

# 910 MEDICAL SQUADRON

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## MISSION

## LINEAGE

910 Tactical Dispensary constituted and activated, 28 Dec 1962

Organized in the Reserve, 17 Jan 1963

Redesignated 910 Tactical Clinic, 1 Apr 1973

Redesignated 910 Tactical Hospital, 1 Oct 1989

Redesignated 910 Medical Squadron, 1 Nov 1990

## STATIONS

Youngstown Muni Aprt (later, Youngstown MPT-Air Reserve Station; Youngstown-Warren Regional Aprt-Air Reserve Station), OH, 17 Jan 1963

## ASSIGNMENTS

910 Troop Carrier Group (later, 910 Tactical Airlift Group; 910 Tactical Air Support Group; 910 Special Operations Group; 910 Tactical Fighter Group; 910 Tactical Airlift Group; 910 Airlift Group; 910 Airlift Wing), 17 Jan 1963

## COMMANDERS

Col Ronnie Roberts

Col John F. Rudge, 15 Aug 1991

Col Colleen Kelley

## HONORS

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

## Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

### Decorations

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

1 Sep 1983-31 Aug 1985

1 Sep 1995-31 Aug 1997

### EMBLEM



On a white disc within a narrow Air Force blue border between in chief a pimento red cross and in base a brittany blue crouching tiger with elevated wings, eyes Air Force yellow, tongue red, teeth white, all outlined and detailed black, wings and claw yellow outlined and detailed gold brown, a brittany blue immunization needle and stethoscope outlined and detailed black forming a saltire, emitting three yellow double-ended lightning flashes shaded gold brown, radiating one to dexter (right) chief, one to base, one to sinister (left) chief. Below an Air Force yellow scroll edged Air Force blue above a like scroll inscribed with Air Force blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The emblem is symbolic of the dispensary and its mission. The winged tiger alludes to the mission of the parent unit while the immunization needle, stethoscope, and cross depict the primary mission of the dispensary, with the lightning flashes representing the rapidity with which the mission is carried out. The emblem bears the Air Force colors, golden yellow and ultramarine blue. (Approved, 7 Aug 1964)

### MOTTO

### OPERATIONS

Fifteen members of the 910th Medical Squadron took a slightly different approach to their annual tour this year. After departing from the ramp door of a Youngstown C-130 during an engines running off-load (ERO) at a small, remote civilian airport in Pierre, S.D., the group picked up rental cars and headed toward Valentine, Neb. on Aug. 6. In Valentine they would find lodging and commute daily for the next two weeks to the Indian Service Hospital located on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota. For most, this was the first time they had ever been on a reservation. It was here that several people from the 910th learned that the Rosebud Sioux Tribal

members are descendants of the Sicangu Oyate of the Tetonwan Division of the great Sioux Nation.

The reservation is roughly about 5,961 square miles in size. The Tribal governments maintain jurisdiction within the boundaries of the reservation, according to Maj. Patrick Ginley, a physician assistant with the 910th Medical Squadron and second-year returnee to the reservation. "The Tribal Council President is the administrative head of the Tribe and serves a two-year term," he explained. During the initial briefing at the hospital the medical squadron team learned about the rules governing the hospital and aspects of Indian culture. "Traditionalists, [Indians who have never left the reservation] won't give you direct eye contact when they speak to you or when you address them," said Robert Reynolds, the housing manager for the reservation. "To do so would show disrespect."

He also explained about being careful not to point. "In our culture this is a sign of disrespect," he said. In addition, the reservists learned that certain wild growing plants and herbs could not be picked because many of the indigenous plants are an important part of their culture and spirituality. The group from the 910<sup>th</sup> also received an invitation to attend a Pow Wow and a Sun Dance, which is a sacred ceremony. On another occasion, members of the group were invited to participate in a special flag raising ceremony held on the reservation to honor deceased Native American veterans. Staff Sgt. Darren McClave, assigned to the logistics section of the 910th Medical Squadron, carried the American flag, and Staff Sgt. Theodore Harrell, a bioenvironmental technician, raised the flag during the ceremony.

Capt. Lance Williams, a second-time returnee to the reservation and information manager/medical administrator with the 910 MDS, helped to set up the diabetes awareness program on the reservation. "Diabetes is a growing health concern for the population here," said Capt. Williams. Flyers such as the "Lakota Diet in a Modern Time," which encourages healthy eating and a physically active lifestyle, can be found throughout the hospital. Although diabetes is a major concern to the health care providers on the reservation, there are other issues that needed attention as well. The slimly staffed engineering department received valuable assistance from 1st Lt. Scott Tomkins and Sergeant Harrell.

They observed and collected data on the number of residents on the reservation who used seat belts and child restraints. The information collected will be presented in the future to the Tribal council to demonstrate the need for a law requiring their use on the reservation. No such laws currently exist there. Staff Sgt. Jackie Eckert, an information manager with the 910 MDS, provided valuable support not only in medical records but in the mental health clinic, and the billing office. The mental health staff had been working without a secretary and was conducting interviews to fill the position. Senior Airman Michelle Euard, also an information manager, provided temporary front office support to the psychologists and patients. By the end of the annual tour, the 910th medical team had learned much about a different culture and provided caring hands of support to the patients and staff of the Indian Service Hospital on the reservation. 2005

For most Americans familiar with the Dominican Republic, the mention of the country's name conjures up images of sandy white beaches, crystal blue waters, lush rolling mountains and destinations such as the capital city of Santo Domingo or the tourist destination of Punta Cana. there is another side to the island nation that many people are not familiar with and that is the

countless villages and towns filled with corrugated tin shacks, small concrete open air hovels with a population of impoverished but seemingly content people living their lives day by day. This lesser known part of the Dominican Republic was the destination of a group of more than 30 Citizen Airmen that arrived to the island from Youngstown Air Reserve Station April 26 on a mission scheduled to last until May 8.

Dominican Republic Medical Readiness Training Exercise (MEDRETE) 2009 brought the expertise of specialists assigned or attached to the 910th Medical Squadron to give much needed medical care to residents in and around two neighborhoods in the town of Azua and one neighborhood in the town of Padre Las Casas. By definition, the MEDRETE concept develops and cultivates global relationships by providing culturally aware, linguistically competent regional healthcare experts in support of U.S. national strategy.

On the ground, MEDRETE gives medical care to a population that quite possibly has not received any type of basic healthcare in their entire lives as well as provides invaluable training to the U.S. Air Force Reserve's Citizen Airmen in a real world setting. Maj. Michael Keller, assigned to the 910th Medical Squadron and an emergency room doctor at St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Youngstown, Ohio, said the training Reservists receive on a MEDRETE will carry over into their civilian jobs as well. "What I learn on this mission, I then bring back to the community and I think that enhances my capabilities (to treat my patients)," said Maj. Keller. Maj. Keller was a family care specialist during the mission among a team that also included an in-processing triage team, dental care and eye care specialists and a full pharmacy staff.

The MEDRETE team set up operations on fenced-in school campuses in the towns where they were working. These pre-selected sites allowed the Dominican Army to provide crowd control for the caregivers and also let the team use the classrooms to set up individual areas for their sections of care. The Airmen assigned to the 910th Medical Squadron were augmented by personnel from Pittsburgh's 911th Airlift Wing as well as a specialist from Travis Air Force Base, Calif. and a specialist from Hill Air Force Base, Utah. Pre-mission briefings estimated the team would see more than 1,000 patients per day over the span of the 10-day mission. Estimates allowed for the first day and second day of the mission to have lesser numbers due to section set up and so on. The pre-mission brief stated the team could expect to treat 500 patients on day one and 800 patients on day two of their mission in the small Dominican town of Azua. Actually, the 910th MEDRETE team saw more than 600 patients on their first day and more than 900 patients on their second day in Azua. By day three of their time in the small Dominican town, the group saw more than 1200 patients in the course of an approximately nine hour long work day. "It's impressive.

They all really came together as a team. It was hard to tell who had been working with each other in Youngstown for years and who hadn't," said Col. Ronnie Roberts, 910th Medical Squadron commander and MEDRETE mission commander. A humanitarian training mission dispensing much needed and incredibly rare health care conducted on a Caribbean island presented more challenges than figuring out how a team of about 30 specialists would go about caring for an estimated 10,000 people in the span of about a week and a half. The security and health of the providers was paramount. The mission would suffer drastically if team members fell ill or were harmed in any way. The language barrier between mostly English speaking care givers and mostly Spanish speaking patients was also an enormous challenge. With this in mind, planning for the mission began many months ahead of time and involved Department of Defense

personnel assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo and personnel from the U.S. Southern Command.

Everything from the purchase of cases of bottled water to an armed escort of more than 15 Dominican Army soldiers to securing as many translators as possible was considered and put into place. Maj. Patrick Lanaghan, 910<sup>th</sup> Medical Squadron Medical Science Officer was in charge of much of the mission pre-planning and the effort to try to consider every contingency seemed to be paying off. Although the climate in Azua is a far cry from that of Northeast Ohio, Maj. Lanaghan noted that after some adjustment, the team was good to go. "Coming down from Youngstown, we weren't prepared for the heat and humidity but we are doing well. We are drinking lots of water and taking care of each other.

We are making sure everyone is staying hydrated," said Maj. Lanaghan. Col. Larry Woods, a MEDRETE family care specialist assigned to the 910th Medical Squadron, agreed with the science officer's assessment of the team and their preparation. "We have been preparing for this for months and we're real happy to do something like this," said Col. Woods. Although the team put in long, hard, exhausting days, working in temperatures around the 90-degree mark with 90 percent humidity, the satisfaction of treating patients ranging from a 26-day-old infant to a woman reported by townspeople to be 120 years old seemed to be a common thread among the MEDRETE team members.

"It just boils down to what this person needs and how can I help this person. It's a joy. It's really great," said Lt. Col. Christopher Rugaber, an eye care specialist and a veteran of several MEDRETE's assigned to the 910th Medical Squadron. Col. Woods, a Citizen Airman who, as a civilian, works as a cardiovascular specialist and intensive care doctor at Trumbull Memorial Hospital, was equally impressed by the team and the Dominican residents seeking the rarely available medical care. "They (the MEDRETE team) are working their hearts away to try and provide the (most) amount of care they can give in such a short amount of time and the Dominican people are just all grateful.

You have to see it to believe it," said Col. Woods. The 910th Medical Squadron MEDRETE team worked together to treat all types of ailments that included vitamin deficiencies, dermatitis, skin infections, heart and lung problems, parasite infestations, a variety of eye problems and tooth decay as well as oral infections due to the lack of preventative dental care. Lt. Col. Rodney Waite, a dental care specialist, said his section was seeing 100 to 150 patients per day requiring care. "We're seeing a lot of patients and each will require a (tooth) extraction or two, so, we have been pretty busy," said Lt. Col Waite.

The recent Medical Readiness Training Exercise (MEDRETE) in the Dominican Republic allowed medical personnel from the Youngstown Air Reserve Station to experience the EAF concept firsthand. The upside of this was the opportunity to go on a deployment where people appreciate the presence of caregivers. The potential downside was the fact that the host nation speaks a different language.

Fortunately, Tech. Sgt. Maritza Ramirez, a medical specialist assigned to the 910th Medical Squadron, speaks Spanish, the native language of the Dominican Republic. Tech. Sgt. Ramirez pulled double duty during the mission, also acting as interpreter for Col. Ronnie Roberts, 910th Medical Squadron and MEDRETE commander. Early in the trip, when the scheduled interpreters had gone missing, she found herself being pulled in every direction to help other 910<sup>th</sup> caregivers

communicate with a populace that had a lot to talk about with respect to their health and comfort level.

Tech. Sgt. Ramirez, 24, grew up in a bilingual household. With both of her parents of Puerto Rican descent, the Spanish language was bound to make an appearance in her parents' conversations. "My mother would start a sentence in English, but it would end in Spanish," she said. Currently living in Dayton, Ohio, Tech. Sgt. Ramirez has been attending Wright State University. She has recently completed her Bachelor of Science degree. Her course of study? Nursing. While attending school, Tech. Sgt. Ramirez focused all of her energy on her studies. This left little time to brush up on her Spanish. When asked how it felt to be asked to be the commander's interpreter, Ramirez summarized the feeling in one word. "Intimidating!" said Ramirez, noting she had to not only give remarks during a ceremony but also contact her mother to have them translated into Spanish.

When going on deployments, service members frequently find themselves wearing more than one hat. Tech. Sgt. Ramirez was no exception. "When Maj. Lanaghan first asked me to go on the trip, I was (working) as a bio-environmental and public health specialist," said Tech. Sgt. Ramirez. When Maj. Lanaghan learned that she spoke Spanish, Tech. Sgt. Ramirez was asked to put on yet another hat. "They got a two-in-one with me," said Tech. Sgt. Ramirez, referring to her ability to translate Spanish in addition to her skills as a medical specialist. The Air Force Reserve personnel involved in the MEDRETE had the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of many residents of the Dominican Republic.

This would not have been possible without Citizen Airmen like Tech. Sgt. Maritza Ramirez. Although very few of the MEDRETE specialists spoke Spanish, they were able to communicate with their patients through volunteer translators provided by the Dominican Army and the Azua Rotary. The MEDRETE team members that were bilingual such as Tech. Sgt. Maritza Ramirez, an aeromedical technician assigned to the 910<sup>th</sup> Medical Squadron, were an incredible asset contributing to the mission's success. Tech. Sgt. Ramirez assisted patients working through the in-processing section of the MEDRETE by speaking with them in their native language to aid in filling out triage slips in English that would help the team members to give them the care they needed. She also acted as the official interpreter during the opening ceremonies of the mission held by local dignitaries welcoming the MEDRETE mission to the town of Azua.

The language skills of Tech. Sgt. Ramirez and the other Spanish-speaking team members were appreciated by the rest of the group. Tech. Sgt. Dennis J. Kilker Jr., a 910<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Public Affairs photojournalist providing support for the mission had the ability to see every section of the MEDRETE's work in detail. "The bilingual personnel such as Sergeant Ramirez were indispensable and worth their weight in gold toward the overall success of the mission," said Tech. Sgt. Kilker. By the end of this mission, there were countless moments of incredibly touching bedside manner to the smallest child or most elderly woman or examples of the expertise to pull a tooth with the bare minimum of tools needed to do the job and still keep the patient comfortable.

The team members also demonstrated over and over the ability to test someone's vision and fit them with a pair of prescription glasses that would improve their quality of life by measures that cannot be calculated or the means to distribute toothbrushes, toothpaste, vitamins and prescription medications to help island residents fight off ailments for even a brief period of time. In short, the Citizen Airmen assigned or attached to the 910<sup>th</sup> Medical Squadron

came together to form a Medical Readiness Exercise team on a mission that not only brought the finest medical care and unbridled compassion to thousands of residents of the Dominican Republic, but honed the skills of the team's medical specialists for future missions anywhere the Air Force Reserve might need them. 2009

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USAF Unit Histories  
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Sources  
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.