomenal, deputy now. She's just phenomenal. She's also got a big bite to her. So she just won't say what she's thinking to you, she'll take action on it. You know, we've had a number of issues that have been coming up with things like travel requests, or civilian pay, or, um, people making disparaging remarks in the office. Not only will she talk to you one-on-one, and say, "Hey, let's meet in the middle. How are you doing? How's your family? Is this ..." She wants to get to the bottom of it first. "What's causing you to act like this? What's causing you to fail at your task, or what's happening? And how can I help you get back on track." Or, personality sometimes gets in the way. "Okay. Let me help you. Let me put you on notice to give you enough time to find something that's better suited for you, so you don't have to go home empty-handed." I think that's very telling. I also think, you know, people would generally want to come work for her.

The other thing is for those people in the office who did have a history of being toxic, it put them on notice that that will not be acceptable, or tolerated when they come in, and they will be removed from their position with ample supporting documents if they continue that behavior. And they've really put a lid on it, and I think that's very important. It's a humbling experience across the board. You know, we're all people. We're all human beings. I think those things matter. People need to know that they're cared about. At the end of the day, I think that's, that's just part of being a human being.

Bad Example 1

It was really sad that she felt the need to be that way, because she had a real problem with immigration, which is what it turned out to be. Um, Omaha, Nebraska turned out to be a place where, um, immigration services will house a lot of people trying to start, um, in the United States, so people who've been granted asylum or people who've come here. They start there. So she had a number of run-ins with people from different cultures. So she would make comments like, "This is America. Learn how to speak English," or, uh, you know, "All the immigrants are the same," and I thought, "Hey, I speak English. I learned English when I was 15. I'm Hispanic. I don't think that's really fair." "Oh, well, you're all the same. Well, you know." No, we're not all

the same, and not all Hispanic people come from the same Hispanic country or Latin country, so it's a really big deal. Not all of us, you know, I'm an American citizen. I was born in New York. I look like this by, because I can't help it, but culturally I have traditions and culture, but that doesn't mean I'm not an American. I serve my country as well.

But she just really was, "This is my land. This is my area. The Midwest was perfect and pure before they started bringing, you know, immigrants here, and you know, I want my, my state back." And I thought, "You can have it, but I work here too, so there has to be some tolerance." At, at a minimum regardless of what your beliefs are, have a, a respect for someone else's beliefs. You know, I'm non-Denominational Christian, she's Catholic, she's thought I was going to- she literally told me I was going to burn in hell for not being Catholic, and I thought, "That's sad for you. Uh, I'm sorry." You know, it was just very, very sad that, to feel that way. And I thought, at the end of the day, I felt sad for her because I thought she has to walk around with that, that heart, that spirit about her that she's just angry at everything. It sucks to be her. Like that, that's just the bottom line. There's nothing in her life that makes her happy, so of course it's pouring out of her. You know, I hope she found her calling in life for, you know, an awareness, and I think that's a big deal. I was really surprised she cried at my going away. That was a big deal.

You know, but that, that's just-

[What do you think caused that?]

Well, two, in that area, it was known for very, very high prejudice, you know, and racial tensions. Um, there were some towns that the Air Force had deemed unsafe to travel through at night, uh, because of those types of issues. So I think it was just a small town, you know, very isolated town mentality of this is how I live, this is how I want my land to be. This is the last of what we have. I think maybe if she would've been a little bit more open, she could've got some really great ideas of how to do things just from a different perspective. That's how we got medicine. That's how we have science. That's how we drive cars and ride in elevators, accepting different ideas from different people, and I think that was, that was just culture awareness.

I think education plays a part of that too, because some schools teach those things. Some schools teach inclusion. I think that makes a big difference, how your family- Generationally speaking, her family lived through segregation, so of course she's a child that came after segregation, but her parents still had some pretty strong feelings about that, and it, it carried through their family. That's a big change.

[Have you ever thought about between the linkage between that kind of view and leadership?]

Oh, absolutely. I think too, sometimes people don't know any better. They literally don't have an awareness above and beyond of where they're standing in time and place, so if things are changing around them but they're still the same, it seems like, like an invasion of what they have built in their life. Some people just don't like change, and it's unfortunate, but it's true. I think that happens in different pockets all over the United States. I don't think it's isolated to one particular region, but I mean, I've heard stories about it happening here in Florida. We've been fortunate enough not to have any of those types of issues, but I think it's just generationally speaking, the

United States has come an astronomically long way in a hundred years of history, which is a relatively short period of time if you think about it.

We've lived through women's suffrage and, you know, we can vote now. We can get jobs. It, you know, women can be in combat now, women can be scientists and doctors and lawyers now where before they were just admin personnel. You know, blacks and whites aren't segregated anymore. You know, we can integrate. Schools are integrated. That's huge. A lot of people are still alive that lived through that, and that, that's a big deal for them. They were raised through their families not to accept, and trying to force all those people to change at the same time is a massive undertaking. It's, it's just not going to happen overnight. I think the best chance we have is the next generation. They didn't live through that, but they saw all the problems that it created, and now they're about change and they're about moving forward and together as opposed to apart.

Bad Example 3

So, so we had a corporate individual come to CENTCOM, a civilian, a federal civilian, and they really had a standard of how they wanted things to be done without any regard for DOD regulations or instructions that are already established. He thought they were ludicrous and thought that they needed to be completely overhauled without understanding that there's a process for that.

So he um, he's very toxic to his team, constantly berating them, not only through, in front of each other but through his leadership, you know, "Oh that didn't get done because so and so doesn't know how to do their job," kinda thing. And the team got really upset. So there were some rumors going around about this guy, people were talking about him.

And then one day, I, I don't know this guy and I don't work for him either, uh, but somebody I know does, he came over to my office to ask me for particular documentation that I refused to give him because he didn't have a need to know. And he started to get a little loud, and a little absurd, so I pulled him into a private conference room and I had some words with him and explained to him that his reputation precedes him in a really bad way, his personality clearly has some blind spots in it, and um, he really needed to take a look at that because uh, people were starting to call out from work, they didn't want to be there because he was so toxic.

And we had a heart to heart. It wasn't a good conversation when it started, but we hugged it out when we were done. And uh, he went back to his office and I thought, "Oh, that's the last time I'm going to see that guy." Unbeknownst to me at the time, I found out later, he pulled his whole team aside in front of a whiteboard and drew a picture of his whole team, and then a little picture of him on the outside and said, you know, "I'm not being a team player and I'm not coming across the way that's appropriate and I'm, I'm sorry for being ... a schmuck." And you know, "I will do better and I wanna understand how this works." Instead of process he, he took the time to understand the process and then to understand where his team was coming from. He turned out to be a really reasonable individual, and the team was very appreciative of it.

So he left his job, of course, and he ends up working at SOCOM with somebody I know very well. (Laughs) it's funny. But he's totally different, he's a much better, much more tolerable individual and he's doing a really good job at his new job at SOCOM.

Interview 8

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Background

I am an air force veteran over 23 years of service in active forces. Retired in 2012. Was an intelligence officer as an officer. After I retired, I became a contractor with multiple contracts here at Central Command, and then in my current position, I work as a contractor as a cyber planner assigned to the CENTCOM J3 directorate. I retired as a major. I was prior enlisted.

Bad Example 1

[Can you share any specific examples of either exceptionally good or exceptionally bad leadership that you've encountered during your career or your time as a contractor?]

Sure. One of my first instances of a caustic leader in a sense of just rubbed people the wrong way, would have to say when I was at XXXX air force base. We were in the operational support squadron, part of the intel element there. Unfortunately, the senior leader at the time focused a lot on herself and demanded strict loyalty regardless of the situation. So it became one time when she was just gave bad guidance. Don't recall the specific situation, but it got to the point that caused junior officers, junior captains, 0-3's and below, had to get together and discuss were we gonna go above and beyond her to address it to the squadron commander. In our discussions, she ultimately found out and pretty much gave us letters of counseling for even coming together and discussing the situation.

Certain elements, personal, she demanded loyalty in a certain situation, job situations and others, and it started affecting the mission.

Loyalty to either it's her way or the highway. And her way may not have been up to rules and regulations as we knew it. Or just good leadership as an air force leader at the time. And it would put us in an uncomfortable situation because we wanted to support her, but it became almost personal. Again, loyalty.

[What was her rank?]

She was an 0-4 at the time. Unfortunately, the specific situation got we received letters of counseling because of that situation. After that the morale, pretty much, was low. But we still did our jobs because we were responsible for the mission there.

[What kind of communication style did she use?]

Very ... Depends on the day. Very authoritative ... She had a good day, it was very supportive and things like that. But if things weren't going her way, very authoritative, directive. I'm not saying she cursed a lot, I don't remember that. But it was just depending on the day, unfortunately. It wasn't a steady ...

[Did she yell, or?]

At times. Just to make her point across, that way she didn't have to. But, like I said, just depending on the day and the situation, and the stress that she was undergoing, there possibly could've been some personal stuff that we weren't privy to, but it definitely affected how she addressed the people. Again, the key issue about that is demanding the personal loyalty regardless of the situation. That's what made it caustic.

[Did that personal loyalty involve doing personal favors for her?]

Not that I recall. It's been awhile, so. Not to that level, it's just how we would conduct the mission to make sure she ... It seemed to me, my personal opinion anyway, that she got the glory. Everything was focused on making her look good, and things like that.

[Was she competent in her professional skills?]

I would say overall, yes. She was very good, of course, with her senior leaders and put on a very professional face and all that. But when it came to us at times, not always, she let us know who's in charge and how things are gonna go, and if you don't support me, you're gonna have problems. Again, and it culminated with that situation would be letter of counseling. When that happened my morale went low, and I said, "I'm gonna do my job, I'm not gonna go around her if necessary to do the job and play within her boundaries. She's not worth me getting out of the air force." Did what I had to do to survive that particular incident.

[Did she demonstrate any kind of prejudice, you know, either gender, or race, or cultural?]

No, thankfully, she was definitely more professional for that. I didn't experience anything personal. I guess one of the things being in the fighter squadron or operational support squadron that supported fighters, being a female must have been hard on her at times because fighter pilots could be. But she didn't really let that on, but in a high testosterone environment like a fighter squadron, at a fighter wing, at a fighter base, she may have felt some of that from her peers. But she did not let that on to us, to me.

[The meeting that led to the letter of counseling, what were you guys discussing?]

I'm not sure if it was how she was dealing with a particular person, or some sort of personal policy, I can't recall the specific event, unfortunately. But it was to the point that it was affecting morale, it was affecting how we were doing our mission. So as we had a weapon officer with us, myself, we had another captain that pretty much got together, and a first lieutenant that had got together and said, "What do we do about this? Because this is getting a problem affecting the flights.", because she was the flight commander. What do we do as junior officers to help rectify the situation or even address it to her that we were even concerned about that, because how she would react with our concerns. Ultimately deciding whether or not, do we go above her, an IG complaint, and things like that.

[Did you guys ever make a decision to go above her?]

I think it was a discussion meeting. I don't recall us going to the squadron commander, or even going to the IG. I think we were about let's keep it in house and discussing with her, if I recall.

[How did she find out about it?]

I think we may have decided to approach her first. Again, to keep it in house. And once she ... Or I'm not sure if somebody else may have told her, but bottom line, I think we, if I recall, we did approach her and did not go well for us. She thought we were trying to undermine her, and all that, hence the letters of counseling.

[Was she respected by the squadron commander?]

I think he thought she was competent. Of course, when you're dealing with your boss, you're gonna have different face, different demeanor, and all that supportive. So I did not get from him that he was unsatisfied with her performance.

[How did your flight perform under her leadership?]

I think before this situation escalated, we were doing our mission. There was no significant issues. She was a little new in the seat, but I think things progressed downward later. But overall, again, the squadron kept doing ... We tried as much as we could not to affect the junior leadership. There's a few enlisted people with us and we tried to deal with it directly at the officer level. We didn't try to put our opinions ... I didn't put my opinions on the enlisted, that was the thing.

Bad Example 2

Yeah, we had an O-6 when I was in Japan that he was very by the book, old school, and regaled of his time in SAC. So we kind of sort of knew where his kind of leadership mentality was, and by the book. And we were, I won't say afraid, but we were very careful how we addressed this particular leader and conducted, and give him what he needed. Unfortunately, it's personal to me, there was an instance where I had gone on leave prior to a deployment to bring my family back from the states, and unfortunately, I had missed my flight back to Japan. I immediately alerted the leadership of what was going on, I even made recommendations because I had to attend a pre-deployment meeting, so I alerted ... got the email from that office and said, "Hey, I'm coming one day late.", just to make sure everything was fine. And of course, they responded to me as I'm frantically emailing them it would be okay of me to attend that pre-deployment meeting one day later.

So I sent all this package up to my leadership telling them, "May I please have one more day of leave so I could attend the meeting. I'll be deploying probably three or four days after the meeting." And unfortunately, the senior leader at the time, pretty much said, "You better get on that plane and get here as soon as possible." And unfortunately, because of flights, and finances, and whatever, I could not. So when I came back to Japan, I was told to report as soon as possible to the leadership where he subsequently gave me, I think a letter of reprimand for being late.

I rebutted, but it was to no avail. So the relationship between he and I was soured and he placed me in a unit kind of, sort of away from his daily interaction. So my unit ...

[What kind of unit was he in charge of?]

It was an intel division for the numbered air force in Japan. Other than that, after that incident things went south. And my immediate supervisor, his deputy, was not supportive at all. He was scared of him, my words. Did not support me, did not try, because he knew what type of leader he was. My deputy, my immediate supervisor at the time, wanted to make the next rank of O-6 and he was not gonna cross him. My personal feeling, he would not support me, and hence, when I left there I got a referral report because of that incident. Although, made sure there was no impact to my deployment, no impact when I went to my deployment location, which actually, was here. I was able to get a joint service achievement metal, so I performed in a great manner that day, would've spent the time resources gave me achievement metal. So brought that back. And it was a negative experience because had he chosen to just be merciful and give me one more day of leave, which with no impact, we would not be here.

[Do you have any understanding of why he was so hard pressed to not extend your leave that one day?]

He may have been issues that I didn't know of with me personally. Up to then, there was no significant issues that I failed him on. I don't know if it was just, "Hey, by the book. You were supposed to be here, you didn't get on that flight." I think he said something to the fact that, "Had you spent the money", which would've been over a thousand dollars to get a flight, the very day that I found out I missed rotator, nothing would've happened to me because I made the good faith effort. And I thought the good faith effort was informing my immediate supervisor, informing the people where I had to conduct the deployment meeting prior to my deployment. And make sure it was okay with them. And it would've been handled easy. I had enough leave, and things like that. So it was leadership ...

Maybe, I don't know ultimately what was in his heart, but it wasn't a detriment to the unit. I had decent performance reports. Supported his missions, supported what he was trying to do. And we had a good bilateral relationship with the Japanese and supported on multiple those events. My opinion, he may have different, I was not a detriment to the unit. So when it came to this one instance where I needed his support, or my immediate supervisor's support, they both did not support me. And, of course, my supervisor did whatever my colonel wanted. Ultimately, I had a referral report.

Don't know what the mind ... I could say he's from an old school SAC mentality. You've gotta be on duty all. That could've been it. There was no racism to that, because he was Hispanic himself. When I did my rebuttal of my performance report that went to the three star, I said, "Hey, there was no inkling this was coming." Just a lot of miscommunication from my immediate supervisor, in my opinion, because he received that overall guidance that you will hit 'em, treat him by the book, per se. No mercy.

I'm pretty sure ... I can't recall a specific one, but everybody was on point that you better do your job and do it well and be by the book, or Colonel Xxxx would not take it lightly on you. I think others had other issues from personal nature I do not know of.

[What kind of communicator was he?]

Very direct. Very stern. But of course, like all senior leaders, he worked well with his superstars in the squadron. Really, really, really high performers, he was great with them. If you're not a really, really good superstar, then he would treat you like everybody else. It's not that he was an ogre, but he was very direct, he was very by the book, he was very no quarter given. That's the mentality that you understood, and we all understood that, and we performed, I thought, to those standards. He had a good relationship with the senior leaders, I think. In part, because of the work the team was doing to support him to make sure the mission was going.

[Did he get promoted?]

The colonel, I am not sure. He was an 0-6, I don't think so because he may have missed a wing command, or something like that, I'm not sure. But my immediate supervisor, no, he did not get promoted to 0-6. And he retired as a Lt Col.

Bad Example 1

[I meant to ask you about the major in the OSS. Did she get promoted?]

I am not sure. I don't recall. I wanna say yes, but I don't know. She would've been through reserves. I'm not sure.

[Did anybody up the chain know how she treated her flight crew?]

I think over time, because again personal issues, her demeanor sometimes may have gotten ... Not just being around people a lot, but if there were other specific issues with other people, I can't recall. But I'm pretty sure over time the squadron commander will ultimately find out in. In his squadron, in his leadership, and her demeanor to him and all that. I can't speak to that.

Good Example 1

Oh, positive. Now the good stuff. One of most positive experiences was my assignment right before my second to last assignment in the air force when I was the operations officer. Now, that position has been upgraded now to Director of Operations for our squadron at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. And we had a really sharp lieutenant colonel, female, by the book, but caring for people. Funny thing is, I met her before she arrived down on station. I met her while deployed to Iraq, because we had heard that she was gonna take the squadron command, so I got a chance before I returned to the squadron to meet her there, and we hit it off really well. She was very sharp.

So when I came back, she gave me the opportunity to become her operations officer. And pretty much tried help run the squadron with a senior civilian, her deputy, we ran the squadron for her. And of course, she had insight all the time what we were doing. But really was a great leadership opportunity for me, personally. How she treated the squadron, she was fair, she was caring, she involved her spouse in the squadron. Night and day from what I experienced in Japan. But that was, even before her, we had a squadron commander that actually made colonel, that knew when I came directly to Wright-Patterson ... Sorry I'm skipping back a little bit.

When I came from Japan to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the current squadron commander there knew everything that was going on, and still gave me a chance. And he was a phenomenal leader, as well. Cared for people, was focused on the mission, exemplified all the leadership characteristics we expect from all leaders, but especially air force. And he gave me an opportunity to lead, and I did well there. He discussed my situation with the incoming commander amongst all the other things. I served with him for a year before ... Served with him for about, actually, six months deployed and then came back. I'm pretty sure ...

[What was your rank when you were in Japan?]

Japan, I was a captain promotable, as they say in the army. I had made major while I was in Japan.

[Okay. That was before the referral of the OPR?]

Yes, yes. Did not affect it at all. Thank god for that. But bottom line, the new leadership, the latest one, she was a phenomenal squadron commander. Two great individuals after that situation in Japan that just totally reinforced my love for the air force. People can be strong, you can be direct, but you can care for your people and give them opportunities to excel. And both of those leaders after the Japan incident were wonderful, phenomenal. Would run through a wall for them. They challenged me to grow as a leader, and I was able to grow with their leadership myself. Totally different instance.

Recommendations

[If you had to give advice to someone for what you were experiencing in either the OSS or in Japan, what advice would you've give?]

Definitely. First, I would say deal privately with the OSS situation and the OSS with the major. Understand ... Be more emotionally intelligent to their leadership style and if you don't want to have any issues with your career, do what she says so long as it's legal and moral. If it was a real, real issue, talk to her personally and see what would happen before you talk to others because my career could've been ruined by that letter of counseling. Be more protective when you're in a bad leader, protect yourself because you could get hurt.

With the situation in Japan, I would say, understand your leadership's ways, how they do business. And protect yourself if they seem to be the leader that gave you no quarter, then you operate with that. You take more leave, as I should've done. Do everything to protect yourself,

document every performance, because if something negative were to happen, you have all the documentation you need to defend yourself if necessary. Protect yourself because the person could ruin your career. Just be aware, be emotionally intelligent, understand the leadership style, and if it's caustic, just protect yourself. Do what they can until you can't stand it anymore, then just leave.

It's funny you should make me sign that statement. No, those experiences affected me for the rest of my career after that. Became better for it, but at times, I was bitter for the experience because it didn't necessarily have to happen, especially the situation in Japan. But through god's help, my family who supported me all the way through, I think the key thing was thank god for a strong family that supports you through the good and bad of your experience, regardless of the leadership style. As long as you have family and people that care about you, you'll make it through whatever leadership style you have to face.

Bad Example 1

[Did you suffer any physical effects?]

Probably stress. Some stress, maybe a little bit of weight loss. But other than that, no.

Interview 9

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Background

I retired from the active-duty Air Force after 21 years and nine months. I was an intel officer. After that, about four years and a few months ago I became a contractor working for the government. I was a program manager for a little over two and a half years. Then I became an analyst working for SOCOM.

[What rank were you when you retired from the Air Force?]

I retired as a lieutenant colonel.

Bad Example 1

[Can you share a story that exemplifies either an incredibly bad or good leadership experience?]

Oh, I definitely have a lot of examples. I'll try to pull one that's kind of succinct. I worked for a lieutenant colonel when I was a lieutenant, and she was the chief of intel. It wasn't considered a job where people wanted to go. I however want to go there because I love the flying mission. I was excited to be a part of a flying mission with the Air Force.

This lieutenant colonel boss, she's very quiet. I'm not sure why she led that way she did if you can call leading what she did. She was very laissez-faire. She would disappear for hours in the middle of the day. We wouldn't know where she was. Sometimes the squadron commander would come around looking for her, and we didn't know where she was other than lunch. Her typical three hour lunches would surprise us. We had four lieutenants in the intel shop. We had an intel shop of 13 people and four lieutenants, the one lieutenant colonel, and then the rest were all senior NCOs, two senior NCOs and, sorry. One senior NCO, one E5, and the rest were all airmen, junior enlisted.

She did not in my opinion reflect a good officer or leader because she would take advantage of her position and her rank and disappear for so many hours as I mentioned. Then when command decisions were required from her, she would often not make them and would during working lunches, which we used to have once a week, internal training working lunches from bad things where we would bring in our lunch and somebody would train us on something, whether it was threat systems or new processes for doing our jobs or whatever. She would throw things out there like decisions, like who's going to go on the deployment to Germany for four months? Who does the airmen think should go?

Instead of making the command decision on who she felt should go, she would do things like that which there were two of us who wanted the deployment because it was to Germany. Of course that's a sweet deal. Instead of making the command decision, she would just throw it out there like that which was irresponsible in my opinion and not a leadership activity. The bottom

line is those kinds of things were just an example, the missing in action kind of thing and then throwing out a command decision that she kind of just passed over to other people.

It bothered me because I'm a proactive leader and an involved leader. I never thought that that kind of technique should be allowed, but who was to stop her and was to know about this up the chain? Because nobody talked about it. We would cover for her as best we could without lying when the squadron commander came around and asked where, such-and-such. We would say, "Oh, she's at lunch." Sometimes he had this look on his face like, still?

It put us in a very awkward position because we are all second lieutenants, and there were two that eventually became first lieutenants. We had to do the best we could. We didn't want our boss to get into trouble but we also wanted her to be present. We wanted her to do her job, which she failed to do many times.

[Was she a flight commander?]

She was the intel flight commander.

Then she was gone, and the two most senior lieutenants PCS'd, then the third most senior lieutenant PCS'd. We got another lieutenant in. We were all backfilled eventually. When I was a senior lieutenant there, I got to be the intel flight commander for several months. I ran the shop well. I did my job, I was organized, I built a continuity book for the person who was coming in following me because I knew that we were getting a major in.

Bad Example 2

This major came in, again, another failure. I don't need to call her a failure but her leadership style was basically nonexistent also. It was uncomfortable for me to see her not take the reins fully like she should have, especially because I had a continuity built for her and I just wanted her to read it to get caught up and to understand. I had been extremely busy as a first lieutenant trying to run that intel shop. I had to deploy people the whole time to the Middle East.

We got a new master sergeant in. He was really good. He was a really good leader, a quiet, gentle leader. He was the true backbone of our shop. I was really happy to have him, and the previous NCOIC was also very good. They had very different leadership styles but they both had really good qualities. I loved working with both of them. They helped me tremendously when they saw that I had, the outgoing NCOIC didn't get to meet the new major, but incoming NCOIC experienced her failures and leadership. I think he felt for me because he knew I had worked hard to keep that intel ship afloat.

I'm not trying to pat myself on the back because I take my job very passionately and very seriously. I'm a team player and I always want my people to be taken care of. It bothered me when she came in and was all force, no vector. She was all over the place messing up things that I had kept right, sinking things that should have been afloat. I tried to help her and I went behind her to fix things often, but I knew that I needed to leave that intel shop because my time was up and I needed to PCS.

She would go to meetings and not have a clue what was going on in meetings even though we had prepped her, briefed her. It was like her head wasn't in the game. She had just gone through a horrible divorce. Her husband was having affairs. I think she had a lot of personal issues that clouded her thoughts and distracted her from focus. I felt bad for her. So one of my friends was a weather officer, she and I would, and she didn't have anybody but a dog. She lived in a hotel, it was very strange, for almost a year.

We after, do you want to go out to dinner and to the movies with us? Because we felt like she didn't have any friends and she was kind of an oddball. We tried to not become unprofessional in our silliness with her but we asked her if she wanted to go to a restaurant and to a movie with us. She went with us, but it was very awkward and I felt so bad for her because I realized her personal tragedy was affecting her work, or that's what I believed. I was trying to be kind to her, but it was very frustrating from the inside when I saw things I had kept right falling down, and I tried to push them back up.

I tried to get a job overseas. She called the assignments officer and said, "Don't take her, I need her. I can't survive without her." Then I felt like, I'm not her safety blanket. It was frustrating for me because she was too dependent on me instead of leading. I was basically the informal leader and she was like the figurehead, but she would break things.

For example, the squadron commander called me on my direct line once to say, "Come here." So I went to his office. He said, "Shut the door." I said, "Yes sir." He said, "What's the dingbat doing?" I just was flabbergasted to hear that. That's what he called her I guess behind her back. I was suddenly brought into this which I really was like, oh, come on, sir, in my mind. Don't do that, she's my boss. Please don't disparage her with that derogatory nickname. But she acted like one to be real honest and blunt. I understand why he called her that. It was hard for me to answer that question.

I said, "Sir?" He said, "You know, your boss." I said, "Sir, she's trying really hard." He said, "Look, I know you're running the intel shop. I know you tried hard." I said, "Sir, I have. I built her a continuity book. I wish she would read it." He said, "Okay. I'll see if I can indirectly ask her does she have a continuity book or something to go over." And he was going to try to indirectly help her focus. It was like she had a reputation in the wing that preceded her physical arrival when she had her personal things shipped to the office group that was very bad, including unprofessional and inappropriate magazines that surprise me that she got it.

Honestly, I don't know if they were really hers or if someone played a mean, cruel joke on her. But the magazines I don't read and will never read. A senior NCO in the office group recognized what it was and somehow knew that the plastic covering over it was something that was dirty. He opened it and then brought it over to the intel shop. I told him that that's a felony. He can't open her mail. I said, "I don't know what it is. I don't know why it was sent here but you should not do that." So it was horrible. She was kind of a laughing stock. I don't know if she knew it or not, but I felt bad for her even before she showed up because of incidents like that.

So I eventually got an assignment overseas. I went through an ORI just right before or right after I applied for fighter squadron intel job. I got on with a unit overseas. It was a really good

assignment, but I heard right after I left from my friends back in the intel shop that they deployed her. I guess she failed miserably in supporting the aircrews. So they basically told her, "You need to get out."

I felt really bad for her, but the Air Force needs strong leaders and not people who cannot do the job especially when they're given the rank commensurate with the level of leadership they should be providing. We are not a charity. It's a black-and-white thing. If you can't deploy, you shouldn't be in the military unless you're a wounded warrior in my opinion. Because those tasks will fall on the same people over and over, people like me who are not going to make up an injury and people who have been overseas seven times on deployments or one year remotes.

It's sink or swim. I'm not coldhearted about it but we need warriors. We don't need, we're not a country club. I used to say that a lot when I was a lieutenant when the airmen would start whining. I'm like, "This is not a country club, this is the US military." Then they would stop whining because they realize, okay, yes. I'm an airman. That was long-winded, I'm sorry.

Bad Example 3

Of negative leaders? At that same assignment, I guess I just hit the jackpot. My squadron commander back then, you know how you have spider sense and you just have a vibe about someone whether it's accurate or not? It's just like a sixth sense. My squadron commander asked me if I wanted to be his executive officer, and he was asking all of us lieutenants in the Intel shop because we were pretty tight and we were pretty squared away. When I say tight I mean squared away. We were very professional. We worked very hard in our little intel shop because where we were stationed, there was nothing else to do really with very, very severe weather. We just really were all in with our jobs. I said, "Sir, would I get the job title on my OPR?" He said, "No. That would just be an additional duty." I said, "No thank you, sir."

It wasn't that I didn't want to be exposed to the duties of an executive officer. I felt if I was going to own that pain, I wanted it on my record and I wanted credit for it. Because being an executive officer is a tough job. It's a very long duty day, and I feel anyone who does that job deserves an OPR job title, duty title. He wanted all of us lieutenants in the intel shop to basically rotate in and be his executive officers. Because I guess he didn't have a billet for one.

I didn't want to do it because I also had this sense about him that something was askew with his morals. I'm glad that I didn't do that job and I'm glad that I didn't jump on that grenade so to speak, because later when I was at an Air Force anniversary ball with my boyfriend, he started hitting on me when I was away from my boyfriend looking at some memorabilia from the Air Force times past. My boyfriend was further down the art show path and I was standing there by myself looking. He made a beeline for me and came over there and started to make me feel uncomfortable with the things that he was saying. Oh, you're so beautiful and you look so lovely in your mess dress.

It just really made me feel uncomfortable. I was really glad that I didn't take that job because I don't want to be close to him physically even in the job. So I kept my distance from him. I told my boyfriend. He said, "You're not leaving my side the rest of the night." I said, "Good." I mean,

he came out of nowhere and just cornered me. It was just a little uncomfortable. Turns out later he got busted for sexually harassing other females including a very young airman that worked in a weather shop.

My best friend, she told me that because she was a weather officer, she told me that he had gotten in trouble big time so they PCS'd him really quick instead of kicking him out unfortunately. They just hid the problem and pushed him to another place. So that's another toxic leader. I'm glad that I listened to my gut, because my gut was right to wave off of that. He also tried to entice me to be the squadron quality officer. I told him, "No thanks, sir, I don't really care for all that quality crap." Is what I said to him. I'm very honest and blunt sometimes.

I said, "I think another lieutenant is interested in it." Because she actually told me she was interested in thinking about it. He approached her. She and I were the only single female lieutenants in the shop. He approached her and she said, "I'm thinking about it." I said, "Oh, I think you should go for it if you want it. I don't care about that stuff. I think it's a lot of, you know, wasted time personally. I'd rather do the job than talk about it." She said, "I'm thinking about it."

Then he pulled me in the office along with her. He said, so, "Are you interested in the squadron quality officer?" That's when I just bluntly said "Sir, I'm not interested in that quality crap. I think my friend the lieutenant here is." She ended up getting it and she liked it. I did not want to be near that man anymore than I had to. I certainly didn't want to be in his office just him and me alone given my gut feeling about him. There's another one.

[How did the squadron perform under his leadership?]

The squadron from my recollection, in intel we did very well. The squadron did well I believe despite him, in spite of him. We had a really good GO. The squadron commander that replaced him once he was gone was outstanding. He was really, really good. He's the one who called the newer intel chief the dingbat. Whatever, that might be his only flaw. He was really good, very laid back, and just smart and just a very perceptive kind of man.

You know when you're a second lieutenant, your first base out of tech school, you remember a lot. You learn a lot because that's where you kind of gel your habits. That's when you first start your muscle memory of how things work. Being a unit that's supporting a flying mission was wonderful even though it was in the OSS and we were attached to each of the four KC-135 flying squadrons, the first supertanker wing. We deployed with them. I deployed three times with the squadron I was attached to.

While I was in the OSS, it was like I was in the XXXth because I was briefing the aircrew briefings and current intel briefings every morning. I did their ISOPREP cards. I did all the things that a squadron intel person that used to have them assigned in the flying squadrons, and they built this OSS thing for synergy I guess. There's good and bad to those, really. I kind of think the OSS idea is actually a good idea. Because if someone takes leave, it's a little harder. We were also attached to the squadron with one airman. We had a tag team. The two of us would go

take care of our crews, because we had a lot of aircrews to take care of. It was a really good formula for making things work.

It was a good camaraderie with the squadron because I worked real hard for them.

The second commander was really good. The commander of the XXXth was outstanding. He was wonderful. We're still in touch. He's great. I loved working for him. Deployed with him to Saudi, deployed with him to, I'm trying to think, did he deploy to Istras with us? Didn't deploy to Panama because [Redacted] went, and he was the acting commander I know because it was a smaller bunch of tankers down in Panama. Still in touch with [Redacted] too. Gosh, I'm trying to think. Oh, in France deployed with the DO, the squadron. The DO was the acting commander. Because those squadron was split in half. Half the squadron was in Pisa, half the squadron was in France. My boyfriend was in Pisa and I was in France. My boyfriend was an executive officer. Yeah.

[Have you ever worked for anybody that was verbally abusive?]

Not at that assignment. There was an air crew that was verbally abusive to me, and then another air crew took them out back behind the trailer and I think beat the crap out of him. Then he came back with the tail between his legs the next and say, "Hey, I'm sorry. Can I look at my ISOPREP? I'm sorry for the way I behaved." That's the first time anyone ever beat up anybody for me. Because they saw how he treated me, very disrespectfully from our army Apache pilot who was an Air Force tanker pilot and completely disrespectful to his intel girl. My big brother, not literally but one of the crews who I worked hard to support, and he was the aircraft commander. He tore him up.

He had a change of heart, I love it. You're now my favorite crew dog. I gave him extra attention and made sure I was extra sweet to him after he apologized. I just was aghast that he was treating me like that for an ISOPREP card. We're all going to die, I don't need this. Forget it, I'm not doing this. I said, "But sir, by regulation ..." I quietly slid it back across the table. He flung it back at me again. I'm thinking, what on earth? Then I said, "Okay, sir. I hope you remember that data because I want you to come back, return with honor."

He didn't really want to hear any type of fear in the pre-mission briefing. He was like, "We're all dead." I'm like, "No, sir. You're not." I was real nice to him after even though he first there and being ugly. I was real nice to him because I was like, you know my dad taught me kill them with kindness. It usually works. They can't stand it or they'll come around and see your way of thinking and being.

Bad Example 4

More recently I would say, toxic leaders, I would say that's what I was a program manager, I'll use that which is more recent. But not current situation. I had a team of 13 people again. I was a government contractor fulfilling a time and services type of contract. We provided services, hardware, software, and IT services to help the Air Force.

This person was very toxic and a bully and often very unkind and unprofessional towards me on teleconferences and disrespectful and made knee-jerk loud statements that were based on personal information, and this person would not listen. I always returned with quiet calmness and corrected the person's errant thinking and lack of listening and reading. My team would be IM'ing me in the background through the laptop just exclamation exclamatory things like how can she talk to you like this? You are so strong to take this and not return fire.

It was my first time as a contractor. I knew my place. I knew I served the will of the government and I could be removed at any moment in time and I did not want to give my company any negative marks by acting unprofessionally back even though she totally deserved it and she deserved to be put in her place. I took her abuse and tried to gently correct her errors.

She was very prone to knee-jerk reactions and didn't listen and didn't read. We sent her weekly sitreps, weekly updates.

Basically we would put in information in the WAR that she asked for. She wouldn't read them and then she would say, "What's the deal with this?" I would say, "Ma'am, it's in the WAR report from last week. The situation is blah, blah, blah." Since she hadn't been keeping up with WAR report which we very diligently wrote these, we were very anal-retentive in every single detail that went into that WAR. We did not swag anything. It was all exact everything. Being in intel you have to be exact. It is your credibility, your integrity, your reputation.

We did our best to make it as perfect as possible. She wouldn't read them, and she would go off and then she falsely accused us of putting the government in a risk situation when okay, so for example the government hadn't paid us for the software updates on something. We were meanwhile patching. We were still patching and basically giving the government passes for free even though they hadn't paid us. My engineer and I talked about it. I said, "We have to bring this up to them, and it's going to be a bill that's going to need to pay. Why aren't they paying it?" She said, "You've put us at risk."

My engineer and I were on mute. "That's BS. We have never put the government at risk. We would never do that, never ever. We have been passing all along for free." Once I took the phone off mute I said, "Ma'am, we have not put the government at risk. Ma'am, we have not put the government at risk. Ma'am, may I please explain? We have been patching. We never stopped patching. The government owes us money and we are continuing the patches. There are no security risks. We have been giving you the milk for free and it's time that we are repaid, ma'am."

Then she didn't apologize for falsely accusing me and the company. My boss had her for breakfast. He called her up and we called him and told him what was going on and he was ticked off. He basically gave her down the country and said, "You do not treat my program managers this way. They took care of the government. The government owes the company. They did the right thing. The government was never at risk. You were wrong to throw her under the bus unrighteously and unfoundedly."

That was another more recent toxic example. Honestly it just comes down to one word, bullying. It's this person's technique and style. Yes, it's unprofessional. When no one around this person and above this person puts that person in check because people are weak in a lot of cases, that kind of behavior is allowed to continue. It will continue now with her being, sorry, with that person being a government authority. I imagine it will be even worse, but I don't work for that company anymore, so unfortunately that problem is other people's now.

Recommendations

[How did you deal with situations like that?]

I had to be calm. I had to be professional, always taking the high ground even though inside I wanted to hit the wall with my fists because it was very infuriating to be falsely accused of something that was untrue and invalid. I just realized my place as a contractor is to serve the government, and I'm not going to swing my back. I am not going to go face-to-face, toe to toe. I'm going to be a quiet professional and I'm going to let the higher powers sort this out for me, my God. He'll fight my battles when I can't and when I shouldn't. Basically, my faith helps me to keep myself in check because when I was wearing the uniform, I would not have taken that. I would have countered.

It was really funny how there was this clutch, as soon as I became a contractor it's like my whole demeanor changed. It isn't that I became weak. I had more self-restraint from automatically weighing in because I knew I didn't have that authority as a government person active duty military to roll in and fix the problem immediately because it wasn't mine to turn over the applecart. Because I knew I had to be careful what I did, because my place is supporting the government. My place is not telling the government, "You are wrong." Especially in a public forum like a telcon in which 20 people are on it.

My place is to be very cautious how I respond to idiocracy by being professional and taking the high ground and informing my boss when necessary and sometimes just stuffing it. I will tell you, and I will say this out of pride, my team respected me a lot because I held my tongue. My engineer said, "I don't know how you do it. You are amazing. I would never be able to hold my tongue like you do." I said, "It's just by the grace of God. It's just by the grace of God."

I don't know how I can hold my tongue now. Because when I was active duty y'all would never think I'm the same person because I wouldn't tolerate the BS. I would not. If I had to defend people or if I had to stand up for a cause, I said, "I don't want to come across as weak because I'm not." I knew how to kick but when I need to. I said, "I don't want to tarnish our company's reputation. I don't want to tarnish our team's reputation." I know God is my vindicator. I know that he will fight the battles that I should not fight or the battles that I don't fight. I know that I will prevail in the end even though she is unkind.

I will tell you that when I left that company, two of her people that are on her team, one of which is a government person, the other one is a contractor, called me privately because I had to announce it to them that I was leaving to take a different opportunity in my current job. They both called me privately and said, "We really hope you're not leaving because of her behavior."

They said to me, "We really like working with you and we don't want you to leave. We don't know how you're going to be replaced."

To me that was humbling and a compliment that they proved of the way that I handled this childish behavior from this person. It made me feel good that they took the time to call me, and actually three of them called me. Not two, three of them called me. They were kind to me to say that because I had to take it off. It was emotional. I don't know if she was going through the change or what. I shouldn't say that. You know, there was a lot of ...

Bad Example 4

[Did you leave because of the leadership?]

I did not. Although that was a definite perk for leaving. I left because I was going TDY, and being a single mom raising my child, it was a burden to go TDY that much. My parents had to drive eight and a half hours south to take care of my kid every time I went TDY. I really miss being amongst the military people. They're my people. They're still my people even though I don't wear combat boots.

The working from home is really not for extroverts, and I'm an extrovert. I'm an ENTJ. I get energy from being near people. Being on the phone isn't the same thing as being near people. Those are the three reasons why I left. The TDY OPSTEMPO which is too much. The walls were closing in on me. It wasn't a self-discipline or lack of it working from home. There were no boundaries. It was hard to have healthy boundaries when your team is scattered around the globe and you get calls all the time and you work 65 hours.

That was no problem. I expected it. It's what my program took. Working from home, it was okay working these kinds of hours. At times there was no boundary because while I was at home, I wasn't at home. I was on the laptop or I was on the phone. Then missing the military, even though I couldn't go back active duty unless they recalled me. I miss being amongst the military because it's what I've done for half my life. I truly missed it. Those are the reasons why. That woman is not why I left, no.

[Was there anybody who left that organization because of her leadership?]

I don't know. I don't really know if the guy who replaced me, he was very different than me. I don't know if he's still there or not. I can tell you that I do know somebody who worked with her left because of her. Someone within her own organization left because of her. I figure what comes around, goes around for the most part. All of a sudden you get things that are dealt to you, like her behavior you don't deserve. That's okay.

Bad Example 1

[Let's try a different approach. If you could look at all of the bad experiences, could you describe a person like, a composite view of a person and what makes them that way? Or what are the traits that make up the bad leader?]

I can tell you I understand why my first chief of intel behave the way she did as much as I can even though she wasn't a very personable person and didn't really open up. She was very cool and quiet, kept to herself. So that person, when the higher headquarters intel people came around from AMC, a captain and a master sergeant came around. I started to become friends with this captain through the phone because he knew I was busting my butt and working hard to keep that intel shop afloat after she left.

When they came down when I was the chief of intel there, and they were doing like a SAV. The three of us went out to dinner because they said, "Look, we want to talk with you also off the record a little bit. Because we know that you're carrying a heavy load. We're trying to get a feel and a vive for some things in the shop." I said, "Sure." so we went to Applebee's or something. We were sitting there and talking and everything. This master sergeant reveals to us after a beer, just one beer. Yeah, she shouldn't have made first lieutenant. Excuse me? He said, "Yeah, I knew her in such and such assignment. She was dating an airman or sergeant, fraternizing in other words."

I said, "Oh, really?" She was gone. She left. I don't remember where she went to be honest. I don't recollect where she went. I think she PCS'd but I don't know if she retired. I don't remember her retirement, so I think PCS'd, but honestly but I don't really care. She was just gone and that was good enough for me. She had committed, sorry, what do you call it?

Fraternization, thank you. She married the guy. He got out and he followed her around. Somehow she's able to make all this rank and stuff and I guess keep that hush-hush I guess somehow. But there had been a get together at her house at one point in time. We did have a senior airman who ran amok in the shop. He was not assigned to my squadron because I would have corrected that behavior. He was assigned to another guy. This guy was loud mouthed, opinionated, was a bully himself and got away with a lot of chicanery type of behavior.

I never could figure out why she didn't roll in on him until I see really struggle with this kid. This kid was able to get away with a lot. When I was TDY with the staff sergeant in the office supporting an exercise, we were one day talking because we had to work really long shifts. It was boring in between catching the aircrews and sending the aircrews back up. We were just, you know, there was a lot of null time where we were just waiting on the aircrews to debrief them.

He told me some of the back story, there was a situation in which, it's horrible. Her child hurt this senior airman's child at an office get together while the kids were playing in his bedroom. So this senior airman had the upper hand in the office and could get away with anything.

I was floored when I heard this. How horrible. That explains a lot how he's able to get away with this horrid behavior and she doesn't keep him in check. She would kind of, you know, just let it roll off her back the behavior. That explained a lot. I kept thinking to myself, what could she say? What could she do other than apologizing and everything? What could be done? The kids were young. I think that's probably why she had really yielded her power. That's what I think.

Bad Example 5

[Did you ever work for anybody that was prejudicial or showed either bias for, showing favoritism to someone or bias against because of whatever gender or race or culture or economic status?]

Yes. I did. I have worked for a male boss who is chauvinistic and derogatory towards women and very discounts anything I would say at times because I'm female, yet hone in on any thought that was verbalized by any other males on the team. I have experience with that. Yes.

It made me feel horrible because my resume had 22 years in the military when this person had zero experience in the military and was working as a contractor in a military location, it made me feel slighted and devalued. It just made me work harder to prove myself.

[Did that other person, the perpetrator, was that person in a leadership role?]

Unfortunately, yes.

[I'm just wondering how the unit performed, whether that bias impacted the unit's performance.]

I would say this. A lot of contractors that work on that team left that team, male and female. I think that person, he is a weak leader and people know it. He's a little odd. I don't think anybody really, he's not a good leader for many reasons. You know that a leader is supposed to be like a cheerleader. The team is supposed to rally underneath that leader. As a program manager that was totally my job. I made lots of jobs I had as the program manager. When I went through my PMP courses through Syracuse University, I kept seeing that often. The program manager is a cheerleader, they rally the team, get them on the same passionate vibe to get the mission done on time, on task or early on task and focused and orchestrated. And with vigor, right?

This person is not that way at all. Put it this way, when a company pays for a banquet dinner for the whole company for you and a spouse or a date or a boyfriend or whatever to come along and it's a pretty expensive ticket and the company is putting the bill out there for two tickets per person and out of, I don't know, maybe 15 people, only two people show up that are subordinated to that person, that's a very telling stat right there. That is a vote of no-confidence I think. I don't think it's just because everybody had something else to do. I don't think people wanted to go. It was a highly attended event. It was free. Only two people went.

One of the persons that went, went because they wanted to go to this event because they've never been to an event like that before because it was like a themed thing. It wasn't because let me support my boss or let me join in the company fun. It was like yeah, I want to join in the company fun but I want to see this event. That's an indicator, vote of no confidence.

[How many people were at the dinner in total from the company?]

Probably 200 I would say. Cheeks in seats, I don't know how many were actually employees. I would imagine maybe 50% to 60% were actually employees. I would say 200 to 250.

Yeah. That's telling when, and I don't say this out of pride but when I had my team dinners, I would bring my team in and we would do our kickoff meetings, everybody played. Everybody came to the dinners I organized. Everybody came to the lunches, to the breakfasts, they were early to eat breakfast with me. Yeah, I paid for it because I paid for it out of my merit increases that the company had given me or my bonuses the company had given me because I had no slush fund. I felt led to be generous to my team because they worked very hard for me.

They weren't necessarily going for the free meals. They were going because they wanted to be there, because they could come up with excuses to not go. Oh, I have a friend in town, I'm going to go visit that. We were at a different location, most of us. I think there were two people who lived out of town that we all merged at or convened at in the [Redacted] area. The rest of the team is from all over. I flew them in on the company's dime to do the kickoff meeting. Everybody came out, everyone.

I'm saying that because as program manager, my job was to gel that team, to get those people who were very different, just different is the best word I guess in skills, personalities, type of behavior. You know, some are very introverted, some are very shy, some are very awkward socially. I made everyone feel like they were important because it is my job to do that as a program manager. Everybody came. They came to the functions. They stayed for lunch. They didn't do it because I made them.

... and everybody came along, and it wasn't just for free food. It was like they wanted to be there. They worked as late as we had to work and they didn't complain, at least not to me. I tried really hard to have a good team. I think I did a good job at it because they stayed. It was a good team and it was hard to leave that company despite the animosity from the one person we had to provide our weekly telcons to stayed, like gelled behind me. I think part of it was she's taking one for the team. She's always taking one for the team. You know, anyways.

Recommendations

[If you had to advise somebody that was going to go into a toxic leadership situation, what kind of pointers would you give that person on dealing with that kind of leader?]

Oh, that's a good question. I would tell them always be professional. Always take the high road. Try to detach yourself from conversations that are down-spiraling and awkward and uncomfortable. Come up with an excuse to vacate that area if you can. Take notes on incidents. Keep them private and in your personal possessions. I would say keep the faith, stay positive, try to have witnesses if you think they're going to do something or put you in an awkward position. Make note of witnesses who hear things. Keep personal logs of stuff.

I would definitely say if you have to go in that position, just do your best and just remember like for me as a Christian, I work for God. Wherever he places me, he's my boss ultimately. Even though I may have to work with a total jerk, that's my boss on earth. Just try to keep the faith and literally by asking God for that wisdom and just when to hold your tongue, when to say something, what to do, and should I stay or should I go? Should I continue and endure this or

should I speak up? Or should I move to a new job? What should I do? Who should I confide in if I need to ask a witness?

That's why I would say, because some of you have to go into a hostile situation. You don't have a choice. Because if you have a job to do and you happen to have gouge on the person somehow and you know, oh, be ready. Brace yourself. I have had to go into positions before where I had heard there were challenges that I was going to have to meet. Usually when it happened I was unaware because I just didn't have the experience to know to ask questions about oh, tell me about the person they work for.

Now, I did get that kind of gouge when I first came down. I knew you're going to work for a strong personality, just stand on your own two feet and things like that. Be ready to defend yourself if you must because you will probably be picked apart here and there. Be strong. I was encouraged by another person, a friend who is like-minded to my beliefs and my faith. He warned me. I was armed with knowing that I should just do my best at all times and be professional and try to not take things personally, but be strong.

I think it's important that we put up a strong faith as much as possible and professional faith. It was a strength. I guess strength of character when that woman was saying things that were totally, you know, unprofessional. I had people from different offices telling me, "I don't know how you put up with her. You know, that toxic woman, I don't know how you put up with her." Like, what choice do I have?

Bad Example 4

When we were in meetings with the government and military face to face at certain locations with her, like all of us together, she embarrassed herself, I'll just tell you straight up. She said things that surprised me that she would say such things even in front of the government people that shocked me that those were the topics, and honestly she could not answer questions that were asked of her. I'm trying to be, do unto others as much as I can. I would roll in after she answered or tried to answer and didn't answer. I would say, oh, and also, just to back her up and buttress the waste of time with an actual answer, because I knew that the government people needed the actual answer.

I could tell by the body language of officers, the GO and his branch chiefs and sections chiefs that they were like, what did she just say? Oh my gosh. It was embarrassing for her some of this stuff that she said and didn't answer. I felt bad for her because I have the gift of mercy. I felt bad that she wasn't rising to the occasion. I tried to help her. Do you think it was ever recognized by her? I'm certain it wasn't. Do you think it was ever appreciated by her? I'm certain it wasn't, but that's okay. I did the best I could and I tried to be kind and I tried to do unto others. Sometimes that's all the piece you can take when you meet the face of nastiness and it's staring you down and it's putting a fear in your chest figuratively and you face it every day.

Good Example 1

No, other than to say when I was at CENTCOM J2 I worked for an Air Force colonel. He was an amazing leader. I loved working for him. He was a consummate professional, I can't say that

word. Unfortunately, the Air Force decided to SERB him because he was high year tenure. He was such a good officer. When we found out that he had been SERB'd after serving only eight years, it took the wind out of all of our sails because we were so glad to have him.

I just went into his office. As soon as he announced it to us he broke down crying because he was very passionate about his job and very good at it. He was just blindsided and emotional and didn't want to retire. He wanted to keep serving until he was probably 60, you know. He was forced out. When he said, "That's all." He went into his office and shut the door. After we broke up, because our jaws had hit the floor, his deputy said, "Okay, everybody back to work." I was like, this man needs an encouraging word. I went over to his office door because everybody's just scattered. Everything was quiet because we were all floored by this information.

I knocked on the door and then said, "Permission to enter, sir?" He said, "Come on in." I walked up to his desk and I said, "Permission to do something unprofessional, sir?" He said, "What's that?" I said, "Give you a hug, sir." He's like, "All right., You can give me a hug." I said, "Sir, I'm so sorry that the Air Force has made this decision. It's a bad decision and it's crap and I can't believe they're doing this. We're all really angry right now and shocked and reeling from this news...we'll do anything to help you...and I will be more than happy to help you. If you want me to run your retirement ceremony, it will kick ass. You'll have the best retirement ceremony ever, sir."

I said, "We'll do whatever you need to make your burden light. Just know that you're highly respected and nobody is happy about this I'm certain, even though we're still digesting this hot news off the press. We don't want you to go, sir, so you just need to know that." He was crying and he's like, "Thank you for saying that. That means so much to me." So I did help him with his retirement ceremony, it was really nice. He was very emotional during it. That was a really good leader. I made sure that I told him how much he was valued to all of us. He's probably the best intel officer I've ever worked for I would say.

Interview 10

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Background

I enlisted in 1983. Did the Marine Corps, active duty Marine Corps, reserve Marine Corps. Became a highway patrol trooper. Ended up going into the Army National Guard. I was stationed at Elko, at the time, as a trooper, so, driving to Reno to go to the Marine Corps Reserve was, somewhat, out of the question, being a rookie trooper. Ended up in Elko and went two years at the 21st Chemical Battalion. Had a great time.

Then, here I go Camp W.G. Williams. I meet guys from the 19th Special Forces Group. That's, ultimately, where I go with the Army is. Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group.

Then, I got transferred to Carson City. I decided I was going to get out completely. Then, a good friend of mine, who you're very close to, your brother, talked me into the Air Guard. He said, "Join the Air Force. We stay in clean hotels. We eat good food."

[When you were with the 19th Special Forces Group, were you on active duty, in the Army?]

No. It was a guard unit.

[Tom was trying to convince you to join the Air National Guard?]

Yeah. He did. I enlisted December 3, '94, as a Security Forces member. Was the typical in-base soldier, at the time. Now they call them Drill Status Guardsman. But 2001 happened, September 11th. We were activated.

I found my calling. The Air Force, the active duty side, truly became my calling. I was deactivated in '03 and about four months later, reactivated. Stayed that way until '07. However, from '05 to '07, about 27 months, I ended up working for General Abizaid and Admiral Fallon, for a short period. I was the NCOIC forward of the PSD. I spent a long time down range. So, 27 months, I had four days at home. It was an amazing mission and I met a lot of amazing, what would be Senior Leaders.

It was an amazing mission. Some of the people, yeah, we [inaudible 00:05:53] to read my DMSM. It says I did 1000, or more than 1000 missions on five continents in 33 different countries. That was, it was fun. It was exciting, sometimes dangerous.

Came back. Went back to the highway patrol for a couple days. Then, dropped my paperwork to retire. And didn't look back. I took up a temp AGR tour in Reno. Then I went to NGB where I ran the Combat Arms Program and was the ground Munitions manager, program manager for the Guard.

From there, went to the Security Forces Center for Headquarters Air Force, Security Forces Center and I ran the Police Serviceman section. And then, moved over to Lessons Learned. And brought the Lessons Learned program back to life. Did CPR on it, quite hard, to get it working.

From there, went, tried another tour down range working for General Fantini who was the COMKAF Commander. Then, came back to Reno, got promoted to Chief. And left the position in December. Got hired here, as a Historian for the 37th Training Wing, here at Joint Base San Antonio, Lackland. And finally retired. It was official on the first of May.

So, 1983 to 2019. And for the Air Force, December of '94 to May 1, 2019.

I'm a GS-11, Historian. It's actually my dream job. I'm finishing up my master's degree in military history. And I got, literally, my dream job.

Bad Example 1

The deal with, one of the most recent commanders I had, he was a Drill Status Guardsman. Personally, as a person, just a superb human being. Knowledgeable, fun to talk to.

But he's a leader within business. He has a, in a full on business, a major corporation. So, it's, from what I gather, it's very cutthroat. He went through some cutthroat times. He has this bad habit of, it was a constant thing, Tony ... The full-time people were, are AGRs, myself being the Chief, was the senior, full-time person and you're, basically, doing everything. Even the stuff that the Commander's supposed to do. He'd come in on the weekend. We tried to send him home with a computer and he said it's not his job. That he wasn't getting paid for it. We even offered to pay him Commander's time. But he had said that his job was over there and that his corporation and that a regular job wasn't with the Guard.

I understood that. But I also explained to him, he's a Commander. We need his signatures. We need him looking at stuff. There's pay available. I think he liked the idea of being a Lieutenant Colonel but didn't like the idea of being in the military as an officer. He didn't like the idea of having the responsibilities.

I remember, I would get my ass chewed by the MSG Commander for stuff that he had failed to do. The Commander had failed to do for Security Forces. Failed to do required courses for readiness reporting. Failed to be up to speed on required reports. And here is my Commander and I'm not going to, I wasn't going to ground salute him. So, I'm taking the ass chewings for this and trying to explain to him. Then, I'm doing stuff to keep him out of hot water.

But what I started to notice, and here's where the toxicity of a Commander comes in is, he expected information to flow to him. But he had a bad habit of short cutting or going around myself, or the Superintendent, and going directly to other people and giving them information or passing on information or telling them what to do and not advising the people that are, actually, supervising them on a full-time basis.

It started to appear that there was an intentional act to create discord within the unit. Like you would in a corporation where you're afraid of an employee trying to take your job. He was passing into a military setting. It became very toxic within the unit. It created a lot of animosity.

The other thing is there's a lack of military leadership or capability to deal within the military leadership. So, he would get on a drill and he would hide in his office.

[Did he get along with his fellow Commanders in the MSG?]

You know, he knew a lot of them. And he got along with them. But it was obvious that he was in over his head. What it came down to is the full-time troops, the AGRs, were taking care of everything that he should have been taking of. They recognized it.

[Was he a competent Security Forces person?]

No, he was not.

He was a Services Officer. And he did that. He was enlisted commissioned as a Tech Sergeant. Went to Services, did Services. Then, went to the LRS. He never went to another score, never became a LRS Officer. He became the Commander over there as a Drill Status Guardsman and one of his chief complaints was that nobody kept him in the loop. Everybody kept him in the dark about stuff. They didn't keep him up to speed. But after I saw what he was doing, I understood why they didn't.

I made a point to, everything that happened, that he would get notified, didn't matter whether he was there or not. As the Commander, he needs to know what's going on. But he didn't reciprocate. He didn't reciprocate with the Chief or the Chief Enlisted Man under me, or the Superintendent. So, we were kept in the dark with either decisions he's made or information that he had heard. Kind of like the information is power thing, so he's not going to pass it on. Especially if a troop came to him which is great that a troop would feel comfortable to come to him. But the troop would come to him with a problem, yet, what he perceived as a problem or how he turned the information when we got it, as if this major catastrophe when we would go ... Of course, we were blindsided by this, when I say we, it's ACE and I, we'd go to the troop and go, "Hey, why didn't you come to us? There's a ..."

And the troop would look at us blankly like, "I talked to him, yes. But I told him things that had happened in life and stuff. We're not talking a problem."

So, it's almost an intentional discord. Again, what became, or what looked like, he was bringing his corporate practices of intentional discord to protect his job.

So, the business he, the corporation he was a part of, the past couple of years, he was slated with downsizing these people. One of the people he downsized was his own boss. They went through this process of who they were going to pick to downsize. He had already knew his boss was going to be axed. But didn't pass this on to his boss. He was surprised that his boss, after he found out, was angry with him. He goes, "I don't know why he was mad at me."

I'm like, "Well, he trusted you. Why else do you think he was mad at you?"

But, from what I gathered within it, he was in his corporation is if you can keep a group of people unbalanced, you can make yourself look good by being the savior or make yourself look like the smartest person in the room and the one that is, for lack of a better term, the stabilizing force. Yet, the reality is you're the one that's injecting the discord to make yourself look like that great leader, you might say.

[Did the Group Commander, the MSG Commander, did he know what was going on in the SF Squadron with this guy? Or was he clueless?]

Well, no.

Other people had seen it. We went through several Group Commanders during that time period. There was a bigger problem within the Nevada Air National Guard with General Officers who'd never held command and don't ... It's a small unit, the Air National Guard is a small unit. So, never really holding a command. And what's going to be our new one, never holding anything larger than a squadron, 10 minutes as a Group Commander. But the reality is they don't know what to do with themselves so they start interjecting themselves in Wing. The Wing Commander's just a figure head.

You have the Assistant Adjutant General for Air and the Adjutant General interjecting themselves in Wing and Group and, in some cases, Squadron business. Then, dictating to the point of who a CSS is going to be.

So, that toxicity is, right now, is flowing really hard there. We watched the Group Commander, well, they just relieved him as Group Commander so they promoted him to General. He can't be the GS employee. He worked with the Adjutant General and the Assistant Adjutant General, and they, basically ground salute what would be his competition.

They finally promoted our, what used to be our Medical Group Commander, to Brigadier. A very smart lady. Very good. A very caring leader who very, a people person. But she knows what she's doing. She's good at what she does. Yet, they held onto her promotion, so they could get this MSG, what would be the Chief of Staff. Then, later, MSG Commander that they're going to promote to General. So, they could get his COE [Certificate of Eligibility] in. Because they knew if they promoted her, they would have no reason to keep her from taking a leadership role in the Air National Guard.

So, they go before, the packages go before board back at NGB. They make a decision on who they're going to push forward to the GOMO, General Officers Management Office.

They finally pushed her package. Then, they held her package, seven months? Six months? And did everything they could to find a place to put her outside the state. She ended up back in D.C. But they held up her, for no reason, they held up her promotion. Other than she was a threat to their plans. That's just an observation made.

[Under the SF Commander, was the SF unit successful?]

We put papers in front of him, sign this, do this, this is a program that has to be done. I answered for MIC-T, the Management Internal Control. Every, [inaudible 00:22:19] the MIC-T and the IGMS stuff. Inspector General something Management System. So, these are checklists, for lack of a better word, that you go through that makes sure that you are, through the IG's Office, and through this system, to make sure you're running your unit through the four major graded areas. There's specific checklists for Commanders. The Commander's supposed to get in there and do this. Yet, I'm the guy answering Commander's checklist. I'm the guy that went to the Commander's meetings. If I wasn't there, ACE did it.

So, you go in and you answer the checklist, the communicators, then, they have to be validated. Well, what I was doing, at the Commanders checklist, the acting MSG Commander, which is not the original one we were talking about. He, at the time, was the Chief of Staff. But the one validating it. So, he wasn't doing anything. The program is a Commander's program. The MIC-T and IGMS, the inspection program's a Commander's program. He didn't do any of it.

Even when I took over as Chief, the unit, it was a mess. The inspection program was a mess because we had the Security Forces unit, at the time, we had 36 checklists. Many of them were more than 100 questions. We were manned at 57% of our full-time authorized manning. So, if we're manned at 57%, which 43% do you not want done? Of course, at that time, we went to FPCON-Bravo because of other stuff in the world and in the States. So, what we're required to do at Security, 'cause we still have a full-time mission, even though it's a Guard unit, we well know, we have iron on the ramp. We have a full-time mission.

So, the program had been pushed back. So, getting ready for the UEI, we pushed. And we pushed hard. Ended up, we did all right. We were effective. But then, I wonder how much we did ourselves a favor, showing ourselves as effective at 57% of the full operational time manning. It's kind of like shooting yourself in the foot.

But through all of this, Tom nailed it when he said, "He acted more like a cheerleader rather than a Commander."

I sat with him one day, trying to go over this and talk about the need of him being involved and talk about needing to spend more time. And especially with [inaudible 00:25:50] War College. And he goes, "I don't make my money here. I make my money at the other job. This is just a part-time thing," in a very blasé tone of voice. It's like, Jeez, you really don't sound like you want to be here. Again, that's why I'd look at it like you just like telling people you're an officer in the Air Force.

[How many or how long was this guy a Commander? How long did you have to work for him?]

I had to work for him for four years. Til I left the unit.

[Is he still the Commander there?]

No. They got a former Army MP Officer who is a phenomenal leader. He crossed over to the Air Force.

Recommendations

[How did you and the other people, the other Senior NCOs, deal with this officer and even the other officers on the staff, deal with him? Or how did you overcome his shortcomings?]

ACE and I protected those below us from him. The problems we had with him stayed at that level. You don't let the troops know. They call it the "yeah, but". So, when I went through PSD school and it nails it on the head. They said you have three "yeah buts." Behind closed doors, if somebody wants you to do something and it's really not that good you're doing the "yeah, but, sir." You have three tries at it. Then, if the Commander wants to do it, well, unless it's illegal or immoral, you're going to do it. And you come out and you're on the same page. You don't ground salute your Commander. That's just what you don't do. But you protect your troops from the worst part of the decisions.

The one officer is all we had. The Commander, the part-timer. Then, we ended up with a Captain who came over. He was the ATO, full-time ATO as a GS-12. He was a Security Forces qualified officer. Again, a nice guy but he had started out as enlisted when he commissioned. The commission became a Security Forces Officer. Then, he went to a GS position, as the IPO.

In that position, he dealt with people one on one. So, as a 2nd Lieutenant, 1st Lieutenant, and Captain, he's doing a job where he's calling people, direct. He's dealing with all ranks, direct. So, when they put him in a leadership position, he didn't understand the role as NCO and Officer because he really hadn't stepped away from that role. He hadn't done any real leadership. So, that was a difficult ...

Now, we had, after the time with that [inaudible 00:29:38] Commander, we get this Captain who doesn't understand the role he's supposed to play. He, literally, had himself as the primary contact with Medical before IMR, the Individual Medical Readiness stuff. We have Staff Sergeants that do this. We have Tech Sergeants that do this. Yeah, we have to be on there as alternates because we're so short manned for full-timers. But the idea that you, as a [inaudible 00:30:12] officer, technically is what you are, having yourself as the primary, no. If you're going to be the Commander, that's not your job.

Trying to get him to understand his role in all of this, it was difficult. Ultimately, he's commissioned. We're going to do, unless it's illegal or immoral, we're going to do what needs to be done. But he always had his eye on something better. Always talking, it's the Guard and he wanted to, he's excited and a good kid. He wanted excitement. He wanted to be part of something.

He, ultimately, left us to go be the one of the Commanders over at maintenance.

[Let's say that this SF Commander went to another squadron and was going to take command of another squadron. The Senior Enlisted person in that other squadron came to you and asked you for advice on how to handle this guy, what would you say to him?]

I would tell them expect not to get all the information from him. Expect that you're going to get, even after a conversation with him, you're going to get information that would've been pertinent to that conversation that he gave to somebody else.

But other Senior NCOs who were with him when he was a Commander at LRS, they just cut him out of the loop. And put him in an office because he, although he's a very nice guy, he's not a military leader.

Bad Example 1

[How was his impact on the unit, the morale? You said you were trying to shield his impact on them. So, did those people below you even know what was going on?]

Some actually saw it. Some of those who were close in proximity and back office staff.

But the reality is the mission's going to go on. We've done it for so many years that we just make it happen.

And just put him in a, and tried to corner him so it doesn't cause any damage.

[Was a yeller or a screamer?]

No. No. Not at all.

No. He wasn't very outgoing.

Bad Example 2.

So, I had a leader that was a micro-manager.

Tell me you want something done. But don't stand over my shoulder and tell me how to do it. Because, if you're going to do that, you might as well do it yourself 'cause we're wasting your time and my time. This is hard to get this ... He had true effect, throughout the squadron. It was tough. It created a lot of animosity. It created a lot of stress that didn't have to be there in the squadron, in its entirety. This is before this last Commander. The squadron, in its entirety, felt this.

[What was his position?]

He's one of the Senior Enlisted.

So, it was ... He would hold grudges. If a kid did something wrong, okay, people make mistakes. But he would hold grudges. Everybody knew it. So, it created a lot of stress. The job is tough enough, as it is that to create such internal stress. And for what? Nobody could ever figure out. I could never figure out.

A kid would make the wrong decision about ... Or what he would consider a wrong decision about letting somebody on the base. Or how he dealt with, say, an open classified storage violation. Instead of, there's different ways to skin a cat. If wasn't exactly his way, then, it was absolutely wrong. And if you stood up and said I'm within ranks, he would get even more angry. Then, the fact that you had said, "Hey, wait a minute. King's X, here. We need to talk about this," he would hold a grudge against you. Like you had questioned or usurped his authority.

It created such animosity. When you have such stress and pressure, somebody in charge that's putting this kind of stress and pressure, then you have internal fighting.

Because people get raw. And so, this slight, well, slight, or smallest slight or perceived slight, becomes the end of the world. You snap back. So, it created in-fighting amongst the troops. It had nothing to do with each other. It's just they had been rubbed so raw by this Senior Leader, this Senior NCO, that stuff that shouldn't have mattered, all of a sudden, became big rocks.

[Did any of that stress manifest itself in health issues for any of the members?]

Manifested itself in alcohol issues. Manifested itself in just the common stress stuff, you know. I think one of the guys ended up with ulcers from the constant worrying. We had ... As an AGR, you can quit. You just put in your paperwork and walk away. We had troops quit because they didn't want to deal with it.

Now, AGR is a good gig. In an AGR is a really good gig. You get the active duty benefits. You get the active duty pay. You're at home. You're at your, where you live. You're not going to transfer anywhere. At the time period, we weren't deploying as much. So, it is. It's a really good gig. If people are walking away from AGR job, there's a problem.

Good Example 1

So, I have a story about, what I considered, a really good leader. I don't care about the names. This one. This is George Casey.

So, a lot of the PSD missions we did down range, we worked across, our job as a Commander and Deputy Commander of CentCom. At the time, it was General Abizaid and it was General Lance Smith who's, literally, a legend in the Air Force. A true ... Yeah, well, a true legend. But we did missions for a lot of other Generals. One of them was George Casey, the MNF-I Commander.

I remember driving through [inaudible 00:39:55] of officers, the Senior Leaders conference there in As-Sayliyah. I picked up Casey with his PSO. The Standard Security Packet, you're bringing

him back. He would not shut up. He's just funny as hell. Talking away. He's very good with his PSD interaction.

So, on the way back, after the conference, it was very quiet, in the car. Initially, when we driving over, I wanted to tell him, "Sir, just shut up for a second. I'm driving here. It's the Middle East. It's a little busy."

But, anyways, it was a good trip. And on the way back, he's really quiet. No big deal, I'm driving. I'm the help. I'm the security. That's not my job for the conversation. But on the way over, we were about to turn onto the road to go down to the Al Udeid, he leans forward and puts his hand on my shoulder. He goes, "Hey, I'm sorry I'm so quiet. I've got a lot on my mind."

"Roger that, sir. No problem. I will get you there."

What struck me, with all my interactions with General Casey, and I'd had interactions with him down range, and I'd had interactions with him at As-Sayliyah, [inaudible 00:41:36], technically, the up range going to Iraq, huh?

But he was caring enough and understanding enough of his protection around him, to a noticeable difference in the car which actually made no difference to me, to let a member of his security detail, you know, know, "Hey, yeah, you're on my mind. I'm quiet because there's a lot on it."

So, the other thing is with General Abizaid, how he treated us within the detail was remarkable. Because how you treat the people around you that, you know, the hired help, for lack of a better word, kind of speaks volumes about the measure of a man. You're 4 Star Generals. I mean, they have ultimate control over you. Especially when you're working directly for them. The way they interacted with us, as the PSD, those people that worked with them every day, was truly remarkable.

[Now, I'm trying to imagine how it must have been for you, after working for a Commander who's commanding over 80000 troops, being able to communicate and serve a guy that's got that much responsibility on him. Then, going back to an Air Guard unit--that's got to be like night and day.]

It was. Going to NGB was really cool, being a program manager for the ground Munitions and doing combat arms, I had truly enjoyed the job. Truly enjoyed that job.

Good Example 2

Down at the Security Forces Center, I first got here, it was Colonel Robinette and Mike Kelly is the next one. They were phenomenal to work for. They were the Security Forces Center Commanders, at the time. Just great, great Commanders.

At the time, we were part of the Headquarters Air Force. So, there's a lot of stuff coming and going out of there, when it comes to IG complaints about security or it comes from

Congressional complaints about the security. Anything that dealt with security on the base. I handled the Presidential complaint that I had to call a Wing Commander. I'm like, "I have 12 hours for an answer."

Which was frustrating 'cause they dealt with it, the email was six months old and they had dealt with it the day afterwards. Here I am, calling this Wing Commander direct, going, "I've got to have an answer to LL, the Legislative Liaison, in 12 hours."

Then had already dealt with it. I'm having to put a response to this. I always thought you would have an office full of Majors and Colonels writing responses for the Legislative Liaison or answering complaint. For Security Forces, when it came to the Center, you had me, a Senior, two Masters, two Techs answering and writing letters for responses for the Legislative Liaison.

So, that was a shock. With Mike Kelly and Colonel Robinette, Colonel Kelly and ... How many ways the Security Forces Center goes, how much responsibility you have for the largest career field, for the Air Force, how they orchestrated it and how they dealt with us, literally, there's so much stuff going on at so many different levels, they would walk to your desk and ask you, personally, "Hey, how's it going? What's going on with ..."

And it was more like a family environment. Everybody knew what had to be done. Everybody talked to everybody. There was, information flowed every which direction so everybody knew what the heck was going on. So, if somebody happened to be gone, and there was a call from Headquarters Air Force, whoever was there could answer the five sided squirrel cage.

Recommendations

[If you had to give somebody sort of a techniques or lessons learned on how to survive or how to thrive, even, under a toxic leader, what kind of advice would you give?]

Document, document, document.

Keep a log. Keep a running log of what's happening. Protect your troops. With great privilege, comes great responsibility. If you're in the position, your job is to catch all that shit before it flows to your troops. Understand that you're there for a purpose. And do everything you can not to take it personal.

So, the mission ... And this has helped me a lot with all of this in the mission for the PSD ... protect your Commander from assassination, kidnapping, embarrassment. That's how I've dealt with all the Commanders whether they were toxic or not toxic. Ultimately, my job is to protect the Air Force, the DOD, and the U.S. government. So, if that's taking heat or if that's going the extra mile, so we can either accomplish the mission or protect the entity from being embarrassed, while protecting the troops, then I'll do it. Because that, ultimately, is what we signed up for.

So the down side, and this is on what I would miss in the Wing, is the Wing Commander for the XXXnd Airlift Wing is a combat vet. A lot of hours in an F-15E. A good, good man. A good, honest, caring ... And they have ground sluiced him. Basically, because he was a threat. He was

the better choice to become a general. Hands down. The best choice they had. He's truly a commander who, actually, had commanded full on vital ... Well, the Intelligence Squadron, the Wing, he literally commanded stuff.

He came to us, I think, as a Major, then a Lieutenant Colonel in the Intelligence Squadron. Then, got the MSG. Then, they made him the Wing Commander.

Good Example 3

Your brother, by the way, has been one of the hugest influences on my career, throughout my entire career. It was because of him that I became a trooper. He helped me write the letters and do the process. It was because of him that I enlisted in the Nevada Guard and state because of when I said I'd had enough. He was like, "Aw, no, no, you can do this."

And I look, as I said in my speech when I retired, I'd lay my career at his feet because I'd left the Air Force as the Chief. And he was the driving force behind both of my careers, at the highway patrol and this.

Interview 11

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Background

I really don't know where to start with this. Well, I retired in 2015 with just over 30 years. I enlisted in 1985 and I spent my entire career in the Air National Guard. So I enlisted in 1985 as an aircraft mechanic and I was seeing the F4s flying every day and so one day I just took myself out there and I enlisted there in the Air National Guard as an aircraft mechanic and spent about three years enlisted and then I went up to Nav school and was a WSO for about five years and then as we transitioned to C-130s, I transitioned there as a navigator. Ended up with about 4,500 hours of total flying time, I think. Then, of that, I spent a little over four years in Afghanistan and Iraq doing everything from flying the line to commanding a squadron. Then in 2010, I got a call from an Army guy asking me to deploy with the Army and what they did was ... I guess let me finish up my career. I came back, finished my career as an O6, as a maintenance group commander. I guess that kind of sums it up.

Well, I deployed with the Army. I was still in the Air Force, but I deployed with the Army. That's what I guess I was leading up to. I got a call in 2010, I have a degree in agriculture and about, well I spent a good part of my career as a traditional guardsman and working on a family ranch. I was pretty grounded in agriculture. In 2010, the Air Guard took on an Agricultural Development Team in Afghanistan. It was joint Air and Army and I believe that it was about ... I think it was 64 individuals and 10 or 11 of us were Air and the rest was Army. That was my, I guess, baptism into Army.

Bad Example 1

Well, that was my time in the Army. I can tell you just before I went on this deployment, probably a year or so before I went on this deployment, I did my Air War College. And there was a lot of reading in Air War College about toxic leaders. I remember discussing this with people and saying, "These people that they're talking to about in these books do not exist." I truly believed that this toxic leadership that they had been writing about and I had been reading about, did not exist. I did not think it existed in the military, I didn't think it existed in our culture. And then I went over and was deployed under an Army O6 who probably was the poster child for toxic leadership.

I was an O5 at the time and actually pinned on O6 while I was over there under his command. I can tell you, and I thought, this is going to be piece meal, but that kind of segues into his, I don't know if it's his style or what, but the day I pinned on O6, he made sure that every one of the soldiers had something to do so that I would not have any kind of pinning ceremony.

What he told me was that in the Army, O6 was not a big deal and that they usually don't even throw any kind of pinning ceremony for O6. Come to find out, when he pinned O6, it was the biggest gala they'd ever seen. I don't know. I don't even know where to begin.

He was so narcissistic and so ... he was a tyrant and he didn't want anybody else to ... basically he was threatened by anyone else's successes or what not. It's funny that you bring this up because it was an interesting deployment. We got to Afghanistan in August, and we never really got off the ground until probably late October, early November, and the only reason we got off the ground in Afghanistan, he was very controlling, in fact, I can relate to you, he told myself and my counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel C, to make sure that we get with our counterparts in big Army at Bagram Air Base and everything and we're doing that. We're at this meeting and the meeting breaks up and we're exchanging information with our counterparts in big Army.

Pretty soon he comes flying back into the room and goes, "Where are you guys? What are you doing here?" Basically, he says, when he gets up to leave the room, you get up to leave the room and you leave immediately. And he's berating us all the way to ...

I went over to Bagram for years and over the years it's grew, and grew, and grew. Now it's a monster base. So basically, when we get back to the vehicle, he looks at myself and Colonel C and says, "You're not riding in my car. You walk back to where we're billeted." And where we were billeted was, we were on the north side of the base at the time, it was clear across the runways in the south, into the base, it had taken us six or eight hours to walk there.

Luckily, I commanded the squadron, the C-130 squadron there, just previously so I went there and had guys I knew, and they gave us a ride. That was, I guess just little fits of what was going on. He would say that fear and intimidation is a recognized leadership style in the Army. And he would tell soldiers to tie a piece of, what was it? What was that cord? That parachute cord. I don't know. Anyway, it has a name. And he said, "Tie an end of this onto your 9mm, jump in the dumpster, do what's right, and we'll pull the gun out so we can recover the weapon." That was the kind of things that was being said. And in fact, when we got back, one soldier did commit suicide, it was horrific.

He allowed the male soldiers to fell the female soldiers. To this day, I'm still just absolutely ... We had one female soldier, in fact, she finally came to work for me while we were there, and she was a 50-caliber gunner and the male soldiers had harassed her to the point that she weighed about 60 pounds. It was just horrendous. This is all piece-meal and when we got back to the states, the Army had to go through a post deployment thing for a couple weeks and the air guys got to come home. He tried to get her thrown in the mental hospital so she could have no contact with her family. In fact, when we got back to the states, she was under direct orders not to contact her family or anyone in the National Guard. She was to have no contact.

He tried to isolate her and get her thrown into a mental hospital. It was just absurd. I knew when I started talking to you that ... I can kind of sum up the whole feelings of ... I've been deployed, I spent about four years over there in all facets of the air. Everything from flying the line to commanding the squadron to the CAOC. I had done a lot of it. One of the things as flyers we would try to do would be have a nice BBQ. Someone would come over there and bring us some ribs or something that was donated, and we would have a BBQ. I can remember when I commanded the C-130 squadron in Bagram. The BBQ would last 24 hours, because we were under 24 hours ops. Guys would come in when they had a chance and it was a great festive thing all day long and all night long as guys volunteered their time for this BBQ.

We had a thing of ribs sent over, brought to our group and I was at FOB Shank and we were trying to do that thing the same, esprit d' corps type thing there, and the environment that was brought about by this Colonel was such that it was like rabbits coming out of their holes. People would open the door to their tents, and look around, and if no one was there, they would run and get some ribs and run back to their room so they wouldn't see anybody. That's how bad it was over there.

A yeller, a screamer, an intimidator. Yeah. He would yell down the hall, "You sons of bitches are going to cost me my star." You know? I can tell you some funny things. He was bound and determined to earn the combat arms badge. There's parameters for being awarded the combat arms badge. One of them is being in a rocket attack that is, I'm thinking 100 meters, or 200 meters away from where you are. Okay? And you're going to think this is crazy, but we had a rocket attack and it was two HESCO walls from us, so we were two HESCO walls removed. He literally had one of the soldiers tie a string and run out to the crater and measure the distance back to his desk so he could get the combat arms badge.

Conversely, I was rocketed twice in the face. I'm here twice by the grace of God. The first time, I was within about 10 meters of the rocket hitting and it impacted at the bottom of a T wall, which took 90% of the shrapnel. If it would have been six inches back, I wouldn't be here talking to you today. Okay? The second one, and they were all within about two weeks of each other. The second was impacted a HESCO wall right in front of me, and again, if it had been six inches higher, and would have cleared that HESCO barrier, I wouldn't have been here today, but it impacted in the top of the HESCO barrier and just sprayed us with rocks with six inch diameters. It did its job. His comment to me when I was taken to the Charlie Med Camp was, "What was he doing there? What was he f'ing doing there?" Well I was doing my job, is what I was doing. I mean, those were some of the things that I just can't put my head around. You know?

[What kind of unit was he commanding?]

He was commanding this Agriculture Development Team. It's similar to a PRT—Provisional Reconstruction Team? Very similar to that but more military, whereas the PRTs are civilian. In fact, we were teamed up with the Czechs PRT, which was a great advantage to me, because I went everywhere with the Czechs. I probably went on 100 missions with the Czechs and they were great to go with because they had a common enemy and both the Czechs, and the Afghans hated the Russians. It was a really great group of people to go out on.

[Was the Colonel going outside the wire very often?]

He would go out. In fact, it was funny. His whole thing was to make sure he had more missions outside the wire than anyone else, which I don't think he did. In fact, I'm pretty sure he didn't. But again, it was made to look like he was leading the charge. I can probably speak ... We were one of the most successful aid, and one of the reasons ... When we got back, it took over two years for anything to happen, for the IG to start an investigation and two years for them to complete the investigation and when it was completed, IG told me it was a biblical proportion. It was huge. It brought things back from eras before. Boy, I just ... One of the reasons that when we

came back and start telling our story, the Adjutant General wouldn't believe us because he says, "He couldn't be so dysfunctional but yet so successful."

I've been trying to wrap my head around that for a long time. I don't know if you want to get into that stuff also. We were successful because about November, December, myself and Sergeant J, it was us working, we were the Logar ADT agricultural portion. We went out on a mission with aviation brigade that was there and ...

Okay. Sometimes it's all about relationships. So, we got out on a mission with the Army aviation and their commander is Chris Ault's nephew. That got my foot into the door into a village in Afghanistan. Then I met up with the head of governance for Logar Province, and him and I had a lot in common. He was an ex Air Force 06 C-130 guy. We had a ton in common and he kind of shepherd me into different things and then the Czechs and basically, by November, December, we had started getting our successes, without the Colonel that I was working with before and by the time we left there, we weren't really asking for permission to do things. We were just telling him what we were doing. And he was kind of soaking up the success because he had given me a direct order, I was under direct order for the year I was there, not to have any contact with any military person in the state.

I could not call, have any conversation with my colleagues back home, in fact, my boss called me on New Year's, because he was working on my OPR and basically I said, "I'm breaking a direct order by working on my OPR with you because I'm not to have any contact." These were the ways that I guess he kept things ... I don't know how he kept things shielded from the leadership back in the states. When we got back, I met with the adjutant general and he listened but basically, he said, "This couldn't have happened." Then we have yellow ribbon events, events that the National Guard puts on for reintegration back in after deployment and the IG came in because they were starting to get a flow of IG complaints and basically every IG complaint was substantiated against this colonel.

[Was he active duty or a guardsman?]

Army National Guard. Spent his entire career in the Army Guard. He is not a West Point graduate.

Well, I can tell you why he isolated people, because not only that, you want to know ... I'll bring something, I worked very closely with the Lieutenant Colonel C and I was in Logar Province and he was in, oh gosh, I should remember all this stuff. Another province. He actually went to live in that province, but he would come back to FOB Shank and we still lived in the same tent and bunked across from each other. And are still great friends. This is what he would do. He would go to Colonel C and say, "Hey, Colonel T wants to fire you and send you back home." And then he would come to me and say, "Hey, Colonel C thinks you're doing a lousy job and he wants your position." And so, we would talk and I'm going ... And Clay would say, "I'm not saying that." I'm going, "Clay, you know that I'm not saying this stuff." So, he was trying to divide us. You know? This divide and conquer thing, I guess.

It was absolutely crazy. The thing about this is this is how narcissistic he was. We're going over there and we're this team that's ... We were under an Army 06 also ... the leadership at FOB Shank knew there was a problem. In fact, the number two in the brigade was a Lieutenant Colonel at the time and he would come to me and we'd have meetings and he'd say, "What's wrong with you guys?" And basically, I never could say anything because the fear was such that he was going to ... the retaliation would have been swift. I firmly believe ...

Basically, FOB Shanks knew there was a problem. And we actually went to, it's called, I know it's very disjointed, but they have a thing called, in the Army, combat stress. I don't know if you've heard of that. That's just a place to go, people to talk to, when the stress of the job, which can be very stressful at times, can get to you. His views on combat stress was if any of his troops went to combat stress, he would consider them cowards.

[Was his leadership impacting people physically?]

There were no heart attacks, but the stress level in that place was so pronounced you could feel the stress. Everyone was stressed.

[You mentioned the one gunner had weight loss issues...]

That and the fact that he was allowing the male soldiers to sell ... When she came to me, this Sergeant said, "Hey, I just bought you. You're my property." Yeah. The stress levels for people like that were just incredible. It was a ton of stress.

[Did anybody ever try and confront him?]

Basically, that was me. It happened there but again, I was Lieutenant Colonel, I didn't pin on 06 until way later and at that point in time, when we did have a little confrontation, I was basically threatened with UCMJ thing.

So, I went, and I actually took it to the Army IG in Bagram, and this is what they said, they said, "He's an Army 06. We don't have any 06s here. So, he's basically allowed to do whatever he wants and we're not going to do a thing about it because we don't want to confront an 06." Again, they knew this was happening in Bagram. The brigade new it was happening in Bagram. I don't know, have you done any reading about ... the members of the brigade knew it was happening in Bagram, but our brigade commander was the guy that had two wives.

We were under the leadership of another narcissistic Army guy who had two wives. He had a wife back in the states and a wife that he met in Iran ... Not Iran, but Iraq. You can kind of, if you want to do a little research, Google 173rd Airborne Brigade commander with two wives or something and it'll pop up.

Again, we were kept under such wraps and what not that you really didn't have the opportunity to discuss things.

[What kind of recommendations would you give to your replacement to deal with this guy?]

Recommendations

The same recommendation that I didn't understand people were giving me when I took the job. That would be to do whatever you can to stay away from this guy, basically. I came back and people were saying, "I kind of warned you about him." I thought, "You did?" They go, "Yeah, this guy has a 30-year reputation."

Basically, I think that the only way you could have done anything with this guy would be to completely to stay away from him, because, I don't know how to say that. I don't know what to say or what kind of recommendation I would have.

[How did you cope with it? What was your personal defense mechanisms to make sure that you didn't go crazy over there?]

I did go crazy. It kind of cost me my career in the end. What did I do? For starters, it was such widespread that I could come home ... There were six of us in our tent. There was myself and Lieutenant Colonel C, two Captains and a Senior Master Sergeant Air Force guy that I went to high school with, and a Master Sergeant that I worked closely with. We had such a close bond, a close friendship that I think that we coped with it with each other. We definitely leaned on each other to cope with this stuff. Has that made any sense?

If he would have been successful in isolating us, which he worked very hard at doing, like I said. He would come to the Colonel C and say, "Hey, Colonel T is saying this about you." If we didn't have that close friendship and bond and mutual respect for each other in that working relationship, he would have split us. For me, my career, before he left, it takes a year or so ... You have to get congressional approval and all that. My package for 06 had been accepted long before I ever went. So my career, I was pinning on 06, I had a group command when I came back, so basically, my career didn't depend on what was happening there. It sure didn't hurt it, because I did above and beyond. I did a fantastic job. Myself and Sergeant J probably put more projects in Logar than had ever been put in Logar and the only thing that stopped us was a continuing resolution where we couldn't get any more projects funded.

It was the cohesiveness that we had, as a group, in that small group and the sad part of this, is only expanded not too far outside of that tent, because you couldn't tell--there was an environment or he bred this environment of everybody is looking at everybody as a potential adversary, so to speak. It didn't extend and basically it was funny to think that when we come back, that everyone else was thinking the same thing. Again, it took two years to get this. In that two years, he was promoted and what not and then because again, the adjutant general in the state could not believe that anything we were saying was true.

[Did he get promoted? Did he get a star?]

Bad Example 1

He would have. He was in line for a star. Basically, because I was an outsider to the Army, and I think that again, I don't say this lightly but because I was outside the Army and I ended up being

the same rank as him, and he didn't have a lot to say about my career, because if I'd have been in the Army, I would have gotten a horrible, not an OPR, but whatever the Army, I knew all this stuff a few years ago. The OPR on the Army side. He would have worked very hard to destroy me as an officer if I'd have been on the Army side. In fact, he did work very hard to destroy multiple people across their careers over that. But they were all on the Army side.

I can tell you some funny things. He had a Superman complex, okay? And so when we got to Bagram, we were all given ammunition for our M4s and we all had seven rounds each. Because that's all we had. Except for the Colonel. He had a full 210 rounds of ammunition and it was kind of funny because you're embedded in Bagram Air Base and he had this notion that the Taliban was going to know he was in the country and come hunt him down because of what he was and what he stood for. It was funny. He had a contingency of people that surrounded him all the time with their seven bullets and it was kind of funny.

Yes, I can tell you and this is ... So, we did a lot of work in a place called Mohammad Agha, which was, not a FOB, but what's lower than a FOB. What is the next size smaller than the ...? I'm sorry, I used to know all this stuff.

Myself and Sergeant J did a lot of work at this place called Mohammad Agha. And so, he came up to see this work and basically when he was showing, and it was showing us someone from the embassy and I can't remember if it was the deputy ambassador for agriculture or something like that, pretty high up in the embassy. He's trying to show this person around and see all the things he's done. Well, there were other projects going on there at the same time and they had a little school, a literacy center there with some computers and the ambassador went right to that, the deputy or ambassador went right to that. Basically, when that happened, we were all gathered up, the four or five of us and we hung out waiting for a helicopter because his feelings were hurt over that.

It's basically I grew up in a tribal situation out west, so a tribe is a tribe is a tribe. The Afghan tribes are no different than the Native American tribes of the United States. A tribal system is very tribal. To work your way through and be successful there, is not based on the hierarchy of the position you hold, you also have to tie in the tribal affiliation and a lot of other things that go along with that. It's truly this notion of three cups of tea. I don't know if you've ever read the Three Cups of Tea book.

I spend my whole year there building these relationships and Sergeant J will tell you that when him and I went into a place called Baraki Barak which we were getting rocketed from every day, I guess I'm going to build this on to what my successes were and his reaction to it.

Basically, we were successful because we got away from the Colonel and from asking permission, to basically saying this is what we're doing and this is how we're going to do it and him just signing off on it because he had, not saying he'd lost control, but we had just ... He didn't keep up with us.

I could tell you why. He had 64 people and he was an O6. An O6 is a brigade commander. We had a hierarchy of the brigade. We had miniature companies and it was crazy. We had an S4 and

I don't know what the brigade ... We had multiple levels to try to make him feel like he was this brigade commander. When in fact, he was commanding 64 people on an agricultural mission. You know what I'm saying?

It was an embarrassment to him. And after trying to make 64 people into a brigade, it was impossible. It was just, that's from the fact that I think it's just funny. Basically, he was embarrassed to be there in the position he was there. I was trying to say to you that and try to relate to how things progressed. We were being rocketed every day from Baraki Barak and he wouldn't go to Baraki Barak because he thought it was too dangerous. Sergeant J and I probably went 20 times.

We would helo in there. We would go with the Czechs, we went to Baraki Barak the whole time. In fact, if you want to hear the successes. We talked to the governor from Baraki Barak and he said, "Colonel T, if you're at Baraki Barak I will talk to you. If you're out and we see at a meeting, I may talk to you. But you will never see me at FOB Shank." And believe it or not, he came to FOB Shank with 30 elders from Baraki Barak because we had made that much of an impression on him in what we were doing. That was our success. At the end of us being there, I had made ... When you're with the Army for a year, you get two weeks somewhere in the deployment to come home. Before I went, I made my two weeks, two weeks early because I wanted to make sure that I made it to my daughter's graduation. Over the years, I had missed everything, but I hadn't missed any of my kids' graduations. It was agreed upon that I would get to come home for the graduation. A week before, here's another thing ...

So, you know when you're an 06, there's a little bit of special treatment there that's above an 05 and below. When I left there, he would not ... he made sure that I didn't get to go to the VIP area and basically, I sit out with the airmen and the soldiers and that's okay. But he made sure that I was not treated ... When I left, I was not treated with the dignity of an 06. How's that? That was just, again, it still doesn't ... I find it more funny than anything. Conversely, you know that he was going to be treated like an 06. You know?

Anyways, to sum up things, as a commander I always wanted to see my troops, or my airmen, succeed. The more successful an airman was, the more successful I am as a commander or whatever. On the last week, I took him to all the places I'd spent a lot of time with. I spent a lot of time with all the sub governors and that was thanks to the governance individual in Logar that I had befriended, the C-130 guy and so I got to know the governor and the sub governors and have built these relationships. And so we go to three different places, we have time to go to three different places.

The first place we go and visit and our main project were wood cellars or cool storage. If you ever wanted to get into the reason for that, and so we have built one for the sub governor so he could show his population what could happen. And so we go there and he's talking and I have this great interpreter, but now here's the funny thing. He was a great interpreter. Spoke Dari, Pashto, no accent and the minute I left, he fired that interpreter. And that was just out of sheer meanness, because he could. So we go to this place and the sub governor is there and I'm going "Bes Mullah, this is my boss," etc, etc. and finally Bes Mullah says to my interpreter something

and my interpreter is kind of kicking the ground I wave and he says, "Bes Mullah says, 'Hey, Colonel ... " and then said to my boss, he doesn't know you.

If you come around more often, and he can get to know you, then you can forge this relationship. He knows Colonel T and Sargent J and he'll talk to them but he's not going to talk to you until he knows you. That was strike one. And he was pretty upset at the end of that one. Next day, we go to another place and again, I've done ... this is a village that we've done cool storage in and a former Mujahedeen commander and the whole works and so where you sit in the room in Afghanistan is very important. Myself and Sergeant J were set on both sides of the commander with our interpreter between us and my boss was sat on the other side of the room, which is kind of, at the kids table, okay? We have this discussion and I'm bantering back and forth with him about entering negotiations for his son to marry my daughter and all the good things, because I had built this relationship over a year. And my boss is bringing out pictures of his daughter and the guy is just going, "Yeah. Here."

So that was the second day. Then the third day, we go to, again, back to Mohammad Ahga where we've done a lot of work. Showing him around and everything and there was a big gathering there and you were assigned a room to eat and he was assigned by the sub governor, the room, there was three tiers and he was assigned the third tier room. I'm going, "Hey, Colonel, take my spot in the first tier room." He basically set on a rock and wouldn't eat. I had gotten gifts for all of the people that I'd worked with, mostly pocket knives and I gave my gift to the sub governor, he gave us the woolen hats to both Sergeant J and I and he gave the little prayer cap to my boss. When we got home, he was so mad he just threw it across the room and then into the garbage. I guess, I don't know if that exemplifies the fact that we were successful because we got away from him but yet we had no contact to tell our story. So when we got back, it was like he had done everything ... I don't know where I'm trying to go with this.

You know, I'm probably going to hang up from you, and there's probably going to be a thousand things I could tell you. Anything else you would like to know?

Again, if you have any questions, I hope I helped you out. I can tell you one thing, this is one thing I kind of want you to end up with is that it was so traumatic for me and a lot of the ADT that my time actually on FOB Shank and under the direct command of this Colonel is almost non-existent in my mind. Everything that I remember is from my time outside of the wire and very little ... there's probably a lot more I could tell you and I could also tell you that he would leave for a week to go to Bamyán or other provinces, and the mood and the demeanor of the entire unit would change in his absence. It was uncanny. There was laughter, there was conversation. Anyways, but when he was there there was no laughter, no conversation, it was just a bunch of scared rabbits.

I would like to leave you with one more thing. Even under such a horrible leader, you can glean things and put them in your own toolbox but turn them from destructive to productive. That's what I'll leave you with.

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Background

I am a career infantry officer, started off in Infantry Battalion, Second Battalion, Second Marines. Did a stint in Haiti, a few other operations down in Central America. And then after that I went to Marine Barracks 8th and I, marshaled a little bit. Got out of the Marine Corps, went to the United States Secret Service where I was a special agent in the Washington Field Office. I did protective intelligence there, surveillance. Counter surveillance in the National Counter Surveillance Team for the military district of Washington.

After that, I demobilized with the United States Marine Corps in '08. I joined the United States Central Command and joining them after six months, went down to SOCCENT, sent to a covered task force, down there. And I spent the last 10 years there, doing non-kinetics and various forms of protected information operations. And here I sit now as a division chief here at United States Central Command. Sensitive Activities division.

My commission source was a Platoon Leader's Class. So actually, I went, I did my undergraduate time at Virginia Military Institute. Actually, started off as an Air Force option but I was looking for something, I mean I really didn't know. I just knew I wanted to go into the military. And the thing that ended up appealing to me was the Marine Corps. So, I did the Platoon Leader's Class which allowed me to have more freedom, per se. I wasn't necessarily looking for a scholarship or anything like that because I didn't know at the end of the commission, at the end of my period there at VMI, whether I would want a career in the Marine Corps. Obviously, I did. I wasn't necessarily strapped for money, for undergraduate so I did the Platoon Leader's Class. So that's the one you just go to two six-week, separate six-week periods of juniors and seniors. And upon finishing your degree, your requirements for graduation, you receive your commission.

Bad Example 1

I think most recently it was while I was deployed to the Republic of Georgia. I was working a security cooperation mission there under Marine Corps Forces Europe. The job there was to train the Georgian Infantry Battalions for deployment as battle space owners in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The security cooperation mission was actually physically held on an old Russian FOB within the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. The leadership at that time, it was leadership, as they say by 2000 mile screwdriver.

I think it's to be known that I knew the type of environment I was getting into because this particular person was always known as being a toxic leader. I mean, toxic is probably a mild adjective for him. I think caustic would be anything more so. I mean there were plenty of physical threats. I mean I know it's the Marine Corps, there's loads of profanity but I would say it wasn't general profanity. It was like directed profanity. I mean that went along with the physical threats. Whether it be in person, whether it be over VTC.

He was an O7. So, he was a Brigadier General. He's since been relieved, I think after they did an investigation on him when they were looking at him for a promotion to two-star, it caught up with him. And he was at that time, which was only like earlier this year or later last year, he was assigned to the office of legislative affairs. So that office is in charge of all liaison activities between the United States Marine Corps as a service and Capitol Hill. Bottom line, the congressmen were the ones that turned him in. They said we aren't going to have this. We aren't ... I mean I think they went to the point; hey you're not going to treat us like Marines.

That's what it is, and you shouldn't be treating anyone like this. There was no one that gave any sort of ... there was no one that gave any sort of how would you say it, like a commentary in order to "throw this Marine a life-saver" or anything like that. Pretty much it was 100% agreed that yeah, that's how he is. Superiors, I think dealt with it because it's one of those things they cut everything off. So, at a certain level you don't see what's going on. And I think to a point they appreciated that. People that worked for him, would all to a point agree he was definitely caustic.

So, we had an issue once with vehicles there within the Republic of Georgia. So, the whole premise of the operation is to actually train the Georgians as a motorized battalion. So, in order to obviously operate as a battalion, they needed a battalion's worth of vehicles. Actually, I think a company, I think it was a company element of vehicles to carry a battalion's worth of Georgian soldiers, Georgian Marines.

All the iterations prior to ours had been in, let me preface this with I'm not saying I'm God's gift to anything in terms of like Marine Corp leadership or anything like that. But I do think that knowing the amount of time that I've spent on active duty, I'm made aware of certain things that aren't made to my reserve brethren. So when they actually spend their weekends doing PFTs and going to the rifle range, but then they actually send them out on a ... they send them out on a mission, they don't have any frame of reference other than what they've seen on their one weekend a month.

Me, on the other hand after serving out of a combatant command for 10 years, I see everything that bubbles up to that level and also what gets pushed down in terms of operations, logistics, administration and whatever you may have.

The whole problem there were in all the vehicles, I think 90% of the vehicles were all "deadlocked". They all had at least a class two or three leak which basically says they were inoperable, and they shouldn't be driven. The MARFOR was more concerned about spillage, work like that, he said they really didn't care. They just needed the vehicles to work.

I was like, they don't work. I need someone to come patch them. Then besides that, I need to build a concrete pad because bottom line my mechanics are turning wrenches in mud. Sometimes a foot, two feet deep at some point. You can't jack the vehicle up; you can't do the proper repairs.

So, I actually asked for the basics in order to get that done. That was relayed up to the three-star who is now like the highest position within the Marine Corp right now. And that message that was relayed to him from me was not the truth. It was told I was asking for [\$150,000], when I

actually asked for \$15,000 pad, I was told that he's not going to give me \$150,000 to make improvements to my camp.

I kind of got that and I told him sir, I never asked for that. After the report went up, I basically stated that hey, if these vehicles aren't repaired, we aren't going to be able to conduct the Battalion level exercise. So, what I was told was conduct a company level exercise three times. And the math may work on that but operationally it doesn't add up, as you know.

So okay, let me do three separate companies, they should be operating three companies across, moving about the battle space. That didn't occur, I didn't take that for a great answer. I was told that if I didn't get myself in line that I would get...

I was basically told I'd get f**ked up. Like, I'm gonna come out there, I'm going to f**k you up, I'm going to do whatever. And this went on over VTC along with my sergeant major that was sitting right beside me. And at that point, it was ... it had just spread to the reason like you know what? I'm going to send somebody out there to fire you. I'm going to send some people out there, who are you going to talk to? I don't know if the Marines are getting the proper training. I think I'm losing trust and confidence in you, which are all call signs for I need to relieve you.

All code words for that. And with that being said, that's why he's putting that out, because he's hearing the guys, yeah. It's almost like it starts his own information campaign. Hey, I heard the general say that he lost trust and confidence in him. You know, this is I need to get rid of him, so ...

I was a Lieutenant Colonel at the time, and I hadn't been promoted. And so, my only recourse was to go to the embassy. And at that point the embassy was just speaking directly to EUCOM. Had a session with the ambassador. The ambassador basically agreed, I invited the ambassador out to see the vehicles, see the conditions. He brought a couple of people out there with him, some of his logistics guys. They didn't have the ability as GS's to actually work on the vehicles, so he said he'd do something.

He sent a note up to EUCOM in order to get some action. With that being said EUCOM basically went down and tasked them all for a year by saying hey, we've had eyes on your site, and it needs to get fixed, now. I mean it was really like a mess, but the whole thing is you're dealing with a reserve component. And a lot of people who are deploying to where they're going to. They look at it as an opportunity to go to Eastern Europe, not an opportunity to actually work. That's what they see it as. It's a six-month vacation, they get a deployment out of it. I was called to the carpet again in another email.

I'm sick of hearing the ambassador f**king talking about you, I'm sick of hearing EUCOM talking about you. Why the hell do you have an ambassador and a four-star calling down to me, telling me to get my shit together. So, I caught it for that again. He sent another O6 down. Both of the O6s had basically adopted ... they adopted the one-star's attitude just off of self-preservation. It's like hey, if I don't carry this, hey, you're a piece of crap, you're this, and you're whatever.

But I think the fact where I actually did have the opportunity to get in front of an O6 that knew better, it made everything pan out. So, his point, he was like there's no need for you to be talking directly to the one star or directly to the chief of staff. You need an advocate on the staff and that's going to be me.

And that person happened to actually be the G7 at the time. So, at that point that I was going to take the uniform off at that point. I was considering actually getting out, leaving the Marine Corps, it got that bad. I got restricted to base during the PDSS to Afghanistan because they had no idea that I was in Afghanistan. I mean they're ... the SA that the headquarters kept was probably the worst that I've ever seen.

They weren't operationally focused, they're a component, much like the one sitting behind us right now. They aren't built to manually sustain an operational unit. They aren't built for that. So instead of reaching out and actually getting the help we had to reach out on our own to get some help.

So, hindsight being 20/20 I wouldn't have changed anything. I think I would have been a little more aggressive to meet the general. Like I said, he ended up getting relieved for those same actions later on, but I think it's one of those things where it's a hard piece after you get up to a certain rank, there's a certain responsibility that you carry with your Marines and yourself and I think that other peers may see it different because I think because people tend to expect that they're doing the right thing. They don't treat you like a Marine, they expect that you're doing the right thing.

Here in the building myself, I think between General Langley, between the J5 and the J2, they've actually taken an interest in me and saying hey, you know, let me talk to you about this, let me talk to you about that. Let me give you a little bit of guidance for this, I think you can go a little bit further. And they still treat me like a Marine.

It's like not like I'm getting the same talks I was getting as a second lieutenant, but I'm still receiving counseling from a higher-ranking Marine. Which you're supposed to do all the way up to the point that you're a commandant. At that point you talk to retired commandants. But ...

I did deal with him face to face and he told me at that point, he said I hate Marines. I read your resume, who the f**k do you think you are, I got it, you spent time in JSOC, and task force and all these other places. I hate prima donnas, I just really think you're a prima donna, that's what it is. And he just basically said that just right out as if it were nothing-

He was a Marine as well. And that was the thing to me that was so disheartening. And I contrast that to working with MARFOR South, the next iteration. I took back to back deployments and it was totally opposite. I actually learned a lot and at that point I had already been selected and regardless of the fitness report that they gave me. It wasn't that bad, but I think it was one of those things where enough of a stink had been caused. But the fact that the ambassador was backing my position that if anything went wrong, that they figured I was going to use that to actually strike back. Which I would have done, but I never ... I don't usually want to be in the position where I have to go call someone else to save me. I want to do it on my own.

Or in the set conditions wherein ... I like the set conditions wherein what's left of "the evidentiary pile" speaks to what I'm trying to say. And I think at that point when I told him that I was going to pull the separate documentation. I was going to pull the emails I was going to pull the VTC records from DISA. I think that was the point that they started to look at it like okay, we got to ... we got to look at what we're dealing with here. So, at one point, the General left, another CG came in. He basically got the same talk from the. And I think everything came full circle at the point that the chief of staff there also part of that leadership pyramid ended up coming to MARFOR South as the Chief of Staff there. So, he was just moving back and forth Chief of Staff, Chief of Staff.

And the Brigadier General that was in charge of MARFOR South, he says hey, do you know this guy, he's come from MARFOREUR. I said, "Sir, I know exactly who it is, and I would prefer not to make a comment on his performance." And he was like, "That's all I need to hear." And it was one of those things, it was another one of the lackluster individuals that their only way to ...

There only way to ... they mask their ignorance of their job through threats, through you know. Through, I won't call it bullying to a point, but that's kind of what it is. It's like I'm going to get my way regardless. And I think to the point when they're dealing with reservists, they can usually, they can get away with that. Because the reservists don't know any better. But I think to the point when someone actually knows better, I think it's ... it just doesn't work out well for them. And I think both of them are out of the Marine Corps now.

[How did he make it through?]

Well in this MOS, so this is actually a ... so as an infantry officer, as a reconnaissance officer this is kind of like a ... it is a very harsh MOS. So, they'll tell you in IOC, that all of your mistakes go into body bags. So, you're there for one thing, you're there to locate, close with and destroy or find, fix, finish. That is what you're told that that's your job. And everything outside of that is almost considered being like ... okay, hey. Not that you're just a combat arms guy, you're an infantry officer. You're expected to do certain things. This is the life that you lead. We expect you guys to be the most rigid of anyone. I think at the point where ...

I think at the point where it gets to be some guys actually get out of themselves, where they stop being themselves and they start being what they think the Marines need to see, I think that's where we have issues. I would honestly say I've spoken to my peers and every time we were put there, to say hey when you saw him face to face, did you ask the General to go outside? I'm like I'm not going to do that because I was trained better. And at that point, I'm coming to his level. And I don't want to give him anything.

To be like, you know I could have easily said that and he'd be like oh my god, you're threatening me, now you're really out of hand. And it would have been a unilateral story at that point where it's only his side. So, in order to stay from that, I'm like let me just allow myself to set conditions. So, I sent emails that he would send me, I sent those emails to the ambassador. The ambassador, I let the ambassador fight that fight.

And I think that's the smart thing, you have to understand when you're in a hostile work environment is you have to always understand where ... it's almost like you're doing CQB because it's a contact sport. But you always have to know what's at your six and you always have to have an escape route. And I think that's one of the things that people, you know they get into those situations. And like combat, they quit thinking.

And that's when you start getting in really focused and they're not thinking that hey, I came in this way, this is the way I can go out. And like I said the embassy, the platform that I was on, that they actually made me sit on. None of the other guys before that actually sat in the embassy, but it ended up being the platform that they told me, I had to ... hey you need to go back to the States and get your suits and everything like that. Because you're going to be on the Embassy platform, that's where you're supposed to be. They had no idea that the Embassy platform was going to be their undoing. So.

[Did that O7 ever get under your skin?]

He did. He did, like I said. I was going to take the uniform off. But it was one of those things I had to call, and I was just like I never considered myself a weak person, but I was just like ... I think at a point actually having to deal with such ... I started to look at it as if hey, this is not the Marine Corps. I had to tell myself over and over again. This is a singular individual and he has a few people there. I'll make it past this. I'll get through this. This will be behind me after a while and I can keep going. I think my hardest ... the hardest frustration with being who I am is the fact of not being able to go totally kinetic with another Marine.

At the O5 level, you're like hey. I mean we're still that type of service, hey if you want to go outside, we can go outside. This is what we do. We fight as an MOS and we should, we'll settle this with a fight. Normally when you're dealing with such a ... I don't want to call it barbaric but when you're dealing with such a Spartan MOS to a point, that's only ... sometimes that's the only way people tend to understand each other.

I don't think that he would enjoy the confrontation. I actually spoke to one of the O6's later and I relayed this over to him and told him, I said, "You know there were honestly times that I wouldn't think ... I never thought about telling on you, I just basically wanted to close the door and have my way with both of you at the same time." And I think that's an honest assessment. I say that to you as peers now, but obviously he never got promoted past O6 either and he's out of the Marine Corps as well too.

But I think their whole thing is when you lose focus, although it's a star position, you lose focus, that's when you start to go into the hey, let me look at myself. This is my problem; I'm going to get out. To hell with this, f**k this, I don't want to do this anymore. And that's not the case because you're probably what needs to ... you need to stand your ground because at some point this guy is going to trip and he's going to fall.

And someone else is going to do something about it. And it's just one of the ... it's just at a point like how loud is that fall going to be in order for someone to do something about it. So ...

He's impacted people across the Marine Corps. So, everyone that I talk to, every one of my peers that I talk to, I say hey, did you ever deal with so and so, they were like oh my god, let me tell you this story. It's never a good story, it's never a ... oh he's hard but fair. It is he's on the other side. And I think it's just what it is. I mean some people build their way by being bullies. But like I said that's never up. That's always down.

[Was he technically competent?]

I would say technically he'd be somewhat competent because just to become a GO in the Marine Corps you have to be technically competent. But you know what, there are lots of technically competent guys out there. Do they have ... are they composed of the right elements I would say? The behavioral qualities in order to carry that out? I mean it's one of the things they used to tell us all the time. You can have a 10-pound brain. If you aren't a physical specimen to carry that 10-pound brain into combat, we can't use you in the Marine Corps.

Also, with that being said if you're going to be a leader, you don't have the composure, you don't have the discipline, you don't have the wherewithal to conduct yourself in certain fashion when you're dealing with Marines or whether you're dealing with senior officers or like that, it should be all the way around.

Up, down, side, lateral, it should be all the same. When they've totally focused down and they crush everything down in order to make the upward communication easier, it just doesn't pan well for anyone. But like I said to a point you owe it to yourself and you owe it to everyone else to stand your ground to a point. Because if you don't, you just bend like everyone else, guess what? He keeps going, he keeps getting another star. If someone had not complained up to Capitol Hill and actually took a stand with this. He'd be getting another star right now and doing even more damage. I'm just glad at a point they caught him before they put the second star on him.

Second star for us is a nominal rank. So, he could have been a second star for a pay period, they could have moved him directly to a three-star position.

[Was your unit in Georgia successful?]

Very successful, very successful. Now I'm still in contact with a lot of Marines that were from there, so a lot of them deployed, they went forward, they took them to Afghanistan for a few months, they came back. Didn't lose anybody or anything like that and just continued on with the next rotation.

[What was the key to that success?]

For me, taking ... I don't know if I ... I related to the scene in Glory where Denzel Washington is against the wagon wheel and they're beating him because he actually went out of town to try to get shoes for some other people, this and that. I think it's one of those things as a leader you have to ... I mean you're going to ... they'll tell you that you're responsible for everything your unit does and fails to do. But I think it's at a point you have to provide a shield, like an umbrella to

make sure that they aren't getting it. So, there were times that I would go out and I'd have the formation, I'd have to fix myself because I'd be totally angry about something they were doing.

I had to make sure I wasn't firing off at the Marines in the unit and actually being a conduit for that hatred that was coming from him, from that toxic ... that leadership quality coming from him. Or leadership, I'll say lack thereof. The toxic strings coming from him, shielding the Marines from him. And I think that's one of the most important things. That was my ... I've never had to lead like that, but that was the thing that was best for the unit at the time. Normally I like to pour in subject matter expertise and everything like that. But I think on that one it was to keep them shielded from everything that was coming from beyond me.

[Did he try and isolate you at all from the unit or any of your peers?]

No, I think he would actually have had to care a little bit to do that. He didn't care where we were from, he knew we were reservists and he was basically, like he could do whatever he wanted. I would say in terms of what they were doing financially to the unit, they did anything that benefited the MARFOR and not necessarily anything by choice.

And so when they sent us to Georgia they didn't count it as a deployment, they counted it, they actually moved us administratively to MARFOREUR where we wouldn't receive any per diem or anything like that, we were just out in the field staying in an old Russian FOB. When plenty of people were saying no, you should have been there. You should have been receiving deployment benefits, everything like that and we didn't get anything like that. We fought for it, obviously. They came down on us, there's nothing the home unit could do because they had actually attached them to us.

So, to isolate us, did they? Yes, kind of. It was administrative isolation but I think it's to a point that we aren't going to fight that because it's the way these have been doing ... they've been doing everyone like that so it wasn't from ... it wasn't his behavior that was driving that administrative change, it was just something they had been doing the entire time.

And I think that goes back to the leadership doesn't care, the leadership doesn't know. So, the staff is allowed to do whatever it wants to do because there's no one in the leadership is going to put up a check because they actually know about it. So i think that was the whole issue.

[Was his leadership style causing any kind of physical effect on you?]

I think I actually got stronger because I worked out a lot more, just to deal with it. I realize that's my ... working out is my release. That's how I deal with my stress. Sometimes I'd come in and I wouldn't want to eat. Obviously, you just get sick to your stomach sometimes about having to deal with ... I mean you've got a general officer who is cursing at you all the time, it's not a pleasant thing. And you do realize, like you know what? My career is at stake here. It's all because this guy just doesn't like me for some reason.

And I think that's what it is and when you figure it out, and go hey, it's not just you. I never thought ... and I'll just state this. I never thought it was something racist or anything like that. It's just over time knowing that this is how he's dealt with everyone; it's how he is.

And I mean there would be times where I had other people that would come up to me and say hey, I was in a staff meeting today and the general said, told one of the O6's there that you said that he wasn't doing his job. I'm like, I never said such a thing. They said, well that's what he said. So just adding lies into everything else as well. I mean his whole, the reason that he'd do that ...

And I said, I actually asked him one time on the VTC. I said hey sir, I heard that the 4 was, you related to the 4 that I was unsatisfied with his performance. And basically, the truth was, he said hey. Lieutenant Colonel [me] said you're not doing your damn job. That's exactly what he told me. So, he relayed back to me that that was his way of inserting rigor into the system, at my expense.

So, if I tell that O6 that you say he's not doing his job, that's how I get him to work. Instead of me actually telling him he needs to go to you and support you, I tell him that you said that he's not doing his job. That to me is totally ... I don't know what book that taught that in, I think that would be in some type of deception manual, or work like that. But the key there wasn't deception. The key was supposed to be lead the Marines. And that's what he chose to do and that was his way of doing things. And it's all he did this entire time was insert rigor into the system, into the decision cycle. That's what he did.

Recommendations

I told my replacement a few things. So, I told him that the current leadership is unhinged, uneducated, and very lackluster. And that's how I felt about them. I told him that I had done such platforms before on the SOF side of the house and doing this I thought would be relatively easy but they do not understand what is required of the security operation mission nor what the outputs are due to be with the expectations set by the United States Government, by the United States Embassy. Plain and simple that's who you're working for. I did tell him to make sure that he kept all, that he would keep a folder and keep all communications between himself and the MARFOR. No matter who it would be, keep all communications. All decisions, everything, go on email and nothing verbal.

I told him to actually limit his time with the GO. It's time consuming to the point that you have the GO, and this is like I said, it was a whole ... it was leadership, the leadership from the top affected the entire site there at the ... on the staff. The only good thing and the only redeeming quality I will say is that the general told me to make sure I call him once a week.

Bad Example 1

And once a week, I'd get an ass chewing, or I'd get laid out, or sometimes he'd just been feeling good, like he was off his meds, but he was on his meds actually and it would be an okay conversation. We would speak together, and he respected the fact that I was a grunt like him. So,

I'd had the same gut check, we've jumped out the same planes, we've all been in free fall, we've done whatever but the whole thing about it is he looked at it as me being a junior version of him. And I think after a while he understood that I think it was the fact that I actually stood up to him. It wasn't anything where he was going to say hey, I respect the fact that you stood up for me.

It was one of those, I'm just going to lay off of you right now. Let you go and I'll deal with the other guy when he comes in. But like I said, hopefully I prepared my replacement well. I think he did well while he was out there. He was telling me he was having the same problems now. He didn't go after him on the VTC. He was telling me he was going to f**k him up or he was going to fight him or do anything like that. So, I consider that somewhat of a win. But he was very caustic, he did have the rest of the staff jumping when he was around. So, I think that was the whole thing. How do you actually prepare someone for caustic, omni-directional...?

Like it's omni-directionally caustic. It just goes out bad, there is no rhyme or reason. I can almost think it would be better if there were bigotry involved or racism or something like that. I think it would be easier to identify and note that hey, he doesn't like me. Hey, Staff Sergeant, do you want to brief him? Or Master Gunner do you want to brief him? I'm not going to brief him; I'm not going to get in front of him. I'll still get the Job done and I'll work my way around it. I'll find someone else, hey sir, I've got it. You want me to talk to you, I'm going to go by with a two to three. I don't need to be bothering you with all the stuff and this and that. Anyway.

Recommendations

And usually they acquiesce to it. Take something off a GO's plate, he usually says yes. I think the other things that I told him were just to make sure his reporting, he checks his reporting, understand that they're not going to check your report, they're going to send it straight to the three-star. Be sure that whatever you send, you're ready to defend what you're saying. Don't just paper tiger and say oh yeah, we're doing this, we're doing that. Cooperation here, security there, saying ... tell him exactly what you're doing. Tell him the truth and be able to defend that with everyone in the staff.

Bad Example 1

There are times that he will put the staff against you if he hears something different, right on the VTC. Every engagement to him was about making sausage. There was nothing cursory whatsoever.

That was my first experience with a truly caustic leader. I mean I've had leaders in the past that I thought were caustic, but they weren't. They were just ... I mean they were just; I understand in my position you have to understand how you deal with people, how you speak to people. How you relay certain things over to them and I think you can't talk to someone the way you did when you were a second lieutenant or a captain because this is one of those things like oh my god. You know, you're screaming like that and that guy could be thinking hey, if you just take this out personally, I'm not working no more.

Somebody, you have to be weary of that. And I don't think he was weary of that, whatsoever.

He was active duty. But like I said, the next GO that I had after him at MARFOR South, totally opposite, taught me a lot of things, put a lot of things in my tool bag, and I was a better officer for the experience. And I think honestly, I look back on that and I say hey, if I ever had to do that again what I would do? I think I would take a more offensive stance. There are some battles you aren't going to win but when it's something between commander to commander, I think your voice needs to be heard and I think also there needs to be an outlet. Like I said I was on the Embassy team. My outlet was the Embassy.

As a matter of fact, he sent one of his Emissaries down to the Republic of Georgia for an Embassy party. Everyone was drinking at the time, I don't drink when I have people out of town, especially if I don't trust them. And he comes up and he says hey, I'd like to introduce you to the Chief of Staff of MARFOREUR, Colonel blank blank. The DATT is drinking a beer and he's like wow. So, you're his boss? And he's like yeah, he works for us, this and that. He said good. So, you're the person I need to talk to because you clowns are trying to fire the only guy that came down here that actually one, gave a shit about the job and two is trying to make a difference. But don't worry, I'll do your job for you, but we're going to do it through EUROM and not you.

And he looked at him, I don't think he said another word to me the entire time he was there. It took him a day or two to get his bearing together to actually talk to me because I would allow other people ... he's not going to talk back to another O6. It's not like I prepped these people to say hey, whatever. I just told them, said hey, they're trying to fire me. They're up here to visit...Said hey, what are they coming up here for? They want to fire me and they're looking for a reason to do so. And obviously knowing the good work I was doing there, everyone to the ambassador was like, you've got to be nuts.

This is the only person out of all of the others, like I said, I came up with the active duty mentality that I'm going to go sun up to sun down, keep going, and get the job done. It wasn't to handle-

They were very clueless. They don't understand, the whole thing about it is they don't necessarily understand security cooperation. It's almost like a JSET to a point where you're out, you're actually, you know. You're shooting with the partner nation, partner forces. You're having them out on BZO range, you're doing like CQB with them but it isn't about ... it isn't about the BZO, it's about the relationship that you build with them.

Do you see yourself as being a trustworthy partner that starts on that level? Because those reports feed all the way up the chain. Like for instance, they had this security cooperation team for Russia that was working down in Nicaragua. They said hey, the Russians are a bunch of racists and they really don't care about us. They shot with them with all the tools that you could think. But they said hey, these guys are a bunch of racists, we don't want to work with them. But Nicaragua was being backed by Russia, the Russian team was in there like rolling them over, we got some ships here, we got a bunch of troop carriers and whatever like that. We're just going to overwhelm you with this money, you're going take it.

So, that was the main difference between what we had going on. No one really understands that hey, it's not about that. It's about the feeling that guy has when he goes and reports up to his boss and says hey, this is what I did with the Marines today. They've got to win some time. We feel like we want to beat them all the time. They've got to win sometimes, you've got to be able to let them win without showing oh, I'm pulling shots just for you.

With it being sensitive in nature and with them actually using the terminology, this is the way we always did it. They never looked for any innovative ideas or anything like that. That's a rut that they get worked into because they want to be able to give the least amount of work possible to a security cooperation team. Believe it or not, so.

Good Example 1

Like I said I think everything happens for a reason and it gave me a reminder of what not to do and how not to be. I may feel like that sometimes, but I have to be able to say hey, you know I'm going to let this conversation wait until tomorrow and wait to another time. I will say the MARFOR South commander at that time was 100% opposite. He was probably one of the best, probably one of the best leaders I've ever had, and he was a pilot. He was an F-18 pilot and he was just an outstanding individual. And he trained me, he mentored me, he gave me guidance. And I think that was the most that like a junior officer could really ask at the time. As a matter of fact, he notified me that I'd been promoted. Brought me in, spoke about it. We actually spoke about the whole deployment before that. The whole Georgia incident. And as a professional he didn't say anything disparaging about another fellow one-star or anything like that.

Recommendations

What he did say was like he talked to him in terms of faith and you have to be careful what officers you put your faith in because one, they will abuse it and two it doesn't work out well for you in the end. He says it's one of those things, you have to always treat it, you always train and work like you fight. He says you're an infantry officer, I'm a pilot. You have any issues, you paint the target, select the ordinance, and I will deliver. And that was the easiest thing for me, like to understand at that point.

So like I said, I did get a good lesson later in leadership of what to do, it was almost like the universe was sending me, hey this is what not to do, this is what you need to do. And I got a lot more out of this is what I need to do. So, I just think being cognizant of the fact that everything that you do as a leader ripples to your subordinates. You have to keep ... I mean not that you have to lie to them and be like, oh are you feeling well? No, I'm not f**king feeling well. I mean you don't say anything like that. But you just tell them, hey I'm not feeling too good today. Just saying I'm going to back out, I'm not going to be hasty because that, you snap on someone as a leader and you're supposed to be that beacon for the rest of the unit.

Bad Example 1

I mean you kind of lose a little bit at that point. I think this guy really lost a lot. No one cared that he was a one-star.

So, it's cathartic to a point to talk about it, you know? It doesn't ... I don't stay up at night thinking about it. I only think about ... I think it's one of those things I think about what I would do if I was put in that situation again, I think I would just ... I wouldn't have changed anything I would have done; I think I would have done it with a bit more fervor if anything and a bit more enthusiasm.

And I would have balanced myself out a lot more on the front end, so I wouldn't have to take a day or two days from operating in order to get myself together because I was too mad to get back on the civvies. So, yeah I think that was probably it.

Bad Example 2

So ... fact of the matter, that is a technique that one of my peers that's back in MARSOC right now and I never knew that, like I said great guy, and if he actually came up on anyone's radar I would swear, no it can't be him. But I heard it from a guy that was my roommate in college. We've kept together all the time, he was like his favorite thing is to pit one against the other, have them fight it out to a point. They're oh, you do this, have this person do that and we'll fight it out, we'll meet in the middle and we'll see who is worthy. And I think that's kind of bad, especially if you're supposed to be there to work together as a team. That's what it is, so I've seen that. I haven't ... I wasn't pit against anyone I don't think.

Bad Example 1

And like I said, I was too far away, I was across the continent. But everything, the isolation, I think it was just the normal isolation like us being in the Republic of Georgia was a normal enough isolation. They just made it worse in the fact that they just didn't spend any time with the work and they just ... they were more concerned about Oktoberfest than they were anything else.

No I got you. But like I said if you have any other questions, just feel free to call me. I'll provide whatever I know. Maybe it's something, it's like one of those things, my girlfriend tells me I'm not a good communicator. She used to pull information out of me. So, like I said, if you have anything else to ask, just let me know, I'd probably ... I won't tell it all on my own, I try not to go too deep.

CQB like close quarters combat. Yeah. CQB, close quarters battle, close quarters combat. CQC. It's all the same. But like I said it's like you go into a room, you're up on target, you always remember your way out. Always. You go into battle space, you're going on patrol, you're going across ... whatever area. You always remember, you've always got your way out.

Pilots for instance, they're coming on target, this that and blah blah, they always have planned the egress route. So, I think it's one of those things, we forget that when we're in the ...we forget that, we use it for combat, we forget that when it comes to the interpersonal battles.

[All right, well that's been very useful. With that I'm going to end the interview.]

Interview 13

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Background

From an ROTC graduated officer into the Air Force, culminating with Lieutenant Colonel at the 28-year mark. Then from flying in C130 aircraft, flight navigator, electronic warfare officer specialty, on to headquarters duties. From operations plans, to six years of intelligence production as an intel IMA. Then operations planning, strategic plans, tactical deception, security cooperation, and information operations. In total, that would be a summation.

[When you retired, were you apart of the Air National Guard or Air Force Reserve?]

Air Force Reserve categorically, in 2003, May 1st.

Bad Example 1

There were some leaders tougher than others of course. The most toxic was a Navy commander unfortunately. He was a very intelligent engineer educated man, F-14 RIO, and I worked for him. His toxicity was such that, his leaders recognized it and from 4 people who were his subordinates, the GS-13 female left, or was removed from him. Then the 04 Air Force female left or was removed from him, he was left with 2 male subordinates, myself and another Air Force Space Officer at the time. We were resilient chaps, that officers wife was also an officer at the other command. This guy was just...

He had a brother who was a pilot. I believe Navy veteran Delta Airlines pilot. A very educated person, a refined person, but a miserable disposition on life. He was a bit short in stature, and I worked for a similar fellow who was an aviator like that, and whether was picked on or what have you. I recall one divorce and presently married though. So, he was married and father of children, but again a miserable person. And then to offer candid details, I'm a flight instructor and I even got him his private license. So, we had a relationship outside of work to where I pulled a deal at one of the local airports, back when you could do this, and got him trained on aircraft... So we were fliers together, on different aircraft in the military, and then on the same aircraft I was right seat as instructor, he as the student pilot. It was as civil and effective as, from when he was going 3 degree glide slope and I told him, "Well look, that may seem practical for military aircraft, but even on instrument flying then single engine aviation airplanes, not many people come in as low as 3 degrees." So, it's just a matter of having more of a... Because you just don't need it, anyway.

So, it was effective to that extent and yet... Boy, I've really blocked things out because, oh my gosh. In fact, he bought into an aircraft, went on a trip, did not have a private instrument rating to get through weather to come back from the panhandle, local flying. He called me up and supposed that everything was okay between us after I had since left jobs and said, "I got to get an instrument rating." And I said "Okay, I'd be glad to help you on that." Even though by that time the relationship was exhausted, I wasn't motivated to, not that I would have said no to help someone, it wasn't-

What shows is a miserable cynicism to the point of jaded outlook on life. In terms of, I think he was a motorcyclist and he didn't get graphic, but oh boy, it was just... It exuded his being or persona. He made it a part of, I gosh...

[How did he communicate with you or others in the office?]

No, he was refined, very to the point. His volume was under control, he was very educated. Again, he was an engineer educated curriculum, university educated officer. So, he didn't have a fault for English, he didn't have to resort to insults to present his argument, that wasn't a manifestation. But in terms of the authoritarian nature of where it was over proportional, gosh, how did he express the misery? You're right. Well, I'm trying to be clear. He definitely alienated the two females, oh that's right! The tawdry wording, "bitch slap" was a usual common phraseology. So, I guess the lower ebb of his maritime experience with Navy. Again, I have family members and friends who are Navy, so back in an era where maybe that was less feminine conditioned or sensitive or aware. These ladies did not want any part of that and the civilian lady, her father was a Sergeant Major Army, and the other lady was Air Force Officer. But they grew weary of that and he took delight in it. I think he even used more baser language with them, but I don't know that for a fact, and I think later they communicated that.

So, rather than make trouble for him, the leadership definitely... Hey he's 40 years old, I was told by one officer he's 40, he's in his 40s, do you expect him to change? Well, no of course not. I was in my 30s at the time so. Then you've got 2 years left to work for this guy, you can do that standing on your head. You know, people made light of that. Meanwhile, it was very... There wasn't anyone else that I was wincing over the thought of working for 2 years.

USSOCOM. Yeah in the J3, what they call, they go through their Alphabet Soup phases. This was in the 2000s, pre 9/11 era. So, I took it as a challenge and it was a test to my resilience at the time, back before the DOD was really identifying resilience as a measure to cope with unpleasantness. The leadership was supportive, there was a way out when we had a final falling out and then I had another measure-

I went off to intelligence training as agreed by my IMA billet, which was delayed by mobility orders for 9/11 tasking. Then I was sent to San Anselmo Texas, which was outstanding and a good air base, came on back and they basically made objections that oh he can't come back here, he's going to have to go elsewhere. So, I went to work in the Intelligence Directorate instead of coming back to Information Operations. Which was okay with me because any desk is a good desk, some might be better than others, just like flying assignments. So, that was the extent of the cheap shot. In other words, he got what he wanted from me I guess, and then there were other people that wanted that activity. At that time, the people referred to me as the rainmaker, my effect was met, I could deliver product within a half an hour, which was welcomed by the XO Officers of the leaders, whether they be 06s or 07s. I was chosen to brief general officers there, so I was a good front guy, on initiatives. So, I wasn't a part of the problem and I didn't respond in kind to this individual. I was in my 30s, so I was rugged. But again, at the time I was growing my family, I had younger children.

Now at the one point, I got responses from my now 21-year-old who had health challenges, and this guy said hey I know you're trying to deal with your kid. So, he was supportive from a co-fatherly standpoint. So there were positives, but I think... There were pros amongst the cons, but I guess his cons or negatives is what illustrated the disappointment. In fact, you knew what magnificent person this guy could be and you just wondered why he couldn't be that. With his present wife, after he retired from the uniform as an O5, he started smoking tobacco. Which again, I only know that from one or two individuals who after they get in their late 40s or so, and they start a habit like that, which we all know is very self-critiquing at best and very unhealthy at worst.

So you see, he seemed pretty miserable with the fact... Oh that's right, he mentioned a son, he said my son's not short like me. He was always proud of the fact that one of his kids got accepted in Naval Academy, which is commendable. He was always conscious of his height. So, the only other gent who I knew that was my XO Officer and squadron in the Air Force that was issued the smallest flight suit and that was made known. He made jokes about flying out of CCK in Thailand in the Vietnam War and there were jokes about midget tossing or something. So, whether he was the brunt of that kind of joke, and maybe this guy in a far-

[How tall was he?]

Goodness, 5 maybe, let's call it 5'4 or 5'5 maybe. Again, actors like Glen Ford is 5'5, there were leading men, and I'd be... Dude, he was the only one bringing it up. And So, he felt self-conscious and I guess he couldn't contend with that. That was an adjustment to sort on his part-

He was effective because he was retained his contractor there in the STO billet annex. He went from Navy flier as a RIO to really getting smart on EW initiatives, to where he and I had that in common. Then he segued into a contract job in USSOCOM, which I think is very select. So-

[Was he a Branch Chief then?]

Oh, he was definitely a Branch Chief, he was an O5 in charge of a couple people. Then one time, when one other officer came in to comment about, asking me about my projects, he said gee do I go in and ask about what he's doing or something. We got to go do certain TDYs where, back in those days we were able to rent aircraft out of Plant City airport and enjoy certain trips to different places, one or two of them at least. So, there was a mix of an advocacy that we both had enjoyed-

[Was he threatened by the other Branch Chiefs?]

I don't believe so. I don't think he, professionally speaking in uniform, very crisp image, a very sharp looking Navy O5 Officer in fatigues, in the "camis" as it were then. A sharp guy, a very... I mean goodness, a Teddy Roosevelt lookalike, down to his glasses. I thought a lot of positives. In fact, he used to tell stories of his younger days in Jacksonville; motorcycles, nights on the beach with ladies, to where he didn't seem to have a problem socially in terms of being an attractive gent. So, I thought... You know... Anyway, I thought it was surprising if you weren't on the brunt of the ire, and if you were, it was disappointing.

Caustic language, once you were under his attack it was caustic language, not profanity but very veiled threats of you know what's coming and we're going to da, da, da, da. You know, in terms of, not threatening physical harm but professional harm. Really, he didn't extend metaphors so deep that, I'm going to get you off these orders, to where it was such a credible threat, you took it so credibly. But, you listened and thought, why would a guy resort to this? Doesn't he see this as, I'm the guy that he's worked with before, we've had our highs and lows. One of my kids had troubles to where I was aware of, we had a staff officer in fact, who had bio... Oh gosh what is this, the trouble that men have in their 30s they're diagnosed... Oh it's... The biological, oh my goodness... Men are more prone to it than women according to research.

Well, this officer had trouble and he self-medicated with alcoholism. So that was going on later after this event, so this man may not have had that. He again, he retired from uniform so I was still working there and he segued and got a new contract job. But-

It was very bad where one time, I remember calling him on the phone and telling him... It got into a sharp conversation on the phone, was the only direct altercation or I'm calling in sick or I'm taking a day off, and he's making a big deal out of it. And I wasn't keeping him short or anything, it was just a power play and I'm just like... I don't know, I'll try to remember the exasperated response when I told him why are you like this, or something like that. And I never said that to any other officer, let alone a senior ranking officer and I was an 04 at the time. So, again, not looking for any occasion, either, for an opportunity to vent on anyone in uniform, let alone an officer, but I remember on one phone call, fortunately it was just one, and I told him that. He seemed to take it reasonably, but after that it didn't improve things, nor do I think it descended. It was just, that was the status quo. I was talking the passageway-

[The two women in branch, did they leave because of him?]

Well, no doubt. And again, these are resilient ladies and fellow warriors so they again, I suppose they can internalize as much as we can. Then that didn't become known to us and when they had their egress out with support of the leadership, obviously not trying to exacerbate or magnify the problem, we just didn't see them, they went elsewhere. Then I think I met the other one and we got the grand candid details of, yeah he was saying this and that. This is again 2000 and 2001 we're talking about, to 2003, to 2004. Certainly not later than 2004, I think that's when he retired from uniform. And so, I don't know if he's still there, I don't know. That would be a long time, that would be more than he needed to work. Always gabbed about the first wife, you know, divorce is expensive, his two kids were with her. So, I have an idea of with siblings and friends who do that. That fed to his misery, he brought that up a bit. When he talked, you know. But then again, with regard...

[Did he sense his career was over?]

Oh, that's right, that's right. Yeah, the 06 thing, when people were on a list for 06. He made the snide comment, maybe it would be clever to some people, oh yeah I wasn't on that list, I was on another list. I mean some of these folks rather than just be secure and thankful that he's an 05, and grateful. Some people make 06 and beyond, he's one of the few that made a comment

about... I mean he evidently, I don't know how offended he wasn't an 06 when he could have been, but he certainly lived up to being an 05 to the fullest. I don't, gosh...

[Was he narcissistic?]

I don't see him as narcissistic, except when flying with him and we got this new GPS I brought along for the trip, this was 2003-2004 time frame, he really wanted to lay the work on me to calculate winds or something. So that was something I had to do with the pages. So, you know he wasn't easy care and feeding, rather than you know, just go ahead, heading-altitude-airspeed. We're in a Grumman Tiger that he bought into with other friends, so great machine, great time, TDY to Quantico. But, gee whiz, once he got his license and he was left seat and captain of the ship, you know boy, what a task master. But nothing I couldn't handle, I would just, okay well... Again, it didn't ruin the trip. And again, he needed me to get him on that trip because he wasn't that experienced for cross-country flight of that magnitude.

Then when he did another trip, he wasn't instrument rated to get through weather in the panhandle, so "I got to get that instrument rating"--and you know, I think I offered over the phone even though I think I covered that. I wasn't, boy... We would have seen, maybe... Again, he was a great student, oh, that's right, he was a magnificent student to teach. He got his license in 40.0 exact hours, the exact hours required by the FAA because he had a lot of vast experience by going to the test pilot school in the Air Force, and I believe Pax River with the navy. So, he had these privileged, even though he was an F14 RIO, to fly aircraft outright and had all this experience which came to the forefront. You know, I never had to correct him twice. He was one of the easiest students I've ever taught. So, that was some positives.

Then again, when things were in the office, I guess we segmented or compartmented from that, I never would bring that up, he never would bring that up. It seemed to be, I don't know if symbiotic is the word, separate agenda to where we didn't go there. We didn't... I don't think he was shabby in bringing that up after when, in terms of, it's just one of those things where I can provide him that privilege, and save him money because I wasn't charging him for my time with getting access to aircraft. These days it's not so simple, there's more contractual arrangements with the FBO. But it worked with him, got him through this pilot with the FBO and got him through check airman, and it was far cheaper then. Flying goes up with cost and he was appreciative, "hey thanks for taking care of me" was the phrase. So I thought, well okay, this will be a positive tie that binds and not negative, but now it seems that that was then and this is now and he was just, I don't know. He was just a miserable fellow, and fortunately very few like that.

Even the most difficult 06 in here that I worked for, Colonel Z, not an easy fellow, but not a miserable man. So I would draw a stark contrast-

Well, with an Air Force 05, who we flew with as a 3 team, a team of 3 airmen in one aircraft, that was interesting. This nice guy who lived on Bayshore, he's a minor contractor, he's a I mean happy-go-lucky guy, but when he got in the left seat, because he's a licensed pilot with an instrument rating and [the navy commander] got in the right seat, man the sparks... "Hey [commander], what da, da, da, da." But he didn't throw guff at [Tom], he didn't throw guff. I don't think, there wasn't any sparks transmitted, but boy. I never saw that kind of action out of

[Tom] toward anybody else so I'm like, wow is there background here, and we're going to fly this airplane out of where the heck else we were. Either Peter O'Knight [airport] or out of Plant City, one of the places.

Usually pilots get into a general aviation aircraft it's cause for celebration, we're getting a hold of an airplane, we're going to go fly, pack up your troubles and smile for the camera kind of thing.

[But the commander, it sounded like, he didn't enjoy being the co-pilot.]

I think he enjoyed getting to be in the front seat with controls of course. I think he liked being in the aircraft, but no. Again, he seemed to be learning and soaking it all up, but the negativity was coming from the other fellow. So, something where it got under his claw and that's not usual. This was when we were taking off, the engine run up in the beginning of it all. There's no order, it's all pretty quite celebratory, we're going to have a magnificent time to where we're a little bit tired after about an hour or so.

[The commander was getting under the other guy's skin?]

Yeah, which... Somehow, somehow, somehow. Either doing something or saying something, and then this guy had enough and put a stop to it or something. You know, "hey, what are you doing?" Or you know, in other words, setting the left and right limits early. And yet, this guy it wasn't his worst, certainly I'm in the back seat in the middle of it watching everybody because I'm the most experienced aviator between these 2 guys, or amongst all 3. And I think I arranged for the airplane, oh no, no, [Tom] got the airplane. So anyway, Sky Hawk out of Peter O'Knight [airport] probably. So, that was interesting, in fact, very unusual. So maybe there is room for narcissism as of this descriptor. With regard to other leaders that he may have thrown barks to, he could have done so intelligently. His career was at the end, so what are they going to do to him, retire him early? So, he may have taken shots at other guys and that would have been in his, I would not place that beyond the expectation, out of his nature.

[Did you ever run across any other toxic leaders?]

Bad Example 2

No, that's... In total, the only two difficult fellows in headquarters... Well, the one gent I'm comparing them to was the XO, when I was in my 20s as a flier, and that was to go for Saudi Arabia. And this fellow he was elite, he was an XO, he was from C130s to special ops C130s, and his dad was P47s, and his wife fashioned his father's flight jacket to fit him. And yet he was pretty shabby to his wife, if not mean, according to reports. Just, pretty harsh and arbitrary, we're all on our MOPP 4 gear in Saudi Arabia, scud launches, and he's berating us in a culvert where we're taking shelter. And he's just really, he was sent home early because he's wacko. As soon they rotate him on an aircraft that needed maintenance, the specialized 130, we were sent on magnificent trips through Rota Spain on the way home to get that bird to upper level maintenance, and he was the crew. So, that was...

I mean an otherwise great guy who again, had health problems so he couldn't get to the airlines like he had hoped after retiring as 05. And he had a shot at 06 but he irritated this one Army commander at Fort Campbell to where that's what burnt that bridge. You would think, now why was that needed, his predecessors didn't, he'll helicopter air refueling or what have you, nothing transpired. This guy was just on a destructive path of his own doing, unfortunately. And yet, he had wonderful life structure, family structure, kids. Great guy, just a great guy, great airman-

[How did he communicate with his subordinates?]

Oh, he was gracious. I mean, after he went had his emotional extremes, he was contrite and gracious. He had signs in front of his desk, relax. Now this is a man in his what, late 30s early 40s, and so, I mean, he was just man versus himself. Golly man. Just a-

And then who knows if, bipolar that the word I was trying, who knows who gets afflicted with bipolar. I've seen a couple succumbed to it, and usually... Oh, goodness. It's just... Perhaps, perhaps. So, 3 leaders but I don't want to include the colonel in that because he wasn't, I mean, I'd worked for him for a year and he was not nearly so arduous. But he used to call people up for corrections, and might be not too far from the mark-

[Do you have any closing thoughts?]

Recommendations

I no doubt have learned from it. We learn from negative, don't we? I mean in terms of, I'm sure that's one less lesson we have to demonstrate for ourselves if it vivid enough for us to recall, to be... You know that's one thing where, okay, we'd be more reserved with age and with time and experience, where we'll hold our voices down a bit or... You know... I don't know. I don't know... Don't smoke after retirement from uniform, or don't gain weight. That's what some guys have said, oh he gained a lot of weight, and he was already short so that's not going to help when you're going horizontal. You know, just be civil. We got such a competitively selected military and it's just very intelligent. My words are failing me here, perhaps I'm staring-

[That's all right, thank you very much for your time.]

Interview 14

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Background

Absolutely. I was in the Air Force for 28 years, four months, and 17 days. I retired as an O-6, as an Air Force colonel. I held command several times at different levels. I've had experience in a number of different combatant commands and agencies. NSA, NGA, USDI. I was on the joint staff, as well as the OSD staff. I was even in the old Strategic Air Command. So I've had quite a bit of experience and got exposed to a number of different styles of leadership. The most toxic is the leadership that is afraid to tackle a problem, the ones that want to sweep things under the rug. Shall I continue?

Bad Example 1

The example I have, with documentation here, involved a threatening situation in this command in a directorate that I used to work in. The initial event was in November of '14. It was after the Thanksgiving holiday and almost ... We have not as many people there on the following Friday, but our military deputy branch chief, who was an Army lieutenant colonel, was in charge. Almost all the contractors were there, and a number of government civilians. We had one civilian in my branch, who had previous been working just one item, which was the easiest job we had. The problem was he was the drinking buddy and socialized frequently with the branch chief. He was the branch chief's buddy. They went out to clubs. They were always together after work, so they were just buddy-buddy. The branch chief excused a lot of his behaviors, and allowed this guy to do a job that he really wasn't qualified for.

Well, ultimately, he had to actually start doing GS-13 work, which he got very angry about because the job he used to have, it was being now done by a contractor. The contractor sat at the desk right in front of me. The individual involved, whose name is Bob, sat on the other side of the aisle. He would come all the way over to the contractor's desk, stand over him, and berate him, screaming at him. "You don't know what you're doing. You shouldn't be here. I don't know why they hired you." That kind of stuff. The lieutenant colonel told Bob to go back to his seat and do his own work, at which point he started berating the lieutenant colonel. "You don't know what you're doing either." Okay. The lieutenant colonel, knowing that the branch chief wasn't going to back him up, told him, "Just get out of here." The contractor was extremely upset, and I said, "You should report that." He said, "Well, I'm a contractor. I'm afraid if anybody has to leave, it'll be me." Which is probably true, because contractors aren't treated ... well, they're expendable around here.

So, I wrote the thing up, in extreme detail, and I turned that thing in. Not only did I do that, I emailed a copy to the branch chief, the deputy branch chief, and the division chief. Okay. The branch chief tried to stop an investigation. The deputy branch chief, because he worked for the branch chief, didn't do anything either. What happened was, it was an investigation because I sent the thing to the IG, so it was an investigation. Before the investigation, the branch chief and his deputy had pulled Bob into an office that was ordinarily used by the division chief, who just happened to be TDY at that particular time. The admin person, who has her desk right outside of

the division chief's office, and she could hear every word they said. What they were telling Bob was how to protect himself. Okay, great.

Bob decided he was going to make sure that I wasn't going to tell the investigator anything, so he said, "Can you come over to ..." We had an empty office. "I need to talk to you about something." Okay. Thinking he wanted to talk to me about work, okay, I went, "Hey, what's up?" He said, "I heard you filed a report on me." I said, "You know darn well I did." I said, "So what? What about it?" Now he decided to stand up and block the door. "If you say anything about this, this isn't going to go well for you." I said, "I'm done talking to you. Get out of my way." I am not a big person, but those people who know me, if you want a fight, you're going to get one. So I moved him aside, physically, and walked out the door and absolutely reported that to the branch chief and the deputy branch chief. The branch chief made every effort to ignore that report, so I filed it with the security forces here. That's what prompted an investigation, not only by them, but also OSI because of the clearances we had.

That's when the division chief and the director got involved. They tried to squelch the whole matter. What happened at the time, the director was working on getting a position on the OSD staff. As you know, she's [there] now. But she wanted the whole matter to go away, so they fired Bob. But before I get to that, they fired Bob because a second person made a complaint. This was one of the women in [another division]. He decided that if he was going to be fired, that he would be entitled to be paid for unused sick time. Well, those of us who even bother to read the regulations, you don't get paid for unused sick time. If you're a civilian employee and you retire, you can use unused sick time to increase your time on duty for purpose of retirement, but no one gets paid for unused sick time. So he got mad at her and threatened her, as well. There's a separate report on that, and that's when he got fired.

Now, from my point of view, it looked like, oh, well if a person of the same gender but a different race makes the same complaint, there's action, and on mine, it's they're trying to ignore it. That's not entirely true. The other person's military and civilian supervisors jumped on this thing with both feet and went right after it. That's the real difference between what happened. So, Bob got fired, and he made threats about getting even. So I wrote to our director about this and asked her if she would approach the wing to get him disbarred from the base. That did happen, and I understand at the time that that was normally the procedure when there's been a problem with somebody, a problem employee. Okay.

A few months after that, I was notified that they were going to stop the disbarment, and I wrote to the wing commander again and asked her ... I told her that if this is a problem, if he's on the base, there's only so many parking lots we could use, and my car could get damaged. I could get hurt. I worked late hours. I was concerned about it. She decided, well, this was not a big problem. He shouldn't have access to the base. Normally these things just die off over time. In other words, she blew it off too. So I went to my division chief, my new division chief at the time, and what she did was she went to the headquarters commandant and got me a pass to park on lot 11, the O-6 lot out here, for six months, mostly because that's the only lot that is monitored. So that went on.

Now, of course, Bob showed up in my neighborhood. Since I had a police report, and of course I notified our neighborhood watch and our neighbors, there were a number of people who saw and took cell phone video. That's when I filed a protective order with the police, so if he was pretty much anywhere close to my village in the neighborhood, they would arrest him. Well, to my knowledge, it was nothing further on that. Now, how did this affect me? A great deal. My husband and I spent about \$23,000 on security systems. Cameras, motion detectors, a number of different kinds of sensors on every possible access to the house and on the grounds. Before that, we didn't bother to buy firearms because it's a remarkably safe neighborhood. But we bought several after that, and we got the concealed carry licenses and that kind of stuff.

But it was a real distraction at work. He sent an email, which you'll see in there, talking about the motorcycle gang that he associated with and how they kill people, that kind of nonsense. That was part of the package there. Not only it disrupts your peace of mind, because you're trying to work on things where there's a lot of detail and things that needed to get done, but it was kind of hard to do that. But the biggest thing was I absolutely lost faith in the leadership there. It was very obvious that the director at the time was more concerned about not having any fluff come up that would stop her from getting the job she wanted, and so she took minimal action. He decided he was going to sue the government, which of course that suit had no basis, but what [the director] did was to pay him off and pay his lawyer just to get the thing off the plate, out of her resume, so to speak.

But the branch chief, because he made her look bad, she told the branch chief that he can either retire or resign, but in other words, you're out of here, which should've happened long ago. That took close to two years before that actually happened, and that was closer to the time that she was looking to get that job. The deputy branch chief ... There's good and bad to that. I understand his position, that he felt that he would ... He wanted to get promoted too. He was going to be meeting a board soon, and what he didn't need was somebody, his first-line supervisor, saying not just bad things, saying nothing. In fact, saying nothing is almost as bad as saying, "This officer is garbage," or something like that.

The branch chief was former military. The deputy branch chief was an active-duty Army lieutenant colonel, the senior one. I looked who was on duty when this stuff first happened. But when the investigators called him to make a statement, that's not only the security forces, the OSI, and the IG, he declined to make a statement. Yeah. I lost a lot of faith in the leadership there. The people who did most of the work to help, actually, were the security forces, the IG, and the OSI, not anybody in my chain of command. So the first opportunity I could get to get out of that organization, as you know, I did. What was fortunate was that involved a promotion, just simply getting out of a job in the same command. But that is probably, right now, the worst one, because it's one of the most recent ones.

[How did that impact the operation of the branch? That person's leadership style, his personality]

A lot, because what people did was they didn't want to get involved in anything in any way, shape, or form. So what happened was we stopped talking to each other, which was a shame, because that's how we really got a lot done. We were really effective when we worked together and talked to each other about all kinds of things, even stupid football stuff. One of the incidents

in there involved, during the football season, everybody gave everybody else grief about their team. The Ravens, my hometown team, had a really, really bad time that year. At the time, they had a one win, six loss record. It was ridiculous. Of course, they'd come over and tease me about it. It's a joke. We tease each other about each others' teams. So what I said was, again, as a joke, "I see dead people." At the time, there was a Bruce Willis movie about a kid who could see dead people that was very popular at the time. The other one was, "I kill you." Jeff Dunham's dead terrorist, another widely known, very popular joke. That was my response to, "Man, the Ravens flopped again."

It's a joke, and everybody knew it was a joke. When Bob, before he started acting like a jackass, participated in the joke. Well, he filed a complaint saying that I was threatening people and he felt scared because I ... Now, of course, they came down and interviewed the other people who were involved. "Did you feel threatened? Did you take that ..." It was, "Hell no." It was the most ridiculous thing. But now, of course, I understand, somebody files a formal complaint, it has to be formally addressed, and that was. I'm glad it was, because in case there was somebody in the U.S. who didn't know about Achmed the Dead Terrorist, thought I had suddenly developed this weird accent and was saying, "Silence, I kill you." Please. But I got to tell you that the lack of leadership there was just ridiculous.

[What did you do to cope with that kind of behavior?]

Start looking for another job, because I really lost faith in ... You have to trust your leadership in order to make things work, to get things done. You want to trust them to do the right thing, or at least do what they're supposed to do. When that doesn't happen, gosh, what is it? If I behaved like that, I'd be tossed out of here and somebody else would pack up my stuff. But it's okay for this person to do it because he's buddy-buddy with the branch chief, and nobody else wants to get involved in anything that looks bad, with the exception of the military and civilian leadership in the [other division]. They weren't putting up with that for one second. That was remarkable. Big downer doesn't even come close.

[What happened to the contractor that was the original victim? Is he or she still there?]

No. He wanted to look for another job. He wanted to make a statement to the investigators. His employer didn't want him to get involved because, well, they wanted to keep the contract, they wanted to get additional contracts, and didn't want to be perceived as troublemakers. We still send each other Christmas cards, and he calls every now and then. "Hey, how you doing?" Especially since I had my back problem. But he wanted to get out of there, as well, because he was afraid his employer would get rid of him instead of risk losing current and potential business. So he avoided that, just didn't want to say anything about what happened. But a lot of people knew. A lot of people knew about it, but nobody wanted to get involved. It was a real disappointment.

Bad Example 2

The other one happened much, much earlier in my career, and made a huge difference in how I conducted my entire career. When I was ... I had just pinned on first lieutenant. We had the

opportunity to go to Randolph Air Force Base, and we were told, "Observe a promotion board." Well, that's not what really happened. What we were really doing ... We were the board gofers, if you will. We made sure that they had coffee, water, and that kind of stuff, and the sugar bowl was full. We made sure records were sorted and placed on the proper tables. We made sure they had score sheets. We took messages, phone messages, and we had to make sure that the foods on the break table were served appropriately, that they didn't get empty, stuff like that. The one good thing about being there was listening to the board participants on the breaks. One of them, actually it was a small group, but one of them was particularly vocal. They were reviewing the records of a woman lieutenant colonel who had been married and divorced some number of times. In her records, she had different last names.

He decided she was unstable because she'd been married a number of times, which was evident from the name changes. So what did I do? I never changed my name no matter ... I'm in a fourth marriage now, and I didn't change my name at all. It's the kind of thing that, well, guys don't change their last names when they get married. To a lot of people it's tradition, traditionally what the woman does, so I decided I'm never going to do that. That was an amazing thing. Another one decided that this woman who, I don't know how they figured it out, but had some small children, wouldn't be able to deploy, wouldn't be as useful. So that's one of the factors in my decision not to have children. Sadly, that all worked out for me. It's ridiculous, but these things that ... A guy could have small children, nobody cares. But a woman did, hey, that's a big problem. Weird. I'm glad to know that a lot of attitudes changed from way back in the dark ages when I was a first lieutenant, but I'm not sure they've changed much.

But a lot of things have changed. The combat restriction is gone. A lot of the stupidity about joining the wives' club is gone, or even joining the officers' club. Things have changed over the decades, but that one I'll never forget. Toxic? I thought it was, but I'm glad I knew about it because that's not one of the things you find in any of the materials on what you need to do to get promoted, what you need to do to manage your career. Wow. That was ridiculous.

This is not a political statement. I'm not trying to make a political statement, but since 2017, attitudes toward women and minorities among the leadership has been horrendous. I suspect it's a reflection of the leadership we have right now at the White House. I hope that's not true. I just hope there's just a few jerks in the world. There will always be jerks, just like there's always good people. But yeah, it's kind of not good right now, so I hope that helps a little bit.

Bad Example 1

Yeah. In my case, with the branch chief, the branch chief made very clear to me he was displeased with me that I even brought it up. His deputy, the deputy branch chief, the lieutenant colonel, said, "I wish I could help you, but ..."

[How did that impact the rest of the branches? Were they aware of what was going on?]

Oh, yeah. It was an open bay. You had to be deaf not to hear somebody speak. They came over there as little as possible, as little as possible. They all had to be present for when the division chief had a meeting, but they minimized interaction with our branch. So does that impact the

effectiveness of the division? It certainly did. But we'd muddle along and got done what we could. But it was a lousy place to work for a long time, and I was more than glad to see Joe leave. It was awful.

[Did he retire then from service?]

Yeah. [The director] gave him the opportunity to retire, resign, or get fired, so he retired. Man, that was amazing. There's a problem with-

The only people who really wanted to take any action was the IG, the OSI, and the security forces. That was a shame, the fact that they ... They were the ones who were trying to make sure that I was okay. And my neighbors, God bless them. It's interesting. A lot of people, because of different events and different communities, have a very negative view of all police officers. For a while I did too, especially after I bought my car, which is not a real expensive car, but whatever. But some of them are really good people. Some of them are really good people. It's just that that was just a real disappointment.

[The branch chief, was he a West Point grad?]

Yes, he was. At least that's what he said. My deputy branch chief was a West Pointer as well. I've met West Pointers who were really good people, but in this particular case, wow. Thanks for nothing, guys.

I'm beginning to wonder, because the reason the deputy didn't want to get involved was, he thought it would impact his career. So did everybody else in my chain at the time, including [the director]. Fortunately, the IG had the ear of the chief of staff, and when the other woman complained, things moved like lightning. That was interesting. I don't know if that's because, okay, now we got two complaints, it might be something to this, or I really think the real factor was her chain of command, which were not Academy graduates, just jumped on this thing with both feet, right away. She didn't have to worry about repercussions of any kind, as in, during the time of the investigations and as this was going on, everything I said was questioned by the branch chief. It was ridiculous.

[Do you think he was racist, or sexist?]

I didn't until then. I didn't know how sexist he was until then. Now, he and Bob made jokes a lot, but I took it for what it was. It's just a joke. I don't really feel this way. I'm not so sure anymore. I am not so sure anymore.

Yeah, he wasn't horrible to everybody. He wasn't horrible to Sandy or Ron or any of the guys, and I didn't feel particularly targeted until at that point. Bob told him, "Oh, she doesn't know what she's doing." Yeah, I had more experience than you, and better education than you, Bob. Yeah. He shouldn't have even been there, our high school graduate person that was, yeah. Once I did a paper on some new technology, and I was talking about, oh, the speed of this particular device. I wrote out nanoseconds, and then 10 to the minus nine, which, gee, if you'd made it past the 5th grade, nine, nano, you could've made that association. Oh, Bob insisted it was wrong, and

so did Joe. You got to be kidding me. Come on, let's look it up. And then he would get offended when I showed him it was wrong. I mean, come on. I mean, please. That's like saying one and one doesn't equal two.

Now, do many people write that stuff? Probably not. Do a lot of communicators do, or people who are interested in that level of speed? All the time. Which, as you know, is the business I was in. Good grief. But a simple, I'm sorry, I'm going to call it arithmetic error like that, you've got to be kidding. It would've been easier for him if he honestly didn't believe it, if he honestly thought that was wrong. You could've used Google, Bing, whatever search engine just to be sure. But instead of even checking, it was the automatic assumption that I was always wrong. Easy enough to prove. Please.

[How do you feel about talking about all this right now?]

Cathartic. Because I haven't talked about it since I left, because I didn't want to give the new director, my new division chief, the fact that I was a chronic complainer or whiner. So I haven't talked about it because in order to function your best, you got to just leave the stupid stuff behind, which kind of worked for me as I was growing up. I unfortunately was a victim of the sisters of no mercy, Sisters of Mercy. One February, this was a long time ago, we had what we used to call Negro History Week. The book we were assigned to read, at the time, was *The Count of Monte Cristo*. I was so happy because we were actually going to read a book written by a black person. Oh, no, he's not black. He's from France. Okay. I tried to explain to her that yes, he was born in France, his mother was Haitian, and she was black. Okay, this part is true. You didn't talk back to the nuns, and so she was mad at me. She called my parents, and my father came over with the encyclopedia to show her a picture.

I got sent home that day because I did, in their view, I talked back to a sister, which was not what happened. Well, back then corporal punishment was the way things happened. No, I wasn't going to do that, but I did insist that she had been mistaken. That's when my father told me that, okay, there's different ... you got to find a more effective way of dealing with people like that because you're going to encounter them. I guess my mistake was I thought everybody knew, but guess not. But anyway, you can dwell on stuff like that every day for your whole life, and you won't move forward at all. What happens is, when stuff like that happens, and the stuff in my division, when you move on, you just push it into a little compartment somewhere and lock the door. Otherwise, you'll go crazy. But this was ridiculous. That is one of the worst I encountered.

Bad Example 3

The other one, the last one I'll talk about, is one that did happen in my current organization, but the deputy director fired the O-6 who was in charge of the division when I showed up there. He was another West Pointer. He demanded loyalty from everybody, and that loyalty was a one-way street. The civilian awards were arbitrary, which was even time off and monetary awards. Discipline was arbitrary. I honestly believe he promised a coworker that I had known since late 2008 an automatic promotion to 14, when 13/14 and 14 and up must be competed. There were so many complaints that General Jackson fired him. Now, General Kane at the time, who was this

guy's mentor, said, "Well, you don't really have any documentation showing this guy did a bad job." Well, I don't know if that's true or not. I do know there were a number of complaints.

Well, first there was the problem with Mary. She was the one who was promised a promotion. She was one of the few people left who were here when the division first started. People would go and leave and come back and find that they had different jobs or their desk had been moved. He would respond to things in the most arbitrary way. There was a man who, well he still works here, made a comment about the Michael Brown incident, which actually is true. What he said was, "If Michael Brown had just ignored that guy and kept walking, nothing would've happened. If his parents had told him just to ignore people like that, he'd still be alive." Like it or not, there's some truth to that. Well, somebody else, who was not part of the conversation, overheard that, as you can in an open bay situation, and decided to file a formal complaint. What he did was he decided to make everybody sign a statement that we believe in equal opportunity. It had nothing to do with that. So he filed a complaint to protect himself.

It got to the point where everybody was afraid to say anything. If you had a personal opinion on anything, you didn't express it there. The knee-jerk response was just ridiculous, okay? During the time when Mary made a complaint because ... I've known her for a long time. She doesn't hallucinate. She doesn't make a lot of ... She doesn't make stuff up. I honestly believe at least her perception is that he promised her the job that I got. What he did was on the civilian awards, which on average a really good one is around \$2,000 ... I don't know who [the director] was talking to on the phone, but apparently, she noticed that Mary got \$4,000 that one year. That really sticks out. It was really unusual. I found out that it's true because I have the records now. [The director] believed it was done to get her to turn off her complaint. I didn't know about the complaint at the time. I found out about it after I got here.

But he was more stupid than anything else, and arbitrary, and everything had to be his way, as if he thought he was God. He wasn't, and after he pissed off enough people. Especially after that business about the Michael Brown thing, there are a number of white people who felt, it was [inaudible] white guys who were the ones who complained, that he had this bias against white men. Well, I can see where it would look like that. Did he have one for real? I think he's the only one who actually knows, but it certainly looked like it. But he was a real bully. That was the worst of it. Finally, General Jackson asked me, "What's going on down there?" I had a hard time answering because I knew he ... I was still in probation, in the probationary period, and I knew it might ... I am going to catch it for this, but hey, retired O-6 pay is pretty good, so it's not like I was going to starve and not pay the mortgage and that kind of, so I told him everything I knew.

I had the emails, and people came to me to complain about ... I did all these things, and I got nothing for when it came time for the civilian awards. But that happened because the overwhelming majority of the money went to just these two women. One was Mary. The other one was the one who made the complaint about the Michael Brown thing. Shortly after that, he was fired. At least, fired, but what I mean is taken out of the division. He retired eventually because he knew he wasn't going anywhere.

[I interviewed a guy who came down for six months and worked for the colonel's predecessor.]

Yeah. That was really bad, and a lot of things weren't getting done. We had two directors in a row that were toxic in different ways. The other one, unfortunately, came back as a contractor, and he was a real pain in the ass. They still tell stories about him. He started some kind of real ugly mess with a lieutenant colonel, who to this day doesn't even want his retirement award. That was bad. I didn't know who those people were, but I heard about it. It's CENTCOM. Lots of classified, darn few secrets.

Interview 15

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Background

I'm an Air Force officer with 21 years of experience now, mostly in the communications and information technology realm, as well as some operational planning and cyber operations that I've done in the past. I've had multiple assignments at the operational, tactical and strategic level.

Bad Example 1

I have experienced a number of different leaders and leadership styles throughout my time as an officer. With regards to the subject of toxic leaders, there are two individuals that come to mind. The first one that I'll talk about was a squadron commander that I had when I was a captain when I first made major.

The commander that was there prior to him, I suppose it was his twilight tour, so he knew he wasn't getting promoted and he knew he really didn't have anything to prove, but we were in an ops group and we had a very important mission supporting the J Stars airframe.

So, it was high ops tempo and everybody was willing to lean in and do their job and do their part. For me personally, I did that, I deployed multiple times. I extended one of my deployments. I was all about the mission and I was very motivated and very involved.

When that commander left and the new commander came in, we'll call him Colonel B, his leadership style was about making himself look good. So his primary concern was how the ops group commander perceived him and how he was doing his job and not so much on how well we were supporting the mission. If we were supporting the mission well and it reflected well him, he was happy, but if he perceived that we weren't somehow supporting the mission and if he perceived it would make him look bad, then he was unhappy.

He was very critical of anything that we did. Even if it was an established procedure that had worked in the past, if he thought that there was any risk involved in that or if he thought that it would make him look bad ... So a good example, we had these removable hard drives on the jet and there was a lot. There was probably 50 or 60 on the jet that we had to take off and maintain and they were prone to failure. It was well documented that these hard drives would fail. We had a process that we would go through to troubleshoot these hard drives and evaluate if they were hard broke or if they were just a bad copy of software and they just needed to be re-imaged and we'd put them back on.

He wasn't happy with the procedure that we had in place. He wanted us to do a lot of extra work to prove whether or not that was really the problem and wouldn't take the word of the officers that worked for him or the word of the senior NCOs who are the technical subject matter experts. We ended up spending a lot of cycles working on a problem that he perceived that really wasn't a problem and that the rest of the ops group and the rest of the wing, pretty much had just grown accustomed to and understood that limitation of the air frame.

That kind of manifested itself in other ways where there was a lack of trust between him as a commander and the other officers in the squadron. So whenever there was any other requests that he made, we always were very unsure of his intent and what was really behind that request, if it was something that was mission-related that we really needed to prioritize or if it was just another thing that he was trying to do to make himself look good to the ops group commander.

The other way that kind of manifested itself was that he didn't take the time to really understand our mission and what it entailed, the limitations that we operated under. He had very unrealistic expectations of how we ought to be doing the job and the level of performance that he could expect out of the team.

We would continually give them updates and, and briefings on statuses of projects or statuses of maintenance for the jet, and he just was unwilling to accept where we were. He continually, without any foundational knowledge, just rejected our assessments as not being good enough.

[What kind of communicator was he?]

He was quiet but kind of condescending, if that makes sense. He wasn't really much of a screamer or anything like that, but it was almost like this disrespectful, just I don't believe you even though you'd been working here a long time and you performed well in the past, I'm just not going to take your word and I'm going to make you delve down into every little detail. I'm going to question every single thing, to still get to the same conclusion.

Again, it sort of took our focus away from leading and from supporting the mission into instead defending our actions, defending our decisions and trying to appease his own discomfort, so to speak, with the mission and his own maybe insecurities because he didn't understand what was going on and he didn't have the confidence and he felt like it reflected poorly upon him.

I think another aspect of him as a commander was, he didn't really set expectations. You were left in this guessing game as to what he really wanted. You'd show up at a staff meeting and present something and he's like, "Well, that's not what I want. That's really not what I'm looking for." "Okay, well what do you want?" And he would never be able to give that clear guidance.

And again, it goes back to he didn't understand the mission and he didn't understand what we did and he didn't understand very simple things like the hardware that's on the jet and where it's located, and the processes that we used and the training that people needed. He Just didn't take the time to understand those things. You had to spoon feed him every little thing, and then the decisions he made seemed to be sometimes at odds with what was really necessarily.

[Was he technically competent?]

No, no. I don't remember what his academic background was, but we would joke, me and some of the other company grade officers, that if you really want him to understand something, you need to use crayons and construction paper because you just had to dumb it down so far where it really lost meaning from a technical point of view. When you're talking about technical things in terms of software requirements, in terms of hardware requirements, the way that the data that

was collected off the radars processed and disseminated from PED to other agencies, these are not things that you can hand wave. It requires some degree of technical acumen.

Again, we're at the tactical level, right? We're supporting a flying platform and we're supporting it during contingency operations and the people that he's getting this information from had deployed with the aircraft, supported the mission and knew what they were talking about. He just, for whatever reason, wasn't comfortable and required a lot more explanation than I've been used to in my career.

[How did the unit perform under his leadership?]

I think we were still able to do our mission because we had ... You have the worker bee level that knew the job, right? So all your senior NCOs and all your NCOs, they'd been with the unit for a good amount of time. They knew how to do the job that they were there to do and they were very technically proficient.

I think where it started to impact the organization were the company grade officers and some of the senior NCOs because they bore the brunt of the interactions with him and what that caused. I think for the most part it was transparent to a lot of the junior troops, the junior airmen. It did bubble up in a few instances where you had some senior in NCOs who weren't happy and would go to him. And instead of, again, trusting the officers and trusting our knowledge and our assessments and the way we wanted to deal with things, he would override us. He would not really take our input into account and then he wouldn't tell us that he had considered our input and he has made a decision and here's what the decision is. He would just implement it.

So one example is a master sergeant, a new master sergeant, was PCS-ing, and that individual had been an okay performer. He hadn't done anything that was terribly bad, but he just hadn't been that strong either. So it's not something that you were going to mark down his EPR on because he didn't want to have a permanent record going forward, but it's also one of those things where you don't want to reward the mediocre behavior.

So when it came time for his end of tour of medal, we wanted to give him an Air Force commendation, which again, for a senior NCO is not a bad medal, but there was a push to give him a meritorious service medal instead. When I talked to him and when his supervisor talk to the commander, we both said, "Look, this guy's not a bad guy. He still has a lot of potential. But there had been some performance problems. There's been a couple of behavioral problems and we laid those out," and he was just like, "Okay," and just didn't tell us his decision, but then just went behind our backs, it felt like, and gave him the higher decoration instead of the one that we recommended.

Things like that where it felt like you didn't take the advice of the other officers of the unit, whether it was a mission related thing or a personnel related thing, it just undermined the trust to where we didn't feel confident that he was going to take any of our input.

[Did you have with strong operations officer?]

I'm trying to remember. I don't think ... We had a deputy commander. We didn't have an operations officer and the deputy commander was strong and was his successor actually, and became the squadron commander later, but this was a guy who was a guard guy. This was a blended wing and the deputy commander was a guard guy. He was a major at the time and he was a pretty good guy, but I don't think he could really challenge the commander in some of these things. Maybe he did and I just didn't see it.

[Were you in the guard or active duty?]

I was active duty. Yeah, it was a blended wing at the time. They've since separated out. It was some experiment the Air Force was doing.

[Do you know what commissioning source he's from?]

I think ROTC. It was ROTC or OTS. I can't remember. I think he was prior enlisted, so it may have been ROTC because I think he's separated, went to school, got his commission.

[How did you, how did you deal with that kind of leadership?]

It was very frustrating for me because I felt like I was a really strong performer and I felt like I had done a lot for the organization, for the squadron, for the group, for the wing. I volunteered, like I said, for deployments. I volunteered for our ORI team, which meant doing all the exercises leading up to the ORI. I've gained some pretty good visibility with the other commanders. So for me, it was pretty disheartening to come in and be what I felt was a pretty strong officer just to have this this personality clash where he had me report into his office in service dress over stuff, like knock on the door salute, "Captain Morgan reporting as ordered," type stuff. I just felt like that was-

[As a routine?]

Yeah, he would do that when people messed up. I just felt like that was a little bit petty. I just recognized it for what it was. I think for me, I just tried to keep focused on the mission and keep focused on doing my job, and at the same time learn what I felt was not good leadership, if that makes sense. What not to emulate as I grew in my career.

[Did he ever get promoted?]

Yeah, he did. He made Colonel.

[Do you know how he was perceived by his superiors?]

I don't know. Again, it at my level, I didn't interact with the group commander that much and I never heard from any of the other squadron commanders or any of his peers, any feedback.

[Did he ever try to pit flight commanders against each other?]

In retrospect, I think there was a ripe opportunity for that, and I think some of that started to occur. There was another guy who was several years behind me. He was a pretty new captain when I made major and I think he tried to pit the two of us against each other. It didn't help that this particular guy, I'll call him Captain A was a self-aggrandizing guy. He wanted to look good too. I think it that kind of played into Colonel B's leadership style, to have somebody else who's willing to play the foil and in that relationship, because again, I think some of it too, is it got a little bit personal where he just didn't like me because I'm not ... I know my one of my strengths/weaknesses is I'm pretty open about how I feel and if I feel something's wrong, I tend to vocalize that.

I don't think he liked me challenging a lot of his decisions. I think he tried to pit this other guy against me. It didn't matter to me because I already had been selected and promoted to major, so I'm kind of like, okay whatever. I kind of saw a little bit of that occurring where he would have the other officers ... I think he would favor them over me.

Another one that stands out, and again I'll compare and contrast. So the previous commander, we'd have our Christmas party and the Booster club was big. They had a lot of fundraising so we can have these really good Christmas parties with expensive electronic gifts for the raffle and all that kind of stuff, and an open bar and things like that.

So, one of the things that we'd normally do with the booster club is Karaoke. So you vote, you pay a nickel or a dime or whatever it was, to vote for somebody seeing a song, some kind of Karaoke song. It was always in good fun.

When he took command, the first Christmas party we had, I was a flight commander and ... Actually I don't think I was a flight commander yet. But anyway, I got voted to sing a song, right? It was Brick House, if you're familiar with that song. And I was the number one, I got more votes than anybody else. I got up there and I sang the song and I said, "Hey, because you guys were so generous and spent so much money to hear me sing, I'm going to make you listen to me for another song because I don't sing very well," and I sang another song. It was Country Roads by John Denver. I'll admit to have had some beer and I was a little bit tipsy, but I had a designated driver. I didn't do anything foolish. I didn't do anything immature. I wasn't falling down, throwing up. I had my DD to take me home.

The other guy who got voted basically said, "Ask for your money back. I'm not doing it," and refused. I kind of looked at it as, okay, I'll get up here and I'll embarrass myself and I'll sing a song and I'll contribute to the Christmas party, contribute to the morale and hope everybody has a good time. Well, that was one of the events where I got called in service dress and I was told that I was not professional, and that I acted inappropriately and that basically got a letter of counseling on it.

So, it's one of those things where it's like, okay, I thought this was okay. It was a unit sponsored event, open bar, Karaoke thing. He knew all about it. He knew I got voted number one and after the fact for him to be like, "Hey, I thought that was inappropriate," I think set the wrong tone. It's things like that where you set expectations.

Bad Example 2

Okay. So the next example I'll say is Colonel S. This person I interacted with as a civil service employee. I was still as a reservist, but also as a civil service employee.

The thing that kind of strikes this particular situation is leadership from emotion, I guess I'd put it. I see my role as a leader or any leader is you set the tone, you set the priorities and you give the team that you lead the tools that they need to meet those priorities.

I think when it came to working for Colonel S, if anything went wrong, he just railed against whoever he felt was associated with that. He didn't really tell the group ahead of time, "Hey, here's my top three things I need people to work on and here's kind of my expectation of what you're going to do and come back to me with how you're going to do it," it was just he'd show up to a staff meeting one day and he'd be like, "What's going on with this," and it'd be something that wasn't even on the radar, wasn't even something that anybody had known was a concern or a priority. Then we'd just spend the next hour, people were just getting face shots because they're not supporting the mission.

Again, I don't think it helped. We were rudderless the whole time and the few attempts that were made to up put some discipline into the organization, and by discipline I mean discipline our processes and discipline how we prioritize the mission and how we support the mission, he kind of shunned.

That created this environment where nobody really knew what they should be working on and everybody was afraid, I think, to raise any concerns or issues up the chain because again, they didn't know where that would lead them. I think there was a little bit of avoidance where people just minimized the amount of interaction that they had with him.

There was an instance where we were talking about Intel support to cyber operations and a guy who was a coworker was an intel guy who led the Intel section. He was like, "Hey, I'm here to help, but that's really not one of the things that we do. That's not really part of our mission. I can help coordinate with the people who do this. I can help get whatever support you need identified. I can help lay out the framework."

He basically got told in front of everybody else in the staff meeting that this Intel guy was being the voice of no, that he never supports, that he never provides anything and his job was to make this mission successful and he just got laid into for something that was really not even a good idea to begin with. Everybody knew it was a bad idea from an operational point of view. It was never going to go anywhere. But again, this colonel didn't want to seem like he wasn't being supportive of another command. He basically told this guy, he's like, "You're going to do what I tell you. You're going to make it work and I don't want to hear you tell me, no, you can't do it."

It was just very loud, very in your face, very unprofessional from a leader and everybody knew that nothing was going to happen with this because the request was just totally out in left field. Everybody knew that this was not something that you could actually do. It was just not a realistic thing. I can't get into the details, but it was just one of those things where everybody was like, "I

don't even know why we're talking about this" but the colonel is leaning on this guy so hard to make it a success. It's like you're setting the guy up failure is all you're doing. That's one instance.

[Were you ever impacted directly by him?]

I don't think I was because I was under the radar. He wasn't really focused on the stuff that I was working on and I just kept to myself. I did the mission that I needed to do and kept that afloat. He just really didn't want anything to do with the stuff I was working on because it was not as high profile as other stuff. So I had that luxury of I had my space and I had the ability to do my mission unimpeded. It didn't help that I got no guidance, but at the same time, it helped that I was unconstrained to do what I felt I needed to do.

But it did shape the way I conducted myself going forward. I made sure after that that I had clearly identified all of my priority mission areas and that I communicated those on a continual basis to say, "Here's what I'm focused on, here's what I'm focused on." That's something I still use today because this particular event occurred about four or five years ago.

I still think there was a lot of value in expectation management when you're talking to your leadership at any level. So laying out, "Okay, here's what I see as the priority mission areas that I'm going to focus my resources on." Getting that approval and that buy-in from your leadership. That way there's no confusion when they come back and they go, "Hey, what's going on with this project?" "Hey boss, we talked about that. You told me it wasn't a priority and adjust, but something's got to come down on the list."

I think that was one of the big lessons that I learned is sometimes you just have to lay out your priorities for your boss, even though they're the boss's priorities, you have to do that for him.

There was another example and I don't know the details of the conversation, but him and another colonel got in a shouting match and were cussing at each other in front of the whole organization. That sets the tone for how this guy would operate. And again, I think it goes back to as a leader, your job is to set those expectations, set those priorities, give people the tools and the resources and then hold them accountable. But he didn't seem to want to do any of that. He just wanted everything to work.

Then there are other decisions that he made that seemed to be at odds with the priorities that he did lay out, where at the time, the targeting process and understanding the targeting process was a big deal. He had a lot of people in working late hours and doing these daily meetings on targeting, but then he wasn't really resourcing that function with the subject matter experts to make that a focus or emphasis area. His message was at odds with his actions, which again, just created confusion in the organization where people didn't really know what was important and what wasn't.

Bad Example 3

[His successor ... I was just wondering what your feelings were on his successor?]

He was a good guy who honestly, I think, wanted the organization to succeed, who cared about people and who wanted people to come to work and have fun. I think where he failed was that he was a little bit too, I guess, too easily persuaded. He was easy to persuade. He really didn't stick to his guns on his decisions.

I feel like that was taken advantage of, where he would give some guidance people to come back with the work and instead people would come back and go, "Well, why don't we do this instead," instead of implementing what he had asked them to do. We had gotten to this perpetual analysis paralysis because people kept coming back with good ideas versus results.

And again, he didn't want to hurt anybody's feelings and he didn't want anybody to have a bad day, I think. So instead of just laying down the law and going, "Okay, we're slapping the table on this. I understand we may have better ideas, but it is time to move out and execute," he continued to entertain this perpetual analysis. I think that created its own set of problems because then the mission tended to stagnate. Then his leadership perceived that things weren't getting done. And again, I think his unwillingness to address some of the, maybe the personnel issues in the organization, because again, he didn't want anybody to be upset about it. I think that just made things worse. Instead of coming in and being like, "Okay, this is what I want. Go execute," he let those things fester and eventually it just got to the point where you couldn't correct it.

I think for him, I don't think he was a toxic leader, so to speak. I think he was just almost indecisive to the point where it created a toxic environment because there was all these problems that weren't getting resolved and they continued, like I said, to fester to the point where the organization kind of became less effective.

Recommendations

[Do you have any last comments or thoughts on dealing with poor leaders?]

It's tough because every individual is different, and every individual has their own style. Some people appreciate feedback, some people don't. It all depends on the individual and what they're willing to really take and reflect upon. I think there are some people who truly want to do the best job that they can and they're open to that dialogue and that discourse. In that case I would say go for it. Let them know, "Hey boss, I think this is what's going on. I think this is the impact you're having. I think this is where you need to improve," because I think a lot of leaders, and in my experience, nobody wants to tell you the things you're doing bad because it's an uncomfortable conversation. But at the same time, I think as a follower, you owe that to your leaders, to let them know where you think there could be problems and how you think those problems can be corrected.

The flip side of that though is some people just don't want to hear it and they're not going to look to the left and to the right or to the bottom, so to speak, for that feedback. They're going to look up and as long as their boss is happy, they're happy. Those are the ones that are probably more difficult to deal with. The only way that you're going to get that feedback to them is through their boss, which means maybe working through the boss's XO, the boss's senior enlisted advisor or

senior enlisted leader, and get that feedback to your boss's boss so that it can come from top down.

And again, if the boss is open to feedback, they may have some anonymous feedback mechanism that they employ. But that's another way to do it. I tend to take the more direct approach and that has served me well in my career, where if I see a problem, I identify it. It's not an attack on the person, it's an attack on or a criticism of behavior and a criticism of the impact it's having.

There have been several times where I've told somebody, a leader, that I've had news that they didn't want to hear and I stuck to that because that was the news that they needed to hear, not necessarily what they wanted to hear. Sometimes at the time it wasn't well received, but later they came back and they thanked me for it. I think that you can take the direct approach or take the indirect approach, but I think if you really want to resolve the issue that that feedback has to make its way to that leader. Otherwise it's not going to change.

[All right. I think we're done.]