

**South Dakota National Guard
Public Affairs Office
2823 West Main St.
Rapid City, S.D. 57702**

**Phone 605-737-6721
E-mail PAO@sd.ngb.army.mil**

**March 28, 2008
PAO 03-28-08**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Great training opportunities on the islands of *aloha* and *mahalo*

By Master Sgt. Sara Hilmoe

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii – In the cold bitterness of January, Midwesterners are always looking for a little extra warmth. When that warmth can be tied into a great training opportunity, it's all the better. One hundred seventy-seven members from the 114th Fighter Wing, headquartered in Sioux Falls, S.D., had such an opportunity by participating in Sentry Strike and Sentry Aloha at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

The first week of training was called Sentry Strike, and consisted of an air-to-ground operation where pilots worked with Joint Terminal Air Controllers (JTACs) from the 25th Air Support Operations Squadron at Wheeler Army Air Field. JTACs call in locations to the 114th F-16 Fighting Falcon pilots where simulated bombs were dropped on targets, providing invaluable training for both sides of the playing field.

“The Army guys are down on the ground talking to our pilots calling in coordinates for bombs,” said Chief Master Sgt. Gerald Oltmanns, non-commissioned officer in charge for the deployment and Air Maintenance Squadron chief for the 114th Fighter Wing. “The pilots were getting training for exactly what they’ll be doing during the Air Expeditionary Force deployment.”

To help understand the pilot’s point-of-view, some Soldiers were tasked to ride in the dual-seat F-16D Fighting Falcon during the missions.

“Having them in the backseat during missions helped them to experience what the pilot goes through when they are getting directions from those on the ground,” said Oltmanns.

The next two weeks of training were called Sentry Aloha. This was an air-to-air combat training event benefiting both the 114th Fighter Wing and a Hawaii Air National Guard unit flying F-15 Eagles. The two units engaged in dog-fights with the 114th acting as the aggressors.

“These two weeks offered a nice opportunity for Hawaii to train against our F-16s,” said Oltmanns. “The dissimilar aircraft training is necessary to keep spooled up for wartime fighting against different enemy aircraft.”

Wet and Wild

With an ocean and unique wilderness areas, pilots were also able to complete their water survival and survival, evasion, resistance, escape (SERE) training. This training is essential in the event of an aircraft ejection.

Water survival training was a little different this year for the 114th. Normally the unit goes to a local area lake and the pilots are hooked to a parachute harness and jet-ski. The pilots then train to unhook the harness while being dragged. This is a typical condition when landing in water as the parachute catches the wind as it collapses.

However, with the ocean and docks readily available for this year's training, the pilots were able to be raised up with a boat hoist, unhook their harnesses and drop into the ocean.

“We try to add something different every year,” said Chief Master Sgt. Jim Bradshaw, life support superintendent. “This was different for the pilots to drop in the water instead of starting there and being dragged.”

The pilots then practiced getting out from under the parachute, a methodical process utilizing the seam and slowly pulling the parachute over your head.

“As you land the parachute tends to land on top of you and will begin to fill with water,” said Bradshaw. “Pilots have to practice staying calm and pulling themselves out from under it without getting tangled in the cords.”

Next was getting into both a one-man rescue raft and a 20-man rescue raft, practicing what to do if the raft tips over. Then they used their signaling devices to be rescued.

The final step in training was hooking up to the forest penetrator with a floatation collar added. The life support personnel would lift the pilots from the water once they were secure.

Pilots are required to complete both training exercises every three years. Chief Bradshaw said that this was probably the first time since their initial pilot training school that the pilots were actually in salt water versus a fresh water lake.

Following the water survival training was SERE training. SERE training provides pilots with two training scenarios: tactical - if they land during wartime on how to not be found, and survival - when they land during a non-wartime mission, how to utilize signaling devices and be found.

To help with the tactical training, members from a Hawaii Air National Guard unit helped play the role of aggressors in search of the downed pilots.

“They had to practice evasion movement,” said Bradshaw. “With the aggressors around they had to really concentrate on not being found.”

“We were also on an Army range so sometimes there were Army helicopters flying overhead,” Bradshaw said. “You would have to duck and dive and take cover just like in a tactical situation.”

After completion of all the training, Col. Russ Walz, 114th Fighter Wing commander, was very pleased with the outcome of the deployments.

“The deployment was a huge success providing valuable training in preparation for our Air Expeditionary Force deployment this summer,” said Col. Walz. “The timing was perfect as the harsh weather conditions at home would have severely impacted our local training.”

- 30 -

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact Lt. Col. Reid Christopherson at (605)-988-5644, cell (605) 310-9476, or Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, cell (605) 431-8753.

HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOS ARE AVAILABLE ON REQUEST.

Photo Cut Lines:

Photo 1: HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii – Members from the 114th Engine Shop work on an F-16 Fighting Falcon during Sentry Strike at Hickam Air Force Base in Hawaii. There were 177 members from the 114th Fighter Wing who participated in the training and Sentry Aloha the following two weeks. (Courtesy photo from the South Dakota Air National Guard)(Released)

Link to Photo: https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/Photo_1.jpeg

Photo 2: HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii – A 114th Fighter Wing pilot holds on to the forest penetrator while being hoisted out of the ocean during water survival training at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. Twenty-five pilots participated in the training to refresh their water survival skills needed upon ejection. (Courtesy photo from the South Dakota Air National Guard)(Released)

Link to Photo: https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/Photo_2.jpeg

Photo 3: HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii – Airmen from the Hawaii Air National Guard portrayed aggressors during the SERE training for the pilots. The Airmen would walk through the woods in search of the “downed” pilot, shooting blanks overhead to make it seem realistic to a wartime tactical survival situation. At times, Army helicopters flew overhead to add to the experience and training as pilots would have to duck and hide to avoid being seen. (Courtesy photo from the South Dakota Air National Guard)(Released)

Link to Photo: https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/Photo_3.jpeg

Photo 4: HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii – Col. Russ Walz, 114th Fighter Wing commander (left), and Wing Command Chief Jim Welch make their way through the unfamiliar terrain of Hawaii during tactical SERE training. A few 114th FW members were able to go along on the SERE training with the pilots to experience what pilots may have to deal with during a survival, evasion, resistance and escape situation. (Courtesy photo from the South Dakota Air National Guard)(Released)

Link to Photo: https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/Photo_4.jpeg