

MISSION: Weather Reconnaissance

The 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron is quite well-known by its nickname, the Hurricane Hunters. This squadron, unique to the Air Force Reserve, is the only operational unit in the world flying weather reconnaissance routinely.



With ten WC-130J aircraft, the Hurricane Hunters patrol the Atlantic, Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico and Central Pacific during hurricane season and track winter storms as well.

Flying into and through hurricanes began in the 1940s, supposedly as the result of a dare between two pilots. The observations gathered while flying through tropical storms proved to be so valuable that the predecessor to the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron was formed in 1944.

These crews fly into tropical storms and monitor their transition to hurricanes. One flight may last as long as eight hours, during which the aircraft crosses from one side of the storm to the other several times. A crew consists of five—pilot, who is the commander of the flight; copilot, who assists in flying the aircraft; navigator, who monitors the location of the aircraft and watches for tornadoes, which can occur in conjunction with hurricanes; the flight meteorologist, who observes and records the data; and the weather reconnaissance loadmaster, who collects and records data with a small parachute-borne sensor known as a

dropsonde. The Hurricane Hunters are authorized to have 100 Reservists; of those, 59 are Air Reserve Technicians (ART), meaning they essentially work full time at their jobs.

The Hurricane Hunters primarily are based at Keesler Air Force Base in Louisiana, with a small group working with the National Hurricane Center in Miami, Florida. The Hurricane Hunters track stops when these storms make landfall, and then the storms are monitored by the National Weather Service.

Benefits

In the Air Force Reserve, you are entitled to a wide range of benefits, similar to those on Active Duty.

- Earn a paycheck – The pay is competitive for part-time and some full-time jobs.
- Get an education – The Air Force Reserve encourages continuing education and offers several programs – Non-contributory Montgomery G.I. Bill, Tuition Assistance, free credits through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF), and specialized training that can lead to certifications and licenses. There can also be bonuses and incentives for those going into critically needed areas.
- Low-cost health care plan – This new program applies to both the Reservist and immediate family and can significantly reduce the cost of medical care.
- Retirement plan – Military retirement programs are very generous. If you have previously served, your time counts toward your retirement in the Air Force Reserve.
- Commissary and BX Privileges – Military bases offer discounted and tax-free supermarket and department store shopping plus low-cost recreational vehicle rentals.
- Live and serve at home – Serve where you live and transfer to a new location only at your request.
- Maintain rank – If you have previously served in the Air Force or any other branch of the military, chances are you will retain your rank when you join the Air Force Reserve.
- Do the extraordinary – This is an opportunity to meet American heroes accomplishing amazing feats and to become one with them.

The Air Force Reserve is an integral part of the United States Air Force, performing approximately 20 percent of the work. Members of the Air Force Reserve can live and serve in their local communities. Although there are full-time opportunities, those in the Air Force Reserve can continue their full-time civilian careers. This is a great way to serve your country and still live at home with your family.



AIR FORCE RESERVE

To learn more, call 800-257-1212 or log on to AFReserve.com