

TRANSCRIPT

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**THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT AND MAY CONTAIN ERRORS. USERS ARE ADVISED TO CONSULT THEIR OWN TAPES OR NOTES OF THE SESSION IF ABSOLUTE VERIFICATION OF WORDING IS NEEDED.**

**Q: Welcome today to Lieutenant General Michael Wooley, that's with one L. His middle initial is W, for those who don't know. He's the Commander of Air Force Special Operations Command. We're glad to have you.**

**A: It's great to be here.**

**Q: Is this your first time here?**

**A: It is, yes.**

**Q: We hope it's fruitful. We're on the record, as we always are.**

**Your command is in the middle of I guess the opening phases of a pretty big expansion, the biggest since the Vietnam War, I think. So talk to us a little bit here at the top about some of the parameters of that -- the physical parameters, the aircraft and the base out at Cannon, the people, and then kind of the operational end of that, where you're going there.**

**A: We are in a growth spurt. I will tell you that QDR was very good to us in AFSOC.**

**Probably the most notable thing that we're in a growth industry is in the indirect piece of what we do. Everybody kind of focuses in on the direct action piece of what SOF does, Air Force Special Operations Command in particular; but the indirect piece is where**

we're really concentrating our growth efforts.

You may have heard of our 6th SOS which does foreign internal defense where we go out and take allied nations that invite us in to the next level. We don't actually teach them flying skills, the basics, because they already know how to do that. But we transfer the lessons that we have learned. For example, a good case in point is with the Philippines where we got them into the night flying business quite literally with NVGs and enabled their whole military to operate at night where before when they didn't have the night flying capability because they lacked aerovac, in-fill/ex-fill, there was some reticence to do night ops. So that's kind of an example of foreign internal defense that's working.

Of course you're very aware of the need for other nations to become more aware of border security and all those type of things, so we're very excited about doubling right off the bat that capability. General Brown, the Commander of US SOCOM has even talked about tripling or quadrupling that capability. So that's where we're concentrating our efforts right now is in the indirect piece.

But there's also a direct action piece of it as well. I know everybody is aware we've got a Predator squadron that we've stood up now, the 3rd SOS. We've been working on four new gunships. They're all flying now, in the final phases of test with a new weapon on it. I'm sure somebody will want to talk about that. Also we have started receiving what was known as combat loss replacement airplanes for a couple of Talons that we've lost, a couple of Shadows, and so those airplanes are flying now, the combat sphere MC-130 Whiskey is that airplane.

CV-22 is alive and well, doing great actually. Some of you know that we're planning to deploy with the Marines to get lessons learned as they deploy the MV-22 and we're going to transfer those lessons directly into the CV. We've got our first two operational airplanes. In fact we had them at Tampa a couple of weeks ago for our 20th Anniversary of Special Operations Command. We had two media flights and some parachute jumps out of them.

So a pretty exciting time, actually. We are going through a growth spurt and we're happy about that.

Q: Personnel. You're going from what to what? It's 13,000 about now? Is that right?

A: It's about 13,000. We're probably going to grow about 2,000 and that's a ball park figure.

Q: Over how many years?

A: Over the next FYDP. It's not going to be all happening in a week and a half. We want to space it out. If you dump the spaces in there right off the bat and try to build a force that's not up to the task it would be worse than taking your time. We're lucky in that the Special Operations School is right there at Hurlburt going back to the foreign internal defense, they had set up a pipeline training curriculum for those folks that are coming into the business. We're trying to get as many folks internal to SOF as we can. You also probably remember that we're drawing down the MH-53 helicopters and so we're hanging onto those folks, putting them into foreign internal defense because there are some helicopter missions there. We need to keep those SOF trained minds in our command. Language training, cultural training, all those things are in that pipeline. So methodical, deliberate is the approach that we take with everything that we do, and training the people and bringing them on is no exception.

Q: I know that what you can say about operations is limited. Let me kind of approach it this way. The Chief and others have said recently in the case of UAVs that the Air Force has pretty much flushed all its UAVs over to Central Command. They're all over there. I have been told by some people that that's pretty much the case with Air Force Special Operations Forces, too. Essentially all of your forces that are deployed are in the Iraq, Afghanistan, Horn of Africa areas and there's little or nothing left for the rest of the world. Is that accurate?

A: No, that's not accurate in our case. The ones that get the play are Afghanistan and Iraq and that's the one where the two deployments that we concentrate on the most. But that's not to say that we're not engaged in other places in the world.

Don't forget, we've got a group in Kadina, and a group at Mildenhall of Special Operations Forces on the AFSOC side so we remain engaged through them as well.

Remember tsunami relief, the 353rd in Kadina was one of the first responders with the Talon 2 down to the tsunami. We just got back from Africa doing a couple of exercises down there with some of our African partner nations down there. So we stay in the game.

Q: What about South America?

A: South America is, some people say, overlooked. But we do stay engaged down there as much as we can. Of course if you ask the geographic combatant commander down there, he would like more of our presence. But we go down there and do some training, primarily with the 6th SOS in Colombia, another success story on the indirect side of what we do.

I would say that was probably a mischaracterization that we're not doing other things

around the world.

The way I talk about OpTempo is our folks are thoroughbreds. There have been a long line of great leaders that have come before me and have postured this command very well in terms of equipment and people to do the job. So our thoroughbreds are doing exactly what they were trained and equipped to do. I characterized it the other day down at SOF Week. The water line's about right here. Any higher and I use the word uncomfortable. Any lower, we wouldn't be operating at peak efficiency.

That being said, one of my biggest concerns is not the OpTempo, but it's the proficiency of the folks that are back home because we run the equipment so hard when it is deployed and when it comes back home we need to really work those airplanes and vehicles and other pieces of kit to where they're back up to speed and so they stayed down a lot of the time. The training that I need to do with the forces suffers. So when we have Wingman Day, and I'm sure everybody knows the Chief has still got a focus on Wingman Day aspects of the entire force out there to have a dialogue directly with leadership, and they have brought that to my attention that they are not as proficient as they would like to be as they step out the door for those known deployments.

So that's one of the issues that I'm constantly working on, trying to improve.

The things that get reported get the attention, so I've specifically at my morning meeting to give me a recap of the previous day's training schedule back in the States and the two overseas groups to know exactly what was planned, what was accomplished, why not, and how we can work those issues, whether it's gaining additional contract maintenance or spare parts deliveries or you name it. So I work that hard personally every day.

Q: Advanced technologies that you're interested in. I have heard that AESA you're very interested in and its applicability, and you're looking at a new gunship. Can you talk about those a bit?

A: I won't go into AESA other than to say we're interested and keeping our ear to the ground, but I will talk about the gunship.

Q: The thought being targeting or the fact that it has other IO capabilities and that sort of thing

A: We're very interested in looking at it. [Laughter].

Q: Put that in your paper.

Q: I will.

A: But the gunship is a great direct action piece and everybody wants a gunship right overhead as they're engaged with the enemy or working a convoy into a target, you name it, it's a great airplane. But they're showing their age.

The Specter gunships which are the older airplanes, are doing quite well, aging gracefully, if you will. But the newest airplane, the U-model, it is running into wing box problems. In fact we're having to monitor tail number by tail number, hour by hour, and rotating those airplanes in and out of the theaters so that we won't get into trouble running out of equivalent hours on the wing box to keep from setting the airplane down and not flying it.

You can imagine that once we get a good-flying airplane into the theater it's on the front line and you keep going to that airplane as your most reliable launcher so you just fly it to death.

Q: What do you want to do in the next gunship?

A: We are looking at an exotic weapons suite. In fact the gunship of the future, in my estimation, will not have any big guns on it. Rather it would have directed energy, lasers, lethal/non-lethal capability.

Q: Was that directed energy -- comma -- lasers, or directed energy lasers?

A: Comma. Probably the most important factor that I'm pushing for is the airplane's got to have a 24 hour day fight capability in all weather. So we're really pushing for technology to answer the call on being able to fly 24 hours.

The gunships now are optimized for night so you get out there and you look at the camera, it's got a big lens on it with a huge iris so it can operate very well in darkness and the IR sensors and low light television, doo-da, doo-da, but this is a 24 hour a day fight that we're in.

Q: But are you talking about a 24 hour mission? An airplane capable of a 24 hour mission?

A: Sure. The gunships today are capable of 24 hour missions. They're refuelable. We can keep them up as long as we need. In fact several years ago we demonstrated a capability of taking one H-model gunship, one U-model gunship off from Hurlburt, flew it directly to South Korea, and actually flew on a target upon arrival after several air refuelings.

Q: Do you want to fly higher, and do you want to fly faster, and do you want to fly more

stealthily? And might you go from a cargo aircraft to something else?

A: I can see the next generation gunship not being a mobility airplane. If you look at what I just laid out it's more akin to a bomber or a long range strike airplane. Stealth? No. Low observability? Yes. Speed? Faster than we fly today is not a bad thing. But certainly speed is not a huge requirement. Loiter time is more important. Weapons effects, both lethal and non-lethal are very important.

Q: Altitude?

A: Whatever it takes. We're flying in the high teens, low twenties now. I wouldn't expect that would vary too much, although we'd probably want to get into the high 20s, low 30s. But again, you wouldn't want to limit yourself.

Q: Is it the lasers that would give you that ability to go higher?

A: I think it's too early to tell. We're flying some tests with the tactical laser now. We've got a test airplane that's outfitted and we're running through some tests right now.

The issue with the lasers of today, they're so big, and if you look at the airplane that we've got outfitted to test the laser it's full of chemicals and generators and all that kind of stuff, so the key is going to be pushing the technology to get all that stuff to where it will fit in the next generation aircraft.

Q: On the other hand, they're starting to put electronic effects generators and pipe it through the AESA radars which means you can do all sorts of effects to enemy emitters, radio, all of them. They're talking about ranges beyond the ranges of missiles, over 100 miles. So that should take care of your altitude issue, one would think.

A: Again, we're going to have to wait and see what technology brings. We need to make sure that we are in direct communication with the ground team, so if technology allows us to be further away and higher, that's a wonderful thing. But this is all about supporting our ground force with troops in contact or before they get in contact. So anything that would take away from that as the primary mission, we would have to be very careful about.

Q: Staying on the gunship, on the one hand you're talking about taking more of a technological lead with the next generation gunship capability.

A: You bet.

Q: But at the same time if I understand you correctly you're saying that the current fleet

of gunships is being heavily taxed and aging wing box problems. So can you wait until, especially if there's synergy with your next generation gunship capability and the 2018 IOC bomber, can you wait that long for that capability? Let me rephrase that. What do you need to do to the current fleet to keep it until then? And are you considering maybe buying some C-130Js and have them as gunships in the interim?

A: I'm not really looking at that. I really want to go for a technological leap. However, I do need to keep the fleet that I have viable, modernize it. We do have a wing box replacement program much like we do the Talons. The Talon wing box program is already started. We've got the first airplane in work right now at Warner Robbins. So that learning curve will get better as time goes on. But once we get the wing box on the U squared away, the new guns. We're taking the 40 and the 25s off the U's and replacing them with 230s -- one forward, one aft -- and leaving the 105. So now you've got a great area weapon in the 30 mil. We're also looking at smooth boring the 105 out to 120 which opens up more weapons. The Army's doing a lot of work with powered mortars, precision-guided mortars, that type of thing. So we're watching those developments very closely.

The key is going to be keeping the current fleet viable while we push technology to make that transformational leap. We've done that with the CV-22 on the mobility side and now's the time to do that with the gunship in my estimation.

Q: Are they still looking at this next generation gunship capability as kind of a family of systems, manned and unmanned platforms working in unison, or --

A: Probably the ACC folks would be better to ask that. I'm not opposed to having that capability if it exists. When you look at going back to the range and station time issue, the person in the cockpit is the limiting factor, so if you could push that out to oil in the engines being the new limiting factor you've done something. So stay tuned for further developments. But we're having great success with the Predator fleet, both MQ-1s being armed, MQ-9s armed to the teeth. So there is a strike capability in an unmanned platform today. So why wouldn't we want to push that to the next level.

Q: Do you anticipate that new next generation gunship will come out of the long range strike platform 2018, or --

A: I think it's too early to tell, but we're certainly partnering with ACC and we're partnering with Air Mobility Command as well on their AMC-X which, as you know, is not designed to be a large, heavy carrying airplane. It's designed more of a fight in the white spaces kind of a platform.

So we're not ruling anything out, keeping our options open, working our scenarios into

AOA's every chance we get.

Q: General, CV-22. It's a radical airplane. It will be piggybacking as the Marines are inbound to Iraq with it.

A: You bet.

Q: What two or three things is the V-22 going to give Air Force Special Operations that it needs that it currently doesn't have? And conversely, what concerns if any do you have about this radical new airplane?

A: It's a great airplane, first off. I've delivered two of them, and it's a wonderful airplane. I will say that there were some issues early on with the development of the airplane, but look at the transformational leap that we took with the airplane as a department.

I would say no more than it was when we went from props to jets. We don't remember or don't talk about the issues that we had back then with that transformational leap. So any time you take a transformational leap in the aviation business, there is going to be stuff you're going to learn literally on the fly. It's a shame that there were lives lost, but the airplane is performing magnificently in my estimation. We are sending a couple of folks with the Marines as they push their first squadron into the AOR, so we want to be there and learn those lessons the same time that the Marines learn theirs.

The things that we're excited about that the airplane brings to the fight is speed and range. That's really, when you get right down to it that's what an Air Force does. We bring speed and range to the fight. Of course the CV-22 with its capability for about 18 combat loaded SOF troops from whatever service -- Special Forces, SEALs, our own Air Commandos, and to be able to transit them across at 240, 250 knots, at C-130 speeds, but then pull the [nacelles] back and slow to zero air speed and land exactly where you need to go on an unprepared site or the rooftop of a building or you name it, that's what the airplane is really going to bring.

I often talk about it's got the ability to transform the way we do airfield seizures. It's got the ability to transform the way we do small team in-fill/ex-fill. As you remember, the airplane was born directly out of the failed Iranian hostage attempt at Desert I. So the airplane parameters are designed around a scenario that gets you maximum range in one period of darkness. That's literally what the airplane brings to the fight and we're very excited about it.

The drawback is we won't get them fast enough, in my opinion. We go IOC in '09 and the last delivery of 50 airplanes is in 2017.

Q: So that's your sole concern, you're not getting them fast enough?

A: That's my biggest concern today with that airplane.

Q: You mentioned 18. How come Marines talk about 24?

A: I think our kit is a little bulkier and --

Q: The SOF guys carry more stuff. You also have an extra crew man on that plane.

A: We've got a flight engineer.

Q: Why are you going that way and the Marines are not?

A: I can't speak for the Marines but we have learned lessons over many many years that that extra set of eyes in the cockpit and having flown the airplane, it's, I don't want to mischaracterize it, but there is a lot of work going on in the cockpit. So if you've got the flight engineer that's running the computer, the digital map, the defensive systems, all the other things that make our airplanes different than the MV, we just, it's more akin to the way we operate.

Q: Are those things that the Marines do not have?

A: Yes.

Q: So they're additional stuff.

A: You bet. If you look at the way we do the C-130s, we still fly with navigators for much the same reason. We fly with electronic warfare officers on our C-130s for much the same reason. We're at the PhD level of flying and that extra set of hands, extra set of eyes to spread the workload we've found suits us well for our mission set.

Q: General, talk a little bit about the current generation gunship. The situation with the U as you described it, it sounds as if you carefully balance the wear and tear, you might wake up one morning and find the entire fleet has reached that point where you have to ground them. How do you avoid that? How much time do you have before you have to get into [inaudible] replacements?

A: I just took a briefing on that a couple of days ago. We've got a whole section down in A4 that works those literally tail number by tail number.

It is so important that we not get ourselves into that situation, that those people are

diligent about how much time is left on this airplane, and we can't use it up so let's bring it back to the States and put it in a training environment, let's send it to depot, when are we going to put it down for the wing box replacement, all of those things, literally tail number by tail number. We've got a whole office that does nothing but Talon 2s and the gunships on how not to get us in that situation that you just described.

So I'm confident that we will not.

The gunships are just so important over there that we can't allow that to happen.

When I cry for help, help is on the way and I'm not at the point where I need to call for reinforcements. The Air Force and SOCOM are very attuned to those issues and make sure that we're resourced even in this budget constrained world that we're in, to keep us flying.

Q: Is that one of the benefits of having your own major force program down at SOCOM?

A: It's a benefit and a curse. Any time you've got more than one boss and more than one pile of money, there are issues, but we're pretty fortunate in that regard, especially in today's environment.

Q: The demand on these gunships has been sky-high for years now. Do you get into a situation where you have to start pulling some of these out of the location, so to speak, for this level of work, that you simply won't have enough? Or are these four new ones going to cover that?

A: The four new ones will cover that. The wild card here are the old H's. I've said earlier that they're aging very gracefully and I meant that. They're currently in Afghanistan. They will be the gunship that we send to Cannon. We're not using the H's as heavy because the requirement's not there in Afghanistan like it is in Iraq. So that's kind of our reserve, if you will. We keep an eye on the H's. They're flying in the one mission per night regime where the U's are double, sometimes triple that.

Q: I'd like to ask a quick clarification on the last question about Afghanistan. When you talk about gunships we're talking specifically about the AC-130s?

A: You bet.

Q: And this is separate from the RFP you have on the street right now for some of the other Special Operation C-130s?

A: You bet. Those are mobility platforms. Those are recap airplanes. We are looking for

a replacement for MC-130 Papas, and MC-130E's which are the Talon 1's. Those are the airplanes that we're specifically looking to replace one for one. When you run the numbers it's 37. But since there has been growth with the Marine component of SOCOM and the Special Forces and the Army component of SOCOM in QDR, the growth there, we would like to add two additional squadrons, so that would be 24 additional airplanes which would bring the number up to 61. But the number that we're concentrating on now is the one for one replacement, 37.

Q: Of the 37 is that more important than the rest of the tankers which are also part of that [inaudible], RFI or whatever it is?

Q: You better get to your real question pretty soon.

Q: Hang on. [Inaudible] for 20 minutes, I think I can ask a couple of questions, Bob, thank you.

A: The HC's belong to ACC so I'm not going to speak for them. But my biggest issue is I've got to replace my Talon 1's. That's the oldest airplanes in the fleet, average age 42 years of that fleet in total. So I've really got to replace them.

Q: Thanks for clarifying.

What I wanted to ask you about Afghanistan is when I talk to Army folks, and I haven't been over there, but Army folks will often say in Afghanistan we have a hard time getting the Air Force assets that we need. When I ask the Air Force about this they say that's because the guys you're talking to are regular Army and all of our attention is going to Special Forces in Afghanistan. So you probably see both sides of this balancing. What's your sense of who's getting what? Is the Army perception that they can't get what they need in Afghanistan, is that because they're Special Forces? Do you have any thoughts?

A: Again, I'm not going to speak for the Air Force in general because I've got a very narrow mission set of Special Operations. I will tell you we do support conventional forces with our air when we're able. When we have excess capacity we will support whomever needs that support on the battlefield. But our main focus, and let there be no mistake, for Air Force Special Operations Command as the air component of SOCOM, is to support the SOF warrior on the ground.

Q: Are there a lot of them compared to the regular forces?

A: You know the numbers as well as I do.

Q: I don't know that I do. Thanks.

Q: General, the expansion of AFSOC that you talked about earlier. How many of those additional members of AFSOC are going to be Tactical Air Controllers? I understand there are some shortages in the field. Do you know how many are you adding to AFSOC? Also the Tactical Air Controllers, I've heard them talk quite a bit about interoperability problems they have with airplanes and controllers from the other services. What's being done to fix that problem?

A: We have, again, when I talk about Tactical Air Controllers, we have Battlefield Airmen Combat Controllers that are TACP or Tactical Air Control Party qualified. I don't own the bulk of the Tactical Air Control folks. Those are, again, ACC. So I'm not going to speak for them.

We are adding some additional Battlefield Airmen that are TACP qualified, but that's not their only mission set. The Combat Controllers that we have are Air Traffic Controllers, so they go out and look for landing sites for specific operations, set up a landing zone, set up a drop zone, and actually control that landing zone or drop zone. In their TACP role they do call for air support for a SOF team.

We will always have either a combat controller or a pararescueman or a combat weatherman with any SOF ground team that's out there maneuvering. So those are the guys that are specifically trained to have the air/ground interface with the small team, depending on what their target set is.

They're put together specifically to ensure mission success when they go out in the field.

I would tell you that our addition in the Battlefield Airman is a small number. It's in the 200's. We're not experiencing a huge bit of growth there. But one of the things I do want to highlight when I talk about Battlefield Airmen, we have been working hard to streamline the pipeline of those folks. We were looking, my first assignment in AFSOC we were about a two year pipeline. When I got back this time it was about a 15 month pipeline. Now we're down to about 11 months. After they have graduated from all the requisite schools to get them up to their fully qualified status to go out in the field with those SOF ground teams. So we have really worked that hard, not to change any standards, because we will not lower the standards. We just look for efficiencies in the training regime.

Like we would sit somebody down, the schedule, we didn't work the schedule hard enough so we had 10, 15, 20 days between this TDY and the next TDY. That was just dead time. So we have looked for those efficiencies, worked ways to minimize those gaps in training, and because it is important that we keep that pipeline at peak efficiency to get those folks out in the field.

Q: And on the interoperability?

A: Interoperability in terms of the SOF piece which is the only thing that I work, I don't see any interoperability problems. We are joint from day one. Everything that we do, and that's where the MFP-11 piece comes in and the air component for SOCOM comes in. That's where SOCOM's expertise has really leveraged. They ensure that the Army Special Forces, the Navy SEALs, the Marines and us aren't buying anything that won't talk to each other or operate with each other. I'm very comfortable with our interoperability on the battlefield with SOF forces. By design.

Q: General, has your command been affected by the delay in passing the supplemental? If so, what kind of cuts have you had to make?

A: I got an update on that at the last staff meeting. We start running into trouble in August. I'll answer it that way. That's kind of one of those good things about having two daddies and two pots of money.

Q: What kind of trouble do you anticipate if it's not passed by then?

A: The big thing is flying hours for us. That's when we'll run out of money to fly.

Q: General, I understand you were doing some manning challenges [inaudible] 75 percent manned. Can you talk about what is the challenge and how are you addressing it?

A: You've got to look at there are pockets where we're manned at the Air Force standard which would bring us sometimes in the 70s but more often in the mid to high 80s. But as I said earlier, General Moseley and General Brown are very attuned to our needs. So when I come up on the net and say hey, my maintenance manning is low, can I go for 80 contractors to work home station checks on the C-130 fleet, the answer comes back yes. So that's the way we're mitigating that. But other areas I will tell you that we're on the crew force, for example, we're not bad off at all. That's one of those things that drives that proficiency. When you're manned you're 100 percent. And the airplanes are not flying. Now you've got that issue to deal with.

So I don't know that -- you're trying to paint our whole manning problem at 77 percent, and I don't think that's a fair assessment. There are pockets where we're low, but there are other pockets where we're 100 percent.

Q: And very quickly, are you planning on offering any [inaudible] retention costs?

A: I'll say no new ones. We've got several bonuses out there right now. The crew force has bonuses, the Battlefield Airmen have bonuses, and so I am not pursuing any additional bonuses right now.

Q: General, what's your latest impression on the situation with the CSAR-X program? What effect is the delay having? Where's your gut on what's a better choice? What's the best choice?

A: Again, that's not my airplane, so I'm not even going to comment. You'd have to ask General Keys and General Moseley. That's not our mission set.

Q: UAVs, what's your feeling on the Air Force taking that whole fleet?

A: Flying is what airmen do. We have a requirement in Special Operations for about 30 orbits in the AOR right now. We're having a hard time meeting half of that. So I would say anything that we can do to work the efficiencies of that limited resource, I'm all for.

The other thing that I think is an imperative is the command and control piece, and making sure everybody knows exactly where everybody else is. That would be one of the best things that I think the Air Force would bring to the UAV fight.

Right now I lose a lot of sleep at night over mid-air collision potential. When you look at UAVs, the MQ-1, MQ-9, size, speed and altitudes, that's right where we fly. Going beak to beak with an unmanned aerial vehicle is a nightmare scenario for me.

Q: General, one of the criticisms -- back on the V-22. One of the criticisms is that --

A: Did I tell you I like that airplane? [Laughter].

Q: One of the criticisms is that it is, as you say, at the PhD level. And that in battle, especially when under fire, pilots might find it too complicated to manage. I wonder if there's any validity to that argument, especially in the SOF mission. What has been the reaction from SOF crews?

A: None whatsoever. I'd invite you to come talk to the crews. It's no different than any of the other airplanes that we fly. Our machines are pretty dang complicated, but they're pretty dang complicated because we designed them. Those folks flying those airplanes designed them. They had an input into what the airplane capabilities are. I will tell you an antidote, the bird strike on one of the propellers of one of the MV-22 test birds not long ago. They said wow, this thing is akin to taking a 40mm round right in the center of a propeller, and the airplane kept flying. So things like that give me more confidence in the airplane than I already had. It has the capabilities and the technology that we were

asking for.

Q: You view it as it's safe, it's got durability, no more technical problems, it's only a matter of procuring enough for Special Ops?

A: That's the way I would characterize it.

Now aviation is aviation. Any time you work machines that are heavier than air that are flying with folks in them, you always worry about what's the next thing. But it's no different than jumping on a 777 or an AC-130 or a CV-22. Something could slip, break or come loose at any time. But that's the aviation business.

Q: General, I wanted to ask you about civilian casualties. There was an incident [inaudible] in Afghanistan some days ago which apparently [inaudible] Special Operations Forces were involved. [Inaudible] an isolated thing, [inaudible] happen in a recurring fashion both in Iraq and Afghanistan. When they do, they have tremendous public impact.

A: Sure.

Q: I guess my question is, has air power, airstrike, become too [inaudible] in this operation? Is there anything more that you all are doing or can do to allay the situation? And if you would just comment on that.

A: I'm not sure just which event you're talking about but I'll characterize it in a generality.

We go to great lengths in Special Ops to have eyes on target. Not to say that it is always a set of eyes that is on the ground or in a vehicle or peering around the next building. It could be in an airplane, could be through a UAV sensor suite that positive identification, visual identification, is very important to us when we strike a target. Collateral damage is very important to us when we strike a target. That's one of the beauties of our gunships with a five pound warhead that does have very low collateral damage. So I think that's one of the reasons why every unit on the battlefield would like a gunship right over their head, to one, give them that situational awareness; two, give them that small, low collateral damage capability and great precision. Those are the things that we are very proud of that we bring to the fight.

Any time you're dealing in a wartime situation, you're faced with life or death situations at a split second, that's why in Special Operations we seek out maturity, high experience, because we've got our folks carrying US national policy in their rucksack if they're on the ground, or in that airplane with them every night and every day. So it's a terrible thing

when it goes afoul as it has and will continue to, as long as war is about two armed forces shooting it out at each other. Anything we can do to close the potential it's incumbent on me as a leader to do that.

Q: Haven't reaction times, in other words the time it takes to call in an airstrike, shortened considerably?

A: They have, but I will tell you that at the same time the technology that allows you to shorten that time, you have got the Rover, for example, where you're beaming video that the air crew is looking at directly to a PDA or a laptop of my Battlefield Airmen that are traveling with that Special Forces A Team. So that same technology that shortens that kill chain time brings much greater situational awareness. I would say that that's a good thing.

Q: Hello, sir. I have two quick questions about guns. I was wondering, in the beginning you mentioned a new gun for the gunship. Could you go over that again just to make sure I got it?

A: 30mm.

Q: And the second --

A: We're taking the 40s off of the, and the 25mm's off of the U-model gunship and replacing them with 30s. So the four new airplanes that have been built and that are in test right now, we've taken the World War II vintage, Navy, bow-force canon, the 40mm, taken that out of the airplane and replaced it with a 30mm. Taken the 25mm canon up front out of the airplane and replaced it with a 30mm, which is much more effective as an area weapon to keep people's heads down in an engagement or put down a barrage of fire to take out the enemy in a certain area with munitions that are available today. The 40mm is World War II naval ammunition and it's hard to find.

Q: So the four new gunships have the 30mm.

A: Right. We would like to, once it's proven, proliferate that to all the gunships. All the U's and even the H's.

Q: My other quick question was just on the CV-22. I remember there was something about the MV-22 getting a new gun or a question about the gun. Has CV-22 gotten --

A: We are looking for a gun for the airplane even as we speak. Of course the Marines are as well. Again, there's a requirement for that area suppression so when you're going into a landing zone you're going to, if somebody pops up that's a threat, you need to counter

that threat.

There is a hard point on the nose of the airplane that we specifically asked to be there. There's also potential for a gun on the ramp. So those are the two places we're looking to arm the CV.

Q: General, I was just looking at [inaudible] assessment. From your perspective how do you see things going in Iraq right now?

A: I'll give you my Special Ops perspective. I'll leave the other perspectives up to the other combatant commanders.

I think the targets that we're going after and being asked to pursue, that we are very very effective. We're dealing with a network, and every day and every night we're taking another piece of that network either out or making it ineffective. So I'm very very proud of our people and the things that they do.

I go back to that experience, I go back to that great judgment, and highly trained, highly skilled individual that we have out there that is making those split second decisions, whether it's on the ground or in the air. For what we're being asked to do, we're being very very effective.

Q: How do you feel that lack of UAV [inaudible] is affecting you?

A: More persistent ISR, we characterize it in SOF as the unblinking eye, is where we need to be, over large areas and then being able to neck that down to a soda straw view. So unblinking eye is probably the characterization. Right now there's a great need for more unmanned sensor capability in the fight that we're in.

Q: That seems like a good place to leave it...

A: I saw Bruce chomping at the bit. I'll do one more.

Q: Your move to Cannon, what the current status is --

A: I can't believe nobody asked about Cannon. Bruce, you're the man.

Q: I'm the personnel guy. What's the current status of moving the forces out of Kadina and [inaudible]. [Inaudible] being negotiated?

A: It is being negotiated. In fact you probably are aware that Secretary Gates has tasked General Brown to flesh out the plan. So we are right now working on how we would do

that if given the authority. But Cannon in particular, that's a must-have for us. With all of our growth, new personnel, new airplanes. We could not put all that stuff at Hurlburt. So we need to open a second base. 1 October '07 will be the date where AFSOC takes over Cannon and the crown jewel of Cannon is the Melrose Range. To have an air-ground capability that belongs to Special Ops is going to be huge for us. So I appreciate that, Bruce.

Q: Okay, we're out of time.

A: Thank you very much.

END TEXT