

In the third month of NATO's air war, Yugoslavia flinched. President Slobodan Milosevic, his armed forces badly battered and his nation's economy in ruins, accepted NATO's peace plan, and the Alliance suspended air attacks June 10. However, plenty of danger still lies ahead.

**Precision.** Operation Allied Force, called the most precise air campaign in history, showcased advanced munitions and aircraft. Here, a USAF ground crew at Aviano AB, Italy, checks out an F-15E deployed from RAF Lakenheath, UK. This Strike Eagle is armed with not only AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles for air combat but also huge, 2,000-pound AGM-130 guided bombs.



NATO's aircraft hit Yugoslavia often, hard—and with great precision.

# On Target in



Compiled by Guy Aceto, Art Director

# the Balkans



**Heavyweights.** Cast for a starring role was USAF's B-2 stealth bomber, the epitome of "global power." B-2s loaded with superaccurate Joint Direct Attack Munitions flew nonstop round-trip sorties between home base at Whiteman AFB, Mo., and targets in Serbia and Kosovo. The Air Force's other two bombers—the B-1B and B-52H—laid massive fire on Serb forces.

**We Deliver.** An Air Force C-17 transport from Altus AFB, Okla., taxis to a parking ramp after a May 3 landing at Rinas Airport in Tirana, Albania. C-17s delivered Army and Air Force equipment and personnel to Albania as part of a vast inter-national refugee aid effort. USAF's giant C-5s and venerable C-141s flew numerous Balkan missions.



**Round the Clock.** USAF crews worked day and night to bring in the food, supplies, and equipment so desperately needed by uprooted and suffering Kosovar refugees.

**Dust Bowl.** A C-130 theater airlifter deployed from Altus, at right, kicks up a huge cloud of dust as it reverses power and comes to a stop on an Albanian airstrip. Below, an airman sends another Hercules on its way from Tirana, center of the effort to provide relief to hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanians, such as the children pictured here.



USAF photos by SSGT. Angela Steinfeld



**Full Contact.** Though security was tight at every operational site, the troops did find time every now and then to mingle with the locals, especially children. Over the course of a year, the Serbian ethnic-cleansing campaign drove into exile some 800,000 ethnic-Albanian Kosovars, who poured into crowded, makeshift camps in Albania and Macedonia.





**Rituals.** *F-16 pilots from the 78th Fighter Squadron, Shaw AFB, S.C., receive last-minute information before flying a mission. As the war heated up and the number of strike sorties grew, USAF's pilots got into a routine and relied on certain rituals and habits developed in years of training for the mission. For many airmen, however, it was the first taste of actual combat.*

**Balkan CAP.** *This is the view from the back seat of an F-16D tasked to take part in a Combat Air Patrol mission. The fighter and crew, from the 510th FS, Aviano, flew cover for strike and other aircraft.*



**Hyper Viper.** *US-designed F-16s played many different roles, and the single-engine fighter came to be seen as the workhorse of the war. The F-16 not only flew CAP and strike missions but it also conducted suppression of enemy air defense operations. Joining the USAF F-16s were those of Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and Turkey.*



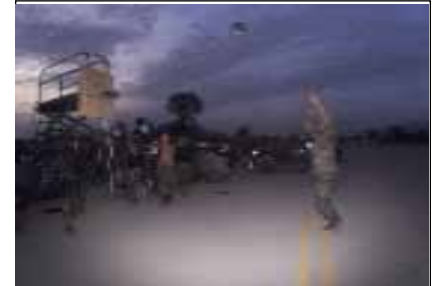
**Jolts From the 'Bolts.** With their A-10 Thunderbolt II in the background (at Aviano), A1C Jerry Herron (left) and SrA. Jason Chaffin, of the 81st FS, Spangdahlem AB, Germany, prepare to reload the 30 mm cannon with armor-piercing rounds. An A-10 taking off from Aviano (below left) displays its load of 500-pound bombs, AGM-65 Maverick weapons, and AIM-9 air-combat missiles. Below right, an A-10 crew chief from the 81st conducts a post-flight check. A-10s delivered a powerful blow to Yugoslavia's ground forces.



**Balkan Ears.** An Air Force RC-135 Rivet Joint electronic intelligence aircraft, deployed from the 55th Wing, Offutt AFB, Neb., to RAF Mildenhall, UK, approaches the refueling boom of a KC-135R tanker during a night refueling sortie. Both aircraft played critically important roles in the war.



**Now, the BDA.** The photo at left shows prestrike and poststrike conditions of the Serb radio relay and TV broadcast site at Novi Sad. Below, the photo demonstrates the devastation of the Ponikve Airfield in Serbia by multiple bombs; they have cut the runway and taxiways several times.



**Home in the Mud.** USAF SSgt. Doug Austin, a member of the 786th Security Forces Contingency Response Team from Sembach, Germany, slogs through the mud at Rinas. No matter where the troops go, they bring homey touches such as the "street sign," left, or a makeshift basketball backboard for pickup games, above.



**On-Call Airlift.** TSgt. Greg Bloomquist, a loadmaster with the 22nd Airlift Squadron, Travis AFB, Calif., calls out directions to others at RAF Fairford, UK. Bloomquist's C-5 transport brought in personnel to support B-1B operations from the British base. Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve personnel had a big hand in the success of Allied Force.

**Ghost of the Balkans.** In Desert Storm, the Saudis called it "the Ghost," and the F-117 proved to be every bit as effective in the Balkan conflict. Serbia downed one Nighthawk on March 27 but evidently never came close to replicating that feat as the F-117 carried out some of the most difficult and dangerous bombing runs of the war.



**End Game.** An F-16 pilot from the 510th FS, just returned from a May 14 bombing mission, waits to get out of his jet. By the time Milosevic folded his cards, NATO had flown more than 34,000 sorties, of which more than 7,000 were strike missions. The Serbian military and strategic areas had been struck by more than 20,000 bombs. ■