

Professor's deployment brings cadet studies to desert

AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. — For 23 years he's worn the uniform and never deployed. It's not because he didn't want to, just luck of the draw. So when the 41-year-old colonel volunteered to deploy for four months to Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq, he knew it'd be something he'd never forget. But what he didn't know was just how valuable a deployment it would be — for himself and his students.

Lt. Col. **David Bossert** is the deputy department head of aeronautical engineering at the Air Force Academy and has spent the last five years teaching. But it's in his other role as the academy's unmanned aerial vehicle research coordinator that his 120 days in Iraq, as the deputy group commander for support of the 506th Air Expeditionary Group, will expand the learning curve in his classrooms.

"UAVs tend to sell themselves when the users understand how easy they are to use and the situational awareness they provide," Colonel Bossert said.

"Users" who benefited immediately were the soldiers of the 173rd Air-

borne Brigade, which shared the base with Colonel Bossert's group.

"They needed an asset that could fly for four-and-a-half to five hours and give the operations center visibility of the operations in the area, especially in an urban environment," the colonel said. "That's exactly what UAVs do."

Since arriving in Iraq, there's been an open exchange of information between the academy and a wartime environment, something that's never been done before. Even better is the fact that war fighters aren't the only ones benefiting. Once he returns from his deployment this month, there'll be another exchange of information.

"I'm looking forward to bringing

by Tech. Sgt. Ken Wright



Lt. Col. Dave Bossert teaches Air Force Academy cadets how unmanned aerial vehicles play important roles in warfare.

some real-world lessons learned back to the classroom," the prior enlisted avionics technician said. "Now, I can talk about what the majority of our Air Force people actually go through — something the cadets can really learn from."

Also, the colonel hopes to bring back future projects for his cadets. Over a two-year period, more than 100 faculty and cadets from nine departments have participated in aspects of unmanned aerial vehicle instruction. The academy courses give cadets hands-on experience building different components for the vehicle, and this year a new engineering systems course will be offered that allows cadets to complete projects from concept and design to flight.

Even the cadets find their academy courses very fulfilling.

"There's no theory with this," said Cadet First Class **Jared Laliberte**, a native of St. Joseph, Mo. "We can help solve real problems, and that's both satisfying and motivational for us."

So with time on the ground in Iraq, what has the academy professor really learned?

"Make UAVs that are able to operate in austere environments," he said. "When I first got here, there was dust everywhere. It got into any opening for the UAV and ground station. Then the rainy season started, and we found out how much fun flying in the mud can be."

And that's the real-world lesson future cadet projects will build on.

— Capt. Christine L. Kunz

More airmen may live off base

WASHINGTON — A change in how the Air Force figures unaccompanied housing requirements will call for fewer dormitory rooms — meaning more airmen could move off base in the future.

Under the new policy, which took effect in January, the Air Force must provide dormitory housing for unaccompanied E-1s through E-3s and E-4s with less than three years' service. Previously, the Air Force maintained dorm spaces for all un-

accompanied airmen E-4 and below.

The policy change is designed to make the number of dorm rooms the Air Force must have available more predictable, said Chief Master Sgt. of the Air Force **Gerald Murray**.

"It's easier to base a construction policy on years in service as opposed to rank within the service," Chief Murray said. "We feel this construction policy will give us the best predictability."

Basic allowance for housing rates are set high enough that senior airmen should

be able to obtain adequate housing downtown, without paying a lot of out-of-pocket costs, Chief Murray said. That trend will continue, and by 2005, the allowance is expected to pay 100 percent of off-base housing costs.

"Today we believe that our young airmen have the pay and allowance to go into the downtown areas and afford good-quality homes," Chief Murray said.

— Staff Sgt. C. Todd Lopez
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