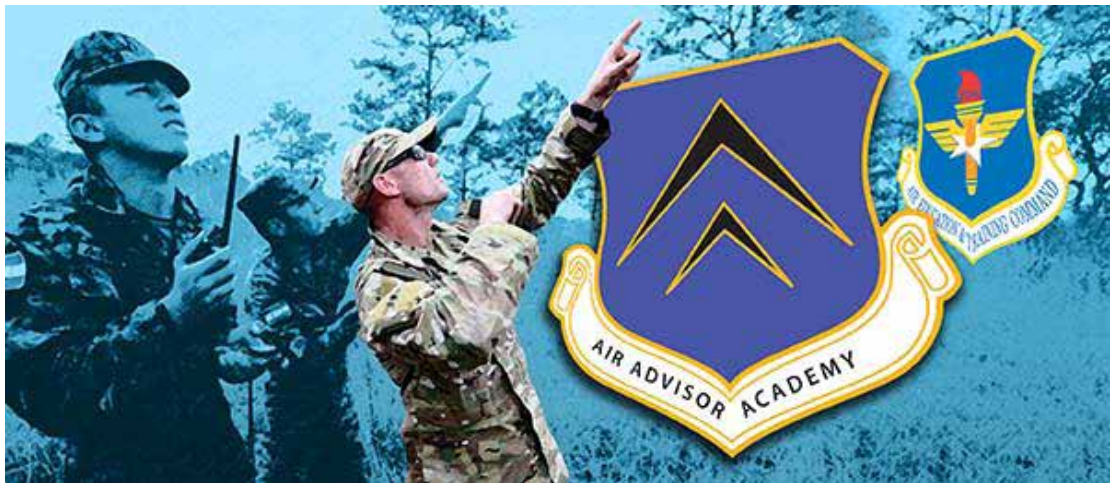




The Air Advisor

The Face of US Air Force Engagement

Maj Gen Timothy M. Zadalis, USAF



Nestled in the local townships of small-town New Jersey is an Air Education and Training Command (AETC) schoolhouse with a small faculty of instructors who are packing quite a punch across the service and around the world. This school, the USAF Air Advisor Academy, educates and trains Airmen-diplomats from a wide range of Air Force career fields who will engage with counterparts in foreign security forces across the globe. More specifically, graduates of this unique institution apply their Air Force expertise to assess, train, educate, advise, assist, and equip partner-nation personnel.

Assigned to AETC's Second Air Force and 37th Training Wing, the Air Advisor Academy officially achieved full operating capability on 14 January 2013. The process began in early 2007, when substantial demand for general-purpose-force air advisors led the Air Force chief of staff to direct AETC to build a permanent predeployment training de-

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tachment. Since that time, the command has trained more than 3,400 air advisors, most of the early graduates serving as air advisors in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now fully operational, the Air Advisor Academy has the capacity to train up to 1,500 Airmen annually. These individuals will advise counterparts in a multitude of nations across every region, supporting a wide array of contingency and peacetime missions around the world. As security challenges and strategic importance increase across the African Maghreb, for example, the Air Advisor Academy is poised to provide education and training to a whole host of Airmen deploying to that region as well.

The US military's responsibility to perform the advising function is steeped in policy and guidance. The US *National Security Strategy* directs a comprehensive, whole-of-government engagement strategy.¹ To realize this vision, the national defense strategy—outlined in the document *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*—directs the Department of Defense (DOD) to “build the capacity and competence of U.S., allied, and partner forces for internal and external defense.”² Similarly, one of six key missions in the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* of 2010 involves “build[ing] the security capacity of partner states.”³ According to the DOD's *Defense Planning Guidance*, “The US will work closely with allies and partners to ensure collective capability and capacity for securing common interests.”⁴ Finally, in support of this guidance, the *National Military Strategy* directs the services to “strengthen and . . . enable partner capacity to enhance security.”⁵

The *2011 US Air Force Global Partnership Strategy*, the service's guidance for the development of plans and programs to build global partnerships in support of national security objectives, grew out of this guidance.⁶ AETC, with the Air Advisor Academy in the lead, is enabling implementation of this engagement plan. In his commencement speech to US Air Force Academy graduates on 23 May 2012, President Barack Obama acknowledged that “today, Air Force personnel are serving in 135 nations—partnering, training, building their capacity. This is how peace and security will be upheld in the 21st century—



more nations bearing the costs and responsibilities of leadership. And that's good for America. It's good for the world. And we're at the hub of it, making it happen."⁷ As the president's comments indicate, Air Force engagement efforts are in line with his administration's guidance. Tireless effort at the Air Advisor Academy has enabled the service to meet those requirements—a huge return on a small, well-placed investment.

In addition to offering in-residence courses that have fueled this success, Air Advisor Academy instructors recently took their air-advising education and training on the road, teaching air advising to US Air Force Airmen in Europe and the Pacific. In mid-January 2013, a team of instructors led by Maj Alex Richburg taught an air-advising course to 23 members of the 36th Airlift Squadron at Yokota Air Base (AB), Japan, preparing these Airmen for the multiple partner-nation engagement activities planned across the Pacific region over the next year. America's strategic shift toward the Pacific makes it increasingly important for air advisors to build relationships and partner-nation capacity across US Pacific Command's area of responsibility. This mobile training team represents an important step in that direction.

At the Air Advisor Academy's next stop, Eastern Europe, another team of instructors trained 10 US Air Force personnel who comprise the newly activated US Aviation Detachment, 52nd Operations Group's Detachment 1, assigned to Lask AB, Poland. Four instructors from the Air Advisor Academy, led by MSgt Jeffrey Culver, taught five days of course material ranging from core knowledge for air advisors to communicating in a cross-cultural environment. American Airmen who receive this education and training will facilitate increased cooperation and interoperability between operations and maintenance personnel for the US Air Force's and the Siły Powietrzne's (Polish air force's) F-16 and C-130 aircraft.



MSgt Jeffrey Culver, team lead of the Air Advisor Academy's mobile training, instructs US Aviation Detachment personnel at Lask AB, Poland, in late January 2013.

Air Education and Training Command's Roles and Responsibilities

The Air Force has recently codified 13 service core functions and has directed specific commanders of its major commands (MAJCOM) to lead the integration of these functions.⁸ As one might expect, Gen Edward A. Rice Jr., the AETC commander, leads the Air Force's core function of education and training. It is important to note that General Rice is the core function lead integrator of the building partnerships core function as well. This makes perfect sense because these two core functions are indelibly linked. For example, AETC is charged with edu-



cating and training as many as 8,500 partner-nation personnel annually at just about every educational institution and training venue in the command. Through the International Military and Education Training program, foreign counterparts attend AETC's Undergraduate Pilot Training, Air Command and Staff College, Air War College, Senior Noncommissioned Officer Academy, and Air Force Academy, to name just a few. Education and training at AETC institutions quite literally build partnerships every day.

Additionally, both the Inter-American Air Forces Academy and the Defense Language Institute English Learning Center are assigned to AETC. The primary mission of these organizations is to build partnerships by educating and training partner-nation personnel. Additionally, AETC's Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron manages the training of foreign partners in 137 countries that fly and maintain aircraft they have purchased through programs such as foreign military sales and foreign military financing. Furthermore, the Air Force Culture and Language Center, also assigned to AETC, helps Air University and other organizations, such as the Air Advisor Academy, educate and train Airmen who will engage and advise other partner-nation personnel.

In the preamble to the USAF Air Advisor Academy's charter, dated 19 April 2010, Gen Norton A. Schwartz, the Air Force chief of staff at the time, specifically discussed building partnerships in the context of AETC's Air Advisor Academy: "Our Nation's security is in substantial measure dependent upon our success in building partnerships and partner capacity, and countering irregular and asymmetric threats." Accordingly, he stated that "one of our most significant tasks that we face is helping to prepare our partners to defend sovereignty and govern effectively." AETC is leading the way toward the vision of the past and present Air Force chiefs of staff. In his recently published *Vision for the United States Air Force*, Gen Mark A. Welsh III, the new chief of staff, made reference to the two core functions assigned to AETC, submitting that "education and training are the foundation of our airpower advantage." Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of building



partnerships as the Air Force moves forward: “To strengthen our enduring contributions, the Air Force will . . . enhance relationships and interoperability with our sister Services, other government agencies, allies, and partners.”⁹

In addition to the roles of the core function lead integrator, AETC is also the lead MAJCOM for expeditionary skills training (EST). Accordingly, the command manages all foundational (tier 1), home-station (tier 2), and advanced (tier 3) EST across the Air Force. AETC is charged with managing and executing Combat Airman Skills Training and the Evasion and Conduct after Capture course as well. Furthermore, the command manages Air Force-wide training in countering improvised explosive devices, a critically important element of EST since these devices are the leading killer of coalition forces and a threat in many other hot spots throughout the world. Again, the tie between these AETC roles is critical. A substantial portion of the Air Advisor Academy’s course material, referred to as “fieldcraft,” is based upon EST lessons. Examples of fieldcraft skills taught at the academy include high-threat driving, active shooter / insider threats, advanced weapons, self-protection, small-team tactics, convoy operations, and training in countering improvised explosive devices. In fact, fieldcraft training is carefully interwoven throughout the Air Advisor Academy’s curriculum and fully integrated with air-advising core knowledge / skills and language, region, and culture course material.

Beyond its lead-MAJCOM role for EST, AETC also has responsibility for developing, standardizing, executing, and evaluating non-Air Force aircrew qualification and maintenance training. Currently, AETC leads training in Mi-17, Mi-35, An-32, King Air 350, Cessna 182, Cessna 208, and Pilatus PC-12 aircraft. The command has postured itself to add other important non-Air Force aircraft programs in the future. US Air Force aircrews and maintainers learn to fly and maintain these aircraft and then learn to advise partner-nation personnel in those roles. The same Airmen who receive AETC training in non-Air Force aircraft operations and maintenance also learn air advising and fieldcraft skills at



AETC's Air Advisor Academy—thus, we come full circle on the linkages between AETC roles and responsibilities.

Air Force Engagement Space

It is important to understand building partnerships and air advising in the context of the many other related joint terms and DOD programs. Although one could view whole-of-government partner-nation engagement as the foundation of this collective effort, the emerging concept of aviation enterprise development serves as the overarching construct for the US Air Force's contribution. The community generally accepts the idea that four pillars support the Air Force's engagement effort: (1) building relationships, (2) building capability, (3) enabling interoperability, and (4) gaining access. Building partnerships and security cooperation both fully encompass these pillars, filling what one might refer to as the Air Force engagement space. Security assistance, which includes foreign military sales, foreign military financing, and the International Military and Education Training program, cuts across the first three pillars, filling a portion of the space and serving as an important subset of building partnerships and security cooperation. Building partner capacity and security force assistance are directly tied to developing the capability of a foreign military force and, for the US Air Force, developing a partner nation's aviation enterprise.

The US Air Force performs building partner capacity and security force assistance through the air-advising function. In so doing, it enables foreign counterparts to conduct irregular warfare activities—including counterinsurgency and foreign internal defense—and other foreign security force activities, such as countering external threats, in line with US national interests. As such, air advising fully encompasses the Air Force's efforts to build partner nation capability and plays a key role in building relationships and enabling interoperability. Although these disciplines include many players, the air advisor, in essence, is the face of the Air Force's engagement effort.



In many ways, the Air Advisor Academy is the service's link to many of these larger joint efforts. For example, the academy is emerging as the Air Force's answer to security cooperation training venues in the other services. In fact, the academy plans to train Airmen preparing to serve in a security cooperation capacity, such as security cooperation officers working in US embassies abroad. Similarly, AETC is working diligently with key stakeholders from Headquarters US Air Force, sister services, the joint community, and the Air Advisor Academy to fully align its course material with emerging standards for joint security force assistance training and corresponding levels of training. Additionally, lessons at the schoolhouse include education and training in security cooperation, security assistance, foreign military sales, irregular warfare, counterinsurgency, foreign internal defense, and other content directly tied to joint and DOD programs. Finally, in March 2013, the Air Advisor Academy launched a new course that trains key planning-staff members of each theater's commander, Air Force forces. These planners will develop those commanders' campaign support plans and individual country plans that support theater engagement plans of the geographic combatant command. Such plans codify theater and country-specific activities in aviation enterprise development and other partner-nation engagement efforts across the region. Planners will then implement the campaign support plans they helped to develop by serving as air advisors as they work with partner-nation personnel across the region.

Conclusion

In his preamble to the USAF Air Advisor Academy's charter, General Schwartz said that "to achieve success, we will need trained, educated, and qualified general purpose force (GPF) Airmen to help build global air, space, and cyber partnerships in support of combatant commanders' security cooperation and irregular warfare . . . activities." He added that "a robust GPF Air Advisor capability will leverage the hard-earned expertise derived from our recent efforts in Iraq and Afghani-



stan." All too often, the lessons of past wars are lost on the next generation. Instructors at the Air Advisor Academy are working diligently to institutionalize the progress made in air advising and expeditionary training over the last decade. Now fully operational and aggressively spreading the word, the little schoolhouse in New Jersey is punching above its weight in response to today's threats and is poised to make an even greater impact in the future. ★

Notes

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8. Gen Edward A. Rice Jr., *United States Air Force Education and Training (E&T) Governance Charter*, March 2013, 2. Senior leaders who attended CORONA Fall 2012 decided to add a 13th service core function by separating education and training from agile combat support, resulting in the development and adoption of this governance charter.
9. Department of the Air Force, *The World's Greatest Air Force, Powered by Airmen, Fueled by Innovation: A Vision for the United States Air Force* (Washington, DC: Department of the Air Force, 2013), [2], [3], <http://www.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-130110-114.pdf>.

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