

# TRAINING RESPONSE

Story by Andrew Stamer

**A** price tag cannot be put on the proper training that could help fire fighters save lives in the event of a plane crash.

That is why U.S. Air Force Europe is pleased that the 39th Mission Support Group at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, has received a critical training requirement – a Fire Training Facility.

The 39th MSG has done other training exercises involving combating fires with the use

of burning wood and other structural fires, but this fire trainer provides the first realistic training, said Col. David “Dash” Wilmot, commander, 39<sup>th</sup> Mission Support Group.

“Structural fires ... are totally different animals than an airplane fire,” said Wilmot. “Especially an airplane fire on a tanker which carried fuel; it may never go out. It’s always hot metal, fuel and air, and is going to burn no matter how much water





**Capt. Tyler Faulk, TUSEG, talks with contractors as they near the completion of a new fire training facility at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey.**

Photo by Brian H. Temple

you put on it.”

As soon as it was ready to use, the fire trainer was putting these fire fighters to the test, and vice versa.

In April, 10 people were certified to operate the trainer and by the middle of May over 100 personnel at the fire department had been certified on the trainer, said Jerry Blaisdell, fire chief, 39th Air Base Wing.

“These facilities are hard to come by,” said Wilmot. “They are also very expensive. It’s one of those things that the fire department absolutely needs.”

Safe fire fighting and rescue techniques can’t have a price tag put on them because they can save lives, and the trainer will soon pay for itself.

Just to send six people to a rescue course in Aviano, Italy, would cost Blaisdell’s department an estimated \$33,000.

“We realized the tremendous cost savings for us and the U.S. Air Force to be able to have one here,” said Blaisdell.

While the primary reason for this trainer is to meet the Department of Defense requirement on

training, it will also help train host nation fire

fighters in the local communities of Incirlik and Adana, which surround the base, said Blaisdell.

From a fire fighter perspective, any time you turn around and make training as realistic as possible, you improve the responses of those fighting fires.

“In order to get good at being a fire fighter you have to fight fires,” said Blaisdell.

“This trainer makes it possible. We are fortunate because we are exposed to live fire.

“It has made a difference with our guys here. It’s hard to simulate heat and smoke conditions ... they learned to stay low because they can feel the heat now.”

The fire trainer’s design comes from the need for it to serve as a multipurpose trainer for all aircraft in the Air Force’s inventory. It combines a high wing for medium to large sized planes and a low wing to simulate a small frame or fighter aircraft, said Blaisdell.

After taking a look at other Corps’ projects around the base, Wilmot said he stepped back and saw the quality come through.

“There have been two very lean years, but we’re holding onto the Corps to keep them viable so that next year, when we start doing MILCON (military construction) projects, that they’re viable,” said Wilmot.

Europe District will continue to be a resource serving the military and other agencies throughout Europe and parts of Asia and Africa, and, those in Turkey are ready to employ the Corps as an essential part of their team.



Photo by Shannon Draper

**Above: Firefighters put out a mock engine fire at Incirlik Air Base, Turkey. Opposite page: Fire blows out of the trainer’s fuselage while two firefighters work to combat the flames.**

**To make training realistic, firefighters battle infernos using a mock-up airplane that combines many parts of different planes to simulate the vast array of airframes in the Air Force’s inventory.**

Photo by Shannon Draper

