



"COMBAT-PROVEN READINESS FOR 75 YEARS...TRANSFORMING FOR THE FUTURE!"

United States Air Force Reserve

By (First to Last) Senior Master Sergeant Darby Perrin (USAFR Ret.), Lieutenant Colonel Warren Neary, and 2nd Lieutenant Kat Justen

A LEGACY OF PROVIDING COMBAT-READY FORCES TO FLY, FIGHT AND WIN

“READY THEN, NOW, AND TRANSFORMING FOR THE FUTURE”

In 2021, the United States ended its commitment to the nearly two-decade-long war in Afghanistan. As a result of that decision, on 30 July 2021, Operation ALLIES REFUGE (OAR) commenced. OAR was the largest humanitarian airlift in history. The operation focused on evacuating American citizens as well as vulnerable Afghans who had assisted coalition forces. Between 14-30 August 2021, nearly 800 civilian and military aircraft from over 30 nations safely evacuated 124,334 people from Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) in Kabul. The United States alone transported more than 79,000 evacuees. The Afghan civilians headed to temporary facilities at military bases across the globe for care and initial processing.

Ultimately, the United States shifted to Operation ALLIES WELCOME (OAW) an effort to expedite the safe resettlement of Afghan allies in the United States. Hundreds of Air Force Reserve aircrews, maintenance, security, medical, and support personnel contributed to the success of this operation. “The United States is the only nation capable of rapidly deploying forces to provide nonstop-airlift operations at this scale,” said Lieutenant General Richard Scobee, then Chief of the Air Force Reserve. “It would not be possible without the support of our Total Force – active, Guard, and Reserve Citizen Airmen – seamlessly integrating to execute the mission.” Success in these operations drew heavily upon the exceptional training and expertise of Reserve Citizen Airmen. The Air Force Reserve generated 86 ready crews within 72 hours, strictly through volunteerism. Reserve assets transported to safety twenty percent of all evacuees, proving that the Air Force Reserve is Ready now!

These four paintings frame the story of OAR and OAW as exemplified by the Air Force Reserve and Total Force contributions to the national efforts. In “Capacity” the story begins with the rapid deployment of military forces to provide safety for the sole remaining port of debarkation. Units faced with chaos on the ground at HKIA had to adjust immediately, and by so doing, they were able to begin the largest humanitarian airlift in human history. “Value” highlights the heroism and humanity of the Reservists as they confronted unprecedented situations. Bringing into the world a newborn, while still in the air, in an extremely over-crowded plane, after nearly 30 hours of continuous operations, shows the capacity of the force when operating at extremes. With “Accessible” our Reservists continued to manifest their professionalism and personalism. When called upon to help resettle Afghan refugees in the United States, they readily answered the summons in ways that eased the transition and forged new bonds of friendship and community. Finally, “Experience” closes this notable chapter by evoking the heroism and commitment of the Air Force Reserves contributions and accomplishments through the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to this particular aircrew, the crew from the flight depicted in “Capacity.”

CAPACITY

Total Force units surged to support Operation ALLIES REFUGE beginning 14 August 2021. Initially, AFR organizations such as the 349th Air Mobility Wing, stationed at Travis Air Force Base, California, focused on transporting elements of the United States Army’s 82nd Airborne Division to Kabul, Afghanistan. The intent of the airlift effort was to provide security to Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA). However, the capital city fell to the Taliban on 15 August 2021. This development spurred chaotic conditions at the airport as it was the only point of safe egress from the country. After delivering military personnel and equipment to secure the airfield, airlift crews faced a challenging situation. Desperate Afghans “swarmed the flight-line” forcing a prompt adjustment to an evacuation effort. Depicted here, a C-17 Globemaster III commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dominic Calderon takes off from HKIA with “153 U.S. citizens, allied partners, and vulnerable Afghans” onboard. The rapid deployment of Air Force Reserve Command assets allowed the U.S. Air Force to provide essential support at a critical moment. Aircrews demonstrated readiness when called to the field with 72 hours’ notice and displayed tremendous resilience when faced with fluid situations in dangerous environments. The flight crew manifested this seamless integration, as four personnel are Reserve Airmen with the 349th Air Mobility Wing and one individual is an active-duty Airmen with the 3rd Wing, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

Lieutenant Colonel Dominic Calderon, Aircraft Commander, 301st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

First Lieutenant Kyle Anderson, Mission Pilot, 301st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Master Sergeant Silva Foster, Loadmaster, 301st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Senior Airman Michael Geller, Loadmaster, 517th Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Staff Sergeant Dennis Gonzales-Furman, Flying Crew Chief, 437th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron – U.S. Air Force

VALUE

Reach 864, the flight designation for a C-17 Globemaster III commanded by Captain Dennis Conner, delivered more than just passengers on 23-24 August 2021. Departing Ramstein Air Base, Germany, the flight path followed through a landing at Al Udeid Air Base Qatar, and then to Hamid Karzai International Airport. The plane left Afghanistan with 456 passengers, 270 of them children, bound for safety in Qatar. There were only two loadmasters to tend to all passengers. One passenger required early medical attention from the flight nurse, Captain Leslie Green. While in a holding pattern, another passenger, a pregnant woman, locked herself in a lavatory along with two other individuals. The flight crew determined that the pregnant passenger was in labor. Although Captain Conner proceeded to make an emergency landing at Al Udeid, Captain Green, assisted by Master Sergeant Leah Schmidt, helped deliver a baby girl while the plane was on approach. The crew’s journey encompassed more than 30 hours of continuous duty from alert to return to station. During that time, however, they performed tireless service in transporting these vulnerable people to safety. Humbly noting that “the hard part, [the new mother] did by herself,” Green captured the collective sense of admiration for those going through such challenging times. Reach 864 departed Afghanistan with 456 passengers; it landed with 457, a new baby and demonstration of the Total Force’s versatility in the most unanticipated-of circumstances.

Captain Dennis Conner, Aircraft Commander, 701st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Lieutenant Colonel Wesley Adams, Mission Pilot, 701st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Major David Gantt, Mission Pilot, 701st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Captain Leslie Green, Flight Nurse, 375th Air Expeditionary Squadron – U.S. Air Force

Master Sergeant Leah Schmidt, Load Master, 701st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Technical Sergeant Dennis Hiott, Load Master, 701st Airlift Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Master Sergeant Adam Stewart, Flying Crew Chief, 315th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

Master Sergeant Joshua Lewis, Mission Essential Personnel, 315th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron – U.S. Air Force Reserve

ACCESSIBLE

On 30 August 2021, Operation ALLIES REFUGE transitioned to Operation ALLIES WELCOME (OAW). The Total Force’s commitment to OAW made possible the warm welcome and humane treatment of at least 50,000 Afghan refugees needing resettlement assistance. Air Force Reservists supported these efforts across the United States. The Air Force focused on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, and Holloman AFB, New Mexico, with 524 Reserve Airmen contributing to the resettlement efforts at these locations. Airmen, working along with many U.S. Government and non-governmental partners, provided “basic medical care, vaccinations, clothes, religious accommodation, culturally appropriate food, and temporary lodging.” First Lieutenant Saleah Jabeen, the first U.S. military female Muslim chaplain, provided religious care for the members of Task Force (TF) Holloman. She also served as a cultural advisor to the TF commander concerning the needs of the Afghan evacuees. The range of services covered by the TF does not alone convey the depth of feeling for and personal commitment to the mission. Colonel Meredith Seeley demonstrated the wholehearted obligation of many assigned to TF Holloman. As vice commander for the TF, she went above and beyond in welcoming those in need, even spending time with parents and children to ensure adjustment to the temporary facilities. As one Reservist later recounted, “This was the greatest mission of my career and a memory our Airmen will cherish for the rest of theirs.” The Citizen Airmen participants drew on tremendous reserves of experience and strong sense of community to ensure the success of TF Holloman.

Colonel Meredith Seeley, Task Force Holloman Deputy Commander – U.S. Air Force Reserve

First Lieutenant Saleah Jabeen, 517th Training Group – U.S. Air Force

EXPERIENCE

On 15 August 2021, the C-17 Globemaster III piloted by Lieutenant Colonel Dominic Calderon and First Lieutenant Kyle Anderson, departed Hamid Karzai International Airport with “153 U.S. citizens, allied partners, and vulnerable Afghans” onboard. The Total Force crew, including both Active Duty and Reserve Airmen, reacted to chaotic circumstances on the ground by turning to load aboard fleeing civilians and transport them to safety. As a result of the selfless actions of the crew, on 1 April 2022 the four Reserve Airmen received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). The DFC is awarded for heroism or extraordinary achievement while flying. Major General Matthew Burger, then-Deputy Commander Air Force Reserve Command, attested to the crew’s achievement while issuing the DFC. General Burger noted, “we only have 45 [Reservists] right now who have received this award.” The crew expressed humility when receiving their recognition. Lieutenant Colonel Calderon acknowledged the honor of the award, linking it to

“some of the nation’s greatest aviators.” Master Sergeant Foster upheld that linkage by asserting that the “knowledge and breadth of experience onboard” determined success on that fateful evening. Award of the DFC stands as a testament to the readiness and resiliency of this crew that performed to the highest standard in an acutely challenging moment. This level of commitment and readily available expertise permeated the Air Force Reserve contribution to Operation ALLIES REFUGE and Operation ALLIES WELCOME.

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AIR FORCE RESERVE

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

As a cost-efficient and mission-effective force, the Air Force Reserve provides 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 United States and neighboring countries with capabilities, including aerial firefighting, aerial spray, and weather reconnaissance, better known as the “Hurricane Hunters.” The Air Force Reserve’s relationship with other federal agencies, including the National Weather Service and U.S. Forest Service, demonstrates how federal, military, and civilian organizations can work together to support the entire nation.

The majority of 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.

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