

126 COMMUNICATIONS SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

126 Communications Squadron

126 Communications Flight

STATIONS

Scott AFB, IL

ASSIGNMENTS

126 Mission Support Group

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The Illinois Air National Guard is helping to provide critical communications to Puerto Rico in the wake of Hurricane Maria. The hurricane devastated many parts of the island, knocking out power across the entire island and rendering communications networks inoperable. The lack

of reliable communications – no voice phone calls, no internet, no text messaging – has severely hampered the relief effort. The Illinois ANG arrived on the island on Sept. 23, 2017. Within the day following, the eight-member team from the 126th Communications Flight set up a Joint Incident Site Communications Capability adjacent to the Puerto Rico ANG's 156th Wing operations building at Muniz Air National Guard Base, Puerto Rico. This team of Airmen is now providing emergency communications capability to the wing's command post and 24-hour support.

“We have a satellite link that allows the local command to communicate with agencies back on the mainland,” explained Capt. Chris Kruse, 126th Communications Flight commander. “This gives the wing commander and his senior leaders reliable connection with the outside world.” Across Puerto Rico, a total of three incident sites have been set up at military installations, providing essential communications capability. Since so many cell phone towers, telephone lines and other pieces of infrastructure were damaged or destroyed in the storm, intra-island communications is one of the greatest challenges facing the various agencies involved in the response. “This is by far the most damaged area I have ever seen from a natural disaster,” Kruse said.

At a hardened box full of radio circuitry inside a tent at one of the incident site, Staff Sgt. Michael Raatz works to ensure that the various connections made by the communication capability sites are constantly fine tuned. “We know that people are really relying on this connection,” Raatz said. “Right now, it is one of the few reliable systems available to the local command.” The 126th Communications Flight is based at Scott Air Force Base, in suburban St. Louis, Missouri. 2017

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency, U.S. Air Force, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.