



Exercise Terminal Strike Delivers Capability

Exercise Terminal Strike recently took place in the challenging terrain of the Scottish Highlands, and provided a valuable training opportunity for Royal Artillery and Royal Armoured Corps Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs), who are able to guide in close air support on the battlefield.

By the end of the exercise soldiers will maintain their qualification as 'Joint Terminal Attack Controllers' or JTACs and they have been training in five locations across Scotland, North East England and the East Anglian coast. Normally taking place over two weeks, twice a year, Exercise Terminal Strike was extended to 4 weeks to maximise on Operation Shader preparations for those due to deploy in early 2019.

Soldiers belonging to the Tidworth-based 1st Artillery Brigade have been training alongside the Royal Air Force and troops from the USA, the Czech Republic and Estonia, as well as observers from Switzerland and Canada. They have been controlling fire from a plethora of aircraft, including a squadron of USAF F15 fast jets, RAF Typhoons and Tornados, Lightning 2 (F-35B), Wildcats from the Commando Helicopter Forces and Army Air Corps Apache helicopters from the ground and from state of the art simulators.

Joint Terminal Attack Controllers facilitate Close Air Support in direct support of ground units. Close Air Support has been a key force multiplier on the battlefield since 1918. Forward Air Controllers (now called JTACs) have been employed within the British Military since 1941. The

UK Military currently draws JTACs from serving personnel from the Royal Navy (Royal Marines), British Army (Royal Artillery and Royal Armoured Corps) and Royal Air Force (RAF Regiment) for service within 3rd (United Kingdom) Division, 1st Artillery Brigade, 1st Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade, 3 Commando Brigade, 16 Air Assault Brigade, RAF Force Protection Force (RAF Regiment) and within the Special Forces Support Group.

JTACs are selected through aptitude screening before undertaking the 8 week JTAC-Certification Course at the Joint Forward Air Controller Training and Standardisation Unit (JFACTSU) based at RAF Leeming. After initial Certification the JTACs complete (up to) 12 months of continuation training before undertaking exercise Initial Strike to gain their initial Qualified statuses. Once Qualified, JTAC must maintain their skills through a series of training requirements with frontline aircraft and simulators.

The opportunities also continue from there on as a JTAC from Corporal/ Bombardier to Warrant Officer. Officers are selected for JTAC training (from (Army) Lieutenant/ Flight Lieutenant) to lead Battle Group and Brigade level Tactical Air Control Parties (TACPs). These officers have opportunities to continue to use their JTAC skill set in positions within the Joint Air Liaison Organisation (JALO) and UK Air Support Operation Squadron (ASOS) up to Commander/ Lieutenant Colonel/ Wing Commander. ■



A member of the Royal Artillery conducts his checks in a simulator in Kinloss. © 2018 Crown Copyright.