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Patrick covers mission, personnel, safety issues in 502nd ABW commander's call

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In his second commander's call at Fort Sam Houston, 502nd Air Base Wing commander Brig. Gen. Leonard Patrick talked about progress being made towards the wing's full operating capacity in October 2010, and gave time to some of his staff to discuss personnel issues and safety.

Speaking to a full house at the Blesse Auditorium at the Army Medical Department Center & School July 13, Patrick said he plans to hold multiple commander's calls at one location in the future so he can reach more people. He said he also wants to use technology to bring his message to more of Joint Base San Antonio.

"Instead of going to several different places, we can do this using streaming video and you can watch it at your desk, in case you're in a customer service position where you can't close down," the general said. "We currently do that at Lackland and Randolph Air Force Bases and we want to bring that to Fort Sam Houston."

Patrick then turned the microphone over to Meg Reyes, the 502nd ABW chief of manpower personnel services.

"I get asked when the non-appropriated and appropriated funds people will convert over from Department of the Army to Department of the Air Force," Reyes said. "NAF employees will convert over Oct. 1.

"On the appropriated side, our timeline for conversion is Oct. 10," she said. "We're on track with that."

Another question Reyes is asked is where official personnel folders will be maintained when people transition from Army to Air Force.

"NAF records will still be located at Fort Sam Houston. On the appropriated side, records will be transferring from the U.S. Army Rock Island Arsenal in Illinois to the Air Force Personnel Center in San Antonio. All records will be converted to electronic files," she added. "People will be able to access all their records online."

In regard to pay questions, Reyes said everything is on track.

“We hope to have a seamless transition,” Reyes said. “All data is going to be picked up from one database and dumped into the Air Force system. I don’t anticipate any problems. We are working diligently on that, because pay is important to everybody.” Another point of concern was new Common Access Cards.

“The Department of Defense said that if you are transferring from Army to Air Force, you need a new CAC,” Reyes said. “We are going to have to take all our employees, including our contractors, and issue new CACs.”

Reyes hopes to have another town hall this summer to go into greater detail about certain items and have more time to answer questions.

Next up was Air Force Staff Sgt. Aron Lee, the 737th Training Group unit training manager at Lackland Air Force Base. He shared a personal story on how alcohol abuse affected the lives of him and his family. “I know what you’re thinking, it’s probably another alcohol briefing or sad story,” said Lee, who said he remembers the days when his eyes would glaze over during safety briefings.

While stationed at Cannon AFB, N.M., in April 2009, he got a 5 a.m. call from his mother. His sister, Tech. Sgt. Audra Britt, had been critically injured in a motorcycle accident in Austin. His brother-in-law, Tech Sgt. Maurice Britt, had died at the scene.

His sister and brother in-law, both avid motorcyclists stationed at Lackland AFB, were returning home from a motorcycle rally when their lives were snuffed out by a drunk driver going the wrong way on a one-way street.

Six days later, his sister died, leaving behind a four-year-old son to grow up without his parents – and a family that vowed to protect others from the kind of pain they’d endured.

“We want to educate people on the effects of alcohol and drugs and try to get people to turn their lives around,” said Lee, who received a compassionate reassignment to Lackland AFB to help his parents raise their grandson.

“I want to make sure people are aware of how alcohol affects the body, what happens if they drink and drive, and how it has an exponential effect beyond the person injured.”

Lee and his parents founded EVADE 411 – for “Empowering Victory through Alcohol and Drug Education,” followed by the date of Audra’s death, April 11, 2009.

“Accidents affect more than just the family,” Patrick added after Lee’s story. “It affects best friends, co-workers and so many more people.”

The general then unveiled the 502nd ABW’s mission, vision and motto. The mission is to “Provide installation services to the JBSA community.” The vision is to “Preserve our heritage; innovate and improve for a better future” and the wing’s motto is “Partnership in Excellence.”

“We’re getting ready to celebrate the first anniversary of the 502nd ABW,” Patrick said. “I’ll always remember the words of Air Education and Training Command’s Gen. Stephen Lorenz as he handed me the wing’s flag: ‘Good Luck!’ We’ve been going at a marathon pace ever since.”

Patrick also touched on construction, signage, parking and other issues around the post.

“There’s a lot of anxiety, but the only thing that is going to change is that you’re going to get more resources, more people and more money,” he said. “We have been successful because of your ideas, your patriotism and your innovation.”