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# Look: Giant Spy Blimp Dwarfs an 18-Wheeler

- By [Noah Shachtman](#)
- [Email Author](#)
- October 7, 2011 |
- 6:30 am |
- Categories: [Air Force](#)

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That teeny-weeny, toy-looking thing to the left? An 18-wheeler truck. The giant egg to the right? The biggest spy drone anyone has ever made.

The optionally manned airship — known by the cumbersome code name of “[Blue Devil Block 2](#)” — was first inflated with air in early September. Last week, at a hangar in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, the blimp was filled with [helium](#), and began to float.

By the middle of next year, the Air Force hopes, the airship will be [hovering in the skies over Afghanistan](#), where it will use a supercomputer and a pile of surveillance gear to look down on the battlefield — 36 square miles at a time.

“[It could change the nature of overhead surveillance](#),” said retired Lt. Gen. David Deptula, the former Air Force intelligence chief now in charge of Mav 6, the company building the blimp. If the thing works as planned, it’ll park itself in the air for five days at a time, at a height of 20,000 feet or more. Wide-area cameras and advanced eavesdropping gear will be able to watch (and listen) to militant suspects for miles around. Information on their location will be beamed down to U.S. forces with a laser. Like everything else in this project, that laser will be gigantic.

For now, the challenge is keeping Blue Devil close to the ground. Six massive winches are keeping the 370-foot-long, 1.4 million-cubic-foot blimp from flying away.

Meanwhile, Mav 6 has begun a push on Capitol Hill to make sure Congressional support for the \$211 million project doesn’t drift away, either. Blue Devil is one of two mega airship programs the military is funding. And in an increasingly-tight budget, Hill staffers are wondering whether that’s one too many.



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Noah Shachtman is a contributing editor at *Wired* magazine, a nonresident fellow at the Brookings Institution and the editor of this little blog right here.

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## Showing 78 of 116 comments



**journey46**

"And in an increasingly-tight budget..."

When did the Military Industrial Complex ever have a tight budget ?

The taxpayers are the one's with increasingly tight budgets in order to pay for all this crap !

8 months ago 25 Likes

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Things are changing for the US military and although the Chinese might end up helping pay for the costs of some security operations in Afghanistan, the main driving factor for the new LTA vehicles is that they are much cheaper to buy and operate than other forms of surveillance with a similar performance. Oddly enough the LEMV and Blue Devil programs will save tax payers money in the longer term.

8 months ago in reply to journey46 2 Likes

Like



**Bloody Albert**

The world is running out of helium. There is no way of making more. Once released into the atmosphere it cannot be recovered. We use it in everything from welding to medical equipment. There is no substitute. The only reason it's cheap is because the US government has a ceiling on the price in order to get rid of it in Texas (The only known source of any significance).

So what the heck. Lets start filling up some really big balloons because we can.

8 months ago 15 Likes

Like

**Guest**



*Comment removed.*

8 months ago in reply to Bloody Albert 6 Likes

Like



**phishhed444**

Fascinating...been wondering about that. (New Mav6 employee).

7 months ago in reply to Guest 1 Like

Like



**Full Metal Pizza**

I wonder why then many people says helium peak. Still, I'm not sure the mullahs want to sell (if they indeed have it) to their biggest foe.

8 months ago in reply to Guest 1 Like

Like



**Exquisite Corpse, me**

In that case their would-be customers for helium will just decide to park a few million tons of military hardware in their country and say "please?"

8 months ago in reply to Full Metal Pizza

Like



**James Bond**

It is a combination of basic ignorance of the facts, gas exploration stock ramping in the press and a few odd badly timed events like the US military running out of larger size storage containers and a major production facility in Wyoming that had to shut for a while for essential maintenance. Everything is normal in supply terms now and Linde sorted out the large containers problem.

If you want to know more about Helium then see that page on my Gasbags comedy site: 3w dot airship dot me

Regards TRH

8 months ago in reply to Full Metal Pizza

Like



**Reformed\_Optimist**

A key secondary helium source is the heads of the Occupy Wall Street protesters - which seem to be filled with something even less substantive than air. Then, when we are out of helium we could simply run a pipe from the US Senate and use the endless supply of hot air.

8 months ago in reply to Bloody Albert 4 Likes

Like



**Mike Greco**

The Occupy Wallstreet people might be leaderless and relatively poorly organized but they're onto something. At least they're willing to get off their asses and do something about the things that piss them off. Your stuck posting anonymously on the web.

So they're at least one up on you.

8 months ago in reply to Reformed\_Optimist 12 Likes

Like



**phishhed444**

Dumbass. "Relatively poorly organized" ....HA HA! Unreal. Dopers really make me wanna think. Gheesh.

8 months ago in reply to Mike Greco 2 Likes

Like



**phishhed444**

Dumbass.

8 months ago in reply to Mike Greco 1 Like

Like



**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

Nonsense. There's one way of making more. The Sun does it all the time.

8 months ago in reply to Bloody Albert 3 Likes

Like

**Exquisite Corpse**, me



Sure, and the Alchemists claimed to be able to turn lead into gold. Funny but I've never heard of them doing that at CERN just yet. But then again,

if you could transmute lesser valued elements into ones of greater financial value at a net profit, would you advertise that to the world?

8 months ago in reply to Gary Romain 1 Like

Like



**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

So you're claiming the Sun doesn't convert Hydrogen via a fusion reaction into Helium, eh? Well, we'd better stop the presses then and alert all the world's scientists that you're claiming they're all wrong.

8 months ago in reply to Exquisite Corpse

Like



**Exquisite Corpse**, me

>So you're claiming the Sun doesn't convert Hydrogen via a fusion reaction into Helium, eh?

I'll accept your statements regarding the sun only after you go to the sun personally and measure the helium there.

Actually if you were capable of recognizing sarcasm you'd realize I was betting that the exact opposite is likely true: that CERN and others transmute random crap they have laying around into precious metals on a regular basis. They just don't bother telling you about it.

8 months ago in reply to Gary Romain 1 Like

Like



**Exquisite Corpse**, me

**Gary Romain** said:

>So spectrosopes aren't good enough for you?

Again you seem to have misunderstood. Rather, I suggest that this thread would be better off if you took the time to go to the sun personally and get back to us on what you experience there.

8 months ago in reply to Exquisite Corpse

Like





**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

So spectroscopes aren't good enough for you?

8 months ago in reply to Exquisite Corpse

Like



**B1ackDiamond**

Really? I have not done any research, but I am calling bullshit on this information.

8 months ago in reply to Bloody Albert 3 Likes

Like



**cat**

Helium can be recovered from air. It would take a lot of energy, but it's no different than extracting nitrogen.

8 months ago in reply to Bloody Albert

Like



**julian tysoe**

Really? Air is 78% nitrogen and 0.00052% Helium by volume.

8 months ago in reply to cat 3 Likes

Like



**Exquisite Corpse, me**

Speaking of nonrenewable resources such as helium. Giant blimps and womb to tomb 35-mile FOV wide-angle gigapixel surveillance are fun and all but isn't it time humanity turned our sights skyward and forgot about all this terrestrial geopolitical squabbling?

Like the intro to the original Star Trek series: Space. The Final Frontier...

Of course the way things are going for the USA, the Sino-Russian federation will probably be the first to do anything ambitious like tow a meteor or asteroid near enough earth to mine it.

8 months ago in reply to julian tysoe 2 Likes

Like



**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

Looks like we'll need to stop the presses again. This time you think Star Trek is real. How many more of these astounding revelations are you going to make?

8 months ago in reply to Exquisite Corpse

Like



**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

I see Ben Franklin had you pegged.

8 months ago in reply to Gary Romain

Like



**Exquisite Corpse**, me

**Gary Romain** :

"Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain, and most fools do." -Benjamin Franklin

8 months ago in reply to Gary Romain

Like



**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

So it's true what they say. Never argue with fools. They'll drag you down to their level then beat you with experience.

8 months ago in reply to Gary Romain

Like

**Exquisite Corpse**, me

Researchers at Tsinghua University have already considered the engineering and logistical challenges relevant to capturing asteroids and meteors that pass near the earth for the purpose of mining them of their available resources.

Google the phrase "Capturing Lazy Asteroids to Plunder."

So it is that Star Trek might not be as far off as you think.

8 months ago in reply to Gary Romain

Like



**Jean Smith**

Helium and hydrogen do not mix well with heavier gasses and eventually leave the atmosphere.

7 months ago in reply to cat

Like



**zeroexcelcior**

Pardon my ignorance, but how exactly is helium used in welding?

8 months ago in reply to Bloody Albert

Like



**Drhoz Heald**

as an inert gas that wont react with the metals you're welding, or the huge current you're wielding

8 months ago in reply to zeroexcelcior 1 Like

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

They can switch to Argon for most specialist welding, although that would cost slightly more at present.

8 months ago in reply to Drhoz Heald

Like



**Mike Greco**

I see what you did there. And I like it.

8 months ago in reply to Drhoz Heald

Like

**BillCornelius**

Actually the innuendo is illusory. point taken though.

8 months ago in reply to Mike Greco

Like

**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

Make it into a pink pig playing Pink Floyd and the koranimals will run away in fear.

8 months ago 8 Likes

Like

**phishhed444**

"Koranimals"!!! Ha Haaaah!!!

7 months ago in reply to Gary Romain 1 Like

Like

**Gary Romain**, The anti-arselifter.

There's also koranderthals, koraniacs, arselifters, slapheads, headbangers, etc.

7 months ago in reply to phishhed444

Like

**Justadumbazz**

Shouldn't we be out of Afghanistan by the time this blimp makes it over there ?

8 months ago 7 Likes

Like

**cat**

We are never leaving. There are trillions of dollars of minerals in those mountains, and our people have been prospecting them for years. We are never leaving.

8 months ago in reply to Justadumbazz 6 Likes

Like

**jacklaughing**

You believe everything the Pentagon says? We've been prospecting them for years? So the war is paying for itself and it's actually profitable now to be there? I guess this is just like how all that oil in Iraq was going to pay for that war. Right.

We'll stay in Afghanistan because militarily we have to, but it's going to be a long time before any one successfully exploits these "reserves," if they exist, considering a large portion of the country is under Taliban control or influence.

8 months ago in reply to cat 2 Likes

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

The first aircraft with a full magnetometer started a major mining related survey about the day after the Afghan airspace was opened to civil traffic. There were nearly as many geologists in the caves as there were US Army soldiers looking for some Bin L chap.

8 months ago in reply to jacklaughing 1 Like

Like



**phishhed444**

cat, you are correct. NEVER LEAVING. And there's a simple reason that no-one ever seems to hit on...but go figure?

8 months ago in reply to cat

Like



**bayonetbrant**

>> "It could change the nature of overhead surveillance," said retired Lt. Gen. David Deptula, the former Air Force intelligence chief now in charge of Mav 6, the company building the blimp. <<

Claims about the performance of blimps have been inflated for decades...

8 months ago 3 Likes

Like



**phishhed444**

bayonetbrant. Dumbass.

8 months ago in reply to bayonetbrant 1 Like

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Claims about the performance of everything have been inflated since mankind first started using tools. You always have chaps like myself that might spin a yarn or add a nought or two to the figures in the bar, but when it comes to modern blimps or hybrid air vehicles like the LEMV, computer simulation and the fact they build a flight simulator and big scale flying models to check the performance figures makes a big difference in how accurate the pre flight calculations will be.

The HAV 304 (LEMV) has some of the best flight simulator and auto flight software from a UK company called Blue Bear. They were seriously involved with the Harrier jump jet and Concord in terms of designing and developing their engine and flight control systems, so when they say the new cargo HAV 366 can do 105kts and lift 50 tonnes, I would be surprised if they were more than a few percent in error. Things have changed since designers used a slide rule and guesswork.

Regards JB (Airship & Blimp Consultant)

8 months ago in reply to bayonetbrant

Like



**bayonetbrant**

dude... humor! sheesh... :P

8 months ago in reply to James Bond

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

See my Gasbags comedy site: [3w dot airship dot me](http://3w.dot.airship.dot.me)

8 months ago in reply to bayonetbrant

Like

**campbell**

It's a blimp. It's unfortunate.

While it's extremely difficult to "shoot down" a large lighter-than-air craft; and, while there is sufficient helium for many lighter-than-air craft, for decades to come.....the traditional blimp design is severely handicapped as far as ground





handling, storage, speed, maneuverability, susceptibility to weather issues....;and, especially....costs to produce (not operate).

Neither Blue Devil, nor Hybrid Air Vehicles have yet moved far enough beyond 19th century technologies. Not yet. The HAV "hybrid", or Lockheed Martins' P-791 are a step in the right direction, but still have major design features that limit them.

Blue Devil? meh...it's a blimp. bleaghhh...

Invalid Application ID 3 The provided Application ID is invalid.

Like



**JohnGaltWasHere**

Its not hard to "shoot down" a lighter-than-air craft because without an appropriate amount of helium, they are not lighter than air. If the craft consists of multiple cells, its harder, but not impossible to cause a leak large enough for gravity to take over.

8 months ago in reply to campbell 1 Like

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Hard to argue the case for the Blue Devil as it is a blimp, although a very modern one with high tech German diesel engines, BUT the new LEMV and Discovery Air HAV 366 are hybrid air vehicles that derive upto 40% of their max lift from normal aerodynamic lift because they are shaped like a fat flying wing. The bigger HAV 366 also uses a hover skirt so it can use any flat surface of land or water and in combination with powerful vectored thrust engines and bow thruster is much more stable and agile than a normal airship design. It does not even need a mast for most stops and can do vertical lift operations if required.

Everything that can fly has limiting design features, but the new generation HAV's have a lot less than almost any other aircraft type and best of all the biggest limiting design feature of needing to charge down a long length of specially built expensive concrete to go fast enough to even lift off has finally been avoided, as have the associated landing fees!

Regards JB (Airship & Blimp Consultant and Gasbags comedy 3w dot airship dot me)

8 months ago in reply to campbell 1 Like

Like

**Rado Rafiringa**

\$211 mil. target practice for Iranian missiles.

8 months ago 2 Likes

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

They don't work and the Taliban have not got any.

8 months ago in reply to Rado Rafiringa 1 Like

Like



**Guest**

Coming to a sky over YOU.

8 months ago 2 Likes

Like



**Drew Rokeby-Thomas**

While it's operational altitude is out of range for insurgent weapons, the article says it will be landing once a week. During landing and takeoff it will be very vulnerable, as a very large, very slow moving target. Hitting a landing or taking off plane with a RPG is almost impossible, as the target is moving fast and is fairly small. Insurgents have already shown that hitting helicopters is possible, though difficult. Hitting this thing, on takeoff or landing, seems like it would be relatively easy, and dramatic. Given that even in Kabul, insurgents seem able to launch pretty complex attacks, this thing seems doomed unless they can do air to air refueling and keep it aloft at operational altitudes at all times.

8 months ago 2 Likes

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Any one shooting at an aircraft or blimp spiral climbing or descending over Kandahar or Kabul is committing suicide. It is a very rare event as a normal suicide car bomb or vest on the ground would be more effective.

8 months ago in reply to Drew Rokeby-Thomas 1 Like

Like



**f451**

possible but difficult is good enough for unmanned craft. I doubt it will take off and land in areas with a reasonable likelihood of ground fire. But only actual deployment will tell if it's a good idea.

8 months ago in reply to Drew Rokeby-Thomas 1 Like

Like

**Bruce Frykman**

How about the government-education complex or the government-science complex. Our government has more complexes than Oedipus Rex

8 months ago 2 Likes

Like

**akteta**

Hello People, be sure to do a bit of research on the folks(Skyship007) who go about stuffing comment threads with misinformation.

This Skyship007(Mr. Hunt) obviously has some kind of strange agenda and self interest, in proliferating whatever kool-aid dispersed ideas propogating from the likes of Hybrid Air Vehicles Ltd, and his former employer Airship Industries (UK) LTD.

Essentially what is comes down to, is these programs are just another way for government officials to rob the public through tax dollars.

8 months ago 2 Likes

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Hi There,

Obviously a Lockheed Martin fan who is still angry at the loss of the LEMV and Discovery Air contracts to Hybrid Air Vehicles. The crash and burn job they did on the first flight of the Hale D has probably not helped much either.

I am just a retired fan of the worlds greatest airship and HAV designer and his team. Even the Blue Devil looks like a development of a Skyship design from the old Airship Industries days 25 years ago. Good old Roger Munk and his design team in Blighty are really the only people with the required expertise to develop the new surveillance and point to point cargo or heavy lift sectors.





Regards

Roger Munk fan club.

8 months ago in reply to akteta 2 Likes

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Just Google "akteta". I did and got what appears in RAF banter to be a "Lancaster tail gunner warning" type of web site.

See 3w dot airship dot me for a more serious Helium sniffing laugh.

8 months ago in reply to James Bond

Like



**unemployedtaxpayer55**

what we need to do is hand the reins over to the Afgan people pull our troops and our money out of there and start refurbishing our vastly degraded infrastructure. Then fire half of the THIEVING elected officials and IMPRISON the other half. Haven't ALL you taxpaying individuals commenting on here had enough of being made to bail out these big business FUCKERS only to have them turn around and slap us with fees fees and more fees to utilize the rest of our money to refill their already over inflated pockets ? And don't you also think that when they are done using these Spy Blimps over there they will be used on us to take even more of our rights away ?

8 months ago 1 Like

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)



Hi fellow unemployed tax payer,

Obviously the Queens English is difficult for you, but I understand your complaint, BUT I can assure you there are no plans to use the Blue Devil or LEMV outside Afghanistan or middle East area. They will test a few systems out before deploying but will do that along the Mexican border looking what you might call, "Wetback drug smugglers" is my guess at a good test idea. They can then compare results with the existing Southern border aerostat radar and IR search systems for calibration purposes. If you like perhaps a strongly worded letter to a political chap or chapess letting them know you think all surveillance of US borders is too expensive might work, but I kind of think that if you get an answer it will be based on two well used military words that start with an F and

an O.

Regards JB (Gasbags comedy 3w dot airship dot me)

8 months ago in reply to unemployedtaxpayer55

Like



**freckles10**

36 square miles coverage at any moment. Interesting. Just as the military sets up perhaps 50(guessing) predator orbits for "continuous" coverage, I suppose the Pentagon will want at least a dozen or more of these blimps to similarly provide "continuous" coverage.

Then it's interesting to speculate that orbiting Predators, some with the wide-area Gorgon-Stare cameras, networked with the new blimps, will make coverage even more "real-time" and thorough.

Lots of possibilities for amazing networking between Predator orbiters, blimps, and ground forces.

Maybe even small units of troopers could quickly "pull down" real-time videos of the area they are operating in from either a blimp, predator or both. And really have good confidence they know what's just over the hill. Cool stuff.

Apparently, however, our presence, far from being stepped down, is just being somewhat replaced by ever-fancier networks of camera-laden aircraft(blimps, predators).

Maybe that network will keep future lithium mining operations from being overrun by Taliban.

We'll be there for the next 60 years at least in some form or another. But I don't know any other way to keep an eye on Pakistan which is at least part of the point of stepping up the game with these high-tech blimps.

8 months ago 1 Like

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Hi There,

The 36 mile figure is incorrect but I don't have the correct one off hand, but the area coverage from the LEMV and Blue Devil is much greater than the other RPV drones as they can carry more gear and bigger aerial systems. The Chinese already have a seriously profitable Lithium mine open and no Taliban problems because once you can develop a mining operation the locals work for you not against you. It is all about jobs and poverty in the long run, but the surveillance needs in Afghanistan are long term even if civil companies are contracted to do those tasks.

Regards JB (Airship & Blimp Consultant)

8 months ago in reply to freckles10

Like



**freckles10**

Purely speculating, but I wonder if a secondary purpose of these blimps is as a study to see if they can be used as somewhat of a backup if the Chinese are able to degrade our satellites in a future conflict. If so, I like the idea at least in theory.

Another possible interesting use of these blimps is as wide area coverage cellular "towers" for both smart phones and internet. Troops who buy their own iphones use the apps but can't get a signal. These blimps might be able to get all troops in the blimp's coverage areas a signal for their iphones so every individual soldier is networked. He can call in airstrikes from his iphone, share video/images with nearby troops, talk directly to pilots, take direct control of a Predator's weapons (with an iphone app), keep track of where both enemies and friendlies are. Finally, no soldier who gets isolated/cut off is going to be alone as long as he has an iphone and an overhead blimp to get a signal to him.

Very cool.

8 months ago in reply to James Bond

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)



Could be true as these new aircraft are all plug and play, so the payload is easily changed to include relay gear or sat comms if



required to cover a blank spot. Some of the present aerostats are used for comms relay tasks at present.

8 months ago in reply to freckles10 1 Like

Like



**freckles10**

Interesting. I'm somewhat in the dark as to how Taliban in the field are electronically communicating with each other when even our guys can't get signals on their iphones (assuming all the Taliban have are iphone-like devices and not advanced comm gear like we have). Or maybe I'm just not understanding how the Taliban electronically communicate in remote Afganistan, assuming they do.

According to this article, intercepting Taliban comms is a big selling point for these blimps together with the "laser" to point out the origin of the comms.

I thought the NSA was already doing that(minus the laser). We'll never really be clear what agency does what when or the extent of their coverage at any given time. But I would guess the NSA, CIA will network with these blimps to help to assist in intercepting Taliban and probably internal Pakistan and Iranian comms.

There will eventually be dozens of these blimps with ever more upgraded and bleeding-edge gear orbiting Afganistan. Relatively few countries(that matter) are so primitive as to not be able to knock these blimps out of the sky so I expect where they can orbit on the globe is pretty limited(unless the Navy wants some of these blimps orbiting open ocean to act as backup satcomms if the Chinese degrade our sats). But to the extent they help our guys keeps tabs on Pakistan, Iran, their own local areas and act as possible satellite backups and comm relays, I think it's all pretty cool tech and a good use of Pentagon spending.



8 months ago in reply to James Bond

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship...](http://www.hybridairship...)

Good reply. The Taliban only use short range low power walkie talkies, they stay well away from sat phones during a mission and even when heard which they are almost every time, the use of code words confuses the issue. They also set up dummy attacks too, so without some kind of prior knowledge even the best interpreter is of no use.

8 months ago in reply to freckles10

Like



**Dan Dobbs**

I don't think it will be at 20,000 feet all the time. If I read the article right, it will be operational for five days at a time, then who knows...back to lower altitudes for maintenance? Additionally, it sends all the information to a laser target on the ground. Disable/destroy the receiver and the transmitter is useless. I hope it works, I really do. Unfortunately, the Taliban and their allies have been really good at the 'hey, we didn't think of that' game so far.

8 months ago 1 Like

Like



**Mike Greco**

The Taliban are good at surprising in us in the "hey, I never would have thought that dude would actually hide in a huge pile of shit to snipe at us" sense of the word. They haven't really proven to be great masters of tactics beyond suicide vests and roadside bombs.

8 months ago in reply to Dan Dobbs 1 Like

Like



**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

They have switched to using ice cube motars for some attacks in summer. The ice cube sits between the firing contact and the end of the live contact point on the motar shell or rocket. They are good at calculating the melt time from the air temperature.

8 months ago in reply to Mike Greco 2 Likes

Like

**stoffer**

i think that this thing will work. It stays high enough to be out of the reach of weapons of the militants, but closer to the ground than satellites, providing for better quality images. Also, satellites have very limited time over the target, this thing loiters over the target all the time.

Of course, satellites have their own merits. They are much harder to shoot down and provide imagery without access to enemy's airspace, which is important in struggle of superpowers, but it not relevant for counterinsurgency.

8 months ago 1 Like

Like

**Guest**

*Comment removed.*

8 months ago in reply to stoffer 1 Like

Like

**stoffer**

I think that the cost problem is not inherent to satellites themselves, but to the launch market. We have a monopoly of the ULA (Boeing and LM) and that can't be good for prices. ULA does not have any incentive to try making cheaper launch system because the DOD will pay anyway. Actually, from business perspective, and ideal situation for the ULA is when there is a few very very expensive launches. More cheaper launches, even though the total profit will be the same, would just mean more work for them.

8 months ago in reply to Guest 1 Like

Like

**killerwhale5000**

At a cost of 211m, is the expense worth it for a war that's suppose to end in 2014? Plus given that other states could blow this thing to heaven with their superior artillery than that of the Taliban, seems a big waste of doh, given that it could only be used in war theaters where the enemy have little weapons...

8 months ago in reply to stoffer

Like

**Pilje Preda**

I designed a laser communication hang-on grenade, during War in Bosnia. Communication between two objects is achievable only if there is no fog (sometime it goes straight to the ground level), therefore, in this case, only during good visibility, but lasers signal can be reflect from the clouds micro particles from the other place (through the appropriate lenses, and filtered). As conclusion, communication can be done from the other places too, not only to desired target. I designed (and made too) small parachute gizmo to overlook ground during battle, thrown from the shooters riffle from using existing flare grenade (just by changing purpose of it). When it falls, it takes 3-4 minutes, which was enough to record everything on the ground by using built-in high speed camera. Above mentioned system work similar, in basics.

8 months ago

Like

**Laurence Coots**

wouldn't a bullet or two bring it down?

8 months ago

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Parental control is necessary for some comments sections, please tell him about the low internal excess pressure and huge volume etc. This is not your kids toy balloon and the LEMV was not designed by your grandfather and they don't go bang if you stick a pin in one.

8 months ago in reply to Laurence Coots

Like

**freckles10**

From now on there should never be story about special forces doing ANY mission, at least in Afganistan, without access to massive comm relays, internet, iphone signals, airborne artillery(armed Predators), whose weapons THEY control via, say, an Iphone app or something else, not controlled strickly by some air-conditioned controller at Creech, eating his Arby's curly fries, while brave men are on the ground in the sh#t..

I saw a documentary on an SAS team probably from the 1991 Gulf war(can't recall exactly) where they were deep in Iraq, ended up cut off, no comms, losing at least one man because they were escaping on foot through a sandstorm and got separated, hijacking a 60's New York city cab, of all things, to escape. Some ended up getting caught and tortured.

I never want to see another documentary about crap like that again. Not dissing the SAS. I just mean that they had no blimps, predators, etc. they could call on to assist their mission and get them out of a jam when the mission went to hell. Then they made do with what they had. Now, there is no excuse for sending teams out like that again, naked, as far as lack of Predators, real-time videos, smart phones with signals etc., just begging to get brave men killed

I suspect there will be strong consideration given to dedicating a future blimp just to special ops teams. They should have it. The blimp should give teams on the ground amazing real-time video coverage of their immediate area and for many miles surrounding them.

The blimps will act as comm relays, internet, iphone signals, video and who knows what else for the teams.

And I never want to hear about spec forces going out without at least one, but better two, armed UAV's whoes weapons they can aim and fire directly, without the controller's say-so. Instant airborne arty they have at any moment to use as they see fit. The UAV's should be networked to the blimps in the future to give them even more help.

Releasing hell on the enemy should always be only a moment away for every spec forces team from now on either to accomplish their mission or, more likely, get them out of trouble or least buy them precious time to escape.

Even if they have to escape long distances on foot, they should be able to somehow keep the predator "with them" as far as moving it's orbit to stay with them, hopefully with a spare missile or two left(in case the enemy threatens to catch up with them) and also acting as an airborne comm relay to get them even more help.

The days of putting spec ops teams in the middle of nowhere, without massive comm and missile backup they control and use as they see fit should mercifully be over forever.

8 months ago

Like

**stephenreal**

Way cool !

I like to get a job with these cats.

8 months ago

Like

**James Bond**, See CV & sailing pages of [www.hybridairship.net](http://www.hybridairship.net)

Try Discovery Air if you are Canadian, Northrop Grumman if a US citizen or green card holder and of course the best jobs are over in Blighty with Hybrid Air Vehicles Ltd in Cranfield and Cardington, as they are building the bigger HAV 366.

8 months ago in reply to stephenreal

Like

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## Reactions

