

# 183<sup>rd</sup> AEROMEDICAL EVACUATION SQUADRON



## **LINEAGE**

183<sup>rd</sup> Aeromedical Evacuation Flight

Redesignated 183<sup>rd</sup> Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, 16 Oct 1991

## **STATIONS**

Sullivan ANGB, Jackson, MS

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

172<sup>nd</sup> Military Airlift Group

## **COMMANDERS**

LTC Janet I. Sessums

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

**EMBLEM**

**MOTTO**

**NICKNAME**

**OPERATIONS**

Thirty-one members of the 183 Aeromedical Evacuation Flight has been called into active duty to support Operation Desert Shield. The unit was recently issued active duty orders for a 180-day tour. Five medical crews have been tasked to fly strategic air evacuation missions out of Saudi Arabia to various destinations in Europe on the C-141. The injured and sick in Saudi are taken to an aero medical staging facility where they are then transported to a C-141 for passage to a hospital in Europe. The aeromedical evacuation crews receive the patients on the aircraft and prepare them for the eight-hour flight. They also administer medical care while enroute to the various destinations. First Lieutenant Betty Newman, a flight nurse with the unit, expressed her thoughts in the call-up by stating, "Nurses train to help people. This is the grand opportunity of all time to help people." She also noted that nursing care will be the utmost priority for those wounded while serving in Saudi Arabia. Members from the 183 Aeromedical Evacuation Flight have already been supporting the Desert Shield Operation on a voluntary basis since the conflict started in August 1990. Crews have been working with the 2nd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron at Rhine-Main AB, Frankfurt, Germany. They have been flying patients from Germany to Andrews AFB, Md. Two of the individuals activated were already in Saudi on a voluntary basis when they received notice they were officially activated. They will remain in Saudi where they will be joined by the other 29 members of the unit who departed for Saudi on 7 January 1991. Capt Fred L Nelson of the 183 Aeromedical Evacuation Flight said that since the arrival, members of the January deployment had been waiting for deployment to their assigned sites and that the units had all been absorbed into a newly-designated unit, the 1611 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, which will be responsible for all aero medical evacuations.

The 183 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron members were activated were assigned to the Air Evac element known as the Tactical Aeromedical Evacuation Liaison Team (AELT). The mission of the AELT was to deploy with the medical support units of the forward ground forces, much like the field hospital in the TV series MASH; the 183 AES was tasked to furnish two teams, each team consisting of two radio operators and one Medical Service Corps (MSC) officer. These teams were the first to be activated within the 183 AES. Once organized, the team lived and worked together very closely; setting up high frequency radios, generators, and tents for living quarters. He said that early in the air war, they had to supply security for the compound because there was only one squad of marines providing security and the radio operators with the AES were only other people in the camp with M-16s. "Once the team was in place and operational, requests for patient airlift of sick or wounded were brought to the AELT's MSC officer who gathered the necessary information. This data was put in the form of an airlift request and given to the radio operator who used special encryption devices to encode the message to prevent it from being intercepted by the enemy (which in our case was only about 25 miles away). The message was then transmitted to the Aeromedical Evacuation Control Center (AECC) who scheduled aircraft to pick up the sick and wounded," said Sergeant Neely. He added, "While the process may appear simple, trying to accomplish these tasks and care for the wounded in the middle of a war zone while you were being fired upon, was quite a different story. And after being in a small town called Al Masheb for just a few hours we found out the true meaning of war on a first-hand basis. Our first traumatic experience was with the missiles (the scuds you heard so much about.) These were short-range missiles called 'frogs'. There were no launch warnings with these missiles. They were like visiting in-laws; when they got there, you knew they were coming. Lucky for us their aim was not the best. A lot of what was

supposed to be sleeping time was spent in an underground bunker wearing a gas mask. All things considered, such as bad water, bad food, and at times no water and no food, the entire Air Evac system worked well. We moved American, Saudi, and Kuwaiti wounded out of the combat zone as well as many enemy POWs and when you think about it that's darn good, especially when you take into consideration that all the AELTs near the front lines were made up of Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve people.

Members of the 183 Aeromedical Evacuation Flight (AEF) were welcomed home in March 1991 from bases a Ramstein, Germany and Saudi Arabia. Capt Fran Shaw emotionally recalled those first days when members of the unit left Thompson Field on a C-130 bound for Saudi Arabia; she said things were so uncertain at that point that "You just didn't know if they would be coming back." Sgt Shelia Wallace, a radio operator with the 183 AEF, described her first experience in Saudi Arabia with an incoming SCUD missile attack. She said the shelter was a three-minute run from her quarters, and "Once the SCUD was tracked you had only seven minutes to get to shelter. There was always the fear that you might not make it to the shelter. After several alerts and several bombings a night you began to get used to it but you never lost the fear of would you make it to the shelter in time.

Members of the 183rd Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron departed Jackson, Miss., on 27 April 1992 on a 172 Airlift Squadron C-141B for Dover, Del., as the aero medical evacuation squadron began its participation in lice aero medical evacuation missions. The aero medical evacuation crew, consisting of Capt Betty Newman, 1st Lt Wayne Knight, TSgt Billy Farris, TSgt Ron Richardson and Sgt Kurt Berry, was to remain overnight at Dover and catch the C-141 for Germany. On Tuesday morning, 28 April 1992, the C-141 arrived but only had three available seats for the five aero medical evacuation crew members; therefore, they decided to seek other airlift; a C-5 going to Rhein-Main AB, Germany, was located and the crew departed five hours behind the original aircraft. After arriving in Germany, the crew took some crew rest and then loaded the medical equipment and proceeded to Dhahran, arriving there Thursday morning, 30 April 1992. Then, the four solid days of travel and time zone change caught up with the crew. Exhausted, they went to sleep but woke up at 4:00 a.m. Friday morning, unable to sleep any longer. The mission didn't depart until that afternoon but further sleep was impossible. This is a frequent problem encountered by personnel crossing numerous time zones. Patients in Saudi needing air evacuation services remain at the local hospital until a mission is scheduled, and on the day of the mission the Germany, C-130s go out into the system and bring the patients to Dhahran, where they are loaded from the C-130 directly into the C-141 for the eight and one-half hour flight to Germany. In Germany, the patients are turned over to the area hospital and the air evacuation crew re-entered crew rest for the flight back to the United States the next day. The 183 AES members were not tasked to be the primary crew on this mission as they were there for support to the air evacuation unit from McGuire AFB. This is a weekly mission which runs from Germany to Andrews AFB and normally carries a large patient load. A basic crew of five is not adequate to handle such a large mission and the 183 AES members were a welcome asset. Nine hours after leaving Germany, the aircraft landed at Andrews AFB. Patients and equipment went their separate ways and the crew went to their fourth different billeting office of the trip. On Sunday morning, 3 May 1992, a C-130 stopped at Andrews to pick up the Jackson crew for the final leg home; they arrived at Jackson, Miss., on 3 May 1992. Based upon the report of this crew, it was decided to run this

mission once a month with Jackson aircraft and air evacuation crews; also, the leg from Germany back to the United States will be run with the 183 AES as the primary crew

Six members of the 183 Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron departed Jackson, Miss., on 12 December 1992, for Pope Air Force Base in Fayetteville, N.C., in response to a request for two crews qualified in both the C-130 and C-141 aircraft to participate in the relief effort in Somalia. The six members who were selected by the Air National Guard Readiness Center from a number of personnel who expressed an interest in participating were: Lt Col Mary G Lockhart; Maj. Rita A Pfeiffer; T' Lt Bo Sullivan; 1st Lt David Adams; MSgt Rhonda Lovorn; and Sgt Kurt Berry. They departed Pope Air Force Base on 15 December 1992, and arrived in Somalia on 16 December 1992.

172nd Airlift Wing geared up for its first mission with the C-17 Globemaster III on December 22, 2003. Operation Rudolph was the name of our mission and we were tasked with bringing home injured military members from the war to their home units for Christmas. Maj Barry Blanchard, First Pilot, Lt Col Todd Wall and Lt Mark Rogers as copilots would lead us on our first mission. The morning began with a crew briefing to ensure everybody was present and explain our mission and roles. The team was fired up for the first mission, but focused on security due to the heightened threat of terrorist activity during the holiday season. As the C-17 departed Thompson Field, the excitement began. I saw smiles reminiscent of childhood days and others added a thumbs-up showing their pride in being a part of our new flying era with the C-17s. The Aeromedical Evacuation (Air Evac) crew trained and completed check-rides enroute to our first stop, Andrews Air Force Base. They built in a scenario to resemble real-life situations we see in our current wartime operations. For training purposes, Maj Barry Pettit played the role of Medical Crew Director (MCD). The MCD coordinates all patient care with the flight nurses and aeromedical technicians. Maj Charissa Gentry assumed MCD duties at Andrews AFB upon arrival. We arrived at Andrews and the Air Evac crew received our patient list as the aircrew checked in with Command Post for operational orders. The next morning we were greeted with very crisp morning air and a beautifully painted sunrise to kick-start the first leg of our journey. We received three litter patients, three ambulatory patients and four attendants. Three of our patients had just arrived the night before from Kirkuk, Iraq with injuries to include: gunshots to the leg; one with a shattered ankle; and another with hearing loss from mortar rounds. The patients seemed very glad to see us knowing they were going home for Christmas. Our next stop was Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. We coordinated with Scott's medical crew for patient pickup. As the door opened, a Lieutenant Colonel and a Major boarded the C-17 and I approached to assist the officers. The Lt Col introduced himself as Joe Dructor and was assigned to Scott AFB. Dructor was inquiring about a message he received concerning his daughter, Erin Dructor, who had come back from Kirkuk, Iraq and was possibly on our plane. I informed him I would find the answers for him but before I had a chance to ask an Air Evac crewmember, I turned and saw that Dructor found his daughter on one of the litters. I turned to our photographer, TSgt Marvin Moore, and sated "This is what the mission is all about." It was a bittersweet reunion for the Dructors. A1C Erin Dructor is assigned with the 75th Security Forces, Hill Air Force Base, Utah and we were to transport her to Hill AFB. The Dructors had an opportunity to catch up, share some laughs and tears. After they said their goodbyes, we were off to Hill AFB. We met with the medical crew at Hill AFB to offload our last patient, A1C Dructor. Our Air Evac crew and aircrew checked in with

Command Post for further operational instructions. Command Post relayed to us our operation was complete due to the fact we had no further patients to transport. Now it was our turn to be excited about making it home for Christmas to be with our families. We arrived back at Thompson Field around 2000 hours, 23 December 2003 with a sense of pride and accomplishment that we had just made history with the Air National Guard and the 172nd Airlift Wing.



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