

129 RESCUE SQUADRON



MISSION

LINEAGE

3 Bombardment Squadron constituted, 1 Jan 1938
Redesignated 3 Bombardment Squadron (Medium), 22 Dec 1939
Activated, 1 Feb 1940
Redesignated 3 Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), 20 Nov 1940
Inactivated, 1 Nov 1946
Redesignated 129 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (Medium, Photographic), 24 Jul 1951
Activated, 1 Aug 1951
Redesignated 129 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (Medium), **16 Jun 1952**
Redesignated 129 Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron (Heavy), 16 **Oct 1952**
Inactivated, 1 Jan 1953
Redesignated 129 Air Resupply Squadron
Redesignated 129 Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium) 1 Nov 1958
Redesignated 129 Air Commando Squadron, 1 Jul 1963
Redesignated 129 Special Operations Squadron, 1 Aug 1968
Redesignated 129 Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, 3 May 1975
Redesignated 129 Air Rescue Squadron, 1 Oct 1989
Redesignated 129 Rescue Squadron, 15 Mar 1992

STATIONS

France Field, CZ, 1 Feb 1940
Rio Hato, Panama, 8 Dec 1941
Galapagos Islands, 4 May 1942
David, Panama, 12 Mar 1943
Talara, Peru, 1 Apr 1943
Salinas, Ecuador, 23 May 1943

David, Panama, 11 Jun 1943
Howard Field, CZ, 6 Apr 1944
Rio Hato, Panama, 26 Aug 1944
David, Panama, 8 Dec 1944
Rio Hato, Panama, 19 Oct 1945-1 Nov 1946
Fairchild AFB, WA, 1 Aug 1951
Travis AFB, CA, 15 Oct 1952-1 Jan 1953
Haywood, CA
NAS Moffett (Later Federal Field), CA, 1 May 1980

ASSIGNMENTS

6 Bombardment Group, 1 Feb 1940
VI Bomber Command, 1 Nov 1943-1 Nov 1946
111 Strategic Reconnaissance Group, 1 Aug 1951
111 Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, 16 Jun 1952-1 Jan 1953

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-18, 1940
LB-30, 1942
B-17, 1942, 1943; 1942; 1944
B/RB-29, 1951
C-46, 1955-1958
SA-16, 1956
SA/HU-16, 1956
U-10, 1963
C-119, Jul 1963
U-6, 1966-1967
C-119, 1968
C-119, 1973
HH-3, 1975
MH-60/HH-60, 1990
HC-130, 1975

COMMANDERS

Maj Elmer T. Rundquist, 1 Feb 1940- Jun 1940
Maj Charles W. Koenig
Lt Col Albert R. Santos
Lt Col Daniel Lapostole
Maj Matthew Wenthe

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Antisubmarine, American Theater

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM



3 Bombardment Squadron, Heavy emblem

On a blue disc within a white and black border a demolition bomb endwise, entwined with a bushmaster (snake) in front of a cloud proper. (Approved, 10 Apr 1941)





MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The 129th Air Resupply Group derived the majority of its membership from personnel of the departing 144th, it also engaged in an intensive recruiting campaign for such new aircrew positions as Navigator, Flight Engineer and Radio Operator. The new group was initially equipped with the C-46. It was one of four new ANG units tasked with secret special operations missions formed that year at the request of the Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency. The creation of those units marked the debut of the special operations mission in the Air Guard.

It was LTC Breeden's task and challenge to mold his human and material assets into an operationally ready unit new to the Air Guard with an equally new mission, that of clandestine warfare. Initiating an effort which was to become a 129th tradition, the organization set about making the C-46 capable of meeting its high standards of maintenance and air worthiness. Equally important, its pilots were obliged to transition into new aircraft and different

techniques. All these formidable achievements were accomplished with virtually no outside assistance.

In the absence of an active duty force, the decision to go to the Air Guard had one great advantage in its favor. Unlike the never-ending personnel rotations that characterize the active forces, Air Guard personnel frequently spend their entire careers flying and maintaining the same aircraft. The overwhelming advantage of such continuity has been frequently demonstrated in tactical competitions in which air guardsmen outperform their active duty contemporaries. This experience proved doubly fortunate as no concerted effort seems to have been made to channel ARG personnel leaving active duty into these new Air Guard units.

The mission was identical to that of the active duty ARGs the guardsmen were replacing unconventional and psychological warfare. With the organization established and the aircraft coming in, the most pressing question quickly turned to the subject of training. Single-ship, low level flying in and out of remote airstrips both day and night, not to mention water operations, were a long stretch for a group of fighter pilots used to high-altitude, daytime formation flying. There was an agency that could provide the necessary training for unconventional air warfare training at a place called simply "The Farm."

Following the 1954 move of the 144th Fighter Wing to Fresno, the 129th Air Resupply Group was formed at Hayward Air National Guard Base and was federally recognized on 3 Apr 1955. The Air Resupply mission, dealing in unconventional warfare, would later become known as Air Commando and then Special Operations. Equipped with the C-46 and under the command of Lt Col John R. Breeden, the new unit was challenged in its first winter of existence. That winter the Sacramento valley was hit with severe flooding. The new 129th responded, flying much needed relief supplies into isolated areas.

Little time lapsed before the new unit was called upon to demonstrate its capabilities in a most challenging environment. During the winter of 1955-1956, Northern California was battered by severe and repetitive storms and ravaged by extensive flooding. Pressed into service by State authorities, the 129th Air Resupply Group responded by airlifting tons of relief supplies, emergency equipment, and livestock feed to the devastated areas. Staging out of Hayward CA, McClellan AFB CA, and other locations, the lumbering C-46 became a familiar and genuinely welcome sight to the citizens of the affected regions.

In 1956, the amphibious SA-16 (later re-designated the HU-16) was added to the squadron's inventory. They were painted black for the night mission. The capability to operate on both land water added more mission flexibility, but also presented unique training challenges.

During these years, deployment to Gowen Field at Boise, ID for annual training periods gave the Group the opportunity to operate in a diversity of terrains such as high mountains and deserts, situations conducive to honing its techniques and abilities. In addition, it gained experience in Mobility by transporting its personnel and equipment by both airlift and convoy. This proved invaluable in the future when the Group was to be required to prove this capability during the

exacting inspections which had become the order of the day.

On 1 Nov 1958, the unit was reorganized from a Group to a single squadron structure and renamed the 129th Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium). All elements involved such as Operations, Aircraft Maintenance, Supply Administration, etc, were included in the Squadron. Maj Charles W. Koenig, a World War II P-51 Ace, then assumed command. As the year 1962 arrived, the old C-46s were now sitting in the "Bone Yard" in Arizona and the HU-16 would be our sole aircraft. The 129th would also re-gain Group status. That year the 129th passed its first, of many, "Operational Readiness Inspections". Some would say, "It would be a cold day" for that to happen, and it was - it snowed in the San Francisco Bay area. During this period, the 129th varied its training locations and added long overwater navigation flights in the SA-16 to its impressive list of skills and began what was to prove to be a longstanding association with Army Special Forces units, both active and reserve

In Jul 1963 the black HU-16 was replaced with the C-119. The Flying Boxcar gave the 129th added range and cargo capability. Another unique aircraft, the U-10 would be added to the inventory giving us a short range, short field capability. With these changes came another name change to the 129th Air Commando Group. Although the name changed, the basic mission remained the same.

During the winter of 1964-65, northern California was again visited by heavy rains and much flooding, isolating many areas. The 129th responded by flying over half a million pounds of supplies into the stricken areas. In addition to the usual items such as food, clothing, and medical supplies, a mobile Air Traffic Control Tower was flown to Arcadia to assist the FAA in controlling air traffic in the stricken area. Also, hay and grain were flown in to feed stranded livestock. All this was accomplished without serious incident while flying in continuous bad weather. This effort did not go unnoticed, and the 129th was awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit award. The Assembly of the State of California also passed a Resolution commending the unit.

For most of its early existence, the 129th did its annual Field Training at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho.

In the spring of 1964, all four Air Commando Groups came together for a rare opportunity to train during Operation Sidewinder. The training site itself was appropriate in that Marana Air Park, located 20 miles northwest of Tucson, Arizona, was home to a number of USI proprietary airlines, as well as other unrelated federal departments. While little was said directly to the guardsmen, the presence of civilian strangers observing their mission briefings and flight performance made it clear their proficiency was being monitored. It was also at Marana that the Guard was introduced to the latest evolution in air-to-ground recovery systems, a weird-looking setup patriotically called the "All-American System."

In the 1960s, South and Central America beckoned, and Panama in particular provided an excellent training site. Unconventional warfare training, psychological warfare leaflet drops,

and even jungle-survival school were on the curriculum for the guardsmen operating in the Canal Zone. In addition, numerous humanitarian missions were conducted by the guardsmen using their amphibian and STOL aircraft to reach remote villages and coastal towns. The Rhode Island special operators even took two SA-16s and a support aircraft to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1970 to conduct underwater seismic testing for the US Navy in Lake Tanganyika. In June 1971, Maryland's 135th Special Operations Group (SOG) was redesignated a tactical air support group. Four years later, California's 129th SOG became the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, part of the Military Airlift Command.

In July 1963, the 129th saw the departure of the "Albatross" and its replacement by two very different types of aircraft. The C-119 had for some time been one of the primary cargo/troop carrying aircraft of the Air Force. This new-to-the Reserve Forces equipment permitted the Group to range considerably farther and significantly increased the number of personnel and the amount of cargo which could be transported. The U-10 was especially well suited to effect the introduction into and exfiltration from "denied areas" of small, specialized teams. Coincidental to the assignment of these aircraft came another change in name, to that of "Air Commando" Group, a designation considered more appropriate to the unconventional warfare mission and to the new emphasis and reliance on non-nuclear military response. This acquisition of the C-119 further enlarged the sites in which the 129th could operate, making it possible to deploy to the Panama Canal Zone in 1965 and from there to all of Central America, as well as to Eielson AFB, Alaska in 1966 from which it accomplished missions well beyond the Arctic Circle.

In this decade of the 1960's the 129th acquitted itself with distinction in the other half of its dual responsibility - support of State authorities. In the winter of 1964 -1965, Northern California again was inundated by rain-induced flooding which isolated communities, stranded livestock, and generally wreaked havoc. The Group, at the call of the Governor, responded by airlifting over 600,000 pounds of relief materials and emergency supplies and equipment. A mobile control tower, the property of another California ANG unit, was airlifted by the 129th to Arcata. Because of the magnitude of the disaster and the relief efforts, this relatively small community's airport had become one of the busiest airfield facilities in the U.S.

August of 1965 extensive rioting and civil Disturbances erupted in the Watts section of Los Angeles. The 129th provided airlift to State authorities to the area so that the situation could be evaluated and appropriate action determined.

In 1965, for the first time the unit went outside the continental US to complete this requirement, deploying to Howard AFB in the Panama Canal zone. While there, the flight crews received Jungle Survival training. In addition to training missions, the unit flew cargo missions throughout Central America and south to Lima, Peru, in support of the USAF Southern Command. The following year, the 129th deployed to Eielson AFB at Fairbanks, Alaska. Cargo missions for the Alaska Air Command ranged north of the Arctic Circle to Bettels, Alaska.



Once it had been decided that the Guard should be summoned to State Active Duty, the Group airlifted over 600 personnel to the scene from various locations in Northern and Central California on an around-the-clock basis for several days. The unsettled times, when actual and threatened disturbances disrupted both active duty and Guard installations, dictated that the ANG be capable of coping with such potential problems. The 129th, in compliance with this necessity, trained to meet such contingencies by developing both a Riot Control Force and a SWAT Team, both unaccustomed roles for airmen.

From May to September 1966, the 129th based upon its reputation for expertise in its mission and excellent and demanding training standards, was tasked to provide specialized training to active duty Air Force pilots. The training vehicle was the U-6A with which the unit had been assigned when its U-10's were transferred to the Air Force for service in Viet Nam. Upon completion of this program, dubbed "Lucky Tiger", the Group was cited by the Air Force for the superior quality and effectiveness of the training. In addition, the Project Officer, Lt Col Albert R. Santos, accepted on behalf of the Group, a Burmese Teak Tiger, from the Air Force pilots who had participated in the training as a tangible expression of their appreciation. The Air Force, recognizing its expertise in the Air Commando mission, in 1968 called on the 129th to train its pilots to fly the U-6 in the mission for operations in Vietnam. The program was called "Lucky Tiger", and the unit was cited by the Air Force for quality and effectiveness of the training. By the 1970s, the Air Force no longer had flight crews qualified in the C-119. In 1972, the unit supplied flight crews to ferry some AC/C-119 aircraft from the US to Viet Nam. Although some maintenance problems were encountered, these were coped with and solved, and the "two-engine" C-119s were successfully delivered across the "four-engine" Pacific Ocean.

1974 would be a pivotal year for the 129th. Col Koenig, who had guided the unit for the past

fifteen years, had left the group. Col Albert R. Santos now assumed command. In February, the Department of Defense announced its intention to deactivate the ANG's Special Operations units. If these units were to survive, Col Santos and the commanders of the other affected units would have to find viable missions. For the 129th that mission was Rescue, a mission with both peacetime and wartime applications, and on 3 May 1975, the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group was federally recognized

With the change of mission came a change of gaining command from TAC to MAC - and a change of aircraft. HC-130s, a long range turbine powered rescue transport, and HH-3s, a turbine powered heavy lift rescue helicopter, replaced the C-119s and U-6s, and the very large task of retraining in both aircraft and mission was begun. In-flight refueling of the HH-3s from the HC-130, which could greatly extend the range and endurance of the helicopter, became a new training challenge for the crews of both aircraft. A new crew position, Pararescue man (PJ), was added to the crews of both aircraft. Now, for the first time, we were being trained in the same equipment and to the same standards as our active duty counterparts.

In February of 1974, the unit received notice that it was one of several Air National Guard organizations scheduled for deactivation in mid-1975 as the result of an economy move by the Department of Defense. Lt Col Albert R. Santos, who had succeeded Col Koenig upon the latter's retirement due to illness, refused to accept this devastating blow without reaction. He set about mounting a campaign to secure a reversal of the decision. Members and friends of the unit were pressed into service to contact federal and state legislators to impress upon them the value of the trained and professional resources which the 129th represented. Visits, letters and telephone calls finally persuaded the appropriate authorities that the past significant accomplishments and contributions of the Group and its obvious potential to continue that record deserved more consideration than being disbanded. By May of 1974 the DOD relented and determined to continue the unit's existence but in a mission totally new to and unique for the Air Guard - that of Aerospace Rescue and Recovery. While this reprieve was a most welcome announcement to the unit's personnel, there were immediate and pressing challenges which had to be faced. The most important event on the horizon was the Operational Readiness Inspection scheduled for later in the year. Since this would focus critical attention on the resolve of the Group to prove its value as an asset, the organization's members, permitting no letdown, even though the Special Operations mission was ending, prepared themselves even more earnestly than it had in the past. The confidence in them was fully justified when as a result of the inspection the 129th was rated as C-1, the highest readiness category then in existence.

Following the accomplishment of this noteworthy milestone, the 129th began the demanding task of conversion to new aircraft and new taskings. Now to be equipped with two types of aircraft entirely new to it, the HC-130P/N and the HH-3E, pilots were confronted with transitioning. In the case of the Jolly Green Giant, this transition would require almost total retraining. In addition, Aircraft Maintenance would be obliged to obtain schooling for its people in many systems which were equally new to them. To further complicate matters occasioned by the changeover, new crew positions such as Radio Operator had to be recruited and an

occupation never before included in the Air Guard personnel inventory, that of Pararescue Specialist. This highly complex vocation demanded expertise in such capabilities as medical, scuba diving, and mountain climbing as well as parachutist.

The assignment of this highly visible, uniquely humanitarian mission and the new aircraft spurred the 129th's Guardsmen to outstanding effort. Current members learned new skills and techniques and the infusion of rescue-experienced individuals from active duty Rescue units permitted all conversion activities to be completed well in advance of the established deadline. As a consequence of this superior performance, the 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group was extended Federal Recognition on 3 May 1975, becoming the first of its kind in the ANG. It began a new and exciting era which was to prove especially satisfying and gratifying.

Continuing its now longstanding tradition of getting down to business as quickly as possible, it responded to its first tasking by the Air Force Rescue Control Center during Christmas time of 1975.

This first test of the unit's ability to prosecute these highly involved missions required particularly close coordination between all the parties. It was to be the forerunner of a continually growing record of achievement. As the Rescue Service became more familiar with and impressed by the Group, it was called upon with increasing regularity and consistently demonstrated its willingness and ability by reacting in a truly professional manner as it continues to do today.

Upon regaining an Operationally Ready status, the Air Force Rescue Control Center began calling on the 129th to assist in rescue operations in the western states and off the Pacific coast. While participating in a Red Flag exercise at Nellis AFB, Nevada, the unit was credited with its first "save" on March 24, 1977. An Air Force fighter pilot had ejected at low altitude and was rescued by the crew of a 129th H-3. From that point forward, the word "save" would take on added significance. The California Air National Guard's 129th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Group, based at the Hayward Air Terminal, has been credited with its first unassisted rescue of an injured airman. The rescue took place March 24 in Nevada, where the Hayward unit was participating in an operation near Nellis Air Force Base. The men were in a "Jolly Green Giant" helicopter being refueled when they were notified that a fighter plane had crashed and that the pilot, who had ejected at low altitude, was badly injured. The flight crew located the downed plane and injured pilot, who was being attended to by Nellis range personnel, within 30 minutes of the 10:30 a.m. crash. He had suffered two broken legs, had head and back injuries and was in shock. The helicopter crew flew the pilot to the base hospital, treating him for his injuries and putting him on an intravenous solution. The actions of the Guard crew were credited with saving the pilot's life. The crew was composed of TSgt. Dick Grady, a para-rescueman, of Fremont; Capt. Les Spencer, a pilot, of Petaluma; Maj. Dan Layton, co-pilot, of Pleasant Hill; TSgt. Ken Dudick, flight mechanic, of Union City, and SSgt. Manuel Cortez, crew chief, of Fremont.

HC-130 Crew (not mentioned above)

MAJ Driscoll (AF Advisor)

CPT Geary Tiffany	PLT	
GPT Chuck Baker	PLT	
CPT John Ruppel	NAV	
MSG Gus Pappas	F/E	
MSG Bert Bartholomeu		L/M
SSG Rich Wagner	R/O	

Besides conducting rigorous training in its wartime mission of Combat Rescue and answering the call for help to those in distress both on land and at sea, the 129th began to be selected for more and more support missions. These included the provision of air-to-air refuelings for regular Air Force helicopter crews in Japan, Korea and the Philippines so that they could maintain currency and "Duck Butts" to provide cover for over-ocean flights of aircraft. The 129th supported one such duck butt escorting Air Force Two while Vice President Mondale was making a goodwill tour in the Pacific. This particular mission effectively demonstrated the regard in which the Group was held.

These noteworthy achievements brought well-deserved recognition from many sources. Acknowledging the sustained superior performance of the 129th, the United States Coast Guard awarded the organization its coveted Meritorious Service Unit Award with Operational Device. Receipt of this award from one uniformed service to another was especially gratifying to the members of the 129th.

In 1976 it had become obvious that the runway and unit facilities at Hayward were too restrictive to permit sustained operation of the HC-130 at its full potential. A decision was reached to relocate the Group from there to Naval Air Station Moffett Field.

Missions were still conducted at an ever quickening pace, training continued to add to the unit's expertise, and contributions continued to be made which added to the "Can Do" reputation of the 129th. Much of the attention and effort had to be concentrated now on the development of plans for relocation, building design and the actual construction of the new and/or refurbished facilities which were to house activities at its new home. Despite the frustration of delays, changes, adjustments and rescheduling, work did progress, facilities took shape and anticipation gave way to realization.

Faced with the choice of movement of equipment and materiel by commercial means or by self-help, the sections opted to "do it ourselves". As a consequence of this decision only a very few items which were either outsized or otherwise exceeded internal capability were moved by contract. All other items, such as furniture, communications gear, supplies, PJ paraphernalia, delicate test equipment and office machines were relocated solely by internal means. This monumental effort entailed accumulating over 100,000 miles in one of the most congested traffic areas in the State and was accomplished without incident or accident. All those Mobility exercises over the years really paid off.

Only partially settled into its new quarters and severely handicapped by very limited

commercial communications, the unit was once again called upon to deliver the goods. Heavy rains and the flooding induced by them ravaged large areas of Southern California. Reacting to the call of the Governor, the Group provided aerial survey of the affected areas by the HC-130 and evacuated endangered individuals by use of the H-3.

Col Santos was reassigned to HQ California ANG in Jan 1977, and Col Grant S. Pyle III would succeed him. In September, Col Edward R. Aguiar, a home grown product who began his career as an enlisted man with the 144 Hayward, assumed command. One of the first tasks facing Col Aguiar and his staff was to find a new home for the unit. The runways at Hayward could not accommodate the HC-130 at its maximum mission weight. A new home, still in the San Francisco Bay area, was found at Moffett Field, Sunnyvale, California. By January 1980, the move was completed and operations were started at Moffett Field. When Mount St. Helens erupted in May, the 129th provided an HC-130 and crew operate an airborne command post to assist in the rescue effort in the area. During the winter of 1980-81, California was again hit with heavy rains and much flooding, this time in southern California. The 129th, responding to the call of the Governor, provided an HC-130 and crew for aerial survey of the affected areas, and HH-3 helicopters and crews to evacuate endangered civilians.

February 1982 saw the departure of Col Aguiar to assume command of the 144th Fighter Wing at Fresno. Col H. Robert Hall, an attorney and later a judge in civilian life, assumed command of the group. Since acquiring the Rescue mission, the 129th had worked closely with the United States Coast Guard in the prosecution of missions off the west coast. In recognition of this cooperation and support, the Coast Guard awarded the unit with the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation

After the departure of Col Hall in February 1983, command passed to Col Allen W. Boone, who had been serving as the Director of Operations. With the 129th, he had flown both the C-119 and HC-130 as Aircraft Commander, Instructor, and Flight Examiner. Col Boone had also commanded the 129th Rescue Squadron. Under his command, the group continued to provide support for the Air Force rescue mission both locally and world-wide.

The Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor for its contributions in Operation SOUTHERN WATCH in 2001, the Air Force Association Outstanding Air National Guard Flying Unit Award for 2001, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 2002.

129th assumed CSAR alert for Operation SOUTHERN WATCH in late August 2001.

Our men and women at Al Jaber continued to fly all fragged missions while defending our aircraft and equipment from any possible enemy action. While accessing base vulnerabilities, the Wing Commander at Al Jaber recognized the security forces' need for additional support to patrol the base perimeter. The 129th was asked for input and assistance and once again demonstrated our flexibility. With our unique NVG and FLIR capabilities, and using a tactic not employed since Vietnam, the 129th crews flew our HH-60s as day and night perimeter patrol gunships, greatly enhancing the base security posture. Combining these perimeter patrol

missions with the tasked fraged missions, 129th aircrews accumulated a remarkable 100% effective sortie rate and a 95% aircraft mission capable rate. The deployed 129th members' performance and the performance of the other Air Force and Air National Guard units deployed to Al Jaber during this critical time in our world's history did not go unrecognized. In September 2002, the Air Force announced that the units deployed to Al Jaber during September 2001 (including the 129th deployed personnel) had earned the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor. September 11th caused our mission at home to expand greatly as well. As a grieving nation came to grips with our newly exposed vulnerabilities, the Air National Guard was quick to step in and provide assistance. The 129th also deployed an MC-130 crew and 3-man PJ team to Kuwait in continuous support of the Air Force Reserve Operation SOUTHERN WATCH CSAR mission. While performing these combat missions, they increased their combat capabilities, improved their war-fighting skills, and refined their war-winning attitude. When the buildup began for a possible hostile engagement in Iraq, 129th personnel remained vigilant and prepared to meet all assigned taskings. As it became apparent that hostilities with Iraq were imminent, 129th troops at Incirlik Air Base and at home station carefully orchestrated the buildup necessary to support CSAR in a "hostile" theater. In February 2003, the 129th was realigned from AEF to the CENTAF Command. When tasked, the 129th self-deployed all forces from Turkey through Cypress into Iraq and Romania for combat ops in Operation IRAQUI FREEDOM (OIF). The 129th launched its first HH-60 CSAR mission from Basur, Iraq supported by 129th MC-130s out of Romania in April 2003. During this period, the 129th was credited with its 299th, and first-ever combat mission "save;" the first ever combat rescue by an Air National Guard Rescue Wing The Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor for its contributions in Operation SOUTHERN WATCH in 2001, the Air Force Association Outstanding Air National Guard Flying Unit Award for 2001, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 2002.

In March 2002, the 129th was ordered to Prepare to Deploy to a classified location. Coordinating with the other active and ANG rescue units, 129th Operations and Logistics Group Commanders developed a "Lightning Plan", that provided all elements necessary for a cohesive, seamless deployment to and execution of continuous CSAR missions at a bare base theater location. In August 2002, responding to a Presidential Selected Recall, 129th Operations, Logistics, Support, and Headquarters personnel deployed to Incirlik, Turkey. They flew traditional Operation Northern Watch CSAR missions, and provided both flight surgeon and medical technician health care in Incirlik and at the forward operating location. They generated aircraft and flew numerous fraged CSAR missions. The ONW "box" in Northern Iraq could not be opened, no coalition aircraft could fly missions in Northern Iraq, unless the 129th rescue forces were airborne or on strip alert. The 129th maintainers and operators generated a remarkable 100% effective mission rate, deploying MC-130s and HH-60s for every fraged sortie. The 129th also deployed an MC-130 crew and 3-man PJ team to Kuwait in continuous support of the Air Force Reserve Operation When the buildup began for a possible hostile engagement in Iraq, 129th personnel remained vigilant and prepared to meet all assigned taskings. As it became apparent that hostilities with Iraq were imminent, 129th troops at Incirlik Air Base and at home station carefully orchestrated the buildup necessary to support CSAR in a "hostile" theater. In February 2003, the 129th was realigned from AEF to the CENTAF

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The professionalism and dedication of the 129th Rescue Wing personnel has not gone unrecognized. The Wing received the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Valor for its contributions in Operation SOUTHERN WATCH in 2001, and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for 2002.

Relieved families and friends, patriots on motorcycles, local firefighters and members of the media surrounded a group of lifesaving Airmen on Sept. 9 at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif., as they arrived home from an intense four-month deployment to Afghanistan, where they rescued 187 injured people. It was a welcome sight as nearly 70 Airmen of the 129th Rescue Wing returned after providing 24-hour rescue alert at Kandahar Airfield and Camp Bastion in Helmand province, Afghanistan. Airmen from the 129th Rescue Wing composed half of the 129th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERQS) in Afghanistan, with additional personnel from active-duty and reserve units around the world, including rescue squadrons based at Moody Air Force Base, Ga.; Kadena Air Base, Japan; and Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. During the deployment the 129th ERQS was in charge of battlefield combat medical evacuation, or medevac, of all joint, coalition and Afghan National forces operating within Regional Command South, Afghanistan.

The ERQS also routinely provided critical lifesaving medical care to Afghan citizens who were wounded by enemy fighters or simply injured in everyday incidents. This rescue task differed from previous missions in which 129th Airmen were on alert to save downed U.S. Air Force pilots: The 129th ERQS in Afghanistan was responsible for saving whomever needed immediate medical attention. The 129th contingent was split between Kandahar Airfield and Camp Bastion. Stationed close to combat zones, the unit improved its response time in an effort to meet the defense secretary’s mandate to recover critically injured patients from anywhere on the battlefield in less than one hour. The 129th shared medevac alert at Kandahar Airfield with the 82nd Combat Aviation Regiment based out of Fort Bragg, N.C. “We got everything from high-priority combat casualties, such as [improvised explosive device] blasts, troops-in-contact and gunshot wounds, to routine transfers between medical facilities,” said Lt. Col. Rhys Hunt, commander of the 129th ERQS. At Camp Bastion, the unit was paired with the British Joint Helicopter Force-Afghanistan and its CH-47 Chinook airborne surgical team. “The guys out there were doing four to eight missions per day at Camp Bastion, and to say the conditions are austere is an understatement,” Hunt said. “Temps routinely hit 115 degrees with less than 1 mile visibility due to the dust. “We were closely tied to the fight there and worked particularly well extracting wounded U.K. Soldiers from the highthreat Green Zone.” Speedy and efficient maintenance of the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters at both locations was critical to saving lives, said Capt. Michael Vandermeiden, maintenance supervisor for the 129th ERQS and commander of the 129th Maintenance Operations Flight. “The key to our success was teamwork, because we were on alert around the clock and had to launch aircraft within 30

minutes,” Vandermeijden said. “[Operations] would communicate a potential mission to maintenance, which would kick the alert crews out to the aircraft to start the launch process. This allowed ops to run and jump into the aircraft and go.” “We set the standard for launching aircraft early,” he said. “A quicker launch saved people’s lives.” The maintainers faced many hurdles in keeping the aircraft flying. “Browning out” was common when a helicopter would land, and sand and dirt would envelope the aircraft. The engines would suck in the dirt, triggering engine problems. “At one point in July our maintenance team changed four engines in a week — three in 36 hours,” Hunt said. “I was impressed with their level of motivation in such arduous conditions.” Although the members of the 129th ERQS faced risks and challenges on a daily basis, the team united to perform its mission and came home without any casualties. “We have enough stories of heinous brownouts, IED strikes, bullet holes and Soldiers that lived to fight another day to last a lifetime,” Hunt said. “I don’t mean to overstate this, but this deployment has been unlike any that I have experienced in my 15 years as a rescue pilot.”

2009 Air National Guard combat search-and-rescue crews on HH-60G Pave Hawks fly throughout Afghanistan to provide airlift and medical care to service members wounded on the battlefield. More often than not, this requires them to fly into and operate in extremely hostile and precarious situations and locations, so aerial gunners are charged with protecting their combat search-and-rescue teammates and helping bring everyone back safely. “The HH-60s need to be able to land virtually on top of the [point of injury] to quickly recover the wounded,” said Tech. Sgt. Scott Matthews, an aerial gunner with the 129th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERQS). “The helicopters are a huge target for the enemy, and we need to have our heads on a swivel, making sure the [pararescuemen] have the cover they need to recover injured people.” The rescue crews are successful in recovering the wounded largely because of the speed with which they can get to a location and extract the wounded on the ground. “Speed is everything, so you need to be very familiar with your job so that you don’t cause any delays,” said Staff Sgt. Tim Chase, an active-duty aerial gunner attached to the 129th ERQS. “We constantly train for these missions. This allows us to work confidently and quickly when we are on a mission.” The irony of the aerial gunners’ role in a rescue flight is that they are often required to take a life in order to save a life. “The aspect of this job I love more than anything else is that we’re here saving lives,” Matthews said. “On the flip side, we need to make sure that when [pararescuemen] step off the bird to get the wounded, they have the protection they need. This may require taking out the bad guys so the good guys succeed.” For the crews, flexibility is important, as they never encounter the same situation twice. “The challenges that come with being in the back are constantly changing and dynamic because the [combat search-and-rescue] platform changes according to whatever theater we operate in,” said aerial gunner Staff Sgt. Sean Pellaton of the 129th ERQS. Crews often find themselves in chaotic situations, but they must maintain their composure to execute the mission. “When we’re on a mission, we’re seeing all this chaos, and right in the middle of that, there’s this odd organization,” Matthews said. “While we’re observing what’s going on all around us as thoroughly as possible for threats — whether natural or enemy — we’re also playing an active part, using the radios and manning a weapon.” The teammates, through training and experience, are completely in sync with one another, allowing the mission to become a well-orchestrated symphony of events. Once the helicopter lands, the gunners relay the signal for the pararescuemen to disembark from the

helicopter to recover the wounded, while the gunners alert the operations center that the aircraft has landed. The flight engineers and aerial gunners man their .50 caliber machine guns, providing 180 degrees of security on each side, while also monitoring the radios, updating the crew on activity outside and preparing ground forces for the helicopter's departure. "It's all going down in a matter of seconds," Chase said. "In that time, I'm looking for bad guys, the [pararescuemen] are triaging their patients, I'm giving a 30-second call for liftoff, the [flight engineer] is making sure the systems are working, and the pilots are focusing on getting us out of there and back to base camp. I don't know how or why, but everything just comes together." At the end of the day, it's the goal of the rescue mission that leaves the biggest impression on the crew. "Being a gunner, I'm part of something much bigger than myself," Matthews said. "We go in and get guys who, if we weren't there, may not make it to the next day or even the next hour."

2009 *129th Rescue Wing* launch into action to retrieve wounded service members and other battlefield casualties. As the helicopters hover over the hostile area, the Guardian Angel team rushes out to retrieve the wounded — often risking their own lives so that others may live. The 129th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron (ERQS) responds to emergency medical evacuation calls within Helmand province, Afghanistan. The detachment supports Regional Command South, responding to calls for U.S. and coalition forces as well as Afghan National Security Forces and local nationals. "As Air Force rescue crews, we use our personnel recovery and combat search and rescue skill-set to conduct [casualty evacuation] quicker and better than anyone in theater," said Maj. Matt Wenthe, 129th ERQS detachment commander. The rescue squadron comprises more than 60 Airmen accompanied by HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters. A rescue flight consists of two helicopters, each with a pilot, copilot, aerial gunner, flight engineer and two pararescuemen, or combat rescue officers. "Our entire mindset is to bring an emergency medical platform, combined with offensive security capability, to the site for quick and successful extraction of those who need us," Wenthe said. Helmand province has recently seen an increase of insurgent activity as more coalition forces were moved into Afghanistan. As such, more calls come over the radio requesting rapid recovery of injured service members or innocent bystanders in locations that are extremely hostile. This type of mission demands a response team specialized in rapid insertion and egress. "The [combat search-and-rescue] mission requires us to train going into hostile environments," Wenthe said. "That training allows us to execute medical evacuations in areas other units cannot get into." The rescue teams must remain on high alert during their 12-hour shifts. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has instructed the Air Force that rescue teams need to respond and begin transferring a patient to a higher level of medical care within 60 minutes from the time a medical alert drops — a time period commonly referred to as the "golden hour." "Speed is what's saving lives," Wenthe said. "If we are able to get to someone within the golden hour, then survival is pretty certain." Recently, a Marine on foot patrol in Helmand province was seriously injured by the blast of an improvised explosive device. "If our [combat search and rescue] guys hadn't gotten to the Marine when they did and started medical care on him, he wouldn't have survived — it's that simple," said Capt. Jac Solghan, Camp Bastion Role 3 Hospital Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Team flight clinical coordinator. "Following the golden rule is giving people a chance who otherwise would have had none, and the [rescue squadron] guys are giving us that hope for

survival. Without them, countless people would now be dead."

On the evening of July 3 2011, the California Air National Guard was contacted by the California Emergency Management Agency about a potential rescue mission to find a missing hiker in the El Dorado National Forest near Pioneer, Calif. The 54-year-old hiker, Lauren Ellen DeLaTorre, had become lost in the rugged terrain a day earlier after becoming separated from a group of her friends. DeLaTorre, an inexperienced hiker, had no food, water or warm clothing. Earlier on July 3, a helicopter crew from the 129th Rescue Wing had participated in the annual Red, White and Tahoe Blue celebration at Incline Village, Nev. After completing a water rescue demonstration, the team returned to the Truckee Tahoe Airport. Later that evening, the demonstration team was contacted about the potential mission. The mission's objective was to airlift teams of civilian search-and-rescue personnel into El Dorado National Forest. An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter was already in position, and the operation was time-critical because of the conditions. The 129th team accepted the mission. The crew took off from Truckee Tahoe Airport at about 9 a.m. on July 4. After picking up two civilian rescue crews at the incident command post, the 129th team flew into El Dorado National Forest to drop off the rescue crews at designated landing areas. Shortly after dropping off the second civilian rescue crew, the Pave Hawk crew spotted De-LaTorre in a remote area. Because of the rocky terrain, the helicopter crew had to execute a tricky landing about 100 meters from DeLaTorre. Senior Airman Edward Drew departed the aircraft and climbed through steep and rocky terrain to reach DeLa-Torre. She was suffering from dehydration and extreme fatigue and had superficial wounds on her legs. Due to her fatigue, Drew carried DeLaTorre through the more difficult terrain. At the time she was rescued, DeLaTorre had been missing for almost 48 hours. Once DeLaTorre was on board the helicopter, the crew airlifted her to the incident command post, where she was treated for minor injuries and reunited with her family. After flying to Placerville, Calif., to refuel, the Pave Hawk crew returned to the forest to pick up the second civilian rescue crew and return them to the command post. The 129th crew then flew back to Truckee Tahoe Airport, successfully completing the rescue mission and bringing the total number of people saved by the wing to 947.

"With lost hiker searches, you hope for the best but prepare yourself for the worst," said aircraft Commander Capt. Nathan Nowaski. "It was extremely gratifying to find the missing hiker and get her back to her family safely."

Members of the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Squadron conduct deck-landing qualifications with their HH-60G Pave Hawk rescue helicopter on the National Security Coast Guard Cutter USCG Bertholf off the coast of northern California, June 20, 2012. This marked the first time that a Pave Hawk landed on the Bertholf, said squadron officials. The rescue unit is assigned to Moffett Federal Airfield northwest of San Jose. 2012

HH-60G from the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing at Moffett Federal Airfield last week began dropping water on wildfires outside Bakersfield in southern California. "This is a great example of the use of airpower in the homeland to save lives and property," said Col. Steven Butow, 129th RQW commander, in an Aug. 15 unit release. Two of the unit's Pave

Hawks, staging from Tehachapi Municipal Airport, initially flew against the Jawbone complex fire in Kern County, states the release. Armed with "bambi buckets" capable of holding some 500 gallons of water, and painted with temporary pink high-visibility markings, the helos delivered 58,000 gallons of water in 120 drops between Aug. 12 and Aug. 14, their first three days of operations, according to the release. Six Air Force C-130s equipped with the Modular Airborne Firefighting System are also battling blazes from bases in California and Idaho. 2012

Out of the Fire and into the Sea: Members of the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing at Moffett Federal Airfield last week rescued two fishermen requiring medical attention aboard an Ecuadorian vessel located about 1,400 miles off the coast of Acapulco, Mexico. "This mission demonstrates the adaptability of the Air National Guard to fight wildfires in California one moment, and then save the lives of civilians in the Pacific the next," said Col. Steven Butow, 129th RQW commander, in the wing's release. Two of the wing's HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters, escorted by an MC-130P refueler, departed Moffett on Sept. 3 to insert several pararescuemen aboard the fishing boat. The PJs attended to the fishermen and helped extract them on the following day to the Coast Guard cutter Morgentha, which was steaming towards the Mexican coast. The HH-60s returned on Sept. 5 with a pair of MC-130s to extract the patients and PJs from the cutter for transport to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, where the fisherman received further medical treatment in a hospital, states the release. 2012

California Air Guardsmen Complete Ocean Rescue California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Wing at Moffett Federal Airfield retrieved a critically ill passenger aboard a cruise ship more than 300 miles off the coast of San Diego, according to unit officials. The passenger was suffering from kidney failure and required immediate treatment beyond the capabilities of the cruise ship's medical staff, states the wing's May 5 release. At the request of the Coast Guard, the wing dispatched one of its HH-60G rescue helicopters and a MC-130P refueling asset on May 5 from Moffett. Staging from San Diego's Coronado Island, the Air Guardsmen, joined by pararescuemen of the 58th Rescue Squadron at Nellis AFB, Nev., then flew to the ship. The rescuers then boarded the ship, prepared the patient, and then hoisted him up to the HH-60, which then flew him back to San Diego for treatment. "This was a complex rescue mission and our airmen rose to the occasion," said Col. Steven Butow, 129th RQW commander. 2013









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