

721 AIR EXPEDITIONARY ADVISORY SQUADRON

MISSION

LINEAGE

721 Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron

STATIONS

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

CALL SIGN

OPERATIONS

8/23/2011 - CAMP TAJI, Iraq -- When increased maintenance issues began to threaten real-world operations for four Iraqi helicopter squadrons, U.S. air advisor and their Iraqi counterparts knew they had a challenge on their hands, and one they had to quickly remedy as U.S. forces prepare to cease advising and training operations here. A shortage of trained Iraqi avionics specialist prevented Iraqi maintainers from keeping pace with the Iraqi Army Aviation Command's operations tempo, prompting U.S. and Iraqi aviation leadership to devise a plan that would ensure the IqAAC could continue to successfully accomplish their mission long after U.S. forces withdraw from Iraq.

"We knew something had to be done and that a team effort was needed," said Master Sgt. Vince Clevinger, a U.S. Air Force avionics advisor from the 721st Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, who assessed the problem and quickly found a solution. "We implemented a formalized helicopter avionics maintenance course that trained 19 Iraqi airmen in 24 related avionics functions that allows the IqAAC to cross-utilize maintenance airmen to fill the void. This is always a short-term solution to a long-term manning problem, but it is also an effective solution to a short term increase in operations tempo."

The month-long course included more than 60 hours of classroom and hands-on avionics instruction. The students learned the theory of avionic operations, its purpose and characteristics, and about component removal and installation. They also learned how to conduct basic troubleshooting on five avionics systems including the Very High Frequency Omni-directional Radio/Instrument Landing System, the Interphone Communication System, the VHF/UHF Harris Radios, the Forward Looking Infrared and transponder systems.

The students were required to pass an end of course exam with a score of at least 70 percent. Eight of the graduates achieved a perfect score on the exam, demonstrating to Clevinger that the Technical Wing has become a "true center of excellence." U.S. contractors assigned to the AAC volunteered to collaborate with Clevinger on the development of the avionics inspection and repair capability training. According to U.S. and Iraqi leadership, the collaboration garnered an "impressive" six-week turnaround.

"We were very excited to support the IqAAC, to present these new and exciting capabilities to the Technical Wing here at Taji," Clevinger said. "It was a real honor to train motivated technicians, see their enthusiasm and then apply the classroom training to the practical aircraft exercises." This training is a key component to sustaining aircraft maintenance and flying operations in Iraq, said Maj. Claudio Covacci, 721st AEAS director of maintenance. "This event marked a significant milestone in the IqAAC Technical Wing's ability to sustain maintenance operations and overcome management obstacles through creative solutions."

Clevinger, who witnessed the Iraqi airmen independently performing the new tasks, said the students now have the ability to fill the void, as well as train others in the future. "In my opinion, when it comes to training and getting a measurement of how well that training was, the student's final score is your feedback and how well they complete these task independently" he said. The Taji IqAAC Technical Wing commander thanked his airmen for their commitment to the program and challenged them to continue moving forward. "Do not keep the knowledge for yourselves, but continue to pass the skills you have learned to all avionics technicians," the Iraqi commander said. "The systems our technicians have now qualified to troubleshoot and repair are installed on a variety of aircraft. This strategic partnership has provided a force multiplier that will significantly contribute to national stability of Iraq."

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.