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Combat Aviation Advisor

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Mission

Combat Aviation Advisors are air commandos who serve in operational aviation detachments responsible for integrating with surface special operations forces advisors to conduct special operations activities by, with, and through foreign aviation forces in permissive, hostile and denied territories to deny, degrade or defeat a threat. They are tasked to carry out foreign internal defense, security force assistance and unconventional warfare tasks on behalf of the United States Special Operations Command. Advisors use their tactical and operational knowledge to accomplish these strategic tasks through engagements centered on special operations forces mobility, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, adaptive strike and surface integration functions. CAAs assess, train, advise, assist and accompany foreign aviation forces in airpower employment, sustainment and force integration. They enable friendly, partner and allied forces to employ and sustain their own combat-oriented airpower resources and, when necessary, integrate those resources into joint and combined (multi-national) operations from small bilateral events to large-scale contingency operations addressing major regional conflict.

CAAs are trained in a wide range of specialized skills to carry out their mission. Ultimately CAAs exist to facilitate the availability, reliability and interoperability of participating foreign aviation resources that support joint and combined operations. This is done primarily through hands-on, adaptive advisory missions designed to demonstrate the practical application of air resource management.

CAAs reside exclusively within the Air Force Special Operation Command's 492nd Special Operations Wing and 919th Special Operations Wing. The 6th Special Operations Squadron reports to the 492nd SOW and is the only active duty unit within the Department of Defense whose primary mission is to execute fixed-wing combat aviation advisory operations worldwide. The 711th Special Operations Squadron is an Air Force Reserve Unit which belongs to the 919th SOW and partners with the 6th Special Operations Squadron in accomplishing the same mission.

Training

CAAs are required to complete a demanding four-phased, 12- to 18-month training program designed to produce foreign language proficient, regionally-oriented, politically astute and culturally aware aviation experts. Graduates of the course are willing and able to operate autonomously environments apart from a traditional base support structure and in concert with other U.S. and international SOF surface partners.

Phase I - Advanced Tactical Fieldcraft

Phase II – CAA Operational Planning

Phase III - Culture & Language Training

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Phase IV - AFSC Specific Training

The CAAMQC curriculum primes CAAs in tactical fieldcraft, advisor METLs within each respective Air Force Specialty Code and culture and language training through the USAFSOS Language and Culture Center located on Hurlburt Field, Florida. CAAs representing 18 separate AFSCs test and maintain proficiency in languages such as: Russian, Polish, Arabic, Spanish, French, Tagalog, Thai and Portuguese-Brazilian.

Background

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986, which created the USSOCOM, identified foreign internal defense as one of the principal activities of special operations forces. Subsequently, in 1990, the Commander, USSOCOM validated and strongly supported the establishment of a dedicated Air Force Special Operations Command aviation-FID organization.

In the spring of 1991, a FID office was created in the Plans, Programs and Acquisition Management Directorate of Headquarters AFSOC, and an aviation-FID concept of operations study was published. In July 1992, the organization conducted a "proof-of-concept" deployment to Ecuador with the US Army 7th Special Forces Group. The success of the deployment led to a Commander, USSOCOM request for an early unit stand-up. In August 1993, the organization became Detachment 7, Special Operations Combat Operations Staff.

In March 1994, the first major aviation-FID deployment was conducted in Ecuador, and in April 1994 the organization was renamed the 6th Special Operations Flight and realigned under the 16th Operations Group of the 16th Special Operations Wing. The unit was upgraded to squadron status in October 1994 to reflect its growth in mission and personnel. In 2006, and then again in 2010, the Department of Defense Quadrennial Defense Review directed the doubling in size and capability of AFSOCs Combat Aviation Advisory force.

Summary

AFSOC CAAs stand ready to respond on short-notice wherever tasked worldwide. Commensurate with tasked commitments, they continue to hone their combat advisory skills and exercise bilaterally with foreign friends and allies.

Inventory of aircraft used:

In-garrison:

C-145A (Mobility)
Cessna 208 (ISR)

Deployed:

AC-235
AT-802
BT-67
Cessna 208
C-145A
MX-7
PC-6
PC-12

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