

Liberty Press Weekly

July 16, 2012, Vol. 4, No. 29

512th Airlift Wing, Dover Air Force Base, Del.

Civil engineers aid in TN tornado recovery

Master Sgt. Veronica Aceveda
512th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. -- The second rotation of 512th Civil Engineer Squadron reservists left here Sunday to replace some of the Liberty Wing Airmen who have been assisting with the reconstruction of a tornado-ravaged school in Fayetteville, Tenn., for the past two weeks.

Other Reserve units, including some from Ohio and Texas, are also supporting the repair efforts of the Riverside Christian Academy campus as part of the Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training initiative.

IRT provides training opportunities for service members and units to prepare them for their wartime missions while supporting the needs of America's underserved communities, according to the program's website.

In April 2011, tornadoes ripped through The Volunteer State, and the preschool-through-12th grade institution suffered massive damage to buildings and athletic areas.

About 35 512th civil engineer Airmen are involved with the project, which includes the construction of a field house, soccer field and cross country track as well as repairing the gym roof, gutters and electrical issues.

Senior Master Sgt. David Kuntzi and Tech. Sgt. Ivan Fullerton are serving as the project's team leads. They and a handful of others are staged in Tennessee for the duration of the 30-day training opportunity, slated to end at the end of July. The entire IRT timeframe has been underway for about 40 weeks and is scheduled to end in late August, said Kuntzi.

The second rotation of 512th CES members arrived via military aircraft and brought a varying range of experience and skills to the worksite. Their career specialties spanned from electrical and structures technicians to surveyors and heavy equipment operators.

From 3-to-7 skill levels, these people volunteered to do this, said Kuntzi. Most of the team members had already completed their yearly two weeks of annual tour and volunteered for the additional duty.

"It's something extra that everyone stepped up and did," he said.



512th Civil Engineer Squadron members install roof trusses on a building at Riverside Christian Academy, a Fayetteville, Tenn., school devastated by tornadoes in April 2011. The Airmen are among the latest in a string of Air Force Reserve Command civil engineer teams to work at the campus. (Courtesy photo)

"This effort is a great example of what our wing members accomplish on a regular basis," said Col. David K. Berkowitz, 512th Airlift Wing vice commander. "There are a lot of wing members doing great things for the wing, community and nation all the time."

Active forces also provide IRT support, but the program primarily involves Guard and Reserve units.

In addition to receiving hands-on training, the 512th CES' contributions to the IRT program also highlights some of the Air Force Reserve's wartime capabilities in a peacetime environment.

School board chairman Stephen Elrod learned about the program while serving as a Navy reservist at the Pentagon. He initiated paperwork before the school was even damaged as it had some lingering maintenance needs. After initial rejection, work was approved and equipment rolled off the truck the same day the tornadoes hit.



Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force James A. Roy congratulates Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz on his final mission.

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