138. Justin Reynolds: Ragin’

Gavin Kelly
Hey, everybody you're listening to beyond 1894 this is the official podcast of Louisiana Tech University. My name is Gavin Kelly from the Office of University Communications, and we are joined today by Lieutenant Colonel Justin Reynolds. We're recording here on the 12th floor. He came all the way down from floor 14 to be with us today, Lieutenant Colonel, thank you for making time for us. Thanks for having me so you are the commander of our AF ROTC detachment, 305, and you are professor of aerospace studies. Is that correct? That is correct. Okay. And you have been in this role recently, right? Just as of this year, yeah.

Justin Reynolds
So we got here in June, and the end of June, we moved in, so officially changed command on the week after the fourth of July, and it's, it's been a whirlwind after that, trying to figure it out, getting to come back to your alma mater, right? That's right. So coming back to Tech has been awesome. And we, you know, I grew up in downsville and Calhoun and I went to the Ouachita parish school system. So West ouaachita is where I graduated high school. I got a bachelor's degree from Northeast Louisiana University. It turned to Ulm as I was there the first class, I think was what they said, that graduated with Ulm. Okay, my diploma. And then there's a huge backstory about how I got here. But I came over and got a master's degree in biology in 2002

Gavin Kelly
okay, so has military service always been something like, at what point was that a given in your life?

Justin Reynolds
I'd say probably when I was here, Okay, interesting. I had always wanted to go do it, and I wanted to fly airplanes, you know, the generation or top gun came out, and everybody wanted to go be a fighter pilot. Then I realized living on a boat with 5000 my closest friends probably wasn't something that I would like to do for seven or eight months. The Air Force has always been, you know, growing up, we would go to the air shows at Barksdale, and so I guess the exposure was, was to the Air Force. So I wanted to fly airplanes when I was a kid, my eyes, you know, I found out I got my my granddad's genes, and so I was a myopic I did a science project in the seventh grade, depending on how deep you want to get into this, I went over to you or northeast, and set with the Aviation Department, and there was a retired B 52 pilot, and he looked at me, he goes, kid, I don't know What you're talking about. You're not gonna fly airplanes. You gotta got 2020, division to be a pilot in the Air Force. And I went, Well, okay, that stinks. We'll go do something else. And great friend of mine, who's an anesthesiologist now in Monroe Lucas PB, we grew up together, and his older brother, you know, they've got a path in medicine. So we were around each other almost on a daily basis growing up. His older brother, Shane, is a was a rad tech. I think he still is his second his middle brother Bill, BB is a physician as well. And so seeing them and what they were going through when they were going through school, that looked really interesting. Lucas was going to go that way. My little brother had broken his leg during a baseball game one night,

you know, and watched that orthopedic process. And so I just decided medicine was going to be the camp that we took and got over to Ulm, and my 3.2 GPA was not sufficient at the time to go get accepted into medical school. And so I went over to LS us and had a discussion with a dean over there, and he said, if you get a Master's, get a better GPA, get your MCAT score up a couple points, you know, the standard. Go get better somewhere, and then try out again. And so then I came over here, and during those processes, I was researching career paths, what specialties I wanted to go. And somewhere along the line, I figured out, or realized, that you didn't have to have 2020, vision to be a navigator in the Air Force for a pilot, yes, yeah, but there's this other position called a navigator, and I could get into that. And I was so far down track doing the medical thing that I was kind of committed to it. I graduated from tech. I started, I got, got my MCAT score up, I guess I did well enough over here to get in. So I got into LS, U S, and just due to the weight of the time and worked tops had become a thing. I was sitting at tops at UC Ulm, I realized, you know, there comes a time in your GPA where you can get straight A's. It's depreciating returns, I guess. Yeah, sure, at some point you got to break free, yeah. So came over here. You. Yes. And I guess what the point of saying that is, there was about a month break between Ulm and start in tech. I started tech in the fall, and then when I graduated tech in the summer, I didn't get to even graduated, you know, in person, like my diploma, because I was already in school at LS us. And so the point of that was at that age, you don't realize what burnout is. Yeah, I was burned out, yeah, and I was unprepared for that level of rigor. And LSU and I parted ways in 2003 and so when that happened, I had, my plan was to pursue what's called a flight surgeon, or a doctor who does aeromedical, aerospace medicine, when all that stuff had had come crashing down. Then at that point, there was time to pivot. And so I put a package in for a navigator slot, and I went to officer training school. And so that happened in the summer 2005 and so since then, I've been active duty. And then that got me to flight school, and flight school got me to F fifteens, and F fifteens got me all over the place. Yeah, through your service

Gavin Kelly
a little bit, tell us about kind of places you've been stationed, and some some things you've done and seen, yeah.

Justin Reynolds
So we left here, like I said, in summer of 2005 was when I was commissioned. That officer training school was, and still is at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. That's about three months. And so following that, I went to flight school. I went to a program. It doesn't exist anymore. Now we send all the navigator or Combat Systems officer candidates to Pensacola, and that's where the main schoolhouse is. Back then, the main schoolhouse was in San Antonio. There was a strike fighter path that was at NAS or Naval Air Station Pensacola. I went through that program, so I was in the Air Force training with a navy that took about two years. And so we did basic, intermediate and advanced. And we started off in t6 Texan twos. It's a turbo prop, single engine, twin seat, tandem. Little trainer did instruments, you know. And then moved over to jets, and the t1 some more instruments, and some more low levels. And then we transitioned to the advanced Squadron at the T 39 which is, as I go through this, all these things are retired. Now, the T 39 was an ancient business jet. It was a saber liner, and it was procured by the military in the 60s for Distinguished Visitor transport. Somebody along the way had put a radar in the front of this thing, and so we could do radar training with it. And it would take, we would do radar navigation low levels. And then later on, when I selected a fifteens, we got to

do Air to Air intercepts with it. And so that was kind of kind of wild, you know, was flying at 500 feet, which, at the at the time was is low. And 500 feet legitimately, is low, you know, we were going 300 miles an hour, and it was just a rage fest, you know. And then that was inside of two years from from leaving Calhoun, and that was kind of wild. So after that, graduated, got my wings, it's time to go get some more training. Of course, I go to Randolph Air Force Base to fly T 38 was a supersonic jet fighter. It was the intro to fighter fundamentals was about a six week course. They kind of give you a lead in to, this is how we do things in fighter airplanes, formation flying, you know, tactical maneuver and basic fighter maneuvers, or dog fight and and things like that, and then. So once that's topped off, I went to survival school, seer school in Fairchild, Washington. You can Google that. It's it's a lot of fun. I would not recommend that you send your friends. And once I, once we did that, we moved from Pensacola, and Robin and I, we were married in 2003 so we were married when I went to the Air Force. We moved to North Carolina. So in Goldsboro, North Carolina, there's a little piece of ground called Seymour Johnson Air Force base that is the school house for the F 15 e strike Eagle. So that's the version of the jet that I qualified in. It's a McDonald Douglas product now Boeing, the twin tailed, twin seat, fire breathing. Mac Air War Horse and and so that dual seat, multi role version is the training platform. Or, sorry, the training headquarters is at Seymour Johnson. So everybody go into the strike. He will go see Seymour Johnson. I went through what's called the B course, or the basic course there. So. And we lived there for probably about nine months, almost a year, finished training there, and then during that process, we got your first operational base, and I was I put in for and got Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. So we left there in the fall of oh eight, 2008 and then we moved up to Idaho, and at that point, North Carolina was the furthest north that we had ever lived. And so we moved to Idaho in October of, oh, eight. And then I thought we were going to perish that year, you know, like the Oregon Trail had happened, we were going to, you know, the great white winter had come to get us. But we figured it out, and we learned how to drive in the ice and snow. And we learned that, as it turns out, you can't forecast winter and just shut everything down, because if you did that up there, then nothing would get done. Or had a few more potatoes than you were used to. We did, yeah, first, the first time a potato bounced off a truck and hit this in the windshield, it was like a come to Jesus moment. I didn't know what happened. We lived there for three years. I deployed a few times. We got to do some stuff that was really, really cool up there. And, you know, met a bunch of great people that we still stay in contact with. We had our first child there. My daughter, Annalise, was born there in 2011 and then in 2011 we moved to England to go to Lake and Heath, okay? Base called Rh, just a little jump, yeah, small jump with a nine month old baby. What we did was we came back to Louisiana and celebrated Thanksgiving, and then we we saw some family in Arkansas, and we jumped on a plane and took us to Chicago. And then two days after Thanksgiving, we were sitting in England trying to figure out Heathrow and where we're gonna go, and trying to find a house and do all those things. And so we lived in England for three years. I was attached or assigned to the 4/94 fighter squadron. There it was the 3/91 fighter squadron in Mountain Home, the Tigers, 4/94, fighter squadron in England, the Panthers. And then we were there for three years, because we move every three years. The Air Force has got you on a three year cycle for officers, you know, two years, eight months, you're gonna get notified that, hey, it's, it's time to pick an assignment. That experience of living in England was just absolutely magnificent. You know, that was probably my favorite place to live, my least favorite place to be stationed, because we, we, I can't talk about the details now, but you know, that was around the 2012 timeframe when the Arab Spring was kicking up. You know, Libya was becoming a thing and, and there was a lot of times where you were just told to go home and pack a bag and we'll call you if we

need you. Yeah, a lot of stuff where you just couldn't leave the house. And so that that out of balance life was, I was working a ton. We were really busy at work. We had some things to do kind of teetered the totter in the wrong way for the work life stuff. And it didn't cause, you know, Robin, Robin's a absolute saint, and we had a really good group of folks there. And, you know, we all got through it that we were deployed once during Thanksgiving and all the all the spouses, loaded up the kids and took them to 10 reef. You know, there's stuff that you can do, and you live in Europe, deployed another couple times there. Kind of wrapped up that assignment. We, we had our second child in England, Bryce, who was born in 2015 and in standard fashion, 90 days after we had Robin, had him, it was time to move again. Yeah, you just like traveling with newborns, right? You know, it's, it's fun, it's, it's something everybody should experience as international flights back and forth from being a little small children. And at that point we came back to North Carolina, so we were now stationed at Seymour, and I taught at that same schoolhouse. So I spent three years teaching people how to operate and employ the strike Eagle. And then at that point, I realized, you know, through some experiences, and now we've got two small kids, right? You know, it's, it's probably time to pick a road. We can keep going down this path, and then the world is going to be stay busy enough to need the aircraft. The Air Force is going to stay slim enough to need me and and I can either go back and back out into the world, you know, go back to another operational base, yeah, keep your three year cycle going. Yeah, we can go back and we could do some other stuff, or we can kind of try and break out of it. And, you know, I like to tell people, I continue to live life in the Air Force, slipping through the cracks. And so I slipped through the cracks, and I got a really cool job opportunity to go to Hickam Air Force Base, which is in Honolulu. UC, and that is the headquarters of Pacific Air Forces. And there's a command center there called an AOC, or an air operation center, that kind of plans all the operations and air missions for the Pacific Air Forces. And Pacific Air Forces is assigned to United States Indo Pacific Command or indo PAYCOM. And there are, you know, if you see a bomber show up in the South China Sea somewhere that was, that was planned. And, you know, five ish years ago, I was probably the one playing some of that stuff. So got to work with some awesome people. I got some doors open for me, both literally and figuratively, like I was in some rooms, making some decisions and making some recommendations that I never thought I would be, yeah, probably shouldn't have been doing honestly

Justin Reynolds
and and that was just an epic experience, until covid came crashing down, of course. And we can, we can talk about how things got there, you know, offline, but, but being in Hawaii for covid was not a great time, yeah, because they, the government leadership in Hawaii made the decision to shut tourism down, which choked off the livelihood, at least for Oahu, and it caused a lot of anguish for, you know, a lot

Gavin Kelly
of the local populace, it's already kind of an isolated place too, right?

Justin Reynolds
So, exactly, and so what I, what I didn't know is during, I found this out after, but during the high season, previous to covid, I don't know if it's returned fully. Honolulu International Airport were processed something like 15,000 people a day. Wow. And all those rental cars that were running around Oahu. I mean, it's a vacation destination for both the continental United States, but also, you

know, the greater Asian land mass and all kinds of people want to go to Hawaii for different reasons. But So when all that drew down, you know, they parked everything, the boats and ships were still coming with all the supplies to support all the tourists, which worked out people were going through food lines because they didn't, you know, the tourism industry had Crumped, so people had to go somewhere to eat those everybody was getting handouts, but they were eating really well. And then, you know, everybody went through covid with the lockdowns and the shutdowns. And, you know, now shut down number two and shut down number three in two weeks turns into three months. And, you know, with a child starting kindergarten that year, and right, you know, there were just some real life impacts. And so we the point of saying all that was not to, not to dog on covid Or what anybody did. But we, we elected, then, not in accordance with what you would expect people to do, was to leave Hawaii early, right? And when we did that, we left in the very early year. So sorry, January of 2021, and then we moved to Utah, north of Salt Lake City, there's a base there called Hill Air Force Base, and I was assigned the 86 fighter weapons Squadron, which is a weapons test squadron. And I spent the last four years there. My official title was the director of operations for the first two years, and then the commander of the squadron for the second two years. But the job was, was really, really neat, and it was kind of a full circle moment, because when I was assigned to the 3/91 like I said, at Mountain Home, the first trip that we did, or TDY, temporary duty that we call them, was to go to Hill Air Force Base to participate in a thing called Combat hammer that was run by the 86 fighter weapons Squadron, and that was the first place I got to drop a real bomb, and the first place that I did a bunch of stuff. And so now I got to go back to that organization and participate in it and run it. And that was really, really neat. We did some really the folks up there did some really exceptional things over the course of four years and and we tested a lot of great weapons. Of probably the biggest thing that we helped push across the finish line, that's something we can actually talk about that relates to a lot of people, is overseas. You're probably seeing in the news all the one way, drones that are being launched from different places and going into Israel, and Russia's got them. They're going into Ukraine. There's a weapon now called an APK W s, or an advanced precision weapon kill system. We, we worked with a bunch of other folks in the test community inside of the Air Force, to get that field and it pushed across. And so what that did was, now you don't have to shoot a $2 million am Ram that's designed for jets at a fairly, you know, 30, $50,000 drone. Yeah, you can put something on parity with that. And, oh, by the way, it's, it's contained in a rocket pod with 20 others. And you can carry four rocket pods. And, you know, there's a lot more firepower, excuse me. So those, those things have been extremely useful in the defense of both our allies and partners. And pretty proud of that. That was, that was neat, see, and everybody pull together and get that done in such a short time, yeah.

Gavin Kelly
And so then after Utah was here, right? And after Utah's here, yeah, when that, that opportunity came about, was that a what went into the decision for you to come back here?

Justin Reynolds
Honestly, it was, if I had not gotten this, I was going to retire because I entered the Air Force in April of oh five, I was eligible for retirement when I gave up command up at Hill. And so the decision was, you know, as you as you near retirement, you start looking at things to do, and what does that that scope look like? I learned about an opportunity, and I had heard about ROTC command over the years, and it was almost the exact same story. It was when, when we were at Mountain Home, Robin and I

participated in an exercise, and this has been a theme, you know, in my Air Force career, like we went to combat hammer, and then I got to run combat hammer, and then I went to an exercise at Hickam. And of course, if they're going to send me, then I'm going to drop a weekly on the back end of it. Fly Robin down. So we spent a weekend in Honolulu, and she said, Wouldn't it be nice if we could ever get stationed here? And I said, No, it's never going to happen. You know, that came to fruition. And over the course of my career, I've been reading about ROTC detachments because they're still run by active duty folks. Everybody we've got here at 305 is is active duty. And I had just been researching it, and it came time to apply. And what I found out was headquarters, ROTC actually in a in a departure from normal Air Force protocol. ROTC actually pays attention to where you went to school. And so if the time matches up, and you're qualified, and the need arises, and they can put alumni into detachments as commanders, then they try and do that, yeah, okay, because it, it get your you've got skin in the game, bought in already, right? Yeah. And so at that, because I want to see tech do well, right? I want to see Tech graduates go into the Air Force and do well. I want to, I want to see local people from the local North Louisiana and South Louisiana and East Texas and southern Arkansas, where, you know the world, right? I want to see those people look at Tech and go, I can go do those things. And so I've got a vested interest in that. And so to wrap the story up, the the application cycle happened. I put an application in and was selected for it. So, so then, then it's an easy choice, right? Let's just not retire. Let's stay in the Air Force for another little bit. What I am committed to was, is Annalise. Is now a freshman. She's at Ruston High School. Go Cats, and then my commitment to the children was, you, you've moved all around the world in a in a stroller with me. Yeah, we're gonna do four years and you're gonna because I've seen people get uprooted in the middle of high school. Yeah, I've seen people uproot children in their senior year. And that's that's tough, man, that's tough. So when I broke out of the operational community, if my job is now to go do planning and tests and things like that, if they don't need me on the front then, then let's break out and let's go do things that are institutional, that that helped the institution continue. And so I think graduating top tier people is right in the heart of that. Yeah, so it fits our our desires, it fits our life goals. And excuse me, it helps the Air Force out too. So yeah, it was kind of a win all around and we were here.

Gavin Kelly
Yeah, very nice. Yeah. Thanks for sharing some insight. There. It's always interesting to talk to military folks about their journey, because no two are the same, right? So, so thanks for that. Let's talk about detachment throughout five it's a good segue, yeah. So recently celebrated 75 years, right? So been around for a while. I guess it's it's interesting too, to talk to you and learn that you know your time at Tech as a student. You know, there was no Air Force connection there for you at the time, and now you come back with this like, you know, fresh set of eyes and all this world experience in the Air Force. So, you know, passing through tech your first time was different than you coming back now. So talk about, kind of the history of detachment 305, and how you've sort of integrated yourself into that, and kind of how it stands right now. Because let's, I guess, clear the thing, one thing up to first, kind of the appeal of ROTC, AF, ROTC at a at a college, is that when it comes time to be commissioned. Into military, you're able to start as an officer, right? Like you're able to get a jumpstart, and plus the things you're doing along your studies. So talk a little bit about that, yeah.

Justin Reynolds

Well, you nailed it, right? The detachments been here since 1949 and there is a long standing history. And you know, the patch that we wear. Yeah, there's got a design on it that the students in 1949 designed. And so, you know, we still try and honor that by wearing the patch and keeping that alive. You know, when we go downstairs, there's all the year boards, so every year the seniors make a board. And frankly, we're running out of space for those things we need to talk about. You know, how we're going to capital not because I'm going to try not to just shoot off a bunch of tangents. But what was really, really neat was, two weeks ago, three weeks ago, there was an alumni that came back, and so he had been selected for Lieutenant Colonel. And he's at Maxwell going through developmental education. And so he calls me and says, Hey, man, can we come up there? Because all the families in Monroe, can we drive over and can you promote me to Lieutenant Colonel in Wiley tower? Of course, I can, you know, bring them. Heck, yeah. And I didn't know it at the time, but his granddad was in the Air Force and had graduated from Tech, and wasn't an alumni of dead 305, and so we were able to go because he made this joke. He goes, you probably don't have anything for me. And I was like, actually, I do come here. And in the class of 1952 there was a photo. And of course, it's not how resolution we don't have today, right? That project is something that I would like to embark on, but that's, that's probably a five year project to go find those things. You know, PSA, I plan on working with the alumni for for some of that stuff.

Gavin Kelly
But yeah, if you're listening, just yeah, just be sure soft ask.

Justin Reynolds
We were able to find a picture of their senior board, and everybody said they thought that was him, because of his body language and the way he sat and things like that. The caption wasn't there to point out who was in the picture, but that was really, really neat. I've always been a student, a slacker student, but a student of history. I love those things. I love those connections. And so keeping that flame alive for folks to come back is exactly like the bricks out there. You know, you graduate, you put your name in a brick, and that's that's going to be there for perpetuity. So, you know, we've come back, and I showed the kids my brick. Those things I think are important to keep you rooted, yeah, to keep you grounded to who you are, because that's that's truly what motivates you, and that's kind of what motivates you as well for military service. You know, if you, if you are a consumer throughout life and not a provider, then I think we should probably have a conversation about your life goals, but at the same time, there needs to be something you don't just consume. You have to put back at some point. So the stockpile has to be replaced. It has to be replenished, and that's what I'm interested in doing here. So now to your point about Yes, when you matriculate through the system, if you come to AFROTC, and we get you all the way through, and you, you know the individuals put in the work, then they will commission when they graduate as an officer. There are multiple career paths in the Air Force. There are folks that, well, by and large, just the military in general, yeah, right. Is primarily made up of enlisted personnel. And I have met a decent amount of enlisted personnel that have college degrees, but in order to enlist, a college degree is not required, right? Those are the people that are really doing the things right. So if you talk about aircraft maintenance, the people that are changing tires, turning wrenches, doing safety wire, running the checklist. Those folks are the enlisted troops, and they are the heart and soul of, yeah, the military. It does not nothing gets done without them. That being said, they the system. I'll say this, individuals don't necessarily need somebody over their shoulder, making sure,

you know, keeping them to task. The system, though, does need managers. And when I say managers we I tell the cadets like we manage things, but we lead people, and so we you have to be both, and if we are training leaders through a standardized curriculum that the Air Force gives us, but that's why I enjoy the fact that we've got highly experienced cadre down there. So the two captains that I've got have both been enlisted, and so Captain Mandy spent his time as a comm troop, and then he commissioned, and now he's an RPA, or remotely piloted aircraft operator. Ken. Captain Anello grew up as an enlisted maintainer. Was actually a senior NCO when he went to Officer Training School, so he's got a lot of time under his belt, both being a technician, but also leading people. And Sergeant Durham was an age Equipment Technician, so aerospace ground equipment, and really all the trailers and tugs and things, you know, vehicles, ground equipment that's required to do aircraft maintenance. And then we've got Sergeant on guiano, she came into the Air Force, and still is an administration professional. And so if the military loves its bureaucracy, and when we've got questions about what the book says, typically we go to her, and so she keeps us all safe with procurement and things like that. And of course, you know, we've got the nerd Louisiana Tech employee, Miss Tracy Crawford, who keeps everybody in line, yeah, and it's kind of the mother hen for the group, and we love having her, but having that perspective about what the enlisted force structure both looks like, does does for the Air Force. That's an important perspective. As we take it, we've mold people into leaders, because certain times, people will be guilty. And there's been times in my life where I'm guilty of that, of wanting, if you sell me, I need to go be an officer to fly that airplane. Then I'll go be an officer. Yeah. And so early on, it's easy to get stuck in that transactional relationship. I think once you break out of that transactional relationship, and that's kind of what has hit me later in my career, is the, of course, there's an intrinsic joy in ripping around in an F 15 and 100 feet in supersonic, you know, like shooting missiles, dropping bombs, that stuff is epic. Watching the sun come up over the Atlantic is fantastic, but there's a greater sense of purpose and sustainment and fulfillment when you're able to take somebody and get them to where they want to go in their career. Yeah, maybe they hit a roadblock, or maybe they need some help, or maybe you just need to go advocate for the right person and and those things are, you know, while we can talk about flying airplanes and dropping bombs and shooting missiles, and that gets a lot of people pumped up, you know, the the other thing that we have to talk about is, guys, this is what's going to happen to you. It might not happen in your first one or two years, depending on your Air Force Specialty, but it's going to happen. Yeah? And so for the career fields that we get into, you know, we've got, we're pushing people to be engineers, developmental engineers, test engineers, operational analysts, yeah, finance officers, you know, things Comptrollers, things that have to run the system in order to ultimately fight and win a war. If it comes up which, you know, the classification of war sometimes gets bannered around. We've the Air Force has not been deployed fighting somebody since the late 80s, right? So that's who we're trying

Gavin Kelly
to build. You know, we talk about history, we talk about the program. We're in a good place for it, too, right? It's right down the road from Barksdale, so that's helpful. But ROTC programs, AF, ROTC, it's might be easy to assume, well, all the all the kids in this program are probably aviation majors and whatever, and I'm sure that's part of it. But these types of programs for these students are open. It's anyone who's pursuing a bachelor's degree, right? Correct. So Correct. You probably see a large variance in the students that come through the program.

Justin Reynolds
Yes, we've got a ton of them. I thought the same thing, not knowing much coming in. The number of folks that we've got in the prav or professional aviation department is actually relatively low. Yeah, we've got engineering students. We've got a psychology major who's about to commission this year. It's one of the best cadets that we've got. I hope he's not listening, because I need to keep him motivated. But, but we've got all kinds of folks. And one thing that one of the first conversations I had when somebody I first got here fall was coming up. You know, some of the new student orientation were happening, and we've got a cadet in her first year now, but she was, she had come up to tech to look around Tech with her parents, and her parents stopped by the office, and we had a chance to have a conversation. And of course, they needed her to go be an engineer, because engineering got you into pilot training, and pilot training got you into airplanes. And I went, what? And I looked at the daughter, and I went, do you want to be an engineer? Well, you know, kind of maybe, if it works out and what? And I look, because then we go, okay, what? What are mom and dad, what their engineers? Yeah, and so when I and this is still true. This has always been true that you do not need to be an engineer or even a scientific mind to go fly airplanes. We, we, I have flown F fifteens with people that were history in. Degrees, yeah, psychology degrees, Poli Sci degrees, and what they're there's not a direct correlation to the type of degree that you have based on how you're going to operate that airplane. There is a direct correlation if you want to go do scientific type things, if you want to go to test pilots, yeah, then Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base in California is going to require that you have some kind of a STEM degree, because they're going to throw some pretty heavy duty math at you. And if it's your first time seeing calculus, it's probably going to turn out right, you know? Because it's not that you're not capable of it, it's that they have a finite time to get you through that level of training, right? And it can't wait, yeah. So in that way, your degree path can kind of shape you, and then the Air Force is not going to put people like they're not going to put developmental engineers of non engineering backgrounds, you know. So sometimes you will see your degree will open doors for you if you want a certain Air Force Specialty, but, but you won't get, you won't get pigeon holed and tight cast, right? And the beautiful thing of it is, we come to work every day, so if, if somebody wants to come ask it, then, you know, we'll show them what's available. And you know, based on your needs, wants and desires, where we think you can go.

Gavin Kelly
Very good, very good look. Let's, let's get one more question in here for you before we let you go raging Reynolds, your your call sign, yes, we got to talk about how that came about and because it still follows you to this day. It does. It's on your patch there. So let's, let's talk about that.

Justin Reynolds
Okay, the the official answer is, we're supposed to buy beverage and talk about this. But generally, and I won't go into specific details, everything has got its own there. There are hours and hours. There are books that have been written about, you know, call signs, fighter pilot culture. And I do make sure to wear this, because one we were unauthorized to wear it for a little bit, that authorization has recently come back and and to, excuse me, I think that that it's not about self aggrandizement. It's the culture needs to be, needs to be propagated, because it's, it's, it's done very well for us. It got us through World War One, it got us through World War Two, and then, you know, Korea and Vietnam, and then the major conflicts and Enduring Freedom, Iraqi, freedom to you know, O, I are the named operations that

we fought since September 11. And there have been people doing things and go into combat with with call signs and so kind of, where it comes from is it's, you know, you typically don't want to say your name over the radio, right? That's, sometimes it's a nickname, sometimes it's an acronym. Mine generally harkens back to, you know, the fact that I'm from Louisiana, and I'll save you the gory details. Apparently, there's been some times in my life where I may have been confused as a hot head, sure.

Gavin Kelly
Okay, very nice. Yeah, it's, it's also too. I mean, as a as me, who has never has a military experience and is outside looking in on something like that, it's personalization a little bit of, you know, and you mentioned Top Gun earlier, I'm sure the sequel did some wonders for for you guys, too.

Justin Reynolds
I think so. Yeah, I wouldn't in. I do field questions about it often. They're, you know, I'm gonna, she's gonna say this, and I'm gonna give her a shout out. My wife likes to the Air Force. Nomenclature for what I do is a weapon system officer. Okay, it's a back seat in the strike Eagle. It's the only fighter that we still have that's got two seats. And so wizards have been been around fighters for a long, long time. And so when you tell people, are you a pilot? Well, not really. I can fly the airplane, but I'm not the primary actuator of the flight controls, right? Well, that doesn't go as well as Robin then always stands up and goes, he's goose, and everybody knows what that is. I take a little offense to it, because in the first movie bites it, Goose didn't do a whole lot, you know, he was more like a high speed cheerleader, and which, in that aircraft, in the F 14, the rear cockpit was the sole operator of the radar. So all those intercepts that you know, Maverick was right up until the fight, where they started dog fighting. That was goose in the in the second movie, you know, there was, there was Bob. So I haven't had anybody call me Bob yet. I'm sure after this, there's going to be a lot of people that do that, but, but those things are, are exactly, and there's a lot of tie ins to those, right, like the the movies are important because you can see a little bit of it, and it might not be a documentary. If you want a documentary on fighter aviation, there's tons of exist, yeah, but they don't sell as well as one of those major cinematic movies. You can't eat popcorn while you're doing it. You know, it's got this whole entourage around it, and it's important for people to see those things. Just like it's important for people in my in my mind, again, not about me, right? But what I like about coming back is people can see the fact that this is available from Louisiana Tech. I can go do something like that from Louisiana Tech. Things that when I was growing up in downsville, I never thought in there was that was so far off? Yeah, there's no way I could ever get to that. That's almost impossible. I don't I don't know what the barriers to entry are. I don't know, you know who I would call. And so now we can help people with those things. Yeah, but back to the movie. The interesting thing about that was that one out of all the things that we could have another conversation about whether or not it was accurate. That final strike scene. You know, when they're they're rolling it, what we call rolling down the chute, right? So they pull over and they're going into the thing, they're getting ready to drop bombs, the target pod, work that he was doing in the rear cockpit trying to lays those weapons in that was actually fairly well done, because that was a laser guided bomb that he was trying to employ and put into that that area, those things are phenomenally accurate the the ones shown in that movie, and how he was kind of fighting the pod, and the pod broke track it was doing that, that that's all happened. That happens more often than you would think, and that's exactly why there's a second crew member and a lot of these fighters, because that is a operating that targeting pod is a full time job, and operating the multiple sensors that you have on the aircraft. Because there's there's

an air to air radar, an air to ground radar, there's a data link, there's a target pod, there's targeting the weapons, those related laser guided weapons, other weapons are GPS aided, and so you have to talk to the jet to tell the bomb where to go based off coordinates. And all that stuff is happening in about that time. Yeah, you know. So that was, that was a good depiction of how long it takes what the attack runs going to look like, and the end game between rolling in on target and weapons employment, and then weapons employment to weapon impact. So that was, that was really well done,

Gavin Kelly
and that any guys like you in the plane, yeah, that's why there's that's why sometimes you need two people in a seat, exactly. Well, thanks for that. Yeah, maybe we do need to have you back one day and talk about kind of Air Force and military depiction and in media. Because, you know, you think about movies, think about video games, even you think about, you know, people growing up and that being their primary exposure to, you know, military life and culture. And, you know, it's it. It has a purpose in recruiting, I'd imagine, too. And, you know, so, yeah, maybe we need to dive into that a little deeper one day. But yeah, as for today, I appreciate you stopping by. Thanks for making time for us. I've enjoyed this conversation a lot. And you know, as you, I guess, continue to kind of navigate being, you know, still in military service, but also having kind of more solid roots here than I guess, like you said, you've been used to for a long period of your life. We're glad to have you, and thanks for everything. And Go Dogs, right? Go detachment 305,

Justin Reynolds
yeah, go. Dogs, man, we're looking forward to it. Thanks.

Gavin Kelly
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