

RC-135 Rivet Joint, EA-37B Compass Call Start Integrated Sorties

The US Air Force has begun integration sorties with its RC-135 Rivet Joint signals intelligence (SIGINT) aircraft and new EA-37B Compass Call stand-off electronic attack (EA) aircraft to develop a synergistic and interoperable spectrum warfare capability.

Sustained, integrated sorties outside of a large force exercises began in late September 2025, according to a press release from the 55th Wing at Offutt AFB, Neb. The integration, which initially paired the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron (Rivet Joint) and the 43rd Electronic Combat Squadron (Compass Call), has now grown to also encompass 343rd Reconnaissance Squadron and 41st Electronic Combat Squadron aircrew.

Based on an extensively modified Boeing 707 airframe, the RC-135V/W Rivet Joint is designed to provide near-real-time SIGINT collection, analysis, and dissemination for theater and national level customers. The EA-37B, which cross-decks the EC-130H Compass Call mission system into the Gulfstream G550 business jet airframe, is an airborne EA capability that denies, degrades, and disrupts adversary command, control, communications, radars, and navigation systems to restrict enemy electromagnetic-based battlespace coordination. Both types come under the command of Air Combat Command's 55th Wing.

Melding the complementary capabilities of the Rivet Joint and Compass Cal aircraft is intended to grow and exploit the 55th Wing's electromagnetic warfare capabilities. "This level of sustained, continuous integration has never been conducted

before by these two assets,” said Capt Wesley Ballinger, 38th Reconnaissance Squadron weapons & tactics flight chief. “Both assets complete specific actions in the kill-chain, and now the kill-chain is being refined into a faster, robust, and more lethal tool.”

Weapons officers and leaders from both communities have been creating the foundational steps for sustained integration. Early lessons learned are shaping tactics, techniques, and procedures between the two capabilities, which each have a specific role in targeting and engaging threats in the electromagnetic spectrum.

Moving forward, four integrated sorties per month will be flown between Offutt AFB, home base for the Rivet Joint squadrons, and the Compass Call squadrons based at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz. The 55th Wing said these will continue on a permanent basis. – *R. Scott*