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Captain Kevin Malloy



Captain Jeremy Driggs

AFJAGS Podcast: Episode 49

PME at SOS and ISOS with Captain Kevin Malloy and Captain Jeremy Driggs

HOST: MAJOR RICK HANRAHAN

GUESTS: CAPTAIN KEVIN MALLOY AND CAPTAIN JEREMY DRIGGS

In this interview, we speak with two Air Force JAGs, Captain Kevin Malloy and Captain Jeremy Driggs, who are graduates of two different professional military education programs including Squadron Officer School and a less well-known program called the Inter-American Squadron Officer School.

MAJOR RICK HANRAHAN:

In this interview, we speak with two Air Force JAGs, Captain Kevin Malloy and Captain Jeremy Driggs, who are graduates of two different professional military education programs including Squadron Officer School and a less well-known program called the Inter-American Squadron Officer School. They offer an overview on each of these programs. Their tips on how to be successful and how they grew in leadership, team building, and innovation through the process.

[short intro background music]

Here are a few clips from the interview.

SHOW EXCERPTS & INTRODUCTIONS

CAPTAIN KEVIN MALLOY:

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CAPTAIN JEREMY DRIGGS:

Getting everybody on the same page is like an internal struggle of leadership, right? Like we're trying to make sure that we all have the same goal in mind.

ANNOUNCER:

Welcome to The Air Force Judge Advocate General's Reporter Podcast, where we interview leaders, innovators, and influencers on the law, leadership, and best practices of the day. And now to your host from [The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School](#).

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Welcome to another episode from The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School at Maxwell Air Force Base. I'm your host, Major Rick Hanrahan. Remember, if you like the show, please consider subscribing on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or your favorite podcast platform and leaving a review. This helps us to grow in outreach to the JAG Corps and beyond. In today's interview, we're going to speak with two Air Force JAGs who are both captains and graduates of different professional development programs, including the [Squadron Officer School](#) or SOS, and another program, likely not as well known, called the [Inter-American Squadron Officer School](#), or ISOS.

As we've discussed in previous episodes, leadership requires professional development. So the goal of today's interview is to discuss a few of these professional development opportunities within the Air Force, how to leverage these experiences, and grow as both a lawyer and leader along the way. And for those listeners who are not JAGs or are civilians, the fundamental principles of professional development, such as team building, networking and innovation, which we'll discuss, apply in other careers as well.

So I'd really like to introduce our guests, Captain Kevin Malloy and Captain Jeremy Driggs. Thank you both for coming on the show today.

CAPT MALLOY:

Thank you for having us on.

CAPT DRIGGS:

Thanks sir, happy to be here.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

So our first guest, Captain Kevin Malloy, is assigned as the Chief of Military Justice for the 97th Air Mobility Wing at Altus Air Force Base, Oklahoma. He assists the Staff Judge Advocate in providing legal advice to the wing commander, 34 subordinate units, and 7100 active duty and civilian personnel who sustain the C-17, KC-135

and KC-46 training mission. He was commissioned in March of 2018 as an active duty Air Force JAG, and he has previous assignment to Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, where he worked at the base legal office. While there he also deployed from February to September of 2020 as a joint targeting cell legal advisor in Iraq. And he's a graduate of the Squadron Officer School at Maxwell Air Force Base in 2019 which he's here to discuss today.

And our second guest Captain Jeremy Driggs currently serves as the Chief of Adverse Actions for the 52nd Installation Support Group at Joint Base San Antonio, Lackland, Texas. In this capacity, he's responsible for providing legal services to the 37th Training Wing, the 59th Medical Wing, the Special Warfare Training Wing, as well as a broad spectrum of subordinate units and partner commands. He was commissioned in March of 2018 as an active duty Air Force JAG and has a previous assignment to Kirtland Air Force Base in New Mexico, where he also worked at the base legal office. And he is a recent graduate of the Inter-American Squadron Officer School or ISOS in residence and an honors graduate which is a program that he's here to discuss today and one that is likely not as well known.

So what that quick backdrop, if maybe we could start off with Captain Malloy and could you provide a little more background on your current duty position and what you're up to these days?

CAPT MALLOY:

Of course. Thank you, sir. So like we talked about earlier, I came in and 2018. It's been a big dream to be an Air Force JAG. I tell people all the time there's a lot of boring ways to be a lawyer. Being an Air Force JAG is not one of them. Very rewarding. Every single day there's a new challenge to kind of tackle. Coming from Nellis, they are very busy, high ops tempo there.

And then Altus has kind of a different shift, with where it's more training based and very eye-opening to just to see different skill sets in the Air Force, different mission focuses. And so not only just for me, but also those that

I work with and those that I consider colleagues. And then of course I am excited, in a couple of weeks, [I'll] be switching roles yet again, moving over to the ADC position here at Altus.

So it's kind of changing that mindset of, you know, representing the Air Force as a client and focusing more on the Airman as individual clients. I'm looking forward to the opportunity.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, great stuff there. And congratulations on the new upcoming assignment as area defense counsel.

And for our second guest, Captain Driggs, if you could introduce yourself to our audience as well.

CAPT DRIGGS:

Good morning. My name is Captain Jeremy Driggs. I'm a second-generation Air Force JAG. Grew up bouncing around Air Force bases all over the country. And so I followed in my dad's footsteps. I have a three-year-old son, and we'll see if we can't go three for three and go make him a third-generation JAG as well [laughter].

I graduated from BYU's law school in 2018 and headed to Kirtland Air Force Base in lovely Albuquerque, New Mexico, which is totally a hidden gem that neither my wife or I expected to love as much as we did. It was a really cool mission. It was a nuclear enterprise. So dealing with a lot of the issues that come with kind of America's nuclear weapons and keeping that mission safe and progressing.

And I arrived here at Lackland Air Force Base, kind of the home of Air Force's and Space Force's basic training programs in October of 2020. So totally different. Like Kevin said, the shift from kind of a theoretical science-based mission at Kirtland to just constant go, go, go here at Lackland. Really different, but really rewarding. No complaints on my end.

SOS OVERVIEW

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, great. And thank you for the intro there. So kind of moving into today's topic, which we're here to talk about, which deals with professional development. Captain Malloy, maybe you could start off as you're a fairly recent graduate of a school that many folks with, at least within the Air Force are aware of, which is Squadron Officers School. But maybe for our non-Air Force listeners or even civilians, could you speak to a little bit what is SOS and just kind of give a broad overview that.

CAPT MALLOY:

Of course. So the main focus on SOS, from my point of view, when I was there, it seemed like there was a huge emphasis to focus on leadership skills that, at a very tactical or a level that you would expect from a captain, but then also to start thinking about bigger ideas, you know, leading, being a leader on a much bigger scale.

And so they bring in a lot of guest speakers a lot of high-vis influential people in the Air Force and other parts of the DoD to kind of help the younger generation of leaders start thinking about bigger problems of tomorrow that they'll be facing. But it's a, it's a 6-week course. There's a lot of classroom time. There's a lot of guest speaker time. But there's also a lot of opportunity to do like physical activities with your colleagues and do, I guess you could say, like ways to challenge the way you work with teams. So it's very rewarding. It's physical. It's mental. It's just it's a great learning environment that eventually by the time you can kind of look back and say, you know, "What do I need to grow as a leader? What are some ways that I've excelled? How can I make those better? How can I make those around me better?" The focus, it's just a great opportunity to become a better leader and a better individual.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And for our non-Air Force listeners, this is a required professional development training. Is that accurate?

CAPT MALLOY:

Correct. Yes, it's one of the things that make it move on to the to the next rank of major. It's one of those things that has to be done.

ISOS OVERVIEW

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great. And for Captain Driggs, so you had an experience with a different program. Could you talk a little bit about this program?

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yeah, no problem. So like you guys said, SOS is a program that everybody has to go to and you basically just get sent when your office can tolerate losing somebody for six weeks, right? ISOS was a little bit different. And I actually found out about it like third hand. I was trying a court-martial and my co-counsel knew somebody that had been on this program. And so he kind of put me on to it. And basically ISOS is the same program that Kevin went through and that most Air Force captains go through, but it's taught in Spanish at San Antonio, and they invite coalition allies or partner nation captains as well from South, Central, and Latin America to come partake, I guess, in this Air Force leadership school. It's kind of like a study abroad mixed with Air Force professional development.

SOS & ISOS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Fascinating. Thank you for that. So kind of going back to Kevin, so for SOS, just for our listeners, that's at Maxwell Air Force Base. Is that accurate?

CAPT MALLOY:

Correct. Yes. And everybody goes. I know this last year is a little bit different. They did a lot of Zoom SOS, online SOS because of COVID. So, you know, very flexible because you think about every captain in the Air Force

needs to go through this. There's a lot of individuals that are going through this, at any given moment at Maxwell there's a significant number of Air Force captains. And then, of course, it's not just captains there. Sometimes they're DoD civilian employees that are there. There are a few other international captains that come as well or, you know, that kind of, that equivalent is coming, so that there's a little bit of a taste. So it's a little bit different from Jeremy's experience, where the main focus is Air Force captains and then a few others. Where Jeremy's was a little bit, is very focused on the Inter-American aspect of it.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Right. So your experience at SOS was it's more Air Force-centric, while Jeremy's would be kind of a little more global-centric, I guess, for lack of a better term.

CAPT MALLOY:

Yes, sir.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And Jeremy, is the course that you went through, do you take that in lieu of SOS, or will you also take SOS?

CAPT DRIGGS:

No, that's a good question. So it counts for my SOS credits. So for all intents and purposes, if you go to ISOS, you still get the, that requirement or that box filled.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And when you mentioned Spanish, is this something you need to be proficient in Spanish, I would presume?

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yes. It's a little bit more involved than SOS, right, where your boss just says, "Hey, you know what? You're going to go." And then you pack up and you go. For ISOS, you take the Air Force's language test and you'll get your score back. And you have to meet a certain threshold on that score to even be eligible to go to ISOS. And then once you have your score, you submit a package with your PT test, your Spanish score, you write a letter

saying, “Hey, this is why I want to go to ISOS.” And then you’re a senior rater also writes a letter, says, you know, “Captain Driggs is a good candidate because X, Y, Z”, and then that package goes to a selection board. And the selection board ends up choosing from among your peers who gets to go to this course.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Copy. So for our Spanish speakers out there, this could be a great opportunity.

CAPT DRIGGS:

That’s right. It was totally awesome. It was one of the coolest things I’ve ever done in the Air Force.

SOS EXPERIENCE

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great. So moving back to Captain Malloy, let’s talk a little bit about SOS here. What were some of your bigger takeaways in your experience at SOS?

CAPT MALLOY:

You know, one thing that really stood out to me—and it happened really quick—is that oftentimes you discuss just different problems, right? Because the Air Force is focusing on innovation and change, and adapting and becoming better. And so what SOS does is that they’ll actually, they’ll give the flight commander, the flight instructors, they’ll give them like prompts to give to us as captains. And they can be a moral issue, it could be a dilemma, an ethical issue, things of that nature. And they would just say, “How would you solve this?” Or maybe they’d give you like a fake scenario, like a real-life example, but like you know change names. Or they would just kind of throw out these ideas and you know, I don’t think that there was ever a time that they didn’t, the entire class didn’t, just look at you and they’d say, “Hey, I want to hear Kevin’s take on this.” But the reality is, I mean, they just want legal’s take. And I learned very quickly, if legal is in the room, you’re going to be used as a resource. And so that’s obviously important to come prepared and having done your homework ahead of time.

It was also one of those times you really learned the value of saying, “I don’t know, I will get back to you”, you know [laughing]. And you know, it’s good to practice that, you know, that important skill, as well as making sure the information is accurate as well as timely. But just realizing just how quickly people in the Air Force, and these are peers, like if you think about your flightmates at SOS, that they’re from all the different backgrounds in the Air Force. So there could be a pilot, there could be an intel officer, there could be a logistics officer. And then, of course the legal, there’d be a doctor in there. They purposely assign the flights this way so that they can represent a vast majority of the different jobs that are available in the Air Force. And so when they, when you have these problems that very often people would say, “What is the legal guidance on this?” And so they would turn to you in that moment as a leader and it was very eye-opening to see just how much people relied on legal advice outside of the courtroom or a discharge board—like what you are you’re thinking of in terms of what a JAG does in the Air Force.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

So maybe safe to say when you were when you walked in SOS, you weren’t necessarily prepared for that type of discussion.

CAPT MALLOY:

No, not at all. I mean, in fact, you know safely, having gone to Nellis, you get exposed to a lot of mission really fast, really quick. And so I was able to kind of hold my own, so to speak. But yeah, I certainly wasn’t expecting—I was kind of thinking I’d be a fly on the wall, just kind of like observe, get to know and see how the Air Force functions. And the reality is, nope, that’s not the expectation at all. It’s we need some, we need some legal advice right now. [laughing]

MAJ HANRAHAN:

It’s almost kind of de-facto, just because you are the JAG, the lawyer, that they’re going to look to you as a leader in that capacity.

CAPT MALLOY:

Absolutely.

ISOS EXPERIENCE

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And moving over to Jeremy, how was that experience for you in the course that you attended?

CAPT DRIGGS:

It was really eye-opening. You know, one thing that I think happens to anybody really is we kind of get tunnel vision on our own sphere, on our own kind of life and job. Like, you know, as chief of adverse actions, the only thing that exists to me is adverse actions, and my job, right? And even as like members of the bigger and broader Air Force, maybe we think about, okay, well, we're, you know, allies in the War on Terror or we're, you know, prepping for great power competition.

And I went to ISOS with members of the Honduran, Guatemalan, Dominican Republic and Ecuadoran air forces. And those guys have a totally different set of concerns and a totally different set of priorities than we do or than even some of our more prominent allies like Great Britain or Australia or whoever have. They're focused on drug violence and cartel violence and narco trafficking, and thinking about violence in the Middle East or whatever China might be doing in Africa or who knows what, doesn't really move the needle and doesn't register to them at all.

And so when I was there, it was like, okay, there is there is a whole other set of issues that our allies are going through. And there's so much more to being, I guess, a military member than what we think of typically or even more than what we might try and think outside of the box. Like I, I just had no idea the issues that these allied countries were facing. And it was just so eye-opening to see what their priorities were and what they felt like defending their country was versus when I joined the military, what I thought my role in serving my country was.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

So these international students were, was their focus more on domestic or regional issues?

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yeah. Yeah. 100%. They you know, one of my buddies in the class was a Honduran helicopter pilot, and he was talking about how he was running a mission against Honduran drug traffickers, and they're shooting at him. And he saw a bullet passed through his canopy. And that was when he was like, "Look, I need to get out of the pilot business and go do something else." Right? Which yeah, sounds good to me, but I just thought about it. What would it be like if I was an American, a helicopter pilot, and Americans are shooting at me from American soil. Like that, that was the kind of issues that they're running through. It's just really mind blowing.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And how are the international students selected?

CAPT DRIGGS:

So it was kind of the same thing is how we were selected, but even more competitive. Like it was the top-notch officers from these foreign countries. Like we had Ecuador's version of Air Force One. That pilot was there. We had a guy that was Dominican Republic's top fighter pilot. They all had to apply, and they all had to be selected. And most of them were selected as like a reward for exceptional performance, or you distinguish yourself in some way that we want to invest America's education into you. And it was really interesting because they actually committed more time to their nation's armed services in exchange for getting to go to this course. The course was eight weeks long, and the Honduran committed, I think, six months of additional service. The Dominican committed another three years. I mean, three years for eight weeks. That's a big exchange rate, right? So they really valued this opportunity to come to America and learn about America and our kind of spin on military professional development and professional education.

LEADERSHIP

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And just to kind of stick with this point here, when you talked about valuing kind of the American, I don't know, brand, why do you think that's the case?

CAPT DRIGGS:

So they talked about that a lot, and they were like, the way that you guys teach, and the way that you guys expound on just doctrine and strategy, and leadership especially, is just stuff that we don't get back home. You know, they've all gone through their country's various flight schools and their military, I guess commissioning sources, but they said leadership and how to manage people, we just never even knew that this was a way that you could do it. And, you know, I don't know how accurate that is because I haven't been to Honduras or Guatemala and gone through their leadership schools or academies. But they were just so grateful and so excited to be learning from the world's greatest Air Force, right? And we kind of say that tongue in cheek sometimes, right? Like, oh, the world's greatest Air Force and my computer doesn't work. But they really knew. And they were really grateful. Like, this is the world's greatest Air Force, and we want to learn from what you guys have to teach us because the quality of instruction or the quality of teachings that we're getting back home doesn't measure up. And I just thought that was so interesting.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great. Thank you for that. And kind of keeping that theme in mind. Moving over to Kevin, you talked earlier about, you know, working with non-lawyers. Could you expound on that a little bit, on how that experience was when discussing leadership and working through the challenges and issues you had to for SOS?

CAPT MALLOY:

Of course. So I think probably the biggest one is just when you first come into the JAG Corps and you're working at the base legal office—oftentimes you spend so much time learning the you know, the expectations and learning the job and trying to really hone your craft,

you know, engaging in the practice of law—it doesn't always lend itself to the opportunity to go out and really connect one-on-one with your colleagues that are also, you know, your fellow captains in the Air Force. And SOS, like it really, it kind of brings that in, but it also highlights the importance of doing that. And thinking about a couple of individuals—the intel captain that I developed a close relationship with and him explaining a little bit more about what he does and how he ties into the Air Force. And then talking with some of the pilots—what their airframes, what they do, how they move the mission forward.

And it's a really good reminder because I think it's easy to get tunnel vision when you're a captain and just focused on your daily tasks, right? Or, you know, what do I have to worry about next week or next month? And then realizing, you know, there's captains all throughout the Air Force, they have the exact same concerns, right? But when you come together and you have that broader context, it can change your perspective. It can change how you focus on different things. And you build those relationships and you lean on them too, like later on. And then and maybe it's not even those individuals, but you know, okay, well, I know that this individual in the Air Force or this position in the Air Force accomplishes X, Y and Z so in order to move forward what we need to do, we need to engage with these individuals, this other job in the Air Force.

TEAM BUILDING

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And one other thing I think you talked about, both of you talked about, was team building and kind of innovation within these professional development courses. Kevin, could you maybe discuss that a little further on what your experience was with that and maybe some takeaways you had with that from maybe your non-legal classmates?

CAPT MALLOY:

Of course. At SOS, they have this game, it's called ADWAR. And it's like a computer game and it's simulating kind of

an air battle space, right? And when you first come in there, you may be a little bit skeptic, right? Like what's really going on here? The pilots are really into it. And you're just like, I don't know if I fit in here. And then you start, you do the first practice and you're like, wow, this is a lot of fun. Really big team thing. It's basically your flight competes against other flights and, you know, in a virtual sense, right, with an air battle space. And one of the things, the important thing that is taught, is one, is you know, the high amount of coordination that is required to pull off anything like this. You know, this was a game translating this to real life is a whole nother thing. But the team, the team building, the camaraderie and like, hey, I need a tanker at this location. I need a bomber at this location. I need fighters hitting this target. That level of communication with your whole flight was really key. So, you know, brought us together as a flight, but it also just kind of was meant to show how important it is in order to accomplish our mission—it's a team effort.

And ironically, it was on my deployment when I was in Iraq, you could actually see ADWAR kind of playing out in real life, where I had that understanding and realizing working in a targeting cell. And so everybody's got a very specific task and you're looking at this entire team working on their own, their own specific job. But overall, the goal was to, you know, to accomplish that mission that day. And everyone had that job, but then also realizing the constraints that were going on outside of our room. And that's important to know too, is when you, not only you, work with your team there, but knowing that there's teams everywhere, you know, behind the scenes that you're not always understanding, but when somebody would say, "Hey, we can't do this because of this constraint", it made more sense. Just simply having done this game at SOS or yep, yeah, I do remember that coming up. I remember the first time we did a practice run and all of our fighters fell out of the sky because they didn't have fuel. You know [laughter]. If you take the game and you play it in real life, obviously we didn't have fighters in that situation, but understanding that, you know, there's real constraints out there in the real world that you have to take into consideration. But yes,

working as a team was extremely valuable. Not only that, it was also very rewarding as well.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And kind of building off of that, Jeremy, how is your experience with team building with the international students?

CAPT DRIGGS:

It was tough. I won't sugarcoat it. I mean, one thing that I think is distinctive about the ISOS experience is everybody is competitively selected. So everybody is chosen and pushed to this course. And like I mentioned, you had these just stellar, stellar international students there. And, you know, I kind of got there and I was like, all right, we got Ecuador's Air Force One pilot, we got this Dominican Republic fighter pilot, we've got Air Force Space Force captains and then, oh the lawyer, right? Like, it definitely felt kind of some imposter syndrome, right? But these people were all so alpha. And that sounds cliché, but they were also used to being the man and being in charge. That was really difficult.

Like, I remember one common thing that we did at ISOS that happens at SOS too, is Project X, right? And Project X is like an obstacle course combined with like Survivor kind of game where you have to like cross a pretend river on time and not step on a bomb and rescue a crash dummy without touching anything that's painted red or whatever. And it sounds ridiculous explaining it verbally, but if you're there, you're like, oh, this totally makes sense, right? But one thing that I'll just never forget is we're building a bridge to cross a river and we're running out of time and we're running out of materials, and these two fighter pilots just argue with each other at the end of this wobbly bridge that's falling apart until all the time runs out. And it was something that was really difficult to figure out—how do we make all of these personalities work and how do we get everybody on the same page?

And it's something that we, I think as lawyers we run into a lot, because a lot of lawyers are type-A people that are used to success. You know, you have to go to college,

and go to law school and pass a bar. And so you're used to this certain level of success, and you're used to kind of things breaking your way. And when they don't, it's hard to manage. And we see that a lot in Air Force practice, in court-martials, right? Where you have the prosecution and the defense counsel and the victim's counsel and witnesses. And you're just really trying to meld all of these expectations into one. And so I guess the circle back, the answer to your question is I don't know that I did a really good job of this at ISOS. It was really hard to figure out how to drive all of these personalities and how to make everything work together. And it's still something that like I'm trying to work on in my position as chief of adverse actions, where I deal with units trying to figure out what the right kind of discipline is for their members and at the same time move kind of a legal office's mission forward by doing our job right, and in the correct time deadlines and everything. So I guess ISOS mirrored life. And that sounds kind of odd and weird, but at the same time, like getting everybody on the same page is like an internal struggle of leadership, right? Like we're trying to make sure that we all have the same goal in mind.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Right. And I would I mean, I think it's challenging in any capacity when you have multiple individuals on a team from different maybe career backgrounds, even at SOS, right? Where we're all kind of in the same culture. It could still be challenging, but probably much easier because we're within that same culture. I would guess, though, from your standpoint, Jeremy, I mean, even though you're speaking the same language, in Spanish, you're dealing with different culture.

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yeah, totally. And not only that, but different military cultures as well, right? Like just because I spoke Spanish, I was definitely kind of on the outside just because I'm a white American male and the officers from other military, other military services, right, Guatemalans, Dominicans, etc. And then the other American officers that were there were Latino Americans. We had Puerto Ricans and

Venezuelan American and a couple other people from different nationalities. And so there was this, this cultural difference. One thing that, we had lots of like barbecues and banquets and grills, and it was like, "Hey, after class, like we're barbecuing" and after class you know, we're turning on some Salsa music and we're dancing, and like, it's super different for me, right, where it's like, all right, after work, I guess I'll go home and get ready for work the next day, right?

Like, you know, sometimes we have this idea of like, all right, I'm going to go to work and then I'm going to go home. And it may be due to everyone being TDY from their own countries and it was like no I don't care that I just saw you guys for an eight-hour work day. We're hanging out until it's time to go to bed and then we're going to do it all again tomorrow. So like, totally, totally different culture.

INNOVATION

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Fascinating stuff there. Thank you for sharing that. So moving on to another kind of topic that you both talked about a little bit, which we talk about on this show all the time is innovation. Just curious if you could offer a little, a few insights just on how that process worked, we will start with Kevin first, when you're working through challenges or issues within the program. What were some of your key takeaways on just kind of how innovation was done?

CAPT MALLOY:

Yes. So one of the things that they did is innovation is the topic was not the topic, but it is it was a very central focus of the entire experience that they were trying to give all of us captains. And what they would do is they would say, "Hey, this isn't a do as I say." They wanted to show us as well.

So one thing that they did is they brought out a virtual reality experience for us. And it was kind of like choose your own mission format. And so we all put on the virtual reality goggles and we all got to be a pararescuemen

and go out on a mission. And depending on how you did different things, how you how you reacted to different things, the overall mission would kind of change. And so, I mean, it was fascinating to see how that all went out, but it really drove a lot of discussion, like to take, like we were thinking like the overall idea of innovation, but then to say, okay, let's take 14 captains, put them in a room, put them behind virtual reality in a virtual reality environment, make them make decisions and see the outcomes of those decisions and then discuss it afterwards, was very innovative because you can have a lot of academic discussions about innovation, but really showing it and showing how it applied. It was almost like a lesson within a lesson. It was really cool how they did that.

And they would try to like foster like hey try to dig deep down inside yourself and become more innovative just by the problem set. And that wouldn't always be the main thing that they were trying to teach, but if they came up with like a scenario, they would ask like, "How did you all innovate yourself?" You know, "How did you all innovate and come up with your solution?" And we'd all kind of take a step back and think, you know, we did do something very different and it was out of the box and we did it because, you know, we wanted, we were at A we wanted to get to B. And the way to B, the normal way, wasn't quite working out at all. And so we had to adapt and change on the fly. And again, it wasn't, you know, maybe the goal the lesson was to get from A to B, but the flight instructors were always very good about pointing out to us, okay, "So how did you get there? How did you innovate?" And just kind of showing us, trying to help build confidence, that you're innovating all the time. Any time you're making something that, a task you've been given, any time you're making it better you are innovating.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And moving over to Jeremy, how did innovation work in your environment?

CAPT DRIGGS:

Innovation was something that was really put to the test when I was there. I attended ISOS from October to December of 2020. And you know, we're dealing with the COVID 19 pandemic and the prior ISOS class had actually gotten canceled when the pandemic kind of kicked off. Everybody got sent home to their, their native countries and they told us when I was at ISOS like, we need to figure out how to do this right, because we can't have Ecuador's best pilot coming to America and dying of COVID, right? Like, that's a complicating factor that we had to deal with at ISOS, that people in, you know, if you were lucky enough to go to SOS in 2019, you didn't have to deal with, right.? So they put us all in quarantine for the first two weeks and we did tons of like Skype and Zoom sessions. And that sounds like, oh, of course it was COVID, right? But like, I don't think we realize how oh, we don't actually have to be in class to make this happen and to make this work, right? Like we can still have class, and after quarantine, we move to in-person instruction.

But starting and not wasting that quarantine time was something that was valuable and then the one thing that we actually did kind of mirroring Kevin's virtual reality experience is we had a virtual, excuse me, have virtual reality experience as well, where they put us in class and they had actually contracted actors out in Los Angeles to appear like an avatar of themselves and come to our office as we were role-playing as commanders or leaders or what have you. And it would be, you know, a civilian that had a labor dispute like, "Hey, I got sexually harassed at work", or an Airman that would come in, you know, "My dad committed suicide" or, and they would put us through these moral dilemmas. And it was really cool to have it be a real person that wasn't kind of indoctrinated into Air Force thinking, right? Because you could, right, if we did this with somebody that had been in the Air Force forever, they would give you kind of Air Force answers and things that have been molded by our experience as Airmen. But to put a Dominican fighter pilot in the seat, interviewing an actress from

Los Angeles that was appearing via VR and have him try and counsel her through how to work through sexual harassment, issues. It was really interesting.

RESOURCES

MAJ HANRAHAN:

I'm sure it was. That sounds fascinating. So kind of as we move on to the conclusion here and obviously we've only kind of touched the surface with both of these programs, there's so much more we could get into. Are there any resources where listeners could learn more about these two programs?

CAPT MALLOY:

I would say the big one is to talk to your colleagues that have gone to SOS, but also think about your chain of command. Everybody who is above the rank of captain has gone to SOS and recently, I mean that typically it's an in-residence thing. So and people look back at their time in SOS with somewhat fond memories, right? Because it's kind of like a, it's a learning environment. Then learning is, oftentimes it's hands on. And so you make those relationship, you make those memories. And when you talk to people who have already gone to the program is probably the best one. So think about your chain of command that have gone before you and say, "Hey, any tips that you have regarding either, you know, how to be successful, you know, how to make the most out of a really valuable training opportunity?" But I would say the number one asset is people have gone before you.

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yeah. And I'll just mirror that. ISOS, right, as you mentioned sir, it's a little bit more niche, it's a little bit less known, but there are resources out there, whether it's people that have gone through it before you or, you know, ISOS has a website that was just so helpful. And then the Air Force produced a kind of how to packet on myPers that was available for interested applicants. It required a little bit more digging, but it was totally worth it. And finding out who's done this and, and what they did to have a successful experience was really helpful for me as I went through the program.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

And for both of you, do you still stay in contact with either of your students that you went through the course with?

CAPT MALLOY:

Absolutely, yes. In fact, I mean, I've even reached out to them about, like personal, like day-to-day things like, "Hey, you've been to Altus before. I know you went to training there. What's it like at Altus?" Like even non-Air Force things. You know, I consider them all really close friends and those relationships that you build that hopefully lasts a whole career.

CAPT DRIGGS:

I would say I keep in touch honestly more a little bit with the faculty than I did the people that attended the course. It's a little different. Everybody is kind of spread out in different countries and whatnot. But I am here at Lackland and the faculty here, the faculty of ISOS is also at Lackland. So I talk a bit with some of them, and they're just a great resource.

FINAL THOUGHTS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Great. And final question for both of you. Just any final thoughts or a parting tips you like to leave with our listeners on both of your experiences?

CAPT MALLOY:

Yeah. So it's important as a JAG, we have a really, really important part of the mission on so many different levels, right? If we think about all the different ways that a JAG is tied into the Air Force mission, it's pretty broad. But when you're first coming in, oftentimes it's either going to be something civil law related or military justice related. And so one of the things that I've found very helpful about SOS is it was a really good reminder that we're at war every single day. Every single day there's people out there who they have real concerns fighting our enemies. And I didn't get that when I first came into the Air Force as well as I probably could have, right? You know, I'm so focused about making sure my proof analysis is top notch, getting ready for a court-martial, right?

And realizing that's extremely important, it's part of the mission, it's part of moving everything forward, but realizing that as a member of the Air Force, and SOS did a fantastic job of this, as a member of the United States Air Force our job is to protect our country against our enemies. And SOS did a great, fantastic job of reminding us that what kind of an organization you're part of and something that you should be proud of every single day.

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yeah. And on my end, I just can't speak enough for what a great experience it was. It was, it was really cool to wake up every day and go to work with these foreign Air Force officers and hear from their perspective and hear from kind of the broader global issue. Like I mentioned before, I had no idea the stuff that they were going through as military members. And it was just so eye-opening to see the role that I played in, you know, pushing the Air Force's mission forward as an attorney, but also the role that America played with our allies, not just in kind of what I mentioned before, the bigger issues, but also like what we do to help people in Latin America and how our countries interact with some of these conflicts that maybe aren't as well known, but that are just still life and death, like Kevin mentioned.

MAJ HANRAHAN:

Well, Captain Malloy and Captain Driggs, thanks so much for coming on today and sharing your experiences with us.

CAPT MALLOY:

Thank you for having us, sir.

CAPT DRIGGS:

Yeah, it was awesome to talk with you.

TAKEAWAYS

MAJ HANRAHAN:

That concludes our interview with Captain Malloy and Captain Driggs. For my top three takeaway, I'm going to recap an overview on each of these two programs and then offer a few remarks on what they both provide.

NUMBER ONE, Squadron Officer School. The Squadron Officer School is a required typically four up to potentially six week in residence program or a virtual program based on the status of COVID-19 held at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama through Air University for U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force, active duty Guard and Reserve captains, civilians and international officers.

SOS formed in 1950, and the program has evolved continuously to meet modern challenges through professional military education. The stated SOS mission and vision is to enhance air and space minded leaders primed to prevail in competitive environments, and the stated SOS goal is that graduated students will return to their units with an enhanced understanding of the institutional competencies, leadership actions and key elements of reasoning required to fly, fight and win in the 21st century.

Finally, the course curriculum is structured around three main areas including leadership, strategic design, and joint warfare. To learn more about [SOS online](http://www.airuniversity.af.edu/SOS/), you can go to WWW Dot Air University Dot AF dot EDU backslash SOS [www.airuniversity.af.edu/SOS/].

NUMBER TWO, the Inter-American Squadron Officer School, otherwise known as ISOS, is a program offered through the Inter-American Air Forces Academy at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, and mirrors SOS with some differences, including one that the program has an objective to include inter-Americanism and development of potential Latin American regional affairs specialists for the U.S. Air Force, that the students attending, like Captain Driggs, will have the opportunity to engage with future Latin American partner nations and military leaders, which in turn helps to enrich the pool of U.S. officers available to serve in positions, requiring interaction with these Latin American countries and forces.

The school is also taught in Spanish, which requires a Spanish proficiency to attend. So discussing eligibility for ISOS, it is open to active duty captains with at least four but not more than seven years total active Federal

Commission service. It requires a Spanish proficiency of two plus or higher on the Defense Language Proficiency Test, a Spanish oral interview, which is normally conducted via telephone on final candidates, minimum physical fitness scores.

It's recommended the completion of SOS by distance learning prior to the course start date, but is not required. And you may have to check for any required waiver authority in attending ISOS in lieu of SOS. You can find more information online about [ISOS](#) at WWW dot 37 TRW dot AF dot MIL then go to the units tab at the top of the website and from there click Inter-American Air Forces Academy and then from that page go to the bottom of the website where you'll see Squadron Officer School with links to both the pamphlet and selection process for ISOS [www.37trw.af.mil/Units/Inter-American-Air-Forces-Academy/].

Moving on to my **THIRD AND FINAL POINT**, professional military education or PME here through SOS or ISOS is a great opportunity to work with and grow as a leader with classmates outside of your career field, with folks across all different Air Force specialties, careers and different types of expertise. Both these programs place an emphasis on team building, leadership and innovation, and applying those skill sets to come up with solutions to real life challenges that you will likely face out in the field.

So if you are getting ready to attend SOS, or potentially ISOS, it might be a good idea to reach out to those who have attended or recently attended one of these programs to hear their insights just like you heard from our captains today. That concludes today's show. Thank you for listening to another episode. If you like this episode, please let us know by leaving a review on Apple Podcasts, Spotify or your favorite podcasts platform and consider subscribing to the show. [music]

We'll see you on the next episode.

ANNOUNCER:

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GLOSSARY

- **ADC:** area defense counsel
- **ADWAR:** Air Doctrine Wargame
- **AFJAGS:** Air Force Judge Advocate General's School
- **ISOS:** Inter-American Squadron Officer School
- **JAG:** judge advocate general
- **PME:** professional military education
- **SOS:** Squadron Officer School
- **TDY:** temporary duty
- **VR:** virtual reality

QUICK LINKS

External Links to Additional Resources

- **AFJAGS:** <https://www.afjag.af.mil/JAG-School/>
- **ISOS:** <https://www.37trw.af.mil/Units/Inter-American-Air-Forces-Academy/>
- **SOS:** <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/SOS/>