



ACC pilot hearing protection combines with headset

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1/25/2008 - **LANGLEY AIR FORCE BASE, Va. (ACCNS)** -- Air Combat Command Pilots are now using a new customized hearing protection system that not only protect the pilots' hearing but also provides a platform for radio communication.

The ear plugs, known as Attenuating Custom Communications Earpiece System, are used by pilots in the cockpit and on the flight line.

According to Capt Brian Stahl, F-22 pilot here, all past communication in the cockpit had to travel through a foam ear plug. The foam hearing protection acted as a barrier to all sounds, including the vocals from the headset. The ACCES, however, doubles as hearing protection and headset. "Now [communication is] much clearer and the amount of information we are able to process is increased," said Captain Stahl.

In order to make the ACCES plugs, audiologist put hardening foam in the pilots' ears and a customized mold is shaped. The mold is then sent to a contracted company which builds the plugs and equips them with radio ear buds.

"The custom molded plugs, because they are made specifically for an individual's ears, are much more comfortable for prolonged periods of time." said Lt Cmdr. Joel Bealer, Norfolk Naval Station audiologist "So you get much more consistent use with this."

ACCES earplugs were developed by Air Force Research Laboratory in 2005 with the help of technology from Westone Laboratories, Inc. In September of 2005 General Services Administration signed a contract with Westone to market and sell ACCES to military and commercial customers. The ACCES plugs are cost-effective and run less than \$300 dollars per set.

According to Air Force officials the ACCES is one example of how The Global War on Terror has led to technological advances in military equipment.



Pilots from the 1st Fighter Wing, Langley AFB, Va., complete a sortie at Hickam AFB, Hawaii.