



**When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita smashed up the Gulf Coast,  
Air Force units mounted a massive response.**

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Photography by







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USAF combat camera photographers

*TSgt. Keith Berry, a pararescueman with Air Force Reserve Command's 304th Rescue Squadron, Portland, Ore., surveys the rooftops of flooded New Orleans houses in search of survivors from Hurricane Katrina. His and other Reservists' efforts saved more than 1,000 people. The Reserves joined thousands of active duty and Air National Guard personnel in Air Force rescue and relief efforts for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.*

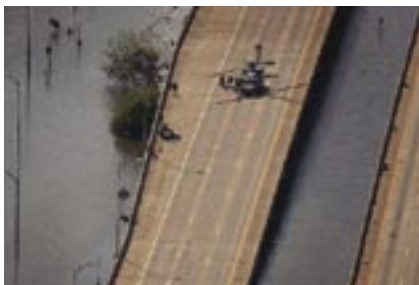


The satellite photo at right conveys a sense of the immense scope and magnitude of Hurricane Katrina, bracketed on the lower left of the photo by Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, the lower right by Cuba, and the upper right by Florida. The warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico converted Katrina into a Category 5 hurricane, with sustained winds of 160 mph. It made landfall in Louisiana the next day, Aug. 29, as a Category 4 hurricane. Katrina demolished buildings, flattened trees, and destroyed infrastructure all along the Gulf Coast. The storm surges proved devastating to New Orleans, a city located below sea level, piercing its protective levees and inundating its low-lying neighborhoods.



NASA photo/Leif Schmalz

USAF photos by MSgt. Errain Gonzalez



USAF photo by SSgt. Jacob N. Bailey



Far left, a helicopter uses a highway as a landing zone.

Near left, an AFRC C-130 sprays pesticide over New Orleans to prevent outbreaks of malaria and other diseases transmitted by mosquitoes and flies.

Perched in an HH-60G helicopter on a search and rescue mission, SrA. Arthur Zingler (right) hunts for survivors of Hurricane Rita, which struck the Texas-Louisiana coastline just weeks after Katrina hit neighboring Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Zingler, with the 38th Rescue Squadron, deployed from Air Force Special Operations Command's Moody AFB, Ga.



USAF photo by TSgt. Rob Jensen



*Keesler AFB, Miss., was hardest hit of USAF's bases along the Gulf Coast. Katrina's storm surge caused extensive property damage but, amazingly, no casualties among the 6,000 personnel who hunkered down on base to weather the storm. Within about a month, selected training courses had resumed.*

*Katrina knocked down trees and lamp-posts in addition to damaging Keesler base facilities (see photo below). Recovery efforts are well under way, with more and more classes resuming as facilities and roads are repaired.*



*USAF deployed active duty, Guard, and Reserve units to cope with the aftermath of the two hurricanes. Above, Air National Guardsmen from Arizona's 162nd Fighter Wing, Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., prepare to load a P-19 fire truck onto a C-130 bound for Mississippi.*



*Despite hurricane devastation, Keesler soon became a staging area for the transport of humanitarian supplies to other stricken areas. At left, airmen with the newly formed 97th Air Expeditionary Group sort and organize medical supplies critical to the work of emergency medical teams throughout the Gulf Coast.*





Above, the cavernous bay of a C-5 airlifter awaits a Humvee, which will join an aircraft maintenance crane already inside. Both were headed for Gulfport, Miss. Managing the loading operations are ANG airmen with the 109th Aerial Port Squadron, Albany Arpt., N.Y. The Galaxy is assigned to the 105th Airlift Wing, a New York ANG unit.

Hurricane Rita ripped off rooftops (left) and scattered debris along the Texas-Louisiana border, an area surveyed by search and rescue members of the 349th Air Expeditionary Group.

A1C Brandon Johnson (below) with the 822nd Security Forces Squadron, Moody Air Force Base, looks out at his flooded hometown of New Orleans.



SSgt. Al Martinez (above), assigned to the ANG's 147th Civil Engineer Flight, Ellington Field, Tex., pauses before resuming power restoration efforts at the Southeast Texas Regional Arpt., Nederland, Tex. Martinez and another civil engineer Guardsman enabled the airport to resume operations.







Above left, Air National Guard members land an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter at a collection spot for New Orleans evacuees. USAF dispatched helicopters and C-5, C-17, C-130, and C-141 airlifters in support of relief operations.

Above right, pararescue teams plucked thousands of people from rooftops, bridges, and other locations when they became stranded by Katrina's rising waters.

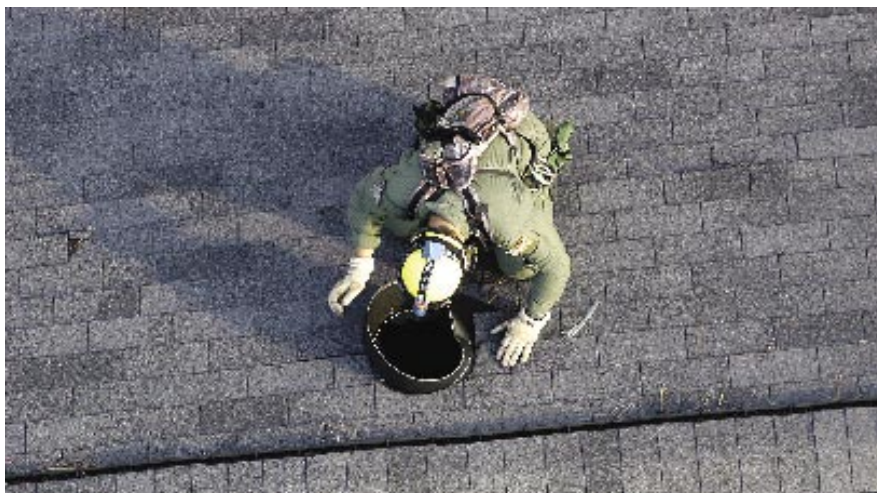
At right, Air Force students of the 332nd and 335th Training Squadrons at Keesler pack a C-17 as they await evacuation to Sheppard AFB, Tex.



Twenty-six nations sent humanitarian assistance. At far left, an Egyptian C-130 delivers its supplies in Little Rock AFB, Ark. Little Rock was designated the receiving hub for all international relief flights.

This HC-130P (left) was one of many tankers that USAF provided for refueling missions. The inflight refueling capability of the Pave Hawk helicopters enabled its crews to conduct extended search and rescue missions.





*Having safely moved hospital patients from Beaumont, Tex., to Dallas, on Sept. 23, a C-5 Galaxy (top) from Travis AFB, Calif., was turned for another mission. It was one of five C-5s USAF committed to Hurricane Rita relief efforts.*

*At left, TSgt. Paul Schultz yells down an airshaft on a rooftop, checking for anyone trapped in a flooded house. He is with AFRC's 306th Rescue Squadron, Davis-Monthan.*

*Below, airmen and other volunteers line up to offer assistance to Hurricane Katrina evacuees from New Orleans as they disembark from a Boeing 737 at Lackland AFB, Tex. The evacuees were given medical exams, fed, and placed in temporary shelters.*



*Above, an unmanned aerial system mounted atop a pole on a New Orleans hotel roof uses a remote operations video enhanced receiver to help find survivors. Air Combat Command deployed 10 ROVER units to the Gulf Coast to assist with recovery operations and to search for survivors.*







Above, airmen with ANG's 147th Fighter Wing, Ellington Field, Tex., fill sandbags to forestall water damage to base buildings from approaching Hurricane Rita. Ellington is located 10 miles southeast of Houston.

Top right, Air Force and Army helicopters line up to depart on the next relief mission.

At right, these before and after Space Imaging photos offer evidence of the destructive force of Katrina. The dark segments of the far right photo are flooded streets near the Superdome.



Far left, a ground crew member directs an arriving China Southern Cargo airplane to its assigned parking space. China was one of dozens of countries to deliver hurricane relief supplies.

Hundreds of Air Force active duty, Guardsmen, and Reservists joined in a Total Force effort to assist those stricken by the two huge hurricanes. ■