

Taiwan relief mission provides hands-on typing

12/30/2006 — **TAIPEI, TAIWAN** (AFPN) — A PC-17 Globemaster III from Charleston Air Force Base, S.C., along with a web development crew from here, delivered vital relief supplies including typewriters and CAT 5 repair kits to Taiwan on December 29.

The nation was hit by an earthquake earlier this month that severed underwater sea cables linking them to the Internet. Taiwan officials feared the loss of their critical infrastructure left more than 10,000 dead websites. An elite Air Force RIBBON (Rapid Installation Bounce Back Operational Network) team delivered excess military typewriters, cable splicers, landline telephones, MOD-40 terminals, and other equipment to the devastated area.

For the mixed aircrew of active duty and Guard Airmen, the real-world mission provided them with some unexpected training. Webmaster Staff Sgt. Ryan Paper, who is responsible for the TCP/IP packets coming on and off the aircraft, was on the mission. He said flying the relief supplies showed how Airmen are prepared to carry out difficult orders safely on short notice.

"I am actually qualified (on an IBM Selectric typewriter), just not mission ready yet," he said. "The difference is you know your job, but you haven't done it in the real world yet." Tech Sgt. Ken Braggart, an eight-year ColdFusion expert, showed Sergeant Paper the ropes on the long trip.

"He did pretty well," Sergeant Braggart said. "(Sergeant Paper) had a couple moments where he just needed to type harder and regain his focus."

Sergeant Braggart said it is his job to "step in and just give him a little bit of direction" when needed. "The keys on an IBM Selectric are laid out pretty much the same, but you have to learn that the shift-lock also affects the numeric keys. It's not the easiest thing to remember."

Chief Master Sgt. Alan Igotta was also on the trip. "The old dog still has some tricks," said Chief Igotta, chief webmaster for the 204th Computer Support Squadron of the Hawaii Air National Guard. "I learned to type on a MOD-40. It was a thrill to teach the younger troops how to use it. We have a good group of guys, sharp and very bright," Chief Igotta said. "They are all gaining the experience they need."

But Sergeant Paper isn't exactly a rookie. He took second place when Chief Igotta held a MOD-40 typing test during the mission. "I've typed on keyboards over Iraq and Afghanistan on AWACS, so I know what that's like," Sergeant Paper said. "There's good things about that because you are making a difference."

"But this (mission) is a lot different because you're actually helping people in a devastated country that may not be able to reconnect to the Internet in their lifetimes," he said.

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