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Airmen refresh survival skills

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Cohen Young
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Air-qualified Airmen were able to refresh their survival skills during training in a wooded area of Wheeler Army Air Field, Hawaii on Nov. 4.

Some jobs in the Air Force require special training in addition to one's primary job and Airmen whose jobs require them to fly regularly are some of those who fall into this category.

These personnel are required to attend the survival evasion resistance escape (SERE) school at Fairchild Air Force Base, Wash. for initial survival training. Additionally, a refresher is accomplished every three years for each person who maintains a flying position. That refresher is taught at the flier's base or one near him or her, wherever there is a SERE instructor.

Because Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii is home to C-17 Globemaster III, KC-135 Stratotanker and F-22 Raptor crew members, there are plenty of Airmen who need to maintain their efficiency regarding their survival skills.

"This is continual training for the aviators assigned to Hickam on the skills they learned at Fairchild on evasion and navigation through the woods in case the enemy is chasing them," said Staff Sgt. Sergio Avalos, a SERE instructor assigned to the 15th Operations Support Squadron.

"We bring them up to speed on evasion tactics and recovery procedures," added Avalos, a San Marino, Texas native.

The students at the refresher training participated in a classroom session and then proceeded to a wooded area where evasion, camouflage, fire making and recovery procedures were reviewed. The students were then introduced to a scenario where they had to evade and find their way to a recovery point.

The training reinforces previous training which taught the aviators how to respond if they are faced with a situation in which the aircraft they are on unexpectedly becomes inoperable and they must bail out or crash land in hazard conditions or in unfriendly territory. This is not something that the aviators have to deal with normally, so it is beneficial for them to train in the event that such a scenario should happen.

"This is definitely a chance to get out and do something that we don't normally do," said Capt. Nathan Padgett of 535th Airlift Squadron, a native of Silver Spring, Md.

"As an aircraft commander, you want to make sure you know what to do in case of an emergency and you can help and lead your people," Padgett added.

"This refresher training is good because it gives us a chance to hone the skills that we learned at Fairchild and might not have touched in a few years," Padgett said.

Personal satisfaction is what drives the instructors because the students can apply the training they receive to a number of things besides an air crash.

" If they are out with their family and need a fire in an emergency, they can start a fire and sustain life because of some of the principles applied here," Avalos explained.
