

THE CARGO COURIER

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

Vol. XXXIII, No. 9 • Sept. 15, 2018

Exercise enhances CRG-Army operations

By Maj. Allison Stephens
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

ALPENA, Mich. — More than 130 members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group joined the U.S. Army's 609th Rapid Port Opening Element to participate in Operation Huron Thunder, a U.S. Transportation Command exercise held at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena, Michigan, in July.

The exercise was designed to test the rapid assessment and airfield opening capabilities of contingency forces and establish a Joint Task Force-Port Opening — a complete logistics hub and surface distribution network, said Col. Bruce Bancroft, commander of the 123rd CRG.

Airmen were responsible for establishing an aerial port of debarkation, which receives and stages cargo arriving by airlift. The Soldiers simultaneously established a ground transportation network, shuttling cargo away from the airfield to a forward node.

Although the APOD and the forward node are set up separately, interoperability is key to mission success, Bancroft said. In-Transit Visibility systems and joint communications are a crucial mission set between the geographically separated areas.

"The importance of interoperability with the Army cannot be overstated," Bancroft said.

"Our success on the airfield is directly tied to the RPOE's ability to keep cargo flowing to the forward node, and this exercise demonstrates the absolute reliance we have on each other to make the mission happen."

One thing the Kentucky Air Guard brought to the exercise was extensive experience operating JTF-POs in the past, Bancroft added. This experience allowed the Airmen and Soldiers to quickly streamline operations and share best practices.

For example, Soldiers from the 690th RPOE began the mission by carrying two radios — one to talk with the forward node



Capt. Allison Stephens/KyANG

Tech. Sgt. Jason Kennedy, an aerial port specialist assigned to the 123rd Contingency Response Group, directs a cargo pallet while supporting Operation Huron Thunder at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena, Mich., July 22. The CRG worked in conjunction with the U.S. Army's 690th Rapid Port Opening Element to operate a Joint Task Force-Port Opening.

and the other to talk with commanders at the APOD. This inefficient system was soon corrected by Master Sgt. Kyle Goins, a communications specialist with the 123rd, who was able to reconfigure the radios so only one was needed.

This on-the-job training was very valuable for Staff Sgt. Rhonda McQuay, a signal NCO from the 690th RPOE, based at Ft. Eustis, Virginia.

"I know this was a learning experience, and I can apply what I learned here to future operations," said McQuay, a native of Madisonville, Kentucky.

The 123rd CRG's experience with JTF-POs was readily apparent to Maj. Brett Dunning, commander of the 690th RPOE.

"You can tell the 123rd CRG members

have been working together for a long time, and they're helping to instruct my less-experienced soldiers," Dunning said. "An example of this is downloading cargo directly to flat-rack trucks so they don't have to handle the cargo twice as it transfers to the forward node."

"We've been involved in the JTF-PO mission for 10 years and have been recognized for multiple best practices," Bancroft noted. "The opportunity to work with the 690th has been invaluable, and the information exchange was superb."

The Kentucky unit is the only contingency response group in the Air National Guard. It was recently honored as Air Mobility Command's 2017 Contingency Response Unit of the Year.

Planning underway for the AMC On-Site Visit Readiness Inspection

As you may be aware, the 123rd Airlift Wing is scheduled to participate in an operational readiness assessment in June 2019. For seasoned members of the wing, this exercise will likely remind you of its predecessor, the Operational Readiness Inspection. The models have similarities, but the new concept is now taking root in the Commander's Inspection Program. After learning more about it, you may think of the saying, "everything old is new again."

In order to help you better understand how the new inspection works, let me explain. The new inspection model blends current requirements with new guidance from Gen. Carlton Everhart II, the commander of Air Mobility Command.

His direction indicates that full-spectrum readiness is a top priority. In order to demonstrate our readiness, the wing will create a fly-away exercise and self-assess using the Wing Inspection Team.

In addition, AMC will send inspectors to complete an On-Site Visit to validate our readiness and our ability to properly self-evaluate and report discrepancies.

The concept places a heavy focus on developing practical and realistic scenarios in response to our most likely and/or most challenging response situations. It will contain aspects of positioning the force, employing the force, and sustaining the force in a hostile and contaminated environment.

The exercise scenarios are intended to



Lt. Col. Amy Mundell
123rd Airlift Wing Inspector General

include a representative sample of each wing functional area, if possible. The personnel deployment function and cargo function for deploying forces and aircraft generation must be demonstrated as well.

In addition, commanders are given lead roles in the development of exercise scenarios and the planning aspect of the inspection.

This is being done by allowing commanders a unique opportunity to weigh in on what they would like to have ex-

ercised, inspected and validated. The input from commanders will be melded into the overall exercise objectives and tested alongside the exercise requirements outlined in Air Force Instructions and by AMC leadership.

Unlike ORIs, our wing will not be given a score or grade after the inspection. This is because OSVs are embedded into an overarching exercise sequence and timeline associated with the Unit Effectiveness Inspection.

The results of the inspection are captured and documented by the WIT. In addition, AMC inspectors will generate a separate report that will become part of the wing's "photo album," to be included in the next UEI-Capstone report in 2022. The OSV inspection will be required once during the five-year UEI cycle, preferably mid-cycle.

In the end, the completion of the OSV is intended to provide leadership with a picture of where the wing stands as it relates to full-spectrum readiness. It is expected to offer commanders the information necessary to continue to make our wing better.

It will bring to light areas that require more attention or training, but it will also validate our ability to self-assess with our internal inspection team.

At the end of the exercise, participants will have demonstrated their readiness capabilities and fulfilled the inspection requirement.

More than that, it will create a path for leadership to take us to the next level.

This Air Force newspaper is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. military services. Contents of The Cargo Courier are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Air Force.

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.

Wing Commander.....Col. Jeffrey Wilkinson
 Joint Force HQ Chief of Public Affairs.....Lt. Col. Dale Greer
 Wing Public Affairs Officer.....Maj. Allison Stephens
 Staff Writer.....Master Sgt. Philip Speck
 Staff Writer.....Master Sgt. Vicky Spesard
 Staff Writer.....Master Sgt. Austin Shaffner
 Staff Writer.....Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton
 Staff Writer.....Airman Chloe Ochs

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

Visit our public website for expanded online content — www.123aw.ang.af.mil • Follow us on Facebook — www.facebook.com/123AWKY