California Air National Guard

2008 Year in Review

Major General

Dennis G. Lucas

Commander, California Air National Guard

I want to thank the outstanding men and women of the California Air National Guard for meeting the many challenges in 2008, and for making our organization the best in the nation. I am pleased to report that we met our initial goal of 98 percent strength as of September 2008, and now we must move forward to 100 percent strength by the end of Fiscal Year 09. Your hard work, professionalism, and dedication to excellence, are key elements of our success. Throughout the year, our personnel deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and many other important operations. Again, many California Air Guard members remained stateside on active duty, performing vital reachback missions and supporting Noble Eagle.

In 2008, California engaged in another campaign against disastrous wildfires. The California National Guard responded quickly in support of Operation Lighting Strike, saving lives, protecting property and preserving natural resources. The state experienced an unprecedented number of simultaneous fires, totaling nearly 2,100 separate fires. Consequently, the California Air National Guard plowed new ground in supporting this fire suppression effort. For the first time, the 129th Rescue Wing modified several HH-60G helicopters to employ water buckets, with aircrews trained by the California Army National Guard. Additionally, the Air National Guard trained more than 300 Airmen as Type II firefighters, most deploying to fire lines under the supervision of Cal Fire.

We also employed new capabilities from manned aircraft, an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), and satellites. The RC-26, with its full motion video capability, was flown by aircrews from California, Florida, New York and Mississippi. Imagery from the Global Hawk UAV, based at Beale AFB, was employed, along with satellite imagery from our own Eagle Vision system, operated by Airmen from the 147th Combat Communications Squadron in San Diego. The 146th Airlift Wing stood up a fire base at home station, hosting firefighting-equipped C-130H aircraft from Colorado, North Carolina and Wyoming.

These new capabilities are products of change, both in the Air Force and the California Air National Guard. Our California Air National Guard Strategic Plan for reshaping our force into the "most relevant" Air Force missions continued in 2008. In April, 2008, the 216th Engineering Installation Squadron was redesignated as the 216th Operations Support Squadron, supporting the Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg AFB. Additionally, the 222nd Combat Communications Squadron relocated to Beale AFB and restructured into three separate units, and redesignated as the 222nd Intelligence Support Squadron; 222nd Operational Support Squadron, and the 222nd Communications Maintenance Flight. The 163rd Reconnaissance Wing activated their Predator Field Training Detachment at March ARB, and plans to activate their Flight Training Unit in early 2009. Our Total Force Initiative to reorganize the 162nd Combat Communications Group into a wing structure is in the National Guard and Air Force review process. I am confident that our initiative will materialize in 2009.

The men and women of the California Air National Guard faced every challenge head-on, while continue to rebuilding the force. It will take all of us, working together, to ensure we retain our most valuable resource - People! We must continue recruiting trained Airmen leaving the Air Force and other services, as well as non-prior service men and women from our communities. Everyone is a recruiter, and everyone can make a difference. Strength is vital to our future and for our continued growth and mission success. Rebuilding the force and taking care of our Airmen continue to be our priorities.

It is my distinct honor and privilege to lead the finest, most professional military organization in the world. I pledge to continue working at every level to acquire the most relevant missions, and provide the resources needed to fulfill training requirements and operational commitments. We will continue our success by working together and remaining focused on mission, recruiting, retention, employers, our Airmen and our families. Thank you for making 2008 safe and extremely successful. Keep up the great work!

Chief Master Sergeant

Deborah K. Lott

State Command Chief Master Sergeant

As Airmen of the California Air National Guard, you have once again risen to the top in every aspect of your challenging and demanding careers. I am so very proud of each and every one of you, and I am proud to serve as your State Command Chief. Our enlisted corps has kept pace with our continuing progress, and as I have traveled to your units this past year, I continue to see pride, dedication, and desire to serve our state and nation. Your sacrifices and personal commitment to the mission are truly extraordinary, and I thank you.

Major General Lucas and I asked all of you this past year to continue making "strength and rebuilding the force" a priority to ensure the California Air National Guard remains "Ready, Reliable and Relevant." As of September 2008, we reached our previous strength goal of 98 percent, and I am confident that by the end of 2009, we will reach our new goal of 100 percent. All of us were asked to support retention, and we did. You responded to the call, dedicated yourselves to the task, and our retention rates improved. Keep up the great work!

Our Airmen and their families are the most important and cherished piece of the equation that keeps our Air Force the greatest Air, Space, and Cyberspace force in the world. No one can do what we do on a daily basis. We continue deploying in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and support our stateside missions, such as Noble Eagle. We harnessed new technologies for state emergencies from manned and unmanned aircraft, along with satellite imagery.

California was plagued with more than 2,000 fires in 2008, and the California Air National Guard responded. Our Guard members at Beale Air Force Base worked imagery from the Global Hawk unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), and Airmen from the 147th Combat Communications Squadron in San Diego provided satellite imagery from their new Eagle Vision system. The RC-26 crews at the 144th Fighter Wing provided valuable full motion video to the state fire chiefs.

We supported Operation Lighting Strike by training more than 300 Airmen from throughout the state as Type II firefighters. The 129th Rescue Wing modified their HH-60G helicopters to carry water buckets, and the 146th Airlift Wing hosted firefighting C-130H aircraft from throughout the country.

In addition to these challenges, we continued reshaping our force structure by re-missioning and redesignating the 216th Engineering Installation Squadron to the 216th Operations Support Squadron, supporting the Joint Space Operations Center at Vandenberg AFB. Additionally, the 222nd Combat Communications Squadron at Costa Mesa was re-missioned and reorganized into three separate units supporting our new intelligence and Global Hawk missions, while relocating to Beale. The 163rd Reconnaissance Wing opened their Predator Field Training Detachment, and their Flight Training Unit should be functioning in early 2009. The Counterdrug Task Force continues to successfully assist law enforcement agencies in fighting the war against drugs. All of this while, at the same time, supporting our families and civilian employers. Congratulations!

Our Airmen conducted their assigned missions with greatly appreciated support from their families and employers. Each and every family member and employer are critical to mission success. We will continue seeking ways to further improve the quality of life for our families.

On a personal note, I would like to express my gratitude for the privilege of serving as your State Command Chief. I will be retiring in April 2009, and I would like to say that it has truly been an honor and pleasure serving with our outstanding enlisted corps. You have taught me many life lessons, and I will miss my Air Guard family. Thank you for all that you do – it matters! Your tireless efforts keep this the best Air National Guard the world has ever seen.

You make it happen.

129th Rescue Wing

Moffett Federal Airfield

The 129th Rescue Wing experienced an epic year in 2008. The wing seamlessly transitioned from its normal rescue mission over land and sea to airborne and ground firefighting duty within the state. This flexibility clearly demonstrated the wing's ability to respond, adapt and save lives.

The wing began the summer with Operation Lightning Strike, an emergency response to the state's nearly 2,100 wildfires. Shortly after deploying key personnel to support operations at the Joint Forces Headquarters in Sacramento, two HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters and aircrews were certified to perform water bucket drops on wildfires for the first time in unit history.

During this major state emergency, crews dropped more than 150,000 gallons of water. The wing also mobilized personnel for Type II firefighting training, providing direct ground support to Cal Fire on the fire lines. Meanwhile, personnel remained on search and rescue alert throughout the operation. Helicopter crews stationed at Redding airport landed in rugged Northern California terrain to medically evacuate injured firefighters, and crews also saved two civilians involved in a firefighting helicopter crash northwest of Redding.

Along with responding to state emergencies, rescue crews performed two long-range over-water missions. In June, nearly 550 miles off the coast of California, a critically ill crewmember aboard a cargo vessel was successfully extracted and flown to a hospital for critical medical treatment. A month later, while still immersed in firefighting operations, aircrews saved a Canadian fisherman aboard a fishing boat 600 miles off the coast. Both patients were transported to the Regional Medical Center of San Jose. The medical center's heliport, which was completed in June, was the first in the Bay Area to be certified for use by the wing's HH-60G helicopter.

Soon after Operation Lighting Strike was completed, the wing was asked to assist Louisiana and Texas in response to hurricanes Gustav and Ike. Over Labor Day weekend, the unit deployed more than 80 personnel, aircraft and equipment to the Gulf Coast region. Wing members quickly set up operations at Ellington Field in Houston forming Joint Task Force 129.

The JTF remained in Ellington for Hurricane Gustav and then relocated to Kelly Field in San Antonio for Hurricane Ike. Despite the rising flood waters and high wind, they rescued a total of 16 civilians. After Hurricane Ike passed through the area, JTF 129 helicopters launched immediately into the disaster area and crews rescued another 18 survivors. This professional and highly skilled team of Citizen Airmen demonstrated the wing's life-saving capability to respond anytime, anywhere.

To hone the wing's rescue capabilities to respond to natural and man-made disasters, 129th Airmen participated in multi-agency exercises, including BAYEX 2008, a full-scale exercise designed to test the ability of Oakland and federal agencies to conduct a coordinated response to a major emergency. The unit

Colonel Amos Bagdasarian
Commander

Chief Master Sgt. Kristina Keck
Command Chief

also participated with NASA Ames in the Great Worden Quake II, an exercise designed to train and sharpen the skills of Moffett Field's emergency and disaster-assistance responders.

The 129th Rescue Wing's Counterdrug Task Force detachment, Team Hawk, utilized the HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter, aircrew, pararescuemen and maintainers to support local law enforcement agencies in the eradication of illegal narcotics and the restoration of forest lands that were environmentally damaged by marijuana production. During Operation LOCUST, Team Hawk airlifted more than 520,000 marijuana plants and $2.2 billion in drug production equipment during a massive state-wide drug eradication operation - the largest in California history.

Members from the 129th Security Forces Squadron returned in May from a six-month deployment in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In addition, 2008 saw the 129th Security Forces Squadron named the National Guard Bureau's Outstanding Security Forces Squadron of the Year for 2007. This achievement was unprecedented, as it was the third consecutive award received by the unit for excellence.

These impressive achievements made another successful year and highlight exactly why the 129th Rescue Wing is regularly called upon to perform rescue operations in natural disasters such as fires, floods, earthquakes and hurricanes.

Top Left: A pararescueman from the 131st Rescue Squadron hoists a patient from the APC Peru cargo container ship in to a hovering HH-60G Pave Hawk June 18, 2008. The 129th was credited with its 559th save. (Tech. Sgt. Brock Woodward)

Top Right: Joint Task Force 129 crew, Jolly 92, rescues a family of four in Galveston, Texas, Sept. 12. 129th Rescue Wing crews rescued 34 people and 11 dogs stranded in the Galveston area. (Master Sgt. Wally Bacio)

Above: MC-130P crew members from the 129th Rescue Wing perform search and rescue support during the aftermath of Hurricane Gustav on Sept. 3, 2008. (Tech. Sgt. Ray Aquino)

144th Fighter Wing

FRESNO AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE

The 144th Fighter Wing concluded another year of outstanding accomplishments and enjoyed unit recognition for impressive work and volunteerism. From working as Type II hand crews on California's devastating wildfires to witnessing Airmen receive the newly created Air Force Combat Action Medal, members of the 144th earned respect and received both state and national awards for their achievements.

The wing's primary mission is providing air defense for California, from the Mexico border to Oregon, utilizing the F-16C fighter aircraft. The 144th also responds to state emergencies when requested by the governor. The unit primarily operates from the Air National Guard Base in Fresno and from an alert detachment located at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside.

In April, the unit was recognized by 1st Air Force with the Air Sovereignty Alert Unit of the Year Award for their unprecedented actions of standing watch for the entire West Coast in December 2007. The 144th provided aircraft and personnel to three alert sites simultaneously for the first time in history when the Air Force grounded its entire fleet of F-15s for structural integrity issues.

Wing pilots flew more than 2,300 sorties and 3,100 flight hours in 2008. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the 144th has flown more than 1,400 combat air patrol sorties in support of the homeland security mission Operation Noble Eagle. In addition to commitments at home, the 144th continues to support military operations throughout the world, including operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

In support of Operation Lightning Strike, when Northern California lightning storms ignited more than 2,000 fires in late June, the 144th deployed personnel to supplement the Joint Forces Headquarters staff, and 54 Airmen received training as Type II ground hand crews to augment Cal Fire personnel. In addition, the wing's RC-26B aircraft provided crucial real-time, full-motion video and imagery for the Governor's Office of Emergency Services and Cal Fire incident commanders to aid firefighting efforts.

The 144th Security Forces Squadron personnel and civil engineers trained at Camp San Luis Obispo in February on their respective responsibilities, including close-quarter combat, convoy drills and team-building exercises. During separate deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, two civil engineering Airmen received the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

More than thirty medics and dental technicians from the 144th Medical Group deployed to Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu to conduct hands-on training alongside Soldiers for their two-week clinical instruction. Medical Group personnel also participated in multiple Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, High-Yield Explosives Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) exercises throughout the year, culminating in their first annual team certification.

Colonel Jonathan Flaugher
Commander

Wing members also participated in Staff Assistance Visits, a Logistics Standardization and Evaluation Team inspection, an Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Compliance Assessment and a Management Program inspection, as well as preparing for their upcoming Health Services Inspection to be held in 2009. The wing's alert forces also received "Mission Ready" status for their two Alert Forces Evaluations conducted in 2008.

Chief Master Sgt. Michael McNiff
Command Chief

Through volunteerism, the 144th Fighter Wing continues to be an integral part of its local community. Wing members participated in numerous aircraft flyovers and community events, including Habitat for Humanity Fresno, Tree Fresno, the Community Food Bank, and the Children's Hospital Radiothon, in addition to having a large presence at this year's Veteran's Day Parade. The wing continues its longtime support for holiday programs Toys for Tots and Silent Sleigh. Also in 2008, the wing's pioneer Young Heroes program presented medals to four children who have shown great strength in fighting life-threatening illnesses.

The Fresno Family Readiness Group was honored in February with the 2007 Department of Defense Reserve Family Readiness Award. Individual awards included the 1st Air Force Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Award, the Air Reserve Component Antiterrorism Officer of the Year and the California Unit Career Advisor of the Year. California also recognized the accomplishments of three groups for their outstanding service by awarding them the Governor's Outstanding Unit Award in 2008: the 144th Mission Support Group, Services Flight and Security Forces Squadron.

Far Left: Firefighters from the 144th Fighter Wing coordinate a rescue plan to retrieve a simulated down firefighter during the wings operational readiness inspection. (Tech. Sgt. Robin Meredith)

Above: Tech. Sgt. Jeremiah Burleson, a 144th Fighter Wing life support technician, assists Capt. Seth Nehring, an F-16 pilot, during water survival training in June. (Master Sgt. Matthew Millson)

Left: New tail flash: Airman of the 144th Fighter Wing put the finishing touches on the wing's flagship aircraft. (Staff Sgt. Charles Vaughn)

146th Airlift Wing

CHANNEL ISLANDS AIR NATIONAL GUARD STATION

The 146th Airlift Wing brought the year 2008 to a close with many impressive accomplishments. During this year of change, the wing continued to support numerous worldwide and state missions, coupled with challenging training events.

This year was one of transformation and mission accomplishment for the 146th Airlift Wing that was also marked by sadness. Colonel Steven Freidricks, a member of the wing since 1970 and wing commander since 2004, passed away unexpectedly due to medical illness. In May, more than 500 people attended services, with full military honors, for their friend and fellow Air Guardsman. Using the example he set as a guide, the wing carries forward his expertise in the firefighting mission, quest for technological advancement, and example of positive leadership.

Under the new command of Colonel Paul Hargrove, former commander of the 146th Operations Group, the wing remains focused on its essential missions.

In May, the wing deployed an aviation package to Afghanistan and served as part of the 774th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron. During the four-month deployment, wing members transported more than 8,900 tons of cargo and 25,367 passengers; more than any airlift squadron in the history of the U.S. Air Force. Throughout the year, the wing also supported ongoing operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and Germany.

In preparation for California's wildfire response, the 146th hosted the 2008 annual Modular Airborne Fire Fighting training for MAFFS-equipped units across the country. Members of C-130 units from Wyoming, Colorado and North Carolina came to Channel Islands to share the latest in airborne firefighting technology as they completed their required annual training in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, Cal Fire and the National Interagency Fire Center.

The MAFFS capability was utilized extensively during the state's 2008 wildfires. In addition, the 146th answered the governor's call for assistance with about 70 wing personnel training as Type II ground firefighters before being assigned to Task Force Bucket and Task Force 10. These teams provided valuable assistance to heavily burdened California ground firefighters.

In addition to firefighting missions, more than 20 members of the wing continued to support Operation Jump Start, the southwest border mission. The

Left: Master Sgt. David Buttner, Public Affairs NCO, takes aerial photographs from the back of a C-130J aircraft during a training mission near Santa Barbara Island. (Chief Dennis Goff)

Right: First Lt. Linda Baltes and Tech. Sgt. Aprille Arcilla, 146th Medical Group, stabilize a patient during an earthquake response exercise. (Tech. Sgt. Alex Koenig)

Colonel Paul Hargrove
Commander

Chief Master Sgt. Robert Kanyr
Outgoing Command Chief

Chief Master Sgt. Richard Onsgard
Incoming Command Chief

two-year mission in support of U.S. Customs and Border Protection provided Guardsmen a rare opportunity to perform a Homeland Security mission on U.S. soil before the mission came to a close in September 2008.

Preparing for a wide spectrum of missions is essential in the Air National Guard; this year, members of the wing's medical group participated in an Enhanced Response Force Package (known as CERF-P) credentialing evaluation held at Camp San Luis Obispo. Trained to respond to chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear explosion situations CERF-P personnel from the 146 AW distinguished themselves and received full accreditation.

Preparations also continue for the wing's 2009 Operational Readiness Inspection. Personnel have deployed for training to the Air National Guard's Combat Readiness Training Centers in Mississippi and Michigan. The146th Operations Group took part in an Aircrew Standard and Evaluation assessment to prepare, fulfilling all expectations for success during the visit and maintaining fully mission ready status.

As committed members of their community, the wing invited mayors and other civic leaders to a formal ceremony where they dedicated each of their C-130J aircraft to a surrounding city; the city name now proudly displayed above the aircraft crew entrance door. Additionally, the 146th Airlift Wing's Alumni Association raised more than $5000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation when they hosted the 43rd Annual Air National Guard Western Invitational Golf Tournament.

The year 2008 for the 146th Airlift Wing was filled with change, transformation and successful mission accomplishment. The wing continues to excel with strength and confidence inspired from past experience and leadership, and looks forward to hopes and promises for the wing's future with renewed resolve and purpose.

Far Left: Senior Airman Eysira Vasquez, 146th Services Flight, serves food with a smile during the wing's operational readiness exercise in Alpena, Michigan. (Master Sgt. David Buttner)

Left: Senior Master Sgt. Ray Robles, 146th Aerial Port Squadron, prepares a pallet of boots for loading at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho. The boots are being sent to National Guard troops fighting wildfires in California. (Patti Bielling, US Army)

163rd Reconnaissance Wing

March Air Reserve Base

The 163rd Reconnaissance Wing had a very successful 2008 as its members simultaneously executed their federal mission, providing combat support to war fighters engaged overseas, and their state mission, responding to the governor's requests for assistance.

The wing secured its place as a key player in the Air Force's unmanned aerial system mission, standing up its MQ-1 Predator Field Training Detachment (FTD), as well as laying the groundwork for activating a Formal Training Unit (FTU). Slated to begin operations in early 2009, the FTU will provide Predator aircrew training to both Air National Guard and active duty personnel.

Throughout 2008, the 163rd Operations Group maintained a combat presence in the Global War on Terrorism, providing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support and precision-strike capability to combatant commanders and warfighters on the ground. Wing Predator aircrews conducted up to three 24/7 Predator Combat Air Patrols and amassed 12,000 combat support flying hours, resulting in the prosecution of more than 2,200 targets and support for more than 1,500 combat operations in their areas of responsibility (AOR).

The 163rd Maintenance Group was instrumental to the wing's successful employment of the Predator. While managing various equipment installations and upgrades, deploying personnel to support combat operations in the AOR, and standing up a maintenance-training detachment, the group ensured the wing's Predator operations continued unhindered. Additionally, the group's FTD heralded a new era for Predator maintenance training, becoming a formally recognized training detachment under the Air Education and Training Command.

The 163rd Medical Group participated in numerous missions and exercises throughout the year including a U.S. Southern Command-sponsored Medical Readiness Training Exercise, which brought relief to more than 6,000 Guatemalan citizens in three of the country's poorest communities. In addition, the unit trained alongside its Army National Guard counterparts during a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package exercise, which validated the group as mission-ready and bolstered both services' ability to respond to hazardous material incidents, both at home and abroad. Additionally, 2008 saw several Airmen deployed to various locations throughout Southwest Asia, providing world-class medical care to servicemembers engaged in overseas operations.

The primary focus of the 163rd Security Forces Squadron in 2008 was the deployment of nearly half its personnel to Baghdad, Iraq, as well as the support of detainee-transport security operations at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. While in Iraq, unit members conducted air base ground defense missions, ensuring the safety and security of U.S. and Coalition assigned forces. In addition, the squadron provided wildfire hand crew personnel during Operation Lightning Strike when the governor requested 2,000 Army and Air National Guardsmen to augment civil fire suppression efforts.

The 163rd Civil Engineer Squadron, which hosts the Air National Guard's West Coast Regional Training Site, trained more than 1,500 Army and Air National Guard, active duty Air Force and Marine personnel during 2008. By year's end, the squadron supported numerous construction efforts world-wide to include: an elementary school restoration in Bosnia and Herzegovina; the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Mexico border fence project and construction at Guantanamo Bay. The squadron remains extremely busy executing $6 million in military construction and renovation projects in support of the wing's Predator combat and training missions.

The 163rd Logistics Readiness Squadron was a key player in supporting operations worldwide throughout the year. Squadron personnel mobilized 78 wing members in support of Predator operations, 337 personnel in support of Air Expeditionary Force rotations and 61 Grizzlies from throughout the wing in support of Operation Lightning Strike. The squadron assembled the first ANG Readiness Spares package to support the Predator mission and established supply accounts to support the opening of the wing's Predator training schoolhouses.

Colonel Albert Aimar
Commander

Chief Master Sgt. Edwin Clarke
Command Chief

The 163rd Services Flight was active throughout 2008, both at home and abroad. Key stateside missions included Operation Jump Start and Operation Lightning Strike, as well as providing assistance to other Armed Forces units across the nation for various readiness, training and mission requirements, and working abroad to support operations in Southwest Asia.

The 163rd Mission Support Flight provided personnel services support to nearly 900 members of the wing and geographically separated units, including processing 477 personnel for training as the wing continued its conversion to the Predator, and deploying more than 400 personnel at home and worldwide to support seven operational contingencies. Additionally, the flight's recruiting office was instrumental in boosting wing manning from 84 to 108 percent.

The 163rd Communications Flight provided day-to-day communications support to the wing, including developing and implementing training programs, processes and policies. The flight was also successfully developed communications solutions to enable the wing to maintain a combat presence overseas while simultaneously standing up its maintenance and flight training detachments.

Community involvement remained a cornerstone to ensuring public support for the Air National Guard and Air Force mission. Throughout 2008, the wing participated in several Southern California events, including: the Dr. Seuss National Reading Day Program; Camp Pendleton "Mud Run;" Los Angeles Marathon; Special Olympics Torch Run; and the National Guard Biathlon trials. In addition, they provided speakers for public engagements, hosted numerous tours, and participated in air shows.

As a testament to the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing's dedication to both its hometown and wartime missions, the wing was awarded its fifth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award and its eighth National Guard Association of the United States Distinguished Flying Unit Award.

Far Left: Staff Sgt. Skyler Swinhart, 163rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Crew Chief, recovers an MQ-1 Predator at Kandahar International Airport, in Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo)

Above: Tech. Sgt. Vinh Phung of the 163rd Civil Engineer Squadron, installs drop-down ceiling tiles on the first floor of Vuk Karadzic Elementary School during a deployment to Bosnia. (Tech. Sgt. Joseph Prouse)

Left: Members of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing and 452nd Air Mobility Wing's Security Forces Squadron participate in a five-mile relay during the annual Special Olympics Torch Run event.

162nd Combat Communications Group

NORTH HIGHLANDS AIR NATIONAL GUARD STATION

In 2008, the 162nd Combat Communications Group continued implementing major transformation initiatives, ensuring future relevance to the Air Force, the state and the nation, while supporting many vital overseas and stateside missions. Additional transformation is on the horizon, as a proposal was submitted to reorganize the 162nd Group into the 200th Wing, to include the 200th Space Group and the 200th Intel Group, in addition to the existing 162nd Combat Communications Group.

The 147th Combat Communications Squadron deployed personnel in support of Aerospace Expeditionary Force rotations and returned members from Operation Jump Start on the California border. It also provided tactical vehicles and drivers as well as personnel for training as Type II firefighters in support of Operation Lightning Strike, the California National Guard's wildfire response. The unit's Eagle Vision team, which became fully mission capable in May, provided critical imagery in support of the firefighting effort along with flood relief in the Midwest. In addition, squadron personnel participated in the annual Patriot exercise in Gulfport, Miss.

The 148th Space Operations Squadron finished a busy 2008 with the completion of a new operations center. In addition to commanding the five current MILSTAR satellites, the new operations center will allow for command and control of the Air Force's new Advanced Extremely High Frequency satellites. Set to launch in 2010, the satellites possess data rate modes six times higher than the MILSTAR II satellites, and will further enhance tactical military communications, including real-time video, battlefield maps, and targeting data.

The 149th Combat Communications Squadron focused on mission readiness and establishing and implementing a readiness plan that includes operations and maintenance training, exercises and warrior skills training. In June, unit members participated in a hurricane response exercise in Hawaii. This exercise gave them an opportunity to develop solutions to combine networks, providing island-wide communications coverage for the Incident Command System. During Operation Lightning Strike, 149th personnel provided communications support to the Modular Airborne Firefighting System mission deployed to McClellan Airfield, supporting several agencies and military organizations. The mission's success was a direct result of innovations tested in Hawaii.

The 216th Operations Support Squadron's official standup occurred on April 1, 2008. This newly designated squadron is the first Total Force Integration Air National Guard unit supporting a full-time Air Force Space Command and United States Strategic Command wartime mission as part of the Joint Space Operations Center.

In March, the 222nd Combat Communications Squadron closed its doors in Costa Mesa, and subsequently the 222nd Intelligence Support Squadron was established at Beale Air Force Base on April 1, providing communications maintenance support to the active duty 548th Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Group. Squadron personnel were retrained in the Intelligence career field, their new skills employed in the Distributed Ground Station-Two, in support of ongoing missions around the world.

The 222nd Operations Support Squadron was activated on April 1, and consists of personnel previously assigned to the 234th Intelligence Squadron. Unit members are in their second year of mobilization at Beale, providing planning and programming support for Distributed Ground Station-Two, in addition to scheduling, training, mission planning, and standardization and evaluation expertise.

Also on April 1, the 222nd Communications Maintenance Flight was activated at Beale. Flight personnel support the communication segment of the RQ-4 Global Hawk Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, ensuring successful high altitude strategic ISR capability worldwide. The unit is growing quickly and has

already increased its manning from 53 to 93 percent and has three members in their second year of mobilization at Beale.

The 234th Intelligence Squadron is actively engaged in providing mission support to the 548th ISR Group, delivering full-spectrum imagery analysis and signal intelligence crews to support U-2, Global Hawk and Predator missions. Unit members are in their second year of mobilization at Beale, directly supporting Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and world-wide ISR operations, providing near real-time actionable intelligence.

The 261st Combat Communications Squadron supported the California forest service by sending vehicles and personnel to fight numerous wildfires. In May, approximately 100 members provided voice and data services to the Hawaiian Agencies of Emergency Management and State Civil Defense during a hurricane response exercise in Oahu, Hawaii. Squadron personnel also deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan and Korea, fulfilling Aerospace Expeditionary Force rotation requirements.

In 2008, the entire California Air National Guard was honored when Senior Master Sgt. Donna J. Goodno, from the 147th Combat Communications Squadron, was selected as one of the Air Force 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year. Additionally, Master Sgt. Denise Fuentes, from the 162nd Combat Communications Group, was selected as the Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Colonel Steven Beck
Commander

Chief Master Sgt. John DeCastro
Command Chief

Far Left: The U. S. Navy's Blue Angels Flight Demonstration Squadron passes over the 147th CBCS Eagle Vision site during a performance at the Miramar Air Show. (Master Sgt. Ed Koen)

Top Above: Senior Master Sgt. Brad Riggs of the 222 ISS, stands proudly outside Distributed Ground Station-Two at Beale.

Center Above: Senior Master Sgt. Merlin Bozone, 147th CBCS, offers a high-five to a young spectator during a local patriotic holiday parade.

Bottom Above: Members of the 149th CBCS unload equipment in preparation for annual training in Hawaii. (Master Sgt. Michael Shipman)

Left: Col. Steven Beck, 162nd CCG commander, retires the guide-on of the 222nd CBCS, which was re-activated as the 222nd ISS along with the 222nd OSS and 222nd CMXF at Beale April 1. (Senior Airman George Cloutier)

Outstanding Officers of the Year

Lt. Col. Douglas Weskamp
FIELD GRADE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

Captain Jennifer Cinq-Mars
COMPANY GRADE OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The California Air National Guard is proud of each of its officers and enlisted members. It is their conscientious dedication to duty that makes our organization great. Each year we are faced with the difficult task of selecting the California Air National Guard's "Best in Blue."

It is my honor to present the Officers, Airman, Noncommissioned Officer, Senior Noncommissioned Officer, and First Sergeant for 2008.

Maj. Gen. Dennis G. Lucas
Commander, California ANG

Outstanding Enlisted Members of the Year

Senior Airman
Renae K. Bobbitt
AIRMAN OF THE YEAR

Technical Sergeant
Fernando Wilkins
NCO OF THE YEAR

Senior Master Sergeant
Bradley Riggs
SENIOR NCO OF THE YEAR

Master Sergeant
Manuel A. Hernandez
FIRST SERGEANT OF THE YEAR

Air Force 12 Outstanding Airmen of the Year

Senior Master Sergeant Donna J. Goodno

Senior Master Sgt. Donna Goodno, the 2007 California Air National Guard Senior NCO of the Year, was among 12 Airmen selected as an Air Force Outstanding Airmen for 2008.

A Mission Support Flight Superintendant at the 147th Combat Communications Squadron, 162nd Combat Communications Group, was selected from 33 nominees who represented all Air Force major commands, direct reporting units, field operating agencies and Air Staff agencies. She was the highest ranking Airman in the honored group, which include three senior airmen, one staff sergeant, five technical sergeants and two master sergeants.

As an Air Force Outstanding Airman, Sergeant Goodno was honored by the Air Force Association in Washington this past September.

She joined the Air National Guard in 1992 after serving in the active-duty Air Force, and learned about the combat communication positions through a recruiter.

Sergeant Goodno volunteered for Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002, and served as a communications manager in Kuwait. Then, she volunteered for Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2007 and deployed to Baghdad International Airport as a maintenance superintendent for the 447th Air Expeditionary Squadron (AES) where she was responsible for five work centers and more than $17 million in assets.

There, she credits a great commander who had the foresight to deploy all the necessary communications equipment with her. "He saw that I could do it and

saw some leadership in me and that I could get the job done and let me go do things that I would normally have not done," she said.

Despite more than 35 attacks on the base and a daily threat of rockets and mortar attack, Sergeant Goodno ensured zero communication outages. She identified and corrected 16 frequencies unapproved for Baghdad International Airport's use, conducted an emergency repair of sabotaged perimeter fence fiber-optics, and worked the installation of a $155,000 cable project that provided a redundant network path. She also engineered a TV-over-network solution which provided Armed Forces Network services to more than 800 users. Most notably, she managed a fix to the airport's only airspace radar control system after 10 months of stalled effort, getting the radar up and running in 2 weeks.

Squadron officials there called her work outstanding and recognized her successful supervision of 27 deployed personnel by awarding her AES SNCO of the month. Sergeant Goodno also volunteered her time as a notary for deployed members and supported morale events during deployed holidays.

"I'm the kind of person that if I see a lot of stuff that's not getting done, I'll just jump in, it doesn't really matter what career field it is," she said.

Her community activities included teaching re-integration classes with the group chaplain, which helped Army and Air Force members adjust to leaving Iraq and performing volunteer work for Veteran Standown, which helps homeless veterans reconnect with the community.

California Wildfires

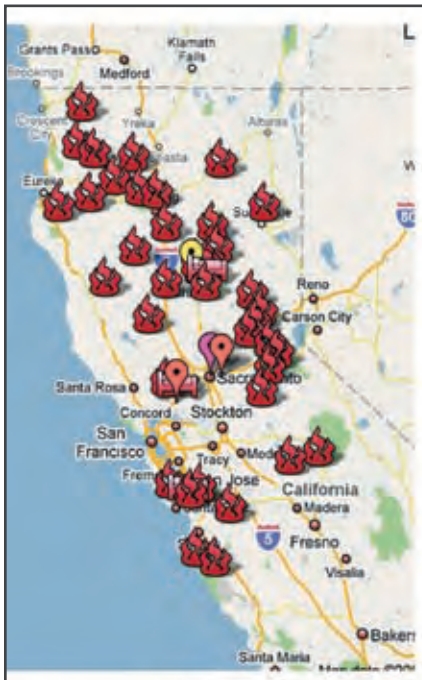
In the spring of 2008, California was once again besieged by wildfire as an estimated 5000 to 6000 lightning strikes sparked 2100 individual fires across the state. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger called upon the National Guard for assistance and the California Air National Guard (CA ANG) quickly answered his call.

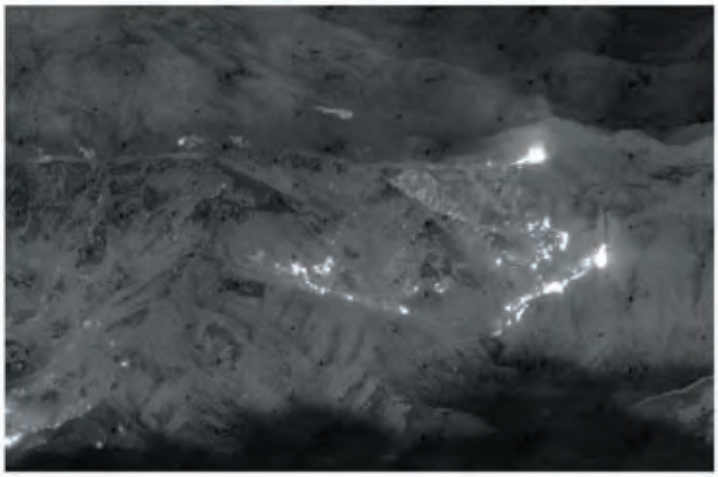
All CA ANG units responded with either specific capabilities or personnel. The Headquarters staff managed and oversaw the execution of a joint military service and multi-state airpower effort. The 129th Rescue Wing provided HH-60G helicopters for dedicated medical evacuation, performed life saving rescue for 8 civilian fire-fighters, and conducted water drops.

The 146th Airlift Wing conducted operations from Chico and McClellan Airports along side eight Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System (MAFFS) equipped C-130s from the North Carolina ANG, Wyoming ANG, and Colorado Air Force Reserve, flying total of 599 hours and dropping more than 1.13 million gallons of flame retardant.

More than 200 Airmen from across the CA ANG, received specialized fire fighting training and deployed to the front lines of the California wildfires to assist civilian firefighters in response efforts. The Airman cleared vegetation from along fire lines, pulled fire hoses, observed terrain for spot fires, and extinguished hot-spots near evacuated homes.

The California Air National Guard made critical contributions to the fire fighting efforts and excelled while responding to our governor's call for assistance and performed in the finest tradition of Citizen Airmen.





Operation Lightning Strike

Joint Force Response to Wildfires in California

Disaster Response

HURRICANES IKE AND GUSTAV

Members of the 129th Rescue Wing deployed to Galveston, Texas, to search for stranded victims of Hurricane Ike in mid-September, only days after deploying in support of Hurricane Gustav search-and-rescue operations.

While the threat of Gustav passed over Louisiana with minimal impact, Ike's presence was more devastating, demanding swift action on the part of 129th Guardsmen. On Sept. 12 they helped rescue 16 people, including several stranded on a bridge nearly submerged in Ike's waters. The crews knew the next day would be even busier.

"We were told that more than two hundred 911 calls were made in the morning," said Maj. Rhys Hunt, 129th Rescue Wing helicopter pilot. Hurricane Ike had passed through Galveston earlier in the day. "When we got to Galveston, it looked like a war zone," Hunt said. "There were four or five houses on fire, Galveston Airport was completely underwater, most of the city was flooded, and several piers were demolished."

Instead of being tasked with picking up victims in specific locations, the helicopters trolled low and slow. The crews hoped the sound of the rotor blades would prompt survivors to come out of their homes and seek help in evacuating the area. It wasn't long before survivors did just that.

At the end of the day, searching for survivors and performing rescues was a grueling but gratifying mission for the JTF 129 Airmen. "All the crew members were glad to be there and help when people needed it most," Hunt said. As of Sept. 15, JTF 129 personnel had saved 48 people and 13 dogs in response to Hurricane Ike.

Humanitarian Relief

GUATEMALA

Members of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Medical Group spent nine days in Guatemala this past August where they provided medical care to more than 5,700 people.

The 31-member team worked tirelessly, operating from local schools in remote areas and makeshift clinics, treating local citizens for a variety of ailments.

Throughout the nearly two-week mission, the medical group treated ailments ranging from rashes to more serious maladies such as intestinal parasites and scarlet fever. In addition, several specialists, to include an optometrist, dentist and gynecologist, were on site to provide specialized care.

As word spread at each site of the American medics' arrival, lines began to form at the sites as early as 3 a.m. with as many as 800 people waiting for the team each day.

"We heard stories of people who actually hitchhiked from hundreds of miles away to see us," said Chief Master Sgt. Carol Barone, 163rd Medical Group services manager. "When we arrived and saw all the people waiting, we knew we had our work cut out for us, but we were all motivated and ready to do whatever we could to help."

The team treated nearly 2,000 people in each community they traveled to, provided more than 6,000 prescriptions and distributed more than 1,200 pairs of glasses.

"It was a good experience to have worked alongside the Guatemalan army and with the people of Guatemala," said Tech. Sgt. Rosa Puente, 163rd Medical Group medical technician. "They were very kind, respectful and grateful that we were there. It was a great learning experience overall, and the people were very happy to have the opportunity to be seen by an American doctor."

Recruiting and Retention

SENIOR MASTER SGT. ELAINE SAMBORSKI

The California Air National Guard (CA ANG) Recruiting and Retention team had their best year in recorded history! The continued hard work and dedication of our team in 2008 was evident in the state's dramatic increase in strength numbers. The end result was the achievement of the state's strategic goal of 98 percent end-strength. As the transformation of missions and Total Force Integration continued, the team was tested and proved their mettle. Our 2008 top performers, as seen on this page, were spotlighted for their accomplishments at the annual CA ANG recruiting and retention workshop. Three of our members, MSgt Denise Fuentes, MSgt Norine Gittins, and MSgt Loren Bell earned recognition at the regional level and MSgt Fuentes was named, for the second consecutive year, the Air National Guard's Recruiting and Retention NCO of the Year.

The retention team partnered with the Human Resource Advisors to continue fostering improvements in retention. The state's percentage-of-force lost dropped for the second consecutive year and as a result, we were able to retain nearly 89 percent of our force in fiscal year 2008. As we continue transforming and modestly increasing authorized strength, retention will remain a front-burner issue! The partnership between the retention team, to include Unit Career Advisors and Human Resource Advisors, coupled with increased emphasis on loss analysis reporting, will be the cornerstone of our success.

Challenged by the CA ANG Commander to access 60 new members per month, the recruiting team delivered. They averaged 62.5 accessions per month and crushed all existing CA ANG production records. The result was 750 new members, a 41 percent improvement over the previous year's stellar result. Local support from the wings and geographically separated units had a positive impact on the team's success. Whether it was additional advertising funding, computer equipment, or manpower for recruiting events, the assistance to recruiters made a difference. In addition, National Guard Bureau contributed another 3-year recruiting position and two 2-year recruiting positions to the CA ANG for 2009.

The Air National Guard has renewed many of its incentive programs from 2008 for continuation in 2009. Cash enlistment/reenlistment bonuses are being offered in more than 50 job specialties and are based on local as well as national needs. The Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (GRAP), a program offering financial incentives for referrals, is back on track and remains highly beneficial to recruiting. Under this program, eligible members and retirees are offered financial incentives to bring in referrals. In addition to the ANG incentive programs, the California Air Guard's Gold Rush program was extended for another year and funds are currently available to reward CA ANG members whose recruiting referral leads to an enlistment or appointment.

The California Air National Guard is postured to meet congressionally mandated strength requirements in 2009, securing our relevance in several new Air Force missions. Our long-term success will rely heavily on our ability to meet both short and long-term strength requirements. Whether it is providing referrals to the recruiting team or taking an active role in retention, every member plays a vital role in maintaining the strength of the California Air National Guard.

Master Sgt. Loren Bell
RECRUITING OFFICE SUPERVISOR OF THE YEAR

Master Sgt. Norine Gittins
RETENTION OFFICE MANAGER OF THE YEAR

Master Sgt. Denise Fuentes
AIR NATIONAL GUARD RECRUITING AND RETENTION NCO OF THE YEAR

Tech. Sgt. Jeremee Tate
PRODUCTION RECRUITER OF THE YEAR

Master Sgt. Diana Escobedo
UNIT CAREER ADVISOR OF THE YEAR

146th Airlift Wing
RECRUITING OFFICE OF THE YEAR AND WINNERS OF THE COMMANDER'S CUP FOR RECRUITING AND RETENTION EXCELLENCE

Human Resource Advisor

Chief Master Sgt. Michael Koslow

This past year has clearly validated my personal belief that the men and women of the California Air National Guard are unsurpassed in their professionalism, ingenuity, and commitment to each other. In traveling throughout the state this past year, and visiting the majority of our units, I have observed each of you epitomize our innate adaptability and effectiveness in accepting increased responsibility in both our federal and state missions. We have recognized that it's not "business as usual," and that with our changing mission roles, we have become increasingly more familiar with each of our respective community, state, national, and international roles in the California Air National Guard. This means not only becoming more efficient in our own jobs, but also being sensitive to how our vital decisions impact others and their decisions, morale, productivity, and overall feeling of inclusion in meeting today's key national objectives.

The Human Resource Advisors (HRA) throughout the state have set the stage for promoting an effective leadership team that emphasizes the development, recognition of high achievers, and motivational incentives that directly impact the continued retention of our most valuable resource – People! HRAs are working together with Command Chiefs, recruiters, Retention Office Managers, First Sergeants, Unit Career Advisors, and Equal Opportunity Officers, to recognize and enhance retention, mentorship, high performance teams, professional and personal development programs and processes within the California Air National Guard.

The Student Flight training programs have been improved to ensure our new members are fully capable of exceeding basic training requirements and becoming an integral part of their assigned units. An increase in the number of Basic Training Honor Graduates has validated these training programs as a benchmark for the rest of the Air National Guard. The enhanced Student Flight program has provided our new members with an increased sense of inclusion into their units and direct mentorship by unit senior leaders.

First Sergeants, Retention Office Managers, Unit Career Advisors, and HRAs are consistently working together to gain critical insight into those things that motivate, aspire, and most importantly – retain our people. Reviews of enlisted performance feedback, awards and decoration, career motivation, enlisted and officer professional development programs at the unit level have assisted unit functional area managers and leaders identify the unique goals and aspirations of our members. Unit commanders and Senior NCOs have also locally developed assessments used to assist our leaders in putting their fingers "on the pulse" of their units' morale and expectations.

The HRA introduction, familiarization, and training of our units in the benefits of "MyEDP" or the My Enlisted Development Plan has provided an outstanding and beneficial opportunity for both California Air National Guard leaders and its members to effectively interact with each other. Through the Air Force Portal, any California Air National Guard member has the ability to have a career "road map" to success. Members can now request any selected leader in their respective unit to provide them with mentorship and professional guidance through this unique on-line program. MyEDP also is connected to the Virtual Mission Personnel Flight database which provides "real-time" access to your military professional accomplishments. MyEDP facilitate supervisors in recognizing the significant achievements and service of our members and support of formal awards and decorations.

The men and women of the California Air National Guard continue to exude an extraordinary level of effort in balancing the demands of our jobs within the unit, traditional guardsmen and guardswomen in their respective civilian employment positions, family, and the support we provide within our communities. The California Air National Guard HRAs are extremely proud to be a part of the most extensively recognized group of professionals who have made a positive distinctive difference both domestically and abroad. Thank you for your personal commitment and unparalleled level of personal sacrifice.

Members of the 129 RQW student flight participate in physical training the Sunday morning of drill. These new Airmen also have academic, military history, and customs and courtesy classes that prepare them for success in Basic Training and Technical School.

Family Assistance Network

http://www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies

The California National Guard established a Family Assistance Network as a resource to Guard and other military families - especially those involved in current deployments. They have rosters of civilian, government, and military agencies that can help families dealing with issues that have surfaced because of active duty deployments.

http://www.guardfamily.org

The National Guard Family Program's Online Community is a place to find contacts, information on programs and benefits, and more. Get tips, tools, and training on family issues.

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Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

http://www.calguard.ca.gov/esgr

Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense organization. It was established in 1972 to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve component members and their civilian employers and to assist in the resolution of conflicts arising from an employee's military commitment.

ESGR has a national network of more than 900 volunteer ombudsmen who help resolve issues between employers and their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. These volunteers serve as informal mediators between employers and employees.

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California Air National Guard Units

WWW.CA.ANG.AF.MIL

129th Rescue Wing

Mission: Combat Search and Rescue
Aircraft: MC-130P Combat Shadow/HH-60G Pave Hawk

650 Macon Road
Moffett Federal Airfield, CA 94035
Recruiting: (800) 821-2433
www.129rqw.ang.af.mil

144th Fighter Wing

Mission: Air Defense
Aircraft: F-16C Fighting Falcon/RC-26B

5323 McKinley Avenue
Fresno, CA 93727
Recruiting: (800) 369-6404
144fw.ang.af.mil

162nd Combat Communications Group

Mission: Global Communications, Space And Intelligence

3900 Roseville Road
North Highlands, CA 95660
Recruiting: (800) 295-3930
www.162ccg.ca.ang.af.mil

146th Airlift Wing

Mission: Tactical Airlift
Aircraft: C-130J Hercules

100 Mulcahey Drive
Port Hueneme, CA 93041
Recruiting: (800) 831-9968
www.146aw.ang.af.mil

163rd Reconnaissance Wing

Mission: Reconnaissance
Aircraft: MQ-1 Predator

1620 Graeber Street
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www.camarc.ang.af.mil