

183D WING NEWS



183D Wing, Illinois Air National Guard, 3101 J. David Jones Parkway, Springfield, IL, 62707

183d Security Forces Provide Aid to over 15,000 People in Puerto Rico

*By Senior Master Sgt. Edward Ferguson
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Part of the Air National Guard's mission statement is, "to provide assistance during national emergencies." In the months following the devastation Hurricanes Irma and Maria brought on Puerto Rico, the Air National Guard has fulfilled this charter by aiding hurricane affected areas by providing resources and manpower. The Illinois Air National Guard has responded to this disaster, sending several teams to Puerto Rico, serving in numerous capacities. The 183d SFS deployed a 14 member team to augment the 156th Security Forces Squadron (Puerto Rico Air National Guard) in their security and manning deficiencies. Like most of the island, the 156th sustained severe damage to their infrastructure. The 183d SFS aided in providing resource protection to the installation, providing standard SFS functions, such as static patrols, vehicle and foot patrols, aiding in VIP security, and responding to numerous events such as in flight emergencies and medical responses.

In addition to resource protection, the 156th conducted missions for FEMA. Many not-for-profit organizations were having difficulties transporting their donations from the United States to Puerto Rico. FEMA had a method, however, the amount of red tape, was too cumbersome and time consuming to work efficiently, and the Department of Defense (DoD) stepped in to help out. The DoD aided in arranging transportation from the continental U.S. to Puerto Rico. Then military bases, such as the 156th, sorted the donations and worked with the organizations and FEMA to distribute the much needed aid. As an augmentation force to the 156th, the 183d SFS

were tasked to help in these missions. These mission requirements were typically filled by SFS members who volunteered in their downtime. The missions ranged in distance and in scope; protecting military members in high crime areas, providing support to not-for-profit organizations, and aiding the wing in distributing donations. During the 30 day deployment, 183d SFS made a direct impact. The 20 missions they conducted resulted in directly providing aid to over 15,000 Puerto Rican citizens. They assisted in providing over 9,000 pounds of rice, 34,000 liters of water, and over 11,000 pounds of mixed food. Our SFS team gained new perspective through this experience.

"When you have older individuals, grandfathers, grandmothers, coming out in tears just wanting to hug you, you get a sense of pride. No words to describe that", said Tech. Sgt. Luis Pozo, 183d SFS team member.

Team Leader, Senior Master Sgt. Edward Ferguson was very proud of team's motivation and accomplishments. "It has been very gratifying to see so many Airmen to volunteer to make a difference for the citizens of Puerto Rico. I had a list of SFS members wanting to go on their days off to help deliver the much-needed supplies. It was a perfect illustration of service before self."



