

CITIZEN AIRMAN

Volume 75 No. 1

February 2023



RESERVIST
OPENS DOORS
FOR VETS
AT NBC UNIVERSAL

On The Road Again

In January, I visited the Reserve Citizen Airmen of the 477th Fighter Group at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson, Alaska. As a classic associate unit, the 477th is critical to executing the fifth-generation fighter mission at JBER and in the INDOPACOM theater. We provide significant strategic depth by retaining the most experienced F-22 pilots in the Total Force.

These pilots average more than 1,200 flight hours in the F-22 alone, compared to their active component counterparts' 400 hours. Additionally, every pilot is mission-commander and instructor-pilot qualified, providing vital operational and instructional capacity to our active component counterparts. The cumulative F-22 flying experience of the pilots of the 302nd Fighter Squadron has a replacement value of \$1.1 billion. In addition to retaining significant flying experience, our Reserve maintainers provide a stable base of deep experience to mentor maintainers from across the Total Force.

The 477th exemplifies our strategic priority of **Ready Now!** as they have demonstrated their ability to fill critical caps in fifth-generation capacity generation while also training our Total Force partners across JBER. This visit also better prepared me to advocate for the Air Force Reserve's role in providing strategic depth the next week at the Combat Air Forces Weapons and Tactics Conference at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

While at Nellis, I was able to visit the 926th Wing and engage with Airmen executing one of the most diverse mission portfolios in the Air Force Reserve. The 926th is a focal point for making progress toward the Secretary of the Air Force's operational imperatives. Its space aggressor mission is helping to get after assuring resilient space systems, while its operational test and evaluation work force is paving the way for tactical air dominance. In addition to being at the vanguard of our second strategic priority, **Transforming for the Future**, Reserve Citizen Airmen at the 926th are critical to maintaining our enduring remotely piloted aircraft mission.

JBER and Nellis were great places to kick off the 2023 Air Force Reserve Command Road Show - my attempt to visit as many Reserve units as I can over the next 12 months. The purpose of the road show is two-fold. First, I want to recognize the indispensable things each of you are doing every day to ensure we have the Air Force Reserve the nation needs. Second, I want candid feedback on whether Headquarters AFRC is meeting its TASKORD obligations to provide the resources necessary to ensure your unit is ready to fly, fight and win.

As always, I am both honored and proud to serve with each of you, and I look forward to seeing many of you at a road show stop in 2023.



JOHN P. HEALY
Lieutenant General, USAF
Chief of Air Force Reserve
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command



RHIP - IT STARTS AND ENDS WITH LEADERSHIP

"Great companies don't hire skilled people and motivate them, they hire already motivated people and inspire them" — Simon Sinek

Teammates — I hope everyone had a chance to take advantage of some much-needed down time throughout the holiday break. Spending time with family and friends or just stepping away from the daily grind is an excellent way to regroup, recharge and recenter. The new year is well underway, so it's time to synchronize energies and efforts toward the common goal of being the Air Force the nation needs.

I previously expressed the importance of every member reading, understanding and striving to execute individual roles and responsibilities laid out in TASKORD #1. As an initial follow-up, the boss released a 90-day focus directive, highlighting the previous 90 days of execution while spotlighting lines of effort for the next 90 days, just to ensure we remain zeroed in.

The focus on Human Capital Management has never been more important. We cannot afford to get this one wrong. To help bring transparency to Human Capital Management, we recently released the Ready Now Dashboard, which allows leaders to see trends and threats to their greatest asset — you.

Although the TASKORD details individual responsibilities for the future fight, we win, lose or draw as a team. The Air Force Reserve is seeing its highest-ever turnover rate in second-term Airmen. Leaders must stay focused to ensure Airmen remain motivated, capable and ready to answer the nation's call.

It's every leader's responsibility to identify obstacles and alleviate barriers keeping Airmen from being mission ready in all aspects. It boils down to the leader's ability to connect with Airmen as mentioned in my December commentary, "Constructively or Physically Present — What Type of Leader Are You?"

If you conducted a survey of the average military member on the acronym RHIP, a fair majority would probably describe it to mean "Rank has its privileges." I heard this myself as a young Airman from supervisors and peers alike who strived to climb the promotion ladder.

I submit that every leader should view RHIP as "**Rank helps inspire people.**" Although Air-

men are ultimately responsible for their own careers, leaders bear the responsibility of inspiring Airmen to be the best version of themselves. It starts and ends with leadership.

Recruiters recruit Airmen and military training instructors train Airmen, but it's leadership's job to keep Airmen. Airmen enlist for a variety of reasons, and often, enlistment day and the day one joins is not one in the same.

I recently visited the 514th Air Mobility Wing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey and met Development and Training Flight trainee Mary Jane Pecson, who enlisted to provide a better future for her family. Whether Trainee Pecson stays for a full career may very well come down to the type of leadership she is exposed to during her first or second term.

My point is this ... every Airman has a "why" — why they enlisted, why they joined, why they stay or why they choose to walk away. Most Airmen enlist for the opportunity of a better life filled with benefits associated with military service, but ultimately find themselves staying to be part of something bigger than themselves.

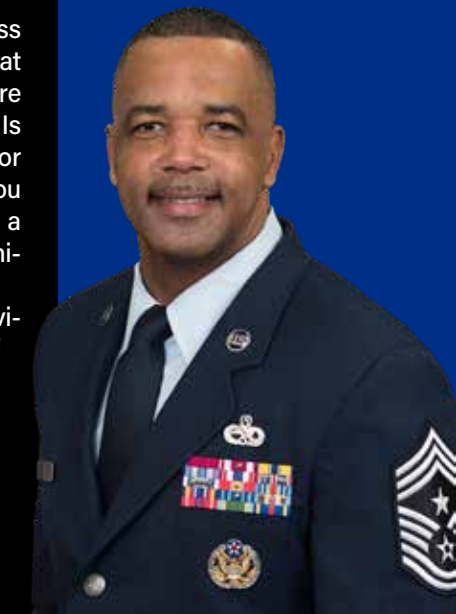
Anytime an Airman separates within their first or second term without reaching their full potential, every leader and the leaders above them should ask themselves why.

The boss and I are ultimately responsible for policies, procedures and the overarching bureaucracy that limit Airmen from reaching their full potential. We own that piece of it and rightfully take the hit for it.

My question to leaders at every level across the command is this: What are you doing at your level to inspire and motivate Airmen? Are your Airmen Ready Now for the future fight? Is the organization within your span of control or influence Transforming for the Future? If you pondered over these questions more than a second before answering, this is an opportunity to reassess, reengage and reattack.

As always, it is my distinct honor and privilege to serve alongside each and every one of you as your Command Chief.

TIMOTHY C. WHITE JR.
Chief Master Sergeant, USAF
Senior Enlisted Advisor to the
Chief of Air Force Reserve
Command Chief Master Sergeant,
Air Force Reserve Command



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Thanks to our contributors: Staff Sgt. Javier Lewis, who is assigned to the 88th Aerial Port Squadron at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, wrote this issue's cover story about his co-worker, Tech. Sgt. Vince Tsang, who is helping transform the culture at NBC Universal by hiring more vets. Our cover photo features Tsang flanked by Reservists and fellow NBC Universal employees Darren Domingo and Jenny Lang. (Courtesy photo)



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Citizen Airman magazine (ISSN No. 0887-9680) is published bi-monthly by Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command Office of Public Affairs for the commander of Air Force Reserve Command. Periodical postage paid at Warner Robins, Georgia, and additional mailing offices. Copies are mailed, free of charge, to the homes of Reservists. Content is normally news articles and features

developed for release to commercial media as part of the Air Force Reserve's continuing public affairs program. Opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the Air Force Reserve. All photos are U.S. Air Force photos unless otherwise indicated. Readers-per-copy ratio: 4-1. Send inquiries and submissions to HQ AFRC/PAO, 155 Richard Ray Blvd., Robins AFB, GA 31098-1661. Or, email them to HQAFRC.PAO.Operations@us.af.mil.

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— By Staff Sgt. Javier Lewis

GOING FOR BOLD

CITIZEN AIRMAN OPENS DOORS FOR VETS AT NBC UNIVERSAL



Vince Tsang wants to hire veterans ... and a lot of them.

From her office inside 30 Rockefeller Plaza, home to NBC Universal and iconic TV shows such as Saturday Night Live and The Tonight Show and overlooking New York City's most iconic real estate, the former advertising sales maven and now NBC Universal's manager of diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) is a driving force moving the decade-old organization from vet friendly to vet ready.

Tsang, a Reserve Citizen Airman technical sergeant and load planner assigned to the 88th Aerial Port Squadron at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, began her civilian career at Viacom Corporation's pop culture factory, MTV Network, after graduating with a bachelor's degree in advertising from Penn State University.

The excitement of a new job and the challenge of climbing the corporate ladder still left her with a desire to do more, a calling to service she vividly remembers experiencing on 9/11 as the plume of smoke and ash from Lower Manhattan was visible from her fifth-grade schoolyard.

"I wasn't fulfilled," Tsang recalled. "I dragged my feet and I wanted more."

The Staten Island, New York native is no stranger to hard work. She cut her teeth in the hyper-competitive world of New York City advertising sales, a multibillion-dollar industry matching companies and brands to the millions of eyeballs across NBC Universal's television brands, and digital advertising. She was born for this ... but she knew there was something more.

Her call to service would follow yet another significant historical moment, the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell in 2011, which had previously prevented service members from being openly queer and serving without the threat of being discharged.

"I was in Air Force JROTC in high school and became the first female group commander and drill team commander," she said. "I loved the discipline and working with others as a team. When the Air Force Reserve popped up, I was already two years into my corporate career. I did not know the Reserve was an option. I told the recruiter to ship me ASAP to the next training in San Antonio. I returned as a new person – refreshed, passionate and not afraid to fail."

Tsang joined NBC Universal's Global Advertising and Partnerships Division as a digital campaign specialist in 2015, and in six years has had three different roles in advertising, planning and operations. But as fate would have it, she almost turned down the opportunity of working at NBC Universal to pursue her dream of joining the Air Force.



Vince Tsang, a Reserve technical sergeant and load planner assigned to the 88th Aerial Port Squadron at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, is helping NBC Universal move from vet friendly to vet ready. Opposite page photos show Tsang during a recent deployment and posing with Reserve Component members she has helped hire at NBC Universal. (Senior Airman Ruben Rios)



“I was offered the job in my final interview, and I said I couldn’t take it because I would be gone for three months for military seasoning training. The recruiters at NBC Universal said, ‘that’s OK. When you come back, we will remember you.’ And I’ve been here ever since.”

She thrived in the fast-paced environment, finding ways to blend her passion for service and duty with the work that she was already doing as a Citizen Airmen. Her service in the Reserve and the confidence to balance the rigors of training, deployments and time away from her civilian commitments gave Tsang the confidence to take a leap of faith to become a diversity leader and the first veteran in NBC Universal’s BOLD Vets initiative.

The NBC Universal Advertising & Partnerships’ BOLD Vets initiative (Building Opportunities for Leadership and Diversity) was born from a vision to influence, inspire and develop the next generation of leaders by anchoring diverse, high-performing talent at all levels through volunteerism and mentorship.

In 2019, in partnership with NBC Universal Advertising executives, Tsang helped launch BOLD Vets to complement the existing mentorship network and partner with other veteran affinity groups across the business.

“Our leadership looked around in 2019 and thought, ‘we are missing something here ... we need more veterans in the door and in this division,’ and from then, I came onboard,” Tsang said. “When BOLD Vets started, I was just another employee, and I didn’t know I was capable of doing much more outside of my day-to-day work. The Reserve already gave me a different hat to wear, and being in corporate and the Reserve gave me the confidence to live that second life.”

Tsang found a calling in serving a community she knew well and opening the doors to other veterans and Reservists. She would soon make her most significant career pivot yet.

“Somebody was listening to a BOLD Vets panel I was moderating about transitioning and mental health, and they approached me after and said, ‘you would be great as a manager of DE&I. You don’t have the credentials, but you have the compassion for people, so we’ll take a shot.’”

In her new role as DE&I manager, Tsang has sought out ways to pay it forward and open the door to more diverse candidates, including veterans. She credits her career and ability to adapt to change and get the mission done to build the credibility and trust of her leadership to create a pipeline for veteran hiring.

With a staff of around 35,000 across the company and more than 2,000 within her division, making meaningful change at such a large organization was no easy feat. While NBC Universal already provided opportunities for veterans, for Tsang, more was needed. She set her sights on ensuring veterans would find opportunities outside of traditional operational roles.

“I think one of the challenges was getting our employees to understand that vets have core skills for jobs outside of operational roles and can integrate into any area of our business with the right support and training” Tsang said.

BOLD Vets’ largely civilian and non-prior service employee volunteers are equally committed to welcoming more veterans into the Advertising and Partnerships division. Since its launch three years ago, the initiative grew to include more than 40 employees who work to support,

mentor and coach the growing number of vets coming through the door.


“BOLD Vets volunteers see this as a way of serving those who served us,” Tsang said. “It’s a way of paying their respects, investing in veteran talent and recognizing the potential, the leadership, the accountability and that that person will accelerate the organization forward in any capacity.”

That investment materialized in several new opportunities, including the inaugural BOLD Vets residency program, a one-year rotational program for veterans interested in a career in sales, marketing, strategy, planning and ad operations.

“My dream job would be to focus solely on veteran hiring and recruitment,” Tsang said. “It’s my specialty, my passion project, and I’m fortunate that my company allows me to do that now from this seat. I would love to expand that to onboarding, training, hiring and recruitment initiatives – everything that encompasses and integrates veterans into the corporate workplace is where I want to be.”

Tsang went from the first-ever BOLD Vet at NBC Universal Advertising and Partnerships to one of many veterans, many of whom she hires for roles in digital ad sales and planning. For Tsang, the transition from being an ad sales professional to being a manager hiring diverse talent wasn’t just another job or additional duty. This was the calling she had answered years prior.

“I used to sell ads, and I was good at it. But I wanted to do something more fulfilling,” she said. “My business is people now. I want to hire more veterans.”

To learn more about NBC Universal’s BOLD Vets initiative, visit <https://www.nbcunicareers.com/programs/ad-sales/bold-vets-residency>. For Tsang’s video story, check out <https://together.nbcuni.com/2022-nbcu-bold-vets/>. 

(Lewis is assigned to the 88th Aerial Port Squadron at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey.)



Tsang went from the first ever BOLD Vet at NBC Universal’s Ad Sales division to the division’s manager of diversity, equity and inclusion. (Courtesy photos)



AIRCRAFT MAINTAINERS

LEAD THE WAY IN REFORMING

— By Bo Joyner

CA

ART TIME AND ATTENDANCE PROCESS



Chief Master Sgt. Byron Landon and Master Sgt. Keith Miner, Reservists from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, are helping lead the effort to improve the Air Reserve Technician time and attendance process throughout Air Force Reserve Command.

When Chief Master Sgt. Byron Landon and Master Sgt. Keith Miner volunteered to be the time and attendance points of contact for the Air Force Reserve's 307th Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, a little more than three years ago, little did they know that they would soon be leading the command down a path to dramatically improve the way it conducts business.

"We had just failed a UEI (unit effectiveness inspection) in the area of ART (Air Reserve Technician) time and attendance, so the chief and I made it our goal that we just didn't want to get to passing in this area, but we wanted to set the standard for the command," Miner said.

ARTs work as both full-time civilian employees and as uniformed Reserve Component military members, performing the same job function whether in civilian or military status. The dual nature of their service can lead to potential problems when it comes to time and attendance.

"I think what's unique about this is that Sergeant Miner and I are crew chiefs. We're maintainers," Landon said. "We live in a world of compliance and guidance. There is no gray area in maintenance. You do exactly what the book tells you to do at all times. And that's the approach we took when we started looking at the ART time and attendance process."

What they found originally was an antiquated, labor-intensive and expensive paper-based process with an outdated operating instruction. What's more, when they started talking to time and attendance POCs at other Reserve wings around the country, they found that the process varied from location to location.

Landon and Miner knew there had to be a better way for ARTs to report and the command to keep up with their time and attendance. At the same time that the Barksdale maintainers were looking at improving the ART time and attendance process at their base, some people at AFRC headquarters at Robins Air Force

Base, Georgia, were looking at taking the time and attendance process from paper to a more automated process.

"For me, the big thing was that ART time and attendance audits had to be done boots-on-the-ground since everything was paper," said Louanna Bledsoe, a human resources specialist in AFRC's Directorate of Manpower, Personnel and Services, who is in charge of the ART time and attendance audit process. "I knew it would be a huge cost savings if we could get to a point where I could do the audits virtually from my desk."

Bledsoe teamed up with Landon and Miner and they set out to automate and improve the ART time and attendance process.

"At the end of the day, Sergeant Miner and I aren't computer people and we're not A1 people, but it was painfully obvious to us that there had to be a better way of doing business. When it came to catching clerical errors, we were spending

a dollar to save a penny. It didn't make any good business sense."

The trio reached out to other subject matter experts throughout the command as they worked to improve the process. Chief among these was Senior Master Sgt. Penny Ricketts from AFRC's Directorate of Cyberspace and Technology, who helped with automating ART time and attendance.

"After we were successful at our wing level, we worked with Ms. Bledsoe and Senior Master Sgt. Ricketts, and our goal was AFRC-wide change," Miner said. "As soon as the AFRC manual is published, every timekeeper and supervisor should be in compliance. The big takeaway is that they no longer print and file copies of the records. Timekeepers and supervisors will no longer be required to sit in a room and audit paper copies. As an ART, this is a huge win."

"We recently had a Continuous Process Improvement event where we brought in stakeholders from here

and some of the wings," Bledsoe said. "And at the beginning of our CPI event, we encountered a lot of resistance. People were reluctant to change since it has always been done this way. By the end, that resistance was gone and everybody agreed this was a better way and they got onboard."

"The numbers out of the CPI event showed that we are projecting to reduce 395,000 man hours annually, a 69% improvement of time and attendance alone," Miner said. "These hours can be refocused towards other programs and, more importantly, towards our Airmen. The new way forward is going to improve the work life for all members involved."

In late November, the team presented its recommendation for an innovative automated ART time and attendance process to Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Pennington, AFRC's deputy commander, and he approved the recommendation, along with the publishing of an updated AFRC Manual 36-104.

Currently, the team is collaborating with the Air Force Audit Agency on an automation tool that should be up and running soon.

"In today's world, if we're not looking at trying to evaluate the previous ways of doing business and innovate them, then we are failing," Landon said. "We now have tools and equipment that we didn't have before that make it possible to improve on a lot of our processes. In this case, we were able to move an old way of doing business that affected about 7,000 employees forward and we built a process that was standard across the command. All units can use this and as you move around the Air Force, it's always going to be the same."

Landon and Miner's efforts prove that great ideas can come from anywhere and that all Reserve Citizen Airmen are capable of moving the ball forward in AFRC's quest to reform the organization.

CA



‘It’s Ok To Not Be Ok’

— By Staff Sgt. Timothy Leddick

SERVICE DPAWG HELPS COLONEL FIGHT THE BATTLES BACK HOME

With a stern voice but a heart of gold, Col. Adam Roberts, the 555th Rapid Engineer Deployable Heavy Operational Repair Squadron Engineers commander at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, practices resiliency each day alongside his best friend and service dog, Porsche, a loveable labradoodle with golden brown fur resembling the look and feel of a stuffed animal.

Roberts wants to use his rank in order to help those around him acknowledge and accept the importance of mental health and wellness.

“I want to convey a message as the commander, as a colonel, as an Airman, as a human, that you matter,” said Roberts. “Life isn’t always easy. You never really know what’s going on behind someone’s eyes. We should act with grace and a little bit of forgiveness, a little bit of empathy, if indeed we believe that every person matters.”

Roberts’ roughly 23 years in service has been accompanied with a fair amount of struggle, but he’s determined to shed a light on others who may also be experiencing low points as he has, and he believes Porsche allows him to better engage with those around him.

Roberts’ struggles of resiliency have been rooted from his time in service through deployments and from divorce.

He has deployed on several occasions throughout his military career to locations such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq and has been involved in combat, facing many decisions and moments that have haunted him to this day.

During many of his deployments, Roberts transported goods and personnel via convoy.

“I was assigned to the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq,” said Roberts. “I was a turret

gunner. I’ve been IED’d (hit with an Improvised Explosive Device), had some engagements in traffic, had lots of indirect fire, lots of mortars, lots of rockets.”

Roberts’ job as a turret gunner involved guarding assets and service members around him with strict guidelines of defense and response, whatever the cost. Almost killing people that didn’t need to be killed are instances that Roberts still remembers vividly to this day. One instance during one of these convoys involved a couple driving in traffic.

“We were driving down the freeway and this car comes to merge into our convoy,” said Roberts. “I can see that it is clearly an old guy and his wife, and they’re just out driving and doing their thing and they didn’t realize that they were merging into a convoy.”

Roberts shoots at their tire.

Nothing.

He shoots at the engine block.

Nothing.

Roberts’ fear sets in as he anticipates what might be the inevitable: He’s only a millimeter away from killing someone that in his heart he knows is an innocent bystander who’s just not paying attention.

Fortunately the couple pulls over at the last second.

“That immediate sense of release and relief — I don’t really know how to describe the emotions I felt or even what I’m feeling right now,” said Roberts.



After his time on deployment and transitioning from active duty to the Reserve, he had attended the Army War College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There he had experienced another struggle that has affected his mental well-being.

“I was at the Army War College,” said Roberts. “I was talking to my wife on a Friday, ‘I love you. How’s everything going?’ The normal stuff. And then on Sunday, the marriage was over. I didn’t see it coming. I was really hurting.”

Roberts struggled with depression, anger and self-worth. To make matters worse, this was the same time he was assigned to command the 555th “Triple Nickel” Squadron.

“The men and women of the Triple Nickel needed me to be in a good frame of mind to be able to serve them. And I couldn’t deliver that in the place that I was. I was really afraid for my career, my security clearance, for what people would think about me, for hurting. But regardless I’ve always been told to ‘suck it up,’ to ‘man up,’ and for most of my career I have done that. I think it’s made it harder for me to be the leader that I want to be. So I went to get help.”

Roberts compares the importance of receiving mental assistance to receiving physical assistance, such as when he broke his wrist after crashing his mountain bike.

“It was real bad but I didn’t hide it, I didn’t pretend my wrist wasn’t broken,” said Roberts. “I went to the doctor and I got help. And at points in my life when I struggled mentally, I went to get help. It’s OK to not be OK, but it’s also OK to go get OK.”

Roberts called Military OneSource to receive help. He talked through issues regarding his divorce, all the accompanying emotions and his combat time. Through this process he discovered he had developed sleep paralysis. He never thought he’d be someone attributed with PTSD and that was a struggle on its own to accept.

“When I get these episodes, it messes me up for a few days,” said Roberts. “It’s hard to process it.”

Roberts trained Porsche from then on as a service animal. Her function is to wake Roberts during these episodes. But Roberts doesn’t bring Porsche to work so that she can wake him up, she serves as a bridge between him and reaching out to others around him.

“She helps me be vulnerable and connect with people,” said Roberts. “She helps to engage in conversation about wellness and mental wellness. She’s a great barrier breaker for that. Many times when people see Porsche and

want to give her a pet, I’m always open to it. I hear lots of times something like ‘this is the best I’ve felt all day ... this is the best I’ve felt all year.’ It absolutely breaks my heart. Why should giving a cute little puppy be the best you’ve felt all year?”

Roberts allows interactions like these to transition into moments of connection and to be able to reach out by sharing his own struggles of resiliency and provide assistance and resources.

“Through a number of these conversations I’ve been able to call Military OneSource with a member and set up some treatments and set folks going on a healthy path,” said Roberts. “So I bring [Porsche] so I can better serve other people.”

Roberts hopes to bridge the gap along with Porsche to advocate for better awareness and treatment of mental health, not necessarily to advocate for everyone to go out and get a service animal.

Roberts often refers to the note under “service before self” within A Profession of Arms: Our Core Values as a guideline of prioritizing and emphasizing wellness.

“Airmen must practice self-care first to be able to serve others,” said Roberts. “If it’s alright for a colonel to not be alright, then it’s alright for you. And it’s alright for you to get alright.”



Col. Adam Roberts, the 555th RED HORSE Squadron commander, and his service dog, Porsche. (Staff Sgt. Timothy Leddick)



908th EMBRACES FUTURE, LEGACY OF HELICOPTER MISSION

— Story and photos by Airman 1st Class Juliana Todd

Benjamin Franklin is quoted as having said, “if you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” The 908th Airlift Wing is choosing to take advantage of the present and prepare for the future.

In 2020, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, was selected as the preferred location to host the MH-139A Grey Wolf Formal Training Unit, with the 908th tasked with the mission. Since then, members have been strategically preparing and anticipating its arrival, saying goodbye to its nearly 40-year tactical airlift mission with the C-130 Hercules.

This unique transition requires synergy between three major commands: Air Force Reserve Command, Air Force Global Strike Command, and Air Education and Training Command. It also requires wing members

to have patience, perseverance and a willingness to learn.

“It’s the hardest, most complicated, multifaceted [mission change] the Air Force has ever taken on,” said Col. Craig Drescher, 908 AW commander. “Not only is it hard to go from a fixed-wing, combat-coded unit to a rotary-wing, formal training unit, but we’re talking about an airframe that hasn’t even come off the factory floor yet. We don’t have anything stood up; we’re having to create everything as we go.”

The MH-139A is the militarized version of the commercial AW139 helicopter, designed to protect intercontinental ballistic missiles and transport U.S. government officials and security forces. It has modified features that makes it superior to its UH-1N counterpart, such as increase of speed, range, ceiling, endurance, payload and survivability. Similarly, as the MH-

139A is replacing the wing’s C-130H, it will also replace the Air Force’s nearly 50-year aging fleet of UH-1N Huey helicopters.

Recently, during November’s Unit Training Assembly, one MH-139A Grey Wolf from the 413th Flight Test Squadron in Duke Field, Florida, and two UH-1N Hueys from the 23rd Flying Training Squadron in Fort Rucker, Alabama, made a stop at Maxwell Air Force Base.

The primary purpose of the visit was for 908th Operations Group and 908th Maintenance Group members to get familiar with the incoming and retiring aircraft, communicate with the helicopter crew and build a closer relationship between each other. This was the first time at Maxwell AFB that members from the wing observed and interacted

with their future mission and the legacy they are now inheriting.

The idea began with Lt. Col. Jay Ference, 357th Airlift Squadron commander and member of the integration team tasked with preparing the wing for the new mission. He realized that morale was starting to deteriorate for the wing’s operations and maintenance personnel, and they needed something to get excited about.

“It’s been very difficult,” said Ference. “We haven’t had aircraft here for last seven months. So, this was an event to get the spark, the energy, to say, hey, this is what we’re going to be doing and we’re going to be getting these aircraft.”

Receiving that hands-on interaction, to see a helicopter from decades ago still performing a vital role for the Air Force today, bred confidence in many members.

“There are pilots that fly and train, and maintainers that maintain, the UH-1N airframe from 1976, a helicopter with over 8,000 flight hours on it,” said Master Sgt. Michael Joseph Cutter, an expeditor with the 908th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. “If those people are maintaining and modifying that aircraft from 1976, we can step in now and maintain this aircraft that’s going to be delivered and built this year.”

Understanding now what they’re getting further helps the 908th to accelerate change and embrace the new mission.

(Todd is assigned to the 908th Airlift Wing’s public affairs office.)



In 2020, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, was selected as the preferred location to host the MH-139A Grey Wolf Formal Training Unit, with the 908th Airlift Wing tasked with the mission. Recently, one MH-139A Grey Wolf from the 413th Flight Test Squadron, Duke Field, Florida, and two UH-1N Hueys from the 23rd Flying Training Squadron, Fort Rucker, Alabama, made a stop at Maxwell Air Force Base to allow 908th Operations Group and 908th Maintenance Group members to get familiar with the incoming and retiring aircraft.

BARKSDALE FIRST SERGEANTS

★ COMPLETE BASIC MILITARY TRAINING IMMERSION



— By Senior Master Sgt. Ted Daigle

Four first sergeants assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, completed an immersion tour of Air Force Basic Military Training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, in December.

The objective of the immersion was to gain a better understanding of what Reserve Citizen Airmen entering service encounter and how those experiences impact their ability to complete the mission.

“Most of our first sergeant’s BMT experience was more than 15 years ago,” said Master Sgt. Katilin Schaeffer, 307th Bomb Wing first sergeant and resiliency integrator. “In order to better connect with our members coming into the wing, we knew we needed to get a better idea of what BMT looks like today.”

It took several months for Schaeffer to organize the visit, but she said the effort was worth it. The group was able to spend considerable time with Air Force Military Training Instructors, or MTIs, and gain a deeper understanding of the rationale behind their training efforts.

That knowledge was necessary for the first sergeants to understand better how incoming Reserve Citizen Airmen adapt to the Air Force and how they perceive their service.

“I find myself telling people that your Air Force is not my Air Force, and it isn’t their Air Force,” Schaeffer said. “So, the best way we can get to know our people is to gain a better understanding of their experiences.”

Those BMT experiences are formed by training designed to meet new global pacing threats.

One of the most significant changes was removing Basic Expeditionary Airman Skills Training, or BEAST, from BMT.

PACER FORGE — Primary Agile Combat Employment Range, Forward Operations Readiness Generation Exercise, replaced BEAST earlier this year.

BEAST taught Airmen how to fight against the global war on terror. PACER FORGE teaches trainees how to combat increasing threats from near peers and work within the Agile Combat Employment model.


Schaeffer said that change was just one of several that highlighted a faster-paced BMT environment than she experienced.

She explained that even injuries that used to sideline trainees for days and weeks no longer disrupt training. Instead of sidelining trainees, physical trainers help them heal while doing alternative exercises that sustain fitness gains.

“Now you aren’t a door guard for six weeks just because of an injury; there are other avenues to overcome the problem,” Schaeffer said.

Schaeffer explained that the immersion wouldn’t impact how the 307th Bomb Wing trains for the high-end fight.

She said the visit did reinforce the efforts of the 307th Bomb Wing’s Development and Training Flight, a program that prepares trainees for BMT.

“The MTI’s told us that Reservists seem ready to go when they hit the ground and they take on quite a few leadership roles,” said Schaeffer. 

(Daigle is assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing public affairs office.)



Master Sgt. James Mitchell, 320th Training Squadron military training instructor, leads his flight at parade rest during an Air Force Basic Military Training graduation held at the 320th Training Squadron’s Airman Training Complex on Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. Four first sergeants from the 307th Bomb Wing attended an immersion visit recently to gain a better understanding of Reserve Citizen Airmen’s entry into the military. (Johnny Saldivar)



RESERVE FIGHTER GROUP LEADS OFF-SITE TOTAL FORCE TRAINING EVENT

— By Bo Joyner

Air Force Reserve Command's 414th Fighter Group and the active-duty 4th Fighter Wing at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, have enjoyed an exemplary Total Force relationship in support of the F-15E Strike Eagle mission ever since the 414th FG was reactivated in 2010. The two organizations recently took their affiliation to another level when, for the first time, the 414th FG led a Total Force training event at the Savannah, Georgia Combat Readiness Training Center in November.

"For the past couple of years, the 414th has been leading flying operations on the weekend six or seven times a year," said Maj. Wesley Szempruch, the director of operations for the 414th FG's 307th Fighter Squadron. "We take four of the active duty's jets and lead training operations at Seymour Johnson over the weekend and return the jets, ready to fly,

on Monday morning. At our strategic planning meeting in August, we thought it would be invaluable training to push the envelope a little more and take the training off-site."

Working hand-in-hand with the 4th FW's 334th Fighter Squadron, Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 307th FS and the 414th Maintenance Squadron quickly set to work to make the off-site training event a reality.

"With only about six weeks of planning time, we were able to bring together more than 40 Reservists and 60 active-duty personnel and execute a \$190,000, four-day trip with eight F-15Es to the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center," Szempruch said. "We executed more than 35 student air-to-air sorties, combining with Jacksonville Air National Guard F-15Cs, adversary A-4s from Draken International and organic CRTC support to maximize student

training. In addition, we integrated with the (Reserve's) 916th Air Refueling Wing at Seymour Johnson to effectively almost double the number of sorties we were able to generate."

The 916th provided KC-46 refueling support during the training event.

"Not only did the 414th integrate with an active-duty fighter squadron, but we sourced 4th FW security forces, logistics readiness and POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) Airmen to support this endeavor. All in all, this first-ever AFRC-planned and led off-station F-15E Formal Training Unit TDY was a resounding success, and both active-duty and Reserve leadership plan to do it again each year at a minimum."



The 414th Fighter Group is a geographically separated subordinate unit of the 944th Fighter Wing at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

THE AIR DOMINANCE
SAVANNAH GEORGIA CENTER

For the first time ever, the Reserve's 414th Fighter Group led a Total Force training event at the Savannah, Georgia Combat Readiness Training Center in November.



YOUNG AIRMAN LOVES THE CHALLENGE OF AEROMEDICAL EVACUATION

— By Master Sgt. Trevor Saylor

Coming from a family of Air Force veterans, Senior Airman Taylor Sturgell knew early on she was interested in joining the Air Force.

Her mother retired from the Air Force Reserve's 934th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, Minneapolis-St. Paul Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, and Sturgell was interested in medicine herself. "I could have joined the ASTS. It was familiar," Sturgell said. "But why not challenge myself and do something outside of my comfort zone."

In 2020, Sturgell joined the 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. Her experience in basic military training and technical school is intertwined with the COVID-19 pandemic, as was her initial experience at the 934th AES. Sturgell said she is thrilled that the unit can now more freely operate in person.

Sturgell marveled at the interactions within the 934th AES team recently during Winged Serpent, a three-day exercise testing the interop-

erability of international joint forces. Working with Canadian partners, the 934th AES coordinated patient care, evacuation and transportation. It was a chance for the unit to put what they have learned into practice in an unfamiliar environment.

"It's amazing to see how we are able to mesh together as a team," Sturgell said. "These flights really allow us to build a better fact-to-face bond. We are able to create strong relationships that make a real difference when we are doing our job."

For this exercise, Sturgell was assigned to an instructor. Senior Master Sgt. Zac Johnson, a flight instructor with the 934th AES, was responsible for training Sturgell one-on-one during the exercise.


"This is her fourth flight since she joined the unit," Johnson said of Sturgell. "And we expect to see growth flight-over-flight as the Airmen learn and put their knowledge into action. But this weekend, the growth was exponential. Her perfor-

mance, confidence and presence all improved a lot."

Sturgell said Johnson was incredibly helpful to her.

"Having an experienced flyer by my side was very beneficial for me," she said. "It was great to be able to pick his brain and get immediate feedback on what we were doing. He helped me become a better flyer and a better student."

Outside of her work at the 934th AES, Sturgell is a patient care coordinator in her civilian life. She is planning to attend nursing school with an eye toward becoming a licensed practical nurse. With that, she sees herself continuing to serve with the 934th.

"I love the culture, the people and the morale here. I'm always excited to be here," Sturgell said. "And that's a good feeling." 

(Saylor is assigned to the 934th Airlift Wing's public affairs office.)

Top: Senior Airman Taylor Sturgell, an aeromedical evacuation technician with the 934th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, talks to Senior Master Sgt. Zac Johnson, 934 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron flight instructor, during exercise Winged Serpent. Accompanying photos show Sturgell carrying out her aeromedical evacuation duties. (Photos by Master Sgt. Trevor Saylor)



Friendship

TURNS INTO BUSINESS

FOR CITIZEN AIR COMMANDOS

— Story and photos by Senior Airman Dylan Gentile

A trio of loadmasters assigned to the 919th Special Operations Wing, Duke Field, Florida, have transformed their friendship and a shared passion for craft brewing into a successful business in Niceville.

Inside their quaint, but bustling, brewery under an oak canopy on Florida's Emerald Coast, you'll find veterans, young couples and children all having a great time surrounded by walls adorned with military memorabilia.

Tech. Sgts. Galen Cooper, Jeff Lockwood and Parker Christianson have traveled the world as loadmasters assigned to the 859th Special Operations Squadron. While loading and offloading cargo, they discovered they shared a love for brewing their own beer.

"We just started hanging out and a conversation came up about home brewing," Cooper said. "We figured we would buy some equipment and start doing it ourselves."

"We go to a lot of places because of our squadron's mission and we get the opportunity to see a lot of things," Christianson said. "It opens doors to potential opportunities for many of us here at home."

The trio started brewing in a garage and began sharing samples with friends. Then, they began selling at fairs and festivals and recently opened their own brewery.

The bonds the loadmasters forged through years of working alongside one another extend to their families as well. The loadmasters and their families find a work-life balance between orders and deploy-

ments by sharing many of the tasks that come with running a business. Often, their wives and friends come in and tend to customers to cover for the trio while they take care of their military duties.

Christianson said running the brewery is fun, but it takes up a significant amount of time. Most days, he leaves Duke Field and changes right into his brewery t-shirt to get started at his second job.

"We all find ways to make it work by sharing the load," Cooper said. "My wife does a lot of the work in the brewery for me while I'm gone."

Their establishment is adorned with 919th SOW memorabilia from different missions and squadrons they have

collected over time in their shared adventures. They carry that military experience over into how they run their business.

"On an aircrew, everyone can work together without using hierarchy," Cooper said. "We learned how to trust people to do their jobs and safely land a plane. We can talk to one another to resolve any issues or disputes."

Splitting their time between so many obligations can be tough, but watching veterans and other military members come in and enjoy their products makes the job worth it, Christianson said.

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



Top: Tech. Sgts. Jeff Lockwood, Parker Christianson and Galen Cooper, all 859th Special Operations Squadron loadmasters, stop for a photo in front of the brewery they run together in Niceville, Florida. Far left: Christianson uses a hydrometer to measure the density of a new batch of brew he created. Left: Cooper carries a sack of malt to be used in a new batch of beer.



Parting Shot: Tech. Sgt. Vincent Holmes, an aircraft metals technology technician with the 911th Maintenance Squadron, uses an angle grinder to cut through metal at Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania. Aircraft metals technology technicians keep the service's aircraft flying by grinding, welding, fabricating or repairing parts. (Tech. Sgt. Jeffrey Grossi)

CITIZEN AIRMAN

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