



In this episode, General Joseph Votel (U.S. Army, Ret.) provides a candid discussion on the challenges of strategic decision-making and risk management. He also emphasizes the importance of role modeling in leadership, highlighting some of the role models who shaped his career.

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Also, Don't forget to check out the [reading list from the show](#).

About Joseph Votel, (Bio courtesy of [Bens.org](#))

Continuing his long, distinguished career of service and senior leadership, General Votel today serves as President and CEO of Business Executives for National Security (BENS) – a national, nonprofit comprised of senior business and industry executives who volunteer their time and expertise to assist the U.S. national security community. In this role, General Votel leads a driven, multidisciplinary staff – spread across seven regional offices – and advises and executes on the strategy put forth by the BENS Board of Directors and the organization’s 400+ dedicated members.

General Votel joined BENS in January 2020 following a 39-year military career where he commanded special operations and conventional forces at every level; last serving as the Commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) where he was responsible for U.S. and coalition military operations in the Middle East, Levant, and Central and South Asia. General Votel’s career included combat in Panama, Afghanistan, and Iraq. And he notably led the 79-member coalition that successfully liberated Iraq and Syria from the Islamic State Caliphate. General Votel preceded his assignment at CENTCOM with service as the Commander of U.S. Special Operations Command and the Joint Special Operations Command.

General Votel has been recognized with the Distinguished Military Leadership Award from the Atlantic Council and has received the U.S.- Arab Defense Leadership Award from the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations; the Patriot Award from the National Medal of Honor Society; the SGT James T. Regan Lifetime Achievement Award from the “Lead the Way” Foundation; and the Freedom Award from the Intrepid Sea, Air and Space Museum.

He is a Strategic Advisor for Sierra Nevada Corporation as well as a member of the Board of Trustees for Noblis Corporation. Votel is a non-resident Distinguished Fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington, DC and the Belfer Center at the John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, MA. He sits on the Executive Board of the Center for Ethics and the Rule of Law (CERL) at the University of Pennsylvania Law School and is an Advisor to

the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, NY. He serves on the Board of Directors for both Service to School and Minnesota Wire and also serves as an Advisor to the Texas Transition Network. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

General Votel is a 1980 graduate of the United States Military Academy and earned his Master's Degrees from the U.S. Army Command and Staff College and the Army War College. He and his wife Michele - who reside in Lake Elmo, Minnesota - have two adult sons, a daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren.

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