

THE CARGO COURIER

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CRG 'outstanding' in earthquake exercise

Unit breaks multiple records as it earns verification from Transportation Command for homeland disaster-response mission

Story and photos by Maj. Dale Greer
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

MASCOUTAH, Ill. — When a natural disaster strikes the homeland, civilian authorities often find themselves overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of the crisis. Power and communications may be knocked out, roads and airports are frequently impassable or inoperative, and food or water can be alarmingly scarce.

But the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group was designed from the ground up to provide essential help during such emergencies, ensuring the rapid delivery of food, water, medicine and other assistance by airlift, even when local airports are closed, said Col. Mark Heiniger, the unit's commander.

On Aug. 8, those capabilities were verified by U.S. Transportation Command when the defense agency gave its stamp of approval to the 123rd, saying the unit was fully mission-capable to provide domestic disaster assistance to civilian authorities.

The verdict came at the end of a four-day earthquake-response exercise called Gateway Relief, during which the 123rd teamed up with the active-duty U.S. Army's 689th Rapid Port Opening Element from Fort Eustis, Va., to operate a Joint Task Force-Port Opening at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport here.

"The inspectors told us we knocked it out of the park and awarded us an overall grade of 'outstanding,'" said Heiniger, who also served as commander of the Joint Task Force-Port Opening. "They found no discrepancies in any of the five graded areas and said several of our functions were 'best seen to date.'"

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Members of the 123rd Contingency Response Group offload equipment Aug. 5 from a Mississippi Air National Guard C-17 at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport as part of Exercise Gateway Relief.



Kentucky Air Guardsmen set new records for response time while establishing operations for a Joint Task Force-Port Opening.

Hurst named assistant adjutant general; Gorter to lead wing



HURST

Cargo Courier Staff Report

Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, has named Col. Warren Hurst as the Commonwealth's next assistant adjutant general for Air, while Col. Barry Gorter will replace Hurst as commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing.

Both moves are effective Oct. 19, Tonini said when making the announcements on Aug.

9 and Monday, respectively.

"The Kentucky Air National Guard has emphasized building a great bench of leaders capable of maintaining our position as the best Air National Guard unit in the nation," Tonini said. "Colonel Hurst will continue Kentucky's national reputation of unequaled excellence



GORTER

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Thanks for your daily dedication to excellence

First, I want to thank all the various units on base who worked together to deploy the Contingency Response Group to Illinois for the Joint Task Force-Port Opening exercise known as Gateway Relief.

The exercise was a resounding success, in part due to the highly effective communication and collaboration between the CRG and all the other groups on base to ensure their timely and effective departure.

Supporting a deploying unit will be a graded process during the upcoming Unit Effectiveness Inspection, or UEI, in 2014. Gateway Relief was perfect preparation and allowed us to exercise and evaluate our deployment processes, setting the stage for success for the deploying unit next year as they assemble, pack and plan for their deployed mission set.

The CRG once again smoked their exercise! New records were set for meeting Joint Mission Essential Tasks. They established secure communication within six minutes of landing! (The requirement is four hours.)

Exercise evaluation teams from both U.S. Transportation Command and Headquarters, Air Mobility Command, had nothing to say but "outstanding."

Well done, team!

I am very proud of the CRG's accomplishments and the synergy from the wing that set them up for success. The Logistics Readiness Squadron once again stepped up for the hard labor of preparing, inspecting and loading equipment. Maintenance worked hard to turn airplanes and provide spares, while Operations adeptly flew all the lines providing the needed platforms for realistic training.

A host of other support teams from the



Col. Warren Hurst
123rd Airlift Wing Commander

Medical Group and Mission Support Group coordinated actions to ensure adherence to deployment processes.

All this was accomplished while simultaneously assisting three other units for real-world deployments to the U.S. Central Command AOR. We have Airmen from Security Forces, Aerial Port and the Fire Department heading overseas to do their part for the war effort. The training never stops and the deployments continue.

We will soon be evaluated once again by the Air Mobility Command Inspector General for our readiness to deploy. We are making progress toward implementing the

new Air Force Inspection System by standing up the Wing Commander's Inspection Program, or CCIP. These recent events help prepare us for the upcoming inspection.

There will be more information to come on the CCIP in the next several months.

I also want to thank those who came together to support one of our injured Airmen during our last Coronet Oak deployment. From immediate life-saving actions at the scene to several simultaneous layers of coordination across a wide spectrum of areas, your response synchronized into a very successful result in a very short period of time. This is what being a wingman is all about. It is also about support provided to those who have lost family members. The way this wing responds sets the standard for others to follow.

I want to close by putting in a plug for the Unit Climate Assessment. You should have received a web link and pass code from your unit leadership to go online and complete the survey.

I am not fond of surveys, but this one only takes 15 minutes and is your opportunity to provide feedback on how you assess your unit. Wing leadership actually does review all the results, and your flight, squadron or group leadership will review the results within each unit.

We have one of the best wings in the U.S. Air Force, but it takes constant work to maintain that level of excellence.

Thanks for all your hard work amid the impact of personal financial sacrifice and operational limitations during the furlough. Absolutely incredible!

— Col. Warren Hurst

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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.

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Unit Climate Survey seeks input from every Airman

The 123rd Airlift Wing commander, in coordination with the base Equal Opportunity Office, will be conducting Unit Climate Assessment Surveys during the months of August and September.

The surveys, which collect information anonymously, are used to assist commanders in assessing positive and negative factors of the human relations climate in their organizations, according to 2nd Lt. Roxanne Smith, base EO officer.

Questions will touch on cohesion and pride, supervisory support, motivation and morale, overt discriminatory behaviors, perceived discrimination, command policy, and sexual assault prevention.

“Your concerns are important to your commander, the wing commander and the EO office,” Smith said.

“We need the participation of everyone. If you have something to say, or feel that you have not been heard, this is one way to express what matters to you.

“The EO office and the Wellness Team will actively use the data from the Unit Climate Assessment to find ways to improve the climate on base.

“Each group and squadron commander also will be briefed on the content of the survey, and the wing commander will get a combined report giving him an overall idea of the health of his wing.

“We need your honest responses,” Smith added. “Each group and squadron will receive a unique password that will allow responses to remain strictly anonymous. Responses in any group smaller than six will be rolled into the next larger group to ensure individuals are not indirectly identified.”

Section supervisors will provide more information this weekend on how Airmen may take part in the survey.

Wing unveils newest plaque honoring retired members

By Airman Joshua Horton
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Fifty former members of the Kentucky Air National Guard were honored here June 22 when a plaque bearing their names was unveiled during a ceremony held in front of the 123rd Airlift Wing's Lt. Gen. John B. Conaway Headquarters Building.

The black granite slab joins six others commemorating hundreds of Airmen who have served 20 or more years in the military and were retired or transferred from the Kentucky Air National Guard, dating all the way back to the unit's inception in 1947.

The ceremony honored 49 Airmen who retired in 2012 and one who retired during 2011, according to Ed Hornung, a retired Kentucky Air Guard colonel who sits on the board of the Kentucky Air National

Guard Retiree Group Inc., a non-profit organization that funds the plaques through golf scrambles and the sale of items like T-shirts and ball caps.

Col. Warren Hurst, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, addressed the crowd, which consisted of dozens of current and former Kentucky Air Guardsmen, by recognizing the commitment required to earn a spot on the monument.

“Some people have put their careers, and in some cases, the better part of their entire lives into this organization,” Hurst said.

“That's commendable. I think seeing these plaques continue on down this row just means the continuation of our legacy of the individuals that made the Kentucky Air National Guard what it is.

“I know at some point, I look forward to seeing my name on a plaque.”



Airman Joshua Horton/KyANG

Tim Atwell, a retired chief master sergeant and former maintenance flight chief at the 123rd Airlift Wing, and Mary McCallie, a retired lieutenant colonel and former commander of the 123rd Communications Flight, unveil a marble tablet honoring retirees during a ceremony here June 22. The black granite slab lists the names of Airmen who served at least 20 years and were honorably retired or transferred from the Kentucky Air National Guard during 2011 and 2012.

CRG

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"That's a direct result of the hard work of our dedicated Airmen, but it's also an indicator of the exceptional performance turned in by our brothers and sisters in the 689th RPOE. The key to this mission was teamwork — our motto going in was 'one team, one fight' — and our Airmen and Soldiers lived it from the start."

A Joint Task Force-Port Opening, or JTF-PO, is a logistics hub that combines an Air Force Aerial Port of Debarkation with an Army trucking and distribution unit. The aerial port ensures the smooth flow of cargo and relief supplies into disaster areas by airlift, while the trucking unit facilitates final distribution over land, Heiniger explained.

The Army and Air Force units deploy with everything they need to operate, from all-terrain forklifts, satellite communications gear and sleeping quarters to aircraft mechanics, security forces and power-production specialists.

During Gateway Relief, Airmen from the 123rd offloaded cargo from inbound aircraft and passed it on to Soldiers from the 689th. The Soldiers then transferred the cargo to specialized pallets, called flat racks, and trucked it to a nearby cargo yard, called a forward node, where it was staged for final delivery to civilian authorities and relief agencies.

"We moved every piece of cargo the inspectors could throw at us, and we maintained a smooth flow of logistics from the airfield to the forward node at all times," said Lt. Col. Bruce Bancroft, director of the Joint Operations Center for Gateway Relief. "It was a seamless process, thanks to a high level of integration between the Army and Air Guard forces."

Army Capt. Charles Greene, commander of the 689th, also described the exercise as "seamless."

"Since we hit the ground, we were a purple force," he said. "Throughout the exercise, we had a synergy which resulted in a hugely successful mission. The Air Force and the Army came together as one."

Gateway Relief began Aug. 5 when a Joint Assessment Team of 11 personnel arrived via a Kentucky Air Guard C-130. Their initial task was to survey the notionally inoperative airport, determine whether the infrastructure could support large-scale relief operations, and provide a "go-no go"

decision to U.S. Transportation Command within four hours of arrival.

The mission was based on a scenario in which two major earthquakes struck the New Madrid Seismic Zone, resulting in mass casualties and widespread destruction across Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Once the airfield was approved for use, more than 120 follow-on personnel began arriving from the 123rd and 689th, augmented by multiple planeloads of support equipment like tents, generators and communications gear, Bancroft said. By the end of the first day, the camp was fully operational, and relief supplies began flowing to the forward node.

From the very beginning, the 123rd's Airmen set new records for performance. The Joint Assessment Team, for example, was required to establish secure data communications with U.S. Transportation Command officials within four hours of landing, but the Kentucky team accomplished the task in just six minutes. In another case, Kentucky Air Guardsmen stood up a complex Small Package Initial Communications Element in only three hours and 10 minutes — nearly nine hours sooner than required by USTRANSCOM.

"Both of those accomplishments were all-time records for a JTF-PO mission," Bancroft said.

Greene noted that he had never seen a JTF-PO stand up so efficiently, and he praised the 123rd for its professionalism.

"It was an honor to work with the Kentucky Air Guard," he said. "I've been an evaluator before, and I couldn't ask to work with better people. If we ever get the call to respond to a crisis, I would want to go out the door with the 123rd. This is what right looks like."

The Kentucky group is one of only eight contingency response units in the U.S. Air Force and is the first fully operational CRG in the Air National Guard. In 2010, the unit was selected to establish and operate one of two overseas airlift hubs supporting earthquake-recovery efforts in Haiti, directing the delivery of hundreds of tons of relief supplies into the Dominican Republic for subsequent trucking to Haiti.

In 2012, the 123rd was verified by U.S. Transportation Command to perform the JTF-PO mission overseas.

For more photos, visit www.123aw.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123359429



Members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Air National Guard C-130, on Aug. 6 as part of Exercise Gateway Relief earthquake-relief exercise.



Airmen from the 123rd CRG create an aircraft parking plan at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport Aug. 5.



Airmen from the 123rd CRG and Soldiers with the U.S. Army's 689th Rapid Port Opening Element from Fort Eustis, Va., erect Alaskan Shelter sleeping quarters at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport Aug. 5.



123rd Contingency Response Group offload a C-17 at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport in Mascoutah, Ill., a U.S. Transportation Command-directed mission Aug. 5.



Maj. Ryan Adams, airflow operations officer for the 123rd CRG, establishes secure voice communications with U.S. Transportation Command officials within a hour of landing Aug. 5.



Airmen from the 123rd CRG assemble Radio Frequency Identification gear, used to wirelessly track cargo and equipment, at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport Aug. 5.



Clockwise from above: Capt. Jeff Clark, an operations management officer with the 123rd CRG, measures the flight line Aug. 5.

"The Cargo Town" served as command, control and communications headquarters.

Soldiers from the U.S. Army's 689th Rapid Deployment Brigade transfer cargo to flatbed trucks at the forward node Aug. 7.



Hamm takes charge of 123rd Ops Group

Gorter steps up to serve as the wing's vice commander

By Maj. Dale Greer
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Col. Robert Hamm took charge of the 123rd Operations Group during a change-of-command ceremony here June 22, and Col. Barry Gorter assumed the post of 123rd Airlift Wing vice commander.

Hamm, the wing's outgoing vice commander, said he looked forward to working with the men and women of the operations group, whom he called "outstanding."

"I thank you for your unrelenting professionalism, your unstinting devotion to duty and your resolute readiness on behalf of our nation," Hamm told the group's Airmen in comments before an audience of more than 600 coworkers in the Fuel Cell Hangar. "We will not allow a lessening of those necessary traits."

The 123rd Operations Group is home to more than 230 Airmen serving in the 165th Airlift Squadron, 123rd Special Tactics Squadron and 123rd Operations Support Flight. The airlift unit's C-130 aircraft, aircrews and support agencies provide worldwide airland and airdrop capabilities to combatant commands, while the special tactics squadron's pararescuemen, combat controllers and special operations weather teams provide support to the U.S. Special Operations Command through short-notice, worldwide deployments.

"The outstanding nature and culture of our organization was recently validated by two major-command inspectors general," Hamm noted, adding that recent inspection results were "almost unprecedented" for the level of excellence demonstrated by group members.

"123rd Operations Group, your performance never ceases to amaze and humble," he said. "I applaud you."

Col. Warren Hurst, wing commander, praised Hamm for his performance as vice wing commander over the past 2 1/2 years, saying he "contributed immeasur-



Photos by Airman Joshua Horton/KyANG

Col. Robert Hamm (right), incoming commander of the 123rd Operations Group, accepts the unit's guidon from Col. Warren Hurst, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, during a change-of-command ceremony held in the Fuel Cell Hangar here June 22.



Col. Barry Gorter thanks the Airmen under his command as he steps down as commander of the 123rd Operations Group to become vice commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing during the same ceremony June 22. Gorter is a veteran of numerous combat and humanitarian missions, including Operations Restore Hope, Provide Promise, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

ably to improvements, better efficiency and better oversight of wing resources."

"He's been a tremendous asset to the wing," Hurst said, "and will undoubtedly excel in leading the operations group through its next set of challenges."

Hurst also spoke highly of Gorter, who "has done a remarkable job as the operations group commander for the past three years," he said.

"In that time, the unit has deployed to (Afghanistan) twice, supporting combat

airland and airdrop missions over in the AOR. They've also supported different missions around the globe, to include foreign-assistance type missions in countries like Columbia or in Bangladesh."

Gorter personally served as chairman of the C-130 Group Council, an agency responsible for managing C-130 issues across the Air Guard community, Hurst noted, and in 2012, he deployed to the

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Wing provides airlift to Southern Command

Coronet Oak supports U.S. operations in the Caribbean, Central and South America

By Master Sgt. Philip Speck
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Nearly 50 members of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing deployed to Puerto Rico on July 6 to support Operation Coronet Oak, a mission that provides airlift capabilities throughout the U.S. Southern Command Area of Responsibility.

The Airmen, who departed aboard two Kentucky C-130 aircraft, will provide vital theater airlift services for U.S. military and government operations across the Caribbean and Central and South America, according to Lt. Col. James White, mission commander.

"Coronet Oak's main purpose is to support Southern Command, and the primary mission is the alert," explained White, a pilot in the wing's 165th Airlift Squadron.

"A plane and crew are placed in 'Bravo Alert,' to respond to anything that happens. It could be an embassy evacuation, or something like the earthquake in Haiti."

The deploying Airmen comprise the



Airman Joshua Horton/KyANG

Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing board a C-130 on the base flight line July 6 for a deployment to Puerto Rico in support of Operation Coronet Oak.

first rotation of nearly 100 Kentucky Air Guardsmen who will support Coronet Oak this year. Another rotation will follow later this summer, after which the wing's role is scheduled to be handed off to another unit.

"Kentucky began flying the mission in the 1989, after the wing converted from RF-4C reconnaissance aircraft to the C-130 Hercules," said Lt. Col. Ron Whelan, a navigator in the wing's 165th Airlift Squadron.

Coronet Oak is a year-round operation supported entirely by Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve C-130 units.

"This is good experience for our aircrews flying in South America," White said, "because it's a totally different environment than (we have in the continental United States), with bigger mountains and language barriers. This will help newer guys build more experience for a deployment."

Hamm

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U.S. Central Command Area of Operations to serve as deputy director or mobility forces at the Combined Air and Space Operations Center, providing oversight of airlift operations across the AOR.

"Col. Gorter, I'd like to thank you for your leadership in moving the operations group further down the road," Hurst said. "You've done an outstanding job. I look forward to having you as the vice wing commander."

Gorter took the opportunity to thank his Airmen for their support during his tenure as operations group commander.

"I feel very fortunate to have been able to serve alongside such an outstanding group of members," he said. "The Kentucky Air National Guard is a big family, and the nucleus of that family is the full-time employees. Thanks to each of you

full-timers out here who persevere, who grind out the day-to-day tasks that, if we were at an active-duty unit, would be spread across many more personnel.... You get it done, and you get it done well.

"Thanks also to the traditional members. The mission does not get done without the traditional members (who) make up 70 percent of our unit and carry a huge amount of the workload."

Gorter noted that Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard have flown 8,700 flying hours during the past three years — more than 2,500 of which have been in a combat environment.

"Crews have flown all over the world, from Bangladesh to South America to Afghanistan to Europe to Kuwait, to the entire United States and many places in between — all in operations in which you have performed brilliantly," he said. "Thank you for your professionalism and your standard of excellence. You have amazed me for the past three years."

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Hurst

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and unbridled service into the future.”

Hurst, who has been nominated for promotion to brigadier general, will replace Brig. Gen. Mark Kraus, who has been named Air National Guard assistant to the commander, U.S. Air Forces Central Command.

Over the past year, Hurst led the wing through a successful Air Force Consolidated Unit Inspection consisting of five higher headquarters-directed unit mission evaluations; demonstrated wing homeland defense/homeland security mission capabilities for state and federal response operations for the four-star-general commanders of Air Mobility Command and U.S. Transportation Command; conducted the first-ever mass physical fitness test for wing personnel, ensuring compliance with Air Force fitness standards and earning praise from the director of the Air National Guard; and coordinated with the National Guard Bureau to add the wing’s 123rd Contingency Response Group to the national Domestic Operations Emergency Response Plan force package.

A C-130 command pilot with more than 4,000 flying hours, Hurst has served in

various operational and headquarters staff assignments, including duty as an instructor and evaluator pilot for 12th Air Force and Air Forces Southern.

He has held staff positions at the Tanker Airlift Control Center and Headquarters, Air Mobility Command.

He also has flown C-130 combat and humanitarian relief missions worldwide to include operations in Europe, Africa, Southwest Asia, Central and South America, and the Middle East.

“Colonel Hurst served for the previous five years as the first commander of the 123rd Contingency Response Group, setting the standard for and developing national policy in this high-profile mission area,” Tonini added, noting that Hurst is qualified as a Joint Task Force-Port Opening commander.

Concurrently, he served as the 1st Air Force (Air Forces Northern) director of mobility forces for eight National Level Exercises for homeland security/homeland defense and coordinated civil-military air relief efforts during the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

He also served as deputy director of mobility forces to the Pacific Air Forces commander in response to the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear crisis in Japan in 2011.

Hurst holds a master’s degree in strategic studies degree from the United States

Army War College. He is a graduate of the Harvard University Leadership in Homeland Security Program and Advanced Joint Professional Military Education at National Defense University, Joint Forces Staff College.

“Please take the time to congratulate Colonel Hurst for his selection to this very prestigious position,” Tonini said.

Gorter currently serves as vice commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing and was commander the 123rd Operations Group from June 2010 through June 2013.

The C-130 command pilot recently completed a deployment as the U.S. Central Command deputy director of mobility forces at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, and is currently serving in an additional-duty role as the Air Forces Northern director of mobility forces for the 1st Air Force commander, U.S. Northern Command. He is an in-residence graduate of the U.S. Air Force Air War College, where he earned a master’s degree in strategic studies.

Gorter joined the Kentucky Air National Guard out of pilot training in 1991. He is a veteran of numerous combat and humanitarian missions, including Operations Restore Hope, Provide Promise, Volant Oak, Joint Enterprise, Coronet Oak, Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. He has served in additional leadership positions, including commander, 123rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, and deputy commander, 123rd Maintenance Group.