

Air Force on ISIS; Africans solving African problems

THE FIGHT FROM THE AIR

The Air Force continued to lead the fight against ISIS from the air through the spring.

As of early May, the coalition had dropped nearly 80,000 weapons in the conflict. Roughly 70 percent were dropped by the Air Force. But in the last week of April, the Air Force dropped 80 percent of the nearly 700 weapons delivered against ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria, US Air Forces Central Command spokesman Lt. Col. Damien Pickart told *Air Force Magazine*.

Still, there are aircraft from all US military branches and the US-led coalition under the control of the combined force air component commander, and “each one brings a unique capability essential to the fight,” Pickart said.

DISASTER PREPPERS IN AFRICA

On a more peaceful note, USAF’s African Partnership Flights are all about strengthening alliances and building capacity in nations. The most recent APF—the 10th in five years—was no different.

APF Burkina Faso included about two dozen American airmen and about 60 airmen from several African nations. It was designed to share best practices for maintenance and logistics in a humanitarian assistance or disaster relief situation.

Burkina Faso, the host nation, chose the humanitarian disaster relief theme, said Col. Ric Trimillos, chief for the International Affairs Division for US Air Forces in Europe and Air Forces Africa. The event was entirely work-group based.

“We’re not teaching them; we’re facilitating this work group, so that way, the best practices between the countries come out. And more importantly, the African partners are building relationships between each other, and they know what each other is capable of doing,” Trimillos explained. “We’re really working to enable Africans to solve African problems.”

Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger participated in the APF, with airmen from Côte d’Ivoire and Morocco observing, Trimillos said.

The countries have different capabilities and experiences, said Capt. Robert Kent of the 305th Aerial Port Squadron at JB McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.

One of the “biggest focus items” was building and sustaining good relationships with other countries, because in the event of a humanitarian assistance or disaster relief crisis, they are likely to need help from other nations, Kent said.

Trimillos said APFs are not just designed to build aviation capacity but to enhance regional cooperation and the partners’ interoperability.

“That’s the big goal,” he said, “because we believe as a foundational concept that if the African nations are working together, that builds more stability to the region.”

US airmen from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst (JB MDL); Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio; Spangdahlem AB, Ger-



MSgt. Johnny Hall, right, of the 818th Mobility Support Advisory Squadron, talks with African Partnership Flight participants at a tabletop workshop in Burkina Faso.

many; and Ramstein AB, Germany, participated in the APF.

“It’s bringing together a team of folks from across the Air Force as a whole to do this engagement, because [US Africa Command] does not have assigned forces,” Trimillos explained.

The first two days of the APF focused on sharing ideas about how to prepare for maintenance and logistics across the continent, said Capt. Megan Gallagher of the 818th Mobility Support Advisory Squadron, JB MDL.

NOW, WORK IT OUT

The event ended with a tabletop exercise, dividing participants into small groups—with no more than one person from any given country in each group—to plan how to get people and cargo moved in a specific disaster.

“That tabletop exercise, I mean, honestly, it was a huge success. The amount of information they were sharing amongst themselves” was fantastic, and it showed everyone the strengths of each country, Gallagher said.

The US represented the host nation government in the exercise, so the groups had to “reach out” to it for authorizations and permissions, just like they would in the real world, she said.

Kent said that when the participants got engaged in the exercise, they were “planning like they were actually going someplace,” sometimes going deeper into the weeds than anyone had expected.

That “really shows how seriously a lot of these countries took it and how invested they are in trying to get everyone on the same level, share the ideas,” Kent noted.

“We’re actually helping develop their planning, and looking to the future, so that way, they can put plans on the shelf. And when a crisis happens, they already have something in mind on how they want to do it, instead of just reacting,” Trimillos said.

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Photo: SSgt. Jonathan Snyder