

BIG SKY FLYER



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Comm personnel aid BLM with climbing skills

By Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson

120th Communications Flight radio frequency technicians assisted the United States Bureau of Land Management with changing communication antennas on a tower located at Antoine Butte near Zortman, Mont. August 14.

Montana Air National Guard communications equipment was scheduled to be removed from the site so the 120th CF offered to assist the federal agency with updating its equipment.

MTANG communications personnel were uniquely qualified to swap out the antennas mounted on the 100 foot tower as they hold certification in tower climbing and safety.

Vigilantes hit the mark at Spearhead

By Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson

The aircrew of two Montana Air National Guard C-130 Hercules transport aircraft successfully parachuted training cargo into a designated area at the Spearhead Drop Zone located near Toston, Mont. August 12.

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120th Communications Flight members Tech. Sgt. Michael Hedrick and Tech. Sgt. Josh Petersen install antennas on a communication tower. U.S. Air National Guard photo/Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)

The antennas are critical for the agency to help maintain radio communications needed for wildland fire-fighting operations conducted over a large portion of north central Montana. According to a BLM radio frequency technician, who also

serves part-time as a Montana Air National Guardsman assigned to the Communications Flight, having the MTANG technicians update the antennas saved the government valuable time and money since the BLM had no certified climbers available

locally to do the work.

“The BLM has a moratorium on climbing so we would have had to farm it out,” Tech. Sgt. Robert Hoffman said. “In Montana and the Dakotas, when BLM has to go out there to contract out for climbers it becomes more and more difficult due to insurance concerns in the civilian world, so this really helped out the BLM, really helped us out a lot.”

Radio Frequency Technician Tech. Sgt. Josh Petersen attended school in September 2014 to receive additional training that allowed him to certify communications personnel in tower climbing. He has since trained and certified all five RF technicians assigned to the 120th CF in safely climbing towers.

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Parachuted training cargo falls to the ground after being dropped from C-130 Hercules transport aircraft assigned to the 120th Airlift Wing of the Montana Air National Guard Aug. 12, 2015. The aircraft dropping cargo at the Spearhead Drop Zone located west of Toston, Mont. (U.S. Air National Guard photo/Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)



Climbing continued from page 1

He said his team of climbers encountered few challenges during their time working high above the ground on the communications tower.

“Just the heat and trying to stay hydrated,” Petersen said. “We had a couple of breezes up there that weren’t too bad. The guys on the ground were always running stuff back and forth for us and working together so it worked great.”

Senior Airman Erick Christian, a cyber transport systems technician, is certified



120th CF members Tech. Sgt. Michael Hedrick and Tech. Sgt. Josh Petersen climb a 100 foot communication tower. U.S. Air National Guard photo/Senior Master Sgt. Eric Peterson)

to climb towers but served as a member of the ground crew during the work conducted at Antoine Butte.

“I helped get equipment up and down and keep things organized and straight and make it as smooth as I could up there,” Christian said. “I feel we work very well as a team. We communicate well and we get everything done as quickly and efficiently as we can.”

The communications tower antenna work also provided the personnel a chance to get real-world experience in their Air National Guard ca-

reer specialties.

“This was very effective AFSC (Air Force Specialty Code) training,” said 120th Communications Flight Commander Maj. Benjamin Royer. “We were able to get personnel who were certified on the tower climbing last week and this week they did an actual job experience. It was a fantastic opportunity.”

“Part of the incentive for doing the BLM’s work for them was not only were we bringing antennas down, we were also getting experience in putting antennas up so it was a win-win for everyone,” Hoffman said.

Drop continued from page 1

The air drop was held near the end of a six day readiness and capability exercise designed to test the 120th Airlift Wing’s ability to mobilize, deploy and execute its new airlift mission.

The training cargo consisted of barrels of water strapped to pallets that simulated the weight of equipment or supplies that could be dropped during a real-world mission.

“It’s simulating a 1000 pound pallet,” said 120th AW Small Air Terminal Superintendent Chief Master Sgt. Pat Halko. “It’s basically four barrels with some water in it to meet the 1000 pound weight standard with a 26 foot ring-shot chute on it. They just kicked it out the back of the airplane and tried to hit the point of impact, simulating what would happen in a warzone.”

It took a team of 120th AW Airmen to complete the training mission. Air transportation specialists and aircrew coordinated efforts to pack the parachutes, load the cargo into the aircraft, fly to the drop zone and drop the cargo at the training area.

The desired point of impact at the Spearhead Drop Zone was marked on the ground by a small orange triangle. One of eight dropped pallets of water appeared to land as close as 100 feet from the marker.

“We work hard in the shop, building this all up and trying to teach the young Airmen what actually goes on,” Halko said. “So it’s the reward of what we do hard back there for hours and hours and hours. And in just a few seconds we get to see what it all is and it brings it all back to reality.”



October dining menu

Saturday-Beef Brisket, Savory Baked Chicken, Potatoes Au Gratin, Wild Rice, Simmered Red Cabbage, Spinach, Steamed Brown Gravy

Soup-Potato Cheddar

Desserts-Apple Crisp, Pineapple Upside Down Cake, Pudding Parfaits, Jello, Ice Cream Sundae Bar

Sunday-Chicken A La King, Stuffed Green Peppers, Mashed Potatoes, Buttered Egg Noodles, Stewed Tomatoes, Green Bean Almandine, Chicken Gravy

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