

JOINT FIRES CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

MISSION

LINEAGE

Joint Fires Center of Excellence

STATIONS

Spangdahlem AB, Germany

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

The Joint Fires Center of Excellence opened its doors to students for the first time Oct. 17 2006 as the U.S. military's only Europe-based joint firepower education center.

The U.S. Air Forces in Europe-inspired initiative is designed to enhance close air support operations by providing a more convenient means to train military members stationed in Europe who are likely to engage in joint and combined combat environments.

Formerly, Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., maintained the only U.S. Air Force school that taught procedures to integrate close air support into the combat fire and movement of ground forces. This required Soldiers and Airmen involved in close air support missions to travel stateside for the specialized training.

“The demands placed upon our forces in support of the Global War on Terrorism require them to maintain the highest levels of proficiency and readiness. They need to be trained and ready to deploy to any combat arena at any given time and on very short notice,” said Col. Thomas Berghoff, JFCoE commander. “The mission of JFCoE, to provide joint warfighting training focused on the effective integration and application of tactical fire, will help ensure these forces are ready for combat.”

Additionally, the center’s European location allows NATO-member military personnel to join in classes. “This gives students special insight into working in a joint and combined-force environment,” said Army Staff Sgt. Larry Melton, JFCoE academics NCOIC and instructor.

Center studies are split into two parts: nine days of classroom study at Spangdahlem, and five days of controlling actual close air support missions at various training ranges in Germany. Much of the instruction focuses on doctrine -- the official word on when, where, why and how close air support is conducted.

“We study doctrine, or what ‘the book’ says, extensively. Battlefield scenarios change, so we must adjust and adapt to those changing situations. Understanding doctrine helps us make good adjustments,” said Sergeant Melton.

In conjunction with doctrinal studies, JFCoE instruction covers the integration of army, air force, Marine, and navy battlefield resources. For example, in the heat of battle, an Army fire support sergeant can call for air cover by an Army attack aircraft, such as the AH-64 Apache. Or he may coordinate with an Air Force joint terminal attack controller for fixed-wing close air support from an A-10, F-16 fighter jet or an AC-130 gunship.

For some students, the JFCoE provides their first experience working in a joint environment. Army 1st Lt. Jason Waters, a fire support officer in training assigned to the 1-94 Field Artillery Battalion, said that besides the convenience of attending classes closer to his home station he has found that the center offers far more than just instruction.

“Combat veterans here provide information and insights that I think will be really helpful when calling in close air support. Students just can’t get that from just reading a book,” he said.

Additionally, the JFCoE team isn’t limited to Spangdahlem. Center instructors will take the show on the road and provide close air support classes to Army units located throughout Germany, making mission readiness even more accessible.

USAF Unit Histories
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Sources
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.