

photos by Staff Sgt. A.C. Eggman



Silently surveying surroundings

BALAD AIR BASE, Iraq — At first glance, it appears to be an airplane model a child might pull off a local toy store shelf. But unlike the recreational remote aircraft, this force-protection asset is no toy. The 7-pound aircraft allows security forces to see beyond what the human eye can see and silently survey the surroundings without anyone knowing it. It cannot be heard and sometimes is mistaken for a bird.

The 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron is equipped with the latest in unmanned aerial vehicle technology — the Force Protection Airborne Surveillance System. The system allows security forces to see beyond Balad's perimeter and provides accurate, real-time visual assessments of detected threats.

"It flies real-time — no delays — providing on-scene surveillance we have traditionally not had, especially in a deployed environment," said Tech. Sgt. **Lloyd Joyner**, the squadron's noncommissioned officer in charge of the system who deployed from Shaw Air Force Base, S.C.

Named Desert Hawk, the miniature unmanned aerial vehicle is made mainly of a Styrofoam-like material and is very simple to operate.

"One of the biggest advantages of the Desert Hawk is being able to fly under the [weather] ceiling," Sergeant Joyner said. "They [other UAV platforms] can't."

Desert Hawk is able to take off from a clearing without using a runway. It also allows security forces to monitor potentially dangerous areas without putting any Airmen or Soldiers into harm's way.

"It gives you the ability to see what the enemy is doing before you engage them," said Senior Airman **Joe Barrientos**, also deployed to the 332nd from Shaw.

It may look like a model toy and appear to be a bird in flight, but to the people who operate the system, Desert Hawk is a valuable asset that can keep the enemy at bay and Airmen and Soldiers out of harm's way.

— Staff Sgt. A.C. Eggman
332nd Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

Desert Hawk launches (above) as Senior Airman David Tillery stands fast. The 7-pound unmanned aerial vehicle allows security forces to see beyond a base's perimeter and provides accurate, real-time visual assessments of detected

threats. Airman Tillery (below left) and Tech. Sgt. Lloyd Joyner look over Desert Hawk after a mission. Both Airmen deployed to the 332nd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron from Shaw Air Force Base, S.C.

