

# Building Partnership Capacity by Using MQ-9s in the Asia-Pacific

Col Andrew A. Torelli, USAF\*



In 2011 the US Air Force conducted a comprehensive review of its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.<sup>1</sup> The secretary of the Air Force directed a study of where those capabilities are today, where they should be in 2030, and how they might balance against future requirements. The study provided key insights, recommendations, and tasks for shaping ISR priorities, planning, and programming to realize the Air Force's vision for 2030 (see graphic below).<sup>2</sup>

The secretary directed seven tasks (see list below). Although they do not represent all of the study's recommendations, these tasks reflect top-priority problems that the service must address if it wishes to conduct "current operations successfully, navigate resource limitations, embrace shifts in national strategy, and progress towards a new vision."<sup>3</sup>

---

This article is adapted from a strategic policy paper written in 2012 at the Australian Defence College, Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra, Australia.

### **A View of the Future: The 2030 Air Force ISR Enterprise**

- Offers a seamless, open-architecture, all-domain, sensor-agnostic, “go-to” information source integrated with Air Force command and control architectures
  - Characterizes any target set (air, space, cyber, or terrestrial) as a “network” to enable effects-based targeting and assessment
    - Persistently accesses target sets by necessary means
    - Collaboratively plans all-domain ISR operations as a single entity
  - Demands trained/equipped analysts with critical-thinking skills
  - Needs secure, reliable, and sufficient information pathways
- Provides fully integrated operations in a networked world
  - Includes operators and intelligence professionals working as a fused team in all domains
  - Requires improving the way we think, train, and operate

*Success in war depends on superior information. ISR underpins every mission that the DOD executes.*

(Adapted from US Air Force / A2, briefing, subject: Secretary of the Air Force’s ISR Review Road Show [unclassified version], slide 4, December 2011.)

### **Tasks Directed by the Secretary of the Air Force**

1. *Conduct an Analysis of the Information Architecture to Frame Air Force Discussions on the Architecture of the Future*
2. *Acquire and Develop Framework Tools to Enable Capability-Based Planning and Analysis of the Air Force ISR Enterprise’s Platform, Sensor, and PED [processing, exploitation, and dissemination of intelligence] Requirements to Feed Core Function Master Plans*
3. *Develop a Road Map for ISR Automated Tools and Analyst Visualization Tools*
4. *Develop a Distributed Common Ground System Road Map with Specific Measures to Implement Service-Oriented Architecture and the Ability to Synergize PED for All Air, Space, and Cyber Platforms and Sensors*
5. *Develop an Air Force Targeting Road Map to Outline Requirements That Satisfy Target-Folder-Development Support to War Fighters, Including Space and Cyberspace Target Sets*
6. *Develop a Nontraditional ISR Road Map to Include Platform and Sensor Mix, Requirements for Communication Pathways, Development of Concepts of Operations, and Demands for Personnel Training*
7. *Develop a PED Apportionment Model and Associated Road Map That Models Manpower Based on Air-, Space-, and Cyberspace-Fused Information Requirements—Not Apportioned Platforms*

(From Hon. Michael B. Donley to key Headquarters Air Force deputy chiefs of staff, deputy undersecretaries, and commanders of major commands, memorandum, 28 December 2011.)

Note that this list does not include a task to build ISR partnerships—critical enablers for supporting the secretary’s finding that the Air Force must posture itself to conduct ISR across the spectrum of operations, from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief through major conflict. The United States rarely carries out unilateral operations, relying on bilateral and multilateral partnerships to attain its national security objectives. Therefore, this article urges that the Air Force either elevate or add the building of ISR partnerships as another top-priority task to the secretary of the Air Force’s ISR review and approve this article’s recommendations. The secretary’s findings and endorsements in that review should address the role of building ISR partnerships in the Air Force of 2030.

The article calls for adoption of a policy to develop bilateral ISR studies with partner nations in the Asia-Pacific region; those studies should address unique issues of conducting ISR operations to support common security concerns. It uses the MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) as an example to highlight key problems associated with deploying this weapon system to the Asia-Pacific and to demonstrate how the service should utilize bilateral studies to address them. It focuses on the MQ-9 because that platform provides the preponderance of airborne ISR and strike capabilities rolled into one package in Afghanistan. Three converging drivers prime the conditions for using the MQ-9 in the Asia-Pacific to confront that complex and dynamic security environment. First, responsibility for conducting the war in Afghanistan is transitioning to the Afghans; second, the Department of Defense (DOD) is emphasizing the need to build partnerships through military sales, training, advising, and working with foreign military and security forces; and third, the United States seeks to rebalance its national security interests within the Asia-Pacific. The MQ-9 could become a fulcrum for enabling sustainable partnerships and furthering US national interests in the region. The article makes the key assumption that the move to Afghan-led operations will reduce the need for MQ-9s, freeing them for use in the Asia-Pacific. However, it does not address the importance of this area to the United States and the role

that ISR plays in security because “US Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Challenges in the Asia-Pacific,” a strategic assessment paper, has already done so.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, the bilateral studies recommended in this article could help overcome these challenges.

The article begins by examining the necessity of ISR in US Pacific Command (USPACOM) and underscores the importance of building ISR relationships in the Asia-Pacific. It then contends that MQ-9s could serve as an important catalyst in this effort and emphasizes the need for bilateral ISR studies to address several anticipated issues involved with operating these aircraft there. The article describes key elements of such studies as well as potential costs and risks. It concludes with a recommendation that encourages the Air Force to develop bilateral studies as part of the secretary of the Air Force’s ISR review.

Conducting ISR studies gives the service’s strategists and planners a tool to design an operational ISR framework with foreign partners that will inform and guide the development of broader strategies and plans. In turn, those studies will build a foundation for better visualizing and actively framing security problems, reassessing the situation, and reframing the issue in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment. No design process will overcome the unknowns or uncertainty, but ISR studies will help the Air Force’s decision makers, strategists, and planners apply critical thinking and gain better understanding of the types of environment in which they may operate and the difficulties they present for ISR operations.<sup>5</sup> Without such studies, the Air Force risks becoming reactive and worsening a security situation.

Together, these bilateral ISR studies will broaden USPACOM’s ISR strategy for the theatre and enable bilateral and multilateral security operations. They will also support US national security interests and the rebalancing of America’s defense posture in the Asia-Pacific by shifting additional ISR capability and capacity to the region. These studies give the Air Force a viable option for answering such questions

as how, where, when, and with whom it can collaborate on ISR operations in a diverse, complex region.

## US Pacific Command's ISR Imperatives

For more than 10 years, USPACOM relied on ISR to satisfy US defense and national requirements in a vast area of operations (in excess of 100 million square miles) that covers over 50 percent of the earth's surface and contains 60 percent of its population—approximately 3.5 billion people.<sup>6</sup> It includes 36 countries divided into four subregions: Northeast Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania.<sup>7</sup> Each of the US combatant commands has great operational need for airborne ISR, referred to as a critical low density / high demand asset because requirements exceed the available resources to satisfy them.<sup>8</sup> All of those commands, except US Central Command, have limited airborne ISR capability and capacity because the preponderance of these assets have supported operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, forcing other commands to accept additional risk to their operations.<sup>9</sup> Emphasis on those two wars resulted in significant collection gaps within USPACOM and reduced the situational awareness necessary to support decision makers. Given the military drawdown in Afghanistan over the next few years, excess MQ-9s should be reallocated to the Asia-Pacific to improve USPACOM's overall airborne ISR capability and capacity. Furthermore, the Air Force could leverage these aircraft to build ISR partnerships with many Asia-Pacific countries in accordance with the DOD's strategic-partnership guidance.

To improve vigilance across the spectrum of conflict and operations varying from humanitarian relief to conventional war, the United States is initiating defense-rebalancing efforts from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific theatre of operations. This policy demonstrates to its allies, partners, and adversaries that the United States does not simply “talk the talk” but “walks the walk” to improve and sustain a safe, secure, and prosperous region. US national and defense strategic guidance codifies and articulates the need for maintaining and building

partnerships with other countries to support America's national security interests.<sup>10</sup> That guidance also emphasizes the uncertainty of the future operating environment and the criticality of ISR to minimize surprise and counter the adversary's denial and deception in all domains. US policy promotes the establishment of robust intelligence relationships with Asia-Pacific allies and partners to ensure cooperation, collective security, and future stability.<sup>11</sup>

For example, in 2012 the Office of the Secretary of Defense highlighted its desire to enhance and deepen cooperation in the theatre through joint ISR operations, which would include RPAs.<sup>12</sup> Because Congress's Budget Control Act cut \$487 billion from the defense budget for the next 10 years, the secretary of defense has emphasized the fact that the United States cannot shoulder global security burdens and costs alone but must build the security capabilities of allies, partners, and multinational organizations.<sup>13</sup> ISR assets already released by the drawdown in Afghanistan include EP-3 signals reconnaissance aircraft, Firescout RPAs, and P-3 maritime surveillance aircraft.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the Office of the Secretary of Defense has indicated that the Air Force's distributed common ground/surface system, MQ-9s, U-2s, and Global Hawk ISR capabilities should also shift to the Asia-Pacific.<sup>15</sup>

## Building ISR Partnerships

The traditional approach to building partnerships in the airborne ISR realm generally has been limited to intelligence, the product of surveillance and reconnaissance. Currently the United States has intelligence-sharing agreements—each with unique foreign disclosure and release policies—with approximately 28 North Atlantic Treaty Organization countries, four commonwealth countries, 42 International Security Assistance Force countries, and 85 global counterterrorism-force countries. However, America should expand these partnerships to encompass ISR, not just intelligence, and look to build partners' overall airborne ISR capabilities with developed and interoperable systems. Consequently, the Air Force should champion a broader approach to

building ISR partnerships as a means of sharing burdens and improving the integration of intelligence and operations with allies and partners.

Because the United States does not have the means to unilaterally confront all of the threats it faces (e.g., proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, ballistic missiles, terrorism, piracy, and air/space/cyberspace threats), the Air Force should continue cooperation with other nations and expand it with new partners to address common security issues. Building partnerships with foreign nations strengthens the Air Force's lines of communication and its ability to wage war, enhances its political-military influence, distributes the burden of security across nations, and reinforces stability before, during, and after a crisis.

Direct benefits of building ISR partnerships include the following:

- Promoting streamlined ISR support for combined air operations.
- Building and/or preserving ISR information and communication channels with partner nations.
- Exchanging ISR assessments and analyses with them.
- Sharing ISR tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) to promote interoperability and synergize concepts of operations.
- Building a common understanding of comprehensive air policy and doctrine with partner nations.
- Enabling multinational exploitation of foreign material.
- Enhancing the interoperability of information systems and databases.
- Streamlining ISR planning and direction, collection, processing and exploitation, analysis and reporting, and dissemination across coalition partners.
- Optimizing allocation of limited ISR resources in the combined operational environment.
- Enabling freedom of operation across all war-fighting domains.

The lack of a broader ISR engagement exacerbates the knowledge deficit and can result in strategic surprise, slow decision-making processes, and delayed reaction times and countermeasures to a full spectrum of threats. Although the Air Force is heavily engaged in global partnership building, it could enhance ISR partnership activities beyond intelligence sharing, engagements of key leaders, training, and education by using MQ-9s as a fulcrum for improving these relationships in the Asia-Pacific.

## The Need for Bilateral ISR Studies

The Air Force should synchronize USPACOM's ISR imperatives, US partnership-building objectives, and the operational advantages of MQ-9s described above by using bilateral studies advocated in this article. These studies would improve the service's and other US government organizations' understanding of the opportunities and challenges of operating the MQ-9 with other partner nations in the numerous bilateral and multilateral security arrangements (i.e., counterterrorism, counterpiracy, and counterdrugs) in the Asia-Pacific. Areas that the Air Force could explore with partner nations include assessing and improving interoperability, synchronizing and deconflicting operations, exchanging doctrine and TTPs, determining suitable operating areas and bases, and sharing resources. It should conduct combined ISR studies with selected countries to improve ISR partnerships.

The formation of bilateral studies represents an initial step in institutionalizing, prioritizing, and deliberately planning ISR partnerships in the Asia-Pacific. These studies will complement the Air Force's establishment of connections with other countries, allowing it to take a bite-sized, regional approach to a very complex global core function. Further, they would provide strategic guidance for willing parties (the Air Force, USPACOM, partner nations, and other interested actors), permitting better understanding of each other's ISR roles, responsibilities, focus, capabilities, and commitment. These studies would also of-



fer a framework to support Air Force ISR planning, programming, and resourcing efforts.

Moreover, bilateral studies will enhance cooperation and understanding between the United States and partner nations, facilitating the advocacy of common security interests. Such studies could then undergird USPACOM's ISR strategy and, possibly, future binding agreements between the United States and other countries. They should have as their desired end state an increase in ISR cooperation between the US Air Force and partner air forces—but tailored to individual countries. Additionally, they should provide for integrated ISR activities with other US government agencies, allies, and partners, enabling operations against regional threats to those entities. Furthermore, bilateral studies should strengthen relationships and trust through closer collaboration with allies and partners. Lastly, they would inform and shape war-fighter-integration discussions between the US Air Force and its partner air forces, enabling national and defense strategic guidance.

### *Structuring an ISR Bilateral Study*

Because many actors have equities in ISR, international affairs, and operations, the studies will need coordination with a number of organizations, including Air Force ISR and international affairs organizations, USPACOM, US Pacific Air Forces, the Joint Staff, DOD, national intelligence agencies, and the State Department. Proper and robust whole-of-government coordination and synchronization will help ensure that ISR partnerships remain within the context of international partnership frameworks already in place and stay in lockstep with broader national and defense intelligence policy. Doing so will also ensure that the sharing of data and TTPs with partner nations is consistent with US law.

The Air Force must also collaborate regularly and conduct reciprocal visits with allies and partner nations to gather facts, understand implementation options, and share perspectives. It should base the studies on a prioritized list of countries, beginning with allies, and detail rec-

ommendations for consideration by partner nations and the service's senior leaders at war-fighter-integration forums such as the Air Force-hosted operator engagement talks with other services. Further, this effort should incorporate activities such as conference programs on the sharing of intelligence; officer-exchange programs; Air Force security-assistance programs; reciprocation of ISR information in accordance with international agreements; exchanges of the acquisition and exploitation of foreign material; and the development of programs to enhance MQ-9 systems and database interoperability with international partners.

At a minimum, the structure of a bilateral ISR study should include a statement of principles, such as an operational focus and the support of service and joint requirements; key assumptions, such as the sharing of information among countries under existing policy agreements; a vision to guide the study; and desired outcomes, including the identification of operational concepts and broad timelines. The study should also assess ISR cooperation among current partners and the Air Force, including investment and participating organizations. Additionally, it should identify key common gaps, needs, and possible solution options that could shape MQ-9 capabilities, the planning and analysis process, and the partner nation's equivalent. Based on these findings, the study would make recommendations with proposed courses of action that include timelines, costs, implications, and measures of effectiveness. It would also need to develop coordination and collaboration frameworks to monitor, manage, and direct the progress of results.

Furthermore, such studies would explore initiatives to increase the sharing of ISR information as well as collaborative ISR planning and direction, collection, processing and exploitation, analysis and reporting, and dissemination. They would also determine the level of cooperative backing of ISR operations by each participant, including training and education initiatives. This could support the provision of educational, training, and experience opportunities for Airmen in the intelligence career fields, allowing them to master the knowledge, skills, and cul-

tural familiarity necessary to influence the outcomes of US and coalition operations and to maximize the MQ-9's operational capabilities.

The Air Force would benefit by understanding the strategic objectives of our partners from the inside out, enabling it to influence operations and build coalitions. Furthermore, the service could identify areas for expansion with partner nations, perhaps including foreign military sales and direct commercial sales of MQ-9 systems. It could also ensure their interoperability with US systems to enhance coalition operations and expand defense cooperation activities, including personnel-exchange programs, mobile training teams, and ISR training programs and exercises.

### *Potential Focus Areas for Bilateral ISR Studies*

Integration of the MQ-9 into USPACOM's operational plans and strategies would entail a concerted effort to increase these activities with partner nations and allies. Otherwise, a lack of joint and combined integration and interoperability would prevent the MQ-9 from serving as a force multiplier, would hinder understanding of the operational advantages and disadvantages in the Asia-Pacific environments under various combat conditions, and would fail to reduce the trust-deficit gap. The following sections offer examples of some potential focus areas for airborne ISR that could benefit from a bilateral study prior to introducing MQ-9s into the theatre.

**Interoperability and collaboration.** Having concentrated on the Middle East for more than a decade, the United States probably lacks sufficient personnel with critical cultural, linguistic, and analytical experience to conduct long-term MQ-9 operations in the Asia-Pacific. To bolster the current force structure, it will need to shift the focus of substantial numbers of individuals from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific and train them in the appropriate language and cultural awareness.<sup>16</sup> Such high-proficiency training, however, will take years, and the situation could be further compounded by an absence of integration with partner nations that could fill this gap in the cultural, linguistic, and

analytical experience necessary to support future MQ-9 operations as required. Further, one must also consider differences in the operating procedures of military, intelligence, and law enforcement organizations within a country and between countries.

ISR relationships provide a means of unique access to ISR information and capabilities that the United States might not otherwise obtain.<sup>17</sup> For example, intelligence production and information sharing have yet to become a reality in US European Command, and collection requirements remain unfulfilled due to limited ISR capabilities and capacity.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Empire Challenge 2006 exercise identified common problems facing coalition ISR operations, including the production, exploitation, and dissemination of ISR information from gathering platforms, such as the MQ-9, to decision makers and other war fighters.<sup>19</sup> If close US allies like Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada experience such difficulties, then the issue will be compounded with other allies and partners.

Additionally, over the last decade, only a few war games and exercises have included the synchronization and integration of MQ-9 command and control and other military capabilities in multiple simulated combat environments to truly gauge their interoperability.<sup>20</sup> These activities are designed to train and educate participants as well as test TTPs on the employment of weapon systems, capabilities, and concepts of operations. For example, during Empire Challenge 2006, coalition forces gained valuable ISR experience in sensor analysis.<sup>21</sup> Objectives usually include understanding better ways to employ and integrate capabilities by enhancing comprehension of various doctrines, strategies, plans, capabilities, and performances to determine limitations and strengths of a number of military services and countries. Participants also strengthen their skills and relationships with other partners and improve collaboration.

**Political constraints.** Policies that deal with allowing US MQ-9 activities in sovereign territory will vary from country to country in the Asia-Pacific and will be influenced by interrelationships between a

country's government, military, and public.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of a major terrorist movement that threatens a nation's survival or causes major devastation, legislation or interpretation of that legislation will probably limit US employment of the MQ-9 because many Asia-Pacific countries generally distrust other nations, especially former colonialists.

At a minimum, a divergence in perception will likely exist among a state's political and military leaders and members of the general populace regarding the value of US-operated MQ-9s over their territory. Political leaders would probably hedge over whether these aircraft would benefit their political interests and could harbor suspicions about US self-interest. For example, a partner nation might view the MQ-9 as a threat because the platform could collect intelligence that the United States might use against it. Although the forward operational footprint that supports one MQ-9 combat air patrol is relatively small by US standards (four aircraft, 59 personnel, and a ground station), a host nation might consider it intrusive.<sup>23</sup> This footprint grows with additional combat air patrols and other support, such as force-protection assets. To complicate matters even more, if a host nation permits the United States to establish a base, a bordering partner country will not necessarily permit the operation of MQ-9s across its borders.

Besides possibly disrupting the internal politics of a host country, introduction of these aircraft could also affect the fragile, intertwined, complex, and complicated political dynamics in the region.<sup>24</sup> Some nations might believe that by hosting MQ-9s, another country could gain an undue advantage and shift regional politics in its favor, causing friction among them. Further, such a situation might prompt an RPA arms race or defenses against those aircraft. Although the United States enjoys strong bilateral relationships, its multinational approach is still evolving, and key issues—such as the future security environment and the regional security architecture—demand discussion and agreement.<sup>25</sup> In light of the strong, independent nature of each of the Southeast Asian countries, such consensus will not likely occur in the near

future, so any deployment of MQ-9s might prove troublesome without giving careful consideration to the region's dynamics.

**Nexus of politics and public opinion.** The United States' MQ-9 operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan might also have a ripple effect on the Asia-Pacific region in terms of the issue of sovereignty. Both international and domestic opinions, perceptions, and actions could adversely influence a country's decision to host MQ-9s. Although the United States likely views the use of these platforms favorably, the international community remains split in its assessment. In countries where America actually employs MQ-9s (e.g., Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan), a substantial portion of the populace opposes their presence.

On 5 May 2012, for example, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that "the Government of Pakistan condemns in the strongest terms the US drone attacks in North Waziristan. . . . Pakistan has consistently maintained that these illegal attacks are a violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and are in contravention of international law. It is our considered view that the strategic disadvantages of such attacks far outweigh their tactical advantages, and are therefore, totally counterproductive."<sup>26</sup> Statements such as these, reinforced by negative media coverage, will probably hinder the United States' ability to introduce the MQ-9 and other military capabilities into the Asia-Pacific.

Questions that a host nation might ask before deciding on whether to commit to supporting US MQ-9 activities include the following:

- Will the MQ-9 be an effective tool to support our national interests?
- Will it provoke negative reactions from the domestic and international community?
- Will it decrease our bargaining power or cause us to lose legitimacy?
- Will it compete with or undermine other efforts such as soft power?

- What degree of support should we provide to the United States?
- Should activities be covert or overt?
- Will psychological, economic, and political costs of MQ-9 activities exceed the anticipated benefits?
- Is the United States trustworthy, and will it make a sustained commitment?

America should also examine these questions and incorporate this calculus into an ISR strategy.

Implications for the United States could include the rejection or limitation of any offer to deploy MQ-9s to a country for fear of human rights abuses and excessive collateral damage against the domestic populace. A host-nation government could anticipate increased political and domestic opposition to its support. Furthermore, it might suspect that the United States would usurp its role in controlling military operations and conduct unilateral operations without permission or coordination. Rejection could cost America an opportunity to gain both mutually beneficial objectives and an advantage over common adversaries. The host might place limitations on the times when the Air Force could fly its MQ-9s, the number of personnel and amount of equipment it could employ, and its methods of employing the capability. Furthermore, the host nation might require the United States to share information that could expose sensitive sources and methods. Additionally, elements within that country could leak sensitive data to the media or an adversary. The United States must consider all of these factors in its MQ-9 planning and in a broader ISR strategy. Moreover, US decision makers should remain cognizant that allies and partner nations may wish to pull American ISR resources, such as the MQ-9, into their operations, thus drawing the United States into domestic or border matters in which it does not wish to be involved.

## Conclusion

This article has called for immediate adoption of a policy to develop bilateral ISR studies with partner nations in the Asia-Pacific region for the purpose of addressing unique aspects of conducting ISR operations to support common security issues. These studies would give Air Force strategists and planners a tool to design an operational ISR framework with foreign partners to inform and guide the development of broader strategies and plans. This foundation would allow the service and its partners to better visualize and actively frame security problems, reassess the situation, and reframe problems to bolster security operations. Such ISR studies are not meant to answer all of the unknowns or eliminate all uncertainty; rather, they will help decision makers, strategists, and planners apply critical thinking and gain better understanding of the types of operating environments and the problems they present for ISR operations. Without these studies, the Air Force risks becoming reactive in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment.

Moreover, this article has examined the need for ISR in USPACOM and has stressed the importance of building ISR relationships in the Asia-Pacific. It contends that MQ-9s could serve as a significant catalyst in this effort, noting their role and value and emphasizing the need for bilateral ISR studies to address several anticipated challenges of operating them in the region. The article also described key elements of these studies, using the MQ-9 as an example to point out issues that emerge in deploying this weapon system to the Asia-Pacific and suggesting how to use the studies to address them. Although the article has concentrated on one particular aircraft, the Air Force could broaden the scope of these studies to encompass a wider set of ISR capabilities.

The bilateral ISR study construct outlined here would contribute to the secretary of the Air Force's efforts to balance current capabilities against future requirements, enable successful operations, and shape the Air Force's ISR priorities, planning, and programming to realize its vision for 2030. These studies represent a viable option for filling knowledge gaps related to working with partner nations and for an-



swering questions such as how, where, when, and with whom the service can collaborate on ISR operations in a diverse, complex region. Without such studies, the Air Force and other US government organizations will not fully understand the opportunities and challenges of operating the MQ-9 with other partner nations in numerous bilateral and multilateral security arrangements. Taken together, these ISR studies could broaden USPACOM's theatre ISR strategy, enable bilateral and multilateral security operations, and support the United States' national security interests.

Lastly, such studies would help the Air Force institutionalize, prioritize, and deliberately plan ISR partnerships in the Asia-Pacific. They would also allow it to take a bite-sized, regional approach to the complexity of operating the MQ-9 there by supplying willing parties with strategic guidance to better understand each other's ISR roles, responsibilities, focus, capabilities, and commitment. This article, therefore, recommends that the Air Force either elevate or add the building of ISR partnerships as another top-priority task to the secretary of the Air Force's ISR review and adopt the deliberate approach to bilateral study advocated here. ★

---

## Notes

1. See Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 8 November 2010, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jp1\\_02.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp1_02.pdf), for the following definitions. ISR: "an activity that synchronizes and integrates the planning and operation of sensors, assets, and processing, exploitation, and dissemination systems in direct support of current and future operations. This is an integrated intelligence and operations function" (143). Intelligence: "the product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation of available information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. The term is also applied to the activity which results in the product and to the organizations engaged in such activity" (141). Surveillance: "the systematic observation of aerospace, surface, or subsurface areas, places, persons, or things, by visual, aural, electronic, photographic, or other means" (279). Reconnaissance: "a mission undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of an enemy or adversary, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area" (240). As a critical war-fighting

function for US military operations, global integrated ISR involves “cross-domain synchronization and integration of the planning and operation of ISR assets; sensors; processing, exploitation and dissemination systems; and, analysis and production capabilities across the globe to enable current and future operations.” Air Force Doctrine Document 2-0, *Global Integrated Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance Operations*, 6 January 2012, 1, [http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af\\_cv/publication/afdd2-0/afdd2-0.pdf](http://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_cv/publication/afdd2-0/afdd2-0.pdf).

2. Jon Kimminau, “A Culminating Point for Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 26, no. 6 (November–December 2012): 115–17, <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/digital/PDF/Issues/2012/ASPJ-Nov-Dec-2012.pdf>.

3. *Ibid.*, 127.

4. See Andrew Torelli, “US Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Challenges in the Asia-Pacific,” a strategic assessment paper submitted to the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Canberra, Australia, 20 July 2012 (copy held by the author, pending publication by the Royal Australian Air Force).

5. For further information on operational design, see Dan McCauley, “Design and Joint Operation Planning,” *Canadian Military Journal* 12, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 30–40, <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol12/no1/doc/CMJ%20Vol12%20No1%20Page30-40%20McCauley%20Eng.pdf>.

6. Maj William D. Anderson and Capt Kenneth T. Cushing, “Security Cooperation with the Pacific,” *DISAM Journal*, Fall 2005, 33, [http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%2028\\_1/Anderson%20and%20Cushing.pdf](http://www.disam.dsca.mil/pubs/Vol%2028_1/Anderson%20and%20Cushing.pdf); US Pacific Command, *2013 USPACOM Strategy* (Camp H. M. Smith, HI: US Pacific Command, 2013), <http://www.pacom.mil/about-uspacom/2013-uspacom-strategy.shtml>; and “History of United States Pacific Command,” US Pacific Command, accessed 29 March 2013, <http://www.pacom.mil/about-uspacom/history.shtml>.

7. US Pacific Command, *2013 USPACOM Strategy*.

8. Department of Defense, *Kosovo / Operation Allied Force After-Action Report*, Report to Congress (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 31 January 2000), 54, <http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/kosovoaa/kaar02072000.pdf>.

9. “DoD News Briefing with Secretary Gates and Adm. Mullen from the Pentagon,” Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 1 February 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4549>.

10. That guidance includes the following: President of the United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, May 2010), [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/national\\_security\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf); Joint Chiefs of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 2011: Redefining America's Military Leadership* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2011), [http://www.jcs.mil/content/files/2011-02/020811084800\\_2011\\_NMS\\_-\\_08\\_FEB\\_2011.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil/content/files/2011-02/020811084800_2011_NMS_-_08_FEB_2011.pdf); and Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, February 2010), [http://www.defense.gov/qdr/images/QDR\\_as\\_of\\_12Feb10\\_1000.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/qdr/images/QDR_as_of_12Feb10_1000.pdf).

11. Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 2012), 2, [http://www.defense.gov/news/defense\\_strategic\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/defense_strategic_guidance.pdf); and President of the United States, *National Security Strategy*, 5, 11, 16.

12. “Joint Press Conference with Secretary Panetta and Japanese Minister of Defense Morimoto from the Pentagon,” Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of

Defense (Public Affairs), 3 August 2012, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5097>.

13. Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta, “Dean Acheson Lecture: ‘Building Partnership in the 21st Century’” (speech, US Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, 28 June 2012), <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1691>.

14. Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton B. Carter, “The U.S. Strategic Rebalance to Asia: A Defense Perspective” (speech, New York, NY, 1 August 2012), <http://www.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1715>.

15. Ibid.

16. Department of Defense, *Counterinsurgency (COIN) Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) Operations*, Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Defense Intelligence (Washington, DC, Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, February 2011), ix, <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/ADA543575.pdf>.

17. Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, *Security Cooperation Strategy: Building Capacity, Integrating Capabilities* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, 2006), 233.

18. Lt Col Kevin M. Coyne, “Developing US European Command’s Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Strategy for Fiscal Years 2010 through 2015,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 83, [http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj10/win10/2010\\_4\\_14\\_coyne.pdf](http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj10/win10/2010_4_14_coyne.pdf).

19. Scott R. Gourley, “Allies Simulate ISR Data-Sharing,” *Jane’s International Defense Review* 39 (December 2006): 48–51.

20. Lt Gen David A. Deptula, USAF, Retired, and Col Mike Francisco, USAF, Retired, “Air Force ISR Operations: Hunting versus Gathering,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 24, no. 4 (Winter 2010): 13–17, [http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj10/win10/2010\\_4\\_04\\_deptula.pdf](http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj10/win10/2010_4_04_deptula.pdf).

21. “ISR Data-Sharing,” 1.

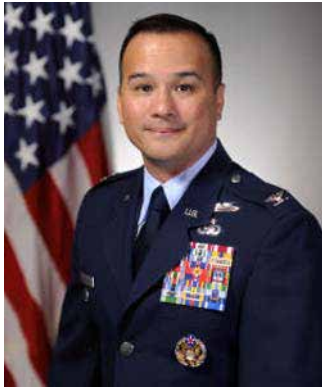
22. For more information on trinitarian analysis, see Michael I. Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, 3rd rev. and expanded ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 102–13.

23. Lt Gen David A. Deptula, USAF, briefing, subject: The Way Ahead: Remotely Piloted Aircraft in the United States Air Force, n.d., [http://www.daytonregion.com/pdf/UAV\\_Rountable\\_5.pdf](http://www.daytonregion.com/pdf/UAV_Rountable_5.pdf).

24. Dr. Kang Choi, “A Thought on American Foreign Policy in East Asia,” *PacNeT*, no. 30 (15 May 2012), <http://csis.org/files/publication/Pac1230.pdf>.

25. Ibid.

26. “Pakistan Condemns Drone Attacks,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, 5 May 2012, <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?prID=201>.



### Col Andrew A. Torelli, USAF

Colonel Torelli (BS, MF, University of Maine; MA, Naval War College; MS, Joint Military Intelligence College; MA, Deakin University [Australia]) is the incoming chief of the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Forces Division in the Directorate of Intelligence at Headquarters Air Combat Command, Langley AFB, Virginia. He will be responsible for A2 intelligence training, manpower, deployments, and resources. Commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps, he has served in a variety of Air Force and joint assignments, from the squadron to combatant command levels, and has held positions as a briefer, analyst, collection manager, staff officer, executive officer, aide-de-camp, operations officer, division chief, and commander. His overseas tours include Germany, Turkey, Panama, Bosnia, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, and Australia. Colonel Torelli deployed six times and commanded 900 "outside the wire" missions. He has advised Air Force, Marine Corps, and interagency personnel on stability operations in Afghanistan.

**Let us know what you think! Leave a comment!**

**Distribution A: Approved for public release; distribution unlimited.**

#### Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed or implied in the *Journal* are those of the authors and should not be construed as carrying the official sanction of the Department of Defense, Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, Air University, or other agencies or departments of the US government.

This article may be reproduced in whole or in part without permission. If it is reproduced, the *Air and Space Power Journal* requests a courtesy line.

<http://www.airpower.au.af.mil>