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Wing to recognize top troops tonight

By Master Sgt. Vicky Spesard
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Senior Master Sgt. Kevin Seifert, Staff Sgt. Dan Keller and Staff Sgt. Raul Rodriguez have been selected as the Kentucky Air National Guard's Outstanding Airmen of the Year for 2018 and will be honored at a banquet in Louisville tonight.

The three Airmen were chosen by members of the 123rd Airlift Wing Chiefs' Council because they captured the qualities of the "Whole Airman" concept, according to State Command Chief Master Sgt. Ray Dawson.

"We are very proud to formally recognize these gentlemen and at the same time celebrate our folks for their accomplishments over the past year," Dawson said. "We had great representatives from across the base, and it was a very fine line that separated these three from the rest. They displayed self-development, mentorship, hard work and success — all of the necessary things that represent the Whole Airman."

Rodriguez, the winner in the Airman category, is a crew chief and aircraft maintainer with the 123rd Contingency Response Group. He took part in three deployments in 2017: Iraq, Japan and Puerto Rico, all on short notice in support of contingency-response missions.

"Rodriguez exemplifies the CRG culture as a multi-skilled Airman with the highest volunteerism who is always ready for immediate, worldwide response," said his supervisor, Master Sgt. Jason Sanderson. "From building intimate relationships with members of the Iraqi Army to saving lives in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, he shows his love for humanity in everything he does. Rodriguez is an integral part of our CRG family, and we are thrilled with his selection to now represent his extended

123rd Airlift Wing family."

Keller, the winner of the Non-Commissioned Officer category, is a combat controller in the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron. His heroic actions in 2017 saved team members' lives during a mass-casualty event in Afghanistan. Keller was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received during the combat operation and has been nominated for a Silver Star.

"Keller was conducting a routine clearing event when he was injured when the building he was standing outside of exploded," explained Chief Master Sgt. Aaron May of the 123rd STS. "In that moment of chaos, he was able to remain calm, work air support and call in helicopters to have the wounded transported out.

"Keller is depended on; he's morally sound and makes the right calls," May continued. "When we look at our future Airmen in STS, we want people like him."

Seifert, the winner of the Senior NCO category, is an operations superintendent for the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron. In 2017, he was responsible for reshaping flight training and developing standard guidance that redefined unit success and brought squadron readiness to an all-time high, May said. Seifert also led squadron support for hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. He has been awarded two Bronze Stars, one Purple Heart, and is a Silver Star nominee.

"Three things come to mind when I think of him," May said. "He has foresight, follow through, and he is always looking for solutions.

"He is technically sound, and his expertise is always sought out," the chief continued. "Seifert is continuously educating himself through technical schools and higher education just to make himself a better leader and more knowledgeable about the job."



RODRIGUEZ



KELLER



SEIFERT

Hagar named 1st Sergeant of the Year

By Master Sgt. Vicky Spesard
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Senior Master Sgt. Michael Shawn Hagar of the 123rd Medical Group has been selected as the Kentucky Air National Guard's 2018 First Sergeant of the Year.

Hagar, who has served as first sergeant for seven years, is the principal advisor to the medical group commander on all issues related to the enlisted members. He is instrumental in providing a mission-ready enlisted force, and quick to resolve issues that could adversely impact the readiness of the medical group enlisted personnel.

"For the 24 years of my being a part of the medical group, Shawn has been the best first sergeant we have ever had," said Senior Master Sgt. Kenny Richards, medical group superintendent.

"He always has the enlisted troops at the forefront, providing mentorship and leadership to the enlisted force."



HAGAR

Over the past year, Hagar spent countless hours and personal resources to plan, organize and prepare enlisted team-building events such as off-duty group excursions and a holiday party that resulted in significantly improved unit morale.

The first sergeant also implemented a new text messaging tool allowing faster communication to group members, revived the medical group's junior enlisted council and led unit Recognition Day efforts ensuring award presentations and activities were planned and executed.

"Working with people and seeing them develop into leaders is what gives me the most satisfaction in this position," Hagar said. "I also love to cook, so anytime I can get the enlisted folks together and cook for them is a great time to mentor."

Hagar will be honored at the Kentucky National Guard's Soldier and Airman of the Year Banquet, to be held tonight in Louisville.

Wing deploys crews to Persian Gulf area

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

More than 30 members of the 123rd Airlift Wing deployed to the Persian Gulf in support of Operation Spartan Shield Feb. 23.

The Airmen departed here aboard a C-130 Hercules aircraft and are expected to be overseas about four months, said Col. David Mounkes, wing commander. They will operate from an undisclosed air base while flying troops and cargo across the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, which includes Afghanistan and the Middle East.

The Airmen joined more than 150 other

Kentucky Air Guardsmen who began deploying to Southwest Asia and Africa in November, Mounkes said. Most of those Airmen will serve on tours lasting six months, working from multiple locations to fill a broad spectrum of missions ranging from civil engineering and finance to public affairs and security forces.

"While some of our wing's personnel are deployed worldwide almost every day of the year, this is an especially busy time for us," Mounkes said. "Every two years, we enter a deployment cycle when we know the Air Force will ask more of us, and now is that time."

"I am extremely proud of our Airmen, many of whom are leaving civilian jobs and families while they continue to answer their nation's call by serving with distinction all over the world. I'd also like to thank the family members and civilian employers of our Guardsmen for their essential support. We simply could not do our mission without them."

Additional deployments are expected through the spring, totaling approximately one-third of the wing's personnel. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the wing has deployed Airmen to more than 40 countries, logging over 400,000 days of service.

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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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