

EO Nebraska plays laser tag in fighter jets

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Members of a local business association got the chance to play laser tag thousands of feet in the air over Council Bluffs and western Iowa.

For what the organization calls a once-in-a-lifetime experience, EO Nebraska – a local chapter of Entrepreneurs Organizations – teamed with Air Combat USA to offer 50 group members an hour they would never forget.

All this week at the Council Bluffs Airport, members climbed into a SIAI Marchetti SF260 fighter jet with a trained pilot. Once airborne, the entrepreneurs took the throttle and tried to “shoot down” another member in another plane. After a hit, a buzzer would go off and white smoke would trail the other plane.

Tim McGill, chapter president of EO Nebraska, brought the week-long event to Council Bluffs after participating in a similar event three years ago in Fullerton, Calif.

“It was such an amazing experience; such a cool event,” McGill said. “We wanted to bring it here for the rest of our chapter to experience. It’s absolutely amazing being in charge of the plane. It’s hard to imagine until you get up there to do it.”

For a fee, participating EO Nebraska members signed up for a training slot. During the three hours, the members learned military rules of engagement, attended a safety briefing and learned about the physiological effects of G-force and flying characteristics of the combat-ready fighter and training plane.

After the training session, participants were given a parachute and helmet and climbed into the aircraft with an instructor pilot, most of whom are former Air Force, Navy or Marine Corps pilots. With the hands of the EO Nebraska members on the controls, participants engaged in a mission complete with a dogfight.



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Two SIAI Marchetti SF260 fighter jets, carrying Entrepreneurs Organization (EO) Nebraska members and flight instructors from Air Combat USA, engage in a simulated dogfight near the Council Bluffs Municipal Airport on Wednesday.

Alan Hans of Springfield, Neb., said he was the first one to sign up. He had hoped the event would happen after rumors of it swirled at the EO Nebraska Christmas party. He said the “dogfights” lived up to the hype.

“It was incredible. It’s just unreal,” Hans said. “You’re flying around cranking your neck trying to find the other plane. It’s surreal.”

He said the flight was more fun than terrifying.

“It wasn’t scary in the sense that I felt I was going to hit the ground. Even when the planes got close, it was never concerning,” he said. “You’re both going at the same speed, so it isn’t like one plane is flying fast and the other one is standing still. It was more amazing that I could have imagined. It was very, very wild.”

Kevin Burkhart, an area director for EO, traveled to Council Bluffs from Minneapolis to participate.

“You’re up there for an hour, but it feels like five minutes,” he said. “You’re in complete control. (The pilot) gets you off the ground, but then it’s all you. It was unforgettable.”

The event was expanded from one day to four after so many members signed up. Fourteen members went up Monday through Wednesday, and another 14 will play laser tag on Thursday.