

701 MEDICAL SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

701 Medical Squadron

STATIONS

NAS JRB Fort Worth, TX

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

Col Kathy S. Meisetschleager

Col Francis Zucconi

Col Richard Walters

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

In August, Hurricane Katrina pummeled through the Southern Coastal area affecting lives and depleting resources, but also sparking an aura of generosity from many. This spirit of giving

caused a ripple effect throughout the country. It brought forth numerous celebrities, military members and civilians to offer their skills and resources to contribute to the rescue and restoration of New Orleans. Numerous military agencies were called to provide troops to assist in rescue and clean-up efforts.

The 701st Medical Squadron heard more volunteer medical providers were needed. When Captain William Houston, 701st Medical Squadron's physician assistant and medical readiness officer, heard of this opportunity, he didn't think twice about stepping up. After gaining approval from his civilian employer and support from his family, he submitted his request. "I volunteered because I wanted to help out in some way with this catastrophe, and this was a great way to assist," said Captain Houston. Given a week to put his affairs and bags in order for the thirty-day deployment, he said goodbye to his wife and eight year-old son.

Capt. Houston, along with Col. Frank Zucconi, 701st Medical Squadron deputy commander, rented a car and drove to New Orleans to perform the mission they were called to do by profession and honor. "I feel it's the nature of public servants, such as the military, police, fire fighters and medical personnel, who desire to become involved with this type of situation," said Captain Houston. When they arrived at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans, the 926th Medical Squadron greeted them with a warm welcome. They were escorted to their staged living quarters at the Navy clinic, a large room lined with wall-to-wall cots. "We had it pretty good," said Captain Houston.

As many as 26 thousand troops supported this mission, most occupying one of the 220 tents. Some personnel slept outside for a time under the aircraft awnings until tent city was ready. With little time to settle, the two doctors began rotating 12-hour shifts performing post deployment physicals on reservists as they departed New Orleans. With barely enough time to get accustomed to their new surroundings, another hurricane was predicted to hit the area. They were quickly diverted north and linked up with the 917th Medical Squadron at Barksdale Air Force Base, Texas, for a few days. On Sept. 24, Hurricane Rita tore her way through the surrounding coastal area.

Once the weather began to clear, they were able to return to their temporary home. These two medical personnel evaluated several cases of pneumonia and upper respiratory infections; a handful of members were referred to the psychiatric clinic to be counseled on the emotional trauma they experienced from handling the deceased; but the majority of patients examined were in great health despite their exposure risk during the mission explained Captain Houston. "Fortunately, there were only a few water born illnesses due to the good field sanitation used," Captain Houston said. People who worked in the contaminated water were issued a brand new set of boots when they left.

This was to help keep anyone from carrying infected material back home. Due to the nature of their assignment, their work came in segments and they were needed at the station on an on-call basis. During their downtime they worked alongside 926th MDS members at the Navy clinic. Throughout their stay, Captain Houston took some time off to visit the demolished city's core, including the devastated Ninth Ward. "It was like something from a Stephen King novel," he said. The once bustling city was completely silent.

Because of curfew, only officials were allowed in this area, leaving only a few cars or people around. "It was such an uncanny feeling," said Captain Houston. "But the most rewarding part of the tour was the people. It was so nice to experience the appreciation of the people in town. They

were so happy to see us here to help. If their restaurant was open and you were in uniform, you couldn't pay for a meal." The tour ended and it was time to pack up and head home; home—a place that would be appreciated now more than ever before. After witnessing such things as a man carrying everything he owned in a duffle bag, the doctors feel it'll now be easier to appreciate the simple things in life. For them, nothing will ever be taken for granted again. 2005

November 2 2008 was a historical date for the medical squadrons in the 301st Fighter Wing as the 701st Medical Squadron and 301st Aerospace Medicine Squadron merged to form the only unit's medical squadron, the 301st MDS.

USAF Unit Histories
Created: 16 Jun 2020
Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.