Behind the Braids
Reservists play key role in first women's hair policy change in 70 years
From the Top

DEVELOPING RESILIENT LEADERS

We will identify, develop and retain leaders who combine emotional intellect with the innate characteristics required to win in future operating environments. These leaders must be able to operate independently, build trust in their units, and create an environment that enables Airmen to take smart risks and generate combat power.

Heroes of the Air Force Reserve:

As a command team, one of our strategic priorities is to focus on how we develop resilient leaders. We recognize the importance of leaders who have a high degree of emotional intelligence at all levels, as technical competence alone will not guarantee our future success. Emotionally intelligent leaders are highly motivated and inspire those around them to overcome adversity. They have a high degree of self-awareness, recognizing their own limitations and blind spots. They are guided by empathy, aware of how their interactions affect those around them. Finally, they have the social skills necessary to build resilient teams based on mutual trust. Each of these components of emotional intelligence is critical to leading in the Air Force Reserve.

The Staff of the Air Force Reserve highlighted key characteristics of future operating environments in Airlift Change or Lose. The forces shaping our future include declining resources and aggressive global competitors, along with rapid technology development and diffusion. Given that any one of these elements can drive uncertainty, it is essential that we continue to identify, train and educate leaders who can adapt to navigate through and thrive in volatile environments.

We have already seen the value of leaders who are able to operate independently. The COVID–19 pandemic clearly demonstrated how local leadership can integrate threat information in a rapidly evolving situation, partner with state and local agencies, and develop tailored guidance to balance the need to protect the health of Reserve Citizen Airmen and their families while meeting mission readiness requirements. In future environments with potentially contested communications, the ability to assess complex situations, collaborate locally and continue to execute the mission will be invaluable.

When reflecting on the lessons learned over the course of his 100 years of life, former Secretary of State George Shultz once wrote “Trust is fundamental, reciprocal and pervasive. If present, anything is possible.” If it is absent, nothing is possible.”

Trust is the glue that holds together everything we do. Our nation trusts us to deliver winning capabilities whenever and wherever they are needed. We trust our leaders to set the conditions for success in our organization to the best of their abilities. We trust our fellow Reserve Citizen Airmen to execute the mission.

Each of those elements of trust: between the nation and our organization, between our people and their leaders, and between each other, can be undermined by the presence of extremism in our organization. The Department of Defense’s ongoing Extremism Stand Down is the first step to addressing extremism within the ranks. Throughout this ongoing process, resilient leaders will be crucial to strengthening teams by enhancing trust.

Innovation cannot exist without trust. Leaders at all levels must vet (not veto) ideas to continually improve our organization. Mutual trust creates an environment in which we can have candid discussions about how to better perform the mission. Trust breeds empowerment. Empowerment with good judgment allows leaders at each level to take smart risks to test new ideas. Given the rapid pace of technological evolution, game changing innovations are likely to come from our most junior personnel who have the deepest experience with new technology. Resilient leaders are aware of this inherent strength in their teams and have the humility to accept that they may not always have the best solution.

Recently, during a meeting with several Air Force Reserve senior leaders, I had the opportunity to listen to several junior Reserve Airmen brief their ideas on developing resilient leaders. They presented bold new ideas for changing our ways of conducting business to better assess fitness holistically, examining both physical and mental fitness, as we prepare to roll out a revamped program designed to more accurately assess overall fitness.

We have also worked on getting the necessary manpower authorizations to provide more full-time chaplains and first sergeants. We are in the process of building out our religious support teams across our host unit wings to provide full-time support to the spiritual fitness pillar. We are also finalizing our hiring for full-time first sergeants, who will serve as our local Comprehensive Airman Fitness champions, helping Reserve Citizen Airmen access helping services, regardless of their status. We have also worked on refining our Key Spouse program, which helps to build connections between our Reserve Citizen Airmen’s families and their units.

Along with investments in additional manpower, we have fundamentally changed the way in which we deliver professional military education. The pandemic forced us to rethink our training delivery, pushing several of our Professional Development Center courses online. This enabled us to clear a significant backlog of students waiting for the Chief Orientation Course. Many of our Professional Development Center courses have also been redesigned to focus on developing resilient leaders. We have also shifted our NCO Academy and Senior NCO Academy delivery to the virtual environment. Each of these courses has had some degree of curriculum redesign with the goal of helping leaders build trust within their organizations and make their units more resilient.

The boss and I have been fortunate enough to safely travel some of our travel. We have been in awe of every Reserve Citizen Airmen we meet. We are especially thankful to those of you who have stepped forward to work on scalable grassroots solutions to develop resilient leaders across the command. We all have had a challenging year due to the pandemic. Each of you has been there for at least one of your teammates during this difficult time; and each of you make us proud to serve in the Air Force Reserve.

Chief’s View

RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING RESILIENT LEADERS

We must develop leaders with the appropriate tools to create and sustain an environment in which all Airmen can reach their full potential, valuing the many aspects of diversity within our Air Force. Airmen who do not or cannot reflect these and the related attributes we value fall short of being the future Air Force leaders we require.

- General Charles Q. Brown, Chief of Staff of the Air Force

Developing resilient leaders can be complex. There is not a single solution or program that can mass produce the caliber of leaders we need to win in a competitive environment. Since I became your command chief two years ago, Lieutenant General Scobee and I have worked tirelessly to provide the resources to units that will set the conditions for success for this strategic priority. We have also been fortunate to hear from many of you out in the field on your approach to leadership development.

The most important part of leadership is learning how to lead yourself. Comprehensive Airman Fitness is one way to understand how we lead ourselves. This model has four pillars: mental, physical, social and spiritual. You can think of these pillars like the four legs of a chair. If these pillars are a little out of balance, you’ll probably wobble a little, but if they’re really out of balance you’ll wind up on the floor. As a command team, we want to ensure that you and your units have the right tools to help with these pillars.

The pandemic has caused disruptions to our fitness assessments and our fitness routines and as an Air Force, we are rethinking and reforming our approach to developing resilient leaders. They presented bold new ideas for changing our ways of conducting business to better assess fitness holistically, examining both physical and mental fitness, as we prepare to roll out a revamped program designed to more accurately assess overall fitness.

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Reserve Citizen Airmen have been instrumental in helping bring about the first major change in the Air Force’s women’s hair policy since the late 1940s. For the story, see page 6. (Chief Master Sgt. Jaimee Freeman)
Reservists play key role in first women's hair policy change in 70 years

By Bo Joyner

Reserve Citizen Airmen have been instrumental in helping bring about the first major change in the Air Force's women's hair policy since the late 1940s.

As an outcome of the 101st Air Force uniform board, Air Force women can now wear their hair in up to two braids or a single ponytail with bulk not exceeding the width of the head, and length not extending below a horizontal line running between the top of each sleeve inseam at the under arm through the shoulder blades. In addition, women's bangs may now touch their eyebrows, but not cover their eyes.

The changes to the Air Force's women's hair policy are the first major updates since the late 1940s. (Chief Master Sgt. Jamiee Freeman)
Air Force, and I could see how it was contrary to the culture of diversity and inclusion we are constantly striving for.”

Scobee and White immediately wrote a letter to the Air Force Uniform Board in support of women’s hair policy reform, saying that the proposed changes would “mitigate safety, medical and operational risks, while fostering a culture of inclusion within the Department of the Air Force.”

“Eventually, we got letters of support from seven of the nine major command commanders and more than 40 wing commanders,” Nadeem said. “Having the support of General Scobee and Chief White from the beginning was critical to our success.”

With the backing of dozens of commanders and years of research and data in hand, the team made its case to the Air Force in November 2020. In late January, the board announced that the Air Force would be changing its women’s hair standards.

In announcing the policy change, Air Force senior leaders expressed their support for the new standards.

“In addition to the health concerns we have for our Airmen, not all women have the same hair type, and our hair standards should reflect our diverse force,” said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force JoAnne S. Bass. “I am pleased we could make this important change for our women service members.”

Nadeem is serving in an Active Guard Reserve position as a Congressional Budget and Appropriations Liaison with the Secretary of the Air Force Financial Management Directorate. She volunteered to be part of the WIT in 2015 while serving on active duty. In 2017, she was asked to lead the team.

“We have more than 600 active-duty, Reserve, Guard and civilian volunteers serving on the WIT,” she said. “We are constantly striving to improve the lives of Airmen and their families by working with Air Force leaders to make policy changes. The new women’s hair standards are a big win for the Women’s Initiative Team and the Department of the Air Force.”

“I think this just goes to show what you can do if you don’t give up,” Lind said. “If you believe what you are doing is the right thing, keep on pushing. You can make a difference.”

#ReserveReady #ReserveReform #ReserveResilient

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Thousands of women across the Air Force provided feedback regarding the hair standards. Many said that constraints to hair grooming standards resulted in damage to hair, migraines and, in some cases, hair loss. (Chief Master Sgt. Jaimee Freeman)
More aeromed specialists deploy to support pandemic

The 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, has been called upon once again to deploy personnel to multiple locations in support of the fight against COVID-19.

In 2020, the squadron sent nine volunteers out the door to various locations. Recently, six more Reserve Citizen Airmen deployed to Travis Air Base, California, and Ramstein Air Base, Germany, for six months.

Among those deploying were first-timers Senior Airman Joseph Bernal, Senior Airman Chris Comeaux and Senior Airman Madison Ross, all flight medics.

“Generally, it’s rare for us to deploy, especially just coming out of training,” said Bernal. A relative newcomer to the squadron, “but I think this is a great opportunity.”

While at their deployed locations, the Airmen will do their part to safely transfer and care for COVID-19 patients as they are moved from remote locations and/or hospitals that cannot accommodate their medical needs to hospitals that can effectively treat them.

“The three said they feel confident the Air Force has prepared them and they will become even more capable as they arrive at their deployment locations and receive mission-specific training.

Part of that training is becoming acquainted with the Negative Pressure Conex, said Bernal. The NPC is a vessel inside the aircraft designed to allow treatment for infectious disease patients while protecting those outside of it from harmful airborne agents. They will also spend time familiarizing themselves with the various levels of personal protective equipment they will use during missions and how to properly don all of its elements.

“It’s exciting to put all of this training we’ve been doing to use in real-life situations,” said Ross. “It’s also nerve-wracking because it’s not your friend acting as a patient. You’re actually making a difference and potentially saving lives.”

Bernal, Comeaux and Ross will be working alongside other flight medics as well as flight nurses, as a typical crew consists of three medics and two nurses.

Comeaux described the role of medics as being “extensions of the flight nurses.”

“Flight nurses are registered nurses, so they’re trained in more advanced stages of life support whereas we’re more focused on basic life support,” said Comeaux.

“We’re more involved with configuring the aircraft and running the mission, granted they do take part in that aspect too. It’s just important that they are able to focus more on the clinical, patient-care applications of the mission.”

One member providing that advanced capacity of care is Capt. Toya Williams, 36th AES flight nurse, who will be providing her capabilities to the 10th Expeditionary Aeromedical Evacuation Flight at Ramstein.

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A traditional Reservist who works as a travel nurse in the Los Angeles area as a civilian, Williams said her family’s and employer’s support is what keeps her in good spirits and excited as she prepares to assist transferring and caring for patients all over the European and African Command areas of responsibility.

In addition to the six deploying to support COVID-19 operations, the unit has eight more members who recently deployed to Travis and Ramstein as well as Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, and Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, said Lt. Col. Rosalind Johnson, 36th AES director of operations.

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A New Level of Realism
Luke Reservists ramp up combat casualty training

By Tech. Sgt. Courtney Richardson

Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 944th Fighter Wing’s Aeromedical Staging Squadron took combat casualty training to a new level of realism during a January training event at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona.

The 944th ASTS is certified by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians to provide Tactical Combat Casualty Care training. TCCC is designed to use evidence-based practices to provide life saving measures and trauma management strategies in battlefield conditions.

The squadron has been facilitating this training since 2012 and provides the course for all branches of the military as well as civilian organizations.

“The Air Force is phasing out what we know as Self-Aid and Buddy Care and moving into TCCC,” said Capt. Breck Smith, the officer in charge of the joint medical operations training initiative.

The transition comes after evaluating the needs of the military over the past several years.

“SABC is basic first aid, and at the time, that was OK,” Smith said. “But, TCCC is an adaption of what we are learning from war. The easiest way to think of it is that TCCC means taking care of patients while getting shot at.”

After studying patient care and deaths over the past few years, the Defense Health Agency determined that almost 90% of all combat deaths occur before the injured person reaches a medical treatment facility.

“We learned that a large portion of those deaths were preventable,” Smith said. “The two biggest causes of death were hemorrhaging and airway obstruction.” TCCC focuses on how to reduce the number of preventable deaths.

“During the three-day course, participants learn the three phases of care: care under fire, tactical field care and tactical evacuation,” said Master Sgt. Lysa Busalacchi, 944th ASTS NAEMT site coordinator. “Students practice learned skills in static stations, where our goal is to emulate realism. This includes utilizing pork tracheas for advanced surgical airway training, chicken legs for simulated intraosseous (bone) infusions and racks of ribs to simulate needle decompression techniques.”

After learning new techniques, the students are put to the test during a field exercise on the final day of training.

“TCCC means care under fire, which means we conduct the training under fire,” Smith said. “As nurses, when we deploy, we are noncombatants under the Geneva Convention, but we still have to train with weapons because we have to protect our patients.”

To help with this aspect of the training, the ASTS reached out to the 944th Security Forces Squadron and acquired paintball guns to replicate a live-fire environment.

To take the training a step further, Smith’s team coordinated with Techline Technologies Inc. “Techline Technologies offers trauma simulation equipment to help in the training process for the military, law enforcement, fire departments and medical responders,” said Jay Hibberd, the company’s business development specialist and director of training.

Techline has a mobile training unit that provides everything from basic life saving techniques to courses like TCCC.

“We brought our ‘TOMManikin’ to the training,” Hibberd said. “It is a breathing, bleeding, talking, articulating 185-pound mannequin that we control through a tablet.”

“It’s one thing to learn something on a PowerPoint,” Smith said. “It’s totally different performing your task on a mannequin that is giving you direct feedback. When you perform the task correctly, you can see the result first-hand, all while under fire.”
One participant said she quickly understood the impact of the training. “In most of our training, we have been working with basic dummies with imaginary wounds, and the most we could do is talk through what we would do to fix the problem in a classroom,” said Staff Sgt. Catelynn Apple, 944th ASTS medical technician. “In this training, we had the realistic dummies that were yelling, communicating and bleeding. They only stopped bleeding when we did the proper care. It was great hands-on training because we could see if we were doing anything wrong.”

During the field exercise, Airmen were tasked with providing security and moving out of a hostile environment in addition to conducting patient care. For some of the medical specialists, this was challenging. “Our mindset is to go straight to the patient to take care of them, but we have to put in our minds to stop and evaluate the scene, then stabilize the patient enough to move them to a safer location,” Apple said.

She said she had to convince herself that she was still helping the wounded even when she didn’t actually have hands on the patient. “Having to break the role from medic to security was a lot easier than I thought it would be because in my mind I am still taking care of the patient while I’m holding the weapon,” she said. “If I move, I endanger everyone behind me who is providing direct patient care. Knowing when to switch and how to effectively do that was a great learning experience for me.”

In addition to the military members, local law enforcement specialists and first responders took part in the training as well. Jim Clark, a fire captain and special weapons and tactics medic from the Buckeye, Arizona, fire department, said training with people from other agencies was extremely helpful. “We typically focus a lot of training on our respective battlefields, but with the world changing, our battlefields are now across the United States,” he said. “This training was real-life. It reinforced what I know and opened my eyes to something I lost value in — communication.”

“When I am with my SWAT team, I know what they know. I mean their movements and hand signals and they know mine. This training made me realize that if I found myself in a situation while off-duty, I might be rendering care with the aid of any other concerned citizen and I wouldn’t know how they think. So, communication could save a life. Being in this class was perfect for me because I was able to work on my communication skills and help extract and treat patients.” Smith said he had one main goal for the class.

“I hope to provide a whole new level of realism to the students so that when they go downrange or respond in an emergency situation, they don’t freeze,” he said. “They’ll know what that stress can feel like and the shock value is lessened. They can let muscle memory take over, making them capable of providing patient care as needed.”

Reserve Citizen Airmen assigned to the 433rd Airlift Wing’s Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, trained for the first time aboard a KC-46A Pegasus March 8-10, to learn and practice their aeromedical skills on the new aircraft.

The training mission was a collaboration with the 931st Air Refueling Wing, McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas, aeromedical evacuation personnel and KC-46A technical specialists from other locations, and the Alamo Wing, where more than 20 medical personnel conducted training in a variety of emergency scenarios on the ground and in flight.

According to Lt. Col. Terrence McGee, 4th Air Force KC-46A pilot, this training will help provide a more ready and deployable force from the Reserve.

“Aeromedical evacuations are a major component of our mission sets, and we’re always looking for ways to increase our readiness,” he said. “This training is important because it helps us prepare for real-world scenarios and enhance our ability to respond to emergencies.”

The training included a day of in-flight training for medical personnel. They practiced the loading and offloading of aeromedical equipment, gear and supplies, while also simulating caring for incapacitated patients.

Once the aircraft was in flight, medical technicians practiced responding to patient medical emergencies, such as in-flight sicknesses, seizures and falls. They also simulated scenarios involving cabin decompression and an emergency landing.

A 433rd AES technician, Tech. Sgt. Tristan Thorland, said that some of the things they trained on were the different capabilities the KC-46A offered.

“In comparing this aircraft to other aircraft, it’s very comfortable, we don’t have sudden temperature changes and it has all the amenities we need,” said Thorland. “It’s not as big as a C-17, but it’s a good aircraft and we’ll probably be using it a lot.”

The training included a day of familiarization with the aircraft, and two days of in-flight training for medical personnel. They practiced the loading and offloading of aeromedical equipment, gear and supplies, while also simulating caring for incapacitated patients.

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The KC-46A is a multi-service aircraft that provides next-generation aerial refueling support and is multi-mission capable. #ReserveReady

(Carmona is assigned to the 433rd Airlift Wing public affairs office.)
Personnel Changes Are Coming

Reservists urged to claim their AFIPPS account in 2021

One of the Air Force’s top priorities is taking care of its people. With between 50,000 and 60,000 pay problems a year plaguing the force and hindering Airmen from focusing on the mission, the service realized there was a big problem.

The Air Force Integrated Personnel and Pay System (AFIPPS) is designed to resolve the causes of pay errors, while improving human resources and pay processes for military members.

AFIPPS will provide Airmen and Guardians with a modernized, technological solution that includes streamlined capabilities and time saving features by improving upon and expanding the current Military Personnel Data System (MiPDS), adding payroll, workflow and self-service capabilities.

“The Air Force Reserve force support community is at the tip of the spear when it comes to implementing this initiative,” said Lt. Col. Michelle Coumbs, Air Force Reserve Command’s former AFIPPS lead. “Their new launch campaign is called AFIPPS Ready-Go and the intent is just that … to ready Reserve Citizen Airmen for the AFIPPS phase one ROSS (Read-Only Self-Service) account release happening this summer, before transitioning to phase two and full capability in the summer of 2022.”

During AFIPPS phase one ROSS, Total Force Airmen and Guardians will be required to create their individual AFIPPS account. Members will receive an email notification with instructions on how to claim their account. The process should take approximately two minutes to accomplish, and allows members to review their records and ensure their information is correct in the system. During this time, accounts will be read-only, affording members the ability to see the human resources data they normally wouldn’t be able to see through another single Air Force platform (dependent-related information, for example). If an error is identified, the individual can immediately engage in the current process for correction of their records, thereby guaranteeing the most accurate information transfers to AFIPPS when it goes live in 2022.

“The intent is that all Reserve military members are ready and go claim their account and review their data by the end of 2021,” Coumbs said.

Phase two, full capability, is scheduled to be delivered in the summer of 2022. At that time, registered users will have access to all AFIPPS capabilities and will be able to see and actively engage AFIPPS to deliver timely and accurate personnel and pay actions.

Airmen and Guardians will continue to receive updates as each phase progresses.

Reserve AFIPPS questions can be directed to the Reserve AFIPPS team at A1.AIR.AFRC.AFIPPS.Team@us.af.mil. #ReserveReady #ReserveReform
The Globemaster
Reservists reflect on C-17 as fleet reaches four million flying hours

By Ed Butac

In January, the U.S. Air Force celebrated the four millionth flying hour of the C-17 Globemaster III at Joint Base Charleston, South Carolina.

More than two decades ago, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, received its first C-17. It has added another nearly four dozen of the cargo aircraft to its fleet since, carrying out missions supporting worldwide combat and humanitarian airlift contingencies.

The Air Force Reserve’s 446th Airlift Wing at McChord has flown more than its fair share of the four million flying hours. From peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Persian Gulf buildup, African relief efforts, Operation Deep Freeze missions in Antarctica and even transporting a killer whale, the airlift wing certainly added to that total.

“What a fantastic aircraft in which to have spent the last 24 years of my life. I’ve probably logged around 6,000 flying hours since that time,” said Lt. Col. Charles Corrigan, examiner pilot for the 313th Airlift Squadron. “I’ve been privileged to travel to more destinations than most of the population will ever know or care about, but I think the camaraderie with the folks I travel with trumps everything else.

“We truly have the best crew community on the planet. We stick together and support each other to get the job done through thick and thin, highs and lows,” Corrigan added.

In the cargo aircraft, Corrigan and other aircrew members have experienced many things.

“We have been privileged to repatriate fallen military service members from North Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan,” Corrigan said. “Equally importantly, we’ve given life-saving flights to those gravely injured in battle so they may receive care outside the combat zone. I’ve been honored to fly U.S. presidential support into combat zones. And I’ve been fortunate to have supported the U.S. Antarctic program with flights to Antarctica.”

On March 26, 2003, nearly 1,000 U.S. service members were parachuted into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq in Operation Northern Delay in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This was the first combat insertion of paratroopers using the C-17.

“The large airdrop, Operation Northern Delay, in northern Iraq was one of the most memorable flights I’ve had on the C-17,” said Chief Master Sgt. Derek Bryant, chief loadmaster for the 728th Airlift Squadron. “And I have more than 8,290 flight hours and counting on the C-17.”

At 174 feet in length, 55 feet high, with a wingspan of just under 170 feet and a maximum gross takeoff weight of 585,000 pounds and the ability to land on a runway as short as 3,500 feet, the C-17 remains flexible.

The C-17 is also known for its reliability. It has an aircraft mission completion success probability rate of more than 92%.

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The Air Force Reserve’s 446th Airlift Wing at McChord has flown more than its fair share of the four million flying hours. From peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Persian Gulf buildup, African relief efforts, Operation Deep Freeze missions in Antarctica and even transporting a killer whale, the airlift wing certainly added to that total.

“What a fantastic aircraft in which to have spent the last 24 years of my life. I’ve probably logged around 6,000 flying hours since that time,” said Lt. Col. Charles Corrigan, examiner pilot for the 313th Airlift Squadron. “I’ve been privileged to travel to more destinations than most of the population will ever know or care about, but I think the camaraderie with the folks I travel with trumps everything else.

“We truly have the best crew community on the planet. We stick together and support each other to get the job done through thick and thin, highs and lows,” Corrigan added.

In the cargo aircraft, Corrigan and other aircrew members have experienced many things.

“We have been privileged to repatriate fallen military service members from North Korea, Iraq and Afghanistan,” Corrigan said. “Equally importantly, we’ve given life-saving flights to those gravely injured in battle so they may receive care outside the combat zone. I’ve been honored to fly U.S. presidential support into combat zones. And I’ve been fortunate to have supported the U.S. Antarctic program with flights to Antarctica.”

On March 26, 2003, nearly 1,000 U.S. service members were parachuted into the Kurdish-controlled area of northern Iraq in Operation Northern Delay in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. This was the first combat insertion of paratroopers using the C-17.

“The large airdrop, Operation Northern Delay, in northern Iraq was one of the most memorable flights I’ve had on the C-17,” said Chief Master Sgt. Derek Bryant, chief loadmaster for the 728th Airlift Squadron. “And I have more than 8,290 flight hours and counting on the C-17.”

The Boeing-built aircraft is designed to fly longer, carry more and land on shorter runways than any of its predecessors.

A C-17 Globemaster III from Joint Base Lewis-McChord, flies over the Tacoma Narrows Bridge May 8, 2020. The 62nd Airlift Wing C-17 Demonstration Team, made up of pilots and loadmasters from the 4th, 7th, and 8th Airlift Squadrons, conducted a flyover of nearly 45 hospitals, healthcare organizations and landmarks up and down the Puget Sound, in appreciation of those working during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Airman 1st Class Mikayla Heineck)
It Can Be Done

The sky is the limit for med tech-turned-pilot

By Senior Master Sgt. Ted Daigle

"Somebody said that it couldn't be done
But he with a chuckle replied
'That maybe it couldn't,' but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried it."

Lt. Col. Jesse Hildebrand smiled as he read the opening passage from Edgar Guest's poem, "It Couldn't Be Done." The limerick is a favorite of the native Texan and it seems to capture his life's philosophy in prose.

The new commander of the 307th Bomb Wing's 343rd Bomb Squadron, Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, has never been one to shy away from a challenge. His entire military career has been a series of missions into the unknown.

Hildebrand enlisted in the Air Force Reserve as a medical technician before attending Officer Training School and becoming a noncommissioned officer. Still, his military obligations. Before long, he has been a series of missions into the unknown.

"I wanted to see if I could do it," he said, breaking into one of his big smiles and shrugging his shoulders. The Texan took his "yes" and ran with it. He'd overcome all the objections, now it was time to show up asking to be a pilot in their unit. Hildebrand explained what he wanted to do. The commander listened carefully, then shook his head no. The 47th FS was a pilot training unit, the commander explained. Hildebrand would need prior experience flying the jet before he could be part of the unit.

But the commander's answer didn't deter the NCO, it just made him start asking questions.

"Well, where can I go to get hired as an A-10 pilot?" Hildebrand asked. Surprised by Hildebrand's persistence, the commander suggested he try reaching out to the 926th Fighter Squadron, another Reserve A-10 unit in New Orleans at the time.

Hildebrand called the commander there, who was also taken aback by the brazen request. Neither was quite sure what to do with a medical technician who showed up asking to be a pilot in their unit.

Just as before, the 926th commander explained he couldn't help Hildebrand. And like before, Hildebrand peppered him with questions about who could. As the cycle repeated itself, with each denial being met by Hildebrand with more questions about where to go and what to do next, each commander suggesting another unit to try.

"It isn't that I can't take 'no' for an answer, it's that I'm always just looking to see if there is a 'yes' behind it," said Hildebrand of his search for answers. "I'll keep trying until it happens and if it doesn't work out, I'll try something else."

Hildebrand changed tactics, moving from fighters to bombers. He went to the 93rd Bomb Squadron, who listened to his story and decided to give him a chance at becoming a B-52 Stratofortress pilot. Persistence had finally paid off.

"I don't think they knew what they were getting into," said Hildebrand with a laugh. "I didn't even know what I was getting into!"

The Texan took his "yes" and ran with it. He'd overcome all the objections, now he'd have to overcome the next obstacle: inexperience.

Not giving up until he tried

Hildebrand admitted to being completely lost when he entered the aviation world. On his very first flight in a Cessna, a bird hit the windshield of the plane. Wide-eyed, Hildebrand turned to his instructor.

"Is this going to happen a lot?" he asked. The instructor just shook his head and laughed.

During pilot training, Hildebrand found himself surrounded by classmates who had backgrounds in aviation and the military. Determined not to be left behind, Hildebrand doubled down on his efforts, completing a year of training in the T-37 Tweet and T-38 Talon.

He described learning to fly the jet as "the best year and toughest year of my life." Hildebrand, fonts to learn the ins and outs of flying and mastery the tricky trainer. But he loved the challenge and ultimately made it through his first year of pilot training.

All the flying struggles seemed to disappear when Hildebrand finally got to the B-52 Formal Training Unit. He immediately took to the big bomber, feeling right at home in its cockpit.

"I always felt comfortable in the B-52, although some of my instructors might tell you something different," he said.

Hildebrand’s struggles in the cockpit were over, but he still faced challenges as he moved up in rank and took on greater responsibility and leadership. He is quick to say he’s been surrounded by great friends and mentors who helped him every step of the way.

If history is any indicator, he’ll use past experiences to guide and mentor others, always looking for ways to help them reach their potential, the lines from Eddie Guest’s poem ringing in his mind.

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#ReserveResilient (Daigle is assigned to the 307th Bomb Wing public affairs office.)
Before the COVID-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, Air Force Reserve Command was dipping its toes into the pool of telework work and other alternative workspace arrangements. The pandemic pushed the command into the deep end, forcing AFRC to immediately shift to a work-from-home business model.

In the months that have followed, AFRC has made necessary adjustments in order to meet mission requirements and ensure force health protection. As a result, a large portion of the headquarters staff now combines work from home with some in-office work to meet mission demands while preemptively decreasing the likelihood of COVID-19 exposure.

Now, a cross-functional team at AFRC headquarters, Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, is trying to determine exactly what the command’s future work environment should look like. Lt. Col. Dustin Pawlak, deputy chief of readiness and integration in the Directorate of Manpower, Personnel and Readiness (A1), is leading the command’s Future Work Environment (FWE) team.

“The Overnight, the AFRC staff went from 7% of our work force doing some sort of telework to almost everyone teleworking full-time,” Pawlak said. “And now after the dust has settled a little bit, we have about 78% of our people teleworking at least part of the time. The FWE team is charged to create a work environment that embraces modern technological capabilities and work balance while still meeting mission demands.”

In addition to A1, the team includes experts from Contracting (PK), the Logistics, Engineering and Force Protection Directorate (A4), the Communications Directorate (A6), and the Directorate of Analyses, Lessons Learned and Continuous Process Improvement (A9).

“We will never return to managing our workforce the way we did prior to COVID,” said Lt. Gen. Richard Scobee, AFRC’s commander and chief of the Air Force Reserve. “Telecommuting will be an enduring part of our workforce.”

Pawlak echoed Scobee’s statement. “The one thing we know for sure is that we’re not going back to the way things were before the pandemic,” he said. “Beyond that, we’re looking at what is the right mix of in-office work versus telework and what impact this has on our mission, our work spaces, our communications systems and our people. We’re focused on creating and maintaining a future work environment that provides essential manpower and capabilities, enabling rapid response, operational surge and long-term operational sustainment of its people, infrastructure and technology. This strategic depth is critical to our national defense.”

Dawn Androsky, AFRC’s director of staff, is championing the work of the FWE team and is excited about the command’s future work environment.

“AFCR wants to obtain the best and the brightest,” she said. “Flexible work options will allow us to do this. Since 80% of our reserve workforce is part-time, we want to lead the way for the future work environment. This effort will allow us to retain talent, but not necessarily require us to have them on-site. Today, we have

The Future Work Environment
AFRC mapping out a tomorrow highlighted by more alternative workspace arrangements

By Bo Joyner

Above, Air Force Reserve Command announces its Outstanding Airmen of the Year via Zoom. Right, Staff Sgt. Charlie Trillo, a 624th Civil Engineer Squadron engineering journeyman, teleworks with his 1-year-old son Evan on his lap during a 624th Regional Support Group virtual unit training assembly in 2020. (Courtesy Photos)

Tech. Sgt. Amber Kurka, 624th Public Affairs photojournalist craftsman, speaks with Col. Athanasia Shinas, 624th Regional Support Group commander, during a virtual interview from her home in Mililani, Hawaii. (Christopher Kurka)
a flight surgeon working medical case management from Knob Noster, Missouri, for example. He is productive at his current location, and we are able to utilize his talent and specific skill set and not incur PCS charges nor disrupt his current family situation. It’s a win-win for the member and the command. This is only one example, there are many more.”

Pawlak said that numerous studies have shown that telework productivity is as high, and frequently higher, than on-site work. In addition, the command stands to reap positive environmental and monetary impacts from increased telework. “During COVID, providing flexibility has been essential to accommodating our members and ensuring retention of talent while being a magnet for the future workforce,” he said.

Overall, we want to keep up the momentum of the current work environment by evolving work policies and procedures to accommodate our members and ensure retention of talent while planning cycle due to the rapidly changing technological landscape. Androsky said the FWE working group is planning for a future that is more than just telework or remote work. “There’s a bigger strategic picture here,” she said. “As the command continues to design and build the AFRC campus at Robins, for example, the FWE working group is looking at how best to incorporate things like secure with, hoteling (reserving workstations), and collaborative work spaces into our future work environments.”

“This is a challenging, but extremely exciting, time for Air Force Reserve Command,” Pawlak said. “We want to be a leader in the area of successful alternative workplace arrangements. The Future Work Environment team will ensure we get there.”

The director of staff said improvements in technology and communications have made alternative workplace arrangements possible. “Current telecommunications platforms, such as Teams CVR, allow collaboration and the ability for all to connect virtually via both audio and video,” she said. “It’s not the same as being there, but it adds the element of being in person by allowing people to raise their hand to speak and to go into breakout rooms to chat, among other things.”

Pawlak said the FWE working group is forecasting for 10-15 year future work environment projections to set directional vectors, but said the group’s work will be more iterative and based on a 24-month forecasting for 10-15 year future work environment projections to set directional vectors, but said the group’s work will be more iterative and based on a 24-month
Learning by Doing

Reserve recruiters participate in joint air operations

By Col. Kjäll Gopaul

In-service recruiters from the 352nd Recruiting Squadron participated in a joint Total Force helicopter sling load exercise in January at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, to enhance their situational awareness of the Air Force Reserve and broaden their understanding of the aerial transportation career field.

The recruiters teamed with Air Force Reserve component personnel from the 26th Aerial Port Squadron and Texas Army National Guard Soldiers from Company C, 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation Regiment, for the heliborne transport of more than 26,000 pounds of cargo and personnel.

The two-day exercise involved rigging cargo loads, establishing a helicopter landing zone with four touch-down points and having two-person teams attach the loads to a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

Master Sgt. Dawnmosha S. Williams, 352nd Recruiting Squadron in-service recruiter supervisor, organized her unit’s participation to get the team out in the field and stay knowledgeable on Air Force Reserve job opportunities and activities.

“We want people to understand that recruiting is not just a desk job and that we’re out there getting down and dirty with everyone else,” she said.

Technical Sgt. Brasil A. Segura, an Air Force Reserve line recruiter, said that with each iteration, the two-person hook-up team would stand by their load as the Black Hawk helicopter approached. The bracer held his or her teammate against the rotor wash and gave adjustment advice as the hook-up person waited for the opportunity to attach the load to the cargo hook of the aircraft hovering just five feet over them.

The team would then verify the secure hookup, dash to its safety point and give a thumbs up to the Army aircrew to confirm task completion.

The experience was educational for those participating.

“My background is security forces, and I honestly did not know aerial transportation does this kind of up-close work with aircraft,” Segura said. “What they do is pretty cool and is 100% part of the mission, to make sure the aircrews can do what they need to do to transport the cargo.

“Part of my job is to promote aerial transportation as a career choice,” she said. “Now I have a better understanding of what ‘port dawgs’ do, and I can represent that to young applicants.

“Now, I also understand why folks with an ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery) score of 99 are a match for the 2T2 (air transportation) career field,” Segura said. “With the rigging, inspection and loading procedures, aerial transportation is an attention-to-detail job that you cannot mess up. I saw all of the precautions out there on the landing zone. If something is not strapped down right, or tied down correctly, or the weight is a little off, it could throw the load off balance and put the load, the aircraft or people on the ground at risk.”

Segura said she has been able to place two applicants in the aircrew background as a loadmaster on C-130s. This exercise was really interesting for me because I was able to see how an Army rotary-wing unit differs from an Air Force fixed-wing unit,” said Master Sgt. Zachary R. Nusbaum.

“With the new experience, seeing the differences in rigging a load for different types of airframes and types of movements. It was impressive to see the versatility of the equipment we have,” Nusbaum said the exercise really benefitted him as a recruiter.

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Flarity, whose father also served in the military, comes from a patriotic family and started her own military career at the young age of 17.

“I was going to become a nurse and was accepted into a nursing program, but I came from a poor family and couldn’t afford nursing school,” Flarity explained. “I joined to figure out a way to pay for school, but it really highlighted for me that I loved the military and I loved the medical career field.”

In 1985, Flarity attended Army Airborne School as one of only nine women in a class of 500. She was known only as N-11 – ‘N’ for non-commissioned officer and 11 as her assigned number. She was appointed platoon sergeant of an all-male platoon consisting of Army, Air Force and Marine officers and enlisted.

“I was out in front, which garnished a lot of [physical] abuse, performing combat jumps with 85 pounds of gear on my 110-pound frame,” said Flarity. “The more they pushed me to quit, the more determined I became to succeed.”

Starting her military career as an Army combat medic helped Flarity understand what it was like to be a ground medic, she said. She was brought on as the inaugural commander in 2008 for the recently established 34th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 302nd Airlift Wing, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado, due to her understanding of what ground and en route care medics do.

“I got to start the 34 AES from scratch,” said Flarity. “I was a squadron of one and they empowered me to hire a team. I loved the people, loved the mission and I was able to take the squadron on a great trajectory.”

Despite working hard at bettering her career field, Flarity also finds time to challenge herself academically and professionally while encouraging those around her to do the same.
to U.S. Northern Command’s surgeon, met Flarity when he was assigned to the 302nd Aeromedical Staging Squadron and Flarity was the 34 AES commander. They partnered together in mass casualty exercises, learned a lot from one another and became colleagues, according to Elkins.

“Although I credit many of my accomplishments to my wife, Flarity is a very close second as an influencer in my academics and military progression,” said Elkins. “I often reflect on a time when I was a captain and expecting to ultimately reach the rank of major to eventually retire. I had completed squadron officer school but did not see Air Command and Staff College, nor a master’s degree, as achievable marks due to my civilian obligations. Considering that then-Col. Flarity had completed Air War College and two doctorates, it is very complicated to make excuses that there is not enough time to complete my next level of academics.”

Flarity never passed judgment, said Elkins, on his lack of commitment to advancing his academics. Instead, she was always very supportive of his, and others, personal journeys.

“It is simple leadership by example,” explained Elkins. “Seeing that she had the time and set her priorities to achieve academic excellence challenged me to consider if I should re-prioritize as well. Fast forwarding, I have now completed my masters and Air Command and Staff College and Air War College, and I am close to completing my doctorate in leadership.”

Leading by example has always been a quality of Flarity’s, according to Wirth. When she had her own newborn, she maneuvered the complexities of bringing a breast pump to work to use on a military aircraft and pumped at appropriate times throughout a training mission, Wirth said.

“Flarity’s ability to see and understand the differences in people has allowed her to also seek out the strengths of each of those individuals and know that everyone has much to contribute,” said Wirth. “The result of her ability to nurture those strengths is a loyalty and drive to contribute to the goals and objectives of a successful mission with strength and honor.”

As a Reserve Citizen Airmen, Flarity said one of her favorite things is the sense of community and passion that many Reservists have for their jobs.

“It doesn’t matter what unit or squadron you come from, they embrace you and support you,” said Flarity. “We have the ability as Reservists to excel in our civilian and military careers and often they support each other. There’s a synergy there.”

Through her years in the Reserve, Flarity has seen several changes, such as increased opportunities for women.

“I started my career 40 years ago, in 1980, when a female wasn’t seen as capable,” said Flarity. “Now I see things like increased diversity and inclusion, not just with gender, race, ethnicity and religion, but total force. It’s not just active duty with the Guard and Reserve. Now, especially in Air Mobility Command, we’re seen as equal partners. Our nation cannot do the mission without our Guard and Reserve members.”

Flarity is especially excited to see changes for the better in the military as her son is now a senior airman and space systems operator at Schriever AFB, Colorado, and her daughter is enrolled in Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

“The opportunities, collaboration, diversity and inclusion, a lot of the stigma and perception of what a woman or young person in the military should look like, has changed for the better,” said Flarity. “[My kids] have seen that there is great opportunity there.”

The new year brought reflection to Flarity as she thought back to her original goals when she joined the military.

“When I joined at 17, my goal eventually was to make it to E-6,” said Flarity. “To go from an Army medic, private E-1 at 17, to a one-star general in the Air Force, anything is possible. Truly.”

By Headquarters RIO Public Affairs

The Headquarters Readiness and Integration Organization launched its independent website February 26.

HQ RIO’s website was previously part of Air Reserve Personnel Center’s site, but RIO branched out to make a resource dedicated solely to Individual Reservists, the roughly 8,000 Reservists who are uniquely assigned to active component units and Department of Defense agencies.

“We listened to our IRs and created an independent site that is organized and focused on their needs,” said Col. Amy Booble, HQ RIO commander. “The HQ RIO site is a hub where IRs can easily find the guidance, forms and information that are unique to their status. IRs have a large number of tasks they must submit themselves, such as pay, reimbursement, orders and readiness functions, and it was important that this site be designed in a way that makes it easy as possible for our IRs to serve.”

The site took about five months to create. Staff Sgt. Tara R. Abrams, HQ RIO public affairs journeyman, took the lead on the project.

“The HQ RIO public affairs team planned how the site should be organized, and then I worked with our migration specialist, Sean Hall, to put it together,” she said. “Sean helped me find ways to make the site look modern and easy to navigate. We were always trying to keep the user in mind.”

The plan for the website was based on the recent update of the Individual Reservist Guide, which is the go-to for IRs. Each section of the website has the key points from the IR Guide along with related links and resources pertaining to each topic.

“We wanted to do whatever we could to make it quick and easy for IRs to get what they need,” Abrams said. Once the site was created, it was reviewed by various subject matter experts for accuracy. The final step was a thorough review by the members of the IR Advisory Council.

“The IR Advisory Council members volunteer to advise HQ RIO to identify IR-based solutions and provide feedback and recommendations,” said Col. Gregory Kuzma, IR Advisory Council program manager. “The comments and suggestions from the council members mean a great deal, and help us know the website is truly tailored to unique needs of our members.”

To visit HQ RIO’s new website, go to https://www.hqrio.afrc.af.mil/.
MODERN-DAY ROSIE THE RIVETER: Airman 1st Class Bethany Dacus, 911th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief, poses for a photo after conducting routine maintenance on a C-17 Globemaster III at Pittsburgh International Airport Air Reserve Station, Pennsylvania, in March. Today, women play many vital roles in accomplishing the U.S. Air Force mission, and their accomplishments and contributions to society are celebrated during the month of March, which was declared Women’s History Month by Congress in 1987. (Joshua J. Seybert)