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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AFNORTH Financial Chief was “a true gem”

By Lt. Col. Susan A. Romano

TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Members of Air Forces Northern here are mourning the loss of their chief financial manager, retired Air Force Col. Donald L. Whitehead, who passed away Monday morning at the age of 60.

“We are devastated over the loss of a good friend and fine officer,” said Maj. Gen. Hank Morrow, AFNORTH commander. “Don was a consummate professional in every sense of the word, and I cannot express how deeply our organization is affected by his passing. Our sincere thoughts and prayers go out to his family at this very difficult time.”

Mr. Whitehead is survived by his wife, Colleen; his son, Jonathan and his wife Michelle; his stepson Donald Kersten; his parents, Don and Luda; his sister, Dee Ledl and her husband Joe; his father-in-law, Jerry Black, and his beloved grandchildren, Bradyn and Brenna.



“Don was a true gem,” said Alan Scott, AFNORTH Chief of Staff. “We have both been with 1st Air Force since 1998, and together we saw this organization grow from a small single-mission role to a robust homeland operational unit. He played a crucial role in getting us to where we are today. He is already sorely missed.”

Mr. Whitehead joined the Air Force in January 1972, after earning a commission through Officer Training School. He specialized in accounting and finance for the Air Force, and completed assignments as a finance officer at bases in New Mexico, Arkansas and Turkey.

He joined the Missouri Air National Guard in 1977 and served for 15 years as a full-time financial manager. From 1987 to 1993, he served as squadron commander for the 139th Resources Management Squadron in St. Joseph, Mo.

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WHITEHEAD

Mr. Whitehead earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Finance from the University of Missouri, his Master of Science degree in Business Management from Troy State University, and he completed the National Security Management Course at the National Defense University.

Some of his major military awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal and the Florida Cross.

“At times like these, I think it’s important to celebrate his life and remember the good times,” said Dave Kostic, deputy financial manager for 1st Air Force and close friend of Mr. Whitehead. “Although we are all feeling a great deal of pain over this untimely loss, I take comfort in the fact that Don touched so many lives in countless ways, and he made this world a better place.”

Funeral services will begin at 2 p.m. Wednesday in the Palo Alto Church of Christ in Panama City. Before the services, the family will receive friends from 1-2 p.m. Wednesday at the church. Graveside services will begin Thursday at 12:30 p.m. at Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Palo Alto Church of Christ, 3119 U.S. 231, Panama City, Fla., 32405, in memory of Donald Lee Whitehead.