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Photo by Tech. Sgt. Ryan Labadens

Lt. Col. Scot Salminen (right) and Maj. Kevin Olsen, 815th Airlift Squadron pilots, discuss the flight path of their C-130J Super Hercules aircraft March 2 during Emerald Warrior 2018. The 815th AS "Flying Jennies" provided airlift support for the special operations joint training event at Hurlburt Field, Florida, Feb. 26-March 2. The exercise involved units from all U.S. military branches, U.S. Special Operations Command and North Atlantic Treaty Organization partner forces.

## Flying Jennies take part in Emerald Warrior

*By Tech. Sgt. Ryan Labadens*  
403rd Wing Public Affairs

Reserve Citizen Airmen from the 815th Airlift Squadron participated in Emerald Warrior 2018, a special operations joint training event here Feb. 26 to March 9 involving units within the U.S. Special Operations Command and Air Force Special Operations Command.

The 815th "Flying Jennies," a tactical airlift squadron assigned to the 403rd Wing provided C-130J Super Hercules aircraft in support of day and night training missions.

"We had special operations people flying with us to perform different types of jumps out of the aircraft, like high-altitude low-opening (HALO) and high-altitude high-opening (HAHO). Plus we'd do on-loads and offloads where we'd try to get people and equipment on and off the aircraft as quickly as possible between takeoffs and landings," said Master Sgt. Chris Sentilles, 815th AS loadmaster.

David Patterson, Emerald Warrior 2018 air operations planner, said that this 11th iteration of Emerald Warrior consists of joint training involving each branch of the U.S. military, as well as military personnel from allied nations. Conventional and special operations forces from the Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps participated in training scenarios alongside North Atlantic Treaty Organization partner forces during the two-week exercise. "The number one objective here is command and control integration with partner nations," said Patterson.

Lt. Col. Stuart Rubio, 815th AS commander, said he was proud of how well the Flying Jennies were able to step up and help out with Emerald Warrior.

"The biggest thing I'm proud of is our flexibility," said Rubio regarding how adaptable the squadron members were in being available to participate. "I was impressed with our folks just having the ability to take on whatever was thrown their way. We were able to lean forward and get a lot of the missions done that we were asked to do." To read more, [click here](#).

[www.403wg.afrc.af.mil](http://www.403wg.afrc.af.mil)

# Women of Weather: *Hurricane Hunters make a difference*

By Maj. Marnee A.C. Losurdo  
403rd Wing Public Affairs

Some little girls might dream about being princesses; but others dream about becoming a Hurricane Hunter and flying into the most powerful storms on earth.

Those goals became reality for Maj. Ashley Lundry, an aerial reconnaissance weather officer, and Maj. Devon Meister, a pilot, both members of the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, referred to as the Hurricane Hunters.

The 53rd WRS is the only Department of Defense unit that annually flies weather reconnaissance missions into severe tropical weather from June 1 through Nov. 30, to gather data for the National Hurricane Center to improve their forecasts and storm warnings.

"It was my dream to fly through hurricanes since I was a little girl," Lundry said. Her father, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate and Navy pilot, influenced her career choice, she said. "I always thought weather was really cool, and my dad told me there were pilots who flew planes through hurricanes. He planted the idea that I could do it."

And she did, but she served a stint in the U.S. Army and Air National Guard first. Lundry received an Army ROTC scholarship to attend the Florida Institute of Technology and earned a degree in meteorology and her commission in 2006. She got her master's degree in physical science at Emporia State, Kansas, in 2013. After serving 4 years as an Army logistics officer, she transferred to the Oklahoma Air National Guard in 2010 to serve as a weather officer. She attended the Weather Officer Course at Keesler AFB in 2010 and toured the 53rd WRS, which provided her an opportunity to inquire about future opportunities to serve in the squadron, she said. She transferred to the 53rd in 2014 and began her training to become a qualified ARWO.

For Meister, the path to become a Hurricane Hunter wasn't a life-long goal like Lundry, but she knew she wanted a degree in mathematics, and the Air Force provided her the opportunity to do so, she said.

"I really liked math," said Meister, who earned her degree from the University of South Florida in 2003. "And a good thing about a mathematics degree is that it opens a lot of doors for you in the military. At the time I wasn't sure what I wanted to do in the Air Force, but they needed weather



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Heiney

**Maj. Devon Meister, pilot, and Maj. Ashley Lundry, aerial reconnaissance weather officer, are members of the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, referred to as the Hurricane Hunters, which is a unit in the Air Force Reserve's 403rd Wing at Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi.**

officers. They sent me to get a second bachelor's degree in meteorology at the U.S. Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California, and I became a weather officer."

Meister also attended the Weather Officer Course at Keesler in 2004 and visited the Hurricane Hunters to learn about their mission.

"Ever since I went on that tour I wanted to be a part of the Hurricane Hunters," Meister said.

However, Meister got the opportunity to become a pilot and took it. While in pilot training she found out her unit was losing its mission and had to find a job, so she called the 53rd WRS and was told that they had a pilot board the following month. She met that board and signed on as a Hurricane Hunter in November 2011.

Today, Meister is one of two female pilots in the squadron, one of 243 female pilots in the Air Force Reserve, and one of 728 in the entire Air Force. Lundry is one of four female ARWOs in the squadron, Air Force Reserve and Air Force as the 53rd WRS is the only unit that has this job.

It's a unique mission, and with that mission comes unique challenges.

As a pilot, Meister and her counterparts fly into storms most pilots avoid.

"The biggest difference between being a pilot for the Hurricane Hunters versus another unit is we purposely fly into severe

weather rather than avoid it; and there is no training for that," Meister said.

In fact, the majority of the squadron's training for pilots, navigators, ARWO's and loadmasters is all conducted at home station and during operational missions, she said, as there is no formal schoolhouse.

"We are a student for multiple missions into a hurricane so we can experience the environment," said Meister, who added it took her about two years of pilot training, C-130J specific qualification and on-the-job training to become proficient to fly through storms.

Meister, who has now flown into 52 storms and has more than 1,500 flight hours, said as a pilot, their role is to fly the weather officer into the storm.

As one of 20 ARWOs in the Air Force, Lundry said due to this rare mission the ARWO training is done in-house as well, she said.

"We need actual storms to fly for training, so the hurricane season impacts how soon you can become fully qualified," said Lundry, who added that it took about a year and she flew through 10 storms with 94 storm flight hours.

The squadron conducts two types of missions, low-level invests and fix missions. ARWOs direct the mission for both, said Lundry.

To read more, [click here](#).



# 403RD HEADLINES

## AERIAL PORT PROVIDES TRAINING

Airmen from the 41st Aerial Port Squadron here participated in a training event called GRIP IV Wheelhouse March 4, 2018, with the goal of providing Reserve Citizen Airmen hands-on experience in a simulated real-world scenario.

This particular training was an engine-running operation where a C-130H Hercules aircraft from the 357th Airlift Squadron, 908th Airlift Wing, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, landed, dropped its ramp and put the engine in idle or reverse while cargo was being loaded onto the aircraft. One particular cargo item that needed to be loaded for this event was a pickup truck.

"The exercise started with the cargo coming in and being checked in through the Global Transportation Execution System," said Staff Sgt. Bret Christofferson, 41st APS air transportation craftsman. "That information was then sent to the ramp section, who then delivered the cargo to the aircraft and helped load and secure the cargo."



## USERRA ASSISTS WITH REEMPLOYMENT



For most Reserve and National Guard members, deployments, for most, usually means getting drawn out of one's civilian job for an extended period of time. The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is a program that supports service members by assisting in the resolution of

conflicts between employers and employee's that arises from the employee's military commitment after they have completed their service obligation.

ESGR is a Department of Defense program that develops and promotes supportive work environments for Service members in the Reserve Components through outreach, recognition, and educational opportunities that increase awareness of applicable laws, and resolves employment conflicts between the Service members and their employers. This program helps service members understand their rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. USERRA is a federal law that establishes various rights and benefits for employees and applicants for employment who have served in the military or have engaged in other forms of protected governmental service. USERRA requires employers to provide leaves of absence and to re-employ workers who enter military service while employed. To learn more, [click here](#).

## WING ANNOUNCES ANNUAL AWARDS

The 403rd Wing recognized its annual award winners for the Jan. 1 through Dec. 31 award period during the March 2018 unit training assembly. Winners were chosen in the Airman, noncommissioned officer, senior NCO, first sergeant, company grade officer and civilian categories. The Airman of the Year is Staff Sgt. Michael Johnson (who was a senior airman for the 2017 award period), 403rd Maintenance Squadron. The NCO of the Year is Staff Sgt. Krystal Hernandez, 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron. The Senior NCO of the Year is Senior Master Sgt. Darren Bannister, 815th Airlift Squadron. The First Sergeant of the Year is Master Sgt. Krystal Knight, 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. The CGO of the Year is Capt. April Martin, 5th Operational Weather Flight. And the Civilian of the Year is Brain Harris, 815th AS. [Click here](#) to read more.



## Air Force News



### National Defense Strategy drives Air Force Budget

WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson and Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. David L. Goldfein testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations about the Air Force's fiscal year 2019 budget in Washington, D.C., March 14, 2018.

"We have returned to great power competition and the central challenge to security and prosperity is one we must meet," said Wilson. "That's what you expect of your Air Force and of your joint force, and we're here to deliver."

According to Wilson, there are "two bold moves," in this budget.

"The first is accelerating defensible space. We need to deter, defend and prevail against anyone who seeks to deny our ability to freely operate in space," Wilson said. "The second is the shift to multi-domain operations. We are proposing to change the way we do command, control and communication on the battlefield."

### Air Force releases FY 2017 AF acquisition report

WASHINGTON (AFNS) -- Secretary of the Air Force Heather Wilson released the fiscal year 2017 Air Force Acquisition Annual Report March 13, 2018.

The report reviews the overall management of the Air Force's 465 programs of record. It also outlines where Air Force acquisition is headed in fiscal years 2018 and 2019.

The report cites \$13 billion in cost-savings since 2011, and highlights a number of initiatives the Air Force is taking to speed up the acquisition timeline, including streamlined decision-making authorities, increased prototyping and improved software acquisition. A copy of the FY17 Air Force Acquisition report is available at [http://www.af.mil/FY2017\\_AQReport](http://www.af.mil/FY2017_AQReport)

## FY 2018 UTA DATES

April 7-8      May 4-6  
June 2-3      July 28-29  
No August UTA      Sept. 8-9

## UNIT COMPLIANCE INSPECTION IN JULY

The 403rd Wing's Unit Compliance Inspection Capstone is July 26-30 in conjunction with the July 28-29 Unit Training Assembly. About 50 inspectors and augmentees from the Air Force Reserve Command Inspector General Office will visit the base to evaluate the wing's mission effectiveness, efficiency and readiness. As part of this event, unit members are encouraged to take a survey. This information was emailed to all unit members. This is unit members' opportunity to tell AFRC IG what they think about 403rd Wing issues and what works well here and what doesn't. For more information, contact Maj. Lisa Breal, 403rd Wing director of inspections, 228-377-0767.

## WING NEWS ON BASE APP

The 403rd Wing now has its own section in the Keesler Air Force Base app. This section includes Air Force Reserve-specific news and resources, important dates and events, and even the latest edition of the 403rd Flyer accessible on any mobile device. Also, members would like to receive 403rd-specific push notifications can click on the "i" at the top of the app's home screen, click settings, click subscriptions and then check "Air Reserve info." To download the app search "Keesler" in the app store or visit <https://apps.appmachine.com/keeslerafb2>.



## 403RD FLYER

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Address: 403rd Wing Public Affairs, 701 Fisher Street, Keesler AFB, MS 39534  
Email: [403wg.pa2@us.af.mil](mailto:403wg.pa2@us.af.mil)  
Phone: 228-377-2056 or DSN 597-2056  
PA Officer: Maj. Marnee A.C. Losurdo  
Superintendent: Master Sgt. Jessica Kendziorek  
Editor: Staff Sgt. Heather Heiney  
Writers: Tech. Sgt. Ryan Labadens  
Staff Sgt. Shelton Sherrill  
Senior Airman Nathaniel Brynes

## WING COMMANDERS CALLS SATURDAY

Col. Robert J. Stanton, 403rd Wing vice commander, will have two 403rd Wing commanders calls Saturday at the Roberts Consolidated Maintenance Facility. The first commander's call is at 7:30 a.m. for the 403rd Mission Support Group, Wing Staff Agencies and Aeromedical Staging Squadron. The second commander's call is at 9 a.m. for the 403rd Operations and Maintenance Groups. For more information, contact the 403rd Wing Public Affairs Office at 228-377-2056.

## GREAT IDEA? USE CC SUGGESTION BOX

The 403rd Wing commander, Col. Jennie R. Johnson, has implemented a direct line of communication for all personnel to share their ideas or concerns by placing suggestion boxes throughout wing buildings. Information placed in the suggestion boxes can be submitted anonymously; however, unit members who would like to receive a personal response when using the commander's suggestion box, should leave their name, unit, and telephone number. The boxes can be found in the Wing headquarters building on the wall near the inside stairwell, Mission Support Group, building 904, in the hallway near the bathrooms, the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron by the main entrance doors, and the Roberts Consolidated Maintenance Facility by the break room outside of the auditorium.

## REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITIES

Everyone is a critical weapon in the war against terrorism and everyone is encouraged to be aware, be alert, and report any suspicious activities. In light of recent events around the country, it is important that all base patrons be vigilant in regards to physical security, cyber-security, and mail-borne security. All personnel have the obligation, if they see something suspicious, to say something. If individuals observe any suspicious activity, day or night, call the Keesler Base Defense Operations Center at 228-377-3040 or the Office of Special Investigation at 228-377-3420.

## EMPLOYER DAY JUNE 2, NOMINATE BOSS

The 403rd Wing's Employer Appreciation Day is scheduled for June 2. This is an opportunity for reservists to thank their employers for their support, but also show them what Reserve Citizen Airmen accomplish serving their nation. Employers will have the opportunity to tour the wing and fly on a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft. The deadline to nominate employers is April 13. To nominate an employer, fill out the form and return it to [403WG.PA2@us.af.mil](mailto:403WG.PA2@us.af.mil). An invitation letter with event information will be sent to employers by May 1. For more information about the event, call the 403rd Wing Public Affairs office at 228-377-2056.

## APPLY NOW FOR SWAN 38 SCHOLARSHIP

The Hurricane Hunters Association will award two \$1,600 Swan 38 Scholarship Memorial Scholarships this year for undergraduate or graduate studies. The deadline for submissions is 1 June 2018. This scholarship is open to all members of the 403d Wing and their dependents. The scholarship application was emailed to all wing members. For more information or to obtain the scholarship application form, contact Maj. Christopher Dyke, 403rd Operations Group, 228-377-5693.

## ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE SURVEY SAYS

It's not every day people are given the opportunity to provide unedited feedback to leadership. The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute's Organizational Climate Survey, or DEOCS, did just that. The survey gauged perceptions of organizational effectiveness, EO, equal employment opportunity, fair treatment, and sexual assault prevention and response and other topics. Nearly one-fourth of the wing took the survey and rated the wing slightly above the Air Force average for the categories surveyed. Col. Robert J. Stanton, 403rd Wing vice commander, will go over the results as well as areas for improvement and the way ahead at the commander's calls Saturday.