



# Air Combat Command Public Affairs

**HOT ITEM**

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## 53rd Wing helps get B-1s to the fight

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EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. - NATO has a new player in its corner in the Kosovo crisis. With the help of the 53d Wing here, the B-1 bomber is now a part of Operation Allied Force.

Achieving in less than 100 hours what normally takes a few months, the wing developed, tested and fielded new software for the B-1B, allowing it to join the NATO effort April 1-- less than a week after the call came for their support.

That call came Mar. 26 from the Air Combat Command battle staff. They wanted to send the B-1 to assist in the Kosovo crisis, but the aircraft needed an updated software package, known as a block cycle update, from the 53d Wing before it could be deployed.

The wing immediately began working around the clock to create new defensive mission data software to incorporate with the block cycle update. The new data allows the B-1's electronic warfare system to accurately identify and counter enemy radars.

Military and civilian engineers at the 36th Engineering and Test Squadron began writing new mission data software that night and started testing it in the morning. Technical concerns were addressed and quickly solved, and employment guidance was built. The laboratory testing was completed the morning of Mar. 29, fielded by that afternoon, and the flight test accomplished the evening of Mar.30.

"The new software has increased capabilities that the theater commanders were interested in -- enhanced defensive capabilities as well as new weapons capabilities," said Lt. Col. Lou Martucci, 36th ETS operations officer. "To meet the dates they wanted it, the electronic warfare mission data had to be done very quickly and optimizations made to the defensive systems."

Achieving this monumental task required the cooperation of numerous players. Many units within the 53rd Wing worked with other military units as well as contractors from Boeing, Raytheon and AIL Systems to complete all phases of the test.

The 36th ETS built and tested the software, and technicians from the 16th Test Squadron assisted with its validation. The 28th Test Squadron coordinated with ACC to resolve communications and navigation radio issues. The 53rd Support Squadron arranged video teleconferencing and worked computer issues, while the 68th Test Support Squadron provided intelligence support.

Then the 53rd Test and Evaluation Group's Detachment 2 flew a B-1B from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., to Eglin for the flight test. Normally, reserving time on Eglin test ranges for flight tests must be planned weeks in advance. "However, the 46th Test Wing allowed us to get on the range immediately when we needed it," said Martucci.

"The cooperation we got from Ellsworth was outstanding," said Lt. Col. Gregg Bourke, 36th ETS integrated systems flight commander. "The 28th Bomb Wing was not only generating airplanes to go, they were helping us work issues so that we could help them."

By Mar. 29, 53rd Wing people were on their way to Ellsworth to brief aircrews and assist with installation of the new software.

"Everyone went way above and beyond what anyone ever thought could be accomplished," said Martucci. "It was a remarkable team effort orchestrated by the men and women of the 53rd Wing. To go from almost nothing to a full laboratory test to a graduation flight test in less than 100 hours is phenomenal."

"At the final meeting prior to approving the software, we determined that we came up with the absolute best product humanly possible, regardless of the amount of time that we had," said Bourke. "We kept the needs of our customers -- the actual combat aircrews -- in mind throughout the test, knowing that their lives depend on us. I feel very confident that they're now well prepared to go to battle."

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