

## Eye in the Sky

by Airman 1st Class Jarad A. Denton  
28th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

11/9/2010 - ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, S.D. (AFNS) -- The last 28th Bomb Wing B-1B Lancer received the necessary modifications to operate the Sniper advanced targeting pod Oct. 18.

The advanced targeting pod acts as a long-range camera, which can pinpoint targets for precision strikes and close-air-support missions.

"It's hard to imagine doing close-air support without it," said Capt. William Louie, the 34th Bomb Squadron weapons systems officer. "The sniper pod and the B-1 go together very well, especially with the expanded mission of the bomber."

Since its combat debut in 2008, the Sniper pod has become an invaluable tool in assisting coalition servicemembers on the ground in hostile areas, Captain Louie said. Its ability to provide a live video feed to ground forces has saved their lives on numerous occasions.

"It's changed the way we fight the war," Captain Louie said. "The Sniper pod is an after-market add-on that allows us to improve our CAS training and operations."

First requested in July 2006, the Sniper pod expanded the B-1's role downrange by enabling weapons systems officers to positively identify targets, self-generate coordinates, provide coalition forces with remote video feeds and employ laser-guided weapons. These capabilities, coupled with the long loiter time of the B-1 and the intense training of its aircrew members, make for an invaluable asset in the current theater of operations.

"The training we go through lessens the pain of the actual first mission," Captain Louie said. "We develop a muscle memory through training that enables us to function perfectly when things heat up and lives are on the line."

With the last B-1 receiving the Sniper pod system, aircrew members are now able to fully incorporate their expanded training plans into all the aircraft of the 28th BW. These plans focus on the diverse role of the B-1 downrange, which may include following ground forces during a mission to provide vital intelligence and support when necessary.

"The more jets we have available to train, the better we are able to hone our deployment skills," the captain said.

Col. William Eldridge, the 28th Operations Group commander, said the addition of the Sniper pod has revitalized and expanded the role of the B-1 to saving lives downrange.

"The B-1's Sniper pod has revolutionized bomber operations," Colonel Eldridge said. "For an aircraft that was developed to deliver nuclear weapons from low altitude to now perform close-air support as

a primary mission is mind blowing. The Sniper pod and B-1 combination are saving lives right now in Afghanistan.

---

Source: <http://www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123230108>