

re-designated the 939th Rescue Wing (RQW) on 1 February 1992.

As a rescue unit, the 939th RQW participated in many high-visibility operations in the surrounding communities, ranging from rescues during the Mount St Helens eruption to the pick-up, emergency treatment and delivery to local hospitals of many sailors at sea. When the order for transformation came, the rescue wing operated a fleet of HC-130Ps, C-130Es and HH-60Gs.

A Site Activation Task Force (SATAF) meeting was conducted at Portland Air National Guard Base (ANGB) in January 2001 to identify all of the necessary actions to support a new Air Refueling Wing at Portland ANGB. Obviously, the air refueling mission was to cause a substantial increase in the amount of aviation jet fuel (JP-8) to be delivered, and the existing infrastructure at Portland ANGB was inadequate to support the KC-135. A total of 31 construction, renovation and demolition projects was required to support the new refueling mission, including the construction of a six-inch structural concrete overlay, as the existing parking ramp was inadequate to withstand the weight of the KC-135R. A dedicated Fuel Hydrant System was necessary to meet mission requirements for launching aircraft and a Type III hydrant system was installed, including approximately 1,950 ft (594 m) of pipeline from the pump house to the aircraft parking area and six aircraft fuelling pits. These fuelling pits are capable of pumping 600 US gal (2271 litres) of fuel per minute. Ten-ft (3-m) blast fences were installed to protect buildings, equipment and personnel from the strong, turbulent exhaust of the KC-135R. Approximately 200 sq ft of office space was also added to the Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) complex for AFRC fuels administrative personnel. As the KC-135R aircraft are longer than the HC-130P and C-130E aircraft previously assigned to Portland ANGB, maintenance hangars were either newly constructed or modified.

Since the unit converted to aerial refuelling in 2003, reservists in the 939th have made a number of significant contributions, which have enhanced the Air Force Reserve Command's ability to perform its global and dynamic mission and, besides air refuelling missions include aerial medical evacuation (aeromedevac), cargo airlift, and passenger movement.

The reservists at Portland completed the Herculean process of role conversion in 14 months less than the three years considered as standard. Success was achieved through a number

Portland airpower – the 64th ARS tankers share Portland's International Airport with the F-15s of the 142nd FW, represented here by an F-15A and F-15B. After the local tankers are dispersed to other units, the Eagle squadron will get its gas from other units, notably the 92nd ARW at Fairchild AFB.

of initiatives, such as optimal blend of formal school scheduling, field training resources and in-house instruction. The 939th hired and trained all of its authorised aircrews within six months of standing up the unit.

Just as impressive was the wing's creative and highly successful in-house flight training for co-pilots – an AFRC first. Leveraging the wing's core group of highly experienced instructors, in 2003 the Operations Group produced five fully-qualified co-pilots in a shorter time than formal training would have allowed. In addition, four aircraft commanders and one senior officer were trained, and 37 mission qualification courses were completed. At the same time, the 939th Maintenance Group had 98 percent of assigned members fully trained on the new weapons system in three months less than the command standard.

Total Force contingency operations

The wing currently operates eight KC-135R Block 30 Stratotankers, assigned to the wing's 64th Air Refueling Squadron (ARS). The unit's mission is to develop and maintain its operational capability, and train reservists for worldwide duty. Training consists of flight operations, deployments and weekend duty, while it also has special taskings to generate aircraft and crews in support of Air Mobility Command (AMC).

Keeping in mind that Air Force Reserve Command currently provides some 23 percent of the Department of Defense's total aerial refuelling capability, the 939th receives its share of taskings both during peacetime and in times of crisis to support the active-duty military forces, and has done so even before it was formally established.

Starting its deployment just after New Year's Day in 2003, the 64th Air Refueling Squadron had crews at Moron Air Base, Spain, flying sorties for just over a month in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), using the unit's own and borrowed aircraft. Reservists from the 64th ARS flew another 55 sorties in support of OEF from 21 February to 28 May 2003, refuelling C-17s from McChord AFB on their way to the theatre. The 64th also logged Aeromedical Evacuation Support (AES) missions for 130 patients from the Pacific and the OEF theatre of



operations. The wing was the first tanker unit to volunteer to run stateside AES ferry missions for soldiers injured in post-Iraq Freedom incidents.

In 2003, 939th Operations Support Flight/Intelligence Section members volunteered to serve as part of Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) rotations overseas and in the front lines of action during OIF, providing support from such locations as Tallil, Iraq, and the US Embassy in Kyrgyzstan. From 26 November 2003 until 2 January 2004, reservists from the 939th led an Air Expeditionary Force deployment by deploying 200 members to Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. The group supported contingency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan with the first 939th crew flying operational missions within 15 hours after landing at the Turkish base. During this deployment, the 939th had a perfect 100 percent on-time record for rendezvous and off-loading fuel to awaiting aircraft. While continuing its conversion and training programme at home, 112 members returned to Incirlik for a second time in support of OEF and OIF operations in the region. The significance of these missions was that the wing was already providing support to the war effort while it was still converting, and at a time when it had yet to be formally established.

Since 30 January 2004, the 939th has been tasked with maintaining one aircrew on Alpha alert (short-notice) for Operation Noble Eagle (ONE), a 24-hour, seven-day alert capability in support of the homeland defence. It has since been tasked on more than 30 short-notice priority 1 and priority 2 tasked missions, setting an exam-

Left and right: 64th ARS KC-135Rs operate from their own 'heavyweight' ramp at Portland, complete with fuel installations. One of the aircraft is kept on alert status at all times, ready to launch in support of Noble Eagle homeland defence missions.

