

## 66 TRAINING SQUADRON



### MISSION

The SERE Training Instructor Course, conducted by the 66 Training Squadron, is taught at Fairchild. This is a five-and-one-half-month program designed to teach future survival instructors how to instruct aircrew members to survive in any environment. The course includes instruction in basic survival, medical, navigation skills, overland travel, evasion, arctic survival, teaching techniques, rough land evacuation, coastal survival, tropics/river survival, and desert survival. Basic survival, navigation skills, overland travel, evasion, and teaching techniques are taught in the Colville National Forest; arctic training is conducted on Calispell Mountain near Cusick, Wash; desert training is conducted in an arid sand dune area near George, Wash.; rough land evacuation is conducted near Tum-Tum, Wash.; tropics/river survival is taught in the Olympic National Park, Wash.; and coastal survival is conducted on Tillamook Bay off the Oregon coast.

The third course conducted at Fairchild is the non-ejection water survival course, which trains aircrew members of non-parachute-equipped aircraft. The course lasts two days and includes instruction in signaling rescue aircraft, hazardous aquatic life, food and water procurement, medical aspects of water survival and life raft procedures. Group and personal survival are stressed throughout the course.

The fourth course is the resistance training orientation course. The 66 Training Squadron conducts the five-day course for U. S. Air Force SERE training instructors and designated Department of Defense personnel. The course covers the theories and principles needed to conduct Level C Code of Conduct resistance training laboratory instruction. Established by 1993 Year of Training initiatives and the new career field education and training plan for SERE training instructors, course graduation is mandatory for upgrade to the 5 skill level.

The final course conducted by Fairchild is the SERE training instructor, 7-level upgrade course. This 19-day course, conducted annually, provides 5-level instructors with advanced survival

training in barren arctic, barren desert, jungle, and open-ocean environments. Training is conducted at Eagle Summit, Alaska (arctic); Yuma Proving Grounds, Arizona (desert); Schofield Barracks Military Reservation, Oahu, Hawaii (jungle); and the Gulf of Mexico based out of Pensacola NAS, Florida (open ocean). Instructors spend three to four days in each environment learning and applying skills required for surviving with minimum gear and support.

Detachment 1, 66 Training Squadron at Eielson AFB, Alaska, teaches Arctic Survival Training. This is a five-day course conducted from October through March, and it is designed for aircrews assigned to flying duties in the northern regions. Instruction concentrates on food and water procurement, thermal shelter construction, fire-craft, and various signaling techniques. This course prepares individuals to cope with the harsh arctic environment and familiarizes the student with cold weather survival equipment and procedures.

Detachment 2, 66 Training Squadron at NAS Pensacola, Florida, conducts a second water survival course offered by the Survival School. This course lasts four days and simulates in-flight over water emergency. The course centers its training on aircrews, which utilize parachuting as the primary means of escape. Instruction includes initial academic training, parachute equipment procedures, parachute drag training, post egress and recovery training which includes a deep water landing, and a one to two hour raft familiarization exercise.

Each summer, the group also supports the United States Air Force Academy in the conduct of their survival and evasion training program. Additionally, survival instructors train approximately 2,200 Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets at different field training encampments throughout the United States each summer. Approximately 1,200 Air Force Academy cadets are instructed in three 21-day programs.

#### **LINEAGE**

66 Training Squadron

#### **STATIONS**

Fairchild AFB, WA

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

336 Training Group

#### **COMMANDERS**

Lt Col Mark W. Worrell

Lt Col Christopher Tacheny

Lt Col James A. Darnell, 8 Jul 1987

Lt Col Timothy C. Davis

#### **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

## **Campaign Streamers**

New Guinea  
Northern Solomons  
Bismarck Archipelago  
Western Pacific  
Leyte  
Luzon  
Southern Philippines

## **Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

### **Decorations**

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

Distinguished Unit Citation

### **EMBLEM**



Blue and yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The helicopter and palm trees were taken from the old 3614th Combat Crew Training Squadron emblem. The lamp of knowledge embodies the unit's training mission and the knowledge of the instructors. The mountains, palm trees, and waves suggest the scope of global survival, evasion, resistance, and escape instruction. Compass points indicate direction-finding instruction. (Approved, 2 Jun 1989)

### **MOTTO**

Learn and Return

### **OPERATIONS**

This unit incorporates the heritage of the 66 Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium) and the 3614th Combat Crew Training Squadron. The War Department activated the 66 Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium) on 12 December 1942. Assigned to the 403d Troop Carrier Group, Fifth Air Force, it operated L-5 as well as C-46 and C-47. During World War II, the squadron provided transportation and resupply to forces in the Pacific Theater. After the war, it was inactivated for a year and a half and

then activated as a reserve squadron at Portland, Oregon. The 66 inactivated on 17 April 1951.

Air Training Command activated the 3614th Combat Crew Training Squadron on 1 April 1981 at Fairchild. Air Training Command activated the 3614th to manage the survival training instructor course, with specialized training taking place throughout Washington, Oregon, and Montana. The squadron was also responsible for the water survival training, nonparachuting, course for non-ejection-seat aircrews.

On 1 January 1993, HQ USAF consolidated the 3614th with the 66 Troop Carrier Squadron (Medium). The Air Force then redesignated the combined squadron as the 66 Crew Training Squadron, effective 28 January 1993. A little over a year later, on 1 April 1994, HQ USAF again redesignated the squadron—this time as the 66 Training Squadron.

2010 In response to the Deep Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Air Force water survival courses have temporarily relocated to Fairchild Air Force Base. Training at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla., was suspended indefinitely June 4 when oil was discovered inside the training area used by Detachment 2 of the 66 Training Squadron.

The instructors at Det. 2 teach students how to survive in cases where the aircrew has to abandon their aircraft over water. The course covers a variety of open-water scenarios, from how to land in water with a parachute, to surviving the elements and procuring food. Up to 55 students a week attend the three-day course, held 48 weeks out of the year, said Lt. Col. Christopher Tacheny, the 66 TRS commander. "Relocating portions of our survival course to Fairchild is a short-term solution," Colonel Tacheny said. "The Air Force is committed to continue this training. What we've had to do is modify what we can teach with our facilities here at Fairchild. It's the very definition of adapt and overcome."

In some cases, the instructors have used an academic solution, teaching what they can in classrooms so aircrew members have at least some familiarity with possible open water contingencies. Those Airmen are expected to fulfill the remaining training requirements at a later date at a location to be determined, Colonel Tacheny said. "There's simply no replacement for exposure to the practical experience," he added. According to the colonel, one of the biggest successes in the effort was how quickly his team was able to divert students from one location and immediately begin training in another. Training in Pensacola Bay was suspended on a Friday and by Monday morning, students were already in place and ready for the course, Colonel Tacheny said.

Tech. Sgt. Toby Stolz, the NCO in charge of the water training flight, has been tasked with creating the alternative solutions for the inbound students. "We've got a lot of creative Airmen who are coming up with answers to the challenges we face," Sergeant Stolz said. "We're actively brainstorming to find cost-efficient ways to accomplish our mission." Sergeant Stolz's team has been able to replicate many of the training tools the Pensacola team uses, such as disentanglement rings for getting out from under a tangled parachute to harnesses aircrew students wear while hanging above the pool.

There are still challenges for the instructors. "We don't have the resources or training areas to conduct parasail operations that simulate an over-water parachute deployment like we do in the gulf region," Colonel Tacheny said. "Also, we still haven't found a way to perform the drag

exercise, which simulates an aircrew member being dragged by a parachute should it inflate with surface winds once they land in the water." Under the command of Capt. Mike Erdley, Det. 2 possesses the largest naval fleet in the Air Force. The Pensacola facility is actually the fourth location the 66 TRS has used. Previously, water survival was taught off the coast of Tyndall AFB on the Florida panhandle, and at Homestead Air Reserve Base, 30 miles south of Miami.

Because of long winters and frozen lakes, the Pacific Northwest is not a viable option for open-water training for several months of the year, Captain Erdley said. "There's a reason why we do the majority of water survival training in the Gulf of Mexico," the captain said. Because of the situation in the gulf, however, it's unclear how long training operations there will be suspended. Colonel Tacheny said efforts are under way to find a permanent location, should Det. 2 have to relocate. "Our leadership is fully aware of the situation," Colonel Tacheny said. "Right now my focus is to continue to provide the best training we can, given the limitations we have here. It wouldn't be possible without the support we've gotten from the outdoor recreation manager, Damian Smith. He's balanced our increased training schedule with normal pool hours, so we appreciate his efforts."

Overcoming those limitations has been challenging, but "water survival instructors have an admirable passion for what they do," Colonel Tacheny said. "Our instructors aren't satisfied until they know for certain that an aircrew member is ready to operate and endure in every environment imaginable," the colonel said. "We want every student who sets foot on our campus to have the skills they need to survive so they may, like our motto says, return with honor."

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#### Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency, U.S. Air Force, Maxwell AFB, Alabama.

The Institute of Heraldry, U.S. Army, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

Air Force News, Air Force Public Affairs Agency.