Major Jeremy Reynolds, a.k.a."Globesmasher": A Canadian C-17 Pilot Reflects on his Iraq War Experiences

By Richard Sanders, coordinator, Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade

ajor Jeremy Reynolds has been a frequent contributor to various online, militarydiscussion groups. Reynold's self-ascribed online moniker in these fora is "Globesmasher." This is a play on the official nickname for the huge Boeingbuilt C-17 cargo/transport plane, namely the "Globemaster III."

"Globesmasher" has introduced himself to internet discussion groups as a Canadian pilot who flew U.S. Air Force (USAF) C-17s during the Iraq war. He and other discussants provide enough detailed information to reveal without a doubt that "Globemaster" is, in fact, Major Jeremy Reynolds.¹

During these often-technical discussions, Major Reynolds offers "first hand" knowledge of the C-17 to an appreciative, and at times reverential, audience of avid Canadian militarists. While sharing his considerable expertise about the C-17, Reynolds offers glimpses into Canada's contribution to the Iraq air war from the point of view of someone who, as he puts it, was "engaged in the actual open[ing] days of the invasion."² For example, in reference to the C-17, Major Reynolds makes the following revelation about his many sorties into the war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq:

"I've operated the aircraft from 2001 - 2004 on dirt strips ([Forward Operating Base] FOB Rhino and also shattered slab concrete runways (Kandanhar [sic], Bagram, Masar-i-Sharif) in Afghanistan, and *all of the northern FOBs in Iraq*." (Emphasis added)

In another online discussion about C-17s, Major Reynolds says

"I flew the beast from Sept 2001 -Sept 2004. 1500 hours in 3 years 2 years on OEF [Operation Enduring Freedom] in Afghanistan and 1 year on *OIF [Operation Iraqi Freedom] in Iraq.*" (Emphasis added) A Pilot in the Bashur Airdrop Major Reynolds uses acronym-laden prose to describe his contribution to a major operation of the Iraq war:

"I also flew in the Bashur airdrop of the 173rd [Airborne Brigade] in [Operation Iraqi Freedom] OIF (#9 [plane] in a formation of 15). 1000 men dropped [using parachutes] from 10 [C-17] aircraft in formation, blacked out [i.e., with their lights off] on NVGs [i.e, using Night Vision Goggles] and 5 [C-17] aircraft in the lead dropping [heavy equipment] HE in formation. 1000 men in a single pass over the [Drop Zone] DZ -100 [paratroopers] per aircraft, 50 per side double door.... It is a very capable 'tactical' aircraft."³

This "airdrop" of paratroopers and heavy equipment, in which Major Reynolds so proudly took part, was an important event in the early days of the 2003 invasion. It is widely recognized as having "opened the northern front" of the Iraq war. In fact, this much-her-

Canadian C-17 Crew Trained on U.S. Missions in Iraq



anadian military pilots, Majors Jean Maisonneuve and Jeremy Reynolds were "exchange pilots with the U.S. Air Force [USAF] between 2001 and 2004"¹ and "flew the C-17 in Iraq and Afghanistan."²

While "taking part in operational missions"³ in the Iraq and Afghan wars, these Canadian CC-130 pilots Major Jeremy Reynolds (left) "gearing up for a night flight aboard the C-17 while serving on exchange with the U.S. Air Force in 2004." Major Jean Maisonneuve (right) in the cockpit of a Canadian C-17.

learned to fly the giant C-17 Globemaster III transport/cargo planes and saw "what the aircraft can do firsthand."⁴ During his three years with the USAF, Major Reynolds chalked up 1,500 hours⁵ flying C-17s, while Major Maisonneuve acquired "about 2,000 hours"⁶ piloting these huge "strategic airlifters."

There were also three other Canadian air force personnel learning the ropes with Reynolds and Maisonneuve. Besides these two "pilots who were part of the original C-17 exchange



program from 2001–2004," "there was one MX officer" (or "Maintenance Major"), "one loadmaster" and "a logistics Capt[ain]."⁷ While stationed at state-side USAF bases and during military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, these three Canadians learned the technical intricacies of loading and maintaining the mammoth C-17 aircraft.



In March 2003, C-17s dropped 1000 troops over Bashur, Iraq, in the largest U.S. formation airdrop since WWII. Paratroopers seen here are waiting to board C-17s for this mission. A Canadian—Major Jeremy Reynolds—piloted one of the C-17s.

alded operation has found its place in military lore as "the largest formation airdrop carried out by the United States since World War II."⁴ It took place on March 26, 2003, when "more than 950 paratroopers from the 173d Airborne Brigade jumped into Bashur, Iraq, to set the stage for a northern front. Two days later [there were]...more than 2,000" U.S. troops entrenched at the small landing strip.⁵ On April 9, the *Stars and Stripes* military magazine reported that "So far, more than 150 flights, mostly C-17 Globemasters, have touched down at the airfield since

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the paratroops secured the area," and "[o]n average, the Air Force is delivering 1 million pounds of cargo a day to Bashur."⁶

The heaviest pieces of cargo delivered to Bashur by C-17s were Abrams Main Battle Tanks. As Major Reynolds put it:

"The C-17s hauled the American Abrahms [sic] M1A1 into Northern Iraq in 2003. They weighed in at 134,000 lbs, fully armoured and fully armed."⁷

He went on to describe the scene aboard a C-17 saying

"All the ammunition was loaded in the racks in the actual tank.

It drove on-the crew stepped out

and sat in the sidewall seats. It then drove off at destination ready to fight—that was it.

All the ammo and add-on armour added a great deal to the overall weight of the vehicle."⁸

To illustrate this, Reynolds posted "a picture of one of the hauls one night." The photograph shows an ammo-laden tank draped with U.S. flags and lashed down inside a C-17. Whether "Globesmasher" took this photograph during one of his battle forays into Iraq is unknown. (See below.)

> Why were Canadian Pilots trained to fly U.S. C-17s in 2003?

In another online discussion about the C-17, Major Reynolds notes that in "Sept 2004" "I left the USAF exchange [program] as an Airdrop [Night Vision Goggles Instructor Pilot] NVG IP."⁹ "Instructor pilots," like Reynolds and Maisonneuve, are specially trained to teach others, and Reynolds' training involved learning to instruct pilots how to operate C-17s during lights-out, nocturnal operations, in which night vision goggles are used.

The fact that Reynolds and Maisonneuve started training on USAF C-17s as "Instructor Pilots" in 2001 is



This photo of an U.S. M1 Abrams battle tank aboard an American C-17, was posted by "Globesmasher" who said: "The ammunition was loaded in the racks in the actual tank. It drove on—the crew stepped out and sat in the sidewall seats. It then drove off at destination ready to fight."

curious because Canada did not actually own any of these warplanes until 2007. An election-campaign pledge to purchase C-17s was made by the Conservatives in December 2005,10 but it wasn't until June 2006 that their newlyelected government announced its controversial intention to purchase these strategic airlifters.¹¹ Canada's \$3.4 billion-dollar contract to buy four C-17s from Boeing was signed in February 2007.12

Whatever the rea-

son for their training as C-17 "Instructor Pilots" five years before an elected Canadian government had even decided to buy these planes, it certainly was propitious. When the Canadian Forces did finally have four C-17s on order, pilots Maisonneuve and Reynolds were not only ready and willing to fly them, they were already conveniently trained to teach other Canadians how to fly them.

So, these Canadian graduates of the Iraq air war were not only the first Canadian pilots certified to fly American C-17s,¹³ they were also chosen to



set up and oversee the elaborate training programs that were needed to prepare dozens of Canadian pilots and aircrew on the intricacies of how to operate, load and maintain these expensive new Canadian warplanes.

More Canadians "trained"

in Iraq War Missions, 2007 According to *Ottawa Citizen* reporter David Pugliese, the C-17 program trained "four crews per aircraft." That meant "32 pilots and 24 loadmasters. Another 96 technicians and 10 maintenance management personnel" to "round out Canada's C-17 team."¹⁴

Pugliese also noted that: "Reynolds, who helped design the Canadian C-17 air crew training course with fellow pilot Maj. Jean Maisonneuve, credits an earlier exchange program with the U.S. Air Force for the speed in which everything was put into place. Several years ago both he and Maisonneuve were involved in C-17 operations, with both eventually flying the

aircraft on missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Reynolds also credits the close working relationship between the Canadian and U.S. air forces for the ease in setting up the training package. Many of the officers he had to deal with in arranging the courses were former colleagues from his days flying with the U.S. Air Force."¹⁵

Just as Reynolds and Maisonneuve had received in-theatre Iraq war training aboard C-17s in the early 2000s, so too did later Canadian cadre

Canadian Pilots Flew C-17 Missions in Iraq War in 2007

anadian Forces personnel learned to operate Canada's newest military plane, the giant Boeing C-17, by training on American jets, including flying those planes into Iraq in support of the U.S. war, according to a memo written by Canada's top general and obtained by Canwest News Service.

General Rick Hillier, [then] chief of Canada's defence staff, wrote to Gordon O'Connor, then-minister of national defence, in May 2007 that in the summer and fall of that year, Canadian military aircrew would fly into Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. That decision was taken without informing Parliament.

"Canadians have been very clear from the beginning that they wanted no part of George Bush's war on Iraq," said NDP defence critic Dawn Black, "and they certainly don't want to see Canadians getting involved



through a back door."

The flights into Iraq were part of the second phase of training for Canadian crews, a phase referred to by the military as "seasoning."

"To ensure flexibility, as well as obtain maximum exposure to the roles and missions of the C-17, deployment approval on [Operations] Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom [i.e., the Iraq and Afghan wars] has been requested," General Hillier wrote. "The overall risk associated with allowing [Canadian Forces] CF aircrew to operate on [U.S. Air Force] USAF C-17 missions to Iraq is low."

Dan Dugas, a spokesman for Defence Minister Peter MacKay, said the Canadians on exchange can end up in Iraq, as they did in this case, when the U.S. unit they have been assigned to is sent by U.S. authorities to Iraq. Under the terms of the Canada-U.S. officer exchange program, the participating officers essentially become part of the other country's military.



'Mother' and Child, Air Force Armaments Museum, Eglin AFB, Florida.

get "seasoned" or "embedded" in actual Iraq war missions in 2007. (See sidebar, pp.48-49.) In the first of three training reports to online followers, "Globesmasher" noted in February 2007 that after their "initial qualification training" at McChord Air Force Base, Oklahoma, Canadian trainees

"move onto another USAF base to begin 4 months of 'imbedded' training with the USAF.... The maintainers (the technicians) have already begun their initial qualification training in Charleston [Air Force Base in South Carolina] (about 50 of them) and they too will be 'imbedded' with the USAF."¹⁶

About three months later, Reynolds provided a progress report: "[W]e are extremely busy in the USA

Canada took delivery of the first of its four Boeing C-17s in 2007.

The C-17s are among the biggest planes in the world. They are used by the U.S., British, Australian and other air forces for strategic airlift, the long-haul transport of military equipment and personnel.

In anticipation of the delivery of the airplanes, Canada sent a first crew, consisting of at least one pilot, co-pilot and a loadmaster, to McChord Air Force Base in Washington. That crew trained at McChord until July 2007. A second Canadian C-17 aircrew was then sent to Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma. Altus is the where the U.S. air force does most of its training for its C-17 crews. That second crew was then assigned for "seasoning" with a U.S. unit flying into Iraq, according to General Hillier's memo.

Source: "Canadian pilots flew missions in Iraq," *Ottawa Citizen*, April 22, 2008. www.canada.com/story_print.html?id= 46f230d1-ca87-47a6-99aa-d14e77652d18 right now getting the initial cadre of crews (6 pilots and 6 loadmasters) up to speed. We're trying to cram as much training (the embedded seasoning training) as we can.... The next batch/wave/phase of initial cadre...should be ready for their 'applied training' beginning in July."¹⁷

In his next update two months later, Major Reynolds revealed that the so-called "applied" or "embedded seasoning training" for Canada's C-17 crews included "exposure" to war zone "operations" with the USAF in Iraq:

"Most of the guys from the first phase will be returning with about ~160 hours or so of flying experience and ready to fly operationally as soon as the aircraft arrive in YTR [Canadian Forces Base Trenton, Ontario]. Most of their training down here consisted of local training missions and also 10 day 'staged' operations from various USAF locations into Iraq for [Operation Iraqi Freedom] OIF for a little bit of 'operational' exposure."¹⁸

On "Daisy Cutters" and

the "Mother of all Bombs" During his own "'operational' exposure" to the war in Iraq, Major Reynolds had to confront the possibility that he would be ordered to bomb Iraq. Although the C-17 is a cargo/ transport aircraft, and not a bomber, the C-17 is tasked to drop what are oftentouted as the world's largest "conventional" bombs, namely MOABs. Technically speaking, MOAB stands for "Massive Ordnance Air Blast." However, "The MOAB" is more often known, quite affectionately by some, as "The Mother Of All Bombs."

In one internet discussion about these horrendous weapons, "Globesmasher," aka Major Reynolds, re-

Daisy Cutters & MOABs

(the Mother Of All Bombs) are among the world's largest non-nuclear weapons. Major Reynolds said he wanted to drop one during his stint in Iraq with the U.S. Air Force:

"I sat for days in the 'alert posture' and hoped I would be able to drop one on the Whaleback."

vealed a personal, almost-nostalgic disclosure about one of his hopes during the Iraq war. When one member of an online military forum wondered aloud whether the "C17 could deliver a couple of MOAB's??", Reynolds responded quite candidly:

"Yes it can.

The C-17 (and the C-130s) can both drop the MOAB ([Guided Bomb Unit] GBU-43) and also the Daisy Cutter ([Bomb Live Unit] BLU-82). The Daisy Cutter is smaller than the MOAB and weighs in at only about 15,000 lbs of high explosive.

They are both rigged [within the aircraft] to [Heavy Equipment] HE xetraction [sic] platforms and are dropped using the HE airdrop check-lists...pretty easy really.

The USAF kept an airdrop aircrew on alert...so that they could go out and drop any of these as required. I never got called but *I sat* for days in the 'alert posture' and hoped I would be able to drop one on the Whaleback to support the guys on the ground ... never happened though."¹⁹ (Emphasis added)

Rushed quickly and publicly through the development process "in only nine weeks to be available for the Iraq campaign,"²⁰ the first MOAB explosion was a carefully calculated public event. The test blast, conducted on March 11, 2003, just days before the official start of the war, was covered that day by CNN and other media.²¹

Weighing in at over 21,000 pounds and measuring thirty feet in length, the MOAB is often described as the most powerful, non-nuclear weapon in the U.S. arsenal. It is, in fact, "the largest-ever satellite-guided, airdelivered weapon in history."²² The walloping explosion it creates was designed not only to "attack large area targets" but also to "have a substantial psychological effect on those who witness its use."²³ And, apparently, judging from Reynolds' MOAB-positive attitude, besides creating the expected "psychological effect" of instilling terror among Iraqis, the MOAB has also had a profound "psychological effect" upon those who were itching to drop this "Massive Ordnance" bomb on Iraqis during the opening salvos of war.

The other infamous U.S. bomb, mentioned glowingly by Major Reynolds is the so-called "Daisy Cutter," which was developed in the early 1970s. The huge blasts from these unguided, "dumb bombs" were used during the Vietnam war to "clear [U.S.] helicopter landing zones about 250 feet in diameter."24 Presumably, the euphemistic name, "Daisy Cutters," comes from the fact that these explosives can fell large swaths of rainforest as if the dense growth of trees were mere daisies. U.S. helicopters then moved in carrying troops and weapons to wage the genocidal Vietnam war. "Daisy Cutters" blasted their way into the psyches of another generation of victims during the 1991 Iraq war when they were used "as much for their psychological effect as for their destructive power."25

"Pick Your Poison":

The A-10 & Depleted Uranium Besides being a great admirer and would-be dropper of gargantuan munitions like MOABs and "Daisy Cutters," Major Reynolds has also waxed poetic upon two of the most horrendous war machines ever used in Iraq or elsewhere, namely, the A-10 "Thunderbolt" or "Wart Hog," and the AC-130 "Spectre." These two American warplanes carrying the designation "A" for "Attack," provide what militarists call "air support." This refers to the "act of using aircraft to attack an enemy to assist ground military forces."²⁶

For six months in 2006, dozens of participants in a Canadian military discussion group called "Army.ca Forums," debated their favourite "air support" aircraft. When one discussant posted a message saying "Pick Your Poison: What's the Best Air Support," Major Reynolds weighed in with his preference for the A-10 "Wart Hog."



The A-10, said Canadian C-17 pilot Major Jeremy Reynolds (aka "Globesmasher") has "an incredible track record in Iraq." This "incredible machine" is as "ugly as sin," he continued, "but you don't have to be good looking to kill effectively."

He expressed his preference for this exceptionally lethal aircraft by using in a prose style resembling poetry:

"A10

Low, slow and packs a deadly punch. Has plenty of loiter time and can get

right down in the weeds.

Well built, strong has an incredible track record in Iraq

Incredible machine.

Ugly as sin but you don't have to be good looking to kill effectively."²⁷

Although the A-10 may—as Major Reynolds says—be as "ugly as sin," this arguably has less to do its appearance than with people's willingness to use it to "kill effectively." The A-10 is infamous—in some circles at least for the special variety of deadly munitions that it employs. Its radioactive bullets keep on killing long after they've hit their targets and aerosolized into tiny particles. In fact, this is when the A-10's abhorrent killing powers really begin to shine.

This warplane's *raison d'être* is a weapon called the GAU-8 "Avenger," a seven-barrel gatling gun that fires 3,900 rounds of Depleted Uranium (DU) munitions per minute. Twice as dense as lead, DU projectiles pierce tank armour. Upon impact, these DU slugs are pulverized to create toxic and radioactive dust specks that can travel on the wind for as far as 26 miles.

When inhaled, DU dust increases infectious diseases caused by severe immunodeficiencies, renal and hepatic dysfunctions, leukemia, elaptic anemia, malignant neoplasms and congenital deformities. With a half life of 4.5 billion years, the health and environmental effects of DU munitions are incalculable.

Nazi research on DU munitions was given to the U.S. military in 1945. About twenty years later, the U.S. was firing them from A-10s in the Vietnam war. A-10s were used most extensively during the destruction of Iraq in 1991 when 148 of these warplanes flew over 8,000 combat sorties, and fired almost a million DU shells. U.S. and British forces reportedly fired more than 300 tons of DU munitions during that war.

DU is a byproduct of the enrichment process used to produce fuel rods for nuclear power plants. The nuclear industry is reputed to provide DU to weapons manufacturers free of charge, thus saving them the cost of trying to safely dispose of this radioactive waste. DU has thus been "disposed of" in various warzones, including Somalia (1993), Bosnia (1994-1995), Sudan (1998), Yugoslavia (1999), Afghanistan (2001-) and Iraq (2003-).²⁸

Could it be that Canada's Major Reynold's was somehow unaware of this horrific reality? While extoling the A-10's "incredible track record in Iraq," and doling out his radiant praise for the wondrous powers of this killing machine, he does not even mention DU.



"The Spectre is very cool," said Canada's Major Reynolds. "It's unbelievable the amount of weapons and ammo they have shoe-horned into the back of that thing. I would love to fly one."

The AC-130 "Spectre" Gunship is "Very Cool" Reynolds also articulated his great appreciation for another American war machine used for "air support," namely the AC-130 "Spectre." He eulogizes this "Attack" aircraft in his usual offthe-cuff style and then recalls a personal experience from his C-17 training years when he was "on exchange" with the U.S. Air Force:

"... the Spectre is very cool.

I toured through one up at Karshi Kanabad [sic] back in 2003. It's unbelievable the amount of weapons and ammo they have shoehorned into the back of that thing. I would love to fly one of those."²⁹

Major Reynold's great desire to pilot an AC-130 "Spectre" may in part derive from the fact that this warplane is a modified C-130 "Hercules." Before becoming a C-17 pilot, Reynolds "flew Hercs for 5 great years with [Canada's] 429 Sqn [Squadron] ('96 -'01) and got to see the world."³⁰

Converting a C-130 cargo/transport into an extremely lethal AC-130 "air support" attack plane is accomplished by adding three huge guns onto one side of the plane. To attack, AC-130s circle their ground targets and "saturate" them with cannon fire.³¹

Then again, perhaps the reason "Globesmasher" thinks these particular U.S. "Attack" aircraft are so "very cool" is revealed in his obvious delight that they wield such "unbelievable" quantities of "weapons and ammo." There is no doubt that the "Spectre," or "Spooky," is one of the most heavily-armed "gunships" in existence.

Reynolds' attraction to the "Spectre" may also arise from his appreciation for the role it has played in so many U.S. wars. Since its appearance in the early 1960s, U.S. forces have used the "Spectre" to great effect in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and Africa, including such wars and invasions as: Vietnam (1962-1975), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Somalia (1992-1994), Yugoslavia (1995) and Iraq (1991 and 2003).³²

"Globesmasher" does not reveal the nature of the "tour" he took aboard an AC-130 when he was in Karshi Khanabad (K2) in 2003. Beginning in 2001, K2 was an important U.S. military base in Uzbekistan, just north of the Afghan border. However, in 2005, the Uzbek government forced the American military to vacate K2.33 During those first few years of the war, thousands of Afghan civilians were massacred by U.S. forces in their successful bid to install and entrench the dreaded Northern Alliance warlords as Afghanistan's new and supposed improved government. We will never know how many innocent Afghan civilians died or what percent of those deaths were the result of U.S. attacks that used AC-130s.

However, research by University of New Hampshire professor Marc

Herold, shows that between 3,000 and 3,400 Afghan civilians were directly killed by U.S. warplanes and Special Forces' attacks between October 7, 2001 and March 2002.34 This accounting excludes civilian deaths that occurred later due to injuries from these attacks. Also excluded are civilian deaths that were an indirect consequence of the U.S. attacks. In the database of civilian deaths compiled by Professor Herold using media reports, there are 26 separate atrocities during the first 20 months of the Afghan war alone, in which AC-130s are reported to have been used in attacks that killed Afghan civilians.35

But despite, or more likely perhaps *because of,* these killing sprees that used AC-130s, Major Reynolds says he "would love to fly one."

Totally Enamoured Without a doubt, the favourite plane of Majors Reynolds and Maisonneuve is the C-17. Both rave about this warplane and were overjoyed when Canada got four of its own. "It's like a CC-130 on steroids," said Maisonneuve.

Canadian military enthusiasts are keen to promote the C-17 because

"it carries four times the payload, flies 40% faster and...twice as far [as a CC-130].... Travelling at 209 kilometres per hour, it can come to a full stop on a runway measuring between 609 and 914 metres—that's at a weight of 200 tons."³⁶

Major Reynolds simply gushed about how wonderful the C-17 is and what a great life he has had flying it:

"[I]t is such a pleasure to fly. I feel very fortunate to be able to operate the most modern, capable and versatile piece of transport equipment in the world in a very challenging and demanding role. What more can one ask for in a career?"³⁷

Reynolds, is a major cheerleader for Canada's C-17s and the "independent global reach and flexibility"³⁸ that they now provide Canadian warfighters. Reynolds has reflected that Canada's acquisition of these aircraft "brought a whole new capability" to our military. It was "a watershed moment" in "air mobility...giving an incredibly robust capability," he said. "With this fleet we truly can declare: 'Anything, anytime, anywhere."³⁹

A National Love Affair with War Planes

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New Canadian Medal for the Iraq War

ajors Jeremy Reynolds, Jean Maisonneuve, and other Canadian "exchange personnel" with the U.S. in Iraq, can receive the General Campaign Star–Expedition (GCS-EXP). This medal is now awarded with a special ribbon for "military service within the political boundaries and airspace of Iraq from 20 January 2003 onwards.... This means that CF [Canadian Forces] exchange personnel with American Forces in Iraq are eligible...."¹

In response to this news, using his usual moniker "Globesmasher," Major Reynolds had this to say:

"Well I, for one, am glad to see the creation of the GCS-EXP for those who served in OIF [Operation Iraqi Freedom] in Iraq."²

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Canada's new C-17s now fly war missions abroad and serve key propaganda/recruiting roles at highly-militarised domestic air shows.



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