

'HISTORY MAKES ME READY':

Contino takes command of 914th



Above: Brig. Gen. D. Scott Durham, left, looks on as Col. Joseph Contino officially assumes command with former commander Col. Lara Morrison applauding. • At right: Brig. Gen. D. Scott Durham, left, passes the Air Force flag over to Col. Joseph Contino as he assumes command of the 914th Air Refueling Wing.



ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY ELIJAH ROBINSON

Contributing Writer

Under one wing, under one flag, under new management.

Col. Joseph Contino assumed command of the 914th Air Refueling Wing – leading 1,600 military and a civilian member force – at a change of command ceremony at the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station on July 7.

Contino is moving up from his operations group commander role. He previously served at the Rickenbacker Air National Guard Base near Columbus, Ohio, and

Youngstown Air Reserve Station. He was 13 when he became an Air Force cadet, and has more than 475 hours of combat time serving in U.S. military campaigns in Afghanistan, Croatia and Iraq.

Describing initial feelings with stepping into the role after accepting the offer, Contino likened the transition to going from a math teacher to the new school principal.

“When you just have to worry about one subject, and one lesson plan, you kind of plan out your day kind of easy,” he said. “But when you have to worry about everybody’s schedule and lesson plan, I don’t want to say overwhelming, but it can be overwhelming.”

In his time as leader Contino, said he hopes to successfully ad-

dress what he sees as the charter being “asleep at the wheel.”

“The military is ... partialed and petitioned out like any other entity in the military,” he said. “I want to make sure that we are important and we’re different (from) those other entities. We’re different (from) those other departments. We’re one of the only things that are actually mentioned in the Constitution.”

On how to carry out this vision, Contino explained he wants to continue exercises where the base can project nuclear force locally, taking from a previous exercise he did with Griffiss Air Force Base in Rome, New York, showcasing the 914’s ability to run a nuclear mission.

“Not only do our Congress men

and women take notice of that, but so do our peer adversaries,” he said. “They know where every one of these tankers are parked, probably, (on a) 24/7, 365 basis.”

Contino is taking over for Col. Lara Morrison, who will become the Director of the Mobility Operations Division at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, working within the 618th Air Operations Center, an arm of the air mobility command that moves on behalf of the United States transportation command.

Illinois is home for Morrison. She’s not only returning to her former station, but plans to get

married there in October.

“It was time to go home,” she said. “I had a wonderful job opportunity that came very unexpectedly, and we decided we were going to grab it and go home. I’m very sorry to leave, because this organization and this community is truly, truly amazing.”

Morrison was the first woman to hold the position of commander, and coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, she oversaw construction of a new entrance gate along Lockport Road, replacement of fuel lines for KC-135s, and a new combined operations alert facility.



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Employment & Training, Veterans Service Agency, human resources at Veterans Service Fair

Submitted by the Public Information Office

Three Niagara County departments will join with state agencies and other service provid-

ers to take part in a Veterans Services Fair on Friday, July 21, in Lockport. Niagara County Employment & Training,

along with the Veterans Service Agency and human resources department, will be on-site to provide assistance and information to veterans.

“There are many programs and opportunities to help veterans currently in the workforce, and those who are looking to rejoin the workforce,” said Don Jablonski, director of the Niagara County Department of Employment & Training. “Our WorkSource One team will be on hand to talk about these programs and other ways we can help veterans looking for a job, training opportunities, or perhaps a new career.”

The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Dale Association, located at 33 Ontario St. As of now, nearly 30 agencies and employers are participating.

“We are very happy to be part of an event that seeks to help our veterans on multiple fronts,” said Jeff Glatz, director of Niagara County Veterans Service Agency. “Our team will be there to provide guidance to veterans in navigating the system to get the benefits and services they rightfully earned serving our nation.”

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