

High praise at handover

LEUT Pete Croce

PERSONNEL from Australia's Heron Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) Detachment in Afghanistan have been praised by US and Australian commanders following the latest successful rotation.

Rotation 13 CO WGCDR Jonathan McMullan said Australia's Heron intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) platform was consid-

ered one of the best within Regional Command-South (RC-South).

"It's heartening to go into the RC-South Commanding General's meeting and be told we are essentially the best ISR platform in theatre because of our dogged determination to complete every mission, every day," WGCDR McMullan said.

"Heron will turn up every single morning if we can safely launch the aircraft. That has seen it complete missions sometimes seven out of 10 days.

ISR overwatch is now a key enabler for mission success."

Rotation 13 has handed over to Rotation 14, which will continue Australia's ISR contribution and enhance RC-South security during the conduct of Afghanistan's Presidential and Provincial Council April elections.

The elections will be a key event for Afghanistan and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which now have the lead for security.

The Heron Detachment was

re-tasked to provide ISR support to RC-South when Australia's mission in Uruzgan province successfully concluded in December.

The Heron first deployed to Afghanistan in January 2010 and Rotation 13 reached a cumulative 20,000 hours of flying time in mid-March.

MAJGEN Paul LaCamera, the International Security Assistance Force's Commanding General of RC-South, and Operation Slipper com-

mander MAJGEN Craig Orme, both thanked detachment personnel during a medal ceremony at Kandahar Airfield on March 2.

Following the completion of Australia's mission in Uruzgan, Australia shifted to a nationally oriented mission in Afghanistan, providing ongoing training and advisory support to the ANSF.

About 400 ADF personnel continue to work in Afghanistan in both Kabul and Kandahar.

Bronze Star recognises Heron effort

FLTLT Jaimie Abbott

WGCDR Jonathan McMullan, who commanded Rotation 13 of the Kandahar-based RAAF Heron detachment, has been awarded the US Bronze Star for exemplary leadership while commanding Heron operations in Afghanistan from September 2013 to March this year.

WGCDR McMullan, also CO 5 Flight, received the award in his final days leading the task unit.

The presentation was made by the Commander of International Security Assistance Force Regional Command-South, MAJGEN Paul LaCamera, of the US Army, at the Heron hangar in Kandahar.

Under WGCDR McMullan's command, Rotation 13 maintained the highest rate of effort of any Heron rotation. His team provided outstanding intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support to ensure the security of Multinational Base Tarin Kot during the ADF retrograde in November-December 2013, then seamlessly transitioned command and control arrangements to support US and coalition forces in Regional Command-South leading up to the 2014 Afghan presidential elections.

Already highly decorated, WGCDR McMullan had previously deployed on Operation Slipper seven times, including Heron Rotation 5 in 2011, for which he received a Commendation for Distinguished Service in the 2012 Queen's Birthday Honours List.



MANY ACHIEVEMENTS: WGCDR Jonathan McMullan, centre, with Commander Regional Command-South MAJGEN Paul LaCamera, left, and Commander Joint Task Force 633 MAJGEN Craig Orme inside the Heron hangar during the Rotation 13 medal presentation at Kandahar Airfield. Inset, WGCDR Jonathan McMullan presents framed Australian and US flags to MAJGEN Orme.

Photos: WC2 Rob Nyffenegger

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Triton boost for Edinburgh

THE government has committed to the acquisition of the Triton Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), subject to the successful completion of the US Navy development program under way.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott made the announcement during a visit to RAAF Base Edinburgh on March 13, accompanied by CAF AIRMSHL Geoff Brown.

The aircraft will patrol Australia's vast ocean approaches and work closely with other existing and future ADF assets to secure Australia's ocean resources, including energy resources off northern Australia, and help to protect our borders.

They will provide the ADF with unprecedented maritime surveillance capabilities, operating at altitudes up to 55,000 feet over extremely long ranges while remain-



IMPORTANT CAPABILITY: CPL Tara Enchong, of 462SQN, shows Prime Minister Tony Abbott the Distributed Ground Station - Australia during the PM's visit to RAAF Base Edinburgh to announce the acquisition of the Triton Unmanned Aircraft System. Inset, CAF AIRMSHL Geoff Brown signs the visitor's book.

Photos: CPL Nicci Freeman

ing airborne for up to 33 hours.

The Triton UAV's will be based in Adelaide. The acquisition will require about \$140 million of new facilities and infrastructure, about \$100 million of which will be invested in South Australia.

"This potentially involves the

expansion and enhancement of existing facilities and infrastructure at Edinburgh," Mr Abbott said.

The total number of Triton UAV's to be acquired and their introduction into service date will be further considered by government in 2016, based on the Defence White Paper.

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