



Soldiers from the fuel and water platoon set up an Advanced Aviation Forward Area Refueling System. They connect the 500-gallon fuel blivets to hoses that are connected to a pump, power unit, and filter/separator. Once set up, the system will provide two refueling points. (Photo by Spc. David Maness)

Jump FARP Operations in Afghanistan

Preparing to provide a jump forward arming and refueling point in Afghanistan required the fuel and water platoon of the 601st Aviation Support Battalion to practice providing that service.

■ By 1st Lt. Daniel Bolon

During the retrograde of personnel and equipment from numerous forward operating bases throughout Afghanistan, the footprint of regularly manned forward arming and refueling points (FARPs) in the area of operations decreased. This created the need for an expeditionary refueling and rearming capability to support coalition force operations across Regional Command South. To address this need, Soldiers of

the fuel and water platoon of the 601st Aviation Support Battalion, Task Force Guardian, prepared for jump forward arming and refueling point (JFARP) operations.

A Unit in Transition

When the fuel and water platoon began its deployment at Kandahar Airfield (KAF), it manned a hard standing FARP to refuel the brigade task force's UH-60 Black Hawk, OH-58 Kiowa Warrior,

AH-64 Apache, and CH-47 Chinook helicopters.

Because of force manning reductions, many of the battalion's Soldiers redeployed to Fort Riley, Kansas. The fuel and water platoon remained to provide a JFARP capability. To free the platoon for this mission, the FARP was turned over to contractors. During the transition, the fuel and water platoon trained more than 20 contractors to assume FARP operations at KAF.



Spc. Rene Torres and Spc. Justin Gerdes connect two 50-foot fuel hoses while setting up a jump forward arming and refueling point using the Advanced Aviation Forward Area Refueling System at Camp Hero, Afghanistan. (Photo by Spc. David Maness)

Focus on JFARP

After handing over the FARP, the platoon turned its focus to JFARP operations. While the platoon was hard at work preparing equipment and personnel to deploy a JFARP team, parallel planning was taking place at the battalion, brigade, and combined joint staff levels to ensure all operations and courses of action were properly analyzed, compared, and understood.

A JFARP can be conducted in numerous ways, all of which are mission dependent. There are three primary methods:

- Sling load 500-gallon fuel blivets from a Chinook, fly to the proposed JFARP location, and establish a FARP using the Advanced Aviation Forward Area Refueling System (AAFARS).
- Ground convoy to the JFARP location in M978 heavy expanded-

mobility tactical trucks (HEMTTs) with 2,500-gallon tankers and set up the HEMTT Tanker Aviation Refueling System (HTARS).

- Employ a “fat cow,” which is a Chinook outfitted with 800-gallon extended-range fuel system tanks and hoses.

During its JFARP training, the fuel and water platoon conducted all three types of operations and validated the associated refuel systems.

Pros and Cons

Each type of JFARP operation and equipment has its pros and cons to consider during planning.

AAFARS. Using the AAFARS system provides suitable aviation refuel capability for 24 to 72 hours. It rapidly employs all necessary personnel and equipment using Chinooks. It also gives units more

options for site selection.

One con to the AAFARS is that it is primarily deployed using Chinooks, which have weight limitations when flying in the mountains of Afghanistan. Multiple trips may be necessary to get all equipment and personnel to the location. Another con is that, depending on the mission and aircraft to be refueled, multiple 500-gallon blivets may be required. Resupply factors must be considered when determining CH-47 requirements and mission synchronization.

When planning a JFARP using the AAFARS, sling-load operations are integral to the process since they are the primary means of deploying the blivets and sometimes the container used to store the AAFARS.

HTARS. Conducting a ground convoy using HEMTT tankers provides high fuel capacity, which

can be increased easily depending on the mission and number of HEMTTs available. The high capacity reduces the number of resupplies required on site after the JFARP is in place and operational.

Ground convoy operations come with added risks, including increased security implications and enemy threat potential before and after refueling operations. Performing preventive maintenance checks and services on HEMTTs and including a security escort are paramount to a successful JFARP when employing HTARS.

Fat cow. Like the AAFARS, a fat cow JFARP provides rapid employment and more site choices while operating under minimal enemy threat potential to and from the site. Since this system requires the use of aircraft, it comes with weight limitations. This primarily affects how much fuel or how many 800-gallon extended-range fuel system tanks can be safely transported.

The fat cow can be used to either refuel aircraft for a short time or resupply another JFARP by refueling blivets that are already in place, for example. Effective synchronization between the flight unit providing the Chinook and the fuel unit providing the personnel to conduct refueling operations is important.

Innovating While Training

While training and preparing to employ a JFARP, the fuel and water platoon experimented with different ways to execute operations, such as using a fat cow to resupply an AAFARS FARP, which is not normally done.

The platoon also experimented with ways to package systems for employment. Using the basic issue item box, the platoon fit a whole HTARS inside the cab of a HEMTT, reducing the need for additional cargo transport vehicles for convoy operations.

Although a tricon container is part of the AAFARS component

item list, the platoon packed all necessary pieces of the system on an Air Force 463L pallet. This allowed the platoon to load the AAFARS into a CH-47, which decreased the need for additional sling loads.

Even though each system is designed to be employed a certain way, it is invaluable to have Soldiers who are capable of referencing doctrine, such as Field Manual 10-67-1, Concepts and Equipment of Petroleum Operations, and leaders who can innovate and execute missions tailored to certain situations in a combat environment.

Validation Exercise

The fuel and water platoon trained with the 142nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion and learned its tactics, techniques, and procedures for convoy operations. The platoon also trained with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment Support Squadron (RSS/2CR) to learn convoy and site security integration. This training proved valuable to the platoon and prepared it well to execute a validation exercise.

The validation exercise consisted of a ground convoy with two HEMTTs escorted by RSS/2CR Strykers to a location outside KAF. At the chosen JFARP site, RSS/2CR emplaced security at the landing zone and the platoon set up a two-point FARP using the HTARS and refueled one CH-47.

After completing the HTARS validation, the CH-47 flew back to KAF, where the platoon's sling-load team hooked up two blivets. The CH-47 returned to the JFARP site with the blivets and the internally loaded AAFARS. After cutting sling on the blivets and downloading the AAFARS, another FARP was set up. Once the AAFARS was set up and validated, the JFARP team convoyed back to KAF, reset personnel and equipment, and conducted an after-action review.

The platoon trained for fat cow

operations with the 2nd General Support Aviation Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, at KAF, which familiarized the unit with the Chinook, extended-range fuel system tanks, and associated hoses and connections necessary to employ the system.

After conducting numerous dry runs, the platoon was able to roll out the system and emplace all safety equipment, such as grounding rods, drip pans, and fire extinguishers, in less than five minutes.

A similar joint training plan to certify all three systems for use is highly encouraged for units that will be responsible for comparable refuel operations. Certain personnel within the platoon should be designated to be responsible for different aspects of the mission, such as landing zone control or air-ground integration.

In garrison, it is easy to become complacent while operating a permanently established, hardstand FARP. It is important that a unit providing refuel operations for aircraft remain trained and prepared to execute a JFARP anywhere and at any time.

Fuel resupply catered to the needs of rotary wing aviation assets is ultimately the lifeblood of the aviation unit's operational capability. The clearly detailed and coordinated training plan that the Soldiers from the fuel and water platoon executed prepared them to support the combat aviation brigade in combat and provided best practices for future JFARP training for other units in the Army.

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