Active shooter drill tests mettle of responders to real-life scenario

By Dan Bowen, CFAY Public Affairs

It would be a nightmare situation anywhere: a mentally unstable, disgruntled employee walks into his office armed and ready to do harm. Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) tested its capabilities to respond to such an event with an active shooter drill Oct. 21.

The scenario was based on the events of the Nov. 5, 2009 incident where 13 people were killed and 43 injured when a lone gunman opened fire at the Soldier Readiness Center in Ft. Hood, Texas. Although the Ft. Hood response to their emergency was quick and effective, there were still a number of lessons the Department of Defense learned and have implemented as a result of that tragedy.

"We learned we need to work better with each other between fire, emergency, security, NCIS (Naval Criminal Investigative Service) and the EOC (Emergency Operations Center)," said CFAY EOC Manager Chief Yeoman (SW/AW) Tim Willis. "[This drill] is going to give us a baseline for where we're at in our readiness and ensure that the watch standers are able to respond to this situation."

The drill scenario was centered on a troubled Sailor who had just returned from an individual augmentee assignment, who, during a meeting with a counselor in the Fleet and Family Support Center, became agitated, pulled out a weapon and began firing. The scenario included the rescue of hostages, evacuation of the area and the treatment of wounded personnel.

According to CFAY Security Training Leading Chief Petty Officer, Chief Master-at-Arms Reginald Chambers, conducting integrated training team (ITT) drills are important to ensure that personnel on the base are ready to effectively handle a situation at a moment's notice.

Base Security Force personnel participate in an Integrated Training Team (ITT) active shooter drill held in the Community Readiness Center Oct. 21. The drill was based on the 2009 Ft. Hood incident in which 13 people were killed. CFAY ITT personnel regularly conducts drills to ensure that the command is ready and able to react appropriately to any incident that may arise.

Photo by Yuji Kawabe

"The integration portion of this drill teaches us all to work as a team in the event an active shooter, natural disaster or whatever the case may be," said Chambers. "You never know [what will happen]… fight like we train and be ready for any type of situation."

Indeed, the report of the DoD independent review entitled, "Protecting the Force: Lessons from Ft. Hood," which can be viewed at www.defense.gov, stresses the importance of continuous training and preparation such as the ITT drills CFAY conducts on a regular basis.

The executive summary of the report states: "We recognize the events of Nov. 5, 2009, are first and foremost, a tragedy for all involved: families, colleagues and the nation. This event shows us, too, that there are no safe havens – for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, their coworkers and their families. The challenge for the Department of Defense is to prepare more effectively for a constantly changing security environment. The department's security posture for tomorrow must be more agile and adaptive. This means structures and mechanisms which anticipate the most pressing current threats – like the insider threat today – and the new threats what will manifest themselves in the future."

The leadership on base has taken these lessons to heart and is continuously working to ensure that CFAY is ready and able to handle any event that comes its way.

"Everything is evolving, adapting every single day. We need to stay one step ahead of the game," said Willis. "We want to make sure that the general public understands that we are actively engaged; public safety is first and foremost."

Field takes command of U.S. Forces Japan and 5th Air Force

By USFJ Public Affairs

Lt. Gen. Burton M. Field assumed command of U.S. Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force during a change of command ceremony held at Yokota Air Base, Japan Oct. 25.

Field, the former senior advisor to the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan/Pakistan, the Pentagon, Washington, D.C., replaced Lt. Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr., who will assume duties as the next commander, Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas.

Adm. Robert F. Willard, commander, U.S. Pacific Command and Gen. Gary L. North, commander, Pacific Air Forces, were present to officiate at the ceremony.

In his speech, Rice spoke about the contributions of the U.S. Forces Japan service members and civilians have made in strengthening the United State - Japan alliance.

"I want to thank all the members of the United States forces in Japan who have played an incalculable role in defending Japan and ensuring there is peace and stability in this part of the world," Rice said. "What you have done, and what you are doing, impacts the lives of millions and millions of people and it has been my great honor to have served alongside such splendid professionals."

Upon assuming command Field pledged his commitment to furthering the United States-Japan alliance.

"You have my pledge to work closely on the important issues of the day; across the spectrum of important areas from DPRI (Defense Posture Review Initiative) to interoperability, to improved coordination and cooperation, to BMD (Ballistic Missile Defense); to the myriad of other issues we must solve in order to meet those future challenges," Field said.

"You have my pledge to work closely with you to improve our great alliance and we will ensure our men and women stand alert, ready and able to respond to the challenges that arise and to support our efforts in the future," he added.

Lt. Gen. Burton M. Field assumed command of U.S. Forces Japan and Fifth Air Force during a change of command ceremony held at Yokota Air Base Oct. 25.

Official U.S. Air Force photo