

Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution

Proudly Honors

Patriot of the Month

November 2023



Tianna Johnston

United States Air Force

Sponsored by:

Sarah Barton Murphy Chapter, NSDAR

Tiana Johnston enlisted in the USAF after 9/11. A multi-generational servicemember, she was born at the on-base hospital to active-duty parents. Her father would go on to found the Westover Air Reserve Base Honor Guard in the 1980s and served as its first active-duty superintendent until his retirement in 2008.

Always interested in helping others learn, Tiana was an eager and intuitive instructor for the American Red Cross at the age of 15, making her the youngest Red Cross instructor in the region. She served as the Health and Safety chairperson for the Red Cross Station in Turkey in 1999 and was on base when the 7.6 magnitude earthquake hit. Alongside base personnel, she assisted the station manager with disaster relief efforts and structural damage assessments of the buildings on base and in the local community. She returned to her home chapter in Massachusetts after the Twin Towers fell, to volunteer and support their disaster relief efforts. She continued to teach health and safety curriculum for the Red Cross in her local community until she left for Air Force basic training in March of 2002.



With previous vocal experience, Tiana was among a group of trainees chosen to sing the National Anthem during the closing ceremony of field week at basic training. She continued to distinguish herself during her training period, earning high praise and letters of appreciation from her commanders at Headquarters Air Education Training Command at Little Rock Air Force Base for her dedication to helping develop and manage the student training program for Loadmasters and spearheading the relocation of over 50 fellow students to new living quarters.

Tiana deployed twice in support of OEF/OIF. Her combat sorties were flown into austere mountainous airfields under threat of hostile fire with minimal navigational aids, at night and in inclement weather. They included aeromedical evacuation of severely injured troops, in-flight emergencies, dignitaries and commanders, and personnel from other branches. The most impactful missions for her were those involving our fallen troops. Performing the same ceremonies she'd watched her father perform at the graveside of so many Veterans with the Honor Guard, it was helpful for her to remember that these fallen troops were being handed through a trustworthy chain back to their families.

Tiana and Ryan got engaged and then married after returning from their deployments. Surrounded by friends and family, they took their vows on a chilly autumn afternoon at Westover ARB's Honor Guard grounds, her father's team an important presence during the ceremony. In between her deployments, she underwent emergency surgery. Her recovery required the monumental task of physically rehabbing her body to pre-surgery, mission-ready status within just a few months. She was successful, cleared to fly, and went on to accompany the rest of her unit on a second deployment.

On her final deployment, Tiana experienced a spinal injury. She was devastated to learn that her injury required extensive surgical intervention and would end her flying career with over 600 flying hours and 242 sorties. Following her surgery, she was medically separated and honorably discharged. She was awarded: 2 Air Medals, an Aerial Achievement Medal, the Air Force Meritorious Unit Award, the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with valor, the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Air Force Expeditionary Service Ribbon with gold frame and bronze oak leaf cluster, and the Air Force Training Ribbon.