

Can you hear me now? Radio maintainers keep in touch

by Airman 1st Class
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F-117A Nighthawks fly training missions everyday, preparing the 49th Fighter Wing for action anytime, anywhere. Helping to ensure that there is never a break in communication between the jet and air traffic controllers is a group of 13 Airmen ready to repair systems at a moment's notice.

The 49th Communications Squadron ground radio maintenance shop repairs and maintains air traffic control radio systems vital to air operations including transmitter receivers, enhanced terminal voice communications, ultra-high frequency receivers and public address systems.

Master Sgt. Kevin Joyce, air traffic control radio maintenance chief, said the stealths wouldn't fly without constant air traffic

control communications.

"If you can't control the aircraft, they can't perform the mission," Sergeant Joyce said. "We maintain these ATC systems so the tower can control the airspace surrounding Holloman."

The communications maintainers' mission doesn't stop at ATC systems. During daily operations, the shop will receive jobs from maintenance control and radar operations requiring

immediate maintenance to any device from security forces' hand-held radios to the base's giant voice system.

"Once we receive a tasking, the technicians go out to troubleshoot and repair the damaged systems," he said. "We have to keep the mission going the best we can. I've been in this career field for 22 years, and one thing you learn about the job is you're responsible for anything radio related. If nobody else claims it, ground radio gets it. Airmen here are challenged with a lot of the system."

The ground radio career field breaks down to three basic elements including ATC, tactical communications and base radio support.

Air Force tactical communications includes field radios and mobile land communication systems that other military

branches will use in their operations during deployments.

Keeping the electronic systems in check and up to speed is a relatively fresh group of Airmen to Holloman. Sergeant Joyce said his shop has a training challenge ahead of it, but they will pull through.

Airman 1st Class Gann, ground radio technician, said Airmen train each other because of the lack of the experience in the shop.

"All of the new Airmen came to Holloman when the NCOs deployed," Airman Gann said. "During the recent changes of command, we provided over 30 public address systems to the base on top of our ATC mission. During the summer, a whole rack of receivers would go down and we would have to stay for longer hours to repair the systems".

Sergeant Joyce admitted that without the constant teamwork by the new Airmen, the mission could not be accomplished.

"Without the cohesion here, the mission doesn't get done," he said. "Last week alone, a particular system came into our shop and our three levels came together to solve a problem. As they improve their training, Holloman will have a top-notch ground radio maintenance shop."



Airman 1st Class Ea Velasco repairs a coupler.



Airman 1st Class Alex Gould, ground radio technician, tunes a quadroupler module. The module increases the radio frequency four times to help air traffic controllers communicate with aircraft.



Airman 1st Class Rey Marquez, ground radio technician, performs a visual inspection on a power supply regulator.



Airman 1st Class Ea Velasco, ground radio technician, repairs a coupler used to connect weather operations to the radio receiver site.