



Air Force News

Bombers continue to show their might in NATO operation

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*by Tech. Sgt. Ann Bennett
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ROYAL AIR FORCE FAIRFORD, England -- Air Force bombers are an important part of NATO's air campaign in the Balkans, providing a lot of payload and long-range flexibility, according to the commander of the 2nd Air Expeditionary Group here.

Col. Floyd Carpenter commands the 2nd AEG, which has almost 800 airmen from 34 bases supporting more than a dozen B-52H and B-1B bombers, as well as the KC-135R tankers operating from here as part of NATO's Operation Allied Force.

Referring not only to the B-52s and B-1s here, but also to the B-2s flying global missions from Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., Carpenter says "it's a great capability bombers bring to the fight."

In a visit here April 18, Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Michael E. Ryan said we've been able to build an appreciation at home for what the bomber force can do.

"You saw that we used the B-1s and B-52s in Desert Fox and we had the B-2 planned if we needed it," Ryan said. "All three bombers are currently engaged in Operation Allied Force. We continue to advocate (the) bombers' importance."



Airman 1st Class Erik Underwood, a crew chief from the 96th Bomb Squadron, 2nd Bomb Wing at Barksdale Air Force Base, La., waits for a B-52H Stratofortress as it taxis its way down the runway at Royal Air Force Fairford, England. Underwood and elements of the 2nd Bomb Wing are at RAF Fairford as part of the 2nd Air Expeditionary Group supporting NATO operations in Kosovo. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Randy Mallard)



The bombers have been dropping their payloads on Serbian military targets in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia since the air campaign started March 24. The B-52s took part in the first offensive action in NATO history in this joint air campaign.

"The B-52s, with their conventional air-launched cruise missiles, give us the ability to stand outside threats and hit high-value targets very precisely," Carpenter said.

Referring to the initial operation, which included cruise missiles launched from B-52 bombers, Carpenter said, "the way we usually start an air campaign is by using stand-off weapons like cruise missiles to take down ... threats to our airplanes.

According to the 2nd AEG commander, the other bombers give Allied Force a different kind of bomber capability.

"The B-1s (can) fly over and drop a large number of weapons precisely on targets and survive in a hostile environment," he explained. "The B-2's precise joint-direct attack munitions and stealthiness gives it free reign to take out high-value targets throughout the region."

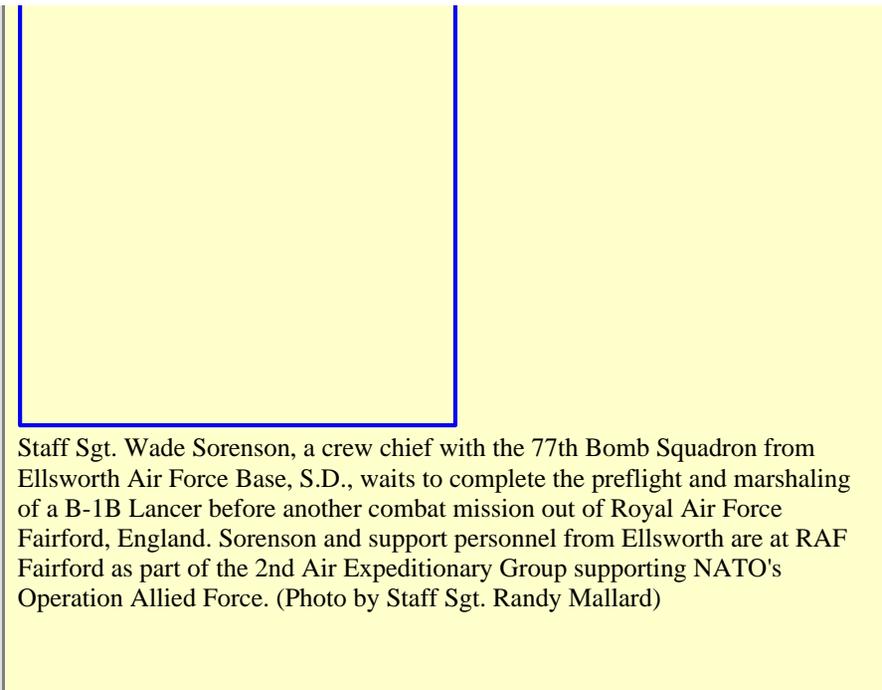
"America's bombers complement each other very well," he said. "Each has unique capabilities and strengths. Together, they provide a very formidable force."

B-52s, which have been deployed here from Barksdale AFB, La., since Feb. 21, and the B-1s, which arrived April 1 from Ellsworth AFB, S.D., together have flown about 60 combat sorties.

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Staff Sgt. Wade Sorenson, a crew chief with the 77th Bomb Squadron from Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., waits to complete the preflight and marshaling of a B-1B Lancer before another combat mission out of Royal Air Force Fairford, England. Sorenson and support personnel from Ellsworth are at RAF Fairford as part of the 2nd Air Expeditionary Group supporting NATO's Operation Allied Force. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Randy Mallard)

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