Raiders enter 'the wild blue' with UAV training

U.S. Army

FORT CARSON, Colo. (Jan. 28, 2013) -- Unmanned aerial vehicles soared through the sky under the control of 16 "Raider" Brigade Soldiers during QR-11 Raven training on Fort Carson, Jan. 7-18.

During the two-week training certification course, Soldiers from 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, in a variety of career fields, learned how to launch, maneuver and land the small, unmanned aircraft in a variety of situations, including aerial security during movement operations, terrain reconnaissance and target acquisition during night operations.

"The benefit of this training can't be overstated," said 2nd Lt. Theresa Ross, intelligence officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 4th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Brigade Combat Team. "The Raven is small, lightweight and portable. We use it for everything from site reconnaissance to target acquisition, so having several Soldiers trained and qualified to operate it is a huge combat multiplier."

The hands-on approach to the training helped the Raiders get a feel for the tactical importance of the unmanned aerial vehicle, as well as a solid understanding of its capabilities and limitations, said Ross.

"Not a whole lot of intelligence officers get the chance to learn about this hardware first hand," she said. "Because I have first-hand knowledge of the Raven, I will have reasonable expectations of what we can accomplish with it during a combat deployment."

The Raven is designed for quick assembly and deployment at the lowest levels of the military structure. Weighing only four pounds and operated by remote control, the Raven can gather video or photographic intelligence, or direct forces to a target using an infrared laser.

Having Soldiers from both combat arms and support career fields participating in the training ensures that no mater what the situation, U.S. forces can always get an "eye in the sky," said Steve Rocovitch, small unmanned aerial system instructor, Rally Point Management.

"The Raven is a great asset to the military, but only if it is used properly," Rocovitch said. "I have confidence that these Soldiers can take what we've practiced these past two weeks and implement them in a complex deployed environment."

While one Soldier flew the Raven via remote control, others viewed the unmanned aerial vehicle's flight on a laptop, implemented flight patterns and controlled its cameras and other tools.

"In addition to learning how to operate the Raven, I gained a better understanding of all the things going on in an operating environment," said Pfc. Glen Default, infantryman, Company B, 1st Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team. "When I fly, I have to be aware of everything going on in my airspace and know what is going on ground side to accomplish my mission. It's a much bigger picture than I have been exposed to."

The Raider Soldiers will continue to train in preparation for an upcoming deployment in support of U.S. Army Central Command.

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