

## MILITARY

# Creating Opportunities

Mark Schwartz, Lt Gen, USA, U.S. Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority, Jerusalem

Interviewed by: Douglas Lindsay

**Schwartz:** Thank you for talking to me today. I've done a couple of engagements with West Point, with Georgetown University, not only with my job I have over here but with general leadership discussions. Any chance I get to talk to future leaders of the armed forces, I enjoy doing so. I think many of my experiences and lessons I have learned leading and following excellent leaders in the military are relevant to the civilian sector.

**Lindsay:** I appreciate that. One of the things I am trying to do with the Journal of Character & Leadership Development (JCLD), is reach out to external individuals, leaders, and thought leaders, and bring that phenomenal information in, but also, use it as a forum to bring the information, the resources, and the research that we are doing at the Academy, out to larger audiences. With that in mind, do you mind taking a few minutes and walk through how you got from where you began to where you are now, and maybe share some of the leadership lessons along the way

**Schwartz:** I was first exposed to the United States military through my grandfather who was a World War Two veteran. He didn't do any heavy fighting but his service certainly spurred my interest as a young child playing army,

---

Lieutenant General **Mark C. Schwartz**, U.S. Army, currently serves as the United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Prior to arriving to the United States Embassy Jerusalem, LTG Schwartz served as the Deputy Commanding General, Joint Special Operations Command. His other general officer assignments include; Commander, Special Operations Command Europe, Deputy Commanding General for Maneuver, 1st Cavalry Division and Deputy Commander Special Operations Joint Task Force - Afghanistan. A career Special Forces officer, prior to being promoted to brigadier general, LTG Schwartz served in Special Operations key developmental command and staff assignments including; Chief of Staff, Joint Special Operations Command; Commander, 3rd Special Forces Group; Commander, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan; Director of Operations, Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command - Afghanistan; Deputy Commander for Operations, CJSOTF-A; Executive Officer and Deputy Commander, 3rd Special Forces Group; Commander, 4th Battalion 1st Special Warfare Training Group; Special Operations Plans Officer, Joint Forces Command Brunssum the Netherlands NATO. He is a graduate of the Navy War College, Newport, RI and the Command and General Staff College, Leavenworth, KS. He attended Idaho State University majoring in Finance and was commissioned an Armor second lieutenant in December 1987 through Army ROTC.

and I was always interested in the armed forces. When I went to college at Idaho State University, I didn't join ROTC right away. However, one of my closest friends at the time was in ROTC and I also had the ROTC department's Professor of Military Science (PMS) in one of my business courses. So, I was approached and solicited by the PMS and then my good friend also talked to me about ROTC. I was interested in the military and I was also looking for financial assistance at the time, so I decided to meet with the PMS. As a result, I joined kind of late as a college student, in the spring of my junior year.

I immediately loved being in ROTC. I went off to a spring camp with the ROTC Department and what really struck me was the prior service non-commissioned officers (NCOs) who were in the ROTC Department. It was a small unit, but the prior service ROTC cadets were very focused, they knew what they wanted to do academically, and they knew what they wanted to do professionally in the Army as well. That really took me as I had a new set of peers to try and emulate. Also, we had a senior noncommissioned officer within the ROTC department, MSG Frank Fish, who was a Green Beret and who had also served in the Delta Force. He was a pretty inspiring guy to hang around with as a young cadet just trying to learn about the Army and the Army Green Berets. I went to ROTC Basic camp the summer of my junior year and got evaluated at Fort Knox, Kentucky and I did surprisingly very well on my leadership evaluations, physical fitness tests, and other evaluated tasks over the six week course. After that first spring of ROTC and Basic camp, I really felt I had direction and so I seized on it. It really is interesting as I go back and I look at my academic performance up to that time in ROTC and thereafter, and it changed a lot of things for me. It really provided focus for me academically as well. I wish I would have joined ROTC as a freshman, I would certainly have had a better GPA given the direction and focus being in ROTC gave me. I was really gung-ho, I went to the advance camp the

next summer and became the Regimental Commander for my ROTC Department.

I wanted to go on active duty as an infantry officer. However, I ended up declining to go on active duty and I decided to go into the National Guard because of the relationship I was in at the time. Shortly thereafter, that relationship ended and I seriously thought about resigning my commission, enlist, and compete for the ranger option program to get on active duty. Fortunately, my PMS and a couple of ROTC instructors convinced me that would not be a good idea to do. They told me to just hang in there, stay an officer and I could compete to go on active duty when I went to my Armor basic course. So, I did that. I went to my basic course in August of 1988.

They had a program where they were selecting a few officers in each class who wanted to compete to earn an active duty commission. I was already commissioned, but I did apply and based on my order of merit in the class and my selection board interviews, I got selected. I went from the basic course and went to Korea. In terms of my first influence, I did not have the best leadership at the unit level. My first company commander was not considered the best company commander in the battalion, let's just put it that way. I very quickly did about four and a half months of platoon leader time and then because of Lieutenant changes in our company, I became the Executive Officer. So, for many tasks I was running the company, not just as the senior maintenance officer and the senior lieutenant all of a sudden, but because of my company commander's challenges with leadership. That was a very challenging time for me but I also learned a heck of a lot for a young officer.

It was in Korea also that I decided that I wanted to apply for Special Forces at my first opportunity. I had a recruiting team, a captain, and a warrant officer from the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) who came

over because Group's geographic orientation includes Korea, the Korean peninsula and East Asia. I went to the Special Forces information briefing and as soon as I could apply to Special Forces, I did. I was subsequently accepted and went through the training and education pipeline.

When I completed my tour in Korea, I went to the 509th Infantry and that was my first exposure to being a part of an elite unit and being around some superb officers and NCOs. The NCOs I had in Korea were great too, and I would say that what's influenced me the most as a junior leader. I've had some great officers to look up to, but I think I paid a lot of attention early in my career and listened closely to noncommissioned officers that have either been my platoon sergeant, my section sergeant, or company first sergeant. They had a significant impact on my early career development as well as how I lead now as a senior leader. I got to go to airborne school and jump into training rotations and just be around some superb NCOs, many who had been in the Panama Invasion because they were from the 373rd Armor and a lot of Cav Scouts, the elite of the armor community, the cavalry. That had a big impression on me in terms of always wanting to try to be as good, as fast, and as confident as your NCOs. Serving with the 1-509th was my first exposure to an exceptional leader, Scott Porter, who was my company commander there and was just a true armor officer and a true professional. He taught me a lot about officership. I also had exceptional battalion commanders at the 509th. Over three years, I had three different battalion commanders and they were all remarkable. They set such a good example for all the lieutenants and captains. It was at the 1-509th that my last battalion commander, Col Mike Cummings, encouraged me to follow my pursuit in Special Forces. That wasn't the case of a lot of infantry officers at the time but he helped me out, made sure I was physically ready, and just gave me full support. So I was selected, and went to the qualification course. It was there at the 509th too, that I met my wife Alison, so a lot of

super things happened there. Change in branch, start of a life together with my wife, and exposure to some exceptional leaders.

After the Q (qualification) course I went off to the 5th Special Forces Group and did my captain time there with 5th Group at Fort Campbell. From there, this was the first time, not knowing it, that I was exposed to mentorship and how important it is. It's not just your performance and potential but those leaders who identify talent and potential in subordinates and guide them, sponsor them, and mentor them even when they don't know it. So, I had a former battalion commander who was working at U.S. Army Personnel Command, now Human Resources Command, and when he left battalion command 5th Special Forces Group he took over as the Special Forces branch chief and he pulled me up there to be the future readiness officer of the branch, and then an assignment officer. That was a really important developmental assignment for me and I use that experience even now as a Lieutenant General. Understanding how to manage the talent of the officers who I was responsible for, and again as important, recognizing that all things aren't equal and not everybody is right for every job. But Col Joe Whitley was a true mentor before I even understood what mentorship meant as a young officer. His replacement, Colonel Charlie King, also had a significant impact on me. He taught me to never complain about how hard your are working, the importance of putting the nation and the Army ahead of your loyalty to your unit and your peers in the loyalty hierarchy. The loyalty to the nation and the institution are paramount.

When I left there, I went to Fort Leavenworth to Staff College then I went right back to 5th Group as a major. I did my key developmental assignments in 5th Special Forces Group. That was '99-2003 so Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF-1) happened there, so it was timing and opportunity. I was working as a battalion Operations Officer when 9/11 happened. We had a phenomenal group commander, who is a mentor to me

to this day, LTG (Ret) John Mulholland. I got put on an element with my battalion commander and about nine other folks, and we were the 4th team to go into Afghanistan in OEF-1. A pretty unique experience and it was my first time working with the CIA, and just a lot of firsts for all of us, and we spent about six months on the ground before we did our first rotation with one of our sister groups, the 3rd Special Forces Group. That experience was my first time in serving and leading in combat. Although I wasn't the commander, I was leading soldiers into combat, planning operations in combat, evaluating and approving tactical operations for my commander, as well as dealing with casualties both U.S. and our Afghan partners. So that experience certainly shaped me to be the leader I am today.

After that first Afghan rotation, I was supposed to leave the group and go to the Joint Readiness Training Center to be an observer controller. But I asked my boss MG (Ret) Chris Haas and LTG (Ret) Mullholland, I said, "Hey, I know what's coming next" which was Iraq, and I said, "I don't care what I do, I'd like to stay with the Group. I think I've got experience that can help us with the next effort." Low and behold, some things happened, and I became the group operations officer in charge of the overall operational planning and coordination for the Group's contribution to the initial invasion of Iraq—to that date, the largest Special Operations Task Force ever assembled to conduct combat operations. Pretty daunting. Again, opportunity to either succeed or fail, and LTG Mulholland was like "Hey Mark, you'll be fine. We'll work our way through this" So on top of the U.S SOF and conventional forces assigned to us, the Task Force we assembled included a coalition of UK Special Forces and Australian Special Forces joining our Special Operations Task Force. We were spread between southern Kuwait and Jordan to orchestrate the initial infiltrations and the initial phases of Iraq in support of the conventional ground and air component headquarters.

I forgot to mention, both my children were born in Fort Campbell too when I was in 5th Group as a captain and a major— my son and then my daughter.

I left 5th Group in the summer of 2003 after the initial invasion of Iraq. Like OEF-1 the year before, the experience was life changing for me. All along the way just incredible peers, NCOs, and senior officers— many who stayed on for that second rotation going to Iraq right out of Afghanistan. So I'd say we were relatively seasoned in terms of what we needed to do to prepare for what was ahead of us there, and the size and scope of the operation was a whole order of magnitude greater than what we had planned for in the previous years as we exercised elements of the Iraq war plan.

So, then I left the group, and I went to NATO at Joint Forces Command Brunssum in the Netherlands. This was my first assignment working with NATO and being assigned to an international four star headquarters. It was a growth experience for me. I had worked with allies before but I had never worked within the NATO command structure. I had a lot of maturing to do I realized early on, I realized that no matter how large your nation is, if you are part of NATO, every nation has got an equal vote. The good thing was that I was one of two officers in the entire 1,000-plus person headquarters that had even been to Afghanistan. NATO had taken over the Afghanistan mission, so I became the senior plans officer for ground operations planning as we were putting the concepts and plans together for International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) expansion in Afghanistan. I did that for two years. Great experience in the Netherlands

We left there as a family and I went into battalion command at Fort Bragg, NC. Most officers want to be a tactical battalion commander, which I certainly did at the time. I ended up going to a training battalion at the United States Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center School, and I oversaw all the enlisted Special Forces military occupational specialties except

for the Special Forces medics, and the battalion was also responsible for the officer training. It was a great experience. It really helped me understand how to plan and implement training and follow an education and training methodology. The environment was also a pretty high pressure and high-risk environment because you are dealing with brand new soldiers, and you are putting them through some high-risk training, especially the NCO training working with demolitions, live-fire range training, and things like that. It was a great experience for me in terms of improving my ability to assess risk, to do things to

*Now with 20 years of war since 2001, so many have sacrificed so much, and as leaders and a nation, we owe a debt of gratitude and enduring support to these service members and their families.*

mitigate it, and also deal with pressures from my chain of command. There is institutional pressure to get so many soldiers and officers through each phase of training and sometimes their leadership, physical, and/or academic performance did not warrant them going on. So there were many opportunities to support and stand alongside your noncommissioned officers and junior officer cadre who are making those evaluations and speaking truth to power. Again, a very important thing that you need to learn to do as you grow as a leader.

After LTC command, I went back to work for my former battalion commander, who I mentioned we went to Afghanistan together, became the group commander of 3rd Group. I asked him if I could come be his deputy commander of the group, which he accepted, and then we went off to combat again to Afghanistan. I left after a year and I went to the Naval War College which was a great experience, and then

I went right back to Afghanistan again standing up a new special operations headquarters there as the chief operations officer. I worked for a phenomenal two-star, then one-star General Ed Reeder, who became a mentor of mine through that experience and still is to this day. I left Afghanistan in late May 2010, and took over 3rd Special Forces Group where I was the previously the deputy just two years earlier. I went right back to Afghanistan again about nine months later to command as our O-6 level Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force headquarters. That was a stressful time for our family, as you can imagine with any family, just rotation after rotation after rotation. Three combat rotations almost back-to-back. But, I also put my experience within the context that there were so many of the noncommissioned officers and junior officers that from the outset of OEF in 2001, never left the groups and just kept going back to Afghanistan, Iraq, East Africa, the Philippines, and a few other countries as Operation Enduring Freedom and the War on Terrorism expanded. There were guys that were on their 5th and 6th rotations in a lot of cases by 2010. Now with 20 years of war since 2001, so many have sacrificed so much, and as leaders and a nation, we owe a debt of gratitude and enduring support to these service members and their families.

Both as a deputy commander and when I was the group commander dealing with Gold Star families, you know the loss of your mates who get killed in combat, life changing and some devastating injuries, helping families through these life changing experiences, their grief, and trying to find peace, was life changing for me as well. Anybody will tell you that it's much easier to deal with these experiences when you are deployed in combat because it happens, it's an event, it's horrible, you grieve and then you must get on with the mission. When you are home, it's your responsibility to care for the families of the units that are affected by these losses and it's much more emotionally draining on you

and harder on the unit overall. It's a really important part of what you are asked to do as a leader. When newly commissioned lieutenants are told "Hey you are being put in charge of the lives of America's sons and daughters," it's true, and unless you deal with a non-combat loss in your unit from training or suicide, you don't get that experience that you do in combat. It is our most important and sacred responsibility as leaders.

After group command I got to do something really neat. I'd worked with the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) from 2001-2012, but I'd never served within the Joint Special Operations Command, our nation's elite organization. I got to be part of a proof of concept where they took me as a Green Beret to be the Chief of Staff, which is a pretty important job in that organization, as I learned. It was a 4-star Admiral Bill McRaven, talking with Gen Reeder who was my 2-star commander in Special Forces Command and Gen Mullholland saying they want to do some cross-pollination of some senior leaders. I went and I was the chief, worked for a great leader, General Joe Votel—he retired as the CENTCOM commander a few years ago. It wasn't sink or swim but it was "Who is this guy who didn't grow up in the Delta Force, Seal Team Six, or the Ranger Regiment, and he is coming to be the chief?" But it went great, and I learned so much. I had a phenomenal mentor in a guy called Don Plater, who was a retired colonel, and he was my Deputy Chief of Staff. On day one he goes "Two things, I'm successful if you are never surprised and if you succeed." I was totally set up for success as you can imagine. He was just wonderful. He was a mentor to me, even though technically he was my subordinate, he was certainly more senior to me by about eight years. He knew the command extremely well, and as a government civilian, he really set me up so well. That is where I got promoted to General Officer and I went as a brand-new GO right back to Afghanistan to be the Deputy Commander at our Special Operations Task Force. That was a great assignment. It was 2014-2015.

I went from there to another broadening assignment. As a SF general officer, I went to the largest armor division in the free world, the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood Texas and served there as Deputy Commander for Operations. That was great. I got to be back in touch with young conventional soldiers. I left the conventional Army, I guess you would say in the summer of 1990, and I didn't return until 2015. Twenty-five years later I returned to the conventional Army, I had not interacted with conventional units daily for more than two decades. I learned so much professionally and I thoroughly enjoyed being around so many young soldiers and leaders.

I left 1st CAV in 2016 and took command of Special Operations Command Europe (SOCUER) for two years in Stuttgart, Germany, which has responsibility for the European theatre. Commanding a theater Special Operations Command was a very comfortable leadership assignment for me.

By the time you are a colonel, you are very comfortable because you are the senior individual in your organization at the brigade or group level. As a colonel you are often more senior than your command sergeant major. At the tactical level, you feel pretty good because there is not much you haven't seen at that point. You've dealt with all the tough ethical dilemmas that young soldiers go through and family members go through and life experiences that they deal with, and you can handle it well.

At the two-star level command, that is where I felt most comfortable leading as a general officer. Mainly because I had superb senior noncommissioned officers working side by side with me and phenomenal senior leaders who developed me up to that point to include Gen Votel, Gen Tony Thomas, MG Reeder, MG Haas, and LTG Mulholland, who is retiring me by the way in December. The investment these leaders made in me, the potential they saw in me, and their sponsorship,

allowed me to serve the Army, Special Operations, and our nation at the rank I am today.

Maybe it was part of professional growth, but I think once you become relied upon and you prove yourself, additional opportunities come. But the key thing for leaders is they've got to create those opportunities for their subordinates. It is one of the things that I loved, and I really started doing it consciously as a senior colonel. It was probably at the Joint Special Operations Command, even after group command because I was just so busy as a group commander, But, little things like a junior officer needing a letter because he wants to go to advanced civil schooling; or an officer or NCO needs a letter because they want to go to a specific unit; or a soldier wants to change careers and he just needs that vote of confidence that you are not abandoning the unit or the branch because they decide to go off and do something else. Leaders must foster and encourage subordinates to pursue their professional passions and ensure they support what is best for soldiers and their families.

*...so I'm focused on doing things to advocate for female leadership - especially in male dominated organizations. Advocating for women in leadership is important to me and to our society. I will continue be a strong advocate no matter what I do after the military.*

Senior leaders have the responsibility to create those opportunities if performance and potential warrant it. That is important. I've loved doing that and I've expanded it. I'm more focused probably because I have two nieces who are serving right now. One is an Air Force Academy graduate, the other is a West

Point graduate. My daughter will be graduating ROTC following her dad next May, so I'm focused on doing things to advocate for female leadership - especially in male dominated organizations. Advocating for women in leadership is important to me and to our society. I will continue be a strong advocate no matter what I do after the military.

But after SOCUER, and I was there for two years until 2018, I went back to the Joint Special Operations Command to be the Deputy Commanding General, where I was previously the Chief of Staff. Again, I was real comfortable because as the chief, I worked very closely with the deputy on many of the same responsibilities so it was like coming home. Great folks there.

Another key thing I would say is when you join a new organization and you don't have the historical credibility because you didn't grow up in that organization, it takes a little while to have the bona fides to speak up confidently and be taken seriously. I think

that based on how I performed as the Chief of Staff, when I came back as the Deputy it truly was an easy transition. I handled things that came up, that maybe people needed to hear but didn't want to. That is something that I really cherished as a senior leader there. You are not there to be popular, you are there to make the organization better, drive down risk and hopefully keep people alive when they conduct operations. I left JSOC after just a year and came to this job, where I'm at now. I came here in 2019 as the security coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and this is the truly highest, in terms of strategic level I've worked. It's pretty unique. I was just with the Prime Minister today of the Palestinian Authority and I interact with the Israeli senior leadership, not political but military leadership and I have a coalition of seven other NATO allies that are part of the group. We

are not a NATO mission, but they are all coincident NATO allies, as part of the mission. So that is unique leadership opportunity, fostering that coalition while everybody has their own national objectives trying to keep everybody together. It is the unity of effort of what we are trying to achieve on behalf of our respective nations and to help the Palestinians too with their security institutions. It's just a fascinating place to work culturally, religiously and the security portfolio we are working on. One of my responsibilities here as the senior military officer, even though I'm not the senior defense official in title, is to educate our inter-agency partners who haven't worked too much with the military on what we're about, and all about teamwork and being inclusive. I just in-briefed my Chief of Staff yesterday and I said "Look, we always have to go that 50-60% over the line and go out of our way to be as inclusive as possible, we can't expect others to do that for us. That's what we pride ourselves in." It has been great. It's a great assignment to finish up my uniformed service to our nation. It's unique and something I'll certainly cherish when I depart. That is a quick rundown, probably more than you wanted.

**Lindsay:** That's great. I've been doing this leadership thing for a long time, and what I've learned is there is truth in the journey and how somebody got to where they were is not by accident, not by happenstance. For some of us, it seems like dumb luck. We got into opportunities where timing and persistence paid off. I like hearing about the journey because by being able to walk through that, we hear the factual but we also get to hear the contextual and that sometimes is lost without conversations like these. What I heard you say as you walked through each of those assignments is two things. The first is the power of the people and the relationships around us and what kind of impact that can have on us. The second one was you framed

every opportunity that came along or every assignment that came along as an opportunity. As a learning development type of approach where I'm sure that in the moment for each one of those assignments, it may not have been a "Wow, I get to go do this!" Some of it may have been the old salute smartly and go where they tell us to go. But as you look back on

*The most important domain, or if you want to call it environment, is the human environment. But the core competencies, the values, the character attributes that are so important that our nation expects of us as military professionals will endure. And if they don't endure, then we are going to have a problem as an institution and a nation...*

each of those, it was a learning opportunity. It was a development opportunity, and each one was significant in that development and learning. Even your phrasing of your first boss in Korea, who was probably less of a leader than they could or should have been. It wasn't a negative, it was here is what it is. Here is the opportunity I saw in that, here is the perspective, here is what I learned from that and I think that those are two very powerful themes. We've got to understand the relationships, and the influence, not only that we have on others but that others have on us. Also, looking at the challenges, because some of the situations that you were put in maybe didn't look like opportunities on the surface. They were certainly challenging, but the opportunity that came out of that to grow and develop and to be there for your people.

**Schwartz:** I would agree with every comment that you made there.

**Lindsay:** You talked about your growth as a leader, 9/11 happened, Afghanistan happened, Iraq happened, and those were certainly all growth opportunities in terms of leadership and how you had to grow, develop in those. When you think about leaders today and looking five, 10, 15 years down the road - what are some of those challenges that you are seeing? Is it more of the same in terms of what you talked about power of relationships, opportunities, etc.? What do you see when you look to the future regarding leadership and prepping people to be effective in that battlespace?

**Schwartz:** First, I think what we have learned historically in leadership, and certainly what I've experienced over the last 33 years, is going to be relevant for leaders going forward. I don't think because we talk in terms of domains now land, air, sea, cyber, and space, that that changes the leadership competencies or the core of leadership competencies that are required to be successful and lead effectively. The most important domain, or if you want to call it environment, is the human environment. But the core competencies, the values, the character attributes that are so important that our nation expects of us as military professionals will endure. And if they don't endure, then we are going to have a problem as an institution and a nation, I firmly believe that.

Another aspect is, and I tell every young group that I can, that no matter what rank you are and what position you are in, you always have to lead by personal presence and personal example. When an individual makes a conscious decision that because they are a staff officer or they assess they are too senior that they feel that they don't have to do that, then it's probably the time that they need to step away from our profession as military professionals. If there is one thing that resonates with subordinates, it doesn't matter if you are a young lieutenant or young sergeant, you as a leader, at every level, are taking on the same responsibilities, sharing the same risks, burdens, and hardships as those that you lead. The leader and the led.

The pace of which young soldiers can take and consume information is much greater than I could. They are tech savvy. I saw that in my multiple rotations between Iraq and Afghanistan— the leaps in technology, and the way we are able to plan and execute operations, the different resources, and enablers that are available to be successful. So, I would say that the intellectual acumen of leaders has got to be greater. If you aren't the expert, you just have to be able to recognize your weaknesses and don't be afraid to ask for those functional experts to be around you. I do it all the time. I do it in this job. That is important. What I expect of a young lieutenant today are the same things that was expected of me as a young leader. You've got to be physically fit and you've got to be competent in your profession. I was on a forum a week or so ago and we talked about all these unique attributes of good leaders. I said "Yes, I agree with all of that, but it's got to be underwritten by competence. If you are not competent, it doesn't matter how compassionate you are or how caring you are. Your subordinates expect you to have a certain level of competency for the position that you are going into." You can be stretched, I've been stretched many times as a leader in terms of the core of what I know and what I needed to know in order to make the organization successful. At the end of the day, this is a human performance profession and you've got to be able to perform and do it with the core values and character that our nation expects when we operate.

**Lindsay:** I agree. I think it's very easy to hear a narrative out there in terms of what leadership needs to look like in the future that somehow excludes what has been successful about leadership in the past. It's about taking care of your people, understanding your profession, and being competent. There certainly are some specific things that you are going to do if you are going to be leading in Special Forces, versus if you are going to be leading in the human resources domain. But I think sometimes we talk about the difference at the exclusion of the common. We carry our core values, that character, that who a person, is across domains. So,

I think it is important to understand that commonality on who we are as human beings and who we are as a profession.

While who we are doesn't change as we progress through the profession, what is needed in terms of leadership competencies are different when you are at a junior level to when you are at a more senior level. What are some of those challenges that you see at a more senior level that maybe you didn't have a good perspective on at the junior level?

**Schwartz:** There are a couple of things. Even as small as my organization is here, I deal with certain challenges. First off, the importance of, and the value of relationships becomes more and more important the more senior you get. That doesn't matter if that is in garrison or in combat. There is a common phrase that relationships between and among commanders are far more important than the command relationship, the line and block chart of an organization. You often have to go out of your way to explain what you bring to the fight and to provide that outreach to those you are working with. The more senior I've gotten, the more I work interagency, with the intelligence community, with the Department of State, with the Executive Branch, with Congress, and those relationships are extremely important especially when you are trying to convey to your higher headquarters, certainly to decision makers, on resources that you need to accomplish your mission. When you have bad things happen within your organization and there is immediate congressional oversight, the relationships that you invest in when things are going okay provide you some breathing room, and decision space and trust when things go afoul. They happen in every organization, everyone deals with it.

The other thing I would say is the more senior you get, because you are not down at your tactical unit day to day, you have to continually reinforce the direction

you are trying to take the organization, the priorities of the organization within that direction, and you've got to make yourself available and approachable. Because there is this myth out there, and I do believe it is a myth, I believe that any good senior leader would agree. The myth goes like this, "Oh sir, thanks for taking the time, I know you are so busy" but I'm like "No, I'm really not. Honestly I'm less busy now than I was as a group operations officer, or the operations officer for 10,000 person organization than I am as a commander or a coordinator or even as a GO in general." I'm just not and I can always make time. You can always make time for individuals that need to come to you for guidance and for clarity. A leader can always make time. You are ultimately in control of your time. If you choose to abdicate your responsibility of controlling your time, your leadership and more importantly, your organization will suffer. I think senior leaders who are less effective - both personally and for the organization - are those who try to block every, literally every minute of their day, and they use that as a metric of success. Let me show you how much stuff I have on my calendar. I was told this by a couple of mentors one, you have to leave time to think, and two, you have to leave time for drive by's so people can come in. I've operated that way as a group commander and as a battalion commander, but as a senior leader, it is even more important because you've got to be accessible to those individuals that directly report to you. What you have to be cautious of though is, while you want to be accessible to your entire command, you also have to enforce staff discipline so that your Chief of Staff isn't left out or subordinate commanders are left out because you went down three or four levels. I've done this personally, and I've talked to a leader at let's say the O3 level and that circles back up to his or her O5 or O6 commander and they are like "Hey sir, I wish you would have informed me that you provided that guidance to Capt. Jones." But I find that even with even 60 people, I mistakenly think I'm being perfectly clear on things, but you've got to go back around and not get upset that is the key thing too.

You've got to realize that everybody doesn't hear things the same way, and even two people in the same room can get different interpretations all the time.

I think those are some key things that the more senior you get, that I've learned. Another thing you have to guard yourself about is, and you've heard this I'm sure, is you are always being watched. Always, always, always. Not like somebody is trying to get something on the boss, but everybody is watching. They listen to what you say even in casual conversations.

**Lindsay:** Thank you for your thoughts and perspective. I know you have a lot of choices with how you spend your time so I appreciate you taking the time.

**Schwartz:** This is the right choice spending time with you. One last thing that I wanted to share that is really important. Recognition costs a leader nothing. That is something that has been a pet peeve of mine since I've been a young officer. If someone is deserving, it doesn't matter what their rank is or whatever, it makes a huge impact on the individual and the organization, if it is warranted. People need to be more forthcoming with recognition to their subordinates.

**Lindsay:** That is important. Like you said, for a leader it costs nothing, but for the individual that is receiving that it can be everything because it could be a recognition, or a validation of what I'm doing and what I'm contributing to. Often people work for a long time in very austere conditions because its important and there is value in it. But recognition from an authentic standpoint really can do a lot to the human condition in terms of building trust, building teamwork and helping people endure five or six back to back deployments that we've all seen people do over and over again.

♦ ♦ ♦