

# THE CARGO COURIER

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

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## CRG completes Maria operations

### Unit processed more than 7.2 million pounds of hurricane relief

By Lt. Col. Dale Greer  
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Thirty-five members of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group returned home Oct. 17, completing a three-week deployment to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where they processed more than 7.2 million pounds of humanitarian aid for recovery operations following Hurricane Maria.

The Airmen, who arrived in San Juan on Sept. 23, were among the first U.S. military forces to deploy for the relief effort, said Lt. Col. Bruce Bancroft, the unit's commander. They established an aerial port of debarkation at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport upon landing and began accepting military aircraft the next day, eventually downloading food, water, electric generators and other essential cargo from 268 aircraft.

The Airmen also processed 3,887 passengers arriving from a variety of agencies, including the Department of Defense and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, to assist with relief efforts.

While the Kentucky Airmen are now home, the cargo mission will continue for the foreseeable future, Bancroft said. Primary responsibility for the aerial port has been turned over to the Puerto Rico Air National Guard.

"Standing up this aerial port of debarkation was an extremely important mission for us," Bancroft said. "Like all units in the U.S. military, our group has an im-

portant combat role to play, but as National Guardsmen, we also specialize in providing humanitarian aid to the homeland. It has been very gratifying to know that our skills and capabilities are making a difference for the people of Puerto Rico.

"Now, that mission will be carried forward by the next group of Airmen from the Puerto Rico Air National Guard."

The San Juan operation was the 123rd CRG's second mobilization for hurricane relief this year. The unit also sent 43 Airmen to Texas on Aug. 29, where they established an aeromedical evacuation hub in Houston following Hurricane Harvey.

In the past two months, the Kentucky Air Guard has deployed more than 150 Airmen for relief operations following three major storms — Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Those Airmen include 18 members of the 123rd

Special Tactics Squadron, who rescued 333 residents stranded by flooding in Houston in the aftermath of Harvey.

Kentucky Air Guardsmen also were instrumental in the evacuation of more than 1,000 U.S. citizens from the Dutch Island of St. Maarten following Irma, providing air traffic control and flying passengers to safety board two Kentucky C-130 aircraft.

The Kentucky Air Guard still has nearly a dozen Airmen deployed for hurricane recovery operations, including seven who departed for Puerto Rico Oct. 11 to staff a mobile field kitchen that can serve up to 4,000 hot meals a day. Other Kentucky Air National Guardsmen are providing aircraft maintenance in Savannah, Georgia, where the National Guard Bureau has established a major cargo hub to fly relief supplies from the mainland to the Caribbean.



Lt. Col. Dale Greer/Kentucky Air National Guard

Airmen from the 123rd Contingency Response Group download relief supplies from aircraft around the clock at Luis Muñoz Marín International Airport in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Oct. 6.

# Services deploys for Hurricane Maria

By Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton  
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Seven Airmen from the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Services Flight arrived in Puerto Rico Sept. 11 to assist with hurricane relief efforts by cooking meals for Soldiers from the Puerto Rico National Guard.

The Kentucky Air Guardsmen, joined by eight Airmen from the Tennessee Air Guard's 134th Refueling Wing, deployed with a Disaster Relief Mobile Kitchen Trailer, which gives them the ability to serve up to 4,000 hot meals per day, said Master Sgt. Aaron Foote, base services specialist and unit deployment manager for the 123rd Force Support Squadron.

"There are 17 of those trailers across the country, and we have one of them," Foote said. "We also took two pallets of additional accessories. These guys are doing something really phenomenal down there."

The Airmen will be serving Unitized Group Rations, a meal designed to maximize the use of commercial items and to simplify the process of providing high-quality food service in a field environment. All the components for a complete 50-person meal are included in the UGR.

According to Lt. Col. Kevin Krauss, commander of the 123rd Force Support Squadron, the deployment marks the first mass deployment of the DRMKT



Lt. Col. Katrina Bramlett/Kentucky Air National Guard

Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing load a Disaster Relief Mobile Kitchen Trailer onto a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base Oct. 11.

as a proof-of-concept for the National Guard Bureau.

"The mobilization went extremely smoothly," Krauss said. "Everybody jumped in to help. They came in on weekends and holidays to get it done."

"The relationships we've built over training and during exercises with the units who are close to us bore fruit. We were able to pick up the phone and call some other units and they lent the additional manpower. That's pretty awe-

some to see."

Krauss noted that the Airmen face some challenges in Puerto Rico, which is struggling to recover from the devastating effects of Hurricane Maria, but their performance has been exceptional.

"They're down there without power, not exactly certain where they're going to sleep," Krauss said.

"But they've been very professional, which is not a surprise. It's been awesome to watch."

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