

Unmanned Aircraft Systems Training Battalion (UASTB)

What is it?

The Unmanned Aircraft Systems Training Battalion (UASTB) is located at Ft. Huachuca, Ariz. It consists of four companies with 270 Soldier authorized, 120 Department of the Army Civilians, and 471 contractors. It is dispersed over 750 acres with more than 350,000 square feet of training area and support facilities, including three separate runways, totaling over 17,000 linear feet. The battalion's mission is to develop, maintain, and administer UAS Operator Training, UAS Repairer Training, Tactical UAS Warrant Officer Technician Training, and the UAS Command and Staff Officer's Course to provide ground force commanders with highly trained, combat ready Aviation Soldiers and Marines. The primary focus towards accomplishing this mission has been to instill aviation rigor throughout the schoolhouse and UAS community. Specific airframes trained include the Hunter, Shadow, Warrior-A and the Extended Range / Multi Purpose (ER/MP) UAS. Alpha Company is the Advanced Individual Trainee (AIT) company that does the care and feeding of the AIT and MOS-T students. Bravo Company conducts daily flight operations for all AIT and MOS-T students going through the Shadow and Hunter UAS Operators Course, while Charlie Company conducts all Warrior-A and ER/MP UAS operator training and the ER/MP maintainer training. Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC) is responsible for the development and administration of five programs of instruction for the Shadow and Hunter UAS Repairers, UAS Operator Common Core, 150U UAS Warrant Officer Technician, and UAS Staff Officer Leader Course.

What has Army Aviation done?

From FY08 to FY09 the battalion completed its seventh consecutive annual student throughput increase from 1,103 to 1,849 students, a 68 percent increase. The surge most affected maintainer courses which increased from 160 to 533 students, doubling each class size.

During FY09 the UASTB also increased its training footprint with temporary facilities. Though operating at only 57 percent manning strength, the expansion has allowed training to increase to three shifts, conducting 24-hour operations from select runways. In order to support increased operations the battalion hired and trained an additional 126 contractors who have completed the baseline operator course as per the parameters of the Training Requirements and Arbitration Panel (TRAP). Also, these contractors exceeded requirements by completing the Instructor-Operator Course and the Method of Instruction Course.

The UASTB has seen great strides in the safety program. It adopted an "apprentice to journeyman" concept to remind personnel, down to the lowest level, of the battalion's infancy in both aviation operations and accident prevention. This concept allowed the battalion to view itself in a manner that allowed room for improvement, especially in risk mitigation. Through this concept, the UASTB successfully implemented the first Directorate of Evaluation and Standardization (DES) approved crew chief progression program for UAS maintainers. This program was a key element in the Shadow program's ability to reduce RQ-7 accidents by more than 50 percent while simultaneously increasing student throughput, a task that had never been accomplished previously.

The battalion developed an Enlisted Launch and Recovery (LRE) Course due to a lack of available rated Army Aviators to launch and recover the Warrior-A platform. As a result the first ever enlisted takeoff and landing class that the Warrior-A program has ever seen, successfully graduated five Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) in June 2009. The five NCOs, in a matter of weeks, conducted more than 500 takeoff and landings with no incidents, a task that would have taken a tactical unit more than two years to complete. Following the training, three of the five NCOs were immediately deployed in support of OEF.

The battalion will continue to support the US Army Forces Command (FORCSOM) requirement for a Quick Reactionary Capability (QRC). The battalion has trained Soldiers on ER / MP for QRC 1 in support of OIF in FY09. The UASTB continues to train two additional QRCs to provide an additional capability to OEF and replace the OIF QRC 1.

What continued efforts does Army Aviation have planned for the future?

The UASTB continues to increase throughput from FY09 to FY10 from 1,446 to 2,042 personnel. This increase is due to the need of UAS operators and maintainers on the battlefield. A large portion of that increase will come from the training of operators and maintainers for the ER/MP Program of Record (PoR). ER/MP training will coincide with the Army's plan to field the ER/MP PoR between FY11 and FY21. By May 2010 the UASTB will have transitioned to conducting all AIT training for the new 15E MOS.

Why is this important to the Army and Army Aviation?

UASTB continues to be a relevant and responsive member of the Army's Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition (RSTA) / Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) surge, to provide tactical RSTA / ISR platforms in support of full-spectrum military operations at all echelons. UAS support the achievement of information dominance by providing the capability to collect, process, and disseminate information.

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