

321ST STS WORKS HAND IN HAND WITH 492nd FS TO STAY COMBAT READY by Tech. Sgt. Marelise Wood, 352nd Special Operations Group Public Affairs

May 6, 2010 - RAF Mildenhall, England -- The convoy slowly moves forward. Eyes are peeled, focused on the road ahead, alert for any suspicious activity.

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A 321st Special Tactics Squadron combat controller uses binoculars to observe "suspicious activity" during a convoy and close air support training exercise held recently at RAF Lakenheath. The 321st STS worked with the 492nd Fighter Squadron, RAF Lakenheath, on achieving combat mission readiness. They developed a realistic scenario involving a direct-action hit and the bombing of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. (U.S. Air Force photo by TSgt Marelise Wood)



Two individuals have been spotted in the distance engaging in what appears to be digging on the side of the road. The convoy keeps pushing ahead; the suspected individuals spot the convoy and a fire fight ensues.

For these individuals, they're fighting a losing battle because the convoy is not alone ... it includes Joint Terminal Air Controllers, and close air support is about to be employed in the form of several F-15E fighter aircraft.

That was part of a scenario used during a recent CAS and convoy training conducted by the 492nd Fighter Squadron from RAF Lakenheath, and the 321st Special Tactics Squadron, RAF Mildenhall.

"This exercise was designed to fulfill several of the training requirements we have to meet before deploying in support of Operation Enduring Freedom," said Capt. Daniel Etue, 492nd FS. "The end goal is to deploy a combat mission ready squadron, and this exercise is one of the many tools we have used to make that happen."

The 321st STS combat controllers were more than happy to participate in this exercise, which not only assisted the 492nd FS in achieving CMR status, but also provided the 321st STS an opportunity for realistic CAS training.

"It's very hard for us to get combat air support opportunities in England," said a 321st

STS combat controller. "During this exercise, we worked on getting all the combat mission ready Joint Terminal Attack Controllers live night laser calls, as well as our non-combat mission ready Joint Terminal Attack Controllers qualified and proficient on the radio."

The exercise simulated actions including a direct-action hit on a building, the bombing of the suspected individuals, and the elimination of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device, all enabled by the precise direction given on radios by a combat controller on the ground to the F-15Es flying above.

"We have to give them [the aircrews] the most realistic training that we can," said the combat controller. "Doing close air support is a very fluid environment, but if they've seen a scenario in training or in the real world, they are able to react quicker because they've seen it before. Also, if the Joint Terminal Attack Controller has had that experience, he can provide possible courses of action the enemy may take, or he can update the aircraft quicker. It's beneficial to both parties."

Captain Etue's words echoed that sentiment.

"The 321st STS has been an enormous asset," said the captain. "During the convoy exercise, they really brought the training to another level. They helped us develop a robust combat convoy direct-action exercise to simulate supporting a convoy in a realistic close air support scenario."

As one combat controller said, "We're not in the war zone so we can't train to that exact standard, but we try to get as close to it as we can!"