

Military Personnell Practice an Earthquake-Response Scenario at MidAmerica St. Louis Airport

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Approximately 135 members of the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Contingency Response Group and the U.S. Army's 689th Rapid Port Opening Element deployed to MidAmerica St. Louis Airport this week for a disaster preparedness training exercise. Specifically, the three-day exercise was designed to verify the ability of Air Force contingency response and Army rapid port opening forces to work together to receive and distribute cargo to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (simulated) at a civilian airport.

They began setting up a logistics hub on Aug. 6th as part of Gateway Relief, an earthquake-response scenario directed by the U.S. Transportation Command. The exercise conducted was based on a situation in which two major earthquakes have struck the New Madrid Seismic Zone, resulting in mass casualties and widespread destruction across Arkansas, Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky and Tennessee. The scenario involved civil authorities asking the military for assistance in setting up the airport and distribution center for disaster aid as all other local airports are inoperable.



The Airmen and Soldiers were tasked with setting up operations at a theoretically inoperative airfield, and had to determine the steps that needed to be taken in order to approve and accept the planeloads of equipment necessary to complete the mission. The two units worked together to organize and operate a Joint Task Force-Port (JTF-PO), which combines an Air Force Aerial Port of Debarkation with an Army trucking and distribution unit. The aerial port ensures the smooth flow of cargo and relief supplies into disaster areas via airlift, while the trucking unit facilitates final distribution over land. The Army and Air Force units bring everything they need to operate a JTF-PO, from all-terrain forklifts, satellite communications gear and sleeping quarters to aircraft mechanics, security forces and power-production specialists. Both units were being evaluated by the U.S. Transportation Command to verify their ability to perform the purposed mission.

“We are pleased that MidAmerica could host this special exercise so members of our military are prepared for the vital work they do in the event of an emergency,” said Tim Cantwell, director of MidAmerica Airport. “We understand that the exercise went extremely well, with the various tasks required being accomplished faster than the military leaders have witnessed in recent years.”

MidAmerica St. Louis Airport is located in Mascoutah, Illinois, in the eastern portion of the St. Louis metropolitan area. Major multimodal rail and inland port centers are located within 22 miles of the airport, which also enjoys easy access to five interstate highways via I-64. With parallel runways of 8,000 and 10,000 feet, the airport can handle simultaneous take-offs and landings in all conditions, minimizing delays. It has an annual capacity of 200,000 operations. Tenants include Boeing, which recently located a new manufacturing facility at the airport, as well as AVMATS, a company providing alternatives for the support and [maintenance of corporate aircraft](#), which has been operating at MidAmerica for over nine years. MidAmerica is a Joint Use Airport partnering with Scott AFB, the home to US Transportation Command, a multi service organization, and Air Mobility Command, the USAF’s component command for airlift. MidAmerica and the 375th Air Mobility Wing operate Scott AFB/MidAmerica St. Louis Airport. For more information, visit www.flymidamerica.com.