

403 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

403 Installations Squadron constituted, 8 Sep 1950
Activated in the Reserve, 11 Oct 1950
Ordered to Active Service, 1 Apr 1951
Relieved from Active Duty, 15 Nov 1952
Inactivated, 1 Jan 1953
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Jan 1953
Redesignated 403 Civil Engineering Squadron, 1 Jul 1960
Ordered to Active Service, 28 Oct 1962
Relieved from Active Duty, 28 Nov 1962
Discontinued and inactivated, 11 Feb 1963
Activated in the Reserve, 1 Nov 1983
Redesignated 403 Civil Engineer Squadron, 1 Mar 1994
Inactivated, 30 Jun 2015

STATIONS

Portland Aprt (later, Portland IAP), OR, 11 Oct 1950-29 Mar 1952
Ashiya AB, Japan, 14 Apr 1952 -1 Jan 1953
Portland IAP, OR, 1 Jan 1953
Selfridge AFB, MI, 16 Nov 1957-11 Feb 1963
Keesler AFB, MS, 1 Nov 1983

ASSIGNMENTS

403 Air Base Group, 1 Oct 1950-1 Jan 1953
403 Air Base Group, 1 Jan 1953-11 Feb 1963
403 Rescue and Weather Reconnaissance (later, 403 Tactical Airlift; 403 Airlift) Wing, 1 Nov 1983
403 Support Group, 1 Aug 1992

403 Mission Support Group

COMMANDERS

Lt Col Michael Dawson, 10 Sep 1995
Capt Otto Ford III (Acting) 8 Jul 2000
Maj Michael Grubb, 1 Jun 2001
Lt Col Eric Ross, 5 Mar 2006
Maj Otto Ford III, 5 May 2007
Maj Quinton Sasnett, 7 Feb 2015
Col Connie Allen

HONORS

Service Streamers

Korean Service

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards
[1 Nov 1983]-30 Sep 1984
30 Sep 1984-30 Jun 1986
1 Oct 1991-30 Sep 1993
1 May 1994-30 Apr 1996
1 May 1996-31 Aug 1997

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
14 Apr 1952-1 Jan 1953

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

ST. CROIX, U.S. Virgin Islands -- Three reservists from the 403 Civil Engineer Squadron wrapped up what would be their squadron's final 'roll out' mission with the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron "Hurricane Hunters" here May 4-10.

For nearly 30 years, reservists with the 403rd CES deployed with 53rd WRS air and ground crew and other 403rd Wing members in support of the Hurricane Hunters' annual roll out. The CE squadron's scheduled inactivation Sept. 15, 2015, would make this the last roll out event they would support for the Hurricane Hunters.

The weather squadron uses the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport in St. Croix as their forward operating location to fly storm missions during the hurricane season each year June 1 to Nov. 30. This roll

out time, which typically takes place annually during the first week of May, provides the 53rd WRS the opportunity to set up shop in preparation for flying storm data-gathering missions for the upcoming season.

Lt. Col. Brad Boudreaux, 53rd WRS instructor pilot, spoke about the importance of work performed by the CES Citizen Airmen. "CE is basically here to help provide us with an adequate work environment down here at our forward operating location," said Boudreaux. "They help to get the facilities in shape for us so that we can safely operate out of here during the storm season."

For Senior Airman Nathin Schuessler, 403rd CES structural journeyman, this was only his second trip to St. Croix to help the Hurricane Hunters prepare for the hurricane season. For the civil engineers' final roll out, Schuessler was joined by Master Sgt. Kevin Shows, 403rd CES heating, ventilation and air conditioning craftsman and Staff Sgt. Walter Pinkerton, 403rd CES water and fuels system management craftsman.

Schuessler listed several tasks the civil engineers accomplished while there, including repainting faded lines on the airfield taxiways, greasing and maintaining the rollup doors to Hurricane Hunter hangar to ensure they worked properly, replacing the exhaust system on one of the backup generators to prevent a buildup of fumes under the building's overhang, changing filters on the building's water heater, and a variety of other preventive maintenance and repair efforts.

"Any kind of work they need us to accomplish on, outside or in the facility, we do it," said Schuessler. Chief Master Sgt. Eugene Lee Wilcox, 403rd CES chief enlisted manager, said that over the years the CES crew performed a number of projects requested by the 53rd crew to renovate and maintain the Hurricane Hunters' building and help keep them operating throughout the season. "It's all customer-based; it just depends on what the customer wants," said Wilcox, in reference to their taskings from the Hurricane Hunters. "Over the years, we've installed, repaired and maintained a number of items, such as overhangs on the building to protect the aerospace ground equipment used by the ground crew. We also installed rollup doors (on the building they use) and gates to keep it a secured area, and we gutted and installed new bathrooms in the building."

During the 1990s, Wilcox mentioned one major project the CES members performed: installing a tie down system on the aircraft parking pad to prevent high winds from moving and damaging the WC-130H airplanes the Hurricane Hunters used at the time. They later reconfigured the tie downs for the newer WC-130J models, and finally jackhammered and re-installed those portions of the parking pad so the planes could be rotated 360 degrees, depending upon the direction of the prevailing winds.

Wilcox said that while he was a little sad to see the end of an era with the upcoming inactivation of the 403rd CES, he knew that other options were available to continue on the work necessary to keep the 53rd facility in St. Croix up and running, such as contracting out the work or deploying members from other CE squadrons with the Hurricane Hunters.

"Somebody else will pick it up, I'm sure, and it will be something good for them to experience as well. And, who knows, maybe it will be another (CES) unit where some of our people have already went to," said Wilcox. 2015

The 403rd Civil Engineer Squadron was inactivated in a ceremony held here July 12 as a result of

overall U.S. defense budget cuts stemming originally from the fiscal year 2015 President's Budget Proposal.

"The Air Force has to find a way to be leaner," said Maj. Quinton Sasnett, 403rd CES commander. "Through everything that the Air Force Reserve Command has determined, Civil Engineering units and some other units have been drawn down for the purposes of operating leaner."

Approximately 111 members were affected by the closure with roughly a third of them being absorbed by other units within the 403rd Wing by allowing members to cross-train, said Sasnett.

"It hurts," said Senior Airman Zachary Shoemake, 403rd CES firefighter. "I actually came into the Air Force to become a firefighter here at Keesler or I wasn't coming in at all." Shoemake has decided to stay at Keesler and is cross-training into the 403rd Communications Flight. His father is stationed here as well and enjoys having those UTA weekends with him here.

The unit's history dates back to the Korean War up through Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom earning six Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards. This is not the first time this unit has been inactivated and it most likely will be needed again in the future, said retired Chief Master Sgt. George L Herrington, former 403rd CES fire chief, who was the guest speaker for the ceremony.

The majority of the unit's equipment is being sent to Grissom Air Reserve Base, Indiana, to be redistributed as needed throughout the command, said Sasnett. He said some of the fire department's equipment that won't be going to Grissom, will be donated to local fire departments near Keesler. 2015

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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