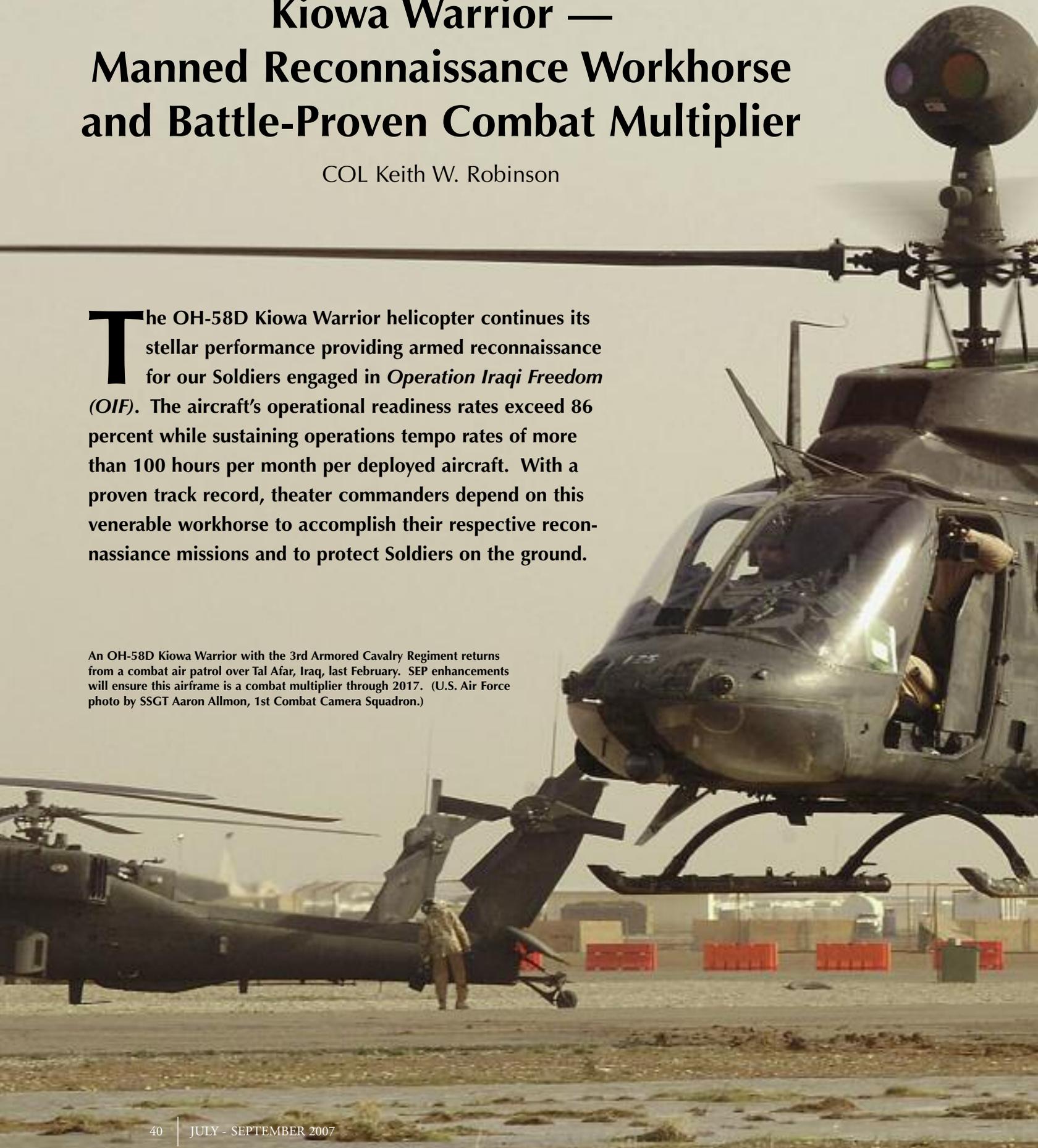


Kiowa Warrior — Manned Reconnaissance Workhorse and Battle-Proven Combat Multiplier

COL Keith W. Robinson

The OH-58D Kiowa Warrior helicopter continues its stellar performance providing armed reconnaissance for our Soldiers engaged in *Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)*. The aircraft's operational readiness rates exceed 86 percent while sustaining operations tempo rates of more than 100 hours per month per deployed aircraft. With a proven track record, theater commanders depend on this venerable workhorse to accomplish their respective reconnaissance missions and to protect Soldiers on the ground.

An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment returns from a combat air patrol over Tal Afar, Iraq, last February. SEP enhancements will ensure this airframe is a combat multiplier through 2017. (U.S. Air Force photo by SSGT Aaron Allmon, 1st Combat Camera Squadron.)

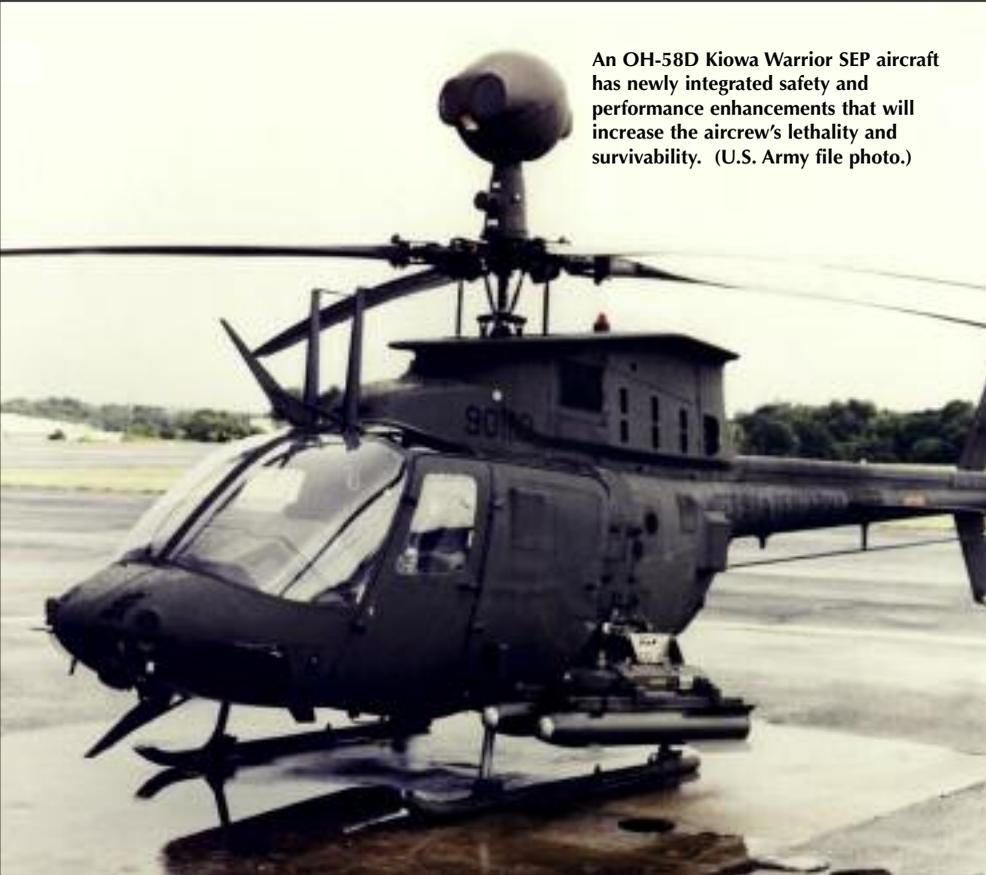


The Kiowa Warrior Safety Enhancement Program (SEP) at Bell Helicopter continues to modify and deliver aircraft ahead of schedule. The Kiowa Warrior SEP incorporates safety enhancements such as the Full Authority Digital Electronic Control R/3 engine, crashworthy seats and cockpit airbags. Digitization enhancements include an Embedded Global Positioning System Inertial Navigation System, Video Image Crosslink, Improved Master Controller Processor Units, Improved Data Modem, Improved Mast-Mounted Sight (MMS) Sensor Processor and Digital Map. To date, SEP modifications have been made to 248 of the Army's 350 Kiowa Warriors. The end state will be 279 of 350 aircraft. The Army expects to complete the SEP by December 2007, with aircraft deliveries to the 6th Squadron (Air), 17th Cavalry, Fort Wainwright, AK.

Aside from SEP modifications, the Product Management Office also has several ongoing product improvement initiatives to ensure the Kiowa Warrior remains relevant now and through 2017. Aircraft weight reduction and elimination of obsolescent technology are the primary product improvement initiatives.

Current weight reduction initiatives include installation of the ALKAN weapon racks, CXP-118 Mode S transponder, new composite armor, lightweight liquid crystal displays, along with the aircraft stripping and repaint program, for a total of approximately 175 pounds. In addition, an approved engineering change proposal

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An OH-58D Kiowa Warrior SEP aircraft has newly integrated safety and performance enhancements that will increase the aircrew's lethality and survivability. (U.S. Army file photo.)

will extend life for the MMS while reducing more than 20 pounds from the Improved Master System Processor.

To ensure the Kiowa Warrior remains technologically compatible on the modern battlefield, numerous aircraft and system upgrades are underway. These will include upgrades and obsolescence manage-

ment for the cockpit display system, MMS and other electronics. Meanwhile, the Kiowa Warrior continues to set the standard for software blocking and interoperability with the 2007 summer fielding of Software Block II.

The Army's decision to extend the Kiowa Warrior's fleet commitment until 2017 speaks volumes about the confidence and capability that

combatant commanders and their Soldiers have in this battle-proven helicopter. The Kiowa Warrior will serve as a strong and capable bridge for our Soldiers as the Army begins fielding the Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter.

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