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New \$9.5 million center to help Air Force Academy cadets understand warfare

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Red Hoar, a software development program manager, teaches Master Sgt. Bonnie Rushing, a military and strategic studies instructor at the U.S. Air Force Academy, to operate the remotely piloted aircraft control room in the school's multi domain laboratory, July 22, 2021. The lab will be part of the air power and joint operations strategy course, the school's only 4.5 credit-hour core course. (U.S. Air Force photo/Staff Sgt. Seth Stang)

Air Force Photo
MORE INFORMATION



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As American troops pull out of the nation's longest war in Afghanistan, the Air Force Academy is spending \$9.5 million on a facility that will help cadets envision their role in future conflicts.

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Loaded with flight simulators, facilities similar to those used to control drones and other technology to introduce cadets to simulated combat, the "multi-domain" laboratory will enhance the school's Military and Strategic Studies Department, the school said on its website.

"We need to prepare cadets for future conflict, so we will integrate and update technologies, tactics and theories into our classrooms and lab," Master Sgt. Bonnie Rushing, an instructor in the department said on the school's website. "This truly enhances our curriculum."

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The academy for years has worked to prepare cadets for the life they'll face after graduation. From flight training to ground combat drills in Jacks Valley, the academy has worked to prepare cadets for future fights.

The new lab integrates a new dimension to combat training, teaching skills like electronic warfare and intelligence gathering along with the basics of combat in air, space and cyberspace.


The academy's 4,000 cadets are required to take a course in air power and joint operations strategy.

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It's the most military element in a grueling curriculum that rivals the nation's top traditional colleges.

"Warfare is consistently evolving," Maj. Catherine Brewer, an instructor for military and strategic studies said on the school's website. "As we commission new second lieutenants, they are expected to lead in an ever-changing and complex joint environment. The lab provides hands-on experiences to support their operational missions."

The school's military-aimed classes, though, aren't about memorization. Instead, like the rest of the academy curriculum, they're designed to inspire creativity that could someday be the difference between victory and defeat on a battlefield.

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At an event to mark the beginning of the school's new academic year, academy dean Brigadier Gen. Linell Letendre explained the philosophy.

“At the Academy, we will expose you to a vast array of concepts,” Letendre said. “This is not about teaching you what to think, this is about teaching you how to think.”

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Tom Roeder is the Gazette's City Editor. In Colorado Springs since 2003, Tom has covered the military at home and overseas and has covered statehouses in Denver and Olympia, Wash. His main job, though, is being dad to two great kids.