

The 436th Air Support Group Called to Support The American Red Cross

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Ft Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas - On 28 Aug 05, the 436th Air Support Group (ASG) of the Texas State Guard, was called to State Active Duty in support of the American Red Cross Hurricane Katrina evacuee relief efforts. Of the 37 unit personnel, 33 were deployed in support of Operation Katrina. Two members, SMSgt Short and A1C Tribble, were immediately deployed to Orange, TX on Aug 29, while the rest of the unit was deployed on Sept 2 to support the relief efforts at the Dallas Convention Center and the Reunion Arena.

One member, Airman Marcela Arredondo, was assigned to Ms. Jo Carter, from the Family Readiness Group to assist in the support of the displaced military families at Carswell Field, Ft. Worth, TX. The members of the 436th ASG, as well as other members of other Texas State Guard units, supported the Dallas Convention Center/Reunion Arena operations 24/7 from Sept 2*Sept 16. This was the first time in 43 years that the Texas State Guard, the Army Brigades and the Air Wing have served jointly under the command of Fourth Brigade Commander, Brigadier General Marshall Scantlin.

In addition to supporting the shelter in Orange, TX and the Dallas Convention Center/Reunion Arena shelters, the 436th ASG was called upon again to support the Hurricane Rita relief efforts. Fifteen members were sent to Bryan/College Station, TX as part of the Army/Air Wing Joint Task Force to support seven separately located shelters from Sept 22*Sept 26. Following the closure of all of the shelters in Bryan/College Station, six members were reassigned to support shelters in Lufkin, TX.

Throughout the month of October, the 436th ASG was called upon to support relief activities in Waco, Kirbyville and Deweyville. Although the 436th ASG had been tasked to train in Red Cross shelter management, the focus of our deployment activity was of shelter security and an unarmed military presence. Throughout all of the deployments, no harm came to any shelter resident or to any of the Texas State Guard members. This speaks volumes of the men and women of the Texas State Guard and of the evacuees. As a unit, the members of the 436thASG are proud to have been called upon to assist the American Red Cross and our fellow countrymen. If we were able to provide security, provide a helping hand or smile and provide words of encouragement and hope to just one of the many people we helped, then all of the long hours have been well spent.

The following excerpt is from a letter written by A1C Sugranes, which states what we all felt from this experience: *"The experiences that we lived in these shelters are unique, sad and hard to forget. I do not remember specifically how many school buses came the first day from the "Super Dome" but I remember that they came continuously with thousands of people o all ages, some wounded, confused, hungry, thirsty, hopeless and looking for their missing family members. I never believed this kind of crisis could happen here. You read hundreds of horrifying stories in the newspaper that may be true, but good things happened too. Many volunteers came to the various shelters to help the evacuees and*

work together as a big team on this crisis. Most evacuees appreciated our job and frequently thanked us for helping and taking care of them. I will never forget a 9 or 10-year old girl that came to me with a broken electronic toy asking me to fix it.

Fortunately, I had my tool kit and was able to fix her toy by adjusting some screws, cleaning up some connectors, and installing a couple of new batteries. Her face brightened with a smile and she thanked me. I never saw the little girl again. Since being activated for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, we worked non-stop for nearly a month. Initially, we were working 13+ hours per day with a few hours sleep. The work was hard, longhand extenuating, yet rewarding."

The primary mission of the 436th ASG is to support the units of the 136th Texas Air National Guard as a force multiplier. We are continually looking for new and broader areas in which we can be of added value to 136th Wing operations. We currently have members working with the Aerial Port, Civil Engineering, Communications, Aircraft Maintenance, Security Forces, and Flight Operations Squadrons, as well as the Family Readiness Group.

136th AW EDITOR'S NOTE: The 436th Air Support Group is a valuable part of the 136th Airlift Wing. As the hurricane relief efforts proved, they are also a valuable asset to Texas Military Forces--demonstrated by their dedicated service in staffing shelters for our displaced neighbors. As your liaison with the 436th, I ask you to think outside the box and find more ways to capitalize on this volunteer organization.