

CITIZEN AIRMAN

Volume 76 No. 1

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2024



COMMANDER PARACHUTES WITH RESERVE RESCUE WING

Story on page 12

REOPTIMIZING THE FORCE FOR GREAT POWER COMPETITION

In early September, Secretary of the Air Force Frank Kendall charged the Department of the Air Force with reoptimizing the force for Great Power Competition. For those who are new to the term, Great Power Competition, or GPC, describes the strategic environment that focuses on the People's Republic of China as a pacing threat.

For the last 30 years, our operational focus in theaters outside the Pacific has led the Department of the Air Force to place efforts on organizational structures, policies and management practices around contingencies other than GPC. These outdated practices have forced us to examine how the Department of the Air Force, and for us, the Air Force Reserve, perform fundamental functions to provide support to the Joint Force and combatant commanders.

To combat this emerging threat, Secretary Kendall and his senior leader team have created five lines of effort, each assigned a secretariat and service component lead, which your command staff has aligned efforts with over the past few months.

These LOEs tackle problem sets that require reform to deter and defend against People's Republic of China aggression; LOE 1 – Organize: Headquarters organization and command and unit level structure. LOE 2 – Equip and Sustain: Acquisition and sustainment, technology transition and warfighting advantage delivery. LOE 3 - People: Recruit, retain and train for GPC. LOE – 4 Readiness: Generate, sustain, evaluate, manage and assess readiness. LOE 5 – Support: Provide installations, mobilization and core competencies to the Total Force.

Our success in GPC requires coordination across the Total Force and

your senior leaders have been involved in every step of the analysis and development process. This collaboration ensures the Air Force Reserve is ready to provide the combat surge capacity and experience that our combatant commands need and expect. By Jan. 31, 2024, we plan to have senior leader approval to begin implementation of our new processes and reorganization, and I assure you that we will keep you informed as these changes develop. Our Air Force Force Generation model is already preparing us to support our combatant commands more efficiently, and any future changes will only prepare us even further for the threat that lies ahead.

Despite our increasing efforts, I cannot stress enough the importance of taking some time over the holidays to reflect on your year of successes and hard work. Everything you have done thus far has prepared you in ways you can only begin to imagine, and our new strategic focus will only further enhance our capabilities.

Your dedication and sacrifices are not only felt by you, but also your spouses, children, family and friends. Appreciate what you have accomplished over the past year: deployments, exercises, TDYs, training...all while preserving your families, relationships and personal goals.

Serving in the military while balancing a civilian career takes a special kind of commitment, and I know that keeping up with both careers takes a lot out of you and your loved ones. However you choose to celebrate this holiday season, don't forget to take a deep breath, give thanks, give yourself some grace and revel in every challenge you have overcome. From the bottom of my heart, thank you to you and your families.

From me and Cathy to yours, Happy Holidays.

KEEP STRIVING FOR WORK-LIFE HARMONY

Recently, I had what has become a rare, yet cherished, opportunity of taking one of my daughters to school. As I wished her well, it hit me that she has had to move across the United States twice in the past two and half years.

Having to uproot, adapt to a new environment and make new friends is not easy for anyone, especially young children. As a loving parent and husband, this moment of reflection allowed me think about the past five months since taking the seat as your Command Chief. I thought about the significant events and challenges that affect all of us who wear the uniform, and what we can do to best balance our love for service and family.

With end of year nearing, I have realized that the entirety of our service has been laser focused on reoptimizing for Great Power Competition. The lines of effort that will be undertaken as part of the Secretary of the Air Force's initiatives are necessary to ensure we are prepared to deter and defend against aggression from the People's Republic of China. We need to be prepared to embrace the changes to come as they will ensure that we are postured to be the force that our nation and allies need.

As Lt. Gen. Healy mentions, increased efforts to optimize our service and perform daily operations comes at a cost. The work that our Airmen put in requires time, dedication and sacrifice – often at the detriment of families and loved ones. Most recently, we have seen and felt that sacrifice through the overwhelming volunteerism seen by Citizen Airmen. Hundreds of you have raised your hands to part from your day-to-day careers and put your lives and families on hold in support of unexpected

operations within the U.S. Central Command theater. The strategic depth and experience that you have brought, and continue to bring, is what makes a difference around the world and what has kept adversaries at bay.

Throughout my career, I have heard that the best recipe for managing that tug and pull that comes with answering our nation's call is to find perfect work-life balance. Unfortunately, the latter is often difficult to attain and never perfectly balanced.

Knowing this, I encourage all of us to find work-life harmony. Focus on your time, energy and attention, and when/where you invest it. Be present in whatever you are doing at that moment. Give enormous amounts of energy, passion and love to your family when you are with them and apply the same to duty when it calls. Although timing may be imbalanced, embrace each minute, hour and day you spend with your loved ones. Be fully engaged when around them, show them how much they mean to you, and most importantly, never pass up an opportunity to tell them that you love them.

Please take time over the holidays to be proud of your amazing service and reflect on your work-life harmony. We are in a demanding profession that requires careful navigation of many competing priorities. Your ability to adjust to the changes around you are a testament to your personal resiliency and your ability to harmonize each facet of your life. I cannot thank you and your families enough for your sacrifices and am thankful to serve with and for you.

Susie, Isabella, Olivia and I wish you all a Happy Holidays!

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The U.S. Postal Service requires certain periodicals to publish a Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation each year.

Title of Publication – Citizen Airman	Copies Distributed
USPS Publication Number – 0887-9680	(Oct/Nov 2023 issue) – 41,134
Owner – U.S. Air Force Reserve	Free Distributed by Mail
Publisher – Lt. Gen. John Healy	(Oct/Nov 2023 issue) – 41,134
Editor – Col. Eric Simon	Copies Not Distributed
Managing Editor – Bo Joyner	(Oct/Nov 2023 issue) – 100
Frequency of Issue – Bi-monthly	Total Copies Distributed and Not Distributed
Location of Office of Publication	(Oct/Nov 2023 issue) – 41,234
HQ AFRC/PAO 155 Richard Ray Blvd. Robins AFB, Ga. 31098-1661	

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

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

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





An MH-139 Grey Wolf sits on the assembly line at Leonardo Helicopters, Pennsylvania. The Air Force Reserve's 908th Airlift Wing is transitioning from a C-130 airlift mission to a MH-139 training mission. (Senior Airman Mary Bowers) Opposite page, an MH-139 Grey Wolf takes off from Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. The aircraft, set to replace the UH-1N Huey, will provide emergency security response and convoy escort security at Air Force intercontinental ballistic missile bases. (Capt. Joshua Thompspon)



908TH SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATING DIFFICULT MISSION CHANGE, EAGERLY AWAITING FIRST GREY WOLF HELICOPTER

— By Bo Joyner

On Nov. 20, 2020, then-Secretary of the Air Force Barbara Barrett announced that Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama was selected as the candidate base to host the MH-139 Formal Training Unit. By the time Maxwell was officially named as the site for the FTU on June 10, 2022, the Air Force Reserve's 908th Airlift Wing was well on its way to transitioning from a worldwide airlift mission in the C-130H Hercules aircraft to a training mission for the MH-139 Grey Wolf helicopter.

Over the past three years, the dedicated Citizen Airmen of the 908th have been busy gearing up for the new mission. The Grey Wolf will provide security and support for the nation's intercontinental ballistic missile fields and transport U.S. government officials and security forces. Other mission capabilities include civil search and rescue, as well as survival school and test support.

The transition from Hercules to Grey Wolf has not been easy.

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

Since that time, the 908th has made great strides in getting ready for its new mission. Over the last two years, the wing has awarded \$34 million in construction and renovation contracts on nine projects to facilitate the mission change. The largest project, transforming an existing aircraft hangar

into a simulator and academic building, is alone valued at \$14 million.

Construction at the hangar-turned-academic building began in late July. When completed, the facility will house six training stations, including two operational flight trainers, a weapons simulator, a host and extraction trainer, a cockpit procedure trainer, and an integrated aircrew systems trainer. The operational flight trainers are fixed-base simulators incorporating a full-size crew station replication of the MH-139A cockpit and rear aircrew stations. The integrated aircrew systems trainer is a full-size nonoperational MH-139A used for inspection and pre-flight training.

— Continued on next page



MH-139A student pilots and special-mission aviators are expected to spend approximately two months training in the facility prior to their initial flights in the Air Force's newest platform.

The Citizen Airmen of the 908th have been extremely busy since they first learned they would be getting a new mission.

Over the spring and summer of 2021, the wing executed the largest deployment in wing history while navigating the COVID pandemic and preparing for its new mission. Approximately 250 members of the wing deployed to various locations in Southwest Asia in the summer of 2021. In August of that year, a team from the 908th Aeromedical Staging Squadron assisted in the evacuation of personnel from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul. They treated multiple critical injuries after the terrorist bombing on Aug. 26 and helped evacuate the 13 U.S. service members killed along with 18 others who were injured. After evacuating hundreds of military and civilian patients throughout the month, they were among the last personnel to leave Kabul on Aug. 30, only hours before the return of Taliban rule.

On April 2, 2022, the 908th's 357th Airlift Squadron flew its last C-130H mission in a four-ship formation to the Gulf Coast and back. Within a week, the squadron's last four C-130s were flown to their new home in Lit-

tle Rock, Arkansas. The wing's other C-130s went to Air Force bases in Ohio, Minnesota and Colorado.

With the last C-130s gone, the Reservists at Maxwell intensified their efforts to get ready for their new air frame and their new mission. The former Hercules operators and maintainers who opted to stay with the 908th ramped up their training for the Grey Wolf, which will replace the Air Force's nearly 50-year-old aging fleet of UH-1N Huey helicopters.

Several of the wing's C-130 pilots chose to learn how to fly the helicopter so they could remain at Maxwell as instructors.

Their first step in this process was attending the TH-1H Rotary Wing Fundamentals course at Fort Novosel (formerly Fort Rucker), Alabama. Lt. Col. Jeffrey E. Randall was the first member of the wing to complete the course in 2022.

"It was an honor to be the first member of the 908th to complete the initial training," Randall said. "They have a very good training program at Fort Rucker. I think everyone of our members will come out of the course fully qualified."

The four-month course is designed specifically to train helicopter pilots with previous experience flying fixed-wing aircraft.

The next phase of training before attending MH-139 familiarization is the TH-1H Instructor Training course, also at Fort Novosel. After completing this course, the graduates are serving as instructors there until the FTU is established.

One of the first things Drescher did to navigate the mission change at the 908th was set up the Program Integration Office in 2021. Anthony "Todd" Taylor, a former Air Force helicopter pilot, serves as the director of the PIO team.

"We are responsible for working with other leaders to ensure the 908th AW safely and efficiently converts from a tactical C-130 mission to the Air Force's Formal Training Unit for the MH-139A helicopter," he said in 2022.

Lt. Col. Jay Ference, 357th Airlift Squadron commander, is the PIO deputy director.

"This is probably going to be the hardest transition in the history of the Air Force," he said. "But, I have no doubt that we're up to the challenge. We have maintainers, for instance, who have an average of 10 to 12 years of experience. We have very decorated and accomplished maintainers."

Many of those maintainers got their introduction to helicopter maintenance at a class on basic rotary systems at Maxwell in the summer of 2022. Master Sgt. Mike Cutter, 908th

Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief and expediter, and Master Sgt. William Little, 908th AW flight safety noncommissioned officer in charge, taught the class. Cutter was a C-130H crew chief and expediter who has more than 35 years of helicopter experience from his time in the Marine Corps and the Vermont Army National Guard prior to joining the Reserve. Little has more than 20 years of experience as a helicopter mechanic and avionics technician at Fort Novosel and has worked on AH-64 Apache, OH-58D Kiowa and the UH-72 Lakota platforms.

"The main purpose of these briefings was to give everybody some clarity as to what kind of aircraft we will be getting and to see the main differences between them," Little said.

"This was just a basic introduction to the rotor system and how it ties in with the flight controls, which ties into everything," Cutter said. "This is a big mind shift coming from a C-130 where they think, 'this is my field and this is what I focus on,' to working hand-in-hand with each other because that rotor doesn't move without all of these systems."

After their introduction to basic rotary systems, many 908th maintainers have continued to pursue helicopter maintenance training, including working with the Chevron Corporation in Picayune, Mississippi, which maintains the civilian variant of the MH-139, the AW-139.

Since January 2023, more than 20 maintainers from the 908th have spent a minimum of 30 days with their Chevron counterparts to learn how to effectively maintain these helicopters.

Master Sgt. Timothy Hill, 908th Maintenance Squadron dedicated crew chief, and Tech. Sgt. Lloydstone Jacobs, were two of the first 908th maintainers to embed with Chevron's maintainers at their facilities.

"It was extremely beneficial for us to be at their site with them," Hill said. "It gave us an opportunity to see all that they do, and to receive mentorship and build relationships with their maintainers."

"I believe this is going to help speed up our process of transitioning to the MH-139A Grey Wolf," added Jacobs.

At the November 2022 unit training assembly, one MH-139 from the 413th Flight Test Squadron at Duke Field, Florida, and two UH-1Ns from the 23rd Flying Training Squadron at Fort Novosel, made a welcome stop at Maxwell so members of the 908th Operations Group and the 908th Maintenance Group could get familiar with the incoming and retiring aircraft.

This was the first time at Maxwell that wing members had the chance to interact with their future mission and the legacy they are inheriting.

"It's been very difficult," Ference said at the November 2022 UTA. "We haven't had aircraft here for the last seven months. So, this was an event to get the spark, the energy to say, 'hey, this is what we're going to be doing and we're going to be getting these aircraft.'"

The first of the new MH-139A helicopters is expected to be delivered to Maxwell early in 2024. A total of 10 are scheduled to be delivered by the end of fiscal 2028.

The 908th AW's economic impact on the local River Region of central Alabama is expected to increase with the mission change. Not including construction expenditures, the economic impact is estimated to increase nearly 40%, from \$55 million to \$75.5 million beginning in 2024.

From a personnel standpoint, the wing will continue to have about 1,200 total members, but the number of full-time employees at the wing, to include military personnel, government civilians and contractors, will increase from 240 to 420, with an additional 150 pipeline aircrew students cycling through every year.



Senior Airman Jarren Peak, right, and 1st Lt. Seth Partyka, middle, train Senior Airman DeAndre Scarborough on helicopter electronic management systems. (Britanie Teston.)



An MH-139A from Test Detachment 7, Air Force Global Strike Command, Duke Field, Florida visits the 908th Airlift Wing during a Unit Training Assembly at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, in November 2022. (Airman 1st Class Juliana Todd)



Master Sgt. Mike Cutter, 908th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief and expediter, gives a briefing on helicopter rotary system basics. (Senior Airman Shelby Thurman)



Jo Osman, a Minnesota Girl Scout, leans out the window of a C-130H Hercules aircraft at Flying Cloud Airport in Eden Prairie, Minnesota. Below, 1st Lt. Riley Komurka, 93th Airlift Squadron pilot, speaks with visiting families at the Girls in Aviation event. Opposite page, Staff Sgt. Scott Kosmatka, 934 Aeromedical Staging Squadron medical records technician, observes as Tech. Sgt. Diesel, 934th ASTS therapeutic dog, enjoys spending time with girl scouts visiting for Girls in Aviation Day.

— Story and photos by Senior Airman Victoriya Tarakanova

MINNESOTA RESERVISTS ENCOURAGE GIRLS TO CONSIDER A CAREER IN AVIATION



Citizen Airmen from the 934th Airlift Wing, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Air Reserve Station, Minnesota, took part in the largest female-focused aviation event in the world in September.

The ninth annual Girls in Aviation Day, hosted by Stars of the North, the Minneapolis chapter of Women in Aviation, is designed to introduce girls ages 8 to 18 to aviation and aerospace. The GIAD event held at the Flying Cloud Airport in Minnesota, had about 2,500 attendees and many different types of aircraft to tour, including a 934th AW C-130H Hercules.

GIAD offers aviation-minded girls and their families the rare opportunity to get up close and personal with Air Force Reserve Airmen and aircraft.

“I’m passionate about getting girls better opportunities to do stuff like this,” said Senior Master Sgt. Amanda Kellner, 934th AW investigation and inquiries specialist, who has helped organize 934th AW GIAD involvement for years.

Though centered toward girls, the event inspires women of all ages who may not have considered aviation as a career.

“The big thing is when a young person, or even someone young at heart, has an ‘aha’ moment,” said Master Sgt. Mina Carlson, 96th Airlift Squadron flight engineer who has been helping support the event for more than five years. “And then you see that smile when they’ve been bitten by the aviation bug.”

Carlson said she was bitten by the aviation bug when she was a teenager. In addition to being an Air Force Reserve flight engineer, she also worked as the state’s chief helicopter inspector and recently joined the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s Office of Aeronautics.

GIAD helps girls discover aviation-based career opportunities beyond being a pilot. Minnesota’s GIAD brings in representatives from companies that contribute to aviation and defense segments from the engineering or manufacturing side.

“Globally, the (aviation) industry is going to need about a million people, with only 200,000 of those being pilots,” Carlson said. “So, we have expanded that engagement piece.”

Planning for 934th AW participation in the GIAD event began early in 2023. Kellner and her team considered specific mission logistics needed for success and gained approval to fly a C-130 to the event.

All the planning paid off, because groups of young girls from across Minnesota and beyond connected with many inspirational female aviators.

“I have two 11-year-old daughters, and I brought one of them last year and she loved it,” Kellner said. “She got so excited, and now she wants to join Junior ROTC, the Civil Air Patrol and other aviation organizations. Seeing her excitement, I was like, ‘this is a good thing.’”

(Tarakanova is assigned to the 934th Airlift Wing public affairs office.)



COMMANDER PARACHUTES WITH RESERVE RESCUE WING



— By Bo Joyner

Calling it the thrill of a lifetime, Lt. Gen. John Healy had the opportunity to take part in a tandem parachute jump from the back of a 920th Rescue Wing HC-130J Combat King II aircraft at Patrick Space Force Base, Florida, in October.

Healy, the chief of the Air Force Reserve and commander of Air Force Reserve Command, teamed up with Senior Master Sgt. Matthew Williams, 308th Rescue Squadron pararescueman, for the tandem jump. Master Sgt. Richard Dunn, 308th RQS pararescueman, exited the aircraft before the general and Williams and provided video coverage of the event.

Also on the flight, 920th Rescue Wing Command Chief Master Sgt. James Loper jumped tandem with Senior Master Sgt. Kyle Oler, 308th

RQS Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape specialist. Oler is the only SERE specialist tandem-qualified for the 308th RQS and is one of the only Military Tandem Tethered Bundle qualified in his career field.

Tech. Sgt. Alex Dastmalchi, 308th RQS pararescueman and primary jump master, Staff Sgt. Yosuel Garcia, 308th RQS pararescueman and assistant jump master, and Master Sgt. Kelly Goonan, 920th Rescue Wing public affairs photojournalist and superintendent, stayed aboard during the flight.

The Combat King II flight crew was comprised of Lt. Col. William Perry, 39th Rescue Squadron pilot; Maj. Jeffrey Broffman, 39th RQS pilot and aircraft commander; Master Sgt. Marcus Hildebrand, 39th RQS load-

master; and Tech. Sgt. Austin Schwier, 39th RQS loadmaster.

The pararescuemen and Healy jumped from 10,000 feet.

During his visit to Patrick, Healy also had the opportunity to fly aboard one of the 920th RQW's HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters flown by 1st Lt. Dave Popovich and Lt. Col. Chadd Bloomstine, and crewed by Senior Master Sgts. Bill Allen and Chris Mora Matos, 301st RQS special missions aviators.


Senior Airman Sam Becker, Space Launch Delta 45 photojournalist, took imagery on the ground of the general and within the HH-60. Loper also was also on the Pave Hawk for the low-level familiarization flight.

Healy's visit to the 920th Rescue Wing gave him the opportunity to see firsthand the unique mission carried out by the more than 2,000 Reserve Citizen Airmen assigned to the combat search and rescue wing. The 920th is the Reserve's only wing with the mission to plan, lead and conduct military rescue operations and missions that deny competitors and adversaries the exploitation of isolated personnel.

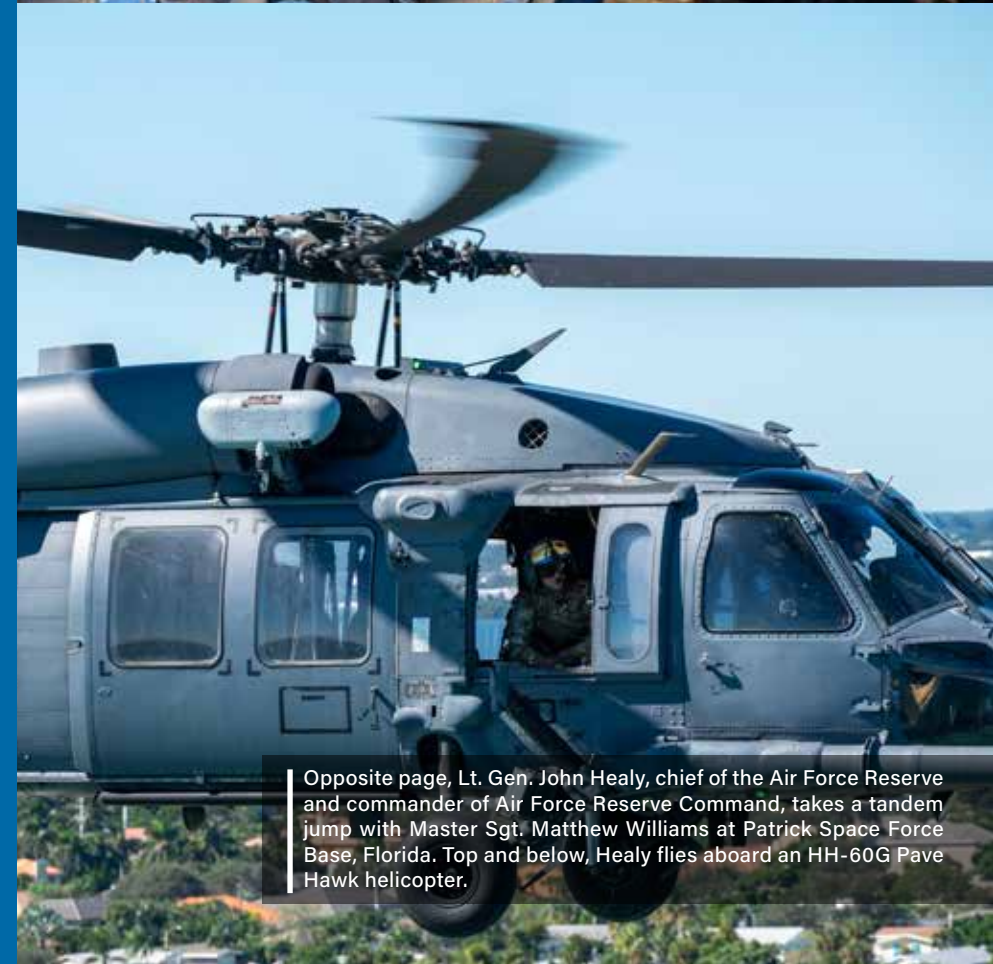
The 920th Rescue Wing comprises 25 subordinate groups and squadrons, including three geographically separated units; the 943d Rescue Group at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, the 304th Rescue Squadron at Portland, Oregon, and the 920th Aerospace Medicine Flight at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, Virginia.

The wing has recorded more than 1,200 combat rescues since 2000, including Navy SEAL Marcus Luttrell, who documented his ordeal in the best-selling novels "Lone Survivor" and "Service."

The rescue wing also has been a mainstay in humanitarian relief, rescuing 137 South Florida residents during the 18 days following Hurricane Andrew in 1992; saving 93 elderly residents from rising flood waters at their Tampa-area retirement community in 1993; rescuing more than 200 people after Hurricane Floyd in 1999 and pulling 1,049 people from New Orleans and the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina and Rita in 2005.

"I am so impressed with the Reserve Citizen Airmen of the 920th Rescue Wing," Healy said after his visit. "They maintain an extremely high level of proficiency and must be ready to deploy at a moment's notice. It was an honor to get an up-close and personal look at what they do every day." 

Check out the video at:
<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/904341/afrc-commander-jumps-with-920th-rescue-wing>



Opposite page, Lt. Gen. John Healy, chief of the Air Force Reserve and commander of Air Force Reserve Command, takes a tandem jump with Master Sgt. Matthew Williams at Patrick Space Force Base, Florida. Top and below, Healy flies aboard an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter.



RESCUE PARACHUTE RIGGERS BECOME AIRBORNE QUALIFIED

— Story and Photos by
Master Sgt. Kelly Goonan

Parachutes hang to dry inside the 308th Aircrew Flight Equipment parachute drying facility at Patrick Space Force Base, Florida. Opposite page, 308th Aircrew Flight Equipment rescue riggers exit an HC-130J Combat King II. From top to bottom, Tech. Sgt. Felipe Guilfu, Master Sgt. Brian Pajor and Staff Sgt. Melissa Romero inspect and pack parachutes. A group of combat search and rescue Aircrew Flight Equipment rigger Airmen have recently become the 920th Rescue Wing's first AFE Airmen to become airborne qualified. (Master Sgt. Kelly Goonan)

A group of combat search and rescue Aircrew Flight Equipment rigger Airmen, assigned to the 308th, 306th and 304th Rescue Squadrons, have recently become the 920th Rescue Wing's first AFE Airmen to become airborne qualified.

Based at Patrick Space Force Base, Florida, the 920th Rescue Wing is the only Air Force Reserve Command wing trained and equipped to search for, locate and recover U.S. Armed Forces personnel during military operations. The wing also has a humanitarian search and rescue mission.

Having this airborne certification allows the AFE riggers to jump from aircraft alongside the pararescuemen, combat rescue officers and survival evasion resistance and escape specialists for whom they build, inspect and provide rescue equipment.

This rescue-specific specialty within the AFE career field means that every parachute packed and provided by this team will be used during mission execution, providing zero margin for error.

These riggers are required to know and pack a variety of chutes in a variety of conditions to meet mission needs. The process is detailed and takes time to inspect and repack, along with complex quality control measures that must be performed.

Every AFE Airman plays an important role in ensuring the safety of aircrew, however, these jump-qualified Airmen take their knowledge and meticulous work one step further.

"We're now involved in every step of the process. We're able to gain firsthand experience and knowledge of how the packs we give our members behave in every element of the process of its use. This experience allows us to better understand the specific needs and concerns our PJs (pararescue jumpers), CROs (combat rescue officers) and SERE (survival, evasion, resistance and escape) specialists have when it comes to their equipment and safety," said Master Sgt. Brian Pajor, 308th RQS AFE noncommissioned officer in charge.



Becoming airborne qualified involves undergoing rigorous training that includes parachute jumps from aircraft and learning proper landing techniques to execute operations. Having this experience enhances the credibility and effectiveness of these AFE Airmen in their role within the rescue squadrons.

Prior to any jump mission, these riggers are now seeing the other side to the end state of their work. Not only are they receiving the tasking to prepare parachutes for jumpers, but they're also preparing one for themselves, attending the insertion briefing and performing their own equipment checks alongside the operators; bringing a better understanding of just how short a two-hour timeline can feel like when missions are tasked.

"Before becoming qualified to jump, we'd have a much more limited scope of understanding for what these chutes go through when used. Having AFE Airmen who have personally experienced the conditions of jump operations provides us riggers with more accurate and relevant guidance as well as support to our team. We can better anticipate possible issues that could arise and ensure the equipment is properly maintained to meet the demands of the mission," Pajor said. **CA**

(Goonan is assigned to the 920th Rescue Wing public affairs office.)





Individual mobilization augmentees Lt. Col. Jason McMunn, left, and Lt. Col. Nicholas Passarella recently worked with midshipmen cadets at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in support of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program. (courtesy photos)

IMAS HAVE UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE AT MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY

— By Bo Joyner

Lt. Col. Nicholas Passarella and Lt. Col. Jason McMunn, a pair of Air Force Reserve individual mobilization augmentees, recently had the unique opportunity to work with midshipmen cadets at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in support of the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps program.

The USMMA, located at Kings Point, New York, is a U.S. service academy that trains and educates future leaders of the global maritime industry, which serves vital U.S. national security interests during both peace and war. The USMMA is a unique service academy in that the midshipmen cadets can choose their respective military service branch while enrolled at the academy. This option is exclusive to the USMMA, in that the midshipmen do not have to elect to declare their branch of service intent until their sophomore, or in some cases, their junior year. Even more exclusive to the USMMA, midshipmen who join the AFROTC program in certain circumstances can commis-

sion directly into the Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard.

During the spring of 2022, Lt. Col. Bernard King, the AFROTC Detachment 560 commander at Manhattan College, and Passarella were discussing recruiting events for the upcoming school year and how Reserve Component members could augment and support the active-component ROTC cadre. King asked Passarella if he would be interested in serving an active-duty tour at the USMMA as the Air Force senior liaison. Passarella jumped in with both feet, and recruited another IMA, McMunn, to tackle the task.

Upon approval from AFROTC headquarters, Passarella and McMunn were brought onto temporary active duty for the express purpose of leading and administering the one-of-a-kind Air and Space Force ROTC unit at the USMMA. Due to their unique experiences both in and out of the Air Force, Passarella and McMunn were well suited for the herculean task of establishing

the Air Force's in-person presence at the Merchant Marine Academy.

The pair faced a host of challenges since this was the first time the USMMA had a full-time Air Force presence on its campus with the express purpose of advancing and commissioning midshipmen into the Department of the Air Force.

Immediately after arriving, Passarella and McMunn hit the ground running. Passarella arranged a meeting with USMMA leadership, where he was able to secure office space and equipment for the Air Force ROTC program.

"Everyone in the commandant's office was phenomenal," he said, "especially CAPT. Mikel Stroud, CDR. Andrew McCarthy and Collen Sica."

McMunn established lines of communications and opened channels within the USMMA superintendent's office to facilitate and successfully advance the Air Force's agenda.

"All the people at the USMMA and ROTC involved in making this happen were all on the same page and were all very attentive and supportive of our endeavors," he said.

King and the ROTC cadre were instrumental in the success of this new endeavor, successfully supporting the IMAs with reach-back capabilities.

The IMAs faced a host of administrative hurdles, most of which were rectified with little more than an in-person visit to the appropriate official.

"This is all about relationships and team building," Passarella said.

More difficult were the actual personal situations that were unique to each midshipman cadet and that could only be dealt with by experienced leaders. Each time these issues arose, the IMAs expertly handled the situations.

One of the most important aspects of this journey was bringing to

life classroom lectures and lessons learned to the cadets, some of whom were about to embark on their Air Force or Space Force careers.

During the lecture on Air Force operations, Passarella said, "We as officers have the greatest responsibility. We have been entrusted with our nation's most important resource, our nation's people. These are the men and women who have volunteered to serve our great nation. We as leaders must always strive for complete mission success. However, our people and their well-being and safety are paramount above all else. As leaders we are there for not only what we normally are expected to do, but what we might have to do."

The unique experiences of these two IMAs highlight not only the versatility of the Air Force Reserve and its members, but it showcases how Reserve Component members have stepped up to augment the active duty outside of the normal requirements and have continually achieved success.

Furthermore, it magnifies the invaluable abilities of Reserve leaders and displays how the Reserve Component contributes every day to the active duty and to the future of the Air and Space Forces.

In this unique and uncharted dynamic, IMA Reservists and the active-duty ROTC cadre, along with the U.S. service academy staff, all partnered together with a single focus to bring about and commission the next generation of Air and Space Force leaders.

Passarella, a career intelligence officer, is currently assigned as the IMA to the commander of an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Operations Support Squadron at Fort Meade, Maryland.

McMunn is currently serving as a primary-duty Academy Liaison Officer stationed at the Air Force Academy. He has repeatedly served as the commander of security forces squadrons. His initial command was immediately following the 9/11 attacks. **CA**



“ *We had eyes looking out every window* ”

TRAVIS AIRCREWS ASSIST IN RARE



— By Rossi D. Pedroza

SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION

It's not every day that tanker aircrews get asked to take part in a search-and-rescue mission, but that's just what happened to a pair of KC-10A Extender aircrews assigned to the Air Force Reserve's 349th Air Mobility Wing at Travis Air Force, California, during the October unit training assembly weekend.

The aircrews, from the 70th and 79th Air Refueling Squadrons, were participating in tanker and receiver training with three Air National Guard F-15s when they got the call for help.

The Travis Command Post reached out to the KC-10 crews to see if they could investigate an active distress beacon the Coast Guard picked up near the Oregon-California border.

“Both aircraft received phone calls from the command post to see if either of us could proceed to a global positioning satellite fix,” said Capt. Judah Anolick, ORCA-70 aircraft commander. “The Coast Guard wanted to know if we could investigate and, if able, help facilitate a rescue.”

After burning all available fuel during the training mission, TORA-79 headed back to Travis. The crew passed off the latest coordinates, a thorough weather report since the weather conditions were poor

and a report of having heard the emergency locator transmitter over the aircraft's radio.

The crew of ORCA-70 headed directly to the area of the distress signal and coordinated a non-standard descent over the ocean with San Francisco Radio Control via high-frequency radios.

The crew first descended to 6,500 feet, but remained in dense cloud cover. ORCA-70 descended to 3,500 feet and then to 2,500 feet, but still found itself in dense clouds. The aircraft commander prepared to lower the altitude to 1,500 feet.

“At this altitude, we were still in and out of dense clouds, but we were able to see the ocean for brief periods of time,” Anolick said. “It was raining and very windy with large and plentiful white caps on the surface. The crew's strategy was to plot all the previous points received from the Coast Guard and scan the areas of interest for the distressed ship. Despite the continuous rain, dense clouds and barely discernible surface conditions, crew members took up positions at nearly every available window in the jet to see anything out of the ordinary.”

The first five to six passes over the area yielded nothing. Then, during one of the final passes, Staff Sgt. Taylor Dickson, a boom operator, called from the back of the jet that he had seen the boat out of the air refueling operations window.

The aircrew radioed in and provided detailed information on the current state of the boat, location of the sighting and other information to the Coast Guard before leaving the area. With fuel running low, ORCA-70 had to return to Travis.

“We were grateful to hear that a nearby passenger vessel was enroute to our most recent location,” Anolick said. “We briefly talked with them directly over our high-frequency radios, but quickly lost connection. We believed the passenger ship was able to get the rest of our information from the Coast Guard after we lost contact.”

After touching down at Travis, the crew learned that the passenger ship arrived at the scene and found a single male aboard the distressed ship, which was taking on water. He was safely recovered.

“I am very proud to have such an exceptional crew despite the day and long odds,” Anolick said. “Everyone was willing to make the long drive out over the ocean to do our best to assist in this search-and-rescue mission. We had eyes looking out every window.”

Lt. Col. Jill Sliger, 349th Operations Group commander, expressed gratitude to the Travis Command Post. “We got word that a life was saved today because of your effective communication to the aircraft in the air and to the U.S. Coast Guard ... incredible.”

In a message relayed to the flight crews, the Coast Guard said, “We couldn't have done it without you.”

(Pedroza is assigned to the 349th AMW public affairs office.)

A KC-10 Extender makes a touchdown at Travis Air Force Base, California. (Grant Okubo) Above, Capt. Judah Anolick was the pilot on one of the tankers asked to take part in an ocean search-and-rescue mission. (Dennis Santarinala)





C-130H AVIONICS GO DIGITAL WITH MAJOR MODERNIZATION UPGRADE

— By Samuel King Jr.

Above, the new all digital C-130H cockpit sits ready for its next test flight at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. (Samuel King Jr.) Below, an aircrew tests the C-130H's all new digital displays for the first time. (Courtesy photo)

Air Force Reserve Command's C-130H fleet began the transition from analog to digital recently with testing beginning on a major upgrade of the aircraft's avionics system.

The update, called Avionics Modernization Program Increment 2, is a significant improvement to the almost 60-year-old aircraft's avionics and navigation systems.

The goal for the AMP Inc 2 modernization effort is supporting mobility air forces to sufficiently meet National Defense Strategy priorities, according to the C-130H legacy avionics branch. The upgrade provides a new flight management system, autopilot, large glass multifunctional displays, digital engine instruments, digital backbone and terrain awareness and warning system.

Aircrews with the 417th Flight Test Squadron, Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, were involved in the AMP upgrading since 2017 and began AMP Inc 2 developmental testing in August on one aircraft with others to follow.

"This modification completely changes the interface for the crew to employ the C-130H," said Maj. Jacob Duede, 417th FLTS experimental test pilot. "Aircrew essentially had to print the directions before flying and then type the information in using latitude and longitude or use ground-based navigation aids. This new mod is the newest GPS navigation with a by-name search function and autopilot, all built into the aircraft."

The built-in flight plan modification ability is particularly impactful for the pilots. Prior to AMP, to modify the flight plan, pilots coordinated with air traffic control, then looked up new coordinates in latitude and longitude with equipment brought onto the aircraft like a tablet or laptop. Then, the pilots took those numbers and entered them into the aircraft to adjust the flight plan.

"Depending on the proficiency of the crew, this could take 30-45 seconds or two to three minutes," Duede said. "Either of which is a long time when in the air moving at four miles per minute."

Using the new built-in multifunctional displays, the pilot can complete the entire process with a hand controller in less than 30 seconds.

"The new process is as quick as the first step of the old process. You just identify the point on the moving map, grab it and execute the flight plan," said the major, a 10-year C-130 pilot.

Another new key aircraft component is the Integrated Terrain Awareness and Warning System. It is a commercially-used ground and object avoidance tool, but significantly upgraded to react to Air Force tactical flying requirements. The ITAWS, combined with the latest flight navigational programs, are all now built into the aircraft and available on screens easily assessable to the pilot, co-pilot and navigator. Currently, operational C-130H aircrews carry on tablets or laptops to access any navigational software.

All but three of the aircraft's original analog gauges are gone to make way for the AMP system. In place of those gauges, that worked independently of each other, are six new brightly lit multifunctional displays working together throughout the aircraft's flight deck.

"This is much larger than just a software or hardware upgrade," said Duede. "It's reconstructing and modernizing the aircraft's entire cockpit area."

The planning phase of the 417th FLTS's developmental testing began in 2021 and continues through the rest of the year.

During the developmental testing flights, aircrew examine all aspects of these newly-installed tools, none of which existed within the aircraft before.

"This is an entirely new system," said Caleb Reeves, 417th FLTS test engineer who helped design the test plan. "Everything we're testing here is being done for the first time ever in this aircraft. We're also examining if these untried systems perform in the ways we thought they would or not. That data allows us to adjust our testing and provide feedback to the manufacturer."

The ITAWS test flights sometimes mean flying at terrain and at obstacles to check if those new warning systems react in the timely fashion and with the clarity.

Once the 96th Test Wing completes developmental testing, the aircraft and mission shifts to Little Rock, Arkansas, where the Air National Guard/AFRC Test Center begins the operational test phase.

To better prepare them for operational testing and the upcoming aircraft changes, AATC pilots augment 417th FLTS aircrew roles during the current DT flying missions. This opportunity gives those aircrews a chance to see and learn the system early. This developmental seat-time helps guide the ANG and AFRC's new techniques, procedures and training that becomes new aircraft standards for all operational units.

More than 23 Air Force Reserve and 54 Air National Guard C-130H aircraft will receive the AMP Inc 2 modification over the next five years at a cost of approximately \$7 million per aircraft.

(King is assigned to the 96th Test Wing public affairs office.)



TEAM DOVER AIRMEN TEST INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

— By Senior Airman John Rossi



Capt. Christopher Berube and Lt. Col. John Gerlach set up the Helios platform at the flight line on Dover Air Force Base, Delaware. Below left, the Helios tactical platform sits ready for deployment. Below right, Team Dover members work alongside a California-based defense technology company to set up and test the Helios tactical platform. (courtesy photos)



Active-duty and Reserve Airmen at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, tested a new communications and sensor platform kit on the flight line in October. The Helios platform, developed by a California-based defense technology company, is designed to provide aircrews with satellite internet connectivity anywhere in the world.

The team of active-duty and Reserve Airmen deployed the Helios from its portable case during a mission scenario involving a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft. Capt. Christopher

Baude, a pilot assigned to the Reserve 512th Airlift Wing's 326th Airlift Squadron and the unit's chief of innovation, said the crew was able to set up the kit and connect to Wi-Fi in just over five minutes.

"With the ongoing digital transition of Air Mobility Command and Air Force Reserve Command, aircrews are more reliant than ever on having internet connectivity," he said. "In an environment where there is no cell service, this technology gives us the capability to get the mission done without delay."

Anthony Lugo, the technology company's head of government communications, said collaborative events like this tactical demonstration are vital for gaining insights from military members to guide their future product design.

"The passion and commitment displayed by Dover's team in their pursuit of modernization is both commendable and motivating," Lugo said.

Dave Jackson, the 512th AW's chief of continuous process improvement and innovation, said collabora-

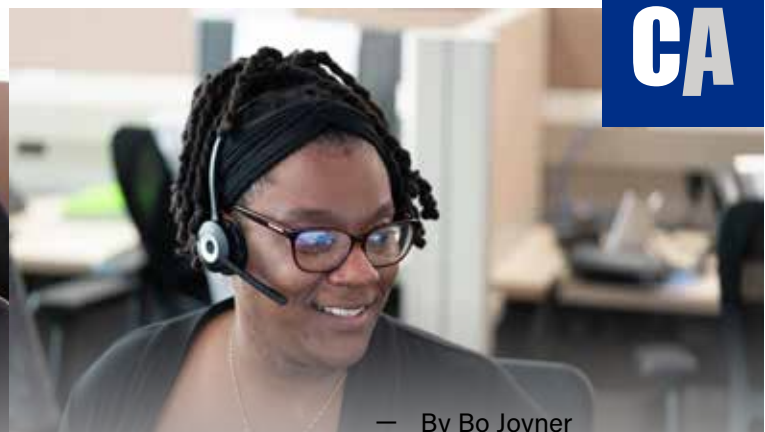
tive efforts such as the Helios flight test are hallmarks of innovation the Air Force strives for.

"Continued efforts such as this will continue to push boundaries to bring ideas in the realm of possible," Jackson said. "I encourage all Airmen who have innovative ideas for the workplace to speak up and share. We stand ready to support you and accelerating change for mission accomplishment." **CA**

(Rossi is assigned to the 512th AW public affairs office.)



Technicians answer calls from Reservists at the Total Force Service Center Call Center. (Anthony Beauchamp)



— By Bo Joyner

WHAT RESERVISTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE TOTAL FORCE SERVICE CENTER CALL CENTER

In 2018, the Air Reserve Personnel Center's call center combined with the Air Force Personnel Center's call center at Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph, Texas. With this centralization, Citizen Airmen now have access to Total Force Service Center call agents 24 hours, seven days a week, 361 days a year by calling 1-800-525-0102, 210-565-0102 or DSN 665-0102.

The centralization of the call center has reduced call wait times and has allowed ARPC technicians to focus on executing personnel programs, including evaluations and retirements.

At the Total Force Service Center, 20 TFSC Reserve/Guard call agents are available to provide official guidance to members based on ARPC policy, guidance and procedures. The agents do not work cases for members and do not have access to transfer members to ARPC back offices. The agents answer basic questions, assist members with creating tickets on their behalf and can escalate issues to TFSC supervisors or the TFSC Reserve/Guard liaison for expedited action.

The 20 TFSC Reserve/Guard call agents

and are eager to help Citizen Airmen who call.

"Every day is a challenge working for the TFSC, but every challenge is rewarding at the end of the day," said one call center technician. "I know I made a difference in someone's life and helped them with their issue."

"It's an honor to serve those who unselfishly serve our country," added another technician.

The TFSC Reserve/Guard liaison is charged with strengthening communication between the field, the Total Force Service Center and ARPC to ensure knowledge, training and resources are available to support current and former Reserve and Guard members.

The TFSC Reserve/Guard liaison also evaluates all agents to ensure proper assistance is given, professionalism is maintained during the encounter and escalates all major issues for completion that have not been answered accordingly.

"There are so many cases that come through the TFSC daily, but if we can complete at least one case a day for a member or their family, that is a win in

my book," said Master Sgt. Rene Riojas, the TFSC Reserve/Guard liaison.

Air Force Reserve Force Support Squadrons still have direct access to ARPC for members who need immediate assistance and commanders have a hotline number to ARPC. For individual mobilization augmentees who need personnel assistance, HQ RIO has instructed the TFSC agents to refer members back to their detachment.

Citizen Airmen are encouraged to keep the Total Force Service Center number close by in case they have any personnel questions. Below are some additional helpful links: **CA**

My FSS: <https://myfss.us.af.mil>

My Vector: <https://myvector.us.af.mil>

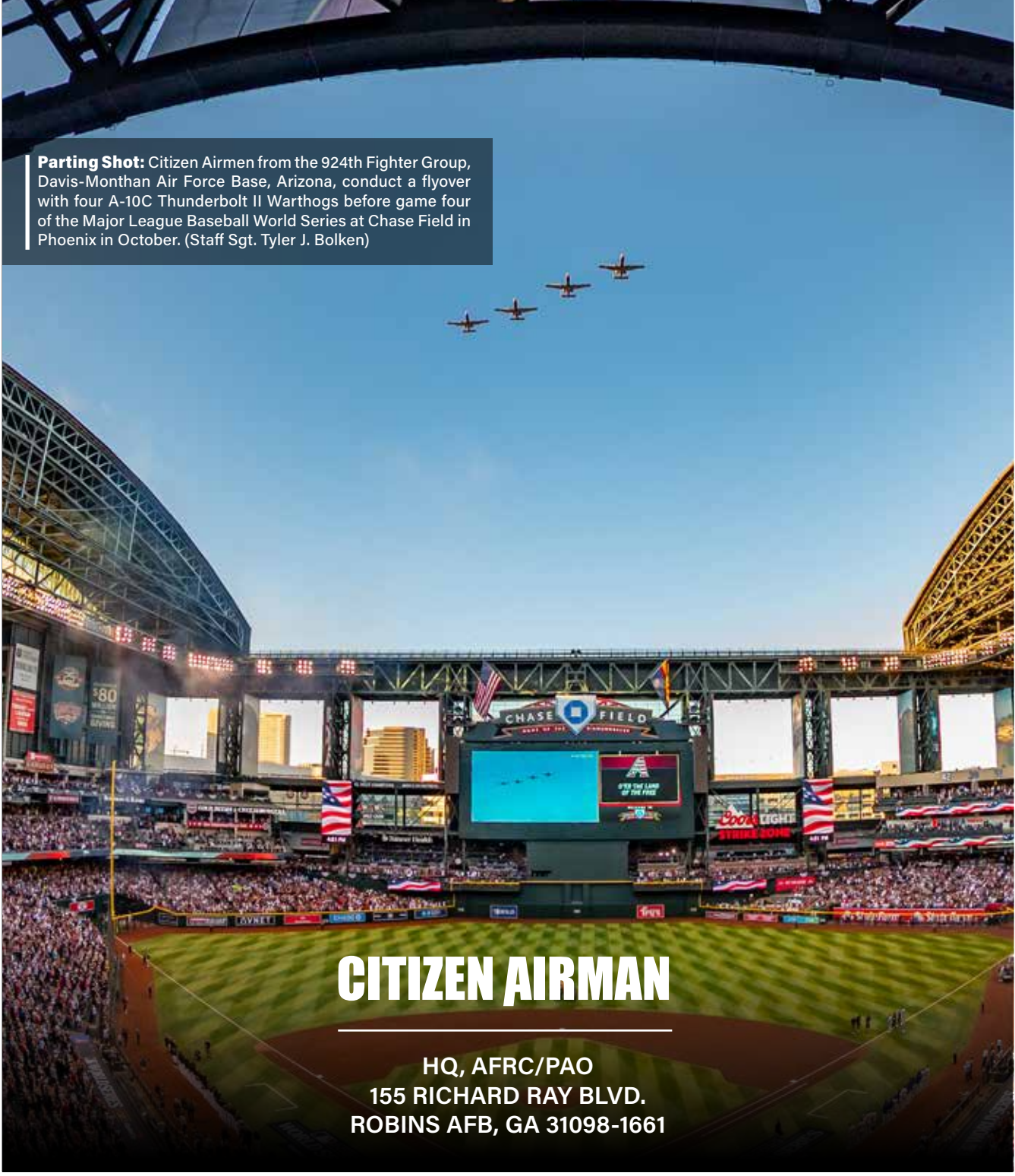
ARPC website: <https://www.arpc.afrc.af.mil/>

HQ RIO website: <https://www.hqrio.afrc.af.mil/>

TFSC introduction video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EIKItBHCRDg>

TFSC Reserve/Guard liaison e-mail: AFPC.DPX-OL.TFSC-RGLiaison@us.af.mil





Parting Shot: Citizen Airmen from the 924th Fighter Group, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, conduct a flyover with four A-10C Thunderbolt II Warthogs before game four of the Major League Baseball World Series at Chase Field in Phoenix in October. (Staff Sgt. Tyler J. Bolken)

CITIZEN AIRMAN

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