

156th AIRLIFT WING



MISSION

LINEAGE

Established as the 156th Fighter Group (Air Defense) and allotted to Puerto Rico Air National Guard in 1958

Received federal recognition and activated on 10 April 1958

Redesignated 156th Tactical Fighter Group c. 1 April 1964

Redesignated 156th Fighter Group on 15 March 1992

Redesignated: 156th Fighter Wing on 1 October 1995

Redesignated: 156th Airlift Wing on 1 October 1998

Redesignated 156th Wing on 10 April 2019

STATIONS

Muniz ANGS, Carolina, Puerto Rico

ASSIGNMENTS

Puerto Rico Air National Guard, 10 April 1958

WEAPON SYSTEMS

Mission Aircraft

F-86 Sabre, 1958

F-104, 1967

A-7D, 1975

F-16, 1992

C-130, 1998

WC-130, 2013

Support Aircraft

C-26

C-130

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

September 1998. After Hurricane Georges ripped across their island destroying some 26,000 houses, members of the Puerto Rico Air Guard's 156th Airlift Wing flew tons of food, water, equipment and supplies to remote parts of the storm-stricken island. The unit was in the middle of converting from fighters to airlifters and had two of its planned eight C-130Hs on hand to deal with that natural disaster.

2005 28 Oct A C-130 assigned to the 139th Airlift Wing, Missouri ANG, airlifted seventeen members of the 156th Aerial Port Flight, Puerto Rico ANG, to NAS New Orleans to participate in hurricane relief operations. The 156th Aerial Port Flight deployed to New Orleans to fulfill their two-week annual training requirement.

29 Nov A C-130 assigned to the 165th Airlift Wing airlifted thirty-six personnel from NAS New Orleans to St Croix Island, US Virgin Islands.

8 September 2006. The Puerto Rico Air Guard's 156th Airlift Wing deployed to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. It was the first time the island's ANG had deployed to a war zone as a unit in its 59-year history. While the 156th was committed to a 120-day deployment, its individual members were slated to rotate out every 30 days.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AFNS) -- The Puerto Rico National Guard has released the names of the victims of the WC-130 Hercules aircraft accident, which occurred May 2, 2018, near Hilton Head Airport in Savannah, Georgia.

The names of the nine fallen Airmen are:

Maj. José R. Román Rosado – Pilot – 18 years of service - from Manati, PR. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Maj. Carlos Pérez Serra – Navigator – 23 years of service - from Canóvanas, PR. He is survived by his wife, two sons and daughter.

1st Lt. David Albandoz – Co-Pilot – 16 years of service - from PR, recently residing in Madison, Alabama. He is survived by his wife and daughter.

Senior Master Sgt. Jan Paravisini – Mechanic – 21 years of service - from Canóvanas, PR. He is survived by two daughters and son.

Master Sgt. Jean Audriffred – 16 years of service - from Carolina, PR. He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Master Sgt. Mario Braña – Flight Engineer – 17 years of service - from Bayamón, PR. He is survived by his mother and daughter.

Master Sgt. Víctor Colón – 22 years of service - from Santa Isabel, PR. He is survived by his wife and two daughters.

Master Sgt. Eric Circuns – Loadmaster – 31 years of service - from Rio Grande, PR. He is survived by his wife, two step-daughters and son.

Senior Airman Roberto Espada– three years of service - from Salinas, PR. He is survived by his grandmother.

The Puerto Rico National Guard will continue to support the families for as long it takes.

“Taking care of our fallen Airmen’s families and loved ones is our top priority,” said the adjutant general of Puerto Rico, Brig. Gen. Isabelo Rivera. “We are fully supporting them and providing all the assistance and resources of the Puerto Rico National Guard during this difficult moment.”

The Puerto Rico Chapter of the American Red Cross has also been supporting the families since day one with mental health and spiritual care resources.

“For all of us at the Red Cross this a very mournful moment; on behalf of our employees and

volunteers we offer our most sincere condolences to the families. Our support teams are working with the families by identifying their needs and providing all necessary support during this process,” said Lee Vanessa Feliciano, American Red Cross regional executive officer.

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AFNS) -- A week and a half post Hurricane Maria, it is hard to tell the Federal Aviation Administration was at “ground zero” and in the dark with no power or communication capabilities. Now, the air traffic flow at San Juan Luis Munoz Marin International Airport is back to normal thanks to the Air National Guard stepping in to help the FAA and to restore air operations for the island. The storm on Sept. 20 hit Puerto Rico and destroyed a key generator used by the FAA to power their control center that directs aircraft movement in and around the island. The FAA’s San Juan Center is responsible for directing the movement of civilian and military aircraft for takeoff and landing, but also any aircraft flying in the vicinity.

Edward Tirado, Puerto Rico FAA operations manager, said, “We take it for granted,” as he pointed to a telephone. “It seems so simple, but it’s a lifeline for our operations. After the storm we had nothing. Thanks to our relationship with the Puerto Rico Air National Guard, they were able to provide us with the assistance we needed to get back up and running and now the Air National Guard is supporting us with redundancy as a backup now that power is restored to our building.” The loss of power and communication lines created a situation where all aircraft traffic had to be controlled by visual and physical spacing. Only one aircraft could arrive or leave the island every 10 minutes, or six per hour, to ensure that the aircraft were safely separated. Under normal operating conditions, an airport the size of San Juan International can handle about 45 flights per hour. The limited aircraft movement choked the supply chain of critical material and personnel. The Puerto Rico ANG, while in a recovery state itself, saw the big picture and knew they needed to immediately support the FAA. The focus of the PRANG’s assistance was to help re-establish local and ground-to-air communications and to re-establish radar coverage of the air space above the island and surrounding area.

Lt. Col. Humberto Pabon, PRANG’s 156th Airlift Wing vice wing commander, understood the gravity of the situation and the necessity to restore air operations capabilities, so he set teams in motion. “Our communications flight immediately engaged with the FAA at the airport, to begin that process. We worked with various Guard resources to provide power and immediate data link access,” Pabon said. With basic communications established, the number of flights taking place per hour began to climb from six per hour, to 18 per hour two days after the storm, to more than 30 and finally into the upper 30s and low 40s which is normal operations. After the storm, the PRANG’s 156th Communications Flight had immediately established a Joint Incident Site Communications Capability team giving Air Guard commanders local communications and getting their own air operation back online.

Another ANG unit, the 126th JISCC from Illinois, is powering the 156th JISCC command post and airfield management office, restoring ramp operations at the San Juan Luis Munoz Marin International Airport. The commanders and team members from all three JISCCs pulled resources and knowledge to work with the FAA and get them back up and running. In the spirit of community partnership, the ANG provided an additional resource, the 115th Communications Flight from the Wisconsin ANG, set up a separate JISCC at the FAA

communications center at San Juan. This allowed San Juan Center to begin direct communications with inbound and outbound aircraft again.

“We had to come up with multiple solutions to every challenge,” said Capt. Jeff Rutkowski, Wisconsin JISCC commander. “We’d try something and the first solution wouldn’t work. We’d get something started and realize that a better idea came along and we’d switch to that. We were dealing with a scenario where so many things were damaged. We really had to get creative.” “This support between the Guard and the FAA is unprecedented,” said 2nd Lt. Jose Arroyo-Cruz, 156th cyberspace operations officer and one of hundreds of PRANG Airmen who have been on the job since before the storm hit. “We had a hole in the sky over Puerto Rico. It was a giant hole in the highway in the sky. We had to fix that hole before we could bring in aid to the people of Puerto Rico.” 2017

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources

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The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.
Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.