



TRAINING AND DEPLOYING READY RESERVISTS IN MARCH 2012

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442nd Fighter Wing www.442fw.afrc.af.mil Whiteman AFB, Mo.

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Commentary by Col. Eric S. Overturf
442nd Fighter Wing commander

What if someone told you that your squadron was retiring all its equipment, cutting its personnel and being closed in the next 12 months? What would you say? What would you think?

Reservists in the 917th Fighter Group at Barksdale AFB, La., are facing these questions right now with the projected loss of 21 aircraft and an unknown number of personnel in the upcoming round of force structure changes. I went to Barksdale in February to convey our wing's commitment to helping them through the force structure changes, and understandably, the reservists I talked to were concerned about the future of their unit and their jobs. Despite the difficult circumstances, spending time with them reminded me again about why I love to work with people in the Air Force Reserve: When times are toughest, Airmen step up and shine the brightest.

I won't sugar coat the impact of the force-struc-

The power of positive thinking



ture announcement if it is implemented as currently written. Jobs are being cut. Jets are being retired. Families will have to face the possibility of relocating from a place they've called home for 20 years. Children may have to change schools. It seems like an unlikely place to find optimism – but here, in the face of chaos, I met Airmen with incredible resilience and a can-do attitude who shouted “I will survive!”

Chiefs are already working with their counterparts in the 307th Bomb Wing at Barksdale to identify positions for 917th people. The civilian personnel office is setting up briefings on job placement options. The 917th FG commanders and supervisors at all levels are engaging base, community and AF Reserve Command leaders to get transition assistance from every source.

This still doesn't make it easy for the people whose jobs are on the line. One Airman asked me whether he should keep his military job that might be impacted by the force structure cuts or pursue a full-time civilian job that would require more time away from his family. I wished there was an easy answer, but I couldn't guarantee that one avenue would be better than the other. There was no “one-size-fits-all” response because of all the unknown factors, like exactly which military jobs would be cut and how much stress the civilian job could bring to his family. It wasn't the answer the Airman was hoping for, but his attitude was “I'll keep asking questions and looking for opportunities until I figure this out”.

That is resilience in action – a young Airman put in a stressful situation, facing heart-wrench-

ing decisions and bouncing back to take on the challenge with a positive attitude. By seeking advice and information to help him make a decision, he was already working hard to move ahead toward a solution, and away from the stressful situation he'd been put in.

I've been around long enough to know that one thing you can always count on is change. I know that despite my best efforts I cannot control the future. What I can control is my reaction to change. There are millions of other people and things and events that determine how my life will change, but there is only one person who decides how I will react to those changes – me!

I admit it's not easy, but I try to start with the power of positive thinking and live a balanced lifestyle with time for mental, spiritual, physical and social fitness. By investing energy in the things we can control rather than focusing on what we can't control, we give our energy to the solution instead of the problem. If none of this seems to work and the stress starts to become overwhelming, we can and must seek help from our friends, family, wingmen and support agencies like Military One Source and the base military family life consultants.

Thanks for all that you do as we pitch in to help the 917th FG through this difficult time. You've all put a lot of yourselves into the Air Force Reserve, and I want to personally thank each of you for your service. I don't have all the answers, but I can assure you the whole wing will work through this together, one step at a time, just like the Airman I talked to last week.





Civil engineers return home from deployment

By Senior Airman Wesley Wright

Approximately 30 civil engineers returned from Afghanistan in late February after a six-month deployment. The reservists, who accomplished their combat skills training at Fort Bliss, Texas, prior to deployment, worked on engineering projects while in theater.

Among their accomplishments, they helped repair runways, build dining facilities, and repaired facilities that had life, health and safety issues. This is the first time many of the Airmen have deployed and worked outside the wire on facilities at forward operating bases. Their efforts will support thousands of servicemembers in coming months.

[See more photos](#)

CARE FOR AIRMEN



Marriage-enrichment seminar

Senior Airman Wesley Wright

The 442nd Fighter Wing chaplain team hosted a marriage enrichment seminar for reservists throughout the wing Feb. 24 and 25 here. The seminars, usually part of a yellow-ribbon program, have been attended in the past by wing members.

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SUPPORT DEPLOYMENTS



A-10s head north to Bagram

By Staff Sgt. Heather Skinkle

Since their arrival here, members from the 303rd EFS, 451st EAMXS, and 451st EMXS have executed their mission despite day-to-day complications that come with moving to a different base to support a close-air support reset of Air Force assets within Afghanistan.

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ABSENTEE VOTING



Exercising the right to defend

By Senior Airman Wesley Wright

One of the freedoms reservists protect while deployed is the privilege of choosing our representatives through voting. National Guard and Reserve members can exercise that right even while deployed, mobilized or activated thanks to rules enabling absentee voting.

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