

# THE PONY EXPRESS

Sept./Oct. 2008 Pony Express Volume 6, Issue 4

943rd Rescue Group, Davis-Monthan AFB



## THE PONY EXPRESS

943rd RQG Commander  
Colonel Robert Dunn

Chief of Public Affairs  
Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny

Editorial Assistance  
Team  
Major Michael Williams

### Contact Information

943rd Rescue Group  
Public Affairs Office  
5020 E. Arizola Street  
Davis-Monthan AFB, AZ 85707-3108  
Phone: 520-228-5952  
DSN: 228-5952  
FAX: 520-228-5258  
[943rqg.pa@dm.af.mil](mailto:943rqg.pa@dm.af.mil)

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### FY 2009 UTA Schedule

4-5 Oct 08  
1-2 Nov 08  
6-7 Dec 08  
10-11 Jan 08  
7-8 Feb 08  
7-8 Mar 08  
4-5 Apr 08  
2-3 May 08  
6-7 Jun 08  
11-12 Jul 08  
1-2 Aug 08  
12-13 Sep 08

### On The Cover:

Staff Sgt. Joshua Gonzales hugs his children after returning from a deployment to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan, Sept. 8.

Photo by: Mr. Jim Fren, retired Marine and Patriot Guard Rider



After providing Hurricane Gustav support, Reservists return from Texas in a HH-60 helicopter two-ship formation, Sept 3, 2008. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny)

# Happy Birthday, Air Force!

To the Airmen of the United States Air Force and their families:

Happy Birthday! On September 18, 1947, our Nation established the United States Air Force, signifying the commitment of the American people to leverage the most precise and reliable technology available for our defense in the air.

Our core functions have evolved since that historic day, but our responsibility to project America's strength and compassion remains steady.

Today, America's Airmen deliver Global Vigilance, Reach and Power for the joint team through unrivaled air, space and cyber capabilities. The actions of Airmen and their families build upon a tremendous heritage of integrity, service and excellence.

Your dedication to mission and devotion to duty are obvious to all. We are proud of your efforts to win today's joint fight, and we know that your commitment to mission during joint, coalition and interagency operations - now and in the future - is steadfast.

In the past year, America's Airmen have delivered humanitarian aid to those in need and passed the milestone of one million sorties generated in support of the Global War on Terror. You have operated the Nation's space enterprise and stood watch over America's nuclear arsenal. You stood alongside ground and special operations forces as Battlefield Airmen,

defended against rogue actors in cyberspace and cared for the sick and wounded.

You have made a global impact that spans the spectrum of conflict, all the while defending the homeland.

Our Air Force has faced unprecedented challenges during the past year, and several events have highlighted the fact that attention to detail must form the foundation of our every action. We are addressing several strategic issues, such as strengthening the Air Force nuclear and acquisition enterprises. We know that every Airman is fully committed to the high standards of excellence that are our hallmark, and that through this commitment, we will fully restore our external credibility and our own inner confidence.

As we celebrate the United States Air Force's 61st birthday, we call upon America's Airmen to reflect upon and commit to honoring the inspiring legacy with which we have been entrusted.

Happy Birthday, United States Air Force - **fly, fight, win!**

Mr. Michael B. Donley  
**Acting Secretary of the Air Force**  
General Norton A. Schwartz  
**USAF Chief of Staff**



*Family members of deployed Reservists wait inside the 943rd Maintenance Squadron Hangar for their love ones to deplane after returning from a deployment to Afghanistan, some who were gone for six months. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny)*

# Guardian Angels return home

By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny

## 943rd Rescue Group, Public Affairs

Davis-Monthan's Reserve Rescuers return home Monday, Sept. 8 after being mobilized in March to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan. The 943rd Rescue Group welcomed home more than 60 Reservists, pararescuemen, pilots, aircrew, aircraft maintainers, and support Airmen.

The men and women of the 943<sup>rd</sup> prepared for months for this deployment and are ready in a moments noticed to fulfill their motto "These things we do; that others may live."

"These Reservists are every bit as thoroughly trained as their active duty counterparts," said Col. Robert Dunn, 943d Rescue Group commander. "Often training in their spare time, Reservists match the skill of the active duty Airmen in much less amounts of time. Their commitment as Citizen Airmen is proven in their selfless volunteerism and dedication. They left behind their families, their full-time jobs and their friends to protect the freedoms of every American. I'm very proud of each and every one of them," said Colonel Dunn.

Working primarily with U.S. Army units, our "Citizen Airmen" conducted 359 medical evacuation missions flying HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters with pararescuemen. More than half of these medical evacuations were due to combat action. They helped saved more than 570 people and two military working dogs. They provided life saving medical care to U.S. military members, coalition forces, as well as Afghani soldiers and citizens including 47 children and four enemy patients.

"The reserve Airmen performed professionally and represented the Air Force with great distinction," said Army Maj. Chuck Rambo, executive officer and current acting-battalion commander for Task Force Eagle Assault, Afghanistan. "We

were all impressed with their technical and tactical proficiency. We could not fight and win our nations wars without the professional men and women of our Air Force Reserve."

"If we needed something done quick and done right we can always count on our Air Force Reserve brothers (and sisters)," Major Rambo added. "They are an outstanding unit, who are well-lead, dedicated pilots and the best maintainers I have ever worked with. They represent everything that is great about the United States Air Force."

While the Reservists were deployed, they were supported by the Veterans of Foreign War Chapter 10188 Ladies Auxiliary with donations for care packages and a grant from the U.S. Postal Service allowing the unit to mail more than 80 VFW care package to Afghanistan. The VFW Ladies Auxiliary along with the Patriot Guard also supported the Reservists during their departure with personal escorts, refreshments and teddy bears for the children to hug as they watched their moms and dads go off to war. They also plan to support the unit's home coming.

The unit's Family Readiness noncommissioned officer-in-charge and Key Spouse Volunteers provided support to family members while their Reservists were deployed. They are dedicated to continued support through family reunion and reintegration.

The unit was also selected as the Air Force Reserve Command Pilot site for the Veterans Health Administration Medical Support program for returning veterans of OEF and OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. Representatives from the Veterans Administration will be at the unit to take care of our Reservists by informing and enrolling them in critical VHA medical programs.

## Continued on page 4

# Welcome Home 943d

## Questions and Answers about the 305th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron from Army Maj. Chuck Rambo, Executive Officer and acting-Battalion Commander, Task Force Eagle Assault, Afghanistan

**Q:** How did the 305th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron impact the Army's Medical Evacuation Mission in Afghanistan?

**A:** They had a significant impact on our operations and contributed directly to our overall success. The capabilities they brought to the fight greatly enhanced our ability to recover injured Soldiers during limited visibility operations - their courage and commitment amazed us everyday. We could not have asked for a more professional organization.

**Q:** How did the 305th ERQS's Airmen and HH-60 Pavehawk capabilities enhance the medical evacuation mission to help save lives?

**A:** They flew over 650 hundred hours, over 700 missions and conducted (to date) 356 medical evacuations missions. Their ability to fly during limited visibility enhanced our capabilities and saved lives on the battlefield.

**Q:** Were there any difficulties merging the two services capabilities to perform a joint mission? If so, how did you overcome these obstacles?

**A:** It was an easy transition all around. Different services will always have their quirks and we enjoyed ribbing one another daily. In addition to the professional relationship we were developing, the daily interactions we had fostered a great team - a very cohesive team.

**Q:** Other than looking a little older and wiser, how did you feel about working with Reservists? Did our part-time Citizen Airmen impress/surprise you with their capabilities and working relationship?

**A:** I think that after six years of conflict in Afghanistan and the constant deployments - the gaps in training proficiency prevalent in the 90's is gone. There is no distinct difference between the active and reserve side of the house. The reserve Airmen performed professionally and represented the Air Force with great distinction - we were all impressed with their technical and tactical proficiency. We could not fight and win our nations wars without the professional men and woman of our Air Force Reserve.

**Q:** Overall, how do you feel the 305th ERQS performed as a member of the team?

**A:** They performed to the highest standards, we were very proud to have them on our team.. I don't think you could a find a better squadron in the Air Force.



*Tech Sgt. Aaron Curtis, 305th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron Aircrew Flight Equipment, inspects night vision goggles so all equipment is mission ready for alert calls during Operation Enduring Freedom. Sgt. Curtis is deployed from the 943rd operations support flight, Davis Mothan Air Force Base, AZ. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Demetrius Lester)*



*1st Lt. Brough McDonald preflights an HH-60 Pave Hawk before his aircrew begins its shift on alert Aug. 13 at Kandabar Air Base, Afghanistan. Lieutenant McDonald is a rescue pilot for the 305th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron from Davis-Mothan Air Force Base, Ariz. (U.S. Air Force photo/Master Sgt. Keith Brown)*



*Tech. Sgt. Tricia Broenmeka cleans windows on an HH-60 Pave Hawk before a flight Aug. 15 at Kandabar Air Base, Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo/Master Sgt. Keith Brown)*

## Combined Federal Campaign 2008

During this years CFC reservists can donate as little as \$2 a month through payroll deduction or a one time cash/check donation, minimum \$10. To give to a CFC charity, please contact your unit representative.

Unit representatives:

- 943 MSF – MSgt. Ron Harmon
- 943 MXS – MSgt. Lori Milner
- 943 RQG – TSgt. Yolanda Esparza
- 305 RQS – TSgt. Daniel Juen
- 306 RQS – SSgt. David Schlesinger
- 943 OSF – SSgt. Joel Morgan
- 943 AMDF – SrA Robert Terrell

## Fitness Test, Sunday

Mr. Bracamonte will be giving a fitness test on Sunday Oct. 5 at 6:30 a.m. at the base track.

## 943rd MXS Change of Command Ceremony

The CoC ceremony will start at 3 p.m. Sunday Oct. 5 in the Officers Club immediately following commander's call.

## Top Three Breakfast

Sunday Oct 5 from 6 a.m. to 8:30 at the Desert Inn dinning hall. Col Robert Dunn, 943rd RQG commander will be the quest speaker.

## Operation Jr. Heros-Camp Lighting

Operation Jr. Heros-Camp Lighting will be held here Nov 15. It is open to all military children regardless of branch or status of service.

The camp is a great opportunity for military children to understand the deployment process and have a great time. The event is FREE and registration starts Oct 4. For more information contact Tech Sgt. Yolanda Esparza at 228-7045.

## D-M 50 Picnic

The DM-50 Picnic is rescheduled for Friday, 13 Mar 09.



*Left: Major Joe Romeo, 305th RQS pilot, explains the night vision goggles to the boyscouts of Troop 777 before giving them a demonstration as part of the curriculum to earn their aviation merit badge.*

*Right: Assistant Scout Master, Mr. James "Hank" Reece, 305th RQS, administrative specialist, helps guide the boy scouts through the lesson plan for their aviation merit badge.*

## Troop 777 visit the 305th to earn Aviation Merit Badge

*By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny  
943rd Rescue Group, Public Affairs*

Nine boy scouts and one cub scout along with their Scoutmaster Mr. Roger Vesper and Assistant Scoutmaster Mr. James "Hank" Reece visited the 305th Rescue Squadron Sept 29 to earn their Aviation Merit Badge.



*After conducting a preflight inspection, Senior Master Sgt. Mike Flake, 305th Flight Engineer show the boy scout the engine of the HH-60 helicopter used by the squadron, Sept. 29.*

The Boy Scouts were from Troop 777 part of the Spanish Trails District in the Catalina Council and meet at the El Camino Baptist Church.

A specific lesson plan was developed to accomplish the requirements for the merit badge. Major Joe Romeo, 305th RQS pilot talked to the scouts about the aircraft, pilot certificates and ratings, instrument ratings, aeronautical charts, maps, flight plans, itineraries and more. He also gave hands on demonstrations of various equipment and survival gear used by the aircrew.

Senior Master Sgt. Mike Flake, 305th RQS Flight Engineer and special guest Lt. Col. Jeff Peterson, HH-60 helicopter pilot took the scouts out to the aircraft to conduct a pre-flight inspection and explain the operations of the aircraft instruments and components.

The merit badge is an elective badge for scouts interested in aviation. For a scout to become an Eagle Scout they will need to earn a minimum of 21 merit badges, 12 of which are required and nine electives.

# A Life Worth Living

By Lt Col David A. Yáñez

943rd Rescue Group Chaplain

Breathing. It is the essence of life. I know, I work in a major hospital. When I see my patients, I often hear them say they are grateful just to still be breathing. It's not until the body is deprived of oxygen that one often gives thought to breath.

Every 24 hours you breath 23,240 times. Everything that breathes has the breath of life in it. God breathed and all life came into being. There is a powerful mystery in the simple act of breathing. To become aware of that mystery is to come close to the essence of life and the giver of life.

Life and breath are bound together, however there is a noticeable difference between people who are alive and people who are living. Some people go through life as if each breathe brings increased burden. They live life without joy, without purpose and experience life in a shell, almost numb to the experiences of each day.

Then, there are those that live life as if each moment were a miracle, a bubble filled with mystery just waiting to pop. Not only do they live life with anticipation, joy, and hope, they bring life to every arena they touch. The life giving breath of God has so deeply penetrated their soul. Everything they touch brings life and happiness.

Today consider the life you have been given. Life is not meant to be endured but enjoyed. God has promised to provide a life full of opportunity as we give ourselves to Him.



## Signs of domestic violence

Last year, more than 3,300 Airmen were either victims or offenders of domestic violence. Supervisors and coworkers are in a good position to notice signs of domestic violence in fellow Airmen. October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month and serves to remind all of us to be alert for the signs.

Here are a few signs that can help you save a fellow Airman's life:

- Frequent unexplained "accidents" or injuries
- Frequent and sudden absences from work or school; frequent tardiness
- Personality changes such as depression, withdrawal or crying
- Isolation from family and friends
- Insufficient resources like money or a vehicle
- Excessive fear of conflict
- References to partner's anger or fear of the partner
- Frequent harassing phone calls or unexpected visits to the person at work

Don't ignore possible signs of domestic violence. If you, or someone you know, are in an abusive relationship, contact your local Family Advocacy office. The Air Force has several resources for Airmen and their families involved in cases of domestic violence. Treatment and prevention are the keys to ending domestic violence in the Air Force.

Find Airman's Roll Call Online Here: <http://www.af.mil/library/>

**Reservists who are in an abusive relationship or know of one should contact their 1st Sergeant.**

# AFPC Spread the Word teams launch global tour

By Maj. Beth Kelley Horine

*Air Force Personnel Center Public Affairs*

The Air Force Personnel Center commander, Maj. Gen. K.C. McClain, will kick off an Air Force-wide “Spread the Word” briefing tour at Oct. 7 and 8 at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

“AFPC is evolving to provide personnel services in new formats through new programs, and we want to communicate these changes in the field—so, we’re coming to you,” said General McClain.

“Developing and caring for our Airmen is one of the Air Force’s top priorities, and AFPC wants to hear from you about what works and what we can improve,” the general added. “The changes and improvements we’re making in our personnel, manpower and services management helps make it possible for us to better employ the right Airmen, to the right place, at the right time.”

The Spread the Word briefing provides information on personnel issues and delivery transformation, as well as allows all Air Force members direct, face-to-face contact with AFPC personnel to address concerns and provide feedback.

Specific topics covered in the Spread the Word briefings will include, among others, 365-day deployment options, the Global AEF tempo-banding system, civilian hiring procedures, and assignment changes. The teams also include military and civilian assignments experts, as well as deployment experts, who will be available for questions during the visit and after each Spread the Word briefing session.

AFPC Spread the Word teams will start visiting other Air Force bases in November and continue in 2009, briefing bases Air Force-wide. Locations, dates and times of the Spread the Word team visits will be provided to installation leadership in the coming weeks. For individual personnel questions, Air Force members should contact the Air Force Personnel Center Contact Center at 1-800-616-3775.



## LAF explores AF medical and SAR training

By Master Sgt. Theresa Shannon

*AFCENT Public Affairs*

SHAW AIR FORCE BASE, S.C. – A four-member team from the U.S. Air Force recently visited with senior leaders from the Lebanese Armed Forces to discuss future cooperation efforts between the two countries’ air forces.

Capt. Randy Allen, Lebanon Desk Officer in US Air Forces Central’s Security Cooperation office coordinated the one-day trip to Beirut. He was accompanied by Col. Robert Dunn, 943<sup>rd</sup> Rescue Group commander, Lt. Col. Theodore Bale, 306<sup>th</sup> Rescue Squadron commander and Chief Master Sgt. James Sanchez, 943<sup>rd</sup> RQG enlisted manager, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

The meeting stemmed from the March 2008 Security Assistance Management Review in which Air Forces Central proposed several ideas to the LAF for long-term engagement. The LAF chose medical and search and rescue as possible disciplines to explore for cooperation with the USAF.

“This event lays the groundwork for enhanced engagement with the Lebanese Armed Forces,” said, Office of Defense Cooperation Chief, U.S. Embassy, Beirut.

Since the LAF has a small air force, most of the US support to the LAF is to improve ground combat capabilities, and the Army has taken the lead on this, said Captain Allen. The USAF does have exceptional medical and SAR capabilities that it can assist the LAF in developing.

This is the first time the USAF has engaged with LAF to improve their capabilities since the US withdrew all US military forces in 1984 as a result of terrorist bombings, said Captain Allen.

Several ideas were discussed at the meeting and tentative plans were made to bring senior LAF observers to Exercise ANGEL THUNDER 2008, a two-week CSAR exercise at Davis-Monthan AFB in late November, according to Captain Allen.

After meeting with senior LAF members, the team was given a tour of the Beirut Air Base and met with base leadership and junior pilots.

“It was great to meet the Lebanese Airmen, they were highly professional and they take good care of their equipment and facilities,” said Captain Allen. “It is clear that they take a lot of pride in their country and serving in its air force.”

According to Captain Allen, the U.S. government has granted \$378 million to improve the LAF’s capabilities since 2006. Much of the assistance will be spent on training. AFCENT/A5 can advise the LAF on which USAF courses will best suit their training needs, and the AFCENT/A5 can set up tailored 1-2 week engagements in which the LAF delegations come to the United States or the USAF delegations visit Lebanon to share information and build relationships.



Above: Major Brian Novogradac, 306th Rescue Squadron Readiness Officer, (center) leads the Airmen of the 306th in formation to a salute during the 306th Change of Command Ceremony, Sept. 19. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Dominic Esparza)

Right: Major Jason Wetzel (center) assumed command of the 306th Rescue Squadron when he received the 306th guidon from Col Robert Dunn, 943rd Rescue Group Commander (right) during a change of command ceremony at the Officers Club Sept 19. Lt Col Ted Bale, (left) the former 306th RQS commander relinquished his command and is transferred to McDill Air Force Base, Fla. He was also promoted to the rank of Colonel in a ceremony following the change of command reception. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Dominic Esparza)



Mrs. Chrissy Wetzel, wife of Maj. Jason Wetzel, 306th RQS commander, is the newest Key Family Member. She will work with Tech. Sgt. Yolanda Esparza to provide support to the deployed Airmen's families of the 306th. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny)

Left: Tech Sgt. Yolanda Esparza, 943rd Rescue Group Family Feadiness and Mrs. Vickie Jo Ryder, 355th Figh Wing, Family Readiness, worklife specialist, sign-in spouses during a base Heart Link meeting held at the Desert Dove Chapel, Sept. 4. The Heart Link program is primary an active duty program to help spouses better understand the Air Force, gain valuable resources, help build networks for coping during times of separation and deployments. Tech. Sgt. Esparza, and Key Family members Mrs. Ruth Dunn and Mrs. Sue White, and spouses from the 306th RQS joined forces with active duty by attending the meeting to prepare for an upcoming deployment. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzyczyny)



*Families say goodbye one last time before the Reservists from the 305th and 306th RQS load the bus to deploy to the Horn of Africa.*

*Colonel Robert Dunn, (far right) 943rd Rescue Group commander, says goodbye to members of the 305th and 306th Rescue Squadrons as they deploy to support contingency operations in the Horn of Africa, Sept. 26. They will be deployed for two months. Earlier in the month members of the 304th Rescue Squadron deployed to support Operation ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan.*



*Above: Thirty-five employers from Tucson and throughout Arizona visited the 943rd Rescue Group, Sept. 17 during the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Fall Boss Lift 2008 tour. They were greeted by Col Robert Dunn, the 943rd Rescue Group commanders along with other commanders and senior noncommissioned officers from the squadrons and flights within the group. Colonel Dunn gave a unit mission briefing and then the ESRG employers were escorted to the 943rd Maintenance Hangar where the 305th RQS, 306th RQS and 943rd MXS had static displays set-up for the employers. The units gave briefings and talked to the employers about their jobs, equipment, helicopter and what it is like to be a Reservist. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzycki)*



*Captain Steve Bursick, 943rd Rescue Group, executive officer re-enlists Tech. Sgt. Richard Lee, 943rd Maintenance Squadron, Oct 1.*

*Right: Mrs. Frances Bale, Mr. William Johnson, Mrs. Ruth Dunn and Mrs. Sue White, 943rd Rescue Group Key Family Members enjoyed the afternoon in Nashville, Tenn. during the 920th Rescue Wing leadership conference, July 2008. During the conference the Key Family Members talked about the 943rd Family Readiness Key Family Member program that serves as a benchmark throughout the wing to help unit family members during deployment, reunion and reintegration. (Courtesy Photo)*



# 943rd RQG's Hurricane Season 2008



*Reservists return from Texas after supporting Hurricane Gustav, Sept. 3, 2008. (U.S. Air Force Photo/Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzycki)*

## Ellington Field is Air Hub for Hurricane Gustav Rescue Operations

TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD  
Public Affairs

**147th Reconnaissance Wing, Ellington Field** – Hurricane Gustav did not have a huge weather impact on the Houston area which allowed the Joint Reserve Base located at Ellington Field to serve as the ideal location to stand up air support for search and rescue operations.

Active duty members assigned to the 563 Rescue Group (RQG) and the AF Reserves forces assigned to the 943 RQG both out of Davis Monthan AFB, AZ, joined the Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing from Moffett AFB, CA and the 147th Reconnaissance Wing of the Texas Military Forces to provide the Governors of Louisiana and Texas air search and rescue assets.

In addition to the military support, the integrated cooperation of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) provided for the movement of aircraft ground equipment which ensured smooth transition for the search and rescue missions.

Yesterday, aircraft arrived at Ellington throughout the day. The last aircraft to land at Ellington was a C-17 transport

containing two HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters from the Alaska Air National Guard. By the end of business Monday the ramp at Ellington Field was full of aircraft ready to respond to Hurricane Gustav efforts as directed.

"This mission is a total force effort, we have the Active Duty, Reserves and the National Guard pulling together to save lives," said Major Brett Hartnett, 563 Project Officer.

He continued with, "These integrated forces set up a Rescue Operations Center at Ellington Field within 2 hours of being on the ground." Hurricane Gustav was the first time the ROC concept was implemented and operational.

The ROC is a self contained operations center, with command and control, flight surgeons, communications, plans, logistics, maintenance, intelligence, and a "Guardian Angels" element which is a specialized rescue team. The ROC can support humanitarian efforts and has the capability to expand to full combat operations.

"It is amazing how quickly this mission came together," said Col. Rodney Horn, 147 RW Vice Commander.

He continued, "Ellington Field is now operational for 24 hour search and rescues missions. We have an important role in helping with the recovery efforts from the devastation of this storm, and we will continue operations for as long as needed."



*Reservists listen to a passenger briefing before deploying to Randolph Air Force Base, Texas to support Hurricane Ike search and rescue missions.*

*Below: Staff Sgt. Brad Hovey, 943rd Mission Support Flight, small computer specialist, boards the C-130 bonded for Texas carrying additional rescue equipment to support Hurricane Ike SAR mission.*



# 943rd deploys to Hurricane Ike

*By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzycki*  
**943rd Rescue Group Public Affairs**

The 943<sup>rd</sup> Rescue Group at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. deployed reservists to areas outside the path of Hurricane Ike Friday, Sept 12 to support the Texas Task Force preparing for the potentially devastating storm.

Hurricane Ike was expected to be a category two to three hurricane with 120 mph winds when it made landfall and was expected to affect 500 miles of shoreline off the Texas coast.

The 943<sup>rd</sup> RQG deployed two HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters, eight aircrew members and four pararescuemen. Fourteen maintainers and support Airmen also deployed on a C-130 aircraft Saturday Sept 13 to safe areas to wait out the storm and prepare to conduct search and rescue mission for victims of the hurricane.

The unit joined other Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Active Duty and Coast Guard SAR units along with National Guardsmen preparing for what was expected to be a historically destructive natural disaster.

The unit's mission was to locate and rescue victims of the storm. They provided medical support to victims when they were transported to safe areas determined by the Joint Personnel Recovery Center part of the Texas Task Force managing the emergency plan for the natural disaster.

While the aircrew and helicopters deployed to support the victims of Hurricane Ike, the last remaining unit members of the unit's six month deployment to Afghanistan returned home.

Saturday: 17 Reservists from the 943<sup>rd</sup> Rescue Group at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz. deployed to Randolph Air Force Base, Texas to support search and rescue missions for victims caught in the wake of Hurricane Ike.

The Reservists were transported by an Air Force Reserve

Command C-130J Hercules Aircraft from the 815<sup>th</sup> Airlift Squadron from Keesler, Miss. to Texas this morning.

When they arrived in Texas, they became part of the 331<sup>st</sup> Air Expeditionary Group, a joint search and rescue unit of more than 400 people, mostly Air Force and Coast Guard members and about 20 Air Force and Coast Guard HH-60 Pavehawk and Jayhawk helicopters and four HC-130 Hercules aircraft based at Randolph. The Group is being lead by the Col. Steven Kirkpatrick from the 920<sup>th</sup> Rescue Wing, Patrick Air Force Base, Fla., the parent wing of the 943<sup>rd</sup> RQG.

Their first priority was saving lives. Military search and rescue specialists, aircraft and equipment assisted civil authorities in saving lives and preventing human suffering. The Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Active Duty, Guardsmen and Reservists and equipment provided enhanced air, land and sea search and rescue capabilities and capacities.

The Airmen who deployed from the C-130 are aircraft mechanics, intelligence specialist, and ground radio specialists. They maintained the helicopters and provided critical situational awareness to the aircrew in-flight and ensure air-to-ground communication during the search and rescue operations. They deployed two pallets of equipment and supplies to sustain the mission for weeks, if needed.

More than 30 Airmen from the 943<sup>rd</sup> RQG have deployed and conducted rescue missions in the storm-affected Texas areas. They joined the fight with their experience following 2005 Hurricane Katrina where they helped save 1,043 lives, including 475 people in one day.

# 943rd MXS 1st Sgt. completes twelfth annual AF Marathon

By Master Sgt. Ruby Zarzycki  
943rd Rescue Group Public Affairs

The twelfth annual United States Air Force Marathon took place on September 20, 2008, at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

Representing the 943<sup>rd</sup>, Rescue Group and Air Force Reserve Command was 943<sup>rd</sup> Maintenance Squadron's 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant, Master Sgt. John Stonehouse.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Sergeant decided to run the AF Marathon in February and used the Jeff Galloway marathon training method to prepare to run the 26 mile race. Eight months later he was in Ohio at the starting line.

"To run a marathon gives you a goal to set for yourself that you must train and be dedicated to in order to accomplish," said Master Sgt Stonehouse. "I feel we all need to push ourselves from time to time. It is a great character builder, and the people you meet at the marathon are great."

Master Sgt. Stonehouse finished the marathon in the top half of the participants.

"It was absolutely incredible to finish the marathon!" he said. "It actually hit me the next day as I reflected. I actually ran 26 miles."

"The medal was unique to the event and year, I was impressed by the fact that a three star General was there to support the event and hand out the medals to the finishers," he added.

The U.S. Air Force Marathon is held in September to commemorate the anniversary of the Air Force, September 18, 1947. Other events included a wheelchair marathon, half marathon, individual 10K, team 10K and a 5K. This was a record year for the AF Marathon, as the number of participants increased by a third compared to last years 6,700.

The AF Marathon was the best physical event I have ever participated in, said Master Sgt Stonehouse.

"The event was well planned, and the support from the



community in Dayton Ohio was tremendous," he said. "The people that turned out to watch the event, cheered you on like you were their neighbor."

"My favorite part was the finish line, but not just because it was over," he explained. "As you approached the finish line the path is paved on both sides with nostalgic aircraft from the Air Force Museum. As I ran pass the aircraft from our history, and approached the finish line it gave me great sense of pride to be a part of the Air Force and its heritage."