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Helicopter, TRF training ends with LF recapture

by Airman 1st Class Jason Wiese
90th Missile Wing Public Affairs

8/22/2013 - **F.E. WARREN AIR FORCE BASE, Wyo.** - It is an unusually hot morning in Wyoming. The only sound is the gusts of wind blowing across the amber plains surrounding the captured ICBM launch facility guarded by hostile men armed with an array of weaponry -- men who do not belong at the LF.

Gradually, the sound of UH-1N "Huey" helicopter blades cutting the air goes from barely audible to quite loud, but they can not be seen.

Before they know what hits them, tactical response force members are upon the trespassers with small arms fire and explosives. The captors are no more.

Lucky for them, it was only a training exercise.

This was the scene as members of 20th Air Force's helicopter squadron aircrews and tactical response forces trained together to practice helicopter and combat tactics at Tango-09, a deactivated Peacekeeper LF, near Guernsey, Wyo., Aug. 14.

Both teams worked together to recapture the launch facility from Airmen acting as an opposing force.

The LF recapture is a culmination of a six-week assaulter course for 90th, 91st and 341st SFG TRF members and a month-long helicopter tactics course for 37th, 40th and 54th HS aircrews. Convoy response force members from the security forces groups also participated in the training to get a bigger picture of defenders' roles in the missile complex.

When TRFs got started in 2005, the role of helicopters in their response to threat was transportation to the site only, said Maj. Sean Masters, 20th Air Force Helicopter Weapons and Tactics chief.

"Over time, tactics started evolving," he said. "We realized we'd be fighting in the continental U.S. where we have air superiority."

As a result, the 20th AF helicopter squadron aircrews now provide tactical mobility for TRF members around battlefields, he said.

Helicopter aircrews and TRFs are the only forces routinely taught to recapture a LF, said 1st Lt. Justin Smith, 37th Helicopter Squadron pilot. While missile security forces defenders get some training in the subject, helicopter pilots and TRF members receive specialized training.

"My favorite part of this training is getting to teach [TRF members] the things they can get the helicopters to do," Smith said. "They're a force multiplier."

The overall goal of these exercises is to give pilots and TRF members an idea of where everyone is going to be during a LF recapture and what everyone's role is, from leadership to junior enlisted Airmen, said Airman 1st Class James Hubright, 90th SFG TRF.



130814-F-BR137-291 Senior Airman Jordan Panknin, 790th Missile Security Forces Squadron, keeps an eye out for opposing forces Aug. 14, 2013, on a hill adjacent to the Tango-09 Launch Facility during a training course aimed at familiarizing security forces and helicopter pilots with launch facility recapture scenarios. The Tango-09 LF is a deactivated Peacekeeper ICBM LF the 620th Ground Combat Training Squadron uses for training scenarios involving LF recapture. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Jason Wiese)

"My mission was to saturate the site with M-249 fire, keep the enemies' heads down and take out vehicles," Hubright said. "I learned a lot about what the helicopters can do for us, using terrain to our advantage and utilizing our weapons and equipment the right way."

The field training took place after weeks of classroom training and smaller-scale field training covering the topics of helicopter integration, battlefield tactics, close combat, weapons fundamentals, weapons firing, urban operations, individual movement tactics and small unit tactics, said Staff Sgt. Monica Gonzalez, 620th Ground Combat Training Squadron course lead.

Being able to recapture a LF is necessary for nuclear surety, one of the top priorities in 20th Air Force wings, she said.

Aircrews and TRF members graduated their respective courses Aug. 15.

The following defenders, flight engineers and pilots graduated:

Minot Air Force Base, N.D.

54th HS

Maj. James McCue

91st SFG

1st Lt. Ashleyann Hajovsky
Staff Sgt. Jason Bell
Staff Sgt. Christopher Gillespie
Staff Sgt. Brandon Williamson
Senior Airman Kyle Coleman
Senior Airman Adam Cruz
Senior Airman Gareck Esposito
Senior Airman Isaac Rodriguez
Senior Airman Justin King
Senior Airman Cordero Patraw
Airman 1st Class Cody Poole
Airman 1st Class Joshua Riddle
Airman 1st Class Wendall Banks
Airman 1st Class Jacob Rich
Airman 1st Class Michael Price
Airman 1st Class Zachery Hacker
Airman 1st Class Thomas Arroyo
Airman 1st Class Nichalis Rider
Airman 1st Class Andrew Klosterman
Airman 1st Class Joshua Parnell
Airman 1st Class Casey Rosander
Airman 1st Class Conor Lindell
Airman 1st Class Shavonta Travis

F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyo.

37th HS

Maj. Eric Compton
1st Lt. Justin Smith
Staff Sgt. Chris Pipkin

90th SFG

1st Lt. David Krigbaum
Staff Sgt. Andrew Houge
Senior Airman Nathan Visconti
Airman 1st Class James Hubright

Airman 1st Class Jake Aragona
Airman 1st Class Christian Calvillo
Senior Airman Jay Suttor
Senior Airman Jordan Panknin
Senior Airman Alex Griego
Airman 1st Class Kevin Abercrombie

Malmstrom Air Force Base, Mont.

40th HS

Capt. Joseph Burchell
Staff Sgt. Blake Cooper

341st SFG

Staff Sgt. Aaron Appelwick
Staff Sgt. Bernard Ayon
Staff Sgt. Jacob Thomas
Senior Airman Nicholas Blosson
Senior Airman Justin Korus
Senior Airman James Machen III
Senior Airman James Wilson
Airman 1st Class Luis Briseno
Airman 1st Class Tyler Brock
Airman 1st Class Eric Budraitis
Airman 1st Class Christopher Elam
Airman 1st Class Isaac Lau
Airman 1st Class Omar Ramirez