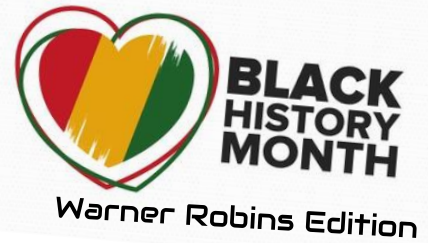


# All African American crew flies into history books



by Noel Espinal

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Photo Source: WGXA

WARNER ROBINS, Ga--

History in the making; that's what crew members of a local military flight crew said they were proud to be apart of. Members of the JSTARS flight crew, say today was about more than a mission. It was about honoring African Americans who came before them and paving the way for future generations.

U.S. Air Force Captain Dewey McRae says "today we're simply going out to honor the legacy of those who came before us."

A 32 person all African American flight crew is something that's been years in the making.

"So this is the first time the E-8C has ever put together an all African American crew." An E-8C is the type of plane and airborne command station the crew flies.

JSTARS is a military group that consists of Georgia's Air National Guard, active duty Air Force and Army personnel. The purpose of their mission is to gain training hours and leave a mark on history.

Director of Joint Staff, Konata Crumbly says increased diversity within the military is a strength. "As time has gone along we've learned to leverage diversity and we've actually really learned that diversity is our power," Crumbly explains.

Crew members say the sacrifices of those who've flown before them is what makes the training mission possible.

"This is just an honor and privilege. So the folks that come behind us will see it's okay to dream," McRae says.

Captain Andrea Lewis, is the co-pilot of the flight and first black female to become a pilot for the Georgia National Air Guard in 2019. She says works to encourage young people that anything is possible. "What I try and express to young people is that you can do anything you set your mind to especially young women." She adds making history for a second time is an "amazing feeling." "I've always hoped that I was gonna be able to be apart of an event like this, and so to have this happen today is really amazing."

The crew hopes the mission will inspire the community

Senior Technician Tanisha Swift says this mission can "showcase to people that we can do it, we are doing it, and that anyone can do it."