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## **601st AOC helps support Key West exercise**

*By Mary McHale, AFNORTH Public Affairs*

**TYNDALL AIR FORCE BASE, Fla.** - Members of the 601st Air and Space Operations Center, along with members from other services and federal agencies, participated in a first-of-its-kind homeland defense event Monday as part of the Joint-Deployable Integrated Air and Missile Defense field training exercise conducted in Key West, Fla.

According to Maj. Greg Lewis, the chief of command and control, weapons and tactics, the exercise was the first time live flying in defense of the homeland was integrated into a scenario involving missile defense of North America.

“Before, all the aspects were simulated,” he said.

Members of the 601<sup>st</sup> AOC orchestrated command and control from the AOC here for the exercise in Key West, explained Lewis.

“The J-DIAMD concept is designed to enhance our ability to defend the homeland,” said Brig. Gen. Christopher Coates, deputy commander of the exercise. “The strength of J-DIAMD is that it provides commanders with real-time information to enable decision makers to make informed decisions using the best available sensors and shooter assets to resolve threat situations.”

Exercise participants came from a variety of military and federal organizations and included representatives from the 263rd Army Air and Missile Defense Command, Fleet Forces, Air Combat Command, Space Command, the Federal Aviation Administration and the Missile Defense Agency.

“There was a tremendous amount of integration from all involved” said Lewis, who added that planning for the exercise began approximately nine months ago. “That we did this successfully for the first time sets the future for where we are going to go in integrating air and missile defense.”

Navy Capt. Ron Page, test director for the J-DIAMDS FTX, echoed that sentiment.

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## **2-2-2 Key West**

“This exercise helps every military branch involved in synchronization efforts,” he said. “It is how things will be done in the next generation.”

For other participants, the live aspect added value.

“We don’t get nearly enough opportunities to do this,” said Army Lt. Col. Kimberly McGavern, a liaison officer from the 263rd AAMDC. “We have always done simulations before. This is the first time we actually had forces in the field which provided an excellent opportunity to validate the tactics, techniques and procedures we’ve worked out in a simulated environment.”

The joint nature of the exercise also added value for some participants. This was especially true for Capt. Jeremy Cantrell, a space officer from the 286th Air Support Squadron, Meridian, Miss., and Navy Lt. Frederick Alston, a Task Force 22 LNO.

Cantrell said participating in the joint exercise exposed him to the full pulse of operations that occur when defending the homeland and felt it offered vital preparation training for real-world events.

Alston agreed.

“It was an extremely valuable experience seeing it from a joint perspective,” Alston said. “We do a lot of simulation in the Navy, and it’s not the same. Getting this perspective taught me a lot more about our defenses.”

When Coates was asked if he saw a difference between a simulated exercise and this one, he said he saw no difference.

“I saw no difference which means things are working the way they should, not just the way they would in simulation,” he said. “But whether actions are simulated or real, the bottom line is there is a job to do and that is to defend North America to our utmost ability. I think we did that with this exercise.”