VETERANS WITHIN ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY

2024 EDITION

VOICES OF OUR HEROES THROUGHOUT THE GLOBAL AVIATION ECOSYSTEM

VETERANS SPECIAL REPORT

ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY INSTITUTE

EDITOR: AMIN VAFADAR

“In honor of their valor and sacrifice, we celebrate heroes whose resilience inspires a future of courage and hope, uniting us in a vision of global strength and progress.”

ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY INSTITUTE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our deepest gratitude to Collinear Group, our Title Sponsor for this edition of the Veterans Special Report. Their unwavering support not only enables the creation of this important publication but also amplifies the voices of veterans within the aviation ecosystem. By championing this initiative, Collinear Group helps empower the heroes who have shaped and continue to influence the global aviation industry. We are proud to partner with a company that shares our commitment to honoring and elevating these individuals.

Collinear Group is a leading provider of cutting-edge intelligence and technology solutions tailored to the complex challenges faced by highly regulated industries. By bridging the gap between information and action, Collinear helps engineers, manufacturers, and operators unlock new potentials and reach greater operational heights. With a clear vision of creating seamless industry processes, the company ensures that the right information is delivered at the right time, empowering industries to innovate, streamline operations, and thrive in today's fast-evolving landscape.

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SPOTLIGHT - A WRITE TO HEAL BY LISA REGINA

Empowering Veterans, Healing Through Storytelling & Technology

Read about Heroic Episodes and Veterans Drone Training Program on page 24

CONTRIBUTORS

“As we honor our veterans in 2024, we recognize not only their courage and sacrifices but also their role in shaping the future. From defending our skies to advancing the frontiers of aviation, our veterans bring unmatched dedication and expertise. Their legacy inspires the innovation driving Advanced Air Mobility, bridging today’s progress with tomorrow’s possibilities. This Veterans Day, we salute their contributions to a safer, more connected world and commit to building a future that reflects their spirit of service.”

Right: Oliver Renard, Test Pilot at Volocopter

—DAN SLOAT
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT
ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY INSTITUTE

The purpose of the ‘Veterans within Advanced Air Mobility’ annual publication is to honor military veterans worldwide for their contributions to the emerging aviation field of Advanced Air Mobility including eVTOLs, drones, vertiports, UAS Traffic Management, policy, advocacy, and more.

Eligibility Criteria:

- Military service to any nation for at least 2 full years by 11/2023
- Open to Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard across all branches
- If retired, separated, or medically released: Honorable discharge
- Current members of the AAM Institute Board of Directors are ineligible

Note: A separate report, ‘First Responders within Advanced Air Mobility,’ will be published by 5/2025 to recognize our brave public safety personnel.

JAMES O. POSS

Maj. Gen. James O. Poss (ret) is the CEO of ISR Ideas, an intelligence and drone consulting firm. He is the founder and former Executive Director of the Alliance for System Safety of UAS through Research Excellence (ASSURE) FAA Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Center of Excellence. During his 30-year US Air Force career, the General flew RC-135 sensitive reconnaissance missions during the Cold War, served in DESERT STORM with U.S. VII Corps RC-12/Guardrail, commanded an RC-135 squadron during the Kosovo Air War, and was Director of Intelligence for Coalition Air Forces in Southwest Asia at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom where he helped direct the USAF's first armed drone strikes.

The general commanded the 488th Intelligence Squadron, Royal Air Force Mildenhall, the 609th Air Intelligence Group at Shaw AFB, SC, and the 70th Intelligence Wing at Fort George G. Meade, MD. The general was also the Director of Intelligence at Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe and Air Combat Command. His final assignment was Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, HQ USAF. He is a leading expert on UAS, having helped design the US Air Force's remote split operations system for UAS control. He is the 2012 winner of Aviation Weeks' Curtis Sword Award for leadership in Anglo-American aerospace relations. General Poss has a Reserve Officer Training Corps commission from the University of Southern Mississippi and has master's degrees from the University of Southern California and the US Navy War College.

ERICA G. COURTNEY

Erica G. Courtney has 23-years of U.S. Army active-duty and Reserve time having served in various roles inside and out of the military. Her roots are as a scout helicopter pilot flying combat arms missions blazing trails for women after her. She was the first woman to graduate advanced armor cavalry course learning tactical and strategic lessons that helped her at all levels as her career progressed. She served in peacetime and war leading logistical operations for both Iraq and Afghanistan within the most highly deployable units in the country. After 12 years of active duty, she left the service to focus on her family, an MBA, and starting a business assisting large and small companies do business with the government. long her journey, she became - a fierce advocate for veterans and women chairing Boards, commissions, and committees focused on public policy, advocacy and entrepreneurship. She is currently serving as a Governor and Senate appointed Commissioner for the state of California and an Army Reservist (came back in the service after a six-year break) working on partner nation capacity building with a team of industry and military experts. After a few activated tours at the Pentagon, and over 15-years as a small business owner, the eVTOL market appealed to her as the next innovation in aviation. Keeping the warfighter top of mind, she understood that the reduction of the movement of fuel on the battlefield equates to saved lives as 1-10 soldiers died during the Afghan/Iraq wars. As a scout, she also saw the gap within DoD for a medium lift capability to perform security and reconnaissance missions in a way that drones just can not do. Having a pilot/commander flying close overhead maneuvering forces is a combat multiplier and decisions must be instantaneously. Lastly, the need for medium lift, attritable, safe, quiet airframes to deliver people or supplies in austere environments is a must. EVTOLs can provide capabilities that can offset helicopter or C-130 demands and as the world becomes more contested, assets are in high demand. eVTOLs can provide solutions that are not ‘theoretical’ anymore as thousands of flights have been demonstrated with no issues. In addition, unlike traditional aircraft programs of record, it will not take seven plus years to get these to the Force-they will be ready within a year. The DoD has invested millions of dollars over the last six years in this space and we are all moving from R&D to demonstrations to manufacturing with the hope of operationalization.

DAVID F. STEPANEK

David F. Stepanek became Bristow's Executive Vice President, Chief Transformation Officer in March 2021. In this role, David is leading the transformation of Bristow by introducing the next generation of Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) aircraft and expanding Bristow's core business in new regions. David has previously served as Bristow's Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer. Previously, David held positions within PHI, Inc., most recently having served as President, PHI Americas, responsible for the overall performance and direction of PHI's U.S. and international operations in the Western Hemisphere.

Before becoming President PHI Americas, David served as PHI, Inc. Chief Commercial Officer and led the company's growth in the Gulf of Mexico and international expansion including the acquisition of HNZ Group's offshore helicopter business. Before joining PHI in 2010, David held a variety of leadership positions at Era Helicopters.

After four years' service in the US Marine Corps as a heavy lift helicopter avionics technician, David moved to Sikorsky as an avionics technician and field service representative; he was subsequently promoted and contributed to the sales and product development of the S-76 and S-92 aircraft, amongst many other roles. David is also a Fellow of the Royal Aeronautical Society.

ANNA KALAGIA

Anna is a highly experienced non-commissioned officer in the Hellenic Air Force, actively serving since 2019. Specializing in advanced imagery interpretation and unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operations, Anna has gained over 1,000 flight hours as an Optical Payload Operator on the Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Heron I UAVs, following rigorous training from Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). Her role has been instrumental in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions, as well as in more complex, multi-domain operations supporting national and allied defense efforts.

As the landscape of air mobility rapidly shifts towards advanced air mobility (AAM) and urban air mobility (UAM), she has positioned herself at the forefront of integrating UAV technology into these emerging sectors. Her deep technical expertise is grounded in hands-on experience with cutting-edge UAV systems, placing her in a unique position to contribute to the evolving capabilities of drones in urban environments, cargo logistics, and beyond. Anna is currently on the path to becoming a certified UAV instructor, reflecting her dedication to training the next generation of UAV operators, with a focus on the evolving demands of both military and civilian air mobility applications. Her instructional capabilities will play a key role in ensuring that operators are equipped to manage new UAV technologies that are pivotal to the future of AAM and UAM. In addition to her extensive operational background, she holds a MBA, which has sharpened her leadership, strategic decision-making, and operational management skills. This enables her to approach UAV operations not just from a technical perspective, but with an eye toward scalable, efficient, and sustainable solutions in advanced air mobility. Her completion of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) training further highlights her ability to harmonize military objectives with civilian applications, an increasingly critical skill in the integration of UAVs for urban and interurban missions. Anna's broad expertise across ISR, UAV operations, and strategic management, combined with her commitment to advancing the field, positions her as a leader in the transformative future of drones and AAM. Her contributions are set to play a key role in the expansion of drone technologies for urban air mobility, logistics, and defense applications, ensuring the integration of innovative solutions in both military and civilian contexts.

ROBERT “BOB” WALTZ

Colonel Robert Waltz, USAFR (ret.), Ph.D, FRAeS, is a Senior Advisor on Operations for AAMI and Safety Management Systems at Embry Riddle’s (ERAU) Boeing Center for Aviation and Aerospace Safety. Bob’s mission is to promote the effectiveness of systematic risk mitigation in high-reliability organizations. Bob is an Adjunct Professor at ERAU and a guest lecturer at the University of North Dakota and the University of North Texas. Bob is the Senior Director of Flight Operations at Sun Country Airlines and has previously served in a wide variety of leadership roles (most recently Vice President of Flight Operations) at Southwest Airlines.

Bob retired from the Air Force Reserve in 2016 (30 years of service) as a Regional Reserve Director for FEMA Region IV, Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer to the State of Texas, and Chief of the ALO Support Division. Bob also served as a C-130 Evaluator Pilot in the US Air Force while on active duty and in the Air National Guard.

Bob has flown a wide variety of aircraft: T-37, T-38, T-1, C-21, and the C-130 E & H. Bob flew combat and combat support missions in the Middle East and the Balkans (Operations Southern Watch, Joint Forge, Joint Endeavor, and Joint Guardian). Bob is type rated in the Boeing 737-200/300/500/700/800 and MAX-8. Bob holds a BS in Human Factors Engineering from the US Air Force Academy, an MS in Educational Psychology from Florida State, and a Ph.D. in Aeronautical Science from the University of North Dakota.

OLIVIER RENARD

Olivier Renard began his military career in 1994 with the French Army in Aix-en-Provence while attending university. After earning a Master's in Engineering from ENSAM (Arts et Métiers Paris Tech) in 2000, he joined the French Army Aviation Academy as a combat helicopter pilot. He served as an officer and patrol commander in the 3rd Combat Helicopter Regiment, gaining significant experience flying Puma utility helicopters. In 2003, Olivier was deployed in Djibouti for utility missions, including NVGs, fast rope, mountain, sea operations, and Medevac. In 2004, he served during the civil war in the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. As a captain, he became a wing commander in Lyon with the Gendarmerie air support units (FAGN) in 2006, flying the Alouette III.

The introduction of electro-optical infrared sensors on helicopters greatly enhanced police operations, leading Olivier to manage the AS350, EC135, and EC145 programs and oversee aircraft modifications. In 2012, Olivier graduated as an Experimental Flight Test Pilot from EPNER and continued his work on innovative solutions for police and rescue missions. During the November 2015 Paris attacks, he served as a lieutenant colonel. In 2016, he became the commander of Gendarmerie air support units for north-east France, responsible for cross-border cooperation. In December 2018, he coordinated air support during the Strasbourg Christmas attack. Olivier's passion for aviation led him to a civilian test pilot career. In 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, he led emergency medical services missions while continuing military maintenance check flights. In early 2023, he joined Volocopter, drawn by the opportunity to pioneer electric aircraft. He quickly adapted to piloting Volocopter's 2X and VoloCity prototypes. He also conducted Volocopter's first FAA test campaign in the U.S. and later flew eVTOL missions during the Paris Olympics, testing Europe's first active vertiport. At Volocopter, Olivier continues to contribute to flight test campaigns, including the first crewed flight test of the VoloCity, now undergoing certification with EASA. With over 3,600 flight hours across 24 helicopter types and 15 airplanes, Olivier, at 48, remains committed to shaping the future of sustainable air mobility.

SCOTT A. NEUMANN

Colonel Scott Neumann is the Director of the Pulitzer Electric Aircraft Race for the Advanced Air Mobility Institute.Col Neumann served on active duty for nearly 24 years as an operational KC-135 and B-1B pilot, as an experimental test pilot and in other Pentagon staff assignments. Col Neumann is a graduate of the USAF Test Pilot School (TPS) and began his flight test career flying the B-2 Stealth Bomber during the developmental test program. His other test assignments included flying as a TPS instructor pilot, serving as a Big Safari program Det commander and leading USAF flight test activities as Deputy Commander of the 412th Operations Group at Edwards AFB.

He completed his USAF career as the Military Deputy to the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Industrial Policy at the Pentagon. Following military retirement, Scott joined the Federal Aviation Administration as the Chief Technical Advisor and Special Assistant to the Director, Aircraft Certification Service. He later returned to active flight test with a major defense contractor and now works as an FAA Designated Engineering Representative (consultant) test pilot. Col Neumann holds 10 aviation world records for time-to-climb and is an active member of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA) Contest & Records Board. He is the President of the Federation Aéronautique Internationale Astronautic Records Commission (ICARE) and an Associate Fellow of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots. Col Neumann is a Distinguished Graduate from the United States Air Force Academy with a Bachelors Degree in Aeronautical Engineering and a graduate of California State University, Fresno with a Master of Science Degree in Mechanical Engineering with Distinction. Col Neumann is married to Dr. Shelia Neumann, PhD, also a retired Air Force officer, and lives in northwest Florida.

EJ FELD

EJ Feld's aviation career shows his deep commitment to the skies and forward-thinking approach to sustainable flight. Starting in 1999 with the Royal Netherlands Airforce, EJ quickly proved himself as a versatile pilot, mastering both fixed-wing and rotary aircraft. His skills were put to the test through multiple tours in Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan, where he thrived in challenging environments. Recognizing EJ's talents, the Airforce made him a flight instructor on the Pilatus PC-7, tasking him with training the next generation of pilots. This experience sparked a passion for education that would shape his future career.

After leaving the military in 2009, EJ smoothly transitioned to civilian aviation, joining a Helicopter EMS company while also founding AirCoach.nl. This business venture allowed him to share his know-how with flight schools across the Netherlands, helping them expand and even launch new schools. His reputation led to roles with the Dutch Aviation Authority and EASA, further establishing him as a respected figure in the industry. But EJ's biggest impact on aviation was yet to come. Facing the environmental challenges in the industry, he rejected the idea that reducing air travel was the only answer. Instead, EJ saw a future where aviation could grow sustainably. This vision became reality with E-Flight Academy, the world's first fully sustainable flight school. Under EJ's leadership, E-Flight Academy has become a trailblazer in electric aviation, completing over 4,700 electric flights and working with major players like KLM and the Royal Netherlands Airforce. The academy's success shows EJ's ability to combine his military background, teaching skills, and environmental awareness into a groundbreaking venture. EJ Feld's career embodies the Airforce motto: "One team, one mission." From serving his country to revolutionizing flight training, he has consistently pushed aviation's boundaries. His vision of quiet, clear skies filled with guilt-free flight isn't just a dream – it's a goal he's actively working towards, one electric flight at a time.

SUE OSBORN

Sue Osborn's distinguished career began in 1993 when she enlisted in the Australian Regular Army as a Specialist Medic. She held key roles, becoming the second female Drill Sergeant at the Royal Military College – Duntroon, an Airborne Medic with the 1st Parachute Surgical Team, and a recruit instructor at Kapooka Recruit Training Base. Her deployments to the Solomon Islands in 1995 and East Timor in 2002 demonstrated her dedication to service and leadership.

In 2008, Sue transitioned to the Royal Australian Artillery, becoming one of only four female Uncrewed Aerial System (UAS) operators.

Rising quickly, she became Mission Commander for the Scaneagle UAS platform, leading multiple aircraft missions in Afghanistan in 2010. Following her return, she trained on the Textron Shadow 200 System in Arizona and deployed again to Afghanistan in 2011. In 2018, she served as a UAS Advisor for Operation ANZAC Exchange in New Zealand, helping develop the NZ Army's UAS Capability Directive.

After her medical separation in 2021, Sue joined Mirragin Robotics and Uncrewed Systems (RAS) Consulting as a Senior Consultant, eventually leading flight operations. As Chief Remote Pilot for Intel® Corporation's first Australian Drone Light Show, she played a crucial role in establishing regulatory pathways for "One-to-Many" operations, showcasing her industry leadership.

As Chairperson of the Australian Association for Uncrewed Systems (AAUS) Women in Uncrewed Systems Interest Group (WUSIG), Sue advocates for women in the field. She promotes networking and mentorship, advocates for visibility, and organizes educational resources to support women's careers in uncrewed systems. Through her leadership, Sue is building a supportive community that empowers women in this dynamic sector.

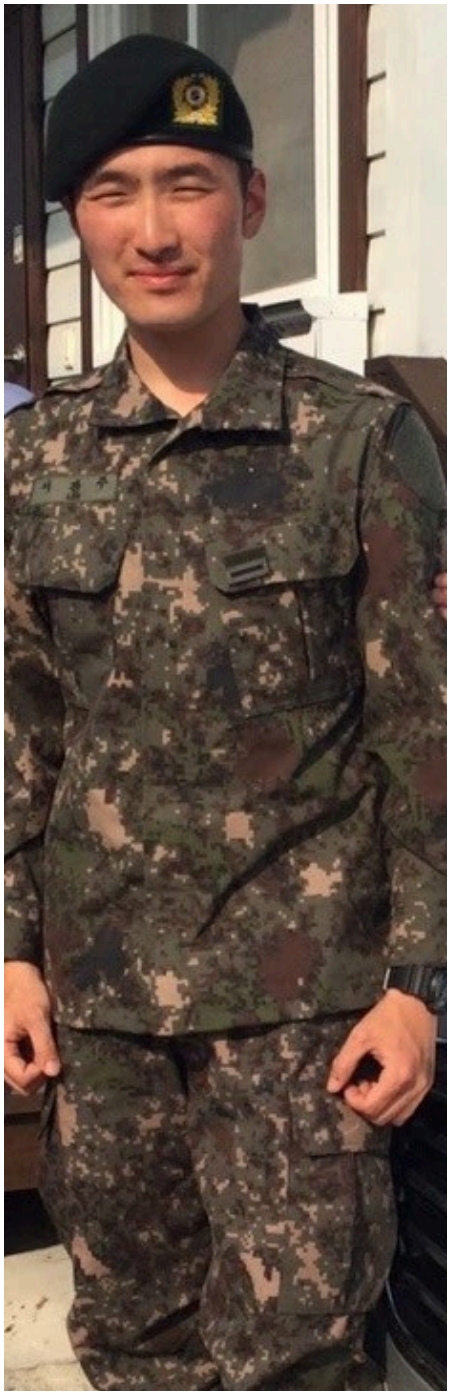
Her contributions have earned numerous industry awards, marking her as a trailblazer in uncrewed aviation. Sue's military background instilled in her a commitment to service, leadership, and advocacy, qualities that continue to drive her impact in the Uncrewed Systems Industry and her championing of women in the field.

TOM DORL

Thomas R. Dorl is a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel with over 25 years of distinguished service in training, operations, combat, leadership and staff positions. Tom is a dual-rated pilot and flew the HH-60G Pavehawk helicopter for over 20 years in the U.S. and in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a U.S. Air Force Weapons School (Top Gun) Distinguished Graduate and has advanced degrees in Business Administration, Strategy, Planning and Leadership. Tom has commanded flying units in the U.S. and in Iraq and Afghanistan and led flying squadrons credited with saving hundreds of soldiers and civilians. Additionally, while in the U.S. Air Force, he developed plans and strategies working with industry partners, testing, developing and operationalizing HC-130J and the HH-60W. After the Air Force, Tom has worked in a variety of industries and positions. He is a leadership coach, he helped lead efforts to save the U.S. Air Force fuel costs and develop fuel optimization strategies with synthetic aviation fuel policies. He is a former Vice President of Operational Risk at Wells Fargo Bank, guiding the company to a more compliant and risk-mindful culture. He has also been a Director of Safety and Training for a corporate flight department operating jets and helicopters in the U.S. and international locations.

Tom is involved in many aviation advocacy and safety organizations; he is also an active Gold Seal Flight Instructor. He is a Senior Advisor to AAMI and passionate about advancing aviation operations with new technologies. He currently resides in Virginia.

CHANJOO “DEREK” LEE



Chanjoo Derek Lee has a diverse background that spans both military and civilian sectors. His journey blends military discipline with cutting edge technological innovation in the AAM sector. It began in the Republic of Korea Army, where he served as a sergeant and squad leader at the frontlines. During this period, he honed his leadership, tactical planning, and crisis management skills. During his time at squad leader education training, he earned a division commander's Commendation recognized for his leadership and discipline. Transitioning into the civilian sector, Derek applied his strategic mindset and resilience to the world of AAM, taking on a role that showcased his versatility and forward-thinking approach. At PABLO AIR, Derek was instrumental in driving the company's growth on a global scale, managing international operations, securing major partnerships, and leading investor relations efforts in the AAM industry. He is the first member of the U.S. branch of PABLO AIR International, where he successfully navigated the complexities of international business operations, regulatory landscapes, and cross-border partnerships. He spearheaded cutting-edge BVLOS test flights and helped the company establish a major footprint as the Korean AAM startup in the U.S. His expertise in IPO strategies and international project development and management further highlights his forward-thinking approach in the rapidly evolving AAM space.

FAHAD IBNE MASOOD

Squadron Leader (R) Fahad Ibne Masood, MRAeS is a seasoned aviation expert with a career spanning over two decades in military and civil aviation, specializing in Advanced Air Mobility (AAM), vertiport systems, and unmanned aerial systems (UAS). His distinguished service in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) as a Fighter Pilot, Instructor Pilot, and Flight Safety Risk Management Officer laid the foundation for his extensive contributions to aviation. Fahad's flying experience includes the MFI-17, Super Mushak, T-37, K-8, T-38C, Mirage III, and V, amassing over 1850 flight hours. As a Cat-B Instructor, he successfully graduated 11 student pilots and mentored 300 plus, earning 1-Star & 2-Star Flying Safely Endorsements. His expertise extends to teaching Principles of Flight, Human Performance, and - Meteorology, further solidifying his reputation as a top-tier instructor.

His advanced training includes an English Language Proficiency Diploma from the Defense Language Institute (DLI-ELC) and 9G G-LOC Centrifuge Training. Fahad's proficiency in safety management is highlighted by his role in investigating Hull Loss military air crashes using frameworks like HFACS & HFIX, disseminating corrective actions across strategic policy, operational, and tactical levels. Transitioning to civilian roles, Fahad has led over 2,000 participants in safety-related programs such as CRM, SMS and Aircraft Accident Investigation to mention a few. His leadership in these programs has had a lasting impact on the development of safety protocols and best practices in aviation. Fahad's post-military career has seen him emerge as a leading voice in the AAM sector. As a faculty member at the Modern College of Business & Science (MCBS) in Oman, he teaches advanced modules on AAM space, shaping the 'Generationext' aviation leaders. He has spoken at global forums such as the Dubai Airshow and the Pilotless Seminar UK, where he moderated discussions on optimizing airport infrastructure and integrating eVTOLs into air mobility networks. In addition to his teaching and public speaking, Fahad is a Doctoral Student in Aviation, with research focused on the digitalization of transport networks and sustainable air mobility. He has authored over 50 academic and commercial publications while he is frequently consulted by international media for expert analysis on aviation trends and incidents. Fahad's commitment to innovation & leadership in AAM combined with his military discipline and experience, makes him a key figure in shaping the future of air mobility.

ANDREW SCHUBERT

Andrew's military career spans 12 years in the Australian Army as a technical systems soldier, where he experienced operational deployments and achieved the rank of Sergeant. In 2012, Andrew decided to discharge and began a new career, starting in the combat simulation sector where he learned the Defence Industry for his first nine years. Driven by a desire to enhance current technology protection solutions for soldiers, Andrew pursued an opportunity in 2022 to join HighCom Group's (formerly XTEK) Small Uncrewed Aerial System (SUAS) program, which supports the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) UAS capability.

Andrew advanced to the project delivery team, where he led the integration of a new SUAS platform for the ADF from November 2022 to May 2024. His role required both technical expertise and strong relationship-building skills, enhancing collaboration with internal teams, ADF UAS stakeholders, and industry vendors. Andrew worked closely with the ADF UAS Acquisitions team, along the way identifying areas to streamline future UAS integrations. The lessons learned from both industry and customer perspectives have contributed to reducing barriers to integrating SUAS into the ADF moving forward. Since starting in the UAS industry, Andrew has focused on expanding his knowledge and that of his company's non-veteran workforce. He promotes a culture of learning around UAS and associated technologies. As a personal venture, Andrew engages as a military technology commentator on LinkedIn, sharing UAS news and other technology insights with his global network. A passion for technology has shaped his approach to information sharing, emphasising education and the clear articulation of complex emerging technologies for a wider audience. Andrew's motivation to inform others about UAS technologies stems from a desire to empower people with deeper knowledge, enabling them to drive technology adoption forward in their own way. He actively advocates in both the civilian and defence innovation ecosystem, particularly for UAS technology innovators, to support grassroots development of Australian sovereign capabilities. His military service and operational experiences not only honed Andrew's military technical knowledge but also provided unique insights into the needs of the future digitised soldier. With a focus on end-user needs and a commitment to product improvement, Andrew continues in his new role as an Innovation and Product Specialist, bringing an innovation lens to UAS product integration, always striving to enhance capabilities for soldiers. Andrew envisions a future of increased UAS autonomy with multi-environment capable platforms that can operate across land, sea, and air, economically, at speed and while being supported by in-field humanoid robotic platforms. He believes this future will be driven by next-generation battery technologies and edge computing, coupled with improved thrust and locomotion systems.

CHRISTOS MANTZOROS

Christos Mantzoros is a seasoned Second Lieutenant in the Hellenic Air Force, bringing over 23 years of extensive experience in both manned and unmanned aviation. His career began with his graduation from the Hellenic Air Force NCO Academy and the Hellenic School of Civil Aviation. He also completed the Academic Instructor School and served as a Training Officer for 18 years during his tenure as an Air Traffic Control Officer (ATCO). In his air traffic control career, he took on roles as a Tower and Approach Controller, as well as a Ground Controlled Approach (GCA) Controller, developing expertise in air traffic management and training.

Transitioning to unmanned aviation, Christos logged over 140 flight hours in Class I UAS, primarily in security and surveillance missions. His progression in this field led him to become a Military UAS Class I Flight and Ground Instructor, where he also specialized as an Instructional Systems Specialist. In 2021, after undergoing specialized training from Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), he became a UAS Maritime Patrol Radar Operator for the IAI HERON-I UAV, a Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) Remote Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS). Over time, Christos accumulated more than 700 flight hours on the HERON-I, playing a crucial role in Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) missions, maritime patrols, and search and rescue operations. Shifting to regulatory aspects of unmanned aviation, Christos utilized his expertise to provide compliance training and audit preparation for UAS operators throughout Europe. He has collaborated closely with European aviation authorities, facilitating regulatory training under EU regulations (EU) 2019/947, (EU) 2019/945, and (EU) 1139 for Specific Category operations. Additionally, he has trained operators on the EASA Cross Border Operations flight permit process, particularly for European Maritime Safety Agency and Frontex missions. His contributions include authoring Greece's first Light UAS Operator Certificate (LUC) Management System, setting a significant benchmark in national UAS operations. As a certified flight and theoretical instructor, Christos has imparted practical and regulatory knowledge to numerous UAS operators. He holds a Project Management (PM^2) certification from the European Commission and a certification in UAS Design and Development from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. His qualifications extend to areas such as compliance monitoring, auditing, safety management systems, UAS risk management, airworthiness, and remote pilot competency. Currently, Christos is pursuing a Master's in Sustainable Air Transport Management Executive at ITAEREA, further advancing his expertise in sustainable aviation and reaffirming his leadership in both manned and unmanned aviation sectors.

CHRISTOPHER “CHRIS” BYARS

Christopher (Chris) Byars, MSgt (Ret), USAF, is currently a Test Aircraft Program Manager for Deutsche Aircraft GmbH near Munich, Germany. He and his team are building test aircraft for the D328eco: an efficient, economic and environmentally friendly aircraft, driving the future of aviation toward climate-neutral flight. The D328eco, as a multi-role aircraft, will target regional aviation markets and will supplement regional air mobility ecosystems. During his military career, Chris was an electronic warfare systems technician, supporting B-52 and C-130 aircraft. He served in numerous locations around the world, to include Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Later in his career, he became a United States Department of Defense Acquisition professional, specializing in Lifecycle Logistics and studied Program Management.

After retirement, Chris spent nearly nine years in Huntsville, AL supporting US Army Aviation and Missile programs. Areas supported include Lifecycle Logistics, System Security Engineering, and Program Management.

Chris has been involved with the AAM Institute since 2023, advocating for AAM maintainability, cybersecurity, and overall ecosystem development.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Science in Technical Management from DeVry University and a Masters in Project Management from the Keller Graduate School of Management. He holds a Project Management Professional certification and a Disciplined Agile Scrum Master certification from the Project Management Institute.

YIANNIS RIZAKIS

With over 12 years of experience as a flying officer in the Hellenic Air Force, Yiannis Rizakis has accumulated more than 700 flight hours across four aircraft types—Cessna T41, Beechcraft T6, F-16, and C-130. His diverse aviation background spans advanced tactical operations, flight training, and mission readiness across a variety of operational environments. Additionally, he boasts over 1,000 hours of flight time operating the IAI Heron 1 UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle), positioning him as a seasoned expert in both manned and unmanned aerial systems. He is also on track to become a certified instructor in UAV operations, which will further enhance his contributions to the unmanned flight sector.

In recent years, his career focus has shifted towards the burgeoning field of precision agriculture, where he leverages his UAV expertise for sustainable farming. As the owner of “Terrawing”, a precision spraying company based in Thessaly, he leads innovative efforts in deploying unmanned aerial systems, particularly the T30 Agras—one of the leading platforms in agricultural UAV technology. His company, “Terrawing”, is at the cutting edge of implementing drone technology to enhance efficiency, minimize environmental impact, and promote long-term sustainability in farming practices.

His depth of knowledge in unmanned systems goes beyond military applications, positioning him as a key figure in the intersection of UAV technology and sustainable agriculture. He firmly believes that drones represent the future of farming, offering transformative solutions that improve productivity while optimizing resource usage. By integrating UAV technology into agriculture, he not only improves operational efficiency but also reduces environmental footprints, paving the way for smarter, greener farming.

Across his military and civilian roles, his focus has remained steadfast on safety, continuous improvement, and mission success. His extensive experience positions him as a bridge between military-grade UAV operations and their civilian applications, particularly in the context of advanced air mobility (AAM) and sustainable agricultural practices. Looking ahead, he is committed to driving forward the development of UAV systems in both defense and agricultural industries, ensuring their role in building a more sustainable, efficient future for all.

DONTE M. ALLEN

Donte M. Allen is a U.S. Air Force veteran, where he served for 14 years as an avionics technician maintaining and optimizing surveillance, communication and navigation systems for F-15 and C-130 aircraft. Throughout his military career, Donte honed his leadership skills and developed a deep understanding of aircraft maintenance and sortie management, ensuring mission readiness in both domestic and deployed environments. His time in the Air Force instilled Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do, core values that continue to guide him in his civilian career.

Donte is a father to three boys: Caden Allen, Donte Allen Jr., and Brennan Allen. Being a father is his greatest source of pride, and he strives to instill in his children the same values of discipline, perseverance, and compassion that have shaped his life.

Following his military service, Donte transitioned into the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), where he now leads operations for the D.C. Capital region surveillance team. His passion for aviation and leadership is further supported by his academic achievements, including a Bachelor of Science in Aviation Business Administration from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and an ongoing Executive MBA at Georgetown University, Class of 2025.

He is deeply passionate about the future of aviation, particularly the development of Urban Air Mobility (UAM) and emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, 5G and IoT. His vision is to help shape a future where innovation and technology converge to create more efficient, sustainable, and accessible air transportation systems.

DAN SANDER

Dan Sander resides in the Seattle area and is currently an engineering services delivery manager for Collinear Group, LLC, which provides certification and engineering support to several AAM clients in manufacturing and certification. He is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD and spend 21 years on active duty as US Navy officer, attaining the rank of Commander (O-5). During his military career, he made numerous deployments to the Middle East and the western Pacific on warships and was also part of the directorate of intelligence (J2) for USCENTCOM during Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom – deploying to the Middle East and Afghanistan on numerous occasions in support of combat operations.

After the Navy, Dan served as a cyber security advisor to the Port of Seattle, where he also mentored other veterans leaving the service and helped them transition.

He has been at Collinear Group for the pasts ten years and has been an integrator of aircraft development as well as a certification consultant on several military – commercial derivative aircraft programs, including KC-46, MH-139, MH-47G, and E-7A prior to entering the exciting emerging field of Advanced Air Mobility.

SAMANTHA SCULLY

Samantha Scully, a Navy veteran decorated with awards and honorably discharged, is now a certified drone pilot and entrepreneur. Since earning her Part 107 License in 2021, Sam has accumulated over 500 flying hours, solidifying her reputation as a skilled and dedicated unmanned aerial systems (UAS) professional. Her passion and dedication to advocating for the advancement of drone technology is unwavering, as seen in her active participation in the FAA Safety Team (FAAST) and Women and Drones, where she engages in numerous conferences, STEM events, and training programs.

Sam strongly advocates workforce development and addresses the underrepresentation of women in the UAS and eVTOL sectors. She has been a prominent speaker at industry conferences, highlighting the importance of creating equitable opportunities for women.

Despite her extensive involvement and experience, she continues seeking a role that aligns with her skills and expertise, having noted the industry's challenges in job placements for women.

Determined to make an impact, Sam remains a vocal proponent for change, continually pushing for greater inclusion and recognition of underrepresented professionals.

ADAM TWIDELL

Adam is head of Future Flight at the OneSky Group which houses the private aviation brands of Flexjet, Sentient, FXAIR, PrivateFly, Corporate Wings & Sirio. The group is investmenting in clean-tech companies that are shaping the Advanced Air Mobility industry. This includes consideration of eVTOLs, electric and hydrogen-powered aircraft and the associated ground infrastructure that will be required. Discovering the University Air Squadron whilst studying Electrical & Electronic Engineering in Edinburgh, Adam was immediately hooked on aviation and joined the Royal Air Force full time after graduation. Flying the C130 Hercules, his operational detachments included Sierra Leone, the Congo, Afghanistan & Iraq.

After leaving the RAF and looking for more interesting flying than the airlines could offer, Adam entered the world of private aviation, originally with NetJets. Following a period of tremendous growth in demand, Adam teamed up with London City Airport, winning the contract to develop RAF Northolt into an exclusive private jet hub for London.

Having seen the industry from all angles Adam spotted an opportunity in the market for an efficient online marketplace, linking customers directly with aircraft operators. In 2008 he co-founded PrivateFly with his wife Carol, growing the business over ten years before it was acquired by Directional Aviation, in 2018.

He remains a passionate aviator and a well-known industry advocate for aviation innovation and sustainability. Adam currently flies his family's Cessna 210 and volunteers with the Scouts where he flies a motor glider, introducing young people to flying for the first time. Through sponsorship from 4AIR, Adam also flies the all-electric Pipistrel Electro out of Fairoaks, UK. His mission is to introduce as many people as possible to electric aviation, so get in touch to reserve your slot!

DANIEL DO

Daniel Do is presently serving as a Flight Test Operator – Operator in Command at Amazon Prime Air, where he is responsible for overseeing flight operations of advanced drone technology. His role involves ensuring compliance with rigorous safety standards while contributing to the development and implementation of innovative solutions within the aviation and drone technology sectors. His position requires operating in high-pressure, fast-paced environments where precision, adaptability, and attention to detail are essential. Through his work, Daniel aims to advance the future of autonomous delivery systems, focusing on revolutionizing logistics through drone technology.

Before joining Amazon Prime Air, Daniel Do accumulated significant experience during his military service in the Republic of Korea Army, from which he was honorably discharged as a Sergeant in 2017. His military career equipped him with strong leadership, communication, and operational skills, which have proven invaluable in his professional trajectory. Notably, one of the key highlights of his military service involved serving as a translator and interpreter for the US-Korea joint military operations during the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in Seongju, South Korea. This experience gave him firsthand exposure to international cooperation and strategic operations, honing his ability to navigate complex, high-stakes environments.

Daniel Do seamlessly integrates the discipline, problem-solving abilities, and leadership qualities developed during his military service with his passion for aviation and technological innovation. His work at Amazon Prime Air is driven by a commitment to ensuring safety, efficiency, and compliance while exploring the potential of autonomous drone systems to transform the future of delivery and logistics. He remains deeply motivated to push the boundaries of what is possible within this rapidly evolving field, playing an active role in shaping the future of aviation technology.

SPOTLIGHT

A WRITE TO HEAL BY LISA REGINA

THE PARADOX OF TRAUMA IS THAT IT CAN EITHER DESTROY US OR EMPOWER US

awritetoheal.com lisaregina.com www.linkedin.com/in/lisaregina

Lisa Regina is an actress, advocate, survivor, filmmaker, and Part 107 Commercial Drone Pilot. She has worked as a professional actress and acting coach for over 36 years. She studied at New York University in the School of Educational Theatre, including, NYU's Tisch School for the Performing Arts. She taught at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in NYC. Lisa has always had a passion for mission driven projects. In 2001, she wrote, directed, and produced an educational film, 'Kenny' to raise awareness for her friend's rare skin disease, Ichthyosis. Kenny won The Manhattan Global Film Festival and a Humanitarian Award.

As a survivor of domestic violence Lisa took the path of advocacy work and founded her non-profit, 501C3, A Write to Heal, Inc. in 2006. Lisa became a keynote speaker for the YWCA. She began her performance tour across the country presenting her one woman show. Lisa proudly presented as a keynote speaker for the YWCA in Washington, D.C. and internationally in Zurich, Switzerland at the Women's World Council.

Lisa's advocacy and written works have a strong focus on healing from trauma and raising awareness on issues surrounding PTSD. She has a passion for serving our military community through her film productions, which include veterans as consultants, cast and crew members. The camaraderie of 'vets on set' has proven to be a positive healing experience for our heroes in Lisa's two film productions, 'The Shooters Nail' and 'The Shades' official selections of the Cinequest Film Festival and Berlin Lift-Off Film Festival.

SPOTLIGHT

A WRITE TO HEAL BY LISA REGINA

Over the last 12 years, Lisa has conducted interviews with military soldiers, of all branches of service and all wars. She is currently adapting their true stories into a dramatic series, Heroic Episodes. The series will run in conjunction with a new program that Lisa has created, the Veterans Drone Training Program (VDTP). The VDTP will help veterans obtain their Part 107 Commercial Drone License and guide them towards jobs in the aviation and film industry.

Heroic Episodes and the Veterans Drone Training Program has garnered the support of patriot and actor, Joe Mantegna, the star of TV series, 'Criminal Minds' and an ambassador of the Gary Sinise Foundation. Lisa recently held a virtual reading of Heroic Episodes pilot script with actor Joe Mantegna and a cast of professional actors.

Lisa continues to develop her humanitarian film projects and writings with a focus on trauma survivors and a universal message of hope and healing.

heroicepisodes.org

awritetoheal.com/veterans

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