

THE CARGO COURIER

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

Vol. XXIX, No. 10 • Nov. 22 2014

Kentucky Air Guard completes Ebola mission in West Africa

CRG processed more than 750 tons of humanitarian aid

By Maj. Dale Greer
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

DAKAR, Senegal — Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group transferred control of a humanitarian cargo hub to replacement forces here Nov. 18, successfully completing their support of an Ebola-response mission that processed more than 750 tons of relief supplies for airlift into Liberia.

While the Kentucky Air Guard's mission is winding down as its members prepare to re-deploy to the United States, the humanitarian

cargo operation will continue at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport under the direction of the new troops — more than 70 Airmen from the 787th Air Expeditionary Squadron.

"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 mission to follow-on forces within 60 days," explained David Mounkes, commander of the 123rd. "We've now completed that mission, and the 787th is ready to take over. I know they will do a superb job."

Read more online at
www.123aw.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123431838



Maj. Dale Greer/KyANG

Tech. Sgt. Brian Leach, an aerial porter from the 123rd Contingency Response Group, directs the positioning of a forklift to off-load pallets of humanitarian aid from a Halverson cargo-handling vehicle at Léopold Sédar Senghor International Airport in Dakar, Senegal, Nov. 12. The cargo ultimately will be delivered to Liberia in support of Operation United Assistance.

123rd wins fourth Metcalf Trophy

The 123rd Airlift Wing had been named the top airlift unit in the Air National Guard, Kentucky's adjutant general announced during a Veterans Day celebration held in downtown Louisville Nov. 11. See more online at <http://www.123aw.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123432114>

Nelson promoted to brigadier general

Former 123rd Airlift Wing Commander Greg Nelson was promoted to the rank of brigadier general during a ceremony at the National Guard Readiness Center in Arlington, Virginia, Nov. 19. Nelson, vice director of Strategic Plans, Policy and International Affairs at the National Guard Bureau, served as commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing from 2008 to 2012. See photos at www.flickr.com/photos/generalfrankgrass/sets/72157648955335199/

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Your support enabled our success in Senegal

Greetings from Dakar, Senegal! The 123rd Contingency Response Group is nearing the end of its highly successful mission here. As I write this, we are awaiting redeployment airlift from a mobility system that is heavily tasked around the globe.

I'd like to extend my deepest thanks to the members of the 123rd Airlift Wing for your hard work in getting us out the door on short notice. A full CRG deployment is not an easy undertaking. I know the level of effort the wing put into supporting our deployment, as well as the care and concern you have all exhibited as you prepare to receive us back home. Col. Gorter just arrived here as the Deputy Director of Mobility Forces for Operation United Assistance and was able to pass on his support in person.

The 123rd CRG deployed in support of U.S. Agency for International Development-led efforts to contain the spread of Ebola Virus Disease in affected West African countries and bring an end to the terrible suffering this disease has wrought.

The international airport in Dakar, Senegal, was selected as an Initial Staging Base for support of relief efforts in Liberia. The main support provided by the DOD in Liberia is the construction of Ebola Treatment Units, often located in remote and austere locations. The mission at Dakar for Operation United Assistance is to facilitate the movement of aircraft, personnel and cargo for staging, prioritization and storage.

When the 123rd's Joint Assessment Team arrived in Dakar, it was a hot and humid day — much like every day for the 123rd CRG at this location. The people were friendly, but we noticed right away the impact of the language barrier: French and Wolof are not common

languages spoken amongst our Airmen.

The JAT immediately went to work with the few hours of daylight we had left on the day we arrived, operating out of an old Quonset hut-like structure set aside for U.S. Forces. The mosquitoes that lived in and around our operating area were very happy to have visitors.

Over the next several days, we worked diplomatic clearance to assess all parts of the airport, which is divided into a civil international airfield and a Senegalese military air base. The JAT was comprised of eight 123rd CRG members and four U.S. Army Soldiers from the 689th Rapid Port Opening Element at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Our mission was to assess the airfield for air mobility operations and forward movement of cargo, which is accomplished by obtaining enough data to fill a 10-page report.

CRGs were developed to provide rapid airbase-opening capability for air mobility operations. Some of you may have experienced the challenges of piecing together teams, waiting for personnel and equipment to arrive, and then building and integrating the various capabilities. CRGs deploy such that they are ready to operate immediately after arrival, with all of the expeditionary equipment and expertise they need.

The 123rd JAT received the rest of our CRG forces — more than 70 Airmen — a few days after the JAT's arrival, at which point we became Joint Task Force-Port Opening Senegal.

When a CRG "hits the ground," just like the JAT, they go right to work. There is nobody to receive us, and we're the first U.S. Air Force presence to arrive, which means we have to immediately establish operations (personnel,

force protection, command and control, aerial port, quick-turn maintenance, power, vehicle operations, communications, fuels, medical support and all the other required support functions). Once the main body arrives, the airfield is considered FOC — immediately ready to receive and facilitate the movement of personnel and cargo.

Over the next 45 days, we received and prioritized for movement over 1,000 short tons of cargo, more than 400 personnel, and over 180 aircraft of all different types. We provided our own security, in coordination with the Senegalese, and coordinated Air Mobility operations with the Germans, French and the United Nations World Food Program.

We also met or communicated with representatives from Japan, Taiwan, Great Britain and Norway. We worked with multiple U.S. military commands and the U.S. Embassy in Dakar, as well as USAID and the Department of State. It's been non-stop operations here as we've set up the ISB for the Joint Forces Commander/Joint Operating Area.

We accomplished the mission that U.S. Transportation Command sent us to do, on short notice, at the request of USAFRICOM, and we are in the process of turning operations over to the forces that have come in behind us for a more "steady-state" mission.

This was the very first full Air National Guard CRG deployment, and the first full CRG deployment for our group. We couldn't have done it without the support of the 123rd Airlift Wing, which could now lay claim to the title "123rd Contingency Response Wing."

— Col. David Mounkes, Commander
123rd Contingency Response Group and
Joint Task Force-Port Opening Senegal

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The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office of the 123rd Airlift Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard. All photographs are Air National Guard photographs unless otherwise indicated.

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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