



Click.
citamn.afrc.af.mil



Tweet.
[@citizenairman](https://twitter.com/citizenairman)



Like.
[@citizenairman](https://www.facebook.com/citizenairman)

CITIZEN AIRMAN

Volume 71 No. 4

August 2019



Ready to Roll

Enlisted Aircrew
Members are
Critical to
C-130 Hercules
Flight Testing



NEW LEADERS POISED TO DO GREAT THINGS FOR THE COMMAND

The success of any organization depends on its leaders. The Air Force Reserve is comprised of numerous units, and each has its own set of leaders. Some manage a section, others helm a numbered Air Force, but all are leaders. We rely on each and every one to conduct our day-to-day operations and provide outstanding support to our Airmen and their families.

Recent promotions and retirements have brought new faces to many of our senior command positions, and I would like to take a moment to introduce you to the individuals who lead the larger organizations within the Air Force Reserve.

In May, Maj. Gen. Brian Borgen took command of 10th Air Force.

He is an A-10 pilot who has a rich operational background. He's deployed numerous times and has combat experience in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan. He has commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels and served on the 10th Air Force staff. In his most recent assignment, he was a mobilization assistant at Air Combat Command.

Borgen's combat experience and his time with ACC make him an excellent choice to lead our power projection forces.

Our newest numbered Air Force commander is Maj. Gen. John Healy, who took command of 22nd Air Force last month.

He was previously an adviser at U.S. European Command. He has flown the C-141, C-5 and was part of the C-17 initial cadre. He has been a squadron and vice wing commander. He has extensive staff experience serving at the Pentagon and the Tanker Airlift Control Center

and deploying in support of U.S. Central Command.

Healy's robust mobility background and his time at the combatant commands make him well suited to lead our tactical airlift wings.

These newly minted commanders join Maj. Gen. Randall Ogden, who has led 4th Air Force since March 2017.

Ogden is a helicopter and tanker pilot who has commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels. His staff experience includes tours at the Tanker Airlift Control Center, the headquarters Air Force staff and the joint staff. He has deployed as an operations group commander and as a deputy director of mobility forces.

His extensive aerial refueling and strategic mobility expertise make him a solid leader for 4th Air Force.

The Air Reserve Personnel Center also has new leadership. Col. Kelli Smiley assumed command in June. The personnel center provides critical support to every Reservist and Smiley's breadth of experience makes her an ideal fit to lead this organization.

She has extensive experience at both the Air Force and Air Reserve Personnel Centers. She also served at the Pentagon and has been a squadron commander. She was previously the commander of the Readiness and Integration Organization and has completed several tours as an IMA.

Having served in multiple statuses makes Smiley well suited to understand



Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee passes the guidon to Col. Kelli Smiley, the new Air Reserve Personnel Center commander. Smiley is one of several new senior leaders throughout the command. (Staff Sgt. Katrina M. Brisbin)

the challenges our Reservists face and improve their quality of life.

Both the Air Force Reserve Command staff and the Office of the Air Force Reserve staff have new deputies who provide critical leadership behind the scenes.

Maj. Gen. John Flournoy Jr. has joined the command staff and the new deputy at the Pentagon is Maj. Gen. Hubert Hegtvedt.

All these individuals are exceptional leaders. They have proven their abilities as commanders on multiple occasions and their experience makes them exceptionally well prepared for their particular roles within our organization.

I know these individuals will do great things for the units they command, the Air Force Reserve and our amazing Reserve Citizen Airmen. I look forward to seeing how they will improve their organizations, enhance readiness across the command and inspire their Airmen to reach new heights. ■

RICHARD W. SCOBEE
Lieutenant General, USAF
Chief of Air Force Reserve
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command

ENHANCING TRUST IS THE FIRST STEP TO REFORMING THE ORGANIZATION

In my last commentary, I rolled out three individual lines of effort – comprehensive readiness, deliberate talent management and enhancing organizational trust – to align with our strategic priorities. Today, I want to focus on LOE3, enhancing organizational trust.

During my most recent trip to Indo-Pacific Command, a Reserve Citizen Airman asked me what I meant by enhancing organizational trust. Originally, I had my own reservations about this particular LOE because of its possible connotations, but here are a couple examples of what I mean by enhancing organizational trust.

Several weeks ago, retired Chief Master Sgt. Frank Batten, the former command chief for Air Combat Command, reached out to me about a Reservist he ran into. The Reservist expressed frustration and concern about retirement benefits and entitlements he had not yet received.

For some reason, perhaps it was just coincidental, the Reservist felt the necessity to reach outside the command for resolve. After personally speaking to the member, I tasked my team for action and the issue has since been resolved to the member's satisfaction. The trust this member once had in the organization has been restored.

In another example, I recently received two separate inquiries in which Reservists reached out to the Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force's office because they had not received internal resolve to their individual concerns.

What I've discovered is that situations like these often boil down to a lack of communication. Here's my point: When situations reach or even bypass my office it's because in some form or fashion members have lost or lack trust in the organization.

Regardless of the reason or status, anytime I receive inquiries like these, I personally look into them. In fact, at my request, one of my numbered Air Force command chiefs recently met one-on-one with a member who expressed some significant concerns with the member's unit. I have and will continue to give out my direct line and e-mail and will instruct Reservists to contact me directly regarding issues or concerns involving them or their family members.

Although an inquiry may or may not be resolved in the member's favor, I'm still going to look into it. It provides me with an



Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee and Chief Master Sgt. Timothy White meet with Reservists from the 624th Regional Support Group, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

opportunity to enhance trust in the organization, which directly impacts recruitment, retention and our ability to meet national security objectives as outlined in the National Defense Strategy.

Every member, past and present, has a story to tell. That story can be positive or negative depending on the experience the member had. A member with an awesome 30-year career can taint our image for future members based entirely on a negative experience in the member's final year. Likewise, if we course correct where we went wrong, not only do we restore faith with that member, we have the potential of gaining new members.

In turn, members will share their adventure and their positive outcome, even if they endured a few hiccups along the way.

Lt. Gen. Scobee tasked me with leading the enlisted force of Air Force Reserve Command. That means looking at the hard questions, like what does it mean to enhance organizational trust.

Although it may be my final line of effort, enhancing organizational trust is the first step to reforming the organization.

These lines of effort are no different from those of my predecessors or any other current chief taking care of Airmen. I simply labeled the bucket of actions we carry out each and every day through more effective communication up and down the chain of command.

Please continue to share your comments with me at afrc.ccc@us.af.mil. It is an honor to be 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

Table of

FEATURED STORIES



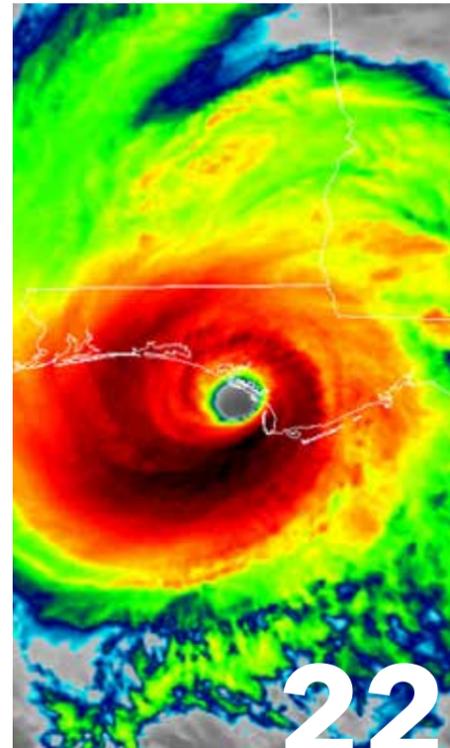
Staff Sgt. Keifer Bowes

08



Master Sgt. Stephen Schester

14



22

TRI-LIGHTNING

Three-nation F-35 exercise demonstrates air power interoperability

'I CAN TELL YOU WHAT A GLOCK TASTES LIKE'

Chief bounces back following close call with suicide

ANSWERING THE CALL

When Mother Nature strikes, emergency preparedness liaison officers are there

ON THE COVER:

Master Sgt. Allen Clutter, a Reserve Citizen Airman flight engineer attached to the 514th Flight Test Squadron at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, performs a functional flight check on a C-130 Hercules. Clutter is part of the aviation team that performs checks on C-130s coming out of depot status from the Ogden Air Logistics Complex at Hill. For the story, see page 26. (Cynthia Griggs)



CONTENTS

NEWS & PEOPLE

Swift Response
Reserve airlift squadron delivers during European exercise **06**

Out with the Old
Aircrews get new anti-smoke goggles **10**

Post-9/11 GI Bill
Changes coming to transfer of education benefits **12**

Finding Closure
Deployment helps Reservist connect with family **18**

Travel Made Easy
Reservist plays major role in new discount travel web site **21**

ARPC News
Navigating the retirement application process **25**

Enlisted Aircrew Members
Group is vital part of Hercules flight testing **26**

Running with Faith
An Airman's journey to redemption **28**

'Wise Guy' Returns
Reservists help bring B-52 back to life **30**



Staff Sgt. Vito Bryant

13

CITIZEN AIRMAN

Leadership Staff
Gen. David L. Goldfein
Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee
Commander, Air Force Reserve Command

Chad Gibson
Acting Director of Public Affairs,
Air Force Reserve Command

Magazine Staff
Bo Joyner
Editor, Public Affairs,
Air Force Reserve Command

Tyler Grimes
Staff Writer, Public Affairs,
Air Force Reserve Command

Anthony Burns and Jonathan Migel
Graphic Designers, Public Affairs,
Air Force Reserve Command

Contributing Writers
Master Sgt. Ted Daigle, Cynthia Griggs, Master Sgt. Jessica Kendziorek, Col. Ann Knabe, Lt. Col. Christine D. Millette, Master Sgt. Stephen Schester and Jamal Sutter

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 all 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/PAOM, 155 Richard Ray Blvd., Robins AFB, GA 31098-1661. Or, email them to hqafrc.pa.citizenairman@us.af.mil. For questions about the magazine or its contents, you can call (478) 327-1771 or DSN 497-1771.

Moving? PLEASE DO NOT SEND CHANGES OF ADDRESS TO CITIZEN AIRMAN. To continue receiving the magazine, unit Reservists, as well as people serving a statutory tour of duty, should send a change of address to their military personnel flight or unit orderly room. Individual mobilization augmentees should call the Total Force Service Center-Denver toll free at 1-800-525-0102 or DSN 847-3294.

POSTMASTER: Please send all Forms 3579 to Citizen Airman, HQ AFRC/PAOM, 155 Richard Ray Blvd., Robins AFB, GA 31098-1661.





Swift Response

Reserve airlift squadron delivers during European exercise



Story and Photos By Master Sgt. Jessica Kendziorek

The troop doors open, the wind rushes through the C-130J Super Hercules and paratroopers await the commands of the jumpmasters before disappearing into the darkness.

“Ten minutes! Get ready! Personnel stand up! Hook up! Check static line!”

Both jumpmasters yell the instructions simultaneously while giving hand signals, waiting to hear a return response from the paratroopers. At one minute out, the first paratrooper is ready at the jump platform in the open troop door and waits for the countdown to jump.

“Five. Four. Three. Two. One!”

With their static lines attached to the cable, the first paratrooper steps out the door, leaving the rest to follow. As they step out of the aircraft and into the night, the static lines connected to the parachute deployment bags are left hanging out the back of the plane and a line of parachutes fills the sky.

For Exercise Swift Response 2019, military members from two continents worked as a team to conduct training to increase the participating nations’ readiness, capabilities and capacity to conduct full-spectrum military operations. They used combined training which fosters trust, increases interoperability, and enables allies to readily and effectively respond to regional crises and meet their own national defense goals.

With approximately 5,600 participants from Canada, France,

Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States, the exercise took place this summer at locations in Bulgaria, Croatia and Romania, with additional staging bases in Germany, Italy, Slovenia and the United Kingdom.

Air Force Reserve loadmasters from the 403rd Wing’s 815th Airlift Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, had a huge role in making sure all of the paratroopers got out safely during Swift Response jump missions. They rigged the aircraft with anchor cables for the static lines to ensure soldiers from the U.S. Army Airborne Divisions, along with any NATO airborne allies on board, could safely jump from the C-130J.

“We have to know what type of parachute will be used, if they are going out the troop doors or off the cargo ramp door,” said Master Sgt. Douglas Otten Jr., 815th AS loadmaster. “We need to know these things in order to rig the aircraft correctly.”

If jumpers are going out the troop doors, two anchor cable lines are installed inside the aircraft and the jump platforms have to be installed. This is performed by maintenance personnel after they remove the side rails in front of the troop doors. However, if the paratroopers are going out the cargo ramp door, only one anchor cable is used for the static line jumps.

“The jump platforms for the troop doors are inspected, along with the sides of the doors and the cables, by both the ‘loads’

Opposite page: Senior Master Sgts. Eric Gassiott and Dave Kittrell, loadmasters for the 815th Airlift Squadron from the 403rd Wing, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, load a propeller onto a C-130J during exercise Swift Response 19. Top left, Tech. Sgt. Gary Bryant installs the seating on the C-130J in preparation for paratroopers to use. Top right: Tech. Sgt. Brandon Price secures a static line cable in preparation for Army airborne units. Bottom right: Senior Master Sgt. Dave Cooper directs Corporal Jared Guden, 82nd Airborne scout platoon team leader, as he drives a ground mobility vehicle onto a C-130J.

and the jumpmasters,” Otten said. “We also have to check the anchor cables for splinters or broken wire prior to use. If a cable has either, then the cable is turned over to maintenance and is replaced.”

Airlift for paratroopers is just one mission of the Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 815th AS, commonly known as the Flying Jennies. They also airdrop or deliver supplies to service members in hard-to-reach locations. Sometimes this means doing an airdrop or having to land on a short runway and do a combat offload.

Combat offloads are completed when there is no forklift or K-loader available to take the cargo pallets off the aircraft. There are two different types of combat offloads, according to Otten. One is where the pilots hold the brakes, accelerate the engines and release the brakes, causing the cargo pallet to slide out of the back of the plane after the loadmaster releases the locks.

The second is where the load is pushed out the back of the aircraft onto steel barrels, then the aircraft is slow-rolled forward and a second set of steel barrels is put into place to hold the pallet.

The Flying Jennies deliver supplies for both humanitarian and wartime missions.

During one Swift Response mission, they transported a ground mobility vehicle with a pallet of bags and returned with

a Humvee along with more than 70 bags and parachutes, which were floor-loaded and strapped down.

“This was the first time I got to floor-load this many bags at one time,” said Senior Airman John Beaudreaux, 815th AS loadmaster. “We had to strap them down at an angle and did a belly strap, which means to wrap around the middle to hold the bags in place.”

While the loadmasters are responsible for everything going on in the cargo area of the aircraft, it’s the responsibility of the pilots to get to the drop zone on time and on target. During an airlift mission, the pilots will call back times to the loadmasters, who relay the information to the jumpmasters.

“Getting to the drop zone on time is a challenge for us because it is a long flight, anywhere from four to five hours,” said Maj. Nick Foreman, 815th AS pilot. “We have to account for weather and winds. These changes can cause us to be early or late and we have to be at the DZ at the time when the Army wants us so they can execute their mission.

“On the first night, we had some issues, but we were able to make up some time enroute and still make it on time and on target for both nights. Timing is critical for a successful mission and we had a successful mission.”

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

Tri-Lightning

Three-nation F-35 exercise demonstrates air power interoperability

By Lt. Col. Christine D. Millette

The Air Force Reserve plays an integral role in global and national security and proved it recently when F-35 Lightning II aircraft from Hill Air Force Base, Utah's Reserve and active-duty fighter wings joined other F-35s from the United Kingdom and Israel to participate in Exercise Tri-Lightning over the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

Exercise Tri-Lightning was a one-day defensive counter air exercise involving friendly and adversary aircraft from the three participating countries and consisted of active and passive air defense operations.

This exercise is a demonstration of the interoperability between the United States, United Kingdom and Israel using the F-35A, F-35B and F-35I respectively.

"We build capacity with our strategic partners to harness our air component's capabilities and skills," said Lt. Gen. Joseph Guastella, U.S. Air Force's Central Command commander. "The transatlantic strategic relationship between the U.S. and our allies and partners has been forged over the past seven decades and is built on a foundation of shared values, experiences and vision."

The U.S. Air Force F-35As flew

from Al Dhafra Air Base, United Arab Emirates, the Royal Air Force F-35Bs flew from RAF Akrotiri, Cyprus, and the Israeli Air Force F-35Is flew from Nevatim Air Base, Israel.

"Tri-Lightning was an exercise which had been planned for months and it provided an outstanding opportunity for the squadron to operate and learn from our fellow F-35 community," said U.K. Wing Commander John Butcher, Squadron 617 commanding officer. "In addition, it allowed us to share and gain valuable experience that we will be able to exploit during future training and potentially

operational deployments, whether embedded on the Queen Elizabeth or from overseas air bases."

The F-35s from the three nations played as primary friendly, or blue, force players in this exercise while a variety of other aircraft played the aggressor roles, simulating realistic combat situations between the advanced F-35s and previous generation fighters.

"The exercise today reflects the close cooperation between the participating nations," said Brig. Gen. Ammon Einar, Israel chief of air staff. "The training opportunity between Israel, the U.S. and

Britain strengthens shared capabilities and overall cooperation amongst allies."

At the time of the exercise, F-35 pilots, maintainers and support personnel from the Air Force Reserve's 419th Fighter Wing and the active-duty 388th Fighter Wing at Hill were taking part in the Air Force's first F-35 deployment to the Middle East.

(Millette is assigned to the U.S. Air Forces Central Command public affairs office.) ■

Left: U.S. Air Force F-35A Lightning IIs, center, lead a formation of Israeli Air Force F-35Is, right, and Royal Air Force F-35Bs, left, during Exercise Tri-Lightning over the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. (Staff Sgt. Keifer Bowles) Above: A U.S. Air Force pilot from the 4th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron prepares to fly an exercise training sortie. (Staff Sgt. Chris Thornbury)

Out with the Old



Aircrews get new anti-smoke goggles

Story and Photos by Jessica Kendziorek

If smoke starts filling up a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, the aircrew reach for their Anti-Smoke Goggles. For more than 20 years the ASGs have been a basic four-part system, until now.

With innovation, the new ASGs are now a three-part system. The suspension frame itself is still made the same with the nape pad attached, while the goggles and oxygen mask portion have been upgraded.

“The ones that we are replacing have the same basic frame, but the goggles and the oxygen mask are two separate pieces,” said Tech. Sgt. Ronald Patton, 403rd Operation Support Squadron aircrew flight equipment craftsman, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi. “Before, you would need to put the oxygen mask over your mouth and nose, then pull the frame up and place the nape pad at the back of your head. Once that was in place you

would put the goggles on and pull the straps on both sides to tighten them.”

The way the new ASGs work is still the same concept, except now the goggles and oxygen mask are one piece, so when you place the oxygen mask over your nose and mouth, the goggles are put on at the exact same time, saving time and making them quicker to put on and operate.

“The new masks are made similar to ones that firefighters use,” said Master Sgt. Ray Reynolds, 403rd OSS aircrew flight equipment supervisor. “The older goggles had a narrower field of view, while the new ones allow the aircrew to be able to use their peripheral vision.”

As a part of their duties, AFE technicians are required to make sure the equipment operates the way it is supposed to, be



Top left, Tech. Sgt. Ronald Patton, a flight equipment craftsman with the 403rd Operation Support Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, shows the difference between the current anti-smoke goggles and the new anti-smoke goggles for the C-130J Super Hercules aircraft. Top right, Patton checks the air flow on one of the new goggles. Opposite page, Patton demonstrates how to put on the old goggles, which have been used for more than 20 years at Keesler.

able to fix the equipment and replace any parts as needed.

Patton said that when the new ASGs came in, the manufacturer sent a ‘fix’ in with the mask to ensure they operated as designed. This ‘fix’ was a single screw that needed to be replaced on the front of the mask.

“Every part on the ASG system is replaceable, which helps to make sure they last,” said Reynolds. “Looking at the order of parts that could be damaged from easiest to hardest. The first thing is the hose, the second thing being the communication cord, and the third is the microphone, and then onto the remaining parts.”

AFE technicians are also required to test the pull disconnect on the air hoses to ensure that they will not come unattached from the oxygen hose on the aircraft too easily. This pull test requires a minimum of 12 pounds to a maximum of 20 pounds of pull before the hose on the mask would release, ensuring that there is some resistance before it disconnects.

If the disconnect is not between the 12 to 20 pounds of pull, then they have to fix the connector to correct the amount of pressure to meet the requirement, said Patton.

“We are also required to conduct pre-flight, post-flight, periodic maintenance, 30-day and 120-day inspections on the ASGs,” said Patton.

The 30-day inspection consists of basic checks. A visual examination is conducted and they look for cuts, tears, abrasions, discolorations, rust, anything other than normal, looking for anything that is obviously defective. A cleaning is done and the components are tested to ensure they work.

The 120-day inspection is the same inspection, but with a full break down of all of the components and a deep clean,

checking the integrity of the components that you cannot see, said Reynolds.

“It is not that the old ASGs were replaced because they were faulty, they worked exactly as they were designed to. It seems like they just needed to improve on the integrity of the system itself,” said Patton. “Will it operate better under stressful situations, will it be easier to repair if it does break, does it have as many subcomponents that can break, does the aircrew member find it easier to don, and can the aircrew operate better in the environment, were questions that they asked when designing the new system.”

To improve the ASG system, they took a mask similar to a firefighter’s mask and the quick don suspension frame and made it one system, then they added the communications portion, said Reynolds.

“So they are doing something right, because if they hadn’t created this one, the ones that we have still work. I have been in this career field for more than 30 years, and this is only the third version that I have seen,” said Reynolds.

“While the older ASG masks still work and some are still located on our C-130J Super Hercules aircraft, we are working to replace them on all of the aircraft” said Patton. “We currently have six sets in service and have replaced more than half of the 815th Airlift Squadron’s ASGs with a new quick don system and we expect to have them on all of our aircraft by the middle of August, after the current inspection cycles are complete.”

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

POST-9/11 GI BILL CHANGE UPDATE



Changes coming to GI Bill transfer of education benefits for Guard, Reserve

By Air Reserve Personnel Center Public Affairs



Effective Jan. 12, 2020, the Department of Defense will make changes to the Post-9/11 GI Bill, updating the policy on the transfer of education benefits by service members to eligible dependents.

The changes are intended to more closely align the transferability benefit with its purpose as a recruiting and retention incentive and also to underscore that while the Post-9/11 GI Bill is a transition/adjustment benefit offered as a reward to service members during a time of conflict, transferability of the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit to dependents was enacted to serve as a recruiting and retention incentive.

The 2020 changes follow additional Post-9/11 GI Bill changes that went into effect in July 2018 and one that went into effective July 12 of this year. The 2018 changes include:

- Service members with a previously approved transfer request who are separated under force shaping authorities and policies prior to completing their required four years of service retain their eligibility to transfer benefits. The scope of force shaping was expanded to expressly include officers involuntarily separated as a result of being twice passed over for promotion and enlisted service members being separated under service high year of tenure policies or a change in these policies unless separated at high year of tenure subsequent to reduction in rank

through administrative demotion, nonjudicial punishment or court martial.

- Service members who have not applied for transfer of education benefits and are on limited duty or involved in a medical evaluation board, physical evaluation board or disability evaluation system process must wait until the process is complete before applying for the transfer.

- Service members who applied for transfer of education benefits but were denied due to insufficient retainability as a result of being on limited duty or involved in a medical evaluation board, physical evaluation board or disability evaluation system process must request a transfer again once they are fit for duty and commit to an additional four-year service obligation.

- Members subsequently found fit for duty, but only after having accrued more than 16 years of total creditable service, will be allowed to apply to transfer their educational benefits again provided they apply within 90 days of being informed of the fit-for-duty determination.

- Service members who have not applied for transfer of education benefits and who are subsequently found unfit for duty (with a medical separation/retirement order) but are otherwise eligible to request to transfer their benefit (have six years) may not be approved for transferability with no additional service obligation.

On July 12 of this year, the following change went into effect:

- Service members must be eligible to be retained for four years from the date of their election to transfer benefits and not be precluded from serving for four more years prior to approval of their election by either standard policy or statute. If there are reasons that preclude service members from committing to four years of service (mandatory retirement date, high year of tenure, retention control point, medical disqualification, for example) they are not eligible to apply for transfer of their benefits.

The changes that will take effect in January 2020 include:

- Eligibility to transfer Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefits will be limited to service members with at least six years, but not more than 16 years, of total creditable service. The determination of service members' total years of creditable service will be based on the date of the member's transfer of education benefits application, not the date the request is approved.

All changes will be included in the next rewrite of Air Force Instruction 36-2649, Voluntary Education Program. Service members seeking additional information are encouraged to visit MyPers or call the Total Force Service Center at 1-800-525-0102.

Spotlight: DOD Warrior Games



Reserve Citizen Airmen Staff Sgt. Kevin Greene, Staff Sgt. Melinda Cousins and Senior Airman Demarcus Garrett recently represented the Air Force in the 2019 Department of Defense Warrior Games. Top left, Garrett, assigned to the 442nd Fighter Wing, Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, competes in wheelchair rugby (EJ Hersom). Top right, Cousins, assigned to the 911th Airlift Wing, Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania, participates in the shooting competition (Staff Sgt. Sabara L. Fales). Bottom left, Garrett celebrates after completing his bench press in the powerlifting competition (Staff Sgt. Sabara L. Fales). Bottom right, Greene, assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick AFB, Florida, takes a shot during the wheelchair basketball gold medal game. (EJ Hersom).

SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS

It is our responsibility

#BeThere

To build and grow

#ReserveResilient

Your action could save a life



'I can tell you what a Glock 21 tastes like'

Chief bounces back from hard times, close call with suicide

A commentary by Master Sgt. Stephen Schester

I've been a photographer in the Air Force for 21 years now, and over that time I've met a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds. I've found that everybody has a story to tell, and occasionally I come across a story that really resonates with me. Chief Master Sgt. Stacy Gilman's story is one.

I first met Gilman in July 2018 while I was covering the Air Force Reserve's participation in an Innovative Readiness Training event in Crystal Springs, Mississippi. He was a senior master sergeant at the time, attached to the 439th Airlift Wing at Westover Air Reserve Base, Massachusetts, and the senior NCO in charge of overseeing construction at Camp Kamassa in Crystal Springs. Camp Kamassa is the future home for underprivileged and special needs kids.

In addition to being a Reserve Citizen Airman, he had served

as a police officer for 17 years and at one time had been a major player in real estate in the Northeast.

With his Boston accent and straight-to-the-point demeanor, I found him intriguing ... and a little intimidating. After spending time with him over two weeks and interviewing him for this story, I found that Gilman was actually a very humble person who had experienced great heights of success and incredible depths of sadness. His lowest point was in 2007, when he came within seconds of taking his own life.

But before I go into his story, I have to tell part of my story as well. You see, I have also been to incredible depths of sadness and have struggled with mental health issues for many years. I would be lying if I said I had not contemplated suicide at some point in my personal struggles, but with years of therapy,



Left: Chief Master Sgt. Stacy Gilman, currently assigned to the 560th RED HORSE Squadron, Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, helps move heating and air conditioning equipment that will be put in homes at Camp Kamassa in Mississippi (Master Sgt. Stephen Schester). Right: Gilman worked as a police officer for 17 years before going into mortgage lending and real estate. (Courtesy photo). Gilman has experienced great heights of success and incredible depths of sadness in his life. He came close to committing suicide, but is now determined to help others get through the tough times in life.



Left: Gilman has developed a strong bond with 8-year-old Aly Cole during his time at Camp Kamassa. Gilman attended the class prom and helped with swimming lessons with the youngster, who is blind and autistic. Right: The chief shares a laugh with some of his co-workers. Opposite page: Gilman says that today he is in a great place mentally and is committed to promoting resiliency throughout the ranks. (Master Sgt. Stephen Schester)

emphasis on deep inner perspective and a belief in a higher power, it saved me from my own demons. I learned how to be resilient and learned a lot about the brain, the mind, psychology, human nature and so much more by trying to find answers to my problems.

As I tell Gilman's story ... and mine, I think that is the key to all of this – there are answers to every problem. No matter what life throws at you, there are always solutions.

Back to Gilman's story. In 1999, wanting to provide a better life for his family and looking to supplement his income from his police officer job, he went into real estate and mortgage lending. Over the next few years, he found great success in his new endeavor. He owned a number of rental houses and an apartment complex with 150 units. He was able to buy a five-bedroom house for himself and his family and owned multiple cars and motorcycles. His success allowed him to leave the police force and pursue real estate full time. Life was good for the Gilmans.

Then, in 2007, the recession hit and the housing market crashed. Everything he had worked for over the past few years was suddenly gone. He lost his house, his vehicles, his rental properties and the apartment complex, "all of it with a stroke of a key," he said. He cashed out his police department pension in hopes to cover his debts, but it wasn't near enough. He was forced to file for bankruptcy and his wife, who enjoyed the life he provided, even threatened to leave him. He had hit rock bottom.

Gilman said he felt like a shell of his former self. "I couldn't face my children. I couldn't face my wife. I couldn't face my

father, who I hold near and dear to me. It was time to go. I was no benefit to anybody," he said of his mindset at the time.

After leaving a meeting with his lawyer about his financial situation, he pulled over on the side of the road and pulled out his Glock 21 pistol, put the barrel in his mouth and put his finger on the trigger. "I can tell you what a Glock 21 tastes like," he said.

With the barrel in his mouth, his phone started to ring. He didn't pick it up immediately, but it kept ringing. Something told him he should answer, so he put down his gun and picked up his phone. It was his father, who said he had a feeling that something wasn't right.

"He knew something was wrong, he just didn't know how bad," Gilman said. He and his father had a heart-to-heart conversation that pulled Gilman out of the depths of despair and gave him enough hope and perspective to put the gun away.

In the hours following that phone conversation with his father, Gilman told himself he never let anything beat him before and he wasn't going to start now.

"It took a little while, but I snapped out of it. I've got two kids who depend on me and suicide is the most selfish thing you can do. You're going to leave these two beautiful children behind and your mom and dad? They are the victims, not me. It's just money," he said.

In the ensuing years, he did what he had to do to get back to financial stability. He moved into a much smaller rental house, took on two part-time police officer jobs and rejoined the Air Force Reserve.

"We were very watchful of our money," Gilman said of his new lifestyle, "and I slowly crawled out of it."

Gilman is now a chief master sergeant assigned to the Reserve's 560th RED HORSE Squadron, Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina. He's happily remarried, in a great place mentally and still heavily involved with Camp Kamassa. He is even making plans to move to Mississippi to devote his energy full-time to the camp.

His perspective on mental health has changed since that day in 2007. He takes his role as a senior NCO very seriously when it comes to promoting resiliency among the lower ranks.

"I notice the little things now. I know when people have hard times and everybody has a story. ... Everybody," he said.

He has no qualms telling people about that day he nearly killed himself. If it helps someone along the way, it served its purpose.

Speaking of purpose, Gilman firmly believes God intervened that day. "I honestly feel in my heart of hearts He saved me that day," he said. "Losing everything was just a test and an example of what not to do. He was saving me for bigger and better things." Bigger things like seeing Camp Kamassa come to fruition for the kids who need it and helping whomever he can avoid what he almost didn't avoid that day on the side of the road.

Gilman is one example of strength and resiliency and what

a person can do when he reaches his lowest point but realizes suicide is not the answer to life's problems. It just creates more.

As for me, I still have days where my mind wanders to its darkest corners. I think that will always be a part of me, but I don't allow its potency to develop. I also know those dark moments are fleeting and I'm responsible for the defense of the negative that wants to enter my mind.

What you choose to focus on is where your energy will go; so it's important to focus on the positive. I'm not saying that when life is hard, and all you need to do is just think positive and it all goes away. That's not realistic. What I'm saying is that each day you choose to change your perspective towards the positive, you eventually develop a defense against the negative and you slowly erode the old self that did not serve you any purpose. I am an example of that.

With suicide rates rising, especially among military members and veterans, there is no greater time than now to arm yourself with knowledge. Seek to destroy the enemy that is poor mental health and all the casualties that come with it. Too many individuals have been lost to it already. And remember, suicide is not the answer and there is always a solution to a problem. How bad you want that solution is the challenge.

(Schester is assigned to the Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command public affairs office at Robins AFB, Georgia.)

“ I couldn't face my children. I couldn't face my wife. I couldn't face my father. It was time to go. I was no benefit to anybody. ”

- CMSgt. Stacy Gilman



Finding Closure

Deployment helps Reserve Citizen Airman learn about her father, connect with family

By Bo Joyner



Left: Capt. Sandrela Magnuson and fellow Air Force Reservist Staff Sgt. Brian Tremain. Meeting Tremain while deployed helped Magnuson make the contacts that would lead her to learn about her father's family. Right: Magnuson, second from right, meets her father's family for the first time during a trip to Egypt in 2018.



Capt. Sandrela Magnuson never really knew her father. After all, she was only 2 years old the last time she saw him in 1985. But for the last 34 years, the dad she never knew was never far away in her thoughts. “Was he alive?” “Where did he live?” “Did he ever try to look for me?” “Did he have any other children?” The questions endlessly rambled around in her mind without answers.

Until one day a couple of years ago when the Reserve Citizen Airman met someone on a deployment who volunteered to help her try and find the answers to the questions that filled her thoughts.

Sandrela was born in Baghdad in 1983. Her mother, Angela Ruiz, was Spanish and worked for the National Ballet of Spain as a dancer. During the early 1980s, she traveled the world on a tour to promote Spanish culture. It was while she was performing in Iraq that Sandrela's mom met her dad. Adel El Masry was born, raised and educated in Egypt. He moved to Iraq from Egypt and was working at the Palestine Meridien Hotel in Baghdad when he fell in love with the young Spanish dancer.

The couple married in Madrid in 1982 and returned to Iraq where Sandrela was born.



Left: Young Sandrela and her mother enjoy life at the Meridien Hotel in Baghdad before her dad was arrested and they were forced to leave the country. Middle: Magnuson's new friend, Aly Nour Eldin, an active-duty staff sergeant, helped her find out what happened to her father and make contact with the family she never knew. Right: Magnuson visits her dad's grave for the first time.

“From what my mom told me, my dad had a great job and was very successful in Baghdad,” she said. “The Meridien Hotel was built by the Iraqi government, but it was managed by the French. Although my mom was Spanish and my dad was Egyptian, French was the common language between the two of them.”

Life was great for the young couple and their beautiful baby girl until one day in 1985 when Iraqi authorities unexpectedly came and arrested Sandrela's father.

“From what my mom told me, they were shocked when he was arrested. Nobody explained why he was being arrested, what his crime was or anything. They just came and took him and we were told we had to get out of the country right away,” Sandrela said. “I was almost 3 at the time and the French Embassy helped me and my mom get out of Iraq and back to Spain.”

Sandrela's mom continued dancing and touring and eventually she remarried and divorced. When Sandrela was 14, she and her mom moved to the United States.

“During those 11 or 12 years, we never heard from my dad,” Sandrela said. “We didn't know if he was dead or alive or if he was still in prison. It was really hard not knowing what happened to him.”

When Sandrela was 16, war broke out between the United States and Iraq. “When the war broke out, I was really hoping I could find out what happened to my dad. I thought maybe he would

get released from jail and would come looking for me,” she said.

The war progressed but Sandrela never heard from her father.

After high school, she went to nursing school and took a part-time job with the Army working as a “civilian on the battlefield.”

“I would dress up as an Iraqi and serve as a role player during Army training exercises,” she said. “That's when I decided I wanted to be a part of the military.”

Magnuson joined the Air Force Reserve in 2012. She is currently assigned to the 34th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, where she works as an aeromedical evacuation nurse.

During deployments and humanitarian operations, Reserve Citizen Airmen assigned to the 34th AES provide critical medical care to ill and injured patients.

Magnuson deployed to Al Udied Air Base, Qatar, in 2017. While flying missions, she worked alongside Staff Sgt. Brian Tremain, an Air Force Reservist assigned to the 934th AES, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Air Reserve Station, Minnesota. Magnuson and Tremain quickly became friends during the deployment.

Tremain also made friends with an active-duty staff sergeant named Aly Nour Eldin, who was deployed from Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, and

working as a logistician and interpreter, at Al Udied. When Tremain found out that Nour Eldin was from Egypt, he suggested a meeting between Magnuson and Nour Eldin.

“We talked for a while and Aly told me his father was a retired policeman in Cairo and he might be able to help locate my dad. I thought it was a long shot, but it was worth a try. I had all of the information about my dad locked up in a safe at my house, so when I got back from deployment I sent what I had to Aly,” Magnuson said.

“Two weeks later, I got a text from Aly saying I had to give him a call. My first thought was he found my dad. I called him and he said he had bad news. He had my dad's death certificate and he had died in Egypt. I had all of these questions that Aly couldn't answer, but he did say his father was able to find the names and phone numbers of some of my dad's relatives.

“I started calling, but no one would answer. About three days after I started calling, I was home alone and I got a video call from Egypt and there were about five people standing there. They spoke broken English but I could tell they were trying to tell me they were relatives of my father. I thought they might be pulling my leg until one of them pulled out my mom and dad's wedding picture. That was a very emotional moment for me, but it was an amazing feeling



Travel Made Easy

Reservist plays major role in new MWR discount travel website

By Bo Joyner

Discounted rates on airline flights, hotels, car rentals, cruises and event tickets are now available online for all current and retired Reserve Citizen Airmen and their eligible family members.

“AmericanForcesTravel.com is an exciting new benefit available to all service members. It is the only official Morale, Welfare and Recreation e-commerce site offering travel and event discounts to service members and their families,” said Ken Sorg, an Air Force Reservist who helped lead the development of American Forces Travel.com while serving as a civilian program analyst on the Office of the Secretary of Defense staff.

Sorg, an individual mobilization augmentee chief master sergeant assigned to Headquarters Air Mobility Command’s Manpower, Personnel and Services Directorate at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, said the perspective he has as an Air Force Reservist was critical as he led a three-year joint transformational effort to modernize the DoD MWR leisure travel program.

“That’s the advantage we have as Reservists,” he said. “We wear two hats so we bring two perspectives to the fight. While leading this working group, I always kept the Reserve as part of the conversation. We now have the opportunity to reach more than 800,000 Guard and Reservists who may not have had access to their earned MWR benefits before. Now, wherever their phone or computer is, they can access this travel/entertainment benefit and not have to live near an on-base Tickets and Tours office.

“This is a great service for all military members, but I think it’s especially beneficial for Reservists and Guardsmen who may live hundreds of miles away from a base and aren’t at their base every day.”

The web site launched in January and Sorg said the response so far has been phenomenal. “We’ve had more than 270,000 authenticated patrons – people who have signed up and been authenticated on the site. The site has saved

Ken Sorg, an individual mobilization augmentee chief master sergeant for the Reserve, helped lead the development of AmericanForcesTravel.com as a civilian program analyst.

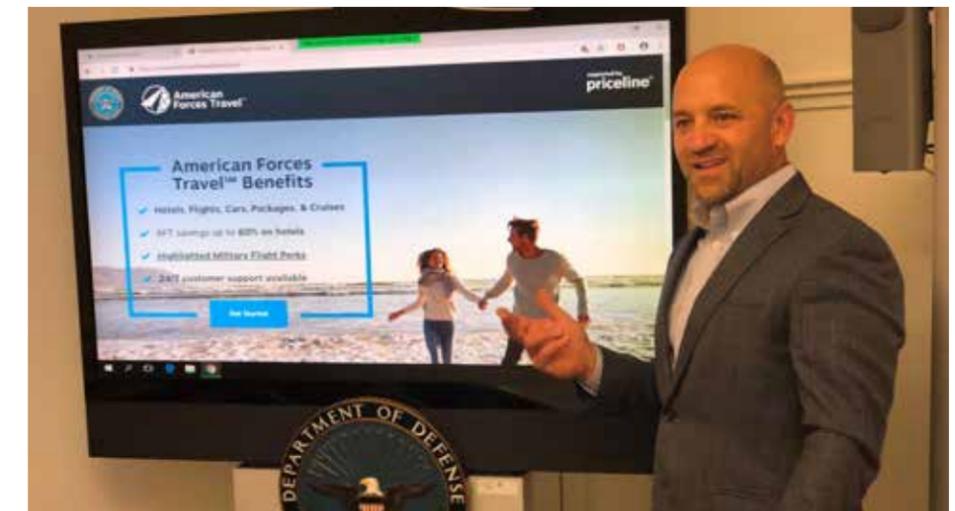
shoppers more than \$600,000 and generated \$425,000 to improve quality-of-life initiatives for the DoD,” he said.

Sorg said American Forces Travel.com is unique in that the Joint Service’s team worked with a commercial company to make it happen. “We entered into a no-cost contract with Priceline to create the American Forces Travel website,” he said. “Priceline has the expertise in this area so we thought it didn’t make sense for us to reinvent the wheel. Priceline maintains the site and pays the services a commission for every booking made. We take that money and put it into quality-of-life initiatives for our service members.”

He said the site recently began offering discount event tickets in addition to discount travel options. “We started out with travel and we just added event tickets to the site and the response has been great. Anybody who has ordered event tickets from some of the popular web sites knows that there are often a lot of additional fees tacked on at the end. Patrons of AmericanForcesTravel.com won’t find these on our site so they’ll save a lot of money on their event tickets.”

Sorg said that since the internet is now easily the most popular way to research and book travel, it made sense for the Joint Services to offer an MWR discount travel website. He said the success of AmericanForcesTravel.com should lead to more collaborative and transformative MWR efforts in the future.

Check out AmericanForcesTravel.com for eligibility requirements and to sign up.



“That was a very emotional moment for me, but it was an amazing feeling knowing I had found my father’s family.”

- Capt. Sandrela Magnuson



Magnuson and one of her cousins enjoy spending time together during the captain’s recent visit to Egypt.

knowing I had found my father’s family.”

Magnuson found out she had two aunts, three uncles and 13 cousins she had never met. During the numerous phone calls that would follow with her new family, Aly would serve as an interpreter and help bridge the language gap.

“I asked about my dad and they told me he had returned to Egypt in 1995, but he was very weak and wasn’t in good health at all when he arrived,” Magnuson said. “He didn’t want to talk much about what he had been through in Iraq, but he was trying to get all of his papers in order so he could go to Spain and look for me. Fourteen days into his time back in Egypt, he wasn’t feeling well and he went to the doctor. While he was there he collapsed and died. He was only 43.”

“I hated finding out that my dad was dead, but it was comforting to know that he was with his family and that he died in Egypt. For years I had it in my head that he died in prison in Iraq and he was buried in a mass grave there.”

Magnuson also learned that the “crime” her father was arrested for was not meeting a deadline for making a repair at the hotel, even though he informed the Iraqi officials that the materials they sent him for the repair were not of high-enough quality to do the job correctly. Additionally, she said some of her relatives believe her father may have been poisoned before

he was finally released and allowed to return to Egypt.

Magnuson flew to Cairo and visited her new family in the small town of El-Mahalla El-Kubra in December. “Aly’s dad was there to meet me at the airport and he escorted me to my family. There was a whole mob of people there with flowers and balloons. I can’t even explain how it made me feel. With blood family, even if you’ve never met someone, there’s an instant connection there. I can’t even describe it.”

The captain spent 13 days in Egypt getting to know her new relatives. “It was an amazing trip,” she said. “We did all of the touristy things and it was an incredible cultural experience, but the best part was I got to visit my dad’s grave. The fact that he died with his family and is buried in his family’s cemetery was huge for me. It brought a lot of closure. I’ve never cried so hard in my life. It came out of nowhere. I guess there were a lot of pent-up emotions I had deep inside of me that I never let out. When I got there, I was finally able to let them out. It brought me peace.”

“Another great thing that happened was my cousin gave me six pieces of art my dad created. I was amazed at the level of talent he had. It’s my goal to display them in an art gallery some day along with his story.”

While Magnuson has a whole new family in Egypt now, she said she feels like her stateside family has grown as well.

“Aly is like a brother to me,” she said. “I could never thank him and his dad enough for helping me find closure. Aly and I are trying to coordinate a trip to Egypt next year where we can go together. It’s amazing the people you meet and the networks you develop as part of the Air Force Reserve. Joining the Reserve was one of the best decisions I ever made.”

Nour Eldin said he was more than happy to help his new friend with her quest to find out about her father. “I felt like it was the least I could do,” he said. “I knew my dad had the connections in Egypt to find her family and he was willing to do the research. I made a great new friend in the process.”

Tremain said he will never forget this deployment. “Through the friendships and networking that developed while we were deployed, we were able to introduce two people who journeyed through one of the most intense family reintegration stories I’ve ever heard. This whole event came as a result of randomly established friendships during our deployment that radically changed the lives of two people.”

Answering the Call

When Mother Nature strikes, emergency preparedness liaison officers are there

By Col. Ann Knabe

Col. Cynthia Ritchey, an Air Force Reservist who serves as an emergency preparedness liaison officer, uses five fingers as she ticks off the hurricanes she's worked.

Her first was Hurricane Matthew in 2016, when she deployed to Dobbins Air Reserve Base in Georgia and served as the sole military liaison to Federal Emergency Management Agency rescue personnel.

She directed base reception, staging, onward movement and integration for 10 urban search and rescue teams, while coordinating hazardous push packages and securing mission essential landing permits for rotary aircraft.

In 2017, Ritchey deployed for

Hurricane Irma, which was quickly followed by Hurricane Maria. She found herself at Dobbins again, this time coordinating massive amounts of airlift operations of equipment and commodities, including White House cargo. Her work directly contributed to the largest disaster air mission in U.S. history (4,600 sorties) and the longest sustained domestic air mission of food and water delivery in U.S. history (62 days).

Ritchey deployed again in 2018. This time she was gone for 45 days, working at two locations in South Carolina, supporting recovery efforts following Hurricanes Florence and Michael.

Ritchey is just one of 88 senior officers assigned to the 1st Air Force National

Security Emergency Preparedness Directorate. Referred to as EPLOs, these Reservists come from a variety of Air Force specialties. They often log more than 60 days a year responding to events.

The directorate facilitates and coordinates provisioning of U.S. Air Force capabilities for Defense Support of Civil Authorities missions addressing natural and manmade disasters and emergencies.

EPLOs provide Air Force leadership critical to the situational awareness to and from the field.

With an emphasis on domestic operations, the EPLO role differs from most Reserve assignments that include worldwide deployments. The DSCA mission provides U.S. military assets and

personnel to respond to catastrophic events that overwhelm local and state civilian response capabilities.

EPLOs also support designated special security events and other domestic activities.

"The commonality with all of the missions is a need for proactive relationship building," said Joe Sanders, NSEP deputy director. "EPLOs need to be on the ground, building relationships and training with their interagency partners and sister-service EPLOs before disaster strikes. This means proactively networking and building trust with local, state, regional and federal authorities and agencies.

"You wouldn't show up to play in the Super Bowl without practicing. Similarly, you wouldn't effectively respond in the DSCA world without previously establishing relationships with key stakeholders."

Requesting a military response for domestic contingencies is done through a formal process established between

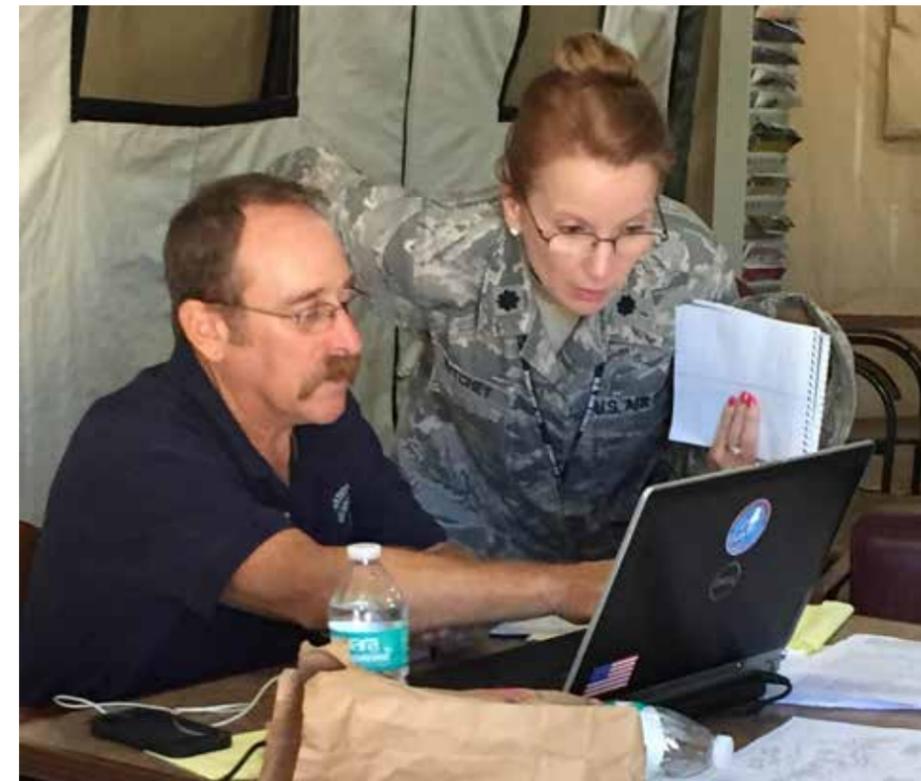
FEMA and the Department of Defense. In general, disaster response always starts at the local level, and elevates from the county to state if needed. If a state exhausts all its resources or lacks specific capabilities, it may turn to the federal government for assistance.

During disasters, EPLOs also serve at the National Response Coordination Center and 10 Regional Response Coordination Centers. Located in Washington D.C., the NRCC coordinates resource deployment, provides operational support to regional and field structures, and helps develop strategic plans.

In contrast, RRCCs coordinate regional response efforts, including establishing initial federal objectives, providing federal support to the affected states and deploying teams to the Joint Field Office.

Some EPLO work is associated with planned events. The officers play a key role in National Security Special Events as defined by the Department of Homeland Security. NSSE events include the United Nations General Assembly,

Then-Lt. Col. Cynthia Ritchey, an emergency preparedness liaison officer with the Air Force Reserve, meets with a member of the incident support urban search and rescue team during Hurricane Matthew. As part of their planning, the two discussed movement in and out of the disaster area in North and South Carolina.



A Snapshot of EPLO Support in 2018



2018 proved to be a busy year for emergency preparedness liaison officers. Air Force Reserve EPLOs supported 252 events, coordinating with thousands of local, state and federal partners to refine and rehearse disaster response posture and procedures.

They also trained 5,483 Defense Department workers (including every base commander) on Defense Support of Civil Authorities processes and missions.

EPLO deployments translated into 113 Federal Emergency Management Agency mission assignments requiring Department of Defense capabilities to complete, totaling more than \$300 million in support. Highlights include:

- **Fire Season** – Three EPLOs worked with the National Interagency Fire Center to certify 42 Modular Airborne Fire Fighting Systems crews, shaping wild land firefighting strategy for the season. This enabled drops of more than 793,000 gallons of retardant on wildfires, supporting 30,000 people fighting 143 fires across 2 million acres.
- **Hurricane Olivia (Hawaii) and Super Typhoon Mangkhut (Guam)** – Three EPLOs deployed, processing 19 mission assignments that provided U.S. Pacific Command with \$1.7 million in relief support for 5.5 million victims of the two massive storms.

Continued on page 24

Continued from page 23

A Snapshot of EPLO Support in 2018

• **Hurricane Forence** – 13 EPLOs deployed and processed 59 mission assignments, leading to \$144 million in relief funds and movement of 11,000 tons of supplies to victims. Through their work, EPLOs staged 2,031 trailers through four installation support bases, facilitating the distribution of 13 million meals, 15 million bottles of waters and 121 generators to North and South Carolina storm victims.

• **Hurricane Michael** – 35 EPLOs processed 15 mission assignments, securing \$3.05 million in relief funds, providing victims with 5.5 million meals, 6 million bottles of water, 10,000 cots, 20,000 tarps and 65 generators. They established two base support installations and helped establish alternate work site locations for the DSCA cell, ensuring no mission stoppages.

• **Super Typhoon Yutu** – Two EPLOs processed 20 mission assignments and 12 mission assignment tasking orders, apportioning \$162 million for DOD disaster relief operations. Five EPLOs deployed to Guam and Saipan. Through their work, EPLOs facilitated a 3,858-mile air bridge from Hawaii to Saipan and a 1,369-mile air bridge from Guam to Japan. Through their efforts, power and water were restored to 55,000 people, 91 generators were installed, 24 temporary shelters were erected and more than 13,000 cubic yards of road debris was cleared. The super typhoon was the Earth's strongest storm in 2018.



From left, Army Aviation Liaison Officer Lt. Col. Glenn McRill looks on as Air Force Reserve EPLOs Col. Shannon Yenchsky and Col. David Shabady discuss aviation mission assignments during Exercise Vibrant Response in Lansing, Michigan. Yenchsky serves as the lead EPLO for FEMA Region V, and Shabady is the state EPLO for Michigan.

presidential nominating conventions and presidential inaugurations.

EPLOs also support events that meet a specific Special Events Assessment Rating. An event's SEAR level depends on the number of people gathering for a planned event. For example, EPLOs annually support the Boston Marathon and Super Bowl.

From the EPLO perspective, there are many opportunities to serve in state-side missions with a joint, interagency environment.

Col. Andy Crum, a state EPLO for Indiana for the last three years, has worked across the DSCA spectrum. In 2017, he deployed to FEMA Region II and supported Hurricane Maria relief efforts. Less than a year later, he worked the Indianapolis 500, a SEAR level 1 event.

In between, he regularly met with Indiana state emergency managers and the Indiana National Guard and participated in DSCA exercises.

The Air Force Reservist, who previously served as a pilot, said he finds his EPLO work "meaningful and rewarding because of its emphasis on the homeland mission."

Other EPLOs appreciate the flexibility and opportunity for career growth. After working for years as an Air Force

Academy liaison officer, Col. Shannon Yenchsky joined NSEP four years ago as a state EPLO for Wisconsin. She now serves as a regional EPLO in FEMA Region V.

Since joining NSEP, she has deployed to Guam for Typhoon Yutu and served in the Minnesota Emergency Operations Center during Super Bowl 52.

Yenchsky said part of the reason being an EPLO is so rewarding is because of the different opportunities to serve and the tight-knit group of EPLOs in NSEP. "We're a low-density career field," Yenchsky said. "You really get to know your counterparts and there's an inherent commitment in our mission to support local communities."

While EPLOs must maintain a constant state of readiness so they can deploy on short notice, it takes more than checked boxes and courses to be effective in the field.

"EPLOs need to be problem solvers," Sanders said. "And they need to be critical thinkers with mental agility. But above all, they need to be relationship builders. That's the core of our business in emergency preparedness – establishing relationships and working together before something bad happens."

(Knabe is a Reserve Citizen Airman serving as an EPLO in Illinois.)



Navigating the retirement application process

Retiring from the Air Force Reserve is a significant, emotional event, filled with anticipation and uncertainty. Because Airmen only retire once in their lifetime, they have no past experience to serve as a resource, and typically learn what is required as they go through the process.

There are basic foundational requirements that must be met before beginning this process. Therefore, it is important for Airmen to ask themselves a few questions. First, do I have a 20-year verification letter confirming I am eligible to apply for retirement pay? Second, did I serve on a deployment for 90 days or more or serve in a capacity that allows me to apply for a reduced retirement pay age? Finally, what is needed to apply for retirement pay?

When Airmen have answered these questions they will be better prepared to navigate the application process.

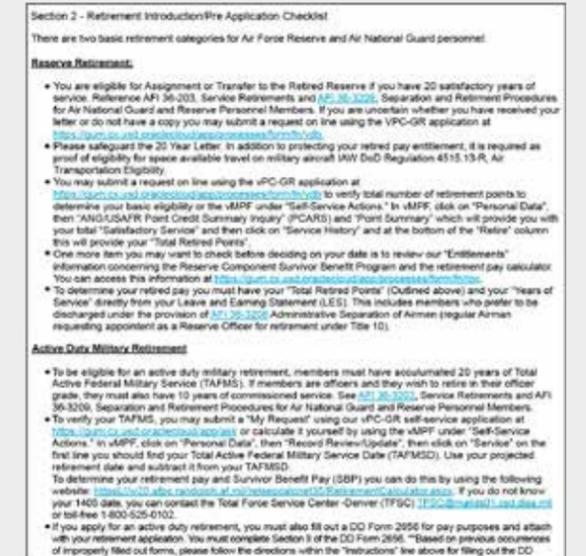
HQ ARPC has developed two web-based applications located within the Virtual Personnel Center that simplifies the process for retirees applying for retired pay; whether at age 60 or a reduced retirement pay age, if eligible. Eligibility for a reduced retired pay age is dependent on qualifying periods of service.

The RRPA application, within vPC, automatically screens service data for qualifying and non-qualifying periods of service. It then displays the available data and allows retirees to review for accuracy. If the data is inaccurate, it allows for submission of relevant documentation in order to correct inaccuracies contained in the record that affect the eligibility date of pay. No longer do retirees have to submit every set of orders for a deployment or extended tour qualifying for a reduced retirement pay age.

HQ ARPC introduced the retirement pay application in April to streamline the process for applicants. Now retirees are able to submit the required DD Form 2656, via the web, as the application navigates the retiree through the process, reducing errors and preventing incomplete submissions.

The retirement application process culminates when the member receives a retirement order which allows him or her to apply for health-care benefits under Tricare. The retirement order is simultaneously sent to DFAS to establish a pay account for disbursement upon the retiree effective pay date.

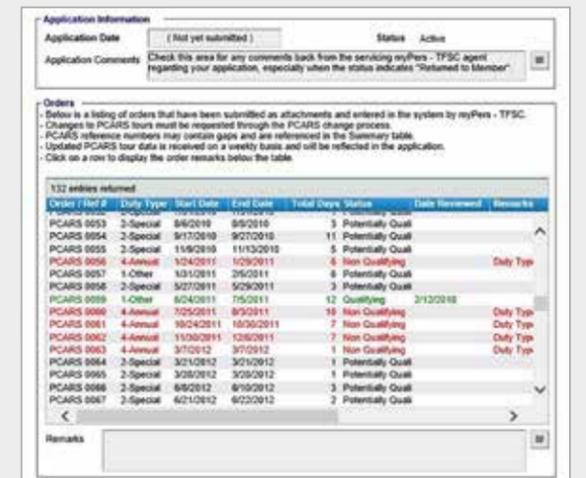
HQ ARPC strives to provide exceptional service at all stages of the Airman lifecycle. For more information and instructional videos on the retirement process visit www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/retirement/ and send your feedback to arpc.pa@us.af.mil.



1. The retirement application in the Virtual Personnel Center provides instructions on the appropriate retirement type to select and what documents are required to apply for retirement.



2. Once the correct application is selected, the retiree is led through a series of mandatory fields to provide his or her information. Retirees are unable to submit an application without all required fields completed and documents uploaded.



3. In the Reduced Retirement Pay Age application, qualifying, non-qualifying and potentially qualifying orders are pulled directly from AROWS-R. To correct gaps in service history or missing point credit summary reference numbers, Reservists are able to scan orders or upload orders through the application.



Photos show Master Sgt. Allen Clutter, a flight engineer attached to the 514th Flight Test Squadron, performing a comprehensive pre-flight functional flight check on a U.S. Navy C-130 Hercules at Hill Air Force Base, Utah.

Enlisted aircrew members critical to C-130 Hercules flight testing



Story and Photos By Cynthia Griggs

Without much fanfare, Air Force Reserve enlisted aircrew members stationed at Hill Air Force Base, Utah, are helping make sure C-130s that come out of depot maintenance are ready to go back into service. These Reservists showcase that the Reserve is a lethal, operational force, which provides critical capabilities both at home and abroad.

“There aren’t many people who do what we do,” said Master Sgt. Allen Clutter, a C-130 flight engineer assigned to the 514th Flight Test Squadron at Hill.

Clutter and loadmaster Senior Master Sgt. Nicholas Palmer are Air Force Reservists on active-duty status. Clutter said they have one of the best enlisted assignments in the Air Force.

Clutter and Palmer are part of the aviation team whose job is to perform functional check flight tests on the C-130 Hercules aircraft coming out of depot status from the Ogden Air Logistics Complex at Hill.

Flight engineers serve as the link between the aircraft and the pilot. They monitor all aircraft engine and control systems in flight, compute takeoff and landing data, and perform preflight and post-flight inspections when the aircraft is away from its home station. During the functional check flight, they perform comprehensive in-flight checks.

Their system knowledge is critical to the safe and effective operation of the aircraft.

Loadmasters control and inspect the back of the aircraft, ensuring the safety of the people and cargo by computing weight and balance and creating cargo and passenger load plans. They also perform other mission-specific tasks and handle airdrop duties. In addition, they function as the lookout in the back of the aircraft for functional check flight engine shut downs and emergency landing gear extensions.

“Certification to perform functional check flights is a qualification that is unique and reserved only for the very experienced and for those with high flight time hours,” said Palmer, the squadron’s most experienced loadmaster.

Besides Clutter and Palmer, the 514th is manned with two additional flight engineers, Senior Master Sgt. Thomas Butts and Master Sgt. Jason Witherspoon, and an additional loadmaster, Master Sgt. Christopher Caminiti.

Combined, the five enlisted aircrew members have more than 90 years of experience and more than 10,000 hours of flight time in various versions of the C-130.

The C-130 Hercules is a versatile aircraft with a long history dating back to the 1950s. Clutter said he is proud to be a crew member on an aircraft with such a storied history.

“It’s the greatest job I’ve ever had in my whole career,” Clutter said. “Checking the functionality of the aircraft is amazing. The aircraft has done so many things over its life and to be able to return these machines to the warfighter gives me a sense of satisfaction.”

(Griggs is assigned to the 75th Air Base Wing public affairs office at Hill Air Force Base, Utah.)



Running with Faith



An Airman's journey to redemption

Story and Photos By Jamal Sutter

Standing there with a knife in hand and cold-hearted from the most devastating news of his life, Master Sgt. Brandon “Troy” Keel contemplated an irreversible decision. Looking into his wife’s eyes after learning she was pregnant with another man’s baby, he couldn’t fathom living anymore. Suicide, he thought, was imminent.

Six years later, Keel is not only still alive, but is in as good a space mentally and spiritually as he’s ever been, he said. Since that dark moment in July 2013, the Reserve Citizen Airman has a new outlook on life altogether, and he owes it all to running.

A month after learning of his wife’s betrayal and sunken into a deep depression, Keel, then 38, said he was going through one of his social media newsfeeds when he saw a post promoting a local running group. Needing something to help relieve his stress, he decided to give it a try.

Keel felt welcomed immediately. Group members showered him with belonging and encouragement; and from that instant, he was sold.

“August 21, 2013, is what I call my ‘runiversary,’” Keel said. “That’s the day I joined a local running group. You can say that’s the day I started my running journey.”

In no time at all, he began his routines. While running with a friend, he found out about another group that hosted a 5-kilometer training class. The class offered a 12-week program that incorporated running training with Bible study.

“It was important because I didn’t realize ... how, basically, running and my spirituality go hand-in-hand,” he said. “And not only that, but also God has introduced me to people who I can turn to if I was struggling or anything like that.”

At first, Keel said he wasn’t sure what he got himself into. His new path of physical fitness was a far cry from anything he devoted himself to in the past.

“I hated it,” he explained. “It was something that really didn’t interest me, I never really considered myself athletic; I never really played sports in high school or anything of the sort.”

But things were different now, and Keel got stronger; running



Master Sgt. Brandon Keel, 413th Force Support Flight force management NCO in charge, poses for a photo at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. In 2013, Keel joined running groups to combat his depression after finding out his wife got pregnant by another man.

got easier. On top of that, it gave him a peace of mind he desperately needed. And with a fresh perspective and new confidence in himself, Keel felt ready to get back on the dating scene. That’s when he met his current wife, Adney, on a blind date set up by friends of theirs. The two played mini golf, rode go-carts and did other activities.

“She never played laser tag before,” he recalled. “I had and she ended up whooping by butt.”



Top, Keel runs at Robins Air Force Base. Before taking running seriously in 2013, Keel struggled with Air Force physical training tests and was on the verge of separation from the Air Force Reserve. Nearly a year after he began his running training, he scored his first 90 on a PT test. Since then, he hasn’t scored below a 90. Below, Keel stands before a wall of race medals, certificates and memorabilia.

They had much in common and bonded quickly. She, too, experienced a rough first marriage, and they both felt like they should have married each other previously. It was nearly two years later when they tied the knot, but from the beginning, Adney played a significant factor in Keel’s pastime.

“She has been an instrumental part of my running ministry,” he said. “She’s always been there for me. She’s been very supportive. She’s been out to several races to either cheer me on or cheer my fellow runners on.”

Keel said he sometimes feels guilty for spending so much time with his running group. But Adney said his time with them

makes the time he spends with her that much more special.

“It’s important to a relationship when we each have something that’s, kind of, just our own — something that is individual for each person,” she said. “But running is his thing, and when he has that thing, and when he has that freedom to be himself, then our time together is more quality.”

In addition to gaining new friendships through his groups and helping build confidence to once again find love, running has also saved Keel’s professional career. Before taking running seriously, Keel struggled with Air Force physical training tests. He failed a few due to the running portion and was on the verge of separating from the Air Force Reserve if his scores didn’t improve. Keel said he knew it all paid off when he scored his first 90 on a PT test, nearly a year after he began his running training.

“I remember that run,” he said. “It was really easy. It seemed like a walk in the park, and I look at my fitness scores from when I was failing and I’m like ‘I was that slow, but now I’m running this fast?’ So that was a turning point and ever since then, I haven’t scored below a 90.”

Now, Keel is a source of inspiration for Airmen at his office within the 413th Force Support Flight at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. He sometimes provides running advice or paces individuals looking to improve their running times. When it comes to his running group, he’s a trainer, organizer and overall spiritual motivator.

“He’s just a very encouraging person, and he’s very, very deep into his faith,” said Ali Stubbs, one of Keel’s friends from the running group. “It’s not about Troy. It’s about all of us, and he just wants us to have the same passion for running.”

Keel’s desire to serve and spread good faith is what led him to another selfless opportunity; one that matched him with a special-needs child named Hunter. Through a non-profit organization, Keel is able to run in Hunter’s honor and communicate with him and his family on his running progress. In May 2015, Keel traveled to Hunter’s hometown in Ohio to participate in a half-marathon and meet his family for the first time in person.

“I’ll tell you this,” he said. “That was just an emotional experience—running 13.1 miles in Columbus, Ohio, thinking that I’m doing this for my buddy in his home turf. I’ll admit, I was about in tears running on the route.”

Keel has participated in more than 80 organized running events, ranging from 5Ks to full marathons. He said he doesn’t have any grand, long-term goals when it comes to running; he just wants to continue helping those in need.

“I want to be there for other people,” he said. “It gives me high satisfaction knowing that using my experiences of what I’ve been through and what I’ve learned gives me the ability to help my running group or help my fellow [Airmen] meet their accomplishments and their goals.”

(Sutter is assigned to the 413th Flight Test Group’s public affairs office.)

'Wise Guy' Returns

Reservists help bring B-52 back to life

By Master Sgt. Ted Daigle and Jamal Sutter

When then-Capt. Aaron Hedrick helped deliver the B-52 Stratofortress nicknamed "Wise Guy" to the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, for decommissioning in 2008, he took the time to scribble a message on a clipboard and leave it in the cockpit.

"AMARG, this is 60-034, a cold warrior that stood sentinel over America from the darkest days of the Cold War to

the global fight against terror. Take good care of her ... until we need her again," he wrote as the plane was left to bake in the desert at the AMARG "Boneyard."

Hedrick, now a lieutenant colonel with the active-duty 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, couldn't have known it at the time, but the Air Force would indeed need "Wise Guy" again.

Earlier this year, the Air Force brought "Wise Guy" back to life

and returned her to service at Barksdale, home of both the 2nd BW and the Air Force Reserve's 307th BW. The Air Force decided to bring "Wise Guy" back into service after another B-52 crashed in 2016 at Andersen AFB, Guam.

Col. Robert Burgess, 307th Operations Group commander, was the pilot for the flight from Davis-Monthan to Barksdale on May 14 that began the next phase of "Wise Guy's" life protecting U.S. interests at home and abroad.

With more than 17,000 flight hours in its history and more than a decade baking in the desert, getting "Wise Guy" air worthy required help from multiple sources.

"This is a command-wide effort, with Reservists and active duty offering a great deal of experience," Burgess said. "It took four months to get ready, so it was really a small effort on the aircrew side and a major effort on the maintainer side."

The bomber had a team of 13 to 20 maintainers working on it any given time, said Master Sgt. Steven Sorge, a 307th Maintenance Squadron fuels system mechanic.

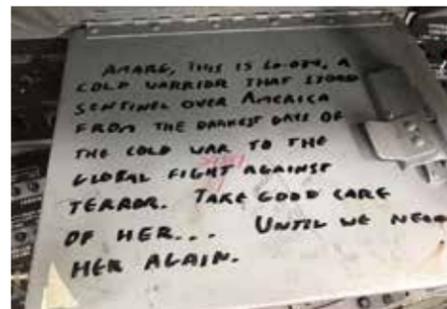
"The jet had cracks in the rear landing gear and was missing two engines," he said. "It also needed all its fuel cells and hoses replaced, as well as its tires."

"Wise Guy" also needed its egress system overhauled, said Master Sgt. Greg Barnhill, 307th Maintenance Squadron egress shop supervisor. An egress system allows the aircrew to bail out of the aircraft in case of an emergency.

"All of our parts for repairing the ejection seats were basically in a five-gallon bucket," he said. "It was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle."



Burgess is flanked by Lt. Col. Eric Barkley and Lt. Col. Stephen Miracle before they flew the aircraft to Barksdale, where it will receive further maintenance. (courtesy photo)



Bottom, Col. Robert Burgess, 307th Operations Group commander, gives a thumbs up after flying a B-52 Stratofortress, nicknamed "Wise Guy," to Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. The bomber had been at the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, since 2008. (Master Sgt. Ted Daigle) Top, a note found inside the cockpit of "Wise Guy." (courtesy photo)

Fortunately, maintainers like Sorge and Barnhill have a deep well of experience, having worked on B-52s for more than two decades. They also had the advantage of total force integration, which combines the experience of Reserve Citizen Airman from the 307th BW with active-duty Airmen from the 2nd BW.

"TFI worked great out there for us," Barnhill said. "The active-duty Airmen in our shop and those from the 2nd BW worked well as a team and were a big help."

Once maintainers had completed the necessary repairs, they ran multiple tests on the engines, landing gear and fuel and egress systems to ensure the jet was flight worthy. From there, it was all up to the aircrew to get the bomber to Barksdale. The three-man crew, with more than 10,000 flying hours between them, flew the B-52 low and slow all the way to Louisiana.

With the bomber safely at Barksdale, Barnhill had time to reflect on his role in saving "Wise Guy" from becoming a historical footnote.

"Bringing a bomber out of AMARG is a once-in-a-lifetime chance and I have been able to do it twice," he said. "It's just an honor to bring it back into service."

Barnhill was also involved when the Air Force brought the first B-52H from the Boneyard back to service. That

Stratofortress, nicknamed "Ghost Rider," was brought to Barksdale in 2015.

For the "Wise Guy" flight, Burgess was joined by Lt. Col. Stephen Miracle, 10th Flight Test Squadron B-52 flight commander. The 10th FLTS is stationed at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma, and conducts routine functional check flights and acceptance flights in B-1, B-52, E-3 and KC-135 aircraft. The squadron is a geographically separated unit of the 413th Flight Test Group, stationed at Robins AFB, Georgia.

Miracle and Hedrick flew B-52s alongside each other more than a decade ago at Minot AFB, North Dakota. After seeing his name signed on "Wise Guy," Miracle said he reached out to Hedrick to talk about his foretelling call.

"It almost is kind of a prophetic thing that he wrote that on there," he said. "He wasn't all that surprised to see one (being restored), and it's just neat that it happened to be his airplane that he wrote that note on."

Curious to see if he personally had any flight time with the previously-retired aircraft, Miracle checked his log books and found out he too flew the bomber while at Minot. Miracle last flew "Wise Guy" on Oct. 29, 2007, about 10 months before the aircraft was originally sent to the desert of Arizona.

Miracle said he wasn't shocked by the

maintenance work done and also praised AMARG for helping get "Wise Guy" back in the sky.

"They've got it down to a science for sure," he said. "Regeneration, it's in the name of AMARG. It's not uncommon for them to regenerate an aircraft. It probably is uncommon to regenerate one that's this big and this complex.

"We took off on the very first attempt," he said. "That's difficult to do in a B-52 that flies every week, so to have done it with an airplane that sat for almost 11 years in storage – to crank up and get out of there in one shot was pretty impressive."

Miracle also has ties to "Ghost Rider." After maintainers disassembled, inspected and repaired "Ghost Rider," Miracle performed functional check flights on the B-52 to ensure its reliability and safety.

He has approximately 2,000 flight hours in the B-52 and has been with the 10th FLTS since 2015. He credited his B-52 counterparts at the 10th FLTS for assisting him throughout the process of the "Wise Guy" mission and said his crew will perform functional check flights on the aircraft once required maintenance is complete, similar to "Ghost Rider."

(Daigle is assigned to the 307th BW public affairs office. Sutter is assigned to the 413th FTG public affairs office.)

Staff Sgt. Kevin Greene, a Reserve Citizen Airman assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing, Patrick Air Force Base, Florida, chases after a ball during a wheelchair basketball game at the 2019 Department of Defense Warrior Games. Greene competed in cycling, wheelchair basketball, sitting volleyball, rowing and track. For more on the games, check out dodwarriorgames.com. For more photos, see page 13. (Staff Sgt. Sahara L. Fales)

