

# CITIZEN AIRMAN

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



Official Magazine of the Air Force Reserve





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

Citizen Airmen, April 14th marks the 75th birthday of the United States Air Force Reserve, when the Army Air Corps Reserve was transferred to the Air Force.

For the last 75 years, the Air Force Reserve has been Ready Now. We have provided the surge capacity for our nation in every conflict. Beginning with the Korean War, more than 146,000 Air Force Reservists were mobilized to answer our nation's call. Air Reservists, most being World War II veterans, provided the surge capacity and experience that proved to be invaluable to the war effort.

Another example of the Air Force Reserve standing ready to support and defend the nation was during Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Air Reservists were active throughout the theater from the beginning, providing the strategic and tactical airlift to shuttle personnel and equipment that

helped set up the operational left hook maneuver in Iraq.

At the turn of the century, our nation called upon the Air Force Reserve yet again to respond to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. We were ready to support. Air Force Reserve F-16 fighters and KC-135 tanker crews flew combat air patrols and air refueling sorties to defend the homeland.

As the Global War on Terrorism came to an end in 2021, our nation needed airlift support for Operation Allies Refuge. The Air Force Reserve was ready to transport at-risk Afghan civilians and U.S. embassy employees during the final days of the War in Afghanistan.

Crew members from the 349th Air Mobility Wing at Travis Air Force Base, California, flew an active-component C-17 into Kabul as part of a Total Force crew. Within 24 hours, the Air Force Reserve generated 13 ready aircrews to assist with the evacuation. After 72 hours, that number grew to

88 crews, consisting solely of volunteers, along with 36 aircraft.

Desert Storm, 9/11 and Operation Allies Refuge are only a few examples from our history that highlight how the Air Force Reserve has been a Ready Now force from the beginning.

Most recently, the Air Force Reserve demonstrated its surge capacity in responding to the devastating earthquakes that hit both Turkey and Syria on February 6th. AFRC received a time-critical request from the Tanker Airlift Control Center at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, to execute a special assignment airlift mission, moving USAID-sponsored urban search and rescue personnel and equipment from the Los Angeles Fire Search and Rescue Team. Within 10 hours, the 452nd Air Mobility Wing, March Air Reserve Base, California, stood up Team March and was wheels up to support earthquake relief operations in Turkey and Syria. They provided one C-17 and moved more than 56,000 pounds of cargo, 76 people, and six search and rescue dogs.

I want to conclude by taking a moment to celebrate the career of Chief Master Sgt. Timothy White as he enters retirement. Chief, you have answered the call to serve and have remained ready to ensure American freedoms remain steadfast and true. Your service in the Air Force is the embodiment of our core values, and I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve with you. You leave a legacy of courage and commitment to our nation, inspiring future generations to follow in your footsteps.

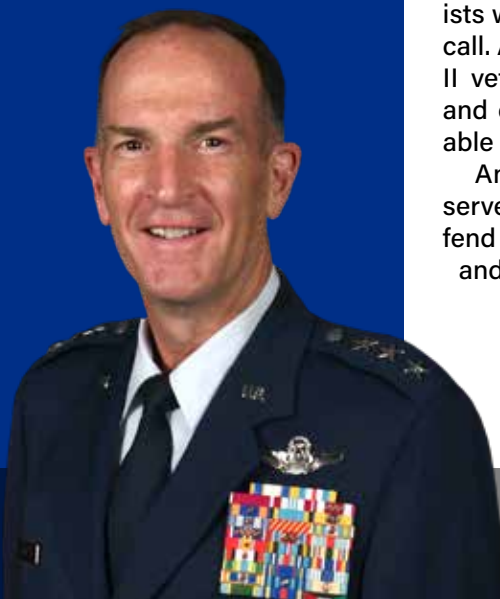
As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Air Force Reserve, we could not be here without all of you - Reserve Airmen who remain ready to answer our nation's call. Your commitment to service and willingness to answer that call deserves to be celebrated, not just for a day but for the whole year-round.

I am both honored and proud to serve with each of you.

Stay Ready!



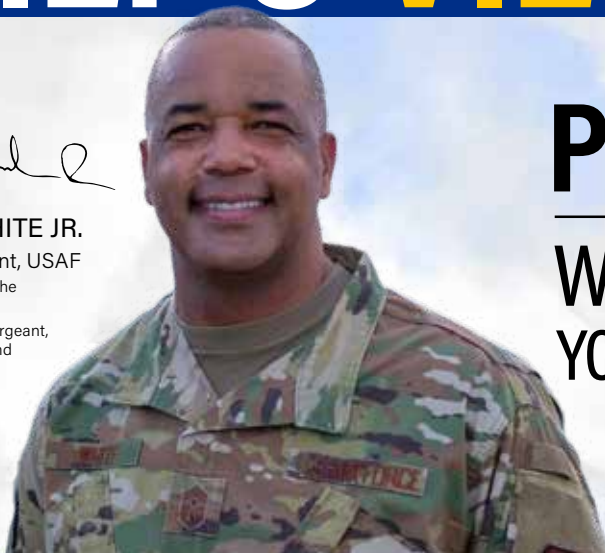
JOHN P. HEALY  
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# CHIEF'S VIEW

**TIMOTHY C. WHITE JR.**  
Chief Master Sergeant, USAF  
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Chief of Air Force Reserve  
Command Chief Master Sergeant,  
Air Force Reserve Command



## POPPIN' SMOKE WHO WILL YOU BE ONCE YOU HANG UP THE UNIFORM?

Welp teammates, I'm poppin' smoke. This will be the last *Citizen Airmen* commentary I write as your Command Chief. In my initial draft, I thanked numerous individuals by name who've had a significant impact on my career and found myself three paragraphs in without mentioning everyone. It's always a gamble mentioning people by name because you will undoubtedly miss someone, but there are a few I must acknowledge.

First and foremost, I want to thank my wife, Edith, my son, Jordan, my daughters, Natalia and Gabby, along with the extended family who supported us every step of the way.

Edith has been the bedrock of our family, and despite us getting on each other's nerves from time to time, she is my ride-or-die and has ridden this thing out with me. My family is intact to this day because of the strength and commitment Edith has for our family.

Jordan is living his best life, and I hope to get him interested in golf so we can hang out more. Now that Natalia is an Airman, we have grown closer than ever before simply because we speak the same language. Even though Gabby is the baby of the family, she has been the voice of reason, and I am so proud of the young woman she has become. I love you all, and as we move on to the next chapter, my commitment to you is to be a better husband, father, sibling and son to those I've neglected over the past three decades.

I would be remiss for not specifically mentioning my previous and current wingmen, Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee and Lt. Gen. John Healy for the trust they bestowed in me. Any wins or gains made during my tenure were a direct result of their support.

I also wish to thank all the previous supervisors, commanders, directors, chiefs, first sergeants, peers and Airmen of all ranks I've had the pleasure of serving with throughout my career. You know who you are.

A special shout-out to my internal AFRC headquarters and Pentagon office teammates, past and present, for keeping me on time, on target and on focus, especially when things got hectic. We've been through a lot over the last four years, and you made me and this command better. I can't mention you all by name, but again, you know who you are.

An extra shout-out to CMSAF #18, Kaleth O. Wright, CMSAF #19 JoAnn Bass, and our Airey Court neighbors, past and present, for being such great mentors, neighbors and friends.

While the military combated international and domestic terrorism, Covid-19 and civil unrest on a national scale, the sacrifices of local law enforcement within their own communities has been something never lost on me. I want to thank Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco, sheriff's admin and the county of Riverside for their unwavering support.

A special shout-out to my Thermal Station friends and coworkers who have borne the additional administrative and operational burden during my extended absence. I have been a law enforcement officer with RSD for 22 years now, and if you count the mobilization after the September 2001 terrorist attacks, my last two active-duty assignments, and various deployments and training requirements, I have been away from the department for 10 of those years. I am excited about returning to the starting lineup for Team RSD in a full-time capacity this summer.

This is a common practice for thousands of Reservists and employers across the globe who juggle military and employee/em-

ployer commitments. It can be difficult balancing this relationship because some may not fully understand what we do or why we do it. Employers and coworkers often pick up the slack for Reservists and Guardsmen at the expense of organizational and mission demands.

Civilian employer sacrifices often go unnoticed, and for this, I tip my hat to Reserve and Guard civilian employers and community advocates everywhere for playing such a crucial role in the defense of this nation.

During a recent media interview, I was asked about any specific accomplishment I was most proud of. No individual accomplishment readily came to mind. I've always viewed leadership opportunities as a team sport, like a perpetual relay race. You take the baton from your predecessor, run your leg as hard and as fast as you can, then hand the baton to your successor.

As I hand the baton to Chief Master Sgt. Israel Nuñez, I'm going to step off the track, find my seat in the bleachers and cheer for Team AFRC from afar. It's the only way the team continues to win.

One of my teammates recently asked about the legacy I intend to leave behind. Guess what ... I don't have one. I never intended to create a legacy for myself. I only strived to do the best I could with the resources I had to move the ball forward. While I've always made decisions I believed were in the best interest of this command, I am not married to any of them.

I've known peers and colleagues who struggled after hanging up the uniform because it can be difficult separating the position from the person. Transitioning from a high-profile leadership position into an ordinary civilian job can be extremely difficult.

While I will severely miss the people and the mission, I won't miss any one position or title, because I've never worn the uniform for that. I will, however, miss the opportunity and ability of making a difference in the lives of others simply because of the position I once held.

Here's the skinny. At some point, we all will relinquish titles, responsibilities, positions of authority or spheres of influence we've accumulated over time. This is how this enormous machine works. But you never have to relinquish being the best version of you that you can be. You never have to relinquish showing respect for one another simply because you disagree. You never have to relinquish being a decent human being because you don't need a uniform for that.

What or who you will be once you hang up the uniform is the million-dollar question that can only be answered by the why one wears it in the first place.

I've worn the uniform going on 34 years now, and like the majority of those who do the same, I've done it for one reason and one reason only. We who wear the cloth of our nation do so because we love this country. Factoring all the things that divide us, there is more that unites us. Although America is a country with a troubling past and a challenging future, make no mistake about it: Despite her imperfections, she is the greatest country on Earth.

There has been no higher honor than wearing the cloth of the United States of America, and there has been no greater privilege than serving as your Command Chief.

I wish you and your families well!





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**Thanks to our contributors:** Ivan Rivera is a senior graphic designer with Air Force Reserve Command who is responsible for designing Citizen Airman magazine on a bi-monthly basis. He's been in the graphic design field for more than 25 years. Thanks to Ivan for all of his hard work designing the magazine and for coming up with this issue's cover design that celebrates the Reserve's 75th anniversary. (Courtesy photo)



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# The First 75 Years

**Reserve celebrates three quarters of a century of unparalleled service**

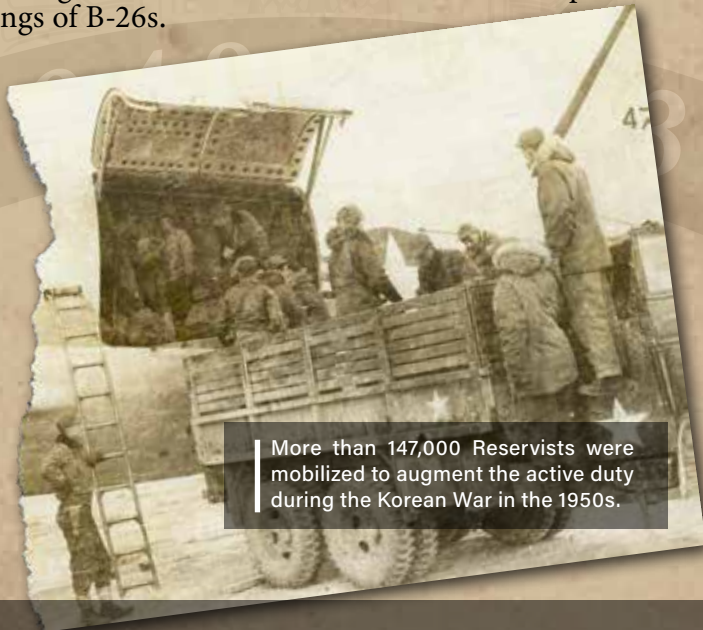
Over the past 75 years, hundreds of thousands of men and women have answered their nation's call and served as Air Force Reservists, ready at a moment's notice to leave their families and civilian jobs to serve their country.

It would be impossible to mention all of the missions Reservists have participated in or services they have provided in the more than 27,000 days since there has formally been an Air Force Reserve, but in honor of AFRC's three quarters of a century of unparalleled service to the country, here's a quick recap of the command's first 75 years provided by AFRC's History Office.

While the historical origins of an air reserve in the U.S. military stem from the National Defense Act of 1916 that authorized an organized Reserve Corps, the Air Force Reserve was formally established on April 14, 1948, by President Harry Truman. The president envisioned a program similar to one established during the First World War, whereby Reservists stood ready to serve during wartime.



When the Korean War erupted in 1950, the Air Force Reserve was comprised of more than 315,800 non-drilling and nearly 58,500 drilling Reservists in combat sustaining units, namely 20 troop carrier wings outfitted with C-46s and C-47s (and later C-119s), and five light bombardment wings of B-26s.



More than 147,000 Reservists were mobilized to augment the active duty during the Korean War in the 1950s.

Between July 1950 and June 1953, the Air Force mobilized nearly 147,000 Air Force Reservists to active service for periods from one to three years. Five Air Force Reserve units remained on active service while another 15 units were called up to replace and fill out active units. The Air Force Reservists performed well, as demonstrated by numerous unit citations and several recalled individuals who became fighter aces.

During the 1950s, several legislative acts addressed concerns with the national reserve program, establishing the Ready, Standby and Retired Reserve categories. Units were provided with full-time Air Reserve Technicians and the president

was authorized to mobilize a portion of the Ready Reserve to active duty without advanced congressional notification.



In the 1960s, the country relied on Reserve forces to support the Berlin and Cuban Crises. While still transitioning to new aircraft, five Air Force Reserve C-124 units along with 5,613 Reservists were mobilized for a year during the Berlin Crisis. When the Cuban Crisis intensified, Reserve aircrews flew C-119s and materiel to Key West Naval Air Station and Homestead Air Reserve Base, Florida. Mobilizations followed with 14,220 Reservists and 422 aircraft on active duty by Oct. 28, 1962.

The Air Force again called on the Air Force



President John F. Kennedy visits with members of the 512th Troop Carrier Wing deployed to Homestead Air Force Base, Fla., after the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

Reserve to participate in the Vietnam War effort. Reservists voluntarily provided direct and indirect support with few mobilizations. Needing more strategic airlift into the Vietnam Theater, Reservists responded by flying C-124 missions as part of their inactive duty, annual two-week training, and an additional 36 days of inactive duty days until U.S. involvement ended in 1973. Air Force Reserve rescue and recovery, intelligence and medical specialists, aerial porters, maintainers, lawyers and chaplains comprised the range of support provided.

Desiring more augmentation from the Reserve and yet unable to procure enough new C-141s, the Air Force initiated in 1968 the associate concept whereby Air Force Reserve personnel would associate with an active-duty unit equipped with new C-141s or C-9s, flying and performing maintenance together.



With the implementation of the Total Force policy in



In 1973, Air Force Reserve C-141 and C-9 associate aircrews, medical, aeromedical, casualty assistance, legal, chaplain and intelligence personnel supported Operation Homecoming - the return of American POWs from North Vietnam.

1973, the Air Force Reserve became a multi-mission force, flying the same modern aircraft as the active Air Force. With the same equipment and budget authority, the Air Force Reserve was held to the same readiness standards and inspections as active-duty Air Force units. Special operations, air refueling, weather reconnaissance and fighter missions were added to the airlift, rescue and mission

support roles performed by the Reserve. The associate concept soon expanded to include the C-5.

Reserve participation in Air Force exercises and deployments perfected its mobility capabilities as demonstrated throughout the 1970s, most notably during the Israeli Airlift of 1973. Some 630 crewmembers volunteered for Middle East missions to include flying into Tel Aviv while another 1,590 Reservists performed missions worldwide, freeing up more active crews for airlift.





1980s

The 1980s saw the modernization and expansion of the Air Force Reserve program. KC-10s joined the associate force in 1981. Fighter units obtained the more modern A-10s and F-4s, and in 1984, the Reserve received its first F-16.

Operationally, the Reserve returned American students from Grenada in 1983, performed air refuelings of F-111 bombers during the El Dorado Canyon raid on Libyan-sponsored terrorists in 1986, and acted as a full partner in Operation Joint Cause which ousted Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega in 1989 and 1990. Reservists also supported humanitarian and disaster relief efforts, including resupply and evacuation missions in the aftermath of Hurricane Hugo. The Reserve's continual volunteering allayed the concerns of those who believed the Air Force Reserve would not be available when really needed.

1948-2

Air Force Reserve airlift and tanker crews were flying within days of Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. When ground operations commenced, Reserve A-10s operated close to the front lines along with Reserve special operations and rescue forces. A Reservist scored the first-ever A-10 air-to-air

In 1983, Air Force Reserve airlift associate units assisted in the evacuation of more than 700 American and foreign citizens from Grenada during civil unrest there. Maintenance, aerial port and medical Reservists augmented active forces.



1990s

kill during the early days of Operation Desert Shield.

When Operations Desert Shield/Storm ended, the Reserve counted 23,500 Reservists mobilized with another 15,000 serving in a volunteer capacity.

In 1993, when tensions mounted in Bosnia, Reserve tanker and fighter units participated in enforcing the Deny Flight no-fly zone while airlift units ensured logistical resupply.

The Air Force increasingly relied on the Reserve

By this time, the Reserve had become indistinguishable from the active force in capability. There was no difference between an Air Force Reserve pilot and an active-duty pilot, or a boom operator or loadmaster.

In the aftermath of Desert Storm, Reservists continued to serve and were heavily involved in enforcing the no-fly zone over northern and southern Iraq as well as in humanitarian relief missions to assist uprooted Iraqi Kurds. For more than six years, Reserve C-130s performed these Provide Comfort missions on a rotational basis while F-16s and rescue HH-60s deployed to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, for the no-fly operations.

In 1994, Air Force Reserve airlift and air refueling aircrews participated in Operation Support Hope, the humanitarian relief mission to aid Rwandan refugees.



for a "steady state" of daily assistance, whether it was flying airlift channel, fire-fighting, aerial spray or hurricane hunter missions or providing highly skilled medical and aeromedical personnel. As a result, Congress sought to clarify the organizational placement of the Reserve. Accordingly, in February 1997, the Air Force Reserve officially became Air Force Reserve Command, the Air Force's ninth major command.

In 1999, Reservists volunteered and were also mobilized for Allied Force operations over Serbia and Kosovo. The involuntary recall marked the ninth time the Air Force had requested a mobilization of Reserve units and personnel since 1950. During Allied Force, the Reserve once again proved itself as an adaptable and capable force, ready to perform the full range of Air Force operations on an integrated and daily basis in sync with the new Air and Space Expeditionary Force concepts.

2000s

When terrorists attacked the United States on September 11, 2001, Air Force Reservists responded in full measure. Reserve F-16 fighters flew combat air patrols protecting America's cities while KC-135 tanker and AWACs aircraft supported with air refuelings and security.

In October 2001, the United States initiated the Global War on Terrorism as military forces entered

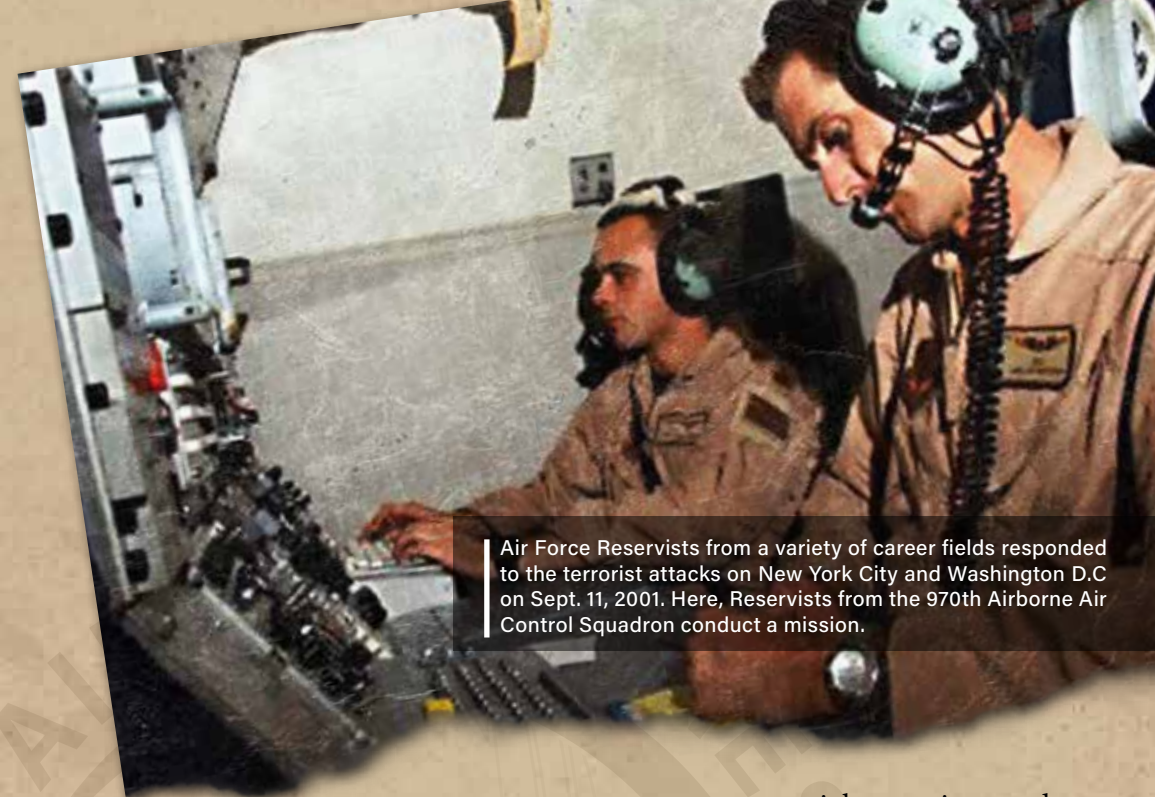
Afghanistan to combat the Taliban in Operation Enduring Freedom. Air Force Reserve MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft became the first fixed-wing aircraft to penetrate Afghan airspace while Reserve F-16 crews, already deployed in theater for Operation Southern Watch, performed the first combat missions.

Reservists made significant contributions by flying close air support, combat delivery, rescue, strategic airlift and air refueling missions supporting operations in Afghanistan. They also provided B-52, special operations, aeromedical, security forces and civil engineering support. When war against Saddam Hussein's regime began in March 2003, Reserve combat-ready A-10, B-52 and F-16 aircrews flew numerous strike operations during the first hours of engagement and performed

special operations and rescue missions.

Reserve rescue personnel were among the first into Tallil Air Base as Reserve A-10s provided close air support. Part of the lead tanker force, Reserve tankers offloaded more than 21 million pounds of fuel to more than 1,000 aircraft. In late March 2003, 15 C-17 Reserve associate crews supported the C-17 airdrop, which opened up the Northern Front in Iraq.

Additionally, Reservists supported Air Force unmanned aerial vehicle missions and space-based operations in Southwest Asia, providing essential data to battlefield commanders. In all, Reserve aircraft and crews flew nearly 162,000 hours and deployed 70 unit-equipped aircraft in theater while aeromedical personnel provided 45% of the Air Force's aeromedical crews that performed 3,108 patient movements.



Air Force Reservists from a variety of career fields responded to the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington D.C. on Sept. 11, 2001. Here, Reservists from the 970th Airborne Air Control Squadron conduct a mission.





# 2010s

Throughout the 2010s, the Air Force Reserve continued to support the nation's Global War on Terrorism while also facing a number of unexpected threats, including the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, instability in the Ukraine and the outbreak of Ebola. As ISIS drove thousands of Iraqis from their homes, the Reserve airlifted life-saving supplies to the Yazidi refugees, refueled strike packages and delivered combat capability.

When the Ebola outbreak threatened the world, the Reserve supported Operation United Assistance by providing medical capability and airlift capacity to deliver vital personnel and supplies to Liberia.

The 2010s also brought some new missions to the Air Force Reserve as the command ushered in the first F-35 fighters at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, and the first KC-46 aerial refuelers at Seymour-Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina. In 2018, the Reserve stood up the 960th Intelligence, Surveillance



The 2010s brought some new missions to the Air Force Reserve as the command ushered in the first F-35 fighters at Hill Air Force Base, Utah

and Reconnaissance Wing – a first of its kind for the command. In 2011, the Reserve established the Force Generation Center as its execution arm for mobilizations and deployments.

Across the decade, the Air Force Reserve continued to serve as an operational force on a constant basis. In a rapidly shifting security environment, the command leveraged the unique talents and expertise inherent in its Reserve Citizen Airmen, from pilots and intelligence professionals to space and cyberspace operators. From 2010 to 2020, the Reserve continued to provide the agile response, daily operational capability, strategic depth and surge capacity which are vital to the United States' national defense.

# 2020s

Like the rest of the world, the Air Force Reserve started the latest decade locked in a fierce battle with Covid-19. While the pandemic kept most Reservists at home, countless Reserve health care providers selflessly answered the call and volunteered to serve on the front line in the country's battle against the deadly and highly contagious disease.

In early April 2020, 125 Reserve medical specialists

reported to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, with only 48 hours' notice to help overburdened health care providers deal with the Covid-19 pandemic in the New York City area.

More than 40 doctors, 70 nurses and about a dozen respiratory technicians departed their home stations on April 5, went through further inprocessing at JB-MDL and eventually went to work at medical facilities in and around New York City.

Their deployment was part of a larger initial mobilization package of more than 1,000 Reserve Component medical professionals from across the nation.

While Reserve medics continued to serve their units and their country during the pandemic, all Reserve Citizen Airmen

had to get creative to stay connected during this time of physical distancing. Virtual unit training assemblies and video conferencing became the norm as Reservists showed their flexibility in ensuring the command could still perform its long-standing mission of providing combat-ready forces to fly, fight and win.

Reserve Citizen Airmen from across the country played a huge role in one of the largest air evacuations of civilians in American history, supporting the rapid

evacuation of thousands of people from Afghanistan in August 2021 as part of Operation Allies Refuge.

More than 70 Reserve aircrews and hundreds of maintenance, security, medical and support personnel were activated to help ensure the safe passage of Americans and Afghan allies from Kabul to locations around the globe.

Hundreds of Reservists were also deployed to support Operation Allies Welcome as more than 50,000 vulnerable Afghan allies were temporarily housed at eight U.S. military facilities.

For 75 years, the nation has called on the Air Force Reserve to support national security objectives around the globe and across the spectrum of military and humanitarian operations. As they have for three quarters of a century and as they will continue to do into the future, Reserve Citizen Airmen across the country stand ready to provide daily operational capability to the joint force while preserving the strategic depth the nation needs to respond to unexpected and emerging threats.



Reserve Citizen Airmen take a break during a shift at Queens Hospital Center in New York in May 2020. Doctors, nurses and medical technicians from throughout Air Force Reserve Command deployed to the city to help with patient overloads resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.





— By 1st Lt. Kristine Frohreich

# ACCOMPLISHED MUSICIAN, GUARDIAN CELEBRATING AUTISM WITH TACT

Senior Airman Danny Combs founded TACT, Teaching the Autism Community Trades, to encourage and empower the full spectrum of individuals with autism through education and employment in the skilled trades. (Senior Airman Danielle McBride)

Danny Combs is on a mission to change public opinion of what individuals with autism are capable of.

An Air Force Reserve senior airman assigned to the 310th Space Wing's Fourth Space Warning Squadron at Buckley Space Force Base, Colorado, Combs was a professional musician for more than a decade in Nashville, playing, touring and opening for several country and Christian artists. During that time, he won the Grammy's Enterprise Award for developing a music program for Nashville's school system.

It was a job he planned to do for the rest of his life until doctors at Vanderbilt University in Nashville diagnosed his son with autism.

"I went through a wide, wide range of emotions," said Combs about his son's diagnosis. "Everything from 'Oh my God, my name isn't going to live on' to 'I'm never going to be a grandfather' to 'I'm going to have a child who will be financially dependent on me for the rest of my life.' They were all selfish thoughts, but honest ones. It took a while."

Combs said the therapeutic treatment his son received was deficit based. It focused on what his son lacked instead of his strengths.

"All I kept hearing after sitting in waiting rooms was 'your son needs to do this better, he needs to work on this, this needs to change,'" Combs said. "There was never any recognition of what was good or things he was successful at – all the amazing things that made him him. He was really talented in a lot of different things."

Combs comes from a long line of tradesmen. His great grandfather helped start a company now known as Northrop Grumman, his grandfather worked on the Apollo missions and his father is a general contractor. Combs said he noticed his son had a knack for building things at an early age.



"He was about 6 or 6 ½ before he could say 'hello dad, I love you,'" Combs said. "But at roughly 3 or 3 ½ he was putting together these amazing things."

Combs would watch as his son would build moving things out of cardboard and tape and he realized he didn't want his son to become another statistic. He wanted him to have his own fulfilling life.

"Time Magazine did an article saying the average lifetime cost of raising a neurodivergent child with autism is \$2.2 million, opposed to a quarter million dollars for a neurotypical child," Combs said. "Even though I did well with music and had some money to spend, I was spending a fortune on his services and I didn't want that to be his future. I didn't want that to be my future. I wanted him to have a life that he chose."

He decided to do the opposite of what he's seen in therapeutic treatments by creating a strength-based environment where his son, and others like him, could thrive and set them up for success in the future.

In 2016, he founded TACT, Teaching the Autism Community Trades, a nonprofit organization based out of Englewood, Colorado. TACT's mission is to encourage and empower the full spectrum of individuals with

autism through education and employment in the skilled trades. TACT offers career tracks in auto repair, carpentry, electrical services, welding and other select science, technology, engineering and mathematics trades.

"Thankfully, I had good lawyers back in New York to help get set up really quick," he said. "It was seven years ago this April actually that I announced the idea. We had our corporation by June and our 5013-C status by October. We were already teaching classes and going at it. Then a year later, we secured our first half million dollar grant I wrote to get it going."

Since starting TACT, Combs and his staff have helped hundreds of young adults get jobs.

"There are 5.4 million adults with autism and the unemployment rate for that group is 90%," Combs said. "According to the Centers for Disease Control, one in four kids has autism ... and they only measure 8-year-olds. It's a big part of our population. Why is it not being talked about? It's surprising to me that we as a society still overlook this entire demographic. It's a big elephant in the room. It's kind of sad."

Combs hopes TACT can be a national framework for helping those with autism. He wants to show people that the autistic have talents like everyone else and they can be suc-

cessful in their careers when given the opportunity.

TACT works with major companies in the automotive and technology industries, and they've helped place members of the program on their big projects. Combs is hoping to also partner with the different branches of the military.

"We've had people come through TACT who have since gone into service in the Army and Navy and that's pretty amazing," he said. "We've had a lot of service members who have stepped up and brought their kids out here, which has really been neat. I always like it when that happens."

"I know a lot of military families have children on the spectrum," Combs said, pointing out that "autism services" is option number one on Tricare's telephone menu. "Just because service members have children being diagnosed with autism, or they themselves find out later in life they have autism, it doesn't mean it's a bad thing. It's just part of being neurodivergent. It's who they are. There is opportunity for success in life and TACT can be a vessel for that. To have that impact on families I think would be really cool."

To learn more about TACT and its programs, visit <https://www.build-withtact.org>.





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## DOG YEARS LATER, STORIED COMBAT STRESS THERAPY CANINE CALLS IT A CAREER

By Senior Airman Dylan Gentile

During Operation Enduring Freedom, a military hospital in Afghanistan was bearing the brunt of caring for service members wounded in combat. While the staff worked around the clock to save lives, they found comfort in what would become the country's first and last combat stress therapy dog.

Edan began her military career in 2012 as a military working dog tasked with narcotics detection. Her demeanor and propensity to disregard her duties whenever food was around resulted in her being relieved of her position.

It wasn't until health care professionals at the hospital discovered her ability to identify patients in acute distress and provide immediate comfort that she was given a new job as a combat stress therapy dog. Edan's unique skills led her down a distinct career path from other military working dogs.

"There were a lot of traumatic injuries with people getting critically wounded all the time, and a lot of doctors were under extreme stress," said Lt. Col. Michael Brasher, a pilot assigned to the Air Force Reserve's 919th Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida, and Edan's caretaker. "They realized Edan had a special gift because she would go comfort the most stressed people specifically."

After completing additional training and heading into duty, she became well known across Kandahar Airfield as Afghanistan's only combat stress therapy dog. Edan made her rounds at the Morale, Welfare and Recreation center and at various workplaces on base. She flew frequently to support service members at Bagram Air Base, Camp Bastion, Camp Dwyer and forward operating bases across the country.

"I met Edan while I was deployed to Bagram, and it felt so nice to pet her ears and talk to her," said Tech. Sgt. Ashli Nelson, a sensor operator with the 919th's 2nd Special Operations Squadron. "She was definitely great for morale."

Edan quickly became a star for the unique service she was providing. She was featured in publications like Time Magazine and The Atlantic. Public affairs offices across multiple branches produced stories about her exploits.

"All my friends I deployed with would show me pictures of her and we'd talk about meeting her," Nelson said. "She's kind of a celebrity. I think anyone who was deployed to Bagram around that time knows her."

In 2017, Edan met Brasher while on duty at an MQ-9 Reaper compound in Afghanistan. Brasher checked her out of the kennels and brought her to the compound, where the operators would play with her and feed her.

"At the 2nd SOS operations center, crewmembers would all lay on the floor with her," he said. "She was a small brown dog in a sea of flight suits. They would always tell me having Edan around made working so much better and they looked forward to their jobs."

After two more years of supporting service members around Afghanistan, Edan retired from her active-duty career when Brasher took her home to Florida.

Edan served alongside Brasher at the 2nd SOS for three more years, using her unique skills to identify members felling stressed.

"I've witnessed her picking up on stress in people over and over again," Brasher said. "I was talking to this very outgoing and gregarious member when she started licking his palm, and I knew something was going on."

Edan has multiple ways of indicating someone's stress level. When an Airman is experiencing minor stress, Edan

will place her head on the person. If the person is experiencing chronic stress, she will lay next to them or at their feet. If a member is going through acute distress, she will lick the palm of their hand.

"She's most definitely done her job," Nelson said. "Edan has done at least her full 20 in dog years, and I've really appreciated having her and Brasher at the squadron."

While Edan is putting her military service behind her, in her free time she still volunteers at a Veterans Affairs hospital in Orlando.

"I love her to death and am extremely proud of her," Brasher said. "She's brought a lot of joy and love to people over the years."

Brasher and Edan retired together at a ceremony in January, where they both received certificates of appreciation for their service and congratulatory words from Col. Jason Grandy, 919th SOW commander.

Brasher said Edan will spend her retirement catching sticks, going on walks and swimming.

*(Gentile is assigned to the 919th Special Operations Wing's public affairs office.)*



Col. Jason Grandy, 919th Special Operations Wing commander, left, with Edan, and Lt. Col. Michael Brasher at Edan and Brasher's retirement ceremony. Opposite page shows Edan and her caretaker, Brasher. (Senior Airman Dylan Gentile)





Senior Master Sgt. David Workman, 403rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron production superintendent, completes a walk-around inspection of a WC-130J Super Hercules prior to releasing the aircraft to the aircrew for take-off. Opposite page: Senior Airman Daiquiri Burton, 403rd Maintenance Squadron propulsion technician, watches as the safety spotter during the use of the two-person lift during the repair of a rudder acuator on a WC-130J. (Jessica L. Kendziorek)



# AT HOME OR OFF STATION, KEESLER MAINTAINERS GET THE JOB DONE

— By Jessica L. Kendziorek

When it comes to maintaining aircraft, it doesn't matter if the members of the 403rd Maintenance Group are at home at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, or at an off-station location, they get the job done.

"We have four of our WC-130J aircraft at Mather Air Field (California) flying atmospheric river missions right now," Senior Master Sgt. Myra Trippe, 403rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron assistant superintendent, said in February. "Keeping them in working order to fly the missions no matter the challenges we face is what we do."

The weather data collected during atmospheric river missions flown by the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron is used to improve forecast models for the West Coast. This data helps build a vertical profile of the water vapor in the low-level jet stream, which also provides the critical knowledge needed to improve reservoir operations that can supply water during droughts and assist with the control of water levels during potential flood events.

To keep the 53rd WRS aircraft flying at an off-station location, the maintainers bring most of their own equipment with them, but some challenges do pop up.

One recurring challenge is where to get liquid oxygen carts filled.

"We are having the LOX carts transported back and forth from Keesler during the crew rotations," Trippe said. "Or we either have to generate a flight to fly the cart over to a local base, get it filled and bring it back."

Both of these options were made more difficult by the extremely busy operations tempo posed by the atmospheric river missions. The first two weeks of January were very busy for both aircrews and maintainers with no time between flights. Many of the aircrew members and some of the maintainers were on a 16-day rotation, while some of the maintainers were on a 30-day rotation.

"The first rotation lasted 16 days, and we flew 15 of the 16 days with one mission cancelled for weather," said Maj. Grant Wagner, 53rd WRS navigator and atmospheric river mission commander. "We launched 22 sorties during the first rotation, and we did not lose a single sortie due to maintenance."

Wagner said the maintainers worked a grueling schedule, working 16 days straight with no breaks on both the day and night shift.


"We don't really want to work the maintainers that many days straight with no relief, especially in the cold weather and rain," Wagner said.

The weather was another challenge the maintainers constantly faced.

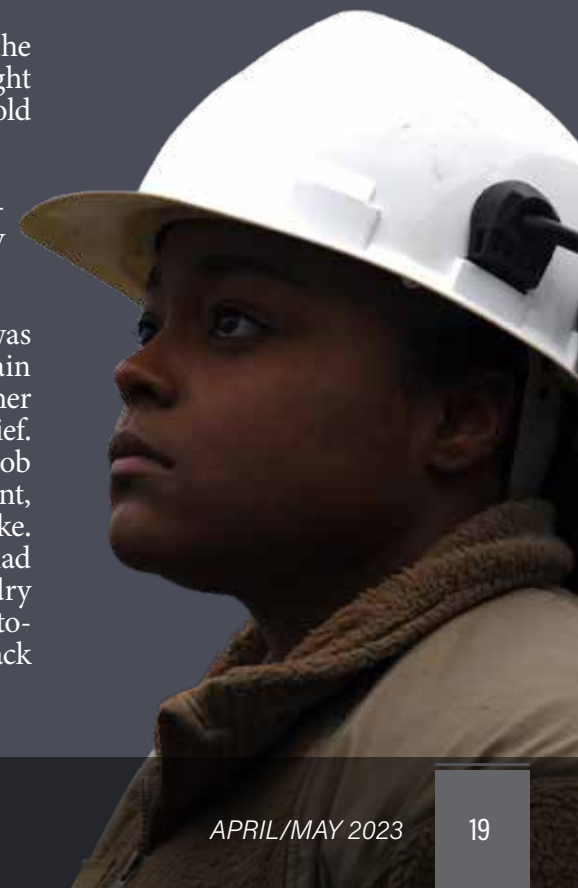
"When I was there the weather was a challenge, but that is what we train for," said Master Sgt. Christopher Simmons, 403rd AMXS crew chief. "We have to be able to perform our job and our duties in any environment, no matter what the weather is like. Due to the cold, rainy weather, we had to worry about keeping our tools dry and keeping an eye on our work-to-rest ratio in relation to warming back up and staying dry ourselves."

High winds were another problem. Without tie-downs for the aircraft, high winds during the atmospheric river mission caused the front wheels of aircraft to turn at times. With no tug or tow bar, the maintainers could not manually straighten the wheels and had to wait until the aircraft was ready to taxi to straighten the wheels.

"The high winds added additional work on top of regular maintenance," Trippe said. "We had to include high-wind inspections to our standard maintenance checks before releasing the aircraft for flight."

"This is the first time we have flown AR missions where we were actually inside the AR weather on the ground," Wagner said. "But when it comes down to it, the maintainers did an excellent job. They were asked to do more than they could manage, and they did it to 100% effectiveness." 

*(Kendziorek is assigned to the 403rd Wing public affairs office.)*





# KEY SPOUSE HIGHLIGHTS IMPORTANCE OF CONNECTION

— By Senior Airman Kalee Sexton

Dr. Sonny Kelly is an Air Force veteran, college professor, Key Spouse and someone who lost his brother to suicide. When Col. Douglas Stouffer, commander of the 512th Airlift Wing at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, heard he was going to speak at a Key Spouse training session in January, he opened the event to a wider audience so more people could hear Kelly's message on the importance of connection.

"We are all trying to find a way to survive and thrive in an age where trauma is the standard," Kelly, who serves as a Key Spouse for the 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron, said during his presentation at the January

unit training assembly. "I think too many of us are trying to succeed and survive and thrive on our own, and if we can get together and find rhythms and ways to connect, that is our answer for hope."

After losing his brother, who also served in the Air Force, to suicide, Kelly said he wanted to create ways to help others communicate more effectively by "reframing and reclaiming" interpersonal relationships.

He described a time from his youth when he cut himself on a barbed wire fence and how it left him with scars on his hands. "Scars are not a reminder of your pain, but a reminder that you survived," he said.

Kelly said the past few years have been especially traumatic for everyone, and people should acknowledge the hurt so they can get to a better place.

"We've all been through trauma, and it's nothing to be ashamed of," he said.

Kelly started his presentation with a poem, "The Cold Within" by James Patrick Kinney. It tells the story of six people sitting around a dying fire. They each hold a stick, but bound by biases and distrust for one another, no one offers his stick to keep the fire going. The poem ends by saying they didn't die from the cold outside, but from the coldness within.

"They each hold their stick back, just like people who hold back their gifts or pieces of who they are," he said.

He encouraged leaders to be vulnerable and lead by example, quoting Theodore Roosevelt who said, "Nobody cares how much you know until they know how much you care."

He also emphasized the importance of truly hearing and understanding lower-ranking colleagues, outlining three interpersonal needs required to maintain a positive relationship: control, inclusion and affection.

Additionally, he noted how simple, consistent and repeatable rhythms build trust. For example, if a leader consistently checks in on an Airman every day, that Airman will trust that the leader cares about his well-being, Kelly said.

Emily Reppert, a 512th Civil Engineer Squadron Key Spouse who is leading her family while her husband is deployed, said she is glad she attended the presentation.

"Sonny's presentation gave me the boost I needed to get through the deployment," she said. "I had been wondering if I would even laugh again over the next several months. This changed my whole mind frame, and I feel much better."



(Sexton is assigned to the 512th Airlift Wing public affairs office.)

Dr. Sonny Kelly, 512th Memorial Affairs Squadron Key Spouse, speaks during a recent unit training assembly at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. (Senior Airman Kalee Sexton)



# CANCER SURVIVOR BECOMES AIRMAN FOR A DAY

— By Ciara Gosier

On a normal Monday morning, most children begrudgingly wake to get their school week started. But on a recent February Monday, Nolan Madsen started his week as an Airman for a Day at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia.

Nolan, who is a cancer survivor of osteosarcoma, was diagnosed four years ago. Prior to his diagnosis, the 12-year-old's goal in life was to join the military. While his diagnosis made attaining his dream difficult, it did not make it impossible. On February 6, Nolan and his dad, Scott, spent the day visiting various units on base to gain a real-life experience of what it's like to be in the Air Force.

"From an early age, Nolan wanted to be in the Air Force as a fighter pilot," Nolan's mom, KellyAnn, said. "Although his dreams of being a pilot may have been darkened, he has remained positive throughout this whole journey."

Nolan began his day by receiving an honorary commission as the 94th Airlift Wing's newest lieutenant. He then paid a visit to NASA's ER-2 high-altitude research aircraft, which is temporarily deployed to Dobbins conducting weather and scientific research.

He then visited with security forces Airmen, where he was invited to ride along in a patrol vehicle and conduct a mock traffic stop. He also visited the Dobbins Fire and Rescue Services facility to learn about fire safety and tour a fire truck. He wrapped up the day by touring a C-130H aircraft and learning firsthand about the various jobs necessary to maintain the aircraft and operate an airlift mission.

Since his diagnosis in 2019, Nolan has undergone more than 25 rounds of chemotherapy and a radical resection of his right femur.

During his visit to Dobbins, Nolan not only got to learn what it's like to be an Airman, but was able to teach resilience to every member of the wing with whom he interacted. Nolan shared his story and the experience of his diagnosis and treatment journey and reminded Airmen the importance of overcoming adversity.

Resilience wasn't something Nolan learned overnight or on his own, though. During the taxing challenges of healing, his older sister, Mackenzie, was always by his side.

"Nolan's fight was just as much hers at it was his," KellyAnn said. "She was the only one who could comfort him during those dark days of cisplatin, steroids and feelings of defeat."

Lt. Col. Michael McNulty, 700th Airlift Squadron commander, and Pam Younker, a Dobbins civic leader, played key roles in orchestrating the day's events.

"It was such a pleasure getting to watch Nolan at Dobbins," Younker said. "I had gotten to know Nolan and his family at some other events, and I could tell he loved every minute of the experience."

KellyAnn said Nolan has always had an interest in the military, specifically the Air Force and being selected for this opportunity was extremely special to him.

"He did things that he would probably never have the opportunity to do," she said. "He got to chase a car and 'arrest' someone, ride shotgun in the firetruck, explore so many places and more. His favorite part of the day was when a C-130 flew by. For this, we are forever grateful to God and modern medicine."



(Gossier is assigned to the 94th Airlift Wing public affairs office.)

Nolan Madsen had the opportunity to don fire gear and sit in the cockpit of a NASA ER-2 aircraft while serving as an Airman for a Day at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia. (Ciara Gosier)





# UNSUNG TECHNICIANS ENSURE C-130s ARE READY TO FLY



Air Force Reserve Command is home to countless unsung heroes – people who quietly do their jobs every day to ensure AFRC can carry out its mission of providing combat-ready forces to fly, fight and win.

Take the instrument and flights system technicians assigned to the 934th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Minneapolis-St. Paul Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, for example. Without fanfare, these highly skilled technicians maintain the flight control systems on all of the 934th Airlift Wing's C-130s, making sure the wing's aircraft stay mission ready.

“We are in charge of most of the indicating instruments in the cockpit and flight deck and various transmitters that correspond with them,” said Tech. Sgt. Robert Leif, 934th AMXS instrument and flight control systems technician.

Several instruments in the aircraft are vital for the safe flight of passengers and crew members. A plane would be at an elevated safety risk without fully operational systems.

The instrument and flight control systems technicians at the 934th recently replaced a Pitot probe on one of the wing's C-130s. Pitot probes take air inputs and convert them into signals for air speeds and altitudes.


“There are two Pitot probes located on the aircraft,” Leif said. “If both probes aren't working, the pilot will receive

erroneous readings that they're going either slower or faster than the speed they are actually going.”

These types of issues are not uncommon with aircraft, and thanks to the technical skills of instrument and flight systems members, they can be fixed in an efficient way that keeps aircraft from staying grounded. This kind of work requires extensive knowledge of all the different systems inside the plane.

“With some jobs you might find yourself doing only electrical stuff or only mechanical stuff,” Leif said. “This one has a good balance between the two. It touches on all aspects of the plane, from navigation to engines and offers the opportunity to be hands-on in all aspects.”

The instrument and flight control systems technicians take great pride in their work and enjoy the sense of satisfaction they get from a job well done.

“It's rewarding to fix issues with the plane and actually see the aircraft take off after you fix something,” said instrument and flight control systems technician Staff. Sgt. Rachelle Berry. 

*(Tessness is assigned to the 934th Airlift Wing public affairs office.)*

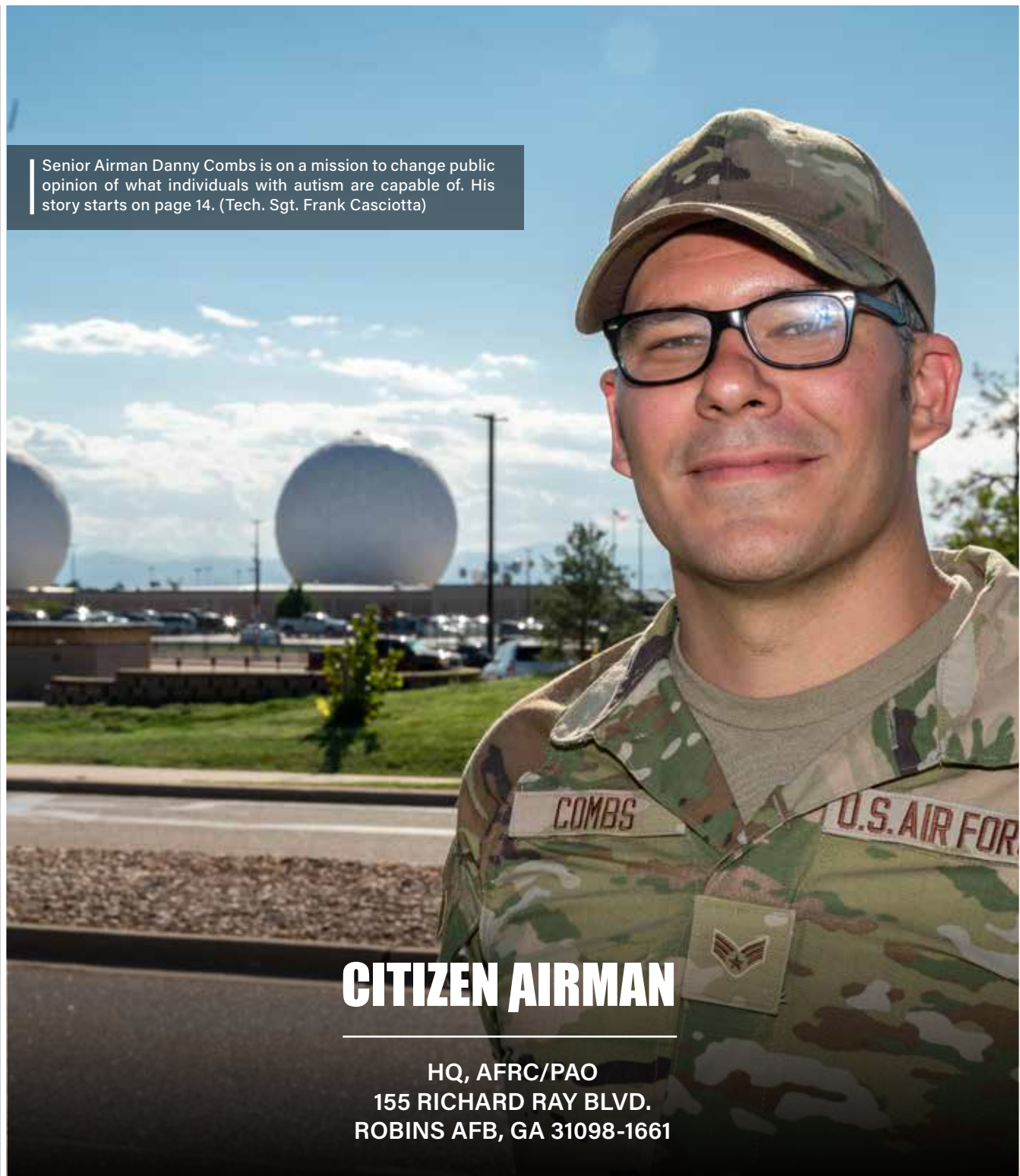
934th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron instruments and flight control systems technicians like Staff Sgt. Rachelle Beverly and Master Sgt. Luke Huseby work quietly behind the scenes to make sure the 934th Airlift Wing's C-130s stay mission ready. (Senior Airman Colten Tessness)

— By Senior Airman Colton Tessness





Senior Airman Danny Combs is on a mission to change public opinion of what individuals with autism are capable of. His story starts on page 14. (Tech. Sgt. Frank Casciotta)



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