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Ohio National Guard's 269th Combat Communications Squadron continues to provide support to Virgin Islands following Hurricane Irma

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ST. THOMAS, U.S. Virgin Islands — A six-Airman team from the 269th Combat Communications Squadron, based in Springfield, Ohio, continues to provide tactical communications support to the Hurricane Irma relief efforts here.

After a more than 16-hour flight to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, the team from the 269th CCBS was redirected to St. Thomas, as it was determined their services were more critically needed there.

"The JISCC (Joint Interoperability Site Communications Capability) team from the 269th CCBS was forward deployed to St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands," said Lt. Col. Samantha Adducchio, the 269th commander. "They are supporting the FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) (Region) VI headquarters on St. Thomas."

Since arriving in St. Thomas on Sept. 10, the team has set up satellite and telephone communications as well as radio frequency links. Within the first 24 hours of operations, the team enabled communications services to five key agencies on the Islands supporting 70,000 residents. They repaired the communications links to the Virgin Islands FEMA Headquarters, enabling interagency coordination and expanded situational awareness outside of the local St. Thomas area.

They extended services to the local hospital and Department of Health, enabling personnel tracking and status of welfare. Communications were extended to the police commissioner and the Special Forces units that are providing search and recovery and extraction services, as well as general community security services. They are currently extending telephone services to the tactical air traffic control team overseeing medical air evacuations and airfield management. As of Sept. 13, the team had extended services to the Red Cross site to help with shelter management, personnel accountability and resource requirements for the impacted community. Airmen tested and are completing the high frequency network that will

enable communications between the Islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and Puerto Rico. Moving forward, the team will continue to extend and improve communications services to civil and governmental agencies, which will greatly help with resource management and fulfilling the needs of the community.

“Your 269th CBCS crew is here in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands doing great work. (The) citizens here are incredibly resilient and very thankful for all the help. No doubt they will come through Irma stronger than ever,” said Capt. Craig Conner, 269th Combat Communications Squadron detachment commander. “The team that we are working with here on St. Thomas is excellent and they could not have better attitudes.”

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NEWSROOM NOTES: High-resolution photos to support this story are available for download at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ohionationalguard/albums/72157686653489474>.

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