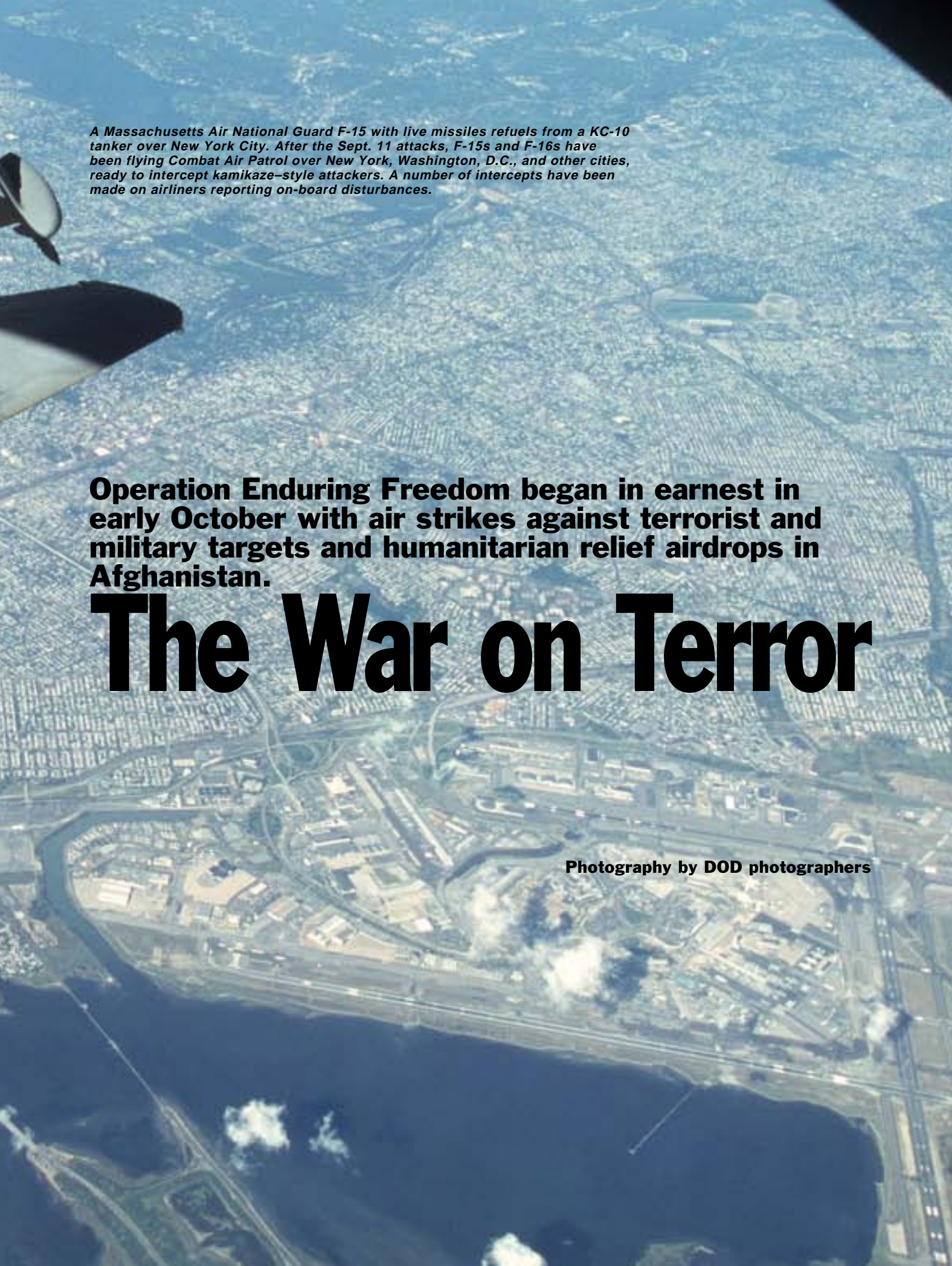




USAF photo by Ken Mann

An aerial photograph of New York City, showing the dense urban landscape, the Hudson River, and the East River. In the upper left corner, the tail section of a white F-15 fighter jet is visible, flying towards the right. The sky is clear and blue.

A Massachusetts Air National Guard F-15 with live missiles refuels from a KC-10 tanker over New York City. After the Sept. 11 attacks, F-15s and F-16s have been flying Combat Air Patrol over New York, Washington, D.C., and other cities, ready to intercept kamikaze-style attackers. A number of intercepts have been made on airliners reporting on-board disturbances.

Operation Enduring Freedom began in earnest in early October with air strikes against terrorist and military targets and humanitarian relief airdrops in Afghanistan.

The War on Terror

Photography by DOD photographers

Destination secret, nameplates painted over, and patches removed, an F-15E crew of the 48th Fighter Wing from RAF Lakenheath, UK, gears up to deploy to Southwest Asia for Operation Enduring Freedom. The initial strikes of the operation aimed at terrorists in Afghanistan and the Taliban regime that supports them. Below, an F-15E carries a multipurpose load of air-to-air and air-to-ground ordnance—both laser-guided and “dumb” bombs—extended-range fuel tanks, targeting pods, and a data link pod.



USAF photos by SSgt. William Greer



Laser-guided bombs get the preflight once-over. Planning for air strikes goes right down to the clothing and footwear.



The Afghanistan campaign involves two fronts: terrorism and starvation. Operating from Ramstein AB, Germany, C-17s drop humanitarian food relief to Afghans already suffering from famine. The airdrops of Humanitarian Daily Rations were made from extreme altitudes, to protect the aircraft and crews as air defenses had not yet been beaten down.



USAF photo by TSgt. Cary Humphries



All three types of Air Force heavy bombers—B-52s, B-1Bs and B-2s—have seen action in Afghanistan. At top, a B-52H armed with satellite-guided 2,000-pound bombs gets a rousing send-off from crews at Diego Garcia, a British atoll in the Indian Ocean. Above and right, a lineup of MiG fighters and a cargo airplane at Herat Airfield, Afghanistan, before and after US precision attacks. No enemy fighters came up to challenge US warplanes.



Left, a B-1B launches from Diego Garcia. The B-2s participating in the operation flew 44-hour missions from Whiteman AFB, Mo., attacking targets and recovering at Diego Garcia, where fresh crews took the controls for the long trip home.

Long after the attack, the ruins of the World Trade Center still smolder. The twin towers and other buildings were demolished by the Sept. 11 attacks, which killed more than 5,000 from the US and other countries. Below, a grim reminder of the toll on the first responders: 343 firefighters and 23 police officers died as the buildings collapsed.



USAF photo by Gary Eil

US Navy photo by Jim Watson



USAF photo by Capt. Jim Fabio

New Jersey firefighter Anthony Latona, awaiting the order to enter the rubble of the north tower, is also a staff sergeant in the New York Air National Guard. Many firemen and police officers are Guardsmen or Reservists; call-ups after the attacks strained their ranks.

An MH-53 Pave Low special operations helicopter from Hurlburt Field, Fla., swoops toward the South Battery. Working from McGuire AFB, N.J., the aircraft's crew transported search-and-rescue teams into the area near the World Trade Center.



USAF photo by Gary Eil



McGuire Air Force Base quickly became a hub of USAF activity in the rescue and recovery effort. Above, Federal Emergency Management Agency supplies are off-loaded; at right, FEMA search-and-rescue personnel go home to California after 10 days of exhausting effort.



An Air Force civilian worker hooks up telephone and computer lines as McGuire gears up for the recovery effort, far left. And then the war: A KC-10 prepares to head out.

American Airlines Flight 77 slammed into the Pentagon at 9:38 a.m. on Sept. 11. This area of the building had recent renovations and many personnel had not yet moved back into the section hit. Anti-terrorist measures—blast-proof windows, steel reinforcement, Kevlar shielding—helped contain the damage.



USMC photos by Cpl. Jason Ingersoll

US Navy photo by Mark D. Faram



Triage on the helipad: Instead of evacuating the area, many of the uninjured Pentagon employees turned around and helped with the rescue. Preparation and quick thinking on the part of many kept casualty numbers from being far graver. Aside from those on the airplane, 125 were killed by the Pentagon attack.

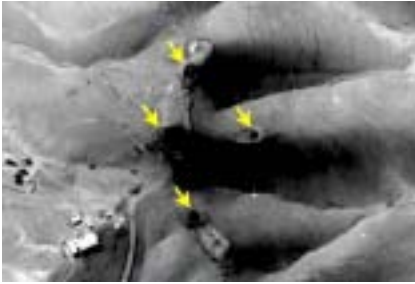
It took days to extinguish the fire at the Pentagon. Crash, fire, and water damage claimed about one-third of the entire structure. Still, the rest of the building never stopped functioning.



US Navy photo by Robert Houlihan



USAF photo by MSgt. Don Taggart



The terrorist assaults prompted the invocation of Article 5 of the NATO treaty: the provision for mutual defense. NATO AWACS aircraft were dispatched to the US to control CAP fighters such as the F-16 at top, freeing USAF AWACS to go abroad and support Operation Enduring Freedom. The UK offered the most overt help: Tomahawk missiles, aircraft, and use of Diego Garcia for staging, right. Above, Taliban SAM sites knocked out as shown in reconnaissance photo.



USAF photo by SrA. Rebecca M. Luquin

The faces of USAF crews have taken on a new determination. As US and international leaders have said: The war against terrorists and any nation that supports them will be fought on many fronts and will not be easy or quick.



“Global Reach” has gained sharp definition, as USAF goes to war from the skies over Manhattan to the mountains of Asia, literally on opposite sides of the world.