

## Newslines The Air Force

# F-22 Weapons School overcomes challenges

## Finding students, jets, hasn't been easy

By Bruce Rolfsen  
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As a first lieutenant flying F-15C Eagles, Capt. Jonathan Gration had his role model picked out.

"I always looked at my weapons officers to be the guys I wanted to be like," Gration said.

Gration is about four months from becoming one of those guys and breaking ground as one of the first two F-22 Raptor pilots to graduate from the F-22 Weapons School course at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev. The other pilot is Capt. Ethan Waitte.

While operational and training squadrons have flown the F-22 for

several years, the F-22 community did not have its own Weapons School course. Instead, pilots who earned their Weapons School patch flying other fighters and then cross-trained into the F-22 served as ad hoc F-22 weapons officers.

Getting the F-22 course off the ground has been a challenge, from finding pilots with the right mix of experience and time in service to rounding up enough F-22s to fly sorties, said Lt. Col. Pete Milohnic, who oversees the F-22 course as commander of the 433rd Weapons Squadron.

The initial instructor corps for the F-22 school began arriving at Nellis in November 2007, Milohnic said. Instead of creating a squadron for the F-22 course, the F-22 school stood up as part of the 433rd, the squadron already teaching the F-15C weapons course. It was more efficient for the F-15 and F-22 schools to share

administrative and nonflying duties, the squadron commander said.

The F-22 school also needed aircraft, Milohnic said. When new F-22s roll off the production line in Marietta, Ga., most every plane is needed by expanding F-22 fighter squadrons. The school was to share 17 F-22s at Nellis with test and evaluations units. However, only 13 jets are available and three of those are borrowed from the F-22 training wing at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

"We are really struggling to get the sortie production," Milohnic said.

While the first class has two students, later F-22 classes will have

four students with the goal of graduating eight weapons officers annually, Milohnic said. The minimum qualifications to be considered for the course include 200 hours in F-22s with 50 hours as an F-22 instructor pilot. Candidates also should have a maximum of nine years of commissioned service, although a waiver can be granted.

Like other Weapons School courses, the F-22 instruction runs six months, the commander said. Students will fly 27 F-22 sorties and 18 sorties in F-22 simulators, spend 334 hours on academics and another 374 hours in mission briefings. The overall time is nearly the same as the F-15 course.

Once the students and instructors get in the air, the struggles become tactical.

The F-22's mix of stealth, speed, digital avionics and advanced radars gives it an almost insurmountable advantage against other fighters. For instructors, the challenge is developing scenarios that test the pilot's think-

ing skills, not just flying skills.

Instead of expecting a pair of F-22s to take on four aggressor fighters, the ante is upped to eight aggressor fighters, Milohnic said. And those aggressor fighters make their initial approach from behind the F-22 at different altitudes, Gration said.

The problem for the F-22 student is whether he can turn around to face the aggressors and comprehend their positions before they can close in for a kill, Gration said.

And to complicate matters, range officers observing the dogfight may decide the virtual radar-guided missiles shot by the F-22s aren't as accurate as the pilot hoped for or the F-22 pilot will have to fly within visual range of the aggressor jet to shoot off a shorter-range missile or fire the F-22's 20mm gun.

Apart from the specifics of flying the F-22, the F-22 course is much like other weapons officers courses, Gration and Milohnic said. Time on the ground is set aside to prepare students to become teachers — learning to be a good briefer and spotting cues that the airmen listening don't understand you.

"It's more than just the stick and rudder," Gration said. □

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# Air U. begins cross-culture program for students

## Five-year plan for enlisted airmen and officers

By Erik Holmes  
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Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., is launching a five-year plan to prepare all airmen to work more effectively in culturally diverse environments.

Under the university's quality enhancement plan, cultural education will be included in many of the professional military education courses taken by both enlisted airmen and officers.

The initiative is a response to the increasingly joint and expeditionary nature of the Air Force, said Brian Selmeski, a cultural anthropologist who is leading the program.

"One of the aspects that is common to a lot of these things we're asking of our airmen is they're having to work across cultural differences, be that working with the State Department or working

with our Iraqi host nation partners," said Selmeski, chairman of Air University's cross-cultural competence department.

The ability to work across all cultures, based on a broad understanding of what makes up a culture, is referred to as cross-cultural competence.

Air University officially kicks off the program in April with its new online Introduction to Culture course for enlisted airmen, worth three general education credits toward their Community College of the Air Force degrees.

The course's 50 slots filled up in 72 hours, Selmeski said, and half of the 250 spaces in the fall section are already taken.

The program begins for officers in August, when cross-cultural competence studies will be added to the Officer Training School at Maxwell. It will be added soon after for Reserve Officer Training Corps programs.

Squadron Officer School will get the material next year and the Senior NCO Academy, Air Command and Staff College and Air Warfare College are scheduled to add the cross-cultural competence to their

curricula between 2011 and 2013.

The program's goals include:

- Helping airmen develop cultural relativism, or the ability to be open-minded about cultural differences.

- Teaching them about the dimensions that make up any culture, such as family and kinship structures, belief systems, language, livelihoods and the political system.

- Teaching them specific cross-cultural skills, such as communicating across cultures and building and managing relationships.

### Preparing for ambiguity

"This is preparing them for ambiguity," Selmeski said. "There's very little about working across cultures that is certain ... because culture is something that shapes how we think, act and feel."

Selmeski said the military services in recent years have gotten better at producing linguists and other personnel who specialize in certain regions but haven't done as well providing general cultural knowledge to their entire forces.

Air University's initiative will provide knowledge and skills that airmen can use in any culture,

rather than easily forgotten details about cultural attributes of particular countries or regions.

"We're not asking our airmen to become social scientists or anthropologists," he said. "We are trying to help them become better airmen."

The university will use testing, surveys and other tools to measure the program's effectiveness. Officials hope to see improvements in airmen's cultural sophistication, attitudes toward other cultures and ability to work across cultures, he said.

The program is part of Air University's push to be approved for continuing accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which has accredited the university since 2004. The association requires universities to implement a quality enhancement plan for their five-year renewals, and Air

University officials decided to focus their plan on improving cross-cultural competence.

Officials from the association are visiting Air University on March 2-4 to review the plan, as well as several other aspects of the university's operations. Re-accreditation is expected in June.

Accreditation is important because it pushes the university to improve its programs and ensures the degrees and credits airmen earn are respected by those outside the military, said Bruce Murphy, Air University's chief academic officer.

"If you're a ... student, the course you attended is regionally accredited," he said. "If an institution is accredited you know there are some outside people looking in and making sure there are standards. ... You can take that transcript to other schools ... and they will take it." □

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BRIAN SELMESKI  
CULTURAL  
ANTHROPOLOGIST  
LEADING THE PROGRAM