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Wing earns NGB Flying Unit Plaque

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

The 123rd Airlift Wing has earned its seventh National Guard Bureau Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque, for outstanding performance in operations, human resources, accident prevention and community engagement.

The award is bestowed annually on the top five Air National Guard flying units. It was presented to Col. David Mounkes, wing commander, by Lt. Gen. L. Scott Rice, director of the Air National Guard, during the National Guard Association of the United States annual conference Sept. 10 in Louisville, Kentucky.

"I continue to be amazed by the outstanding dedication of the Airmen in our wing," Mounkes said after accepting the honor. "This award is the direct result of their hard work, personal sacrifice and pursuit of excellence every day of the year."

The 2017 award recognizes achievements from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 2016. During that time, the wing deployed 61 Airmen to seven countries and five geographic commands for a total of 3,176 Title 10 days.

Among the missions supported were several multinational airlift exercises, including Operation Sabre Junction in Italy and Operation Maple Flag in Canada. The wing also deployed special operators to four overseas theaters, conducting more than 100 combat missions and controlling over 120 coalition aircraft. The wing's civil engineers deployed overseas as well, training with the Moldovan military while helping renovate a school for deaf children.



Jay May/NGAUS

Lt. Gen. L. Scott Rice (left), director of the Air National Guard, presents Col. David Mounkes, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, with the 2017 National Guard Bureau Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque during the National Guard Association of the United States annual conference Sept. 10 in Louisville, Ky. The plaque is awarded annually to the top five Air Guard flying units.

Back home, the wing's 123rd Medical Group served as the lead agency for an Innovative Readiness Training program that provided no-cost medical, dental and optical care to more than 4,000 underserved residents in three Western

Kentucky counties. The effort provided 13,000 procedures with an economic impact of \$1.3 million over 10 days, including 1,800 pairs of prescription eyeglasses and \$20,000 worth of medication.

Air Force adopts OCP battle uniform

U.S. Air Force Public Affairs

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Air Force leaders announced the service will move to a single combat utility uniform, adopting the Operational Camouflage Pattern, or OCP, already in use by the Army and Airmen in combat zones and in certain jobs across the Air Force.

Starting Oct. 1, 2018, Airmen who have serviceable OCPs may wear the uniform, and Airmen can purchase OCPs at Army and Air Force Exchange Services at the following locations: Aviano Air Base, Italy; Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina; Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina; and MacDill Air Force Base, Florida.

These initial locations will allow uniform manufacturers to produce additional stocks for other locations, eventually outfitting the total force in the coming months.

The service will fully transition to OCPs by April 1, 2021

Air Force leaders decided to transition to the OCP following feedback from Airmen that it is the best, battle-tested utility uniform available. It will also eliminate the need to maintain two separate uniforms – one for in-garrison and one for deployments – and it is a visible reminder of the service’s identity as a joint warfighting force, Air Force officials said.

“We looked at all utility uniforms currently in our inventory to find the best-of-breed,” said Chief of Staff of the Air Force Gen. David L. Goldfein. “We spoke to and listened to Airmen on this, and the OCP was the clear choice.”

“The uniform works in all climates—from Minot to Manbij—and across the spectrum of missions we perform,” Goldfein added. “It’s suitable for our Airmen working on a flight line in Northern Tier states and for those conducting patrols in the Middle East,” he said.

More than 100,000 Airmen have been is-

sued or are already wearing OCPs or equivalent two-piece flight suits—from Airmen deployed to Air Forces Central Command, to those serving in Air Force Special Operations Command, and most recently, aircrews in Air Mobility Command and defenders in Air Force Global Strike Command.

As with the Battle Dress Uniform, or BDU, worn by all services until about 10 years ago, the OCP Airmen wear will have distinctive Air Force features. The name tape and Air Force lettering will be a spice-brown color, and T-shirts and belts will be tan. Most rank will also be in spice-brown thread.

Squadron patches will also be worn on the OCP, said Goldfein. Bringing back squadron patches was among the recommendations made by Airmen as part of the ongoing effort to revitalize squadrons.

“Unit patches express squadron identity and heritage – something our Airmen are incredibly proud of and want to celebrate,” he said.

Unit patches and special functional identifiers (Security Forces, Fire, Explosive Ordnance Disposal, Tactical Air Control Party, Combat Controller, etc.) will be attached to Velcro fabric on the sleeves. All patches will be in subdued colors; headquarters patches and the U.S. flag will be worn on the right shoulder, and unit patches and authorized duty identifiers will be worn on the left shoulder.

Airmen can find guidance for proper wear of the uniform in the coming months via an Air Force Guidance Memorandum, followed by updates published in AFI 36-2903.

Feedback from the force indicated Airmen find the OCP more functional—from the slanted, Velcro chest pockets to the easily-accessible shoulder pockets. Female Airmen have made it clear that this uniform is a better fit, as well.

“The Army has done considerable work to make the OCPs a better fitting uniform for female service members,” said Maj. Gen.

Bob LaBrutta, director of military force management policy, deputy chief of staff for manpower, personnel and services. “The uniform comes in 20 female sizes and 37 unisex sizes. Female Airmen, currently issued the unisex uniform in U.S. Air Forces Central Command, report a better fit and higher morale as a result.”

Enlisted Airmen should start to see an increase to their annual clothing allowances starting Oct. 1, 2018.

“Many of our Airmen already have this uniform from their numerous deployments, so they will be able to make the transition easily,” said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright. “For other Airmen, we must provide enough time for their clothing allowance to fund the items to avoid out-of-pocket expenses.”

Effective April 1, 2019, Airmen can purchase the uniform at any AAFES store that carries them and AAFES online services will open purchases to Airmen around October 2019. The schedule will be updated monthly on the AAFES and Air Force’s Personnel Center websites.

The delay in availability allows the supply chain to produce and field enough uniforms, boots and other associated uniform items to meet both Army and Air Force requirements. Enlisted Guard and Reserve Airmen will receive the new uniform through their unit’s clothing replacement procedures.

The Air Force will also outfit Basic Military Training, Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, and Officer Training School starting October 1, 2019.

“This celebrates joint warfighting excellence as OCPs will become the joint combat uniform for Airmen and Soldiers while patches and nametapes will identify our respective services,” Goldfein said. “We’ll maintain our distinctive Air Force uniforms in blues, service dress, mess dress, and PT gear.”

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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.

123rd Airlift Wing Editorial Staff

Wing Commander.....Col. David Mounkes
Joint Force HQ Chief of Public Affairs.....Lt. Col. Dale Greer
Wing Public Affairs Officer.....Maj. Allison Stephens
Staff Writer.....Tech. Sgt. Vicky Spesard
Staff Writer.....Staff Sgt. Austin Shaffner

Phone: (502) 413-4089 • Email: allen.d.greer.mil@mail.mil

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