

## 123 CONTINGENCY RESPONSE GROUP



### MISSION

### LINEAGE

123 Contingency Response Group

### STATIONS

Louisville, KY

### ASSIGNMENTS

### COMMANDERS

Maj Kevin Morris

### 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 roundel Azure; three rays issuing from the hurt to three winged plates Argent over three billets Or in chief, overall a chevron per chevron of the last and Gules, the shield edged in chief Or. Attached below the shield, a White scroll inscribed "123D CONTINGENCY RESPONSE GROUP" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE:** Ultramarine blue and Air Force yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue

alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The three winged plates represent the original Air National Guard units of the 123d Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, consolidated through 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 Group's missions.

## **MOTTO**

## **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

The 123d Contingency Response Group (CRG, consisting 15 members of the 123d Aerial Port Squadron and nine members of the 123d 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.

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 123d 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 123d 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 123d 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 123d STS' first quarter 05 to Afghanistan. Thirty-one personnel from the 123d 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 123d Operations Group kept aircraft and crews on

alert for hurricane relief operations throughout the month of September. Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Whelan of the 123d Operations Group served as Air Liaison Officer to the Louisiana Air National Guard in Baton Rouge from 22-29 Sep. The 123d Contingency Response Group (CRG, consisting 15 members of the 123d Aerial Port Squadron and nine members of the 123d 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 123d 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 123d 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 National Guard announced the creation of a contingency response group in Louisville Nov. 28. It marked the first such rapid air base construction unit to be formed within the ANG. Active duty CRGs have been one of the Air Force's in-demand units, performing a range of operations from disaster relief to evacuation assistance. The 123rd CRG will provide the capability to open a runway, load and unload aircraft, provide security, and create conditions where follow-on forces can operate a successful airfield. Col. Mark Kraus, 123rd Airlift Wing commander, said the transition for the unit should be smooth, since the unit has the only ANG special tactics squadron containing combat control and para-rescue airmen. Other Air Guardsmen are also experienced in expeditionary command and control as well as medical operations, critical skills for CRGs. More than 130 airmen will be transferred into the new 123rd CRG and will use current facilities and equipment at the Kentucky Guard base. The unit's associate partner will be the 615th Contingency Response Wing at Travis AFB, Calif 2007

12/6/2007 - FORT DIX, N.J. (AFPN) - Airmen assigned to the nation's first Air National Guard contingency response group unit attended 22 days of training at the Air Force Expeditionary Center's Mobility Operations School here. Fifty-six Airmen from the 115-person 123rd Contingency Response Group of the Kentucky Air National Guard at Louisville completed the comprehensive, four-module course covering all the phases of CRG operations to include subjects such as air base assessment, initial airfield operations and force protection and Alaskan shelter construction.

The 22-day stay included 10 days in the Advanced Contingency Skills Training Course, taught by the Center's Expeditionary Operations School, learning convoy operations, military operations in urban terrain, combat patrolling and tactics and many related subjects. "The training they received is designed to provide newly-assigned Airmen to contingency response

wings, groups and airlift control flights with a firm understanding of the 'contingency response' mission," said Lt. Col. Richard Elkins, the course director. "The course prepares them for rapid deployment and equips them with the basic expeditionary skills needed to function across the full spectrum of military operations and in a wide variety of bed down and operating environments," he said. Capt. Ash Groves, a 123rd CRG maintenance officer, said the course gave him the exposure he needed to learn the "many facets of expeditionary operations." "Many of the skills learned will take time for us to become proficient at, however, with the initial ground work accomplished, we can continue to build on our capability (as a unit)," Captain Groves said.

The establishment of the mission and the directive to form 123rd CRG was established just over one year ago on Nov. 28, 2006, in Louisville. The unit formally activates on April 1, 2008. The Airmen assigned to this unit say the training is needed and has definitely helped build on the knowledge of the mission they are tasked to do. "We are expected to be self-sufficient when we hit the ground and capable of operating in nearly any environment," said Capt. Gregory Shanding, a 123rd CRG civil engineer officer. "In the training, I learned a lot about what the other CRG functions will focus on as we together accomplish our mission.

I also received an excellent 'big picture' perspective on how the CRG fits into how the Air Force fights." "We have to be able to go anywhere in the world in a matter of hours. Most Airmen have days, weeks or even months to do the same," Tech. Sgt. Mike Skeens, an air transportation craftsman for the 123rd CRG, said. "The training reiterated the fact that you have to be prepared at all times for contingencies anywhere, anytime." For Staff Sgt. Thomas Fuchs, the training built on skills he's learned as a 123rd CRG security forces troop, he said. "Being security forces, this was great refresher training, and the CRG classes were very informative," Sergeant Fuchs said. "When you deploy with a CRG, everyone needs to have knowledge of other career fields in the unit, and this training helped me understand that. The 123rd students who took the training also say they know being in a CRG is unique and requires specialized training.

"We could hear about our deployments just days before we have to leave," said Senior Airman Ryan McNary, a 123rd CRG load planner. "We have to be ready at a moment's notice and always be current on our training." Staff Sgt. Tyler Marks, also a 123rd CRG load planner, compared the type of effort it takes for a CRG to deploy with the normal process. "Normally when Airmen deploy, they pack bags with gear and clothing to perform a duty at a down-range base," Sergeant Marks said. "With a CRG, they pack an entire unit, load it on to aircraft and go open a base that is nothing more than a deserted airstrip when they arrive. For us to be able to do this, training is everything." Lt. Col. Warren Hurst, the 123rd CRG commander, said the ultimate goal is for his CRG to be among the best, and the Center's training helps accomplish that goal. "Kentucky has selected our most experienced and motivated people for our CRG," Colonel Hurst said. "We have a unique opportunity to establish a corporate culture that sets a high standard of excellence. The Expeditionary Center provided an outstanding and standardized starting point for us to do just that.

4/25/2009 - KENTUCKY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- 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 stateside 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' 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. "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

Kentucky Air Guard Unit Gets Domestic-Response Nod US Transportation Command earlier this month declared that the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group is fully mission-capable to provide domestic disaster-response assistance to civilian authorities, according to a release. TRANSCOM rendered the decision after the group on Aug. 8 completed a four-day earthquake-response exercise in Mascoutah, Ill., with the Army's 689th Rapid Port Opening Element from JB Langley-Eustis, Va., states the Aug. 14 release. "The inspectors told us we knocked it out of the park and awarded us an overall grade of 'outstanding,'" said Col. Mark Heiniger, 123rd CRG commander. The group's mission is to ensure the rapid delivery of food, water, medicine, and other assistance by airlift, even when local airports are closed. The Kentucky group is the first fully operational CRG in the Air National Guard, according to the release. In 2012, TRANSCOM affirmed the group's ability to perform the joint port-opening mission overseas. 2013

Members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group recently transferred control of a humanitarian cargo hub in Senegal to a relief group. The Ebola-response mission was initially set to last 45-to-60 days, Maj. Dale Greer, spokesman for the Joint Task Force-Port Opening Senegal, told Air Force Magazine in October, shortly after the unit's arrival. While in the country, the unit established an international staging base to help route supplies and equipment from the airport into the affected areas, processed more than 750 tons of relief supplies for airlift to Liberia, and "ensure[d] capabilities [were] rapidly provided to the affected region and to health care providers," Greer said. The humanitarian operation will continue at the Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport, despite the 123rd

CRG's departure. The 787th Air Expeditionary Squadron will take it from this point. "As one of the first Air Force assets in theater, the 123rd Contingency Response Group's mission was to open an airfield for military cargo operations, establish an aerial port of debarkation, and hand off the operation to follow-on forces within 60 days," said David Mounkes, commander of the 123rd, in a release. 2014

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Air Force Unit Histories

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Sources

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