

CWID Tests Latest in Communications for Warfighters

by Randy Roughton
Defense Media Activity-San Antonio

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO. (AFNS) -- Airmen and Soldiers brought their experience from Afghanistan and Iraq to test the latest communications systems in the Colorado Springs portion of the joint Coalition Warrior Interoperability Demonstration on June 16.

The demonstration is designed to improve and enhance command and control; communications systems; and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. The portion of the demonstration held near the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs showcased the coordination of civil and military authorities during a simulated complex attack on local communications.

"We were tasked to support the exercise, but we really view it more of a privilege because we get to come down here and see the latest and greatest technology and how it directly helps the warfighter," said Maj. Bill Worrell, the commander of Joint Forces Headquarters-Colorado at Buckley Air Force Base. "From a communications standpoint to an operations standpoint, we get to see not only the technology, but also the operations side of the house."

North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command officials at Peterson AFB hosted the Homeland Defense/Homeland Security portion of CWID in Colorado Springs for the seventh consecutive year. The demonstration consists of five main U.S. network locations and more than 20 coalition partners worldwide.

CWID gives warfighters with experience in both wars the opportunity to test the latest technology and give their opinions on how it will work in a combat environment, said Col. Teddy Byrd, the commander of the 207th Army Liaison Team at Fort Bragg, N.C.

"You need a Soldier's or first responder's perspective on how things will work in a real-world type of environment," Colonel Byrd said. "The Pentagon or Department of Defense is going to eventually spend some money on this kind of stuff, so they need to have it assessed properly by the people who are going to use it."

"This has been a really good opportunity for my Army Reserve soldiers to see some new things, get new experiences and get their hands on new technology," he said.

About a dozen emerging technological systems were tested in the exercise, with mixed results, Colonel Byrd said.

"We had some good success with some systems on the first day and others that seemed to have some bugs," he said. "We're trying to provide some feedback for the contractors to allow them to fix it, and sometimes they're fixing it on site."

Five Air National Guard members from Joint Forces Headquarters Colorado supported the exercise, along with Major Worrell.

Last year, Major Worrell and his guardsmen observed the Event Management Framework early in its development at the 2009 CWID, and it has already advanced through the procurement phase and is being

used by officials in the NORTHCOM command center.

One example of the systems tested this year is the Aerostat for Communications and Surveillance in Disaster and Wartime balloon.

The system has a built-in remote control camera that allows the exchange of information, dissemination of related data, and real-time direction to deployed first responders.

It offers a variety of communications and surveillance payloads to support the mission, said Master Sgt. Ronnie Williams, a first sergeant with the 207th Army Liaison Team at Fort Bragg.

"Basically, Aerostat is a weather balloon, but with camera and video that can be used for surveillance with infrared technology," Sergeant Williams said. "You can actually key in on suspects and track them."

Sixteen Airmen are participating in CWID at Hanscom AFB, Mass., as role players in a scenario involving a terrorist attack. Aerostat will provide video surveillance to track terrorists and damage to the area, and facilitate radio communications.

Other systems that were evaluated during the Colorado exercise included the TerreStar satellite and cellular smartphone, Portable Systems Interconnect Communications and Collaborative Alert and Respond System.

CWID is a Joint Chiefs of Staff-directed annual event that engages cutting-edge information technology and focus on operational shortfalls identified by combatant commanders and government agencies. Technologies are approved for participation because they address a new information-sharing capability or might improve an existing capability. Assessment results are captured in CWID's annual final report which informs defense, federal, state and local acquisition decision-makers. The final report is scheduled to be published by October or November.

Source: <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123210047>