

NPS/CIRPAS Activity Summary

Activity Name

JTFEX 01-3

Customer

JFCOM

Activity Description

CIRPAS operates and maintains the two Predator UAVs procured for Tactical Control Station (TCS) development and owned by PMA-263. Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) requested CIRPAS support a TCS/Predator utilization activity during JTFEX 01-3. Effective UAV intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support to the user involves access to the asset, effective dissemination of the imagery (to the right person at the right time) and ability to control the sensor in real or near-real time. In recent real world situations, inflexible operating concepts have inhibited users from obtaining UAV support even when the priorities may have dictated the tasking. This JTFEX 01-3 experiment looks at some of those processes and operating concepts to determine what, if any, changes to joint operations should be considered.

Payload Description

Both Predators were configured with the standard EO/IR payload.

Flight Activity Description

The UAV System arrived onsite at MCAS Cherry Pt., NC on 2 August 2001. Both Predators were assembled for flight operations and based from the north end of Hangar 1315. Functional Check Flights occurred 7-8 August. The missions occurred from 10-17 August (although weather kept us down until the 12th). Both Predator 30 and 35 flew in support of time critical strike targeting. Selection of aircraft was based on the particular maintenance status of the aircraft. Predator operated off the main runways and integrated into the daily flight activity. The imagery was transmitted to cell operations personnel onboard the USS Mt. Whitney via the Naval Research Lab's Transportable Re-configurable Universal Communications K-Band (TRUCK) and the Global Broadcast System. The EO/IR payload operator was tasked by the cell operations personnel through a variety of methods. Most often used link was voice communications via radio through the AWACS or other central command aircraft. The Predator was able to image suspected targets and identify real or simulated assets. Predator 35 can be seen prior to preflight checks for the day's mission in the photo to the above. The system was disassembled and shipped back to the west coast on 21 August .



The TCS/Predator activity was only a small part of a much bigger exercise. The following news release was put out by the 2nd Fleet's Public Affairs Office and provides the 'big picture' of JTFEX 01-3:

NEWS RELEASE: By JOC Robert Benson, USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20/JCC 20) Public Affairs

ABOARD USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC/JCC 20) – In the August 2001 war against Korona, U.S. and coalition forces lost a handful of aircraft and saw 351 wounded in action. It was bloodier on the Korona side: their entire surface Navy and two submarines were destroyed, and thousands were killed.

Chances are though, you didn't even here about this fictitious battle unless you were one of the 23,000 participating in the exercise. The scenario, played out in waters off the eastern U.S. seaboard, pitted the fictional nation of Kartuna against the threatening and invading Korona, a fictitious neighboring country. U.S.-led coalition forces were called in to deter hostile actions.

The semi-annual Joint Task Force Exercise (JTFEX), directed by Commander in Chief, United States Joint Forces Command, Army General William F. Kernan, is designed to prepare U.S. joint forces for future forward-deployed operations. It presented U.S. and multinational forces with realistic and dynamic exercise threats that closely replicated the operational challenges military forces routinely encounter around the world. JTFEX 01-3 included more than 30 ships, two from the United Kingdom, and military personnel from all four branches of the service.

Playing major roles were the USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN 71) Carrier Battle Group, USS BATAAN (LHA 5) Amphibious Ready Group, the SECOND Marine Expeditionary Brigade and the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Commander, Second Fleet and Commander, Striking Fleet Atlantic onboard the flagship USS MOUNT WHITNEY (LCC/JCC 20) guided all units and actions during the exercise. Onboard, in the dimly lit Joint Operations Center (JOC), the exercise was carried out with uncanny realism. Considered the heart and epicenter of the exercise, the tactical center bustled with the feverish activity of senior officers and enlisted focused on one goal: to win a war.

Never mind that it was an exercise. For them this was the real thing: News releases were generated by public affairs personnel, body counts were tallied, large screen monitors displayed locations of friendly and hostile contacts, topography maps were shown on other monitors, information from the field was broadcast on speakers, and daily live video conferences from sea were conducted.

"I've been through four of these exercises and each time I learn something new," said OS3 Beatrice Brown, a database manager in the JOC, who has been with the Second Fleet Staff since 1998. "Our primary mission is to track ship's locations and plot them here," she said, gesturing toward a Nintendo-like computer display, showing all surface contacts along the east coast. Information she enters is passed on to a larger monitor in the Operations Center for all to see.

Woven into JTFEX for the first time was a second, smaller exercise called "Assured Alligator." There, Marines from the 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) conducted a brigade-sized amphibious assault of Korona, played out in the training area of Camp Lejeune. Assured Alligator included a mechanized infantry assault in a mock-urban training area, with live artillery fire and aircraft support from both Marine jets and helicopters.

It was the first such evolution since the MEB was disbanded in the early 1990's.

"The MEB exercise really added a level of complexity to the scenario," said Vice Adm. Cutler Dawson, Commander Second Fleet and Commander Striking Fleet Atlantic. "I was delighted that we could fold it into JTFEX. I think everyone, including me, learned a great deal, all the while working to prepare our forces for joint and combined operations overseas," said Dawson.

JTFEX serves as an opportunity to certify the U.S. Navy Carrier Battle Group and Amphibious Ready Group for deployment.

The "joint" in JTFEX held special significance for some.

In his 31-year career, Air Force Master Sgt. Russ Gentle, from the 152nd Air Ops Group in Syracuse, N.Y. had never set foot on a Navy ship until he came to Mount Whitney. "The exercise and the ship were entirely new to me," he said. "I worked alongside Navy meteorologists for the first time, but we clicked, we meshed. While I focused on air forecasting for the exercise, I still learned a lot about nautical weather: waves heights, wind, our position. Forecasting weather while you're stationary is much different than forecasting while you're on a ship, always moving."

Twenty three thousand more people on ship and shore shared similar experiences. A large chunk of those 23,000 will be grateful to have taken part in JTFEX 01-3; those in the Roosevelt Battle Group and Bataan Amphibious Ready Group begin their six-month deployments late next month, with training and readiness at a peak.