

445th Reserve Citizen Airmen return from New York City 'COVID Commandos' return home

By 1st Lt. Rachel Ingram
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

It's been nearly three months since seven Citizen Airmen departed Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio with only 24 hours' notice to support COVID-19 relief efforts in New York City.

"I don't think any one of us could have been totally prepared for what we were walking into," said Capt. Kristina Fleming, clinical nurse, 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron. "It was like nothing I could have imagined."

The team hit the ground running. They arrived in New York on April 6, in-processed at the Jacob K. Javits Center on the 7th, then were assigned to support Lincoln Medical Center, a teaching hospital in The Bronx. They rapidly navigated the rank structure in place, established functional teams, learned digital medical records software, and familiarized themselves

with an unfamiliar city and workplace, all within a matter of days.

"We stepped through the doors of Lincoln Hospital on April 8th. It was a little chaotic, but we all just kind of adopted the attitude of, 'Just point us in the right direction and we can figure it out.' And that's what we did," said Col. Hans Otto, commander of the 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron and allergist, immunologist, and internist in the civilian sector.

A doctor with 19 years of experience, Otto is no stranger to high-tempo work environments. Within three days, he was responsible for 17 patients, all but one of whom had tested positive for coronavirus.

"That's a lot of patients to care for, even under

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89th AS spouse makes masks for squadron

By Ms. Stacy Vaughn
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

When the coronavirus pandemic started to unfold in early March, the 89th Airlift Squadron continued to fly to parts of the world where the pandemic was thriving. A spouse from the squadron decided to do something to help protect aircrews.

Molly Kirstein, wife of C-17 pilot Capt. Nathan Kirstein, decided to help by making masks for members of the 89th Airlift Squadron when she learned her husband had an overseas mission in mid-March.

"Sewing has been a hobby of mine since I was given a sewing machine for our first child's baby shower. Early in the pandemic when Ohio made the decision to close schools March 12, my hus-

band, Nate, was preparing to leave for a mission overseas. Some of the bases that the crew would be land-



Courtesy Photo

Molly Kirstein, spouse of Capt. Nathan Kirstein, sews face masks for members of the 89th Airlift Squadron.

ing required that they wear masks. At the time you were unable to purchase masks and people had just started making them. Supplies of elastic had started running low so we had to improvise. Together Nate and I created a breathable, washable mask with a nose clip from materials we already had," Molly said.

The couple used cotton fabric with cotton interfacing. T-shirt yarn was used for straps. Wire and duct tape were used to make the nose clip.

"Once the first crew masks were finished (in mid-March), we quickly realized another crew would be in

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Leading during difficult times

By Maj. Karen M. Gharst
445th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Commander



The COVID pandemic and the George Floyd tragedy have caused us as a nation to reach a level that can be deemed “uncertain times.”

When we look back at 2020, we may remember this as a dark time in our history. I’m confident that as a country, we will emerge with stronger values, stronger equality for all Americans and a new focus on taking

care of each other.

For our wing, I hope that we will look back and remember it as a time when we shined, a time we reflected on what’s important, a time we took care of our Airmen, and a time we stepped up to the challenge and excelled at our mission despite adversity.

Looking across the wing, I see leaders rising to the challenge, taking care of their Airmen and discussing the difficult topics that need to be discussed. As the Chief of Staff of the Air Force recently stressed, we should not shy away from the national conversation about equality. Those discussions are important to creating a culture of inclusiveness and a strong anti-discrimination policy.

We should all reflect on our own stories and how they fit into the national discussion. This all goes hand-in-hand with the need to nurture resiliency. Leaders at all levels, from Airman and up, are important to maintaining a strong and healthy force. Resiliency is not just hosting training sessions or providing a list of resources. It must encompass everything we do as leaders, every conversation we have and every decision we make.

During these difficult times, I am reminded of my first two years of active duty, when I faced two back-to-back crises that tested my resiliency to the core.

The first incident was during my first assignment on active duty. It was just after my first year in the Air Force and it made me question everything, especially myself as a leader and wingman. In fact, I could not find the courage to talk about until about 10 years later.

Now, I realize that it has become a teaching opportunity that I should share with others.

The first incident occurred at a party with fellow maintenance officers. I decided to invite a few other female officers from other units. Unfortunately, one of our unit’s senior officers was drinking heavily and started harassing all three of us females. I was shocked. This same person was one of the most esteemed officers on base.

To make a long story short, I left the party in

tears. The next morning, I found out that the party got more out of hand after I left, and the crimes more serious.

On Monday morning, I nervously went to our commander and reported what happened. I immediately became the black sheep of the group for reporting a beloved leader. The investigators told me to not discuss it, so I held it all inside and didn’t reach out to peers, nor could I explain my side of the story.

After only one year in the Air Force, I wanted to get out as quickly as possible and started researching Palace Chase. Luckily, I was tasked to deploy on back-to-back AEF [Air Expeditionary Force] tours which opened my eyes to the true Air Force values. I realized that I could trust leadership and that there are more good leaders than bad ones.

Just months later, while I was deployed to Balad, Iraq, I was rocked again with another life-changing incident. My squadron back at Minot inadvertently shipped nuclear warheads on-board a B-52 aircraft. Even though I was assigned to a separate maintenance shop, I felt very connected to the mishap, as I knew most of the 70 Airmen involved. Then, I started to feel survivor’s guilt. I couldn’t be there with the Airmen as they were going through the most significant incidents of their careers, which also turned into one of the darkest moments in Air Force history.

After returning back to home station, I found myself fully dedicated to the nuclear mission as an officer in charge of some of the areas that became a central focus of the mishap. The environment in the squadron was grim. Morale was non-existent. People walked around like they hated life, and there were even suicide attempts. I was only a CGO [company grade officer] with a limited scope, but I found joy in trying to make life better for the Airmen. They needed to feel like they were valued, that the incident did not define them. They needed to hear that they could emerge stronger in the end.

I questioned if I had been a better wingman and stopped the alcohol incident at the party, maybe I would have saved our squadron from the turmoil of the nuclear mishap. I know now that the guilt was misplaced. Despite these internal struggles, I stayed on active duty for another 6 years.

After 15 years, I look back and believe the adversity I faced early in my career helped shape me as a leader.

As we face these constant struggles that are occurring today, my hope is that it provides us all time to grow and solidify our leadership philosophy. More importantly, it is a time we need to emphasize that

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FM tip of the month - Applying for GTC

CitiBank has changed their websites. Previously, all customer actions were conducted on the CitiBank site. Now cardholders have access to the CitiManager site. Previously, agency program coordinators (APCs) would initiate the application for members. Members must now initiate the application themselves.

Cardholder Application Process

1. Member must complete the “Programs and Policies – Travel Card 101” training and the Department of Defense Statement of Understanding for Cardholders prior to applying.

2. Member’s supervisor or agency program coordinator will provide him or her their PASSCODE and inviter’s email. The inviter can be the member’s supervisor or APC. The member must have both to initiate the application.

3. Members must then navigate to <https://home.cards.citidirect.com/CommercialCard/ux/index.html#/login?locale=en>.

4. Click on the “Apply for Card” link.

5. Select the Invitation Passcode radial and continue.

6. Enter the invitation PASSCODE and the inviter’s e-mail and continue.

7. Complete all required information in steps 1-3 and continue.

8. Complete the required information in step 4 and submit. The member must attach the training certificate and statement of use prior to submission.

9. Step 4, Approver 1 email is the member’s supervisor. The correct address must be provided or the application will not proceed.

10. Once the application is completed, the member will receive an email confirmation and his or her supervisor will be notified. The supervisor will approve and the application goes to the wing APC for final approval. After the final approval, it normally takes 7-10 days for the application to be processed and a card to be issued then another 3-10 day for delivery.

11. The member can track the application in the CitiManager Site by using his or her username that was created during the application process and PASSCODE.

12. Upon receipt of the card, the member should call the number on the sticker to verify receipt of the card with the bank and set a PIN, then go into Defense Travel System (DTS) and update his or her profile with the card information.

13. Member must use their Government Travel Card (GTC) for official use only.



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the Airmen are the most important resource. My time in Minot reminded me that when everything falls around us, the Airmen remain the backbone of the unit.

Here are few key take-aways that I learned from dealing with adversity:

Find a sustainable balance – Leaders must endure a constant balancing act between their top two priorities: “Airmen” and “Mission.” Every decision that comes to my level, I always ask the question, “How does the outcome impact the Airmen?” If I keep that question at the forefront of all decision-making, I find that balancing the two comes easy.

Communicate clearly – Especially during uncertain times, communication is the key to making sure your people know what the unit is doing and what actions you’re taking as a leader to protect them and the mission. I find

that when I share my “intent,” it’s easier to communicate my decisions.

Value Diversity and communicate the value to everyone – The most successful societies across history have also been the most diverse. We need to continue to foster diversity and improve how we communicate its importance to our Airmen. The renewed attention from CSAF on diversity and enforcing anti-discrimination policies offers hope that we are going to see positive changes in the future.

Be bold and decisive – You must be ready to make tough decisions. Difficult times call for decisive leadership. There should be no doubt where leaders stand on an issue or what actions they want you to take. It’s a time to become action-oriented and bold when we’re making decisions.

I’m seven months into commanding the 445th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. It’s a remark-

able squadron. I’m blown away by the passion and professionalism I see every day in these maintainers! No matter how many times we’ve had to modify our processes for COVID mitigation, flex for the flying schedule, or add last-minute weekend duty, they tackle the challenge every time. Even more amazing is that through the challenges, the unit was able to reach one of the highest MC [mission capable] rates seen in two years.

I’m very proud to be a part of this unit. My hope is that I can use my past experiences dealing with difficult situations to help AMXS get through these uncertain times.

I know I don’t have all of the answers, and I don’t pretend to be the smartest person on any of the topics. However, a good leader will clearly communicate that their focus is on their Airmen’s well-being and through their actions, they will prove it.



Around the wing...



Lt. Col. Cynthia Harris



Senior Airman Angela Jackson



Senior Airman Angela Jackson



Senior Airman Angela Jackson



Lt. Col. Karen Keller

1. Members of the 445th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron unload medical equipment from a C-17 Globemaster III, May 31, 2020. The equipment provides hands on training to keep the lifesaving skills of the AES crews current.

2. (left to right) Members of the 445th Security Forces Squadron, Staff Sgt. Daryn Weatherspoon, unit training instructor; Tech. Sgt. Jacob McCorkle, lead unit trainer; and Staff Sgt. Mitchiner Underhill, fire team member, perform a tabletop evaluation to test Airman's knowledge of cover and concealment, flanking procedures and moving as a firing team, June 6, 2020. Discussions like these are now completed in small groups to comply with social distancing guidelines.

3. Senior Airman Chloe Van Hoose, 445th Force Support Squadron career development specialist, checks the temperature of Master Sgt. Bryan Ulloa, 445th FSS services craftsman, as he enters the building, June 6, 2020. This safety measure is taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Senior Airman John Fowler, 445th Maintenance Squadron electrician, replaces a terminal board that controls the defog system on a newly installed window of C-17 Globemaster III at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, June 16, 2020.

5. Capt. Trisha Degilormo and 1st Lt. Jennifer Gerritsen, 445th Aeromedical Staging Squadron clinical nurses, train medical staff at Lincoln Medical Center while deployed to New York in support of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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normal circumstances, especially when you're just getting started at a new hospital," he said.

The volume of patients demonstrated how great the need was in New York.

"It was obvious they were overwhelmed by the entire crisis," recalled Fleming. "Some of the agency nurses had worked 12-hour shifts for 21 days in a row before we got there."

One floor of the hospital was transformed into an additional intensive care unit (ICU), and this is where Fleming worked.

"We wanted to care for these people like they were our own family," she said. "It wasn't all sunshine and happy days, though. It was hard. Every one of us experienced every emotion that we could have. But I have no doubt in my mind that we were able to save lives there, even if it was only a few."

The COVID Commandos were part of a group of 145 total military personnel deployed to Lincoln Medical Center. Additional personnel were assigned to Jacobi Hospital, the Javits Center field hospital, and Queens Hospital. Prior to the military's arrival, hospital adminis-

trators brought in additional nurses from private agencies to bolster the staffing ratios, but it still wasn't enough.

"The healthcare workers who

professionals here, and we've stayed a few weeks beyond the peak," he said. "Now we're looking to start coming home."

The team members will be tested for COVID-19 prior to departing NYC, then will self-quarantine either at home or in a lodging facility for two weeks before being tested again. If both tests are negative, they'll then enjoy a happy reunion with their families.

The final group of four COVID Commandos arrived back on Ohio soil May 31, 2020.

"Looking back, I think our presence really made a difference," Fleming added. "We heightened the standard of care at the facility, helped ensure supplies like gloves and surgical gowns were available, and we came in and offered a fresh perspective."

Otto reviewed the metrics from the span of time the 445th worked in Lincoln Medical Center and determined there was a 16 percent reduction in patient mortality.

"Once we started looking at the numbers, we realized that we did make a difference by being there," he said. "One out of six people lived because we were there."



Airman 1st Class Erin Zimpfer

Col. Raymond Smith, Jr., (far left) 445th Airlift Wing commander, greets the 'COVID Commandos' after they return May 31, 2020, from a deployment to New York in support of the COVID-19 pandemic.

were already there were exhausted," said Otto. "They could finally take a day off."

By the end of April, Otto's patient caseload began dwindling down to single digits.

"We arrived here just prior to the peak of the virus, rode through the peak and fought alongside the pro-

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need the following week. Before we knew it, 50 masks had been made and we needed more fabric. I have no idea how many masks have been made total since, but I can tell you that it felt good to do something to support our community during a time of so much uncertainty," Molly said.

Capt. Kirstein said the masks were important to have for everyone, not just those out on a mission.

"After I returned from my mission, my wife suggested that we make more and drop them off at the squad-

ron for other crews getting ready to leave. I know that some of the crew members felt a little embarrassed having to wear them, but when they returned from their mission they were thankful to have them, knowing they wouldn't have been able to get into the commissaries or other base facilities," Capt. Kirstein said.

"My wife and I know that we are not the only family making masks for others. We just wanted to help in some way to keep the mission moving and to keep our friends and family in the 445th safe."



SPOTLIGHT



Senior Airman Angela Jackson

Rank/Name: Staff Sgt. Daryn Weather-spoon

Unit: 445th Security Forces Squadron

Duty Title: Unit Training Instructor

Hometown: Dayton, Ohio

Civilian Job: City of Oakwood General Service Worker

Hobbies: Gardening and landscaping, recreational basketball, hiking, and trailing, firearm shooting

Career Goal: My career goal is to become a fire-

fighter/paramedic. In addition, to stay in the Air Force for as long as possible to better my skills as a person and professional. I have a passion for helping people and bettering communities. My goal is to be a role model for the individuals I am responsible for.

What you like about working at the 445th?: I love the camaraderie of all the people within the wing, specifically within the security forces squadron and the constant opportunities given

to each individual who wants to better themselves and their career.

Why did you join the Air Force?: I wanted to test myself and see what type of man I could develop into. During high school, I did not really know what I wanted to do after graduation. The Air Force Reserve seemed like the best option for me and I wanted to excel in life and become a leader.

Finding motivation during stressful times

By Ms. Jennifer Marquez
445th Airlift Wing Director of Psychological Health

Have you ever experienced a stressor or situation that left you feeling unmotivated to perform day-to-day activities? If you are thinking, "Yes, I have felt that way," you may be experiencing situational listlessness.

For the last several weeks, many individuals may have experienced feelings of listlessness due to environmental changes. Being unmotivated doesn't necessarily mean you are depressed or experiencing symptoms of depression. You may simply be adapting to a change in your life and adapting to something new takes time.

Listlessness due to the current environmental changes may bring emotions of fear about the future. This may consist of isolative behaviors brought on by fear or simply because of requirements to socially distance yourself from others, difficulty focusing and changes in eating/sleeping patterns.

While some of these changes mirror symptoms of depression, they are simply examples and normal reactions to current times.

Just like your situation can be influenced by environmental changes, so can your psychological health. If before the stressor or the COVID-19 pandemic you were more motivated in your day-to-day activities and

now find it difficult to engage in any activity because you lack motivation, you can take small steps to help.

Below are some of the steps you can take:

- Set an alarm to wake up at a specific time every day. If you are back at work, this is not an issue but for tele-working folks this is a great start. Try to pick the time you would normally wake up for work.
- Attempt to create a schedule with breaks or exercise built in. Take a short walk for 15 minutes. Garden or engage in meditation.
- Connect with others by inviting someone to your home while practicing social distancing or Skype/video chat. Connection is important. PEOPLE NEED PEOPLE.
- Schedule time to engage in something you enjoy: reading, listening to music, watching a movie. This is about you relaxing.
- Eat healthy and get the amount of sleep your body needs (6-8 hours is recommended for adults).
- Find your focus. Being home can come with a lot of distractions. Try to create an environment for work production that has as few distractions as possible. Earbuds may be an effective way to stay focused or noise cancelling headphones.

For confidential assistance call 937-701-1124.



News Briefs

In Memory of



TSgt Robert Hall

445th Civil Engineer Squadron

March 29, 1967 - May 22, 2020

Shaheed Mourillonswift, 63 IS
Daryn Weatherspoon, SFS

Technical Sergeant

Benjamin Anspaugh, AMXS

Delauna Evans, 63 IS
Douglas Lippert, AMXS
Alexandria MacFarlane, 50 IS
Zachary Mulrenin, 16 IS
Nicole Patterson, FSS
Amber Rich, 16 IS
Jessica Rosenberger, 71 IS
Matthew Yeager, 655 ISRW

Master Sergeant

Adam Craig, AMXS
Joshua Moody, 63 IS
Jonathan Porter, LRS

Senior Master Sergeant

Jason Houghtelling, 718 IS
Bryan Massey, 38 IS
Monica Riggins, 16 IS

Retirements

June 2020

Lt Col Steven Shrader, OSS
MSgt Chad Cox, CES
MSgt Gregory Shepherd, SFS
MSgt Joshua Worch, SFS
TSgt Christina Schraft, 14 IS

445th AW App

Get the 445th Airlift Wing App. Download the Air Force Connect app from the Google Play or Apple Store and search for and select the 445th.

Hit next to bring up the Air Force Connect page. Slide to the left and the 445 AW page will appear.

For more information, call the public affairs office at 937-257-5784.

Key Spouse Program

The 445th Airlift Wing Key Spouse Program is looking for volunteers. If you or your spouse is interested in learning more about the wing's KSP or becoming a volunteer, contact Mrs. Stephanie Smith, 445th Key Spouse mentor, at ssmith2979@gmail.com or 413-301-3152 or Mr. Alvin Dennis, 445th Airman and Family Readiness Office director, at alvin.dennis@us.af.mil or 937-522-4607.

Maintainers Monument

The Aircraft Maintainers Monument will be unveiled in the Memorial Gardens of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force July 31, 2020 at 10:30 am.



Jerry Haines, former member of the 445th Maintenance Group, with the help of Dodd's Monument have designed a seven-foot 3D relief monument to represent mechanics and maintenance teams in the Memorial Gardens.

A&FR

The 445th Airman and Family Readiness Office is available to assist the community now and after this coronavirus pandemic ends. The office can provide information and referral services from many resources on base and in the local community.

The A&FR office can provide points of contact with local resources to assist with mortgage/rent payments, utility bills, food, employment and budgeting limited income over a long period of time.

Please call 937-204-0335 or email: alvin.dennis@us.af.mil.

Buckeye Flyer

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Brothers come together in crisis response efforts

By 1st Lt. Rachel Ingram
445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Thousands of U.S. troops deployed to New York City in April in support of coronavirus relief efforts at a number of medical facilities in the region. Among the response team: the Otto brothers of Ohio, a tight-knit family with a rich legacy of military service.

“Growing up in Waynesville, Ohio, we had each other,” said Col. Hans F. Otto, commander of the 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron. “Even in the professional world, we still have each other’s backs.”

Hans, an allergist, immunologist, and internist in the civilian sector, arrived in New York City on April 6th. He lives in Kentucky and was one of seven Citizen Airmen who deployed from the 445th Airlift Wing at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

His youngest brother, Cmdr. Josef (Joe) Otto, had been in New York City since early March and helped establish the Jacob K. Javits field hospital. Joe is an Army and Air Force veteran who now serves in the U.S. Public Health Service.

The two connected within just a couple days of Hans’ arrival.

“During what little downtime we had, we tried to go on socially-distanced runs together, sometimes two or three times a week,” Hans said. “We all work hard and play hard.”



Courtesy Photo

Col. Hans F. Otto, commander of the 445th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, and his brother, Cmdr. Josef (Joe) Otto, an Army and Air Force veteran now serving in the U.S. Public Health Service, were both in New York City to help with the coronavirus relief efforts.

Meanwhile, their eldest brother, Gustav (Gus) A. Otto, was helping provide strategic oversight throughout the mission. Gus retired from the Air Force and now serves as Defense Intelligence Agency Senior Representative to NORAD-NORTHCOM in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

“Knowing that Gus had overwatch on us from a distance was pretty awesome,” Hans said. “We were all working different aspects of the same mission.”

They said their varied areas of expertise lent to their ability to aid in the relief efforts.

“When you put us all together, it’s amazing to see what we can do as a team,” Joe said. “We all had different perspectives on

one big, global mission.”

They appreciate each other’s viewpoints and said they often ask for advice from one another.

“If we call, even if they can’t pick up the phone right away, we always know we can count on each other,” Gus said. “I seek counsel from them, and I trust their judgment.”

As the coordinated response efforts in New York City wind down, the brothers parted ways, for now at least.

“The time we spend together is always sweet,” Hans said, “and it’s never enough.”

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