

USAF's heavy bombers dominated events in Afghanistan, but the success story was much broader than that.

Enduring Freedom

THE rapid success of Operation Enduring Freedom stemmed mainly from the unprecedented combination of massive airpower—much of it in the form of heavy bombers—with small numbers of special forces on the ground, indigenous troops, and the full press of US Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capabilities, according to senior US officials.

By mid-December, the operation had achieved its initial goals: breaking the terrorist-friendly Taliban militia's grip on power in Afghanistan and eliminating its ability to support and protect the al Qaeda terrorist network. After just two months of US air attacks, the Taliban had been forced from its strongholds and, with al Qaeda's foreign fighters, was in flight from American forces and those of the Afghan United Front.

The military success of Phase 1 came in the face of widespread complaints from critics who, at the outset, insisted the United States could achieve little in Afghanistan with airpower. It was a nation with few traditional infrastructure and military targets deemed valuable enough to bomb.

President Bush, in his Dec. 11 speech at The Citadel, said the blend

of "real-time intelligence, local allied forces, special forces, and precision airpower has really never been used before," but it had served to "shape and then dominate an unconventional conflict." The operation taught US leaders "more about the future of our military than a decade of blue-ribbon panels and think-tank symposiums," Bush added.

He also said, "No one would ever again doubt the value of strategic airpower."

A Clutch of Firsts

Battlefield "firsts" for Enduring Freedom include the first combat deployment of the Global Hawk Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, first operational use of an armed version of the Predator UAV, and the widespread employment of the satellite-guided Joint Direct Attack Munition, which previously had only been used in combat by the stealthy B-2 bomber. The operation also saw the first combat use of the Wind-Corrected Munitions Dispenser, a vastly refined use of the Combined Air Operations Center as a weapon system in itself, and a sharp reduction in the time required to identify targets and strike them.

Enduring Freedom was also the

By John A. Tirpak, Senior Editor

Northern Alliance soldiers watch the contrails of American combat aircraft marshaling for attacks on Taliban and al Qaeda positions in Afghanistan.



first conflict in which heavy bombers loitered in the sky above ground troops and delivered pinpoint close air support when called on to do so.

The first blows of the war were struck on Oct. 7, a mere 27 days after al Qaeda's hijacking attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on Sept. 11. Some USAF aircraft had gone into action even earlier. For example, Army Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the Commander in Chief of Central Command, had ordered high-flying U-2 reconnaissance aircraft to overfly Afghanistan and collect data long before the first ordnance began to fall.

American land- and sea-based aircraft struck key operational elements throughout Afghanistan. These targets, which included runways, surface-to-air missile and gun sites, warning radars, armored vehicles, and concentrations of troops, were considered the keys to the Taliban's ability to maintain control of Afghanistan and claim to be its legitimate government.

The initial strikes were delivered by Air Force bombers, Navy carrier-based fighter-attack aircraft, and cruise missiles launched from American and British warships. They were aided in their targeting by small units of US and British Special Operations Forces inside Afghanistan. These small teams collected information and used a number of methods to designate aim points for the aircraft. Within days, Air Force F-15Es and F-16s

joined the hunt, as did USAF AC-130 gunships.

All three types of Air Force heavy, long-range bombers saw action. A handful of B-2s flew record-setting, 44-hour-long missions directly from Whiteman AFB, Mo., to Afghanistan, with recovery at the British atoll of Diego Garcia 2,500 miles to the south in the Indian Ocean. The B-2s that landed at Diego kept their engines running; fresh crews came aboard and took off for the grueling flight back to Missouri.

The Air Force based another 18 heavy bombers—eight B-1Bs and 10 B-52Hs—at Diego Garcia, from which they carried out daily and nightly runs. The missions numbered about four or so per day per type, with the bombers using both “dumb” bombs and JDAM, the innovative munition that uses Global Positioning System satellites to achieve precise hits on aim points. The bombers used 2,000-pound JDAMs, Mk 82 500-pound dumb bombs, and leaflet dispensers.

The B-52s were the first to use the WCMD in combat. The weapon employs a tail kit that attaches to a cluster bomb unit. The tail kit alters the bomb's flight path to adjust for windage, resulting in accurately placed area explosions.

1,500-Mile Round-Trip

Initially, the Navy maintained four of its big-deck aircraft carriers on station in the northern Arabian Sea.

These huge ships launched fighters northward to targets throughout Afghanistan. Each mission lasted, on average, “five to seven hours, ... 750 miles one way,” according to Adm. Vernon E. Clark, Chief of Naval Operations. En route, they were refueled by Air Force tankers operating from bases throughout Europe and Southwest Asia. The majority of these strikes were flown by F/A-18 and F-14 aircraft employing laser-guided bombs and JDAMs. Marine AV-8B Harriers later joined the fight.

In time, all items on the fixed target lists were struck, and the focus of the air operation shifted to what the Pentagon called “emerging targets.” When this happened, the Navy brought home two of the four carriers, leaving the two remaining ships operating at about the same tempo, Clark said. Many aircraft were sent to areas where targets were expected to pop up but did not. This caused quite a few Navy aircraft to return with their full load of weapons.

The initial Taliban threat to US aircraft—its integrated air defenses, fighters, and command-and-control systems—was eliminated “within the first 15 minutes or so,” according to Lt. Gen. Charles F. Wald, who, as CENTCOM's Joint Force Air Component Commander, ran the bombing operation until mid-November. Wald subsequently left for Washington to become USAF deputy chief of staff for air and space operations.

Wald said the anti-aircraft systems of the Taliban were “operable” and were being used on Oct. 7 and that as many as 40 Taliban pilots were capable of getting MiG-21s and Su-17s into the air to challenge US forces. However, Taliban resistance was limited to anti-aircraft artillery, which was quickly targeted and suppressed. Air superiority was achieved almost immediately. The Taliban air force had about 50 aircraft, of which approximately half were older-vintage fighters and the rest cargo and utility fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters. All were swiftly destroyed.

Decisively putting down the threat allowed the US to put many other types of aircraft—mainly of the ISR variety, but also tankers and special operations aircraft—directly over Afghanistan, allowing the pace of operations to speed up. Strike aircraft hit at Taliban headquarters, troops, and weapons storage areas,

USAF photo by TSgt. Jack Braden



The Global Hawk made its operational debut over Afghanistan. Though still in test, it yielded useful intelligence. One was lost to a malfunction, but UAVs have proved their worth and earned a permanent place on the battlefield.

rapidly reducing the enemy's combat capabilities.

Although the carrier aircraft were an asset that required monumental assistance from aerial tankers, Wald said they played a useful role in the early campaign because they allowed the US to attack across a broad swath of the country. The naval fighters generated many sorties but accounted for a relatively small percentage of munitions on target or total tonnage.

It was "a smart thing to do" to use naval air, even in Central Asia, because "we weren't sure" what the anti-aircraft threat would be, Wald said. The availability of many aircraft early on might have made a big difference if air defenses had proved tougher.

Affirmation of EAF

The Air Force employed its Expeditionary Aerospace Force concept for the war in Afghanistan, utilizing the Aerospace Expeditionary Force "buckets of capability" exactly as envisioned, USAF officials reported.

Gen. John P. Jumper, the Air Force Chief of Staff, reported that the Sept. 11 attacks had caused many specialties to be stretched very thin. Among those working heaviest duty were force protection troops who had to cover home bases as well as forward locations, which had not previously been the case.

Jumper said the AEF rotation schedule may have to be modified as a result of the war effort. He admitted that USAF has had to "reach forward" into future AEFs for some capabilities, such as combat search and rescue. However, he added, the AEF structure is "not shot." Adjusting the rotation to deal with real-world operations is "part of the plan." He added, "That's part of how you do the rotational force. How we get that back into a rhythm now will depend on what the new steady state is."

By mid-December, when organized resistance ended, the Air Force had flown 6,800 sorties, representing nearly half of all missions flown during Enduring Freedom's Phase 1. These sorties included reconnaissance and refueling missions. Tankers accounted for half of USAF sorties at that point, while ISR missions numbered about 400. Although USAF combat airplanes had flown some 20 percent of all strike missions in Af-



USAF photo by SSgt. Shane Cuomo

The C-17's ability to haul huge items directly to the front made it possible for the Marines to set up forward operating base Rhino. Humanitarian aid also arrived over Afghanistan aboard the C-17.

ghanistan, they had delivered 6,100 tons of ordnance, or approximately 75 percent of the total.

Furthermore, more than 72 percent of the munitions that the Air Force dropped during Enduring Freedom's first two months were precision guided. This pointed up the growth in use of precision weapons in the past decade; by percentage, their use had more than doubled since Operation Allied Force in Kosovo, in which only 35 percent of weapons used were precision guided. In the 1991 Gulf War, a mere nine percent of munitions used were precision guided.

When the Navy fighters are added into the mix, the total US munitions expended against Afghan targets topped 12,000, of which 60 percent were precision guided munitions, according to CENTCOM data.

Having beaten down the radar threat, US forces then used electronic warfare and signals reconnaissance aircraft to jam the enemy's cell phones or eavesdrop on communications to better triangulate the locations of commanders and al Qaeda fighters. They also broadcast messages to the Afghan people, assuring them that the US was after military targets, the Taliban, and al Qaeda and not prosecuting a war against Afghanistan itself.

To back up the claim, the Air Force mounted relief missions to Afghanistan, dropping C-17 loads of Humanitarian Daily Rations to Afghans

starving from the combination of a long drought and years of intertribal warfare. By early December, well more than two million HDRs had been dropped to Afghan civilians by C-17s flying at very high altitudes and, initially, escorted by fighter aircraft.

Heavy Lifting

The C-17s also flew heavy equipment into Afghanistan, allowing the Marines to establish forward operating base "Rhino" to the south of the major city of Kandahar. The C-17s operated from unimproved dirt and gravel strips, functioning, as one airlift pilot observed, "like a C-130 on steroids." Camp Rhino eventually swelled to more than 1,000 Marines, plus their armored vehicles and helicopters.

C-17s and some C-130s supported troops in forward areas with drops of M-16 and AK-47 ammunition, warm clothes, and boots for special forces and Northern Alliance counterparts.

They also dropped sacks of oats for the horses, said Gen. Gregory S. Martin, commander of US Air Forces in Europe. Horses proved to be one of the most effective means of transportation for Green Berets and others moving about in mountainous regions where roads are narrow and treacherous.

Martin, in an interview, reported that the US enjoyed great support from friends in the region. The sup-

ply air bridge, once coming from both the Pacific and European theaters, quickly shifted to a European-only mode, as Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan all granted overflight privileges. Former adversaries offered up overflight and even basing privileges. Bulgaria played host to a dozen KC-135s at an airbase on the Black Sea.

The heavy flow of aircraft from the US to Southwest Asia moved primarily through Ramstein AB, Germany, one of USAFE's main facilities. Martin said Ramstein handled this new load, though there was "some spillover" into Rhein-Main AB near Frankfurt, Germany. "Ramstein is really the hub of this entire [airlift] operation," Martin said.

The number of heavy aircraft on the Ramstein ramp, in early December, ranged from 18 to 25 at any given time, compared to the usual six to eight aircraft.

As the conflict developed, the US began cooperating with Northern Alliance fighters and other opposition forces, who shared the American goal of unseating the Taliban. In addition to pursuing its own target list of suspected hideouts of Osama bin Laden, al Qaeda, and Taliban troops and leadership, the US began to supply advice, provisions, and close air support to the Northern Alliance.

This aid allowed the anti-Taliban forces to survive attacks from the Taliban and, in turn, besiege and

eventually capture the capital of Kabul, the northern stronghold of Kunduz, and finally Kandahar, the Taliban's headquarters and "spiritual center."

Taliban stragglers and the remnants of al Qaeda in Afghanistan—made up mostly of Muslims from other nations—ultimately retreated to a mountainous area near the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad, where intelligence suggested that bin Laden had holed up.

Air Force officials said the 15,000-pound "Daisy Cutter" bomb—so large it must be rolled out the back of a C-130 cargo airplane—was used mainly as a demoralizing weapon and to reach into hard-to-hit places such as tunnels and caves.

Into the Caves

Taliban and al Qaeda forces were eventually reduced to the Tora Bora complex of caves near Jalalabad, where they were hunted both by aircraft and special forces, working in cooperation with anti-Taliban forces. The B-2s, which early on had been withdrawn from the fight once the need for stealth had passed, returned to Afghanistan, using three-dimensional, synthetic aperture radar to more precisely map the complex of canyons and caves into which al Qaeda had withdrawn.

On Dec. 16, a Northern Alliance commander asserted the terrorist group was "destroyed in Afghanistan," although bin Laden had not

yet, to anyone's firm knowledge, been captured or killed.

Secretary of State Colin Powell said, "We've destroyed al Qaeda in Afghanistan and we have ended the role of Afghanistan as a haven for terrorist activity," but he, too, admitted that bin Laden was still proving elusive. Despite the pronouncements that the first phase had been completed, bombing and fighting continued.

In an interview with *Air Force Magazine*, Wald said the strategic key to the campaign's rapid-fire success lay in having an understanding of the culture of the region and maintaining the support of the neighboring nations and allied parties.

Afghanistan's strategic center of gravity was and is Islam, Wald asserted. While neighboring nations could understand the need of the US to retaliate against al Qaeda and destroy its ability to make further terror attacks, support would have dried up without a scrupulously conducted campaign, he added. The US had to avoid collateral damage in any way possible.

As a result, to a far greater extent than expected, US forces made heavy use of JDAM, due to its extreme reliability and consistent accuracy of within a few feet of the target. So great was its success and such was demand for the weapon that there was concern supplies of the bomb would run out.

In late November, USAF Chief of Staff Jumper acknowledged that the Pentagon, too, was concerned about supplies of JDAM and that he was "taking steps to increase production." Inventory information was not given out after Oct. 7, but Pentagon officials noted that, at the pace of JDAM usage during the early weeks of the conflict, stocks would indeed have run out in midwinter if no adjustment had been made.

The US struggled to maintain the support of "the senior leadership level of the countries in the region" as well as "their constituencies," Wald noted.

Neutralized

There was little argument with the US attacking Taliban military capabilities, Wald said. The Taliban conventional capability gave them the edge over opposition groups in Afghanistan. He added that, in practi-

USAF photo by SSgt. Shane Cuomo



This was the first operation in which big bombers conducted close air support. Equipped with JDAMs, B-52s like this one loitered over Afghanistan, often responding in just a few minutes when a strike was called for.

cal terms, “in a matter of days or weeks, the Taliban’s ability to counter the opposition was neutralized.”

It turned out to be “fortunate” that the opposition forces were able to engage the Taliban at that time and did in fact “jump in” so quickly, Wald added.

“That was not in the cards, initially,” he said. Cooperating with the anti-Taliban forces was a practice that, in Wald’s view, “evolved over a matter of weeks.”

The cooperation was eased, however, by the fact that special forces had been working with Northern Alliance factions for some time—even before Sept. 11—and had built ties to militaries in neighboring nations, particularly Uzbekistan.

As the cooperation intensified, Wald had new equipment air-dropped to the special forces on the ground. Special binoculars equipped with laser range finders enabled the troops to determine specific geo-coordinates for the targets they were observing. These coordinates could then be relayed via “burst” signals to bombers orbiting high above, which could then enter the coordinates in their computers and send a JDAM to a particular spot—often in only a few minutes.

The success of these strikes was very impressive to the Northern Alliance, which had expected airpower to be as nearly irrelevant in this conflict as it had been for the Soviets in the 1980s. The record of successes led the Northern Alliance to trust the US and cooperate with American forces, Wald said.

Jumper, too, noted that the success of airpower owed much to the special forces on the ground who made precise target designations.

“I wish we could have done this in Kosovo,” Jumper said. “It would have made us a lot more effective.”

New technology helped enormously. A National Imagery and Mapping Agency computer program named “PowerScene” allowed US pilots, while still back at home base, to “fly” missions over areas they would attack. Scenes were rendered in high detail, obtained from high-resolution three-dimensional satellite images. With a cursor, targeters could select a point and obtain its exact coordinates. In a new wrinkle, electro-optical imagery obtained from Predators could be compared with PowerScene im-



US Navy photo by Johnny Biviera

The combination of airpower with small special forces units on the ground proved to be a winner, according to President Bush. US troops worked with indigenous forces, designated targets, and helped coordinate attacks.

ages, and the exact coordinates for tanks and troop or gun emplacements observed by the drone could be fed to orbiting bombers that could—and often did—strike them at night or through cloud cover.

Not the Good Old Days

The arrival of bombs on target through bad weather and at night had a powerful effect in destroying Taliban and al Qaeda morale, senior Pentagon officials said, quoting reports from US special forces and Northern Alliance commanders who had interrogated prisoners. Most unnerved were the veterans of the Soviet years, who had come to ignore airpower, expecting it to be applied indiscriminately and imprecisely.

Wald said this ability to have bombs come out of nowhere and hit with high precision “made a key difference in that early part, where the Taliban was defeated.”

Wald made clear that the United States had been prepared to go it alone, had that become necessary. However, having the Northern Alliance on the ground—equipped with its own armor and artillery—made demolition of the Taliban that much more successful, Wald said.

Wald had been dispatched to Southwest Asia shortly after the Sept. 11 attacks. On that day, senior Air Force officials, seeing the carnage in Manhattan on television, had ordered B-2 pilots “into crew rest,”

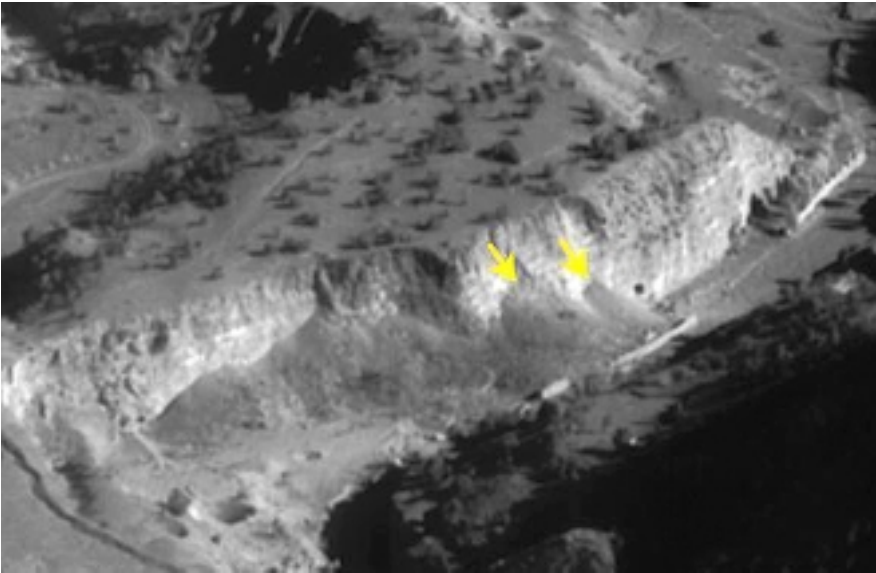
one noted. Service leaders anticipated that the White House might order swift retaliation.

However, planning was more deliberate. Wald said that, although al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan had been hit in response to the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, not much of the Taliban’s order of battle had been established by fall of 2001. A clear picture of Taliban capabilities was not available until “a couple of days prior to the initial attacks on Oct. 7,” Wald said. The U-2 flights in the first days of October provided the necessary detail.

It was also lucky the US has just completed the construction of a new, state-of-the-art Combined Air Operations Center in the region. The facility, housed in a country that Washington refuses to publicly identify, had access to high-bandwidth commercial satellites and served as a collection point for data coming in from all intelligence sources and interpretation points.

Because this CAOC was in operation, bombers could be launched and receive their target information while en route to a site. This greatly reduced the time required to mount an attack against a target that popped up unexpectedly.

Jumper said the “kill chain” of finding, identifying, tracking, and attacking a given target had been sharply reduced in Enduring Freedom. Previously, he had set a goal of



Later air strikes centered on caves to which al Qaeda and Taliban fighters fled. Though vaunted as untouchable, the caves proved to be graves for many of the enemy. Repeated bombings collapsed them, as in the photos above.

having the capability to routinely hit emerging targets in “single-digit minutes.” The Chief of Staff, referring to this goal, told reporters, “We’re not there, yet,” although he observed that, in some cases, that it

had been done in “as a matter of fact, less than one, two, or three minutes.”

The general voiced his desire to equip all USAF shooter aircraft with digital data-sharing systems, to elimi-

nate the time necessary to pass target coordinates and verification by voice. In Jumper’s view, a special forces member on the ground should be able to designate a target with a laser range finder, obtain coordinates, and digitally transmit them to an aircraft overhead.

Fratricide

A senior USAF official said it was precisely this action of stopping and involving humans in what should be a quick and routine transmission of numbers that was probably the cause of an incident of fratricide on Dec. 5. On that day, a B-52 dropped a 2,000-pound JDAM in response to a request for close air support by Army Green Berets. The bomb hit within 100 yards of American special forces and Northern Alliance fighters, killing three Green Berets and five Afghans.

“I can’t believe it was the JDAM” that failed, the official said. “The accuracy of the bomb has been so phenomenal, and the weapon itself so reliable, the feeling is that the guy calling in the air strike may have

Bombing the Caves

When Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda leadership withdrew to a complex of caves in the Tora Bora region of eastern Afghanistan, it wasn’t necessarily the smart thing to do as a way of avoiding US bombing.

Buried and hardened targets pose a problem the Air Force has been working on since the beginning of the Cold War, and a variety of weapons have been developed to address them.

Repeated attack with simple iron bombs can cause tunnels and caves—or their entrances—to collapse. Bombing by B-52s and B-1Bs with unguided 500-, 1,000-, and 2,000-pound bombs was carried out in Tora Bora, and special forces troops reported finding a number of collapsed tunnels.

Gen. Tommy R. Franks, the Commander in Chief of US Central Command, proposed searching them one by one for the remains of bin Laden or clues to his whereabouts.

Air Force officials said that B-2s, which were taken out of the fight when the need for stealth was eliminated, returned to Afghanistan in December to use their 3-D, synthetic aperture radar to more accurately map the cave areas. The B-2 can establish not only Global Positioning System coordinates of a target with its radar but also the altitude of a target, the better to attack caves in a mountainous region.

A 15,000-pound bomb—the so-called Daisy Cutter—was employed in Tora Bora, both to cause tunnel-collapsing concussion and to act as an oxygen vacuum. The sudden eruption of the fireball resulting from the bomb’s detonation can suck all the oxygen out of the air for nearly 600 feet in all directions. Even if the blast did not kill the cave’s occupants, they may have died of asphyxiation.

For penetrating rock and hardened bunkers, the Air Force has a number of precision munitions equipped with durable steel warheads that can cut through stone and with sensors that help the bomb fuze at the right depth. The fuzes can tell when the bomb has gone through rock and emerged in an

empty space. Reportedly, these bombs can penetrate as deeply as 100 feet of unreinforced earth and several meters’ worth of the toughest hardened concrete.

A recent version of the air launched cruise missile, designated AGM-86D, is also intended to be used as a hard-target weapon, with its penetrating warhead and special fuzing, combined with the ability to hit the target with extreme precision—i.e., within 10 feet of the aim point.

A similar precision-fuzing capability is available on the 3,000-pound, TV-guided AGM-130 rocket-and-glide bomb. The TV guidance is augmented with GPS guidance for extreme precision, even in the typical bad weather of an Afghan winter.

The GBU-28 is a 5,000-pound weapon used only a couple of times during the endgame of the Gulf War, as a way to get at deeply buried command posts. It can be carried by the F-15E or the larger bombers but has laser guidance, requiring good weather for use.

Some of the caves used by al Qaeda were simply natural formations, but some were elaborate affairs dug into the rock with multiple levels, communications rooms, ammunition storage areas, and sleeping quarters, equipped with sophisticated ventilation systems. These caves also reportedly had several back doors.

The US had not employed a fuel-air explosive in Operation Enduring Freedom for use as an asphyxiation weapon, officials said, because there were none in the inventory.

However, on Dec. 21, Pentagon acquisition chief Edward C. Aldridge told reporters that DOD had developed a new fuel-air explosive “that is particularly designed for tunnels.” He said the “thermobaric” weapon had been tested on a laser guided bomb that exploded in a tunnel with “a significant growth in overpressure for the tunnel and temperature.

“It’s something that we clearly have a need for in Afghanistan, and they’re on their way over there.”

entered the [coordinates] wrong or radioed it in wrong, or the guy in the plane punched in the wrong numbers on the keypad in the [bomber's] computer. That's why we need to get these machine-to-machine interfaces."

The CAOC was able to direct Predator "streaming video" directly into the cockpits of some aircraft. This enabled AC-130 gunships to rain fire down precisely on some targets in Kunduz without inflicting much damage on neighboring areas.

"I think the CAOC is a new weapon system itself," Wald asserted. "It would have been extremely difficult, if not almost impossible, to have run the campaign in Afghanistan without the CAOC." The command center enabled Wald to have an "air picture over Afghanistan" showing all friendly aircraft, their objectives, and flight paths "within two days of when we arrived."

In the command center, for example, Wald and his targeters were able to look at imagery coming live from U-2s and hear specialists at Beale AFB, Calif., interpret the images as they were coming in.

Wald suggested that the information available to him in the first days of Enduring Freedom rivaled the information available to Operation Desert Storm air commander Gen. Charles A. Horner after six months of preparation in theater.

The pace of the air campaign, Wald said, went "just as planned,"

but no one at CENTCOM could have predicted the Taliban would have "folded as fast as they did, even with the Northern Alliance attacking them."

Martin emphasized that point. "We are not getting much play out of the fact that the Taliban didn't just collapse because they are weak," said the USAFE commander. "They collapsed because the Northern Alliance was given good information at the right time. The people who were with them were identifying targets of value. We were striking targets of significant value and they were being cut off from the world. They ran."

U-2 Supplement

Global Hawk was dispatched to the theater to provide high-altitude imagery and signals intelligence, and because it was still, as Jumper said, "in test mode," it supplemented the U-2 but did not replace it.

Jumper reported having signed roughly a dozen mission needs statements, or requirements for new capabilities, as a result of shortfalls encountered during the Afghan campaign but also noted that many of these referred to refinements of existing weapons or systems.

Martin said there is some "concern" among senior military leaders that there is no structural commander for a global enemy, as there are regional Commanders in Chief for various parts of the world. There are

seams between CINC areas of responsibility, and the Afghanistan operation drew that fact into sharp relief.

Martin noted, for example, that Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan all fall within CENTCOM's area of responsibility, but the former Soviet republics in the group are involved in the NATO Partnership for Peace program, within European Command's area. Jurisdictional issues might cause something to fall through the cracks, Martin said. He added that there may be a new division of labor along mission area lines. No one, however, is planning to scrap the current "CINC-doms," he said.

Martin also said, at the end of Phase 1, that the US military had done "about five [Major Theater Wars'] worth of planning" for whatever step was to come after destruction of the Taliban, al Qaeda, and their top leaders. Some options being looked at for the broader fight against terrorism with a global reach might require "three MTWs' worth of some of our capabilities, with about an MTW-and-a-half or an MTW of support," he said.

Wald said he could see that, after Afghanistan, there might be a need to "rethink our force structure."

Enduring Freedom is being run with no letup in support for operations in the Balkans or Northern and Southern Watch in Iraq, Martin and Wald noted. Because of that, the force structure is there to shift attention elsewhere in the region if necessary.

However, Martin noted that Air Force troops would hit a "crunch point" after about three months on the rotation. He said the cycles may be extended, but one of the highest priorities would be to figure out how to establish a steady-state mode for the troops.

He predicted USAF would defer some exercises, competitions, and deployments. Air Force leadership also gave some thought to doubling the 90-day deployment schedule to 180 days for all AEFs but that the troops affected would not go again for 30 months. Martin does not like this solution and expected the extension would be more like 30 days. USAF might also make an early call on some later AEFs. Without a change, Martin concluded, the EAF concept "is busted." ■

USAF photo by SSgt. Sean M. Worrell



Now in its fifth major armed conflict, the U-2 proved invaluable in determining the Taliban order of battle prior to Oct. 7. Though UAVs seem destined for an ever larger role, the U-2's timely performance showed why it's still in demand.