

Deployed warfighters require three Rs for success

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RAMSTEIN AIR BASE, Germany — Reliable, robust and redundant are the types of communications systems deployed warfighters have come to expect on the frontlines of America's Global War on Terrorism. What troops may not realize is that it takes a team of dedicated professionals working non-stop behind the scenes to ensure that these three R's are met.

RELIABLE

Between July 2002 and June 2003, the most critical span for Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, the SATCOM facility had absolutely zero downtime for any scheduled or unscheduled maintenance. This means the SATCOM team provided an amazing communications capability and support to our deployed warfighters, an incredible feat that entailed keeping a decade old satellite terminal and supporting equipment up and running.

ROBUST

The 86th Communications Squadron was directly responsible for providing one-third of the communications reach-back capability to deployed warfighters supporting OEF and OIF. This service supported 290,000 troops and led to the execution of more than 17,600 successful combat sorties. As daily operations began to slow, the communications need remained at a premium. When deployed troops got a spare moment, they made morale calls back home to their families. At one point, the SATCOM shop was processing 60,000 DSN calls a day through the Switch Multiplexing Unit.

REDUNDANT

This is perhaps the most difficult R to attain because of funding requirements, but the Air Force and DoD have seen to it that this will no longer be a problem.

In December of 2003 the 86th CS received the Air Force's newest Teleport site upgrade. The site is a telecommunications collection and distribution point augmenting the established services Ramstein already offers to our deployed warfighters. The new facility

provides interoperability between multiple Military Satellite Communications and commercial satellite systems while providing deployed Ground Mobile Forces with DSN, Video Teleconferencing, DRSN, Automatic Digital Network and secure and nonsecure network connectivity, Information Assurance tools and strategic and tactical C4I support with worldwide reach-back capabilities to the Defense Information Systems Network.

The 2400-square-foot teleport support facility is the home for all of Ramstein's base band equipment associated with the Commercial STEP mission. It houses equipment for Ramstein's C- and Ku-band satellite dishes and the install of support equipment for four EHF and two UHF antennas scheduled for installation at Ramstein between 2004-2005. All these pieces will then be routed to the newly installed Multiplexer Integrated DCSS Automated System. This system will emulate existing multiplexing and switching equipment while occupying much less floor space. MIDAS will also automate all the routing within the STEP site and increase the communications capability to our deployed troops by an amazing 300 percent.

The past few years have proven the Air Force has indeed become more expeditionary. Programs such as teleport will guarantee the Air Force is ready to meet the changing and challenging needs of its military endeavors.



Photos by Master Sgt. Leroy Lambert / NCOIC SATCOM

In the foreground is the AN/GSC52 dish supporting the MILSATCOM mission with X-band. The next dish is the Ku-band followed by the C-band dish for commercial SATCOM traffic. The building in the background is the brand new Teleport facility.

