A COUNTRY AT WAR

Reservists on the front lines in battle against COVID-19
The reason the Air Force Reserve exists is to provide manpower and capabilities to support and defend this nation. This mandate spans the entire spectrum of operations, so we must be prepared to respond to any potential scenario. As a military organization, our primary focus is combat and operational readiness. However, threats to national security are not limited to adversarial forces. We cannot limit our focus to just combat readiness. Ultimately, our mission is to respond when needed, to any scenario or requirement.

Our world is unpredictable, and the most powerful and volatile force on the planet is nature. Often, when we are called upon to execute a rapid response to an unplanned event, the mission is defense support of civil authorities or disaster relief, rather than combat operations.

Less frequent, but more insidious, are global pandemics, such as the outbreak of COVID-19, which continues to produce widespread effects that require a more complex response.

Responding to COVID-19 is like running a marathon, not a sprint. We can neither predict nor prepare for every possible scenario that may arise. We can maximize our ability to respond and to operate in non-standard circumstances by remaining resilient, flexible and adaptive.

In addition to providing support to Americans in our pandemic response efforts, the Air Force Reserve must protect our Airmen and their families from the COVID-19 virus, while continuing to advance the Air Force Reserve strategic priorities: prioritizing strategic depth and accelerating readiness, developing resilient leaders, and reforming the organization.

In order to minimize the impact to our combat readiness and meet our daily mission requirements, we must continue pursuing alternative and innovative ways to operate.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the criticality of empowering local commanders to act independently. The severity of the outbreak has varied from region to region. Some locations have been hit harder than others. Therefore, the risk to our wings and unit personnel vary with geographic location. This scenario is further complicated by the differences in mission requirements between units. Certain tasks can be completed from anywhere with ease, whereas others can only be accomplished on location. Because of the uneven distribution of COVID-19 cases and the unique characteristics of each of our units, there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to the pandemic.

Rather, we must tailor preventative measures by location to include when and how to gradually return personnel to their work centers. Local command teams are best suited to make these decisions, because they have the most comprehensive understanding of the unit, its mission, the unit population and the local situation. So rather than issue specific guidance for the entire Air Force Reserve, I provided commander’s intent in response to the pandemic, trusting our command teams to do what is best for their unit.

As always, caring for our Airmen and our families is paramount. We must continue with preventative measures to protect our personnel from COVID-19 and mitigate the spread of this virus.

As states ease shelter-in-place restrictions, it is imperative to maintain proper hygiene protocols and standards. We must keep our Airmen well informed about the pandemic and provide them with resources. In situations such as these, it is important for every Airman to maintain strong situational awareness by remaining informed on both the disease and conditions in their local area. Gather information from reliable references, such as the Center for Disease Control, state health agencies, and Department of Defense websites.

If we continue to stay the course throughout this marathon pandemic, we can ensure our Air Force Reserve remains ready and healthy. Stay safe and continue to aim high, Airmen!
Six Air Force Reserve physician assistants who deployed to New York City to serve on the front lines of America’s battle against the COVID-19 coronavirus pose for a photo in Times Square. Left to right are Maj. William Steele, Lt. Col. Troy Houston, Capt. Heather Dugan, Capt. Andrew Cruz, Col. Ari Fisher and Lt. Col. Matt Bershinsky. Hundreds of Reserve medics have been mobilized to help care for Americans during the pandemic. For the story, see page 6.

In these trying times, Reserve keps on flying, fighting, winning #ReserveReady #ReserveResilient

How Reservists are staying connected during pandemic #ReserveResilient

How the Reserve got 125 medics to the front lines in 48 hours . . .

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Citizen Airmen medics on the front lines in battle against COVID-19

From Staff Reports

Ever since President Donald Trump signed an executive order authorizing mobilization of the Reserve Component on March 27, Reserve Citizen Airmen medics have served on the front lines of the nation’s battle against the COVID-19 coronavirus.

“The Air Force Reserve stands ready to surge in support of the COVID-19 response,” Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee, chief of the Air Force Reserve and commander of Air Force Reserve Command, said on the day the executive order was signed. “This is an unprecedented mission and COVID-19 is a destructive adversary. We must do all we can to take care of Americans.”

Reservists Mobilized in 48 Hours

Just days after the mobilization was authorized, Air Force Reserve Command’s Force Generation Center received its first request for support.

Within 48 hours of notification, the Reserve mobilized more than 120 medical specialists across the nation to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, to help with the fight against COVID-19 in New York City, the epicenter of the pandemic.

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

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

The FGC ensured the Air Force Reserve volunteers were delivered to the fight in a timely manner.

“Using SELRES member volunteers enabled the FGC to do a quick-turn to meet this first tasking coming to the Reserve component from the Department of Defense,” said Brig. Gen. Stacey Scarisbrick, FGC commander. “It’s important to get our Reservists out the door quickly to help combat the spread of COVID-19 and take care of Americans.”

The initial group of mobilized Reserve medics comprised both unit Reservists and individual mobilization augmentees.

“From our IMAs to our Reserve medics, I couldn’t be prouder of this incredible Reserve team who stepped up quickly to answer our nation’s call,” Scobee said.

Scobee said, “The FGC team and our wing commanders got this mobilization moving in the right direction within 48 hours to take care of Americans in the fight against COVID-19.”

It isn’t easy to mobilize civilians into military status normally, much less within two days. However, the leadership across the Air Force Reserve leaned forward to pre-identify volunteers from the Selected Reserve – Reserve Citizen Airmen currently actively serving in the Reserve.

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Through the volunteer process, members were screened for...
Base, Ohio. Group members referred to themselves as the Aeromedical Staging Squadron, Wright-Patterson Air Force "We train on a variety of medical skillsets in multiple areas, so we have the knowledge we need anytime the nation calls on us," Jones said. "I've been called up once before for Hurricane Katrina. It's nice to have been in (service) long enough to be used again in this capacity."

Also called upon for her medical expertise was Maj. Katherine Trout, who works full time as a registered nurse in an intensive care unit in Salt Lake City, and part time in the 419th MDS.

"I've been in the medical field for a long time, and deployed several times in the military. I'm definitely prepared," she said.

First Lt. Joseph O'Brien was another Reservist who volunteered for the first mobilization. "I was sleeping when I received the phone call to report to MacDill in four hours," O'Brien, a clinical nurse from the 927th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, MacDill AFB, Florida, said. "I live a couple hours away, so I only had a couple hours to finish packing and say goodbye to my wife and child."

As an emergency room nurse, O'Brien said he was ready to get to work in the coronavirus hot spot.

"This is what we train for," he said. "I am ready to help fight this fight and get our country back to some scene of normalcy."

Tech. Sgt. David Rudd, a respiratory technician assigned to the 433rd Medical Squadron, Joint Base San Antonio–Lackland, Texas, who deployed, said in his 12 years in the military he’s never seen such a short turnaround for a mobilization and deployment.

"The fact that we were able to get the phone call Friday night at 8 p.m. and then boots leaving at 10 a.m. Sunday; I’ve never seen that," Rudd said. "It’s amazing how all of us were able to get ready so quickly, and it shows what our country is capable of. I took an oath when I became a respiratory practitioner to help people. We’re all medical and we’re willing to help."
Maj. Reginald Whittington, 433rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron clinical nurse and mobilized Reservist, said that despite the unknown, he felt ready to face the challenges ahead.

“We are trained to expect the unexpected,” Whittington said. “I’m looking forward to treating patients and helping people, and I’m ready to meet the challenge.”

Whittington said he’s been with the 433rd AW for 13 years, and the unit has always been at the tip of the spear; but it doesn’t happen without the support of families.

“I’m extremely blessed to have a great family who appreciates what I’m doing,” he said. “I’d like to say our families are the heroes in this because they take care of our children and homes while we’re gone. So in every case, our families are the ones who are to be celebrated.”

More than 150 additional Air Force Reserve medical specialists were mobilized about two weeks after the initial call-up and deployed to support COVID-19 relief efforts in New York, New Jersey and Connecticut.

Staff Sgt. Trevor Talbert, 307th MDS aerospace medical technician, Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, was one of the deploying Airmen. A veteran of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, he said the deployment to fight COVID-19 was different from the previous ones.

“You can prepare for combat and normally see an enemy coming; now we are combatting a virus that we can’t see,” he said. “I’m still excited, because we’ve got a great group of people going and we are going to do good work.”

“I’ve never been more proud of our Reserve Citizen Airmen and how they’ve stepped up to support Americans,” Scobee said. “The Air Force Reserve is designed to provide critical rapid response and this capability is on full display as we provide support where it’s needed most.”

Aeromed Joins the Fight
About a week and a half after the first Air Force Reservists were mobilized and sent to New York City, about 100 Reserve aeromedical evacuation specialists were called to join the fight against COVID-19.

They were sent to the COVID-19 aeromedical evacuation hub that was established at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, and deployed around the globe as needed.

The primary mission for these Reservists is to provide lifesaving in-flight patient care in response to contingencies and humanitarian emergencies. These are specialized medical teams, consisting of flight nurses, aeromedical evacuation technicians and support personnel. These teams can operate on a number of U.S. Air Force aircraft.

“As Citizen Airmen, our people are playing a role in helping Americans recover from this pandemic,” said Col. Adam Willis, commander of the 315th Airlift Wing, Joint Base Charleston. “I couldn’t be more proud of the work they are doing,” he said.

About 10 of the initial aeromedical deployers came from the 403rd Wing’s 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.

“I’ve never been more proud of our Reserve Citizen Airmen and how they’ve stepped up to support Americans.”

The 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron is a unit full of professionals who are absolute experts at their jobs,” said Col. Stuart Rubio, 403rd Wing Operations Group commander. “This short-notice mobilization of our Airmen will utilize those skills and strengthen our fight against this formidable foe.”

“I am extremely proud of our Airmen who volunteered to answer our nation’s call for medical support,” said Lt. Col. Rosalind Johnson, 36th AES director of operations. “When Air Force Reserve Command put the call out for volunteers many of our unit members quickly raised their hand to help wherever they’re needed.”

“We go wherever the patients are,” said Senior Airman Emilie Canlas, 36th AES aeromedical evacuation technician. “We provide all the same services as an emergency medical technician does, but in the back of an aircraft. I am happy to help people in any way that I can, so being able to deploy and provide care is very exciting.”

Canlas said that being a single mother of two, a college student, and working full-time can be difficult; but during this time she has received all the support necessary to deploy.

“My family, college professors and employer have really stepped up and been really supportive of me, allowing me to perform my mission,” she said.

About 20 of the initial aeromedical specialists mobilized came from the 433rd AES, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas.

“We’re not only sending crews of flyers, but we’re also sending a ground crew, which includes communications personnel, our medical service corps officer and our admins, who are critical to supporting the mission,” said Lt. Col. Alex Schwan, 433rd AES chief nurse.

“They will be playing a role in the aeromedical evacuation operations team, which is the ground component that supports the aircrew movement.”

In his civilian capacity, Schwan is a primary care clinical case manager for the Veteran’s Administration at the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veteran’s Hospital in San Antonio.

This crew spans a variety of backgrounds. Maj. Tracy B. Tucker, 433rd AES flight nurse, who had a break in service between her time as an active duty enlisted Airman and returning with a commission, hasn’t deployed since Desert Storm.

“This is a whole new Air Force for me,” said Tucker. “I was an electronic technician. I worked with radio equipment, video equipment and TVs. Back in those days there were VCRs and stuff like that. It has been a long time since I deployed. I’m looking forward to it.”

When not on duty with the Reserve, Tucker is a nurse at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

“I feel blessed to be able to go in and support this operation,” said Chief Master Sgt. Jennifer Moses, aeromedical evacuation technician, 514th AES, JBMDL. “It’s an opportunity for us to take care of America and our partners.”

#ReserveReady
#ReserveResilient

(Editor's note: 1st Lt. Rachel Ingram, Tech. Sgt. Peter Dean, Tech. Sgt. Samantha Mathison, Tech. Sgt. Christopher Carranza, Master Sgt. Kristian Carter and Staff Sgt. Michael Hong contributed to this story.)
unseen enemy. Here are just a few of their scenes to help the nation defeat this virus. Countless more have served behind battle against the COVID-19 coronavirus. Medical specialists have been mobilized to help wage war against COVID-19.

It’s not just Reserve doctors and nurses helping wage war against COVID-19

From Staff Reports

Hundreds of Air Force Reserve medical specialists have been mobilized to serve on the front lines of America’s battle against the COVID-19 coronavirus. Countless more have served behind the scenes to help the nation defeat this unseen enemy. Here are just a few of their stories.

EPLOs Involved in the Fight from the Beginning

As communities across the nation first started to grapple with the threat of COVID-19, one group of Air Force Reservists was already fully engaged in the fight against the deadly coronavirus. Assigned to the 1st Air Force National Security Emergency Preparedness Directorate, Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers deployed across the nation to state emergency operations centers, Federal Emergency Management Agency regional offices, the National Response Coordination Center, Air Force bases and the Air Force Crisis Action Team cell at the Pentagon in the early days of the pandemic.

Some Reservists – like Col. Matthew Tondini – served on the frontlines as FEMA decided how and when to integrate Title 10 Air Force assets (active duty and reserve) into the fight.

Tondini worked 12- to 14-hour days at the New York Office of Emergency Management, maintaining visibility on all aspects of military response in the city, including the arrival of the Navy’s Comfort hospital ship, the retrofit of the Javits Convention Center to care for thousands of patients and the need for mortuary affairs augmentation.

Known as EPLOs, Reservists like Tondini come from a variety of Air Force specialties to this special-duty assignment. During regular operations, EPLOs focus on building relationships within the disaster response enterprise, and informing key stakeholders about their role in the Defense Support of Civil Authorities mission and preparing for disasters.

When crisis hits, these relationships prove crucial. “The commonality with all of the EPLO missions is proactive relationship building,” said Joe Sanders, NSEP deputy director. “Day-in and day-out, EPLOs are on the ground, building relationships, and training with their interagency partners and sister-service EPLOs before disaster strikes. These existing relationships are paying great dividends right now in the fight against COVID.”

Early on in the crisis, Col. Ralph Anthenien, the senior director to FEMA Region 3, deployed to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, where American evacuees from China’s Hubei province were quarantined in February. Over the course of several weeks, two groups of cruise ship evacuees arrived and remained in quarantine at the base. Anthenien orchestrated multi-agency support activities and directly supported the installation commander by assisting with Air Force issues that came up during the multi-agency response.

Meanwhile, almost 2,000 miles away, Col. John Trovato worked in a similar role at Travis AFB, California, when the base was selected as a quarantine area for American evacuees from Wuhan, China, and a Princess Cruise ship during February and March.

As Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga., Col. Christiano Marchiori served as a liaison between the base and Air Forces Northern, keeping them apprised of developments associated with a group of evacuees from the Grand Princess Cruise ship who were quarantined at the base.

During the month of March, EPLOs also deployed to serve on the Air Force Crisis Action Team cell in the Pentagon. Col. Rob Manz, Lt. Col. Karen Shelton-Mur and Lt. Col. Elizabeth Kelpis worked around the clock seven days a week, funneled information back and forth between the White House, the secretary of the Air Force, the chief of staff and other senior leaders.

Aircrews Deliver Medics to the Fight

As Reserve doctors, nurses and medical technicians from around the country reported for duty in and around New York City, it was often Reserve aircrews who delivered them to the country’s COVID-19 epicenter.

Within a few hours of notification, for example, an aircrew from the 452nd Air Mobility Wing, March Air Reserve Base, California, took to the skies in a C-17 Globemaster III to transport medical personnel to New York to help combat the coronavirus.

The crew departed April 5 with Air Force Reserve medics from the 940th Air Refueling Wing, Beale AFB, California, the 349th AMW, Travis AFB, California, and the 452nd AMW on board.

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It’s important to get our Reservists out the door quickly to help combat the spread of COVID-19 and take care of Americans,” said Brig. Gen. Stacey Scarsbrich, Air Force Reserve Command Force Generation Center commander.

On the same day the C-17 from March was transporting medics from the west coast, a C-130 crew from Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, was gathering and delivering medics from the east coast.

“It took a huge effort to put this all together, not only from our medical personnel, but also from our aircrews, maintenance, logistics and many others” said Col. Craig McPike, 94th Airlift Wing commander. “The response I’ve seen is amazing. Service before self, happening right before my eyes.”

The flight started with four medical specialists from the 94th Aeromedical Staging Squadron at Dobbins and one from the 413th ASTS at Robins AFB, Georgia.

After leaving Dobbins, the crew made stops at MacDill AFB, Florida, Patrick AFB, Florida, and Charleston AFB, South Carolina, to pick up more Reserve Citizen Airmen to join the fight.

“We’re here to take care of Americans, our Airmen and their loved ones, while we continue to maintain mission readiness and sustain vital operations here at Dobbins,” McPike said.

Lt. Col. Michael Eldridge, an Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer from Alaska, works in the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s National Response Coordination Center in Washington, D.C. Eldridge, deployed to support the fight against COVID-19, helped provide emergency management coordination, planning, resource deployment and collection and dissemination of disaster information—all at the national level.

MORE THAN MEDICAL

911th Airlift Wing aircrew members prepare to transport mobilized Airmen from Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania, to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, in support of the COVID-19 efforts in early April. (Joshua J. Seybert)
**Freedom Wing Command Team Assists in Fighting Pandemic**

Located just a few miles from New York City, the 514th Air Mobility Wing, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, has served as a hub of activity for Air Force Reserve COVID-19 support. As Reserve medical specialists process through the New Jersey bases on their way to serve in hard-hit areas in and around New York City, there is a command team at the Freedom Wing standing by to offer support.

Early in April, Col. Thomas Pemberton, 514th AMW commander, activated the 64th Air Expeditionary Group to serve and assist the Reserve healthcare providers. The group is comprised of a command, command chief and first sergeant all from the Freedom Wing. In addition, it has a three-member team for Personnel Support for Contingency Operations (PERSCO) from the 514th Force Support Squadron.

Col. Adrian R. Byers, 514th AMW vice commander, serves as the 64th AEG commander. “Our Airmen never cease to amaze me,” Byers said. “We always talk about the fact we have 72 hours to mobilize a mobilization effort but in this case 125 Airmen were identified, mobilized and deployed inside 48 hours. Within 24 hours they were part of the fight against this dangerous virus. I’m humbled to be their commander, as they all clearly exude one of our most cherished core values – service before self.”

Chaplain Maj. Len Werner, 64th AEG command chief, worked alongside Byers and two of the PERSCOA members at JBMDL. He said he was amazed to see the quick response of receiving medical personnel in such a short time, some from as far away as Hawaii. “All are accounted for in NYC and hit the ground running at three hospitals,” Werner said.

Senior Master Sgt. Michael B. Moody, 64th Air Expeditionary Wing first sergeant, oversees Staff Sgt. Awa B. Diakhate. They were both forward deployed to the Javits Center in New York City to help fight against COVID-19.

Moody has been in the Air Force for 24 years. He’s a maintainer by trade, said he is impressed with how medical personnel speak their own language and are super supportive of each other. His goal as a first sergeant is to lift any burdens for them so they can focus on what they need to do.

Staff Sgt. Awa B. Diakhate, personnel specialist with the 514th FSS, was on the scene for PERSCO at the Javits Center. She found it amazing to be a part of such a large-scale operation in less than 24 hours after a unit training assembly. She is humbled to see how fast the Air Force Reserve came together in this joint operation in the biggest city in the United States.

“I’m having that feeling I had back in basic training, joining something bigger than me,” she said.

Reservists Nationwide Pitch in by Making Masks

Air Force Reservists from across the country have been helping out with the fight against COVID-19 in countless ways, including making masks for people to use when they can’t stay at home.

At Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina, for example, Reservists from several 437th OSS squadrons made masks for other departments.

The Aircrew Flight Equipment Flight in JEMC contributes to this story.

Reservists from the 452nd Air Mobility Wing, March Air Reserve Base, California, make face masks for their fellow Reservists when social distancing is not possible.

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**JAGs Help Marines Deploy on Short Notice**

In early April, the Dobbins legal office helped more than 60 Marines with legal documents in preparation for a short-notice deployment to assist in the battle against COVID-19.

“It was asking a lot, but we really couldn’t say no,” said Lt. Col. Justin Swick, 94th Airlift Wing staff judge advocate. “If they’re going to go forward heading out the door to complete their deployment, we’re going to do whatever we can to make that happen, but that also includes putting their families and their futures in order.”

Preparing legal documents is a multi-step process that can be labor intensive, said Swick. First, the member fills out a form that outlines the details to be included in legal documents such as beneficiary designation and other pre-deployment processing in the room was wearing face masks to keep social distancing in place.

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How Reservists are staying connected in this time of physical distancing

From Staff Reports

Staying connected during this time of mandated physical distancing can be extremely difficult. But Reserve Citizen Airmen from every part of the country are getting creative to keep open the lines of communication and stay in touch during the COVID-19 pandemic.

It’s no secret that Air Force Reserve Command’s senior leaders thoroughly enjoy visiting Reserve units and meeting face-to-face with the Reserve Citizen Airmen who get the mission done every day. Since “face-to-face” is not an option face-to-face with the Reserve Citizen Airmen who get the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keeping open the lines of communication and stay in touch during Airmen from every part of the country are getting creative to distancing can be extremely difficult. But Reserve Citizen

Airmen's Year banquet, this year’s winners were notified of their victory in an innovative way.

Using a cloud-based video conferencing platform, Scobee, White and Chief Master Sgt. Travon Dennis, AFR command

connected as a team and as a family.”

“While we need to be physically distant, we don’t want to be socially distant. Now more than ever we need to stay socially connected as a team and as a family.”

For many Reserve Citizen Airmen, the Air Force Reserve is not only about the mission, but it is also about camaraderie and taking care of each other during times of crisis.

“When we first realized there was a potential that we would not be doing our April UTA due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a lot of concern for our Airmen and the personal struggles they were facing,” said Maj. J. DeMeo, the 624th Aeromedical Staging Squadron staff dentist, and key member of the virtual UTA development team for the ASTS. “Being able to connect with people is a really important way to help them manage stress, and to make sure they have the support they need to help their families at this time.”

For Lt. Col. Lisa Huntoon, the 624th Medical Operations Flight commander, the ability to connect with her flight was extremely meaningful.

“As a flight commander, having the ability to see my Airmen and ask them how they’re doing, and to listen to their personal stories almost had me in tears,” said Huntoon. “One of my Airmen had to cancel her wedding and listening to her story was heartbreaking. I could see that my flight members needed this connection, but what was even more amazing was the level of resiliency they have displayed as we continued to connect as a team.”

The 960th Cyberspace Wing’s 51st Network Operations Squadron, Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia, also held its first-ever virtual UTA in April.

As a guardian of the Air Force information network, the 51st NOS mission is to develop and empower Reserve Citizen Airmen to assure global operations through cyberspace.
Virtual Promotions, Re-enlistments and Other Ceremonies Abound

COVID-19 could not put a stop to the countless promotion, change-of-command, re-enlistment and other ceremonies that have taken place throughout Air Force Reserve Command over the past couple of months. Although the coronavirus did manage to eliminate most large gatherings, it didn’t keep people from celebrating monumental events virtually with friends and families tuning in from around the world.

For example, Brig. Gen. William Murphy, mobilization assistant to the director of operations and communication at Air Force Global Strike Command, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, officially pinned on his first star April 4 during a ceremony attended by dozens of friends and family members using remote conferencing services.

“When discussing this promotion with my family, especially my wife, on whether we would delay or maybe even skip the ceremony altogether, I think my wife, Natalya, summed it up best for me - even in times such as these, we need to be able to celebrate those once-in-a-lifetime events, marriages, baptisms, graduations and in this case a promotion ceremony,” Murphy said during the ceremony. “So here we are celebrating what may be the first all-virtual ceremony where each participant and attendee (with the exception of three of my family members) are all at different locations.”

Making the ceremony work required additional up-front coordination as the presiding official, narrator and chaplain all connected remotely from their homes, as well as real time interactions from multiple individuals/locations as they switched video feeds, and moderated questions and comments from attendees.

The general said that the ceremony was “surreal,” because the audience could see him, but he couldn’t see them. Family and friends participated from as far away as Hawaii, Uzbekistan and Germany and from all over the continental United States.

In another example of a socially-distanced celebration, Col. Brian Beachkofski, an individual mobilization augmentee, assumed command of Air Force Life Cycle Management Center Detachment 12 during a virtual ceremony April 15. Detachment 12’s mission is to create and deliver software and applications for U.S. warfighters. With the principals at three different locations, Lt. Gen. Robert McMurry, center commander, virtually passed the Detachment 12 guideon to Beachkofski from the outgoing commander, Col. Enrique Ott.

Staff Sgt. Paige Yenke, a public affairs officer assigned to the 926th Wing, Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, practiced safe social distancing and took to the great outdoors for her re-enlistment ceremony in late March.

With everyone a safe distance apart, Lt. Col. Richard Yenke, Paige’s father, conducted the re-enlistment as Paige’s mother, Staff Sgt. Keth Chariise Daleke, and Paige’s son attended as witnesses. They used a flag hanging form a neighbor’s house.

“I will cherish that moment in time that occurred during such a chaotic turn of events in our country,” she said. “Now that it’s done, I can breathe a sigh of relief. Currently, we are all having to adapt and creatively overcome the obstacles being presented to us during this challenging time. But I’m thankful for the support and help from my wing and family in getting my reenlistment done in an unprecedented time and for allowing me to continue my career as a member of the Air Force Reserve. I will not forget my journey to becoming a career Airmen.”

Col. Bernard Willis, an IMC assigned to the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, had a “COVID-19-cumplemier” private pinning-on ceremony outdoors at the security forces memorial statue at the National Museum of the Air Force with his family and a few close friends April 1.

Over nearly 29 years of commissioned service with the active duty, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, Willis has flown F-16s and MQ-1 Predators, served as an acquisition program manager for the F-15, and been a security forces squadron commander, among other assignments.

“I have had so many other amazing opportunities in the Reserve these last few years as the Crisis Action Team/battlestaff director for the AFLCMC commander, interim commander of the 88th Security Forces Squadron last summer during a break between active-duty command, and now leading the effort for the Air Force pilot project from the Weapons and Tactics Analysis Center for installation command and control. I am currently serving as the operations chief supporting the 88th ABW Incident Command Center for the COVID-19 response and loving every minute of it,” Willis said.
Traditional Mission Continues

While some Reservists wage battle against coronavirus, others ensure the traditional mission continues.

From Staff Reports

Reserve Citizen Airmen from across the country have volunteered to help wage America’s battle with COVID-19, but that doesn’t mean Air Force Reserve Command’s long-standing mission of providing combat-ready forces to fly, fight and win has been put on hold.

In fact, unit Reservists and individual mobilization augmentees from coast to coast have continued to train for their wartime mission and perform essential duties during the coronavirus pandemic. Here are just a few examples of how Reservists have continued so Reserve Citizen Airmen can maintain their readiness to accomplish their wartime mission.

Flying missions like these allow aircrew members, like 1st Lt. Clayton Gledhill, a new pilot who joined the 927th’s 63rd Air Refueling Squadron in February, to practice critical skills.

Gledhill said he identifies with families struggling to balance work, remote school and family time at home. “When I head to the base to fly, I say goodbye to my wife who will spend the day teleworking for her job, helping our three kids with school work. The same time my oldest son has said goodbye to me and do our best to protect our family.”

Extra precautions have been put in place to minimize the health risk to those still working on and around Reserve flightlines, including splitting shifts and ensuring crews work with the same people when they come in to fly and work.

“Our Airmen are the best in the world at what they do and it’s important we do everything we can to keep them healthy while they work,” said Lt. Col. Ginger Ormond, the 927th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron commander.

Turning Wrenches and Flying Missions

While many Americans have been working from home to mitigate the transmission risk of COVID-19, when it comes to flying and maintaining airplanes, some jobs can’t be done via telework. Reserve aircrews and maintenance crews at flying units around the country have continued to turn wrenches and fly missions during this time of social distancing.

As an example, Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 927th Air Refueling Wing took off in a KC-135 from MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, on April 2, to meet up with F-15s to conduct mid-air refueling operations, one of the countless training flights Reserve flying units have conducted despite the coronavirus pandemic. These flights have continued so Reserve Citizen Airmen can maintain their readiness to accomplish their wartime mission.

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Rescue Wing Brings Home First HC-13J Combat King II

On the same day Gledhill and his fellow Reservists were refueling F-15s from their MacDill KC-135, the 920th Rescue Wing’s 39th Rescue Squadron brought home its first HC-130J Combat King II aircraft to Patrick Air Force Base, Florida.

“This is an exciting time for the men and women of the 39th RQS, the 920th RQW and the Air Force Reserve Command,” said Lt. Col. Ellis, 39th RQS commander. “The delivery of the first HC-130J represents a major milestone in our unit’s transition. The new aircraft will enable enhanced mission capabilities and ensure the successful execution of future combat search and rescue operations.”

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Airmen, as well as Lockheed Martin personnel, took several precautionary measures to ensure their health and the health of those they may come in contact with.

“We eliminated the customary factory tour, team introductions as well as the key ceremony, in which Lockheed Martin gives the gaining unit a symbolic key to the aircraft,” said Lt. Col. Rich, 920th Operations Group HC-130J conversion officer. “In fact, our 920th maintenance experts limited their interaction with Lockheed Martin personnel to an absolute minimum prior to releasing the aircraft to the aircrew.”

Members of the 302nd Air Lift Wing wave to Colorado healthcare workers, first responders and essential employees battling COVID-19 during a flyover in May. The 302nd AW was one of numerous Reserve units that utilized normal training flights to salute Americans on the front lines against the COVID-19 virus. (Staff Sgt. Laura Turner)
The 920th maintenance personnel were able to expedite the acceptance and pre-flight checks of the first AFRC HC-130J, accomplishing all required tasks in nearly half the normally allotted time.

"The aircrew avoided local contact entirely with assistance from the 71st Rescue Squadron out of Moody Air Force Base, Georgia," Rich said. "The 71st provided a pilot and loadmaster to round out our aircrew from the 39th RQS in addition to flying us all from Patrick to the Lockheed factory."

At Lockheed, the crew picked up the aircraft without any fanfare.

"We executed the first-ever engine running offload on the Lockheed Martin ramp and proceeded directly to the aircraft," Rich said. "This has never been done before and the aircrew was able to avoid the Lockheed facilities altogether. It was a truly unique and exceptionally well thought out plan to limit our exposure to the current threat."

Once the power-up and preflight checks were complete, the combined team from the 920th and 71st departed the airfield in Georgia, without incident.

"The day was complete when the 71st RQS crewmembers, who assisted us, were picked up from Patrick AFB and returned safely to Moody AFB," Rich said. "Despite all that is going on in the world today, I am proud to have been a small part of the great effort by the Total Force working together to overcome seemingly unlimited obstacles. It was inspiring to witness the priority placed on the protection of each Airman while still focusing on mission accomplishment."

Dover Reservists Support Counterdrug Mission
Also early in April, a 512th Airlift Wing aircrew comprised of Reserve Citizen Airmen demonstrated the Reserve’s ability to continue to fly critical missions by airlifting counterdrug equipment out of Panama.

The mission from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, supported the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and involved hauling more than 100,000 pounds of cargo from Panama Pacifico International Airport, Panama, to San Angelo Regional Airport, Texas.

"With minimal on-ground support in Panama, these loadmasters successfully accomplished a difficult load in an efficient manner," said Master Sgt. David Finfinger, 709th AS evaluator loadmaster.

Overseas Deployments Continue
While most of the country hunkered down at home this spring, some Reservists headed halfway around the world to support critical combat operations overseas.

In late March, for example, more than 80 Airmen and four KC-135 Stratotankers from the 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Air Force Central Command combat operations.

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Members of the 302nd Airlift Wing push a U.S. Forest Service Modular Airborne Firefighting System unit into the bay of a C-130 Hercules aircraft at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, during training for the upcoming fire-fighting season. (Staff Sgt. Justin Norton)
“Despite the effects of COVID-19, our mission continues and our deployments are still on schedule,” said Col. Larry Shaw, 434th ARW commander. “Grissom has a long history of doing things right and we plan on carrying that forward. People are relying on us.”

“Our maintainers have prepared the tankers with required deployment configurations specific to their deployed location,” said Col. Gretchen Wiltse, 434th Maintenance Group commander. “That not only includes adding additional refueling requirements, but also ensuring aircraft are capable of transporting troops and cargo.”

Working where the rubber meets the asphalt, Master Sgt. Benjamen Bond, 434th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron expeditioner, said it’s a priority to ensure tankers leaving Grissom are prepared not only to reach their destination, but also make it through their deployments with minimal maintenance.

“If we see things that might become an issue while the tankers are deployed we fix them before they leave,” said Bond. “We don’t want to create problems for the maintainers down range; we want them to be able to focus on the mission.”

“This is a difficult time for everyone,” explained Shaw. “Everything we do involves risk, but the 434th ARW has some of the best leaders in the Air Force assessing those risks to ensure the safety and wellness of our Airmen.”


during their 10 weeks of training on the KC-46, the pilots couldn’t get enough of the new technology that comes along with this new aircraft.


Transitioning to a new aircraft after exclusively flying the KC-135 Stratotanker brought about mixed emotions for the two pilots.

“You’re excited to learn a new aircraft, but at the same time it’s sad that you’re leaving a plane like the KC-135,” said Orzech. “I felt honored to fly a plane like that. There’s not many four engine jets out there anymore. It’s definitely a last of its kind. It was bittersweet.”

Part of their new training was learning to take on fuel, since the KC-135 was not equipped to receive refueling in-air.

“I have a brand-new appreciation for the guys that flew behind me (receiver pilots) when I flew as a tanker pilot,” said Rodriguez. “When the tanker pilot makes corrections, it makes a big difference to the receiver in the back. It gives me a new appreciation for guys that refuel off me. I think it makes you a better tanker pilot to do receiver work.”

During their 34 weeks of training on the KC-46, the pilots couldn’t get enough of the new technology that comes along with this new aircraft.

“I love the KC-135, but you’re going from a plane with 1950’s technology and jumping to a plane in the 21st century when flying the KC-46,” Orzech said. “It’s like going from watching a black and white TV to a smart TV, you can’t compare the two.”

With two pilots down and approximately 38 to go, the 916th has opened its doors to the next generation of air refueling.

Medical Reservists Ramp up Training

With hundreds of Reserve medical professionals from across the country volunteering to be mobilized if needed in the fight against COVID-19, Reserve medical units ramped up their training this spring.

At Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, for example, Reservists with the 34th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron participated in a training mission April 6-11 to maintain and enhance their medical skills.

While 34th AES reservists trained to maintain their normal skillsets of providing critical medical care to ill and injured patients, they also evaluated their response would change if they were activated to support the COVID-19 response.

“Today we have orthopedic injuries, or combat injuries, in our scenario,” said Lt. Col. Kimberly MacPherson, 34 AES director of operations. “But due to what is going on in the world, we are also including enhanced infection control while on the plane.”

The AES reservists volunteered to participate in the training and were provided the proper personal protection equipment to protect themselves while training. They set up a C-130H to hold their medical gear and then simulated receiving patients onto the aircraft with mannequins. Once they were in flight, the team ran through several scenarios.

“It’s important for all the units to maintain mission readiness and make sure our Airmen are ready to respond to a tasking in case we get a request,” said Col. James DeVere, 302nd Airlift Wing commander. “That is why we are continuing to train in AE and our normal C-130 air-lift mission to answer the call when the American people need us.”
Niagara Wing Reaches Full Operational Capability

Almost three years ago, the 914th Air Refueling Wing, Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, New York, started the transition to become the 914th Air Refueling Wing, switching from the C-130 Hercules to the KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft.

On April 1, Col. Mark Larson, commander of the 914th announced the wing was fully operational capable in the air refueling mission.

“My thanks to the many Airmen and the DoD civilians who have worked so hard,” said Larson. “While at the same time maintaining our readiness to execute the other taskings and deployments required of many of our wing personnel.”

The 914th Operations Group, including the 328th Air Refueling Squadron and 914th Aeromedical Squadron, has spent several years training with instructors from across the nation to become eligible to execute the tanker mission. The 914th Maintenance Group has also put in countless hours of work to keep all nine tankers ready to fly at a moment’s notice.

“The nation needed NEARS fully back in the fight, and today we are letting our leaders know we are ready and willing,” said Larson.

Top, Lt. Col. Doug Johnson, 413th Flight Test Group chief of plans and programs, makes his way to a C-130 for a functional check flight at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. Reserve Citizen Airmen of the 416th FTG have continued to fly and support the programmed depot maintenance mission, despite the current COVID-19 pandemic. (Jamil D. Satter) Left, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 916th Air Refueling Wing, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, North Carolina, continued to transition from the KC-135 to the KC-46. Capt. Joseph “Miki” Orzech is one of the first pilots to complete training on the new aircraft.

According to officials at the TFSC, representatives will still be available by phone but the chat feature will allow customers to avoid wait times for inquiries to be answered by phone.

When the chat is initiated, a ticket is automatically created for processing and the conversation will be included in the ticket so the customer service representative will have full knowledge of the issue.

The chat function will be available Monday-Friday from 0700-1700 CST. Representatives will be available after hours and on weekends to handle incoming queries by phone.

This new feature for the Guard and Reserve will only be available during the Covid-19 response. Upon returning to normal operations, members of the ARC will be able to reach a representative by phone at 1-800-525-0102.


TFSC introduces chat function for the Guard and Reserve

The Total Force Service center has introduced a new tool for Guard and Reserve members to reach a representative with their personnel-related questions.

Now when members of the Air Reserve Component log into myPers, they will see a banner advertising the new chat feature to communicate with a live agent to handle their inquiries.

Customers will also notice a pop-up screen will appear when they are reading knowledge articles on the myPers website asking if they would like to initiate a chat session.

To initiate a chat session, customers are encouraged to click either the banner or the pop up.

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Chief Master Sgt. Stacy Wilfong, Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization command chief, talks to Master Sgt. Kevin Wilson, noncommissioned officer in charge of installation personnel readiness at RIO. Wilfong was selected in February to be HQ RIO’s command chief and began her duties March 2. (Master Sgt. Leisa Grant)

Chief Master Sgt. Stacy Wilfong is the Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization’s command chief, the first for the office that oversees more than 7,500 individual Air Force Reservists around the globe. She began her new duties in March.

As the command chief, Wilfong is the senior enlisted advisor to the commander on all matters affecting operations, training and readiness, health, morale and welfare, and discipline.

The benefit of having a command chief at HQ RIO and for all the individual Reserve units is a seat at the table during strategic discussions that affect the IR population.

“I’m excited to advocate for our enlisted men and women around the globe,” Wilfong said. “By fighting for the needs of our IRs, whether in policy decisions or everyday operations, I hope to help further our vision of making it easier to serve. I’m looking forward to sharing my experience and knowledge to benefit all of our IRs and hundreds of support personnel.”

Previously, Wilfong was the superintendent for HQ RIO Detachment 3, as well as acting superintendent for HQ RIO. She believes her experience in a detachment will allow her to bring that field experience into the headquarters.

“I truly care, and I love what I do,” she said. “I look forward to capitalizing on our Airmen’s talent, and I am very excited for this opportunity and for the future of HQ RIO.”

Col. Amy Boehle, Headquarters RIO commander, selected Wilfong for the position.

“Chief Wilfong is a servant leader and the perfect Airman to be our first command chief,” Boehle said. “She exemplifies the qualities that generations of commanders have looked for in their command chiefs. She will positively influence the lives of our individual Reservists, and I’m excited to move forward with such an incredible leader.”

Chief Master Sgt. Stacy Wilfong, Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization command chief, talks to Master Sgt. Kevin Wilson, noncommissioned officer in charge of installation personnel readiness at RIO. Wilfong was selected in February to be HQ RIO’s command chief and began her duties March 2. (Master Sgt. Leisa Grant)
Mobilization on Steroids

How the Reserve got 125 medical teams to ‘fight COVID’ in 48 hours

By Bo Joyner

As Air Force Reserve Command’s execution arm for mobilizations and deployments, the Force Generation Center is used to answering the call to provide Reserve support around the world when it is needed. It’s what the FGC’s dedicated experts have been doing on a daily basis since the center was established in 2011.

Perhaps the FGC’s biggest test to date came on the first Friday in April this year when the request dropped for 125 specific Reserve medical specialists to report to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, to help overburdened health care providers deal with the COVID-19 pandemic in the New York City area.

The catch: they needed to be in place in 48 hours.

This is the story of how the FGC and the Reserve’s Surgeon General’s office teamed up to pass this test with flying colors.

When President Trump signed an executive order authorizing mobilization of the Reserve Component on March 27, the specialists in the FGC anticipated the call requesting Reserve Citizen Airmen to support the nation’s pandemic response.

Typically, when the FGC received the request on April 3, the call was made immediately to the surgeon general’s office functional area managers, Lorenzo King and William Smoot, to begin identifying the Reserve professionals who would be mobilized.

Typically, King and Smoot would forward the mobilization request out to the various Reserve units and let the units decide what qualified Reservists they had available and willing to fill the requirements. In this instance, there wasn’t time so SG had to do all of the sourcing directly from the headquarters level with some input from the wings.

Thankfully we already had a list of Reservists who volunteered to deploy,” King, SG’s chief of medical readiness operations, said. “Unfortunately, the list didn’t match up perfectly with the requirement that was coming down.”

“Normally for us in deliberate planning, it’s usually more nurses and med techs than doctors,” Smoot, SG’s medical readiness manpower manager, said. “We’ll be asked to provide 60 people and four or five may be doctors. The rest hold other types of medical Air Force Specialty Codes. This request was for a lot of doctors, and by the way, we want to limit the impact on the local communities so we don’t want people who are already involved in treating a lot of COVID patients.”

King and Smoot worked closely with their counterparts throughout SG to find the right Reservists for the mobilization.

As the chief of manpower and the individual mobilization augmentation manager in SG, Capt. Joshua Black played a critical role.

“My involvement came into play because I have access to a lot of reports and sources of information and have a great understanding of what capabilities we have and how to find that capability,” he said. “There are 66 different medical MOSs in the Army, there are different MOSs in the Navy, and there are different MOSs in the Air Force. It’s a complete mess on our part. We are trying to get it more organized. But there are different specialties on each of those depending on what their specialties are. When we got this request to provide support in New York, it was important for us to be able to clearly identify those capabilities.”

King explained that a typical mobilization might call for a flight surgeon, a doctor with a 48R AFSC. But flight surgeons can be internal medicine doctors, pathologists, emergency care doctors, critical care doctors, general surgeons, anesthesiologists, etc. . .

A typical deployment will just ask for a flight surgeon, but this situation was different in that they were very specific in what they needed, he said. “It takes a lot of data mining and analyzing several different reports to pull all of that information together – hours and hours of analysis to provide those reports to senior leaders so they know where our capability exists and how much we have available.”

“What made this requirement even more challenging is that if you are medical in the military, chances are you are medical on the civilian side as well. We didn’t want to take away their ability to support their local communities so we had to massively involved in treating COVID patients in their civilian job.”

Smoot said another factor that made this mobilization so difficult was the joint nature of the deployment. “We have AFSCs, the Army has MOSs (Military Occupational Specialties) and the Navy has something altogether different. They aren’t interchangeable. The Navy may equate an Air Force Reserve med tech with a Navy corpsman, but they aren’t the same thing at all. There is a lot of education that needs to happen.”

As SG’s chief of medical operations, Col. (Dr.) Henry Smoot, said, “We had a feeling for what was coming,” said Maj. Millie Grey Thieriot, chief of the FGC’s Agile Combat Support Branch. “We just didn’t anticipate the extremely short timeline. This was a mobilization on steroids.”

Thieriot explained that for a normal planned mobilization, the FGC usually has about two years lead time to start the planning process and Reserve units know well in advance when they will be deploying. “For a normal deployment, 180 days before they are leaving, Reservists will know where they’re going, all of the pre-deployment requirements they have to have and how long they’ll be gone,” she said. “They then have several unit training assemblies to meet all of their pre-deployment requirements.

Even in the event of a natural disaster or other sudden crisis, the FGC usually has more time to execute a mobilization.

“It rarely happens that the Secretary of Defense mobilizes someone with less than 30 days’ notice. Well, in this case that requirement was waived immediately, so what we thought was a 30-day notification was now down to two days.”

When the FGC received the Secretary of Defense Orders Book on April 3 requesting the 125 medics in 48 hours, it was the first it heard of the request.

“Typically, before we see an SDOB we already know the requirements. We have the unit type codes, the unit line numbers and line remarks,” the major said. “We didn’t have any of that this time.”

When the FGC received the request on April 3, the call was made immediately to the surgeon general’s office functional area managers, Lorenzo King and William Smoot, to begin identifying the Reservists who would be mobilized.

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The colonel was instrumental in helping the Reserve match the right people to the requirement. “In one case we needed someone who was heavily involved in treating COVID patients in their civilian job.”

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Aircrew members on a C-130H3 Hercules from Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, transport Air Force Reserve medical specialists to Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey, to join the effort in combating COVID-19 in New York City, in early April. Pictured from left to right are Capt. Latessa Meader, co-pilot; Maj. Jonathan Bonde, navigator; Tech. Sgt. Joey Burnett, flight engineer; and Maj. Brian Metzger, aircraft commander. (Courtesy photo)