Story One: **Diversity leads the way for JTAC training course.**

Words: 565

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Pictures available at: [http://images.airforce.gov.au/fotoweb/Grid.fwx?position=1&archiveId=5000&columns=4&rows=2&sorting=ModifiedTimeAsc&search=\*JTAC\*](http://images.airforce.gov.au/fotoweb/Grid.fwx?position=1&archiveId=5000&columns=4&rows=2&sorting=ModifiedTimeAsc&search=*JTAC*)

Recently Number 4 Squadron had their first female student on the Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) course held at RAAF Base Williamtown. Air Support Control Officer, Captain (CAPT) Emma Tucker from the United States Marines Corps (USMC) attended the course in preparation for a deployment role she will fulfil for 44 Wing (WG).

CAPT Tucker is currently on exchange at 44WG which is located at RAAF Base Williamtown and said she hadn’t experienced any challenges as a female on a male dominated course. “Everyone has been really friendly and I knew some of the people from working at 44WG”. “Completing the course will allow me to provide JTAC subject matter expertise in theatre in my role as a Battlefield Airspace Control Liaison Officer and when I return to the USMC,” CAPT Tucker said.

Chief Instructor Squadron Leader (SQNLDR) Michael Duyvene De Wit said the JTAC course is non-restrictive and open to all musterings and specialisations but is selective. “The course has an operational focus and training is costly so selection is competitive and there must be an operational need for students to complete the course”. “A JTAC is not a mustering in itself but a specific skill set that enhances a member’s primary role and is very sought after in operations”, SQNLDR Duyvene De Wit said.

JTACs are on the ground directing fixed and rotary wing aircraft in support of a ground manoeuvre for offensive air support. A direction is called a control and each control can take a JTAC 5-30 minutes to complete.

Australia is one of a number of nations to hold the US JTAC training accreditation with the only ADF JTAC training school located at 4 Squadron. Two six-week courses are run a year consisting of approximately 16 students from both Army and Air Force and includes up to six JTAC instructors-in-training. SQNLDR Duyvene De Wit said the instructors come from a variety of backgrounds, experience and services which provides a good depth of balance in instruction. “We have both Air Force and Army instructors including two dedicated Army positions within 4SQN”, SQNLDR Duyvene De Wit said.

Currently instructing on the JTAC course is Staff Sergeant SSGT Shaun Knibbs of the New Zealand Army. SSGT Knibbs is an Instructor at the School of Artillery and attended the JTAC Evaluator course last year at 4SQN. He has returned to Australia this year as an instructor on the JTAC course. SSGT Knibbs said becoming a JTAC Evaluator enables him to conduct the mandatory evaluations on New Zealand JTACs required as part of their ongoing JTAC currency requirements. Upon return to New Zealand SSGT Knibbs hopes to assist in setting up New Zealand’s first Joint Fires Observer School.

The JTAC course comprises of both theory and practical instruction in the classroom followed by simulated and live fire exercises and consists of three phases. Phase one consists of theory and dry controls with support from Hawk 127 and PC-9/A aircraft. In phase two, controls are practiced in a live joint fires environment and in phase three students demonstrate they are combat ready.

Once fully qualified, JTACs will work either in isolation or are embedded with a company or patrol and will usually work in arduous conditions for extended periods of time. “Within a few months of students graduating the JTAC course, they can expect to be deployed overseas supporting ADF operations” SQNLDR Duyvene De Wit stated.

**Story Two: Understanding how the JTACs work.**

**Word count: 289**

Being a Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) requires a high level of adaptability as situations can change rapidly. JTACs are on the ground directing fixed and rotary wing aircraft in support of ground manoeuvre for offensive air support. Each control can take a JTAC 5-30 minutes to complete.

There are three types of control with varying levels of complexity and requirements. Type 1 control is when the JTAC is visual with both the target and attacking aircraft, allowing the JTAC to visually confirm the geometry of the attacking aircraft prior to weapons release, minimising the chance of any fratricide when friendly troops are in close proximity to the enemy targets.

In a type 2 control, the JTAC may not see the actual target and may have to utilise a qualified observer who can relay target information over the radio. The aircraft may also be flying at a high altitude making it very difficult or impossible to visually determine the attack geometry. In this case the JTAC provides target co-ordinates to the pilot before either talking the pilot’s eyes onto the target or providing terminal guidance of the weapon via other means.

 A type 3 control is where more flexibility is given to the attacking aircraft to conduct multiple target engagements within a set of restrictions passed from the JTAC. Similar to a type 2, the JTAC does not have to be visual with the target and may not see the aircraft, although the JTAC does need to satisfy other requirements to ensure that the attacks are conducted safely.

The JTAC therefore provides the pilot with a comprehensive target description and restrictions before clearing the aircraft to engage with the target ensuring the safety of nearby allied troops and civilians.

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