

A special assignment

Boeing employee's efforts on helping U.K. define training has personal meaning

By STACEY RITTER

When Steve Monson, chief technologist for Training Systems and Services, said yes to an assignment to help win and manage a new demonstrator program in the United Kingdom, he had no idea how it would affect him both professionally and personally.

With two- to three-week trips to the U.K. occurring monthly, the little time he had at home was hurried—preparing for the next trip, spending time with his wife and two children and tending to household tasks.

“Murphy’s Law was right: if that garage door spring is going to break, it will break when I’m gone,” Monson said. “However, being on-site in the U.K. is important, really immersing me in the program and pro-

viding a much-needed focus to deliver the best capability to our customer.”

The 30-month program is the U.K. Mission Training Through Distributed Simulation Capability Concept Demonstrator (U.K. MTDS CCD). The program is being provided by Team ACTIVE, a team led by U.K.-based research firm QinetiQ. Boeing is the team’s major partner and is assisting the U.K. in defining the requirements for providing unit, joint and coalition training in a synthetic environment.

As the father of a U.S. Marine who’s served one tour in Iraq and is preparing for another in early 2008, Monson understands the value of effective joint and coalition training and is passionate about the development and delivery of cutting-edge technologies to warfighters.

“My son is a U.S. Marine who completed his first tour in Iraq just as the program’s first exercise—Battle Buzzard—was being completed. The exercise demonstrated the potential to deliver training for U.S. and U.K. pilots providing close air support as directed by the U.K. and U.S. Forward Air Controllers,” Monson said. “This program is about understanding how we could

apply training technology to increase the readiness of our warfighters, who increasingly work in coalition operations. In a way, the program allowed me to be a father helping his son.”

Monson is a Boeing Technical Fellow with a specialty in distributed simulation (the linking of simulators through a network to allow pilots at various locations to train together). He was behind the scenes in the mid-’90s when Boeing demonstrated Distributed Mission Operations (DMO) technology to the U.S. Air Force. “Just as that work contributed to the birth of DMO, I feel this work will contribute to a future of recurring training for coalition forces,” he said.

The U.K. MTDS CCD program will involve 10 aircrew trials and technical experiments. The trials involve frontline aircrew from the Royal Air Force and other services and are being supported by military experts from the RAF Air Warfare Centre. The trials will provide evidence to answer questions about the overall scope and shape of any future MTDS requirement, the simulation fidelity required and the ways to maximize the most cost-effective training benefit.

The MTDS CCD facility includes four Tornado GR4 cockpits and four Typhoon cockpits linked in to a comprehensive exercise management, planning, briefing and debriefing facility. These can be connected to similar assets at the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory at Mesa, Ariz., and to the Aviation Training International Ltd.’s Apache training simulators in the United Kingdom, as well as to other sites. All systems are linked over a secure wide-area network.

Over the coming months, Team ACTIVE will continue to enhance the capability of the RAF Waddington facility, based on the experience of previous events. A seven-seat AWACS capability is due to be added in the next few months. And government negotiations continue on linking the U.K. facility to the U.S. Distributed Mission Operations Network. This network includes participants from U.S. services and allies and permits them to “wargame” and rehearse highly complex campaigns.

“I am very excited about the capabilities Boeing is providing to this innovative demonstrator program,” Monson said, “and proud of my contribution to a program designed to examine how we can increase the readiness of warfighters and help ensure the safety of our sons, daughters, relatives and friends.” ■

stacey.l.ritter@boeing.com

There’s a special reason why Boeing employee Steve Monson (left) recognizes the value of effective joint and coalition training: His son Matt (right) is a U.S. Marine who’s served one tour in Iraq and will serve another in 2008.
PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE MONSON

