

Air Force Reserve family helps Airman go active duty

19th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

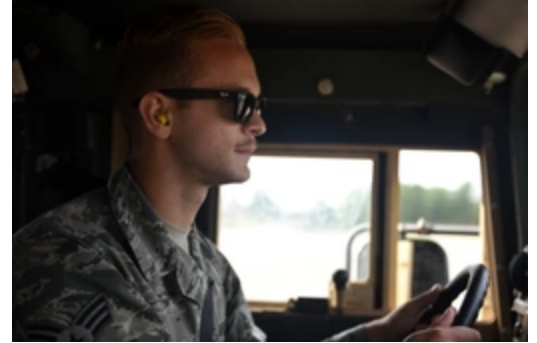
Story by [Senior Airman Grace Nichols](#)

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With 850 miles in the rearview, a 22 year old pulled up to Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, with a mixture of nerves and excitement as he focused on the road before him. Once greeted by a smiling Airman, he knew this moment marked the start of a journey he had been seeking for the past year.



This was his first active-duty location, but wasn't the beginning of his Air Force career. U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Gregory Cantoni, previously a 69th Aerial Port Squadron aerial porter at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, had made another nerve-wracking journey to Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland for Basic Military Training previously. Similar to only 20 percent of the 1 percent who join the military, he served with the U.S. Air Force Reserve.

“My family has a long military history, and it was something I admired,” Cantoni said. “But I wasn’t entirely certain I wanted to fully commit to the Air Force, and I thought going to college through the Air Force Reserves would be easier than trying to do that active.”

After getting a full-time job with a technology company traveling the U.S. in addition to his reservist job as an aerial porter, he found it nearly impossible to achieve his education goals.

“There were a lot of stressful moments in my personal life,” Cantoni said. “I had to put college on hold to get a more secure job. I realized I joined the reserves partly for education and I was doing all this stuff to go to college, and I couldn’t even do that because of what was going on in my life.”

Cantoni continued to work hard in the reserves, which propelled him toward multiple opportunities and kept education as an option despite his personal challenges. Part of the Air Force Reserve mission to take care of Airmen is a seasonal training program which allows top-notch reservists to go active duty for 90 days at participating installations.

It was during one of these assignments to Charleston, South Carolina, that the wanderlust-stricken Cantoni received a different perspective and a solution to his problem.

“I was essentially active duty for 90 days in Charleston, and I absolutely loved it,” Cantoni said. “A year later, I came back from my two-week annual tour from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, and I was put on orders for the commander support staff in my unit; I was active duty for another three months.”

It was at this point the seed was planted and the aerial porter realized he needed more.

“It was through moments of realizing I liked the structure of military life and the fact that every civilian job I had didn’t give me that or job security that pushed me toward active duty.”

With very few exceptions, one cannot simply transfer from the Reserve component to active duty. One must get an approved discharge from the Reserves component of service and then separately process for enlistment or commission for an active-duty service.

A member of good standing can apply to the reserves for a conditional release, a document stating that the Reserve component agrees to release them from the remainder of their commitment if they are accepted for enlistment or appointment to an active-duty service component.

Cantoni's unit didn't let him go it alone. His years of dedication motivated his commanders and coworkers to share the load, and Cantoni's stars changed.

"I got an email from my recruiter saying that the Air Force was making a push for a limited number of reservists to go active duty," the prior reservist remembered. "I immediately called and told him I wanted to sign up."

It turned out that his unit had unknowingly prepared him for this transition nearly a year before by placing him in CSS. Cantoni's knowledge about paperwork and receiving information aided in his quest.

"Day after day, Airman Cantoni proved how capable and valuable he was," said U.S. Air Force Reserves Tech. Sgt. Antony Lee, Cantoni's CSS supervisor and 69th Aerial Port Squadron Ramp Services supervisor at Joint-Base Andrews, Maryland. "I once thought it was a shame Airman Cantoni didn't join active duty in the first place because he has so much to contribute. When I found out he was going from Reserve to active duty, I was extremely proud and happy for him."

With this encouragement, and his knowledge from his time in CSS, six months of paper work, qualifications, tests and more, Cantoni had finally achieved his goal: transition from the Reserve component to active duty.

Fast forward to the present, Cantoni is celebrating one year on active duty as an element member of the 19th Logistics Readiness Squadron aerial delivery operations center in his original careerfield.

Part of a unified team of professional Airmen, Cantoni uses his knowledge to ensure installation excellence and mentor the Airmen in his shop.

"He came with experience and a great attitude," said U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Ryan Pawlicki, 19th LRS aerial delivery operations center supervisor. "He brings great insight on how our job works to the younger Airmen in the careerfield."

For more information on how to join the Air Force Reserve, go to www.afreserve.com, or contact Tech. Sgt. Shantel Rolfe at (318) 716-0259.

For more information on how to join the active duty Air Force, go to www.Airforce.com.