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Randolph Air Force Base Goes Wireless...and Rugged

Through a joint partnership between Itronix Corp., a worldwide leader for implementing wireless, rugged mobile computing systems, and Telos Corp., a leading provider of enterprise integration solutions and services to the federal government, maintainers and technicians at Randolph Air Force in Texas will be the first in Air Education and Training Command (AETC) to use wireless, rugged technology to reduce the time and associated costs of fixing an aircraft.

Known as Point of Maintenance (POMX), the wireless, rugged mobile computing systems and secure wireless local area network will allow air force technicians to use the computer-based maintenance information system without leaving their work area. By replacing tedious and error-prone manual methods with wireless, rugged computers that are loaded with critical information, such as maintenance manuals and updates, aircraft schematics, and parts and inventory visibility, technicians can drastically reduce the time it takes to repair aircrafts and more quickly return them to operational service.

"In a nutshell, what POMX does is bring technology to the point of use specifically for aircraft maintenance," said Tod Clement, AETC POMX project manager. "For example, an advantage of POMX is the ability to load maintenance data on the flightline by inputting data there instead of packing everything up and taking documentation back to the flight room. With this new wireless ability, technicians now have the edge they need in order to distribute information to the widest potential audience and return the aircrafts to service as efficiently as possible.

Using Itronix "ultra-rugged" GoBook MAX laptops with access to secure wireless LAN terminals located throughout the flightline maintenance area, maintainers use laptops to remain connected to the network, even in the harshest of conditions. Rated intrinsically safe, the GoBook MAX laptop exceeds military specs for drop, water resistance, dust and vibration and enables users to safely work in HazMat environments, on flightlines, near hazardous chemicals or explosive materials.

"The wireless laptop is convenient and saves time," said Rick Peyton, an avionics technician. "With POMX at technicians' fingertips, it will cut transit time in half, thus saving the Air Force money. This might not sound like a lot, but when you add up the time of 139 maintenance technicians, it is a lot."

In addition to deploying wireless, rugged mobile computing systems at Randolph Air Force, Itronix and Telos are working together to implement similar systems at other air force bases around the country, including the Air Combat Command at Nellis Air Force Base (AFB) in Las Vegas, Nevada.

According to Sergeant Howarth of Nellis AFB, "If a picture is worth a thousand words, wireless technology paints a masterpiece. Now everyone from the maintainer at the aircraft to the maintenance operations control center a mile away can see and understand the same picture of aircraft status, and can work together to keep Nellis on the cutting edge."