NEWS RELEASE

Reserve Airmen discover common bond before deployment

11/22/2016

By day, Ricardo Johnson works as a Customer Service agent for American, greeting customers at the ticket counter and helping them check in for their flights at LaGuardia Airport (LGA) in New York City.

By night, Johnny Tello is an Aircraft Maintenance Technician (AMT) at LGA, servicing and repairing American's aircraft. Ricardo was hired in 2009, Johnny in 2006. But their paths had never crossed.

But consider this: Both are also in the U.S. Air Force reserves — Ricardo joined in 2011, Johnny in 2010. Since they started, both have been in the 714th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey. That means both have trained in the same place at the same time. Both climbed the ranks and now share the title of Staff Sergeant. And both recently volunteered for their current deployment overseas.

Neither could say he really knew the other — until just a few months ago, during pre-deployment training.

"I was sitting at a desk filling out paperwork when I overheard someone asking Johnny where he works," said Ricardo. "He responded 'American Airlines at LaGuardia.' I looked up to see if I recognized him from work, but I didn't. So, I went over to him and struck up a conversation."

"Ricardo approached me without hesitation and said, 'excuse me, who do you work for?!'" Johnny said. "When I told him 'American Airlines' we started asking each other questions about other people we may know, and we've gotten to know each other very well since."

They both maintain aerial refueling tankers in the reserves, they share the same taste in music and both have

families — toddlers included — waiting for them to get home. Both Ricardo and Johnny plan to return to American and LGA once their deployment ends in 2017.

“American has been very accommodating each and every time I am called up for active service, as well as on my drill weekends,” said Ricardo.

“I can only say — on behalf of all employees currently serving and those who have served — thank you,” said Johnny. “The support, flexibility and understanding given to us by members of local and upper management and the support from co-workers have been astounding. The ability to leave at a moment’s notice to perform our military duties and return to smiling faces and heartwarming welcomes is amazing.”