

## MC-12 Liberty joins the fight in Iraq

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6/10/2009 - **JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq** -- The 332nd Air Expeditionary Wing welcomed the arrival of the Air Force's new MC-12 Liberty aircraft, a manned special-mission turboprop aircraft designed for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, here June 8.

Following the MC-12's arrival, the 362nd Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron was activated June 9 to carry out MC-12 operations at JBB.

"This is a big day," said Col. Michael Fantini, 332nd Expeditionary Operations Group commander, who presided over the ceremony. "The MC-12 represents a huge cutting-edge capability for our Air Force and the CFACC's (combined forces air component commander) ability to provide another level and layer of ISR combat capability to the joint-force commander, and we'll push it to the limit."

The first of its kind for the U.S. Air Force, the MC-12 Liberty provides real-time ISR in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility -- a result of the office of the secretary of defense's ISR Task Force's efforts to increase ISR capabilities in the CENTCOM AOR.

"The unique thing about the MC-12 is that it goes a step beyond our current capability," said Colonel Fantini, a native of Vineland, N.J. "It has the latest technology; it's going to complement FMV (full-motion video) and other intelligence capabilities in terms of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance integration in the battlespace."

Almost a year ago, Project Liberty was on the drawing board. Today, the aircraft and its crews and maintainers supporting the 362nd ERS are operational and ready to go here at JBB.

"This plane was first on the drawing board as a concept, just a year ago, and today it is flying combat missions in Iraq," said Lt. Col. Phillip Stewart, 362nd ERS commander.

"The MC-12 is an embodiment of the Air Force's commitment to ISR at every level in the joint fight," said Colonel Stewart. "My goal is to provide world-class intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance when and where it's needed as a key part of the joint fight."

Overall, the MC-12 will augment information gathered by other ISR assets already operating in Iraq and complement existing capability with live infrared full-motion video and signals intelligence. By and large, the platform will enhance how U.S. Air Force ISR complements the total intelligence "picture" in the respective commander's scheme of maneuver in the battlespace.

"We are going to have the flexibility to employ this platform in whatever methodology is required in the ongoing operational and tactical scheme of maneuver required," said Lt. Gen. Gary North, 9th Air Force and U.S. Air Forces Central commander. "The processing, exploitation and dissemination of the mission data, both in real-time and for continued intelligence analysis, will greatly enhance a commander's level of situational awareness - from senior commanders down to the engaged unit of action."

With a unique mission to execute, the 362nd ERS is ready for sustained combat operations. The first MC-12 aircraft arrived from the United States in fully-mission-ready status and flew its first combat sortie on its second day in-theater.



JOINT BASE BALAD, Iraq — The Air Force's new MC-12 Liberty aircraft, and the first one deployed in-theater, lands here June 8. A medium-altitude manned special-mission turboprop aircraft designed for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, MC-12 aircraft will operate from here in support of Coalition and joint ground forces. (U.S. Air Force photo/Senior Airman Elizabeth Rissmiller)