

Airmen Train On Latest Technology

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A shadowy silhouette is seen through dust clouds, brush and trees. There's neither enough sun nor moonlight to distinguish the surroundings. The atmosphere is unfamiliar, uncomfortable, dangerous and unpredictable. You know your enemy is watching your every move.

Relief is found in a locked and loaded M-16 you're tightly gripping and the knowledge that tactical weapons training will advance troop safety and security. Any sensation of fear is overcome with emboldened spirit.

This scenario could describe a servicemember's warfare reality or could be the constructed training environment of the 61st Security Forces Squadron's firearms training system.

The dimly lit room in a building here houses the new system and the main scenario -- a traditional ground war environment and an urban setting. The urban setting simulates a situation where police are called to a home or building with an armed intruder. The system lets the intruder react to the security forces trainee commands and it either escalates to a shoot-out or he comes out with his hands up.

The training system has three different scenario categories -- computer graphics imagery, digital video and simulated training lanes, said Capt. Jessica DeVries, an officer with the squadron.

"The computer graphic imagery for military personnel allows us to create our own scenarios," she said. "If a military member comes back from deployment and says this is what I saw most of the time, then we

can create a scenario from that. We can create a roadside bombing and we've actually created a scenario involving an ambush."

Digital video, which is mostly for the Department of Defense police, reflects an urban environment. Simulated lane training looks like a traditional firing range. The majority of the trainees qualify on the weapon, using the lane training scenario. Captain Devries said Airmen must initially qualify on live-fire weapons.

Then they can come into the training system and qualify.

"Qualifying every other time on the ... system will save a lot of time, a lot of ammunition and a lot of money," she said. "(It) can be a really nice tool for people who've never picked up a gun. With live fire, there are safety issues if a trainee does not keep a weapon pointed down range. In the (training system), those issues can be corrected safely with no threat to the trainee or instructor."

"The purpose of each interactive scene is to determine how security forces, DOD police and deploying military personnel will react in urban and desert conflict by creating realistic environments with similar stress and pressure to gauge impulsive reactions, as well as the trainee's ability to respond to threats with a level head," said DOD Police Sgt. Stanley Johnson.

Master Sgt. Troy Scruggs, 61st SFS, trains security forces Airmen here, security forces augmentees and deploying personnel on the system.

"This system utilizes weapons that function and handle just like the ones you would use in actual situations; however, they are modified to fire lasers at the computerized images from the system," Sergeant Scruggs said.

Sergeant Scruggs credits practice on the system for improving his aim and ultimately for his achieving the Air Force Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon on the M-9 Beretta. With the new system many others will be able to practice shooting firearms right here at home.

"Deployers will be able to refresh their weapons qualifications here, saving time and resources," said Maj. Allan Sacdalan, the squadron commander. "With the ability to continually train or practice on the system, we envision a 100-percent success rate. It's a qualification and training tool."

by Staff Writers

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