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Ammo troops one key to Operation Allied Force success

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ROYAL AIR FORCE FAIRFORD, England (ACCNS) - When iron-dropping bombers were needed for NATO's Operation Allied Force, the 28th Munitions Squadron, Ellsworth AFB, S.D., was ready to go.

Arriving here March 31, the 54 ammunition troops were ready to meet NATO bombing requirements the following day.

Like other deployed squadrons here, they unloaded their equipment, set up sections and flights, and proceeded to meet their mission supporting six B-1 combat sorties. In the first 30 days alone, the B-1 dropped about 1,500 Mk-82 500-pound general-purpose bombs.

The 2nd Munitions Squadron from Barksdale AFB, La., sent reinforcements May 3, arriving with 10 fully loaded B-52 aircraft. The 2nd Air Expeditionary Group's ammunition community grew to 116.

Working around the clock, teams from both bases quickly produced bombs to support the bombing requirement orders, sometimes exceeding 450 bombs a day, said Chief Master Sgt. Michael Boyd from the 28th MUNS.

Many things go into preparing bombs for flight, Boyd said. First, the parts must be ordered from the depot and received here. All operations begin with safety briefings and must comply with strict explosive safety rules, he said.

Then, each bomb, fuse, fin, nose support cup and other parts must be inspected for serviceability. The preparation of these parts takes almost as long as actual assembly. The bombs are removed from their pallets and placed on modified 40-foot flatbed trailers where they are assembled. The crew chiefs then verify the fuse's settings and assign "lot" numbers for accounting purposes. The bombs are then positioned on holding pads until needed.

"The airmen on-site worked day and night to ensure their missions were met. One of their personal bests was building more than 340 bombs in one shift," said Boyd.

The ammo team repeated this scenario for more than a month - building more than 14,000 bombs. They built Mk-82 500-pound, M-117 750-pound and Mk-84 2,000-pound general-purpose bombs. They also replenished aircraft countermeasures, repaired munitions handling

equipment and ferried bombs to aircraft spots.

The aircrews dropped more than 11,650 weapons averaging about 45 per sortie. "That equates to about 5.4 million pounds of steel and 1.9 million pounds of high explosives worth in excess of \$24 million," said Boyd.

Now that the peace efforts have begun, the troops have disassembled the unused munitions and balanced the supply accounts down to the penny. Mobility pallets are reassembled and chocks are met until they all get home.

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