



Allied military forces attack terrorists in Afghanistan.

The War on Terror



Photography by DOD photographers

A 2,000-pound JDAM destined for Taliban and al Qaeda targets is loaded into the cavernous bomb bay of a B-1B on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. The B-1B can carry 24 such bombs, which add the element of high precision to the Lancer's all-weather capability. In Operation Enduring Freedom, big bombers are dropping more than 80 percent of the bomb tonnage but account for only 11 percent of the sorties flown.

These F-15Es, from the 48th Fighter Wing at RAF Lakenheath, UK, are headed to an undisclosed air base in Southwest Asia. The F-15Es have proved valuable for their long range, speed, and ability to carry some of the larger precision guided weapons.



USAF photo by SSgt. William Greer

USAF photo



These EC-130 Commando Solo aircraft are flying TV and radio studios. They broadcast to the Afghan people the US message about why we're fighting terrorism and the Taliban. All Commando Solos are in the Air National Guard, based at Harrisburg, Pa.



The famine relief in Afghanistan goes on. Above, humanitarian daily rations are loaded aboard a C-17 for the flight from Ramstein AB, Germany. At right, the loadmaster personally delivers the one-millionth meal dropped.



USAF photos by Mannie Garcia



In late October, there was a shift from exclusively precision guided munitions to more area attacks. Top, rows of "dumb" bombs are lined up for their one-way ride on the hulking and venerable B-52 to a Taliban army target.



Above, ground crews of the 28th Air Expeditionary Wing remind themselves and the intended recipients what all this is about and get a chance to personalize their retribution. The big BUFFs are 40, or older, but still pull their share of the weight in the direct air attack. The ramp at Diego Garcia is a bustling place, as attacks continue both day and night.



A Taliban barracks and training complex near Kabul. The Air Force is going after Taliban armor, troops, command-and-control facilities, and airfields, as well as al Qaeda terrorist training sites and camps throughout Afghanistan.



In this poststrike image, most of the military facilities are completely destroyed or severely damaged, but a historic fort nearby has been left untouched.



With hundreds of sorties being flown over a volatile region, strict airspace management is the rule for AWACS aircraft deployed to Enduring Freedom. At right, SrA. Shana Reeves and Canadian Master Cpl. Tim Rice operate a Joint Tactical Information Distribution System, helping keep straight who's who over Afghanistan.





USN photo by Cmdr. Brian G. Gawne

USAF photo by SSgt. Ken Bergmann



The air campaign simply would not be possible without constant and comprehensive support from Air Force tankers. Top, Navy F/A-18s and an F-14 fill up from a KC-10. The carrier-based aircraft may hook up to the tanker six times or more on a typical mission.

SSgt. Jeffrey Richards opens an access panel on a KC-10 operating out of the island of Sicily.

Above middle, an ANG tanker crew briefs a mission at Moron AB, Spain. An air bridge between the continental US and Southwest Asia ensures a constant flow of airplanes, supplies, rations, spares, and bombs to the theater.

And at home (right) a KC-135 tanks up an F-16 flying nighttime combat air patrol over New York.



USAF photo by SSgt. Pamela J. Farlin

USAF photo by Carlos Cimron



Special operations doesn't just mean ground troops. They have to get there. Below, an MH-53 Pave Low is loaded onto a C-17 for transport to the war zone. At right, a Pave Low tanks up during a mission. The helicopter excels at getting special ops troops into and out of their operations.

USAF photo by SSgt. Cecilio Ricardo



USAF photo by TSgt. Scott Reed

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USAF photo by SSgt. Mitch Fuqua

At left, a Combat Talon MC-130 readies for a night run. The modified Hercules transport performs lights-out, low-altitude, white-knuckle refueling, mainly of helicopters. Above, a crewman keeps watch as a chopper takes on gas.

Also called to the war are the AC-130 gunships, which have the ability to put prodigious and continuous amounts of firepower on a point target. Aircraft like this keep the Taliban awake at night.



USAF photo



USAF photo by TSgt. Cedric H. Rudisill



USAF photos by SSgt. Shane Cuomo

Top, a B-1B refuels over the Indian Ocean. The Air Force still plans to reduce the size of the B-1B fleet to pay for upgrades of the remainder. Rising defense budgets, and the understanding that the war on terrorism will be a long one, may allow the Air Force to rethink the plan.

Above and right, JDAMs are loaded onto the "Bones" at Diego Garcia. Quick consumption early in the conflict worried many that the JDAM supply would run out, but production has been stepped up.

USAF photo by SSgt. Larry A. Simmons



Not long ago, few could have imagined that the US would enter a conventional war in the heart of Asia, using carrier-based aircraft, big bombers—some of which fly in from as far away as Missouri—and fighters staged in former Soviet states. Enduring Freedom sharply illustrates both the unpredictability of warfare and the challenges of access in the 21st century. ■