Safe recovery. An F-117 stealth attack aircraft lands at Aviano Air Base, Italy, just after sunrise following a night mission into the most heavily defended portions of Serbia. During the air war's fourth night, an F-117 was downed just northwest of Belgrade, most likely by a lucky SA-3 shot, in the first-ever loss of a stealth aircraft in combat. (The pilot was promptly retrieved by CSAR forces.)

Stealth bomber. Used for the first time in combat during Allied Force after having been in line service since 1993, a USAF B-2 prepares to take on fuel midway across the Atlantic Ocean during one of two preplanned tanker hookups en route to target. The low-observable bomber, operating nonstop from its home base in the United States, was the first allied aircraft to penetrate Serb defenses on opening night.
Heavy players. A venerable USAF B-52H bomber stands parked on the ramp at RAF Fairford, England, as a successor-generation B-1B takes off on a mission to deliver as many as 80 500-lb Mk 82 bombs or 30 CBU-87 cluster bomb units against enemy barracks and other area targets. An AGM-86C CALCM fired from standoff range by a B-52 was the first allied weapon to be launched in the war.

Final checks. Two Block 40 F-16CGs from the 555th Fighter Squadron at Aviano taxi into the arming area just short of the runway for one last look by maintenance technicians before taking off on a day mission to drop 500-lb GBU-12 laser-guided bombs on “flex” targets of opportunity in Serbia or Kosovo, as directed by airborne FACs and as approved, in some cases, by the CAOC.
On the cat. A U.S. Navy F/A-18C assigned to Fighter/Attack Squadron 15 is readied for a catapult launch for an Allied Force day combat mission from the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt cruising on station in the Adriatic Sea. On April 15, carrier-based F/A-18s figured prominently in a major CAOC-directed air strike on the Serb air base at Podgorica, Montenegro.

Burner takeoff. An F-15E from the 494th Fighter Squadron home-based at RAF Lakenheath, England, clears the runway at Aviano in full afterburner, with CBU-87 cluster munitions shown mounted on its aftmost semiconformal fuselage weapons stations. Eventually, some F-15E strike sorties into Serbia and Kosovo were flown nonstop to target and back directly from Lakenheath.
Combat support. U.S. Navy and Marine Corps EA-6B Prowler electronic warfare aircraft, like this one shown taxiing for takeoff at Aviano, provided extensive and indispensable standoff jamming of enemy early warning and IADS fire-control radars to help ensure unmolested allied strike operations, including B-2 and F-117 stealth operations, against the most heavily defended enemy targets in Serbia.

SAM hunter. This Block 50 F-16CJ in the arming area at Aviano shows an AGM-88 high-speed anti-radiation missile (HARM) mounted on the left intermediate wing weapons station, with an AIM-9M air-to-air missile on the outboard station and an AIM-120 AMRAAM on the wingtip missile rail. The USAF’s F-16CJ inventory was stressed to the limit to meet the SEAD demand of Allied Force.
Cramped spaces. This USAF C-17 parked on the narrow ramp at Rinas airport, incapable of accommodating the larger C-5, was one of many such aircraft which provided dedicated mobility service to TF Hawk. In more than 500 direct-delivery lift sorties altogether, C-17s moved 200,000-plus short tons of equipment and supplies to support the Army’s deployment within the span of just a month.

Task Force Hawk. A U.S. Army AH-64 Apache attack helicopter flares for landing at the Rinas airport near Tirana, Albania, following a ferry flight from its home base at Illesheim, Germany. In all, 24 Apaches were dispatched to Albania with the intent to be used in Operation Allied Force, but none saw combat in the end because of concerns for the aircraft’s prospects for survival in hostile airspace.
Deadly force. Munitions technicians at RAF Fairford prepare a CBU-87 cluster bomb unit for loading into a USAF B-1B bomber in preparation for a mission against fielded Serbian forces operating in Kosovo. With a loadout of 30 CBU-87s—more than five times the payload of an F-15E—the B-1 can fly at fighter-equivalent speeds more than 4,200 nautical miles unfueled.

Eagle eye. Ground crewmen at RAF Lakenheath prepare a LANTIRN targeting pod to be mounted on an F-15E multirole, all-weather fighter. The pod, also carried by the Navy F-14D and the USAF F-16CG, contains a forward-looking infrared (FLIR) sensor for target identification at standoff ranges day or night, as well as a self-contained laser designator for enabling precision delivery of LGBs.
Help from an ally. One of 18 CF-18 Hornet multirole fighters deployed in support of Allied Force from Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta, Canada, is parked in front of a hardened aircraft shelter at Aviano. The aircraft mounts two 500-lb GBU-12 laser-guided bombs on the outboard wing pylons and two AIM-9M air-to-air missiles on the wingtip rails.

Force protection. A security guard stands watch over a USAF C-17 airlifter at the Rinas airport in support of the U.S. Army's Apache attack helicopter deployment to Albania. For a time, reported differences between on-scene Air Force and Army commanders with respect to who was ultimately responsible for the airfield made for discomfiting friction within the U.S. contingent.
Round-the-clock operations. An F-16 pilot readies himself for a night mission over Serbia, his helmet shown fitted with a mount for night-vision goggles. Used in conjunction with compatible cockpit lighting, NVGs made possible night tactics applications, including multiaircraft formations and simultaneous bomb deliveries, which otherwise could only have been conducted during daylight.

Flexing into the KEZ. An AGM-65 Maverick-equipped A-10 from the USAF's 52nd Fighter Wing stationed at Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, takes off from Gioia del Colle to provide an on-call capability against possible Serb targets detected in Kosovo by allied sensors, including the TPQ-36 and TPQ-37 firefinder radars operated by the U.S. Army on the high ground above Tirana, Albania.
A team of U.S. military personnel examines the remains of an enemy MiG-29 fighter (NATO code name Fulcrum) which was shot down in Bosnian airspace by a USAF F-15C on the afternoon of March 26, 1999. The downed aircraft, which appeared to have strayed from its planned course due to a loss of situation awareness by its pilot, brought to five the number of MiG-29s destroyed in early Allied Force air encounters.

**Night refueling.** A USAF F-15C air combat fighter, shown here through a night-vision lens, moves into the precontact position to take on fuel from a KC-135 tanker before resuming its station to provide offensive counterair protection for attacking NATO strikers. With a loss of six MiGs in aerial combat encounters the first week, Serb fighters rarely rose thereafter to challenge NATO’s control of the air.

**Splash one Fulcrum.** A team of U.S. military personnel examines the remains of an enemy MiG-29 fighter (NATO code name Fulcrum) which was shot down in Bosnian airspace by a USAF F-15C on the afternoon of March 26, 1999. The downed aircraft, which appeared to have strayed from its planned course due to a loss of situation awareness by its pilot, brought to five the number of MiG-29s destroyed in early Allied Force air encounters.
Hard-target killer. This F-15E pilot, a USAF major assigned to the 494th Fighter Squadron, looks over a 4,700-lb electro-optically-guided GBU-28 bunker-buster munition mounted on his aircraft’s centerline stores station. The aircraft, one of a two-ship flight of F-15Es (call sign Lance 31 and 32), delivered the weapon on April 28, 1999, against an underground hangar at the Serb air base at Podgorica.
A bridge no more. Another post-strike battle-damage assessment image shows this bridge in Serbia cut in two places by a precision bombing attack. Sometimes enemy bridges were dropped at the behest of NATO target planners to prevent the flow of traffic over them. At other times, they were attacked and damaged to sever key fiber-optic communications lines that were known to run through them.

**Precision attack.** In April 1999, a single B-2 achieved six accurately placed GBU-31 JDAM hits against six runway-taxiway intersections at the Obvra military airfield in Serbia, precluding operations by enemy fighters until repairs could be completed. This post-strike image graphically shows the B-2's ability with JDAM to achieve the effects of mass without having to mass, regardless of weather.
Before and after. This bridge over the Danube River near Novi Sad in Serbia, shown here in both pre- and post-strike imagery, was all but completely demolished by precision bombing on Day 9 of Allied Force as Phase III of the air war, for the first time, ramped up operations to include attacks against not only Serbian IADS and fielded military assets but also key infrastructure targets.

Effects-based targeting. For three consecutive nights beginning on May 24, U.S. aircraft struck electrical power facilities in Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Nis, the three largest cities in Serbia, shutting off electrical power to 80 percent of Serbia. This transformer yard in Belgrade was one such target that was attacked in what was arguably the most influential strike of Allied Force to that point.