

PACAF: 18th Comm @ Cope Tiger

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KADENA AIR BASE, Japan — The 18th Communications Squadron deployed its Theater Deployable Communications team to participate in a multilateral training exercise hosted by the Royal Thai Air Force.

The purpose of Cope Tiger is to improve combat readiness and the combined and joint interoperability of American, Thailand, and Singaporean forces, while enhancing security relations and demonstrating America's resolve to support the security and humanitarian interests of allies in the region.

The 18th CS was first in PACAF to deploy the Theater Battle Management Core System, which gives the deployed commander the ability to plan and control air operations, including air and space control and air and missile defense. This was the first time the 18th CS had the opportunity to palletize, depalletize, set-up and operate in the field. Specialists also had to overcome an incompatibility of commercial power versus power input requirements for the TBMCS.

The 30-person team consisting of specialties from computer systems management, data transmission, satellite communications and radio technicians supported more than 780 Air Force and Marine Corps personnel. The units they supported flew joint missions with Thailand and Singaporean air forces. The Air Force was able to fly over 350 combined F-15E, E-3, and KC-135 sorties during a two-week exercise with an overall three

country total of 1,240 sorties.

The exercise started early for the 18th CS team. Planning started almost a year before the exercise began. Preparation included a site survey, gathering user requirements, designing a communications plan and ensuring all equipment was ready for the deployment. All of this took place while the TDC team participated as a key member, in more than six local operational readiness exercises and finally an Operational Readiness Inspection.

The team's preparation paid off in February when it arrived at Korat AB, Thailand. All of the planning, briefings and equipment checks allowed them to implement their plan.

This team had the task of unpacking all equipment, establishing a satellite link and installing radios to allow initial communications to the base. After the initial phase was complete, the expansion phase began. The team had to expand services to the buildings supporting aircraft maintainers and pilots. This required them to run a fiber cable approximately 1.5 miles. Once they established a link to the far side of the base, they began running individual connections for phone and computer services. As the end of the first week approached, most users were up and running with phone, NIPR-NET, SIPRNET and radio services. Now the task of maintaining the network was the primary mission of the team. Most of the exercise was accomplished during the day, but the communications team had to ensure its services were available around the clock. They provided reach-back services to the rest of the world, and set up a small morale area for e-mail and



Courtesy photo

The team from Kadena's 18th Communications Squadron spent more than a year planning the comm needs for Cope Tiger's multinational exercise.

phone use.

Despite the fact the team worked primarily behind the scenes supporting the warfighters, the deployed commander recognized their direct impact on the mission.

"It is through the professionalism and commitment of personnel from the 18th Communications Squadron the Air Force was able to maintain a leading role for peace and stability in the Pacific AOR," said Col. George Daniels, 13th Air Force Director of Operations and Exercise Plans.

Although most people don't see all that's involved to keep everyday services available, many come to appreciate the ability to check their e-mail from their base or make calls. Most of the 30-person team that set out on this TDY had not deployed before, however, they left this exercise with experience that will help them in their every day jobs and on their next deployment. They not only gain practical experience but also the ability to think outside the box, to find a solution to a problem on their own.