

WEBVTT

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<v SPEAKER_1>In this episode of Defence Deconstructed, which we recorded on the 10th of March, 2026, we're talking to Lieutenant Colonel Matt Cochrane to discuss his position as the first Canadian Air Division's A2, the Chief of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Division, including the role of the intelligence branch and how it's adapting to new technologies and intelligence needs in an ever-involving defence environment.

00:00:24.140 --> 00:00:26.120

<v SPEAKER_1>Colonel Cochrane, welcome to Defence Deconstructed.

00:00:26.820 --> 00:00:27.760

<v SPEAKER_1>Hi, good morning.

00:00:28.860 --> 00:00:35.940

<v SPEAKER_1>So, we're going to have you on to talk a little bit about your actual job as an intelligence officer with 1 Canadian Air Division.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But before we get into that, just give us a little bit about yourself and how you came to be in that position.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Sure.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, I'm Lieutenant Colonel Matt Cochrane.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm an RCAF intelligence officer.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, Royal Canadian Air Force, just I'll make sure I at least say them the first time I do it.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, so I joined the military at 18, coming out of high school.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I went to Royal Military College in Kingston.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Originally, I had intended to be an infantry officer, because that's what an 18-year-old wants to do.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then I really injured my knee playing rugby, and that put an end to that.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, I ended up as an intelligence officer.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think it was a really good switch, to be honest with you.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, I was a history major in university, and I was always very interested in both history and problem-solving, and understanding people's motivations behind the things that they do, and finding those sort of like patterns is too strong, but like the links between the context of why people decide to act the way they do.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so, by the time I finished that degree program, I kind of already knew that I wanted to be an intelligence officer, and it took a little bit more time to work through the administrative systems of leaving one occupation and joining another.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I ended up here, and I've been really enjoying it ever since.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, I finished my intelligence training around 2010, bounced around.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I did some time in Trenton at Eight Wing, doing air mobility intelligence, so supporting Hercules and C-17 Globemasters flying around the world for about four years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I did three years at the Joint Meteorological Centre in Gagetown.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, I've kind of split my career about 50-50 between hard intelligence, air force work, and supporting the meteorology function.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I was then in Cold Lake, Alberta for three years supporting fighter operations there.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then I did another three years as the commandant of the Meteorology School here in Winnipeg.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so since this last summer, I've been here at 1 Canadian Air Division as the Senior Intelligence Officer.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And so for folks that don't have that understanding like myself, like what does that entail?

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<v SPEAKER_1>What does that position look like for the command?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, that's a good question.

00:02:36.240 --> 00:02:37.280

<v SPEAKER_2>For the division, I guess.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, so while I'm the Senior Intelligence Officer for the division, under the Continental Staff System, that's the A2.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so that's really the position title that I would most commonly go by.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I also, like many people in the headquarters, I have two hats.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I sort of have this A2 Staff Officer role, which is really more about the policy of how we do intelligence across the division.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I don't set those policies necessarily, but I interpret the policies from the Chief of Defense and Intelligence and I sort of do the management and oversight of how that's conducted across the whole division.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That's sort of my staff role.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I'm doing a lot of coordinating of priorities, working together across the division at all the different wings that have their own intelligence sections.

00:03:17.640 --> 00:03:20.660

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm in contact with them and keeping us all working together towards the same goals.

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<v SPEAKER_2>In addition to that, however, I'm also the Chief of our Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Division of the Air Operations Centre.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So 1 Canadian Air Division in and of itself has multiple hats, but I think Major General McKenna has about 4.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I also share some of his 4 hats in terms of the scope.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So whereas my A2 job is very much about policy and staff work supporting the commander working across the division, my Chief ISR, so Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Division, role is about current intelligence.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So whether that's 24-7 support to our Canadian NORAD region responsibilities, or whether that's supporting our Canadian Joint Operations Command in Ottawa, the CJOC, our force employers, my boss, General McKenna, is also the Air Component Commander for CJOC.

00:04:10.520 --> 00:04:12.720

<v SPEAKER_2>So I am his Senior INTO for that as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So when we have aircraft doing UN missions in Africa, for example, it's my team that is coordinating their air threat assessments to ensure that when they go at the door, they know what kind of the context of the missions they're flying in.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Or a more timely example would be with everything going on in the Middle East the last week or so, when we have government contingency planning, what if we need to evacuate Canadians from places in all these countries over the Middle East right now?

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<v SPEAKER_2>When they start asking, okay, well, what if we used aircraft?

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's my team's job to sort of pivot to, hey, what country

are you looking at today?

00:04:44.880 --> 00:04:48.520

<v SPEAKER_2>Let's put together an air threat assessment to say, what kind of environment is this?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then someone else can decide, is it feasible to use aircraft in this kind of environment?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What kind of aircraft?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What kind of mitigating steps would they need to take to do it safely?

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<v SPEAKER_2>So there's very much a global scope to between 24-7 NORAD focused operations to looking at any RCAF operation that could happen around the globe that still falls kind of on my team.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Practically, how does that actually shake out in terms of what you and your team would focus on between the, so recognizing the many hats and part of it is global, which is continuous dynamics and the other part is a more focused North American mission set, recognizing that that's got global connectivity too.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Like what is, in terms of your day-to-day, what does that look like in terms of how time and resources get a portion between those different hats?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, that's a great question.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So dynamic is the right word for it.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I would say it shifts in response to need.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So if you asked me a month ago, I was very focused in my A2 role on modernization initiatives.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What are we gonna do to get our people better prepared for this return to great power competition?

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the world we're living in is getting more dangerous and more complex.

00:05:56.840 --> 00:05:59.520

<v SPEAKER_2>And how do I get my team better prepared to deal with that?

00:05:59.520 --> 00:06:01.520

<v SPEAKER_2>That was very much what my focus was a month ago.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But obviously, in the last week, I wouldn't say it's taking a backseat, but it's not the imminent immediate priority that occupies all of my time anyway.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But whether it's my personal time or my team's time, we kind of apportion the resources as are required by the mission set.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I always have 24-7 coverage looking at NORAD stuff because that mission never sleeps.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We have pilots on alert all day every day, and my team is supporting them at the operational level.

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<v SPEAKER_2>When it comes to what's happening around the world, they have a second team that does looking at that global thing.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So whether that's doing horizon scanning, we'll call it, where you're looking at, hey, what's the next hotspots?

00:06:39.740 --> 00:06:41.080

<v SPEAKER_2>What are the things we're worried about?

00:06:41.160 --> 00:06:44.200

<v SPEAKER_2>Or whether that's planning for our next upcoming operation.

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<v SPEAKER_2>If we have a, we call it, they call it episodic rotation of missions that we send over to Africa to support the UN.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So in the months leading up to a new rotation of that

mission, we'll be relooking at our air threat assessments, making sure everything's up to date, making sure those pilots go out the door with the most up-to-date information, making sure the planners here have the most up-to-date threat information they need.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Same thing would apply to operation reassurance in Latvia.

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<v SPEAKER_2>When we have ships that deploy with helicopters embarked, we're still doing the air threat assessments for those as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So looking at whether it's the Mediterranean, the Indo-Pacific, I have a team that kind of does that.

00:07:18.320 --> 00:07:25.240

<v SPEAKER_2>And I would say, you know, the last week, they've been very focused on sort of, you know, contingency planning, what's happening in the Middle East, and what does it mean for us.

00:07:26.380 --> 00:07:34.560

<v SPEAKER_1>Team 212CD brings together Germany, Norway, and Canada in a uniquely integrated submarine partnership, one that is already underway and already producing.

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<v SPEAKER_1>At its core stands TKMS, the world's most experienced builder of conventional submarines, offering Canada a low-risk, NATO-aligned, and economically transformative solution.

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<v SPEAKER_1>This is not a paper concept.

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<v SPEAKER_1>This is a proven program, a live production line, and a generational opportunity for Canada's economy and sovereignty.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Quested Allies, world-class platform, generational benefits.

00:07:56.880 --> 00:07:58.920

<v SPEAKER_1>Team 212CD for Canada.

00:08:01.840 --> 00:08:10.460

<v SPEAKER_1>I think we're going to work our way back to the comment you made about sort of re-adapting to the new strategic environment we're in right now with great power competition.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But maybe just before we get to that, just talk a little bit about the intelligence function within the CAF and what that actually looks like.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Then we can talk a little bit about how it's changing given the evolving environment.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:08:22.660 --> 00:08:26.660

<v SPEAKER_2>Talking pan-CAF a little bit, not quite by wheelhouse, but just to give some context.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The intelligence branch is growing significantly, and that's in response to need and in response to changes in the nature of warfare.

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<v SPEAKER_2>As things have become more data-centric, as we have more ability to collect vast amounts of information, it simply just takes more people to process all of that and use it to come to accurate conclusions about what's going on in the world around us.

00:08:50.320 --> 00:09:05.780

<v SPEAKER_2>There's an element of as things get more confusing as well, as things get more complicated, it takes more brain power to figure out how can we contextualize this to make sense of it and use it to predict what an adversary group might do next, for example.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So that's a branch-wide issue.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the Canadian Forces Intelligence Command is how the branch is run to do all that.

00:09:13.460 --> 00:09:19.340

<v SPEAKER_2>My piece of it is within the Air Force specifically, at 1 Canadian Air Division.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we're very focused on, I already covered the hats.

00:09:22.600 --> 00:09:24.400

<v SPEAKER_2>It's very much, what's the threat to North America?

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<v SPEAKER_2>That is priority 1.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So that's sort of that NORAD mission of like, what are we looking at that can reach out and touch us here at home?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then the next part of that is, okay, when we go to operate internationally, what are the things that can reach out and touch our people and our equipment in those international contexts?

00:09:39.260 --> 00:09:52.920
<v SPEAKER_2>Then the third step of that is like, okay, in places we aren't operating yet, but that we are looking at saying, hey, this might become a problem if the day comes where the government is asking us to go somewhere and do a thing, and I haven't looked at it already, I'm going to be behind the 8-ball.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The time it takes my team to do research to come up with a good, well-thought out air threat assessment, we need to be ahead on a lot of those things.

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<v SPEAKER_2>A lot of the time, it's us looking at where are hotspots that we think the government might be involved in, and then we try to predict, spend a little bit of time at least warming our own curves that if someone asks us for it, we're ready to go faster.

00:10:13.640 --> 00:10:14.560
<v SPEAKER_1>Is your reflection on that?

00:10:14.640 --> 00:10:30.140
<v SPEAKER_1>Do you think, is there part of that remit that you think could be better understood both with your colleagues, across the right or defence establishment, or folks outside of government, about how that function of intelligence works in a military context in Canada?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, that's a good question.

00:10:32.780 --> 00:10:46.220
<v SPEAKER_2>And so I'll preface it by saying, when I speak about intelligence, I'm really just talking about military intelligence, which is a subset that looks specifically at adversary nations and other military threats, and some non-military threats as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But this is not a CSIS thing.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The CSIS has their own mandate, and I won't tread in that space.

00:10:52.120 --> 00:10:54.600

<v SPEAKER_2>I think a lot of it right now is the world has changed a lot.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think even thinking back to when I joined the CAF, which was just a couple of months before 9-11, there was obviously a very set context to the first 15 years of my career, which was about us being over there on the other side of the planet, being involved in operations, that well, there was a terrorist threat at home.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There wasn't really a military threat for us at home.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think that we have a whole generation of people that grew up with that as their context, and decades now of politicians living in that world set.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think what's changed is, and I think the Chief of Defense staff and the Minister of Defense have highlighted this stuff a lot, is that we're looking at a return to great power competition and what does that mean from a military perspective?

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think it can sometimes look like us wanting war, but that's definitely not the case.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's about deterrence and about us being ready if we're called upon to defend the country.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so I think what's changed a lot is the threat to North America is much more real and present than it was in the past.

00:11:51.780 --> 00:11:55.580

<v SPEAKER_2>And this is a combination of changes in technology, this return to great power competition.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We're not talking about deterring a terrorist group.

00:11:59.220 --> 00:12:03.800

<v SPEAKER_2>We're talking about deterring another great power in the world, which is a very different mission set.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think we're starting to see that now across politics.

00:12:07.680 --> 00:12:10.260

<v SPEAKER_2>We're seeing a lot of politicians picking up that sort of that those threads.

00:12:10.260 --> 00:12:13.180

<v SPEAKER_2>And certainly the current government also seems to be taking it very seriously.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And you can see it with how they're investing in defence.

00:12:16.720 --> 00:12:23.960

<v SPEAKER_2>And holistically, I think, too, not just defences in our CAF apparatus, but more broadly, what does defence mean across the country.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the intelligence role is helping to set the context behind why we're doing that.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think it's a lot easier to understand when the government talks about needing to modernize NORAD, for example.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Understanding the nature of that NORAD threat is really, really important.

00:12:38.260 --> 00:12:51.900

<v SPEAKER_2>And one of the things I'm really happy to see in the last, just even just the last 12 months is NORAD press releases when they put out about, hey, you know, we just intercepted Russian bombers, you know, off the coast of Northern Canada or off the coast of Alaska.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It used to be, even going back a year ago, you'd kind of get maybe, hey, we conducted intercept and it was two Russian aircraft.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that was about all that ever really came out.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Even just in the last six to 12 months, what is being put out open source is, you know, it'll break down exactly how many aircraft there were, what airframes they were, what aircraft we used to intercept them.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And lays out a little bit more clearly what exactly is going on, which I think gives context to people about the nature of the threat we're facing.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Is part of the dynamic, just to focus on that idea, like what the challenge is specifically with the gray power competition environment.

00:13:25.160 --> 00:13:29.240

<v SPEAKER_1>I mean, I think part of it, you touched on this a little bit, it's a changed geographic scope.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So, previous strategic and threat dynamics were, was it over there, relatively localized, there was concern about ability to reach back to North America.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But that was more of a public safety, national security kind of frame than a military one, given the kind of actors.

00:13:44.280 --> 00:13:48.460

<v SPEAKER_1>But great powers have many more instruments of statecraft that they can employ.

00:13:48.960 --> 00:14:07.120

<v SPEAKER_1>And the division between a military specific problem set and some other national security or wider other government actors' problem set is a little less clean, at least in my abstract, because a bunch of them employ numerous tools of statecraft in ways that are interrelated.

00:14:07.880 --> 00:14:11.040

<v SPEAKER_1>And it strikes me that maybe makes your problem slightly messier.

00:14:11.860 --> 00:14:12.720

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, absolutely.

00:14:12.720 --> 00:14:16.800

<v SPEAKER_2>And so I think I'll put this in the context of, let's

just think about it for NORAD context first.

00:14:16.880 --> 00:14:18.600

<v SPEAKER_2>I think it's a useful way to think about it.

00:14:19.000 --> 00:14:23.980

<v SPEAKER_2>So what I'll call NORAD classic is all about nuclear threats.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so it was about this nuclear triad and how do we stop Russian bombers from flying over the country, maybe intercept intercontinental ballistic missiles.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that was sort of for like 50 years, that was the threat.

00:14:36.380 --> 00:14:45.000

<v SPEAKER_2>And as the threat of nuclear war diminished over the course of the Cold War and the Cold War slowing down, I wouldn't say it went away.

00:14:45.000 --> 00:14:46.620

<v SPEAKER_2>We're still on alert every day.

00:14:47.160 --> 00:14:48.200

<v SPEAKER_2>But it was less of a focus.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think people were less concerned certainly about a nuclear war breaking out over the last 20 years than maybe they are right now.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But in addition to that, what's changed a lot technologically is the conventional threat from those same platforms has really increased.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So where 40 years ago we were really only talking about like nuclear bombs being dropped off of a Russian bomber.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Now we're talking about long range conventional cruise missiles that present a threat.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the idea being some of these adversaries like Russia now have the capability to reach out and touch us in a way that

wouldn't trigger a nuclear war, which makes it more palatable and a more realistic option for them to have.

00:15:25.480 --> 00:15:28.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Does that mean I'm worried about them shooting us with a cruise missile tomorrow?

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<v SPEAKER_2>No, not necessarily.

00:15:29.720 --> 00:15:37.960

<v SPEAKER_2>But we need to be prepared for the possibility, especially with the powder keg that is Eastern Europe right now in Ukraine, the powder keg that is the Middle East.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Like we've seen from, this is my history major coming out, we've seen historically like these triggers can lead to unintended consequences.

00:15:44.840 --> 00:15:49.540

<v SPEAKER_2>You can find yourselves embroiled in a much bigger war than you thought you were going to be going in.

00:15:49.720 --> 00:16:19.320

<v SPEAKER_2>So, us being prepared to counter these conventional threats from these, what were traditionally, whether it's Russian submarines, whether it's air-launched cruise missiles from Russian bombers, whether it is intercontinental ballistic missiles, or sort of more modern is like hypersonic cruise missiles that can travel at lower altitude, making them harder to detect, at less predictable flight paths, making them much more complicated to be in the right place at the right time compared to a traditional ballistic missile.

00:16:19.460 --> 00:16:22.040

<v SPEAKER_2>It really complicates our defensive picture.

00:16:22.040 --> 00:16:25.940

<v SPEAKER_2>So, being ready for that is much more difficult, much more challenging.

00:16:26.680 --> 00:16:33.700

<v SPEAKER_2>And again, I think the likelihood of it increases somewhat because it doesn't cross that threshold into nuclear war.

00:16:33.700 --> 00:16:36.840

<v SPEAKER_2>I'll pause there before I go on, because I have some other things I could talk about here too.

00:16:37.880 --> 00:16:47.860

<v SPEAKER_1>So, that part was part of what I had in mind, but also the main state actors now also employ cyber capabilities in both military and non-military contexts.

00:16:48.440 --> 00:17:00.100

<v SPEAKER_1>So, I'm imagining that in addition to just the strategic nuclear, even like tactical nuclear conventional kind of dynamic, that there's also more of a concern about broader scope of mechanisms.

00:17:00.900 --> 00:17:10.920

<v SPEAKER_1>And then there's also the whole hybrid sub-threshold kind of dynamic too, that also would bleed into some of the focus that you and your colleagues must take when looking at these different threat vectors.

00:17:11.700 --> 00:17:12.860

<v SPEAKER_2>A hundred percent, yes.

00:17:12.860 --> 00:17:19.720

<v SPEAKER_2>So I'll kind of stick to my air domain first, and then I'll bridge a little bit into the cyber and space domain stuff.

00:17:20.600 --> 00:17:28.940

<v SPEAKER_2>So when it comes to the air domain, what we've obviously seen, particularly in Ukraine, but we're seeing it spread outwards is that the change in prevalence of drones sees for warfare.

00:17:29.140 --> 00:17:43.980

<v SPEAKER_2>And one of the things we're seeing, whereas in Ukraine, we're seeing a very acute version of this where I believe drones now account for like 75 to 80% of all casualties in Ukraine, which is a wild change compared to even the beginning of that conflict where it's artillery that's doing all of the casualty making.

00:17:44.080 --> 00:17:50.500

<v SPEAKER_2>Drones are now so prevalent and being used in such a high tempo and such high saturation that it really has changed warfare.

00:17:50.500 --> 00:17:52.720

<v SPEAKER_2>Now I don't want to take that model and say it applies everywhere.

00:17:52.720 --> 00:17:53.860

<v SPEAKER_2>The time and space is different.

00:17:53.860 --> 00:18:02.880

<v SPEAKER_2>We can see obviously with what's happening in the Middle East, Iran has launched hundreds and hundreds of drones and they haven't had the same effectiveness of the drones in the Ukraine war.

00:18:03.000 --> 00:18:05.020

<v SPEAKER_2>But there's a temporal piece to that.

00:18:05.020 --> 00:18:08.800

<v SPEAKER_2>There's obviously a lot of very expensive air defense missiles being used against those drones.

00:18:08.880 --> 00:18:11.700

<v SPEAKER_2>That's not sustainable long term, which is what Ukraine discovered.

00:18:12.100 --> 00:18:15.120

<v SPEAKER_2>But in the short term, that makes it easier to defend against it.

00:18:15.160 --> 00:18:22.320

<v SPEAKER_2>But one of the things we're seeing as these drone tactics are starting to spread around the globe is conflicts in Africa now.

00:18:22.320 --> 00:18:29.800

<v SPEAKER_2>We're seeing a lot of drone usage and it's a lot more of a plausible deniability situation where whose drone is it?

00:18:30.060 --> 00:18:36.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Unless someone takes credit for it, it can be a lot harder to attribute causation to these events.

00:18:36.680 --> 00:18:46.160

<v SPEAKER_2>Another great example would be Operation Spiderweb, which Ukraine carried out against Russia, where they were targeting Russian air bases in incredible depth.

00:18:46.220 --> 00:18:56.000

<v SPEAKER_2>In parts of Russia, far Eastern Russia, they're so far from the front lines of Ukraine that with any other weapon set, it would be impossible for Ukraine to target them.

00:18:57.040 --> 00:19:04.600

<v SPEAKER_2>So these kinds of tactics are troubling, particularly because it can make it very murky and very difficult to assign blame.

00:19:04.600 --> 00:19:05.820

<v SPEAKER_2>Who's behind that?

00:19:05.860 --> 00:19:08.720

<v SPEAKER_2>Unless someone takes accountability for it, it could be very difficult.

00:19:08.740 --> 00:19:10.280

<v SPEAKER_2>So these threats are things we're worried about.

00:19:10.280 --> 00:19:20.480

<v SPEAKER_2>We're having to, and if you follow the news, the Americans have been talking for several years at this point about like weird drone events where like, we don't know whose drones were flying around our air base.

00:19:20.620 --> 00:19:41.020

<v SPEAKER_2>And so these kinds of events raise our concerns about this new threat vector that is available to not just conventional state actors, although we're obviously worried about that, but unconventional actors as well as terrorist groups, homegrown organized, like there's all kinds of groups that exists in the world that could leverage weaponized drones in ways that make our lives very difficult.

00:19:41.020 --> 00:19:45.440

<v SPEAKER_2>So that's sort of still within the air domain, but even even just collecting information.

00:19:45.440 --> 00:19:52.780

<v SPEAKER_2>So again, the ability to use saturation of drones to collect information about our target, about our tactics and procedures and our defensive situation.

00:19:54.160 --> 00:19:55.180

<v SPEAKER_2>That's kind of air domain.

00:19:55.180 --> 00:20:01.300

<v SPEAKER_2>So like drones have really changed the game, we're having to come to grips with what that means both at home and abroad.

00:20:01.300 --> 00:20:11.120

<v SPEAKER_2>So whether I'm wearing my NORAD hat or my Joint Air Component Commander hat, we're having to worry about these threats to our aircraft everywhere.

00:20:11.640 --> 00:20:14.160

<v SPEAKER_2>The next one I'll say is the cyber domain.

00:20:14.160 --> 00:20:15.000

<v SPEAKER_2>You touched on that really well.

00:20:15.000 --> 00:20:17.620

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think again, it gives you this plausible deniability.

00:20:18.780 --> 00:20:21.080

<v SPEAKER_2>There is a cyber conflict ongoing every day.

00:20:21.280 --> 00:20:26.640

<v SPEAKER_2>I am not one of the cyber defenders that's involved in that part of what we do.

00:20:27.140 --> 00:20:39.280

<v SPEAKER_2>But what I need to prepare for is a world where our ability to communicate can be degraded in the same way that, you know, once you're in a real shooting war, you have to expect that, like, people are going to shoot at you.

00:20:39.400 --> 00:20:41.680

<v SPEAKER_2>And you're probably going to take some hits at some point.

00:20:41.680 --> 00:20:43.420

<v SPEAKER_2>The same thing applies here in the cyber domain.

00:20:43.420 --> 00:20:46.420

<v SPEAKER_2>Like, you have to expect that we're not going to have perfect connectivity.

00:20:46.420 --> 00:20:51.240

<v SPEAKER_2>I'm not necessarily going to be able to pick up the phone and just call somebody to share information.

00:20:51.240 --> 00:20:56.220

<v SPEAKER_2>And in particular, when it comes to all of the data that we push through the internet, it's encrypted.

00:20:56.220 --> 00:20:57.580

<v SPEAKER_2>There's all kinds of safeguards there.

00:20:57.720 --> 00:21:04.280

<v SPEAKER_2>But if they are able to hit an infrastructure node that takes down part of the internet, it's probably not going to last forever.

00:21:04.280 --> 00:21:07.400

<v SPEAKER_2>But even that disruption at the wrong moment can really affect our operations.

00:21:07.400 --> 00:21:12.140

<v SPEAKER_2>So we're having to think about how do we maintain communications even in these worst-case scenarios?

00:21:12.140 --> 00:21:13.300

<v SPEAKER_2>How do we keep connected?

00:21:13.300 --> 00:21:17.220

<v SPEAKER_2>How do we keep operating even when we don't have perfect

connection to each other?

00:21:17.220 --> 00:21:29.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And that's that sort of cyber domain threat that, like, from my perspective, the part that I'm worried about, how do I continue to push active, relevant, timely threat information out to the people that need it so that they can operate effectively?

00:21:32.000 --> 00:21:35.260

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00:21:35.460 --> 00:21:37.700

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00:21:37.960 --> 00:21:43.040

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00:21:49.200 --> 00:22:03.640

<v SPEAKER_1>We're having this conversation for listeners on the 10th day of the combined Israeli-American air attacks with Iran.

00:22:04.300 --> 00:22:10.920

<v SPEAKER_1>That's obviously having a huge number of implications and getting a lot of focus for all kinds of different reasons.

00:22:11.660 --> 00:22:17.300

<v SPEAKER_1>For somebody like yourself, is that now causing a refocus for a bunch of your attention?

00:22:17.300 --> 00:22:26.340

<v SPEAKER_1>Or what in the current environment has been lots of different things that I imagine might have been crossing your radar in both a literal and figurative sense?

00:22:27.000 --> 00:22:31.040

<v SPEAKER_1>What are some of the key geopolitical tensions driving some of the activity?

00:22:33.320 --> 00:22:43.780

<v SPEAKER_1>In addition to some of those aspects about changing nature of air threats, any key takeaways for you and your team about what to make of events in the last four years?

00:22:44.800 --> 00:22:45.020

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah.

00:22:45.020 --> 00:22:46.460

<v SPEAKER_2>I think there's a few layers to that.

00:22:46.760 --> 00:22:52.040

<v SPEAKER_2>One, I think is the kind of modern warfare that we're really talking about here.

00:22:52.060 --> 00:22:58.760

<v SPEAKER_2>How do I get prepared for a war that will be defined by long-range munitions?

00:22:59.320 --> 00:23:01.880

<v SPEAKER_2>Again, we look at Ukraine, is there trench warfare happening?

00:23:01.940 --> 00:23:03.600

<v SPEAKER_2>There is to some extent.

00:23:03.600 --> 00:23:11.200

<v SPEAKER_2>But when you look at the scale of what's happening in terms of ground troop maneuvers, we're talking about Russia hoping to drop a platoon and have them infiltrate.

00:23:11.240 --> 00:23:15.980

<v SPEAKER_2>That's about the extent of the mass you can successfully launch in these environments.

00:23:15.980 --> 00:23:27.940

<v SPEAKER_2>Really, the war is taking place, long-range fires, drones being a really cheap precision munition as compared to more expensive cruise missiles, for example.

00:23:28.260 --> 00:23:32.940

<v SPEAKER_2>In this kind of warfare, I think what's happening in Iran is a good example for us.

00:23:32.940 --> 00:23:35.460

<v SPEAKER_2>How does this play out in a context that isn't Ukraine?

00:23:35.460 --> 00:23:36.420

<v SPEAKER_2>What does it look like?

00:23:36.460 --> 00:23:38.620

<v SPEAKER_2>How easy is it to defend against this?

00:23:39.260 --> 00:23:45.060

<v SPEAKER_2>How complicated is it to predict what's going to happen and narrow down where the threats are going to come from?

00:23:46.340 --> 00:23:51.180

<v SPEAKER_2>I think it's also an example of how complicated the Middle Eastern region still remains.

00:23:51.580 --> 00:23:53.120

<v SPEAKER_2>You can't have a war with just Iran.

00:23:53.120 --> 00:23:59.260

<v SPEAKER_2>There's all kinds of proxy forces that are going to have all kinds of activities to one degree or another that complicate your threat picture.

00:24:00.580 --> 00:24:03.000

<v SPEAKER_2>I think that touches on the first layer that I would say.

00:24:03.000 --> 00:24:10.580

<v SPEAKER_2>The second layer for us is a lot about being prepared to be able to do what the government needs us to do.

00:24:10.580 --> 00:24:11.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Some of those things are being signaled.

00:24:12.200 --> 00:24:15.400

<v SPEAKER_2>My team watches the news to say, hey, what are politicians talking about?

00:24:15.400 --> 00:24:19.680

<v SPEAKER_2>Because sometimes they talk about things publicly before we get any orders to do it.

00:24:20.000 --> 00:24:29.140

<v SPEAKER_2>If I hear one of the ministers talking about like, oh yeah, we're looking at the possibility of evacuating Canadians, and they say the word Oman, okay, my team is going to be on that immediately.

00:24:29.840 --> 00:24:32.020

<v SPEAKER_2>In most cases, I would hope we're even ahead of that.

00:24:32.140 --> 00:24:34.140

<v SPEAKER_2>But sometimes you just got to roll with the punches.

00:24:34.340 --> 00:24:40.860

<v SPEAKER_2>And so being able to refocus on changing my priorities genuinely the last week, day to day.

00:24:41.000 --> 00:24:50.700

<v SPEAKER_2>I can walk in on Monday morning and tell them, okay, the plan is today we're going to focus on these three countries and really hammer out a draft of the Near Threat Assessment.

00:24:50.700 --> 00:24:52.420

<v SPEAKER_2>Because hey, I mean, it's changing day by day.

00:24:52.420 --> 00:24:56.000

<v SPEAKER_2>So I can't even say it's going to be relevant if I do it now and they ask for it a week from now.

00:24:56.060 --> 00:24:59.580

<v SPEAKER_2>But doing enough research to say, we could spin this up pretty quickly if we needed to.

00:25:00.220 --> 00:25:04.020

<v SPEAKER_2>And then I walk in the next day and say, hey, those ones I just told you yesterday, refocus.

00:25:04.020 --> 00:25:07.120

<v SPEAKER_2>We're not doing those three anymore because the government has told us they're not interested in that country.

00:25:07.120 --> 00:25:08.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Let's refocus on these next ones.

00:25:08.440 --> 00:25:16.600

<v SPEAKER_2>So it's about reprioritizing dynamically and having a team that is able to roll with those punches as well, which I think is really helpful.

00:25:17.720 --> 00:25:37.160

<v SPEAKER_1>So as you think about those internationally dynamic events that are unfolding, as well as some of the longer evolution that you're describing in the buildup of conventional capability that was previously, mostly nuclear focused, and that whole picture has been changing.

00:25:37.160 --> 00:25:49.080

<v SPEAKER_1>That's driven a lot of the North American focus, and certainly my understanding of a lot of the direction on NORAD modernization was largely focused in that kind of direction, more of a conventional military picture.

00:25:49.240 --> 00:25:55.800

<v SPEAKER_1>Is that what you reflect on net about how the security environment facing North America has evolved today?

00:25:55.800 --> 00:26:15.740

<v SPEAKER_1>How do you knit together those two streams of dynamism, changing air threat picture with different types of assets, as well as, I think in one sense, a bit of a blast from the past, but of a different sense of more of a conventional threat dynamic towards North America that just is no longer exclusively nuclear in nature?

00:26:17.160 --> 00:26:36.100

<v SPEAKER_2>So this is one of the things I really tried to get after, even when I just came into the position this summer, is I looked around and I thought, I feel like it's really important that people know why we're doing all this, and I don't know that the baseline level of understanding that was really well understood at all levels across the Air Force, for example.

00:26:36.260 --> 00:26:38.340

<v SPEAKER_2>I say Air Force because it's the part I'm responsible for.

00:26:39.460 --> 00:26:45.440

<v SPEAKER_2>I think all our general officers understand this, and I think a lot of our politicians now understand this too.

00:26:45.660 --> 00:26:55.260

<v SPEAKER_2>I remember when the new premier of Manitoba took over, one of the first statements he made was about national defense issues, and I was like, that's surprising to me.

00:26:55.540 --> 00:26:59.600

<v SPEAKER_2>A guy in the middle of the country who's a premier of a province doesn't have a mandate for national defense.

00:26:59.600 --> 00:27:04.760

<v SPEAKER_2>It was one of the first things he came out and said, and it's because he understood the nature of this time and place that we're in.

00:27:05.740 --> 00:27:11.920

<v SPEAKER_2>But I'm not sure that everybody turning a wrench on a flight line necessarily understands the nature of this change.

00:27:11.920 --> 00:27:13.180

<v SPEAKER_2>Why are we talking about NORAD?

00:27:13.180 --> 00:27:15.120

<v SPEAKER_2>Why do we need to buy all these new airframes?

00:27:15.120 --> 00:27:18.900

<v SPEAKER_2>Why do we need to modernize all of these capabilities, other than the fact that the airplanes are old?

00:27:19.340 --> 00:27:20.620

<v SPEAKER_2>That's a good reason to start.

00:27:20.620 --> 00:27:23.060

<v SPEAKER_2>But why are we targeting specific capabilities?

00:27:24.240 --> 00:27:30.880

<v SPEAKER_2>One of the things I've had my team doing over the last eight months is trying to get things down to an unclassified level.

00:27:30.880 --> 00:27:36.500

<v SPEAKER_2>To be able to talk about like we're doing today, the nature of this changing kinetic threat to North America.

00:27:36.780 --> 00:27:43.540

<v SPEAKER_2>Again, not putting in the context of like, I think we're going to get attacked tomorrow, but putting in the context of like, this is the kind of conflict we need to be prepared for.

00:27:43.540 --> 00:27:48.600

<v SPEAKER_2>Not a go fight over their conflict, but a defend our country, defend our people conflict.

00:27:48.980 --> 00:27:50.180

<v SPEAKER_2>I hope it doesn't come to that.

00:27:50.180 --> 00:27:51.580

<v SPEAKER_2>I have a family that lives here.

00:27:51.620 --> 00:27:52.940

<v SPEAKER_2>I don't want them to face that.

00:27:53.300 --> 00:27:57.340

<v SPEAKER_2>But professionally, it's necessary that I prepare myself for that possibility.

00:27:57.340 --> 00:27:59.660

<v SPEAKER_2>So trying to educate at all levels.

00:27:59.720 --> 00:28:01.880

<v SPEAKER_2>I don't want to make assumptions about what people do or don't know.

00:28:01.880 --> 00:28:02.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Everybody reads the news.

00:28:02.960 --> 00:28:05.800

<v SPEAKER_2>But making sure we're all operating off the same sheet of music.

00:28:06.160 --> 00:28:14.440

<v SPEAKER_2>When the CDS talks about mobilization and drastically increasing the CAF, making sure everyone understands the why behind that.

00:28:14.440 --> 00:28:19.800

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think if we can get to the why, it's a lot easier

to motivate yourself to get into work and really get after it.

00:28:19.800 --> 00:28:24.720

<v SPEAKER_2>It's a lot easier to, frankly, like this is well-publicized, that we have some retention problems.

00:28:24.960 --> 00:28:27.620

<v SPEAKER_2>Motivating people to stay because they really believe in what we're doing.

00:28:27.620 --> 00:28:30.440

<v SPEAKER_2>Motivating people to join because they really believe in what we're doing.

00:28:31.060 --> 00:28:38.800

<v SPEAKER_2>If you care about defending our country, again, I think sometimes the Afghan-Can conflict, we definitely saw a surge in recruiting at the beginning.

00:28:39.840 --> 00:28:44.880

<v SPEAKER_2>People want to be involved in whatever, young people join for adventure.

00:28:44.880 --> 00:28:46.780

<v SPEAKER_2>That's a big part of why people join the CAF.

00:28:47.860 --> 00:28:52.160

<v SPEAKER_2>But I think at some point, going and fighting over there might have lost some of its shine.

00:28:54.540 --> 00:29:00.400

<v SPEAKER_2>Being prepared to fight to defend the country, I think that's where people's heads are at right now.

00:29:00.640 --> 00:29:06.120

<v SPEAKER_2>I think being able to speak to them about, give them the context behind what are we defending against is really important.

00:29:07.520 --> 00:29:10.000

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, I think that's a great note to end on.

00:29:10.580 --> 00:29:13.560

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks very much for joining us on Defence Deconstructed.

00:29:13.640 --> 00:29:17.800

<v SPEAKER_1>The last question to you, not explicitly necessarily work-related, what are you reading these days?

00:29:18.700 --> 00:29:19.400

<v SPEAKER_2>It's a great question.

00:29:19.460 --> 00:29:26.140

<v SPEAKER_2>I'll tell you, I read so much at work that when I leave work, I don't want to read anything that has anything to do with work.

00:29:26.300 --> 00:29:27.380

<v SPEAKER_2>That's my reality.

00:29:28.240 --> 00:29:29.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Dungeon Crawler Carl, that's what I'm reading.

00:29:30.800 --> 00:29:31.400

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:29:32.240 --> 00:29:35.060

<v SPEAKER_1>Colonel Cochrane, thanks very much for joining us today on Defence Deconstructed.

00:29:35.720 --> 00:29:36.560

<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you for having me.

00:29:37.540 --> 00:29:39.540

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

00:29:39.740 --> 00:29:45.160

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00:29:45.200 --> 00:29:51.500

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00:29:51.800 --> 00:29:54.080

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00:29:54.420 --> 00:29:58.300

<v SPEAKER_1>Music credits go to Drew Phillips, and this episode was produced by Jordyn Carroll.