



**“GHOST OVER THE HIGHWAY”**  
United States Air Force Reserve  
by Lieutenant Colonel Warren F. Neary, 2016



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In February 1991, Citizen Airmen of the 711th Special Operations Squadron assigned to Air Force Reserve Command's 919th Special Operations Wing, left their home station at Duke Field, Florida for combat in Operation DESERT STORM. After only a few days in theater, these Citizen Airmen found themselves in the midst of chaos along Highway 80 connecting Kuwait City and Basra, Iraq, as Allied forces liberated Kuwait City.

On the night of February 26, 1991, while en-route to their target, Captain Richard “Beef” Haddad noticed his aircraft's autopilot control had failed. Haddad and co-pilot Lieutenant Randal Bright normally relied on the autopilot's altitude-hold function to keep the aircraft at a fixed altitude while they banked and fired the aircraft's weapons. To compensate, Haddad manually controlled the ailerons to turn the aircraft while also firing his aircraft's guns. Bright crouched down in his seat to work the aircraft's throttles and yoke simultaneously to maintain a fixed altitude. The 0014 crew remained on station, firing their weapons with little resistance.

As they began to egress the “killbox,” Master Sergeant Don Dew, the illuminator operator, excitedly yelled “missile launch” over the radio. Haddad increased power and dived while Captain Jose Davidson, the aircraft's navigator, released flares to counter the missile. Unaware of the navigator's actions, Haddad and Bright thought they had been hit after witnessing the noise and light produced by the flares. Haddad recalled “my hands were gripping the throttles, thinking we were going down.” After seeing more flashes, Haddad and Bright realized they were in no danger.

The stretch of road the crew of 0014 fired on became known as the “Highway of Death” due to the enormity of the destruction caused that night. While the exact number of casualties remains unknown, the attack destroyed or caused the enemy to abandon an estimated 2,000 vehicles. The 0014 crew destroyed at least 20 enemy trucks and four armored personnel carriers and received the Air Medal for their actions. More than 23,500 Citizen Airmen served from August 1990 through the end of May 1991 in what was the sixth major call up of the Air Force Reserve since its establishment in April 1948.

## **AIR FORCE RESERVE**

The Air Force Reserve is a combat-ready force, composed of more than 70,000 Reserve Citizen Airmen, stationed locally at over 60 locations throughout the United States and serving globally for every Combatant Command in air, space and cyberspace.

We are a cost efficient and mission-effective force, providing the nation with operational capability, strategic depth and surge capacity, both overseas and here at home. The Air Force Reserve's wide-ranging operational capability serves the diverse needs of every Combatant Commander, whose requirements are as varied as the geographic and functional areas they support.

Air Force Reserve Command directly supports the homeland with capabilities, including aerial fire fighting, aerial spray, and weather reconnaissance, better known as the “Hurricane Hunters.” Our relationship with other federal agencies, including the National Weather Service and US Forest Service, demonstrates how federal, military and civilian organizations can work together to support the entire nation.

The majority of our Reservists serve alongside our active duty counterparts in association constructs. Approximately two-thirds of the Air Force's associations are with the Air Force Reserve. Integrating through associations delivers significant taxpayer value, both in cost savings and improved mission effectiveness, by sharing aircraft, equipment and facilities with the active duty.

Value is also gained from “Airmen for Life” as the Air Force Reserve retains the experience and training cost of a member's active duty service. As over 75 percent of our Reserve Citizen Airmen serve part-time, this combat-tested experience stays in a highly cost-efficient force, available whenever the nation calls. Further, the nation benefits from the intrinsic value gained by a member's civilian experience in a variety of career fields, from pilots and nurses to space and cyberspace professionals.

## **AIR FORCE RESERVE MISSION**

Provide Combat-Ready Forces to Fly, Fight and Win.

### **MISSION SETS**

The Air Force Reserve currently performs about 20 percent of the work of the Air Force, including traditional flying missions and other more specialized missions, such as Weather Reconnaissance, Aerial Fire Fighting, Aerial Spray and Personnel Recovery.

### **WHERE AIR FORCE RESERVISTS ARE CURRENTLY SERVING OR DEPLOYED**

Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti (Horn of Africa), El Salvador, Ethiopia, Germany, Guam, Guantanamo Bay, Honduras, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, South Sudan, Spain, Thailand, Turkey and Uganda.



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