



# News Release

## UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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### **PATRIOT PARTNER TRAINS GUARDSMEN, GIVES ACTIVE-DUTY CAFB MEMBERS BREAK**

**CHARLESTON AFB, SC --** Five Air National Guard units have taken over the 437<sup>th</sup> Aerial Port Squadron as part of Patriot Partner, July 21-Aug.3.

Guard personnel from the 123 APF (Aerial Port Flight) Louisville, Ky. (Lead Unit), 135 APF Baltimore, Md., 137 APS Oklahoma City, 152 APS Reno, Nev., and 156 APF Carolina, Puerto Rico, have integrated with the 437 APF and taken over its operations, according to Tech. Sgt. Billy Williams, 437 APF Reserve coordinator.

"Patriot Partner is an exercise designed to simulate wartime conditions and involves the take over of an aerial port's operations by National Guard members and reservists," said Chief Master Sgt. Tom Downs, 123 APF and superintendent of the National Guard 703<sup>rd</sup> Consolidated Aerial Port Squadron. "Every strategic aerial port hosts a Patriot Partner."

Although Charleston AFB has hosted Patriot Partner for more than two decades, this year's program is unique. The 703 CAPS is the first all-Guard Patriot Partner in the nation, according to Maj. Doug Rose, 123 APF and 703<sup>rd</sup> CAPS commander.

"We have 144 personnel deployed from five ANG units providing round-the-clock support for a vital strategic port," said Rose. "I have been thoroughly impressed by the professionalism, skill level and attitude of each of the members of the 703<sup>rd</sup> that I have met to date."

The Guard units mirror active duty daily activities and provide 24-hour coverage seven days a week, with three daily eight-hour shifts.

During Patriot Partner, approximately 75-80 percent of 437 APF's activities will be handled exclusively by guardsmen, Downs said. As a result, active duty personnel gain valuable free time for training or leave.

"We are glad to have the Guard units since they are very proficient and provide leave and training opportunities for active-duty personnel," said Williams.

"Many active-duty personnel receive training in first aid, chemical warfare and weapons," he continued. "Much of this training occurs on base. Other personnel are allowed to take leave. However, training takes priority over leave.

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“Patriot Partner also frees active-duty members who are usually assigned to the swing shift and cannot complete training offered only during the day,” Williams added. Patriot Partner offers benefits to participating Guard units as well. The program allows Guardsmen to practice operation protocol and learn new procedures.

“Patriot Partner provides the senior staff management of Guard units with wartime simulation training,” said Downs. “The 703 CAPS has taken over CAFB’s flight line operations, which include passenger and fleet services.”

Guard units also take advantage of the opportunity to train with unfamiliar equipment.

“We have been able to train with a Tunner loader, operational software and oversized cargo that aren’t available at our home bases,” said 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Kevin Thornberry, 123 APF and officer in charge of air freight for the 703 CAPS.

Ultimately, Patriot Partner allows guardsmen to train with other Guard units and active-duty personnel and achieve complete work-force integration.

“The Air Force considers the Reserve and Guards as a total force component,” Rose said.

“Distinctions are rarely made these days between the active duty, Reserve and Guard,” continued Rose. “All the gaining commander cares is that he has a fully qualified group of aerial porters who can safely and effectively run his cargo, fleet, passenger and ATOC (Air Terminal Operations Center) operations. Patriot Partner offers us a unique opportunity to further refine the skills we will need when we are called to duty anywhere in the world.”

Both active-duty and Guard personnel realize the value of cooperative training programs such as Patriot Partner.

“Patriot Partner is based on mutual benefit,” said 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Jeff Vincent 123 APF and 703 CAPS Air Terminal Operations Center OIC. “The 437 APS personnel get a break and the guardsmen get crucial training.”

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