

THE CARGO COURIER

123rd Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, Louisville, Ky.

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Kentucky Airmen deploy to Afghanistan

123rd Airlift Wing supporting Operation Enduring Freedom

By Capt. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

Approximately 200 members of the Kentucky Air National Guard began deploying overseas March 18 to provide airlift services in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The first rotation of 34 Airmen, all assigned to the 123rd Airlift Wing, departed for Afghanistan aboard a Kentucky C-130 aircraft. The rest of the troops were deployed in subsequent rotations that continued through the end of March.

Deploying personnel include pilots, navigators, loadmasters, maintenance personnel and various support troops. Their mission is to fly airlift sorties in the Central Command Area of Operations, which includes Afghanistan, Iraq and Northern Africa. About a dozen Airmen from other wings also will participate in the operation, including members of Air National Guard units in West Virginia, Tennessee and Idaho.

The Kentucky Air Guard is expected to complete its participation in the airlift mission by May 19.

"The men and women of the Kentucky Air Guard continue to demonstrate their desire to go anywhere in the world they're needed, and do whatever job our nation asks of them," said Col. Greg Nelson, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing. "I could not be more proud of our troops and their dedication to the mission."

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 10,000 members of the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard have deployed worldwide in the Global War on Terror.

This latest mission marks the 123rd Airlift Wing's second major deployment to Afghanistan since 2007 and its fourth major deployment to CENTCOM since 2003. Previous missions sent hundreds of Kentucky Air Guard forces to multiple locations in Afghanistan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

During the 2007 deployment, Kentucky Air Guard troops airlifted thousands of personnel and thousands of tons of cargo to locations across CENTCOM, often airdropping vital supplies to troops who were in direct contact with the enemy while navigating over some of the most rugged, high-altitude terrain anywhere in the world.

Major deployments like these comprise the majority of the wing's contributions to the Global War on Terror, but smaller numbers of Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard have served on active duty almost continually since 9/11, performing a wide variety of overseas missions nearly every day of the year.



Above: Kentucky's assistant adjutant general for Air, Brig. Gen. Mark Kraus (second from right), wishes Kentucky Air Guardsmen well March 18 as they board a C-130 en route to Afghanistan. The Airmen will be providing airlift services as part of Operation Enduring Freedom through May 19.

Left: Lt. Col. Mark Heiniger, mission commander, talks with members of the news media March 18 to explain the key role that Kentucky Air National Guard forces will play in airlift operations over Afghanistan this spring.

Photos by Capt. Dale Greer/KyANG

Accountability is a deadly serious issue

We are all accountable for our actions. We learn accountability at a very young age from our parents, then our teachers, then our friends, peers and employers. Early on we learn rules and guidelines and we are held accountable when we don't follow them. Our level of accountability increased and our breadth of accountability expanded as we became adults.

When we joined the United States military, we accepted a completely new set of rules to follow, guidelines to adhere to and a level of accountability unique to our profession of arms. When we volunteered to serve our country, we became a part of something larger than ourselves. Our accountability as members of the 123rd Airlift Wing is commensurate with the responsibility we hold. Our military skills and training give us the authority to perform the responsibilities of our job. We are accountable for the authority and responsibility we hold.

Now, enough philosophy. What am I talking about? I want everyone in the 123rd Airlift Wing to turn it up a notch, and I am going to hold you accountable to do so. I expect you to take the authority you are given and the responsibilities you have dead serious — because that is the business we are in and the accountability you hold.

I expect every member of the Wing to be accountable as an individual and as a team member of his or her unit. You are accountable to your superiors and subordinates alike, and you are accountable to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky and our great United States. Don't let anyone down. Don't let yourself down, your unit, those above you or below, or those who look up to you because of the uniform you wear. Don't let me down.



Col. Greg Nelson
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

Please take this direction as my command. Our accountability is a serious issue with dire consequences. Our rules are not to be broken, and our guidelines are to be followed without question. Failure to act responsibly on and off duty comes with harsh consequences, and for good reason. We are responsible for the security and defense of our nation, and our jobs are responsible for the safety of ourselves, our peers and our nation. Most military checklists are written in blood. Someone lost his or her life before we identified the correct way or a better way to do something. Follow the

checklist. Follow written direction, guidance and instruction. Don't question, don't deviate and don't change something without following the correct guidelines to do so.

Twenty-four hours a day, you are a member of the Kentucky Air National Guard. You represent every level of your chain of command, and every member of your unit and the Wing. Act accordingly.

We have a zero tolerance for illegal drug use for good reason. I don't want anyone with impaired ability or judgment around me, a weapon or our aircraft. I beg you to think before you do something to jeopardize your military career, your family and your life.

Each of us is fiscally accountability for the property and equipment within our responsibility. If you have been issued something or have custodial responsibility for something, then you are responsible for it. Period! We have the authority to use everything we need to accomplish our mission, but we are responsible for keeping track, count and inventory. When we consume equipment in our mission, we report it and replace it. No questions asked. If we lose something, we are accountable. That's the business we are in.

Every day I tell someone about the 123rd Airlift Wing: the best tactical airlift wing in the Air National Guard and United States Air Force! I am proud of our wing and all our members. I am surrounded by professional military men and women. I expect you to hold the same professional pride and perform accordingly. I expect you to use the authority you have been given to perform the mission under your responsibility, to the utmost of your ability and accepting accountability.

I expect and command no less.

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Our office is located in room 1160 of the Wing Headquarters Building.

We welcome your feedback. Please contact the Public Affairs Office directly if you have suggestions for articles or photography. Publication deadline for submissions to the next issue is May 7.

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An electronic version of the Cargo Courier is available at the Kentucky Air Guard's Web site — www.123aw.ang.af.mil

Legislation supports Kentucky Airmen

Gov. Steve Beshear recently signed into law a series of bills that will affect Kentucky National Guard members and their families.

House Bill 124 allows K-12 students to be granted excused absences from school for up to 10 days to visit a parent or guardian serving in the military, stationed out of the country and on military leave.

House Bill 39 exempts 17-year-olds who have enlisted in the military from the requirement to obtain an intermediate driver's license and exempts individuals over the age of 18 from graduated driver's license requirements.

State parks offer military discount

Kentucky State Parks are now providing a 10 percent "R&R" discount for military personnel and veterans. The discount can be used for lodging or camping at any time.

Military members must be present during the stay and provide proof of their military service. For more information, call 1 (800) 255-PARK.

Two conferences rescheduled for June

The 78th Annual Conference of the National Guard Association of Kentucky and the Senior Enlisted Leadership Conference, both originally scheduled for February, will be held June 12 to 14 at the Drawbridge Inn and Convention Center in Ft. Mitchell, Ky.

For more information on the NGAKY conference, call (502) 564-7500 or e-mail ngakyginger@fewpb.net.

For more information on the SELC, call Chief Master Sgt. Mark Grant at (502) 607-1479 or (502) 773-4667.

Contingency Response Group stands up

First Air Guard CRG unit becomes official asset for Commonwealth, nation

By Capt. John Stamm
Deputy Wing Public Affairs Officer

A new crisis- and contingency-response team is now open for business at the Kentucky Air National Guard.

Officials here formally stood up the 123rd Contingency Response Group during an activation ceremony held in the base Fuel Cell Hangar on April 15.

The unit is designed to be a early responder in the event of a terrorist attack, natural disaster or other major emergency anywhere within a 400-mile radius of Louisville, according to the group's commander, Col. Warren Hurst. The unit also is capable of supporting military contingency operations worldwide.

Described as an "airbase in a box," the 123rd Contingency Response Group has all the personnel, training and equipment needed to deploy to a remote site, open a runway and establish airfield operations so that aid or troops can begin to flow into affected areas.

"Our training, experience and equipment — including immediate access to the Kentucky Air Guard's C-130 aircraft — mean that we can rapidly deploy in any contingency situation any quickly establish initial operating capabilities for humanitarian or military airlift," Colonel Hurst explained.

Col. Greg Nelson, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, noted that the 123rd CRG is the first such combat-ready unit in the Air National Guard.

"These forces are now ready to deploy at a moment's notice to support individual operations, another wing or civilian humanitarian relief efforts locally, within the United States or anywhere on the globe," he said.

Unit members represent a broad spectrum of specialties, including airfield security, ramp and cargo operations, and command and control. Most of the group's Airmen were already members of the Kentucky Air National Guard before transferring to the CRG and have deep operational experience from multiple deployments to

Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as from state-side operations in support of relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

The new group can expect to serve overseas to meet ongoing operations needs, officials said. Since 9/11, for example, the U.S. Air Force has established about 40 new air fields from scratch in the Central Command Area of Operations, which includes Iraq and Afghanistan. The Kentucky unit's skills would be a perfect fit for such missions, Colonel Hurst said.

The CRG concept was developed after initial operations in Afghanistan, when the Air Force recognized the need for a highly specialized team capable of rapid deployment — usually with just a few hours'.

See CRG on Back Page



Capt. Dale Greer/KyANG

Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, says the new 123rd Contingency Response Group places the Kentucky Air Guard at the forefront of engagement, both at home and abroad.

Bullard named to lead mission support group

By Capt. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer

A 17-year veteran of the Kentucky Air National Guard has been named commander of one of the unit's key organizational groups.

Col. Steven Bullard formally took charge of the 123rd Mission Support Group March 14 when he accepted the unit's guide-on from Col. Greg Nelson, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, during a change-of-command ceremony held in the Base Annex.

One of four groups at the wing's highest organizational level, the 123rd MSG is responsible for providing a broad range of essential base functions, including security forces, communications, fire-fighting and civil engineering.

Colonel Bullard takes over from acting commander Lt. Col. Matt Stone, who has been named the wing's full-time mission support officer.

A "traditional Guardsman," Colonel Bullard has served in numerous leadership roles in the Air Force, both at home and overseas, and with the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

He first joined the Kentucky Air Guard in September 1991 after having served as an instructor navigator in the active-duty Air Force. Most recently, the colonel served as chief of operations for the Joint Intelligence and Operations Center at U.S. Central Command Headquarters, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., from August 2008 through January 2009.

He also served as senior airfield authority for the NATO International Security Assistance Force and commander of the 451st Air Expeditionary Group at Kandahar Air Field, Afghanistan, from September 2006 through March 2007.

Prior to that, Colonel Bullard deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, in early August 2006 to serve as the deputy director of the Air Component Coordination Element and the U.S. Air Force liaison with Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan and the Government of Afghanistan.

Back in Kentucky, Colonel Bullard served as the director of joint doctrine and training (J7) at the Kentucky National Guard's



Tech. Sgt. Dennis Flora/KyANG

Col. Steven Bullard, right, is congratulated by Col. Greg Nelson, wing commander, after taking charge of the 123rd Mission Support Group. Colonel Bullard, a traditional guardsman, has extensive leadership in federal, state and expeditionary environments.

Joint Force Headquarters from April 2005 to July 2008. The colonel concurrently served as director of operations at Kentucky Air National Guard Headquarters.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom, he served as operations officer, and later commander, of the 10-aircraft, 306-person joint Guard-Reserve 38th Airlift Squadron (Provisional) at Ramstein Air Base, Germany, from March to October 2003.

During his Air Force career, Colonel Bullard has flown missions in 68 countries, participating in Operations Just Cause, Desert Shield, Provide Promise, Restore Hope, Joint Endeavor, Joint Forge, Southern Watch, Bright Star, Coronet Oak, Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

He has participated in numerous special operations low-level deployments and served as lead instructor during Red Flag and Green Flag exercises.

In the civilian community, Colonel Bullard served as director of public affairs for the industry trade association Associated Industries of Kentucky from 1993 to 2004 and currently serves in the Kentucky Department of Military Affairs as director of the Division of Administrative Services.

The division is responsible for personnel administration and functions, procurement actions, accounting and fiscal functions, maintenance and storage of "War Records Bureau" documents and records, legislative activities, and state grant funding to the Civil Air Patrol.

He served two terms as elected president of the National Guard Association of Kentucky, served as chairman of the Louisville Armed Forces Committee, and served as the volunteer executive director of the Kentucky Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve from 1993 to 2001.

He is a master navigator with more than 5,000 of flight time in a variety of aircraft, including the C-130 and the EA-6B.

Colonel Bullard's major awards and decorations include the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal with oak leaf cluster and the Air Medal with oak leaf cluster.

Medical group gets robust hands-on training

Recent PACAF deployment hones skills of hospital troops

By Capt. Amy Mundell
123rd Medical Group

TRIPLER ARMY MEDICAL CENTER, Hawaii — More than 40 members of the 123rd Medical Group deployed here for required annual training from Feb. 6-21, gaining invaluable hands-on experience that will better prepare them for future combat or contingency situations.

The Airmen received hands-on instruction in a variety of areas, as required by the Air Force's Readiness Skills Verification Program, an effort designed to ensure that medical personnel maintain adequate capabilities to perform their duties during wartime, humanitarian assistance efforts and installation-response contingencies.

According to Col. Diana Shoop, the group's commander, an opportunity for this type of robust training is rare in today's military because so many military medical facilities have been down-sized to clinics or — at best — "super clinics."

The chance to train at a major facility like Tripler is so coveted, she said, that the Kentucky group had to compete with more than 90 medical units nationwide before being selected by the National Guard Bureau to participate.

"The 123rd Medical Group was very fortunate to be selected to train at one of the largest and best-equipped medical hospital and training centers," Colonel Shoop said. "Tripler Army Medical Center is a 200-bed training hospital that supports 264,000 local active-duty and retired military personnel, their families and veteran beneficiaries."

Of particular benefit to the deploying Airmen was the center's Reserve Affairs Division, which is responsible for supporting reservists' annual training requirements.

Prior to deploying, Kentucky Airmen submitted training plans to the medical center. Upon arrival, designated sponsors with customized training plans greeted the Airmen to help them attain their unique training goals.

"I felt the training was great," Colonel Shoop said. "Many of our members were very impressed with their sponsors, who went out of their way to provide exciting hands-on training."

Staff Sgt. Marie Plaza, a medical administration troop, was among them.

If the training seemed to be going down a path that was inconsistent with the requirements, Staff Sgt. Plaza said, the group's sponsor quickly allowed them to move to areas where the training would be more beneficial.

"What I liked best was how the rotations allowed focus on specific (activities)," she said, "such as aerovac and admissions and dispositions."

"I felt good about the training because, for me, it gave me the active-duty experience that I did not have," she added. "I got a better overview on how the whole process works and how it all comes together."

Col. Shoop said her troops did an outstanding job throughout the deployment.



Maj. Carolyn Congleton/KyANG

ABOVE: Maj. Tracy Glenz, a Kentucky Air Guard bioenvironmental engineer, and lifeguard Kat Van Dyke test beach water at a military recreational area on West Oahu. The training kept Major Glenz current on tasks she might be asked to perform in more austere environments if deployed.

BELOW: Deployed nursing services personnel receive an airway training class at Tripler Army Medical Center.



Maj. David Martin/KyANG

"They are without a doubt some of the brightest and most talented medical specialists you will find anywhere," she said. "While we were deployed to hone our peace-time and war-time medical skills, once our talent pool was discovered, many of our members ended up teaching classes as well."

VA answers questions about new GI Bill

Revised benefits to impact eligible post-9/11 Airmen and their family members

By Staff Sgt. Christie Putz
375th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Since Sept. 11, 2001, U.S. military forces have worked overtime to ensure the nation's safety and security.

To return the favor, the government is rolling out one of their most comprehensive educational benefits package for servicemembers since the original Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

Under the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, which will go into effect Aug. 1, many veterans who served after Sept. 11, will be eligible for full tuition and fees, a new monthly housing stipend and an annual stipend of up to \$1,000 for books and supplies.

Wing members who have been activated for more than 90 days since Sept. 11, as well as servicemembers who declined to participate in the original Montgomery GI Bill, will have access to the same GI Bill benefits.

"You will be required to make what we call an 'irrevocable decision' on whether or not you want to receive benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill," said Department of Veterans Affairs representative Dan Wellman.

Those receiving benefits under the current Montgomery GI Bill can transfer their benefits into the Post-9/11 GI Bill at any time until its expiration, but once the decision is made to transfer, benefits cannot be reverted back to the Montgomery GI Bill, he explained.

For many eligible participants, the Post-9/11 GI Bill will offer better benefits than former programs, however, there are several factors that affect suitability:

Unlike the Montgomery GI Bill, the Post-9/11 GI Bill can only be used for programs taken at a college or university. Current GI Bill benefits cover undergraduate and graduate college courses, certificate programs, on-the-job training, apprenticeship training, flight training and non-college degree courses. In some locations, the costs of college and housing (which you would receive payment for under the Post-9/11 GI Bill) are less than the payment received under the

Montgomery GI Bill.

In states where resident veterans do not have to pay tuition at selected state colleges, the Post-9/11 GI Bill may only pay housing benefits and a book stipend. Payments under other GI Bill programs, such as the Active-Duty GI Bill, may be higher in these cases.

Many of the add-ons to the Montgomery GI Bill are not available for the Post-9/11 bill. For example, those who participated in the \$600 buy-up under the Montgomery GI Bill or REAP will not receive that additional benefit under the new bill.

According to Mr. Wellman, the Department of Veterans Affairs is expected to begin accepting applications for the Post-9/11 GI Bill May 1. Applications and the most up-to-date information about the program will be available on the GI Bill Web site: www.gibill.va.gov.

Servicemembers with at least 90 consecutive days on active duty in the Armed Forces since Sept. 11, 2001 are eligible for benefits. However, to be eligible for the full benefits, participants must have three years of active duty service after 9/11 or have been discharged due to a service-connected disability.

Officers who graduated from a service academy or received ROTC scholarships also qualify for the new GI Bill benefits. However, ROTC/Service Academy associated obligated active-duty service time does not count toward the three years necessary to qualify for the full benefits.

Members already enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill who also meet the criteria for the Post-9/11 GI Bill have the option to transfer remaining Montgomery GI Bill benefits to the new program, but benefits will not reset themselves. For example, members who've used six months of Montgomery GI Bill benefits will only receive the remaining 30 months of benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

Any individual who paid the \$1,200 buy-in for the Montgomery GI Bill and elects to use the Post-9/11 GI Bill will be refunded a proportional amount if, and after, all entitlement under the Post-9/11 GI Bill is used.

Unlike the Montgomery GI Bill, the new GI Bill will allow you to use this benefit for up to 15 years after your last discharge or separation from active duty.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill will cover tuition and fees with payments sent directly to the school. The formula for determining the amount of tuition and fees paid will be based on the highest cost of a state-supported bachelor's degree program.

For students who attend less than full-time (12 credit hours per term), a portion of the payment based on the number of units of study will be received.

Preliminary rates for individual state tuition and fees are available on the GI Bill Web site. Students in at least half-time status will be paid a monthly housing stipend averaging \$1,100 per month.

The allowance will be equivalent to the E-5 with dependents Basic Allowance for Housing payment, determined using the ZIP code of the school.

Amounts per location can be found online at: www.defensetravel.dod.mil/perdiem/bah.html

Students enrolled exclusively in online training will not receive the housing allowance.

Books and Supplies: A maximum of \$1,000 per year, distributed per credit hour, will be allotted to the member to cover the costs of books and supplies needed for classes. Students on active duty will not receive the book and supplies stipend.

Like the Montgomery GI Bill, the new GI Bill will provide up to \$1,200 for tutorial assistance. An extra \$2,000 is available to pay for one license or certification test as approved by the VA.

Selected students may also receive a one-time rural benefit payment of \$500 if they reside in a county with six persons or less per square mile (as determined by the most recent decennial census) and must travel or relocate to attend school.

For the first time, those enrolled in the Post-9/11 GI Bill program will be able to transfer unused educational benefits, to cover the cost of tuition only, to spouses or children.

The DoD is authorized to allow individuals who, on or after August 1, 2009, have served at least six years in the Armed Forces and who agree to serve at least another four years in the Armed Forces to transfer unused entitlement to their dependent spouses and children.

Visit www.gibill.va.gov for more information.

**NORAD/NORTHCOM
leader to address
armed forced dinner**



Gen. Victor Renuart

Gen. Victor Renuart, commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command, will be the guest speaker at the 83rd Annual Louisville Armed Forces Dinner at The Galt House Hotel in Louisville on May 15.

NORAD is a bi-national United States and Canadian organization charged with aerospace warning and control for North America.

NORTHCOM provides command and control of Department of Defense homeland defense efforts and coordinates defense support of civil authorities.

This year marks the 90th anniversary of the nation's longest-running armed forces dinner.

The tradition was initiated by the dinner's first speaker, Gen. John J. "Blackjack" Pershing, in 1919.

Reservations for event can be made by calling Col. Steve Bullard at (502) 607-1738 or via e-mail at steve.p.bullard@us.army.mil.

The evening begins with a reception at 6 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. in the Grand Ballroom of the hotel's east tower.

Attendance is \$30 per person. Entertainment will be provided by the 202nd Kentucky Army National Guard Band.

Military uniform for the event is mess dress.

Airmen fly honorable mission

**Every day is Memorial Day
for Charleston aircrews**

By Trisha Galloway
437th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

CHARLESTON AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. — Charleston Air Force Base C-17 Globemaster III aircrews flew the most precious of cargo recently — the remains of a fallen hero.

Spc. Israel Candelaria Mejias of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment in Task Force 3rd Battalion, 66th Armor Regiment, 172nd Brigade Combat Team from Grafenwoehr, Germany, was killed April 5 near Baghdad, Iraq, from wounds he sustained when a mine detonated near him during combat operations.

An aircrew from the 14th Airlift Squadron was in crew rest at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, when they were alerted and notified their mission back to the U.S. would be a dignified transfer from Ramstein Air Base, Germany, to Dover Air Force Base, Del., where Specialist Mejias' family would be waiting for him.

"You go out to the jet and reality sets in," said Tech. Sgt. Erin Manley, a loadmaster with the 14th AS. Once the Charleston C-17 departed Ramstein, the aircrew flew a 9.5-hour direct flight to Dover. It is the policy of the Department of Defense and the mission of the Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Center to return the remains of any fallen servicemember to their family as quickly as possible.

"It taxes on your emotions," said Senior Airman Stephen Adams, another loadmaster from the 14th AS. "We have a lot of time to reflect about the sacrifice of the individual."

After touching down at Dover, the aircrew stood in formation on the ramp of the C-17 and saluted Specialist Mejias as an Army carry team transferred his body.

"It's pretty emotional," Airman Adams added. "We try to return our military servicemembers with honor, and that's what we did."

Once Specialist Mejias' body was transferred from the C-17 to a waiting vehicle, he was taken to the Port Mortuary where the AFMAO staff prepared his body for his final trip home to San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico.



Roland Balik/USAF

An Army carry team transfers the remains of Army Spc. Israel Candelaria Mejias from a C-17 Globemaster III on April 7 at Dover Air Force Base, Del. Specialist Candelaria Mejias of San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico, died April 5 of wounds sustained when a mine detonated near him during combat operations near Baghdad, Iraq. The C-17 is assigned to Charleston Air Force Base, S.C.

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notice — to assess, prepare and command newly acquired airfields for expeditionary aerospace forces.

“We follow seizure forces, assess the airfield and then immediately set up airfield operations,” Colonel Hurst said. “After we have operations up and running, we hand it off to the unit selected to operate at that particular location.”

The CRG concept has further evolved to now include homeland crisis-response efforts. Whether at home or abroad, officials say the 123rd CRG will meld multi-disciplinary, cross-functional teams under a single commander to maximize unity of effort while minimizing personnel and equipment.

Kentucky’s unit is comprised of two squadrons: the 123rd Global Mobility Squadron, which provides the first on-scene Air Force troops trained in command and control, aerial port operations and maintenance; and the 123rd Global Mobility Readiness Squadron, whose mission is to establish security and other base support capabilities like logistics, fuels and intelligence.

The Kentucky Air Guard announced its new mission in November 2006 and established a task force to start working on the CRG activation process.

“We began developing plans right away,” said Colonel Hurst. “I came on board in April of 2007 and continued the process of selecting unit members. Within a few months, we had the core nucleus of our new group. It is an exciting and challenging opportunity to

build a new group, one of the first in the Air National Guard.”

According to Colonel Hurst, the Air Force had been looking for an Air National Guard or Reserve unit to form another CRG. At the time, the 123rd Airlift Wing was downsizing from 12 to eight C-130 aircraft and had excess manpower. Most of those “excess” troops already had the requisite global experience needed to excel in the new unit.

“We’ve been doing expeditionary missions here for quite some time,” Colonel Hurst noted. “We supported relief missions in Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti and Kosovo. We also had some of the same AFSCs that the new unit would require, so it was a very logical fit to bring the CRG here. The active-duty Air Force realized that.”

The 123rd CRG began training in October 2007, sending 60 personnel to the Contingency Response Formal Training Unit at the U.S. Air Force Expeditionary Center located at Fort Dix, N.J. Since then, unit members have been deployed as augmentees to other CRGs during operations in Germany, Israel, the former Soviet republic of Georgia and, currently, to Afghanistan, Croatia and Poland. The unit also led Air Guard relief efforts here in Kentucky during a recent ice storm that caused massive power outages and confined many residents to their homes.

“During the ice storm, we went door to door checking on the condition of our citizens to see if they were in need of help,” Colonel Nelson said. “Our team identified a couple suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning and provided medical attention immediately.



Capt. Dale Greer/KyANG

Col. Warren Hurst, commander of the 123rd Contingency Response Group, addresses Kentucky Airmen during the unit’s activation ceremony in the Base Fuel Cell Hangar on March 15.

“It most likely saved their lives.”

Officially activated on Feb. 1, 2009, the new unit is now one of only 10 such CRGs in the entire Air Force.

It joins the 615th Contingency Response Wing (570th, 571st and 572nd CRGs) at Travis Air Force Base, Calif.; the 621st Contingency Response Wing (816th, 817th and 818th CRGs) and the 108th CRG (Air National Guard) at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.; the 86th CRG, Ramstein Air Base, Germany; and the 36th CRG, Andersen Air Force Base, Guam.

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