

# Combat Airlifter



VOLUME 66 • NUMBER 48 • FRIDAY, DEC. 14, 2018

## EARNING THE STRIPE

PAGES 8-9

# U.S. AIR FORCE



Newly selected chief master sergeants were promoted at Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 4. Chief master sergeant is the highest enlisted rank in the U.S. Air Force.

U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS RHETT ISBELL



### ALS LEVITOW AWARD WINNER

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Kayla Nikolaychuk, 19th Logistics Readiness Squadron individual protective equipment supervisor, receives the John L. Levitow Award at Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 6.

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### SAME SKILLS, DIFFERENT MISSION

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Kyle Talley, 19th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter, arrived at Little Rock Air Force Base approximately four months ago and hit the ground running, refining his firefighter and emergency medical technician skills.

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### K-9 DEFENDERS RETIRE

K-9 Defenders Britt and Willam, two military working dogs assigned to the 19th Security Forces Squadron at Little Rock Air Force Base, have retired.

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# Chief Wright to Airmen: Know your retirement options

**By Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kalet O. Wright**  
*Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs*

ARLINGTON, Va. (AFNS) -- The opt-in deadline for the Blended Retirement System is Dec. 31.

Make your decision knowing only you can determine which system is best for you, and understand that if you opt into BRS, it is irrevocable. You only have one chance to make this choice, so it's imperative you and those involved in making financial decisions for your family fully understand the pros and cons of both retirement systems.

I encourage each of you to take all of the training available on ADLS and utilize the BRS comparison calculator on the Military Compensation website before making an appointment with your base financial counselor. The calculator provides a comparison between the current retirement system and the BRS. Doing your homework and preparing your questions ahead of time will help you get the most from your financial counseling appointment. I would like to see all eligible Airmen trained as soon as possible to give everyone time to really think about their options and be fully prepared before making this life-impacting decision.

If I had to pick just one thing I'm most passionate about as the chief master sergeant of the Air Force, without a doubt it would be taking care of our Airmen and their families professionally, physically, spiritu-

ally and financially. I'm a firm believer that these four things go hand in hand. In order to be the best, most resilient Airman possible, you have to balance your professional, physical, spiritual and financial wellness. This is why I'm always looking to arm our Airmen with knowledge to help them grow and make the best decisions possible in their lives.

Part of arming our Airmen with knowledge means providing them the tools necessary to understand and smartly plan their long-range financial goals. But this planning isn't just for Airmen with families; it's vital for all Airmen.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2018, the Department of Defense will transition to the Blended Retirement System. If you haven't heard about BRS, you need to get up to speed now and learn all you can. I need each of you to take an active interest in your financial planning by using every resource we've made available to learn about the BRS.

The BRS gives Airmen an opportunity to save their money in a portable Thrift Savings Plan while receiving matching government funds at the same time. This is the most basic layman's description of the program, which is why I need you to arm yourselves with all of the research and information available. To help you, our Air Force leaders have put together a team of experts ready to provide extensive training. Certified personal financial counselors are available at your Airman and Family Readiness Center. These experts cannot decide

for you, but they can help you evaluate which retirement plan is best for you. Every Airman's situation is different, financial goals are unique to each Airman and there is no "one size fits all" decision.

Airmen who enter the Air Force on or after Jan. 1, 2018, are automatically covered by the BRS. Active component Airmen serving now and those who enter the Air Force on or before Dec. 31, 2017, will be grandfathered under the current retirement system. Airmen with fewer than 12 years of active service on Dec. 31, 2017, or reserve component Airmen with fewer than 4,320 retirement points as of Dec. 31, 2017, have the choice to opt into the BRS. Reserve component members' "retirement points" and retirement eligibility for the defined benefit are the same under the BRS as under the current retirement systems.

There are pros and cons to every major decision we make, and this holds true for both retirement plans. I can't tell you what to do. I can't tell you what's best for your family. All I can tell you is that you need to arm yourself with knowledge. Check out the training, talk to people who can provide you with objective advice, talk to those who will be most impacted by your decision and execute your plan knowing you made the best decision for you and your family.

For more information about the BRS, visit the BRS website at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement/>.

## EDITORIAL POLICY

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# COMBAT AIRLIFTER OF THE WEEK



**NAME AND RANK**

Senior Airman Ariel Geldien

**UNIT**

913th Maintenance Squadron

**DUTY TITLE**

Electronic environmental technician

**HOMETOWN**

Beale Air Force Base, California

**TIME IN SERVICE**

3 years, 11 months

**TIME AT LITTLE ROCK**

3 years, 2 months

**GOALS**

Complete my bachelor's in business administration and accounting and earn my CPA, then look into commissioning.

**HOBBIES**

Hiking, biking, camping and traveling.

**AIR FORCE CORE VALUE PORTRAYED**

Service Before Self

**HOW DOES THE INDIVIDUAL PORTRAY THE**

**CORE VALUE?**

"I believe in the 913th Airlift Group mission, and I'm committed to my 913th Airlift Group family. I recently moved to Mississippi to finish college, commuting to Little Rock Air Force Base one weekend per month to fulfill my military obligation. I have accomplished four associate's degrees, all while working multiple jobs, in addition to the Air Force Reserve. I never turn down any assignments my leadership delegates to me, and I look forward to many more."

U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY CAPT. ASHLEY WALKER



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U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY SENIOR AIRMAN GRACE NICHOLS

## Airman earns Levitow Award

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Kayla Nikolaychuk, 19th Logistics Readiness Squadron individual protective equipment supervisor, receives the John L. Levitow Award at Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 6. The award is presented to the student who demonstrates outstanding leadership and scholastic qualities.

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# Military Family Life: A single mother's experience

By Tech. Sgt. James Hodgman  
60th Air Mobility Wing Public Affairs

TRAVIS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. (AFNS) – She is an Airman, a noncommissioned officer and the mother of a 5-year-old girl. Throughout her life, she's risen to overcome numerous obstacles including the challenges of military deployments and going through a divorce after six years of marriage.

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Amanda Scheer, 60th Contracting Squadron contracting specialist, arrived at Travis Air Force Base in December 2009 as a civilian military spouse. According to a recent enlisted performance report, today she's responsible for managing nine government contracts valued at \$40 million.

"I married my high school sweetheart in

August 2009," said Scheer. "He was an air traffic controller in the Air Force at the time we got married and he later commissioned into the Medical Service Corps."

During her time as a military spouse, Scheer worked as a bartender, waitress and as a general manager for a brewing company. She also took classes toward a bachelor's degree in contract management.

"Business has always been a passion of mine," she said. "I like little details which is what contracting is all about. My ex-husband's stepdad talked about contracting in the Air Force a lot and that helped spark my interest in the career field."

Desiring to pursue her dream of working in contracting, Scheer enlisted in the Air Force in November 2012. She would get quite a surprise several weeks later.



COURTESY PHOTO BY VALERIE OZELLA

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Amanda Scheer, 60th Contracting Squadron contracting specialist, and her daughter, Paisley, in Vallejo, Calif., Aug. 20, 2017. Scheer is a single mother and has served in the Air Force six years.

See Single, page 12

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# Same skills different mission: firefighter becomes Airman

By Airman 1st Class Kristine M. Gruwell  
19th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Kyle Talley, 19th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter, arrived at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, approximately four months ago and hit the ground running, refining his firefighter and emergency medical technician skills.

After taking a high school course to become an EMT, Talley fell in love with the fast-paced job. He knew he wanted to follow in his family's footsteps by joining the military. While he waited to be flown out to Air Force basic training, Talley became a certified firefighter in addition to already being an EMT.

"I knew I wanted to join the Air Force, but I had to wait for this job," Talley said. "I decided I wanted to get a jump start on developing my skills as an EMT and a firefighter so I would be prepared when I became an Airman."

Talley's work ethic and fast-paced attitude stuck out to his leadership from his contributions to his team during emergency calls by using his prior knowledge and experience.

"When I see Talley on scene, I rest a little easier knowing the patient will receive the medical care they deserve," said U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Christian Lyle, 19 CES assistant chief of operations.



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY 2ND LT. HUNTER RININGER

U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Kyle Talley, 19th Civil Engineer Squadron firefighter, stands by a fire truck at Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 3. Talley joined the Air Force as a firefighter because he fell in love with the fast-paced job as a civilian.

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# Chief Master Sergeant



U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Kimberly Johnson, 19th Force Support Squadron manpower and organization chief, learns of her promotion to chief master sergeant from Col. Gerald Donohue, 19th Airlift Wing commander, on Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 4. Four Airmen from Little Rock AFB achieved the rank of chief master sergeant.



U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Keith Jones, 373rd Training Squadron sergeant on Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 4. The 373rd Training Squadron



U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Juston Demke, 19th Operations Support Squadron aircrew flight equipment superintendent, is tacked on by Chief Master Sergeant Justin Strain, 19th Airlift Wing command chief, and Col. Gerald Donohue, 19th AW commander, on Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 4.



U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Anngela Robinson, 314th Maintenance Squadron sergeant on Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 4. Robinson

# nt: Earning the stripe

STORY AND PHOTOS BY AIRMAN 1ST CLASS RHETT ISBELL  
19TH AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS



Detachment 4 chief, learns of his promotion to chief master sergeant. Detachment 4 is a partner unit of the 19th Airlift Wing.

Pinning on a hard-earned stripe is a sacred occasion for Air Force enlisted members and no stripe is more significant than the stripe of chief master sergeant.

Achieving the rank of chief master sergeant is only accomplished by 1 percent of the Air Force enlisted structure, so when someone makes chief, they know they earned it. However, such an achievement comes with the largest set of responsibilities an Airman may have.

“I think being a chief means you have an opportunity to really give back to the enlisted force,” said U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Jeremy Grider, 19th Mission Support Group superintendent. “As you climb the ladder of those stripes, you

get to the top of the pyramid and there’s some that want to look out and see everything that’s under their control, but it’s not like that. You need to flip that pyramid over so that you’re at the bottom and you’re holding up the rest of the pyramid.”

Finding such a giving mindset is common among chiefs. Many feel they achieved the rank due mostly to the contributions of their team members.

“Your people promote you,” said U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Kerry Parsons, 19th Civil Engineering Squadron superintendent. “I was told during my induction that ‘This is the last day it’s about you,’ so that’s really when it hit home that my job was taking care of people.”



Group superintendent, reacts after learning of her promotion attributed her success to her Airmen.



U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Justin Strain, 19th Airlift Wing command chief, speaks during the chief induction ceremony on Little Rock Air Force Base on Dec. 7. Airmen gathered with their friends and family to celebrate their promotion.

# MAN'S BEST FRIEND

## K-9 Defenders retire after years of service

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
SENIOR AIRMAN GRACE NICHOLS  
19TH AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Amid a sea of deep blue berets, two Defenders step onto a stage to be recognized in front of peers they have served alongside for many years.

The two K-9 Defenders are Britt and Willam, military working dogs assigned to the 19th Security Forces Squadron at Little Rock Air Force Base. A third, Jeck, could not attend.

During their tenure, they have supported operations while home and abroad. While this retirement marks an end to their years of service, it also marks the beginning of two new dogs' careers: Frigo and Mirco.

"Military working dogs, Britt, Jeck and Willam have served long and honorably," said U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Donald Bartholomew, 19th SFS commander. "They have spent the entirety of their careers in a time of war where threats abound both home and abroad. They have undoubtedly given their best and able-bodied years to serve our great nation."

MWDs have been part of the Air Force since its conception, and their history spans back as long as the military itself.

The changing of collars signaled the close of the ceremony, symbolizing the end of distinguished careers in service to their country while at their home stations and deployed locations and for sacrifices in the line of duty.

Although they don't hold rank, MWDs serve similarly to Airmen assigned here – with each having a specific job that is imperative to protecting the installation.

Their journey begins at Joint-Base San Antonio Lackland, Texas, like all enlisted Airmen, where they undergo weeks of training to prepare for active-



U.S. Air Force 19th Security Forces Squadron military working dogs Britt and Willam retire from active duty service at Little Rock Air Force Base on Nov. 14. MWDs have been part of the Air Force since its conception, and their history spans back as long as the military.

duty service. Upon completion, they are given their orders to the duty location from which they will spend the majority of their careers.

"Just like how an Airman has on the job training, military working dogs are required to qualify on tasks before going out on the field," said U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Brooks Jones, 19th SFS kennel master. "When they get to their installation we consider them just like an Airman straight out of technical training school. Once they get here, they go to their handler and have 90 days to be validated."

Some of the qualifications they must achieve are detection problems such as explosives and narcotics, patrol tasks, scouting, searching, obedience and gun fighter trainer.

After training is completed, dogs work shifts just like Airmen, can deploy

alongside their handlers, and qualify for many different jobs under the security forces umbrella.

"They're held in the same regard as service members," Jones said. "They're not considered a piece of equipment ... they're a member of your team."

Dogs can serve as long as their health permits, which varies with each dog. If the dog doesn't have health issues but it begins to decline in performance, it will be removed from duty in order to protect the life of the animal.

Upon determination that a MWD is no longer fit to serve, he will begin a journey back to where it all started: Joint-Base San Antonio Lackland. Here, the MWD will receive an evaluation that will determine its health. Care is taken to ensure the animal receives the best home

See Single, page 12

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U.S. Air Force 19th Security Forces Squadron military working dog Britt spends one more moment with his handler before retiring from active duty service at Little Rock Air Force Base on Nov. 14. After training is completed, dogs work shifts just like Airmen, deploy alongside their handlers and qualify for many different jobs under the security forces umbrella.



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTOS BY SENIOR AIRMAN GRACE NICHOLS

## Retire

Continued from page 10

and treatment needed to lead healthy, safe and happy life after retirement.

Once the evaluation is complete, current and previous dog handlers are given the opportunity to adopt the dog first. If no one is available, the adoption is opened to military employees and then the general public.

“To me, seeing these dogs succeed is like a supervisor seeing his Airmen do well,” Jones said. “I definitely feel proud that I get to be part of training for the new dogs and the retiring of the old. They’ve done a lot for us. They deserve to be able to be honored in a way that reflects their faithful service.”

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# Single

Continued from page 6

“During my fourth week of technical training, I learned I was 17 weeks and three days pregnant,” said Scheer. “I unknowingly went through basic military training while carrying a child. At the next appointment I learned I was having a girl and all I could think about was if she was OK.”

The doctors at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, had good news for Scheer – her growing baby girl was completely healthy.

“I was thrilled,” she said. “I always wanted a girl.”

After graduating from the Contracting Apprentice Course in March 2013, Scheer returned to Travis AFB five months pregnant. On Aug. 9, 2013, her daughter Paisley was born.

“I was very excited the day she was born,” said Scheer. “I never knew what love was until I held her. I also gained a greater appreciation for my parents because I realized, while I held my baby girl, how much they loved me because of how much love I felt for my own child. That moment changed my world for sure.”

While Scheer was overjoyed to be a mother, she and her husband grew apart over time.

“I think a big issue in relationships, especially marriage, is not meeting the other person’s expectations,” said Scheer. “Over time, I realized we had different expectations of one another.”

Scheer filed for divorce in January 2015 and her divorce was finalized in August of that year. She was awarded full custody of Paisley and has juggled the requirements the Air Force has levied upon her, along with her motherly responsibilities.

“Paisley was born with a corneal dermoid on her left eye, which was affecting the color and vision in that eye,” said Scheer. “When she was just 3 months old, she had to have surgery to remove that. Ever since then, she sees a pediatric eye doctor five times a year. I also had to patch her good eye to strengthen her weak eye for up to five hours a day until she was five-years-old. During a recent visit, a doctor said that with her glasses on, her vision is that of a normal child.”

Scheer said her squadron leadership has been supportive of her and her daughter.

“I receive a tremendous amount of support from the squadron if Paisley has anything going on,” she said. “When I need to take her to eye doctor appoint-



U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. JAMES HODGMAN

Staff Sgt. Amanda Scheer, 60th Contracting Squadron contracting specialist, holds artwork her daughter Paisley created in her office at Travis Air Force Base, California, on Nov. 10. Scheer is a single mother and has served in the Air Force for six years.

ments in Walnut Creek, California, which require me to be gone half of the work day, my commander understands that and works with me to support those appointments. If she’s ever sick and can’t go to the child development center, my leadership understands that as well. They’ve just been amazing.”

Scheer has also received support from her parents who she credits with enabling her to deploy.

“My parents took care of Paisley during my six-month deployment,” she said. “My leadership also helped get my parents passes to Nellis AFB, Nevada, because they live in Las Vegas, so they could shop at the base exchange and the commissary to ensure Paisley had all she needed. They also helped get Paisley a spot in the CDC at Nellis.”

“I’ve also gone on a few temporary duty assignments and my parents always watch Paisley during those times,” added Scheer.

During her deployment to Southwest Asia, Scheer managed 14 expeditionary contracts valued at nearly \$12 million helping secure a new vehicle search area, hospital and fitness center for the installation.

She said she called Paisley twice a day, every day, so she could stay connected to her little girl.

“Sometimes she didn’t want to talk to me because she was only 4 years old and wanted to play,” she said. “When we did talk, we discussed where I was, what I was

doing and what she was doing. She only had one breakdown while I was gone, which was terrible to go through, but for the most part, she rocked it.”

“I wouldn’t be able to deploy or go on TDY assignments without the support from my parents,” Scheer added. “I could get by with the day-to-day things, but supporting the bigger aspect of the mission I’m required to would be much more difficult.”

When Scheer returned from that deployment, her daughter was the first person she saw when she exited the airplane.

“We just held each other and I cried,” said Scheer. “Paisley just kept saying, ‘Mamma, Mamma’ as if she was shocked to have me home.”

When she’s not deployed, Scheer said she enjoys spending as much time with Paisley as she can.

“We enjoy watching movies together and I take her to her ballet and gymnastics classes,” said Scheer. “She also enjoys playing soccer and singing and dancing around the house.”

Scheer said she wants people to understand the most difficult part of being a military mother is dealing with the unknown.

“Not knowing when I will deploy or go TDY is the hardest thing to deal with,” she said. “When that happens, I need to figure things out for Paisley like where she is going to go to school, who is going to watch her, how is she going to get there and what doctor she will go to. Leaving her is not an easy thing to do either, but those things just add so much stress on top of everything else I have to deal with. That’s the most stressful thing about being a military parent.”

While military life can be challenging, Scheer is doing all she can to serve and raise her daughter.

“Paisley is the best thing that ever happened to me,” she said. “She saved me. If it wasn’t for her, I might still be in that old relationship and unhappy. She is my greatest blessing. God gave her to me to save me. She makes being a single mom worth it.”

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# COMBATAIRLIFTER

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THE COMBAT AIRLIFTER CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT will take ads by phone from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday 982-9421, or you may mail your ad to 404 Graham Rd., Jacksonville, Ark. 72078. You may also e-mail them to [combatairlifter-classifieds@arkansasleader.com](mailto:combatairlifter-classifieds@arkansasleader.com). Deadline to advertise in Friday's issue is 5 p.m. Tuesday.

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**LADDER RACK** for Chevy LWB, won't break, \$550 obo.; 235-70-15 Dodge wheels w/tires for '96 Dakota, aluminum, \$200. (501) 882-2142 or 606-1314.

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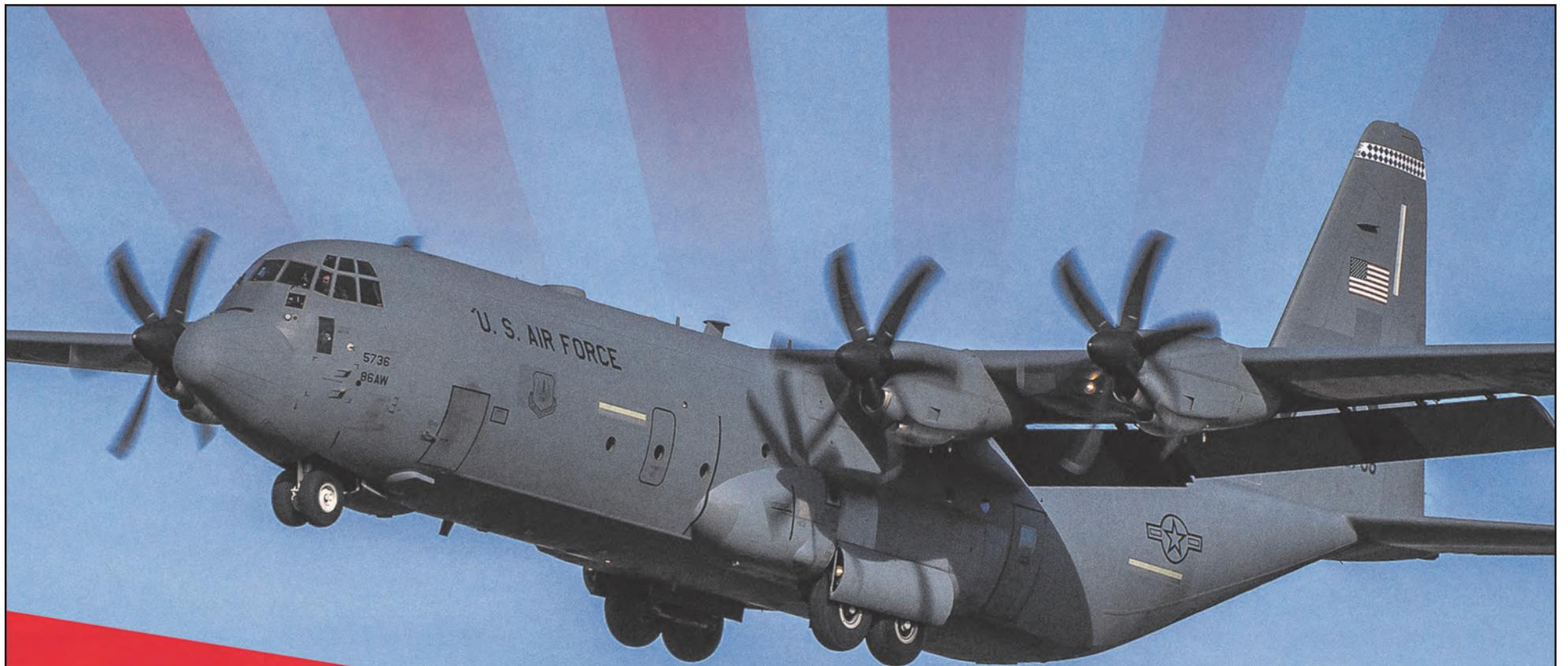
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