

# THE CARGO COURIER

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

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## Wing aces ‘hyper-realistic’ combat training at Red Flag

C-130 crews flew alongside strike aircraft to face threats

By Master Sgt. Phil Speck  
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — More than 100 Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard completed 10 days of intense combat training here May 23, airlifting 35,000 pounds of essential cargo and airdropping 280 Army paratroopers into enemy territory while facing attacks from hostile aircraft and surface-to-air missiles.

The training, part of a regular Pacific Command exercise called Red Flag - Alaska, exposed Kentucky's C-130 aircrews

to a “hyper-realistic training environment” that will strengthen their preparation for combat missions in any setting, said Col. Robert Hamm, commander of Kentucky's Louisville-based 123rd Operations Group.

“The fast pace and high tension of the exercise required our Airmen to maintain constant focus despite being mentally and physically fatigued throughout,” Hamm said. “It was as close as it gets to the stress they’ll have to endure in actual combat.

“Our guys accomplished every one of their learning objectives, and I think it opened up a lot of their eyes about how serious this is.”

Read more online at  
[www.123aw.ang.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123412524](http://www.123aw.ang.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123412524)



Senior Airman Bob Buchberger/KyANG

An aircrew from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 165th Airlift Squadron flies their C-130 Hercules over the mountains of Alaska during a training scenario as part of Red Flag - Alaska on May 15. More than 100 Kentucky Airmen participated in the exercise from May 7 to 23.

## Kentucky supports exercise as lead unit

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing provided essential mission support to Red Flag - Alaska from May 7 to 23, serving as the lead unit during the Pacific Command exercise here.

Though Red Flag is primarily an operations-driven exercise designed to test the skills of aircrews in a simulated combat environment, dozens of Kentucky Airmen from a broad range of career fields provided support. See more online at <http://www.123aw.ang.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123413452>

## EOD uses war skills to eliminate flooding

A destructive force made its way through the swamps of Georgia, bottling up water flow and flooding parts of Robins Air Force Base. The enemy at hand: the American beaver.

Answering the call for action were Staff Sgts. Dustin Turner and Tim Baker, Explosive Ordnance Disposal specialists with the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron. See more online at <http://www.123aw.ang.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123411771>



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# Red Flag - Alaska heightened wing's preparedness

Three C-130 aircraft and 107 personnel from the 123rd Airlift Wing were deployed to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, from May 7 to 24 to participate in Red Flag - Alaska 14-1.

RF-A is a Pacific Air Forces-directed field training exercise for U.S. and international forces flown under simulated air combat conditions. It is conducted on the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex — 67,000 square miles of air and ground space with air operations flown primarily out of Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

RF-A exercises are focused on improving the combat readiness of U.S. and international forces and providing training for units preparing for air expeditionary force taskings.

123AW personnel consisted of six C-130 aircrews, planners and tacticians, maintenance, services, logistics, security forces, and a leadership package. While the exercise was operations/aircrew focused, our services, logistics and security forces personnel were exposed to a real-world analogue of their respective air expeditionary force taskings, and they performed and represented the wing in an exemplary manner.

Our deployed maintenance troops were exposed to sustainment of large-force deployed air operations, and, as expected, they thrived and excelled in this environment — mission effectiveness was a spectacular 94 percent!

RF-A enables joint and international units to sharpen their combat skills by fly-



**Col. Robert Hamm**  
123rd Operations Group Commander

ing simulated combat sorties in a realistic threat environment. The exercise provides joint offensive counter-air, interdiction, close-air support, airfield seizure and large-force employment training. Additionally, the training allows participants to exchange tactics, techniques and procedures while improving interoperability.

Realistic combat training is essential to the success of air and space operations. 123AW aircrew were supported and escorted by F-22, F-16, A-10 and F-15 fighters.

Additional aviation assets that participated were E-3C AWACS, C-17 airlifters, KC-135 tankers, Navy EA-6B combat jamming aircraft and MC-130 special operations aircraft. International participants were Singapore and Royal Malaysian F-16 fighters.

The 354th Combat Training Squadron's F-16 fighters participated as aggressor/enemy air threats and, combined with the multiple surface-to-air missile threat simulators, provided hyper-realistic threat scenarios to all aircrew participants.

My objectives for our 165th Airlift Squadron aircrews for this exercise were: (1) to expose them to a combat environment with very difficult threat scenarios requiring joint interoperability and coordination to solve those threats and achieve mission effectiveness; (2) to provide a stress inoculation to the pacing, confusion and fatigue inherent in combat operations; and (3) to accomplish desired learning objectives consisting of airfield seizure operations utilizing heavy equipment, container delivery system, and personnel airdrops, and dirt landing zone operations.

I told the troops on our first day in Alaska, "You do not rise to the occasion in combat; you sink to the level of your training."

RF-A allowed us to heighten the level of our training in achieving each of those desired learning objectives.

Thanks for all you do.

Let's have a great June UTA.

— Col. Robert Hamm

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We welcome your feedback. Please contact the Public Affairs Office directly if you have suggestions for articles or photography. Our office is located in Room 1160 of the Wing Headquarters Building, 1101 Grade Lane, Louisville, KY 40213.

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