

SELFRIDGE FLYER

Volume 4, Issue 5

"127th Wing — Your Hometown Air Force"

Oct./Nov. 2021





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Published by MediaNews Group, a private firm in no way connected with the U.S. Air Force.

On the cover: Alpena, Mich.—An A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, prepares to land on a public highway here on August 5, 2021. The highway landing was part of Exercise Northern Strike 21-2, an annual multinational, large-scale military training event that tests the rapid insertion of an air expeditionary wing into a bare-base environment. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Scott Thompson)

MAKING HISTORY

127 Wing makes historic highway landing

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea FitzPatrick

127th Wing Public Affairs

Members of the Michigan National Guard's 127th Wing, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, made history today when they successfully landed modern military aircraft, then turned around and took off again from an American highway for the first time. Two A-10 Thunderbolt II pilots of the 127th Wing, two A-10 pilots of the 355th Wing, Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Arizona, and six C-146 Wolfhounds aircrew members from the Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field, Florida, executed the mission, landing the aircraft on a closed portion of Michigan State Highway M-32 here, as part of a training event named, "Thunder LZ."

"Thunder LZ gave the pilots the opportunity to land in an austere environment that they're not used to," said Lt. Col. Brian Wyrzykowski, the mission commander for Thunder LZ and a KC-135 Stratotanker instructor-pilot at the 127th Wing. "But it's also a first in the nation, as this is the first time that modern combat aircraft have landed on U.S. soil, on a highway."

Planned in line with the Air Force's agile combat employment concept, Thunder LZ was established on a four-lane stretch of M-32 approximately three miles west of the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, giving participating units the chance to practice posturing forces in a combat scenario.

"Our adversaries have advanced weapons systems and advanced technology that they can use against us, so we need to be able to operate efficiently in austere situations and gain profi-



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

An A-10 Thunderbolt II pilot, 127th Wing, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, touches down on a public highway here, August 5, 2021. The training event marked the first time in U.S. history that a modern military aircraft landed on a U.S. public highway designed only for automobiles.

ciency in those operations," Wyrzykowski said.

Thunder LZ allowed training participants to practice the forward-arming and refueling concept of ACE, taking a small aircraft crew, returning the aircraft to these austere locations, then generating the aircraft back into the fight.

Held as part of the Michigan National Guard's annual, multinational, large-scale military training event, Exercise Northern Strike, the landing took place within the national all-domain warfighting center, an area of airspace, ranges and bases geographically located in northern Michigan, where all-domain training occurs in a joint environment. From the local utility companies to municipal emergency management agencies, Michigan Department of Transportation, and even residents, the local community played a key role in the training event.

"We actually met with those homeowners directly and the level of support we received from those direct interactions has been, in my

mind, unprecedented," said Alpena CRTC here. "They're Col. Jim Rossi, commander, such a patriotic group of

Americans that are up here, willing to support and are as excited as we are to make this happen."

Wyrzykowski made the first call to initiate the planning process a year ago. After all the planning and coordination, all six aircraft successfully landing and departing from M-32 was the most basic metric of mission success. For leaders of the 127th Wing and Michigan National Guard, staying ready to fight while being progressive will continue to be one of their top priorities.

"This historic training event is very important for the Michigan National Guard, Wyrzykowski said. "We are making sure we are ready for the high-end fight against a near-peer adversary."



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SEEN AROUND SELFRIDGE



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MUNNAF H. JOARDER

Clockwise, from above: Members of the U.S. Air Force F-35 Demo Team Depart Selfridge Air National Guard Base, August 9, 2021 to support Thunder over Michigan Air Show at Willow Run Airport in Ypsilanti. The F-35 Demo Team, based out of Hill Air Force Base, Utah, performs at air shows and special events throughout the United States.

Airmen and aircraft from the 127th Air Refueling Group at Selfridge Air National Guard Base refuel the U.S. Navy Blue Angels traveling from Alaska to Michigan where they will perform at Thunder Over Michigan August 7-8. The next open house and air show for Selfridge Air National Guard Base is scheduled for July 9-10, 2022.

Members of the 294th Quartermaster Company, 36th Sustainment Brigade, Texas National Guard, assist members of the 182nd Wing, Illinois National Guard, to load a C-130 Hercules with humvees and a pallet of sustainment supplies during here on August 4, 2021. The load was part of Northern Strike 21-2, an annual multinational, large-scale military training event that tests the rapid insertion of an air expeditionary wing into a bare-base environment.



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY MUNNAF H. JOARDER



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TERRY L. ATWELL

SEEN AROUND SELFRIDGE



Clockwise, from top left: Members of the 127th Civil Engineer Squadron's roads and grounds crew based here, clear up storm debris and fallen tree branches from a recent squall that struck Selfridge Air National Guard Base on August 12, 2021. No injuries or facility damage was sustained in the storm that brought 74 mile per hour winds.

Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, 127th Wing commander, promoted Staff Sgt. Kyle Schultz, a controller with the 127th Wing's command post here, during a ceremony on August 11, 2021. Schultz has been assigned to the Wing for three years after serving in the 127th Security Forces Squadron here as a defender.

The U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team arrived at Selfridge Air National Guard base, August 5, 2021, in advance of their performance at the "Thunder Over Michigan," air show in Ypsilanti

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTOS BY TERRY L. ATWELL

COMBAT CAPABILITY

127 Wing deploys to Exercise Spartan

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea FitzPatrick

127th Wing Public Affairs

More than 700 members of the 127th Wing, based at Selfridge Air National Guard Base participated last month in a large-scale readiness exercise, traveling north to the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center here, in support of Exercise Spartan.

"Exercise Spartan is our opportunity to practice our warfighting excellence," said Brig. Gen. Rolf E. Mammen, 127th Wing and Selfridge Air National Guard Base commander. "This is what we are training every day to accomplish."

Spanning over two weeks and executed in multiple phases, the first of which includes personnel deployment out-processing, troop and equipment movement from home station to Alpena CRTC. The second phase is notionally executing combat operations in a contested, degraded and operationally-limited environment and the third will return everyone back to homestation.

"This is a big deal, where we're going to be executing combat capability, not only under the eyes of our own local inspector general's office, but the Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command's inspector generals will be here as well to observe our operation from start to finish," Mammen said.

Where the first priority is executing combat capability, the second priority for members participating in Exercise Spartan, is to learn. According to Mammen, the point isn't to execute without making mistakes, but to learn from those mistakes for the future.



127th Wing Airmen don chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protective gear as part of Exercise Spartan at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center on August 1, 2021. The 127th Civil Engineer Squadron's emergency management team set up a contamination control area and practiced running members through the line.

U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD
PHOTOS BY STAFF SGT.
ANDREW SCHUMANN

"I do not expect perfection, in fact, I anticipate we will make mistakes along the way," Mammen said. "But the key there is that we learn from those mistakes and make it better each time."

The final objective for Exercise Spartan is that everyone practices safety particularly in hot weather.

"We're going to be working hard and these are going to be some long days," said Chief Master Sgt. Richard Gordon. "We want to look after ourselves and our Wingmen."

After the exercise is complete, all inspector general team members inspecting the exercise will complete and submit reports, grading the 127th Wing unit as a whole, providing insight for further training focus.



Tech. Sgt. Mike Rygwelski, assistant chief of training for the 127th Civil Engineer Squadron's fire department, instructs members on tactical rescue rappelling at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center as part of Exercise Spartan on July 30, 2021. Exercise Spartan is a two-week long exercise meant to demonstrate the 127th Wing's capability to operate in a contested, degraded and operationally-limited environment, against a near-peer adversary.

AIRMAN PROFILE

Airman continues service and family legacy

By Tech. Sgt. Chelsea FitzPatrick
127th Wing Public Affairs

A decision made by his pregnant mother, likely saved the life of a toddler and future Michigan Guardsman.

"The only reason I'm probably still alive is because my mom was pregnant with my brother at the time," Joseph Peelish speculated about his experience on August 28, 1988 as a toddler-aged spectator at the Ramstein Air Show. "It was hot and she was very pregnant so she didn't want to take the long walk to get closer to the front of the crowd."

Her fatigue likely saved her and her two sons, when three Italian fighter jets collided mid-air causing one of the most significant air-

show catastrophes in modern history occurred only yards from where Peelish and his mom stood, taking the lives of 70 people and injuring approximately 500 more.

Peelish, a heavy mobile equipment inspector with the 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron's vehicle maintenance team, is neither the first, nor the second generation member of his family to serve at Selfridge. He's one of three family members over four generations to serve at the Michigan air base, and he wants to share the skills and knowledge he's gained.

"After 17 years, with the skill-level I've earned, you're considered a jack of all trades," Peelish said. "Before I retire, I want to share my knowledge with new Airmen."

In December 2003, Peelish enlisted in the Michigan National Guard at age 19. Attending community college hadn't been working well for him due to the financial burden and he knew he wanted to do something different with his life. At the time, his father was serving as a master sergeant in the 127th Communications Squadron here, after an active duty career.

"I started running with the wrong crowd," Peelish said. "My Dad served and I knew it was a solid career path, so I enlisted and was using the tuition assistance at the community college to learn how to work on trucks."

The part-time commitment he signed up for with his Air National Guard enlistment meant that after

his initial entry training of basic military and technical training, Peelish began to serve one weekend a month and two weeks a year.

"I've always been good at tinkering with cars, so I decided to make it a career," Peelish said.

In 2003 Peelish did just that when he began working a full-time civilian position in the unit and for the first half of his career, he specialized in fixing and maintaining fire trucks, snow plows and deicing trucks.

In addition to the state tuition assistance benefit, Peelish earned the G.I. Bill education benefit, which afforded his wife the opportunity to complete her undergraduate education in the nursing field.

"We have two young children. My ability to work while she attended school meant she could stay home with our kids," Peelish said. "Now that my Guard career is closing in on 20 years, I feel I can take a step back now that she will be working full-time."

Aside from the education benefits, Peelish says his favorite part of serving in the military is the travel and meeting new people. His last deployment was a six-month long tour to Qatar between 2017 and 2018. He's also served shorter-term deployments to countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Kuwait and travelled for temporary duty missions all over the world. More recent examples include Alaska and the Virgin Islands.

"The best part about serving is meeting a lot of interesting people because you get to travel. I've got friends all over," Peelish said. "I've also been able to help a lot of people."

After gaining 17 years of experience with the 127th



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD PHOTO BY TECH. SGT. DAN HEATON

Tech. Sgt. Joseph Peelish conducts a pre-season maintenance overhaul on a Global deicer truck at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Sept. 4, 2019. Peelish is a member of the Michigan Air National Guard's 127th Logistics Readiness Squadron. He spent two weeks in Alaska working on individual skills training as part of his annual training obligation as a member of the Air National Guard.

Wing at Selfridge as a uniformed Airman, he transferred his drill-status guardsman position to the 110th Logistics Readiness Squadron, Battle Creek Air National Guard Base, earlier this year. He wanted to broaden his perspective and train new Airmen in his specialized skillset.

"There's a lot to our job and there's a lot of stuff that can kill you," Peelish said. "Everything is heavy, sharp or dangerous and some of the new Airmen have no experience in a vehicle shop environment."

Peelish's father retired as a master sergeant from Selfridge in 2007. His great-grandfather, John Bentz, retired as the supervisor of Selfridge's boiler and steam plant in 1969. In between, he and both his siblings, a brother and sister, enlisted and have served. With the family legacy strong here, Peelish just wants to do a good job and share his wealth of knowledge to better the next generation of incoming Airmen here.

"I think my grandfathers would be proud," Peelish said.

COMMEMORATIVE MARCH



U.S. AIR NATIONAL GUARD BY TECH. SGT. SAMARA TAYLOR

The 127th First Sergeants council organized a memorial ruck march commemorating the 20th Anniversary of 9/11 here, September 11, 2021. Airmen walked with their rucksacks six miles, starting their march with a moment of silence at the time of the first 9/11 attacks.

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