The Attempted Rescue

On a moonless night, a small group of US special operations forces attempted a hostage rescue mission. Three MQ-9 Reapers and a manned U-28 ISR aircraft provided support to the SOF team from insertion throughout the rescue operation.

1. Three MQ-9s were operated from the same RPA Operations Center.
2. Key real-time intelligence to the SOF team was taking too long—going from the aircraft to a Joint Operations Center mission hub before reaching the rescue team.
3. The MQ-9 was given direct radio contact with the ground forces, with instant access to the intelligence. It was decided to transfer responsibility to the Reaper pilots, where the time frame for receiving essential information went from a minute to under five seconds.

Unfortunately, as the SOF team arrived at the location, it was discovered the hostage had been moved just prior to the raid. However, this event provided real-world lessons on RPA operations that can be used in the future.