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

With the 2018 hurricane season fast approaching, NOAA and the U.S. Air Force Reserve will host a series of events, including tours aboard a hurricane hunter aircraft, to help communities in Mexico and the Caribbean prepare for the season and the coming storms.

[National Hurricane Center](#) director Ken Graham and several federal hurricane specialists will visit with residents of vulnerable communities and discuss hurricane preparedness, resilience and how they can become "weather-ready." Tours of the Air Force Reserve Command's [WC-130J "Hurricane Hunter"](#) will offer an opportunity to learn how scientists collect hurricane information. The [NOAA G-IV](#) jet, a high-tech, high-flying, and high-speed platform used for hurricane forecasting and research, will be on display as well.

"Last year's hurricanes Irma and Maria were some of the most powerful hurricanes ever to strike Mexico or the Caribbean," Graham said. "Even as recovery from these devastating hurricanes continues, we have to prepare for another season that is just weeks away."

The eastern North Pacific hurricane season begins May 15 while the central North Pacific and Atlantic basin hurricane season begins June 1.

Locations, all local airports, and local times for public tours are:

- April 23, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico
- April 24, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Manzanillo, Mexico (on Mexico's Pacific Coast)
- April 26, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Panama City, Panama
- April 27, 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. – Montego Bay, Jamaica
- April 28, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. – Ceiba (Roosevelt Roads), Puerto Rico

During hurricanes, military air crews fly 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.

"Last year was a very busy hurricane season for the squadron," said Lt. Col. Kaitlyn Woods, 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron (WRS) chief meteorologist. "At one point we flew into Hurricanes Irma, Jose and Katia simultaneously from three different locations, using almost all

our assets and man power at once. We do this so the forecasters at the hurricane center will have accurate and up-to-date information.”

During the 2017 hurricane season, the 53rd WRS flew 93 missions over the Atlantic basin, including 15 investigative flights, for the National Hurricane Center. The NOAA G-IV flew 21 missions.

Aside from Graham, also participating in the tour will be senior hurricane specialists Lixion Avila and Daniel Brown from the National Hurricane Center; U.S. Air Force reservists from the 53rd Weather Reconnaissance Squadron 403rd Wing, stationed at Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi, Mississippi; and the flight crew of NOAA’s G-IV.

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