

115th OPERATIONS GROUP

LINEAGE

STATIONS

Traux Field, Madison, WI

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Flying at 8,000 feet above flood-ravaged Wisconsin in mid-June, Wisconsin National Guard members got a lift from Guard units in Mississippi and Arkansas and provided “eyes in the sky” to help with disaster relief efforts. Heavy rains left Wisconsin rivers and lakes swollen and in many cases the surrounding areas flooded. With disaster relief efforts ongoing, the Madison-based 115th Fighter Wing worked with the Mississippi Air National Guard’s 186th Air Refueling Wing to bring an RC-26 from Mississippi that could fly over a flooded area and send back live video and still pictures. With technical help from the Arkansas Guard’s 314th Airlift Wing, the aircraft flew over more than 25 locations across Wisconsin for on-the spot assessments of the flood situation. The Mississippi plane was sent on short notice as a substitute for Wisconsin’s

own RC-26, which was deployed in the Global War on Terror. It was a more advanced version of a similar mission Wisconsin Air Guard members undertook during Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. At that time, Wisconsin Task Force Katrina used an RC-26 to photograph bridges, highways and associated infrastructure in and around New Orleans. The Katrina mission required the RC-26 crew to land the plane in order to process the photos, but the June mission in Wisconsin took advantage of a “Katrina Mod” that allows for instantaneous transmission of images and video. The modification was tested in 2007 in support of the California and Florida wildfires. The Wisconsin floods mission was the first full-scale use of the technology in a disaster. The system helped coordinate relief efforts by providing immediate assessments of flooded areas including highways, bridges and dams. Real-time images were sent to an antenna array temporarily set up on the roof of Joint Force Headquarters in Madison. Inside the building, the Wisconsin Joint Operations Center and the state Emergency Operations Center used the still and motion images, to coordinate relief and recovery efforts. “It’s all about accurate information,” said Brig. Gen. Don Dunbar, the adjutant general of Wisconsin. “With this type of aircraft able to stream live video to the governor holding a cabinet meeting or a county official meeting with first responders, they can see firsthand exactly what’s going on and figure out how to deploy their assets in the best way possible.” The RC-26’s normal mission includes drug interdiction support for local and state law enforcement agencies. “The communications and the relationships we have built up over the years doing the counter-drug missions in Wisconsin apply directly to emergency response situations,” said Lt. Col. Stephen Dunai, RC-26 program manager for the 115th Operations Group. “This greatly enhances our ability to provide support whenever called upon.” While officials commonly use helicopters in assessing damage over a particular area, the RC-26 offers advantages when there is widespread damage. “The RC-26 is a fixed-wing aircraft which can get to the scene fairly quickly and can easily be redirected to other sites that officials would like to see,” said Col. Dave Romuald, 115th Operations Group commander. Summer storms in Wisconsin created a need for rapid visual data to emergency responders, Dunbar said, and providing that data was the primary goal of the mission. “It is not about the particular cause of the event, whether it is Mother Nature or a terrorist threat; it is about all hazards response, and this capability for homeland defense is irreplaceable,” Dunbar said.

RC-26 Pilots Lt. Col. Scott Craver, left, of the 186th Air Refueling Wing, Meridian, Miss., and Lt. Col. Steve Dunai of the 115th Fighter Wing, Madison, fly an initial flood awareness assessment mission in the skies over Wisconsin in June. Imagery captured during this mission was used to assess the integrity of several area dams and provide flood damage assessment in the hardest hit regions of the southern half of the state. 2009

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