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Aegis Ashore Team Trainer: Training the Shield of Europe

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – The latest development in Aegis Ashore Team Training is poised for installation as renovation nears completion at its facility on board the Dam Neck Annex in Virginia Beach.

The new Aegis Ashore Team Trainer (AATT) was developed by the Center for Surface Combat Systems (CSCS), working with the Surface Training Systems (STS) Program Office (PMS 339) at the Naval Sea Systems Command (NAVSEA) and Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division (NAWC TSD). This high-fidelity training facility will be located onboard Naval Air Station Oceana's Dam Neck Annex and is being built in Gallery Hall. The trainer will house a mock-up of the shore-based Aegis Combat Information Centers (CICs) to be built in host nations in Europe.

"In September 2009 it was determined that there was a requirement for a more capable land-based Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system to provide defense for U.S. deployed forces, their families, and allies in Europe," said Brian Deters, director of Technical Support for CSCS. "Aegis Ashore is the United States Navy's solution for missile defense in Europe and in December 2015, the first land-based Aegis weapons system is scheduled to come online."

To understand this new technology, Deters explained that for decades, Aegis weapons systems have defended America's interests onboard Ticonderoga-class cruisers and Arleigh Burke-class destroyers. Aegis Ashore is the land-based version of this combat system, leveraging the latest technology developed for the U.S. Navy's most advanced warships as well as the experience of highly-trained Sailors.

"Aegis Ashore boasts virtually the same BMD hardware and software configuration as the newest Navy destroyer, USS John Finn (DDG 113)," Deters added. "AATT provides a nearly identical set-up to the Aegis Ashore CIC, giving Sailors the opportunity to experience working with the system and allowing teams to certify for operations prior to deployment."

"AATT is a great example of how technology plays an essential role in training Sailors," said Capt. Don Schmieley, CSCS' commanding officer. "While nothing can truly replace the training our Sailors experience when they're out in the fleet, AATT represents the next evolution in training, giving us the capability to provide our Sailors the tools they need for a successful mission, making them ready to contribute as soon as they arrive in theater."

Schmieley added that every effort has been made to replicate the host nation tactical system accurately and to make the trainer as realistic as possible using actual tactical code wrapped in simulation and providing spatial realism -- right down to the paint color.

"We're proud to be involved in this project and the opportunity it has given the team to be innovative in the way they blended commercial products and available technology," said Capt. Michael Van Durick, program manager in NAVSEA's Deputy Commander for Surface Warfare Directorate. "The

integrated product teams have fostered several new concepts that produced, for example, a high quality mission playback system and a fully functioning communications suite. This trainer is the prototype for future training systems to be developed and delivered by the PMS 339 program office.”

Prospective watch teams will undergo a thorough eight-week training course, which will cover everything from knowledge lessons on system capabilities and limitations to complex threat scenarios conducted in conjunction with theater BMD entities.

“Starting in January 2015 when AATT comes online, a new watch team will commence training every eight weeks,” said Mike Kroner, deputy director for CSCS’s Technical Support Directorate. “After the first three watch teams have completed training, the host nation site will have an uninterrupted flow of incoming and outgoing watch teams deploying for six-month durations, maintaining three qualified watch teams deployed at all times.”

The AATT facility development is nearly complete; the spaces designated for AATT in Gallery Hall are being renovated by Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC). The software is being developed by industry partners, and was demonstrated to CSCS staff in Jan.

“Equipment installation in the newly-renovated spaces will begin in May, culminating in ‘Initial Operational Capability (IOC)’ in Oct. , just in time for the first pilot class to kick-off in January 2015,” added Kroner.

Deters noted that it’s remarkable to see this program grow from the ground up.

“There are so many groups and organizations doing great work to make this become a reality,” he said. “It will be exciting to see our first watch team complete the AATT course and deploy. It’s great that we can extend the U.S. Navy’s BMD capability to land and continue keeping our deployed forces, families, and allies safe.”

The Center for Surface Combat Systems mission is to develop and deliver surface ship combat systems training to achieve surface warfare superiority. The CSCS headquarters staff oversees 14 learning sites and provides almost 70,000 hours of curriculum for nearly 700 courses a year to more than 40,000 Sailors. The training center uses a mix of blended learning comprised of instructor led classes, hands-on labs, simulation and computer-based training.

For information on the Center for Surface Combat System, visit <https://www.netc.navy.mil/centers/cscs/>

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