



Volume 2, No. 11

403rd Wing, Keesler AFB, Miss.

Nov. 2, 2017

# OUTSTANDING:

*Operations Group earns  
Airlift/Tanker Association  
Outstanding Unit Award*



Photo by Staff Sgt. Kyle Brasier

**Maj. Lucas Caulder, 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron pilot, flies through Hurricane Irma Sept. 8. The 403rd Operations Group was awarded the Airlift/Tanker Association's Lt. Gen. James E. Sherrard III Air Force Reserve Command Outstanding Unit Award for their support of the Mobility Air Forces mission to include the weather reconnaissance, tactical airlift and aeromedical evacuation missions.**

*By Staff Sgt. Heather Heiney  
403rd Wing Public Affairs*

Every year the Airlift/Tanker Association Symposium and technology convention brings together Air Force leadership, industry experts and members of the academic community along with past and present mobility Airmen from around the world. During the four-day event, attendees discuss the issues and challenges the air mobility community faces and recognized Airmen and units making exceptional contributions to the mission.

This year, the 403rd Operations Group was awarded the Lt. Gen. James E. Sherrard III Air Force Reserve Command Outstanding Unit Award.

This award is presented annually to the most outstanding Air Force Reserve wing or group that distinguished itself in the performance and support of the Mobility Air Forces mission by balancing the operational demands of today's global mobility operations with maintaining a viable strategic reserve for tomorrow and embracing responsibilities they have with their civilian employers, communities and families.

"I'm so proud of everyone in the OG; to be singled out as the best Operations Group in AFRC is a tremendous honor," said Col. Brian May, 403rd OG commander. "We know how hard our folks work day-in and day-out, and receiving this award validates the achievements of everyone and the results of our combined efforts."

The 403rd Operations Group was selected for this award for several accomplishments during the award period from July 1, 2016, through June 30, 2017.

They conducted more than 100 storm missions, collecting data on hurricanes in both the Atlantic and Pacific, as well as 53 joint airborne and air transportability training missions with a 99.5 percent mission success rate.

In March 2017, the 815th Airlift Squadron, which falls under the 403rd Operations Group, led the first AFRC Green Flag exercise, which combined seven reserve crews with seven active-duty crews to simulate combat missions in a deployment scenario.

The group also supported the U.S. Navy's Gulf of Mexico Operational Demonstration, which highlighted unmanned systems capabilities and explored collaborative opportunities. [Click here to read more.](#)

# Propelling the mission:

## *Propulsion flight chief traveled world, never left Keesler*

**By Staff Sgt. Heather Heiney**  
403rd Wing Public Affairs

The symmetrical curve of a propeller's blades allows them to spin so fast that they become a translucent silhouette and lift aircraft into the sky.

For more than 30 years, Senior Master Sgt. Eric H. Johnson III, 403rd Maintenance Squadron Propulsion Flight chief, has cared for and kept the propellers turning at Keesler Air Force Base, the only base to which he was assigned his entire Air Force career.

He stepped through the doors of Hangar 5 in June 1982 as an Airman Basic at the beginning of his career and will be walking out those same doors after a retirement ceremony honoring his 32-year career Sunday.

Johnson grew up in New Milford, Connecticut, and left for basic military training in January 1982. He started out as an active-duty turboprop mechanic with the 3380th Field Maintenance Squadron and spent more than 12 years working on EC-130E Commando Solo and EC-130H Compass Call airborne battlefield command and control center aircraft as well as WC-130E and WC-130H Hercules weather reconnaissance aircraft. On July 1, 1991, all 3380th maintenance personnel were reassigned to the 7th Airborne Command and Control Squadron until that squadron left Keesler in October 1994.

At that time, Johnson separated from active duty but stayed on the Mississippi Gulf Coast working on the Keesler flight line but as transit alert caring for aircraft that were visiting the base from elsewhere. Then, in 1998, he joined the 403rd Wing and became a full-time Air Reserve Technician in the same propulsion shop he leads today.

"If you cut open my boss, I think he would bleed mobile jet engine oil," said Master Sgt. Kathy Wheelock, 403rd MXS engine manager. "Not only does he know everything about the aircraft, he also knows about each specialist's job as well. Every time he does a tour in our section for distinguished visitors

403rd Flyer



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Heiney

**Senior Master Sgt. Eric H. Johnson III, 403rd Maintenance Squadron Propulsion Flight chief, spent the last 32 years keeping propellers turning at Keesler Air Force Base Mississippi. He retires Sunday in a ceremony at 10 a.m. at the Roberts Consolidated Maintenance Facility.**

I listen in amazement of the things he knows, and I learn something new every time."

As the propulsion shop flight chief, he is responsible for 67 propulsion mechanics performing engine maintenance on the only Air Force Reserve fleet of C-130J and WC-130J Super Hercules aircraft.

"He has the uncanny ability to push all of his troops in a way to get the best out of each and every one of them. He also

holds people accountable for things they do and don't do," Wheelock said.

"His passion and knowledge base are obvious; anyone who's interacted with him can see it," said Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Linthicum, 403rd MXS superintendent. "He's completely selfless and always looking to improve the unit as a whole."

Johnson was even part of the team when the J-model C-130 was in the operational test and evaluation phase. During that time he helped develop modifications that increased the safety and efficiency of the entire Air Force J-model fleet manu-

factured by Lockheed Martin.

"We've done that for several different things that Lockheed's asked," Johnson said. "Keesler has always been the first base to step up."

Over the years he has deployed in support of operations Urgent Fury, Just Cause, Desert Storm, Desert Shield, Deny Flight and Enduring Freedom, performing maintenance that was critical to get mission-essential aircraft in the air.

"I just wanted to fix aircraft, so I did it to the best of my ability and had fun doing it," Johnson said.

He's traveled to Bermuda, throughout the Caribbean, Italy, Panama, Saudi Arabia, Guam, Alaska, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Midway, Kwajalein, South Korea, Japan, France, Spain, Portugal and several other locations to perform his duties and keeps a map dotted with push pins to record the places he's been.

Johnson said that over the years he's watched things transform around him, including the technology, the people and the base.

"The technology is night and day," he said.

In 1982, he was working on legacy aircraft built in the 60s and 70s and said that the C-130J model feels more like an F-16 on steroids in comparison.

[Click here to read more.](#)

“**If you cut open my boss, I think he would bleed mobile jet engine oil.**”

**Master Sgt. Kathy Wheelock**  
403rd Maintenance Squadron  
engine manager



# 403RD HEADLINES

## DEFENDERS GRADUATE AIR ASSAULT SCHOOL

Imagine standing at the open door of a Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter with its four blades spinning deafeningly above and the ground 90 feet below -- and then stepping over the edge. So far, three members of the 403rd Security Forces Squadron have done just that as the culmination of their training at the U.S. Army's Air Assault School. The 10-day course is designed to prepare graduates for insertion, evacuation and pathfinder missions that call for the use of multipurpose transportation and assault helicopters. This training focuses on the mastery of rappelling techniques and sling load procedures, skills that involve intense concentration and a commitment to safety and preparation.



"Air Assault school provides our members with valuable training and enhances mission effectiveness with an opportunity not found anywhere else," said Tech. Sgt. Richard Potter, 403rd SFS assistant security forces action officer. Click here for more. (*403rd Wing Public Affairs*)

## WING GAINS ADDITIONAL WEATHER MISSION

In an effort to streamline the weather missions in the Air Force Reserve Command, the 403rd Wing gained the 12th Operational Weather Flight, which is located at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois. The unit supports the 15th Operational Weather Squadron at Scott AFB, which monitors weather observations, forecasting and aircrew briefings for the Midwestern and Eastern United States. It also provides presidential support for the East Coast Air Defense System and supports U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Transportation Command. AFRC has three weather units, the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron Hurricane Hunters, the 5th Operational Weather Flight at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina, and the 12th Operational Weather Flight, which was aligned under the 932nd Wing at Scott AFB. Click here for more. (*403rd Wing Public Affairs*)



Photo by Staff Sgt. Heather Heiney

## Airman Spotlight

Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright presents a coin to Senior Airman Cayce Bennett, 403rd Maintenance Squadron, during his visit to the 403rd Wing Oct. 25. Bennett is an Air Reserve Technician and has been a reservist for four years. In 2016, he was the 403rd Wing Airman of the fourth quarter and the 81st Training Wing's Dragon award winner for junior service member of the quarter. To read this month's Airman Spotlight about Bennett, click here.



## Air Force News



## CMSAF visits Keesler AFB

KEESLER AIR FORCE BASE, Miss. (AFNS) -- Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force Kaleth O. Wright visited Keesler Air Force Base, Mississippi, to tour the base and celebrate a ribbon cutting for the new Military Training Leader Course schoolhouse Oct. 23-25.

During the ceremony, Wright reflected on the beginning of his career as an airman basic and how the mentorship of MTLs helped shape civilians into Airmen in the world's greatest Air Force.

"In August of 1989, a young Airman graduated from basic military training and went off to Sheppard Air Force Base in Texas," said Wright. "He and a few of his friends went to the shoppette, bought beer, shoved the beers in their BDU pockets, went to their dorm rooms and hid the beers in the ceiling so they could drink in the dorms. Somebody in technical training missed the mark."

Wright said there have been, and always will be, young Airmen who fall by the way side, but that emphasizes the importance of MTLs.

## Air Force Art Contest open to Airmen, families

JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-LACKLAND, Texas (AFNS) -- The Air Force Services Activity aims to showcase the artistic talents of Airmen and their family members via the 2017 Air Force Art Contest.

"AFSVA wants to find ways to recognize our Airmen and families' talents," said Jonathan Grammer, AFSVA director of programs. "We have phenomenal artists and photographers within the Air Force, and hosting these types of contests is a way for them to showcase their works. Last year, the art contest was a huge success with over 2,000 works of art submitted."

The contest is open to Airmen and their families, including children ages 6-17. The call for entries will run Nov. 1-30. Click here to for information on how to enter.

## BLENDING RETIREMENT TRAINING FRIDAY

The Defense Department will implement the new Blended Retirement System next year. While no one needs to make a decision until Jan. 1, 2018, all Airmen should take advantage of training and informational resources to research their options.

The 403rd Wing is offering the Opt-In training Friday at 10 a.m. and Dec. 2 at 9 a.m. in the Sablich Auditorium. This course is also available on Advanced Distributed Learning Service under the "Selected Force Training" drop-down menu.

Reserve Airmen who have accrued fewer than 4,320 retirement points will have the option of electing BRS or remaining in the legacy retirement system. These Airmen will be required to take the Opt-In training. However, all Airmen are encouraged to take the training.

For information, contact Capt. Bruce Bentley, 403rd Force Support Squadron, at [bruce.bentley.1@us.af.mil](mailto:bruce.bentley.1@us.af.mil). (AFNS)

## FLU SHOTS THIS UTA

The flu and typhoid immunizations are available at the following times and locations.

Friday: 6:30-7:30 a.m., 403rd Security Forces Squadron, Building 901 classroom; 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Roberts Maintenance Facility, Room 158; 8-9:30 a.m., 36th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron; and 1 to 2:30 p.m., 41st Aerial Port Squadron.

Saturday: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Roberts, Room 158; and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Keesler Medical Center, Immunizations Clinic.



## 403RD FLYER

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Photo by Staff Sgt. Shelton Sherrill

## WING READINESS EXERCISE THIS UTA

Wing Airmen help each other into their Mission Oriented Protective Posture Gear during a training event Oct. 15 here. The MOPP Gear is used to protect members during chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear attacks. The 403rd Wing will conduct additional training this weekend during an Ability to Survive and Operate exercise Saturday, which will test its capabilities in response to a crisis situation. There will be several pre-exercise briefings for players and Wing Inspection Team members Friday. There will be a Mass Concept Brief for all the exercise players from 2:15 to 3 p.m. at the Bay Breeze Event Center, 2nd Floor; a Wartime Command and Control Exercise for the Crisis Action Team and Emergency Operations Center personnel from 10 a.m. to noon at Wolfe Hall; a Wing Inspection Team Augmentee Training and Emergency Management Brief from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. for the Warlord, Inspector General and WIT members at the Bay Breeze Event Center, 2nd Floor; and post attack reconnaissance team training for PAR team members from 3 to 3:30 p.m. at the Bay Breeze Event Center, 2nd Floor.

## COMMAND CLIMATE SURVEY OPENS FRIDAY

The Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Wing Climate Survey opens Friday and information will be sent out by email. This is an opportunity for Airmen to provide feedback on issues that affect the workplace. For more information, call Maj. Tisha M. Thompson, 403rd Wing Equal Opportunity director at 377-9027.

## LOGGING OFF PROTECTS AIR FORCE NETWORKS

To ensure Air Force Network-connected computers are patched and updated daily, wing members need to log off of their machines at the end of the duty day rather than simply remove their common access cards and lock their workstation. Laptops that are frequently disconnected from the AFNET should be reconnected every seven days, or more often if possible, to receive system and anti-virus updates.

## 403RD WING CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY PARTY DEC. 2

The annual 403rd Wing children's holiday party is scheduled for Dec. 2. The time and location will be sent out this weekend. The event is free and will feature food, drinks as well as bounce house, arts and crafts, games and a visit from Santa. Parents whose children are attending the event should bring a wrapped book for their child to receive from Santa. The standard lodging rules apply for the unit training assembly so Airmen who are bringing their families may have to reserve lodging at their own expense.

## THREE AIRMEN SELECTED FOR COMMISSIONING

Three 403rd Wing members have been selected to attend Officer Training School through this year's Deserving Airman Commissioning Program board. They are Tech. Sgt. Shanna Gillis, 403rd Operations Support Squadron; Tech. Sgt. Maxwell Peacock, 403rd Maintenance Group; and Staff Sgt. Shannon McLeod, 41st Aerial Port Squadron.