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A deployed aircraft ground response element Airman with the 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron watches for any potential threats while protecting a simulated airfield during an exercise July 27, at Kadena Air Base.

(U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Corey M. Pettis)

## DAGRE Airmen complete humanitarian aid, disaster relief exercise

### By Airman 1st Class Corey M. Pettis

18th Wing Public Affairs

**8/2/2016** — Sweat glistens on his face, his eyes peer back and forth, weapon at the ready and watching for any movement. As the old saying goes, practice like you play, because for deployed aircraft ground response element (DAGRE) Airmen, there's no room for anything but success.

Airman from the 353rd Special Operations Group participated in a training exercise here July 27; the scenario gave them the opportunity to practice humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations.

"Building partnerships with foreign entities doesn't always involve the two nation's militaries, it can also come in the form of humanitarian aid," said Capt. Ceasar Baldemor, 353rd Special Operations Support Squadron DAGRE flight leader.

The purpose of this training exercise is to keep the DAGRE

sharp and ready to tackle any situation they may find themselves in, wherever they are deployed to complete the mission.

"In one way or another, we're always training for a HA/DR mission," said Baldemor. "For the DAGRE flight, our core mission is security because we make sure the aircraft gets off the ground safely and that special tactics can perform their critical mission."

When things kick off in the Pacific, the phones at the 353rd SOG are some of the first to ring.

DAGRE personnel can be tasked to operations such as providing fly-away security, flight deck denial, pararescue and combat control team escort, airfield security and personnel recovery operations.

"This evening, we wanted to test all of these mission capabilities over a 24-hour period," said Baldemor.

During this exercise, the DAGRE team was responding to a crisis in a fictional country

where the local population was desperately trying to be evacuated, portrayed by volunteers from the 18th Force Support Squadron.

"I was a local refugee who needed to be evacuated and as time went on, we became impatient and started to get anxious about getting on the aircraft," said Senior Airman Andres Cervantes, 18th FSS out-bound technician who played the role of a refugee. "It was fun, full of action and rough, but it's all good as long as we made it real for [the DAGRE team] and they got the training they needed."

The team used a training area with a burnt-out plane, normally used for fire training, as an aircraft waiting to load up refugees.

After securing the airfield and setting up security, the team encountered their first refugees. They expertly defused the restless refugees, searched and escorted them to the aircraft.

They then responded to a situ-

ation of being outnumbered by a large group of people wanting to get on the plane. They promptly calmed the crowd down and restored order.

Once order was restored, the DAGRE members were attacked from two sides by members of the 18th Security Forces Squadron, simulating enemy resistance. Swiftly and accurately, they returned fire, taking out the enemy while protecting the group of refugees.

Afterward, the area was cleared of any additional threats and the remaining refugees were loaded onto the aircraft.

As the sun sank below the tree line and darkness fell upon them, night vision goggles were pulled out and turned on; under the green glow of NVGs, the team was ready for the next part of the mission – an important person was missing and it was their job to recover him.

Slipping under the cloak of night, the team made their way

through the jungle, down the road and off a beaten path.

They found their man, who had simulated injuries. They provided essential first aid and took him safely back to the extraction point.

Once back, the team was ambushed, this time at night and from the cover of the surrounding trees. Again, they responded with appropriate force and maintained control of the situation, finally reaching the aircraft so they could take off to safety.

"They performed very well considering we threw numerous complex [exercise] injects at them," said Baldemor. "We wanted to see how they would setup security over a wide area, such as an airfield, with only a small number of people, how they would execute effective crowd control measures when there is panic and desperation in the air, and finally, how well they are going to work as a team to get the mission done."

## Kadena trains for contingency, humanitarian operations

A 44th Fighter Squadron F-15 Eagle taxis past a C-17 Globemaster III assigned to Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., July 28, at Kadena Air Base. Kadena supports Air Force commitments in the Pacific region as well as all U.S. and allied partner interests from all over the world.



(U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Peter Reft)