

# CITIZEN AIRMAN

June 2017



[PAGE 6] AIR ADVISORS IN  
**AFGHANISTAN**

[PAGE 30] TURNING TRAGEDY INTO  
**MOTIVATION TO  
HELP OTHERS**

PAGE 28

# 10K

**HOURS IN A B-52**

## WHAT INSPIRES

COMMAND'S TOP RECRUITER?  
**PAGE 20**



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# From the Top

f /ARFCCommander

In the February issue, I discussed Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy's story about the angel who learned three truths about life. I left you with some questions to ask yourself regarding your leadership style. Today, I want to share my thoughts on how to be an effective leader.

Effective leaders are servant leaders. These leaders understand life is not about "them," but rather it's about those they serve. You can make a living, which is to measure what you get, or you can have a life, which is to measure what you give!

Effective leaders come off their high podium and enter the workspace and lives of those they are leading. They reach out as leaders. They share their authority, their thoughts and their dreams. Just as important, leaders share in the work of those they serve, therefore serving together.

The angel in Tolstoy's story learned that man does not live by caring for himself but rather by sharing love for others. The angel said, "I remained alive when I was a man, not by care of myself but because love was present in a passerby, and because he and his wife pitied and loved me."

The angel also learned that the twins (orphans) remained alive not because of their mother's care but through the love that was in the heart of a stranger. The angel stated, "And all men live, not by reason of any care they have for themselves, but by the love for them that is in other people. ... It is by love for

others that they really live." Again, in this story, love for others is seen in how people serve others.

What does it mean to lead, and what does it mean to serve? Leading focuses on the mission by motivating a person or group to achieve a certain outcome. Serving is not about you but about others. A leader understands the needs of those he or she serves. A leader will help others with a burdensome task.

Servant leadership is not easy. It takes fortitude, resiliency, courage and endurance. It is too easy to become full of yourself, stand on the mountain, point fingers, and think you are effective and powerful. Too many leaders "fall" and become a "slave" to power and do not understand its true purpose.

You are only as effective as your ability to influence and motivate. You can have all the accoutrements of power, but if you cannot influence a soul, then you are lost in your authority to lead.

Invest in serving others. Lead from the front. Kneel beside your people, share in their work, respect their lives and honor their contributions. Be servant leaders: You were made for it!



**MARYANNE MILLER**  
Lieutenant General  
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command



## Citizen Airman // June 2017

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## Chief's View

f /AFRC.CCC

**Q: What work or personal experience had the most impact on your career?**

A: As an immigrant from Guatemala, becoming an American had a humbling impact on my life. I've been thankful to call America home since the age of 12. Now I share in the honor of being able to defend it. My experiences, good and bad, are a testimony for every American. When you work hard, you have the ability to become the person you want to be. The Air Force Reserve values of strength, resilience, dedication, compassion and commitment have helped drive me to be the best Airman I can be. As a law enforcement officer in my civilian career, I'm often faced with making difficult decisions. Doing the right thing is not always easy, but these Air Force values have given me a strong foundation and ability to stand up for what's right.

**Q: Where do you see the Air Force Reserve in the next five years?**

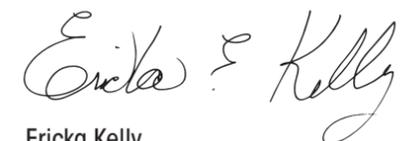
A: To understand where we are going, we must first understand where we have been, where we are now and where the nation needs us for the future fight. By preserving our

foundational principles, we will remain a predominantly part-time, prior-service force of volunteers who live locally and serve globally. Over the next few years, we will build on our current strengths and capabilities, modernize and integrate weapon systems, and maintain the highest readiness levels for tomorrow's fight. As Reserve Citizen Airmen, we must remain both personally and operationally combat-ready to answer the nation's call within 72 hours — anytime and anywhere.

As the Reserve continues to grow in emerging missions such as space, cyber, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, we must ensure we are shaping the force of the future to meet those requirements. To ensure we do this, Airman development and readiness will continue to be my top priority. I want to empower our enlisted force and allow them to make educated decisions about their careers. My focus will be to develop specific processes for enlisted development, such as the annual Command Chief Screening Board, provide more educational opportunities for leadership development and increase Airmen mentorship. My goal is to ensure we provide Airmen the opportunity to continue serving as they experience changes in their family and civilian work life.

**Q: What advice would you give Airmen about the road to success?**

A: Every Airman will have a different road to success. Don't rush to achieve the next rank just for rank's sake. Enjoy the journey and gain the experience needed to excel at the next level. Take every opportunity to learn and grow in the position you are filling. Do not be afraid to ask questions and seek out mentors. ... you can never get enough information or advice! Continue your military and professional education, and finish your Community College of the Air Force degree. Remember, education is something that no one can take away from you. Enjoy where you are, maintain that balance in your life and be ready for that next opportunity. A successful career takes time, so make it your own personal investment.



**Ericka Kelly**  
Chief Master Sergeant  
Command Chief Master Sergeant  
Air Force Reserve Command



*Senior Airman April Richardson of the 932nd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, displays a coin presented to her by Chief Master Sgt. Ericka Kelly. Kelly presented Richardson with the coin in recognition of her self-improvements and positive attitude. (Christopher Parr)*



# CITIZEN AIRMAN

*The Official Magazine of the Air Force Reserve*

## 06 **Air Advisors**

Reservists helping Afghanistan establish its air force

## 19 **RIO Connect**

Mobile app allows IMAs to manage their careers on the go

## 20 **Top Recruiter**

Family the inspiration for outstanding performer

## 22 **I-Wing Concept**

Innovation, integration, invention

## 24 **Behind the Lens**

Photographer finds rehabilitation through documentation

## 26 **Storyteller**

Reservist channels creativity into children's book

## 28 **B-52 Warrior**

Reserve Citizen Airman hits 10,000-hour mark in Stratofortress

## 30 **Resilient**

Airman turns life around after tragic loss of her son

*F-35A Lightning II aircraft from the active-duty 388th Fighter Wing at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, land at Royal Air Force Lakenheath, England, April 15. The aircraft arrival marked the first F-35A flying training deployment to the U.S. European Command area of responsibility or any overseas location. The deployment included Reserve Citizen Airmen from Hill's 419th FW, a traditional associate unit of the 388th. (Tech. Sgt. Matthew Plew)*

*Cover: Tech. Sgt. Brian Evanco, a Reserve Citizen Airman C-130 maintenance advisor from the 910th Airlift Wing at Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, reviews training with his Afghan air force counterparts in Kabul, Afghanistan. For more on how Reservists are helping to build the Afghan air force, see stories beginning on Page 6. (Tech. Sgt. Veronica Pierce)*



# RISK AND REWARD

BY BO JOYNER

*Citizen Airmen serving as C-130 air advisors in Afghanistan are sure to find both*

The United States has drawn down its military presence in Afghanistan over the past few years, but a dedicated group of Air Force Reservists continues to serve in the Afghan capital, teaching the Afghan air force to operate and maintain its small fleet of C-130 transport planes.

Reservists who volunteer to serve as C-130 air advisors in Afghanistan have the unique opportunity to help lay the foundation for the Afghan air force.

“Where else would you have the chance to help build an air force from the ground up? Not too many people have the chance to say that,” Senior Master Sgt. Kevin Pratt, a C-130 maintenance specialist assigned to the 910th Airlift Wing at Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, said during a recent interview following his return from an air advisor deployment. “I’ve been in the Air Force for more than 35 years, and this deployment is definitely one of the highlights of my career.”

“This is a vitally important mission that has a direct impact on our national security strategy,” said Lt. Gen. Maryanne Miller, Air Force Reserve Command commander.

Miller visited Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul in January to get a firsthand look at the Reserve Citizen Airmen serving as C-130 air advisors to the Afghan air force. She came away extremely impressed.

“Our C-130 Airmen are the most experienced and knowledgeable in the world, and they are doing a tremendous job of taking what they know and passing it on to the Afghan air force,” she said. “It’s a critically important mission with long deployments, language barriers and cultural differences, but our Reserve Citizen Airmen are doing a fantastic job of teaching C-130 maintenance and operations to their Afghan counterparts.”

Coalition teams are currently in-country training the Afghan air force to operate six different aircraft at three locations. The Afghans fly three helicopters: the Mi-17, Mi-35 and MD-530. They also operate three fixed-wing planes: the C-130, C-208 and A-29.

Reservists from AFRC and members of the Air National Guard are in charge of the C-130 air advisor mission. At any one time, there are about 11 air reserve component C-130 maintainers and nine aircrew members — pilots, navigators, flight engineers and loadmasters — serving as air advisors at the Kabul airport.

The Afghans currently have four C-130s, all H models and all built in 1978. Since the U.S.’s active-duty Air Force now exclusively flies newer C-130Js, the task of providing training on the legacy C-130H aircraft is the mission of the reserve components.

“To be honest, there are challenges associated with this mission for our Reserve Airmen,” said Maj. Gen. John Stokes, 22nd Air Force commander, during a recent interview at his Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, office. “First, it’s a long deployment. Our operators deploy for 179 days, and our maintainers deploy for 120. There are about eight weeks of pre-deployment training, so you’re looking at a very lengthy deployment for Reservists. It’s extremely difficult for a lot of traditional Reservists to be away from their civilian job for that long.

“Secondly, our operators are used to deploying as a combat crew,” Stokes said. “The air advisor mission is challenging because you are pulled from your home station force, which is already at threshold planning levels. If I’m already short of flight engineers and have somebody who served as an air advisor a year ago, that person won’t be available during his or her normal AEF (aerospace expeditionary force) cycle. It can create a readiness challenge for some of our C-130 units.”

Stokes accompanied Miller on her trip to Kabul in January, and he, too, came away impressed by what he saw.

“It really does take a special person to step up for this mission, and I am very proud of the job the Reserve is doing to help build the Afghan air force,” he said.

It would be hard to find a mission tied more closely to the United States’ national security strategy.



*(Previous page) Maj. Ethan Bryant, a C-130 pilot assigned to the 934th Airlift Wing at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, transports passengers and cargo with his Afghan air force counterpart. (Above) One of Afghanistan’s four C-130s. (Tech. Sgt. Veronica Pierce)*

“ I WOULD RECOMMEND THIS MISSION TO ANYONE WHO IS LOOKING TO HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT ON HELPING THE AFGHANS BUILD THEIR AIR FORCE FROM THE GROUND UP. ”

“Our primary mission remains to protect the homeland by preventing Afghanistan from being used again as a safe haven for terrorists to attack the United States or our allies,” Army Gen. John Nicholson, commander, U.S. Forces — Afghanistan, said in a recent statement before the Senate Armed Forces Committee.

He went on to explain that U.S. Forces-Afghanistan executes two narrow but complementary missions to achieve this objective: the U.S. counterterrorism mission, called Operation Freedom’s Sentinel; and the NATO train, advise and assist mission, called Operation Resolute Support. The C-130 air advisor program is a vital part of train, advise and assist.

“Of the 98 U.S.-designated terrorist groups globally, 20 operate in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, along with three violent extremist organizations,” Nicholson said, adding that this is the highest concentration of terrorist groups anywhere in the world. “We remain very focused on the defeat of al-Qaida and its associates, as well as the defeat of Islamic State Khorasan Province, which is the ISIL affiliate in Afghanistan.”

“In the past, Afghan national defense security forces relied on the coalition for air support,” said Air Force Brig. Gen. David Hicks, commanding general for Train, Advise, Assist Command-Air and commander of the 438th Air Expeditionary Wing at Kabul. “Now, they rely on their own countrymen overhead. Our TAAC-Air mission is to work with our Afghan partners to develop a professional, capable and sustainable force.

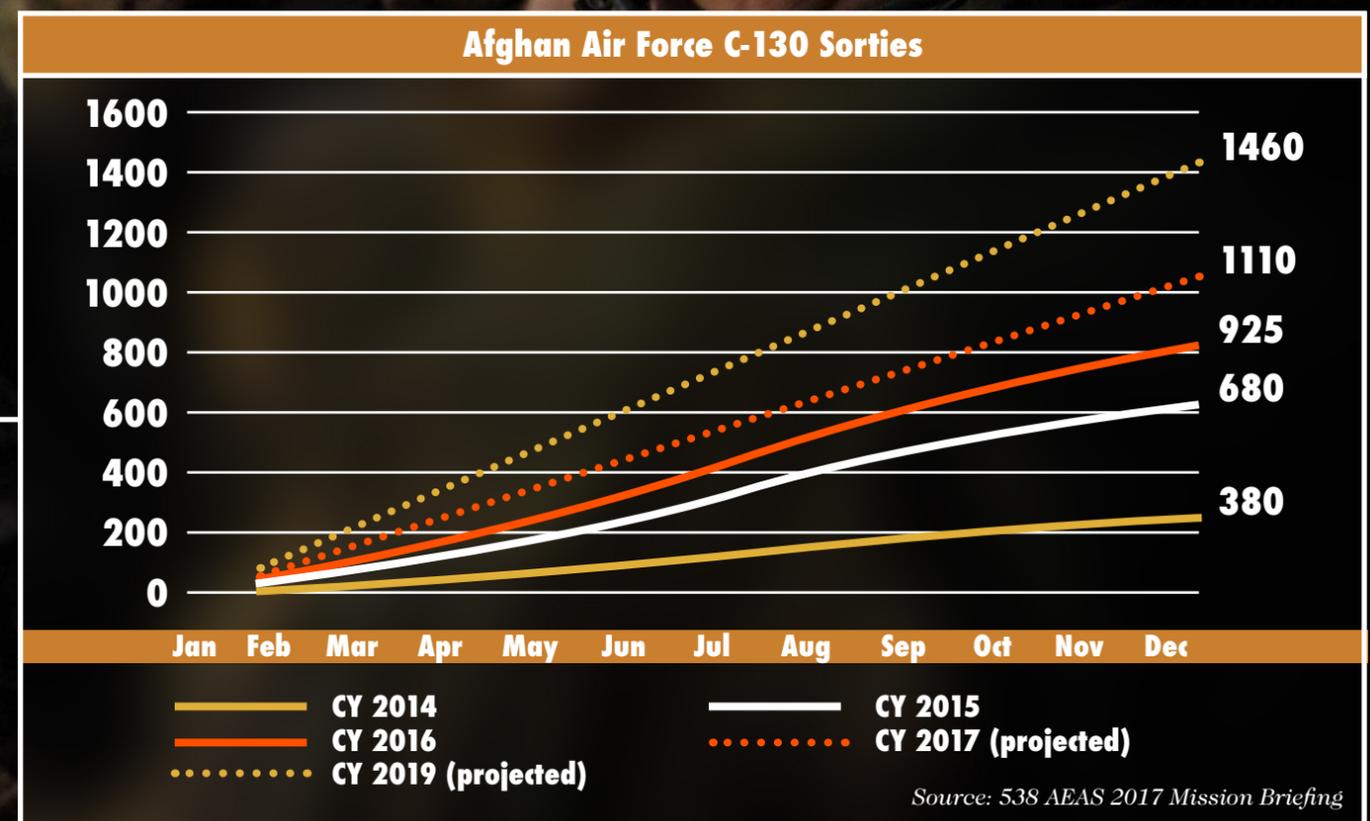
“The C-130 is an indispensable asset to the AAF that allows them to independently provide a robust, sustainable regional and tactical air mobility enterprise,” Hicks said. “In 2016, AAF C-130 crews were responsible for completing more than 1,000 sorties, transporting nearly 30,000 passengers and delivering 880 tons of cargo. The training and advising from both our C-130 aircrew and maintenance advisors have helped the AAF improve this massive capability.

“I would recommend this mission to anyone who is looking to have a positive impact on helping the Afghans build their air force from the ground up. TAAC-Air relies heavily on the expertise of our Reservists who operate the C-130H, both aircrews and maintainers. The C-130 airlift mission could simply not be done without our total force enterprise.

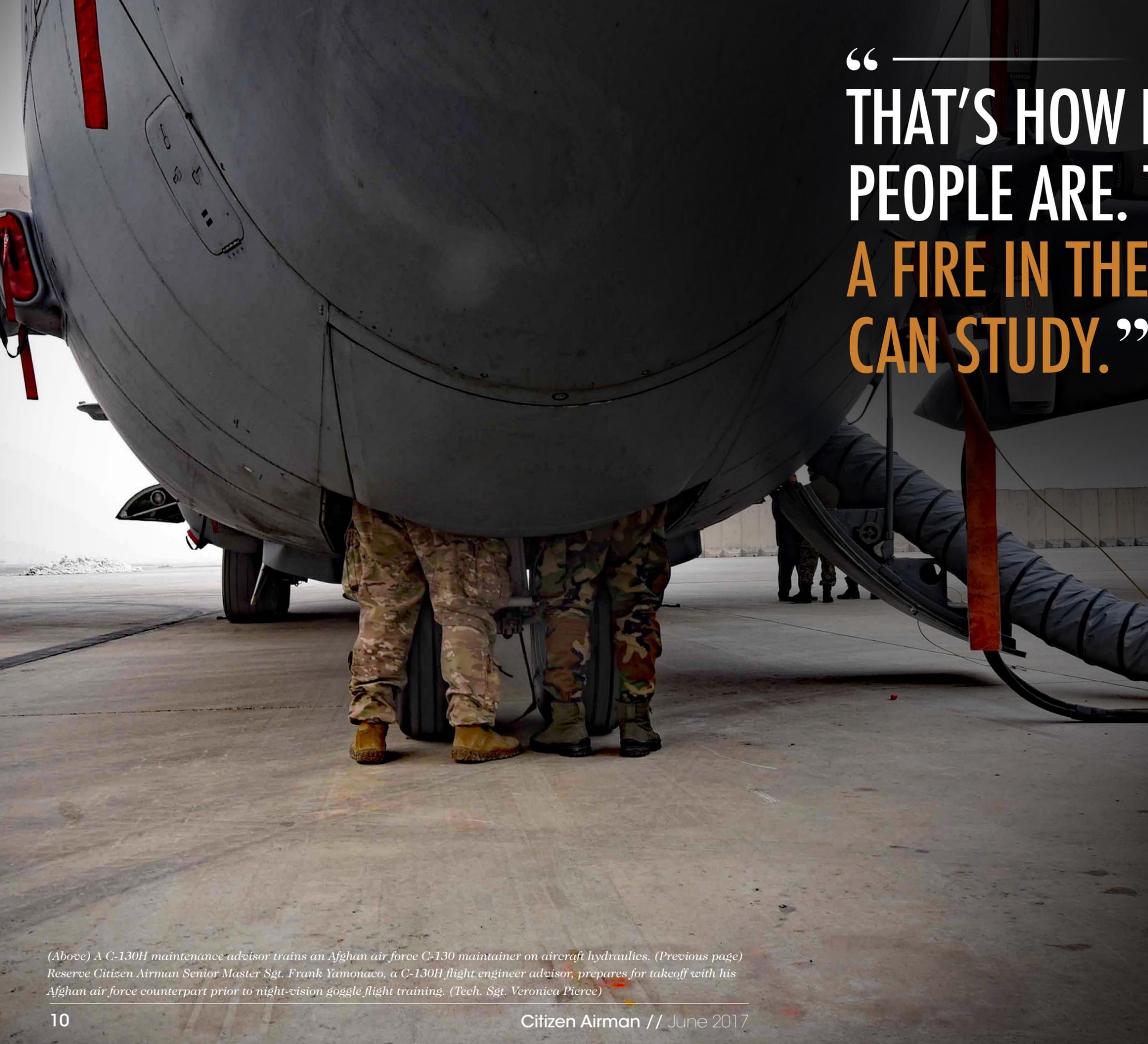
“The AAF is constantly improving, and that is a positive reflection on our advising,” Hicks said. “But, more importantly, it is a testament to the AAF’s hard work and dedication to its mission. The AAF should be proud of how far it has come in a short time. Being part of TAAC-Air is an opportunity to be a part of the progress the AAF is making.”

“The Afghan government has to be able to move troops and supplies throughout the country to fight the insurgents,” Stokes said. “The AAF’s four C-130s are a crucial part of this effort. Our Reservists are working side by side with the Afghans every day to teach them how to keep their C-130s flying and maintained in the best way possible.”

Afghan Air Force C-130 Sorties



Source: 538 AEAS 2017 Mission Briefing



“ THAT’S HOW DEDICATED THESE PEOPLE ARE. THEY WILL START A FIRE IN THEIR ROOM SO THEY CAN STUDY. ”

Maj. Ethan Bryant, a C-130 pilot assigned to the 934th Airlift Wing at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, returned in March from a deployment as a C-130 air advisor where he saw firsthand how important the C-130s are to the Afghan government’s ongoing war on terrorism.

“They are flying their C-130s every day,” he said. “If they don’t do their missions, vital personnel and supplies don’t make it to the front line.”

Bryant said the Afghans use their C-130s similar to the way the U.S. Air Force uses its C-5 Galaxy aircraft.

“Their C-130s are more for strategic airlift,” he said. “They use their C-208s kind of like we use our C-130s.”

The major said he has a lot of admiration for the Afghans he worked with on a daily basis.

“People in the United States don’t understand how dedicated and motivated these people are to see their democracy succeed and what they have to go through every day to get their job done,” he said.

Bryant gave several examples. One was a senior Afghan pilot who was flying L-39s during the Afghan civil war in the 1990s when he was shot down and captured by a rival group.

“He was within hours of being executed, and the front lines switched enough that he was freed,” the major said. “He was on his execution day. He still has the death certificate framed at his house.

“There is another pilot who was shot down and captured by the Taliban. He was held prisoner for a year until he escaped. He’s been to the U.S. and has completed Air War College.

“There is a younger pilot who didn’t leave the basement under his house for seven months when he was a child,” Bryant said. “Kabul was being rocketed in the ’90s during the civil war. He was 5 or 6 years old at the time and stayed in his basement for more than half a year because it was too dangerous to go outside.

*(Above) A C-130H maintenance advisor trains an Afghan air force C-130 maintainer on aircraft hydraulics. (Previous page) Reserve Citizen Airman Senior Master Sgt. Frank Yannonaco, a C-130H flight engineer advisor, prepares for takeoff with his Afghan air force counterpart prior to night-vision goggle flight training. (Tech. Sgt. Veronica Pierce)*



“One guy had a brother injured in an attack near the ministry of defense. Another one had his son lose a leg in a suicide bombing. One pilot was severely injured when a sticky bomb was attached to the government vehicle he was riding in. They never know if they will make it in to work and make it home. They still get up. They still do it. They’re still professional.”

Bryant talked about one flight engineer student who came to the base every day eager to learn.

“This guy always knew his stuff, always did his homework,” he said. “He came in one day covered in soot. I’m like, ‘What happened to you?’ He told me that the power went out in his building, so he started a fire in his room so he could study. The chimney he rigged to take the smoke out through the window collapsed. That’s how dedicated these people are. They will start a fire in their room so they can study.”

There are currently four fully mission qualified Afghan C-130 crews and more crewmembers in the training pipeline.

“These guys are good at what they do,” Bryant said. “All of the pilots are experienced. They are not new to flying. They’re new to the C-130, but they all have a lot of flying experience. The older guys in the squadron have been flying for 25 years. They flew under the Russians. Some of them flew for the Taliban, and some flew against the Taliban.”

Bryant said that when the C-130 air advisor mission began in Afghanistan, there were only two trained Afghan Hercules pilots, so the Americans flew every flight with a partial Afghan crew. Now, Reservists and Guardsmen only fly about 20 percent of the flights with a mixed crew.

“We usually only fly one mission and one training flight a week,” he said.

Bryant said the air advisor mission requires aircrew members with a great deal of experience and expertise in the Hercules. For that reason, he believes it is best accomplished by the seasoned pilots found in the reserve components.

“It really is a double-edged sword,” he said. “On one hand, deploying for a year is extremely tough for a Reservist with a civilian job, but this mission really calls for someone who is very, very comfortable in the airplane. You need to be very calm. Flying has to be second nature to you. A lot of the Reserve and Guard folks have that level of experience.”

“I think of this deployment as being kind of graduate-level,” Bryant said, “because you’re not just flying missions like you do during a normal deployment. You have to be comfortable instructing others. You have the language barrier, you have cultural barriers, and you have procedural barriers. There are so many cultural potholes you can run into if you’re not careful.”

“I’ve deployed many times. I have lots of combat hours in a C-130: Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, South America, Central America, Haiti right after the earthquake, Pakistan after the earthquake, Syria. ... This mission is 100-percent completely different from all of my other deployments.”

“Although it was different, it was extremely rewarding,” Bryant said. “That’s what I tell colleagues who ask me about the air advisor deployment. If your career can allow it, if you can give up 11 months and not come over here and be stressed out and distracted about what is happening at home, it’s a rewarding mission. The threshold of preparation is much higher than other deployments. You have to have a graduate-level proficiency in the airplane. You can’t have a bull-in-a-china-shop mentality in this job. You have to be deliberate in your communications.”

*Bryant reviews takeoff planning with his Afghan air force counterpart. (Tech. Sgt. Veronica Pierce)*

“**YOU ARE TEACHING PEOPLE WHO ARE REALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT LEARNING.**”

by Bo Joyner

“WE’RE DEFINITELY LISTENING TO THE AIR ADVISORS WHO COME BACK AND HAVE SUGGESTIONS ON HOW TO MAKE THIS DEPLOYMENT BETTER.”

“You have to be situationally aware of your surroundings and interpersonally aware of your surroundings. You have to have a high level of emotional intelligence. You have to go in with eyes wide open. You can’t power through this deployment. You have to evaluate how your interactions went. You have to build relationships. There are times when you have to let them fall on their face. It’s a much more involved level of thinking. If you are up for that, it’s a great mission.”

“One of the best things is that you are teaching people who are really passionate about learning,” Pratt said. “They treat you with a great deal of respect and are very appreciative of what you are doing for them. Another highlight for me was the team of Reservists that I got to work with. We jelled as a team better than any other team I have ever deployed with.”

Master Sgt. Steven Ashley, a crew chief assigned to the 94th Airlift Wing at Dobbins who served as an air advisor alongside Pratt, echoed Pratt’s sentiments about the Reserve team of maintainers he deployed with.

“I would deploy anywhere in the world with this group of people,” he said, adding that he would volunteer again to return to Kabul and serve as an air advisor.

“It was a very rewarding deployment and definitely one of the highlights of my career,” Ashley said. “While we were there, they had 44 maintenance people graduate and receive their level-three certification. They were the first maintainers in their country to do this. They invited us to their graduation ceremony, and it was great to see their pride in what they had accomplished.”

Both Pratt and Ashley said they would like to see the length of the C-130 maintainer air advisor deployment match that of the operators.

“I told General Miller when she came over in January that it would be better if the air advisors on the maintenance side of the house could stay for 179 days like the aircrews,” Pratt said. “When you get over there, it takes a while to build up the relationships with the Afghans that you need to do the job effectively. I think we could get a lot more done in those extra two months compared to bringing a whole new crew in.”

“We’re constantly looking at ways of expanding the pool of potential candidates,” Stokes said. “That could mean having J-model crew members requalify on the H model or by including other partner nations in the program. I think we also need to help promotion boards better understand how air advisors contribute to our national security.”

“We’re definitely listening to the air advisors who come back and have suggestions on how to make this deployment better,” Miller said. “I’m sure there are things we can improve upon, but I’m so proud of the job our Reserve Citizen Airmen are doing in helping to build the Afghan air force.”

As the director of operations and readiness for Air Force Reserve Command’s 22nd Air Force, Col. Joe Janik is in charge of trying to find Reserve pilots, flight engineers, navigators and loadmasters to serve as C-130H air advisors for the Afghan air force in Kabul. It’s not an easy job.

“It’s definitely a challenge,” Janik said during a recent interview in his office at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia. “I work with the ops group commanders from all of our C-130 units to try and line up volunteers for the air advisor mission. Sometimes we have to beat the bushes pretty hard to find the volunteers we need.”

The colonel said there are a number of reasons why finding air advisor volunteers can be difficult.

“The first thing is the mission calls for fully instructor-qualified folks. In the Reserve, these instructors are more mature in age and usually have a civilian career and family. Members, if tasked, may choose to decline the deployment. If that occurs, they are forced to leave the Reserve or, if eligible, may retire. Some of our folks have made the decision to decline the tasking.

“In addition, the economy is really good right now, so our traditional Reserve operators have options out there,” Janik said. “We’ve had 22-year lieutenant colonel instructor pilots say they would rather retire than do this tasking. That’s why we’ve actually had some squadron commanders step up and say, ‘I’ll go,’ if it means that these other folks will stay with the unit.”

The air advisor tasking is in addition to the aerospace expeditionary force-scheduled C-130 deployment the reserve components have provided for several years.

“We’ve been doing the persistent four-ship deployment to Al Udeid (Air Base, Qatar) for a number of years now,” Janik said. “We have C-130 folks deploying every two years. Now, we’re asking for individuals from the units to take on the six-month deployment to Afghanistan.”

Another hurdle Janik has to clear is the fact that two Reserve C-130 units are currently undergoing conversions to different airplanes and different missions. The 914th Airlift Wing at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York, is converting to the KC-135 Stratotanker and becoming an air refueling wing. The 911th AW at Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania, is changing from a C-130 tactical airlift mission to a C-17 Globemaster III strategic airlift mission.

“Obviously, those two units are out of this mission now, so our pool of available folks is even smaller,” Janik said.

“In the past, there has been some apprehension about how safe our people are over there,” the colonel said. “I think that’s gotten better in the last couple of years since we’ve had some of our people deploy, and we have a better idea of what to expect. Also, our Reservists are trained very well on how to stay safe at the Air Advisor Academy.”

Janik said the Reserve has had to get creative in how it fills its requirement for C-130 air advisors. Since the Afghan air force flies H-model C-130s, the Reserve has traditionally only looked to its C-130H units to man the air advisor deployment in Afghanistan.

“For the next deployment, we actually asked our two C-130J units (the 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, and the 913th Airlift Group at Little Rock AFB, Arkansas) for some help,” Janik said. “Now, we have a Keesler navigator and a Little Rock pilot going through requalification back to the H model so they can go on the deployment in the fall.”

The colonel said the Reserve first got the call to support the C-130 air advisor mission in 2014 and, right now, is tasked to keep supporting it through the fall of 2020.

“What happens after 2020 is anybody’s guess right now,” he said. “We could be done with the mission, or we could be asked to keep supporting it into the future. This tasking comes down from the State Department, and we just don’t know right

now what lies ahead.”

Janik said that when the mission first started, the taskings were pretty much even, with the Reserve doing half and the Air National Guard doing half.

“Now, we are starting to see our Reserve taskings decrease some and the Guard’s taskings going up,” he said. “This is because they have more C-130 units and a bigger pool of people to draw from.”

In spite of the inherent problems with finding volunteers to be C-130 air advisors, Janik is confident the Reserve will continue to meet its mission requirements in the years to come.

“There are a lot of variables and a lot of moving parts, but our C-130 units are doing a great job of stepping up and doing what they can,” he said. “We’re getting the mission done. It’s not easy, but we’re getting it done.”

“SOMETIMES WE HAVE TO BEAT THE BUSHES PRETTY HARD TO FIND THE VOLUNTEERS WE NEED.”

# TRAINED & READY

by Bo Joyner

Before Air Force Reservists head to Kabul to serve as C-130 air advisors for the Afghan air force, they have to go through an intensive training regimen designed to teach them how to stay safe while effectively sharing their knowledge and experience with their Afghan counterparts.

The bulk of that training comes from the Air Advisor Academy, a part of the Expeditionary Operations School at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey. The Expeditionary Operations School is part of the Air Force Expeditionary Center, the service's center of excellence for mobility and expeditionary operations skills training and Air Mobility Command's provider of global reach and support to the mobility enterprise.

"We conduct air advisor training for all Air Force general-purpose forces," said Col. Thomas O'Connell, Expeditionary Operations School commander. "Special operations forces have their own air advisor training that can take up to 12 months."

Reservists who are going to be C-130 air advisors get six weeks of intensive training at the Air Advisor Academy. The training used to last five weeks, but an extra week was added in April. The first two weeks focus on general fieldcraft training in a hostile environment. Fieldcraft is the term given to the basic military skills required to operate in the

field, such as stealth, camouflage and observation. The next three weeks are dedicated to teaching basic and advanced air advising skills, and the final week focuses on specialized fieldcraft training for air advisors.

"A lot of what we do is centered around teaching our Airmen to protect themselves and protect their fellow Airmen," O'Connell said. "We lost nine advisors during one green-on-blue attack in 2011. We certainly hope we don't have another attack like that one, but we want to make sure our Airmen are prepared in the event it does happen."

Green-on-blue is the name given to attacks on coalition forces by uniformed Afghan forces, either military or police, or militants disguised in their uniforms.

The initial two-week fieldcraft course "trains you on how to operate outside the wire and be an active participant in your own defense if you are under attack," O'Connell said. "It doesn't teach you to be an offensive force but how to operate and participate in a convoy, how to look out for IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and how to respond if you get ambushed."

The next three weeks of training are designed to teach advisors how to teach.

"Our Airmen know their skill set," the colonel said. "We train them to be able to advise on that skill set. Here, we

teach our students some basic language and cultural skills specific to the area where they will be deploying, and we also give them training on how to teach."

He said the academy stresses that air advisors are not in the business of teaching foreign countries to operate the U.S. Air Force way.

"We advise them and point out things they should consider, but they need to adopt what works for the host nation," O'Connell said. "We have to be able to accept that they are going to do things differently for a vast number of reasons. If they want to do things one way and we do them another way, it takes a very nimble advisor to be able to support them in their efforts and help them execute down the path they want to go. We can't go over there and say, 'This is the way things have to be done, and if you're not doing it this way, you're wrong.' That's an important skill set to develop."

It's during this part of the training that students get to interact with the Airmen who are currently performing the mission they will soon be doing.

"One of the great things about the Air Advisor Academy is we have a huge amount of connectivity with the units downrange," O'Connell said. "We get your commander on a secure VTC (video teleconference) so you can talk with the boss you are going to have downrange. You can hear — no kidding — from the people who are there right now what you can expect to see when you get in the seat. You get it straight from your commander what he wants you to focus on in your training."

The academy also has a building set up like a host nation's air force.

"You have the A4 (logistics), the A3 (operations), the director of staff and the chief of the air force. We have people who play those roles," the colonel said. "If

you're a maintenance officer going through the course here, you get to practice interacting with the Afghan air force A4. You build those skill sets so you've gotten a little experience before you have to go and meet with that real Afghan general for the first time."

Insider attacks from members of the Afghan armed forces and police departments, or people disguised as such, are a concern for air advisors serving in Afghanistan, and they are the focus of the final week of specialized fieldcraft training at Air Advisor Academy.

"Because air advisors are often in a position when it might be just one or two of them working with a large number of people from the host nation, there is special fieldcraft training required for air advisors," O'Connell said.

"We teach things like always having a guardian angel with you. You can be sitting down with somebody on a carpet and breaking

bread, but you always have your armed guard who is in the corner, keeping an eye on everything that is going on. We teach people how to always be aware of their surroundings and how to recognize when something bad might be about to happen."

At about 10 a.m. on April 27, 2011, Col. Ahmed Gul Sahebi, a seasoned pilot with the Afghan air force, pulled out his 9mm pistol and began firing during a meeting taking place in a military compound near Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. He killed eight active-duty U.S. Airmen and one American contractor, all of whom were serving as air advisors to the Afghan air force at the time.

Afghan security forces responded quickly and killed Sahebi moments after he opened fire, but not before he had carried out one of the deadliest insider attacks during the U.S.'s long war against terrorism in Afghanistan.

Since the nine Americans killed were serving under NATO Air Training Command-Afghanistan at the time, they have come to be known as the NATC-A Nine.

Every Air Force Reservist who signs up to serve as a C-130 air advisor in Afghanistan knows their story.

"When my bosses started asking for volunteers to serve as C-130 air advisors in the summer of 2014, I didn't know anything about the mission, but I knew about the NATC-A Nine," said Lt. Col. Lance Avery, a pilot with the 94th Airlift Wing at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, who served as a C-130 air advisor in Afghanistan from April through November 2015.

"There wasn't a lot of information about the air advisor mission out there at the time, but there was a lot of talk about the green-on-blue attacks that were happening in Afghanistan," Avery said.

Green-on-blue attacks dramatically increased between 2009 and 2013, peaking at 35 deaths in 2011 and 61 in 2012. Since then, the number of coalition deaths from insider attacks has decreased to four each in 2014 and 2015 and to two 2016. While none of the deaths in the last three years involved air advisors, green-on-blue remains a concern for Reservists who take on the C-130 air advisor mission.

"It's definitely something that is always in the back of your mind," said Maj. Ethan Bryant, a pilot assigned to the 934th AW at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, who returned in March from a deployment as a C-130 air advisor.

"Nobody has a bigger interest in keeping us safe than the Afghans we work with every day," Bryant said. "If there is another NACT-A Nine incident, they know there is a chance we are going to pull everybody out, and they are not ready

“IT'S SO IMPORTANT THAT YOU GET TO KNOW EVERY STUDENT IN YOUR CLASS ON A PERSONAL LEVEL.”

for us to be pulled out yet. These are not the people we are worried about.

“The best defense we have against these insider attacks is to foster a genuine relationship of mutual trust and respect between ourselves and our Afghan counterparts. The more time we spend with them doing the mission and learning together, the safer we are and the easier it is to spot when the security situation changes.”

“You have to be on your toes all the time. You’re constantly having to keep up your situational awareness,” said Senior Master Sgt. Kevin Pratt, a C-130 maintainer assigned to the 910th Airlift Wing, Youngstown Air Reserve Station, Ohio, who recently returned from an air advisor deployment at Kabul.

“It’s so important that you get to know every student in your class on a personal level,” Pratt said. “If you have someone who was active and always participated in class, and then one day they are sitting in the back and not taking part, it gives you a key that something is not quite right. That’s what you have to be on the lookout for. That’s where a lot of the green-on-blue attacks come from. Somebody could be threatening this person or his family. You know this person and you know he doesn’t want to do anything to hurt you, but it could be a situation where his family is in danger, and he doesn’t feel like he has a choice.”

“I think we’ve made a lot of progress in how we take care of our air advisors who are serving in Kabul,” said Maj. Gen. John Stokes, commander of AFRC’s 22nd Air Force, headquartered at Dobbins ARB. “Advisors are taught from day one to have a guardian angel with them at all times. And now that we have had a number of Reservists perform this mission, they have been able to share what they have learned about staying safe from insider threats with our new air advisors.”

Under NATO’s guardian angel program, a fully armed NATO service member, dubbed a guardian angel, is required to observe any gathering of NATO and Afghan troops. Guardian angels watch their fellow service members’ backs and help identify people who might be thinking about an insider attack.

“We had a dual purpose over there,” said Master Sgt. Steven Ashley, a C-130 crew chief assigned to the 94th AW at Dobbins, who served as an air advisor from September 2016 to February 2017. “We were primarily there to serve as air advisors, but we also served as guardian angels. If I was instructing, one of the other guys would be my guardian angel and vice versa. He would stand by outside the aircraft or inside the classroom. When you were instructing, you would take off your body armor so it would be easier to teach and your students would accept you better. But you always had someone serving as your guardian angel whenever you were interacting with the Afghans.”

“I think one of the main things you have to guard against is complacency,” Avery said. “When I first arrived in Kabul, I was super vigilant and really in tune with everything that was going on around me. After I was there a few months, I fell into a routine, and I think I kind of let my guard down a little. I would caution people

who are going over to be air advisors to be aware of that because that’s when you become more vulnerable to an insider attack.”

“Afghanistan can be a dangerous place to deploy. That’s just the way it is,” Stokes said. “That being said, I think we’ve been successful in mitigating a lot of the risk by training our people before they deploy and implementing programs like guardian angel.”

“The safety of our Airmen has always been and will continue to be our No. 1 concern,” the general said. “We are constantly looking for ways to make sure our Reservists stay safe while performing the C-130 air advisor mission.”

In addition to Air Advisor Academy, Reserve Citizen Airmen serving as air advisors are required to take one week of evasion and conduct after capture training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. The course is designed to prepare Airmen for obstacles they may encounter while evading capture or moving in an urban environment.

Avery said the training he received before heading to Afghanistan definitely prepared him well for his deployment.

“It’s a little bit like drinking water out of a fire hose, because you definitely get a lot of information in a short amount of time,” he said. “But it certainly prepared us for some of the potential dangers and how to best interact with our Afghan counterparts. I thought it was great training.”



*Future air advisors learn about operating a vehicle in a threat environment at the Air Advisor Academy.*



*Trainees experience a combat environment during Tactical Combat Casualty Care class.*



A new mobile app for Android and Apple devices is available for individual mobilization augmentees to give them access to the tools and information, when and where they need it, to manage their careers.

The Headquarters Individual Reservist Readiness and Integration Organization at Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado, released the app, called RIO Connect — IMA Mobile Wingman, in February. It allows users to access content from the HQ RIO website on their mobile devices, while also leveraging native mobile features and functions, further enhancing the user experience.

RIO Connect was developed based on usage statistics from the HQ RIO website. Its primary features include a click-to-call and email directory; pay, travel and career resources; how-to videos; and an events calendar.

The new app builds off of the proof-of-concept HQ RIO app developed in 2015.

“This new app builds on the original app and gives our IMAs a 24/7 ability to connect, which I believe will create more enabled, engaged and empowered Airmen,” said Col. Minh-Tri Trinh, HQ RIO program manager.

RIO Connect is available from both the Google Play and Apple App stores.

HQ RIO produced the app in conjunction with Straxis Technology LLC of Tulsa, Oklahoma, which has developed a number of other apps for Air Force organizations, including the U.S. Air Force Academy.

Col. Carolyn Stickell, HQ RIO commander, said one of her top priorities is ensuring IMAs receive the support they need to be as effective as possible when augmenting their active-component organizations. She sees the app as a platform that will deliver relevant tools and information where people want them — on their mobile devices.

“The RIO Connect – IMA Mobile Wingman will give IMAs instant access to the knowledge base they want and need in a format that’s easy to access and navigate right from their mobile devices,” she said. “And, if they can’t find what they’re looking for on the app, we’ve made it easy to contact the detachments or headquarters by building our contact information right into the app.”

*(Huffman is assigned to the HQ RIO public affairs office at Buckley AFB.)*

# RIO CONNECT

New mobile app helps IMAs manage their careers

By Master Sgt. Timm Huffman



Master Sgt. Alisa Merriott (center) poses with the Col. Mike Mungavin Recruiter of the Year Award with (left to right) Col. Chris Nick, former Recruiting Service commander; Lt. Gen. Maryanne Miller, AFRC commander; Chief Master Sgt. Ericka Kelly, AFRC command chief master sergeant; and Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Zwelling, Recruiting Service superintendent. (Courtesy photo)



Merriott said her driving force is her family, which includes her mother, Arline Kabele, and her daughter, Emma. (Courtesy photo)

# Top Recruiter

## Family the driving force behind her success

» By Master Sgt. Chance Babin

While Master Sgt. Alisa Merriott was having arguably one of the greatest production years ever for an Air Force Reserve recruiter, she was also dealing with a great personal hardship. Her mother, Arline Kabele, had been diagnosed with stage-four brain cancer and was given three months to live.

On a professional level, Merriott, lead health professions recruiter at Travis Air Force Base, California, gained 38 health care professions accessions in fiscal year 2016, which is believed to be a record within Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service. In recognition of her achievement, she won the coveted Col. Mike Mungavin Recruiter of the Year Award.

“That was a phenomenal year; not sure if I can top that,” Merriott said. “I don’t think anyone has put that many health professions applicants in before. Putting in that many people was a crazy amount of work and timing.”

Health professions career fields are for officers and include doctors, dentists, nurses, and allied health and medical services corps members.

“Health professions is our most difficult specialty, and putting in 38 health professionals in a year is an amazing feat that will be hard to match. But if anyone can do it, she can,” said Chief Master Sgt. Thomas Zwelling, AFRC Recruiting Service superintendent, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. “Sergeant Merriott is the best of the best, not only as a recruiter but as a senior NCO. It’s an honor to serve with her as a member of Reserve recruiting.”

While a traditional accession for an enlisted Airman takes roughly two to four weeks, signing up a health professional is a much longer and tedious process. HP recruiters also have a much larger zone from which to recruit. For example, Merriott’s zone included seven continental states plus Japan, Korea, Guam, Hawaii and Alaska.

“Since it takes up to approximately 10 months to put just one person in, anything can hold up that HP timeline,” Merriott said. “The year before, I had worked really hard to keep pushing to fill the needs for the McChord (Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington) aeromedical evacuation squadron, since they were really low on flight nurses. Every month I kept working harder to get more and more flight nurses. Next thing I knew, they were finally getting approved and ready for oath.”

Throughout her magical year of recruiting and the trying times in her personal life, Merriott relied on the strength she gained from the support of her family.

“My driving force is my family,” she said. “I have the greatest husband who is the biggest supporter to my accomplishments and keeps me grounded. I have a loving family that has always inspired me to do my best, no matter if it’s work, school or just making me feel special. My two daughters give me the fortitude to push on at all times.”

Before her husband and kids came along, Merriott had a strong support system from her parents. She lost her father in 2012 but said he was a huge supporter of her military career.

“I think anyone wants their parents to take an honest and genuine level of interest in what we do, but for me it was just fun to see their expressions,” Merriott said. “I am very blessed to have had two parents give me all the love and support anyone could give a child.”

Merriott’s path to becoming AFRC’s top recruiter in 2016 started when she was only a senior airman at Eglin AFB, Florida, in 1997. A recruiting team was searching for a few people to be part of a new task force to see if senior airmen would make good recruiters. After an extensive interview process, she was selected and sent off to recruiter school.

“I wanted to be a recruiter to help others get into the military, especially women,” she said. “I felt that if I could talk with young girls, they would see that the military was not just for a certain type, and if I could do it, anyone could.”

Merriott said she remembers early in her recruiting career talking to a young lady during a high school visit.

“The young girl told me, ‘I want to join, but I thought women were not encouraged to be in the military.’ That broke my heart and pushed me to get out more for other young people to see this was a great career and an awesome opportunity for everyone.”

While an active-duty recruiter, Merriott won many awards, including Airman of the Year for her unit and the Blue Suit Award, which recognizes the Air Force’s top recruiters worldwide.

But the award she said is her favorite is the John L. Levitow Award at Airman Leadership School. The Levitow is the highest award for enlisted professional military education in the Air Force and is presented to the student who demonstrates the

most outstanding leadership and scholastic achievement.

“That was the hardest I have ever worked, trying to keep up with recruiting goals while in leadership school,” Merriott said. “The leadership award is voted on by your peers, which proved to me that others see what drives you and that you are sincere in your goals.”

In 2002, while still on active duty, she made the move to health professions, where she really found her calling. Prior to becoming a recruiter, she worked as a radiology technician in the hospital at Eglin AFB. She was able to transition to the Reserve a year later. By 2005, she had won the Top HP Recruiter Award for the AFRC Recruiting Service. She was then ready to take her skills and training to the civilian sector.

“I really enjoyed being an HP recruiter, since I loved working in the hospital. I wanted to still be a part of that somehow,” she said. “I knew that recruiting HP professionals is in demand in the civilian sector and thought this would be a good area for me to develop my resume.”

After getting valuable training in the Reserve, including becoming a certified medical staff recruiter, Merriott was able to land a job running a health division for a staff recruiting company in Cincinnati. In her typical fashion, she and her team won many awards, and she was soon promoted to lead one of the largest divisions in the company in Fresno, California, working to secure large state contracts for nursing homes and state prisons.

“The experience that I gained in the civilian sector is unforgettable,” Merriott said. “There are many opportunities for you to go after, but it’s up to you to be the dynamic force to make it happen. No one holds your hand or shows you how to do much. They just want you to make money and larger gross profits.”

“The civilian market is very competitive, and there is always someone better who is ready to jump in and take your business. You have to fight for each applicant and opportunity, or it will be gone. There is no time to be lazy, and being creative is how to explore new marketing and recruiting ideas.”

She said her military training and recruiting background gave her the best foundation for learning and helping others succeed.

“The amount of teamwork that I brought with me allowed for future success in all my divisions and promotions for others around me,” Merriott said. “I was only out of the military for four years. I didn’t regret leaving and was happy for the chance to learn new viewpoints.”

Since coming back to the Reserve, Merriott has been named the top HP recruiter for Western Recruiting Squadron each year, until her magical year in 2016, where she swept all the major awards in her category including the Top HP Recruiter, Top Lead Recruiter, Top Physician Recruiter and the Mungavin Award as the top recruiter in AFRC.

“For me, winning that award was a huge feeling of accomplishment in recruiting – a feeling that I have mastered the art of relationship building,” Merriott said. “Winning awards is never just a ‘me’ effort but a whole team concept. There are so many others who help me complete each package, which makes me feel good to see it all pay off. The award didn’t change my life, but now I feel honored to win an award named after a colonel I so highly respected and worked for years ago.” (Mungavin was commander of the Recruiting Service for eight years.)

Being able to share her accomplishments with her parents has always been a part of Merriott’s life. And she felt so lucky to have her mother around this past year to enjoy her most successful year ever in recruiting.

“I was able to text her that night after the award ceremony. She had a hard time understanding all the medals, but we talked the next day, and she was so excited and very proud,” Merriott said. “She has always been a big supporter of anything that I do, and I love to include her in on as much as possible.”

Merriott said her favorite story her mother loves to share with everyone is the time she put her first officer in the Air Force back in 2004. The officer was going on a trip to Las Vegas and knew Merriott’s mom was a blackjack dealer at a casino. He made a point to go and see her.

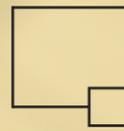
“He was standing at her blackjack table as she was working and said to her, ‘I just wanted to thank the mom of my recruiter; she changed my life.’ He then said, ‘I can see that the apple didn’t fall too far from the tree.’ She still talks about that to this day and is my biggest fan. That applicant is still in and is now a lieutenant colonel. I am proud to have been a part of his success.”

(Babin is superintendent of public affairs for the Air Force Reserve Recruiting Service at Robins AFB.)

# INNOVATION, INTEGRATION, INVENTION

## /// I-WING CONCEPT SPEEDS TO MATURITY

BY MASTER SGT. SHANDA L. DE ANDA



Aircraft maintenance craftsmen Tech. Sgt. Brian Fuller of the 916th Maintenance Squadron at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, works on a door to help maintain the proper cabin pressurization on a KC-135 Stratotanker. Fuller, a traditional Reservist, represents one aspect of the total force team of Airmen who make up the Defense Department's only Integrated Wing, which is expected to reach full operational capability July 17. (Senior Airman Jeremy Moore)

The Department of Defense's first Integrated Wing, located at Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, is on a successful journey to achieve full operational capability by July 17.

Prior to October 2016 when the test began, air reserve component and active component Airmen were working together in an active association at Seymour Johnson. The 911th Air Refueling Squadron, an active-component tanker unit, functionally fell within the organization of the 916th Air Refueling Wing, an Air Force Reserve Command wing, but reported administratively to the 6th Air Mobility Wing at MacDill AFB, Florida.

Under this construct, the organizations worked together but were administratively separate, with two corresponding chains of command. With the new I-Wing model, all units now effectively function as a single organization to accomplish the mission.

"The National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force's intent was to realize the full potential of associate units," said Lt. Col. Christopher Vicari of the Directorate of Strategic Plans, Programs and Requirements at Headquarters AFRC, Robins AFB, Georgia. Vicari has been part of the program's implementation since the beginning.

"The Total Force Continuum Office (located in the Pentagon) stressed that throughout the process, the goal was to implement the program while doing no harm to the mission, organization or people," he said.

The 916th ARW and leaders from AFRC, Air Mobility Command and Air Combat Command took this guideline and the four fundamental principles — maintain separate administrative controls as needed to meet legal requirements, adhere to U.S. laws dictating appropriations use, maintain force development opportunities for total force leadership development, and protect and leverage the unique strengths of each component — and began to chart their course.

"The borders of money and adcon (administrative controls) rest in statute; the force development piece is just the right way of doing business, which is what we're already doing, and the final piece is to make sure we hold to the strengths of each component," said Lt. Gen. Maryanne Miller, AFRC commander. "The beauty of all this is that (through this process) you're learning about your partners and how best to work with the boundaries of each. ... to find that sweet spot ... to get it done. We're all after the same mission."

"Implementing the I-Wing concept is like flying an airplane that has two completely different engines that work in different ways, and the pilots have to figure out how to fly both of them in the same direction, at the same rate for success," Vicari said.

With their marching orders in hand, the team set forth to make the I-Wing pilot program a reality, test if the concept would work, and chart a course to design a program to better leverage the strengths of each component while balancing capacity, capability and readiness. The process has had its challenges, as leadership and Airmen at every level uncovered things they didn't know. But the team has met these challenges with innovation, ingenuity and some historical references as a unit accustomed to "firsts."

"Yes it's a challenge, but we (the 916th ARW) have been doing this since 2008 when the (active-duty) 911th Air Refueling Squadron came on board (as an active associate unit)," said Chief Master Sgt. Shirley Wilcox, 916th command chief. Wilcox is the first female command chief of the 916th

ARW and the first command chief under the new I-Wing construct.

"I want to make sure I am available for everyone and that I can help whoever needs assistance to achieve their goals regardless if they are active duty or Reserve," she said. "I want Airmen to know I am here full time so if they have any issues or need anything they can talk to someone about it. I have an open door, and they can come talk to me."

Just like the chief, leaders who are involved at all levels of the I-Wing are fully committed to taking care of the Airmen and their families who support the organization's mission.

"If you take care of Airmen, the mission will take care of itself," said Gen. Carlton D. Everhart II, AMC commander.

In taking care of Airmen in the I-Wing, the host unit at Seymour Johnson — the 4th Fighter Wing — is manned to support medical, dental, training and other support functions. As additional needs to support I-Wing Airmen are identified, memorandums of understanding and other agreements are negotiated and drafted to meet the needs of the Airmen and the mission. Challenges still exist, and these are being worked and elevated as needed. But even in the face of challenges, the total force integrated team continues to successfully meet mission demands, which is a credit to the caliber of Airmen who make up the total force team.

"We develop Airmen, manage the health of the fleet and provide the sorties to be used by operations as needed," said Greg Haywood, 916th Maintenance Group commander, who went on to describe total force Airmen successes in support of contingency operations, even in the face of host-nation governmental unrest. For example, "during a deployment to Turkey, we provided over 1,400 sorties and 77 million pounds of fuel to 6,200 receivers."

Lt. Col. Kelly Hosey, 916th Mission Support Group commander, also highlighted the concurrent accomplishments of integrated Airmen, adding, "Over the past year, our IDRC (installation deployment readiness center) and IPR (installation personnel center) deployed more than 300 Airmen and over 38.5 short tons of cargo. In addition to simultaneously participating in Razor Sharp and preparing Airmen to deploy, we hosted the first (logistics readiness squadron) teaming event between ACC, AMC and AFRC."

Successes like these are often the result of innovative responses to challenges faced, and as the I-Wing concept continues to evolve and mature, more opportunities for success and innovation are imminent.

"Today I can tell you it's amazing to me to see the progress that has been made and how leadership has implemented this and the relationships that have been built as a result of this," Vicari said. "It's not perfect; we had some issues and challenges we had to work through or around, and we still have some things we're working out. Through all the challenges, they (the I-Wing total force Airmen) have come together and have done a remarkable job in my opinion."

Successes, challenges and lessons learned from the I-Wing pilot program may be applied to Air Force and Department of Defense programs and organizations.

(When she wrote this article, De Anda was assigned to the Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command public affairs office at Robins AFB. She has since been reassigned to the 62nd Airlift Wing public affairs office at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington.)

Tech. Sgt. Efren Lopez speaks during a presentation of his "Broken Windows" short film at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (Courtesy photo)



# LIFE BEHIND THE CAMERA

Combat photographer shares story of rehabilitation through documentation  
» By Tyler Grimes

Tech. Sgt. Efren Lopez is a renowned Air Force combat photographer whose work captures the realities of war and the service members who put themselves in harm's way for Americans at home.

And even though he has spent a lot of time on the front lines, he said he was somewhat removed from what he was documenting.

"I always felt protected because the camera was a shield to me; what I saw did not seem real," said Lopez, a member of the 4th Combat Camera Squadron at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina.

During a 2009 deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Iraq, Lopez was involved in a number of firefights while photographing the war effort.

"The most challenging part of documenting war was capturing photos under fire because you cannot see the enemy, and I was exposed to the threat of IEDs (improvised explosive devices)," he said.

At a certain point, the impact of the war started to affect him.

"The reality of documenting war still haunts me," Lopez said. "When I removed the camera from my face, I still see images of the wounded Soldiers."

That realization hit Lopez after returning home, as he began experiencing difficulty getting back to normal life with his family and friends.

"I have had a hard time adjusting and taking it easy at home," he said. "My mind is always in a state of urgency to complete the tasks at hand. It is very hard for me to hear others complain about how tough they have it here in the U.S. when I recall the condition our Soldiers are facing in other parts of the world."

Lopez started to notice he was having problems when he began acting out in anger around his family. There was one incident that made it clear he had a serious issue.

"There was one particular day my 5-year-old son would not go to school. I dragged him to his class and handled him pretty rough," Lopez said. "I was given a warning by his school teacher. There were concerned parents in the school who saw the incident, and they wanted to report me to the police because they were concerned about my son's safety."

Lopez was showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. While living with his family in Monterey, California, and trying to figure out what to do next, he came across a place during a walk on the beach that would change his life.

The place was the Fort Ord National Monument, an abandoned Army facility used by the military from 1917 to 1994. Fort Ord served as a staging ground for training troops during the Vietnam War. In its more than 75-year history, about 1.5 million military members trained there.

But on that day and for many days to follow, Lopez had Fort Ord all to himself.

"I love history and especially military history, so the old dilapidated buildings were interesting to me," he said.

"I felt like the old buildings were left to wither away and be forgotten, so they were like a common friend I can relate to."

Lopez began doing what came natural to him. He started taking photos of what he was seeing at Fort Ord. He saw the decrepit state of the buildings and the grounds as an opportunity to document an untold story. The project also gave him a sense of purpose like he felt while he was deployed.

In addition to taking photos, Lopez began researching the history of the installation. When he would find images of the fort, he would try to identify the exact location where the photos were taken and recreate them. Recording the history of Fort Ord became a therapeutic experience for Lopez as his project took on a life of its own. It soon evolved from still images to a video project.

"Broken Windows" is a short film Lopez made in 2014 about his experience at Fort Ord and how it helped him cope with PTSD. Early this year, he was contacted by a faculty member at California State University in Monterey Bay about an opportunity to share his story in a presentation at the Library of Congress and a screening of his film at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., in March. Lopez's story was also archived in the Library of Congress as part of its Veterans History Project.

Lopez said he hopes his film will inspire military members and veterans coping with PTSD to seek help from family, friends and the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"I feel a sense of accomplishment and pride that I can share my story and hope that others can benefit from what I have gone through," Lopez said. "I hope they get a better understanding of how war changes the individuals who participate and to make sure they can help them when they seek support."

The "Broken Windows" video is available online at <https://vimeo.com/106996865?ref=em-share>. To learn more about the Veterans History Project, visit <https://www.loc.gov/vets/>.



Recording the history of Fort Ord, California, became a therapeutic experience for Lopez as his project took on a life of its own. (Tech. Sgt. Efren Lopez)

# Storyteller

By Master Sgt. Beth Anschutz

»»»» Reservist channels creativity into children's book

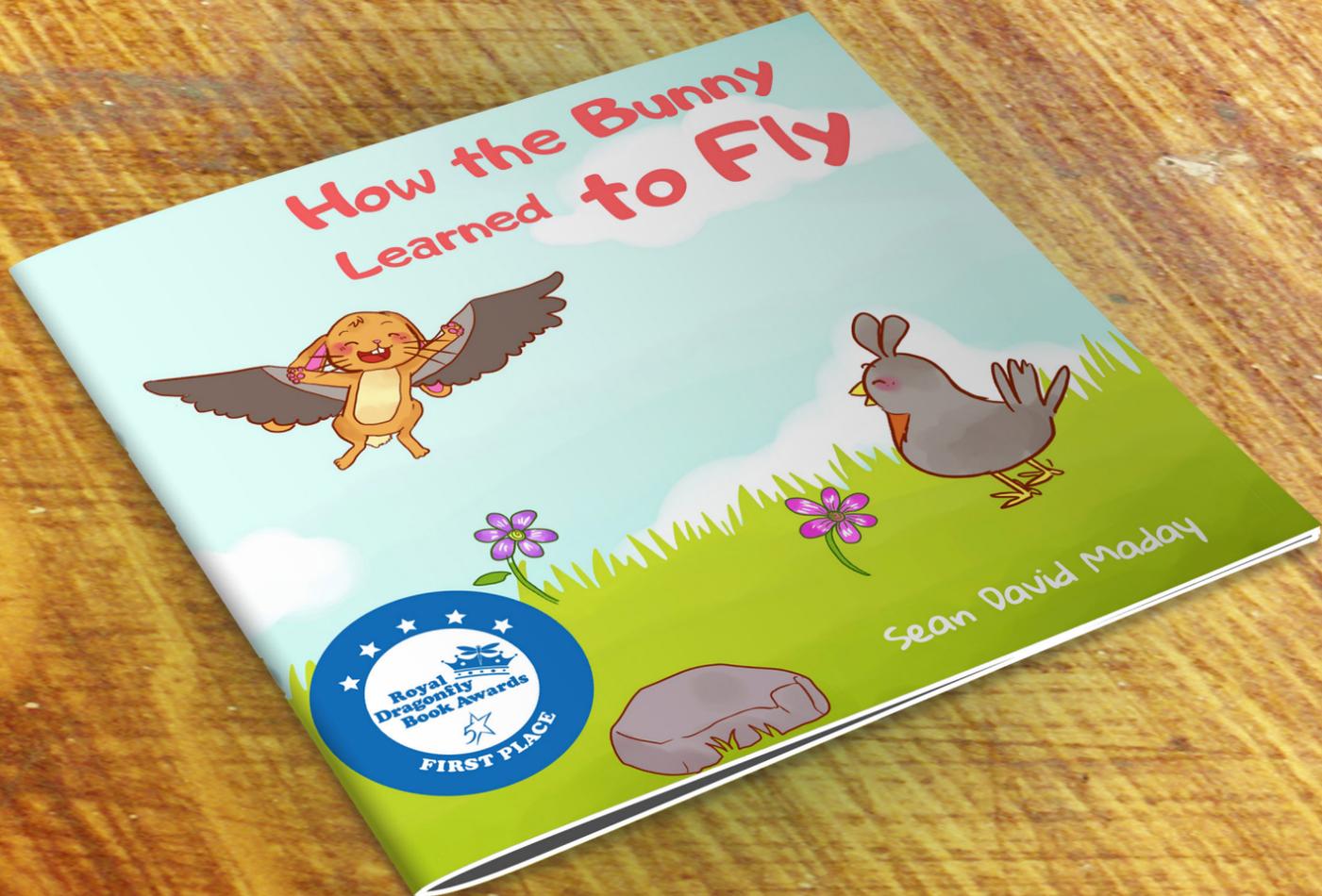
A traditional Reservist made a creative dream reality by publishing his first children's book.

Maj. Sean Maday, assigned as an instructor at the Headquarters Reserve National Security Space Institute at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, channeled his family's love of language and reading into a story that he hopes many others can now enjoy.

When he's not serving in his Air Force officer capacity, Maday works in software. He says his civilian job and his hobby as an author mirror each other.

"I love helping people solve problems using technology," he said. "A big part of my job is helping people derive understanding from abstract pieces of data. In a sense, I tell stories through data from charts, graphs and visuals."

The proud husband and father of three daughters labored on the book in the evenings and on weekends, all while working full time in the civilian sector and serving in the Air Force Reserve. Maday hopes his success with the book will inspire others to find the time to share their ideas and inventiveness with the world.



"I really wanted to get the piece illustrated and published in order to share it with my daughters as a way to get them thinking about empathy," Maday said. "I have wholeheartedly adopted the empathy credo in my personal and professional life, and it has shaped my leadership philosophy. I believe that successful Air Force leaders understand the needs of the people around them and treat their Airmen how they would want to be treated."

Empathy is the central theme of the book. The main character, a bunny, has a dream to fly. His friend, a robin, magically gives the bunny his wings. The bunny understands and shares the feelings of his friend when the bird struggles to traverse land and not sky.

"I think the story is also an allegory for trying new things," Maday said. "In the picture book, the bunny gets to fly, but he observes the bird struggling and shows compassion."

Maday said his daughters' love of learning inspired him to use "sophisticated and expressive" vocabulary in the book to spawn readers' curiosity.

"I like using obscure words with my daughters," he said. "It generally peaks their curiosity and drives them to ask for clarification and definition. It is a fun way for us to engage together and explore language."

The book includes a glossary of words to assist in the learning experience. Maday also provides free activities online, to accompany the book, that vary in difficulty.

"I hope to accommodate a wide range of skill levels and ambition, from coloring to matching and spelling," Maday said. "My goal is that readers can grow up with the book and not just discard it as they get older."

Maday's book tied for first place in the "Picture Books 6 and Older" category and earned an honorable mention in the "Newbie - First Time Author (Fiction)" category of the 2016 Royal Dragonfly Book Awards contest, which recognizes excellence in all genres of literature.

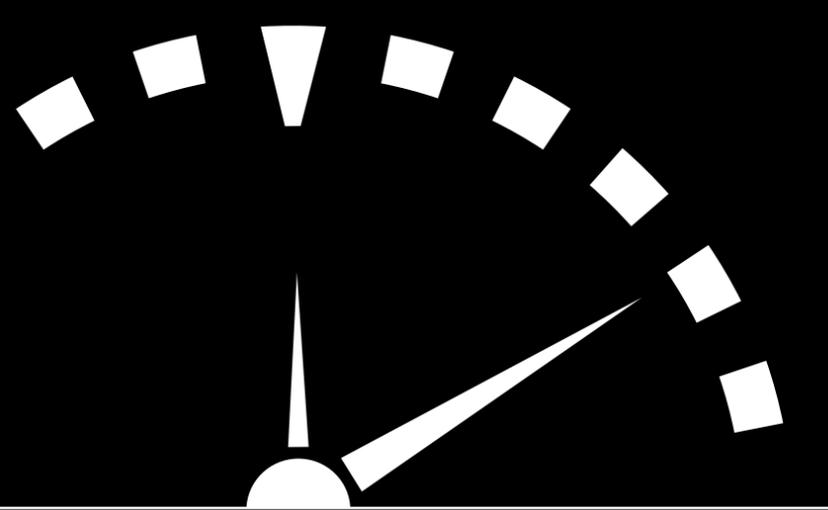
Linda Radke, president of the Dragonfly Book Awards Program, said in a media release, "Winning any place in the Royal Dragonfly Contest is a huge honor because in order to maintain the integrity of the Dragonfly Book Awards, a minimum score is required before a first or second place, or honorable mention will be awarded to the entrant — even if it is the sole entry in a category. Competition is steep, too, because there is no publication date limit as long as the book is still in print."

Maday's book, "How the Bunny Learned to Fly," is available for download online. For more information, Maday is available via email at SeanMaday@gmail.com.

*(Anschutz is assigned to the Air Reserve Personnel Center public affairs office at Buckley AFB.)*



Maj. Sean Maday, assigned as an instructor at the Headquarters Reserve National Security Space Institute at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, with members of his family. Maday channeled his family's love of language and reading into a children's book that he hopes many others can enjoy. (Courtesy photo)



# 10,000-Hour Love Affair

*Deep affection for B-52 bomber leads to long, successful career*

*By Tech. Sgt. Ted Daigle*

Love has a funny way of creeping up on a person. Just ask Lt. Col. Steven R. Smith, 93rd Bomb Squadron flight instructor.

Three decades ago, upon being assigned to the B-52 Stratofortress, his first reactions were disappointment and anger.

“I was in the top 10 percent of my class in navigator school, and the B-52 was not even on my wish list, so I was really upset,” Smith said. “I remember my adviser trying to tell me I was going to love it, but I didn’t believe him.”

Fast-forward to 2017, and Smith has a completely different opinion of the aircraft. On March 3 at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, he exceeded the 10,000-hour mark in the jet that he now loves. Smith’s deep affection for the bomber has led him to a long and successful career in the Air Force.

The milestone gives him more hours in the aircraft than any pilot currently serving in the Air Force, according to officials at Boeing, the aircraft’s manufacturer. For Smith, however, 10,000 flight hours is just another number.

“It does not mean I’m smarter or better than anyone else here,” he said. “There are lots of people in this unit smarter than I am. It just means I love the B-52. It has been the center point of my whole career.”

Smith never planned on accumulating so many flight hours in the B-52. When he arrived at his first duty station, rumors circulating throughout the bomber community led him to believe his time in the aircraft would be short.

“There was talk about a new bomber coming into the inventory soon, so I thought I would just stick it out until they replaced it,” he said.

The change never happened, but a change in perspective certainly did. Despite his initial dislike for the aircraft, Smith found himself growing fonder of the B-52 with each passing year.

“I was on active duty for seven years, so I flew quite a bit, and it was something I just found myself enjoying,” he said.



*Lt. Col. Steve Smith hugs his wife, Jayne, after returning from a training mission March 3 at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. During the mission, Smith surpassed 10,000 flight hours in the B-52 Stratofortress. He is a veteran of 1,800 missions and multiple combat deployments. (Tech. Sgt. Ted Daigle)*

After separating from active duty, Smith joined the Air Force Reserve and was assigned to the 93rd BS. At that time, the squadron had a combat mission and a high operations tempo. Smith’s fondness for the jet propelled him to attend every mission briefing he could.

“I figured each time I went to a briefing, there would be a 25 percent chance I’d get on the jet,” he said. “Turns out, I got on almost every time.”

With each flight hour he accumulated, Smith’s love of the B-52 grew, and he quickly gained a reputation for excellence.

“He is the B-52 warrior of warriors,” said Col. James Morriss III, 307th Bomb Wing vice commander. “When he is part of the flight crew, you know there is nothing to worry about on that mission.”

After the 93rd BS was designated as a flying training unit, Smith was tapped to be an instructor. Soon, all his experience began to have an impact on the larger Air Force community.

“His training and mentorship are directly responsible for preparing two generations of B-52 pilots,” Morriss said. “People all around the world owe their capabilities to him.”

Col. Rob Burgess, 307th Operations Group commander, agreed with Morriss’ assessment.

“His experience and credibility are priceless for the students,” Burgess said. “At 2,000 hours, a pilot really has their respect, but at 10,000 hours you are a B-52 legend.”

Smith said he never intended to be an instructor but is grateful for the opportunity to teach other B-52 pilots.

“It has been extremely rewarding watching the students learn the jet, and it has been a great privilege to see them perform so well in combat,” he said.

Smith’s contributions extend beyond the schoolhouse. He has participated in multiple combat missions, including some while still serving as an instructor. In addition, he helped develop a B-52 targeting pod, which allows for greater target accuracy.

All of Smith’s efforts have been to improve things for others, Burgess said.

“He is a real team player,” he said. “It was never about him; always about the students, the jet and the Air Force.”

As for the future, Smith said it is getting more difficult to keep up his current pace, but he still wants to try.

“I’ve got another two years to go, and I’ll probably ask for an extension,” he said. “I’d like to fly another 1,000 hours.”

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*(Daigle is assigned to the 307th BW public affairs office at Barksdale AFB.)*

# ILOSTMYSON

AIRMAN TURNS TRAGEDY INTO THERAPY THROUGH RESILIENCE

/// BY MASTER SGT. BETH ANSCHUTZ ///

Following the unexpected death of her youngest son, Jeremiah, Tech. Sgt. Ameer Espinoza's life started to spin out of control. She was drinking daily and didn't care whether she lived or died.

It took a failed suicide attempt and court-ordered therapy for her life to change.

When Espinoza decided to end her feelings of hopelessness, she put her other son, Isaiah, to bed, kissed him and then swallowed a handful of Valium pills. Just before sliding into unconsciousness, she felt something other than helplessness — regret. The last thing she remembers is screaming.

When she woke up, Espinoza found herself in a hospital bed. She told the nurses what had happened and was admitted into a mental institution. She spent two weeks undergoing inpatient care and, upon her release, was ordered by the court to seek outpatient therapy.

The court order saved her life and unearthed a calling in her to serve others through therapy.

"I was depressed, hurt and didn't want to be around anyone, especially a therapist," Espinoza said. "At that time, I was unsure if I was going to attempt suicide again. But, I knew deep down that I didn't want to die. I didn't want my son's last memory of me to be seeing me being carried away on a stretcher."

According to Espinoza, who is now the mother of two, it took several sessions for her to begin to "believe" in her therapy. After a couple months she started to look forward to her sessions, and eventually her thoughts shifted to the positive.

Once she was successfully discharged from the court-ordered therapy, Espinoza started attending support group meetings for bereaved parents. A year later, she was facilitating the group sessions and acting as a victim's advocate. She realized she had a greater purpose in life.

"I knew that my purpose was to use my experience to help others overcome trauma," Espinoza said. "I didn't feel lonely when I was surrounded by group members. It was an amazing experience, so I decided to enroll in a master's degree program for mental health counseling."

During her time in graduate school, Espinoza was required to perform 600 hours of direct and indirect counseling services. She worked with individual and group counseling services focused on DUIs and DWIs, addiction, domestic violence, conflict resolution, and anger management, alongside her continued bereavement counseling and victim advocacy. In addition, she provided individual special needs behavior therapy for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

"When I started working with clients, I started to grasp

my own counseling style, and I loved it," Espinoza said. "I consider myself to be a trauma-informed counselor who just wants to assist and help people grow the strength to have a valuable quality of life. This work is so special to me because it gives me a greater purpose. I enjoy doing it, and I enjoy serving others."

Espinoza is an Air National Guard member assigned to the Air Reserve Personnel Center at Buckley Air Force Base, Colorado. Her leadership took notice of her work helping others and decided to nominate her for the GEICO Military Service Awards Program. The annual award spotlights contributions made by enlisted military members in specific areas: drug and alcohol prevention, fire safety and prevention, and traffic safety and prevention.

Espinoza was notified by the Air Force Reserve Command in November that she had been selected as the AFRC nominee for the award.

"Throughout this entire process of working, going to school full time and taking care of my family, there were so many times that I wanted to give up," Espinoza said. "Working more than 15 hours a day at times, all while trying to maintain my own family, became stressful. The recognition and support of my leaders, subordinates, family and friends gave me the drive to keep pushing. When I was nominated for the award, I was proud and honored."

Friends and co-workers of Espinoza know her for her positivity and kind nature. Master Sgt. Veronica Gomez, senior enlisted leader for the Air Force Total Force Service Center, said Espinoza's attitude is a benefit to the work center.

"Ameer exudes positivity, no matter the circumstances or obstacles," Gomez said. "She utilizes her personal experiences to relate to others going through difficult situations, which aids those individuals in trusting her and her commitment to see them through. Dealing with people can be a challenge, considering our various backgrounds, cultures and values. Ameer manages to blend those differences into positive outcomes in both personal and professional environments."

As a mother herself, Gomez said Espinoza's outlook on life is the pure definition of resiliency.

"After what Ameer has gone through, she is still standing. If that's not resiliency, I don't know what is," Gomez said.

Espinoza uses her work and training in the civilian sector to benefit the Air Force as a master resiliency trainer. She enjoys using the skills she has learned through personal experience with trauma and higher education to help her fellow Airmen.

"I believe that resiliency training is so important, not only in the military, but in life in general," Espinoza said. "People will face trauma, tragedy, personal crisis and other life problems, but we aren't necessarily meant to understand why these things happen to us. It is important to understand that we can bounce back from adversity. It is amazing what people go through, but having the right tools, the unparalleled support, and knowing how to use those tools and support is what makes us resilient."

Espinoza continues to serve the Air Force as an MRT and pursue counseling opportunities in the civilian sector. Her personal journey of resiliency continues to inspire those she interacts with on a daily basis, as she spreads a message of optimism and hope to her wingmen.

*(Anschutz is assigned to the ARPC public affairs office at Buckley AFB.)*

*Tech. Sgt. Ameer Espinoza's life spun out of control following the death of her son, Jeremiah. With counseling and support from family and friends, she has bounced back from her tragedy. (Quinn Jacobson)*



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*A Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System-equipped C-130 assigned to the 302nd Airlift Wing approaches a drop zone during the U.S. Forest Service's annual aerial firefighting certification event in Boise, Idaho, April 21. The 302nd supports the Defense Department C-130 MAFFS mission along with three Air National Guard wings. C-130s equipped with MAFFS units can drop up to 3,000 gallons of retardant or water to aid in the suppression of wildland fires. (Maj. Jolene Bottor-Ortiona)*

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