

In the Balkan War, USAF units cast a long shadow.

# Airpower in

With the Balkan War in its second month, USAF-led NATO air forces crossed a major threshold, sharply increasing attacks on Yugoslavia in ways that brought the war home to the Serb heartland. NATO for weeks stuck to purely military targets. In May, planners broadened the target list, hitting Yugoslavia's electrical grid and cutting off power not only to military forces but also to the general population.

**Viper Venue.** Armed with laser-guided bombs and air-to-air missiles, two F-16 multirole fighters of the 555th Fighter Squadron, Aviano AB, Italy, prepare to launch an April 2 mission against Yugoslavia. The Italian air base was the hub of Alliance air operations.



# Allied Force

Compiled by Guy Aceto, Art Director



**Night and In Weather.** At right, a member of the 510th FS, Aviano AB, directs the pilot of an F-16 fighter out to work on April 4, during one of the first nights of the campaign. Most of the early air operations took place at night.

From the start of the war, USAF provided a wide range of aircraft. Air Force units at Aviano launched both F-15E Strike Eagle fighters and F-16CG fighters, equipped with the LANTIRN night targeting and navigation system and laser-guided bombs. Below, rain-drenched SrA. Aaron Fontagneres and SSgt. John Rodriguez of the 494th FS, RAF Lakenheath, UK, load an Mk 82 bomb on an F-15E in preparation for an April 7 sortie. Foul weather was a factor throughout the war.



USAF photo by SrA. Jeffrey Allen

USAF photos by SrA. Jeffrey Allen



**Inspiration.** Returning from an April 16 sortie, an F-16 pilot from the 23d FS, based at Spangdahlem AB, Germany, but deployed to Aviano, evinces high spirits. He carried the small American flag on the mission.

USAF photo by TSgt. Brad Fallin

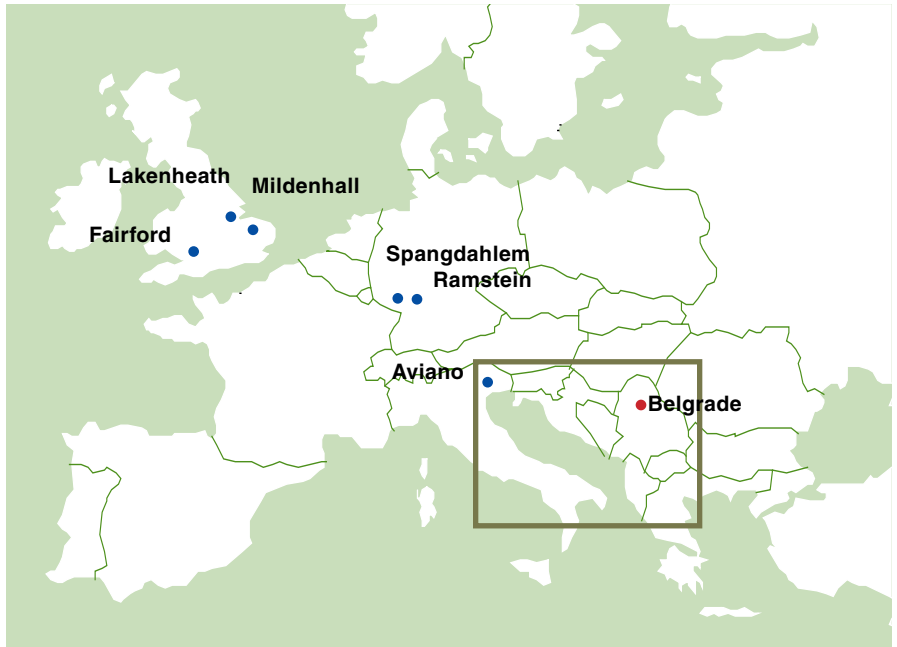


**To the Fight.** Above, a French Mirage 2000 flies combat air patrol in Balkan airspace. At right, SSgts. Heath Yarbrough and Paul Hofer, 509th Bomb Wing, load JDAMs into a B-2's bomb bay at Whiteman AFB, Mo. The B-2 was about to mount an April 19 sortie in which it departed Missouri, struck Serbian targets, and returned to base, with no intermediate stops.



USAF photo by SrA. Jessica Kochman

# The Theater of Operations



**Pros With the Hose.** *The professionalism of USAF aerial refueling crews proved critical to the execution of long Air Force bomber missions out of RAF Fairford, UK, and even longer ones by B-2s flying from the United States. At right, a KC-10 refuels another tanker, a KC-135, over the Adriatic Sea at dusk on April 16. The KC-10 was from McGuire AFB, N.J., and the KC-135R was based at RAF Mildenhall, UK. Most Guard and Reserve forces in the first call-up were assigned to tanker units.*



USAF photo by SrA. Greg L. Davis

USAF photo by MSgt. Keith Reed



**Checkpoint.** *The war brought an abrupt tightening of security at every NATO base but especially at Aviano, where the bulk of NATO air operations originated. Security forces were everywhere to be seen, working to keep the flight line secure. At left, A1C Kenneth Brisbane at Aviano checks a crew chief's ID as he enters the site on April 2. Brisbane is a member of the 790th Security Forces Squadron at F.E. Warren AFB, Wyo.*



**Expeditionary Force.** *Everyone, it seemed, had bags packed and ready to go to Europe on a moment's notice. This airman with the 20th Fighter Wing, Shaw AFB, S.C., carries bags to his room after arriving at Aviano on April 15. At right, an F-117 from the 49th FS, Holloman AFB, N.M., awaits takeoff on March 24—opening night.*



USAF photos by SrA. Jeffrey Allen

**Racked and Stacked.** At RAF Fairford, UK, rows of bombs stand ready to be loaded into a B-1B for an April 2 mission. Below, a weapons load crew member of the 28th Operations Group, Ellsworth AFB, S.D., transports a Mk 82 gravity bomb at Fairford. Not since World War II have US bombers taken off from British bases to attack targets in Europe.



USAF photo by SrA. Jeff Fitch



USAF photos by SSgt. Eirain Gonzalez



**The Wait.** Maintenance crew members from the 77th BS, Ellsworth AFB, stand by for their aircraft to launch at RAF Fairford, after which they will spend nervous hours waiting for the return of their bomber. SrA. Bradley McAfoos (left), weapons load crew member, 28th Operations Group, works on a Mk 82 bomb.

**Warthog Rounds.** A1C Jerry Heron (driver), SrA. Jason Chaffin (left), and SSgt. Mark Nogel, all of the 81st FS, Spangdahlem AB, Germany, pull an AGM-65 Maverick from its case to load it onto an A-10 for an April 10 sortie. Warthogs initially were used for observation and spotter duty, but they soon went to work at their speciality—blasting armor.

The Yugoslav forces long managed to frustrate NATO airmen by putting tanks and armored vehicles in forests, barns, and similar hiding spots, refusing to bring them into the open. Yugoslavia was able to do this because President Clinton publicly ruled out the use of NATO ground forces, relieving the enemy of the need to concentrate his own forces for battle.



USAF photo by SrA. Jeffrey Allen



**Load and Lift.** At left, a crew chief with the 627th Air Mobility Support Squadron, RAF Mildenhall, directs a C-5B to a parking spot after an April 22 delivery of fuel trucks. Above, C-130s land at Gioia del Colle, Italy, to resupply forces there. USAF's airlifters provided a vital edge to NATO forces. So did various special-use aircraft such as the E-3 AWACS, E-8 Joint STARS, and RC-135 Rivet Joint.



**Shining Hope.** Above, airmen with the 623d AMSS, Ramstein AB, load equipment and supplies into a C-17 for an April 14 flight to Albania. USAF mounted a major airlift of food, water, shelter, medicine, and other items. The C-17 at right is at Rinas Airport, in Tirana, Albania, the hub of the Allied humanitarian relief effort, Shining Hope.



**Big Muddy.** SrA. Walter B. Goss and SrA. Daniel L. Deuville, both of the 52d Civil Engineering Squadron, Spangdahlem AB, clear mud from their tent at Rinas. Heavy rains in the Balkans engulfed their makeshift living quarters in a sea of mud. In time, all of the temporary quarters received wooden floors to improve the troops' living conditions. Inhabitants of the camp were civil engineers, explosive ordnance disposal teams, combat communications operators, and weather teams.



**Bomb Factory.** TSgt. Scott Heistercamp of the 9th Munitions Squadron, Beale AFB, Calif., loads GBU-12 500-pound laser-guided bombs on a rack for assembly at Aviano on April 13. Allied Force constituted the most intensive use of advanced munitions in history. Roughly 90 percent of all Allied strikes were made with precision-guided weapons, compared to less than 10 percent in Operation Desert Storm eight years ago.

**Fighting Trim.** At Aviano, maintenance crews from the 43d Expeditionary Electronic Combat Squadron, located at Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., work on April 2 to replace an engine on their EC-130H Compass Call airplane. Below, SSgt. Paul Guyer, from the 510th FS, at Aviano, checks out his F-16 before he'll let the pilot fly it on a planned April 2 mission.



**Workhorse.** An F-16 from Shaw AFB, S.C., takes off from Aviano on April 28 for another sortie into the Balkan battlespace. The single-engine aircraft proved to be a workhorse of the war, used extensively not only by the US Air Force but also by the air arms of many European Allies.





**Long Haul?** Bomber crews—at left, B-52H crews from the 2d Bomb Wing, Barksdale AFB, La., and the 5th BW, Minot AFB, N.D.—conduct a formation brief at RAF Fairford, before an early April cruise missile attack. Above, a BUFF takes off for an April 11 mission from Fairford. Airmen were warned that the war could go on for months.

**Stress and Strain.** A B-52H from Barksdale comes to a stop after an April 14 combat sortie in the Balkans. USAF aircraft have been ridden hard in the Balkans. Gen. Richard E. Hawley, commander of Air Combat Command, told reporters on April 29 that weeks of war had left USAF munition stocks critically low, facing shortages of conventional air-launched cruise missiles and the precision JDAMs used by B-2 bombers. Hawley worried aloud that USAF could exhaust its supply of JDAMs before a resupply effort begins to kick in.



**No Travel Plans.** Members of the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing, Aviano AB, Italy, watch an F-16 prepare to take off on an April 23 mission. For American servicemen and -women, all signs were that it would be quite a while before they could reattach these travel pods to their fighter aircraft for the long trip home. ■