FA hosts ADA at Redleg CTE for first time

By Mitch Meador

In a first for the Fires Center of Excellence, 23 Air Defense Artillery Basic Officer Leader Course lieutenants in Class 002-19 joined Field Artillery BOLC lieutenants in Class 004-19 for the last day of their Redleg Culminating Training Event Aug. 8.

"Our role out here today is to see how the aircraft actually come in and do their offensive attacks. So we, as air defenders, we actually support maneuver units. We support their defended assets. So they had two defended assets out there (in the training event)," explained Staff Sgt. Gregory Brookes, a 42 Papa BOLC instructor for ADA lieutenants going for the short-range (SHORAD) track phase.

The ADA BOLC lieutenants got to see how they would have been employed on the hilltop observa-
tion post. They also saw the avenues of approach for the aircraft and learned how they would defend ground forces from enemy aircraft, along a tree line using terrain, Stinger missiles and defensive tactics.

Instructors have long wanted to introduce ADA lieutenants to what goes on at Redleg CTE, but ADA BOLC is 19 weeks long, which doesn't mesh with anybody else's training schedule, Brookes noted. It just so happened that this time the planets aligned, and they were able to come out to the observation post to see how they could defend an asset.

"So (the FA lieutenants are) using it as offense, but we're actually using it totally opposite," Brookes said. "We're taking the aircraft that's coming in as enemy, and we're seeing how we can actually employ our Avengers and defend the asset."

What would the ADA instructor like to see his lieutenants get out of the lesson?

"I want them to understand the defensive tactics that they can use. We go by BOWMEDs, which is balance of Fires, overlapping Fires, weighted coverage, mutual support, early engagement and defense and death. If they understand those key principles, then they can deploy anywhere in the world, without an issue," Brookes said.

Having boots on the ground at Redleg CTE gives air defenders and Avenger crewmembers key insights on where to engage their targets, whether it's inbound or outbound.

"Now they get to see the better picture and actually get a live picture to see how they actually come in and scoot out," Brookes said.

This class of ADA lieutenants still had a month and a half to go before graduation. The FA lieutenants, on the other hand, graduated Aug. 13, having wrapped up Redleg CTE Aug. 8.

"It was really fun to get out there and utilize all the skills that we had and see all the training we had come together," said 2nd Lt. Hugh Fitzmaurice, whose first duty assignment after graduation will be at Fort Polk, La.

Asked if he felt like he got into the right branch, Fitzmaurice said, "Definitely. I always wanted to go FA. It's exciting to finally be going out into the force."

Besides the seven FA lieutenants standing on Andrews Hill, about 70 more were in the field. Half were on the gun line and half on Apache Hill.

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noncommissioned officer in charge of the Army Multi-Domain Targeting Center.

The FA lieutenants learned how to plan, prepare and execute the integration of surface-to-surface and air-to-surface Fires, according to Lt. Col. Nick Sargent, a British exchange officer nearing the end of his time as leader of joint integration within the Army Multi-Domain Targeting Center.

"When you look at the requirements that we'll have levied upon us in large-scale combat operations, we can't afford to stop artillery shooting to allow close air support to occur. So we're teaching them the techniques that allow them to develop attack geometry that allows a simultaneous massing of joint Fires, both from the air and from the ground," Sargent said.

Also part of the mix Aug. 8 were Air National Guard students from the Initial Combat Skills Training class that the 137th Combat Training Flight teaches at Will Rogers Air National Guard Base in Oklahoma City. Once they graduate they'll return to their Guard units and most likely take the Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) Qualification Course in the next six months to a year.

"We are here with some of our students observing training. The training is between the Field Artillery BOLC class with their culmination training exercise and then also some JTACs. They are from the 6th Combat Training Squadron. They are here at Fort Sill, and they assist with the JFO (Joint Fires Observer) Course," explained Air Force Maj. Jeffrey Hansen, director of operations with the 137th Combat Training Flight based at Will Rogers World Airport.

"What you are seeing is the combination of JFO training with JTAC training. The JFOs are the experts in field artillery integration with the JTACs as the air power experts. The JFOs are actually deriving targeting data, passing that targeting data to the JTAC to help the JTAC build the (close air support) brief, and having your Army and Air Force partners work together to essentially seamlessly integrate surface Fires and air-delivered Fires," Hansen said.

He cited two things going on: First, a ground-based threat being suppressed and flicked with artillery, after which air power is used to destroy it, thus demonstrating altitude deconfliction. Second, using artillery to suppress a threat while using aircraft to destroy a nearby target that would be higher up on the ground commander's intent, thus demonstrating lateral deconfliction.

"This is a practical example for deconfliction techniques for joint Fires we're actually able to demonstrate to them today," Hansen said.

Mitch Meador graduated from Oklahoma State University in the bicentennial year of 1976 and has been in the newspaper business for more than 40 years. His father, Master Sgt. Chester ("Chet") Earl Meador, deployed to Europe with Company B, 1st Battalion, 354th Infantry, 89th Infantry Division, three weeks after D-Day and fought in the Battle of the Bulge.

One of two F/A 18 Hornets performs a “show of force” flyover in memory of Air Force Maj. David Gray on Fort Sill Aug. 8, seven years to the day after he was killed by insurgents while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. (Monica Wood/Fires Bulletin)