

123 AIRLIFT WING



MISSION

The 123 Airlift Wing provides professional, highly adaptive Airmen to Combatant Commanders and the Governor of Kentucky in order to support combat-ready airlift, air logistics expertise, contingency response, special operations, civil engineering, medical support, medical operations, explosive ordnance disposal and base operating support to meet United States' national security objectives; and to provide public protection, mitigation, response and recovery during state and national crises.

LINEAGE

123 Fighter Wing, 26 Oct 1950
Redesignated 123 Fighter Interceptor Wing, 1952
Redesignated 123 Fighter-Bomber Wing
Redesignated 123 Fighter Interceptor Wing
Redesignated 123 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing,
Redesignated 123 Tactical Airlift Wing, 8 Jan 1989
Redesignated 123 Airlift Wing

STATIONS

Godman Field, Fort Knox, KY
Louisville, KY
Richards-Gebaur AFB, MO, 1968-1969
Louisville, KY

ASSIGNMENTS

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft
C-130

Support Aircraft

C-12

COMMANDERS

Col Philip P. Ardery, 1950-1952
LTC Lee J. Merkel, 1952
Col Philip P. Ardery, 1952-1960
BG William Dunn Ott, 1960-1961 (acting)
BG William Webster, 1961-1966
BG Jack Owen, 1966-1970
Col Vern Yahne, 1970-1972
Col William J. S., 1972-1973
Col Quebbeman, 1973-1974
BG Fred F. Bradley, 1974
BG John L. Smith
Col Mark Kraus
BG Stewart R. Byrne, #1993
Col Michael L. Harden
Col Mark Kraus
BG Jack H. Owen

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

Per chevron, azure and or; in base a star argent over a hurt, between a bar voided per roundle azure; three rays issuing from the hurt to three winged plates argent, over three billets or, in chief; over all a chevron, per chevron, of the last and gules; the shield edged in chief or. The shield is located beneath a wreath of blue and white, surmounted by the eagle and enclosed in a circle of stars. With the unit colors are displayed streamers which bear the names of the battle honors and other credits to which the wing is entitled. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The blue and yellow are the colors of the U.S. Air Force. The three winged plates represent the Air National Guard units of the 123 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing (originally these were located at Louisville, Ky., Charleston, W.Va., and Charlotte, N.C.), consolidated through the symbolic rays into an Air Force organization. The chevron, a military symbol of strength and protection, is parallel to the aims and qualities of the organization. The bar, a horizontal band significant of unity and cooperation of purpose, is symbolic of the successful completion of the mission. (20 Dec 1951)

MOTTO

FORTES FORTUNA JUVAT--Fortune Favors The Brave

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

As of Oct. 26 a new order was published creating the new 123 Fighter-Bomber Wing, creating a 123 Air Base Group and a 123 Maintenance Group and creating or renaming squadrons under each group. With this came the merger of personnel and a number of job reassignments with Col Ardery taking the role as wing commander. The tactical squadrons were the 156th Fighter-Bomber, 165th Fighter-Bomber, and the 167th Fighter-Bomber. The entire process severed the previous ties with the 55th Fighter Wing.

Since the wing headquarters had been created while the units were on federal duty, the National Guard establishments of Kentucky, West Virginia and North Carolina all wanted control of the unit as a state asset. The Commonwealth of Kentucky finally won the contest because of a relative lack in the number of Army National Guard units in this state. The creation of a 123 Hospital on active duty also brought this organization back to Kentucky. The tactical squadrons from West Virginia and North Carolina were returned to their own states. Comparatively, Kentucky had moved in total strength from 615 spaces before the activation to a total of 1,121 spaces. The wing and its units were also returned to control of the Air Defense Command.

In September 1953, four Kentucky Air Guard members were cited for heroism: TSgt Charles W. Simmons, TSgt Howard A. Curtis, TSgt Walter Carter and Airman First Class Jesse D. Brown, Jr., all members of Headquarters, 123 Fighter Bomber Wing at Standiford Field when at 4:17 p.m. on 28 September 1953, a civilian resort airline aircraft chartered to the Army, carrying a total of forty-one soldiers and crewmen, most of whom were returning Korean veterans, crashed while landing. There is no firefighting or crash rescue facilities at Standiford Field and the four individuals immediately manned the "155" firefighting truck of the Air National Guard and rushed to the scene of the crash and proceeded at the risk of their own lives to assist. They received the Kentucky Medal for Valor as a result of their selfless actions.

The Kentucky Air National Guard has had 894, some 80 percent of its total force, on orders to support Operation Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Four hundred and ninety one were deployed in large-scale deployments. Kentucky Air National Guard personnel have deployed to the following countries: Istres, France; Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar; Ramstein Air Base, Germany; Diego Garcia; Masirah Island, Oman; Jacobabad, Pakistan; Baghdad, Iraq; Moron Air Base, Spain; Al Dhafra Air Base, Kuwait; Minhad Air Base, United Arab Emirates; Incirlik, Turkey; Bishkek-Manas, Kyrgyzstan; Luis Muniz, Puerto Rico; Prince Sultan Air Base, Saudi Arabia; AH Alsaalem, Kuwait; Sembach Air Base, Germany; Dakar, Senegal; Kabul and Kandahar, Afghanistan and Al Jaber, Kuwait.

The Kentucky Air Guard continued its support of the Bosnian peacekeeping mission by participating in Operation Joint Forge. From February through June and again in July through

September 1999 the 123 Airlift Wing stepped up to the plate to serve as the lead unit for rotations to Ramstein Air Base, Germany for Operation Joint Forge. The KYANG served with its sister unit, the 164th Airlift Wing of Mansfield, Ohio. As the lead unit, the 123 provided most of the administrative support personnel and had primary command and control responsibility for the ANG C-130 airlift missions. This year the 123 Airlift Wing made history once again by being selected as the first Air National Guard unit to deploy in support of the new Expeditionary Aerospace Forces program. This program's concept is designed to ease the crushing and unpredictable operations temps of recent years by limited each unit's deployments to 90-day windows every 15 months. The 123 Airlift Wing was heavily involved in this programs conception from the start and was the test case for the Air National Guard during its participation in the Bosnian peacekeeping missions of Joint Forge 99. After reviewing the effectiveness of the unit's operations, it was selected as the first unit to deploy under this new concept. During the first eight phases of the AEF concept, the 123 AW has participated in each phase providing aviation personnel, combat support personnel and equipment. AEF-1, 2, and 3 were in support of Operation Southern Watch, the U.S. effort to enforce the no-fly zone in southern Iraq. During this mission the 123 Airlift Wing along with the 179th Airlift Wing flew over 345 sorties, delivered 895 tons of cargo, and 1,122 passengers to destinations in Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Both guard units were integrated into a larger war-fighting package known as the 763rd Expeditionary Aerospace Squadron, which included active duty C-130 assets and personnel. In August 1999, KYANG aircraft maintenance technicians wrapped up Operation Shining Hope, the humanitarian mission providing relief to refugees from the conflict in Kosovo. The maintainers worked with their counterparts from the active Air Force and Reserves to launch C-130 humanitarian missions into Albania.

The U.S. Southern Command-sponsored training exercise Nuevos Horizontes (New Horizons 99) allows unit members to participate in the humanitarian quality of life improvement efforts. Twenty-five unit members deployed to Bolivia over a 2 month period to fine-tune military skills while improving the quality of life for many people in the rural villages. Members of the 205th combat communications Squadron provided communications support while other team members demonstrated their ability to establish a base camp and construct permanent structures. Working alongside Bolivian defense forces, the result of their labors was the establishment of schools, clinics and latrines for the Bolivian residents.

May 2003, members of the KYANG continued to be deployed to undisclosed location. The deployments took place on a much smaller scale than the March 2003 deployments. On May 12, 2003, more than 50 members of the KYANG were welcomed home by friends and family after spending 60 days at an undisclosed location in the Persian Gulf supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terror. The Kentucky Air National Guard provided disaster response training not only to the KYANG members, but also to outside agencies. A Major Accident Response Exercise (MARE) was conducted on the KYANG ramp. The exercise included the Guard's Disaster Control Group, the Louisville International Airport's responders, civilian firefighting units, civilian police units and the Red Cross.

The Kentucky Air Guard continued its support of the Global War on Terrorism during the period

of 1 October 2003 through 30 September 2004 by deploying 574 personnel for a total of 35,201 days during the fiscal year. Personnel were deployed all over the globe, many of them in harm's way with the principal locations being the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Europe and South America.

The Kentucky Air National Guard began the 1 October 2004 through 30 September 2005 fiscal year with 45 personnel remaining mobilized to support Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) operations on a daily basis and ended the year with a concerted effort to support Hurricane Katrina relief operations in Louisiana and Mississippi. In between, Air Guard personnel deployed to support ongoing operations and exercises in Europe, Southwest Asia, Antarctica, Central and South America, the Caribbean Islands and Diego Garcia.

On 29 August 2005, Hurricane Katrina swept through Louisiana and Mississippi, leaving a wide swath of destruction. That same afternoon, two Kentucky Air National Guard aircrews scheduled to fly routine local training sorties were tasked to fly the first hurricane relief sorties into Navy New Orleans airfield and by 31 August the 123 Special Tactics Squadron was conducting search and rescue and helicopter evacuation operations in New Orleans with seven pararescue personnel, six FAA certified combat/air traffic controllers and four Zodiac rescue boats. By the end of September, Kentucky Air Guard personnel had reinforced the unit's reputation as a world-class organization with an outstanding record of support to Katrina victims. Twenty-four members of the 123 STS took control of Air National Guard rescue operations from 31 Aug-8 Sep, managing additional STS personnel from the Alaska, California, New York and Oregon Air National Guard, establishing temporary control of the Navy New Orleans airport tower, and operating round-the-clock rescue and evacuation operations. They evacuated 10,635 people by helicopter, 1,206 by boat and 86 by motor vehicle. Additionally, on 23 September 15 members of the 123 STS deployed to Meridian, Miss. to await the landfall of the hurricane season's second Category Five hurricane, Rita, in Texas. Rita made landfall on 24 Sep but did not pack the destructive force of Katrina, so the STS personnel were released to return home and prepare for the 123 STS' first quarter 05 to Afghanistan. Thirty-one personnel from the 123 Security Forces Squadron under Capt. Mary Decker deployed to New Orleans initially, then on to Baton Rouge to provide security for the state of Louisiana from 1 to 24 Sep at multiple locations, including the Baton Rouge Convention Center and the Louisiana State University football stadium. From 29 August through 30 September, Kentucky Air National Guard aircrews flew 91 Hurricane Katrina relief sorties for 166.3 flight hours, carrying 414 military and 414 civilian passengers and 321.2 tons of cargo. The 123 Operations Group kept aircraft and crews on alert for hurricane relief operations throughout the month of September. Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Whelan of the 123 Operations Group served as Air Liaison Officer to the Louisiana Air National Guard in Baton Rouge from 22-29 Sep. The 123 Contingency Response Group (CRG, consisting 15 members of the 123 Aerial Port Squadron and nine members of the 123 Tanker Airlift Control Element [TALCE], under the command of Maj. Kevin Morris) handled airfield operations at the main Hurricane Katrina airfield hub of Belle Chase, Louisiana from 1 to 24 Sep and in Alexandria, Louisiana from 26 Sep into October. Seven members of the 123 Services Squadron deployed on 6 September to Gulfport, Miss. CRTC to provide dining facility services to deployed servicemen and remained in place through 30 Sep. The 123 Medical Group deployed detachments of nine personnel under Col. Richard Kimbler to

Baton Rouge from 6 to 24 Sep, three personnel to Camp Shelby, Miss. from 5 Sep to 15 Oct and two personnel to Belle Chase from 20 Sep to 4 Oct. The Medical Group assigned 10 staff members to work with the Veterans Administration and local volunteers to train them to handle litters and other details for patients expected to arrive in Louisville through the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS). Seventy-five patients arrived at the base by C-130 airlift shortly after midnight the morning of 24 Sep, were processed in at the main maintenance hangar and transported to various local hospitals. Wing Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Thomas Curry led a two-person Religious Support Team to Natchez, Miss. from 6-18 Sep 05 to assist both soldiers and civilians.

The Kentucky Air Guard continued its support of the Global War on Terrorism by deploying 993 personnel for a total of 12,917 days during the fiscal year. Personnel were deployed all over the globe, many of them in harm's way, to locations including Southwest Asia, Europe, Central and South America, Antarctica, the Caribbean Islands and Diego Garcia. During the October 2004-January 2005 time frame, the Kentucky Air Guard deployed detachments of two aircraft, three crews and maintenance/support personnel to San Juan, Puerto Rico for four two-week periods to fly airlift missions throughout Central and South America in support of the National Guard's CORONET OAK mission, including support of U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell's visit to Haiti in November 2005.

From 29 August through 30 September, Kentucky Air National Guard aircrews flew 91 Hurricane Katrina relief sorties for 166.3 flight hours, carrying 414 military and 414 civilian passengers and 321.2 tons of cargo. The 123 Operations Group kept aircraft and crews on alert for hurricane relief operations throughout the month of September. Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Whelan of the 123 Operations Group served as Air Liaison Officer to the Louisiana Air National Guard in Baton Rouge from 22-29 Sep.

On July 29 2006, members of the Kentucky Air Guard led the way to support Operation Jump Start, a part of President Bush's initiative to secure the U.S. - Mexican border. In fiscal year (FY) '06, 115 members volunteered to support this effort; Kentucky was one of the top three responders to the call. Members were needed in three states to support the mission: Arizona, New Mexico, and Maryland. In early July, Colonel Howard P. Hunt III stood up for the National Guard Bureau to lead the Air Guard component into the mission. From the Crisis Action Team (CAT) located at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, he called on all states, but Kentucky airmen led the way for Task Forces Raven (aviation), Maverick (logistics), Diamondback (road maintenance and construction of border fencing), Sidewinder (administrative duties for U.S. Customs and Border Patrol), and Gila (border-observation patrols). His efforts resulted in meeting the short-notice task of having 1,500 Air Guardsmen in the Southwest arena by August 1. Colonel Michael Dornbush soon followed Colonel Hunt's volunteerism and went to Phoenix, Arizona to perform duties as the Air National Guard liaison officer for Arizona's Joint Task Force. His charge was to ensure that deploying troops were properly in-processed and equipped for the Arizona Area of Responsibility. Members were deployed from seven to about 65 days. Some individuals have taken long term tours (365 days) on this mission, while others rotate for shorter periods. Most members are doing work specific to their career fields, such as building

fences, providing medical care or coordinating military logistics. Operation Jump Start is a mission that KYANG continues to support as the National Guard-led effort continues through the summer of 2008.

The Kentucky Air National Guard made history during the summer of 2006 when 31 of its members deployed to Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska, to provide the expeditionary group command for a multinational training exercise called Cooperative Cope Thunder 06-03, also known as Red Flag Alaska. This marked the first time that a Guard unit had taken such a lead role. The event centered around a scenario in which multinational expeditionary forces based at Elmendorf and Eielson Air Force Bases, Alaska, enter combat to defend a neutral neighbor from a simulated aggressor. The exercise included personnel from Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea, The Netherlands, Australia, Sweden, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Russia, Mexico, and Mongolia.

Joint Readiness Training between the 123 Airlift Wing and the Indiana Army National Guard was conducted during exercise Invade Indiana at Camp Atterbury, Indiana. The exercise simulated the deployment of personnel and equipment from a forward staging base into a combat area. The 123 Airlift Control Squadron facilitated operations with Crash, Fire, and Rescue support, communications, and equipment support. During the exercise unit members from the 123 Aerial Port Squadron, Air Generation Squadron, and 165th Airlift Squadron, processed and airlifted 327 personnel and 90 tons of cargo.

The 123 continued in its participation in many other unique deployments and exercises, including four rotations for Coronet Oak. The missions were based out of San Juan, Puerto Rico. The unit deployed 2 aircraft, 54 personnel, and 12 tons of cargo for each rotation. Missions flown into Central and South America provided valuable flying hours, testing aircrews and war readiness capability in another real world setting. Flying operations in "real world" contingency operations around the world is really the surest measure of a unit's readiness. Flying operations in Saudi Arabia, Africa, Europe, Central and South America and within the United States have consistently proven the readiness of the 123 Airlift Wing.

The Kentucky Air National Guard base at Louisville International Airport is now seven years old and remains one of our nation's showplaces for ANG units located on metropolitan airports. It has wonderful visibility to the public and to its recruiting base with excellent sight lines to I-65 in both directions. One of the newest bases in the country, it was completed in May 1995. The unit previously occupied a 66.46-acre site on the southeastern side of Standiford Field, by the KYANG moved to accommodate expansion of the airport and United Parcel Service's hub operation. The Department of Defense has entered into a 50-year lease (which expires in 2046) with the Louisville Regional Airport Authority for the property. The new state-of-the-art facility was designed and built specifically for the unit's airlift mission. The new 81.5-acre site consolidates operational and administrative functions within twelve buildings with almost 329,000 square feet of working area. The facility also features 80,000 square yards of aircraft-related pavements and 59,100 square yards of vehicle-related pavements. Several construction projects are in progress and other projects have been completed. The base is

truly a showplace with the completion of the front gate facility, decorative fencing, base landscaping, lighting and building signs. A new base fitness center was opened in a room that once housed the Base Exchange. The Fuel Cell/Corrosion Control was completed in 1997 and adds much needed aircraft hangar space. The base annex has also undergone extensive exterior and interior renovation. The facility originally housed a church and school and ongoing renovations are about 95 percent complete. Construction is complete on a new hazardous materials (HAZMAT) "pharmacy" in the hangar, which allows the unit to track the location and use of all hazardous materials on base. Segregation walls may be added to the HAZMAT pharmacy in the coming year as higher headquarters refines requirements for this type of facility. The Vehicle Maintenance/POL Operations Composite facility is 100 percent complete and has been in use since 1998. The construction of the Aerial Port Squadron/Airlift Control Element Facility, a 4.6 million-dollar facility, adds an additional 40,000 square feet of usable space on base. The base boasts several impressive environmental features. In addition to being tested and found to be environmentally clean it has a state-of-the-art drainage system in the hangars and on the aircraft ramp were designed to capture any fuel spills for proper disposal. Several construction projects are in progress and other projects have been completed. The base is truly a showplace with the completion of the front gate facility, decorative fencing, base landscaping, lighting and building signs. A new base fitness center was opened in a room that once housed the Base Exchange. The Fuel Cell/Corrosion Control was completed in 1997 and adds much needed aircraft hangar space. The base annex has also undergone extensive exterior and interior renovation.

2005 31 Aug Two C-130 assigned to the 123 Airlift Wing, Kentucky NG, airlifted approximately 190,000 sandbags to NAS New Orleans. The crews flew this mission in SAD status. The 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG, deployed thirteen pararescuemen, combat controllers, and combat weather personnel in SAD to NAS New Orleans as part of the Louisiana-Kentucky EMAC.

1 Sep 2005 The 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG, deployed nine personnel to NAS New Orleans. Thirteen unit personnel (seven PJs and six CCTs) had already deployed to New Orleans. Chief Master Sergeant Pat Malone, deployed team leader for the 123 Special Tactics Squadron submitted a request for additional rescue assets through the Louisiana JOC. The NGB JOC and the ANG CAT notified the Alaska JOC of the request for additional rescue assets. Five rescue personnel and equipment assigned to 176th Wing, Alaska ANG, deployed to NAS New Orleans. In addition, the Oregon JOC deployed four Combat Controllers assigned to the 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon ANG, to NAS New Orleans to assist the 123 Special Tactics Squadron with directing helicopter traffic.

3 Sep 2005 The 123 Contingency Response Group-Element, Kentucky ANG reported they were operational with mobile Command and Control (C2) equipment and personnel at Alexandria Airport in Louisiana.

4 Sep 2005 The 123 Airlift Wing, Kentucky ANG, deployed fifteen Aerial Port Squadron personnel in Title 32 status to Alexandria IAP, Louisiana to support hurricane relief efforts.

5 Sep 2005 Combat Controllers from the 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG, had to abandon helicopter landing zone Buffalo in New Orleans due to gunfire. Thirty-five ANG Special Operations personnel had deployed to the joint operations area to perform search and rescue operations. Eighteen pararescuemen, twelve combat controllers, and five mission support personnel assigned to the 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG; 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon ANG; 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska ANG; 129th Rescue Wing, California ANG, and the 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG. Chief Master Sergeant Pat Malone, 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG, expressed his concerns to the ANG CAT about the health hazards his rescue team were facing in New Orleans. Contaminated flood waters in the city contained a mixture of sewage, fuel, oil, hazardous materials, and animal and human corpses. Chief Malone made it a requirement for his people to get complete physicals including blood tests for any possible diseases upon their return home.

13 Sep 2005 Five Contingency Response Group-Element personnel from the 123 Airlift Wing, Kentucky ANG, returned to home station at Standiford Field. They had deployed to Alexandria, Louisiana.

25 Sep 2005 Four Air Guard Combat Controllers assigned to the 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG, directed 225 helicopter landing sorties in support of Hurricane Rita rescue and relief operations at Chennault International Airport, Lake Charles, Louisiana. At 2200 hours, Central Standard Time, they passed the duties to an Army Air- Traffic-Control team. The ANG deployed fifty-two pararescue personnel to support Hurricane Rita relief operations in Louisiana, Texas, Florida, and Mississippi. Pararescue personnel came from the 123 Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky ANG; 125th Special Tactics Squadron, Oregon ANG; 106th Rescue Wing, New York ANG, and the 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska ANG.

26 Sep 2005 The 123 Contingency Response Group-Element, Kentucky ANG, deployed to Alexandria, Louisiana with its mobile Command & Control equipment and personnel. All personnel and equipment of the 123 Special Tactical Squadron, Kentucky ANG, and deployed to Lake Charles, Louisiana for Hurricane Rita rescue operations returned to home station at Standiford, Kentucky.

Kentucky Air National Guard's 123 Airlift Wing in Louisville has a new Mobile Emergency Operations Center that will enhance the ability of the unit's airmen to support civilian agencies following a catastrophe, according to a wing release. The MEOC is a state-of-the-art, 36-foot-long trailer equipped to tap into the civilian communications infrastructure. It is meant to be towed to the scene of a domestic disaster to serve as a command-and-control hub. "It is specifically designed for use with civilian agencies, and we would deploy the MEOC at the request of the civilian community," said SMSgt. Carol Davis, emergency manager for the 123 Civil Engineer Squadron. The MEOC arrived in Louisville on Nov. 27, according to the release. The wing plans to use it for the first time in March during a major accident response exercise. While the mobile center will be based in Louisville, it's meant to be a regional asset that the wing will share with other Air Guard units on an as-needed basis, said Davis. 2013

The National Guard Bureau selected Kentucky to officially partner with the Republic of Djibouti under the guard's State Partnership Program, officials announced. The state's Army and Air National Guard units already engage in capacity building and military-to-military engagements with the Ecuadoran military since becoming SPP partners in 1996, according to the release. Airmen and C-130s of the Kentucky ANG's 123 Airlift Wing deployed to the US Africa Command theater of operations in support of Ebola response operations last year, and Kentucky Guard soldiers returned from a Djibouti deployment in 2013. "During our deployment to Djibouti, our Kentucky Guardsmen were fantastic ambassadors to our global neighbors," state Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini said in the release. "We're honored to be selected for this SPP mission. We look forward to future operations with the Republic of Djibouti," he added. The SPP boasts 69 state partnerships with some 75 foreign militaries, according to the release.

2015

Airmen from the 123 Airlift Wing palletize inflatable motorboats to be loaded onto a C-130 Hercules aircraft at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Sept. 20, 2017. The boats will be used by members of the 123 Special Tactics Squadron, who deployed to the Caribbean on Sept. 20 to conduct relief operations in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

2017

Airmen from the 123 Airlift Wing load equipment and vehicles onto a C-130 Hercules at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., Sept. 20, 2017. The cargo will be used by members of the 123 Special Tactics Squadron, who deployed to the Caribbean on Sept. 20, to conduct relief operations in the wake of Hurricane Maria.

Seven Special Tactics Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard departed the Kentucky ANG base, Louisville, Sept. 20, 2017, for the Caribbean where they will open airfields for humanitarian aid deliveries and resident evacuations in the wake of Hurricane Maria, the third major hurricane to hit the region in the past month.

A four-man team from the 123 Special Tactics Squadron arrived in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, Sept. 21, while a three-man team from the same unit is scheduled to arrive in St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, the same day, said Chief Master Sgt. Aaron May, the squadron's enlisted manager for combat control.

The mission of both teams is the same: clear the airfields of debris, open runways and taxiways and establish air traffic control so military airlift can begin. The teams are prepared, if necessary, to parachute into the fields with chainsaws so they can remove fallen trees and other obstacles, allowing the C-130 Hercules that brought them to land safely and begin offloading rescue gear. The Airmen also deployed with trucks, motorcycles and inflatable motorboats to assist with rescue operations, May said.

"(This) deployment marks the third time in the past month that Kentucky Air National Guardsmen have mobilized in support of hurricane rescue operations in the Caribbean," said Col. David Mounkes, 123 Airlift Wing commander, parent unit to the 123 STS. "Our Airmen stand ready at all times to answer the call for help, and we are tremendously grateful to be able to provide this assistance again. Our thoughts and prayers are with the residents of these islands as they continue to weather an unprecedented hurricane season."

The Kentucky ANG deployed more than 80 Airmen to Texas for Hurricane Harvey, establishing an aeromedical evacuation hub and saving 333 residents stranded by floodwaters in the Houston area. The unit later deployed 24 Airmen for rescue operations following Hurricane Irma, helping evacuate more than 1,000 U.S. citizens from the Dutch Caribbean Island of St. Maarten. 2017

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AFNS) -- Thirty two members of the 123 Contingency Response Group departed the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville Sept. 23, 2017, to establish an air cargo hub that will support Hurricane Maria relief operations across the Caribbean. The Kentucky Air Guardsmen deployed to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where they will establish an Intermediate Staging Base to receive cargo and humanitarian aid by airlift, and prepare it for forward distribution as needed, according to Lt. Col. Steve Campbell, one of the group's squadron commanders. They'll join a team of eight Airmen who previously deployed to assess the operational capabilities at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport. The unit is completely self-sufficient and typically achieves operational status within hours of arriving on the ground, Campbell said. They bring with them everything needed to operate an air cargo hub; from communications and power-generation capability, to all-terrain forklifts and aircraft maintenance personnel.

"We'll go in there and set up everything to sustain operations immediately," Campbell said. "We don't need any outside water, electricity or (communications) because we bring our own. All we need is a runway and a ramp, and we'll set up an airfield to start bringing in relief supplies." Campbell added the unit is usually on a 12-hour stand-by for missions like this, and prefers to operate that way. "We were also deployed to Texas in support of Hurricane Harvey, and we came home and reconstituted in two days," he said. "So we were packed up and ready to go again when the call came for (Hurricane) Maria. Readiness is our mission, and we love doing it." Members of the Kentucky ANG's 123 Contingency Response Group have a lengthy history of deploying in support of disaster-recovery operations. In 2010, the unit was hand-picked to establish and operate one of two overseas airlift hubs supporting earthquake-recovery efforts in Haiti, directing the delivery of hundreds of tons of relief supplies into the Dominican Republic for subsequent trucking to Haiti.

The 123 CRG also deployed to Senegal in 2014 to establish and operate an Aerial Port of Debarkation/Intermediate Staging Base in support of Operation United Assistance, the international effort to fight the largest Ebola outbreak in history. The unit's Airmen processed 193 aircraft and 1,200 short tons of cargo, including blood, plasma and tactical vehicles during the two-month deployment. As the latest group prepares to stand up an air hub in Puerto Rico, seven Airmen from the 123 Special Tactics Squadron have already provided air traffic control for more than 75 aircraft supporting relief operations in St. Croix.

In addition, the Kentucky ANG's 165th Airlift Squadron deployed three C-130 aircraft and 21 Airmen to the Caribbean on Sept. 22, to fly airlift missions throughout the region, said Lt. Col. Matt Quenichet, the unit's director of operations. Brig. Gen. Warren Hurst, Kentucky ANG's assistant adjutant general for air, noted that Hurricane Maria marks the third hurricane in a month for which Airmen have deployed from the Kentucky ANG and its main operational unit, the 123 Airlift Wing.

“The 123 Airlift Wing, 123 Special Tactics Squadron, 165th Airlift Squadron and 123 Contingency Response Group have done a tremendous job supporting back-to-back hurricane rescue, relief and evacuation operations for the past several weeks,” Hurst said. “The 123 Airlift Wing commander, Colonel Dave Mounkes, in anticipation of emerging requirements, properly prepared and positioned his forces to respond in minimum time when tasked for support. The effective coordination between the wing and multiple headquarters is at an all-time high. There has been an incredible support effort at the base to make this happen.” 2017

Air Force Lineage and Honors

Created: 12 Oct 2010

Updated: 2 Jan 2021

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.