

AFA honors the top airmen and the outstanding units in the Air Guard and Reserve.

Guard and Reserve All-Stars

FOUR awards to honor outstanding Air Force Reservists and Air Guardsmen will be presented this month at AFA's National Convention. They are the President's Award to honor the top AFRES crew, the Air Force Reserve Outstanding Unit Award, the ANG Outstanding Unit Award, and the Earl T. Ricks Award for outstanding airmanship in the Air National Guard.

The President's Award

All Air Force flight crew members who fly in pressurized aircraft are required to go through altitude chamber training periodically. There's a good reason for this requirement. A sudden decompression at high altitude can be fatal to everyone on board. Quick crew reaction is essential.

Such an occurrence may be rare, but it happened to Maj. Van E. Short, aircraft commander of a C-141B on a mission from Charleston AFB, S. C., to Ascension Island in the South Atlantic last October. Major Short and his Reservist crew are members of the 707th Military Airlift Squadron (Associate) based at Charleston. The flight crew



The quick action of this C-141B flight crew saved the aircraft and its passengers. The President's Award winners, from left, back row, are: Maj. Richard E. Gurrieri, CMSgt. Richard R. Fuller, 2d Lt. Paul V. Rancatore, SSgt. William L. Morris. Front row: MSgt. Richard D. Williams, aircraft commander Maj. Van E. Short, TSgt. Anthony R. Reyes, and TSgt. Benson S. Futrell. Not shown is SSgt. Rex L. Litchfield.

that day consisted of Maj. Richard E. Gurrieri, flight examiner pilot; 2d Lt. Paul V. Rancatore, copilot; CMSgt. Richard R. Fuller, flight engineer flight examiner; MSgt. Richard D. Williams, instructor flight examiner; TSgt. Benson S. Futrell, flight engineer; TSgt. Anthony R. Reyes, flight engineer; SSgt. Rex L. Litchfield, loadmaster; and SSgt.

William L. Morris, loadmaster. Also on board were fourteen passengers.

While cruising at 37,000 feet at night over the Atlantic between Antigua and Ascension, the aircraft encountered severe clear-air turbulence. After a violent downward jolt, the No. 1 engine compressor stalled. The aircraft yawed to the

left, and the No. 4 engine also stalled. A few seconds later, the No. 2 emergency hatch blew out, filling the cargo compartment with fog, debris, and horrendous noise. The escape ladder was sucked out, damaging the fuselage and vertical stabilizer as it flew by.

The report of the ensuing few minutes shows the value of previous training for just such emergencies.

"Chief Fuller, who was sitting next to the flight engineer panel, felt that the aircraft was coming apart, even though the cockpit entrance door was closed, somewhat muffling the overall effects of the blow-out. Sergeant Williams, who had been asleep in the crew loft just forward of the blown hatch, was dazed but managed to climb down to the cockpit before becoming incoherent and passing out. The crew quickly found out that during a rapid decompression, their time of useful consciousness without pressurized oxygen was only about seven seconds.

"The pilots donned their masks, pulled the engines to idle, and began a descending right turn. The pilot and flight engineer completed the rapid-decompression checklist, while the copilot attempted to contact [control centers] to declare an emergency in uncontrolled airspace. There was no response.

"Chief Fuller was pinned down by Sergeant Williams, but managed to reach another mask and used force to hold it to Williams's face until he recovered. At the same time, Sergeant Reyes, the student flight engineer, administered oxygen to a passenger in the jump seat who had become unconscious."

Meanwhile, Sergeant Morris, one of the loadmasters, had passed out on the cargo floor, and the passengers seated in the cargo compartment were having life-threatening problems. Some couldn't reach their oxygen masks; some couldn't get a good facial fit and were losing vital pressure.

Sergeant Williams began filling portable oxygen bottles with which Chief Fuller and Sergeant Litchfield tended passengers. Some were panicking; three were slumped in their seats; two more had passed out on the cargo deck, one of them in convulsions. Major Short left the flight deck with Major Gurrieri at

The Earl T. Ricks Award goes to this C-130 crew for moving life-saving medical support equipment from Kansas City to San Antonio during Hurricane Gilbert. From left, standing: Maj. Ronald A. Hale, Jr., Lt. Col. Larry L. Landtroop, and Capt. Michael B. Green. Kneeling: SSgt. Charles R. Swearingin and SMSgt. Jerry A. Beasley. Not shown is SMSgt. James N. Shirey.



the controls and helped Sergeant Morris recover. He then assisted the fourteen passengers until all were sitting up and giving the "thumbs up" sign.

When the aircraft leveled off at 10,000 feet, the copilot radioed Ascension Island and notified controllers that the aircraft was returning to Antigua, where Major Gurrieri made the landing. As the report states matter-of-factly, "As a result of the crew's quick actions, no casualties or injuries resulted."

The Ricks Award

Hurricane Gilbert, a massive storm that came ashore near Corpus Christi, Tex., last fall, catapulted Maj. Ronald A. Hale, a C-130 pilot, and his reserve crew into the limelight. Beginning at 9:30 a.m. on September 17, 1988, thirteen tornados blasted into the San Antonio area. One barreled through the South Texas Medical Center, damaging its air-cooling equipment and endangering its power supply. The Medical Center, Audie Murphy VA Hospital, and the University of Texas Health Science Center all rely on these cooling and power systems.

San Antonio Mayor Henry Cisneros declared a state of emergency for the city, and the Texas Air National Guard responded.

When calls went out for volunteers, Major Hale and crew immediately reacted. Replacement electrical units were waiting for pickup in Kansas City. The weather at the destination was marginal, and there would be severe thunderstorms en route. Hale took off and arrived at the Kansas City Naval Air Station after dark. Two more Hercules transports were to follow.

The report of the mission explains what Hale and his crew saw when they landed:

"They were met by three eighteen-wheel flatbed trucks with more than twenty tons of cooling-tower parts and generators. The truck drivers were the only people present. It was explained that unless all the equipment went, the system would not operate. This type of equipment had never been flown in a C-130 before, and it was in no configuration for transport on an aircraft.

"Evaluating the need and [drawing on] years of airlift experience, Major Hale's crew began planning

The 459th Military Airlift Wing, Andrews AFB, Md., has been chosen AFA's 1989 Outstanding Reserve Unit. The wing's activities included medical support, security, disaster relief, research, and civil engineering. Here, SSgt. David J. Richards of the 459th Security Police Flight prepares to check out a new ATV.



just how they were going to fit [what looked like] five C-130 loads into three Hercules. Working for more than six hours, they handloaded what they could manually lift. What they could not lift, they [moved with] wooden planks smeared with grease. Using the aircraft's winch and the crew's manpower, they were able to delicately slide the oversized parts into place and secure them for flight. Added to the night's task was working in the dark on an almost deserted part of the airfield with occasional rain bursts and minimal equipment."

It was not certain that the C-130s would be able to get safely airborne and make the trip around the thunderstorms to San Antonio. With no precedent for this type of operation or for this type of load, Major Hale had to rely on his own experience and the experience of his crew. He had to calculate as best he could the fuel requirements, the total weight, the aircraft's center of gravity, and the airfield's ability to withstand the taxi weight. Hale did not consider stopping the operation, knowing that San Antonio was relying on this cargo.

Covered with grease and extremely tired, the crew made the three-and-a-half-hour flight to Kelly AFB and landed fifteen hours after their having first heard of the need for their services and twenty-four hours after the first tornado ripped through San Antonio. It took the Kelly aerial port squadron, with all its sophisticated equipment, two and a half hours to offload the aircraft. By the evening of the second day, the generators were installed and two of the four air-cooling units were in operation. Everything was in full operation on the third day. The dedication of Major Hale and the other volunteers made it unnecessary to evacuate patients from any of the medical facilities.

The members of Major Hale's crew were awarded the Air Force Achievement Medal from the State of Texas for their efforts. Those who will receive the Ricks Award in addition to Major Hale, aircraft commander, are: Lt. Col. Larry L. Landtroop, pilot/mission commander; Capt. Michael B. Green, navigator; SSgt. Charles R. Swearingin, flight engineer; SMSgt. Jerry A. Beasley, the loadmaster; and

SMSgt. James N. Shirey, loadmaster.

Outstanding Reserve Unit

The award for the top reserve wing has been won by the 459th Military Airlift Wing (AFRES), Andrews AFB, Md., with special mention given to its associated 910th Tactical Airlift Group, Youngstown, Ohio, and 913th Tactical Airlift Group, Willow Grove, Pa.

The wing's activities included providing 35,000 hours of medical service support to the Malcolm Grow USAF Medical Center at Andrews AFB; to members of the 22d Medical Services Squadron deployed for training at Wilford Hall Medical Center, San Antonio, Tex.; to the Wiesbaden USAF Medical Center, West Germany; and to the hospital at Keesler AFB, Miss. The 459th MAW also sent medical staffers to Reforger and Wintex exercises in Europe. The unit's medics treated more than 1,000 aeromedical patients on medevac missions throughout the continental US, Europe, and the Caribbean.

The 1989 inauguration of President Bush involved almost the en-



Maintenance of the C-141B StarLifter on the Andrews flight line is integral to the 459th MAW's operational capability. The wing sustains one of the best safety records in AFRES history. Here, MSgt. Franklin P. Laning, a C-141B flight engineer, checks out the aircraft before departure.

—USAF photo by MSgt. Ken Hammond

tire 459th Weapons Security Flight. Aerial port squadrons of the 459th deployed to Panama, Portugal, Spain, and Italy during the year. Members of the wing also supported the Armenian earthquake-relief efforts, flying more missions there than any other USAF unit. A research expedition in Argentina was also supported by 459th personnel. An elite cadre of logistics experts from the 1st Transportation Liaison Flight were sent to the United Kingdom and Germany.

The 459th Civil Engineers deployed personnel during the year to Honduras for humanitarian projects. Unit crews and aircraft also went to Honduras, and a 756th MAS crew was the first US aircraft into the country after a short-notice Presidential order in April 1988.

The 152d Tactical Reconnaissance Group is this year's Air National Guard Outstanding Unit. The 152d, which flies RF-4C Phantoms out of Reno-Cannon International Airport, Nev., has won several reconnaissance meet trophies and TAC intelligence awards. The unit deploys firefighters, communications specialists, base-service specialists, and medical personnel around the country.



Louisiana, California, Wisconsin, California, South America, and Bitburg, Germany, on various support missions. Last March, the unit's personnel participated in Volant Oak exercises in Panama.

Outstanding Guard Unit

Reno, Nev., is well-known for its gambling. This year, it will also be well-known in Air Force circles. Nevada's 152d Tactical Reconnaissance Group based there has won the Air National Guard Outstanding Unit Award.

The unit's ability to perform its mission was proven when it won the top Air National Guard trophy, won the Top Photo Interpretation Team trophy, and placed second to the overall winner of the 1988 worldwide Reconnaissance Air Meet

In June 1988, four aircraft and forty-six Guardsmen deployed to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska. Using tanker support from the Utah ANG, the 152d contingent flew a number of four-hour missions to photograph Army installations on the north coast of Alaska and several strategic radar sites.

In September 1988, the unit provided maintenance support for the USAF Thunderbirds, displayed the unit's aircraft, and assisted USAF recruiters at their tent during the 1988 National Championship Air Races.

Deployments during 1988 included sending firefighters to Hickam AFB, Hawaii; Prime RIBS participants to Dobbins AFB, Ga., and K. I. Sawyer AFB, Mich.; Communications Flight members to George

Other personnel were sent to France for USAFE exercises and supported initial relief efforts to Yellowstone National Park during the devastating 1988 fires.

The 76th Mobile Aerial Port Squadron of the 910th Tactical Airlift Group led the wing in exercise participation with twelve deployments during the year, including movements to Germany, Portugal, Alaska, and Korea. They also supported exercises in the continental US at Dover, Pope, Charleston, and Little Rock AFBs, as well as at Fort A. P. Hill, Va. Medical, civil engineering, firefighting, and support personnel from the 910th's squadrons were deployed to Florida,

competition. Competition sorties were flown day and night against sixteen teams representing the USAF, ANG, USN, USMC, West Germany, and Australia.

The 152d successfully completed an ORI with forty-eight percent of the ratings assigned either "Excellent" or "Outstanding." Photo processing, photo interpretation, and intelligence functions were rated the best in the Twelfth Air Force. The unit intelligence officer received an award as the best reserve forces intelligence officer in the Twelfth Air Force. His unit was judged the best reserve forces intelligence unit in Tactical Air Command.

AFB, Calif.; and medical clinic personnel to Nellis AFB, Nev. The Communications Flight conducted a transfer of mainframe computer support from March AFB to Mather AFB, Calif., and converted the aircraft maintenance database from one system to another, all with minimal disruption to unit record-keeping activities.

The 152d is known locally for its many community projects. During 1988, the unit was involved in more than sixty projects and charitable events, including the Ronald McDonald House Fun Run and the Northern Nevada Children's Home Christmas Party.

—C. V. Glines