



Getting settled: 56th RQS ready for action

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9/11/2007 - **ROYAL AIR FORCE LAKENHEATH, England** -- Moving can challenge anyone, some may need hundreds of boxes to pack their stuff, and some may leave those boxes packed for years as they slowly adjust to living in their new homes.

Moving an entire Air Force squadron is no small endeavor.

One difference between an individual moving and an entire squadron is the individual doesn't have to go through a unit compliance inspection to prove they are ready in less than 15 months after finally opening the doors of their new home.

While the squadron started to move in June 2006, they were still supporting the government of Iceland until September of that year. They didn't start concentrating on the squadron's inter-workings until everybody was in place.

"We only had 11 or 12 months to get the squadron up and ready for an outstanding [rating] during the UCI," said Tech. Sgt. Chris Sweetin, operations flight NCOIC, 56th Rescue Squadron.

The UCI took place in August 2007.

When the 56th Rescue Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Steven Huss was asked about his squadron's transition from Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland he said, "I think overall it was a smooth transition but anytime that you pick up and move a squadron full of people, families, equipment and aircraft it has its challenges."

The squadron faced challenges such as deploying personnel to support state-side bases in need of manning assistance and deploying other Airmen down range to support Middle Eastern operations.

In order to overcome the challenges, communication and planning was vital, Tech. Sgt. Sweetin said. They set goals and held weekly meetings to make sure everyone remained focused.

"Our number one priority was getting personnel combat-mission ready," he said. "We pretty much had to rewrite everything; we incorporated what we could from Iceland but about 80 to 90 percent had to be rewritten. We were in constant contact with stateside units, [Pacific Air Forces], [United States Air Forces in Europe] and other major players to make sure we weren't missing anything."

The support wasn't only provided by distant organizations, but ones directly affiliated with the small squadron of 51 people.

"It was a really big team effort, the 48th Fighter Wing did an outstanding job of helping us with the move," the commander said.

Although the squadron's "excellent" UCI rating proved its transition was a success, they aren't satisfied with anything less than perfection, so Tech. Sgt. Sweetin said, "it's always a work in progress to make it better, but the 56th Rescue Squadron is ready for action."



Airmen from the 56th Rescue Squadron prepare for a standard training mission. The 56th RQS began its move to RAF Lakenheath, from Naval Air Station Keflavik, Iceland in June 2006. In less than 15 months the squadron was able to stand up and receive an "Excellent" rating during their 2007 Unit Compliance Inspection. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class John Easterling)