



“THE GRAND RESCUE”
United States Air Force Reserve
by Senior Master Sergeant Darby Perrin, 2017

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In the early morning hours of November 21, 1980, a large fire rapidly spread throughout the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. Unable to help numerous people trapped on the upper floors of the 26-story luxury hotel, civilian authorities called the consolidated command post at Nellis AFB, Nevada, to ask for assistance.

Fortunately, highly skilled rescue personnel assigned to the Air Force Reserve’s 302nd Special Operations Squadron, were at Nellis AFB to participate in the Red Flag 81-1 exercise. Having already noticed smoke on the horizon and heard reports on the radio, the members of the 302 SOS quickly responded. Using the hoist system on their CH-3E Jolly Green Giant helicopters, the Reservists rode the sling down, climbed onto the hotel balconies, and strapped the survivors in place so that they could be hoisted into the helicopters.

The 302 SOS were joined during the effort by active-duty Air Force personnel and six UH-1N Iroquois helicopters assigned to the 57th Fighter Weapons Wing, Indian Springs AFS, Nevada, and the 1st Special Operations Wing, Hurlburt Field, Florida. Together, the three units rescued 93 survivors over the course of 38 trips. Their efforts, as well the devastating impact of the fire taking the lives of 85 people and injuring another 650, received national attention. The Air Force Reserve re-designated the 302 SOS as the 302nd Fighter Squadron on September 19, 1985. The change in mission brought the 302 FS back to its fighter aircraft roots, which began with the activation of the unit on October 13, 1942, at Tuskegee Army Airfield, Alabama.

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 firefighting, 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 Sprayv 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,



**AIR FORCE
RESERVE**