



MEDIA RELEASE

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Tennessee Air National Guard supports Nepal earthquake relief mission: Aircrew members from the 164th Airlift Wing in Memphis land in devastated Kathmandu

By - Niki Gentry, Tennessee National Guard Joint Public Affairs Office

KATHMANDU, Nepal – Tennessee Air National Guard members from the 164th Airlift Wing in Memphis, Tenn., touched down on April 28 with 60 personnel from the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and approximately 55,000 pounds of aid and relief at Kathmandu International Airport. The mission was part of a global support effort to render assistance to the millions of citizens struggling for survival following a magnitude 7.8 earthquake that struck the region on April 25.

Nepalese officials have placed the current death toll at over 5,800 and rising daily with an additional 19 mountain climbers who were killed from large avalanches that destroyed portions of a base camp on the slopes of Mount Everest. Members of the 155th Airlift Squadron, which is the flying component of the 164th Airlift Wing, were already deployed to Ramstein Air Base, Germany, when their planned mission was diverted to provide emergency support for USAID.

Getting the much needed relief to the disaster region was a complex logistical task. The flight required the assistance of three aircrews comprised of two active duty squadrons from the 437th Airlift Wing stationed at Joint Base Charleston, S.C., and the third being the Tennessee Guard's 164th Airlift Wing personnel. The mission began, according to Trisha Gallaway, of the Joint Base Charleston Public Affairs Office, with the loading of "a 57-member team of L.A. County Fire Department firefighters, six search dogs and two semi-trucks worth of equipment. The team known as the Urban Search and Rescue Task Force 2 or CA-TF2...is one of eight teams that make up the California Urban Search and Rescue Program. These teams, when called upon, travel with specialized equipment, such as heavy concrete cutting equipment, chainsaws, search cameras and sonar to locate victims, as well as specialized communications and generators." The Tennessee aircrew flew the rescue team on the final portion of the journey into the treacherous mountain terrain of the Himalayan region.

"The recent rescue mission operated to Nepal by Tennessee Guardsmen demonstrates the seamless capability our nation's military brings to bear on world events. The aircrew in this story was diverted from their original mission and thrown into the chaotic aftermath of a natural disaster of epic proportions," said Col. Mark Devine, Commander of the 164th Airlift Wing. "The fact that we have pilots and loadmasters who can pivot so quickly from civilian careers and plug into diverse and challenging military airlift missions anywhere in the world is a testament to the capability and value of today's Air National Guard."

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The members of the Memphis unit were able to successfully off load the USAID personnel and equipment from their C-17 aircraft at the Kathmandu Airport and return safely to Ramstein Air Base upon completion of the critical mission. The rapid ability to get trained rescue personnel to the disaster site was vital in order to save as many the lives as possible since time is a precious commodity in earthquake rescue operations.

"Tennessee Airmen serve with pride and distinction and are a proven choice to our state and nation," said Brig. Gen. Don Johnson, Tennessee's Assistant Adjutant General, Air. "The 164th's ability to provide Airmen on a moment's notice is a true testament to the professionalism and readiness of today's Tennessee Air National Guard."

PHOTO CAPTIONS: (Links to mission photos and video are located on the Defense Video and Imagery Distribution System or DVIDS website. Video and Photo captions are described below after specific website links.)

Video 1: <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/401236/us-humanitarian-aid-nepal>

Kathmandu, Nepal - U.S. Air Force personnel from the 155th A.S. in Memphis, Tenn., download a U. S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster filled with U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID) members at the Kathmandu International Airport. Sixty USAID members and approximately 55,000 pounds of aid and relief supplies will help support the local people in search and rescue efforts. (Video by Staff Sgt. Kathryn Lozier | 1st Combat Camera Squadron | Date: 04.28.2015)

Photo 1: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/1904539/nepalaid>

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Tim Peck, looks out a paratrooper door while taxiing in an Air Force C-17 Globemaster III delivering supplies and search and rescue teams to Kathmandu, Nepal, April 28, 2015. U.S. Air Force Airmen delivered relief supplies for Nepal earthquake victims. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Taylor Queen/Released)



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Photo 2: <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/1904541/nepalaid>

United States Agency to International Development (USAID) and Los Angeles County Search and Rescue teams depart a U.S. Air Force C-17 in Kathmandu, Nepal, April 28, 2015. The Air Force transported relief supplies along with members of the United States Agency to International Development (USAID), the Los Angeles County Search and Rescue team and search and rescue dogs to provide assistance to the men and women of Nepal. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Taylor Queen/Released)



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