

# THE THUNDERBOLT

*Alumni Edition*

May, 2013

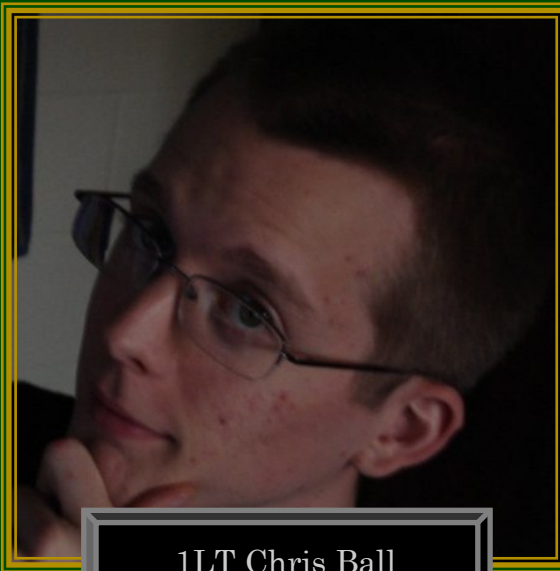


*I, (Full Name) having been appointed a Second Lieutenant in the United States Air Force, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office upon which I am about to enter. So Help Me God.*

## **An Air Force Commission...**

It's something we dream of from the day we set foot into an AFROTC detachment; To become "part of a proud heritage, a tradition of honor, and a legacy of valor." We start fresh as AS100s, new to the culture and ready to learn. AS200 year: We train and compete against hundreds to go to Field Training where, through sweat, determination, and countless MRE's, we graduate as proud POC's. We return triumphant to our detachments and complete our AS300 year of ROTC; still learning, growing, and bonding with the family we have formed. As seniors, Commissioning is so close we can see the gleam of those "Butter Bars" each time we close our eyes. We learn the finer points of leadership and pave the way for our successors until that long-awaited ceremony in May, when we take the oath and enter a stage of life that we have dreamt of since that very first day.

In this very special edition of *The Thunderbolt*, we re-connect with some of our Alumni to learn about their experiences *after* they pinned on the gold bars and began service as 2nd Lieutenants.



1LT Chris Ball

Job: The short description is that I'm a Systems Engineer for the Missile Defense Agency's High Powered Directed Energy Programs Office (I know, a mouthful, you can just say Missile Defense Agency).

Base: Kirtland AFB, Albuquerque NM

The Missile Defense Agency (MDA) is a joint DoD organization (currently headed by a Vice Admiral) that is focusing on developing systems to detect, identify and destroy enemy missile launches to protect our

troops and allies. Systems like Army's THAAD and Navy's Aegis are products of MDA's works going into deployment.

When I entered my office, I was working for what was then the Airborne Laser. The really easy description is that this program was an attempt at intercepting missiles shortly after launch by hitting them with a high powered laser. To get a laser that powerful when the program started, they decided to shove it into a 747 Freighter (which took up quite a bit of space, mind you. Tough to walk around in that thing whenever I got to tour the inside of it). After the program got cut last year, we've transitioned our efforts to newer Directed Energy efforts and I'm leading engineering teams in research for our new system in order to find out what we can and cannot do for putting a new laser on a new plane.

The more and more I think about it, my job isn't that exciting to call it "unique" beyond what I said above, but I can say this: TV and Movie production happens here often. Avengers was filming right when arrived and they're actually filming some shoots for Breaking Bad near where I live right now.

As for ROTC preparing me? I feel that it's things that you don't expect to help that actually helped me the most. As someone who works in the 62/63 AFSC career fields, you find that there is a large amount of non-military working along side of you; from government civilians to contractors. It's not much different than working in the engineering labs with your classmates, TAs and Professors on projects, papers and presentations. It's definitely something our AF Academy compatriots don't have.



Job: 99<sup>th</sup> Security Forces Squadron Flight Commander

Base: Nellis AFB, Nevada

I am in charge of 70 Airmen, NCOs, and SNCOs daily. Provide command and control for 5 AF Wings (99<sup>th</sup> ABW, 57<sup>th</sup> WG, NTTR, USAFWC, and Weapon School) and 250 rotary and fixed-wing aircraft. I ensure law enforcement coverage protecting 18K active duty, 313K dependents, 78K yearly TDY & Visitors. I make sure my personal can maintain a full-spectrum threat response for Air Combat Command's largest flight line complex (4th largest in AF), valued at \$10 billion. I

also plans, organizes, and directs response to all major/minor accidents/incidents and FPCON increase/decrease on Nellis AFB. Being so close to one of the largest tourist cities in the world, the job is ever changing!

One interesting experience was when we had a mission to secure a UAV crash site. The mission was time sensitive and we wanted to prevent bystanders tampering the crash site; I created a quick reaction team to get fully loaded and armed with our weapons. We had to report to the rescue squadron on base and we attached ourselves with the PJs and flew out to the crash site on a UH-60 Pave hawk. Once we had eyes on the crash site, we landed in a nearby field and unloaded from the helicopter. We then established a 360 degree perimeter and maintained the integrity of the crash site to ensure that no unauthorized personal would enter into the crash site. Since we were the initial team, we were required to stay out in the field for 36 hours in field conditions eating MREs and staying warm by the campfire we had to make. Temperature dropped below freezing at night and we were still out that ensuring no one would sneak through (a lot of crazy UFO spotters out here).



In my opinion, I believe there is no way to fully prepare to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant. There are so many different factors and criteria that come from the many career fields that the air force offers. From the moment I came on active duty, I felt like I was drinking water through a fire hose. So much information was thrown at me and so much was require from me. The best thing that I received from ROTC was the fact that flexibility is the key to air power. Being a 2dLt you are required to learn and learn fast. I remember when I was going through ROTC, Captain Thigpen said that the moment a cadet puts on the rank of 2dLt, we will outrank approximately 80% of the air force and will be required to lead. Best advice that I was given while in ROTC and in Tech School, is to pair up with a GOOD SNCO and learn everything from that person. I've been living by that since day 1 and I've been doing great so far! Selected for CGO of the Quarter, recognized by my commander at Defender of the Month. I created a great rapport from my troops and they follow my orders not just because of rank, but because of respect.



2LT Laurli Pleiman

Job: Acquisitions Officer, but we are better known as Program Managers.

Base: Robins AFB

I manage programs with a focus on the cost, schedule, and performance. Almost any plane flying or system associated with the Air Force Mission

has a sustainment team (better known as an IPT, Integrated Product Team) backing them up to make sure they can keep flying. You can say that I work on the "corporate/office" side of the Air Force. Even though I might be doing office and management work, I know that my efforts have a direct impact on our ability to complete missions.

ROTC did help me prepare for active duty and my job. By learning professionalism, confidence to lead, and essential skills such as being comfortable giving briefings and even in little things like how to write professional emails. By learning professional leadership abilities and building confidence in myself and my abilities, I am able to offer a lot more to my job and division than I would otherwise.



2LT Keenan Smith

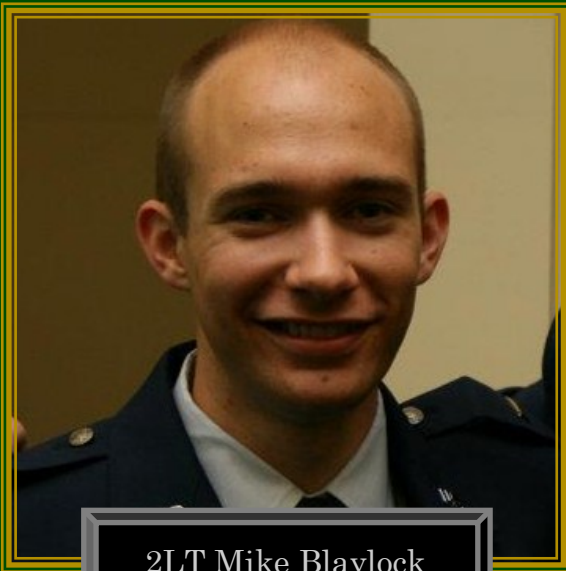
Job: I work as an A-10 Structural Engineer in the A-10 System Project Office (SPO).

Base: I am stationed at beautiful Hill AFB, UT.

I work in a hanger on the flight line providing engineering guidance for the maintenance folks repairing the A-10. I specifically work on repairs for the A-10 Legacy (Old) wings. My job is essentially this: There are things called T.O.'s, T.O.'s are technical orders and in my case, they are basically instruction/repair manuals for the airframe. Maintenance uses the T.O.'s to inspect and fix most of the plane but when they encounter a repair that isn't in the T.O. this is where the SPO engineers come in. We basically analyze the problem and come up with a solution to fix the problem. Another one of my job functions is to write repair manual procedures for the T.O.'s in areas that frequently require engineering assistance to quicken the repair process.

A weird thing about my job: I work almost entirely with civilians. For every one military member, there is about 2 or 3 civilians in the A-10 SPO. In fact, most of Hill AFB's employees are civilian. Another different thing about my job is that I supervise no one. The Air Force solely uses me as an engineer and that is it. My job is just to manage repairs and write T.O. procedures. Most of the military officers in the SPO don't act in supervisory roles. One last thing, my supervisor and rater is a civilian and my additional rater is also a civilian.

ROTC helped me learn and grow as a person and taught me many things about myself and how I act under pressure. For this I am extremely grateful. It also helped me to learn military customs and how to wear the uniform properly. However, and this is really just specific to my job, ROTC did not help me to prepare for engineering projects or having to work with more civilians than military members. That was definitely a shock because the culture is very different than what ROTC promotes. Overall, I would still say that ROTC was a valuable experience in my life, and I do not regret learning any of the lessons it taught me.



2LT Mike Blaylock

Job: 62E1G Developmental Engineer; Project Officer (Acquirer) for the United States Nuclear Detonation Detection Systems (USNDS)

Base: Los Angeles AFB

So far I have helped get our 6th generation of USNDS ground terminals through testing and actually go into operations. I have been able to go on 5 TDYs between Kirtland, Colorado Springs, Wright-

Patterson, and Vandenberg. I also ran a Captain promotion ceremony and a Major retirement ceremony on the side. I work side-by-side with Captains, Majors and Lt Colonels every day.

LA AFB doesn't have a flight line. It doesn't have big old planes mounted up on display. It doesn't have lodging or housing. It doesn't have jets flying overhead all the time. It has no tactical use at all. It has a 1/2 mile track that goes around it. It *\*does\** have 12 satellite directorates. It has the 3-star General of SMC. It is surrounded by Boeing, Lockheed, Northrop, Raytheon, SpaceX, and Aerospace. Thousands of the brightest minds in the space industry are right here. A retired major told me they used to call it "Hollywood Air Force Base" back in his day. This is where space starts!

ROTC taught me customs and courtesies, and familiarized me with the military. It taught me how to be a professional, which is essential for every officer. However, it is quite a bit different from active duty, especially my job with acquisitions. The most important benefit from ROTC was networking. The friends and people that we meet and work with in ROTC are invaluable when you are asked to be the expert on something that you know nothing about (happens very frequently), and can make a call to an old classmate because you remembered that he or she happened to be in that field of expertise.



1LT Andrew Kenny

Job: Pilot

Base: Vance AFB

My job is a little unique right now. I am currently an Officer Awaiting Pilot Training (OAPT) for the 71st STURON. I will be leaving in 2 weeks for what they call Initial Flight Screening, or IFS. IFS is the first step in a long, arduous journey to getting my wings. Because I have been out here since November 1, though, I have been temporarily placed on casual status to work in the base pharmacy (not the most glamorous of jobs, but it makes the time go by). Until IFS, though, I spend most of the days studying and prepping for my next step!

Interesting experiences: nothing that comes to mind right now, but one thing that I encourage everyone to do is to take full advantage of the wealth of knowledge from others stationed at your base. I've learned so much from the NCOICs, as well as those over me, that I will always carry with me through my career.

It's amazing how much different ROTC is than active duty. Other than people stressing the use of the chain of command, there weren't too many similarities between the two, but then again I am stationed at a training base, whereas many of the others in my class are not.



2LT Ashton Burr

Job: Logistics Readiness Officer

Base: Joint Base Andrews, MD

My job title is Vehicle Operations OIC (officer in charge). I am in charge of 81 military members and 27 civilians. My section is responsible for the transportation for Joint Base Andrews, as well as the majority of the government vehicles on the base. We transport air crews when they land on base, and we also supply transportation for any types of deployments or exercises. Because

we are a joint base, we also have a mission out of Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling, which is transportation for the AF Band and Honor Guard. We also have the only Executive Driver service in the AF which is responsible for driving General Officers, those that hold high office such as the CMSAF, and civilian equivalents.

I had the pleasure of attending the CSAF Transition Ceremony for Gen Swartz and Gen Welsch. It was pretty awesome. Currently we are heavily involved in the 57th Presidential Inauguration. The largest role my section plays in that is the transportation of more than 1,200 people to various locations to participate all different capacities. I also have military members from my section that are participating in the Inaugural Parade and Cordon, Presidential Escort, escorting of the Tuskegee Airmen, and the Inaugural Ball. I also had the neat opportunity of being saluted by the new CMSAF Cody when he came to meet the military members in my Executive Driver section.

I definitely feel that the leadership opportunities I had in both ROTC and other student organizations helped to prepare me for my job on active duty. ROTC helped me to be comfortable leading a large number of people. It also helped my critical thinking skills and planning ability. College in general helped with time management because I stay very busy and work long hours now. I am very thankful I took advantage of all of the leadership opportunities that I did, they have all helped me in active duty life.





Job: Weather Officer (15W1)

Base: Barksdale AFB, LA.

Once I'm done training, I'll be responsible for creating "Terminal Aerodrome Forecasts" (TAFs) and issuing weather watches, warnings and advisories (the lightning warnings we issue result in the "lightning within 5" announcements you hear over the big voice at field training) for different bases across the SE United States.

2LT Rachel Layne

Thus far, I have spent my whole active duty career in training, and I still have two and a half months left. They gave me about a month to finish in-processing here at Barksdale before sending me to Keesler AFB, Biloxi, Mississippi for Tech School. Keesler is home to the Hurricane Hunters, so we got a chance to tour their building and one of their planes. We were able to watch the Hurricane Hunters take off on their way to fly through Superstorm Sandy in late October while playing volleyball right across the street from the flight line. It was really neat to see the planes return and think about where they had just come from, it gave a new perspective to all of the charts and satellite images we would work with in class.

I also just had the privilege of working out all the logistics for the visit of the Director of AF Weather, the AF Weather Agency Commander, and both of their Chiefs. All of them were wonderful people and I had a lot of fun working with them. Working with a retired General, a full bird Colonel and 2 Chiefs seems a little above a 2Lt's pay grade, but it is really awesome how many opportunities you have as an officer. A lot of privilege and responsibility comes with the title.

Career field-wise, ROTC really didn't help a lot just because tech career field pipelines are set up a little different than non-tech career fields. However, the time I spent as a POC on the flight, squadron, and wing staff level taught me so much about personnel management, and as an officer that will most likely be your primary duty. It gave a lot of practice time and room for error in learning how to manage your time, other people's time, how to counsel subordinates, how to problem solve, etc. Also, ROTC is entirely responsible for giving me confidence with the military lifestyle and customs/courtesies, things I didn't have any exposure to beforehand.



2LT Samantha Goff

Job: Logistics Readiness Officer

Base: FE Warren in Cheyenne , WY. We like it, but not everyone does. The key to any base is meeting people and enjoying what the area around it has to offer...Colorado isn't far away!

My job title is OIC Materiel Management. I work in supply, but my situation is not typical because my whole flight is made up of civilians...even the flight commander. Still, I take learning experiences whenever I can. We do inventories of the stuff on base: take things being turned in for maintenance, issue out mobility equipment( gas masks, helmets, etc.), take older supplies being turned into DRMO— which gets shipped to Ft. Carson CO and auctioned off— and we also handle the HAZMART pharmacy/storage. The most important thing we do in supply here is NWRM( Nuclear weapons rated materiel), so if maintenance needs to turn in some parts from the missiles we get it. This is super important and we have to ensure that NO mistakes are made.

In all honesty, I don't think ROTC helped me as much as I would have thought. The stuff you learn senior year (EPR's, how to talk to people, etc.) is really helpful, but you'll find that active duty and ROTC are totally different. I love being on active duty...definitely one of the best decisions I've made so far. The key to any base is meeting people and enjoying what the area around it has to offer.



2LT Joel Winkler

9Job: 2T0 Pilot Trainee

Base: Columbus AFB, MS.

After my initial PCS to NAS Whiting field for pilot training, the Air Force discontinued the joint training program held there with the Navy. I had completed IFS and spent 6 months at Whiting on casual status (flipping burgers on the flight line and working in a public affairs office selling patches and t-shirts). I then PCS'd to Co-

lumbus AFB and am now waiting to start UPT.

I'm not sure exactly when I'll start the next phase...they've got us on a sort of waiting list. When someone drops out or fails IFS those slots are prioritized to us Whiting transfers. The Col. here told us we should be in relatively soon. However, the latest news is a buddy got into the April class...

Since the classes are pre-made (UPT slots are assigned straight out of ROTC and academy with ifs for timeline reasons) that was the best they could do to squeeze us into the system. But yeah, casual for a year isn't a lot of fun. Could be worse, I could have had to wait till January to even report after commissioning. At least I'm getting paid! Right now I sign in to the transition office before 10am and go home every day, that's it.

How did ROTC prepare me: with my experience so far I have had to remain flexible. Playing the "hurry up and wait" game is never fun but you have to remember why you are here. Also, those leadership and motivational skills are helpful on yourself and family members, not just airmen.



2LT Wesley Batot

Job: Contract Manager

Base: Shaw AFB, SC.

The past 6 months have been filled with lots of experiences. After about 3 weeks of being active duty, I went TDY for 2 months to an enlisted Tech School at Lackland AFB, TX. My time spent there was filled with class Mon-Fri from 0730-1630. Once I graduated from school and came back to my base, I was put to work. I was assigned as the Squadron Commander for our Assumption of Command Ceremony, appointed as a Security Manager, Physical Training Officer, became the OIC for Infrastructure, and helped plan 2 retirement ceremonies.

I feel that ROTC did help prepare me for Active Duty. The constant encouragement to volunteer is something that carries over well and the leadership training you receive in the ROTC program is invaluable. Once you are thrown into situations on Active Duty you start to see yourself just take charge and act immediately. Detachment 592 is definitely one of the best programs in the country, hands down.

If there was one thing I could recommend to any cadet it would be treat your airmen like human beings. Know that once you step on your base you outrank 80% of the Air Force and your people will look to you for answers.



Our newest alumni were commissioned as 2nd Lieutenants on May 10th, 2013. The ceremony was held right here on the beautiful UNC Campus, on the top floor of the Student Union. Hundreds of friends and family attended the event to witness the ceremony each cadet dreams of the moment they begin their ROTC adventures. Oaths were made, ranks pinned on, and tears were shed from as this year's seniors took the first step into their new lives.

Although we now have these gold butter bars pinned to our shoulders, we will never forget where we came from. We will always be grateful to the officers and fellow cadets who helped carry us from our first day as humble AS100s, to our commissioning day. Memories of our family here at Detachment 592 will remain forever in our hearts as we embark on this new journey.

On behalf of the senior class: Thank you, Detachment 592!

# Off We Go...Into The Wild Blue Yonder...

So we've commissioned...where do we go from here?



Chad Dancer

21AX Aircraft Maintenance  
Officer  
Barksdale AFB, LA  
2nd Maintenance Sqd.



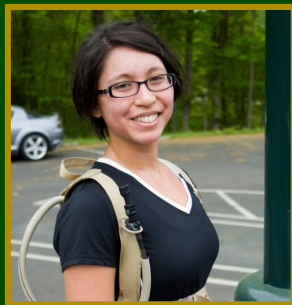
Anthony DeMasi

92T1 Navigator/Combat Systems  
Officer  
Naval Air Station, FL



Ian Lindstrom

14NX Intel Officer  
Goodfellow AFB, TX



Alette Pittman

61BX MISO Behavioral Scientist  
Barksdale AFB, LA  
608th AOC



Christopher Schmidt

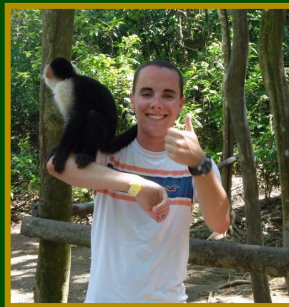
92T0 Pilot  
Vance AFB, OK

# Off We Go...Into The Wild Blue Yonder...

So we've commissioned...where do we go from here?



Jeremiah Spurlock  
92T0 Pilot  
Vance AFB, OK



Robert Stone  
31PX Security Forces Officer  
Minot AFB, ND



Joseph Tompkins  
62EXE Developmental Electrical/  
Computer Engineer  
Los Angeles AFB, CA  
Launch and Range Systems  
Wing



Collin Wilcox  
21RX Logistics Readiness  
Officer  
Shaw AFB, SC



Garret Zupan  
62EX Developmental Engineer  
Hill AFB, UT