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## Female crew makes history at Andrews

Lt. Col. Tim O'Brien

An all-women helicopter alert crew from the 1st Helicopter Squadron made history March 9, as the first flight at Andrews manned entirely with a female crew.

At the controls of the UH-1N were Capt. Anne-Marie Contreras, 1 HS instructor pilot, 1st Lt. Magdelana Painter, 1 HS pilot, and Staff Sgt. Cheryl Rush, 1 HS flight engineer. Their maintenance crew chief was Mary Ann Caress.

"The flight was really a scheduling coincidence," said Lieutenant Painter as she planned the navigation route for her upgrade sortie. "This was not planned as a 'gender history' thing. Tomorrow, we'll probably fly with different people."

Sergeant Rush is the first female flight engineer assigned to the 1 HS and the second UH-1N female flight engineer.

"I think it's an honor to be one of the first women to break the mold for other women to follow," said Sergeant Rush. "I hope this flight inspires younger female Airmen to follow in our footsteps."

With the number of female aircrew increasing at the 1 HS, Captain Contreras said she is looking forward to the first all female crews holding alert at the squadron's alert facility.

"This was a special flight, but the bottom line is that it's a team effort," Captain Contreras said. "We enjoy a tremendous support network in our squadron, the ops group and with Team Andrews. We're proud to carry on the Sam Fox tradition."

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PHOTO BY BOBBY JONES

*Staff Sgt. Cheril Rush, 1st Helicopter Squadron flight engineer, and Capt. Anne-Marie Contreras, 1 HS instructor pilot, receive a preflight briefing from 1st Lt. Magdelana Painter, 1 HS pilot, prior to their historical maiden flight as the first all female flight crew March 8. The all female crew, including a DynCorp aircrew member are the first all female crew since the squadron's inception in 1955.*

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