

# 127 CIVIL ENGINEER SQUADRON

## **MISSION**

The 127 Civil Engineer Squadron provides engineering, construction, fire protection, environmental and other services to the 127 Wing, Michigan Air National Guard, and to the entire Team Selfridge community at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mich. Much of the 127 CES' work is focused on the construction, maintenance, and protection of all base infrastructure at Selfridge, which includes buildings, roadways, airfield pavements, utility services (such as water, gas, sewage treatment and electricity) and the surrounding environment. They also provide complete services for fire protection both on the base's air field and all base buildings.

The total base infrastructure inventory includes just over 3,600 acres of property; approximately 350 buildings; approximately 1.2 million square yards of aircraft taxiways and parking ramps and 25 miles of base roadways. The 127 CES is responsible for the maintenance of all these facilities.

The 127 CES is comprised of approximately 110 military personnel and approximately 150 civilian employees. The 127 CES is a subordinate unit of the 127 Mission Support Squadron, 127 Wing, Michigan Air National Guard. Major elements of the 127 CES include the Selfridge Fire Department; Environmental Services; Real Property; Emergency Management; and a wide range of Roads & Grounds and Construction-related services. The squadron includes a Prime BEEF (Base Emergency Engineer Force) team which can quickly respond to a variety of emergency situations.

## **LINEAGE**

127 Civil Engineering Flight  
Redesignated 127 Civil Engineering Squadron  
Redesignated 127 Civil Engineer Squadron

## **STATIONS**

Selfridge ANGB, Mt Clemens, MI

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

127 Mission Support Group

## **COMMANDERS**

LTC Hans C. Jens, #1976

LTC Mac A. Crawford

Maj Stephen Ward

Maj Todd Rupright, #2010

## **HONORS**

### **Service Streamers**

### **Campaign Streamers**

### **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

### **EMBLEM**

### **MOTTO**

### **NICKNAME**

## **OPERATIONS**

May 1998—The 127 Civil Engineering Squadron (CES) deployed to Elmendorf AFB, Alaska to construct a readiness training center there. During the two-week deployment, Seventeen CES members volunteered to construct a house for Habitat for Humanity.

May 1999—82 127 Civil Engineering Squadron (CES) members deployed to Comox, Canada for annual training.

January 2003—29 members of the 127 Civil Engineering Squadron deployed to Al Dahfra in the UAE and Prince Sultan AB in Saudi Arabia as part of Air Expeditionary Force 7 (AEF 7). This was part of the buildup for the war in Iraq. The 127 CES provided firefighting, troop bed down and facility maintenance to other units in these locations.

February 2003—A new fire/crash rescue facility was constructed for the 127 WG firefighters. The larger building centrally located all of the equipment to enhance readiness.

December 2006—The Selfridge Fire Department responded to the fatal crash of a small, civilian aircraft in Washington Township, MI.

March 2007—82 members of the 127 Civil Engineering Squadron deployed to Baden, NC. for training in the Air Force's Prime BEEF (Base Engineering Emergency Force) program,<sup>146</sup>

March 2007—Selfridge ANGB received its first hydrogen fuel cell vehicle for use on the base as a part of a USAF/Army energy conservation effort.

Crews from the 127 CES construct a California Shelter System during their deployment to Baden, SC.

March 2008— Members of the 127 Civil Engineering Squadron deployed for training at Nevatim AB, Israel. Members of the CES built Munitions Maintenance Facility and their own dormitories where they stayed during the deployment.

Members of the 127 Civil Engineering Squadron (CES) install a cement retaining wall during their training deployment to Nevatim AB, Israel.

July 2008—Members of the 127 Civil Engineering Squadron deployed to Tyndall AFB, FL to participate in the Silver Flag exercise. The five and one half day course emphasizes contingency skills, including construction of forward bases, combat survival, chemical warfare training and runway repair.

April 2010—127 Civil Engineering Squadron deployed to Ghana, Africa to work on construction project at Acota airbase as a part of the ANG's State Partnership Program. This is part of a broader effort to assist and build relations with emerging nations. In addition to the civil engineering project, ANG personnel visited two orphanages where they made donations to the children there.

The 127 Civil Engineer Squadron, under the command of Maj. Stephen Ward, returned March 22, 2008 from Israel where they deployed for training. The 47-member team flew from Selfridge on March 5, 2008 to Sigonella, Italy and from there to Nevatim Air Base, near Arad, Israel. When the CES arrived in Israel on Friday, they hurriedly off-loaded the aircraft and cleared the runway before noon to respect the Jewish Sabbath, which begins at sundown. During the DFT, there was a good balance of work and cultural awareness.

On Friday evening, the Israeli air force hosted their traditional Friday Shabbat (Sabbath) evening meal and invited the Americans. Before dinner, approximately 200 Israeli and American Airmen rose to their feet, the men covered their heads as a young Israeli airman said the Shabbat prayer in Hebrew. After the meal, the highest-ranking officer rose and spoke in Hebrew to the airmen, discussing the workweek and evaluating their service.

The officer prepared to present a decadent three layer chocolate cake covered in coconut to one of the airmen, but the airmen graciously offered the cake to the American Air Force guests. At the time, the CES were not aware the cake would prove to be an unconventional balance for the salads they were to be served at breakfast. On Sunday, the first duty day, the 7:30 a.m. arrival at the dining facility may have led some of the CES to conclude there was a hidden Israeli agenda to get them to eat their vegetables. Already having worked two hours,

the engineers were greeted by a young Israeli airman who had prepared cucumbers and tomatoes for breakfast, a variety of salads and sugarless yogurt.

By day three, eggs were on the menu, and one day, perhaps out of sympathy for the Americans who longed for bacon, the Israeli hosts served deep-fried kosher hotdogs for the morning meat entrée. The work the CES accomplished was phenomenal. There were two worksites: the Munitions Maintenance Facility (MMF) and the dormitories where American Armed Forces reside during deployments. The crew at the MMF, under the supervision of Chief Master Sgt. Greg Robinson, constructed a 25-foot concrete masonry wall, two partial walls, and installed a septic tank with all the required piping.

Robinson was part of an advanced party team to include Technical Sgt. Mike Pattee, Senior Master Sgt. Matt Magiera, Senior Master Sgt. Phillip Scott and Master Sgt. Mark Fisher. By the time the remainder of the party arrived, the advanced party had already dismantled the walls that the CES were there to reconstruct. Under the supervision of 2nd Lt. Minesh Patel, the engineers working on the dorms installed duct work and wiring for a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system in two “Igloo” style dorms. Their job also required a great balancing act to accomplish the construction with the materials on hand.

Some improvising was necessary to match up the wrong size vents with offset drywall opening cut by another team. It was determined that it was easier to change the wall opening than to try to obtain the correct size vents. So the engineers did what they do best, they engineered another successful plan to finish the job. The acting first sergeant, Master Sgt. Mark Fisher, coordinated a weekend teambuilding event to offer the engineers some cultural awareness and allow them to get outside the “wire” of Nevatim, located in the middle of the desert. Fisher worked in coordination with the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv before the Engineers arrived in Israel to arrange a tour bus with a guide.

The tour was within the “safe zone” of Israel, and the Airmen saw some of the most age-old, historical sites on earth. During the final breakfast meal of the deployment, Israeli Col. Amir Harpaz praised the CES for their workmanship on both completed projects. Although the purpose of the CES deployment for training may have been to hone their Air Force Specialty Codes while completing the assigned tasks, it is certain much more was accomplished. Harpaz said, “What began as a partnership has developed into a friendship.” 2008

2010 Airmen who deployed for training to West Africa learned new skills and techniques, thanks to their interaction with Soldiers from Ghana. The 127 Civil Engineering Squadron, Michigan Air National Guard, deployed to Accra, the capital city of Ghana in West Africa for two weeks in April to work with the Ghana military and the North Dakota Air National Guard to perform a major rehabilitation of a building at the Ghana Air Force’s School of Technical Training. “This has been an excellent training environment for our people,” said Chief Master Sgt. Greg Robinson, the senior enlisted Airman who made the trip to Africa.

“Particularly for our masons, who have had to learn how to work in a totally different environment from what we are used to back home.” Of particular challenge for the masons who were working on the project, which included bricking in several windows and doors on the existing frame of a cement building, was working in the high heat and humidity of Africa’s “Gold Coast.” In the local environment, the normal ratios used to make mortar for laying brick didn’t work. “We were constantly adjusting how much water we needed to add, how wet we

needed to make the mortar to work with it," said civil engineer Senior Airman Keith Perkins. "We had to adjust as the day went on and it kept getting hotter.

The Ghanaian Soldiers taught us their methods so we could keep working," said Perkins. Robinson said Perkins and Staff Sgt. Jason Earad, another mason on the project, also learned new techniques for applying mortar not normally used in the U.S. "The Ghana Soldiers we have been working with are very sharp. I think there has been a good level of interaction at the job site between our people and the locals," Robinson said. Robinson said that learning to work in adverse conditions will serve the 127 CES Airmen well the next time it is called to forward deploy to Iraq, Afghanistan or elsewhere.

During the training mission, Airmen from the 127 Civil Engineering Squadron paid a visit and dropped off donations at an orphanage and a center that assists the children of women who have been rescued or have escaped from human traffickers. "How can you not help but feel that you must do something for these children," said Maj. Tom Sierakowski, the officer in charge of the deployment. Anticipating the trip to Ghana, Sierakowski worked with the Flint, Mich., chapter of the Safari Club International, to bring two large bags of supplies to the organizations in Ghana.

Once the 127 CES arrived in Ghana, the Airmen worked in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy to determine some of the needs of the orphanage and took up a collection to purchase items locally to support the organization. Master Sgt. Lisha Lewis visited both of the facilities to learn their specific needs and to arrange the visit by the Michigan Airmen. "Their list of needs ranged from flip-flops for the children to wear, all the way up to a new vehicle," Lewis said. Tech. Sgt. Emory Sims said visiting the orphanage was a reminder of the many things that Americans take for granted. "It was just amazing to see 250 children all living in that one orphanage," said Sims.

"The children were eager just to get to speak with an American." Door of No Return The trip to Ghana was the first time many of the 127 Airman had visited Africa. During the 15-day journey, the Airmen enjoyed one day off in Africa and many took advantage of the day to visit Cape Coast Castle and the infamous "Door of No Return" where thousands of African slaves were loaded on to ships for the so-called "Middle Tech. Sgt. Oscar Burkes pumps up a soccer ball for eager children during a visit to the OSU Children's Home in Accra, Ghana. Passage" journey to slavery in the Americas.

The castle recently added a small commemorative plaque that recalls the 2009 visit to the castle by President Barack Obama and his family. Future Partners It is likely that more Michigan Guardsmen will visit Africa in the future. The Michigan National Guard recently began a partnership with Liberia, which borders Ghana, under the Partnership for Peace program, in which U.S. state National Guards partner with the military of emerging nations. Michigan has long enjoyed a partnership with Latvia, which will also continue. Ghana recently became a partner with North Dakota, which helped organize and worked with Michigan on the trip to Ghana. 2010

The most recent major deployment of the 127 CES occurred 2011 when a portion of the squadron deployed to Afghanistan for six months. During that deployment, Selfridge CES Airmen completed 160 construction projects, worth more than \$75 million.