

SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 7, Issue 1

"127th Wing – Your Hometown Air Force"

January 2024



TOP PERFORMERS



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. CHELSEA E. FITZPATRICK

Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato, left, commander, 127th Wing, presents the 2023 recipients of the outstanding airmen, civilian employee and commander trophy awards. The winners of the airman, noncommissioned officers and company grade officer categories will go on to compete against Michigan Air National Guard Airmen at the state-level awards, where winners will be selected and announced next summer. State-level winners will go on to compete in the nationwide Outstanding Airmen of the Year competition.

Outstanding Airmen and employees honored by 127th Wing at ceremony

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick

127th Wing Public Affairs

Command staff and approximately 1,400 members of the 127th Wing convened to announce this year's Outstanding Airmen of the Year on Dec. 2, 2023.

"The Outstanding Airmen of the Year ceremony is our opportunity to recognize our top performers, and the [127th] Wing's accomplishments this past year," said Brig. Gen. Matthew Brancato, commander of the 127th Wing and Selfridge Air National

Guard Base. "I feel honored to celebrate the extraordinary efforts of the 127th Wing."

The individual winners representing the Wing's top-performing Airmen were selected from a pool of approximately 30 individuals in 11 categories. Final award recipient decisions were based on superior leadership, job performance and overall achievement.

Winners were selected in the following categories:

1. Airman of the Year — Airman 1st Class Cole Alli, 127th Operations Group

2. Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year — Tech. Sgt. Erica Spaulding, 127th Maintenance Group

3. Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year — Master Sgt. Trina Ramos, 127th Medical Group

4. First Sergeant of the Year — Master Sgt. Heather Bell, 127th Mission Support Group

5. Company Grade Officer of the Year — 1st Lt. Caleb Jenkins, 127th Air Refueling Group

6. Honor Guard Member of the Year — Airman 1st Class Ethan Leary

7. Recruiter of the Year

— Tech. Sgt. Justin Nabarrette

8. Civilian Employee of the Year — Catherine Finocchiaro, 127th Wing Headquarters

9. Civilian Manager of the Year — Andrew Schumann, 127th Wing Headquarters

10. State Employee of the Year — Joe McIntyre, 127th Mission Support Group

11. The Commander's Trophy was awarded to the 107th Mission Generating Force Element Team.

During the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Rolf Mammen, Michigan Air National

Guard commander, presented Capt. Charles DiCuccio, 127th Maintenance Group, with the 2022 Company Grade Officer of the Year award.

The winners of the airman, noncommissioned officers and company grade officer categories will go on to compete against Michigan Air National Guard Airmen at the state-level awards, where winners will be selected and announced next summer. State-level winners will go on to compete in the nationwide Outstanding Airmen of the Year competition.

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On the cover: The 127th Wing "Outstanding Airmen of the Year" award winners receive the eagle trophy to commemorate the category honor they earn. The 2023 ceremony was held at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Dec. 3, 2023.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD
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INNOVATION

Michigan Airmen drive future, build agile refueling processes

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea E. FitzPatrick

127th Wing Public Affairs

Members of the 127th Air Refueling Group are answering the Air Mobility Command leader's call to revamp how they accomplish their KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft mission — by creating a training program for it.

Airmen of the 127th Wing, Michigan Air National Guard are trailblazing KC-135 Stratotanker specialized fueling operations by writing the procedures for and establishing a training environment at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, one that has already given aircrews from more than four tanker units the opportunities to practice new tactics.

“We must drive the future with bold, disruptive,

solution-oriented actions with the tools we currently have and new tactics, techniques and procedures to employ them,” Gen. Mike Minihan, AMC commander said. “Today, AMC Airmen will innovate, using the tools we have in new ways, to create novel operational concepts for AMC and the joint force.”

Minihan's call to action in 2022 followed the release of Air Force Doctrine Note 1-21, “Agile Combat Employment.” The goal of the ACE concept is for U.S. forces to maintain the upper hand in combat by creating a more challenging fight for adversaries. Ultimately, the Air Force wants to execute unexpected combat tactics by cross-training Airmen in a variety of skill sets and creating capabilities for

aircraft to operate in new innovative ways, outside established locations.

How can an aircraft weighing more than 161 tons operate with greater agility? According to Chief Master Sgt. Erik Wolford, senior enlisted leader of the 191st Maintenance Operations Flight at Selfridge, one of the answers is through specialized fueling operations, a combination of hot refueling and wet wing defueling processes.

“Our team has drafted a concept of operations for the KC-135 that optimizes hot refueling and creates a wet wing defueling task,” Wolford said. “A lot has been learned through developing and employing hot pit refueling procedures with the KC-135 over the

FUTURE » PAGE 5



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. CHELSEA E. FITZPATRICK

Two members of the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Wing practice removing fuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft into an R-11 refueling vehicle while all engines run, in a process referred to as, “wet wing defuel,” during Exercise Northern Strike 23, at MBS International Airport, Freeland, Michigan, Aug. 9, 2023. Northern Strike 23 is a premier reserve component training event that integrates both U.S. and partner nation readiness training to build interoperability and strengthen partnerships in an all-domain environment.

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MISSION SECURITY

Selfridge focuses on family OPSEC awareness

By Bruce J. Huffman
127th Wing Public Affairs

January is National Operations Security (OPSEC) Awareness Month, during which we focus on policies and procedures governing the protection of sensitive, unclassified information vital to our mission.

All missions depend on critical information for success — information that if exposed to our adversaries can lead to mission failure. The systematic process of OPSEC helps deny or mitigate an adversary's ability to access "critical" information.

Our families and community members are vital players in our success. We encourage them to recognize what constitutes "critical" information and that it's not just classified information we must protect. You can help protect our Airmen and keep the mission secret by protecting what you know about the 127th Wing's day-to-day operations. That's OPSEC.

Everyone should know what information Selfridge considers critical, so they know what to protect. In addition to understanding the strategic value of information they possess, family and community members must also be aware that adversaries may target them to obtain that information and the methods they use to obtain information from them. Everyone must know mitigation strategies for potential vulnerabilities at all levels.

Examples of critical information can be specific facts about military intentions, capabilities, limitations or activities. Even though it may not be classified, if an adversary knew this detailed information, our mission and personnel



U.S. AIR FORCE ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF 55TH WING

safety could be jeopardized.

There may be times when your service member cannot talk about the specifics of his or her job. It's very important to conceal and protect sensitive information including, but not limited to, flight schedules, unit movements, temporary duty (TDY) locations and installation activities. Something as simple as a phone conversation about TDY or deployment can be very useful to our adversaries.

Other examples of "critical information" are:

- Detailed information about assigned units
- Details on locations and times of unit deployments
- Personal transactions (example: pay information, powers of attorney, wills, deployment information)

Details concerning security procedures

- Personal Identifying Information (PII)

As a family member, you will often know bits of critical information. These elements may seem insignificant, but where and how you discuss this information is just as important as with whom you discuss it. Adversaries frequently visit the same stores, restaurants and places of worship you do. Do not discuss these things outside your immediate family and especially not over the telephone or internet.

The space where information is most at risk is on the internet. Our desire to share information about our lives with everyone in cyberspace has made it even harder to safeguard critical

information.

Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok are useful for staying in touch with friends and family, as well as meeting new people. However, social media can be inherently dangerous. Applying OPSEC strategies to social media use is vital to protecting private, personal information.

Recently, it was found that one of the most popular smartphone applications, TikTok, was transferring data from user phones and storing it in China. Information from large media companies such as Meta (formerly Facebook), X (formerly Twitter) and others are especially at risk of having personal information of users stolen, sold, or leaked

to adversaries.

Always maximize your privacy settings, disabling location services, and advising friends and family to do the same. Users should also be aware that social media companies, whether they are US-based or foreign-owned, control all information shared on their platforms. Any information posted to a social media site is by definition in someone else's possession, thereby creating risk. Always be careful when opening suspicious emails, text messages, and pop-ups and always be aware of your surroundings — even online.

Learn to recognize and report attempts to elicit information. If anyone, especially a foreign national, persistently seeks informa-

tion, notify your military sponsor immediately. He or she will notify your installation's Counterintelligence Office or Military Police.

Adversaries won't ever stop trying to gain access to certain types of information, and letting one's guard down once is sometimes enough for an adversary to exploit a weakness.

"Hopefully this emphasizes the importance of protecting sensitive data and other critical information," said Lawrence Crowder, 127th Wing OPSEC Signature Manager. "By employing these OPSEC strategies and guidelines, families can better protect their private, personal information, and the mission, and keep themselves, their friends, and their families safe."

REDESIGNATION

127th Communications Squadron stands up

By Senior Master Sgt. Daniel Heaton
127th Wing Public Affairs

The 127th Communications Squadron officially stood up as a squadron, transitioning from the 127th Communications Flight during a ceremony at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, on Dec. 2, 2023.

The transition from flight status to squadron status “recognizes the broader scope of the unit’s responsibilities in an era where cyber threats and information warfare have become integral to national security,” said Col. Samuel Trapasso, commander of the 127th Mission Support Group, of which the 127th Communi-

cations Squadron is a component.

Both the 127th Mission Support Group and the 127th Communications Squadron are part of the Michigan Air National Guard’s 127th Wing, based at Selfridge Air National Guard Base.

As part of the ceremony, Airmen of the squadron unfurled a new squadron guidon and unveiled a new squadron patch, which among other symbology includes an image of an aircraft flying over a bridge, representing the squadron’s role in maintaining a communications “bridge” to Air Force aircraft and other assets.

“The Airmen of the squadron are some of the most intelligent, dynamic

and hard-working professionals that I have ever met,” said Major Jeremy Bishop, the unit’s commander. “They exemplify core values, with a special emphasis on ‘service before self.’ I am truly humbled and grateful to celebrate this much-deserved accomplishment alongside of them.”

The Communications Squadron, often referred to simply as “Comms” by fellow Airmen, maintains computer networks, radio and phone systems, ensuring not only that the systems are in operational condition, but are protected from cyberattacks from potential adversaries.

The Communications Squadron is one of a total of five groups, 13 squadrons

and four flights that comprise the 127th Wing at Selfridge.

About 45 Airmen are assigned to the 127th Communications Squadron, a unit that was an early advocate of the change from a flight to a squadron. Across the Air National Guard, more than 40 Communications Flights are scheduled to transition to squadron status during Fiscal Year 2024.

According to Trapasso, the transition is more than just a name change.

“It symbolizes the strategic evolution that reflects the dynamic nature of our military and the critical role that communications play in our modern, technology-driven world,” Trapasso said.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY SENIOR MASTER SGT. DAN HEATON

U.S. Air Force Maj. Jeremy Bishop, commander of the 127th Communications Squadron, holds the squadron guidon during a ceremony marking the unit’s transition from a flight to a squadron at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan, Dec. 2, 2023. Approximately 45 Airmen are members of the squadron.

Future

FROM PAGE 3

past few years.”

A “hot” KC-135 keeps at least one engine running during on-ground refueling. Getting a KC-135 back in the air more quickly increases the lethality of the collective U.S. military air mission, keeping aircraft in the air for longer.

“Wet wing” refers to an aircraft that carries fuel. Wet wing defueling achieves a similar outcome when a KC-135 lands in a contingency location, then offloads a portion of its fuel into a refueling vehicle while all the plane’s engines run hot.

Contingency locations are areas outside of established bases that can meet the needs of aircraft supporting combat operations, as close to the fight as possible. This agile combat scenario greatly expands the KC-135 fuel delivery capa-

bilities, extending its reach even further.

When originally researching the wet wing defueling potential of the KC-135, Wolford and his team did not think there was a documented capability for the process. As it turned out, there was a doctrine to support procedures, but the methods would not work efficiently in combat scenarios. The team sought guidance from Air Force Special Operations Command to help develop a concept of operations, or, “CONOPS,” for the KC-135 wet wing defueling process in a combat location.

“We married up the KC-135 draft CONOPS we have with [AFSOC’s] CONOPS and the outcome is very ‘air-crew-centric,’” Wolford said. “We focused very heavily on having aircrew perform the task in its entirety.”

This meant that an Airman proficient in operating a boom during aerial refueling would now need to become proficient in SFO pro-

cedures on the ground.

Col. Leah Voelker, 127th ARG commander, said her team has created a lot of synergy on improving mission agility over the last couple of years with key Michigan National Guard assets such as the 110th Wing, in Battle Creek, the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center and the National All-Domain Warfighting Center.

“We are very passionate about getting after, demonstrating and looking for the capabilities needed for the next war fight and Michigan has created such a great environment for that,” Voelker said.

The 127th ARG has also forged partnerships with civilian airports around the state, such as MBS International Airport in Freeland and Oscoda-Wurtsmith Airport. The latter two locations, along with SANGB, were certified for hot refueling operations on both the KC-135 and KC-46 Pegasus aircraft, in summer 2023.

“We’ve created a space where we can train and get better so that we are more lethal and we’re ready to answer the fight,” Voelker said.

This summer, the 127th ARG was able to put years of hard work, research and development into practice when they hosted and certified seven different aircrews in multiple locations around Michigan in SFO procedures.

Many of the certification events took place during Exercise Northern Strike 23-2, one of the Department of Defense’s largest reserve component readiness exercises, bringing more than 7,000 participants from 25 states, one territory and four partner nations to the NADWC to train in a variety of war-fighting scenarios.

Tanker generation teams comprised of 10 aircrew members, employed at three locations, successfully moved fuel to practice these agile combat skills.

“We were able to move more than 500,000 pounds of fuel, qualify over seven crews, and conduct over 66 [missions] while proving multiple concepts within the ACE envelope,” said Maj. Mark Hanna, 217th Air Component Operations Squadron out of Battle Creek, and NS 23-2 planner for the ARG.

Although the successes have been great, there have been challenges in developing and implementing new concepts.

The 127th ARG and its support team have been taking detailed notes along the way so they can adapt and overcome.

“The biggest challenge is that [SFO] is something we haven’t done before so it’s constantly evolving,” Hanna said. “We tackle something that hasn’t really been done before and we hone it.”

Despite the seemingly monumental task of the SFO process for the KC-135 and creating the environ-

ment needed to certify non-fuel-specialized Airmen in these skills, the team responsible for achieving the positive outcome has a high level of camaraderie.

“We have an excellent team, a group of people leaning forward, across the state,” Hanna said. “It truly has been an integrated effort, not just in the state, but from seven other units, Air Combat Command, AMC, across the entire Air Force spectrum.”

Since the first enabling factor of ACE is the multitalented Airman, Voelker wants to give all the Airmen involved their due praise.

“I’m thankful to have been able to watch this team come together: the individual Airmen who looked at each other and themselves in the mirror and asked the hard questions,” Voelker said. “I’m very grateful to work with this team and watch what they can accomplish because what they’re doing is extraordinary.”

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GIVING BACK

Airmen improve community, adopt a highway

**By Capt. Cammy Alberts
and 2nd Lt. Elise
Wahlstrom**

127th Wing Public Affairs

Airmen from the 191st Operations Support Squadron at Selfridge Air National Guard Base are giving back to the community through Michigan Department of Transportation's Adopt-A-Highway program. The 191st OSS adopted a two-mile stretch of highway off Jefferson Avenue in Harrison Township near the base in early 2020.

Inspiration for the 191st OSS to participate in the

MDOT AAH program stemmed from a desire to provide a service to the community.

"As Airmen, we live in these communities. It's part of your identity. You want it to be representative of who you are," said 1st Lt. Caleb Jenkins, a member of the 191st OSS, who assisted in the coordination of the ongoing cleanup. "People visiting from out-of-state can see the best of south-east Michigan and what we have to offer."

For more than three years, personnel assigned to the 191st OSS have vol-

unteered to preserve the area along Jefferson Avenue.

"We appreciate all the help we get from community partners like the 191st OSS at Selfridge ANGB to help keep our roads clean and keep our community beautiful," said MDOT Adopt-A-Highway spokesman Dan Weingarten. "Long-standing groups like these make a huge difference every year. Adopt-A-Highway volunteers around the state pick up 60,000 to 70,000 bags of trash annually, an estimated \$5 million value.

This is needed work that we otherwise could not afford to perform."

The cleanup work they perform enhances the community by keeping the state's highway roadsides neat and attractive. Adopt A Highway areas include state highway rights-of-way, interchange areas, traffic islands, or two-mile sections of roadway. Community partners volunteer for two years. MDOT provides materials to maintain designated areas and posts signs along the road to recognize participating partners.

The program is supported by Airmen from the entire squadron. As part of the program, Airmen visit their section of road twice a year, generally working in groups of five to eight people at a time. Approximately 20 Guardsmen have volunteered to take part in the biannual cleanup.

"Everyone participating has seized on the value of community," Jenkins said. "This is a small way to give back to a community that has supported us so much over the years."

The MDOT AAH program allows participants

to adopt both sides of a section of roadway for a minimum of two years. Since 1990, AAH groups have collected over 1 million bags of trash from roadways across the state. Currently, 2,900 groups across the state of Michigan are participating in the program and have adopted over 6,000 miles of Michigan highways.

For more information about Selfridge Air National Guard Base, visit 127wg.ang.af.mil. For more information about the Adopt-A-Highway program, visit michigan.gov/mdot.

HOT JOB



Senior Airman Hannah Loose, a munitions systems specialist with the 127th Maintenance Squadron, prepares a practice munition for loading onto an aircraft on Jan. 3, 2024, at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Michigan. Munitions Airmen are a vital link to safety and efficiency in the assembly, storing and handling of ammunition for training and for operational missions.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD
PHOTO BY TOM DEMERLY

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