



OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM -- A maintenance crew prepares to launch a B-1B Lancer from the 405th Air Expeditionary Wing at a forward-deployed location. The B-1 is from the 28th Bomb Wing at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Cherie A. Thurlby) | [High-res version of this photo](#)

Lancer crews describe B-1 missions over Iraq

*by Master Sgt. Scott Elliott
Air Force Print News*

03/25/03 - **WASHINGTON** -- B-1B Lancers, combining the latest in technology with old-fashioned elbow grease, are taking the air war of Operation Iraqi Freedom to regime and military targets in every inch of that country.

Four members of the 405th Air Expeditionary Wing described their mission to Pentagon reporters in a March 25 teleconference. The 405th is currently deployed to an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia.

"The B-1 is so flexible because of its (long range) and ability to carry more munitions than any aircraft (except the B-2 Spirit, armed with cluster bombs)," said Col. Peter Kippie, 405th AEW vice commander. "We have a very dynamic capability to strike across the area of operations.

"There is no target within Iraq that is not at risk when we take off," he said.

The Lancers, Kippie said, are taking off at unprecedented rates, thanks to the efforts of the unit's maintenance corps.

"We had broken airplanes on the first night, but they were repaired in an incredibly short time," he said. "We got every airplane airborne, over target and striking the targets when they should have been.

"Not a single B-1 was turned away either because of maintenance, threats or enemy defenses," Kippie said.

According to Capt. Ty Newman, a Lancer weapons systems officer, the B-1 crews are challenged on every mission by Iraqi defense forces.

"The threat is certainly out there, and on any given mission we take every precaution and use all our tactics to minimize the threat to our aircraft as we go on strikes inside Baghdad," Newman said.

One highly publicized Iraqi countermeasure was the purchase of "GPS jammers," which were designed to thwart America's use of precision-guided munitions. In theory, by overriding global positioning satellite signals, the "smart" weapons could be confused into missing their targets.

"If the Iraqis are spending money to buy this stuff, they're wasting their cash," said Col. James Kowalski, 405th AEW commander.

According to Kowalski, the B-1s themselves can not be jammed, so the bombs will hit their targets one way or the other.

"The weapon has an inertial navigation system, so even if it never gets a lock (on the GPS signal), it's going to land within about 40 feet from the target," he said.

B-1s, which can carry 24 2,000-pound bombs, typically take off with a plan to strike a number of targets and then wait for targets of opportunity to appear.

"Most of the time we go up there, hit some targets and find a tanker," Kowalski said. "While we're on the tanker, we'll get additional targets and then go strike again."

Cutting-edge technology is keeping Combined Air Operations Center war planners connected with the B-1s, ensuring rapid placement of their weapons.

"Sometimes the front moves so fast we're getting additional targets (after) we get into Iraq," Kowalski said. "We're using satellites to transmit targeting data -- basically, e-mails from the CAOC that update us with time-sensitive targets.

"We have all the players linked up now," Kowalski said. "It allows us to react much more quickly to changes on the battlefield and to what we detect via intelligence."

With battle plans changing so quickly, aircrews don't have much time to think about what they're doing, said B-1 pilot Maj. Jeff Paterson.

"It all falls back on training," he said. "You spend years and years training to go to war, training to be the best at what you do. Once you take off and the wheels are in the gear well, you don't really dwell on it a lot. You just get the job done."
