

Morning Calm

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Joint effort restores Comm site

Lightning strike takes down power, United Dragon makes repairs

From 36th Signal Battalion and USAG Daegu Public Affairs

Mission Accomplished.

Critical remote communications restored

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Main: 1st Lt. Rene Rodriguez, 36th Signal Battalion, validates the apex fitting and sling legs that will carry a 3,400-pound transformer to the Salem Defense Communication System to restore lost power after lightning damage on Aug. 2. Inset: Chang Chu Hwan, with Daegu Department of Public Works, receives and positions the transformer on Salem remote site Aug. 17. U.S. Army photos by Pvt. Anthony Downing.

The 36th Signal Battalion, 563rd Medical Logistics Company and 2nd Combat Aviation Brigade conducted air mobile operations to restore a critical, mountain-top remote microwave communications site from Aug. 17 to Wednesday. The operation was coordinated by U.S. Army Garrison Daegu DPTMS and DPW.

On Aug. 2, the Salem Defense Communication System remote mountain-top communication site lost commercial power as a result of a lightning storm that overloaded the site's transformer.

Because of this, operation United Dragon was conceived to unite infrastructure and logistical subject matter experts from various organizations to rapidly restore the communications capability at the site.

The 36th Signal Bn. Assistant Operations Officer, 1st Lt. Rene Rodriguez, along with Reynaldo Garcia, quality assurance/quality control manager for 36th Signal Bn., requested assistance from the USAG Daegu Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security and Department of Public Works to plan, engineer and install a replacement transformer, as well as refuel emergency power generators.

In turn, USAG Daegu DPTMS enlisted the expertise of the 2nd CAB and 563rd Medical Logistics Co. to facilitate air mobile operations.

During this mission, Staff Sgt. Robert Esterbrook, load master for 563rd Medical Logistics Co., led his team to safely rig and certify three separate sling-load packages. The packages consisted of a 3,400 pound transformer, three 55-gallon drums of fuel and special tools for working with high voltage electrical equipment.

The 563rd Medical Logistics Co. not only assisted USAG Daegu DPW workers and signal Soldiers on a critical mission but were able to put practice into practical application.

Esterbrook said, "This operation was a great opportunity for my Soldiers to conduct a real world sling load and apply what they have learned. They enjoyed being a part of it."

Electricians from USAG Daegu DPW worked tirelessly to install the new transformer and re-position the inactive commercial power line from the ruined transformers to the new one, ably assisted by communications personnel from 36th Signal Bn.

It was a unique and successful collaboration between the two.

"This was a tremendous effort from my DPW team," said James Hamilton, USAG Daegu director of public works. "Led by my acting Operations and Maintenance Chief,

Chang U-sok, and with help from all the units involved, our crew made an effective repair and, as soon as the weather permitted, got the power restored to the site. It's just another example of how DPW spares no effort in ensuring that our customers, whether on top of a mountain or right on Camp Walker, are provided with the quality infrastructure and support they deserve."

"The entire event was an amazing opportunity to have multiple organizations working together as a team in order to solve a common problem," said Garcia. "I have not participated in an event like this since I retired from the U.S. Army."

Saturday, after more than four days of inclement weather, air operations finally came together with three successful sling-load missions to Salem.

Sgt. 1st Class Robert Bryant, USAG Daegu DPTMS airfield noncommissioned officer-in-charge said, "This mission was very important. We continued to make progress, as weather allowed, until the power was restored."

The 36th Signal Bn. Has a 24 hour-a-day, seven day-a-week, and 365 days-a-year mission to operate, maintain and defend the DCS network.

This includes the Defense Switched Network, as well as transmission mediums carrying digital traffic supporting a geographical battle space in the lower two-thirds of the Korean peninsula.