

U.S., Canadian construction engineers train for joint contingency operations

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Earlier this month, the Silver Flag exercise site at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla., hosted 31 Royal Canadian Air Force construction engineers from the 19 Wing Comox, B.C.

The Canadians trained side-by-side with American construction engineers during the week-long Silver Flag training exercise designed to help prepare them to establish, sustain and recover an airfield in a contingency environment.

Major David Jane, a Canadian exchange officer assigned to the Air Force Civil Engineer Center at Tyndall, is in charge of Air Force civil engineer contingency training encompassing the Silver Flag program, curriculum and scheduling. He's the 13th Canadian officer to occupy the position since the officer exchange program began in 1981 as a way to strengthen cooperation between the two air forces. Maj Jane's counterpart is a United States Air Force major assigned to RCAF headquarters in Winnipeg, Man.



Capt Kip Boyechko, Capt James Boone and Maj David Jane observe high voltage power distribution training. Credit: Eddie Green

"At Tyndall, we run 23 classes a year," Maj Jane said. "We try to incorporate a Canadian construction engineering flight at least once a year from one of the main air bases. It's a unique opportunity for them to come and experience the different equipment and different organization of U.S. Air Force civil engineers. It's also good for the U.S. members to see some of the differences in the way Canadians operate.

"It helps both nations to maintain capability for joint operations so when they go overseas together, they're speaking the same language," Maj Jane said.

Air Force construction engineers from the Illinois Air National Guard rounded out the approximately 200-member class.

"The joint environment is pretty good because you get to see how (the Canadian troops) normally do things versus our techniques and how the career fields are different," said Technical Sergeant Dustin Walker, 183rd Civil Engineer Squadron power production technician. "The training here is team-oriented, so it gives us a good chance to work together."

The Silver Flag course is an integral part of preparing civil engineers for deployment operations and simulates the experience of deploying to an austere location to build up an airfield and the infrastructure necessary to sustain a base. Construction engineers also get practice in establishing power generation and distribution systems, reverse osmosis water purification units and in providing fire protection and emergency services.

During the week, both Canadian and American construction engineers got to work with equipment not usually available at their home installations.

"Our heavy equipment operators get a chance to work on the airfield with heavy equipment, something they don't have the opportunity to do a lot in Canada," said Captain Clifford Boyechko, 19 Wing's construction engineering flight commander.

"Much of our equipment is the same but it allows us to work in a different environment. We did similar training two weeks ago in Cold Lake, Alta., in -20C, -30C conditions, so obviously the training environment is much better here in Florida," Capt Boyechko said.

The training is provided by a 102-person cadre from Detachment 1, 823rd Red Horse Squadron. More than 6,000 people each year are trained at the Tyndall site, one of three like it in the world. The others are at Kadena Air Base, Japan, and Ramstein Air Base, Germany.



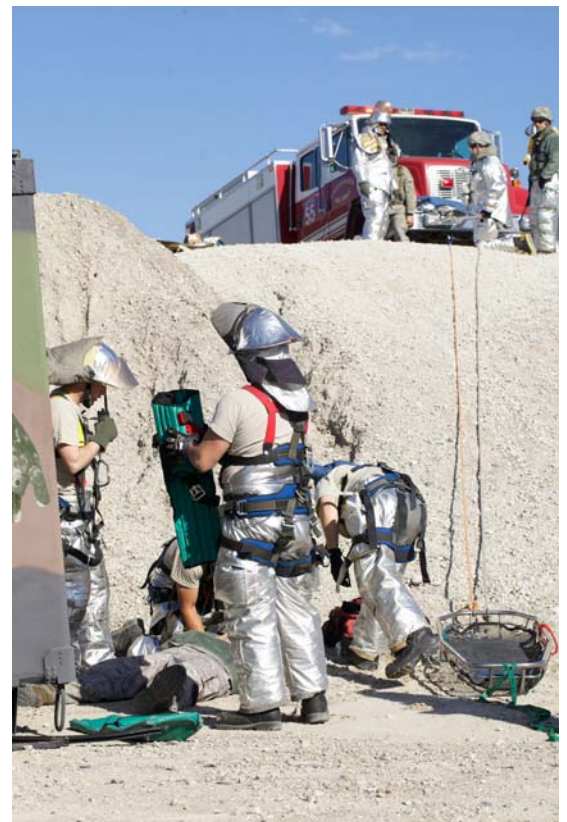
USAF Capt Robert Jobe, RCAF Capt Laura Locklin, 19 Wing Comox, B.C., construction engineering requirements officer, and RCAF MWO Dan Fralick, also from 19 Wing, walk to oversee operations during the Silver Flag training exercise. The blue colour of their rifles indicate they are not functional weapons



A mobile support equipment operator from 19 Wing Comox, B.C., operates an excavator to complete a runway crater repair during the airfield damage repair portion of the final exercise during the Silver Flag training exercise.



USAF firefighters prepare ropework to raise a casualty during rescue training at the Silver Flag training exercise



USAF firefighters care for and prepare a casualty for transportation during rescue training during the Silver Flag training exercise.



RCAF Sgt Joel Fitzgerald and RCAF Cpl Donald Wray connect piping for a water supply unit during the Silver Flag training exercise



RCAF Cpl James Sewell hustles to erect a small shelter during the Silver Flag training exercise



RCAF Cpl Donald Wray operates a portable water pump while preparing the water supply to the reverse osmosis water purification unit during the Silver Flag training exercise