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News Transcript

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Presenter: 405th Air Expeditionary Wing

Tuesday, April 8, 2003 - 10:00 a.m. EDT

B-1 Pilot Telephone Interviews

(Participating in this briefing was Col. James Kowalski, commander of the 405th Air Expeditionary Wing, Lieutenant Colonel Frank Swan, B-1 Weapon Systems Officer and Captain Chris Wachter, B-1 Pilot.)

COL. ALVINA MITCHELL (Air Force Media Relations): Good morning. Hi. I'm Colonel Alvina Mitchell, and I'm in charge of Air Force Media Relations here in the Pentagon.

STAFF: Good morning, ma'am. Stand by, I will give you to Lieutenant Colonel Fred Swan. Stand by.

COL. MITCHELL: Okay. I'll go ahead and get through the ground rules first.

First, I want to thank you all for coming. I apologize for the rather short notice and the change of plans that we had for this event this morning, but I think you'll be pleased with the folks that we're going to be allowing you to talk to here in a minute.

This is on the record. We'll take basically about an hour to talk to our folks over at the 405th. I would ask that you all introduce yourselves as you ask questions. We're going to give everybody one question and a follow-up, make it around the room, and if there's still time left, then we'll readdress and see if we can get some more questions in there.

I'd ask you all to turn off your pagers and your cell phones, if you would, please.

There will probably be a two-second delay with the mike, so just be prepared for that.

So this morning we've got three folks that will be on the phone. I understand they're going to have to share this line, so there'll be some mechanics involved. They're not all going to be listening and hearing everything, so that might cause some problems, but we'll try to work through it as best we can.

First we've got Colonel James M. Kowalski. Last name is spelled K-O-W-A-L-S-K-I. He is the commander of the 405th Air Expeditionary Wing at a deployed location. With him is Lieutenant Colonel Fred Swan -- S-W-A-N. He is the B-1 weapon systems officer, a WSO. And then we also have Captain Chris Wachter -- last name spelled W-A-C-H-T-E-R. And he is the B-1 pilot.

Q: Captain?

MITCHELL: Captain, right.

Q: B-1.

MITCHELL: B-1, B-1 pilot.

Q: And are you sure about the spelling of his last name?

MITCHELL: We can ask him here shortly. Okay?

Okay, who do we have on?

STAFF: Colonel Kowalski and Colonel Swan are on right now.

MITCHELL: Okay, great. Okay. Let's go ahead. And I think you've probably heard the ground rules. We're on the record for one hour. Everyone will be given an opportunity to ask one question, one follow-up. If we have more time left, we'll go into maybe a second round of questions.

Okay? And we have our first question.

Q: It's John McWethy with ABC News. I wonder if Lieutenant Colonel Swan can talk about how long it took from the time you were ordered to drop these weapons to the time that you actually did drop them; were you in orbit, available to work in this particular area? Sort of give us the run of how you came up to actually dropping the weapon.

SWAN: Yes, sir. This is Lieutenant Colonel Swan. And we were actually just coming off the tanker in western Iraq and we had another target area that we were planned to go -- going to, and we got re-tasked to this target. And in the time frame of 12 minutes from the time we got the coordinates, it took 12 minutes to get the bombs on target. So that's how quick the system can work.

Q: All right.

SWAN: And so basically, we got the target set, airborne through Airborne Communications, and then right into the cockpit, we confirmed the coordinates and then that took about 12 minutes to fly to the target and release the weapons.

Q: Was there --

SWAN: And then after that -- it's good to note that after that, we did go ahead and strike 17 more targets in two different locations immediately following that strike.

Q: Seventeen --

SWAN: We did all that basically in about a ten and a half hour total sortie for the crew from our deployed location up into the target areas and then back home.

Q: Seventeen more targets in the Baghdad area, or ranging all the way back out into the desert, number one? And can you just verify again -- there's been some confusion about what weapons you actually dropped, whether you had penetrators or whether you just had straight GBU-31s?

SWAN: Yes, we -- well, the B-1 carries 24 GBU-31s. We dropped GBU-31 version 3, which are hard-

target penetrators. We dropped two of those, and then two weapons with a 25-millisecond delay, which were version 1s. So, we have different loadouts based on different target groups for the day, and that's what we had. And we used four weapons on the target.

That answer your question?

STAFF: Sure does.

MITCHELL: Lieutenant Colonel Swan, one other question from John McWethy is what other targets -
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STAFF: Wait a minute. We're going to -- yeah, okay, go ahead.

MITCHELL: One other question --

SWAN: Okay. Yeah, the other targets -- one was in western Iraq and then the other one was just north of Baghdad.

MITCHELL: Colonel Swan, just to clarify, could you go -- you said 17 targets, but of those, where did they hit -- the 17?

SWAN: Okay. Yeah, we -- they were split between two different target groups. (Off-mike conferrals.)

In general, we had two different target groups, and we had nine weapons on one and then eight weapons on the other, and they were spread out by probably, oh, 200 miles.

KOWALSKI (?): You can talk about fielded forces, artillery or whatever.

SWAN: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, one of the targets was actually a surface-to-air missile site that was suspected or -- confirmed, and then we went and killed that. And then the other was an airfield that we went and struck against, as the third target for the day.

Q: And Lieutenant Colonel Swan, this is Thelma LeBrecht with AP Broadcast. I wondered if you could just relate what was -- when you first got word about the targets you were -- the leadership targets you were going to hit, what went through your mind as you were -- as you got the word of that? Describe what was happening in the plane, if you could, and also what was going through your mind after you hit it, and describe what -- if you saw anything when it was hit. Just go through the whole story, if you wouldn't mind.

SWAN: Okay. Yeah. When we got the word that it was a priority leadership target, immediately or -- you know, you get kind of an adrenaline rush, the crew does, but then you fall back to your original training that says, "Hey, let's get the job done." And we knew we had a -- we had to react quickly to it.

So there's four crewmembers on the B-1, and we all have our own separate jobs to do, but we have to work in concert, together, to make this happen. So when we get the coordinates in, in a case like this, the only way to make it work is have accurate coordinates. So we crosschecked those three different times with the airborne controller that passed them to us, and then we checked them again with the jet to make it happen.

At the time, for me, what I was thinking was, "Well, you know, this could be the big one. Let's make sure we get it right."

I had a fairly inexperienced other WSO with me, so I was basically trying to make sure that he was doing his job right and that I was doing mine right. We got the coordinates in, assigned the weapon, turned towards the target area and go. So there wasn't a lot of time for reflection as we were doing the bomb run. It was just mainly quarterbacking the crew to make sure that we got the weapons on the target at the assigned time and to make sure that we had the coordination that we need to get into that area.

As we are moving towards Baghdad from the West to the East, things that came into my mind quickly were the air defenses around Baghdad, which -- there's still active surface-to-air threat there. We quickly checked to make sure that we had other fighters up there available to suppress any type of surface threat that we saw. And then the B-1 has an excellent system to pick up and actually counter ground systems as well as airborne systems, so I was looking at that, too, and also figuring out the egress heading that we wanted to fly after we released the weapons. So a lot of things happening in those 10 minutes until we let the weapons release.

Now, as far as being able to see anything visually, we couldn't. It was pretty much weathered in over the target area, which is good for us. Again, nobody can spot us from the ground. We just -- we fly in and release the weapons and then turned off. But we had other assets out there helping to make this work.

And again, it was just -- kind of you revert back to your training; I've been flying for 20 years, and 15 in the B-1. The B-1's a great system; it works as advertised, its complete flexibility. And the thing I -- I think hits me most about this is just the lethality and survivability of the airplane. The training that we've had over the last -- that I've had over the last 15 years and that we've instilled into the young crew members over the last 10, we've been able to do this and we could do this with -- any crew in the B-1 force could have done this mission, because we've trained to it over the last few years. And we are just completely flexible, quick-reaction force, and it's all the way from command and control, the upper levels, all the way down to the guy in the cockpit, which, you know, we're the last ones to make it happen. But you just revert to your training.

And so, we really didn't have time to reflect on anything until after the bomb run was done. And then coming off target myself, as I -- you know, I personally was never prouder to be in the Air Force, if actually this was the big one, which we thought it was, based on everything we heard. And everything went as advertised; the weapons came off. We knew we hit the target, because the weapon accuracy is -- it's going to hit within 40 feet. And so, as the weapons come off the jet, they're going to hit the target. So, not a lot of time to reflect. There was a lot of time to reflect on the two-hour drive back to our base, and at that time, again, just everybody's proud to be doing their job and making it happen.

Q: This is Jim Mannion from Agence France-Presse. You said that it was a priority leadership target. Did you know for a fact that Saddam Hussein was believed to be at that aim point? And how common is it to get a priority leadership target assigned to you?

SWAN: No, I did not know who was there. To me, when they said priority leadership target, it's anybody that's in the regime, and I really didn't care. You know, the job was to go put the bombs on the target and then worry about that later. How often do we get those? Maybe a couple times in the past -- since the conflicts began. I don't have any specific numbers. That's the first time I've ever been on a crew that got the priority target. So again, I had no idea who was there, who they were targeting,

but I knew it was important, so we went and did our job.

Q: What made you think that it might be the big one?

SWAN: Those were the words that were used when we got passed the coordinates, that this was "the big one." So, you know, that could be any number of people. And it's like, well, I know it's important, it really doesn't matter, we've got to get the bombs on target, we've got 10 minutes to do it, and we've got to make a lot of things happen to make that happen. And that's -- you just fall totally into the execute mode and kill the target.

Q: Hi, Colonel. This is Jim Garamone with American Forces Press Service. You mentioned something about other assets that helped you out, could you talk about those; what were they?

SWAN: Yes. We had E-3 AWACS, that provides the command and control, and that's who passes us the coordinates and basically directs what we're doing out there. We work with them all the time. We had just come off a tanker. We can't make anything happen unless we've got tankers up there to give us the gas to do it.

We had F-16CJs, which basically can go in there and provide suppression of enemy air defense support for us. We had the EA-6 Prowler out there, joint Navy-Air Force program that provides jamming on the surface-to-air threats. Let's see what else we got. Of course, we've got the guys on the ground, the ground PACs (ph) that basically put the eyes on target, pass the coordinates up through the chain of command, back down to the airborne command and control, which is the AWACS, and then back to us. So it's a full circle system to find, track, target and kill any type of situation that's out there.

So you've got to look at the big picture. And we're the last ones pulling the picture, but we can't do anything and it starts with the guy on the ground getting the information up in a timely manner. And this whole thing was less than an hour from the time that the situation developed to where we were dropping weapons on the target. So just a lot of people out there doing everything we can for us.

You know, back here at where we're deployed to, everybody on base -- the munitions guys that make the weapons -- not make them, but put them together, load the weapons; the mechanics; everybody from the cooks to the security police -- make it happen. So you've got to have a total team effort or it doesn't work. We just happened to be in the right place at the right time to make this one work.

Q: Sir, it's Pauline Jelinek of the Associated Press. First, one question to clarify. You said you heard the words, "This is the big one." Can you say who that was speaking "This is the big one"?

SWAN: That was from the controller that was on the AWACS and that -- you know, I don't know what information he had, but he was passing that on to us just to, I guess, make sure we understood how much of a priority the target was.

Q: And also, can you describe a little bit the procedures of the systems? How do you know -- since you said you couldn't see, how do you know that the target was hit? How does that sort of play out?

SWAN: Well, just from experience, like we didn't have -- you know, we mapped the target with the radar before just to make sure that, you know, we're in the right area. But the coordinates -- the weapon is a GPS, which is a global positioning system weapon. If we put good coordinates in it, it's been proven over the past. I mean, we've dropped over 2,100 weapons in this conflict alone, plus all the testing and training we've done before, we know that weapon is going to hit less than 40 feet from

the target or less, and, generally, it's even better than that. So I've got, you know, 110 percent confidence in this weapon and weapon system.

And the big thing it does, too, is it's going to -- it minimizes collateral damage. When you know a weapon is that accurate, you can put it where you want and you don't have to take chances with civilians and maybe damaging other structures that you don't want to.

So, you know, we bet our life on this weapon all the time and it works, and the whole system does. We have no -- we did not have a, you know, eyes on the target from the airplane after release.

Q: Sir, Brian Hartman with ABC News. I wonder if you could tell us a little more about the eyes on the ground. And you had a controller that was giving you these coordinates for this leadership target?

SWAN: I'm not 100 percent sure where the coordinates came from. But in general, the way we operate in a situation like that, in an urban area, or even out -- you know, in other target areas, there's generally Special Forces or somebody on the ground that they can see the target, can figure out, derive coordinates, pass them up the chain and then pass them back into the cockpit. So in this case, you know, I don't have any particulars of who was down there or what, but it obviously had to happen that way to be able to get the coordinates to us.

Q: And can you also tell me what altitude you were flying from? And when you're flying from that altitude, how connected you feel to the target on the ground that you're striking? I mean, do you feel that this is just sort of remote "fire and forget" sort of thing, or you take this time to reflect, that you say, as you're flying back from your mission? How much do you think about actually what happens when that bomb hits the ground?

SWAN: We employ in the high-20s at high airspeeds, you know, 400- to 500-plus knots. You know, that question gets asked a lot: Are you detached from what you're doing because you're at a high altitude and you don't understand what's going on with ground?

Well, I can assure you that in other situations where we've worked with a ground controller, and you can hear the gunfire in the background, and you can hear the stress in the controller's voice, that you know that -- what's going to happen if you don't release those weapons and take out the threat to him. So, there's -- it's a job that you do, and it's a job that we do very well and we take pride in it. Yeah, we're not walking through the mud with everybody else, but we're there to 100 percent completely support the guy on the ground. And we know what situations they are -- we deal with those people, we work with them.

So we understand the situation. It's not like you're some detached being up there just throwing weapons out. There's a lot of thought going into where they -- what you're doing, the safety of the people on the ground, you know, of our forces on the ground when we release a weapon to avoid any friendly fire types of incidents, and there's numerous checks and balances to ensure that those weapons get where they belong.

And we do have the one advantage, yeah, well, we're going to go land somewhere that's probably a couple hours away from the target area, and you do have time to think about that. But at the time, you're just employing weapons to make sure that the target is killed and that you're doing the best you can to support the ground troops.

Q: Colonel, hi, this is Sandra Erwin with National Defense. You said it takes 12 minutes -- or, it took

you 12 minutes to get the weapon on target. Is that typically how long it takes for any mission --

SWAN: Well, actually, no, that's -- it took us that long to actually physically fly from where we were to the target area, and that's basically how long it took to make this happen. Now, we get target coordinates and get that passed, we can completely set up, you know, 24 weapons in 10 minutes, 15 minutes or less. If it's one or two targets, we can do that in a couple minutes. So, there's really no set time frame on that. This was just from the time that we got the weapons till we got them on target -- in this one particular case, was about 12 minutes. And that's physically, we had to fly to the target area.

Q: And just a quick follow-up. Do you know typically how long it takes from the time that the ground FAC gets coordinates to the time that you get the information? What's the cycle time for that?

SWAN: I don't have a good answer for that. It can be anywhere from immediately -- I mean, we hear the -- we will get the targets passed in some cases for doing close air support right from the ground FAC right to us. So, now you're talking instantaneous. In other cases, we might be re-rolled from one area to another area, and the coordinates will come up from the ground personnel up to the AWACS back to us, and it might take five minutes. But there is no set time. It can happen in a split second, it can take longer, depending on the situation.

Q: This is Tom Hargrove with the Scripps Howard News Service. This is a question for James Kowalski, if he's still there. Sir, the B-1 bomber had to miss Persian Gulf I. What has been the operational efficiency of the weapons system this time round?

KOWALSKI: Well, in both Enduring Freedom and here, the weapons system has set basically record mission-capable rates. Right now we're running about a 90 percent mission-capable rate, which is about almost 40 percent higher than the air combat command standard is to keep the airplane up and ready. So the airplane has just preformed magnificently out here, and just as it did during Enduring Freedom. It's had mission-capable rates then up in the high 80s, for that campaign. And with only flying 5 percent of the sorties in Enduring Freedom, it dropped about 40 percent of the tonnage. And I think when we do the math at the end of this one, it's probably going to be pretty close.

Q: For those times when you've had to keep birds on the ground, sir, was there any pattern to the reason why?

KOWALSKI: (Chuckling.) I guess I don't understand the question. We -- you know, I've got, like I said, a 90 percent MC rate. I'm not really keeping any airplanes on the ground.

In fact, that's one of the reasons that we're able to pull this mission off. You know, the old saying is, "You got to be home when opportunity knocks." We've had B-1s airborne over Iraq since before this campaign started, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. So, you know, the wing here has been operating basically in surge conditions, flying -- at any given time, I've got an airplane up there over Iraq, I've got an airplane heading up, and I've got an airplane coming home.

So the CFAC, the commander of the air forces, General Moseley, has at his disposal, you know, up to 72 JDAM to put on targets of his choosing. That's an incredible amount of flexibility when you look at our loiter time, our range, and our ability to dash. You know, it's a supersonic bomber, so we can very quickly get from one part of that country to another part of the country, especially when you have a high-priority target, like a leadership target, or you have troops in contact. We can -- to a large extent; we can be sort of their air 9/11 force, get to them in a hurry and put a lot of firepower there on the bad guys.

Q: It's Bill Roberts from Bloomberg News. A question for the pilot. We're being -- it's being suggested and reported here in the states that the target you hit was a bunker occupied by Saddam Hussein. Based on the debriefings you've had from your fellow officers there, what is your understanding of what you hit at this point?

WACHTER: This is Captain Wachter. We were passed a high- priority leadership target. We don't really know who's going to be in there, what it's going to be. It could be a general. It could be a head of an intelligence agency. We don't really know. We don't even really know if it's a bunker or not. We just put the weapons that are requested for that target. There's targeteers who look at the building and determine the best weapon to put on the target, whether it, you know, be something where it's out in the open and it needs an impact explosion, or we need a bunker- buster that's going to get some penetration capability to get down underground before it explodes.

Also, they also consider the collateral damage issue. And that's really key with us. We want to make sure that we're able to be very precise with our weapons, much like, say, a sniper rifle where it's a one shot, one kill. We don't want to go spraying bullets; we don't want to go spraying bombs either, so we're very accurate with it.

As to who the target is, we don't necessarily care about that. We follow the orders that we're given, drop the targets (sic) that we need to hit in order to best aid the coalition.

Q: Chris Wright from Fox News. A question for Colonel Swan. Colonel, could you clarify again the timetable? You said it was 12 minutes flying time from where you were to the target, but you said that the whole information to bombs on target was less than an hour. Could you run through that again?

SWAN: Well, just from what I understood, as far as when the target was located, passed up through the chain of command back to us -- and I just -- you know, I saw that on the news that said it was less than an hour! (Laughing) So I got that from you-all!

Our physically -- you know, from when we got the first word of it, coordinates, we turned right towards the target. We had roughly 12 minutes, and we made it happen.

Q: And a follow-up. When you said that you triple-checked the coordinates, do you have a way of looking at those coordinates and looking at a map and saying, "Okay, that's where they've described it"? I mean, how do you triple-check it? I understand that this is quite near a major mosque, for example.

SWAN: Well, yeah, we've got imagery on the airplane of, basically, all of Iraq. So as we get the coordinates, one of the first things we do is, you know, we plot those out and we can put them on the map down to some high-definition imagery just to make sure it kind of matches up, if we get a target description, of where we should be.

Now, for the coordinates itself, because we're passing those over a radio, we get them, we write them down, we pass them back to the controller that passed them to us as a double-check just to make sure that we've got the right coordinates. And then, when we actually enter them into the weapon system, then we check them one more time after that to make sure we've got the right coordinates in.

Q: Colonel, good evening. It's Meredith Buel from Voice of America. You gave us a bit of a technical explanation as to exactly which bombs were dropped on the target in Baghdad at the beginning of the briefing. Would you be kind enough in layman's terms to describe which bombs you did drop on the

target, in what sequence, and exactly what the desired effect was?

SWAN: Well, the -- I'm sure that the desired effect was to basically destroy the building, the target that we gave. And again, that goes back to somebody deciding that, you know, we want to minimize collateral damage, since it looked like it was in a suburb- type of an area. So by using a GBU-31 or Joint Direct Attack Munition, Version 3, which is the hard-target penetrator that would bury itself in farther before it exploded, which would minimize the collateral damage around the area, it will take out that particular structure, but it's going to minimize the fragmentation of the weapon and also the target itself into the outlying areas. And so that's why we used that weapon. And it's got a delay built into it so that it penetrates into the ground and then goes off.

Does that make sense?

Q: Yes it does, sir. How deeply does this generally penetrate prior to explosion?

SWAN: It depends on the type of soil or concrete that it's going into. But it's going to go, in rough terms, you know, 10, 20 feet, is probably a good average. And again, it depends on whether it's going through a runway or just going through soil.

Q: This is Richard Lardner from Inside Defense. A question for Colonel Kowalski. Colonel, an enormous number of PGMs have been fired since the war started. Can you give us a sense as to the success and failure rate, just even if it's in general terms. I mean, I'm assuming not every single PGM that's been fired has hit its intended target. Can you break it down a little bit?

KOWALSKI: No, I wish I could. We, in fact, here at this wing, like Colonel Swan said, we've put about 2,100 JDAMs up there. We do the best that we can to try to track, to make sure that we're not having any kind of weapons faults, and work back through the battle damage assessment process.

But this -- frankly, this war has moved so fast that that normal cycle of getting the results back in and then cross-checking it with the weapons and making sure that, you know, that your weapons are detonating at the place they're detonating at, has been a less precise science. And it's probably going to be a while before the whole system gets caught up and we're able to do that kind of math.

I can tell you, though, that just based on a sampling of us going back on the areas that we were able to get imagery -- for example, we have struck quite a few airfields, we've struck some bunkers, we've, of course, struck leadership targets on several occasions -- when we are able to get imagery of those back, the weapon is performing well above 99 percent.

Q: Just a quick follow-up to that. What has been the PGM of choice? What has been fired more than anything else during this war?

KOWALSKI: Well, I can't speak for General Moseley, and I only see our little piece of it, and really, the only thing that we're carrying out here is the Joint Direct Attack Munition. There's a couple of different versions of it. There are some different fuze settings you use to, you know, to optimize it for a particular target. But that's been our weapon of choice. It's an all-weather weapon. It has proven reliability and, you know -- and it packs a big punch. And when you mate it up with a B-1 that can carry 24 of them and then basically range across Iraq, you can hold at risk just about any target in the country.

Q: This is Thelma Le Brecht with Associated Press Broadcasting. And for Captain Wachter, you were

not here earlier. One of the --

STAFF: Can you hang on a second? He's just getting on the phone.

Q: Yes.

WACHTER: This is Captain Wachter. Go ahead.

Q: Hi. Thank you very much. We wanted to get your thoughts of -- granted that you're all very well trained and you're ready to do this sort of mission, but relate to us your thoughts when you first got the order to drop this bomb as -- tell us, describe what was happening in your mind, what was going through the plane, and also afterwards, when you dropped it and you knew you had a success. And also, your thoughts now, now that you do think you've had a success.

WACHTER: All right, well let me take that in the three parts there, ma'am.

The first part, when we get the target, there's not a lot of time. They tell us it's a high priority target. And so basically, it's like you're kind of sitting around waiting for something and then you get the call, and it becomes go time really fast. The key there is not what is the target but making sure that we are 100 percent accurate with the proper weapons they have requested to put on that target and our coordinates are right. And then oh, by the way, we're going into a(n) area where we're going to get shot at, so we want to make sure that we have the ways to protect ourselves. We do have good systems on board our aircraft, but also I want to get my package together of my SEAD players, suppression of enemy air defense assets up there. I want to make sure that the airborne AWACS knows where I am and where the other players are and is able to deconflict any other aircraft that may be in the area. And then, as a final qual check, I want to make sure that I'm heading in the right area, we have our right systems on board selected. And a big part of that is just looking out the window to see if anything's coming back up at me. And so, you don't really dwell on so much what the target is or who it could be at the time.

Then once you release the weapons, that's a good feeling. It's a good feeling to have the bombs come off the jet, because you know that you're aiding someone somewhere by striking a target. And so, that's a good feeling and it lasts for about, oh, three seconds, and then you begin your turn off target and you egress out of that threat environment and -- because you want to bring your plane back home so your friends in the squadron can fly it the next day, of course.

When you get back and you find out that -- you know, you knew you struck your targets, but then you find out what they are, and especially something like this, it's a feather in the cap. It's a good feeling. But I want you guys to know that anyone could do this. Anyone in my squadron has this ability to go in and do this. It just so happens we were the lucky ones.

Q: Hi. This is Steve Trimble with Aerospace Daily. I have a question for Colonel Kowalski.

KOWALSKI: Yes?

Q: I was curious when you were discussing the JDAM before; in an urban setting, how do you approach your weapons loads for an urban setting? I mean, the 2,000-pound JDAM is not known for its utility in that area. I mean, do you really have to rely on the penetrator version for targeting?

KOWALSKI: Well, first of all, I'd like to say I don't think anybody has really thought about using it in

that kind of area, simply because the weapon is so large, and by nature we tend to think of using smaller weapons in that just because smaller weapons tend to give you less collateral damage. However, when you take the Version 3 of the JDAM, you actually cut the explosive weight of the weapon in about half, so now you've really got, you know, really what amounts to a 1,000-pound class weapon. And by making it a penetrator and delaying the explosion, you're putting the weapon down into the ground before it goes off. So you find that you limit your collateral damage radius when you use that type of weapon, so that it becomes a little more useful for the planners when they look into a dense environment.

Against a large building, frankly, these weapons are pretty reliable. They're pretty good. They got a good record. And as you can see, the CFACC is using them, and they hit where we want them to hit, and we're certainly not scattering them all over the country.

One thing that is often a misconception is that there's a tendency to associate a type of aircraft with a mission. But that's not Air Force doctrine and certainly not the way we employ our platforms. We've got fighters out there doing strategic attack kind of missions, and we've got bombers out here doing close air support in urban areas if required. So really what's important is using proportional force, getting those right weapons on the target, and it really is less important what kind of platform they come off of.

Q: Hello. This is Bruce Rolfsen from Air Force Times. I have a question for the WSO there. On the targeting --

KOWALSKI: Stand by. (Pause.)

SWAN: This is Colonel Swan.

Q: Hello, Colonel. It's Bruce Rolfsen from Air Force Times. On the targeting, I have a couple of questions here. One, when you're targeting, are you setting all four bombs for the same coordinate points? Do you try to vary different parts of the building?

Also, how was the bomb -- were the bombs actually released? Was this done automatically, through your computer, or is there -- one of you actually presses a button?

And the third question was, was there ever the option of using, say, a larger GBU-37 type weapon, or is that something you didn't have available?

SWAN: For the last question there, yeah, we didn't have anything else available. We're carrying GBU-31s only on the aircraft, 24 of them.

Backing up to the first question, as far as how we target, in this case, we are given two separate DMPIs, desired mean points of impact, and told to put two weapons on them. So we -- you know, we basically load the coordinates in two separate weapons for each target.

In other cases, we're given the flexibility, if it's a bridge or if it's troops or if it's a armor vehicle, of weaponeering it our self in the airplane, and we might -- because of the target location error that's inherent with this type of weapon and driving coordinates, we might put three weapons on a target, just to make sure we kill it. So a lot of that is -- it depends -- certainly situational-dependent.

In this case, though, we were told we had two separate target coordinates and wanted two weapons on

each one, so we loaded the coordinates accordingly into the weapons, the four weapons.

Q: Did you help --

SWAN: The other question is on how the weapons came off the jet. In this, with the B-1, we have two ways of doing that. I can manually release a weapon just by pressing a button, or I can go into auto mode, which -- the system takes care of it. And that's what we prefer to do, because it's -- gets the weapons out in quicker sequence.

So in this case, everything's set up, we're tuned towards the target, we arm the weapons, and then we go to an auto mode. And then the computers on the aircraft decide where the release point is, and that's where the weapons come off. And they can do that much more accurately, in a timely fashion, than trying to do it manually.

Q: Those two target points you were aiming at -- could you say about how many feet or yards they were from each other?

SWAN: No, I don't have any idea.

Q: Thank you.

(Off-mike conferral.)

SWAN: Well, I do, but I can't tell you. (Chuckles.)

Okay. Thank you.

Q: It's Brian Hartman at ABC News again. I have two questions.

SWAN: Yes.

Q: I have two questions. First, what are the names of the other crewmembers who were on the plane with you, that are not with us today?

SWAN: Yeah, we had Captain Sloan Hollis, H-O-L-L-I-S, and Lieutenant Joe Runci, R-U-N-C-I.

Q: Sloan is a guy?

SWAN: Yeah, Captain Hollis is the co-pilot on the jet. And then Lieutenant Runci is the -- was the other weapon systems officer on the jet.

Q: And if we could just get off this particular mission and just talk in general about how you guys are holding up over there, how much sleep do you get, how many missions are you running in a day, in a week? Could you just give us an idea of the tempo of your life over there and how you're feeling?

SWAN: Well, it's -- yeah, I think everybody's really feeling good. The tempo is high. We're flying every third day is typical for a crewmember. The sorties are long; they're anywhere from -- I've flown as short as 9-1/2 hours up to 15-1/2 hours to make things work. So basically, what I tell guys is sleep when you can, you know. There's enough motivation here to get the job done that people are always

primed, ready to go fly. And they take the time to get the rest that they need. They work out, they, you know, eat -- eat right. You've got to do all that stuff and just not forget about the small things to be able to fly those types of sorties and that often.

But the mood is great here. The morale is high. We know we're doing an important job that needs to be done that, you know, should have been done before, and we're doing it now and we're making it happen. So yeah, there's no problem here with guys and gals that are flying, at least that I can speak for in my squadron. We'll stay here till the job gets done, if that's two weeks or two years; you know, we'll do it and we'll be motivated and we'll make it happen.

Q: A question for the pilot.

SWAN: If you can stand by, I'll turn it over to him.

WACHTER: This is Captain Wachter.

Q: Captain, Tom Hargrove, Scripps Howard News Service. Have there been any times during this war when a B-1 seemed to come under attack or when you and your crew came under attack? Have there been any times of perceived danger?

WACHTER: I would have to say absolutely. The B-1s have been flying since day one. I got to fly on night one, I flew on the first day, with Colonel Kowalski here, over Baghdad. And yes, there are times the enemy radars have looked at us. We've seen multiple AAA, multiple missile launches. Some of my squadron mates have come back with stories of missiles coming very close to the aircraft. But it's one of those things where the training kicks in and you don't really have a fear, more of a reaction, and you know what to do, you know how to maneuver the jet, how to put out expendables, how to put jamming on radars, et cetera, in order to defeat that threat. And we do this all in conjunction with our other assets out there. And it's just something that you kind of expect that you may face.

I will tell you personally that I've flown on missions that have gone right over the heart of Baghdad where there's threats and seen absolutely nothing -- no one's shooting at me. Other times, it's kind of non-stop that their radars are looking at us. That's generally one of our big guides, is when our jet realizes that their radar is looking at us, we become very aware that someone's looking at us, trying to take a shot.

Q: Of course, sometimes it's hard to tell, but sir, have there ever been any times where it was clear that there were some near- misses, or have any of the planes come back with any damage?

WACHTER: No planes have come back with any damage whatsoever. All of our aircraft have been able to completely successfully evade the threats and -- while at the same time, have 100 percent release on our targets.

Q: (Name inaudible) -- with CNN. Question on the four bombs you dropped on the priority target. Can you tell me which way you put them in? I think you said you had two of the penetrators and then two of the 25-millisecond fuzes.

WACHTER: Well, sure, I can answer how they left the jet. They -- the penetrating bombs left first and then the other bombs left approximately three seconds later. But the bombs themselves, because they are the quote, unquote, "smart weapon," they fly a profile, and we tell the bomb what angle we want it to hit, how fast we want it to hit, et cetera. And so the bomb flies itself. And it meets those parameters

and flies directly to those coordinates. So how they impacted, I couldn't tell you, sir.

Q: This is Bruce Rolfsen from Air Force Times. A little bookkeeping here. I want to make sure, all of you are from the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth, is that correct?

KOWALSKI: Yes, that's true. This is Colonel Kowalski, and you know, when I'm in my peacetime job, I'm the wing commander there at the 28th.

Q: Thank you.

And amongst the -- could one of you describe the purpose of having the second set of two bombs released three seconds later? What did you hope to accomplish then? And I guess they were working the -- a timed fuse. What is the purpose of the timed fuse?

WACHTER: Sir, we weren't really hoping to accomplish anything, we were just dropping the weapons we were assigned. Like I said, this target had probably been weaponeered by someone else, and they pass us the best load-out for the target. There's been a lot of study done with our weapons in peacetime to determine how best to strike structures, taking in the structure's dimensions, composition, et cetera. And so they run through those, and that's how they determine, okay, here's what I need; I need a delayed-fused weapon, I need a penetrator weapon. And that's how it goes about it.

Luckily, with the B-1 and the loads that we carry, we have such a mixed load of this JDAM, we can provide that flexibility to drop whichever, using whichever, penetrator or non-penetrator, the CAOC and the CFACC prefer.

Q: Did -- as part of your -- well, once you got the targets, then did you -- your crew program it for that 25-millisecond delay, or is that something that was hard-wired into the bomb?

WACHTER: Sir, it's just a fuse setting. They set it on the fuse. And we have them preset. So we just know which bombs are which and which ones to drop.

Q: Hi. My name is Peter Cook. I'm with NBC News. And I got here a little bit late, so I apologize if you've already answered this question. But have you all had an opportunity to see at least the television footage of the bomb damage? And can I get your impressions of what you've seen?

WACHTER: Yes, we have. And I think everyone's really proud. That shows a 100 percent surgical strike properly executed with the proper weapon. And we're all real proud of that, that we were able to put the bombs on target and only hit the one target we wanted to hit and do it accurately and very quickly.

Thanks.

WACHTER: You're welcome.

MITCHELL: Any other questions?

Well, I'm happy to report that you've left the reporters here speechless. So --

KOWALSKI: (Laughs) Okay!

MITCHELL: I want to thank you all for helping us out here this morning. And if we have follow-up questions, we'll get back to you, okay?

KOWALSKI: Okay. That sounds great. The only other thing that I would toss out there is that the squadron that is doing this is the 34th Bomb Squadron out of the 28th Wing there in Ellsworth Air Force Base, South Dakota. The 34th has a great history. They were one of the main contributors to Doolittle's Raiders in World War II. So that's what these guys draw on, and as part of their traditions, and that's the kind of spirit and elan that they've brought to this fight.

MITCHELL: Okay. Well thanks so much for you help, and we'll be talking to you soon. Okay?

KOWALSKI: Okay.

MITCHELL: Thanks. Bye-bye.

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