

Air Advisors teach the Colombian Air Force to ‘Help Itself’

TECHNICAL SERGEANT DARLENE BYERS, 571ST MOBILITY SUPPORT ADVISORY SQUADRON



MSgt Jaqueline Carlson and TSgt Tadeo Villarreal instruct Medical Logistics techniques and processes to Colombian Medical and Logistics Personnel.

Bogota, Colombia - The 571st Mobility Support Advisory Squadron (MSAS) conducted a Building Partnerships Capacity (BPC) mission to the South American Country of Colombia. The seventeen-member team, including members of the Wyoming Air National Guard and the Colorado Air Force Reserves, executed a four-week joint training mission with the Fuerza Aérea Colombiana (Colombian Air Force), from July 1st through July 31st, 2018.

The 571st MSAS, located at Travis AFB, CA, supports the U.S Southern Command area of responsibility with continual engagements throughout South American, Central America, and the Caribbean. The BPC mission is designed to promote regional stability by fostering key relationships and enhancing partner nation capabilities through interaction and training.

The Fuerza Aérea Colombiana or FAC is the Air Force of the republic of Colombia. The FAC is one of the three Military Forces of Colombia. Created in 1921, the FAC is charged with maintaining control of Colombia's airspace and defending its sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutional order. The FAC has increased its activity in the fight against narco-terrorism and humanitarian aid and disaster response (HA/DR). Organizations like the MSAS have provided

critical instruction that have allowed the FAC to become more capable and self-sufficient. Over the past few years the MSAS has worked closely with the FAC, increasing their medical and airlift capabilities. This MTT also added fire fighting and search and rescue skills to be used in a non-permissive environment.



From left to right, MSgt Thomas Freeman, Lt Col Richard Pantusa, MSgt Trinidad Gutierrez and COLAF's Tecnico SubJefe Jose Lopez return from ground MAFFS training.

“This MTT (Mobile Training Team) is the epitome of what the MSAS stands for, and what they are capable of,” said Major Noelle Deruyter, Air Advisor and the Aeromedical Evacuation MTT subject matter expert. “The 571st has been working hand-in-hand with the FAC since 2012. The MSAS and FAC have worked hard together to build a solid foundation of interoperability between our countries ... and Air Advisors from the 571st should be proud of what we have achieved together so far.”

During the four-week mission, more than 204 hours of instruction took place at four geographically separated locations across Colombia, graduating 87 FAC military personnel from several career specialties. The MSAS executed courses in the specialty areas of Medical Logistics, Medical Planning, Aeromedical Evacuation Curriculum Development, Air Traffic Control Tower Simulator System, Modular Airborne Firefighting System (MAFFS), Remote Piloted Aircraft (Scan Eagle) intelligence and exploitation, and Search and Rescue (SAR). “With 7 courses taking place at 4 separate locations, this MTT had a broad scope, with many moving pieces. It is a testament to how advanced and eager to learn the students here are. Every trip (to Colombia) we find that we learn as much from them as we hope they learn from us”, said TSgt Giancarlo Reyes, Team Sergeant (in training) with the 571st MSAS.



Colombian Rescue Personnel demonstrate helicopter hoisting techniques learned during the two-week training.

Major Michael Adams and Master Sergeant Jacqueline Carlson, from the 187th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, Wyoming ANG, instructed courses on medical logistics and medical planning which helped to prepare their counterparts for an upcoming mission to Africa. “Medical planning and logistics is a critical step in any deployment. This course has helped prepare the

students for upcoming deployments to Africa where they will be using what they have learned firsthand ... You can see how seriously they are taking this class, knowing that this information could help them save lives”, said Major Adams. Additionally, their counterparts were able to practice their English, giving their final presentation in both Spanish and English. “These students already have a high level of fluency in English and their language skills will be imperative for their upcoming deployments. Their command felt it was an important part of the instruction that they be able to communicate and understand the medical terminology, not only in their native language but in English as well”, stated MSgt Carlson. “It just shows you how highly capable our counterparts here are.”



Maj Michael Adams and TSgt Tadeo Villarreal instructing Medical Planning.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Pantusa, 302nd Operations Group Commander, and Master Sergeant Thomas Freeman, 731st Airlift Squadron, both from the Colorado Air Force Reserves, led the MTT seminar on MAFFS. This critical course helped to bridge the gap between the crew in the air and fire department personnel on the ground. “Pilots and Fire Department don’t typically train together, so this exposure opened the dialogue towards creating joint doctrine to be used for future engagements” explained Lt Col Pantusa. “Through this training personnel from both sections were able to better understand the part the other plays during MAFFS operations.” The course was attended by not only FAC aircrew, but the Bogota City Fire Chief and some of his staff. This course, in particular, addressed a future capability that is in its infancy, and one that the USAF will help the FAC to grow.



TSGt Bryan Wagner demonstrates how to build a training scenario in the ATC simulator.

The 571 MSAS's mission is to strengthen partner nation's capabilities by providing assessments, training, and advice while assisting partner nations in developing their own airpower capabilities. Missions like this one in Colombia are a small example of the hard work that 571st Air Advisors are conducting to sustain US – Colombia relations, improve Air Force to Air Force capabilities and interoperability, and ensure access in Latin America (should the need arise). More importantly, it builds confidence and capability for the FAC, which can now conduct certain operations without any US assistance. Further, the FAC has the ability to 'pay it forward' and instruct other nations in Latin America. Through the effective work put in by MSAS Air Advisors, the US is strengthening relations and cooperation that will meet the challenges of crisis and contingency situations by providing the ability to respond... together. □



Technical Sergeant Darlene Byers is an Air Advisor with the 571st Mobility Support Advisory Squadron (MSAS), Travis AFB, California. Before her current assignment she was the Non-Commissioned Officer In-Charge of Project Management at the only Active Duty Engineering Installations Squadron in the Air Force. Enlisted in 2003, Technical Sergeant Byers is an Radar, Airfield, and Weather Systems Technician by trade. She has stepped out of her career field at her last two assignments to specialize in electronics installations and Security Cooperation. She has led missions worldwide as a Team Chief for the 85th EIS out of Keesler AFB, Mississippi, and traveled to Colombia for her first Security Cooperation mission with the 571st MSAS.