



Civil Air Patrol pilots to fly 'Surrogate Predators'

Published Sept. 18, 2009

By Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters

Public Affairs

Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters -- With the conversion of a Civil Air Patrol plane into a "Surrogate Predator," the U.S. Air Force is relying on its auxiliary in a most imaginative way.

"We're using a manned aircraft to simulate an unmanned aircraft," said CAP-U.S. Air Force Commander Col. Bill Ward, explaining that a sophisticated "Predator ball" placed under the left wing of a Cessna 182 belonging to CAP will give the plane the capability of mimicking the Air Force's MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper, unmanned aircraft that provide real-time data to U.S. warfighters.

The Air Force will use the Surrogate Predator to fill a critical training gap in support of Army and Marine forces as they prepare for deployment. "Due to the Air Force maximum surge effort to provide more MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper support to ground units in CENTCOM, there are no Predator or Reaper forces available to support pre-deployment exercises such as Green Flag, which focuses on air-to-ground operations," said Maj. Matt Martin, chief of the Predator/Reaper Ops Branch of Air Combat Command at Langley Air Force Base, Va. "The Surrogate Predator is the solution."

Air Combat Command, or ACC, with the support of Joint Forces Command, secured \$2.5 million for the Surrogate Predator Program, once it was determined that CAP could provide the needed training with its dedicated patriotic citizen volunteers at a fraction of the cost of the private contractor currently providing the training.

"We've seen nothing but enthusiasm and a willingness to help from the Civil Air Patrol, which is why we chose them to do this mission," said Martin.

With the Predator ball in place, the CAP plane-turned-Surrogate Predator has the capability of locking onto a target and tracking it, said Ward, adding that the ultimate goal is to broadcast streaming video. "This will give our soldiers and Marines a real-time view of what is going on," he said.

Beginning this month, ACC will provide mission training to selected CAP crews at Fort Polk, La. "ACC experts will train the CAP crews on how to do the mission using the same tactics, techniques and procedures that Predator crews use on combat missions," said Martin.

"Basically, we will imitate being a Predator," said Capt. David Lewis, the Louisiana CAP project officer and one of six CAP pilots initially chosen for the program, who described the joint exercises like Green Flag as "the next big thing for CAP in homeland security and the defense of our country."

Lewis and the other CAP pilots have prior military experience, which is a requirement for the program. The pilots and their aircrews - a cadre of 18 CAP volunteers in all - will be needed in the program's initial stages. Many more CAP volunteers will be involved as the program expands in the coming months. The ACC mission training will qualify them to provide air interdiction, close air support and intelligence/surveillance/reconnaissance support to ground forces. After a formal certification, these crews will be able to fly realistic Surrogate Predator missions. ACC will closely monitor the program and will use Air Force operators with real-world Predator or Reaper experience to assist.

"This initial cadre will then train the dozens of crews that will be needed to sustain our regular Green Flag support," said Martin. A second airplane is already being modified to expand the Surrogate Predator Program. Once complete, CAP will be able to provide coverage for both Green Flag East exercises from Fort Polk, La., and Green Flag West exercises from the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., close to where the second Surrogate Predator will be stationed in Las Vegas, Nev.

Green Flag exercises typically involve 11 days of flying, eight hours per day, at least 10 times per year, and "hunter-killer scenarios," in which the Surrogate Predator starts by surveying targets and providing full-motion video to the brigade combat team. "Once a target is identified by the ground commander as hostile," Martin said, "the Surrogate Predator will dynamically re-task into the strike role and coordinate with a forward air control to simulate the delivery of precision ordnance onto a target."

Lewis foresees the potential of the Surrogate Predator for other CAP missions, like search and rescue and emergency services following hurricanes. "In the event of a natural disaster, the aircraft will certainly be made available to NORTHCOM for civil response purposes," said Martin. "However, due to the expense of the aircraft and the need to keep them available to support joint exercises, we don't anticipate using them to train for standard CAP missions."

"Everyone involved is excited," said Col. John Varljen, vice commander of CAP's Southwest Region, which includes Louisiana Wing. CAP takes possession of the first Surrogate Predator this weekend. "This is an important mission, a real-world mission," said Varljen. "It is our contribution to the war effort."

Homeland security missions are nothing new to CAP, which has played a role in protecting America since its beginning days patrolling the Atlantic Coast for enemy aircraft and chasing German submarines during World War II. With its fleet of 550 aircraft, as well as numerous ground assets, and a force 58,000-strong, CAP is considered a force multiplier at a very attractive cost.

"The Civil Air Patrol is grateful for this new opportunity to aid in the defense of America," said CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Amy Courter. "Our members are true patriots, who volunteer to serve and professionally execute their duties with excellence every day. They truly go above and beyond the call of duty in service to this great nation."

Ward predicts the Surrogate Predator Program will be "a real success story" for Civil Air Patrol. "I think it's going to highlight CAP more than it already is to the Department of Defense," he said.

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with 58,000 members nationwide. CAP performs 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and was credited by the AFRCC with saving 91 lives in fiscal year 2008. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to the more than 23,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for more than 67 years. For more information on CAP, please visit www.gocivilairpatrol.com.

Article courtesy of Civil Air Patrol National Headquarters



Civil Air Patrol pilots fly 'Surrogate Predators'

Modified Cessnas used to help train
deploying Army, Marine forces



By Steve Cox

A Predator sensor ball is mounted underneath the left wing of this Civil Air Patrol Cessna 182, turning the aircraft into a "Surrogate Predator" suitable for predeployment training for American soldiers and Marines.

So far, so good. That's the word on the new Civil Air Patrol Surrogate Predator program, following initial rounds of air-to-ground exercises in which the U.S. Air Force is using a CAP plane converted into a "Surrogate Predator" to train Army and Marine forces for deployment to Afghanistan and Iraq.

"The results have been very positive," said Air Force Lt. Col. Matthew Martin, chief of the Predator/Reaper Ops Branch of Air Combat Command at Langley Air Force Base, Va. "CAP has provided effective training in close air support tactics, and our JTACs (joint terminal attack controllers) are ready for the challenges they will face overseas."

To date, 60 CAP members have been involved in the air warrior exercises now known as Green Flag East, which have originated from Fort Polk, La. Eighteen more members participated in Green Flag West ground academies at Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., in December, preparing for the expected delivery of a second Surrogate Predator in January.

Multiple successful sorties to date

"CAP has flown multiple successful sorties working with at least 20 JTACs to get bombs on target (both live fire and simulated)," said Air Force Maj. Matthew Daniel, the Predator liaison working to integrate CAP into the Green Flag East exercises at Fort Polk. "The program is working as planned, but CAP has yet to be integrated into scenarios working with Army intelligence for target development. This will occur during the January exercise, and there will be about 4,000 troops participating in the scenario."

Though the program is still in its infant stages, with 50 hours of flight training and 30 hours of actual Green Flag mission flying, Martin said it is working as planned. "CAP has provided very realistic training to date at Green Flag East on the use of the Predator for our counter-terrorism insurgency operations," he said.

CAP, the Air Force's civilian auxiliary, is providing the

needed Predator training with its citizen volunteers at a fraction of the cost of the private contractor that previously provided the training, filling a critical gap in Air Force support of U.S. troops as they prepare for deployment.

"We're using a manned aircraft to simulate an unmanned aircraft," said CAP-U.S. Air Force Commander Col. William Ward, explaining that a sophisticated "Predator ball" placed under the left wing of a CAP Cessna 182 gives the plane the capability of mimicking the Air Force's MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper — remotely piloted aircraft that provide real-time data to U.S. warfighters.

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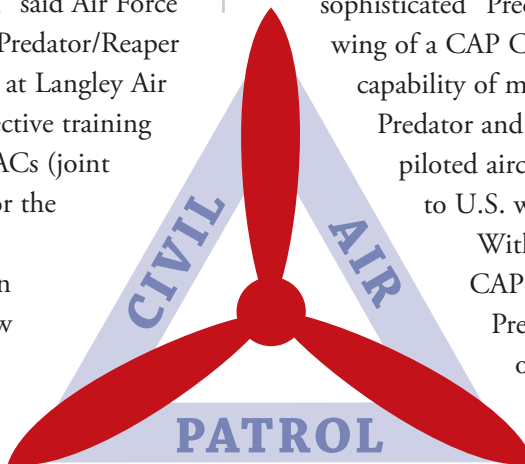
Marines a real-time view of what is happening on the battlefield," he said.

Air Combat Command (ACC), with the support of Joint Forces Command, secured \$2.5 million for the Surrogate Predator program, which is covering the cost of the CAP plane conversions. ACC maintains oversight of the program and provides occasional augmentation in the form of Air Force operators with real-world Predator or Reaper experience. ACC instructors are training the CAP crews on how to conduct the Green Flag exercises, using the same tactics, techniques and procedures Predator crews use on combat missions.

"We've seen nothing but enthusiasm and a willingness to help from the Civil Air Patrol, which is why we chose them to do this mission," Martin said.

First crews to train others

CAP's Surrogate Predator pilots have prior military experience — a requirement for the program. Through ACC's mission training, the pilots and their crews are certified to provide air interdiction, close air support and intelligence/surveillance/reconnaissance support to



ground forces.

“CAP has shown a tremendous amount of support for this program, and an initial cadre of folks has been trained to replicate Predator operations for our battlefield scenarios,” Daniel said. “So far we have trained and qualified nine Surrogate Predator crews.

Each crew consists of a pilot, sensor operator and mission coordinator. These members will, in turn, train more volunteers who wish to participate in these exercises.”

The Green Flag exercises typically involve 11 days of flying, eight hours per day, at least 10 times per year, and “hunter-killer scenarios” in which the Surrogate Predator starts by surveying targets and providing full-motion video to the brigade combat team.

“Once a target is identified by the ground commander as hostile,” Martin said, “the Surrogate Predator will dynamically retask into the strike role and coordinate with a forward air control to simulate the delivery of precision ordnance onto a target.”

“This is some really interesting flying for CAP, since they are providing Predator capabilities for irregular warfare, urban close air support and counter-insurgency operations,” Daniel said. “They are working with both Army intelligence and JTACs to search and destroy high-value targets in the scenario. It’s a fascinating process to watch, and CAP is making it happen.”

A call for more volunteers

Daniel said Air Force officials are hoping to get more CAP volunteers so they can extend the Surrogate Predator coverage for the Green Flag exercises. “The Air Force is looking for volunteers with previous tactical experience; however, we welcome all CAP members to participate,” he said. “Nontactical members need 10 sorties in Green Flag exercises or associated continuation training at Fort Polk. After 10 sorties, they can be

mission pilots, sensor operators or mission coordinators.

“This is a great way to aid the war effort and help train our soldiers and airmen for combat operations overseas.”

Because of the Surrogate Predators’ diverse capabilities, both the Air Force and Civil Air Patrol foresee their potential for other CAP missions, like search and rescue and disaster relief after hurricanes. “In the event of a natural disaster, the aircraft will certainly be made available to NORTHCOM for civil response purposes,” Martin said. “However, due to the expense of the aircraft and the need to keep them available to support joint exercises, we don’t anticipate using them to train for standard CAP missions.”

“This is an important real-world mission. It is our contribution to the war effort.”

— Col. John Varljen, CAP’s national coordinator for the Surrogate Predator program

Helping protect America

“Everyone involved is excited,” said Col. John Varljen, CAP’s national coordinator for the Surrogate Predator program. “This is an important real-world mission. It is our contribution to the war effort.”

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