



# CONR - 1 AF/AFNORTH

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## CONR wins NORAD-level award

*By Angela Pope, AFNORTH Public Affairs*

**TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** – The Continental U.S. North American Aerospace Defense Command Region is NORAD's most outstanding unit for its support of the common defense and partnership in protecting the U.S. and Canadian homelands in 2010.

During the Spring NORAD – U.S. Northern Command Commander's Conference April 12, Adm. James A. Winnefeld, NORAD commander, announced CONR as the winner of the Partridge-Slemon Award.

“As Admiral Winnefeld read the citation and presented the hardware, I can't describe how extremely proud I was as your commander having personally witnessed your selfless dedication to excellence, integrity and teamwork this past year as we've provided the citizens of North

America the defense of our nation's skies in the face of a dynamic and evolving air threat,” said Maj. Gen. Garry C. Dean, CONR commander.



This last calendar year was indeed a challenging and fast-paced year for the command.

CONR responded to more than 1,300 tracks of interest and exercised command and control of more than 2,800 sorties in support of Operation Noble Eagle – the command's response to the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001.

Included in those sorties were flights over several space shuttle launches, Super Bowl XLIV,

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AWARD**

the Vancouver Winter Olympics, the State of the Union Address and meetings of the U.N. General Assembly.



"When it comes to defending America's skies, CONR is always ready," said Brig. Gen. Christopher Coates, CONR deputy commander. "We remain steady, tirelessly vigilant and on close watch regardless of the time of day or night to deter, prevent and, if necessary, defeat hostile air attacks on North America."

CONR also orchestrated protection for the president of the United States on more than 60 occasions, including one alert response that became known as "Obooma."

In August, while President Barack Obama was in Seattle, a small aircraft inadvertently entered a restricted airspace, coming within eight miles of the president's airplane. Two F-15s from the 142nd Fighter Wing in Portland, Ore., scrambled to intercept the aircraft. While en route, the jets broke the sound barrier, producing two sonic booms over Seattle.

The sonic boom caused some concern, but the reaction from the public was mostly positive. Social media sites 'lit up' with comments such as, "Ever vigilant ... as we all know ... it only takes one time – Thanks NORAD!" or "Hat's off to the men and women for keeping our skies and our president safe!" And of course there was the ever popular sentiment, "I'll take jet noise anytime – the sound of freedom!"

In addition to keeping busy providing homeland defense for North America, the men and women of CONR also responded to two unprecedented disasters – the earthquake in Haiti and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The island nation of Haiti was devastated by a 7.0 magnitude earthquake Jan. 12, 2010. In response, the 601st Air Mobility Division, part of the 601st Air and Space Operations Center, temporarily transformed their Regional Air Movement Control Center into the Haiti Flight Operations Control Center after the quake virtually rendered the Port-au-Prince International Airport inoperable.

The HFOCC's primary 'charter' was to coordinate all U.S. military, commercial, governmental and non-governmental aircraft that flowed in and out of the airport, assigning 'slot times' to maximize the efficiency of ramp operations for all incoming and outgoing flights.

"We essentially provided two distinct and much-needed capabilities at the time - airspace management and airflow management," said Col. Brad Graff, 601st AMD chief and officer-

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### 3-3-3 AWARD

in-charge of the HFOCC during relief operations. "Haiti's main seaport was completely unusable because of the widespread damage, so relief operations had to be funneled through the single operational runway at the international airport - all on a single cul-de-sac ramp with only 10 parking spots."

In two months of operation, the HFOCC processed nearly 6,000 slot time requests, coordinated the air movement of 18,000 short tons of cargo, evacuated more than 29,000 passengers and transformed an airport accustomed to channeling a mere 20 flights per day into an operation accepting nearly 180 flights per day.

The success of the HFOCC garnered the team the coveted Air Force Chief of Staff Team Excellence Award.



A few months after the earthquake, the largest environmental disaster in the United States saw its beginning when the Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico April 20, 2010. Initially, CONR provided units to help disperse the spill and mitigate its impacts when as it made its way toward the shoreline.

Under the command of the Joint Forces Air Component Commander, the 910th Airlift Wing, a U.S. Air Force Reserve unit based in Youngstown, Ohio, deployed two C-130 Hercules transport aircraft and aircrew to Stennis International Airport, Miss., equipped with the Modular Aerial Spray System, to assist with containment efforts in the Gulf of Mexico.

CONR also provided emergency preparedness liaison officers to support the federal on-scene coordinator to assist civil authorities with available military assets, including logistics, medical, security forces and public affairs.

In July, senior Department of Defense and Homeland Security officials made the decision to centralize airspace management operations in the 601st AOC due to the organization's 'inherent and unique skill set' when dealing with airspace deconfliction and ability to respond to natural and man-made disasters. The Joint Aviation Coordination Command was created to alleviate the burden the U.S. Coast Guard was undertaking.

"The decision to move airspace coordination operations to the 601st AOC made complete sense," said Coast Guard Capt. Mike Emerson, JACC director. "The men and women of Northern Command's air component have world-class capabilities and expertise when it comes to airspace management and deconfliction, and we were able to leverage that to our advantage. Things like access to networks, shared databases, common operating pictures

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#### 4-4-4 AWARD

and full motion video were invaluable to the success of the JACC."

"Likewise, they brought experience from past events like the earthquake in Haiti that you just can't glean from a textbook or corporate manual," he said.



The JACC was in operation at Tyndall Air Force Base until September 2010.

The 601st AOC's Intelligence and Reconnaissance Division also provided satellite imagery to help locate surface slicks, recover spewing oil and minimize environment impacts. The collected imagery was passed to the command and control elements at the Incident Command Posts in New Orleans, Mobile, Ala., or

Miami, who then assigned spotters and skimmers to the affected areas.

"The IRD folks were able to provide near-real time imagery from the Gulf to the Unified Area Command, which ultimately helped to streamline the efficiency and effectiveness for the on-scene responders," said Col. Randy Spear, 601st AOC commander.

All of these contributions, plus many others, helped CONR bring home the Partridge-Slemon Award.

"I know this award will never replace the long hours and extra days many of you devoted to ensure our mission excellence," General Dean said. "So I hope the camaraderie we share in a job well done allows us to take a brief moment to reflect on why we've volunteered to defend our nations' freedoms."