

703 AERONAUTICAL SYSTEMS GROUP

MISSION

LINEAGE

703 Aeronautical Systems Group

STATIONS

Wright Patterson AFB, OH

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

Behind the "Grim" Reaper: Working under a rapid acquisition and development effort, Aeronautical Systems Center's 703rd Aeronautical Systems Group at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, got the MQ-9 Reaper hunter-killer unmanned aerial vehicle to Afghanistan 18 months ahead of schedule, and earlier this month, it flew its first operational mission in Iraq. The 703rd AESG

worked with Air Combat Command and prime contractor General Atomics Aeronautical Systems "to surge the capability to the field," said Col. Christopher Coombs, 703rd AESG commander. Coombs describes the Reaper as providing an "evolution in capability" that offers "persistent awareness ... and a robust target prosecution capability" with its complement of 500-pound bombs and Hellfire missiles. It helps, too, he said, that the system "has a high resolution radar that can see targets through the clouds." Lt. Col. Micah Morgan, who leads the airmen who operate and maintain both the Reaper and its smaller brother, the MQ-1 Predator, for operations in Iraq and is dualqualified in both systems, credits the accurate on-board sensors of the Reaper and USAF's "extremely disciplined targeting process and strict rules of engagement" with ensuring "the target is destroyed and nothing else."

Another Arrow in Reaper's Quiver: The Air Force is working to clear the GBU-38 joint direct attack munition, a 500-pound satellite-guidance-aided bomb, later this year for operational use on the MQ-9 Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle. "Putting the JDAM on the Reaper significantly increases its lethality on the battlefield," said Col. Chris Coombs, commander of the 703rd Aeronautical Systems Group at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. The GBU-38 scored perfect hits in all nine of its drop tests at the China Lake test range in California, according to the Air Force. Additional analysis is underway, which the Air Force hopes will lead to the certification of the weapon on the Reaper in July. Currently, Reapers carry 500-pound GBU-12 laser-guided bombs and AGM-114 Hellfire surface-attack missiles in combat. Coombs said the next step after the JDAM is to integrate the GBU-39 small diameter bomb on the Reaper. Last year the Air Force tested the GBU-49 on the Reaper; it is a 500-pound bomb both with laser and GPS-aided guidance.

Air Force Lineage and Honors

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Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.