



# AIR FORCE TECHNICAL APPLICATIONS CENTER

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## Two generations of AFTACers reunite where it all began

*By Susan A. Romano, AFTAC Public Affairs*

**PATRICK AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** – In September 1990, a young Airman fresh out of technical training arrived at the doorstep of the old Air Force Technical Applications Center on State Road A1A to begin his career as a satellite data operator/analyst. Little did he realize that more than 25 years later, his AFTAC roots would grow even deeper.

Lt. Col. Chad Melone, currently an acquisition program manager at Kirtland AFB, N.M., was that young enlisted troop in 1990. Since that time, he earned his bachelor's degree, received his commission and worked as an engineer and political-military affairs strategist throughout his officer career.



But before all those career milestones occurred, as a member of AFTAC, Airman Melone was responsible for ground processing equipment to collect and analyze data from three constellations for the U.S. Atomic Energy Detection System. He also worked as an instructor for Air Education and Training Command's Operating Location at Headquarters, where he taught up-and-coming technical applications students at their mandatory three-month training course.

Ultimately, he became an Oracle database administrator and software tester for AFTAC's Atmospheric and Space division's satellite data analysis software baseline.

In 1993, Melone and his wife, Beki, welcomed their first of three children, Dylan, into their family. Dylan was born at Cape Canaveral Hospital in Cocoa Beach and spent the next four years growing up in the shadow of AFTAC as his father honed his technical skills at the Department of Defense's sole nuclear treaty monitoring center.

Towards the end of Chad's tenure at AFTAC, he was selected for the Airman Education and Commissioning Program, through which he earned his undergraduate degree in electrical engineering from the University of Central Florida.

By the time young Dylan reached high school, he began yearning to do something important with his life. He asked his father what he thought about him joining the Air Force. Chad said, "I gave him the same advice my mentor, who is also my father-in-law, gave to me: it's a great life; you won't regret it!"

So on May 5, 2015, Dylan made his dream become a reality and enlisted in the United States Air Force. A few months after basic training, his Air Force Specialty Code became 9S100 – the same as his father. In March 2016, he arrived (again) at Patrick AFB and was assigned to AFTAC's clean room as a technician, where he works today.

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## 2-2-2 REUNITE

“What are the odds of that, knowing that I’m a second generation AFTACer?” Dylan exclaimed. “I was pretty surprised when I was selected for this career field. I’ve really enjoyed it so far, but I’m not certain where I’ll be five years from now. I will be at a large fork in the road in my career, to include whether or not I will reenlist or pursue a commission. I plan on furthering my education and I really enjoy engineering (also like his dad), so maybe one of those things will be part of my future career path.”



If you ask his father, he’ll readily tell you where he thinks his son will be in five years.

“Dylan has always been interested in physically demanding jobs, but since he scored so well on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test (the required entrance exam for all military recruits) as well as the secondary exam all 9S100s must take to qualify for the career field, it seemed like a natural fit for him. I was glad I could give him a lot of insight into what the job entailed and the overall environment of the center’s inner workings. When I was a 9S100 – actually we were called 99s back then – the AFTAC culture was very supportive of education and personal development in general. From what Dylan tells me, it’s still the same way. I have no doubt Dylan will succeed on any path he selects.”

In addition to the work he puts in at the clean room, Airman 1st Class Melone also spends a great deal of time as a Base Honor Guardsman, something of which he is incredibly proud.

“My supervisor, Master Sgt. Eric Reda, recommended me for the program,” said Dylan. “I was fortunate enough to be selected based on my past performance and work ethic, and I really enjoy being a part of it. It is extremely humbling, especially when we are asked to participate in a fallen veteran’s funeral. Nothing puts things in better perspective than being a part of something that carries such weight and magnitude. It is a privilege to wear the Honor Guard aiguillette.”

In December, the family was reunited at Patrick AFB to enjoy some downtime together. Chad had the opportunity to see AFTAC’s new headquarters building where Dylan works and the two reminisced about the center’s former location, which is now a grassy field adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean. He also had nothing but praise for his eldest son.

“I am so incredibly proud of how Dylan works to continually improve himself and get involved in various activities,” said Chad. “He quickly completed all the requirements for his upgrade training, earned his Community College of the Air Force degree, won Airman of the Quarter accolades, and is very close to earning his associates degree from Eastern Florida State College. On top of all that, Dylan is just an all-around great wingman who would give you the shirt of his back if you needed it. Yeah, I’m definitely a very proud father.”