



Photos by Staff Sgt. Timothy Cook

Senior Airman Debra Chaves, 363rd EOSS weather technician, verifies current wind speed using an anemometer. Chaves is currently deployed to PSAB from the 47th OSS/OSW, Laughlin AFB, Texas, in support of OSW.

# W e a t h e r F l i g h t

# Prince Sultan's Prophets of Weather

**By 1st Lt. Jeff Roberts**  
363rd AEW Public Affairs

As Mark Twain once said, "Everyone talks about the weather, but no one does anything about it."

Here at Prince Sultan AB, Saudi Arabia, we still can't do anything about the weather, but knowing how weather works and accurately forecasting and observing current weather and weather trends keeps aircraft and their crews safe from Mother Nature's bad side.

This is where the men and women of the 363rd Expeditionary Operation Support Squadron's Weather Flight demonstrate their unique capabilities.

"We support the aircraft here with both forecasting for future missions and observing current weather," said Master Sgt. Dido Moran, 363rd OSS Weather Flight superintendent. "An air crew needs to know that they can accomplish their mission, get there and, most importantly, get back without weather becoming a problem."

The 363rd OSS Weather Flight forecasts weather for all aircraft at PSAB including coalition forces.

"We provide a tool that helps aircraft fly successfully while giving them information on one of the variables that may affect the performance of their aircraft," said Moran. "We don't tell them where to go, only what they may encounter along the way."

Being the weatherperson may mean being the scapegoat or the hero.

"I always like to remind people that as weathermen, we are in marketing, not production," laughed Moran.

Of course predicting weather is also serious business.

Each day, aircraft commanders listen as Moran and his team give them information to consider while flying missions to enforce the no-fly, no-drive zones over Iraq.

"I have had commanders cancel missions based on the weather information we gave them," said Moran. "It's nice to know the crews have confidence in your reports. No one likes to cancel a mission but, if it happens, you sure hope what you said would happen, happens."

Just last week the AOR experienced a classic "Haboob" scenario which involves strong winds and sand storms caused by collapsing thunderstorms. PSAB experienced winds in excess of 55 mph and reduced visibility to less than a half a mile. The weather teams were instrumental in two weather cancellations, possibly saving human lives as well as expensive and sensitive aircraft and equipment.

"Weather teams provide information that affects our game plan," said Maj. Mike Rouse, 363rd Expeditionary Operation Support Squadron chief of weapons and tactics and F-15C pilot. "Bad weather puts us at a disadvantage in

protecting ourselves and aircraft against attack as well as how we can employ our weapons against a target."

Being proactive in their spot-on forecasts is a great feat, and if the weather didn't change, forecasting weather would be enough. But as everyone knows, weather does frequently change here in the AOR.

That's where the importance of Remote Observation Stations and the people who serve in them comes into play.

Far from the Coalition Complex pool or even the busy Ops and Maintenance areas, is a small shed where a single airman spends 12 hours a day watching for anything that may affect aircraft already in flight.

"I watch current weather conditions, pass updated weather information to the control tower and issue any necessary advisories for aircraft leaving, coming home, or flying near our area," said Senior Airman Debra Chaves, 363rd OSS weather technician.

Both Chaves and Moran give credit to the Air Force's weather technical school at Keesler AFB, Miss., for the ability to do their best in a job that is next-to-impossible to perfect.

"This job is a lot of responsibility," said Chaves. "But the technical school and on-the-job training make me feel confident that I provide the information needed to the aircraft we support."

They also said that the unknown nature and constant challenge of weather is why they wanted to be part of the weather career field.

"Weather is constantly changing and definitely not a desk job," said Chaves. "You get to experience so many different things and it makes you feel good when you hit a forecast and have that positive impact on a mission."

"We will never be able to completely get our arms around nature," said Moran. "But when you get it right, you have saved the government money in fuel, equipment that could have been damaged, and may ultimately have saved human lives."

Master Sgt. Dido Moran, 363rd EOSS Weather Flight Superintendent, checks connections on a Tactical Automated Observing System. Moran is currently deployed to PSAB from the 437th OSS/OSW, Charleston AFB, S.C., in support of OSW.

