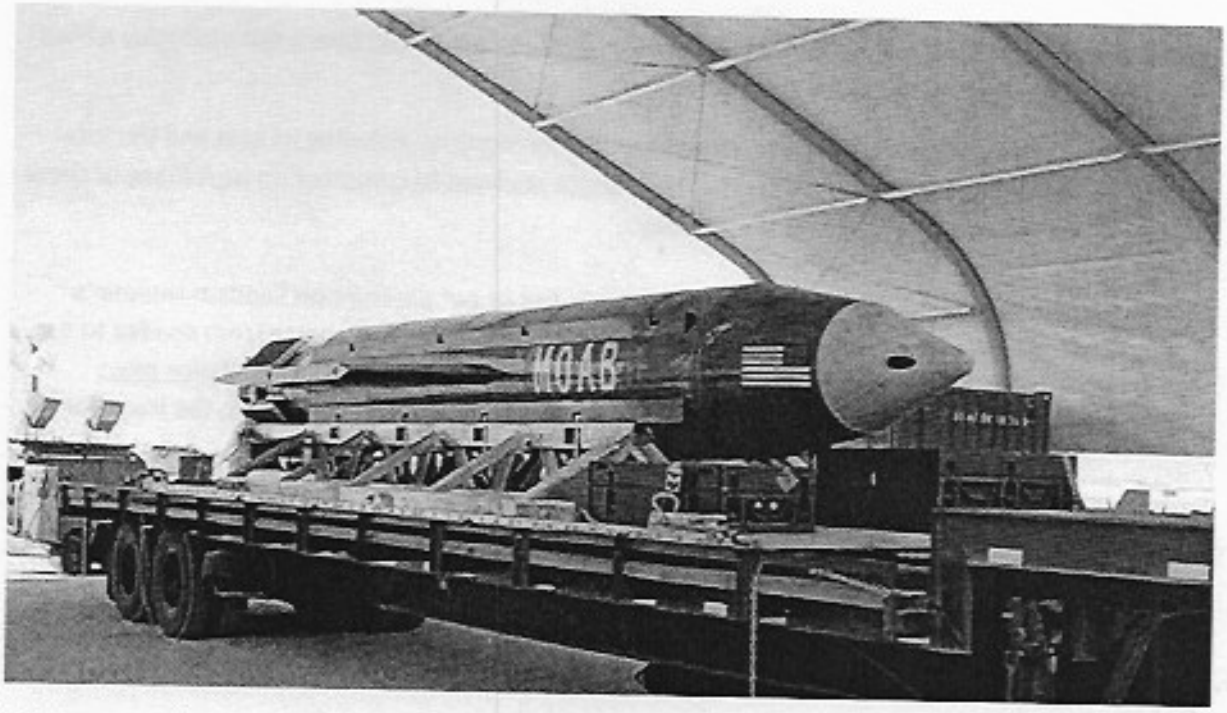
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What you need to know about the 'Mother of All Bombs'

By: Valerie Insinna, April 13, 2017 (Photo Credit: US Air Force)

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military just dropped "the mother of all bombs," the GBU-43/B, on an ISIS tunnel complex in Afghanistan, marking the first time the munition has been used in combat.

The "MOAB," which actually stands for Massive Ordnance Air Blast, is the largest non-nuclear bomb ever dropped in battle. But don't be fooled. It's not the biggest one in the arsenal.

The MOAB is an air burst weapon intended for soft to medium surface targets over an extended area, an Air Force official told Defense News on background. While it doesn't have the penetrative capability that some other munitions have, it is optimized for as targets in environments like caves, canyons or an extensive mine fields.

That could be one reason why it was used Thursday. During the mission, an MC-130 piloted by Air Force special operators dropped the 21,600 pound, GPS-guided ordnance in the Achin district of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, a Central Command news release stated.

"As ISIS-K's losses have mounted, they are using IEDs, bunkers and tunnels to thicken their defense," Gen. John W. Nicholson, the top commander in Afghanistan, said according to the release. "This is the right munition to reduce these obstacles and maintain the momentum of our offensive against ISIS-K."

One advantage of using the MOAB, as opposed to other precision guided weapons like a Tomahawk or JDAM, is extremely high explosive content that creates a large blast area over the surface of the battlefield, said Steve Zaloga, a senior analyst with the Teal Group. The pressure from that explosion likely detonated many improvised explosive devices.

"So it may just be a quick way to clear a large surface area of the IED threat while at the same time doing a great deal of damage to any ISIS troops that are in the area," he said. "This is not necessarily