

# PATRIOT

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## Out of Africa: 439th crews fly relief missions



**AIRLIFTING AIRLIFT — A MH-53 helicopter is loaded onto a Westover C-5 for airlift back to RAF Mildenhall.**

*—photo by TSgt. David P. Adams, 439th MXS*

by MSgt. Sandi Michon

Big problems call for big solutions.

When severe flooding caused thousands of deaths in Mozambique in late February, Westover C-5s and crews ferried tons of supplies and personnel as part of an international relief effort.

Missions in early and late March not only showcased unit teamwork, but also the seamless blend between active duty and reserve forces.

While on a routine mission to Germany in early March, the C-5 commanded by Capt. Glenn Melia was diverted to Accra, Ghana in support of Operation Atlas Response. They airlifted 64 tons of humanitarian cargo and 68 members of the 86th Contingency Response Force from Ramstein AB, Germany. Cargo also included four Humvees, two forklifts, six all-terrain vehicles and four pallets containing tons of food and water.

Once in Ghana, the Westover crew went into mandatory crew rest and handed over the aircraft and the mission to an active duty crew who completed the airlift to South Africa. The following day, reserve crew regained the aircraft and resumed the mission back to Westover.

What goes out must come back.

As relief efforts winded down, Westover crews flew redeployment missions returning cargo the original locations. With only three days notice, Westover crews headed back to Africa.

Early Sunday morning, March 26, reporters were at the base interviewing crew members and documenting Westover's ongoing role in global events. For Loadmaster, TSgt. Dave Benson, it was his second trip to Africa. "Yesterday afternoon I was putting out a house fire in Indian Orchard, and today I'm heading to Africa," Benson said. The Springfield firefighter praised his employer for accommo-

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