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Defense Contract Management Agency

Lockheed Martin employees work on the F-35 Lightning II production line in Fort Worth, Texas. The jet contains about 900 pounds of important rare earth minerals.

‘Prices are going to go up’

Trade war likely to drive up cost of building, buying arms **Page 2**

COVER STORY

Trade war threatens weapon production

DOD has deals with 28 countries that allow it to override 'Buy American' rules

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military relies on a network of countries around the world to produce the sophisticated weapons and equipment that arm its warfighters.

It imports missiles from Norway and specialized technology from France and Italy for fighter jets. It equips Army soldiers with a recoilless rifle produced by a Swedish company and depends on Canada to assemble combat vehicles such as the Stryker.

"There's not a single weapon system that I know of that doesn't have some type of foreign content," said Bill Greenwalt, a former Defense Department acquisition official now at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, a Washington think tank.

That global supply chain, built up for decades, could now be under threat as President Donald Trump's administration seeks to lessen American reliance on imports and bring more manufacturing back to the United States.

Tariffs imposed in recent weeks on nearly all foreign-made products and the prospect of more levies to come could make American weapons more expensive, dampen weapon sales abroad and tarnish the reputation of the U.S. as a reliable partner, according to some experts and lawmakers.

"In the short term, the announced tariffs alone will increase costs for U.S. defense industrial supply chain companies," Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, D-N.H., wrote in a recent letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. "In the long term, tariffs will drive up the Department of Defense's contracting and procurement costs, limit the Department of Defense's buying power and ultimately harm the warfighter and our military readiness."

In addition to 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum, the Trump administration has implemented a blanket 10% tariff on most U.S. trading partners. A plan



ROSE L. THAYER/Stars and Stripes

Soldiers unpack Stryker combat vehicles on April 10, after they were shipped to Fort Bliss, Texas, for use in detecting illegal activity at the U.S. border with Mexico. The armored vehicles are assembled in Canada.

"There's not a single weapon system that I know of that doesn't have some type of foreign content."

Bill Greenwalt
former Defense Department
acquisition official

to introduce higher tariffs on nearly 60 countries has been paused until July while a trade war with China has raised tariffs on Chinese imports to 145%.

A Pentagon official said last month that the department is "closely monitoring existing tariffs and their impacts on procurement and manufacturing of goods overseas with international partners and allies."

The Defense Department has agree-

ments with 28 partner countries that allow it to override congressionally mandated "Buy American" requirements and engage in billions of dollars of defense trade with countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan, according to the Government Accountability Office, a federal watchdog.

It is unclear how those arrangements will be affected by Trump's tariffs and whether the defense industry will be strategically carved out of the levies, as business groups and some lawmakers have been requesting.

"Right now, you just have to operate on the fact that prices are going to go up because there is foreign content," Greenwalt said. "A lot of this foreign content is because of agreements like we have with the F-35 [fighter jet] but the majority of it is because our allies produce better technology than we do."

Dak Hardwick, vice president of international affairs at the Aerospace Industries Association, said the trade group has received an assurance from the Trump administration that duty-free entry for materials destined for

the military would continue.

The nearly 300 aerospace and defense companies who are members of the association continue to seek clarity from the administration and are engaging with their foreign counterparts, Hardwick said.

"Sales to international partners are critical for the health of the U.S. defense industrial base," he said. "We want to continue to do those sales because it keeps our industrial base lines humming, it certainly keeps them warm at times when the U.S. government isn't necessarily buying certain types of capabilities."

While the U.S. received 3.1% of global arms imports from 2020 to 2024, it leads global trade in weapons with a share of 43% of exports, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute.

Tariffs could chip into that dominance by raising the cost of U.S. defense products domestically and abroad.

"You're going to see a greater in-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



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MILITARY

Army names hypersonic missile 'Dark Eagle'

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army dubbed its new hypersonic missile the “Dark Eagle,” paying tribute to a U.S. national symbol, as the developing system nears the end of testing.

The land-based, truck-launched weapon has a reported range of more than 1,700 miles. The hypersonic missile is intended to be maneuverable, potentially making it more difficult to detect and intercept. “Eagle” is for the national bird, representing independence, strength and freedom, the Defense Department said. Meanwhile, “dark” embodies the missile’s long-range firing capability meant to take out enemy targets with the goal of being undetectable.

“The Dark Eagle brings to mind the power and determination of our country and its Army as it represents the spirit and lethality of the Army and Navy’s hypersonic weapon endeavors,”



Defense Department

The Navy and Army launch a common hypersonic missile last June.

the Defense Department said.

The Dark Eagle has been tested in recent years by the Army’s Rapid

Capabilities and Critical Technologies Office and the Navy’s Strategic Systems Programs, which partnered to field land and sea variants of the hypersonic weapon. Originally, the Army planned to have the first system in the hands of soldiers by late 2023. But from 2021-2023, testing of the Dark Eagle has failed, delaying the deployment of the system to at least September 2025.

The weapon successfully completed at least two end-to-end flight tests in 2024, which evaluate the performance of the system from launch to target engagement. The first successful test was June 2024, with the missile launching from the Pacific Missile Range Facility in Kauai, Hawaii, according to the Defense Department. A second successful test was announced by the Pentagon in December 2024. The missile was launched from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida.

The Army originally planned for three flight tests before putting it in the hands of soldiers, according to the Congressional Research Service.

The Government Accountability Office, a federal watchdog, said in 2024 that with successful flight tests, the initial missiles could be fielded by July 2025. The Defense Department did not say whether the weapon is scheduled for operational fielding in 2025.

The 5th Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., was designated to operate the first Dark Eagle battery of eight missiles. The battalion, also referred to as a strategic long-range fires battalion, is part of the Army’s 1st multi-domain task force, a unit of I Corps also stationed at Lewis-McChord. It was unclear whether the unit would still be first to receive the Dark Eagle.

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Acquisitions based on network of international trade

FROM PAGE 2

stance of ‘Buy Europe’ and ‘Buy Asia’ and that’s going to lead to fewer aerospace and defense sales for the United States and drive down the one place that we have a large positive trade balance,” Greenwalt said.

The Philippine ambassador to the U.S., Jose Manuel Romualdez, told Reuters last month that tariffs could affect his country’s economy and its ability to pay for a potential \$5.58 billion purchase of F-16 aircraft from the American defense manufacturer Lockheed Martin.

“These F-16s ... are very expensive for us ... and we won’t be able to afford it if, obviously, we won’t have the resources to be able to buy them,” he said.

Other countries are scrutinizing their security dependence on the U.S., seeing the Trump administration’s “reciprocal” tariffs as evidence that the U.S. is becoming an erratic supplier and customer, according to Greenwalt.

Some lawmakers in recent weeks expressed particular concern about the defense relationship with Australia, which has an agreement with the U.S. and the United Kingdom to acquire

nuclear submarines. Australia had free trade with the U.S. before becoming subject to the Trump administration’s 10% “baseline” tariff.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the levy was “not the act of a friend” and some within his center-left Labor Party have questioned whether the U.S. can be relied upon to deliver the submarines.

“There is definitely collateral damage to our allies,” Rep. Joe Courtney, D-Conn., said of the tariffs at a congressional hearing last month, noting he has been in touch with Australian parliament members.

American defense companies are bracing for retaliatory measures — it’s something that’s “top of mind,” Hardwick said.

The European Union, which recently launched a rearmament effort focused on purchasing weapons from European manufacturers, prepared to hit back with counter-tariffs of nearly 21 billion euros before Trump paused his 20% tariffs on the bloc.

China has responded to Trump’s moves with a 125% tariff on U.S. goods and most pointedly, a limit on exports of certain rare earth minerals and

magnets essential for defense technology such as missiles, radar systems, drones, robotics and jet engines.

Trump issued an executive order last month directing Howard Lutnick, the commerce secretary, to open a national security investigation into potential new tariffs on all U.S. critical minerals imports, escalating the fight.

The consequences for the military industrial base could be steep. A single F-35 contains 900 pounds of rare earths, a Virginia-class submarine contains 9,200 pounds of them and China processes 90% of the world’s rare earths supply.

“Even before the latest restrictions, the U.S. defense industrial base struggled with limited capacity and lacked the ability to scale up production to meet defense technology demands,” according to an analysis by the Center for Strategic and International Studies think tank. “Further bans on critical minerals inputs will only widen the gap, enabling China to strengthen its military capabilities more quickly than the United States.”

There have been signs that the trade war could be abating somewhat. Trump recently said the 145% tariff

that he put on Chinese imports will “come down substantially.” Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said he was engaged in trade negotiations with more than a dozen countries.

Defense companies have, for the most part, expressed optimism that they will be able to weather the changing tariff policies with minimal impact on business, with Northrop Grumman saying last month that it did not yet see significant risk to its programs.

But defense contractor RTX, formerly known as Raytheon Technologies, cautioned it could take a \$850 million hit in profit if global tariffs and separate levies on steel and aluminum and goods from China, Canada and Mexico remain in effect through the year.

“Like many companies in the industry, our supply chain and customer base are global, and we import raw materials, parts and modules from around the world,” CEO Chris Calio said in an earnings call. “In light of this, we would be impacted if the current environment were to stay in place.”

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MILITARY

Army altering its fitness test yet again

By LYDIA GORDON
Stars and Stripes

Soldiers will once again have to get familiar with a different physical fitness test, as the Army moves toward a renamed one that drops an event and alters scoring standards, the service recently announced.

Beginning in June, a revised version called the Army Fitness Test will replace the 3-year-old Army Combat Fitness Test, according to an Army statement on April 22.

The updated test will feature five events instead of the current six and introduce higher, sex-neutral and age-normalized standards for soldiers in combat arms roles, the statement said.

It remains unclear how event scoring will differ from current standards, though the Army said additional guidance, including details on scoring, will be given this month.

“The change reflects the Army’s continued focus on building a physical-

ly ready force capable of meeting operational demands in austere environments,” the statement said.

The new test’s combat occupation standard will apply equally to men and women, with scores adjusted only for age.

The general standard, however, is based on performance expectations tailored by both sex and age groups, according to the statement.

One notable difference is the removal of the standing power throw.

That event has proved broadly unpopular with soldiers, a number of whom say the event is geared more toward technique than power and puts shorter soldiers at a disadvantage.

The most recent Army Combat Fitness Test was updated in 2022 after originally replacing the decades-old Army Physical Fitness Test in 2020. The ACFT differed significantly from its predecessor and was aimed at diminishing injury risk and assessing



DURAN JONES/U.S. Army

Soldiers take part in the Army Combat Fitness Test. Beginning in June, the ACFT will be replaced by the Army Fitness Test.

combat readiness.

Events retained in the Army Fitness Test from the 2022 update are the three-repetition deadlift, hand-release pushups, sprint-drag-carry, plank and 2-mile run.

Soldiers in combat arms roles will be

required to score at least 60 points of a potential 100 per event, with a minimum overall score of 350.

Those in combat support specialties must also achieve a minimum of 60 points for each event, with a reduced minimum total score of 300.

The Army Fitness Test is based on Rand Corp. analysis and service data from nearly a million records, the statement said.

Announcement of the testing changes comes in the wake of a March 31 memo from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth calling for a review and enhancement of physical fitness standards in combat arms roles.

Soldiers will no longer take the ACFT after May 31, though all fitness testing prior to that date will remain valid, the Army secretary said in an April 17 memo.

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MILITARY

Navy cancels Biden-era climate policy

Plan had committed to cutting emissions by 65% by 2030

By CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Navy Secretary John Phelan has canceled the Navy's Climate Action 2030 program, which was enacted by the Biden administration in 2022 to improve the service's energy efficiency.

"We need to focus on having a lethal and ready naval force, unimpeded by ideologically motivated regulations," Phelan said in a video posted to his official X account.

The rescinded plan had committed the Navy to reducing its overall emissions by 65% by 2030 and reach net-zero emissions by 2050. Net-zero emissions mean some greenhouse gases are released but are offset by the removal of an equivalent amount of the gases from the atmosphere.

Scientists have said rising sea levels, recurrent flooding and more frequent and destructive hurricanes result from man-made climate change and are a particular challenge for the Navy.

Hurricane Sandy, in 2012, caused \$50 million in damage to Naval Weapons Station Earle, a critical ammunition resupply base in New Jersey. The Navy combined \$1.9 million in defense funds



JACQUILYN DAVIS/U.S. Marine Corps

Navy Secretary John Phelan, left, speaks with Marine Corps Lt. Col. Matthew Bagley, commanding officer of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461, during a tour at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., on April 10.

with \$61 million from the local county to restore the beaches and salt marsh to protect the installation from storm surge.

Those efforts were still underway in 2020 when Hurricane Sally significantly damaged more than 600 facilities at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. The Navy deferred \$49 million in sustainment and modernization requirements to fund initial response and repairs to withstand future storms.

"Climate change increases risk, exposes vulnerabilities to our people, installations, platforms, operations, and allies and partners," Meredith Berger,

assistant secretary of the Navy for energy, installations and environment, said in 2022 when the program was announced.

The goals listed were meant to hit targets included in an executive order issued in 2021 to all federal agencies by former President Joe Biden. President Donald Trump axed Biden's executive order, "Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad," on Jan. 20, when he rescinded 78 orders issued by the previous administration.

In mid-March, the Defense Department announced it would flush climate change policies and initiatives deemed

"inconsistent with our core warfighter mission." Phelan canceling the Navy's Climate Action 2030 brings the sea service into compliance with those efforts.

"Now, it's done," Phelan said in the video.

Neither Phelan nor his office provided additional details about what efforts were canceled or whether any were being considered separate from the now defunct Climate Action 2030 program.

"The Department of the Navy is focused on shipbuilding, deterrence and warfighting. We will no longer be sidetracked by climate-focused decision-making. Any distraction to those core priorities removes valuable resources better spent on readiness and operational effectiveness," said Kristina Wong, spokeswoman for Phelan.

Wong did not say how much money the Navy expects the canceled climate plan to save the service.

Later, Phelan announced the cancellation of 45 "nonessential" grants and awards, as well as information technology contracts deemed ineffective and over-budget, which he said would save the Navy nearly \$300 million. Among the items canceled, Phelan said, was the studying of the "population consequences of the disturbance of humpback whales in the context of climate change."

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VA creates task force to target anti-Christian bias

By LINDA F. HERSEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A new task force targeting anti-Christian bias at the Department of Veterans Affairs was established after some VA facilities restricted sermon content and an Army Reserve chaplain was removed from duty for preaching about biblical text against homosexuality, the VA said.

VA Secretary Doug Collins, an attorney and Air Force Reserve chaplain, said the task force was a response to documented "anti-Christian bias" at some VA facilities that included the punishment of Army Re-

serve chaplain Russell Trubey over a sermon that he gave in 2024 at the Coatesville VA Medical Center in Pennsylvania.

The new task force will collect reports from employees on actions and activities that are deemed "hostile" to Christian views and values, according to an internal memo that Collins sent to VA employees.

Among the incidents that led to the creation of the task force was an investigation of Trubey in 2024 following complaints over a sermon that he gave titled, "When a Culture Excludes God," according to Trubey's attorneys.

Trubey warned in the sermon that

homosexuality was counter to teachings in the Bible, according to First Liberty Institute and Independence Law Center, the law firms representing Trubey. Some people walked out of the church service and raised concerns about his address, Trubey's lawyers said in a letter to Collins in February.

"After the service ended and when Chaplain Trubey was cleaning up the chapel, an onsite VA police officer approached him alleging complaints about the content of his sermon," according to a description of events by First Liberty.

The attorneys wrote Trubey was transferred out of chaplain service while the VA investigated him over

"inappropriate conduct." Trubey was reassigned to stocking shelves and other duties unrelated to his chaplaincy, the lawyers wrote.

"Trubey experienced ostracization, strange looks and being the subject of the workplace rumor mill," according to the letter.

Chaplains later were barred from preaching sermons that could be construed as political or divisive, the lawyers wrote. They contended censorship of chaplain sermons and other incidents of "religious discrimination" are a systemic problem across the VA.

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MILITARY

Army opens 155 mm facility in Arkansas

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

The Army and General Dynamics recently opened a new artillery production facility in Arkansas, which will produce roughly half the service's 155 mm artillery shells once it is fully operational, according to service officials.

The new load, assemble and pack facility in Camden is expected to produce some 50,000 shells per month, according to the Army. Service officials since 2022 have sought to boost production of the Army's 155 mm artillery shells to 100,000 per month as it sent millions of rounds to Ukraine to bolster that nation's defenses against Russian military invaders.

In an April 22 statement, Army Secretary Dan Driscoll made no mention of the efforts to support Ukraine's defense, but he said the new plant would be critical in ensuring U.S. troops are outfitted with the best "war-winning capabilities."

Army officials had previously said the service could produce some 15,000 155 mm shells on its production lines before Russia invaded Ukraine in Feb-

ruary 2022. It has since quadrupled its 155 mm shell production, officials said.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine set off a massive effort by the U.S. military and NATO allies to arm Kyiv's military. The Pentagon sent Ukraine some 200 155 mm Howitzers and more than 3 million 155 mm rounds since the start of the war, according to State Department data from January. Since President Donald Trump's return to the White House that month, the Pentagon has scaled back its support of Ukraine, as the United States sought to broker a peace deal between the countries. So far, that effort has failed to accomplish a lasting ceasefire.

Army officials under former President Joe Biden said the Ukraine-arming efforts unveiled major problems in the service's supply lines, including single sources of some 155 mm parts that slowed its ability to ramp up production. The new efforts included moving shell production from a single facility to four separate facilities this year.

The Camden, Ark., facility will be a final assembly plant, where 155 mm metal projectile bodies will be filled



COREY CONFER/U.S. Army

The Army recently opened a production facility in Arkansas to produce 155 mm artillery shells.

with explosive materials, assembled and packed for shipment, according to the Army.

General Dynamics said the new facility would use the latest technology including advanced air-cooling systems that "improve the quality and efficiency of the 155 mm artillery"

load, assemble and pack process and reduce hazardous waste. Army officials said the facility will also use "advanced automation and digital quality tracking" to ensure consistent production.

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Air Force picks sites for upgraded North American radar

By GARY WARNER
Stars and Stripes

Three locations in Oregon, and one each in Idaho and Nevada have been selected as potential sites for a part of a \$400 million modernized radar system to detect air and space attacks in North America, the Air Force disclosed.

A listing in the April 18 edition of the Federal Register said the Air Force would prepare environmental impact statements for possible construction of new Homeland Defense Over-The-Horizon Radar transmission and receiver sets.

Ontario, Burns and Christmas Valley in Oregon, McDermitt in Nevada and Mountain Home in Idaho were listed in the Federal Register as cities and towns near potential sites.

"Once constructed, the [radar sys-

tems] would provide persistent, long-range early detection capabilities of airborne threats approaching North America," the Air Force said.

The service website for the project said new systems are needed because current line-of-site radar systems are distorted by the curvature of the Earth.

"The proposed action is needed because U.S. adversaries continue to develop and deploy highly advanced weapons systems capable of disrupting or defeating our military and civilian targets in North America," the Air Force said. "Without [these radar systems], airborne threats could approach North America without early detection, resulting in reduced decision time for military and national leaders to deter, deescalate or defeat threats, placing North American homeland security at risk."

The sites will be controlled out of Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho.

The announcement is an indication that the Pentagon is moving ahead with initial steps on the system, which was originally planned as a joint project between the U.S. and Canada. The two countries cooperate on the North American Aerospace Defense Command, which monitors for air, space and maritime incursions on territory and waters of the two nations.

The U.S.-Canadian cooperation has come into question since President Donald Trump assumed office in January. Trump has made statements that Canada should be America's 51st state, which was criticized as unrealistic and belligerent by new Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney.

On March 19, Carney flew to the

Arctic territory of Nunavut to announce Canada would spend \$6.5 billion to buy the Jindalee Over-the-Horizon Radar from Australia.

"It will enable Canada to detect and respond to both air and maritime threats over our Arctic both faster and from further away," Carney said at a news conference. "It will most fundamentally keep all Canadians safe."

The United States had also been in talks with the Australians to buy the system.

The Air Force would receive 4,987 acres from the Bureau of Land Management, if the proposal is approved. Another 2,622 acres would be acquired from the Oregon Military Department, which includes the Oregon National Guard.

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MILITARY

Marines drill with drone, paragliding tech

Innovations provide commanders with clearer picture of modern battlefield

By BRIAN McELHINEY
Stars and Stripes

IE SHIMA, Okinawa — U.S. Marines demonstrated how they're using civilian drone and powered paragliding technology to provide commanders with a clearer battlefield picture during a recent drill on this Okinawa island.

The III Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group is conducting its first Kaiju Rain exercise at sites across Okinawa, including Ie Shima Auxiliary Airfield, and in South Korea through May 15.

The exercise combines four annual training events led by separate elements of the group into a rehearsal of sensor capabilities across the unit, "in order to be the joint terminal attack controller of the joint force," commander Col. Joshua Mayoral said in an email.

To identify enemy vessels in waters surrounding Ie Shima, the 5th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, or ANGLICO, used small, unmanned aircraft such as the Skydio X2 drone, team leader Capt. Pat Benn said during the demonstration.

Heavy rain and fog prevented drone and paraglider flights that morning. However, Sgt. Jordan Ishimura briefly



Marine Sgt. Brett Lite, a powered paraglider pilot with Bravo Company, 3rd Radio Battalion, revs the engine on his paraglider motor.

flew a drone about 20 feet into the air. "Generally [the weather] has been favorable for the last week or so," Benn said.

The company led Katana Strike, one of the four exercises under Kaiju Rain.

"We have redundancy in our sensor game plan, so we employ a number of different sensors," including binoculars, to provide intelligence, he said. The Marines' version of Skydio's X2D, which the 5th ANGLICO has used for about a year, has a range of up to 3½ miles and is equipped with cameras



PHOTOS BY BRIAN McELHINEY/Stars and Stripes

Marine Corps Sgt. Jordan Ishimura demonstrates the Skydio X2D system at Ie Shima Auxiliary Airfield, Okinawa.

that can digitally zoom up to 16 times, Benn said.

A four-Marine team runs drone missions for the company — one to operate the drone, two communications Marines, and one security Marine on lookout, he said.

"For expeditionary advanced base operations, the Marine Corps needs to be well-informed," Benn said. The company provides commanders with "awareness of the battle space and assured command and control so they can make not only safe but effective decisions."

Expeditionary advanced base operations — a key tenet of the Marines' Force Design plan — calls for small, mobile groups of Marines to disperse within the range of enemy missiles to seize and hold islands and sink enemy vessels.

The 3rd Radio Battalion, deployed from Kaneohe, Hawaii, used powered paragliders during its portion of the exercise, dubbed Corvus Dawn, to quickly insert and extract six-Marine

teams to conduct missions, said Master Sgt. Matthew Webb, operations chief for Bravo Company.

The paragliders, which have a 100-mile range, allow Marines to travel farther without air support, he said. Flying them over open ocean is "under review."

The battalion has been using the paragliders for the past year. Sgt. Brett Lite said flying one "takes some getting used to."

"It's similar to the canopy flight to a certain degree, but ... it is its own insert platform," he said.

The battalion plans to use its sensing capabilities early in a conflict, commander Lt. Col. Gary Keefer said after the demonstration.

"From a Force Design perspective, we are demonstrating our capacity to be an element of the JTAC for the joint force and our ability to sense on behalf of the joint force," he said.

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