

TRANSCRIPT

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Lieutenant General Bob Otto
Deputy Chief of Staff for Air Force ISR

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DWG: -- is the Air Force's Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance on the Air Staff. So sir, again, thank you for making the time to meet with us on a pretty nasty morning out there. It's a very busy time in the Air Force ISR world, I'm sure. As always, we're on the record.

Sir, let me begin with Operation Inherent Resolve. When you look at the Air Force's ISR efforts supporting operations over Iraq and Syria, give us a sense for how intense that is, what are your assets and capabilities, and how does the ISR mission fit into the overall scale of efforts for the [nation]?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I would say that really operations broadly in Iraq and in Afghanistan and then in Iraq and Syria, if you look at the kind of operations we're involved in, what we see is that ISR becomes more than just support to operations. It oftentimes is the operation. So as a consequence what we've seen is the kinds of support that we provide through intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance are really the sweet spot of what the COCOMS are often seeking. So the challenge is not hitting the target, because we will hit a target that we aim at with incredible precision. The challenge is where are the targets. So there is a high demand for ISR.

I like to kind of cite a couple of statistics. If you go back about ten years ago we had about five CAPs. We're talking 2005-2006. In Iraq, Fallujah is really starting to heat up, and we had 100,000 troops in country. We had five medium altitude CAPs and we were meeting something like 56 percent of CENTCOM full motion video requirements. And if you look today we've got 61 CAPs that we're flying across Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria that the Air Force presents and we're meeting something like mid 20s of their full motion video requirements. So with ten times the number of CAPs we're meeting less of their requirement.

So what that tells me is as we've learned how to use these assets there's a demand for them that's virtually insatiable. And so I think if you talk to the combatant commanders they would say we would like more intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance. The question is, how do we use all of our assets to best effect to discover where the targets are on the timing and tempo the commanders would like.

Did that get at your question?

DWG: It does.

Hawk Carlisle and a few others have said that it's incredibly difficult to identify the good guys versus the bad guys right now. Is there anything that [inaudible] besides [inaudible]?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think there are. I think it's a combination of things. But the great thing about air power is it creates an incredible dilemma for adversaries. So if they want to be effective, typically they need to congregate, right? Congregate and mass in order to attack. And then they're an attractive target for air power. If they don't want to die, they have to disburse, hide amongst women and children, blend in with the population and then their effectiveness declines precipitously. That's the neat thing that air power brings to the fight.

So while ISIL has decided to take down their black flags and blend in with the population, what we have seen is they're far less effective, certainly than they were in the opening stages that they were advancing [inaudible].

But what we can do from an intelligence perspective is, it's typically not one thing that's effective. So if I put out an MQ1 or an MQ9 with a full motion video, it has, if you've ever looked at the feed, it's like a soda straw. So you can see a football in it. Right? You go to wide area and then it's less acuity, but it's not really wide area like a large swath of land. It's a soda straw in the context of a country.

If you can overlay that with signals intelligence, maybe you're getting some walkie talkie hits, you know, communication, then we know where to look, and if we know where to look, you can discern, better discern, good guys from bad guys, and create some targets.

If we can look at ground moving target indicators, we're looking at patterns of life. This is normal movement in this area. Then we can discern, huh, this looks like abnormal movement in this area, based on what we've seen over the past months. Then we have some areas to emphasize.

So to me it's more the fusion of the various intelligence capabilities that we have that is more likely to result in targets that are [better] aircraft strikes.

DWG: Sir, I wanted to ask you about Russia and Syria, not surprisingly. About deconfliction problems. Do you at this point have a clarity on how this [inaudible] would look like. Will it be just people here at the DoD and people in the Russian

Ministry of Defense, you know, picking up phones and [inaudible]? Or it would be liaison officers somewhere in the region, and have first round of these discussions taking place, Secretary Kerry said yesterday that they might happen today.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I can speak broadly, Dmitri. I don't know whether talks have already occurred. It's a little bit out of my area. But they need to occur to provide really for the deconfliction of forces in the area. So I think we see that as a very advisable thing to do from a military point of view. I would suspect that our counterparts in Russia that were flying in the area would also see that as militarily advisable to do. Now we [see that]. The commanders with the forces in Syria certainly will be jumping on that.

I know it's a less than satisfying answer, but I'm just providing the forces downrange that they're using.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: General, Lockheed Martin is once again floating this idea of an optional manned U2. So are they just waiting at this time? I know their pitch is a little bit different this time than the last. [Inaudible].

Lt. Gen. Otto: I have heard that, but Lockheed Martin is pitching an optionally manned, I'd say an updated U2, right? I haven't had a sit-down with them yet to see what their particularly proposal is. I've outlined in our RPA Vector, I don't know if you've had a chance to read that, where we think we're going over the next 25 years. But it does provide an outline for the kinds of things that we think would be helpful. And so really, if you're looking at what's our next unmanned platform, we would like it to be able to be used in anti-access area denial type environments, which we expect to be more lethal than they are today ten years from now. We expect greater proliferation of surface-to-air missiles. Those surface-to-air missiles will have greater ranges than what we see today. The [foreign] factors in [inaudible], we're going to imply that you know, we're going to have to have some low observable characteristics. We want to improve on things that we've seen with the Global Hawk. Certainly one of those is the ability to be all weather. I don't want to say all weather like absolutely all weather, but certainly more so than what we see today. Collision avoidance is going to be really important so that we can fly throughout the airspace. And then we need exquisite sensors that allow us to either stand in and do the observation from a GEOINT and signals intelligence perspective, or stand out and have the range in order to do those things.

So the question that I would have is what gap would it fill that is not currently being filled?

Both airframes, U2 and Global Hawk, have the legs to last. Certainly until 2025. But I would think much longer. And, well I know much longer. And so what would cause us to do the upgrade? We'd have to see what's the case, where's the gap that it's going to fill.

Lt. Gen. Otto: Let me just add one little thing if I can. I think it's exciting that industry is coming up with ideas on how we can modernize. So I want to encourage that. My hat's off to Lockheed for doing that. And I think proposals from the industry, if they're listening to us and where we do have gaps that need to be filled are things that I like to encourage, and certainly [inaudible] proposals.

DWG: General, I'd like to take you up to about 50,000 feet. I've always wanted to say that to an ISR guy.

Lt. Gen. Otto: That's about 20,000 loower than I've flown, but -- [Laughter].

DWG: You've been in long enough to see the evolution of ISR from the first Gulf War where there were no JDAMS and GPS to 9/11 and the attacks on Afghanistan to what we're now trying to do in Syria and Iraq. How has ISR changed and what leverage have you brought to the fight that didn't exist a generation earlier?

And secondly, going back to what you said earlier about, you know, the COCOMs are never satisfied, they always want more. When do we reach diminishing returns on that? You've got to review everything you collect, and we're collecting so much, at what point do you hit a brick wall and say no more is no good.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think that's an outstanding question and it's one that we're wrestling with right now. How effective are we with our remotely piloted aircraft that you all would call drones? Some of the things that I'm uncovering in my work is, we are going to have to address some things. Even standard mission types. We need to have standard mission types so that as you go back and look at the data we can say okay, this airplane was used for this purpose. Was it effective n that purpose? You know, if you divide it up into the purposes you might be able to say you know, we really didn't get the bang for the buck when we use them this way. We really get bang for the buck this way.

So when the requests come in, and there's more requests than we can fill, let's fill these requests, not those requests, right?

The other thing that I've discovered is, you know, we haven't been, we haven't figured out the right data to collect that allows us to, with the fidelity that would satisfy me to determine measures of effectiveness.

So if you all want to know, you know, how busy were our analysts last year, I'd say oh my gosh, they were so busy. We looked at 450,000 hours of full motion video. So what? Right? What did we get for all of that looking? What are the measures of effectiveness?

It shouldn't be the number of hours we fly a platform or the number of images we take. It's much better if you can talk about the number of [Titan B's] that we discovered, or the number of bad guys that we were able to take off the battlefield. And then if we took bad guys off the battlefield, where were they? Were they like low level bad guys or were they, you know, Osama bin Laden bad guys?

But thinking through that ahead of time on what measures do we want to collect so that we can [inaudible] effectiveness, takes some work. I've directed my staff to jump into that. We've hired the ops research folks that we need to really start to jump on that.

My sense is there is a point that's diminishing. If I were going to draw the curve, the first [pass] that you add say of medium altitude, it's a very vertical line. You get a great return for it. But I think it does level off. So then the question is what is the added benefit because the cost didn't go down, so you have to [inaudible]. It still takes a lot of people for the flying and processing of that product. And then do we get the bang for the buck that we want?

Right now I have a hard time telling you in precise measures that we're satisfied on what the measures of effectiveness are. So we need to work on our data collection.

But ISR has changed so much in the way that we do business since the first Gulf War. And really, it's the fusion of the ISR with the precision that we've brought with air power that has been phenomenal. And quite frankly, very different than what you're going to see the Russians bring. So you all filed a big report on what the Russians [are dropping]. Those aren't precision weapons. Those are dumb guided bombs by the pilot --

DWG: How do you know that?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Through our analysis.

DWG: You deduce it?

Lt. Gen. Otto: We determine it based on what we see being brought in. We can do, with imagery we can tell what's hanging off the airplane.

DWG: Oh, that's true, yeah.

DWG: Just to follow up, you're in Dave Deptula's job, right?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I am. Yes.

DWG: So he's been talking about this air war as a [drizzle]. It hasn't been robust enough. My question to you is, is the bottleneck that you guys can't find enough targets for those guys to hit? Or is it something else?

Lt. Gen. Otto: So I would say that we are challenged in finding enough targets that the airplanes can hit that meet the rules of engagement that the commander [wants].

DWG: So you guys are the bottleneck. Intel is the bottleneck.

Lt. Gen. Otto: Yeah. Yeah, I think that's fair to say. If we can produce more targets that are strikable in accordance with the rules of engagement, then we can hit more

targets. We have airplanes that can hit more targets. But part of the challenge is, what do you want to do with the force? At the end of the day if you inadvertently, we believe if you inadvertently kill innocent men, women and children, then there's a backlash from that. And so we might kill three and create ten [inaudible]. It really goes back to the question of are we killing more than we're making? And so our approach has been to be very cautious with the application of force to ensure that the force that we apply is right. And that just takes more work. That slows down the number of strikes that we can make.

And then the other factor is, you know, so if you look at when we had a higher tempo, we had -- It doesn't have to be U.S. forces, but we had people that could identify targets that we could [inaudible]. That is certainly an element of that.

DWG: You're talking about on the ground?

Lt. Gen. Otto: On the ground, right. And then -- So human intelligence is a piece of it and then ground observation I a piece of it. And those are things that you don't have you know, to the same level that we've had say in classic counter-insurgency operations.

DWG: So a stupid question. Could you do twice as many targets if you had humans on the ground?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I don't think I could feel comfortable putting a number to it. My sense is, and by the way, we do have reports on the ground from people that we trust that can inform targeting. But it's just not at the same level we would have in the classic counter-insurgency [inaudible]. And part of it is what do you want to have at the end of this? Right? Part of what we want to have at the end of this is that the Iraqis, if we're talking about Iraq, that they own their security. And are they invested? So it's a delicate balance.

DWG: Good morning, General. I'll try to draw up my question to [inaudible].

Staying on Syria for a moment, I'd be interested to ask you about, and going back to the question about the importance of deconfliction, of what it is specifically that you're worried about. Limited to your airplanes for the minute. Looking at any war zone that involves two countries operating without coordinating with one another. And then specifically on how Russia's actions might concern you.

Lt. Gen. Otto: From my time flying F-15s, any time that you have an aircraft pointed at you that has air-to-air missiles, you're concerned about what [are their intentions]. It's almost like if you've ever been driving down the road and then you see somebody in your lane coming the opposite direction, that immediately gets your attention, right? It's like, are they going to move out of the lane, or what's going to happen?

And then as you get closer and closer, well, are they going to move to the left or the right?

So there is this really real aspect of what are their intentions? And then, so now to take that same analogy a little further, I'm not really pointed this way, I'm pointed this way because I'm focused over here where they're coming at me. Right? So what does that do to the attention that I pay over here when I have somebody coming? So there's that aspect of it. And they have SU-30s in country. So that would be concerning.

The other factor is, it does take a lot of effort to create an air tasking order and to put forces in play and talk about the targeting aspects of this. And you want to keep up that tempo.

So if you want to avoid those kinds of missteps, isn't it handy to know ahead of time? Okay, we're going to be operating up in this area tomorrow. That would be helpful to know.

DWG: That's something you're not able to do as well now?

Lt. Gen. Otto: That's right. Yeah.

Like yesterday our forces got I think one hour's notice, two or one hour's notice that hey, we're going to conduct strikes [inaudible] Syria. Well that's not deconfliction and that's not something we're going to do.

DWG: That's Russian deconfliction.

Lt. Gen. Otto: That's Russian deconfliction, yeah. That would work for them, right? So I think that somewhere between that approach, you know, and then sharing of ATO's is where we want to be.

DWG: How concerned are you about the possibility of a direct confrontation between a Russian aircraft and a coalition aircraft?

Lt. Gen. Otto: We'd certainly like to avoid it. So the best way to avoid that is to be in consultation for deconfliction.

DWG: But is that a real threat? Is that something you think about?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Your adversary gets a vote. I don't know.

One of the things we're asking is, what are Putin's intentions? His stated intentions and what I saw on airstrikes yesterday are not congruent. So it's stated intentions. I'm worried about terrorists coming back to my country. We've got people fighting for ISIS. You want to go against ISIS. And then you saw in, you know, Greg's paper this morning, front page, you see where those strikes occurred. Those were not anti-ISIS strikes. So there's an incongruity between what President Putin is saying and what his forces are doing. So what are their intentions? I think that's what we'd like to know.

DWG: General, thanks again for being here this morning. I'm still trying to get my head around this [inaudible] ISR requirement set by the combatant commanders and what you're able to provide. You mentioned CENTCOM is like 20 percent of requirements. I've heard General Rodriguez talk about AFRICOM and then [inaudible] the team. I'm sure PACOM is something similar.

Is that a realistic requirement? You also said you're at 61 CAPs, medium altitude ISR. I think that's down from 65 earlier in the year. Are they asking for pie in the sky? And what does that look like let's say if from CENTCOM you were able to one day magically give them five times what you're able to now. Would that be, would that do?

Lt. Gen. Otto: That's the great question. It really gets into the [inaudible].

First of all, that is unconstrained, so that is from a combatant commander, yeah, I think I can keep this many assets [inaudible] this many hours of full motion video. So it is in an unconstrained request. And it's insatiable.

So really what we have to wrestle with is how much is enough to be effective as we balance the other requirements that we need to provide for defense?

One of our concerns as an Air Force is if we focus too much on low end conflict, which MQ1s and MQ9s are great at low end conflict, they're really going to play in high end conflict. Are we doing what we need to do to deter high end conflict because we have the forces and the modern [JC] program.

So as an Air Force when we talk about we need the F-35. Why? Because it can beat down the door of any potential adversary in the world. Is that a deterrent to countries? I think so. Well how do you get the F-35 there? Well, you need to have global air refueling. That's the next generation tanker. So we need to bring that on board. Then what about deep strike, so that you can hit them in the heart? That's the LRSB. These are all things that I believe have a stabilizing effect from a global deterrent against a high end fight. Which is the one that as Americans we most want to avoid, right?

So there's a tradeoff that has to occur as the Air Force is given its budget to work with. How many MQ9s should you buy versus being able to posture against anti-access area denial [inaudible]?

DWG: You mentioned that the demand is insatiable and these are unconstrained requests from your combatant commanders. Maybe this isn't a fair observation, but I kind of wonder sometimes if in the field over the last 10 or 15 years that the United States military has gotten so accustomed to this great capability that ISR advances are able to bring, that maybe they lean on that too much. You mentioned you know, [inaudible] having people on the ground that you can trust to call in strikes. Is there an automatic knee-jerk reaction from commanders in this day and age that, but we need more ISR? If we just had more ISR, if we had more ISR, we'd be more effective.

Lt. Gen. Otto: Yeah. You go all the way back to Clausewitz. You know, and you quickly understand you'll never have enough intelligence. A commander will always want more. I would want more if I were a commander responsible for the mission. So your question is a good one, Craig, of how much is enough.

My focus is can we be more effective with what we've got? Can we create measures of effectiveness that would help the ground commander determine, you know, I've got five of my sub-commanders using these assets? These three seem to be having great effect. These two aren't, and I can show them by data that these two are using it differently. Hmm, well, that's easy. And then we become more effective with what we have.

We did a study in the DGS just, I read about it yesterday. It was about the efficiency of how we use our analysts against high altitude products. And some of the combatant commanders will say I want you to analyze this product regardless of activity. Regardless of activity. Well why would you want to do that? Because if nothing's changed, why can't the analyst just say nothing's changed? And if we dug into that and the units took kind of a six month look, their contention to me is, sir, we can save upwards of six man years of effort if all we do is get the combatant commanders to say yeah, if there's no effective change, I don't need you to fully analyze and exploit that product. Well that's six people that I can use against other things. This is non-trivial stuff. This could be a 10 to 20 percent efficiency in how we use our analysts.

So I think there's things like that within the system. If we can come up with measures of effectiveness, if we can make sure that we're really using the analysts for what we want to use them for, that will allow us to get more juice for the squeeze.

Part of that is we're talking about activity based intelligence. That's kind of the notion is, it's important to know that hey, here's their marshalling yard, nothing's [changed]. That gives you real confidence that you can go to breakfast and talk to folks and not have to worry about fighting a war that minute. Right?

What you really want to know is, hey, four vehicles are missing from that rail yard and those four vehicles were mobile missile launchers. Whoa. Now I need to do a little more looking to see what's going on.

So activity-based intelligence can allow us to potentially be more effective and efficient with our resources.

The reason that matters is because, I'll just talk for a minute. Our Distributed Common Ground System, the DCGS, is our regionally focused, globally networked, immediate warfighter support operation. We've got a number of nodes around the globe, most in America, but one in Hawaii, one in Korea, one in Germany. And they're responsible to do a lot of this time dominant fusion. They're really stressed. We've done studies in 2010, 2011, we're just completing another one right now. The men and women that serve there, we've really pushed them hard, and the data which supports that their stress levels are similar to our drone pilots -- you all call them drones anyway -- RPA pilots.

Similar to the levels of stress that our pilots experience and much much higher than the Air Force average.

So if I can be more effective in how we use them, you know, then maybe I can reduce the stress levels on them as well.

And all this plays together. You know, at the end of the day it's all about ends, ways and means, and do you have enough stuff to do the ends that the President and the nation wants you to do? My sense is, we're really stretched right now.

DWG: You've got LRSB coming along. You've got the F-35 as a platform with pretty fabulous sensors from what we hear early. How much in an A2Ad environment are they going to end up supplanting a lot of what you're now doing with Global Hawk? And the thing that flies real high up there that's black?

Lt. Gen. Otto: It depends on the situation. If you had a strike asset that has an AESA radar, has the ability to produce a SAR map, a radar map, and it can ma the target, do you want to use it to map the target? And would your answer change if it had to do an orbit in order to map the target versus serendipity as it goes by? That's what it is. Actually, I'm sorry, that's a traditional radar that's moving. An AESA would be moving. Or would you rather have an asset dedicated to that?

And that gets into, it depends on the situation. Oftentimes what we find is it's better to have an asset dedicated.

So for example, when I set up a signals intelligence orbit, that orbit is different. A different location, different altitude, different pattern than if I'm just taking pictures. And so taking pictures might imply you're going to fly a route and you're going to take pictures. Your signals intelligence might imply that I'm going to kind of orbit in an area of interest and then pick up [on] things.

So if my mission is to go from here to there, do I want to divert because I saw something over here? Or is my priority to go straight?

So really where I see the F-35 is we used to call it non-traditional ISR, but what can it pick up for me, or what can we get from its automatic processing that we can then [offset]. And then to solve that problem we need to solve the fit the force problem. Right? So you build [inaudible] assets. You build them to be hermetically sealed and then if you want to get data off of them that becomes a challenge to do it in a way that wouldn't compromise position. And so that's an area that we're working on right now.

DWG: My follow-up is that Charlie Allen called up a couple of weeks ago. He sees absolutely no need for manned reconnaissance for the next generation. Is he right? Is he too far ahead of us? Is he only looking at the black world?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I certainly know and respect Charlie Allen. I need to think through that one.

Here's the way I would answer that. For national type missions I can see that perspective. If we're talking about operational and tactical support, that is definitely not true today. And then the question is, could it be true tomorrow?

So if we just looked at today and we looked at MC12 and MQ9. They both do medium altitude signals intelligence and full motion video. And we find a couple of things. We find that, first of all, when the weather's bad the MC12 is much more likely to be affected. Now can that be solved with technology? Perhaps. We need to put some effort into that and we are. But the other thing is, even though the latency is slight, the warfighter says I'm more effective with an MC12 than an MQ9. If they had to choose only one platform, of course they want both, if they had to choose only one platform they would probably want the MC12. And I say MC12, I mean U28s, medium altitude airplanes that have an [FMD ball] and signals intelligence capability that can [inaudible].

So there is an aspect about being manned and that crew concept, the ability to avoid weather, to understand where the objective is and still make sure they get it done. The eyeball and the brain, that connection over targets, still provides an advantage.

Will that be necessary in the future? At some point, certainly not. Now is that transition point ten years from now? Twenty years from now? Thirty years from now?

So I'd be in full agreement with Charlie today, nationally, and in agreement with him at some point in the future tactically. I don't think that day's upon us right now.

DWG: He was pointing to pilot shoot-downs, that sort of thing, in an active environment, saying how can we possibly take these risks given how much we value our pilots and the geostrategic implications one or two people can have.

Lt. Gen. Otto: It's interesting. It's a sword and shield. There's an aspect about being manned that has positives and negatives; and there's an aspect of being unmanned that's got positives and negatives. So the situation is [inaudible].

DWG: Thank you very much.

I just wanted to ask you about, getting back to Iraq and Syria, how well our allied, I hesitate to even call it a coalition, more coalitions, overlapping coalitions, are integrating in terms of ISR collection and dissemination of information. I want to highlight two things. I wondered if you could talk about the U.S. and UK cooperation, deploying their first RC-135 Rivet Joints over there for this fight, and also with the French now involved in Syria, it seems they were doing all of their own ISR for the targeting and setup. Now that's just from me observing. Could you kind of talk about how that's all working out?

Lt. Gen. Otto: From our air operation center that we have, we have that coalition together. So we've got the French and Brits and Aussies and Canadians, Germans and

so on. That coalition is together and talking and we are working on information flow so that we can be as sharing as we can. We recognize that we saw some challenges in terms of information sharing and that we can do better in that regard.

I think we'd be more effective to the extent that we can do better at information sharing.

I would describe our relationship with the UK as an exemplar one and I think the Rivet Joint example is a great example of that, where we have agreements for co-manning, we have agreements for information sharing, we have agreements for even working on each other's airplanes. I mean it's just a great example. To both countries' benefit and to the benefit of the coalition that's been formed.

So I say that we're improving with the French and we still have some work to do, and I think both the French and U.S. forces, we would recognize that we've got work to do.

But I would describe it as strong, needs to be stronger.

DWG: And sir, with just some of our allies like the Turks, obviously having some different targeting sets, to be generous, than what we have in the fight. Does that create challenges for just what information you share and how you cooperate in terms of targeting and that sort of thing?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think our relationship with the Turks is one where we understand where our interests diverge and it's being managed pretty effectively right now.

DWG: Thank you for doing this, sir. So many questions. I'll try to limit it to just a few.

Airstrikes in Syria really, coalition airstrikes in Syria have really [inaudible] the last couple of weeks. Last night there was one. The day before was four. Why is that? Is that because [inaudible] Russian strikes?

And then my question now, how the coalition is choosing its targets in Syria.

Lt. Gen. Otto: First of all, I have to admit that I haven't been following the daily strikes in Syria by our coalition. That number seems a little low. I wonder if that's pre-planned targets that we're talking about versus the moving targets. I don't know. I don't feel --

DWG: That's okay. I've got other questions.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I don't feel qualified to comment on the current ops. I'd refer you to CENTCOM for that.

DWG: And the current ops, does that apply to what sort of targets they're choosing? In Syria, for example, CENTCOM says we are providing support for groups other than the Kurds in Syria. How are we doing that? And how are we choosing the targets in Syria?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I'd have to refer you to CENTCOM for that.

DWG: Okay. Do airstrikes reach a limit in the war against ISIS in Iraq or Syria? Other than intelligence collection? Like in places such as Ramadi or --

Lt. Gen. Otto: We're not there yet. We're not at the limit. I think if we could strike more, if we could find more targets I think there's more targets to be struck before we see where there's a limit to air power.

What air power doesn't do is seize and hold terrain, right? And so what air power will do is present that incredible dilemma for the enemy. You know, congregate and die or disperse and live, and really reduce their effectiveness. But at the end of the day if we clear an area the Iraqis are going to have to hold it. And so we've got to work in concert with the Iraqi forces in order for Iraq to take charge of their country.

DWG: Hopefully you can answer this. What are the difficulties of establishing a humanitarian corridor or humanitarian safe zone?

Lt. Gen. Otto: It would be situation specific.

DWG: In Syria.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think a lot of difficulties have got to be the whole political situation. What are the second and third order consequences of it? What is the drain on air resources to do it? So you're talking about something that's enforced by air power? Then we say what, no driving there? What's the end state that you're trying to achieve? And then can air power do that or can something --

Can you be more specific? You've got a safe zone and you've got a car driving in the safe zone. Do you bomb it? What if it's filled with women and children? How do you know?

So now you've got thousands of miles of road and hundreds of cars. How do you do that? And then if you're in the end, where you know there's a safe zone and you know, you [inaudible] what the policy is. Do you then then pre-load that?

So I think it's easy in concept to say let's create a safe zone. If you want to do it with just air power than you need to know really the details that you're trying to accomplish. It could be difficult.

DWG: Could I follow up on the French question quickly? Are they actually relying on us for targeting data? Because in Libya they've stopped relying on us because they said we were so bloody slow in getting the information to them.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I don't know the answer to that. Honestly, I don't.

I know they're in the AOC working alongside with the rest of the coalition and our forces. So I don't know why there would be a speed problem other than the vetting process.

DWG: That's what I understood was the problem in Libya. By the time they got the data they were like, they're gone.

Lt. Gen. Otto: Yeah. And there were some vetting problems that I think existed initially in Iraq too, but there's been progress. I don't think the experience from Libya -- That would be my sense today.

DWG: Philip Schwartz and then Bill Sweetman.

DWG: Good morning, General. I also wanted to follow up on the intelligence sharing questions.

If tomorrow the Russians come to the U.S. and say let's cooperate fully, let's communicate fully, I mean what sort of ISR and intelligence assets do you share with them and how do you make that determination? Realizing that they would like to get a look at American ISR capability and they may like have information like position strongholds? How do you make that determination?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Philip, if I might speak -- I have a low level of trust in the Russians, and so when you know, it's trust but verify. So it's easy then to exchange factual data where you're going to operate. I would not envision a relationship where I would share some of my intelligence with them. I'm not saying it couldn't happen, I just don't envision it based on where our interests are and based on where they're demonstrated intent, based on airstrikes.

DWG: So de-escalation and, I mean you're [inaudible] may be limited to [inaudible] the areas we're operating in? Let's try and not run into each other?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Yes. I'd be hard-pressed to think of what intelligence I would want to share with the Russians at this point. Again, just based on -- They're only one day into their strikes, but based on where they're operating.

DWG: General, we've been talking around a bit about operating in contested or denied airspace. We've been talking a bit about LRSB and its relevance. Isn't there a clear emerging need, that's emerged for some time, for a member of the LRS family of systems -- that's being called PISR, Penetrating ISR -- and you know, is that something that needs to arrive about the time LRSB arrives?

And yeah, I'll do that then I'll follow up.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I've been advocating and do advocate an RPA vector which is a product that we put out about a year ago. So if you look out in the 2025 to 2030 time frame for penetrating ISR, --

DWG: Yeah.

And further to this, there seems to be a sort of huge imbalance here between what the COCOMs get in terms of full motion video, which I think is how they define intelligence pretty much.

What they want, which is even bigger, what you can supply anyway. And finally, this seems to be inhibiting the development of the steering of resources towards a non-permissive environment platform. I mean how long can this situation persist? Especially, as you said, we're not really sure what the value of more FMV is.

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think this is a hugely important point, and if you look at the total Air Force budget, that's why the Air Force has proposed things like retiring the A-10, retiring the KC-10, retiring the U-2. At some point you run out of money, and being told to continue to operate these platforms within the same kind of budget authority would be very problematic.

So the Air Force's approach has been to, not that these aren't great platforms; but we need to be able to quit spending money on some of our legacy platforms in order to invest in the future. That's broadly been our strategy, which at certain points has been frustrated.

DWG: This isn't quite legacy, this is money going into the MQ1, MQ9 operation.

Lt. Gen. Otto: Yeah. But it's to the same point. Do you emphasize things that are on the COIN and [CP] side? And the answer is yes. Or do you emphasize A2AD? The answer is yes. And then what's the proportion of those? And what I have been stumping for is that we were over capacity on the low end and we need to invest on the high end. I can't say I've been fully successful in convincing others of that. But at least from an Air Force standpoint I think we've arrived at a good point. The approach right now is 60 CAPs from the Air Force, 16 from the Army, and 10 GOCO, government-owned, contractor operated. That's a heck of a lot better than telling the Air Force you need to go 86. So I think that that's a, if we're going to do more of this kind of full motion video I think that's a good approach to it and one that we've been able to carve out with the leadership of the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Army and the Air Force working together.

DWG: General, because you mentioned the types of bombs that the Russians are using, you've seen the early returns on the battle damage assessments, I'm assuming. And what are some of the things that you've seen as a result of using the weapons that you see civilian casualties? And were all the strikes carried out from planes flying from [Otakia]?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Unfortunately, coming here kept me from getting that intelligence update on what was hit. I did last night look at some just unclass stuff of where I saw things hit and to me it was representative of what you'd expect from dumb bombs being

dropped from airplanes at medium altitude, which was not that impressive. But I need to get in today and take a look at it more carefully and broadly, instead of just unclass imagery.

DWG: Do you see the, because of where the Russians struck, do you see them becoming the de facto air force for Assad's forces?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think it's too early to tell.

DWG: Do you think they're going to generate a lot of terrorists by their lousy accuracy?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Yeah. I think precision matters. And I think when you hit things that you're not intending to hit you create second and third order consequences. And I think that Assad, using fraud, whether it's the barrel bombs or whatever on his people, you know, created a lot of problems for him. And if you look broadly, Assad's campaign has not been successful. I believe that's why the Russians went in, because they recognize that Assad is losing and was not successful.

So if they approach this with indiscriminate bombing, then I think it's just going to create second and third order consequences.

DWG: General, what is the plan of what are the consequences if they either directly or happen to attack [inaudible]?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I think that is still being worked through. It hasn't happened so it's a "what if" at this point. I think the commanders on the ground are working through that issue right now.

DWG: General, how would you characterize ISIL's ISR capability right now? Obviously [inaudible], but I think that a drone was used in the capture of [inaudible] last year. [Inaudible]. How would you characterize it?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Rudimentary, heavy reliance on HUMINT, but in some ways innovative.

DWG: Can you elaborate on the innovative part?

Lt. Gen. Otto: Well yeah, I mean just like commercial off the shelf drones, and could we attach some kind of a device to it that might help us with ISR, putting people with binoculars to spot our airplanes, taking pictures and using that for geospatial intelligence. That sort of things.

DWG: Does it concern you that even though it's such a low level of capability, [inaudible] strategic [inaudible]?

Lt. Gen. Otto: I wouldn't describe what's happened since we got involved with them as strategic gains. I think they've been very much frustrated in what their plans were with the introduction of the United States and air power. And our coalition partners.

I think the real challenge that we have to face is, there is an ideological battle going on here and then what is the plan to confront them? And so what is the plan to make it less appealing for people around the world to want to travel into that area and join that movement? That's where I think a lot of our strategic thought needs to go. And I think there are some discreet things we can look at in terms of where are the hubs and what are the traffic routes, and where are they coming from, and then what are the approaches? It's a whole of government approach. It isn't a military issue. It's a whole of government issue.

DWG: Thank you.

DWG: Sir, we are out of time. I want to thank you for coming in.

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