

Stealthy avionics back shop maintain eyes, ears of F-117



by Airman 1st Class
Stephen Collier
49th Fighter Wing
Public Affairs

Holloman's F-117A Night-hawk maintainers continue to support the jet while the stealth's operations tempo overseas increases. Away from the flight line is a 49th Maintenance Squadron shop dedicated to maintaining the eyes and ears of the black jet.

The 49th MXS Avionics flight is responsible for the upkeep of 11 different line replaceable systems including navigation and targeting equipment.

Tech. Sgt. Brian Myers, Automatic Test Station shop chief, said the computerized brain of the stealth is maintained and repaired by the ATS shop.

"When the flight-line guys pull parts off the aircraft, they swap them with a new one from our supply inventory while the bad part is brought to us," Sergeant Myers said. "Due to the odd shape of the aircraft, the design called for computers to maintain level flight. Without the systems we

maintain, the jet wouldn't fly."

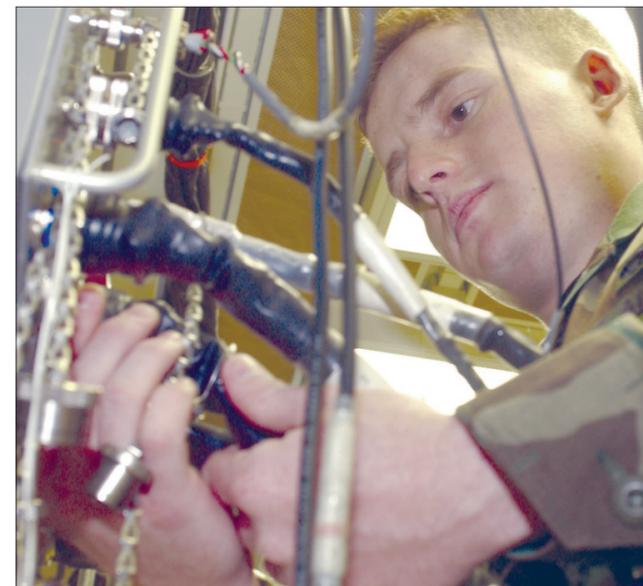
During contingencies and deployments, the F-117's increased flying and training missions mean more wear and tear on parts and more maintenance is required to keep the jets flying.

Sergeant Myers said the work load of the Avionics flight depends on how well the jets are maintained.

"Sometimes the jets go out and they will be alright but sometimes they all break at once," he said. "When the F-117A returns from a deployment, there are a lot more parts needing to be replaced. Some days the shop will sit around, waiting for incoming parts. Sometimes we become overloaded with work and equipment needs to get repaired immediately. That's when troops are called in at a moment's notice."

Compared with other Air Combat Command installations, the avionics flight keeps a small to zero back log of avionics parts according to Sergeant Myers.

Senior Airman Justen Anderson, ATS journeyman, said



Airman 1st Class Christian Sanchez connects adapter cables to a turret interface for a systems check.

Holloman's repair time was a dramatic change from his last assignment at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

"At Offutt, the work load was much more extensive with the constant upkeep of KC-135s and there variants," Airman Anderson said. "Luckily, there are great people here and a very supportive command structure."

Airman Anderson said the problems with the stealth's components are age-related.

"All aircraft age," he said. "It's only a matter of time until they give you problems."

Second Lt. Carmel Patton, avionics flight commander, said without the avionics flight up keeping the stealth's components, bombs couldn't be delivered on time, on target.

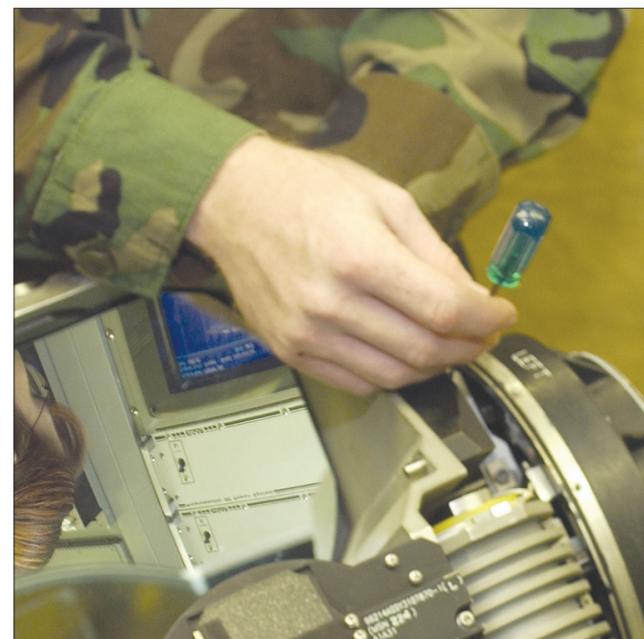
"The avionics shop gets everything done that comes to it," Lieutenant Patton said. "Equipment that comes through here is repaired and back on the flight line in no time. This flight has great people and great attitudes. All of these equal one thing: keeping jets in the air, on time."



Airman 1st Class Sean Reese, avionics back shop technician, is assisted by Staff. Sgt. Devin Morgan while removing a synthesizer card for a ultra-high frequency radio.



Airman 1st Class Christian Sanchez cleans the lens on the F-117A's targeting turret.



An avionics maintenance technician makes repairs to the turret.



Photos by Tech. Sgt. James Hart

Senior Airman Danny Yager, 49th Maintenance Squadron Automatic Test Station journeyman works on an test adapter interface.