

# MEDICAL NEWS

## SERVING STRONG: SOLDIER FINDS CALLING IN MEDICINE

By Sgt. Sharifa Newton  
40th Public Affairs Detachment

Many people join the Army trying to figure out what to do with themselves and Spc. Anthony Gonzalez was no different.

“I enlisted because I didn’t want to stay home and do nothing,” said Gonzalez, a Fontana, California, native, and a combat medic specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment, 101st Airborne Division Artillery Brigade, 101st Airborne Division. “I joined because I wanted to find out what I wanted to do with my life.”

Gonzalez joined at the age of 17 after completing high school. He originally wanted to be an AH-64 Apache repairer, but when he went to the recruiting office they did not have an opening.

Gonzalez said AH-64 repairer was not one of the jobs they offered him, but among the ones they did, combat medic was the best sounding one, so he took it.

“At first I thought this wasn’t going to be any fun, but then I started doing it and now I don’t want to leave,” Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez has served three years in the Army and has been on one deployment to Southern Afghanistan’s Helmand Province.

“Deployment is where I learned the most,” Gonzalez said. “During my experience I got to do some stuff that I probably wouldn’t have ever been able to do, like work on people like you would in the ER, but there are different rules, different people, and different types of surgeons, so it was really awesome.”

While downrange, Gonzalez met Staff Sgt. Daniel Brett Rhodes, chief of the 6th section, 2nd Platoon, B Battery, 3rd Bn., 320th FAR, 101st DIVARTY.

“Specialist Gonzalez is a go-getter,” Rhodes said. “I’ve deployed with him to Afghanistan, and he’s one person I’d like to have on my team. He likes to help people, he’s always cheerful and he’s just a ‘go-getter.’”

Gonzalez said his favorite experience thus far was when he was in Afghanistan and he and the medical staff received their first patients, who were both double amputations.

“I remember I was trying to open a sealing lock and I just couldn’t get the package open and after that I just couldn’t stop just thinking ‘man I got to get better at this, so I can stop being inefficient,’” Gonzalez said. “It was then I decided I needed to get better, so I did more training, more drills, and a lot more tasks that induced stress and bringing [in] more people as far as training. The next time we got patients it wasn’t as bad. It was real smooth and fun.”

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Volume 25, Number 6

www.militarymedical.com

JUNE 2018



(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Nicolas Z. Erwin)

**Senior Airman Daniel Hedlund, a 28th Communications Squadron client systems technician, is blindfolded after being penalized during a human performance team building exercise at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., May 9, 2018. During the exercise, teams of four had to build a model while each team member had specific roles that they could only do, simulating situations that people may not cope well against.**

## Breaking down the image: Mental Health

By Airman 1st Class Nicolas Erwin  
28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

Life in the military can be stressful for anyone from a pipeline Airman to a general officer. Fortunately, the 28th Medical Group Mental Health Clinic provides services for Airmen in need.

“Our primary mission is to return Airmen to their jobs and back into the fight,” said Airman 1st Class Bradley Borytsky, a 28th Medical Operations Squadron mental health technician. “We want to make

sure that [Airmen] are functioning at full capacity and handle whatever life throws at them with healthy coping mechanisms.”

The 28th Bomb Wing has begun teams to help build a support network between Airmen and the chaplain team and mental health clinic.

“One of the things we have recently started is implementing human performance teams in collabora-

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## •Mental Health

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tion with the chaplains and other helping agencies,” said Capt. Timothy Naill, 28th Medical Group Family Advocacy Officer. “We want to build relationships with Airmen in their units...it’s really getting people to see that we are on their team.”

May has been National Mental Health Month since 1949, bringing awareness and educating the public about mental illness. In the military, there are misconceptions of what the mental health clinic does.

“First off, people think [getting help for mental illness] will ruin their career,” said Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Garrison, 28th MDOS noncommissioned officer in charge of the mental health clinic. “They think they have no privacy because their commanders and first sergeants are privy to their information. That isn’t true.”

Garrison explained that although commanders and first sergeants are given limited information when it

relates to harm to self, harm to others or mission impact, generally, what Airmen disclose to their provider and the specific details they have are not given to their commanders.

Naill elaborated on how the misconception of going to mental health will ruin a career is wrong. He explained that the earlier someone gets help, the more manageable their situation will be. Airmen need to know there is support out there to help cope with whatever is happening in their lives.

“We come from a variety of different backgrounds,” Naill said. “We all have different upbringings. The mental health clinic teaches skills that someone may not have learned at other times in their lives.”

These skills improve the overall well-being of an Airman’s mental state, one portion of being ready to win the fight. A general outline of an Airman’s health falls into the categories of Comprehensive Airman Fitness.

## •Soldier

(Continued from front page)

Through initiative like that Gonzalez was put in charge of several medical tasks in his unit. Just recently, he completed a four-day Table XV gunnery exercise with his unit, which consisted of a battery offense and a battery defense. In efforts to make the training the most realistic as possible, the unit had opposition forces that did anything from small arms attacks, indirect fire, Chemical, Biological, Radioactive and Nuclear attacks to complex and blocked ambushes. It was at the exercise where he got another opportunity to train Soldiers and himself.

“So during the training exercise when we have downtime, or when there’s a medical task we need to complete, I will have the aid and litter teams composed of certified Combat Lifesavers respond first,” Gonzalez said. “Then I will let them do what they can [for the patient]. Next, I’ll go over and do my assessment making sure they didn’t miss anything, and then I’ll have them send up a nine-line medical evacuation request. This way the battery gets their training in and I can get my mine, as well. I also get in more training when I get to prepare the patient for the higher level of care and transport the patient.”

Gonzalez said he likes the Army because of all the benefits they give to people. He likes field artillery and infantry because they go out to the field.

“Getting dirty is my thing, so I like to come out to the field,” said Gonzalez. “The best part of my job is getting to work on people.”

In the future Gonzalez’s goal is to become a registered nurse and become a certified nurse anesthetist.

“I was looking for what I wanted to do and now I’ve found it. I want to be in the medical field,” Gonzalez said.

This model includes pillars that represent the physical, spiritual, social and mental portions of one’s readiness. The health of each of these pillars have a tremendous impact on how an Airman performs.

“How someone explained mental health to me was by comparing it to spraining an ankle,” Borytsky said. “When you’re running and sprain your ankle, people don’t expect you to be ready to run a mile-and-a-half. Your mental health is the same. You shouldn’t be expected to be at your best after something traumatic happens.”

Getting mental health care is important as demonstrated by Kevin Hines, one of 36 people to survive a suicide attempt by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge, San Francisco, California. Mr. Hines was invited by the base community action team to help bring awareness of avenues for Airmen to find support at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

“If you are out there in the military, and you are hiding and silencing your pain, I need you to do yourself a favor and tell your truth to someone who can help,” Hines explained.

He described how getting help is a daily occurrence and how important it is to have people who support you and empathize with any situation happening.

Getting help may have a stigma associated within the Air Force. The 2018 theme being promoted for National Mental Health Month is “#CureStigma.” Stigmas tend to create an environment of shame, fear and silence that prevents many people from seeking help and treatment, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

“The stigma is starting to fade,” Garrison said. “In the more recent years, we have seen a tremendous amount of people starting to visit. That’s always a good sign.”

Garrison added that in April, the mental health clinic saw more than 700 patients. This care gives way for more Airmen being able to return to the 28th Bomb Wing fully ready to provide Airpower – Anytime, Anywhere!

For more information on mental health awareness, contact the chapel at (605) 385-1598 or the base mental health clinic at (605) 385-3656.

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Celebrate Your

INDEPENDENCE

# USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) holds change of command ceremony

By Petty Officer 2nd Class  
Kelsey Adams

Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific

NHA TRANG, Vietnam – Capt. John R. Rotruck relieved Capt. Peter F. Roberts as commanding officer of Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) during a change of command ceremony while deployed in support of Pacific Partnership 2018 (PP18), May 20.

During the ceremony, Roberts credited the success of his tour aboard Mercy to his fellow leaders and the hard work of both the in-port crew and embarked crew during missions.

Roberts, a cardiovascular surgeon and native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, assumed command of Mercy in July 2016. During his tour, Roberts has participated in two Pacific Partnerships and traveled more than 36,000 miles. While under Roberts command, the ship made many technological advances to include, the first underway robotics surgery, incorporating tele-health onboard the ship, and being a part of many research projects that have advanced both basic and clinical science.

“The things I’ll remember forever are the personal interactions and relationships we develop in the countries we visit,” said Roberts. “We (Mercy crew) deliver care to tens of thousands of patients, but it is that connection you get with one person at a time that I will remember for the rest of my life, I receive letters, messages, and emails almost daily from people in the countries we have visited, expressing how our visit and our ship changed their lives. Its not always just delivering care, the ship herself is a symbol of hope and togetherness that people are inspired by and they often take the Mercy’s presence as a sign that their lives will change for the better. It is truly humbling to have been commanding officer of this vessel.”

During his speech at the ceremony, Roberts spoke highly of his time aboard the Mercy.

“I’m very sad about leaving the crew and this ship,” said Roberts. “Both Pacific Partnership’s I had the good fortune of being able to participate in have not only been the highlight of my career but the highlight of my life. “Sailing around the world and being with people from partner nations and having a crew onboard whose purpose is to help the countries we visit is incredibly fulfilling.”

Rear Adm. Paul D. Pearigen, Commander, Navy Medicine West Chief of the Navy Medical Corps., was the presiding officer for the ceremony.

“One of the most rewarding milestones and positions in the Navy, is that of commanding officer,” said Pearigen. “It can be difficult and challenging, but it gives us the opportunity to lead and mold our Sailors at a higher level. Capt. Roberts experience and assignments



(U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Kelsey L. Adams/Released)

**Rear Adm. Paul D. Pearigen (center), Commander, Navy Medicine West, officiates as Capt. Peter Roberts (left) and Capt. John R. Rotruck (right), turn over command of Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Mercy (T-AH 19) during a change of command ceremony. Mercy is currently deployed in support of Pacific Partnership 2018 (PP18). PP18’s mission is to work collectively with host and partner nations to enhance regional interoperability and disaster response capabilities, increase stability and security in the region, and foster new and enduring friendships across the Indo-Pacific Region. Pacific Partnership, now in its 13th iteration, is the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific.**

have showed evidence of excellence in both personal and team achievements. Most importantly, there is a dedication to professionalism and leadership that’s developed not only in him, but also those around him. With Capt. Roberts at the helm, Mercy has surpassed her goals and advanced the use of newly introduced programs and equipment.”

Roberts’s next assignment will be to assume duties as Commander 3rd Fleet Surgeon.

“It’s going to be hard leaving the ship,” said Roberts. “Being the commanding officer of any command is a special position and at the conclusion of the Change of Command ceremony, I’m just going to be a captain and not a commanding officer. However, I do know Capt. Rotruck is going to do an excellent job and that the ship will continue to do great things on the rest of Pacific Partnership 2018 (PP18), Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), and whatever else the future may hold for her. My next job as Commander 3rd Fleet Surgeon, will give me some exposure to the Mercy during RIMPAC. I’ll be waiting for her in Pearl Harbor in July and I’m looking forward to participating in all the RIMPAC events and seeing how the crew is doing.”

After official orders were read, Rotruck assumed all duties and respon-

“The things I’ll remember forever are the personal interactions and relationships we develop in the countries we visit.”

– Capt. Peter F. Roberts

sibilities as commanding officer of the Mercy and addressed his new crew for the first time.

“I can say without question I feel like I am coming into a command that has a tremendously high morale and has demonstrated to me a climate of dignity and respect throughout the entire crew,” said Rotruck. “I think this environment will help set the stage for me to sustain the positive energy and to continue having mission success that Capt. Roberts has already established. I am very thankful to him for it.”

Rotruck, a cardiothoracic anesthesiologist and a native of Virginia Beach, Virginia, was previously Chief of Staff at Walter Reid National Military Medical Center.

Mercy, along with Military Sealift Command expeditionary fast transport ship USNS Brunswick (T-EPF 6), are participating in PP18, the largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) preparedness mission conducted in the Indo-Pacific. PP18’s objective is to enhance regional coordination in areas such as medical readiness and preparedness for man-made and natural disasters.

P18 consists of more than 800 U.S., partner and host nation personnel working side-by-side to better prepare for potential humanitarian aid and disaster response situations.

For more news about USNS Mercy or PP18 Visit the Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/pages/PacificPartnership/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/PacificPartnership/).

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# Groundbreaking eye surgery has Airmen seeing careers saved

By Laurie Wilson

United States Air Force Academy

For patients with progressive keratoconus and corneal ectasia, the odds of their careers ending prematurely changed dramatically May 3, when innovative laser surgery, called Collagen Crosslinking, was performed here.

Maj. Marc Neuffer, chief of cornea and refractive surgery at the 10th Medical Group, corrected satellite engineer Capt. Brent Danner's degenerative eye condition.

"This groundbreaking capability to correct the condition allows us to treat cadets and active duty members here and from surrounding areas," Neuffer said. "They keep their vision and stay eligible for deployment."

Cadets diagnosed with the condition are not commissioned unless they receive a waiver, and pilots with the condition are restricted from flying.

"Keratoconus is most commonly found in individuals between 20 and 30 years of age," Neuffer said. "It eventually leads to loss of sight requiring corneal transplantation."

Neuffer said the condition typically isn't diagnosed until after an individual has joined the military and is well into their career. Once discovered, it becomes a duty-limiting condition that can result in medical discharge from active duty service.

Collagen Crosslinking was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2016 as a means to treat progressive keratoconus. The surgery stiffens and

stabilizes the cornea which stops the degenerative process. Patients typically keep their vision and don't require corneal transplants.

For Airmen like Danner, the procedure means the future looks a lot brighter.

"I'm a little nervous because I'm the first patient here to get this done," Danner said. "I'm also excited and positive because of what it means to my family, my career and for my sight."

Neuffer's second patient of the day was a cadet and the doctor said both Danner and the cadet's surgeries went smoothly. The doctor expects both patients to quickly recover and return to duty.

The Academy is the third Air Force location to offer the procedure. Currently, there are 15 base patients awaiting the procedure. This does not include patients from Peterson and Schriever Air Force bases, or Fort Carson, installations that refer their keratoconus patients to the Academy for the surgery. The Academy is also the referral center for 10 additional Air Force bases in the surrounding states.

"This procedure is a game changer for Airmen who would otherwise have their careers sidelined permanently," Neuffer said.

*(Right) Maj. Marc Neuffer, chief of cornea and refractive surgery at the U.S. Air Force Academy's 10th Medical Group, prepares to perform collagen crosslinking on patient Capt. Brent Danner May 3, 2018. The medical procedure corrects progressive keratoconus and corneal ectasia, degenerative eye conditions.*



(U.S. Air Force photo/Laurie Wilson)

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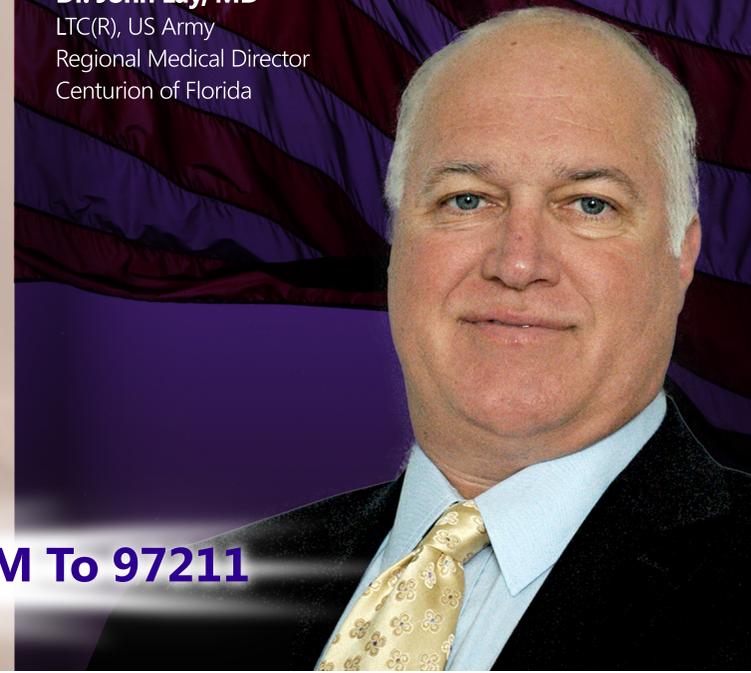
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# NHC Corpus Christi Celebrates 110th birthday of Navy Nurse Corps

By William Love

Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi, Texas

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas — Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi celebrated the 110th birthday of the Navy Nurse Corps with a cake cutting and a special ceremony known as the Blessing of the Hands May 11.

The Navy Nurse Corps birthday is observed along with National Nurses Week, which is recognized annually May 6-12.

Nurses' week began with a message from Capt. Kimberly A. Taylor, NHC Corpus Christi senior nurse executive, about the impact nurses have.

"This week we celebrate and honor the positive impact that nurses have on patients and health care delivery," said Capt. Kimberly Taylor, also interim executive officer. "I want to thank each one of you for choosing to be a part of this amazing profession! In all capacities and in every venue, you continue to remain dedicated to uphold the highest level of quality care. I look forward to seeing all that you will do this year to inspire, innovate, and influence!"

Currently, 16 Navy nurses and 25 civilian nurses care for patients at NHC

Corpus Christi and its Naval Branch Health Clinics (NBHC) located in Kingsville and Fort Worth, Texas, and the Command's detachment in San Antonio.

Throughout the week, nurses participated in various team-building activities, including a breakfast and luncheon.

During Thursday morning colors, a special company of nurses formed, and two nurse color guards hoisted the flag.

Serving as a color guard was a new experience for Lt. Brittany R. Garza, family nurse practitioner (FNP) from Port Lavaca, Texas.

"I was a bit nervous standing at the flagpole in front of the entire command because we don't normally get an opportunity to do this," said Garza, who cares for patients in Medical Home Port, her first Navy assignment.

On the quarterdeck the following day, staff read birthday letters, and the command's most senior nurse, Taylor, and most junior nurse present, Garza, cut the birthday cake.

For the finale of the week-long observance, nurses participated in the blessing.

Although the ritual is observed by

the Navy nurses, anyone can have their hands prayed over during the ceremony as a way to confirm all NHC Corpus Christi staff members support the healing of every patient.

This year's National Nurses Week theme was Nurses: Inspire, Innovate, Influence.

One nurse at NHC Corpus Christi says she owes her vocation to the influence of Nurse Corps officers.

"I enlisted into the U.S. Navy in 1999 and started off my naval career as a hospital corpsman. It was during that time caring for wounded warriors that I knew I wanted to become a Navy Nurse Corps officer," said Lt. Natalie Ann Claypool, from Glenford, Ohio. "I was so impressed by the blend of leadership and compassion I witnessed in Nurse Corps officers that I knew I wanted to be part of their corps."

In 2005, Claypool was selected for the Medical Enlisted Commissioning Program (MECP) to pursue her nursing degree.

Three years later, she graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from San Diego State University. She now serves as

department head, Healthcare Business.

Today, over 4,000 active duty and Reserve Navy nurses representing more than 17 different specialties serve with both the Navy and the Marine Corps throughout the world, providing exemplary care to Sailors, Marines and their families, from the garrison to the deck plates and to the battlefield.

According to Navy Medicine, approximately 200 new nurses access into the Navy Nurse Corps annually, and Claypool offers good advice for Sailors and Marines interested in becoming nurses.

"Maintain strong academics, especially in the sciences. Be of exemplary moral character, and excel in your primary job while getting involved with your command," said Claypool. "Find a good Nurse Corps officer to be your mentor. Lastly, be sure to have multiple people scrutinize your commissioning package for accuracy. If you don't get selected for a commission on your first attempt, keep applying, don't give up, and work hard. Being a Nurse Corps officer is one of the most rewarding opportunities one may have in their lifetime."

## 'America's Medical School' graduate selected for NASA Spaceflight Mission

### Army Doctor, Astronaut Andrew Morgan heads to space in 2019

By Sharon Holland

Uniformed Services University

Army physician Lt. Col. Andrew Morgan, a NASA astronaut, will be one of two members of the NASA astronaut class of 2013 going into space in 2019, according to an announcement released by the space agency May 24, 2018.

Morgan, a 2002 graduate of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences' (USU) F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine – "America's Medical School" – will launch in July 2019 as a member of the Expedition 60/61 crew headed to the International Space Station. Morgan's colleague, astronaut Christina Hammock Koch, was also selected for a mission to the ISS with Expedition 59/60, which is scheduled to launch in April 2019.

Morgan, a New Castle, Pennsylvania, native, earned a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, and a Doctor of Medicine degree from USU. He went on to complete a residency in emergency medicine at Madigan Army Medical Center-University of Washington, followed by a fellowship in primary care

sports medicine from the Virginia Commonwealth University/Fairfax Family Practice.

Morgan's military medicine career was jumpstarted with a volunteer assignment for U.S. Army special operations forces. He served as a medical team member in the Joint Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and went on to an assignment as battalion surgeon for the 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group, where he served for three years. Morgan then served on a strategic special operations assignment in Washington, D.C., before completing his sports medicine fellowship. Morgan has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Africa in support of combat operations.

"We are extremely proud of Drew and all of his accomplishments throughout his career. His unique background as a military medical officer will provide significant contributions to his ISS crew members and the next generation of space exploration," said USU President Dr. Richard Thomas. "I can assure you the entire Uniformed Services University community will be watching when he launches into space."



(U.S. Navy photo by William Love/Released)

Naval Health Clinic Corpus Christi senior nurse, Capt. Kimberly A. Taylor, interim executive officer, and most junior nurse present, Lt. Brittany R. Garza (right), on May 11, celebrate the 110th birthday of the Navy Nurse Corps, in conjunction with National Nurses Week 2018.

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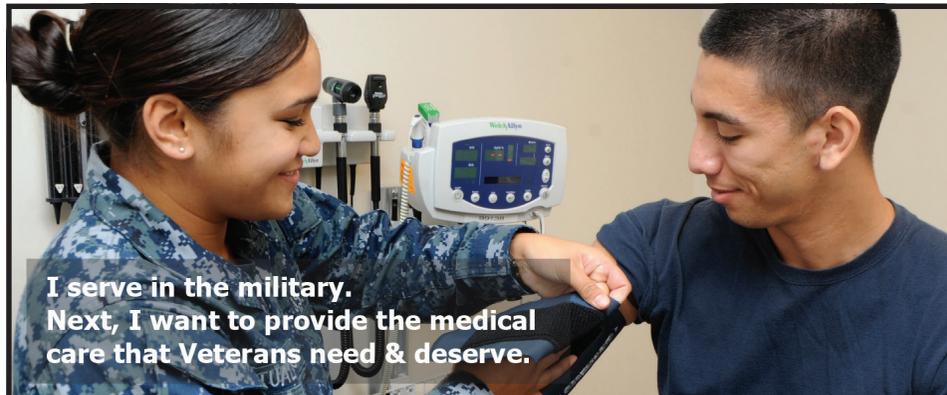


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For additional information about our mission driven Department of Psychiatry, please view our web site at:  
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For questions about these openings, please contact:  
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## Vietnam by blood, Air Force in heart

By Airman 1st Class Nicolas Erwin  
*28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs*

An old idiom goes 'home is where the heart is,' for a 28th Medical Group lieutenant colonel, that saying couldn't be truer.

Lt. Col. An Duong, the 28th Medical Group chief of aerospace medicine, is Vietnamese by birth and Air Force in heart.

"I was born in what was formerly, Saigon, Vietnam," Duong explained. "My dad was taken as a political prisoner and imprisoned after the [Vietnam] War."

Duong described how her mother secured his release and how her family left Vietnam. There were no easy avenues for them to go through back in those post-war years, so her father became a "boat person," someone who attempts to travel to another country by means of overcrowded rafts that tended to sink or be raided by pirates on their journey. He made it to Malaysia and then to the United States.

"Escaping by boat was dangerous," she explained. "About half of the boats didn't make it anywhere, and that's why my father went with just his oldest child. They then brought the rest of the family over through immigration."

The transition was hard for the teenage Duong, but not impossible. After completing high school, she attended Columbia Medical School in Missouri

and began working in private practice.

"I wasn't a brilliant student," Duong mused. "I strive to be useful. Every job helps someone in its own way, I could not be a good electrician but I could be a good family doctor."

After a few years and caring for thousands of patients, one chance meeting changed both Duong's life and her career track.

"When I was in private practice, I was working with a military veteran and he said 'Doc, you'd be really good in the military. You'd do well for the troops,'" Duong explained. "I think back to that a lot. He gave me the right advice."

It isn't just a past experience lead her down the military path, Duong's peers also feel the same way in the present.

Jessica Le, the 28th Medical Operations Squadron public health flight chief, explained there are two important descriptors for the soon-to-be colonel: the first is Duong's job proficiency. The second was a physical attribute that makes her noticeable – her height.

"She's short," Le joked, while she thought about the bond she shared with her superior, mentor and, most importantly, her friend. "She really is the saying 'tiny but mighty.'"

To Duong, it doesn't matter where she was born. What matters is being with the U. S. Air Force and contributing to "keeping the Air Force flying well."

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