

New USAFA lab helps cadets prepare for different battle scenarios

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New technology is preparing cadets for warfare



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COLORADO SPRINGS — As Russia's invasion of Ukraine intensifies, there's much to learn from the tactical and operational events taking place.

In the meantime, the U.S. Air Force Academy has a new multi-domain laboratory helping cadets prepare for different war-fighting scenarios.



The financial state of Colorado Springs

The lab gives cadets a clear and accurate view of battle operations. It can be configured for learning across all strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.

"We can build scenarios anywhere in the world which is fantastic. Right now we have a scenario in Japan, but we can place it anywhere world events need it to be," said Cadet 1st Class Parker Ashlock.

The laboratory is a critical element of learning for cadets like Ashlock who plans on becoming a pilot.

"I get to see a bigger picture visualized that I was taught previously but I wasn't able to fully grasp until I saw it all connect here in this lab," said Ashlock. "I'm going to understand more facets. How the Army, Navy, and Space Force tie into the Air Force and how we can all work together in a joint environment," said Ashlock.

The lab contains two flight bays filled with flight simulators, equipment, and learning aids to simulate drone missions, air and ground battle scenarios.

"This lab has some capabilities that you would see in the operational Air Force. It's designed like that, and it helps cadets get familiar with environments they're going to be seeing once they graduate and get into the operational force," said Ashlock.

"What we're doing here is a quantum leap ahead of where war-gaming was just last year. You might look at board games or rolling the dice, now we have great software and flight simulators which we call immersive learning devices. To use this as an educational environment where they can experiment, do operations, take risks against near-peer competitors in any scenario we can create," said Master Sgt. Bonnie Rushing.

Rushing teaches the Airpower and Joint Operations Strategy class which is a core course for cadets. She says there are several hundred cadets in the course at any given time each semester.

"They learn everything from how each branch operates, how it goes back to national guidance, and how we're going to operate now and in the future in a joint capacity," said Rushing. "We're looking five years in the future so what does their technology look like, what does ours look like, what kind of stakes and goals do we have and we have to think about the adversaries. What are they trying to achieve and what can we do to support those national security strategies," said Rushing.

