

In Images: How American Airlines Supported Operation Allies Refuge

9/14/2021

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Since the U.S. Department of Defense activated the Civil Reserve Air Fleet on Aug. 22, American Airlines has operated more than 25 flights as part of the program, aiding in the effort to bring thousands of evacuees to the U.S. from Afghanistan. On Sept. 13, at Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU), one of the airline's concluding flights served to welcome U.S. servicemembers home from their tours of duty in the Middle East.

Images capture American's participation in Operation Allies Refuge in recent weeks, including how the airline honored the service and sacrifice of hundreds of American heroes as they made their way home.

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Maintaining the mission

Team members from around the system came together to support American’s Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) activation these past few weeks. Throughout our airline, so many aviation professionals have raised their hands to help, including our Technical Operations team. So often behind the scenes, this group is charged with maintaining the safety of every aircraft in the air and keeping our airline moving. The same is the case for our CRAF flights. But there are differences, and our Tech Ops team has stepped up in a big way to ensure the safety and success of every mission.

IN THE AIR AND ON THE GROUND

In addition to a full inspection before departure, each aircraft leaving the U.S. to begin a mission has two or more JFK- or PHL-based aviation maintenance technicians (AMTs) on board should any maintenance-related needs arise. It’s a voluntary position and one for which the team has overwhelmingly raised their hands to support. “Seeing everyone else doing their part, I wanted to do my part of it, too,” said JFK-based AMT Philip Chu who recently returned from a mission.

Our U.S.-based AMTs also team up with our Frankfurt, Germany (FRA)-based AMTs who have been traveling to the various military bases where our missions depart from to provide on-the-ground support, including completing full inspections prior to the flight, supporting fueling operations and loading evacuees’ luggage and personal belongings.

“Working with our Frankfurt team, we completed a maintenance check of the aircraft before it departed the military base,” said JFK-based AMT Neftaly Bayon, who quickly volunteered to be part of these missions. “When I was doing a walkaround of the aircraft, I saw a little girl who reminded me of my daughters when they were young. She was so happy, waving to everyone. I would do it again.”

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BACK AT HOME

Supporting these missions and deploying our Tech Ops resources starts with the team behind the team. Our Maintenance Operations Control (MOC), Routing and Supply Chain teams have been working around the clock to



prepare and position aircraft and resources and coordinate with departments across the airline who are supporting these important flights.

So many have stepped up in a big way, including engineers who have created protocols and authorizations for configuring aircraft, and maintenance control technicians who organize any maintenance needed to prepare the aircraft.

The MOC team manages the fleet and the maintenance side of the operation and coordinates across the airline to supply maintenance support — that work involves more moving pieces for the CRAF flights. “The CRAF missions are dynamic. That’s why our MOC team mans the IOC Command Center around the clock, continuing to coordinate with the other departments to manage any obstacles, which may present themselves,” said John Richter, Senior Manager of MOC.

The Materials, Supply and Aircraft on Ground (AOG) teams worked to ensure these missions had the proper materials to keep moving seamlessly. We’re flying to new destinations where we don’t have our usual support — be it parts, tools or people — which is why it’s critical that each aircraft is loaded with a fly away kit. They contain all the necessary tools and parts to address any issues with an aircraft. “The entire Supply Chain organization really stepped up to support our passengers and crew by ensuring the safety and dependability of every flight,” said Matt Flock, Senior Manager of Planning.

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Supporting our team as they serve our country

Friday, September 03, 2021, 11:24 AM

When asked about the past week, American Airlines first officer and Air National Guard Colonel Carla Riner described it as “rewarding, enlightening, exciting and heartwarming.” She’s spent it on military leave serving as Deputy Director of Mobility Forces supporting Operations Allies Refuge and Allies Welcome at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL).

In her role, Col. Riner manages all airlift assets — including both military aircraft and airliners in the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) — used to transport thousands of Afghanistan evacuees through PHL to safe harbors across the U.S.

Working closely with airport, airline, government and military partners, her team coordinates flight routing, passenger manifests and other logistics critical to the ongoing movement of evacuees through PHL.

“It is a truly unique and fulfilling opportunity to serve in our nation’s effort to care for and protect those who fought for U.S. interests in Afghanistan over the last 20 years,” Col. Riner said. “From my first mission over Afghanistan supporting Operation Anaconda as a C-130 pilot with the 167th Airlift Wing to the important work we’ve been tasked with today, the Air National Guard has provided me the chance of a lifetime to serve my country and fulfill my dreams.”

A CAREER THAT COULD SPAN THREE LIFETIMES

When Carla joined American as a flight attendant in 1991, she never imagined a life on the flight deck. “I had no intention of flying for an airline or the military, but I got entranced by the idea of becoming a pilot — so I started working on my private pilot license in between trips for work.”

She recalled fondly that her fellow flight attendants would often tease her for studying on layovers between flights. But when a first officer working with her overheard, he suggested joining the Air National Guard as a way to pay for flight school. Intrigued, she started asking questions — and before long, Carla landed a position as the second female pilot for the 167th Airlift Wing.

“When I returned from flight training with the Air National Guard, it made for some really fun conversations with other crew members and our customers to work as both a C-130 pilot and a flight attendant.”

Carla applied and was hired to be a pilot for American in Miami flying the Boeing 727 in January 2001. But just nine months later, following terrorist attacks on 9/11, her unit was activated and deployed to support the U.S. entrance into Afghanistan and again in 2003 to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Following deployment, Carla returned home to find her and countless other pilots on furlough as the airline industry struggled to recover. She made the most of her time — balancing her exemplary service in the Air National Guard with aspirations of a career at a federal government agency.

Carla received her Juris Doctorate in 2008 and accepted a role with the National Archives in Washington, D.C., where she climbed the ranks to become Deputy Chief Operating Officer. During that time, Carla was also promoted to Colonel and held progressive posts as 167th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Commander and 130th Maintenance Group Commander. It was only after a 12-year break that she returned from furlough and joined the

flight line as a first officer on the Airbus A320 in Miami.

Today, Carla serves in dual roles as a PHL-based first officer on the Boeing 787 and as Wing Commander for the 166th Airlift Wing in New Castle, Delaware, overseeing more than 1,100 Air National Guard members that provide tactical airlift support using C-130 aircraft.

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Col. Riner and fellow American pilot, Col. Allison Miller, at Dulles International Airport.

**PARTNERING TO ENSURE MISSION
SUCCESS**

After being selected for temporary assignment supporting Operations Allies Refuge, Col. Riner spent two days supporting and observing her counterpart and fellow American pilot, Col. Allison Miller, at Dulles International Airport (IAD).

Deployed to direct both inbound and outbound evacuation flights at both U.S. points of entry, Col. Miller brings more than 5,000 military and civilian flight hours and a unique expertise mobilizing personnel and assets in response to military conflicts and humanitarian crises. Throughout her distinguished 25-year career, she has served as Director of Reserve Integration for the Air National Guard, Director of Mobility Forces for Air Forces Northern, Chief of the Air Mobility Division at the 601st Air Operations Center, Commander for the 179th Airlift Wing and Director of Safety for the Air National Guard.

“We met nearly 10 years ago during a professional military education course and instantly hit it off,” said Col. Riner. “Unlike me, though, Col. Miller has served continuously since 9/11 — and brings extensive experience to special missions like those that have been stood up at PHL and IAD over the past week.”

Still, both Col. Riner and Col. Miller credit strong partnerships for the mission’s success. “This has been an unprecedented and truly collaborative effort between the Department of Defense, airport and city officials, airlines and our federal partners. Here at PHL, American and the PHL Airport team have embraced us as family and have gone above and beyond to ensure we have the equipment, resources and space needed to vet and transport evacuees.”

In addition to the aircraft and crews provided through CRAF, American has volunteered space in Terminal A-West and A-East baggage claim, as well as airfield buses, baggage tugs, carts and other equipment necessary to the operation.

“We’re incredibly proud of both Col. Riner and Col. Miller,” said Capt. Tim Airey, Director of Flight for PHL and DCA. “They’ve been instrumental in helping establish and refine a process that expedites CRAF flight arrivals and provides the highest level of care for both our passengers and our team. They embody the best of our American family and have inspired us all to reach higher, do more and give selflessly.”

American Airlines Flight Attendants Reflect on Flying a Civil Reserve Air Fleet Mission

Thursday, September 02, 2021, 10:30 AM

Thousands of American Airlines flight attendants volunteer each year to crew flights of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet, a U.S. government program that provides the Department of Defense with additional aircraft capacity in times of national crisis. Dozens of those flight attendants were called into service recently, willingly accepting the assignment and helping American fulfill its duty to the country. These are their reflections on their experiences as crew members on American’s rescue flights transporting evacuees from Afghanistan.

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Opening PHL to Afghanistan evacuees

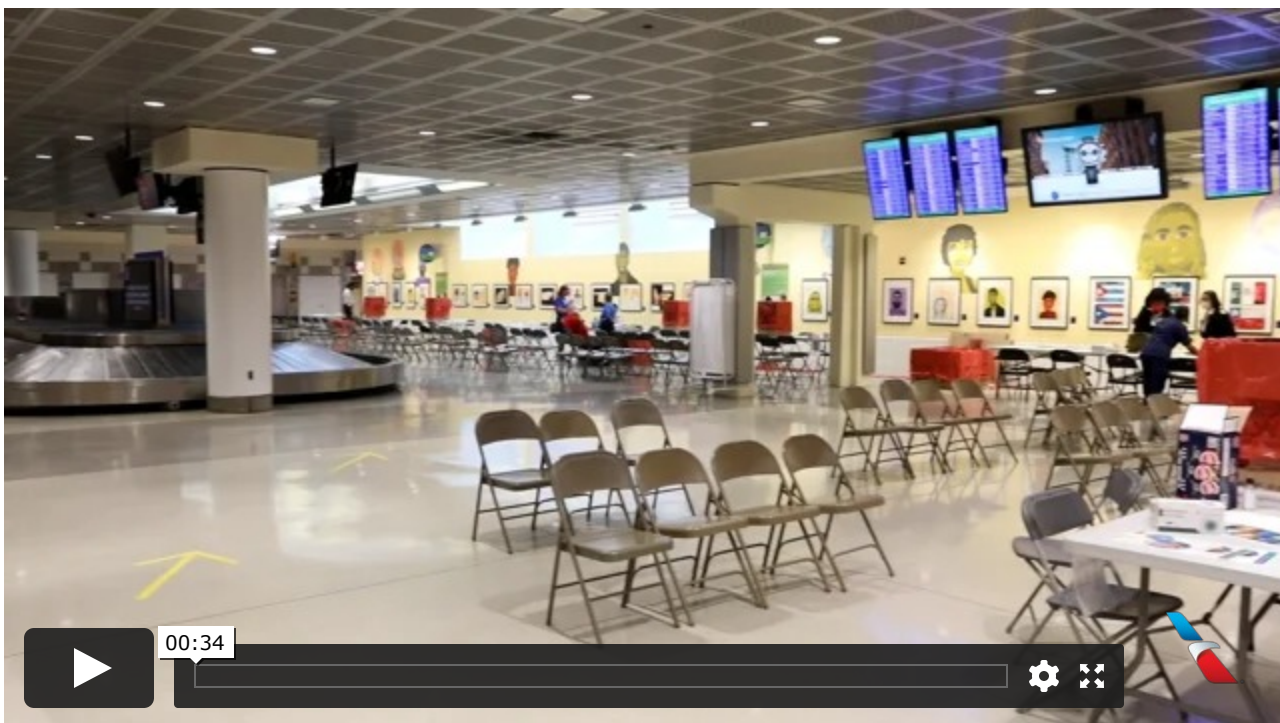
Monday, August 30, 2021, 2:45 PM

Following news that Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) would become the second entry point for evacuees

arriving on Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) flights, American Airlines quickly mobilized to assist airport partners and city officials to prepare.

Leveraging knowledge and experience from previous operations at Dulles International Airport (IAD), American worked with PHL Airport Operations and federal partners to develop a process that would expedite CRAF arrivals. Central to the plan, passengers and crew would be allowed to deplane into secure areas of the airport rather than waiting on board aircraft — improving the experience for evacuees and ensuring aircraft could be cleaned and redeployed on future missions without delay.

Overnight, portions of Terminal A-West and the Terminal A-East baggage claim volunteered by American were secured and repurposed into relief areas for evacuees waiting to be vetted and screened for entry into the U.S.



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An array of city, state and federal agencies as well as local hospitals and nonprofit organizations also mobilized to provide care and assistance to evacuees after arrival. Once initial vetting and coronavirus testing are complete,

evacuees have on-site access to Dari, Pashto, Farsi and Urdu translation services, religious space, medical care and aid stations with food, medicine, personal care items and children’s toys.

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The plan was put to the test Saturday morning. Shortly after 4 a.m. ET, an American Boeing 777-200 with hundreds of evacuees touched down from Europe — and within 40 minutes, all passengers and crew were able to deplane. Since then, the process has continued to improve. American’s second mission, which arrived at PHL on Saturday, took less than 20 minutes to offload passengers and bags. Several military aircraft have also landed at PHL since Operation Allies Refuge expanded to PHL. Unable to utilize jet bridges, American provided airfield buses to transport evacuees from remote pads to the terminal.

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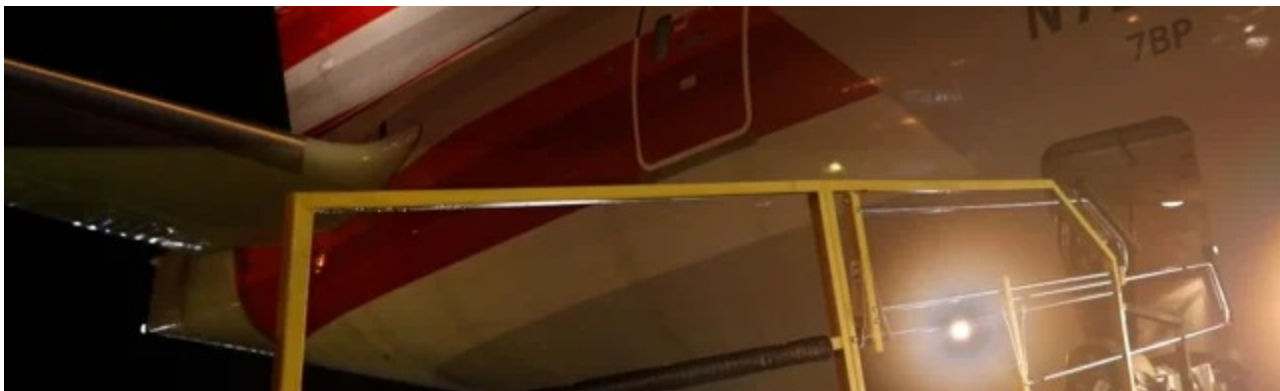
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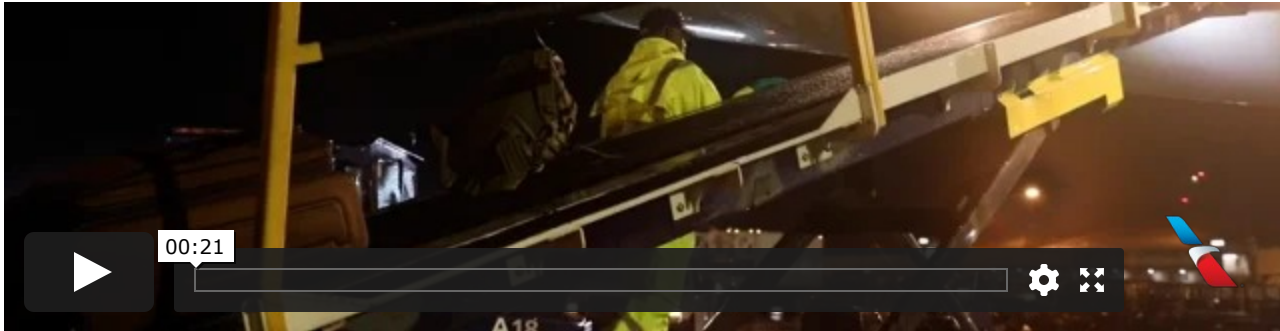
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“We’ve been able to develop and refine a seamless 24/7 operation led by the airport, city agencies, the military and our federal partners,” said Anthony Stanley, PHL Director of Administration and Planning for American Airlines. “In the past three days, more than 1,600 evacuees have arrived at PHL on CRAF flights — and we’re prepared to welcome even more in the coming days.”





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LaGuardia Airport-based Flight Attendant Connie Mirando, who worked the first arrival into PHL, described the experience as humbling. “I joined the CRAF volunteer list after 9/11 as a way to help, and it was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity to serve. I struggle to imagine what these families have been through and am overwhelmed by their kindness, gratitude and perseverance.”

Rising to the occasion

Friday, August 27, 2021, 1:30 PM

Hear from team members about supporting the Civil Reserve Air Fleet mission

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There aren't many situations that the American Airlines team at Dulles International Airport (IAD) can't handle. As a sister airport to American's hub at Reagan National Airport (DCA), IAD is a common location for diverting aircraft during inclement weather, which is why the airline's team there has developed something of a specialty in managing irregular operations and other one-of-a-kind circumstances.

It's also why American's IAD team was well-positioned to rise to the occasion when U.S. airlines were notified that

the Department of Defense was activating the Civil Reserve Air Fleet to transport evacuees coming from Afghanistan, with the first flights set to arrive at the Northern Virginia airport.

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When Camille Didier, American's general manager at IAD, began preparing her team for the task, she sought out volunteers and received a characteristically positive response.

"Like with every station, you get a feel, and our agents here are really good about stepping up, especially for greater causes. This was a station that [was here] for 9/11, so they're really used to this kind of stuff, and we've been pretty lucky and very blessed, because they always come through for us. They really do."

Two customer service agents who are based at Baltimore/Washington International Airport (BWI) heeded Camille's call for volunteers, each driving to IAD after their usual 3 a.m. shift to support IAD's regular operations while the airport's team focused on the CRAF mission.

"My boyfriend actually served there, in Afghanistan," said Lisa Young. "I wanted to know what I could do to help, and when I saw that [message], I was like, 'Yes, I can do something to help, something to be there for them. My heart just goes out to them. I feel honored to be able to volunteer to do something — even behind the scenes, even if I never meet these people — to just know that I've done something that helps to improve their lives and hopefully give them some hope. I would love to do more. In fact, I was telling my boyfriend, 'If they need a home, the answer is yes.'"

Arbi Pulaj, the second customer service agent who traveled from BWI, learned a few words of the local language so he could better communicate with those arriving. As a native of southeast Europe and attuned to the history of its refugee crises, he was personally moved to be involved.

"It's just an honor to be one of the first people here," he said. "They might see our faces first, you know? They've been trying to get out of there and see peace and see some sun, if you will, for a long time."

Laurel Buck also traveled to IAD to lend a helping hand, volunteering to take a flight from her post at American's headquarters campus in Fort Worth, Texas, to represent the Business Partner Operations and Support team.

"I read about it in the news," she said. "Monday morning, straight off the presses, my team was involved pretty heavily. That's been our whole week so far. I just wanted to help."

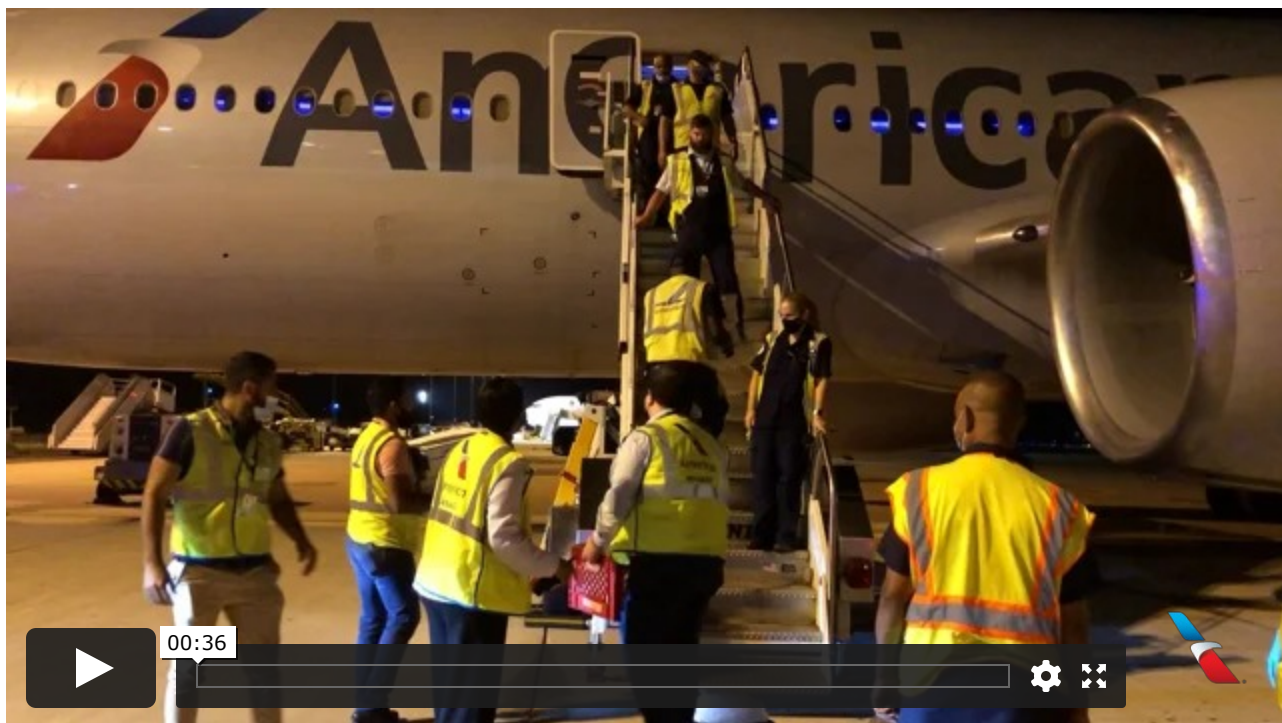
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That same sentiment was prevalent out on the tarmac, as the team awaited an incoming flight. In the space of two days, nearly 20 team members at the station applied to receive a temporary customs seal to allow them to take part in the work involved with the operation of the rescue flights. Also on hand at IAD was Capt. Keith Firmin, chief pilot for DCA, who helped provide on-the-ground, real-time support to the onboard crew.

“They want to be out here. I think everybody is proud of being a part of this effort, a humanitarian effort,” said Santiago Morales, a customer service manager. “They’re just happy to be here, I think.”

In addition to the familiar duties associated with operating a safe and successful flight, American’s IAD team proved its reputation for delivering on the fly by making a run for pizza to feed hundreds of passengers on one of the rescue flights, as well as the team members taking care of them.

Camille told her team about her phone call with the pizza place, saying, “You heard him scream into the back, ‘Y’all, we’ve got a big one! American Airlines!’”



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The impromptu pizza run was just one of the many ways American's team stepped up to care for evacuees on board. Before the first mission took flight, the team at JFK Airport in New York worked to provision the aircraft with everything from pajamas and wash cloths to diapers and teddy bears for children.

"We've watched the situation in Afghanistan unfold with heartbreak," said David Lombard, Alliances Manager at JFK. "So when the time came to help, we wanted to do everything we could to provide a little extra comfort while on board."

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American's dedicated crews are also making the CRAF missions possible, the first of which was comprised of volunteers from the New York base and led by Captain Tony Dettorre, Director of Flight for New York and Boston.

"It's humbling to be a part of the national effort to care for and provide safe passage to those who have offered and sacrificed so much for the U.S.," said Capt. Dettorre. "The hard work, compassion and commitment of the American family is unwavering. Without their tireless efforts both on the ground and in the air, these missions wouldn't be possible."

Behind the scenes: Supporting the CRAF mission

Thursday, August 26, 2021, 1:45 PM

Within hours of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF) being activated, the American Airlines CRAF Command Center opened. With departments and representatives from across the airline, the center is effectively a scaled-down version of our Integrated Operations Center, which carefully coordinates nearly 6,000 flights a day.

But the CRAF Command Center is singularly focused on supporting the Department of Defense's rescue missions. American's first flight arrived in the United States on Aug. 25. Ahead of that, this behind-the-scenes team — serving as the nerve center of our missions — went to great lengths to account for every detail, including preparing to fly to new airports, ensuring our aircraft were stocked with supplies to make the evacuees' journey with us as comfortable as possible and supporting our crew members.

It's our honor and privilege to safely carry American citizens and Afghan refugees to their home in the United

States.

Images from American's CRAF Command Center

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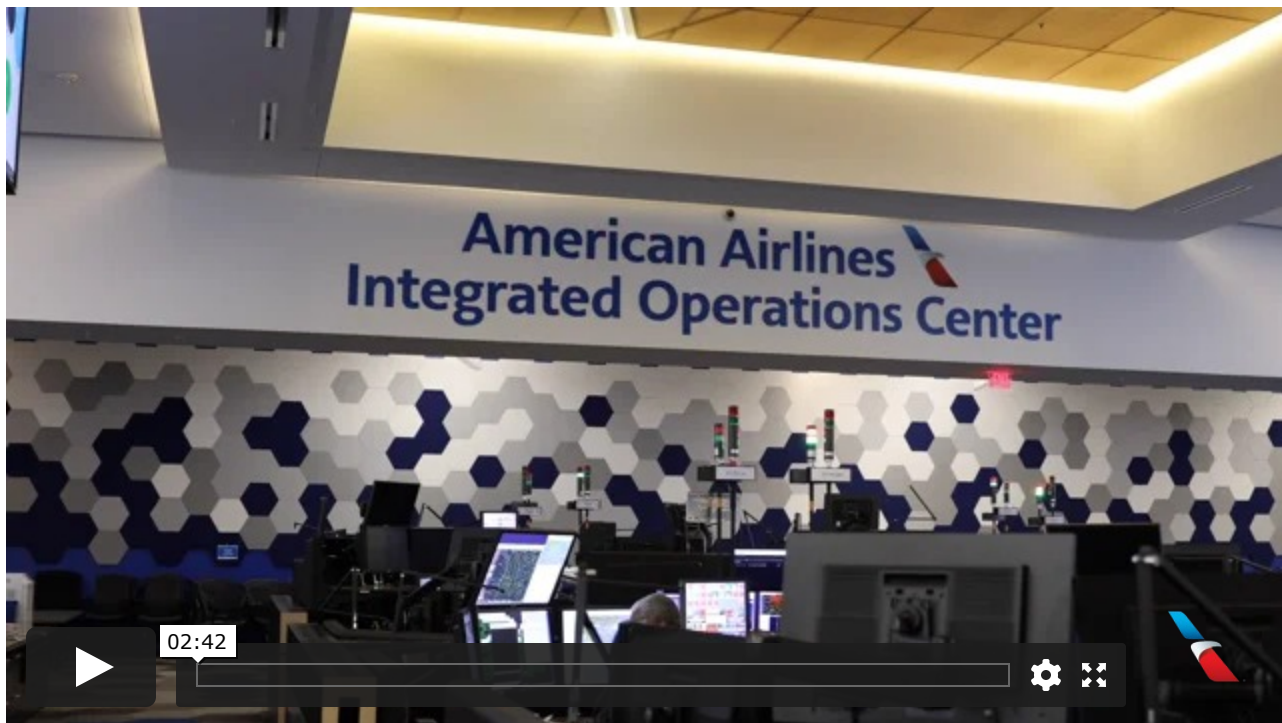
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Video



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A Statement on the Civil Reserve Air Fleet Stage 1 Activation

Sunday, August 22, 2021, 10:25 AM

FORT WORTH, Texas — The U.S. Department of Defense notified American Airlines that it has activated Stage 1 of the Civil Reserve Air Fleet (CRAF). Starting Monday, American will be ready to deploy three widebody aircraft to military bases and other secure transit points on the Arabian Peninsula and in Europe to assist with the emergency evacuation of U.S. citizens and refugees coming from Kabul, Afghanistan.

American is part of the CRAF program and is proud to fulfill its duty to help the U.S. military scale this humanitarian and diplomatic rescue mission. The images from Afghanistan are heartbreaking. The airline is proud and grateful of our pilots and flight attendants, who will be operating these trips to be a part of this life-saving effort.

American will work to minimize the impact to customers as the airline temporarily removes these aircraft from our operation. The airline appreciates customers' patience and understanding as it works to accommodate flights.

About American Airlines Group

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