

## 815th AIRLIFT SQUADRON



### **MISSION<sup>1</sup>**

Peacetime: The mission of the 815th AS is to recruit, organize and train to deploy, redeploy and employ air and ground forces to any area of the world and provide them with logistical support.

Wartime: The mission is to support the theater commander with the capability to resupply the forces, provide for their airlift requirements and employment operations within the combat zone or forward areas, and when requested, to provide aeromedical/refugee evacuation and augment strategic airlift forces.

The 815th AS, nicknamed the "Flying Jennies," is a tactical airlift unit. The squadron currently has five C-130J-30 "Hercules" cargo aircraft and one C-130J dedicated for tactical airlift. The full complement of eight C-130J-30 aircraft will be delivered in 2006.

The 815th AS is authorized 46 officers and 109 enlisted personnel. Thirty-two of those officers and Airmen are Air Reserve Technicians. The unit also employs three civilians.

### **LINEAGE<sup>2</sup>**

815th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy) constituted, 14 Sep 1943

Activated, 20 Sep 1943

Redesignated 815th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, Sep 1944

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<sup>1</sup> Official unit website: <https://www.403wg.afrc.af.mil/About/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/192528/815th-airlift-squadron-flying-jennies/>. Accessed 26 Jul 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

Inactivated, 25 Sep 1945  
Redesignated 815th Troop Carrier Squadron, Medium, 15 Nov 1952  
Activated, 1 Jan 1953  
Redesignated 815th Troop Carrier Squadron, 8 Dec 1965  
Redesignated 815th Tactical Airlift Squadron, 1 Aug 1967  
Inactivated, 15 Dec 1969  
Activated in the Reserve, 25 Apr 1973  
Redesignated 815th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron, 1 Jan 1976  
Redesignated 815th Tactical Airlift Squadron, 31 Dec 1987  
Redesignated 815th Airlift Squadron, 1 Feb 1992

### **STATIONS**

Ephrata AAB, Washington, 20 Sep 1943  
MacDill Field, Florida, 7 Nov 1943-2 Mar 1944  
Sterparone Airfield, Italy, 9 Apr 1944  
Pisa, Italy, 15 May-25 Sep 1945  
Ahiya AB, Japan, 1 Jan 1953  
Tachikawa AB, Japan, 25 Jun 1960-15 Dec 1969  
Keesler AFB, Mississippi, 25 Apr 1973

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

483d Bombardment Group, 20 Sep 1943-25 Sep 1945  
483d Troop Carrier Group, 1 Jan 1953  
483d Troop Carrier Wing, 8 Dec 1958  
315d Air Division, 25 Jun 1960  
374th Tactical Airlift Wing, 1 Nov 1968-15 Dec 1969  
920th Tactical Airlift (later, 920 Weather Reconnaissance) Group, 25 Apr 1973  
403d Rescue and Weather Reconnaissance (later, 403d Tactical Airlift; 403d Airlift) Wing, 1  
Nov 1983  
403d Operations Group, 1 Aug 1992

### **WEAPON SYSTEMS**

B-17, 1943-1945  
C-119, 1953-1959  
C-130, 1958-1969  
C-130, 1973-1975, 1988  
WC-130, 1976-1990  
WC-130, 1991-1993

### **COMMANDERS**

Maj Fred J. Ascani, 20 Sep 1943  
Lt Col James V. Reardon, 19 Feb 1944  
Maj Sherman D. Stanfield, Oct 1944  
Maj William K. Ashby, 1945-25 Sep 1945

Lt Col Kenneth C. Jacobs, 1954  
Lt Col William B. Crum, 1956  
Maj Floyd A. Blackburn, 1959  
Lt Col John P. Remaklus, Jr, 1959  
Lt Col William H. Lewis, 1962  
Lt Col Guy E. Ridgway, 17 Jun 1964  
Lt Col Pierce M. Myers Jr., 4 Oct 1965  
Lt Col Verus A. Yon, 24 Jun 1967  
Lt Col Richard G. Nelson, 27 May-Dec 1969  
Maj Jerry F. Bonin, 25 Apr 1973  
Lt Col Wallace E. Hoffman, by Jun 1976  
Lt Col Charles H. Robards, by Sep 1977  
Col James B. Cobb, by Sep 1979  
Lt Col W. Freeman, by Dec 1983  
Col Charles C. Chatham, by Mar 1984  
Lt Col Jackie L. Hansen, 1 Oct 1984  
Lt Col Thomas L. Hoff, 1 Jan 1985  
Lt Col Wesley M. Bennett, 1 Apr 1987  
Lt Col Carl R. Cucullu, 21 Jun 1989  
Lt Col Douglas F. Kennedy II, 5 Oct 1991  
Lt Col Michael W. Clouatre, 1 Sep 1994  
Lt Col Errol Perez, 18 Nov 1996  
Lt Col Robert Schultz, 7 Aug 1999  
Lt Col Patrick Ryan, 5 Nov 2001  
Lt Col Michael Taylor, 10 Feb 2007  
Lt Col Denny Tutwiler  
Lt Col Matthew G. Sikkink, 6 Jun 2019

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

World War II

Air Offensive, Europe

Rome-Arno

Normandy

Northern France

Southern France

North Apennines

Rhineland

Central Europe

Po Valley

Air Combat, EAME Theater

Korean War  
Third Korean Winter  
Korea Summer-Fall, 1953

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

Panama, 1989-1990

**Decorations**

Distinguished Unit Citations

Germany, 18 Jul 1944

Germany, 24 Mar 1945

Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with Combat "V" Device

1 Jan 1968-10 Nov 1969

Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards

6 May 1953-10 Sep 1954

1 Jan-30 Jun 1961

1 Jul 1964-30 Jun 1966

1 Jul 1977-31 Dec 1978

1 Jul 1984-30 Jun 1986

1 May 1992-30 Apr 1994

1 May 1994-30 Apr 1996

1 May 1996-31 Aug 1997

1 Jan 2004-31 Dec 2005; 1 Oct 2008-30 Sep 2010.

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation

[Jan]-28 Jul 1953

Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm

1 Jan 1968-10 Nov 1969

**EMBLEM**



815th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy emblem: On a light turquoise blue disc, border white, edged and piped black, the head and face of a grinning, red devil, affronte, in front of a large black smoke cloud issuing from Hell fires in base, proper, between two jagged, yellow lightning flashes, surmounted by a like number of black aerial bombs, all issuing from top of black smoke cloud and striking to base, as per record drawing. **SIGNIFICANCE:** The insignia represents the devil exulting at the retribution wrought on the originators of death and destruction by aerial bombardment. The flames exemplify destruction by bombs, which indicate the type of aircraft flown by the Squadron.<sup>3</sup>



815th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron emblem: On a blue disc, a white lighthouse, issuing from base detailed grey with red windows emitting two yellow horizontal light beams throughout each bearing two red lightning flashes all below two white horizontal delta symbols and all within a narrow yellow border. Attached above the disc a blank attached below the disc

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<sup>3</sup> The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

a blue STORM TRACKERS in yellow letters. Blue scroll bordered bordered yellow and inscribed yellow. Significance Blue alludes to the Sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence of the assigned personnel. The airplanes illustrate unity and the lightning bolts denote the unit's ability to deploy rapidly. The lighthouse symbolizes the concept that the unit is steadfastly prepared to fill a vital need.



815th Tactical Airlift Squadron patch

Airlift Squadron emblem: Or, a square with diagonal palewise Argent fimbriated Gules charged with a stylized jenny current of the last, across a cloud formation in base White fimbriated Red; all within a diminished bordure of the last. Attached above the disc a Yellow scroll edged with a narrow border Red and inscribed FLYING JENNIES in Red letters.



815th Airlift Squadron patches

## MOTTO

## OPERATIONS<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency; Official unit website: <https://www.403wg.afrc.af.mil/About/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/192528/815th-airlift-squadron-flying-jennies/>. Accessed 26 Jul 2024.

The history of the 815th AS dates back to World War II when it was activated as the 815th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), flying B-17s. The squadron's war efforts included action in Italy, France and over the Rhine in Germany. The unit was inactivated in 1945.

In 1952, the squadron was redesignated the 815th Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium) and activated in 1953 to fly C-119s. As a troop carrier squadron, the 815th transported troops, supplies and equipment to, and evacuated casualties from Korea.

The unit began flying C-130s in 1965 and was redesignated a tactical airlift squadron in 1967. The 815th TAS was inactivated in 1969.

Then in 1973, the 815th was reactivated as part of the Air Force Reserve, flying C-130s at Keesler AFB, Miss., under control of the 920th Tactical Airlift Group (Reserve).

On Jan 1, 1976 the unit was redesignated as the 815th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron when its parent, the 920th, was redesignated a weather reconnaissance group. For the next 12 years, the 815 WRS tracked storms and hurricanes in the Atlantic, Caribbean Basin, Gulf of Mexico and Eastern Pacific.



In 1983, the 920th WRG was deactivated, and the 815 WRS came under the direct operational control of the 403rd Rescue and Weather Reconnaissance Wing, which moved its headquarters to Keesler.

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In December 1987, both the 815th and its parent wing, the 403rd were redesignated as tactical airlift units. The 815th TAS, however, continued to maintain a limited weather reconnaissance capability through the 815th Weather Flight and the 34th Air Weather Flight.

After a two-year conversion period to tactical airlift, the 815thth began its support of U.S. Southern Command by joining the Volant Oak rotation. Volant Oak is the commitment shared by the Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard to fly cargo and passengers within Central and South America for SOUTHCOM and provide airlift support for U.S. embassies in that region.

In December 1989, during the Flying Jennies' first deployment to Panama, aircrews provided airlift support for Operation Just Cause, the U.S. military effort to restore democracy to that country and oust Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega. Operation Just Cause started a mere two days before the squadron's scheduled deployment began. The aircrews airlifted combat troops, equipment, humanitarian supplies, detainees and captured weapons. They also evacuated wounded American military personnel from Panama to the United States. While they were home catching their breath, the squadron's crews competed in Airlift Rodeo, and brought home the prize for the highest scoring Reserve C-130 unit.

A year later, after the Iraqi invasion of neighboring Kuwait in August 1990, and the onset of Operation Desert Shield, members of the 815thth volunteered for and performed duty in the Middle East. Unit members provided airlift support in the multi-national effort to stop Iraq from further expansion in the region. In February 1992, the unit and its parent wing, were redesignated, becoming an airlift squadron and airlift wing. In September of that year, the squadron found itself overseas again, flying in support of the United Nations relief effort Operation Provide Relief in Somalia. The relief effort last several months, and delivered tons of food and medical supplies to people in the drought-stricken area. The 815thth AS was back on the road again in early February 1993, assisting in relief efforts in war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina. Meanwhile, in July, the 815thth became a single mission (airlift) squadron when the 815thth Weather Squadron was established. The 815thth AS continued its involvement in Operation Provide Promise until June 1994 -- more than a year -- and was supported by aircraft from the 815thth AS and crews from both flying squadrons.

In September 1994, a scant two months after the 815thth AS ended its support of Operation Provide Promise, the squadron was flying out again in support of an overseas operation -- Uphold Democracy -- in Haiti. Rather than airlifting combat forces to Haiti, as originally planned, the crews transported peacekeepers and supplies to staging areas near the island nation. In November 1994, crews from the 815thth found themselves back in Turkey, supporting supply missions between Rhein-Main AB, Germany and Incirlik AB, Turkey. Many of the supplies flown in were in support of Operation Provide Comfort, a relief effort for the Kurds in Northern Iraq

In 1995, the squadron deployed in support of Haiti with Operation Restore Hope. Also that year, the squadron deployed to Honduras, Mexico, Argentina and Peru in support of

humanitarian missions in those countries.

Humanitarian missions continued through 1996, with deployments to Argentina, Ecuador, Russia, Antigua, Nicaragua, Albania, Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Also that year, Reservists with the 815th deployed to Saudi Arabia in support of Operation Southern Watch, and to Venezuela to help train the Venezuelan air force in C-130 tactics.

By December 1997, the 815th Airlift Squadron had amassed more than 3,900 mishap-free flying hours while supporting operations around the world and delivering more than 95,000 tons of food, clothing and medical supplies in support of the Denton Amendment.

In 1998, the squadron deployed to Venezuela and Bolivia, training those countries' air forces in C-130 operations. In the fall of 1998, following one of the most violent hurricane seasons on record, the 815th AS provided humanitarian relief to Honduras and Nicaragua after Hurricane Mitch hit Oct. 29.

In May 1999, the wing earned the Flight Safety Milestone Award from Air Mobility Command for 24 years without a type A or B mishap and 90,000 flying hours.

In May 1999, the wing received the first C-130J in the Department of Defense inventory.

In December 2004, the Jennies deployed a crew and the C-130J to Southwest Asia flying into Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Later that year, the squadron completed the first circumnavigation of the globe in a C-130J while supporting Aero India, one of the largest aviation trade shows in the world.

In December 2004, the Jennies deployed a crew and the C-130J-30 to Southwest Asia flying into Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Later that year, the squadron completed the first circumnavigation of the globe in a C-130J while supporting Aero India, one of the largest aviation trade shows in the world.

For the first time in about six years, since they began converting to the new C-130J aircraft, the Flying Jennies of the 815th Airlift Squadron participated in a personnel airdrop mission. Two pilots and three loadmasters traveled from the squadron's home at Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., to Hurlburt Field, Fla., in March to pick up special forces troops from the 720th Special Tactics Group. The Reservists were accompanied on the procedures development and evaluation mission by Master Sgt. Terry Reaves, Air Mobility Command's chief C-130J loadmaster. Sergeant Reaves flew along to provide instruction, as needed, to the loadmasters — Senior Master Sgt. Mike Watson, and Master Sgts. Morton Smith and Willard Boedecker — and to evaluate the procedures for conducting this type of mission.

The three Reservists helped in evaluating procedures and were cleared to provide training to other J-model loadmasters. "Before the mission, I was the only AMC personnel qualified loadmaster," Sergeant Reaves said. "It helps to have other people trained so they can assist in getting other loadmasters ready for the release of this capability." Before an aircraft is

“released” by the Air Force to conduct operational missions, its capabilities must be determined, and all the procedures have to be written, tested and evaluated. The mission in Florida marked one of the last hurdles the J model had to clear in order to be released to perform the personnel airdrop mission.

“The information we gathered validates that the AMC procedures will meet the war fighters’ needs,” Sergeant Reaves said. “The mission provided an avenue to change or modify the procedures if they didn’t meet the mission requirements. However, the procedures worked as advertised, and the crew performed superbly during the mission.” This is an important capability for the 815th and other tactical airlift units flying the C-130J. Airdrop is the fastest way to deploy troops into an area of operations. Traditionally, the C-130 is the preferred aircraft to perform this mission. More than 60 troops can be on the ground and reorganized within minutes. 2005

A crew from Air Force Reserve Command’s 815th Airlift Squadron delivered the squadron’s final C-130J-30 aircraft to Keesler Air Force Base, Miss., Jan. 9 after accepting it from the manufacturer at Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Ga. Maj. Gen. Hanford “Rusty” J. Moen Jr. piloted the aircraft from Georgia to Mississippi. General Moen is the director of intelligence, air, space and information operations at Headquarters Air Force Reserve Command, Robins AFB, Ga. Delivery of the aircraft was the last step in the unit’s conversion to the J-model. The conversion began Oct. 12, 1999. The 815th AS, also known as the Flying Jennies, has been instrumental in getting the J-model qualified for combat. The unit has participated in testing and evaluation of this new weapon system since 1998. Most recently, unit Reservists deployed to Central and South America to assist U.S. Southern Command with drug interdiction efforts. In the past, they have deployed an aircraft and aircrews to Southwest Asia in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Their participation in the Air Force’s first combat deployment of the new C-130J-30, a “stretched” version of the aircraft, proved it can travel faster, farther and higher than older Hercules while carrying more troops and equipment. In addition to eight C-130J-30s, the squadron’s 403rd Wing also flies 10 WC-130J’s. 2007

In September 2009, the Jennies deployed several hundred Airmen and several C-130Js to Southwest Asia to support United States Central Command airlift requirements in the region. While deployed, the 815th AS set a world record for the maximum number of airdrop bundles delivered in a one-week period: 801 bundles in 24 missions, verified by United States Central Command. During the same deployment, the 815th flew 358 missions and 1,233 sorties, delivering more than 150 boxes of "care packages" and nearly 5,000 tons of cargo while maintaining a 98.5 percent recoverable/reusable rate of cargo airdropped. Over the 120-day deployment, 815th aircrews flew more than 20,000 passengers and 500 aeromedical evacuation passengers, logging nearly 2,500 hours of flying and surpassing their home-station annual average of 2,400 hours.

In August 2010, the 815th AS merged with the 345th AS "Golden Eagles" as the Air Force's first C-130J active associate unit. The 345th Airlift Squadron was officially activated in a ceremony Aug. 6 to form an association with the Reserve’s 403rd Wing. The total force integration initiative not only provides regular Air Force and Reserve members with the opportunity to

work and train together, but also helps reduce operational costs to taxpayers. The 345th is the first C-130J active associate unit in the Air Force and the third active associate unit to activate under the 19th Airlift Wing at Little Rock AFB, Ark. Within the next few months, the new squadron will integrate 112 aircraft maintenance, operations and support personnel with the 403rd WG's Citizen Airmen.

"The active-duty operations personnel have been great to work with," said Lt. Col. Denson Tutwiler, 815th AS commander. "They understand Citizen Airmen. Some of them have backgrounds in strategic airlift, so they have worked with Reservists in the past." The 345th AS's new commander, Lt. Col. Craig Williams, understands that the success of the association depends on the working relationships forged between his people and the Reservists. "Establishing and maintaining an excellent working relationship is paramount," Colonel Williams said. "There are some areas where we both need to learn and understand the culture in which we work. Once that is accomplished, all things are possible, just like in any other unit."

Chief Master Sgt. Vincent Armata, 403rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron superintendent, stressed the importance of seamlessly integrating the regular Air Force and Reserve members. "The bottom line with total force integration is to train together and ensure that the deployment package is manned with people who have the right skill sets to accomplish the mission," Chief Armata said. Colonel Tutwiler said creating associations involving regular Air Force and Reserve, as well as the Air National Guard, offers benefits to the total force. "The Air Force realized it could get much greater utilization from its aircraft by integrating active-duty with Reserve and Guard units," he said. "Adding active-duty personnel will allow the 403rd WG to create more maintenance shifts and launch more aircraft. This truly is a case where the sum of the parts is greater than the whole." 2010

In January 2011, the Jennies and the Golden Eagles deployed to Afghanistan together for the first time as an integrated force and joined with the 41st AS from Little Rock AFB, Ark. Under the command of the 772nd Expeditionary AS at Kandahar Airfield, they successfully completed 261 airdrops exceeding the record of 40 airdrop missions in a month by completing 51 missions. They went on to shatter their own record again in March with 71 missions and in April with 81 moving a total of 5.6 million pounds of cargo. By successfully and accurately dropping supplies, convoys driving long distances through dangerous areas were avoided.

Air Force Reserve Command delayed the transfer of 10 C-130J transports from Keesler AFB, Miss., to Pope Field, N.C., that is scheduled as part of the Air Force's force structure adjustments next fiscal year. The C-130Js are assigned to AFRC's 815th Airlift Squadron, which operates and maintains them together with its active associate unit, the 345th AS. Originally scheduled to leave Keesler for Pope starting on Oct. 1, the C-130Js now will not depart until April 2014, with a possible further delay until October 2014, announced Keesler officials on Aug. 13. "The Air Force's decision to postpone 10 aircraft leaving Keesler is welcomed news for our employees and their families affected by the restructuring," said Col. Craig LaFave, commander of AFRC's 403rd Wing at Keesler. "All future proposals to our C-130 fleet [are] speculative now but [are] tied to planned Army and Marine Corps [end] strength reductions, which ultimately drive the need for tactical airlift. We should have more clarity over the next few months," he

said. 2013

In September 2013, the Jennies again deployed with the Golden eagles, this time to Southwest Asia as members of the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing. Overall, around 160 Airmen were deployed, and they returned January 2014.

The 345th Airlift Squadron was symbolically inactivated Friday at Keesler AFB, Miss. The unit and its associate, the Air Force Reserve's 815th Airlift Squadron, are being inactivated "as a result of broader force structure initiatives announced in 2013," according to an April 23 AFRC release. "Throughout history, our squadron has provided a lot of combat support for our nation, doing exactly what our country needed for its national defense," said Lt. Col. Michael J. Ramirez, 345th AS commander. "Whenever our nation needed that excess capability, the 345th was there and stood up to fulfill that need, and we've written another chapter in the unit's history in the past three-and-a-half years that everyone in this room has contributed to." Col. Frank L. Amodeo, commander of the 403rd Wing, said, "The 345th and 815th are an impressive team. In January 2011, the two squadrons deployed to Afghanistan and smashed the world record for airdrop missions in a month-81 missions moving 5.6 million pounds of cargo." An inactivation ceremony for the 815th AS will be held in June, but many of the Active Duty members will no longer be present, so the unit held its "symbolic ceremony early," states the release. 2014

The Air Force informed Congress on Tuesday that it has abandoned plans to inactivate Air Force Reserve Command's 815th Airlift Squadron at Keesler AFB, Miss., announced members of the state's congressional delegation. As a result, the unit's 10 C-130J transports will continue to operate from the southern Mississippi base, they said. "Today's announcement is a major win for the future stability of Keesler Air Force Base as well as the many communities and businesses that depend on it," said Sen. Roger Wicker (R), in the joint release with Sen. Thad Cochran (R) and Rep. Steven Palazzo (R). Wicker said he was grateful to Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James and Chief of Staff Gen. Mark Welsh "for recognizing the value that Keesler provides to the Air Force and the Gulf Coast." Cochran, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and its defense panel, said he looked forward to working with the Air Force to ensure the squadron's manpower and mission "are fully restored." The Air Force in February 2012 proposed relocating Keesler's C-130Js, a move the lawmakers opposed. In April 2014, the Air Force inactivated the 345th AS, the Active Duty associate unit that provided additional manpower for the C-130Js. 2015

The Air Force Reserve's 815th Airlift Squadron returned April 20 after participating in the U.S. Army Europe's Saber Junction 16 exercise since April 5. Two crews from the 815th AS showcased the C-130J Super Hercules' airdrop and air-land insertion capability by airdropping 112 of the 3,095 paratroopers and providing 60 of the 200 short tons delivered during the exercise. While Saber Junction took place in Germany, the 815th AS along with air assets from other nations as well as various Air Force active-component, Reserve and Air National Guard units were staged at Aviano Air Base, Italy. The annual exercise tests the readiness of the 173rd Airborne Brigade and this year it included the largest airdrop of personnel in Europe since

World War II, said Lt. Col. Stephanie Brown, an 815th AS aircraft commander. "Saber Junction is a large-scale exercise to demonstrate the 173rd's combat capability and interoperability," Brown said. "Our piece of this was to provide airlift to their paratroopers and to also do tactical insertion of their ground equipment onto a small STOL, or short takeoff and landing field."

For the first portion of the exercise, Brown and her crew airdropped the 173rd AB commander and 55 Soldiers who were the logistics specialists to handle and protect the ground assets being air dropped, she said. Maj. Jeff Smith, another aircraft commander, and his crew took part in a five-ship formation of C-130Js, which included an aircraft from Britain. "We ... made several passes dropping personnel," he said. "It was awesome to see this mass insertion of troops." The last three days included tactical insertion, Brown said. Aircrews delivered heavy equipment to include five Humvees, three mortar carts and an additional 40 personnel. "We landed on dirt strip in the middle of nowhere," Brown said. "It was this tiny 3,000-foot strip surrounded by trees. We would off load as quickly as possible and take off again." Smith added that landing on the rough gravel runway with heavy loads of equipment was a challenge, but one the crews excelled at. "The loadmasters did an outstanding job in off-loading aircraft really fast," he said.

"We were wheels down, wheels up ... in about 12 minutes. It was well executed." An H-model C-130 is limited to hauling about 30,000 pounds of equipment whereas the newer J-model the 815th AS fly brought in loads as heavy as 47,000 pounds. "We can bring in more, and we can do it faster because of our times in route. And, it's a lot safer from a combat perspective, because we can get off the ground faster," Brown said. "There is a great deal of capability in what the 815th (AS) can bring to the fight." Reflecting on their training over the last couple of weeks, Brown and Smith said they were honored to take part in such a large-scale training event. "To be part of something that magnanimous was amazing," Brown said. "The Army put forth a lot of equipment and personnel and obviously dedication to enable this to happen. And then, of course, 21 aircraft from 10 different active, Reserve and Air National Guard units were key to the success of providing the Army the force and the supplies they needed."

The 403rd Wing is going through a period of growth with the activation of an additional aircraft maintenance squadron solely focused on keeping the 815th Airlift Squadron's 10 C-130J Super Hercules aircraft healthy and in the air. With the approval of a new manning document, the total authorizations for positions in the unit currently being called Detachment 1 is scheduled to be approximately 145 maintenance professionals. This is roughly the same size as any other active-duty C-130 squadron. "About 55 of the new employees will be full-time air reserve technicians. The rest will be traditional reservists," said Col. Jay Johnson, the 403rd Maintenance Group commander. The current existing aircraft maintenance squadron will shift their full attention to the weather reconnaissance mission of the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron Hurricane Hunters.

Air Force leaders came to the decision to add the new squadron to the 403rd Wing after it was determined that the 815th AS would stay, but the active-duty association with the 345th AS had been dismantled. "The unit was needed in the past. The active component with the 345th filled a lot of the maintenance roles before they left," Johnson said. Once it was determined that the 10 C-130Js were staying at Keesler Air Force Base, differentiating the two distinct flying missions simply made sense. This new construct ensures the maintenance group can fully support both flying missions simultaneously. Johnson believes adding the new aircraft

maintenance squadron will not only help the professional development of maintenance Airmen in the wing, but that the overall morale of the unit will also increase. "The more experiences, the more hands, the more eyes I have on target, the better it is for the overall aircraft and success of the mission, as well as the maintenance activities," Johnson said. "This is great news from a maintenance standpoint. We are truly going to be a hub of activity." To handle the added mentoring and leadership of a larger mission, the Air Force Reserve Command has authorized a full-time air reserve technician 403rd Maintenance Group deputy commander position. Johnson believes that the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of the unit are strong and will only continue to improve. "Anytime you have more hands doing the work, you are going to get a lot healthier fleet of aircraft," he said. "Instead of stretching your workforce thinner, we will have more technical proficiency spread across the force."2016

As part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2013, the Air Force announced plans to transfer 10 of the 403rd Wing's C-130J aircraft and close the 815th, but then-Secretary of Defense Deborah Lee James 2015 reversed that recommendation in 2015, beginning the programming and budgeting work to restore personnel and mission capability at Keesler. The unit returned to fully operational status November 2017. Shortly after becoming fully operational, the Jennies deployed to Southwest Asia in support of Operations Freedom Sentinel and Inherent Resolve January 2018. 815th aircrews, along with maintainers from newly formed 803rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron and other wing personnel, were assigned to the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. As part of the 746th Air Expeditionary Squadron, the Flying Jennies made Air Force history during an event where they did a two-ship formation airdrop with the 774th EAS, an active duty squadron at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan making it the first time two separate units in two countries came together for a single combat airdrop mission. The Airmen returned to Keesler May 2018 having flown 303 combat and 465 combat support sorties, delivering 5,140 passengers, 51 distinguished visitors, 245 patients, and nearly 3,000 tons of cargo.

From October 2020 through February 2021, the 815th AS deployed flying combat missions in direct support of Operation Inherent Resolve. During this time, they were assigned to the 779th Expeditionary Airlift Squadron, 407th Air Expeditionary Group, 386th Air Expeditionary Wing, Ali Al Salem Air Base, Kuwait. The Flying Jennies executed 579 missions, flew 2,179 sorties with 3,620 flight hours moving 4,026 passengers and 2,131 tons of cargo.