

838 AIR EXPEDITIONARY ADVISORY GROUP



MISSION

838 Air Expeditionary Advisory Group mission was training and advising the Afghan Air Force.

LINEAGE

838 Air Expeditionary Advisory Group

STATIONS

Shindand, Afghanistan

ASSIGNMENTS

438 Air Expeditionary Wing

COMMANDERS

Col Michael Senters

Col Larry Bowers, 14 Jul 2010

Col John Hokaj, 16 Jul 2011

Col David Gossett, 1 Jul 2012

Col Daniel T. Lasica, 29 Aug 2013

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

3/25/2012 - SHINDAND, Afghanistan -- Afghan maintenance crews marshaled a team of three U.S. instructors paired with three Afghan students as they took to the morning skies in three separate Cessna 183 aircraft, marking the first undergraduate pilot training sorties in over 30 years in Afghanistan, March 24. Advisors with the 838th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group are teaming with civilian instructor pilots from Lockheed Martin's sub-contractor i3 to conduct this first UPT course to produce Afghan pilots for its air force.

The flights were conducted without having to send pilots to foreign training programs outside the country. "This is the first time that the UPTs have been held in Afghanistan," said Lt. Col. James Bands, 444th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron commander. "The main goal here is to transition all of the training to the Afghans, so these first students are key to the success of a fully independent Afghan air force ."

Prior to starting UPT, the students were enrolled in language training in which they are required to achieve an English language competency score of 80 or above on a scale of 100 points, before being allowed to move on the initial flight screening. The three AAF student pilots are among the first seven to graduate from the IFS here, where they were evaluated on their potential to successfully complete pilot training.

"The students were the first generation of pilots to be properly trained and graduate IFS," said Bands. "We used the IFS and UPT modeled after the programs used in the States to instruct and develop new pilots for the AAF." The students will spend the next six months flying in the Cessna 183 before transitioning to the Cessna 208 Grand Caravan. Afghan air force personnel will spend a total of about 10 months in upgrade training to graduate from the fixed wing UPT program.

Maj. David McManaway, 444th AEAS assistant director of operations and instructor pilot, said that he was really pleased with the students' progress. "I was very impressed with the students' preparation and professionalism. Right off the bat, I could easily see the effort these students put into their studying," said McManaway. "They knew their stuff, which means they possess the motivation required to become Afghanistan's newest pilots."

The students faced many challenges before they ever left the ground which may have hindered their dreams of becoming pilots. "The students endured months of English training, which is not an easy process, to get to the level they are today. So grooming the pilot candidates so they're eligible to start UPT is the hardest thing they have done so far," said McManaway.

In addition to their ELC scores, the students were evaluated on various maneuvers both in and out of the air to include mission briefs, pre-flight checks and the actual flying of the aircraft. All training sessions and flights are documented and used to track a student's progress throughout the UPT program. "We use paper-based training records to document the student's

progression over time," said Bands. "This will help us determine which students will continue flying these aircraft and which ones will return to instruct other AAF pilot candidates in one of the two aircraft."

Afghan air force Lt. Wahlid Noori said that he appreciated everything that he has learned and was thrilled with today's flight. "It was perfect. To perform the duties we've been practicing every day for months is very rewarding and being able to fly makes the long hours of studying worthwhile," said Noori. The students' experiences from this day forward will qualify them for their future roles, commented advisors. "These students are consummate professionals, extremely intelligent and highly motivated; the perfect fit for UPT. These students will not only become instrument-rated pilots but they will also become the future leaders of Afghanistan," said McManaway.

3/16/2011 - HERAT, Afghanistan (AFNS) -- Afghan airmen are frequently seen piloting Afghan air force MI-17 helicopters throughout the Herat Province. At Shindand Air Base, they've discovered it takes more than pilots to keep their air force moving forward and are learning self-sustaining support skills. Deployed Airmen and their Aeronautica Militare (Italian Air Force) counterparts make up the 838th Air Expeditionary Advisory Group in Shindand. Their mission is to advise AAF airmen and build capacity for the AAF's future.

Some skills that AAF airmen are sharpening are: POL (petroleum, oil and lubricant) maintenance, refueling, security forces, computer operations, fire department operations, antenna and communications systems, medical, vehicle operations and administrative. "An advising role is different at every base. The capabilities of the Afghan bases and people determine what road the adviser must take," said Master Sgt. Matthew Hansen, deployed from the 100th Civil Engineer Squadron at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England. "The training is basic; the deployed location will determine the advisory role."

Sergeant Hansen frequently advises Shindand's first two AAF firefighters, who will eventually be part of a fully staffed fire station. Using an old Russian helicopter to test the AAF airmen's abilities, Sergeant Hansen and 1st Marshall Ciro Tenace, an ITAF Provider Team adviser, set up a downed-helicopter scenario. With lights flashing and sirens wailing, AAF firefighters Airmen Abdull Fatho and Asis Ahmed moved at high speeds toward the 'downed' helicopter. Once on scene, they egressed their fire truck, and as Airman Fatho extinguished the simulated flames, Airman Ahmed entered the helicopter and simulated turning off the fuel system, electrical power and pulled a simulated pilot out of the blaze.

"This is important because we can rescue a downed pilot and save lives," Airman Ahmed said, who recently completed the four-month basic fire academy in Kabul. According to Sergeant Hansen, the fire academy in Kabul is very similar to the technical school U.S. Air Force firefighters attend. At the Kabul school house, AAF airmen learn the vitality of their profession.

"If I don't extinguish a helicopter quickly and turn off the power and fuel supply, a downed helicopter can quickly become a gigantic bomb," Airman Ahmed said. Sergeant Hansen is pleased with the rate AAF airmen learn and has high hopes for the AAF's future.

"Seeing the Afghan firefighters working toward self-sustainment is the most rewarding part of my job here," Sergeant Hansen said. "They are capable of self-sustainment. The Afghan mindset will change so they can self-govern in the current times." Sergeant Hansen said the two AAF airmen at Shindand are not ready for the worst-case scenario like a mass-casualty situation

yet. However, U.S. and Italian advisers are working to enable them to act on their own in the future.

"The Afghans have an understanding that they will work with the coalition forces until they are ready to take over," Sergeant Hansen said. "The firefighters will not be ready to take over until more personnel and equipment arrives, coupled with continued training." Currently, most Air Force firefighters are filling six-month deployment billets to enable this advisory role. The Italian counterparts rotate on one-to-two month cycles but, deploy more frequently. The combined efforts of the U.S. and Italian Airmen have proven effective in Shindand said ITAF Col. Girolamo Iadicicco, the ITAF provider team commander.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Updated:

Sources

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

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.