

155th FORCE SUPPORT SQUADRON

LINEAGE

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

LTC Wendy Johnson

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Nebraska Air Guardsmen experience trip of lifetime during short-notice mission to Egypt for Bright Star exercise short-notice mission turned into a trip of a lifetime for two Nebraska Air National Guardsmen when they were given four days to prepare for a deployment to Egypt to support a major international exercise. According to Staff Sgt. Danielle Nuss, full-time technician for the 155th Services Flight, the Lincoln-based unit was received a call from National Guard Bureau officials just days before the September drill requesting immediate help. "They called us on Thursday (Sept. 8) and said 'We need two people to go to Egypt right away,'" said Nuss. Nuss said the 155th Services Flight was chosen because of its success during the August unit compliance inspection and other recent overseas missions. After learning more about the mission, Nuss said, she and other unit officials began calling for volunteers. A number of Air Guardsmen were eager to go, because of the short notice nature of the mission, only four

were eligible. “On Friday we found out that there were no military flights going into Egypt, so whoever went would have to go on a commercial flight,” said Nuss. “In order to go commercial, the people selected had to have a passport.” Of the four Guardsmen with passports, one was too senior in rank, while another was scheduled to go to a military school. That left Nuss and Tech. Sgt. Greg Strong. Nuss said she and Strong spent the September drill outprocessing from Lincoln, packing their bags and learning more about their new mission. “(National Guard Bureau) sent us some correspondence from the people in Egypt,” said Nuss, a 2000 graduate of Sutton High School. “One of the things they said they needed done was lodging. They also asked if we had any (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) experience.” After a frantic weekend, Sharp and Nuss departed Lincoln on Sept. 12 for a long journey to Cairo. According to Sharp, a Grand Island native who has spent the past 12 years in the active Air Force and Air National Guard, he knew very little about the mission he had volunteered for. That didn’t mean he was totally unfamiliar with what to expect though. Ten years earlier he had spent several weeks in Egypt as an active duty Airman supporting the annual Bright Star exercise. According to Department of Defense officials, this year’s Bright Star exercise was joint/ combined training exercise held in Egypt that involved members of the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and special operations forces, as well as military forces from Egypt and 12 other nations. Held Sept. 10 - Oct. 3, the exercise was the largest and most significant coalition military exercise conducted by U.S. Central Command this year and, according to a fact sheet, is an important part of Central Command’s theater engagement strategy. The exercise is also designed to improve readiness and interoperability while strengthening the military and professional relationships among U.S., Egyptian and participating forces. This was the first Bright Star to be held since October 2001. Sharp said he spent the entire trip reading two National Geographic books on Egypt to brush up his knowledge on the country’s rich, historic roots. “I knew a little bit about Cairo and Egypt from being there 10 years earlier,” he said. “But Cairo’s changed a lot since.” When the two Guardsmen arrived in Cairo, they were met by Bright Star officials who quickly took them to a U.S. Embassy office at the airport, said Nuss. Because of the short-notice nature of the mission, the official at the embassy office hadn’t expected them. “He had to make a bunch of calls,” said Nuss. “It was already late, so (the official) said because it’s dark, you are not authorized to drive to your base.” Instead, the two Nebraskans were sent to the Cairo Marriott, a five-star resort located on the banks of the Nile River. After arriving at the hotel Sharp found out that he was going to stay in the hotel, while Nuss was assigned to Beni Suef Air Base, located approximately 90 minutes south of Cairo. Sharp said he had two missions at the hotel. First, he was in charge of coordinating lodging for 300 Air Force personnel who were working at Cairo West Air Base. Second, he was responsible for setting up recreational activities and tours for the Airmen during their off duty hours. “We pretty much hit the ground running,” said Sharp. “I had to basically make sure that they had force protection at the resort and that the people staying there remained in lockdown except when they were on tours.” Sharp said that there was plenty for people to do at the hotel, including restaurants, swimming and shopping. , after a few weeks people were becoming restless. “They wanted tours,” said Sharp, who has had some experience in coordinating recreational trips during previous deployments. “So I set up four of them.” Sharp said he set up tours of the Sphinx and the Giza Pyramids, the Egyptian Museum as well a Nile River Cruise. Tour preparations included setting up an itinerary, working with the Egyptian Secret Service to ensure security and contracting with pre-approved Egyptian travel agencies. “Someone from the hotel security would go with us along with a member of the Egyptian Secret Service just to keep us out of crowds and lines,” he said. “When we would go somewhere, we

would go straight to the front of the line and the security agent would get us right through... it was kind of nice.” Nuss, on the other hand, experienced a completely different mission. After spending a night at the hotel, she and six other military members drove to the Beni Suef Air Base located on the banks of the Nile River. Nuss said she was happy to escape the confines of the hotel. “I really don’t like staying in a hotel because if you go to a real base you get a better experience of meeting people, hanging out and feeling like you’re in the Air Force,” she said. Beni Suef, said Nuss, was a tiny base that’s only used during exercises. There, around 300 people were working to support the on-going exercise. One of Nuss’ first jobs was to coordinate lodging for all of the people on base, ranging from members of the American Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, to members of the Jordanian Air Force. Nuss said that most people were housed in tiny huts called “villas,” which had a living room, kitchen and two bedrooms with three cots each. “It was kind of hard to do the lodging because I got there for the last two weeks of the exercise,” she said. “I pretty much had to go with whatever they had set up already.” “They had a spreadsheet with all of the villa numbers and names on it,” she said. “We had to make sure that it was accurate. When I got there, it was about 50 percent accurate. By the time I got done, it was about 98 percent.” Nuss said maintaining accountability of people stationed on base was extremely important. “We needed to know where everyone was at in case there was an emergency,” she said. “We also had to make sure that everyone was accounted for when the exercise concluded so we didn’t leave someone behind.” Along with lodging, Nuss also coordinated MWR functions. This included setting up a tour to a local pyramid, coordinating several pool, card and foosball tournaments, and overseeing the telephone and computer cafes. “We had five computers and four phones for all of these people,” she said. “Our job was to sign them out for 15 minutes at a time.” “It was busy all of the time,” she added. “I worked the night shift and there were people standing in line, waiting to go in throughout the night.” Nuss said the MWR functions served an important need. “A lot of these people had been there for several months,” she said. “They hadn’t been able to leave base. They were bored out of their minds...and when you get bored people, that’s when you start having problems.” “We provided them with sanity,” Nuss said. “Plus, it helps out with retention. If people go on a deployment for four months and have nothing to do and have a horrible time, do you think they’re going to stay in the Air Force? Now, if they go on a deployment and have a lot of fun, they’re going to sign up for another deployment.” Sharp agreed. “It was very important to everybody there,” he said. “They weren’t allowed outside of the hotel, otherwise.” Along with their lodging and MWR functions, Nuss and Sharp also had the opportunity to work in another important part of their functional areas when a lieutenant was killed in a car accident at Beni Suef. “We had to arrange escorts back to Ramstein Air Force Base (Germany) and an honor guard from people there,” said Sharp. Both Nuss and Sharp said they enjoyed their deployment to Egypt, despite all the work they had to do to get there. 2006

2009 Refueling Wing’s services and military support flights stood before their respective commanders for the last time in Lincoln, Nov. 14, as they prepared to combine into a single force support squadron. During the 20-minute ceremony, the two commanders relinquished command of their affected flights and retired their flags. Then the commander of what had been the 155th Military Support Flight took command of the new combined 155th Force Support Squadron by accepting the consolidated organization’s new flag from Col Richard Evans, wing commander.

Both flights, which had been standing in separate formations, were then physically combined, weaving both together as a single formation. Capt. Pamela Geistlinger, new 155th FSS commander, then took a few minutes to address the members of newly formed unit.

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Sources

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