

## FARP MEANS FLEXIBILITY

Airmen from the 67th Special Operations Squadron in late July conducted the first-ever Forward Arming and Refueling Point exercise between MC-130s and an F-15C, at RAF Mildenhall, UK.

A FARP is a point near a combat zone where an aircraft can transfer fuel and supplies to another aircraft, giving airmen the ability "to ground refuel fixed wing, tilt-rotor, and rotor assets," said MSgt. Jeffrey Nighbert, 67th SOS operations superintendent.

A FARP "allows our air assets to engage the enemy, get refueled, rearmed, and get back to the fight quickly," without needing a fully manned base, explained the 67th SOS combat systems officer, Maj. John Kauzlaric.

This particular FARP "helped to prove the concept of integrating the FARP capabilities of the MC-130 with the F-15C," which could mean more flexibility in the future, said Lt. Col. Jason Zumwalt, commander of the 493rd Fighter Squadron.

The exercise involved the 48th Fighter Wing, 352nd Special Operations Wing, and 100th Air Refueling Wing.

## ROTATION IN THE PACIFIC

Also at the end of July, six B-1B Lancers and 350 airmen from Ellsworth AFB, S.D., deployed to Andersen AFB, Guam, as the 37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron (EBS) assumed responsibility for Continuous Bomber Presence operations in the Pacific.

The 37th EBS will fly Block 16 B-1s; the block upgrade includes improvements to the aircraft's avionics, data link equipment, and other systems.

The unit takes over from the 9th EBS from Dyess AFB, Texas, which "relied heavily" on the new equipment during its deployment, according to an Air Force news release. The 9th EBS worked with the US Navy, Japan Air Self-Defense Force, Republic of Korea Air Force, and Royal Australian Air Force joint terminal attack controllers, and in July conducted missions from Guam to the South China Sea and from the Korean Peninsula to Australia.

The 9th EBS also was part of the military response July 7 and July 30 to North Korea's launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile; two B-1s from Andersen flew a 10-hour sequenced bilateral mission with South Korean and Japanese jets.

## AAF MOMENTUM

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the Afghan Air Force asked to take over full responsibility for A-29 Super Tucano flight line maintenance operations. Since the beginning of July, Afghan maintainers had been responsible for maintenance operations three days a week.

"The AAF has been making great strides in their capability with the A-29," and several leaders told the US advisors they were ready for the responsibility, said Maj. Dale Ellis, the maintenance operations officer for the 440th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron.

Senior Master Sergeant Alokazay, an AAF A-29 maintenance specialist, said the Afghan airmen "want to be responsible for the combat missions and getting the pilots in the air. ... We want to take control and [bring] peace to our country."



An A-29 overflies Kabul, Afghanistan. The Afghan Air Force has asked for full responsibility for Super Tucano flight line maintenance.

All A-29 combat operations are flown by AAF pilots, though coalition partners fly with Afghan pilots for training missions, the Air Force said. And though aircrews operate independently, 80 percent of maintenance functions are still performed by contract maintainers, with 20 percent performed by Afghan maintainers. The goal of Train, Advise, Assist Command-Air is to reverse those percentages by 2022.

MSgt. Jonathan Vickery, maintenance advisor lead for the 440th AEAS, said he thinks AAF maintainers are progressing faster than projected. "Our original plan was to increase responsibilities one day every six months," he said. "This is a point in the program that we did not believe would be possible for another couple of years."

Vickery said the timeline may compress if the Afghan airmen "continue to have the motivation and initiative."

Advisors say the ability of the Afghans to conduct maintenance on their own is critical to the mission, and the request for more responsibility is a step toward the AAF becoming a sustainable force.

The request "demonstrates a desire to take ownership of their operations and shows that these AAF leaders believe in their capabilities," Ellis said. The advisors remain there to support their efforts, but "this is momentum towards the AAF long-range vision. This is Afghans taking action, and it is quite amazing," he said.

## DRONES OF AFGHANISTAN

Also in Afghanistan, the 455th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron at Bagram Airfield has been working with the Air Force Research Lab to teach airmen how to fly remotely piloted aircraft and use them to train coalition forces on how to react when they see other drones on the battlefield.

The program allows the airmen to learn how the enemy may use unmanned aircraft and test how to counter them.

"This allows us to be better prepared," said 1st Lt. Ryan Wilkerson, a researcher with the 455th ESFS. "The best way to train is to actually put something in the air and see how people react. We train how we fight, so this is the most efficient way to counter this growing concern amongst coalition partners."

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