NASA and contractor experts periodically team up to ensure they are ready to counter any threat to NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida.

Today, Kennedy is a 21st century spaceport for both government and industry.

As a multi-user spaceport, Kennedy is much more diverse with many contractors, different launch vehicles and varied operations supporting human and robotic space exploration.

As such, the center could become a target.

To be ready to defend against this possibility, the center's Aircraft Operations recently teamed with the Kennedy Protective Services Contract's Emergency Response Team, or ERT,

for extensive training exercises.

The space center's helicopter operations support multiple missions.

Their flights include everything from quickly transporting injured persons to local hospitals, to firefighting, to assisting environmental experts in keeping track of wildlife.
Training between Aircraft Operations and ERT is crucial for planning, coordination, reducing risk, working out logistical details and ensuring safety remains paramount.

Kennedy’s Emergency Response Team, also known as a SWAT -- for Special Weapons And Tactics -- is a select group within the Kennedy Patrol. This elite unit has the additional training required to respond to a crisis.

One of the simulated ERT training scenarios worked by the joint teams included searching on the ground and from the air for an armed intruder breaching the space center’s gates. This provides an opportunity to practice using both technology and tactics to resolve dangerous situations safer and faster.

Kennedy’s ERT experts and Aircraft Operations crews coordinated maneuvers with the latest in communications equipment, infrared tracking devices and other technology to assist in locating and apprehending a hidden or fleeing trespasser.
A high-technology aid recently added to the ERT and helicopter pilot's tool kit is the latest generation of night vision goggles. The state-of-the-art vision aids allow aviators and ERT members to see images produced in levels of light approaching total darkness. Night vision goggles now provide ERT experts and NASA pilots increased capabilities and reduce risk. The ERT training also included repelling down a seven-story training tower. This capability gives Kennedy's Security team additional options to respond to a situation and quickly reach employees needing help, or to apprehend a dangerous intruder at the space center. To date, Kennedy has not had to face a serious threat to the safety or security of its workforce or facilities that, together, comprise a national treasure.
By conducting periodic training exercises in which the Kennedy Protective Services team joins together with partner agencies and available technology they will be ready if needed to protect vital national assets at the Kennedy Space Center.