Welcome to the Aerospace Advantage podcast. I'm your host John "Slick" Baum. This week, we are on the road in Oshkosh, Wisconsin at the AirVenture airshow. It is an epic event in aviation circles, and for good reason. Over half a million people from around the world gather here, most of them flying themselves to the event in their own airplanes. They camp under the wings of their planes, in tents next to Cessnas, various warbirds and even private jets. One year, I even saw a member of the Royal Canadian Air Force Snowbirds demonstration team camp next to his jet. The show line is massive, stretching a few miles along the runway, while also extending to the length of a crosswind runway. So picture a gigantic L-shaped setup with massive ramps, display halls, various forum stages and a huge camping field for those who drive to the event and a bunch of other events that are occurring at the Experimental Aircraft headquarters building, the group that runs this event. Truly it is an awesome place and center for aviation. So just like everybody else, I was lucky to fly here into Oshkosh this week and I flew in an L-39, which is an Eastern Bloc trainer. I've got Doug with me. So Doug, how did you arrive to Oshkosh?

Hey, Slick. It's awesome to see you. Normally, we're back in DC when we meet up. But Oshkosh, you get to meet buddies from all over the place of aviation. So it's awesome seeing you here and we both have a passion for this stuff. I've arrived in Oshkosh in every imaginable way the can you can think of, from a B-17 to T-6 World War Two-era trainer. This year was comfort cruising in my friends Bonanza. But it's something that, it's really interesting. And we're here to talk airpower and all that. But just as a point of, you know, information for the group, we always get this question. What's it like to actually arrive? And there, there are a bunch of ways to do it. It's intimidating for a lot of people and if you haven't done it a bunch of times I get it. They basically, for most aircraft, they funnel you in, think of a basket where you
get into a chute. And so there are waypoint points throughout, that are geographic locations. And so they're towns out in the Wisconsin countryside. And they basically line everybody up there, two general tracks, those that are lower and slower and those a little higher and faster. The route you in. You are landing on two basic runways, there are colored dots on the runways. Once you get on point for your approach, kind of base to final, they tell you what color to aim for. You touch down, you turn off as fast as possible, normally into the grass, and then they route you into a variety of different parking areas based on the type of aircraft you're with. But it's like you're, I mean, you were in a jet. So you were in a totally different deal. What was it like for you?

John "Slick" Baum 02:41
Well you know, I have two, two different scenarios in front of me. One was luckily, being a previous airshow, guy and knowing the airshow community and having a few phone calls. Initially, I was just going to get a slot to arrive during the airshow, which was going to be great. And they would just make a quick announcement, hey, here comes slick in an L-39. And as long as I met that timing window, it was really just going to be flying to an airport like like anybody normally would, and talking essentially to the control tower, which would have been the air boss. But they were very, very efficient with the airshow. And when I flew in, I tried to contact the air boss, they said, Oh, we gave it back to the air traffic controllers, which, to your point in my mind, you go, Oh, man, you know, I had the EZ-Pass. And now I don't have it anymore. But for the warbirds, Luckily, it is pretty easy compared to what you described. You basically fly over to one town and you make that radio call. And then there is a little island right off the coast of the lake next to the airport. And essentially you circle over that and they sequence you in. But for me, I just reported the town, and then I reported that I was at Warbird Island, so easy for me to remember. And they just said hey, come on in for a straight in to runway 36L, which is great. So setting up for straight in, just like you normally would on an airliner. But then there was an airplane that wasn't responding to the air traffic controllers directions. And they said, which was really kind of neat for me, because they go, Hey, we need you to do like a low pass. Fly underneath this airplane, it's going to be out of your way. And then if you can do like an aggressive pull up and then turn to downwind like a normal racetrack pattern that the military would fly, that'll work out great for us. So I'm like, Okay, you want me to do kind of airshow stuff? That sounds great to me, I'll do it. So that's how I came in and did an over, a pitch up to an overhead and landed.

Doug Birkey 04:21
Hey, man, well, I happened to be standing at the end of the runway, as you know, and see some pictures of that it was it was really cool. And you know, again, it's Oshkosh, there are thousands and thousands of people here. But there's that split second where you're the center of the show. You're the one touching down and it's, it is really, really cool.

John "Slick" Baum 04:37
Well, thanks for getting that. And I'm glad I didn't balk the landing since there was a lot of people looking.
Doug Birkey 04:42
We were ready to judge it, but you held your own, we'll say.

John "Slick" Baum 04:45
Well thanks, I appreciate it. Well, let's get to the point of today. I know that we are at Oshkosh and of course it is the gathering of aviation around the world. But the point of today's episode is to really think about how the public relates to air power at these sorts of events. I mean, the Air Force is about celebrate its 75th anniversary, and it's really appropriate to think about this broader issue. I mean, we're normally buried in the, you know, the hyper details, but let's face it, it's not normal. So what the public thinks about is really what matters the most. So they have the vote.

Doug Birkey 05:19
Now, and it's it's really interesting in that, this is kind of the crux of why we're doing this episode today, you know, past your summer fun content. It's this notion of how do Americans relate to airpower? And I would say, when I was growing up, and Slick, I think it's the same for you. We really had thousands and thousands of interpreters. And by that, I mean World War Two vets, Korean vets, Cold War folks that had served, were airmen. And they would interpret for their family, they would hold their hands, they would explain, hey, this, this is this, this is that, bomber, fighter. These are roles and missions, blah, blah, blah. And there's just more general awareness, because you think about the number of bases that existed, production centers, all that's really gone away in stark terms, and with all the contraction that's occurred, most Americans have very, very little interface with airpower. And the movie Top Gun might actually, No kidding, we joke about this, but that might be the most contact they have with it ever in their lives. And so when they come to an event, like Oshkosh, seeing something like an F-16, or an F-35, or KC-135, or C-5, that might be the most direct contact they've ever had. And those crews, those those young lieutenants, and captains, and majors manning those aircraft, engaging with the public, that is the US Air Force to them, or, you know, in the case of the Navy, or the Marine Corps, or whatever, same deal. And so, when we talk about why national security matters, and all these challenges of an aging Air Force fleet and national security risks and all that, we can really geek out on this stuff, we can go talk to certain experts on the Hill, and there are a handful of them that really get it. But the vast majority people, this is really remote. And these public events matter a ton. And so if you look at what's sitting here at Oshkosh, this week, it's a really good array, because it's the 75th anniversary of the service, that you've got C-17, C-5, F-16, F-35, the Osprey, you've got a ton of different things out there, you've got flying demos, but it's, it's I would just say, the best PR opportunity in many ways for the Air Force writ large.

John "Slick" Baum 07:28
Yeah, I mean, I couldn't agree more. And, you know, yeah, we've mentioned we've talked about it a lot recently, about me having an incredible opportunity of flying with the Air Force Thunderbirds. So that meant I got to go to a lot of air shows, interact with the crowd. We often joke about how, you know, how silly some of the questions are, and you cannot blame the
American public. And I'll give you my personal, you know, feeling. You know, I grew up on Long Island. And although there's you know, Long Island air power history from, you know, the, the F-14 Tomcat, and all of those things with Grumman aviation, that was, you know, a really big deal where I grew up, but there were no Air Force bases. It's not like, you know, you heard the sound of freedom or, you know, an annoyance, if you don't like the sound of airplanes flying over your house all the time. There's just not a lot of exposure. And so, obviously, really, this is the only way that you can bring the Air Force to the general public. And, again, to your point, I think, in generations past, they probably had an uncle or a grandparent, or an aunt or somebody who served in the military. And I think those numbers are really dwindling a lot today. So just from a family organic way of having exposure to the military, they're really not getting it. And so now we got to bring that to the American public.

Doug Birkey 08:44

Now. And dude, just back to your New York point. Let's just do a quick thing on Long Island. I mean, before, Long Island was airpower superpower. You had Grumman, you had Republic, and just over the horizon, you had Curtiss. I mean, these are massively important companies. You had Mitchel Field out there on Long Island during World War Two, I mean, people back then were surrounded by it. Now, nothing. I mean, those are empty production sites and empty bases. So I can't agree with you enough. And it's also something I've observed, you know. I'm not a pilot. I'm just highly involved with aviation and have for most of my life, and I'm really lucky with that. But I've noticed over the past 25 years, I've been doing this kind of on a very frequent basis, there has been a tremendous, I'll just be blunt, deterioration of the quality of questions I am asked when I bring an aircraft that's, you know, a warbird on display to the public. Before they would kind of know the type they would know basic role and mission and they'd ask you semi informed questions about it that were somewhat dialed in. I was just at an airshow the weekend before we came to Oshkosh, I was with some warbirds. And, I mean, you're lucky if they know what half-century that this thing might have flown in. And I don't say that insultingly. This is on us. And Slick, I'm telling you, I'm seeing this last weekend like the show described, I'm seeing here in Oshkosh, they're actually overwhelming crowd numbers. And yet, I increasingly get the feeling, and this is a problem statement for the episode in many ways, they really do not understand what they're looking at. How we are engaging them has not changed from what we were doing ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty years ago. Really. You're just kind of putting stuff out there, and some young company grade officers, and some PA narration while this stuff flies. We need to do a better job. And this really matters. If the American public does not understand what airpower brings, and if they don't understand the precarious nation of American airpower, we got issues that you see today, we talk about all the time.

John "Slick" Baum 10:46

Well, let's just go back to why airshows started. From a military perspective, of course, you know, it was entertainment, and a lot of other things like that, and showing innovation within the aviation community. But the Air Force Thunderbirds really started going on tour because they needed to educate folks on what this new sound was. I mean, airplanes were only propeller planes, you know, up into the 50s. So now all of a sudden, they were going with a point of going to small towns, and allowing folks to hear the jet noise and not be afraid of it and say, okay, hey, that's, that's part of American airpower. And really, you know, the point the aircraft itself was central to that mission. And now, as we're seeing, you know, look at the F-35,
for example, I mean, it is a flying sensor, integrated sensor suite. I mean, how do you really explain that, you know, and I think, again, to the problem statement of the episode, we really need to think about or maybe rethink how we tell. And by the way, when talking about the Air Force, United States Air Force, tells the story of the equipment and the personnel and what the Air Force is capable of doing.

Doug Birkey 11:50

Now, and it's really hard, because, you know, here's an example today. I saw the KC-135 demo, and the official narrator for, you know, commended the maintainers for sustaining something that is, you know, closing in on 60 years of age, it's going to pass that really fast. And, and they're saying this is America, look what these young kids are doing. Yes, it is. But this is shameful that we are asking these young men and women to fight in combat in these ancient assets. And so we've got to kind of nip this romanticism and sentimentality, that is oftentimes display to the public, and say, No, this is not okay. And that is where Mitchell comes in. Because that captain can't really do that. I get it, they have handcuffs on what they can say, but there's got to be a way to nuance it. And to say that F-35 is awesome, but guess what it? It's only about, you know, fifth-gen writ large is about 20% of the fighter fleet. That is not good. You know, there are only 20 long range stealth bombers, the entire inventory until the B-21 shows up, that is not good. We've got to be more comfortable owning the problem statement publicly.

John "Slick" Baum 12:58

So I can say this now? Alright. So Doug, I throw this out as a statement and a question. But as folks may know, that I've listened to the podcast, how we met was when I was an Air Force fellow doing a strategic communications plan. And I worked with public affairs, and you walk around the halls of the Pentagon, and you have the Chief of Staff saying that the Air Force is the oldest, the smallest, etc, etc, as we've said many times. And then you turn the corner in the Pentagon, and there's a picture of the B-52, with a grandfather, a father and a son standing in front of the same tail number, so proud that three generations flew the same airplane. So which is it? You know, are we really proud of the fact that we can keep a dinosaur you know, on Earth or, or in the air, I guess I should say? Or, you know, of course, we have to be proud of the maintenance folks and you know, I'm a prior enlisted maintainer. So I'm totally understand the challenges that they have. But I think to your point, the Air Force really needs to decide what the future is, you know where we're going and really not bragging at the fact that we can keep nearly a, you know, a 70 year old machine in the air.

Doug Birkey 14:07

Totally. And that kind of flips to the other part we wanted to talk about that you see at these events, especially Oshkosh, and that's warbirds. And I think, where I get it, people in uniform have to toe a certain line, these historic aircraft in there, mainly from World War Two that you're seeing, but there's some from Korea and Vietnam. Those are now owned by private individuals that have chosen to invest their resources in making these aircraft accessible to the public. And why they're so important to airpower people today is that the lessons that embody them are really, they capture people's imagination. We go to Barnes and Noble you see books
everywhere on this stuff, or go check out Amazon obviously, it's everywhere. We make movies about this, this is what we like to watch. And the lessons have kind of generally been accepted as the way. And you're not dealing with egos that are currently in power and all that. And so here's you know, today I've seen a B-17 fly by numerous times here, which is incredible. I love that. And the lessons surrounding that are so applicable today. I mean, you think about the B-17 comes out before World War Two, they can barely squeeze the thing into the acquisition budget, we literally had just a dozen of them initially. And then when World War Two hits, we again have a little bit bigger fleet, but not much, a very small number of air crews and maintainers. We spent 1942 and 1943 just staying alive with that force. We could only project enough power with those B-17s and B-24s and others like it, as we could bring back and regenerate tomorrow. So you couldn't really play for knockout blows and really crippling the enemy, you are playing to stay alive. That is a way different strategy than than winning. And it's dangerous as hell. And we lost a lot of guys, because of that. When I see that B-17, I can talk to people about that. They are interested in it, they want to learn about it. And I can then say guess what, the B-52 over there. Cool. You know, I get it, I respect that it's still here and good on the people doing it. But that is not going to work. And we cannot, and right now we have the smallest bomber force in our Air Force's history ever and it's the oldest. This is not good. Look at this B-17. It wasn't until 1944 that we had enough air crews and B-17s to actually do really, really, knockout blow, you know, thousand-plane raids we've all heard about that really took down elements like the petroleum industry or other elements of manufacturing that let it, really netted strategic effects. And I mean, Slick you've been walking around, what's your favorite thing you've seen?

John "Slick" Baum  16:34
Well, I tell you I'm, I really appreciate all that you said. You said one word when we were talking earlier, the romanticism and that is what I get, you know, especially from, you know, being so grateful for the greatest generation. And you know, we're both Stearman owners. So you know, I think we kind of toe that line, if you will, to make sure that people understand what that generation did during World War Two. And so, and I think it properly has that romanticism. One of the things that, I guess you could put it under the camp of romanticism, but from an airpower perspective, especially for me as a weapons officer, seeing the MiG-17 fly last night. And in going back to the history of you know, it is an amazing airplane, and especially for its time, it was groundbreaking. It was the tightest turning dogfighting airplane, and it really challenged the United States Air Force, not only from a technology perspective, F-86. And then, you know, even facing them again in Vietnam, Century Series airplanes, and then ultimately, the F-4, where, you know, Robin Olds is so famous for fighting, you know, some MiG-17s. And then, you know, obviously, MiG-21s, the subsequent fighter from there, but the fact that I saw that, and I understood the airpower connection to that. Again, you know, as we're saying, I don't think Americans really realize that the fact that an American owns an enemy airplane, and now flies it around airshows, it's cool to see it. And we're not telling the story of the MiG-17. But it really is the story of American airpower, defeating, you know, such a technologically advanced airplane. And it also shows, frankly, that we won during that timeframe. I mean, we don't have, you know, billionaires and, you know, other countries flying US aircraft around in that regard, the way that we are doing it on display, I mean, you know, just like for myself, I flew in on an L-39. I mean, we don't have other people in other countries flying T-37s and T-38s around on the weekends.
No, and dude, I like that example, because it cuts your personal history. And it also cuts this hubris that we see today, we just assume we're gonna win. We weren't winning the air war in Vietnam, when that first showed up, because we were prepared for a totally different conflict. And that's why things like Weapons School had to come into play, because we had to get back to basics with teaching fundamental skill sets with the air to air mission. And that's exactly where you spent so much time in the Air Force. And to see he see the history of that actually flying and you lived it. I mean, you trained up airmen. It cuts this notion that today, we can't be cocky, we're watching Russia struggle, they got cocky. The question is, facing China, are we going to be like Russia, and I'm very worried about that. And so that's what I think these lessons are crucial, but we got to add to context. So flying wise, you know, you talked about seeing the MiG-17 was your favorite. Anything else that you've enjoyed?

Well, I mean, we just watched, and it was, it was nearly a head to head demo of the F-35. So the Navy is here, they have two F-35s and they just flew their demo, and then Kristin "Beowulf" then raged in the F-35. And for those that have not seen Beo fly the demo, I mean, she is putting that airplane to the test. And it is amazing. I mean, you know, really the F-35 initially was, you know, hey, it's not going to be a dogfighter, it's not going to have a lot of maneuverability. It's you know, single engine, it's underpowered, it's this big, fat guppy looking thing. And you know, the F-22 is where it's at, because the F-22 demo is amazing to really showcase what that airplane can do. But I mean Beo absolutely crushed it, and I'm really really excited and proud of that. The F-35 demo team is kicking, kicking butt. I mean, they're doing really well. But they're showcasing what this airplane can do, because it's been such a huge burden on the taxpayer, you know, as, you know, frankly, a trillion dollar, most expensive airplane acquisition. And it's, you know, thank goodness it's doing exactly and going beyond what we thought it was going to do initially.

Now, and I will just kind of put that dig in there. Yeah, Beo kicked the butt of the Navy. And yeah, that was nice to see. And, you know, my favorite thing, and this is pretty much any air show is really the heritage flight what she joined up on and participated with the legacy aircraft. And, you know, it's kind of changed every day at Oshkosh. Today, it was with the Mustang. Yesterday, they had a Skyraider and Mustang the day before that it was it was four Mustangs. But again, it's bringing all these lessons together. And as far as I'm concerned, it's one of the most poignant parts of the display.

Well, you know, Doug, you know, one of the really cool things is you and I could sit here and pontificate. But I really had a great opportunity to meet up with a good friend. "Rain" Waters, he used to be the F-16 demo pilot, and he has visited and flown here a number of times. So at this point, we're going to cut it off, and we're gonna go over to that conversation.
Doug Birkey 21:11
No, man, it's been awesome. I love seeing you here. And it's gonna be exciting hearing from Rain, because we all stand on the ground staring up and we just watched you, Slick. But to hear from somebody that actually crossed that line at Oshkosh, and was flying with the military demo things is pretty rare. So that's going to be awesome. Safe trip back, man. We'll catch you later.

John "Slick" Baum 21:27
Thanks, you too. Well Rain, it is awesome to be here at Oshkosh with you. I know. We've been trying to get together for a long time and really just talk about airplanes, and we have a great opportunity here at Oshkosh to do just that. And for those that don't know who you are, and this is not a trap, but can you give us just a quick rundown of your career? And for those that don't know, obviously, you were the F-16, the mighty F-16 Viper demo pilot for a while.

John "Rain" Waters 21:51
Yeah, best jet out there. Right, right. Yeah, slightly biased. But no, thanks for having me on. It's funny how I've talked about before, it's, it's always a challenge to schedule these things and get people together. So it's cool we're able to do it here. But I started off as a fake flying T-6s. So first time instructor pilot, did about three years doing that. In that cycle, I went and did a stint doing MC-12s. So I got about seven months, eight months flying in C-12s. So seeing the ISR piece of it, which was helpful later on as I went down the road, and later into flying the Viper. So I did an operational assignment at Shaw. And then at the end of that operational assignment, I was selected to be the F-16 demo pilot. So I did it for about two and a half years before I separated from active duty.

John "Slick" Baum 22:30
Awesome. You know, it's one of those crazy things. And you and I both had the opportunity to hang out at airshows and engage with the American public. And it's amazing.

John "Rain" Waters 22:38
Right.

John "Slick" Baum 22:38
With the Air Force getting ready to celebrate its 75th anniversary. Sometimes I'm astonished at how little the American public knows about airpower. And you know, looking at the F-16, for example. I mean, you've probably been there and they go, Oh, is that a nuclear bomb on your wing? You're like, No, sir. That's a fuel tanker. Well, you have a hook on the back. I mean, what's it like to land on an aircraft carrier? So you know, you have a tremendous experience. Why do you think it's important, you know, that the American public understands airpower?
Well, there is a statistic, which I will butcher, but it comes from recruiting, you know. If you back up to like the 1970s, over half of Americans had someone who immediately served in the military. And now that number is down in the teens. So airshows are a great way to interface with the public. Rarely does someone get the opportunity to get up close and personal, and get a tour or see some kind of DOD asset, assets so close. So airshows, you know, the doors are open, the gates are open, people can actually get in, get close, sometimes even, you know, sit in a jet, touch a jet and see it operate in the sky. And we're going out there and performing. And again, it's so important for the American people to understand what the Department of Defense does, what the Air Force does, what airpower can do for you. And usually they're only seeing that on a soundbite on the news, potentially if something bad happens, right? Or some kind of accident, which is sensational. Or maybe they get a news article, or maybe they know a friend of a friend that oh, yeah, he flies planes. But they don't really understand just how important it is to have a military they can go out there and own the skies.

So yeah, you know, it's the deterrent piece, right?

Absolutely.

And we talked about that quite often on the podcast, and I want to get your take on, if you were king for a day, how do you think we, and I say we, since we're both former Airmen, you know, I guess we're always Airmen, right? We'll be forever but, you know. If you're a king for a day, how do you think we, we the Air Force, could better engage with the public to make sure that they understand what airpower's doing for them on a daily basis?

You know, I do think air shows are a great way of doing it. Flyovers are a great way because again, that's gonna be a rare opportunity for most people to actually ever see these planes flying and what's going on. Movies, ironically, like Top Gun right, how popular that is. It does get people a glimpse into something that's normally not seen or known and that while it is a movie, I think they did a pretty good job. It exposes a generation to something that's really cool and out there. One of the aspects doing in the reserves, is as a demo pilot, I saw a big fault with our recruiting and the link between the demo teams. Because we sent a demo team out there, we're spending a lot of money, we're spending resources, time, effort to get a plane and a team out to a specific spot to engage with the public. Having a recruiter and demo team speak, where they actually can link up and utilize a demo team as a tool, because that's what it is, to go out there and really maximize its impact for a weekend. But these shows are really
important. I did several shows in other countries. And you know, as we go out there, and we're worried about the next fight. Like we, one, can't do it all ourselves. Having that coalition and that joint fight is huge. So doing shows and other countries and partner nations. I'm sure you saw it. I saw it firsthand. And the one anecdotal story I have is at Rio Negro, Columbia. It's at an international airport. And they have to sequence in commercial airliners, so there's only like a 30 to 45 minute window that the airshow can occur. They stop it and for the next two hours, airliners operate in and out of there. I was holding short ready to go and I was having to wait on a performer ahead of me that blew through their time. The entire Colombian like defense department upper echelon, including their secretary of defense, their chief of staff for their air force, were all in attendance that day. The 12th Air Force Commander, General Kelly who's now the Air Combat Commander Kelly, or Air Combat Commander, was there as well. Because the Colombians as a strategic partner looking to upgrade their air force, looking at the next fighter they're going to buy, had all their people out there to see the performance capabilities of F-16, which was a 12,000 foot density altitude, like roughly, which is impressive and challenging to fly in. But they're there to watch it and see it. And I think that translates to what we're doing with the F-35. And what's what's happening now with how that program is progressing and what the next fight might be. It turns out, they canceled my flight, which became a very big deal. A lot of people were jumping through hoops, I ended up flying just because it was so important to demonstrate the capabilities of F-16 that day, to the Colombian upper echelon, they didn't care about the crowd. They didn't care about people. I'm sure they did. But it was a very rare opportunity to go out there and showcase to a coalition partner, or a partner nation who we need that strategic partnership with, to work with for various reasons in that geographic region. And again, I think it's copy and paste and it translates across across the spectrum.

John "Slick" Baum  27:36

Absolutely. Yeah. And you know, on the last podcast I mentioned, you know, in 2009, we did a Asia tour, you know, hit a bunch of different countries, a bunch of stops, you know, within countries, and it was incredible to have that interaction from that coalition mindset, you know. We have to build these bonds as partner nations. And then of course, you know, hopefully they they pick a US side. So I'm sure that really spawns from a lot of the diplomatic engagement that we do in our shores, airshows are certainly part of that. So now, you've been away from the airshow circuit a little bit. And you know, luckily, we're back here at Oshkosh. What's, what's changed from like an airpower engagement scenario since you left?

John "Rain" Waters  28:14

Oh, that's a good, a good question. You know, I don't honestly don't know, if I've seen too much of a shift. It's been about three years, since I've been out of the jet doing it. I see. You know, when it comes to air shows, we still do a lot of the things that we were doing, good and bad. The one thing I really would like to see an improvement upon, is how we're able to actually really go out there and spider out. You know, a couple years ago, I made the joke, like I couldn't spell Instagram. I do think social media is the future meat, you know, it is changing how we're doing things. This podcast is another example of that. I see that technology and those forms of media being embraced more, because as we look around, everyone has that device in their hand. And that's how they're engaging. And they're doing it at seven to 15 seconds a pop, right. So being able to get that message out there quickly to hopefully capture the attention
and then to possibly draw them to something such as a podcast, where you actually can do a little bit deeper dive and fully understand something that's going on. So I do think when we go out there, we're specifically talking about, alright, air shows and airpower engagement, putting a demo team out there and displaying what that aircraft is capable of. Right? And it's a show, so it's really not showing everything it's capable of, right. But utilizing social media to expand that footprint to reach a broader audience for more than the 5000 foot crowd line. You're going to get more out of it.

John "Slick" Baum 29:37
Gotcha. Want to get a thumbs up if you do, bro. Should we wait a second here? Okay, perfect.

John "Rain" Waters 29:44
Yeah, like if you like that kind of background it kind kind of give you an idea.

John "Slick" Baum 29:48
Yeah, yeah, for sure. And I apologize to my guys for having to edit this, because I don't make it easy for them. You know, to that point, one of the things that I'm gonna answer my own question, but bouncing it off you. One of the things that I, I always enjoyed is when we had, you know, like a bomber flyby. You know, you think about the logistics and the strategic reach when they take off from Whiteman, and you're, I don't know, in Miami or something They hit, they shack the ToT, coming over to the airfield. And of course, that crowd always goes wild. When they see those assets come by, how do you think we can better leverage, you know, some of those other assets and get them involved in the air shows versus just fighters?

John "Rain" Waters 30:29
Yeah, so that's a good point, right? Because the fighters are, they're sexy, they're loud. People want to see that. And we have the ACC demo teams and the PACAF demo teams. You know, everything is scripted. They kind of know, what I mean, they know what to do. They're going out there and every weekend, rinse, repeat how to maximize their their impact. But that is a great point. Because as an Air Force guy standing in Miami when the B-2 flies over, you know, it took off from Whiteman Air Force Base earlier that morning. It is probably flown all over the country. It's refueled maybe once or twice, maybe not at all right? And all the pieces that are going into play to coordinate and make that happen. That translates to if that B-2 instead of being over Miami needs to be over Country X, because there's bad guys there, that we can do that. Telling that story. Like there was a U-2 that flew over here yesterday, you and I watching it know what it took for that U-2 to be overhead. Unless you know how the U-2 operates operationally, you're probably just looking up saying that's really cool. And it is, right? But when you back that up, just all the moving pieces that went into make that happen. It truly shows you what we're capable of. So telling that story to the public is crucial. And we're talking to airshows specifically. I mean that comes through the narrator. That's a huge piece of connecting what's happening to the loud thing, or the quiet thing that's flying out in front of the crowd like that, that is critical to tell that story.
John "Slick" Baum  32:02
Yeah, and one thing that you and I already know, but if that B-2 was doing that, that was just maybe 10% of the training that they probably got on that sortie. They probably executed, you know, multiple other events on that, you know, eight or 10 hour sortie, or something like that.

John "Rain" Waters  32:15
Because what other nation, one, if we just talk here specifically. To be able to allocate resources to go out there and demonstrate a fraction of our capability, that's a huge privilege in and of itself. But it is a testament to what we're able to do. Shaw Air Force base, where I was with the Viper demo, we had three F-16s attached to us, a team of maintainers. And while we did rely upon other parts of the maintenance squadron and the operational squadrons to support the demo team, inherently self-sufficient until something big breaks, and then you know, every every unit there is utilizing that, but the ability to be able to allocate those resources to go out there and demonstrate it is a testament. Being able to maintain that and sustain that I think is. That's probably, that's down the rabbit hole of like, how do we ensure that, because most nations can't afford to just chop off X number of jets to go out there and do performances all the time. They have to have a dual role.

John "Slick" Baum  33:12
Absolutely. It's absolutely incredible. Well, I know we're gonna get short on time on the podcast, I just want to give you the opportunity to say anything or you know, tell us about what you're up to and, and anything else about airpower?

John "Rain" Waters  33:24
Well, Slick, I really appreciate it. I have a podcast as well, the Afterburner podcast again, it's slightly different here. But we're telling a lot of stories capturing those. I know you're gonna come on the podcast, it's always great to, you know, dig a little bit deeper into the person, the fighter pilot, the pilot, the bomber, whoever might be on there, and kind of peel back the onion, if you will, and figure out what makes them tick, and maybe a cool story or two. So I do appreciate you taking the time letting me jump on the podcast here today.

John "Slick" Baum  33:49
Yeah, likewise. And you know, you mentioned social media and you just said ticks. I know you're not a big dancer, but are you on TikTok as well?

John "Rain" Waters  33:55
I am on TikTok. That's a whole nother discussion in itself. I'm not super active on it. I do have I mean, some concerns about TikTok, as probably most of us do, right? But yeah, there we go.
I do appreciate that. And really, to your point, I mean, you were the guy that kind of broke the mold on leveraging social media to reach exactly the audience that we're trying to reach, by telling the airpower story with, with the youth. And they are the next generation they're going to, you're going to carry the airpower torch into the future. So,

Absolutely. Awesome, Slick. Appreciate it.

Hey, thank you. With that, I'd like to extend a big thank you to our guests for joining in today's discussion. I'd also like to extend a big thank you to our listeners for your continued support, and for tuning into today's show. If you like what you've heard today, don't forget to hit that like button and follow or subscribe to the Aerospace Advantage. You can also leave a comment to let us know what you think about our show or areas you think we should explore further. As always, you can join in on the conversation by following the Mitchell Institute on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or LinkedIn. And you can always find us at mitchellaerospacepower.com. Thanks again for joining us and we'll see you next time. Stay safe and check six.