

C-17 delivers U.S. relief supplies to China

by U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Chris Vadnais, Armed Forces Network-Hawaii

CHENGDU SHUANGLIU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, People's Republic of China (May 18, 2008) – Two U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster IIIs landed here today carrying nearly 200,000 pounds of relief supplies in the wake of the devastating earthquake that struck the region on May 12.

The C-17s were assigned to U.S. Pacific Air Forces. Before 2005, C-17s were stationed exclusively in the continental U.S. C-17 squadrons are now operational at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, and at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Alaska's 3rd Wing.

The first of the two jets to land in China was flown by a crew from the Hawaii Air National Guard's 204th Airlift Squadron, and carried nearly 100,000 pounds of food, tents, blankets and tools.

The mission's planning and coordination was handled by the 13th Air Force, a component numbered air force, at Hickam AFB. Thirteenth Air Force serves as the operational air and space arm of Pacific Air Forces and the U.S. Pacific Command, as well as the standing Joint Forces Air Component Command unit. Having resources like two C-17 squadrons in the Pacific theater is part of what makes 13th Air Force so effective.

"We have a full range of tools to be able to assist and to support the missions of Pacific Command," said Maj. Gen. Richard E. Perraut, Jr., 13th Air Force vice commander. "This is just one of the many, many missions and capabilities we bring to the table - the Joint table - to be able to support the United States Pacific Command, the United States government, the Department of Defense -- to accomplish whatever missions or desires our government has," said Maj. Gen. Richard Perraut, vice commander of 13th Air Force.

James Thomas Montgomery, Hickam's deployment manager, said this operation was different than most he's seen because it was a collaborative effort of government organizations. Notably, supplies for the Hickam C-17 mission were purchased from the Federal Emergency Management Agency

"They postured us with all the supplies," said Mr. Montgomery. "We shuttled those supplies from their FEMA warehouse down to our facility here at Hickam. We built the pallets up, got the supplies air-worthy and put them on planes to get them to the crisis area," he said.

This is the second time this year the U.S. has provided humanitarian assistance to the People's Republic of China. In February, a U.S. PACOM mission sent a C-17 from Hickam to deliver winter relief supplies when 19 Chinese provinces experienced the most severe winter storms in 50 years.

“The United States stands ready to help in any way it can,” said U.S. Ambassador to China, Mr. Clark T. Rand, Jr. “To the people of China, our thoughts and prayers are with you at this extremely difficult time,” he said.

USPACOM officials say the focus of this humanitarian assistance mission is to immediately provide assistance to help reduce further loss of life and mitigate human suffering resulting from the disaster. USPACOM was authorized by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to support the relief efforts. The assistance is in support of the U.S. Department of State.

“The members of the U.S. Pacific Command offer our sincere condolences to the citizens of the People’s Republic of China who have been affected by the recent earthquake,” said Adm. Timothy Keating, U.S. PACOM commander.

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