

Air Force Humanitarian Airlift Operations, 1991-2001 Dr. Daniel L. Haulman

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(U) During the 1990s, American combat operations in Africa and Europe included humanitarian components: Provide Relief assisted famine victims in Somalia (1992-1993); Provide Promise aided civilians in Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia (1992-1996), and Shining Hope supported refugees who fled their homes in Kosovo (1999). The Air Force took part in additional major humanitarian operations globally between 1991 and 2001, most not associated with combat operations. Such missions proved the utility of military forces in operations beyond war and demonstrated that military aircraft can be tools of salvation, healing, and provision. Humanitarian operations also displayed the Air Force's improving technological and tactical capabilities to respond to natural and man-made disasters around the world. These experiences contributed significantly to the Air Force's preparation for its active combat role in the early 21st century.

(U) Most Air Force humanitarian operations responded to natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, and floods, often in the same places where the United States committed itself, at other times, to combat. USAF combat and humanitarian commitments did not compete as much as they reinforced and complemented each other. The presence of substantial numbers of U.S. forces overseas made resources more readily available for relief airlift in close proximity. Requirements to airlift rotating military personnel, equipment, and supplies to combat theaters kept the Air Force ready and able to move relief personnel, evacuees, refugees, and relief cargo in response to humanitarian crises. Conversely, humanitarian airlifts provided Air Force crews with flying, loading, unloading, and airdrop experience they also used in combat

operations. Humanitarian missions also enriched the Air Force's geographic knowledge of areas to which airplanes might return, regardless of the role.

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFT OPERATIONS WITHIN THE UNITED STATES

(U) Many of the humanitarian operations in which the Air Force took part between 1991 and 2001 aided the victims of natural disasters within the United States. For example, serious flooding from heavy rain threatened communities along the Mississippi River and its tributaries during the summer of 1992. An estimated 33 persons died and 50,000 were forced to leave their homes. Between July 11 and August 1, twenty missions, flown by C-5 and C-141 crews from the new Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard, carried U.S. Army water purification units and a million empty sandbags to Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri.¹

(U) The most significant of the USAF humanitarian airlifts within the United States between 1991 and 2001 responded to the destruction of Hurricane Andrew, which struck southern Florida in late August 1992. Winds as strong as 160 miles per hour destroyed roughly 85,000 homes and left 250,000 people homeless. After the hurricane swept across the southern tip of Florida, it continued across the eastern Gulf of Mexico and hit Louisiana, with Florida hardest hit, but the destruction in Florida was far greater. The federal disaster response was delayed, partly because the state was late in requesting federal aid. On August 28, the Department of Defense created Joint Task Force Andrew. By September 5, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard aircraft, including C-5s, C-141s, C-130s, and HH-60s, flew 670 missions during the operation. They carried 9,700 passengers and almost 16,000 tons of cargo, including plastic sheeting and medical supplies. Some of the flights delivered emergency workers

such as Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) personnel, medical experts, and security police and their equipment and supplies to and within the disaster areas, especially around Miami, while others carried passengers to temporary homes in other parts of the country. Air Mobility Command commander General Ronald R. Fogleman called the operation “the biggest and fastest domestic relief effort done by air in the history of the Air Force.”² It was truly a team effort. Air Force Reserve aircraft and crews flew 266 missions during the first week of September. Air National Guard aircraft, flying more than 500 sorties, moved 2,359 passengers and delivered 1,925 tons of cargo to hurricane-damaged areas of Florida and Louisiana. The operation suffered disruptions as cargo backed up in the disaster zone because flights to the area exceeded the distribution capabilities within it. The destruction wrought by Hurricane Andrew led to the closure of Homestead Air Force Base, but the facility continued to function later as an Air Reserve Base.³

(U) On September 11, 1992, even as relief efforts continued in Florida for the victims of Hurricane Andrew, Typhoon Iniki struck the island of Kauai in Hawaii with 135 mile per hour sustained winds and gusts up to 165 miles per hour. The storm left 8 dead, 95 injured, 7,500 homeless, and \$1.2 billion in damage. Between September 12 and October 18, transports from the Air Force’s Air Mobility Command and Pacific Air Forces, as well as from the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard, airlifted 6,888 tons of relief equipment and supplies to Hawaii for the typhoon victims. The operation also transported more than 12,000 air passengers, including not only evacuees, but military and civilian relief workers. Most of the 613 airlift missions were flown by C-130s that shuttled between Kauai and Oahu, but 51 C-5 and 44 C-141 flights carried

more than 60 percent of the tonnage. Nine Air National Guard units took part in the Typhoon Iniki relief missions. By the end of September, they had flown 739 sorties, carried 8,418 passengers, and airlifted 2,932 tons of cargo. Task Force Hawaii, the joint task force under which the Air Force elements functioned, operated from September 12 to November 8.⁴

(U) During the summer of 1993, heavy rain in the Midwest flooded the upper Mississippi River valley. The new Air Mobility Command inherited much of the mission and many of the resources of the Military Airlift Command, which inactivated in 1992, and provided airlift assistance to the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Forces Command. More than 30 C-5 and C-141 missions delivered over a million empty sandbags and fourteen water purification systems to Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. The airlift not only contained the flooding in some areas, preserving homes, farmlands, and businesses, but also discouraged the spread of disease in the region.⁵

(U) When a major earthquake struck southern California in January 1994, civilian authorities requested an Air Force humanitarian airlift. Six C-5 and four C-141 missions airlifted 270 disaster specialists and 340,000 pounds of relief cargo, including fire trucks, generators, and communications vans, to Los Angeles.⁶

(U) Natural disasters were not the only crises that provoked humanitarian airlift responses within the United States during the 1990s. On April 19, 1995, a truck bomb explosion near the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City killed at least 168 people and injured many more. Governor Frank A. Keating requested federal disaster assistance. In response, Air Mobility Command and Air Force Reserve C-141 and C-5 aircrews transported Federal Bureau of Investigation personnel, firefighters, search and

rescue teams, vehicles, and support equipment to the Oklahoma capital. Participating USAF organizations included the 60th, 62d, and 436th Airlift Wings.⁷

(U) Hurricane Opal struck the north central Gulf of Mexico early in October 1995, moving so rapidly northward that it retained hurricane-force winds past Montgomery, Alabama. The panhandle of western Florida experienced the worst of the storm, which carried with it 130-mile-per-hour winds that caused \$1.8 billion in damage in Florida alone. Because they were in the path of the storm, Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field suffered significant property destruction, despite evacuation of aircraft that could not be sheltered in hangars. Days after the storm, two C-5, one C-141, and one C-17 mission airlifted 65 tons of relief cargo to Eglin Air Force Base, but most of the aid for the hurricane victims came overland.⁸

(U) The next major domestic disaster eliciting an Air Force humanitarian airlift response occurred in California, when in August 1996, six wildfires devastated northern California. Flying from the airport at Redding, four C-130s, two each from the 302d and 146th Airlift Wings, flew low over the fringes of the fires, each dropping as many as 3,000 gallons of water and fire retardant at a time using the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System. The airdrops reduced the spread of the fires until they could be contained by ground fire-fighting efforts.⁹

(U) Not all the domestic humanitarian airlifts reacted to natural disasters, but nevertheless met serious human needs. For example, on January 19, 1997, a 349th Air Mobility Wing C-141 crew flew from Travis Air Force Base in California to airlift 40,000 pounds of winter clothing to Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota. From there

the cargo was trucked to the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation at Eagle Butte. Indians there used the airlifted clothing to cope with another very cold winter season.¹⁰

(U) During the spring of 1997, flooding of the Red River of the North resulted in an airlift of 50 generators, 900 sleeping bags, 4,000 blankets, and 90 pallets of Red Cross supplies from the states of Washington and California to Grand Forks Air Force Base in North Dakota, from which they were carried to flood victims. For the domestic flood relief operation, Air Mobility Command flew 13 missions and airlifted 143 passengers and 146 tons of cargo, including electrical generators, sleeping bags, blankets, medical supplies, and communication equipment. Some 3,500 homeless victims of the flood found temporary shelter at Grand Forks, Air Force Base until the floodwaters subsided enough to allow them to return to their homes.¹¹

(U) Winter storms also called for USAF humanitarian airlifts within the United States and Canada. At the end of 1997 and the beginning of 1998, they struck New Mexico and the Northeast. The blizzard in New Mexico, which dropped 22 inches of snow, killed roughly 25,000 cattle and stranded many thousands more. Between late December and early January, Air National Guard C-130s from Oklahoma, Texas, Wyoming, Minnesota, and Iowa airlifted nearly 465 tons of hay to snowbound livestock in an operation called Haydrop. Five of the C-130s came from the 136th and the 153^d Airlift Wings, from Texas and Wyoming respectively. In another operation called Recuperation, which lasted from January 10 through 14, 1998, C-17 crews from the 437th Airlift Wing of Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, flew four missions to transport emergency workers and 181 tons of vehicles, generators, water purification equipment, field kitchens, and relief supplies from Edmonton, Alberta, to Montreal

Quebec, where ice on power lines and fallen limbs had produced power failures and heavy snow impeded transportation. The same ice storm struck the northeastern United States, leaving some 500,000 households without electricity. Between January 15-18, 1998, thirteen C-5s and five C-17s transported utility workers, trucks, chain saws, and other emergency cargo from Pope Air Force Base in North Carolina to Bangor International Airport and the Brunswick Naval Air Station in Maine and to Stewart International Airport in upstate New York. The 106th Rescue Wing of the Air National Guard also flew an MH-60 for the relief operation.¹²

(U) Forest fires continued generating a periodic demand for Air Force humanitarian airlift missions between 1991 and 2001. In the summer of 1998, it was northern Florida's turn, with 200,000 acres burning. Between July 2 and 7, in an operation called Phoenix Flame, ten C-5 and two C-141 missions airlifted 300 firefighters and 740 tons of equipment and supplies from California, Oregon, and South Carolina to Jacksonville Naval Air Station and Patrick Air Force Base. From the firefighters deployed in a successful effort to restrict the blazes until they could be put out.¹³

(U) Another series of fires in the West during the summer of 2000 burned approximately 6.5 million acres, twice the average. In response, transports from the Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, supplemented by commercial airliners under contract, airlifted almost 6,000 Army and Marine Corps troops to augment civilian firefighters in Montana and Idaho. They flew 48 missions and carried 339 short tons of cargo between July 25 and September 23. The aircraft involved in the mission included C-141s from the 62d and 445th Airlift Wings and the 452d Air

Mobility Wing, whose crews moved firefighters and equipment to Idaho. C-17s from the 62d and 446th Airlift Wings also airlifted 550 soldiers from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Montana, to support the firefighters. Between July 25 and September 6, the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve's 145th, 146th 153d and 302d Airlift Wings flew C-130s equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System on 774 sorties to drop 970,500 gallons of fire retardant over fires in California, Idaho, and Montana.¹⁴

(U) Heavy rain produced extensive flooding in the Houston area of Texas in June 2001. In response, on June 10, a C-17 from Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, carried 25 federal relief workers and 15 tons of relief supplies from Albuquerque, New Mexico, to Ellington Field, Houston.¹⁵

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFTS IN LATIN AMERICA

(U) The United States Air Force conducted humanitarian airlift operations far beyond U.S. borders. In fact, more of the missions benefited citizens of countries other than the United States. In Latin America, a series of natural disasters required foreign government leaders to request American aid through the U.S. State Department, which in turn solicited the Defense Department for relief operations. For example, in April 1991, a cholera epidemic threatened the citizens of Peru. Using its largest cargo airplanes, C-5s, the Air Force delivered 200 tons of medical supplies in response to the need. Most of the airlifted cargo consisted of intravenous fluids and equipment to administer them, which allowed untold numbers of epidemic victims to survive and recover.

(U) Politics, as well as natural disasters, created circumstances that elicited humanitarian airlifts in the 1991-2001 period. Refugees flowed as readily from civil as from natural crises. For example, after a military coup expelled Haiti's elected President

Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991, tens of thousands of Haitian refugees attempted to flee to the United States. The United Nations imposed economic sanctions and, on July 31, 1994, authorized an invasion of Haiti to restore Aristide to power. President Clinton waited in order to give diplomacy another chance. On September 18, even as U.S. forces were on the way, Haitian military leaders finally agreed to the restoration. The planned violent invasion became a humanitarian one as U.S. forces entered Haiti by air and sea beginning the next day in an operation called Uphold Democracy (Maintain Democracy). By early November, C-5, C-141, C-130, and commercial airliner aircraft had airlifted some 15,000 U.S. troops to Haiti. KC-135 and KC-10 aircraft also took part, doubling as both tankers and transports. By the end of the year, the operation had transported more than 40,000 passengers and over 21,000 short tons of cargo on 1,528 airlift and 92 tanker missions. Most of these were U.S. troops going either to or from Haiti, using Dover and Griffis Air Force Bases in Delaware and New York respectively for the C-5s and McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey for the C-141s. Those transports landed or took off from Haiti's Port-Au-Prince, or Puerto Rico's Roosevelt Roads. Between Puerto Rico and Cap Hatien, Haiti, C-130s flew shuttle missions, because Cap Hatien's runways were too short for the larger transports. The successful operation alleviated a humanitarian refugee crisis, persuading thousands of Haitians to remain in their country.¹⁶

(U) On September 15, 1995, Hurricane Marilyn devastated islands in the eastern Caribbean Sea with 110 mile-per-hour winds. Colonel Steven R. Lorenz, commander of the 305th Air Mobility Wing, directed military forces for the relief effort in an operation called Caribbean Express. C-5s, C-141s, and C-17s carried relief workers and humanitarian cargo from several bases in the United States to the NAS Roosevelt Roads

in Puerto Rico, and eight C-130s from the 314th Airlift Wing shuttled them to St. Thomas and St. Croix. More than 200 missions to Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands airlifted in excess of 3,000 passengers and 4,000 tons of cargo. This was the first disaster-relief operation in which C-17s took part. The C-17 was the first wide-bodied USAF cargo airplane to be able to take off and land on relatively short runways, which reduced the need to transfer cargo from the larger C-5s and C-141s to smaller C-130s.¹⁷

(U) In May of 1998, Ecuador experienced disastrous flooding as a result of torrential rains. In response, the 24th Operations Group, then based at Howard Air Force Base in the Canal Zone of Panama, airlifted medicine, mattresses, wheelbarrows, plastic sheeting, and food from Quayaquil and Quito to the Menabi area. The group flew seven C-27 cargo aircraft that were small enough to land on the tiny airfields available in the region. The airlift not only saved lives but also allowed the flood victims to recover more quickly.¹⁸

(U) In 1998, two powerful hurricanes struck several Caribbean countries. Between September 21 and October 12, at least 190 Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard flights from across the United States airlifted medical teams, water, ice, generators, plastic sheeting, refrigeration units, construction equipment, and relief supplies to the victims of Hurricane Georges in the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and southern Mississippi. The airlift moved 450 passengers and 8,500 tons of cargo. In November, Hurricane Mitch struck Central America, killing approximately 10,000 people and leaving thousands more homeless. In an operation called Strong Support, USAF aircraft from at least ten states flew 7.4 million pounds of relief cargo to the hurricane victims between November 6, 1998 and March 19, 1999, on

more than 200 relief missions. The Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard provided C-130s and their aircrews, and Air Mobility Command also took part, using larger C-5s, C-17s, and C-141s. They delivered such items as rice, flour, medical supplies, clothing, and building materials to Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Belize. Congress had earlier passed the Denton Amendment to a 1985 military appropriations bill that authorized the Department of Defense to transport, on a space-available basis, privately donated relief cargo and supplies to foreign countries without cost to the donor. Denton Amendment missions in the wake of Hurricane Mitch increased the total number of missions for that disaster relief operation to approximately 300, which moved 4,800 passengers and 18 million pounds of relief supplies and military equipment.¹⁹

(U) Throughout the 1990s, the Air Force continued to transport large quantities of privately donated freight to various nations even when they had not suffered any specific natural or man-made disaster. Denton Amendment missions allowed USAF aircraft flying overseas on channel or training missions to transport humanitarian cargo when they would otherwise have flown mostly empty. In 1999, Air Mobility Command, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard aircraft moved more than 3 million pounds of relief supplies and equipment to 41 nations on Denton Amendment flights. Many of the beneficiaries were impoverished citizens of Central or South America.²⁰

(U) In December of 1999, Venezuela experienced intense flooding that left 30,000 dead and hundreds of thousands of people homeless. In response, the United States flew a series of relief missions that lasted until mid-March 2000. The first array of missions occurred between 20 and 28 December, and included flights by six C-130s, one C-5, and two MH-60 helicopters. The second set of missions, called Operation

Fundamental Response, lasted from January 4 through March 10, 2000 and included 11 C-17 and 5 C-5 missions. They airlifted 189 passengers and 527 short tons of relief cargo to Simon Bolivar International Airport near Caracas. The airlift reduced the suffering and deaths of Venezuelans while also strengthening the sometimes strained ties between the two nations.²¹

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFTS TO AND WITHIN EUROPE

(U) The scope of Air Force humanitarian airlifts to foreign countries between 1991 and 2001 extended beyond the Western Hemisphere. Some of the significant operations, if not the most abundant, took place in Europe, which in that decade experienced the collapse of communism and the fracturing of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia in the east, and the unification of Germany and centralization of Europe toward a kind of United States of Europe in the west. Areas in eastern Europe once closed to USAF operations opened up, even as civil turmoil created a demand for increased numbers of relief missions.

(U) In terms of duration and tonnage, Operation Provide Promise proved to be the most significant of all the European humanitarian operations of the decade. It began on July 2, 1992 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, after the province declared its independence from the rest of Yugoslavia, which had come to be dominated by Serbia. Serbs within Bosnia, who wanted Serbian control there, surrounded Sarajevo, the capital of the new country, and threatened to cut off food supplies. On July 13, 1992, a C-130 from the 167th Airlift Squadron of West Virginia began delivering food and other relief supplies to Sarajevo, becoming the first Air National Guard unit to take part in Provide Promise. During the spring of 1993, twelve C-130s from the Air Mobility Command flew missions to the

Bosnian capital. As explained in the chapter on Bosnia, C-141s and even C-17s later joined the effort. On October 8, 1993, Operation Provide Promise surpassed the Berlin Airlift as the longest sustained humanitarian airlift in history. During the operation, which concluded on January 9, 1996, the Air Force, Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard flew 4,553 C-130, C-141, and C-17 sorties, delivering 62,802 metric tons of cargo.²²

(U) During the Gulf War, the Soviet Union presented few obstacles to American military and diplomatic actions, in part because the once-dangerous superpower was then beset with severe problems of its own. In August 1991 an attempted coup by Communist Party hardliners threatened the leadership of President Mikhail Gorbachev, whose reforms threatened the party's monopoly of political power. Coup leaders held Gorbachev captive temporarily, but with the help of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, he returned to power for the few months remaining in the Soviet Union's life. The real power then shifted to Yeltsin and the Russian Republic, which led a new Commonwealth of Independent States, which replaced the once mighty USSR. Economic distress within the former Soviet Union limited the new confederation's ability to solve new problems of malnutrition and disease. In February 1992, the United States mounted a humanitarian airlift, Operation Provide Hope, to relieve the suffering and encourage stability in the territory of its former greatest enemy. In the first phase of the operation, the USAF flew 65 missions and delivered 2,274 tons of food and medical supplies to distressed people in the former Soviet republics. In one 17-day period, 19 C-5 and 46 C-141 missions delivered food, medical supplies, and other relief cargo to areas once closed, because of Cold War enmity, to USAF airplanes. The second phase of Provide Hope took place between February 29 and June 1, 1992, followed by a third phase, which lasted from

October 1992 to September 1993. Each phase delivered relief supplies to a predetermined set of locations. Among the aircraft and crews taking part were Air Mobility Command and Air Force Reserve C-5s, C-141s, and C-130s, but also commercial carriers under contract with the Department of Defense. Increasing use of airliners became necessary because of the development of weep hole cracks in many of the Air Force's aging fleet of C-141s. The cracks threatened the safety of Starlifter flights and restricted their use.²³

(U) Some of these aid missions to the former Soviet Republics occurred under the auspices of the Denton Amendment, which as previously mentioned authorized the United States to airlift privately donated relief supplies to foreign nations at no cost to the charitable organizations that contributed them. During Provide Hope, the Air Force launched additional humanitarian airlift missions to the former Soviet Union after a flood in Ukraine. In July 1995, three C-130s from the 37th Airlift Squadron at Ramstein Air Base in Germany airlifted relief supplies to the flood victims near Kharkov, Ukraine, as part of a larger North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) disaster relief effort. In June 1997, the 500th Provide Hope mission concluded after a C-5 from the 436th Airlift Wing, based at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware, airlifted relief supplies from Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland to Tashkent, Uzbekistan. By then, the operation had delivered more than \$1.8 billion in assistance since its beginning in February 1992.²⁴

(U) Concurrently, the USAF conducted humanitarian airlifts in additional eastern European countries other than the former republics of the Soviet Union. For example, between January 14 and 19, 1997, a KC-135 from the 141st Air Refueling Wing of the Air National Guard airlifted 14,800 pounds of clothing, medical supplies, blankets, and toys to Bucharest, Rumania, for the benefit of orphans there. The tanker-transport was

previously scheduled to fly to Europe to return an Army National Guard unit from Germany to Missouri. As arranged by the State and Defense Departments, instead of flying to Europe empty, the KC-135 carried the privately-donated relief cargo, according to the terms of the Denton Amendment. In a similar operation on October 3, 1997, a C-141 from the 305th Air Mobility Wing, based at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, transported approximately 35,000 pounds of excess medical supplies to Sofia, Bulgaria, where doctors and nurses suffered from shortages of medical supplies.²⁵

(U) Starting in April 1999, USAF C-5, C-17, and C-130 transports delivered food, medicine, tents, bedding, and other relief cargo to ethnic Albanians who had fled Serbia's Kosovo province to refugee camps in Albania, Macedonia, and Montenegro (see the previous chapter on Kosovo for background). By July, the U.S. and NATO operation, called Shining Hope (Sustain Hope), had airlifted almost 6,000 tons of relief supplies and 913 passengers. Between April and August, C-130s from Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany, with crews from many Air Force active duty, Reserve, and Air National Guard units, had flown 756 sorties and airlifted roughly 7,550 passengers.²⁶

(U) The subsequent Operation Provide Refuge commenced in May 1999. It airlifted up to 3,000 Kosovar refugees from Europe to the United States for permanent settlement with relatives or sponsors. They landed at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey, and found temporary quarters at Fort Dix. The airlift included chartered airline flights.²⁷

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFTS TO AND WITHIN AFRICA

(U) Many of the humanitarian operations in which the United States Air Force participated during the decade of 1991-2001 occurred in Africa, where a combination of

natural disasters and civil unrest victimized thousands of people. The most important of the African relief operations responded to crises in Somalia in 1992 and 1993, and in Rwanda in 1994. The previous chapter on Somalia describes Operation Provide Relief, which between August 24, 1992, and February 28, 1993, moved 31,175 metric tons of cargo on 3,094 C-130 missions, mostly from Mombasa, Kenya, to Somalia. Some of these were flown by Air National Guard units, such as the 133d Airlift Wing of Minnesota, the 135th Airlift Group of Maryland, and the 146th Airlift Wing of California. An additional 79 C-141 missions, 17 C-5 missions, and 1 commercial carrier mission moved 1,287 passengers and 1,440 short tons of cargo, much of it from outside the theater to Kenya for later delivery by C-130 to Somalia. The operation, which also involved much larger deliveries of cargo by ship, relieved the victims of famine and civil war.²⁸

(U) Operation Provide Relief did not occur in isolation. It was deeply associated with Operation Restore Hope (also mentioned in the Somalia chapter), which transported troops from many different nations to insure the safe delivery of relief cargo within Somalia, whose starving population was threatened by rival warlords. In 4,350 missions between December 9, 1992 and March 25, 1994, Operation Restore Hope moved more than 90,000 passengers and over 70,000 short tons of their equipment and cargo to, within, and from Somalia. USAF aircraft types taking part included C-5, C-141, and C-130 transports as well as KC-135 and KC-10 tankers that also carried cargo. In fact, KC-135s flew more missions than any other kind of aircraft during Operation Restore Hope.²⁹

(U) In April 1994, civil war erupted between two ethnic groups in Rwanda, the Hutus and the Tutsis, after the suspicious crash of an airliner in Kigali that was carrying the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. Violence in the capital and other parts of the country forced thousands of refugees to flee to other countries, including Burundi. Citizens of the United States and other foreigners evacuated the country by air in an operation called Distant Runner. Between April 10 and 14, 1994, four C-141 missions carried 342 U.S. and foreign nationals from Bujumbura, Burundi, to Nairobi, Kenya. Aircrews and airplanes from the 315th Airlift Wing of Charleston, Air Force Base, South Carolina, and the 446th Airlift Wing of McChord Air Force Base, Washington, took part. Meanwhile, twelve C-5 missions airlifted Belgian troops from Brussels to Nairobi to help accommodate the thousands of Rwandan refugees fleeing to Kenya.³⁰

(U) In May, Air Force active duty and reserve aircrews airlifted 239 tons of humanitarian relief supplies to Tanzania for some 250,000 refugees who had fled there from Rwanda. Thirteen C-141 missions airlifted 478,000 pounds of relief supplies from Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, to Mwanza, Tanzania between May 11 and 17. The cargo included 10,000 rolls of plastic sheeting and 100,000 blankets. Four C-141s of the 438th Airlift Wing flew many of the missions.³¹

(U) The crisis continued and escalated, as ethnic fighting persuaded approximately 2 million Rwandans to flee to Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, and Zaire. In a larger operation starting in July 1994, originally called Provide Assistance but later Support Hope, USAF transports created an air bridge to Africa, airlifting relief cargo from Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany and Aviano Air Base in Italy to Entebbe, Uganda, and Goma, Zaire. They often staged at Mobasa, Kenya on the way. A fleet of ten C-141s

and 5 C-5s operated from Rhein-Main. The missions included a 22-hour C-5 flight that covered 9,900 miles, a flight made possible only with aerial refueling. It delivered a potable water supply system from California to east Africa. Transatlantic flights such as these staged at Moron Air Base in Spain. By September 30, 1994, C-5s, C-141s, KC-10s, KC-135s, C-130s, and commercial airliners under contract had flown 871 missions, airlifting more than 8,000 passengers and 16,171 tons of cargo. Between July and September, Air Force Reserve crews airlifted 4,480 of these passengers and almost 7,000 tons of the cargo. The KC-135s and KC-10s refueled the other aircraft. In addition, several dozen KC-10 missions also delivered fuel from Zimbabwe to Entebbe, Uganda, the hub of the operation, for USAF C-130s that carried some of the cargo from Kenya and Uganda to refugee camps in Zaire. By November 15, C-130s from nine units of the Air National Guard, on rotation to Europe, had flown 915 sorties and airlifted more than 4,000 passengers and 4,500 tons of cargo for the Rwandan refugees.³²

(U) In the years 1996, 1997, and 1998, USAF cargo airplanes often flew U.S. citizens out of African cities threatened by civil unrest in a series of air evacuation operations. In April 1996, civil unrest in Liberia triggered the evacuation by air of more than 2,000 noncombatants in an operation called Assured Response. USAF aircraft taking part, in the course of 94 missions, included MH-53 Pave Low helicopters, MC-130 Combat Talon aircraft, AC-130 gunships, KC-135 Stratotankers, and C-130 cargo aircraft. Air Mobility Command aircraft took many of the evacuees from Freetown, Sierra Leone, to Dakar, Senegal, where they were assisted in traveling to other destinations. By May 6, the command had flown 103 missions, moving 2,153 passengers and 2,148 tons of cargo. In August 1996, the Air Force airlifted 30 passengers threatened

by a civil war in Burundi from Bujumbura to Nairobi, Kenya, using a C-141 Starlifter from the 305th Air Mobility Wing based at McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey.³³

(U) Many of the Rwandan refugees who had fled the ethnic massacres in their country beginning in 1994 had migrated to Zaire, where they lived in large camps. Air Force Reserve C-5, C-141, and KC-135 aircraft and crews delivered relief supplies to them in a late 1996 humanitarian operation called Guardian Assistance.³⁴

(U) The next year, 1997, Zaire experienced similar civil unrest. Operation Guardian Retrieval, which lasted from March to June, involved aircrews of a large variety of USAF airplanes, including MH-53s, MC-130s, C-5s, C-17s, C-141s, and KC-135s from Air Mobility Command and Air Force Special Operations Command. In the first month alone, they evacuated 532 U.S. citizens and other third-country nationals from Zaire on 57 missions. In June of that year, Air Force transports evacuated U.S. and other citizens from the Republic of the Congo in an operation called Firm Response. On June 10, MC-130H Combat Talon II crew members from the 352d Special Operations Group at RAF Mildenhall in the United Kingdom airlifted from 56 people from Brazzaville, including 30 U.S. citizens, after delivering 12 Army and Navy special forces personnel to survey the situation. For this 21-hour mission, which required three in-flight refuelings, Lt. Col. Frank J. Kisner and his crew earned the Mackay Trophy of the National Aeronautic Association for the outstanding flight of the year.³⁵

(U) These and other operations demonstrated the high frequency of non-combatant evacuations from African nations experiencing civil war during the last decade of the twentieth century. In 1998, USAF KC-135 tanker-transports and MC-130s from

the 352d Special Operations Group evacuated noncombatants from Guinea-Bissau in an operation called Shepherd Venture.³⁶

(U) On August 7, 1998, Al Qaeda terrorists masterminded by Osama Bin Laden bombed the U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, killing more than 255 (including 12 Americans) and injuring 5,000. On August 9, a 305th Air Mobility Wing C-141 from McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey carried 15 seriously injured State Department employees, including 11 Americans and 4 Kenyans, from Nairobi to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, for treatment at a regional medical center at Landstuhl. On August 12, a C-5 from the 436th Airlift Wing returned the body of one of the American victims from Ramstein to Dover Air Force Base. From there a C-9 airlifted the remains to Panama City for burial. A 437th Airlift Wing C-17 from Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina, returned the bodies of 10 other Americans to Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, on August 13, where President William Clinton led a memorial service in one of the hangars. The twelfth American who died was buried in Kenya because she had been married to a Kenyan. By the time Operation Resolute Response ended on September 1, Air Mobility Command had flown 61 missions, using C-5s and C-141s from the United States and C-130s from the United States Air Forces in Europe. Many of the transports airlifted security forces from the United States and Europe to Nairobi to aid those of Kenya in the wake of the terrorist attack there.³⁷

(U) Natural disasters in Africa continued to require United States humanitarian relief operations. In the spring of 2000, flooding in Mozambique and Madagascar in southeastern Africa left an estimated million people homeless. Lt. Gen. Joseph H. Wehrle, Jr., commanded Joint Task Force Atlas Response, and the relief operation lasted

from March 1 through April 16. USAF C-5s and C-17s carried helicopters and relief cargo 4,600 miles from Germany to South Africa on 29 Air Mobility Command and Air Force Reserve Command strategic airlift missions. C-5s also flew from the United States to South Africa via Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean, refueling in the air from Air Mobility Command tankers. Other USAF aircraft, including C-130s and MH-53 and HH-60 helicopters, took the equipment and supplies, including food, water, medicine, and tents, from South Africa to the flood victims in Mozambique and Madagascar. The operation airlifted more than 900 passengers and 900 short tons of cargo.³⁸

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFTS TO AND WITHIN SOUTHWEST ASIA

(U) Most of the humanitarian airlift operations the United States Air Force flew in southwest Asia between 1991 and 2001 responded to the consequences of the first Gulf War. As the defeated Iraqi forces of Saddam Hussein withdrew from Kuwait in the spring of 1991, they destroyed more than 600 of the country's oil wells, setting 520 of them on fire. The fires destroyed enormous amounts of valuable fuel and generated an environmental disaster. Experts in extinguishing such blazes, including Red Adair and his company, flew to Kuwait and eventually put out the conflagrations. To support the effort, 436th Military Airlift Wing used C-5s to airlift 580 tons of fire-fighting equipment and supplies from Texas and other parts of the United States to Kuwait. The cargo included helicopters and ground vehicles.³⁹

(U) In the wake of the Gulf War in 1991, Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein brutally crushed a rebellion of Kurds within the northern part of his own country. Thousands of Kurdish refugees streamed toward the border of Turkey. In reaction, the United Nations authorized a humanitarian airlift to northern Iraq, not only to feed the starving, but also to

prevent an ethnic clash between Kurds and Turks. Lt. Gen. John M. Shalikashvili of the U.S. Army commanded a Provide Comfort Combined Task Force, and Maj. Gen. James L. Jamerson of the U.S. Air Force served as his air component commander. The humanitarian operation proceeded after Iraqi military forces agreed to withdraw from a large security zone that included the cities of Zackho, Al Amadiyah, Suri, and Dihok. During Operation Provide Comfort, between April and July 1991, USAF airplanes transported nearly 40,000 tons of relief supplies to Kurdish refugees in northern Iraq. The operation's 1,100 missions also moved more than 14,000 of these displaced persons. Operation Provide Comfort evolved from a humanitarian airlift operation into a no-fly zone enforcement operation, and was eventually replaced by Operation Northern Watch.⁴⁰

(U) As in central Africa, civil wars and disturbances in southwestern Asia sometimes triggered USAF humanitarian airlifts between 1991 and 2001. For example, a 1994 civil war in Yemen, at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula, threatened U.S. citizens and third country nationals in Sana, the capital. In May, one C-141 and four C-130s evacuated 623 of them to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.⁴¹

(U) In another zone of southwestern Asia, the victims of natural disaster cried out for humanitarian assistance. On August 17, 1999, an intense earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck near Izmit in western Turkey, leaving more than 15,000 people dead, almost 24,000 injured, and some 250,000 homeless. The United States reacted with Operation Avid Response, with Topel Naval Air Station, Turkey, serving as task force headquarters. A 436th Airlift Wing C-5 from Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, airlifted a 70-person search and rescue team, along with 5 rescue dogs and 56,000 pounds

of equipment, including three emergency vehicles, from the United States to Istanbul. Two KC-10s from the 305th Air Mobility Wing of McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey, refueled the Galaxy on its non-stop flight. A second C-5 took a search and rescue team and its equipment from Dover Air Force Base in Delaware to Istanbul, Turkey, not far from Izmit. Between August 18 and September 10, the Air Mobility Command flew at least 20 missions in support of the operation, using C-5s, C-17s, C-141s, C-130s, KC-10s, and a KC-135. The larger aircraft unloaded at Istanbul, while the C-17s and C-130s, more capable on landing on smaller and less-developed runways, continued on to the disaster area.⁴²

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFTS TO AND WITHIN SOUTHERN ASIA

(U) Other natural disasters threatened southern Asia between 1991 and 2001. Despite the extremely long distance between the United States and countries such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, Air Force transport crews responded quickly to emergency calls arranged through diplomatic channels. For example, in the spring of 1991, Cyclone Marion struck Bangladesh, leaving thousands dead or without shelter. After a State Department request for assistance from the Department of Defense, Air Force C-5s and C-141s airlifted 832 tons of relief supplies to the flood victims during a major humanitarian operation called Sea Angel.⁴³

(U) After serious flooding in Pakistan in December 1992, the Department of State tapped the Department of Defense to assist with the recovery effort, and six Air Mobility Command C-5 missions transported 415 tons of engineering vehicles and equipment to Islamabad. As in many other humanitarian missions, the operation not only relieved the victims of the disaster but also enhanced the diplomatic relationship between the United

States and Pakistan, which soon sent peacekeeping forces to Somalia in support of United Nations and United States operations there.

(U) In addition to Pakistan and Bangladesh, the United States also aided India and Nepal during the 1990s. During the spring of 1993, a flood in Nepal washed away 13 bridges connecting Kathmandu with India. In April, three USAF C-5 Galaxy transports airlifted bridge components from RAF Mildenhall in the United Kingdom to Nepal to help replace or rebuild the structures. The transports staged at Cairo West Air Base in Egypt and Bombay, India. The Nepalese later showed their gratitude by sending troops to help United States and UN forces in Somalia.⁴⁴ An earthquake in India later that same year killed some 11,000 people. In response, two Air Mobility Command C-5s, one each from the 60th and 436th Airlift Wings, airlifted relief supplies to Bombay. The cargo included 1,000 rolls of plastic sheeting for shelter, 950 tents, and 18,550 five-gallon water containers, as well as blankets, shelter halves, and medical supplies.⁴⁵

(U) Another earthquake, this one of magnitude 7.7, struck western India on January 26, 2001, resulting in an additional USAF humanitarian airlift to the subcontinent. Two C-5 Galaxy transports airlifted 115 short tons of relief cargo on non-stop flights from Travis Air Force Base, California, to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. They could not carry the cargo on to India because the airfield at Ahmedabad, near the earthquake epicenter, was too small for the C-5s. Therefore, at Guam, the cargo was transferred to four smaller C-17s from the 62d Airlift Wing at McChord Air Force Base, Washington. The C-17s flew for 13 hours from Guam to Ahmedabad, refueled on the way by KC-135 tankers from the 18th Wing at Kadena Air Base in Japan. The operation lasted from January 31 through February 3, 2001.⁴⁶

HUMANITARIAN AIRLIFTS TO AND WITHIN EASTERN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

(U) Between 1991 and 2001, the Air Force also flew important humanitarian airlift missions to eastern Asia. After an earthquake targeted Kobe, Japan, in January 1995, C-130s of the 374th Airlift Wing, based in Japan, delivered relief supplies to the victims.⁴⁷ A 437th Airlift Wing C-17 airlifted 40 tons of blankets, sleeping bags, medical supplies, rations, and cold weather clothing from Kadena Air Base in Japan to Beijing after an earthquake in China's Hebei Province in January 1998.⁴⁸ A flood in Vietnam during November of 1999 resulted in an airlift of nearly 22,000 pounds of plastic sheeting, 3,600 blankets, and 5,000 water containers from Guam to Hue. Two C-130s from the 353d Special Operations Group, based in Japan, performed the missions.⁴⁹

(U) Natural disasters in the Pacific resulted in additional humanitarian relief operations, including some of the most significant of the 1991 to 2001 period. In June 1991, volcanic Mount Pinatubo erupted violently. The Air Force responded quickly as part of a joint Defense Department effort called Operation Fiery Vigil. In the largest air evacuation since the end of the Vietnam War, a combination of Military Airlift Command transports and civilian airliners ferried thousands of persons, including military members and civilians, from Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Station to the United States. The eruption resulted in the permanent closing of Clark, which had been one of the most important bases of the Air Force in the Far East.⁵⁰

(U) Typhoon Omar hit Guam on August 28, 1992, with sustained winds of 120 miles per hour, wind gusts up to 150 miles per hour, and 16 inches of rain. Although no deaths were reported, 94 persons were injured, 4,000 homes were destroyed or damaged, and the island suffered some \$385 million in damage. Between August 29 and September

19, the Air Force flew 59 relief missions to deliver humanitarian relief equipment and supplies, including 422,000 meals and 137 electrical generators, to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, flying a combination of C-141s, C-5s, and C-130s.⁵¹

(U) Operations in other parts of the world affected those in the Pacific. Despite a no-fly zone over northern Iraq, the forces of Saddam Hussein's army continued to threaten the Kurds living there. Iraqi military operations on the ground, launched without Iraqi Air Force support, forced many Kurds from their homes. In operations called Pacific Haven and Quick Transit in 1996, USAF aircraft helped transport thousands of Kurdish refugees who had fled Iraq to Andersen Air Force Base in Guam, where they were processed for resettlement within the United States. To accommodate the Kurdish refugees in Guam, the transports also carried security personnel, medical equipment, field kitchens, and rations. Between September 17 and December 31, C-141s and C-5s flew 20 missions to airlift more than 2,000 passengers and 450 short tons of cargo during Operation Pacific Haven.⁵²

(U) Possibly the largest fire in the world in recent history struck Indonesia in 1997 and 1998, consuming more than 19 million acres of forest and sending clouds of ash that polluted the skies of southeastern Asia. As part of an international relief effort, three Wyoming Air National Guard C-130s from the 153d Airlift Wing, equipped with the Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System, which could release up to 3,000 gallons at a time, dropped 685,000 gallons of water and fire retardant around conflagrations in Java and Sumatra during the autumn of 1997. Between October 12 and early December, they flew 194 sorties.⁵³

(U) Typhoon Paka hit Guam on December 15, 1997, with record-breaking 236 mile-per-hour winds, leaving 1,700 people homeless. By January 4, 1998, Air Force airplanes had delivered more than 2.7 million pounds of relief supplies on 45 relief flights, many of them across the Pacific Ocean. The cargo included generators, tents, medical supplies, telephone poles, bottled water, and cots. More than 200 emergency workers also flew from the United States to Guam with the critical provisions between December 18, 1997 and January 14, 1998. Transport aircraft included C-5 Galaxies from the 436th Airlift Wing from Dover Air Force Base in Delaware; KC-10s and C-141s from the 60th and the 349th Air Mobility Wings from Travis Air Force Base, California, and other C-141s from the 62d Airlift Wing at McChord Air Force Base in Washington. C-130s and KC-135s of other USAF organizations also took part, as did a civilian-contracted Boeing 747.⁵⁴

(U) Early in January 1998, an earthquake struck northern Hebei Province in China, leaving many persons homeless. On January 16, a C-17 carried 40 tons of blankets, sleeping bags, medical supplies, food, and clothing from Kadena Air Base in Japan to Beijing, the Chinese capital. From there the Chinese transported the relief cargo to the disaster area.⁵⁵

(U) When the people of East Timor approved a United Nations-sponsored referendum in 1999 on independence from Indonesia, local Indonesian militia attacked the region, killing more than 8,000 people, and driving some 200,000 from their homes. In an operation called STABILISE, the United States used C-5s, C-17s, and C-141s to airlift international peacekeeping troops, equipment, and supplies, from such countries as Thailand, Portugal, Egypt, Jordan, and the United States to Darwin Australia. From

Darwin, USAF C-130s carried them and large numbers of Australian peacekeepers on to East Timor. Between September and the end of the year, USAF transports had flown almost 130 missions for the operation, which continued into the year 2000.⁵⁶

CONCLUSION

(U) The Air Force flew humanitarian missions all over the world between 1991 and 2001, responding to both natural disasters and civil unrest. While humanitarian operations grew increasingly international, they also demonstrated the ability of Americans to share resources with each other and with less fortunate peoples in the remotest regions. The end of the Cold War allowed USAF transports and tankers to go to all parts of the world. Humanitarian airlift operations provided ample opportunities for the Departments of State and Defense, as well as the various arms of the U.S. military, to work with each other jointly. They also displayed the increasing interaction of the Air National Guard, the Air Force Reserve, and regular Air Force Commands. Air Mobility Command proved that it could blend the transports it inherited from the Military Airlift Command with the tankers it received from the Strategic Air Command in 1992 to create a seamless ability to reach to all parts of the world. Relief missions not only saved countless lives and reduced suffering immensely, but also supported the diplomacy of the United States by generating abundant good will. Finally, humanitarian airlift operations provided USAF crews, air and ground, valuable experience that useful not only for future humanitarian missions but also for inevitable combat operations in the same parts of the world.

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