DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH GENERAL NORMAN SEIP COMMANDER, 12TH AIR FORCE AND AIR FORCE SOUTHERN COMMAND VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM WASHINGTON, D.C. SUBJECT: AN UPDATE ON UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLES TIME: 8:15 A.M. EST DATE: MONDAY, JANUARY 12, 2009

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Monday, January 12th, 2009. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Craig. I'm with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating our call. Make sure -- to all the bloggers on the line, make sure to clearly state your name and state the blog that you're with.

Today our guest is Lieutenant General Norman Seip. He's a 12th Air Force and Air Force Southern Commander, and he will discuss the interests, including updates on Reaper, Predator, UAVs, Air Force operations and medical readiness exercises in Central and South America, and the Air Force's work on the A-10 Thunderbolt wing crack issues. So with that, sir, I'm going to turn it over to you. If you want to start with an opening statement and then we'll go ahead with the bloggers' questions.

GEN. SEIP: Thanks, Jennifer, and I hope you can all hear me. And, again, I apologize that I can't actually be in the building. This will be my first interview on a speaker phone on a BlackBerry in downtown D.C. (Laughter.) That being said, I'll be short and sweet with my opening remarks because I'm more interested in hearing what's on your mind with regard to your questions, but certainly an exciting time for us in both 12th Air Force and Air Forces Southern, both, you know, as we continue the long war on terrorism as well as our smart power -- soft power commitment in South Central America and the Caribbean.

We had a very, very successful year. As many of you know that are on the net or have read about the things that we've done down in the area of focus, particularly with our medical readiness exercises, our subject matter experts that travel, as well as our cooperation teams. And one of the areas we've been very pleased with was our inaugural Operation Southern Partner, where we took a regional focus, and our plan is to do two regions out of the four regions in the AOF each year where we'll take a single large airplane and put 60-plus airmen on board, representing about 30 different career fields -- (audio break) -- a focus on areas that are -- (audio break) -- very rewarding, not only for our airmen, for the partner nations that we -- (audio break) -- doing one in the summer of this following year.

From a standpoint of plenty of challenges as we begin to prepare our airmen, our families and our equipment -- (audio break) -- continue to deploy to the main area of focus, obviously in Afghanistan, and it's not without its issues, as we mentioned in the opening statement there. Aircraft -- that come with aging aircraft. Many are unexpected. Most significantly is the 12th Air Force commander's A-10 wing issues that have grounded a large part of our fleet, but we have managed to bring most of those airplanes back up, the issue being the continued demand for unmanned aerial systems here, in particular the MQ1 and the MQ9. And as you all know, we'll -- (audio break) -- in the February-March timeframe, which is pretty significant, considering that it took us until -- (audio break).

Now what I'd like is to just go right into your questions, if that's all right.

Lt. CRAGG: Sir, we -- there was kind of a break in what you were saying, so we heard some of it. So if the bloggers can't hear you, I would recommend the bloggers ask you to restate your answer to one of the questions, if that is okay, sir.

GEN. SEIP: That's perfect.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay. Let's go ahead with the -- I'm sorry. Go ahead? Q Somebody's not on mute. I can hear crowd noises in the background. I think that's what the problem is.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay, whoever had just joined the call recently, when the lieutenant general is speaking, if you can put your phone on mute, that would be a big help.

With that, let's go to Sagar -- Sagar first. Sorry about that, Sagar.

Q Good morning, General Seip. This is Sagar Pathak from HorizontalRain.com. Thanks for speaking with us this morning.

GEN. SEIP: Thank you.

Q My blog is very experience-oriented and I try to get the readers into the moment and have them understand what they saw or felt during a flight or event, and I've had the opportunity to witness your team in action at the FIDEA trade show this year in the NEWEN exercise. My understanding is that you're going to be doing another event in Chile called Salitre in October, and that Chile is signing onto the new State Partnership Program. It seems like your relationship with the Chilean air force is growing. Can you tell us a bit more about that relationship and where you see it heading in the next few years or 2009?

GEN. SEIP: Yes, sir. First of all, that was a great article you wrote on your firsthand experiences flying in a KC-135 and your experiences at -- (audio break). Our relationship with the Chileans just continues to grow and continues to strengthen. They are certainly a regional influence in that part of Latin America, and they're very much involved in many of the issues that are important to, obviously, our Air Force and the United States.

With regard to the exercise at Salitre, it will be a multinational exercise that will be hosted by the Chileans, and we'll be participating with aircraft from Mountain Home and from New Orleans, and we look forward to

interaction, I believe, with both Brazil, we hope the Peruvians, potentially the Argentinians and ourselves there. We try to make it a true and multinational exercise and bring all the benefits of engaging with numerous air forces when it comes to sharing tactics, techniques and procedures and just things that are common to all airmen that slip the surly bonds.

With regard to -- I'm sorry, I missed the second part of the question as far as the other -- that you referenced -- (audio break) -- the state partner program. That's a significant, significant event. In fact, Admiral Stravidis will be -- (audio break) -- the governor of Texas when we sign that agreement in March with the Texas Guard there. And not only is it beneficial from a military standpoint, but from a civilian standpoint, the trading of ideas, things that are common to the nation and to the state of Texas, we also have ongoing with the Chileans a strong economic -- (audio break) -- with California because much of the geography and the climatology of Chile is mirrored in California, so there's many, many challenges, many, many similarities between the two countries there.

So, again, this embracing of the Chileans and vice versa just benefits everyone.

Lt. CRAGG: Thank you. And let's go ahead and go with the next blogger -- Chuck Simmins, please.

Q Good morning, General. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal. I wanted to discuss the drone program. Approximately how long does it take for an already aircraft-qualified pilot to become qualified on the drone? And what type of new skills does a pilot need to learn to operate a drone effectively?

GEN. SEIP: I don't have the exact time -- Chuck, thanks for the question and good morning.

I don't have the exact time it takes to put a pilot in the drone program, or the UAS program, the FTU. We've actually cut the number of days of training down significantly in order to -- just through experience and through feedback as far as what needs to be taught, what doesn't need to be taught, and we're able to produce our pilots at a much faster rate, which is good for all of us.

The skill sets are obviously -- you know, how do you -- (audio break) -- something that when you're sitting in a container with no air, no feeling about you as far as what you'd experience in an airplane. And then the other skill sets are obviously why you're doing this. You're in control of vast amounts of airspace. You're deconflicting many times with other aircraft in the area. They're coordinating with the ground commanders and our airmen that are associated with the ground commanders. And, you know -- and then just the ability to be able to understand what you're seeing through that Predator camera and be able to put it into use as far as from an intelligence-surveillance-reconnaissance perspective, or in the event that you're going to have to use some lethal employment, how to take that information and to ensure that if you do go lethal, if you go steel on target, that you've, you know, identified the correct target, you've coordinated the right people, and you're sure when you pull that trigger that you're going to be successful with the results.

So lots of skill sets that are no different than an A-10 pilot close air support, or an F-15E pilot or an F-16 pilot doing close air support, and

obviously one that many of our pilots that come from other weapons systems are not familiar with. Over.

Q Thank you.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay. And we'll go around after everybody gets a chance to ask their first question.

David, you're next.

Q Good morning, General. This is David Axe with War is Boring. Can you hear me okay?

GEN. SEIP: David, I got you loud and clear. Thank you.

Q Great, thanks. So can you tell me, is there any coordination between the Air Force's soft power activities down south and the Navy's soft power efforts? It seems like you're hitting some of those same countries. Do the two services coordinate?

GEN. SEIP: Yes, sure we do. In fact, Southern Command, you know, puts out a Theater Campaign Plan that Admiral Stravidis coordinates on and approves, and then each of the components, with their resources and with their capabilities for that upcoming year, working with SOUTHCOM, who's worked with all the country teams and the ambassadors, lay out a game plan for whether it be medical readiness exercises, whether it be, you know, the USS Comfort going down on a, you know, six-month various port visits there. But we deconflict, we collaborate, we try to, you know, maximize each of potential there, and where we can share assets, we certainly do so. But we make sure that, again, it's all lined up with the ambassadors, with the SOUTHCOM Theater Security Cooperation Plan itself, that comes from the Theater Campaign Plan. Over.

Q Well, a quick follow up. Do you ever share any assets? I mean, do the efforts ever overlap?

GEN. SEIP: In the way of shared assets, we actually had on the -- (audio break) -- here just recently 40 airmen that were either medics or engineers that were part of that team that did the deployments, both on the eastern and western side of the area of focus there. We look, in Operation Southern Partner, in the future of putting our potentially Navy-Army component representatives and go downrange with us, and they can engage with a partner nation solider or partner-nation sailor while we're doing that with our partner-nation airmen. Over.

Q Okay. Thank you, very much.

GEN. SEIP: Thank you, sir.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay, let's go with Paul, please. Paul McLeary, are you still on the phone? Okay, let's go ahead and skip to Colin please.

Q Good morning, General. Colin Clark at DoD Buzz. I am interested primarily in the A-10s, given the operational implications for Afghanistan. I want to make sure that we add up-to-date numbers. I remember my colleagues at Air Force Times said that in early December about half the fleet were grounded because of wing cracks. Where are we now and do you see operational impact from these cracks? And how quickly can you overcome whatever gap there might be?

GEN. SEIP: Well, yes, sir, initially our focus was on those airplanes that were deployed to the AOR, and we've got those airplanes very quickly either replaced or did the inspections and found that they were okay, and very little impact on our operations. As far as some updated numbers, you know, with our thin skin wing cracking there, we basically inspected almost 200 of the -- (audio break) -- aircraft, and we've got about 40 percent that are in a grounded condition, but we've got about 41 percent that are back into flight and another 20 percent that are flying until we get around to inspecting them there.

Q Sir, if you could, you're breaking up a fair amount. Was that 40 percent?

GEN. SEIP: Right now we're showing about 40 percent of the thin skin, which is about -- oh, I'll let you do the math. That's about -- (audio break) -- are grounded, and they're either out in the field being repaired or out -- (audio break).

Q So 40 percent grounded.

GEN. SEIP: And again, they're all being worked at this time. So we expect by June to have all the repairs completed. We've got 40 percent that have been inspected and have returned to flight, and about 20 percent that are continuing to fly until we find an opportunity to do the inspection, which is not required at this time.

Q All right. So does that mean that you have enough planes to do the missions that you're being asked to do?

GEN. SEIP: That's absolutely right, sir.

Q All right.

GEN. SEIP: You know, particularly in our schoolhouse at Davis- Monthan our priority has been to continue to graduate the students so that we can take them to their replacement units, and we've had to then minimize some of the flying of operational pilots. Living at Davis-Monthan I've watched the wing there do the repairs, working with the fuel teams, and they've stuck to a pretty aggressive schedule.

If I could, let me just take you to the thick skin. As you know, there was six of those 112 have been inspected and they've found about 30 percent that were grounded that, again, we expect to have repaired by June. We've got almost 50 percent back returned to flight and about 23 percent that we're going to continue to fly, and then they can be inspected at a later date.

So what started off as a pretty challenging logistical operational issue, we've managed to bring it under control through a lot of the hard work by our airmen at our depot and our folks at the Air Force Materiel Command.

Q Bottom line, you're able to supply the COCOM with the assets he needs now?

GEN. SEIP: That's correct.

Q Okay. GEN. SEIP: That's correct.

Q All right. If I can just go through the numbers, because you were breaking up quite a bit -- of the thin skins you said 30 percent should be -- that were grounded should be up by June?

GEN. SEIP: We've got 40 percent grounded. We expect them all up by June. Then for the thick skins we've got 30 percent right now are grounded. And, again, those repairs should be completed by June.

Q And 23 percent will continue to fly because they were inspected and found safe in the thick-skin.

GEN. SEIP: That's correct. And the 20 percent on the thick skinned.

Q All right. I guess next up.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay. Aid anyone else join the call? I just wanted to make sure I didn't forget anybody. Okay, let's go back around one more time. Sir, if you have some time -- Lieutenant General, do you still have time to answer one more round of questions?

GEN. SEIP: I --

Q Excuse me, there's a bunch of journalists at the Pentagon right now with questions. We'd like to get a first question in if possible.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay. Roger that.

Q My name is Caitlin Harrington. I'm calling with Jane's Defense Weekly. Sir, I was wondering if I could follow up with you a little bit on the UAVs. Could you talk about training? I know the Army and the Air Force were working toward common trading standards. And also I was wondering -- I was wondering if you could kind of bring us up to date on that and also talk about whether there's any, like, movement toward having enlisted people flying UAVs for -- (inaudible) -- as well.

GEN. SEIP: Yeah, I lost the last half of your question. As far as us collaborating with the Army on UAV standards, that's ongoing. I wish I was more of an expert on that as far as exactly where we are. What I'll do is Captain -- (inaudible) -- get back to me and I'll get you a better answer.

Repeat the second half of the question. I just lost some of the sound here.

Q Oh, sir, I'm just wondering if there was any movement toward setting up training standards so that enlisted people could fly UAVs.

GEN. SEIP: They're not ready yet to ---- our enlisted -- (audio break) -- flying the UAV. As you know, we've started a beta test where we're taking -- (inaudible) -- officers or so that have never, ever flown an aircraft before, and we're going to put -- (audio break) -- their program into the schoolhouse there -- (MQ Q:) -- to see exactly how they do. And then I think from there we'll continue to look at other opportunities for other folks -- (inaudible) -- move into this career field based on the results of that beta test. Over.

Q Thank you.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay, we --

GEN. SEIP: Hey, Jennifer, I'm sitting right outside the (mall ?) entrance here, so if people could wait maybe five minutes I could maybe walk -- (audio break) -- with everyone. Q That would be great, sir, 40-A11.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay, roger that. The bloggers on the call, is that okay with you?

Q Absolutely.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay. Roger that.

GEN. SEIP: I'm on my way. Thanks.

Lt. CRAGG: And who's still on the call?

Q Colin's here.

Lt. CRAGG: Colin, David.

Q Sagar.

Lt. CRAGG: I'm sorry?

Q Sagar.

Lt. CRAGG: Sagar, okay.

CAPT. TAGGART (sp): And this is Captain Taggart (sp). We're still in the Pentagon. We've got the conference room open.

LT. CRAGG: Okay.

CAPT. TAGGART (sp): If he's going to come in here, he can get on a line.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay. Roger that.

CAPT TAGGART: Since his BlackBerry is obviously giving us some problems.

Lt. CRAGG: Yes, yes, understand.

Q Yeah, if he had an iPhone he'd be fine. (Laughter.)

Q Yeah, I'm still here, too, Jennifer.

Lt. CRAGG: Okay, good. Thank you, Chuck. Was Paul on the line, or was I imagining that? Did he come on early?

Q Maybe it was that extra bourbon you had for breakfast.

Lt. CRAGG: No, I don't think so. (Laughter.) Okay, I thought Paul was on, so -- Q He might have been. There's been all kinds of beeps in and out.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. No, that was you, Colin, flying over from Australia, but --

Q Was it? All right. (Laughter.)

LT. CRAGG: You know, I'm a little slow with the uptake here.

Q Hey, Jennifer?

LT. CRAGG: Mm-hmm. (In acknowledgement.)

Q Can we get those -- (inaudible) -- thin-skinned stats numbers again if you get a chance to ask the Colonel

LT. CRAGG: Okay.

Q Yeah, because he was dropping out so much it was --

Q The thin-skinned one was 40-40-20.

LT. CRAGG: We'll just have him repeat it one more time, Chuck. I appreciate you saying that. Just one time we'll have him restate it.

Captain Figert (sp)?

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): Yes?

LT. CRAGG: The bloggers on the line want the general to repeat the numbers again. When he was speaking on his Blackberry, it was hard to hear. Is that okay?

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): That's fine.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, thank you.

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): Guys, that was the numbers on the eight-fin wings, right?

Q Right -- the thin skin and the thick skin.

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): Okay.

Q Could somebody explain to me what the difference is between thick and thin, I mean, other than the obvious?

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): There's a couple of reporters here and they probably know really well. What's the difference between a thin and thick-skin wing? Q The thick ones are newer. They're studier, stronger.

Q That's a scientific explanation.

Q And they crack too, huh?

(Cross talk.)

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): Lieutenant Cragg, are you there?

LT. CRAGG: Yes, I am.

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): We've got the general in the conference room. Can you hear us well?

LT. CRAGG: Yes, I can. All the bloggers on the line, can you hear them okay?

Q Roger.

LT. CRAGG: And Captain Figert (sp), with regards to the question I asked before the general returned, if you can repeat those numbers.

GEN. SEIP: Sure, Jen.

And again, I apologize for conducting part of the interview in a van, which is here now whether you like it or not.

Thick-skinned wing or thick-skinned A-10's -- and again, it's approximations: 31 percent grounded; 46 percent have returned to flight; 23 percent are flyable but awaiting inspection; we expect all the grounded airplanes to be done on or around June 9th.

I, in fact, went down to our depot there at Salt Lake City just a couple days ago, as well as visited the -- (inaudible) -- Americans both wearing the uniform and not wearing the uniform are doing some great work there.

From a thin-skinned wing aircraft standpoint, 40 percent are grounded out in the field or in the depot. We've already put 41 percent back into flight. And about 20 percent are, again, are flyable awaiting. And then we're expecting at the end of '09-- (inaudible) -- right now there's no reason not to believe that we can't make those states. And as we stated, the most important thing is that we continue to meet the combatant commanders' requirements for the A-10. We had that short period of time where there's (shot down ?) airplane in the AOR in order to put the right A-10s in place there.

We just got the sortie count on some of the airplanes that were already in place there. According to the ground commander there was no loss of capability as far as having a close air support capability. Over.

LT. CRAGG: Captain Figert, if I may, thank you, sir, for going over that.

Can I just get with the bloggers and see if there are any follow- up questions, is that okay?

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): Absolutely.

LT. CRAGG: Any of the guys: Do you have any questions for the Lieutenant General? Q Yeah, I do.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, go ahead, Chuck.

Q General, did our increased capacity for the use of unmanned aerial vehicles, we're also seeing that a number of nation states other than us have the same capacity. What kinds of UAV countermeasure studies would your organization be involved in, considering the potential for terrorists or narcotics runners or even enemy nation states to use UAVs in the way that we are?

GEN. SEIP: Yeah, that's a great question. (Inaudible) -- general if he says that. He has no idea how to immediately answer that.

With that being said, you know, we've been spoiled by the fact that we've kind of been the big dog in this fight with regard to owning the airspace, and therefore not worrying about, you know, anyone challenging our UAS or in fact, challenging us with their own UAS capability. So that's an area that our folks out at the weapons center out at Nellis -- our folks that sit there on our tactics development teams continue to look at. That when we, in the future, encounter a near peer or an asymmetric threat out there or a terrorist organization that has the UAS capability, we're going to certainly need to be working toward active techniques -- (inaudible) -- that we can counter those capabilities. In order for us to continue to do the things that we do and just own the airspace to allow freedom of maneuver for our ground forces.

So if I gave you anymore, I'll be talking -- (inaudible) -- opinion, but I will tell you there's a lot of smart captains and majors out there that are putting effort toward that -- (inaudible) -- drug organizations, terrorist organizations or near peers have that capability of doing the things that you see us do in -- (inaudible) -- on a day-to-day basis, not only the MQ1 and MQ9, but also with the global hawk. Over.

Q Thank you, sir.

GEN. SEIP: Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Anybody else -- any of the bloggers have -- any one last final op question? Anybody else?

Q Colin here.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, go ahead, Colin.

Q Sir, there's -- you know, there's been discussion for months now as to whether the Air Force is truly committed to deploying sufficient UAVs or moving the money into those accounts or not. Has this question been finally answered? And under the new leadership, is the Air Force committed wholeheartedly to investing in UAVs to the -- I guess with the same fervor that they do to it and fixed-wing aircraft?

GEN. SEIP: I actually believe that's true. The United States Air Force is all in and we understand Secretary Gates's direction. In fact, 85 percent of our theater-wide capability UAS's are in the AOR; 15 percent are at home are in order for us to continue to be training future UAS pilots and (potential ?) operators, as well as do that critical test and development that we do in order to -- we need to enhance and refine our tactical techniques and procedures.

Q I'm sorry, sir. What was that -- (inaudible).

GEN. SEIP: Eight-five percent of our theater-wide capability UAS's -- I mean, the MQ-1, MQ-9 is in a state of -- (inaudible). So 85 percent of what we own is in the AOR.

Q Okay.

GEN. SEIP: And the 15 percent that isn't is there for -- in order to keep the schoolhouse going in order to continue to train future UAS pilots and (bench ?) operators.

I will tell you that we will in the next -- over the period of the next five years fly more unmanned vehicles than we will fly manned vehicles. So I think that makes a very pointed statement about our commitment to the future of UAS's and what it brings to the fight in meeting the demand for the requirements of the combatant commanders our there. Over.

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): Lieutenant Cragg?

LT. CRAGG: Yes, Captain?

CAPT. FIGERT (sp): If you don't mind, let's take a question from the room here.

LT. CRAGG: Roger that. Go ahead.

Q General Seip, I -- Amy Faldo (ph) from Aviation News -- I was just curious, with regard to Venezuela's military activities and your training with countries like Russia, does that allow you to have a little bit more support and practice in theater -- a little bit more focused -- I know a lot of assets have been focused in Iraq and Afghanistan?

GEN. SEIP: Amy (sp), actually, we've seen no change in the amount of assets that we have in theater. And the assets that we do have in theater are predominately focused on the counter -- (inaudible) -- as well as working with -- (inaudible) -- in a collaborative way with the Colombian military, to work their issues with the FARC, as well as their play in the counternarcotics -- (inaudible). Obviously, our -- my boss, Admiral Stavridis, has come up numerous times questioning -- (inaudible) -- as far as the Department of State, as far as -- (inaudible) -- with regards to -- (inaudible) -- in the theater there, but we don't see that as a -- (inaudible).

Q I think last you spoke with us, you mentioned a great effort by the -- (inaudible). How's that going?

GEN. SEIP: We're still working on funding issues. Admiral Stavridis has made this regional aircraft modernization program, along with the (handprint ?) of the actual radar architecture down in the Central American area there. It's fourth or fifth priority on his priority list.

So that's very good use for all of us and we'll be then working with that priority to try to find a funding stream. The Central American countries that we were involved in initially, are still very much interested in this program. We certainly are. And we realize it is not the silver bullet to stopping the flow of drugs. We realize it is not the silver bullet to bringing -- (inaudible) -- stability to the region, but it's certainly very much a piece of the puzzle as far as enhancing security, stability for that part of the world

there and get us out of the business of -- (inaudible) -- serve the Air Force for that region.

If I could tell you, the cost of doing that regional aircraft modernization program -- (inaudible) -- capability, as well as the medium-lift utility helicopters -- the medium, for lack of better term, interdiction-type of aircraft. You add that up with the radar advantages -- (inaudible).

When you look at the fact that we spend $12.5 billion a month in Iraq and Afghanistan for basically two days of operation in Iraq and Afghanistan, we -- (inaudible). And again, everyone realizes that and it's a question of priorities. Certainly -- (inaudible) -- understands that our priorities right now are in Iraq and Afghanistan. It's not -- (inaudible) -- funding, but it would bring a great capability to further -- (inaudible) -- that's going on in that part of the world.

Q A couple years ago, Venezuela put out a little bit of information about building their own indigenous aircraft production facility. I was wondering if that was something that had come across your radar at all and if you heard any update about that. It was a couple of years ago. I was just wondering if had come up again.

GEN. SEIP: We have not. They obviously -- (inaudible) -- used their oil profits for purchasing from other nations or from other manufacturers. (Inaudible.) But I see no -- (inaudible).

Q Okay.

Q (Inaudible.)

GEN. SEIP: Right. We're tracking to re-launch in November when the -- (inaudible) -- expires. We're working very closely as the executive agency of the Air Force Southern Command, OSB, Department of State, various other interagencies and organizations -- as well as the ambassador -- (inaudible). Our goal is to leave -- (inaudible).

With regard to a replacement -- no word on that. We'll continue to utilize those -- (inaudible) -- and FOLs that we have in place right now. We'll continue to look for opportunities to involve our partner nations and other allies more in the counterdrug -- (inaudible).

And the Ecuadorians -- (inaudible) -- have not said, hey, we're out of the counterdrug business. They'll continue to do the things that they see are necessary to prevent the flow of drugs to both other country and through the country. So again, nothing definite as far as -- (inaudible). Again, I think I told you once before, I would be very, very surprised if we ever saw a replication of -- (inaudible) -- just based on how much money we put into that and the fact that whenever you're a guest of a sovereign nation, your welcome could be terminated at any time.

LT. CRAGG: Excuse me, Captain Figert (sp), we're going to go ahead and sign off. Thank you, General, for taking your time for speaking with us today.

GEN. SEIP: Hey, bloggers, thanks very much.

I mean, this is a guy that, you know control -- (inaudible) -- runs my life. So to do actually Blogger Roundtable is like -- like never I'd be doing that. So thanks for letting me play.

Q Pleasure.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

END.