

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Army Aviation Support Facility
Camp Joseph T. Robinson
North Little Rock, AR 72199-9600

DCSAVN

15 September 2005

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER

SUBJECT: New Orleans AAR for DET 1-149th Med CO (AA)

1. On Sunday, August 28th, the DET 1 -149th Medevac (AA) received word that a possible activation was pending as a result of Hurricane Katrina closing in on the Gulf of Mexico coastline. The essential flight crews were notified on Monday, August 29th, and by noon two flight crews containing two PC's, two PI's, four CE's, and three MO's were ready to respond to the first natural disaster that an Arkansas Aviation Unit has been activated to support. The request for two medevac configured aircraft was submitted to AASF maintenance Monday morning consisting of two aircraft with rescue hoist installed, minimum seats, and carousels removed. Several maintenance issues had to be resolved prior to the two aircraft, 82-23683 and 82-23696, being fully missioned capable. These included cabin modifications, maintenance operation checks, test flights, and a forty hour inspection started on 683 in the late afternoon of Monday, August 29th.

2. Upon completion of the forty hour inspection, 683 departed Camp Robinson on the morning of Tuesday, August 30th, at 1000 hours en route to Hawkins AAF, MS. Aircraft 696 departed approximately two hours later after a maintenance test flight was completed. Both aircraft linked up at Hawkins AAF that afternoon for further guidance from the Mississippi SAAO, COL Brad MacNealy. While talking to COL MacNealy via telephone, both crews were directed to fly to Mobile, AL, and contact the U.S. Coast Guard Commander of Operations. Upon arrival at Mobile Regional Airport, where the Coast Guard is co-located, a briefing of all flight crews followed that evening. The Coast Guard had been sustaining 24 hour operations since Hurricane Katrina made landfall. We were offered a classroom in the downstairs area for housing, but between our crew of eleven and the FEMA crew that was already there crew rest would have definitely been an issue. The facilities were not designed for that many crew members at one time.

3. I placed a call to COL Bonasera, the facility commander of the Alabama National Guards Facility #3, also located at Mobile Regional Airport. COL Bonasera was very enthusiastic about assisting us anyway he could. We arranged transportation through the Coast Guard that night and visited the National Guard Armory. COL Bonasera offered our crews a private classroom setting for cots, hot showers, and access to maintenance facilities that would be utilized for aircraft engine washes, tools, hangers, etc. The next day he had arranged contract meals in the morning from "Cracker Barrel" and "Golden Corral" at night. We would not have been able to sustain the flight hours the missions

demanding without the maintenance facilities and the FTS personnel from the Alabama AASF assisting our crew chiefs. The maintenance contact team from Arkansas could have been utilized and would have definitely been a must if our crews would have been moved to a different location at any point during the activation.

Aircraft 696 was approaching a phase inspection and had an inoperative GPS/Doppler which was essential to have operating on the aircraft. The maintenance facility also changed out a VHF radio and transponder during our stay. Aircraft 683 had a #1 engine oil leak and a #1 hydraulic transfer module leak that would eventually have to be changed out.

4. The two flight crews completed a wide variety of missions during the 11 day activation. The first two and a half days were spent in the hardest hit region, New Orleans, LA. We received a mission on Wednesday, August 31st, from the Coast Guard Commander to rescue a woman and twelve other people located on a balcony in downtown New Orleans. Further guidance was to stay in that area and complete search and rescue operations. The flight time from Mobile to New Orleans was approximately forty-five minutes. Both of our aircraft ended up working downtown doing live hoist missions and completing seventy-seven hoists, (683 – 37) and (696 – 40) in two and a half days. Designated landing zones were placed throughout the city for drop off points for the sick and injured. Upon our arrival, the New Orleans class bravo airspace was a common traffic advisory frequency. There were approximately sixty Coast Guard helicopters and twenty to thirty National Guard helicopters working a twenty mile square grid. See and avoid became very important at this point. The only airport that was open with fuel when we arrived Tuesday was NAS, (Navy New Orleans). New Orleans International opened Thursday, September 1st, with New Orleans Approach taking over the airspace again.

5. Starting on Thursday, September 2nd, both Medevac aircraft began working the Gulfport and Biloxi, MS area. We were staged out of the Gulfport airport and originally assigned as a Medevac/SAR asset. Thursday afternoon both aircraft were incorporated into the re-supply missions distributing water, MRE'S, ice, medical supplies, and baby supplies to the hardest hit areas of the Mississippi gulf coast. Each aircraft completed five to six supply missions daily incorporating two live Medevac missions along the way. Aircraft 683 flew a toddler with a severe ear infection to Gulfport Memorial Hospital and 696 flew an elderly woman with a feeding tube that was lodged to Gulfport Memorial Hospital. On Saturday, September 3rd, our crews took a well deserved maintenance/crew rest day. We had accrued twenty of an allowed twenty two flight hours in a three day period. The re supply missions continued on Sunday, September 4th, and Monday, September 5th. On Tuesday, September 6th, both aircraft were assigned to transport Air Force medical personnel to the rural communities to assess medical needs. On Wednesday, September 7th, aircraft 683 was assigned to fly a DOD camera man from the Pentagon to video footage of the daily missions taking place. During that day's events, we transported Air Force doctors to a hospital, participated in a downed aircraft search and rescue, and continued re-supply missions. COL Bonasera contacted our crews upon arrival to the facility the night of Wednesday, September 7th, that Thursday would be a maintenance stand down day for all flight crews. He also informed us that we would be

departing for home on Friday, September 9th, along with all the other crews from Florida and Alabama. Our crews arrived back at Camp Robinson as a flight of two on Friday, September 9th at 1545 hours.

The following is a summary of the eleven day activation of the DET 1 1-149th MED (AA):

<u>Total Hours:</u>	88.8
683 -	45.6
696 -	43.2

<u>Total Hoist/Rescues:</u>	77
683	37
696	40

<u>Total Medevac:</u>	2
683	1
696	1

<u>Missions Flown:</u>	139
683	68
696	71

6. There was a wealth of knowledge and experience that came as a result of this activation. We participated and worked in conjunction with the United States Coast Guard, the United States Air Force, and several National Guard units from a variety of states. Live rescue hoist operations had only been practiced in the past for proficiency. The training we have been conducting was essential in the performance of this mission. Areas that need to be addressed are the following: all Medevac aircraft need to have the hoist wiring complete and operational. Hoist must be serviced and maintained IAW FM-1-21-1. Currently the DET 1-149 is short on hoist operators. If a need for a third aircraft would have matured, there would not have been a qualified hoist operator to go. Additionally, we are losing SGT Steve Otts as of October 1, 2005, who was one of the two we have qualified.

7. Transportation was an issue throughout the activation. When the area we are assigned to has no rental car capability, a GSA Van from Arkansas would have been a welcome sight. Eleven days is a long time to survive without means of transportation. We made the best of the situation, but in the future I would recommend sending a

ground/maintenance crew consisting of representatives as a minimum from: avionics, TI, and an electrician to cover the day to day needs of the aircraft.

8. A couple of items that have been identified as a result of this activation that would make the missions safer are communications with the Medic at all times. Once the Medic descends on the hoist, the aircrews are limited in communication with them, reverting to hand and arm signals. We would like to request a handheld radio for each Medic assigned to unit in an operational position. This will allow the crews to discuss options in a medevac situation when questions arise. Another item is "SEA Bottles" which are compressed air primarily used in emergency egress situations. This will allow the crewmembers to have an emergency air source should there be smoke or water environments during mission training.

9. Morale was excellent throughout the activation. Additional supplies sent from the unit and the AASF helped out greatly with wear and tear on flight equipment. Accommodations were really very good considering what was going on in Gulfport and New Orleans. For the purpose of future missions, crew changes came at about the right time. Crews were getting pretty worn down sustaining flying hours and maintenance issues on aircraft after ten to fifteen days.

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