

CIAT Trains its First Ship

SAN DIEGO – Over 40 crew members of the guided-missile destroyer USS Rafael Peralta were the first to pilot the updated Advance Warfare Training (AWT) curriculum inside the Navy's newest combat systems trainer, Combined Integrated Air and Missile Defense/Anti-Submarine Warfare Trainer (CIAT), onboard Naval Base San Diego (NBSD), Jan. 8-11.

The Center for Surface Combat Systems (CSCS) officially opened the CIAT during a ribbon-cutting ceremony in December and is planned to deliver tactical training to all San Diego-based Baseline 9 warships.

"The overall purpose of CIAT is to capitalize on advances in virtual technology to deliver a warfighting laboratory that is realistic, relevant, and just as complex as the threat environment our deployed ships are sailing into," said Lt. Cmdr. Reishaid Dixon, CSCS Det. San Diego's officer in charge.

The CIAT facility currently provides Navy watchstanders a state-of-the art training environment to detect and engage the entire spectrum of naval combatants. With an emphasis on realism, it is engineered in every detail to replicate a naval warship's actual combat suite. The feedback from Rafael Peralta is overwhelmingly positive.

"We are honored and thrilled to be the first warship through CIAT," said Cmdr. Aaron DeMeyer, commanding officer. "It's clear that even this first iteration of the CIAT curriculum is far better than any training we could develop on the ship."

Moving away from pre-packaged training scenarios, the virtualization of the trainer is completely customizable by CSCS instructors. Evaluators can now employ advanced enemy tactics, reduce visibility, degrade weapons systems, overwhelm the radars with clutter returns, and in the end, force every single watchstander in the combat information center to adapt.

The first CIAT students were able to experience these advanced training capabilities.

“This is by far the most realistic level of complexity and integration that our ship’s training team has faced,” said Lt. j.g. Anthony Pronchilo, fire control officer.

Chief Operations Specialist Anna Penrod, anti-air warfare coordinator, has been through the AWT curriculum in the past, but not like this.

“The CIAT has so many features,” she explained. “This was our team’s first opportunity to combat a reactive threat or fight through an electronic attack. I know full well the next time we see this challenged battlespace may be on deployment.”

“There is a steep learning curve for every training event in CIAT,” said Lt. Aaron Van Driessche, CSCS Det. San Diego’s course supervisor for AWT. “Many of our students are seeing complex enemy tactics for the first time but it’s critical that they face these combat challenges now. We need to begin training ships for the worst case scenarios because when a ship leaves the pier, its mission could depend on it.”

The CIAT is also equipped with a full debrief room capable of replaying all scenarios. CSCS instructors can break-down, in exact detail, every choice made by a ship’s combat team.

“The debrief room allowed us to articulate the full PBED process – plan, brief, execute and debrief,” said Lt. Wayne Badstuebner, tactical action officer evaluator. “With the ability to relive every scenario in the debrief, the feedback loop was instantaneous, and their team was maturing with every run.”

This multimission and shore-based trainer also executes training at a lower cost compared to training live on shipboard systems.

“CSCS’ CIAT is a game changer,” said Capt. David Fowler, commodore, Destroyer Squadron 23. “It provides the most realistic combat systems training of any system to date. The full potential of CIAT’s capabilities are yet to be experienced.”