

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL GREGORY GONZALEZ, U.S. ARMY, PROJECT MANAGER, UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS, ARMY PROGRAM EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR AVIATION; TIM OWINGS, DEPUTY PROJECT MANAGER, UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS, ARMY PROGRAM EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR AVIATION; COLONEL ROBERT SOVA, U.S. ARMY, TRAINING AND DOCTRINE CAPABILITY MANAGER FOR UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS SUBJECT: ARMY UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (UAS) TIME: 12:08 P.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25, 2010

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MODERATOR: Well, good afternoon on my end. Ashley Washington again from Army Public Affairs Office of Online and Social Media.

Today, we have our roundtable which will be discussing the U.S. Army's unmanned aircraft systems and its values and uses in the military operations. Without further ado -- well, first of all, could I get everyone who's actually calling in to just quickly go around and state your name and where you're calling from? And from there we will have our participants state their names and give a brief overview of what they'll be discussing this afternoon.

Q This is Rick Whittle with Rotor & Wing. I'm in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Q Hi. Spencer Ackerman with Wired in Washington, D.C.

Q Martin Klingst with Die Zeit, German weekly.

Q Jen DiMascio with --

Q (Inaudible.)

Q Oh, sorry. Jen DiMascio with Politico.

Q Paul McLeary with DTI.

Q J.D. Leipold with Army News Service.

Q Ann Roosevelt with Defense Daily.

Q Stew Magnuson, National Defense Magazine.

MODERATOR: Okay. Now if our participants would like to go ahead and give us their names and brief opening statements, whatever you'd like to open with. Then we will go from there and start asking our questions.

COL. GONZALEZ: (Audio break) -- Colonel Greg Gonzalez. I'm the project manager for -- (audio break) -- Army's unmanned aircraft systems. I'm going to have the other two participants introduce (themselves ?). And we'll each take our turn making opening statement(s).

MR. OWINGS: I'm Tim Owings. I'm the deputy project manager for Army unmanned aircraft systems.

COL. SOVA: I am Colonel Robert J. Sova, and I'm the TRADOC capabilities manager -- (audio break) -- manned aircraft system.

COL. GONZALEZ: All right. Welcome, everyone. And thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in this Bloggers Roundtable. A new experience for us, so we're giving it a try. And hopefully it -- (audio break) -- well.

This is Colonel Gonzalez again. I'm going to start out by talking about just giving updates on three quick topics. And then Mr. Tim Owings will talk about an issue or two, as well as will Colonel Sova. And then we'll open it up for questions.

The first thing that I want to mention is that we have now approval for a popular name for the -- what's been known to this time as the Extended Range/Multi-Purpose. And it's also been referred to as Sky Warrior.

And these numerous names have caused some confusion. ER/MP was the name given to the Army project by the Army. Sky Warrior was the name provided by the -- General Atomics, the prime contractor. But the Army just received last week approval for the popular name, which is Gray Eagle.

The -- as many of you may know, Army aviation has -- for years has adopted popular tribes or figures from the Native Americans as a basis for the popular name. And so this falls in line with other major aircraft such as the Apache, the Black Hawk and the Kiowa. So we'll -- from this point forward, we'll be referring to the ER/MP as -- (audio break).

Second thing that I want to talk about is probably more significant. In fact, it is more significant. Many of you may know that back in March, my office, the project management office for UAS, had prepared and submitted a safety case and a request for a certificate of authorization for use of ground-based sense-and-avoid system at El Mirage, California.

And since the March time frame, the FAA has been working with us -- (audio break) -- back and forth. And finally on 19 August, last week,

the FAA gave us approval for the safety case and also the COA, or the certificate of authorization. That -- that is a truly monumental (mark ?) in terms of UAS history, because it's the first time that the FAA has given any DOD entity approval to fly in the national airspace using a sense-and-avoid system.

And so from this point forward -- (audio break) -- a little bit, but I will say with the good news comes a little bit of bad news in that the -- some of the prerequisites and the -- and the restrictions that are in the COA -- (audio break) -- some of the restrictions that you put on that COA are going to make it -- (audio break) -- to operate as we had envisioned.

But -- so we're working with the FAA to work through all of that. But -- (audio break) -- we're very grateful for them, for the consideration that they've given -- (audio break) -- us. (Audio break) -- system out of El Mirage to fly the Gray Eagle during times of limited visibility, after dusk and before dawn, using that sense- and-avoid system.

So we're going to learn a lot from that, and in our experience probably over the next six months to a year. And then our hope and goal is to increase the confidence that -- the FAA's confidence in our ability to use the system, and then increase the scope and the locations where we can use that ground-based sense-and-avoid.

The final thing that I'd like to mention as I open up is, give you a quick update on the status of the Gray Eagle quick reaction capability fieldings that we've had and those that we are about to conduct.

QRC-1 as we've referred to it was deployed into Iraq roughly the August time frame of 2009. It was one platoon of Gray Eagle, four aircraft. They have flown very, very well in theater supporting active division operations.

They've flown to date over 5,000 -- (audio break) -- flight hours -- (audio break) -- lot about the operations of this -- of the Gray Eagle program of record.

And the operations that we've got out there are not only supporting combat operations but are certainly helping us do better at finalizing the technologies that we put into the program of record.

The second quick reaction capability, or QRC-2 as we refer to it, has already been -- the equipment has already been stationed with the unit that will deploy with it to Afghanistan in the fall time frame.

We -- between the time frame that we fielded the QRC-1 and when we provided the QRC-2, we've added some additional capabilities to the aircraft -- (audio break) -- most notable is the addition of the Hellfire missile capability.

We did a limited user test with the QRC-2 soldiers and equipment out at the National Training Center in the May/June time frame. They -- (audio break) -- user test, and their success there -- (audio break) -- the basis for our ability to pack up that equipment and provide it to the unit. So we expect to see that second QRC operational here very soon.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Mr. Owings.

MR. OWINGS: Hello, everyone. For those of you who have been tracking what we're doing inside the Army, you're well aware of the approaches that we've taken with interoperability. But for those who have not, I'll rehash that just a moment.

We inside the Army embarked several years ago to build what we consider the most interoperable fleet of unmanned systems ever fielded. That's built on a couple of key components. First, the universal ground control station. The second is open architecture protocols. And then finally is our universal operator as well.

This fall, we're going to have the single largest demonstration of -- I hope everyone can hear me okay or I'm not talking too loud. But we're going to have the single largest demonstration ever conducted of manned and unmanned systems. So I'll talk more about that as we get into this. But that's something that will happen in FY '11.

Robert.

COL. SOVA: This is Colonel Rob Sova. And again I'll just -- quick opening remarks. And what Tim just alluded to as far as the universal ground control station of course is paramount with the Army's way forward, because it allows our super-enlisted soldiers that operate these systems and are the backbone of unmanned aircraft systems in the Army -- we can focus on the training and move towards that universal operator.

And so as Tim alluded to in FY '11 with this interoperability test, it will make great strides for our way forward. And I'll talk later if the question comes up, about where we are with advancements in our program and the requirements documents associated with our programs of record.

MR. OWINGS: And then just following onto that, I want to clarify something as I was talking earlier. This is Tim Owings again. The demo will be this fall -- I'm sorry, fall of FY '11. And when I say it's going to be the largest single demonstration ever conducted of interoperable systems, it will include our Shadow system, our Warrior systems, our Hunter systems. In addition, it will include our small UAS systems as well.

Also tied to that will be the manned fleet, currently will be for sure with Block 3 Apache and possible with Kiowa Warrior as well. So from the standpoint of the complete end-to-end prove-out of interoperable systems, this will be in our opinion the largest demonstration ever conducted. And it will be in the fall of FY '11.

And with that, we'll open the floor for questions.

MODERATOR: Thank you, sirs.

We're going to start with Spencer, if you have a question.

Q Yes, can you just explain the implications of the FAA approval? What will that actually enable you to do? Are you talking about operability in the system or simply testing it?

COL. GONZALEZ: This is Colonel Gonzalez. Initially what this approval will do for us is, we have some significant need for additional training time at the El Mirage facility, where we are preparing for initial operational testing.

So this will open up night flights eventually and allow us - - there's also a need for additional airspace. There's not -- there's not restricted airspace in that location. So the area we need to fly in is national airspace.

So that's why the FAA had to get involved and give us this approval, to fly unmanned aircraft in the national airspace. That's the point that is so critical. There has never been -- there's not another service that has been given approval to use a system like this in the national airspace.

All other locations where we fly these unmanned aircraft, in the Continental U.S., we are required to fly in a restricted airspace normally located near a military installation or other restricted COAs, which require that you have a chase plane flying with the unmanned system and/or a ground observer.

So using this system, we no longer need the chase plane or the ground observer. It gives us much more freedom. And it implies that the FAA has confidence that we can fly safely with manned aircraft in the national airspace under limited conditions.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

And we'll move on to Ann, if you have a question.

Q Hello. Yes, I did have question, I think, for Colonel Gonzalez.

There was some squishy noise on the line when you were discussing the FAA approval. And I wondered if you wouldn't mind going back just a little bit over what it was that they said you could do. I couldn't really hear.

It's at El Mirage. And the FAA COA allows you to do what? That part I couldn't understand properly.

COL. GONZALEZ: Yes, I'll clarify for you. Thanks for the question.

Q Yeah, sorry, sir.

COL. GONZALEZ: The FAA has approved this certificate of authorization. And basically it says that we can begin flying at night and in the El Mirage area after dusk, but we have to complete before dawn, using this ground-based sense-and-avoid system. And it will allow us to fly a Gray Eagle using these radar that are positioned in the area.

The radar will characterize the airspace and will warn the operators if any manned aircraft come into the airspace that is being used by that unmanned system.

And once the operators are warned through that system, then they will land the unmanned aircraft, allowing the civilian aircraft to pass through safely, upon which time the unmanned system can then resume flight.

So that is -- that whole process while it sounds very simple is actually quite complicated. And it requires not only extreme technical capabilities but good procedures in place.

And so the FAA has given us limited authority to do this. And some of the restrictions that I have talked about is, initially they want to have someone from the FAA present when we do these flights.

That's a restriction that is going to make it difficult for us to fly very often of course. They don't have anyone stationed out at El Mirage that's from the FAA.

So we're going to have to coordinate with them. And then hopefully it's our intent to show them and give them confidence in our ability to do this, where they will no longer restrict us to operations with FAA personnel in place there observing.

There are some other restrictions and prerequisites. But what -- the intent there is to open up a little piece of the national airspace, show them that we have the capability to fly safely, and then increase our ability to fly, so that we don't have to land whenever there's an unmanned -- another manned system in the same area. We just move to a safe space.

So does that -- does that answer your question, Ann?

Q Yes, it does, sir. And just a quick follow.

Does that mean there are no sort of airline flight paths near El Mirage? I'm sorry, I don't know where that is in California.

COL. GONZALEZ: Well, it's --

Q You're not near like LAX flight path or something.

COL. GONZALEZ: We're down in the southwest desert, down close to the Los Angeles area. And one of the reasons they've given us a restriction to night flights is that there are fewer commercial airline flights in that area at night. And so we're operating under the safest conditions we can showing that, you know, we can do this safely.

Q Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

And we move to Paul, if you have a question.

Q No. Just listening today, thanks.

MODERATOR: Okay, not a problem.

And Martin, do you have a question?

Q Yes, I do. Can you tell me something about the future of the unmanned aircraft system, the increasing role in wars, especially in Afghanistan?

COL. SOVA: Well, this is Colonel Rob Sova. And I -- thanks for the question, Martin.

Increasing roles, I'll touch on a couple of things. One, increasing usage as far as the number of hours: We've already exceeded a million hours. One particular program in our inventory, the Shadow, or what we like to refer to sometimes as the "work horse," has over 500,000 hours. And we don't see the -- we certainly don't see a reduction of hours. We continue to see an increase of hours.

As far as the roles, the primary roles certainly surround around persistent surveillance, security, command and control, communications relay. And then, of course, some of our assets -- in fact, only the Gray Eagle at this time -- have an attack role. So those roles we don't see from the standpoint of the mission. Maybe we might as we move into the future and explore the possibility of cargo UAS or the use to move cargo. But for right now, the roles that I just previously mentioned will continue to increase.

MODERATOR: Okay. Thank you.

We move to Debbie (sp). Do you have a question?

Q I do, actually. I have two, if we have time. I was hoping to get more of an update on where you stand on weaponizing the UAS systems and especially what the role of the Griffin missile will be moving forward now that you have the Hellfire P+.

COL. SOVA: But from a requirement -- this is Colonel Sova again, I -- I'll -- and then I'll certainly turn it over to Tim or

Colonel Gonzalez. From a requirement standpoint right now, again, I'll state our Gray Eagle is our only system that the Army feels right now that we want to weaponize. That said, we're certainly looking at the potential, and we have the capability to weaponize other systems.

And as far as the Griffin missile specifically, certainly we work with our industry partners, and we look at the feasibility of using a smaller weapon system. Because it's very important; size, weight and power is always a factor as we use any payload on our platforms. So we look at the potential of using a lighter weapon system that'll provide the capability that our warfighters need. With that, I'll turn it over to Tim to talk about any other acquisition process we're looking at.

MR. OWINGS: Yeah, basically, with regard to weaponization, the other things that we're doing is -- and I think you're aware we're actively working with the Marine Corps to support weaponization of the Shadow program -- in support of the Marines, though, not for an Army requirement. And so that will -- and then -- and, you know, and the Marines will be in the lead in terms of selecting which actual weapon of choice is needed in terms of their -- of their missions.

From the standpoint of lighter weapons, as Rob said, we have been looking into this for some time, given that current weapon systems require us to take quite a hit on endurance. So obviously if we could -- if we could get some lethal capability without taking a hit on endurance, that would be a big movement forward.

But all that said, there's nothing finite right now that says we're going to go to some new weapon system in the next year or so. So for -- at least for the immediate future, with regard to the Army- only mission, it's going to stay centered around the P+ as we see it.

Q Great. If I have time for one more quick one, I was curious about the status of the Cargo UAS JCTD down-select and where you were with that.

COL. GONZALEZ: As you know, we've supported the JCTD. The status of that effort is, it's sort of more from a normal JCTD, where we would take probably a year or two, you know, through a combined look from the different services to look at what's the realm of the possible. In fact, there's been a call by Department of Defense officials to take some early capability into theater with this JCTD, and so they actually get some use out of the systems in theater quickly. So it will -- it will morph from a standard JCTD perhaps to more of a Quick Reaction Capability. And while the QRC is deployed -- (audio break) -- look at what's within the realm of the possible.

So you've got the two efforts ongoing. You have a Marine Corps that is looking to field (intermediate ?) capability based on what's out there on the commercial (off the shelf ?) basically, and then you have the JCTD that was going to look at the realm of the possible but also has been required now to do something in theater with that.

MR. OWINGS: Right. But we were also hoping to use this JCTD to vet out further exactly the approach we want to take inside the Army.

You know, for example, there's a couple of options on the table. Do you build a cargo resupply only system that perhaps has very long legs, very high capacity but is basically a dumb system for delivery of capability? Are you looking -- or are you looking at something that can be a multi-functional role, assist with the ISR work that we already do, plus do the resupply mission? And then finally, are you looking at a pure stand-alone unmanned solution, or are you looking at some type of muling solution, where you would have perhaps, say, one manned Black Hawk escorting five or six unmanned mules to -- for carrying cargo?

So there's a lot of decisions we have to make longer term, but as Colonel Gonzalez said, from the -- at least the way the JCTD is shaping up, it's going to become much more short-term focus.

Q Great. Thank you.

COL. GONZALEZ: Okay.

MODERATOR: And Jen, did you have a question? (Pause.)

Okay. We move to Stew. Did you have a question?

Q Yeah, a couple real short, maybe quick ones. First of all, how is the new Hellfire working? Do you have any success stories on that yet? I thought I understood it was going to be deployed this summer. And I guess I'll just start with that one first.

COL. GONZALEZ: Okay. We have had great success with our integration of the Hellfire onto the Eagle. Just most recently we conducted a limited user test that I referred to in my opening comments. It was a -- basically a -- an operational test of a -- of the soldiers that will be deploying Gray Eagle QRC-2. And they were weaponized. And they fired eight shots out at the National Training Center area, all live -- live fires. Out of those eight, six were lased by the on-board laser designator and fired directly from our Gray Eagle platform, and all six of those were hits.

The last two were where we laser designated from the Gray Eagle platform, and we designated for Hellfires that were on Apaches that were also part of the exercise. And those too were also direct hits. So during the test that we had -- there were eight of eight direct hits. And that was the most recent. Prior to that we had also tested the Hellfire integration at China Lake back in the fall of 2009. And at that time we had nine out of 10 hits and the 10th one that we did miss was an extremely difficult shot of a target moving directly below the aircraft, moving in a parallel -- or I should say in a perpendicular fashion. So we learned a lot from that shot.

And it's been a very successful integration effort. And so I hope that answers your question.

Q These are the ones -- they're all shooting to the rear?  
What was --

COL. GONZALEZ (?): Yes, it's a full --

Q Okay.

COL. GONZALEZ (?): -- it fully opens the envelope.

Q Okay. And when would that -- when will you expect that to reach the field?

COL. GONZALEZ: As I mentioned before, QRC-2 or our Quick Reaction Capability 2 fielding, of four ER -- four Gray Eagle aircraft that are going into theater in Afghanistan this fall will all be weaponized.

Q Okay. Sorry. I -- like Anne (sp) said, there was -- I was getting some interference when you were speaking. I didn't catch all of it.

COL. GONZALEZ (?): No problem.

COL. SOVA (?): (Inaudible) -- problem, I'm happy to repeat anything you need.

Q Okay. As probably the only person online who covers defense and Native American issues, I think I would be remiss in asking -- if I didn't ask where Gray Eagle came from. Was that a famous chief? I'm not familiar with the name.

COL. SOVA: Well -- this is Colonel Rob Sova. And as Colonel Gonzalez mentioned in his opening statement, that's -- it's common that that's what our aviation platforms are named after, either a Native American tribe and/or an individual.

And in this case, I was -- I too was not real familiar with Gray Eagle -- Gray Eagle specifically, but after a little bit of research, Gray Eagle, a great -- a great Indian chief, has a long history in fact with the Army, operating with the Army, and Special Operations. So it actually is very fitting to name our formerly known as Extended Range Multi-Purpose "Gray Eagle." Q So he was a historic figure, or --

COL. SOVA: No, no, he was an actual figure, Indian chief.

Q Yeah. Okay. Do you know what nation he was from or anything?

Sorry. I know these are odd questions, but --

COL. SOVA: I don't have the background and/or the specifics of exactly --

COL. GONZALEZ: We aren't historians here, but I can tell you that over the history of Native Americans, there have been several chiefs named Gray Eagle, the most recent of which -- I think Colonel Sova is referring to -- is more modern-day.

He was a major in the special forces, was a -- (inaudible).

Q Okay.

COL. GONZALEZ: There's also other Gray Eagles, chiefs that -- of the Lakota Sioux tribe. One that fought in the battle of Bull Run was Sitting Bull. So there are numerous figures that could be referred to, because it's really a common term for several great Native American chiefs.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Thank you. And Richard (sp), did you have a question?

Q Yeah. Tim, back in April you and I did an interview on what you're now calling Gray Eagle, and you said that QRC 2 was going to deploy to Afghanistan in July. What went wrong?

MR. OWINGS: Yeah, actually, nothing went wrong. But I'll let Rob, the user rep, take that one.

COL. SOVA: Yeah, the -- as far as -- as far as the -- there's -- nothing went wrong with the system. As you heard, the tests went well. That was a decision obviously by the Army leadership as well as the CENTCOM commander for the deployment of the assets -- asset based on location and utilization. So the -- so both the equipment, the equipment's been packed up and shipped, the soldiers are with the organization and ready for deployment. So as far as -- nothing went wrong; it was a military decision.

Q So it had nothing to do with the -- the system could have deployed in July if the Army leadership had wanted it?

MR. OWINGS: Absolutely. The system was ready to go. And it's packed up and ready to go.

Q One little question. I assume that in the testing you're going to do at El Mirage you're not going to be flying with any weapons.

MR. OWINGS: That's correct. We will not. The only time we would fly weapons would be on a -- on a military base equipped with all the safety nets that we need to fire weapons. COL. : And --

Q And so -- and so the purpose of the flights is just to test the sense-and-avoid technology, or what?

MR. OWINGS: No -- I mean, we're -- we test-fly a lot of things besides just, you know, the weapons piece. For example, we're flying

every single day to prove out new software variants, new capabilities. And so every day, without fail, we're either training operators, flying systems for new testing capabilities.

So what the sense-and-avoid does, it opens the aperture for us in terms of the places we can do that and the times we can do that. And so for us, when we went -- if you go back -- if you go backwards 10 years ago, we could fly with impunity at night. Fairly recently, five or six years ago, the FAA put restrictions on us that no longer allowed us to do that. So basically what sense-and-avoid does for us is it -- is it allows us to buy back the night so that we're able to operate at night, utilize those hours just as we're utilizing the daylight hours.

COL. : This --

Q Well, what I'm trying to understand is, what's the advantage of flying in civilian airspace?

COL. GONZALEZ: Let me -- let me tackle that one. This is Colonel Gonzalez.

The advantage of using national airspace would resolve or at least help resolve a problem that we have really across the Department of Defense. Right now, the majority of the flight hours that all of the services, including the Army, are flying are over in theater, either in Iraq or Afghanistan, where we basically operate with impunity in those theaters.

When -- but we do have needs for training back in the continental United States. And when we -- when those war efforts die down and most of those assets return to the United States, within the continental United States, there's a lot of training needs.

Now, to give you a couple of examples, the National Guard units that are in all 50 states obviously have shadow systems. And -- but they're not located in areas where there's military-restricted airspace in all -- in all locations.

We will also be fielding the Gray Eagle, which requires quite a bit of space, more, normally, than you have in a military-restricted area. So we need access to certain areas of the national airspace in order to keep our operators current in warfighting capability so that they can be deployed any -- at a moment's notice to protect our interests. So the -- having a sense-and-avoid system that is a -- recognized by the FAA as safe and effective could then open up the window in numerous areas for our soldiers to train where they don't -- where they don't currently have that capability. Where we've only made a first step by this is first approval, but it's -- again, you have to make the first step before you can get into a run. So that's -- (off mike).

Q And will -- could you -- maybe my colleagues already know this, but is this sense-and-avoid technology, is that new?

Does that need testing? Or is that something that's been around a while? Can you talk about that a little bit?

COL. GONZALEZ: Well, there's two -- there's two types of sense-and-avoid systems that we're working on across the Department of Defense. One of those is an airborne sense-and-avoid system, which basically comprises of a -- of radar systems onboard aircraft, to replace the eyes and ears of a pilot. You know, a pilot looks out the cockpit window and he can see out on the horizon, in good weather, what's out there. Well, in an unmanned system you don't have that. And the sensors that we have are looking down at the ground; they don't necessarily look out on the horizon to give the operator any view.

So the radars that go on there have to replace that human, and they are -- in many cases, they are larger than can be fit on a smaller aircraft. And so that the development of those radars and the reduction in size of those radars is really being tackled by the Air Force and the Navy, because they have the larger aircraft.

For the Army, where we have smaller platforms where we can't practically put radar, or efficiently put radar on our aircraft, we are going with a ground-based sense-and-avoid system that places numerous radar -- two or three, depending on the characterization or the terrain. And then those radar data feeds into a ground-control station that then pops up alerts to the ground-control station operator.

So you -- all of those -- again, they sound easy, but the technology is one thing; the tactics and the procedures of how you use that data is something that has to be developed.

MR. OWINGS: Right, but the -- and this is Tim Owings again. The reason the FAA likes the initial approach for ground-based sense-and-avoid is that if a -- that it's somewhat self-limiting. They can -- they control which sites get approved for location of these radars, in terms of where we can operate and how we can operate, so it's self-limiting in nature, which allows them to control the pace and acceptance of that side of things. So that's another thing that the FAA is viewing favorably, at least from the approach we're taking.

Q Okay. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Is there anyone that hasn't asked a question that I possibly -- Q Yeah, I would like to -- it's Martin. One more question.

MODERATOR: Okay.

Q Yeah. Is the unmanned aircraft going to substitute the drone in the long run?

COL. SOVA: This is Colonel Rob Sova. And so when you say "drone," I got an interesting question this morning. But as you know, the name "drone," remotely-piloted vehicle -- as the Air Force now refers to it, unmanned aircraft vehicles; and as the Army refers to them,

unmanned aircraft systems, because they're truly a system of systems -- there's a lot -- there's a lot of familiarity and similarity between the uses of them.

Drones could be anything from a(n) unpowered system towed behind an aircraft for a target, which it was used early -- but to get to the point of, I think, your question is, unmanned aircraft systems will continue to increase in the utilization of the hours for the Army. The Army certainly doesn't see -- if you refer to our unmanned aircraft system road map, we don't see that it'll be -- ever totally replace manned systems. But what we do see is a teaming of unmanned aircraft systems with our manned systems, both ground and air, provide a far greater capability and enabling tool to our supported warfighter.

Hopefully, that addresses your question, Martin.

Q Okay, thank you.

MODERATOR: Is there anyone else on the line who'd like to ask an additional question?

Q Yes, it's -- I'd like to ask --

Q It's -- go ahead.

Q It's Ann Roosevelt, with Defense Daily.

I think this goes to Mr. Owings. When you were discussing the interoperability test, you left a couple of things out, like who all is going to participate, and where is it going to be, and what sort of things are you going to be doing -- you know, sort of what are your objectives?

MR. OWINGS: Sure, certainly. Certainly. And I'll -- and I'll hit each of those things. The demonstration is going to be first conducted at Dugway Proving Ground. And I certainly should have said that up front.

The participants -- this is -- the demonstration is primarily an Army demonstration to showcase the work that we have done over the last several years in the areas of interoperability and manned/unmanned teaming. So what you will see at the demonstration -- and there will be a variety of political and, of course, media guests associated with this -- but what you will see at the demonstration is really an unprecedented level of interoperability, where we will be -- where we will be tying systems together in terms of command and control, so that from our universal ground-control station you will see us hot-swap between Shadows, Hunters, Warriors. You will see us push not only video into Apache Block 3 cockpits, but the Apache Block 3 to take limited command and control of our unmanned aircraft systems -- basically, controlling the hunting dogs in front of the hunters.

You will also see something that's fairly brand new. You will see that we've taken the digital data link that we use on our small

unmanned aircraft systems. And we have put that in our larger systems as well.

So what -- why would we do that? And what does that enable? Well, the reason we did it is, it allows all of these small hand controllers that we use for small -- for the small unmanned aircraft systems to now be used as remote receiving devices as well.

So we will have the ability to receive at the Raven controller the video from our Shadows, our Hunters and our warriors. But more -- but perhaps more importantly it also allows us the ability to do command and control of those sensors from those small hand controllers. So that's the basic approach to what we're -- what we're -- what we're demonstrating.

Now, and all of this is stuff that we'll be fielding over the next really about two years, to get into theater and other places as well. But it really is a showcase of all of the work that's happened really over the last three years.

Q Thank you.

MODERATOR: I heard someone else had a question.

Would you like to ask your question?

Q Yeah. Stew Magnuson again. Another kind of offbeat question. But I'm wondering if you guys saw the pictures last week of Iran's new unmanned aerial vehicle, which it says it's armed.

I wonder if you guys had any opinions on what you could see from the video of that.

COL. GONZALEZ: No comment other than, we are aware that they've been developing that. They -- there's two capabilities, one that is more like a cruise missile. And the other capability they're developing is one that would return to base after it delivers its munition.

But other than knowing that they're developing that, really have no comment. Q Okay. That was Colonel Gonzalez speaking.

COL. GONZALEZ: Yes, it was.

Q Okay, thanks.

MODERATOR: Okay, and we have time for probably one final comment or question. And then we're going to allow our participants to make their closing remarks.

Q If I could grab that one, has a date yet been set for the configuration steering board meeting to approve the reconfiguration of the ER/MPs and Shadow fleets? (Inaudible.)

COL. GONZALEZ: Yes, this is Colonel Gonzalez.

The configuration steering board has been set at 2 September. And so we'll get a final determination at that point I believe, unless there's some delay of that, as to the new configuration for the three balanced platoons. And so we'll be able to report on the results of that after that 2 September meeting.

Q Do you know when in September at this point?

COL. GONZALEZ: The 2nd of September.

Q I'm sorry, 2nd, okay. Thank you very much.

COL. GONZALEZ: You're welcome.

Q Okay.

Sirs, if you would like to, go ahead and make your final comments.

COL. GONZALEZ: This is Colonel Gonzalez.

Again I want to thank all of you for participating. It's an exciting time for -- not only for Army unmanned aircraft systems but for unmanned systems across the board. And we're currently here at the AUVSI here in Denver, to showcase a lot of the capabilities and the new technologies.

And you know, it's a tremendous opportunity for us to be here and to observe all the new technologies. We are learning a lot about what we might be able to put into our aircraft, to make them better.

And so it's been a tremendous activity for us. We continue to be dedicated to making improvements to our systems, both in terms of new capabilities and reliability. And we're here to support the warfighter and to make sure that they get the capabilities they need. MR. OWINGS: Just echoing on the things from AUVSI, during the -- yesterday during the opening ceremonies here, there was a lot of discussion about the number-one issue in unmanned aircraft systems being interoperability.

That's one of the things -- that's not why we are focusing on what we're doing. We're focusing on it because it's the right thing for the warfighter. But it is a recognition of how important it is to achieve that and how -- and really how difficult it has been to get there.

And so we probably don't give complete justice to just how difficult it is to get multiple prime contractors, multiple systems operating in an open architectural fashion. But I hope we've given you some feel for what's happening and the fact that this is here and now today and is really a tremendous enabling capability.

And with that, I'll turn it over to Rob.

COL. SOVA: Colonel Rob Sova.

Again I'll just tag onto the whole interoperability piece.

Of course, a lot of times when we talk about unmanned aircraft systems, we talk about the unmanned aircraft, you know, the part that's most visible. But the whole reason for leveraging all the technology that's out there, going to the universal ground control station, and a lot has to do with the open architecture, because that allows the information that is the key for -- coming off these unmanned aircraft systems -- for that information to permeate and get across the depth of the battlefield to the -- what I refer to as the unintended customer.

So by doing that, going to open architectures, you enable all the warfighters across the entire military operation structure, the use of that information to make key and important decisions so that our soldiers operating these systems can save lives and save equipment.

Thank you.

MODERATOR: Okay. Well, this will end our roundtable today. I'd like to again thank Colonel Gonzalez, Colonel Sova and Mr. Owings for speaking with us today. Hopefully, between now and Friday we will have the transcript for any of our participants to receive.

And thank you all again, and have a good afternoon.

END.