JFCC

CAPTAIN GUY C. SWAN III

In the air-land battle of the future, teamwork among the services in planning and coordinating air-ground operations will be crucial. A unique course of instruction offered at Hurlburt Field, Florida, helps officers and senior noncommissioned officers from all the armed services to prepare for that teamwork.

The Joint Firepower Control Course (JFCC), a two-week course sponsored by the U.S. Air Force's Air-Ground Operations School (AGOS), is taught by selected Army, Air Force, and Navy officers, all of whom are thoroughly professional instructors with wide experience in various kinds of military operations.

Like the instructors, the students come from varied military backgrounds and tend to be highly motivated and professional. In fact, a good deal of the learning that takes place during the course comes out of the informal exchanges between the students. This also makes for some lively conversations and promotes interservice respect and confidence.

Much of the first week's instruction focuses on four main topics — Army organization, Air Force organization and missions, threat capabilities, and the functions of the Tactical Air Control System/Army Air Ground System (TACS/AAGS).

In the discussion of Army organization, the emphasis is placed on combat units below corps level. The students are briefly exposed to current Army weapon systems; combat operations, doctrine and missions; fire support assets; and Army aviation. Military symbols, map overlay techniques, and communication procedures are also covered. In addition to being an excellent review for the Army students, this block of instruction helps to familiarize the other students, many of whom will serve as forward air controllers (FACs), with the Army's battle concepts and terminology.

OVERVIEW

A similar overview of Air Force organization and missions focuses on operational doctrine, aircraft, weapons, and communications. The Air Force instructors use the primary missions of tactical air operations as a framework for all the subsequent classes — interdiction, counter-air, close air support (CAS), tactical air reconnaissance, tactical airlift, and special air operations.

A parallel look at the threat forces is also presented. Through a series of classified briefings, the students get a comprehensive picture of threat air, land, and sea capabilities and of threat doctrine and strategies.

The first week's instruction concludes with several detailed periods on the Tactical Air Control System/Army Air Ground System (TACS/AAGS). The students are shown how the various sophisticated Army and Air Force command and control systems work together to provide timely air support for ground operations. The focus is on the Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), because it is here that most of the initial coordination takes place between Army commanders and Air Force supporting units. With the TACP as a basis, the instructors cover the Air Force command and control system, following a sample request for air support through the TACS system.

The course's second week includes instruction in such subjects as tactical air reconnaissance, controlling and requesting tactical airlift, beacon bombing techniques, fighter tactics, and forward air control procedures. There is also a good discussion of the employment of the Joint Air Attack Team (JAAT), which calls for the simultaneous use of Army attack helicopters and Air Force fighter aircraft to defeat heavily armored threat formations.

The students then get an opportunity to visit the 33d Tactical Fighter Wing (F-15) at Eglin AFB, and are also given an orientation on Air Force special air operations and unconventional warfare. The special operations briefing includes a static display of the AC-130H *Spectre* gunship of the 1st Special Operations Wing. The AC-130H is a modified C-130 cargo aircraft that carries twin 20mm Vul-

can cannons, a 40mm cannon, and a 105mm Army howitzer.

The training highlight of the week is an eight-hour planning conference during which the Army students in the course act as an armored cavalry squadron staff conducting a covering force operation with the Air Force students playing the roles of air liaison officers (ALOs) and FACs. This exercise presents a rapidly changing tactical scenario in which the students must apply what they have learned about U.S. air and ground operations, threat capabilities, and the TACS/AAGS system.

The Joint Firepower Control Course is a tremendously valuable tool, and commanders at all levels should use it to prepare themselves and their units to fight the air-land battle. More information on the course and on the other courses offered at AGOS can be obtained from the Commandant, USAF Air Ground Operations School, Hurlburt Field, Florida 32544.

CAPTAIN GUY C. SWAN III, now commanding a company in the 9th Infantry Division at Fort Lewis, recently completed the JFCC. A 1976 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, he has also completed both the Armor and the Infantry Officer Advanced Courses.