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U.S. hurricane forecasters embark to Mexico & Caribbean on preparedness mission
Public invited to tour U.S. Air Force Reserve "Hurricane Hunter" aircraft

The 2015 hurricane season is not far away and to help communities in Mexico and the Caribbean get geared up for the season and weather the storm, NOAA and the U.S. Air Force Reserve will host a series of events, including tours aboard an Air Force Hurricane Hunter aircraft.

U.S. National Hurricane Center Director Rick Knabb; Senior Hurricane Specialist Lixion Avila; Tropical Analysis and Forecast Branch meteorologist Eric Christensen; and Air Force Reservists from the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS), 403rd Wing, Keesler Air Force Base, will educate residents of vulnerable communities about hurricane preparedness. Tours of the Air Force Reserve Command's WC-130J "Hurricane Hunter" will offer an opportunity to learn how scientists collect hurricane information.

"Last year, Mexico was battered by six tropical cyclones, including two from the Atlantic basin and four from the eastern North Pacific. One of these was Odille, a major hurricane that struck the Baja California peninsula," Knabb said. "This tour is a crucial opportunity to work with our partners in Mexico and throughout the Caribbean to prepare for the next hurricane and reduce the human and economic toll."

Military air crews fly 10 state-of-the-art WC-130J aircraft directly into the core of tropical cyclones to gather data that are critical for forecasting a hurricane's intensity and landfall. The data are sent in real time via satellite from the aircraft directly to the National Hurricane Center for analysis and use by hurricane forecasters.

"2015 marks 72 years that the Air Force Reserve Command's 53d WRS has supported the National Hurricane Center and United States Hurricane Warning Program to help mitigate the hurricane threat within the Atlantic basin," said Lt. Col. Jon Talbot, 53rd WRS chief meteorologist.

During the 2014 hurricane season, the 53rd WRS flew 52 missions, including 13 investigative flights over the Atlantic for the National Hurricane Center. It also flew five missions over the eastern North Pacific and 17 over the central North Pacific. The eastern North Pacific hurricane season starts May 15 while the central North Pacific and Atlantic basin hurricane season begin June 1.

Locations and times for public tours are listed below (all times are local):

- April 20, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Merida, Mexico
- April 21, 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Cozumel, Mexico
- April 22, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Bonaire
- April 23, 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. – Santo Domingo, D.R.
- April 24, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. – St. Kitts
- April 24, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – St. Eustatius

- April 25, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – San Juan, P.R.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Join us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and our other [social media channels](#).

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