

Vulnerable Bases

Having been stationed at Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam when it was attacked during the 1968 Tet Offensive, and having studied the key role that bases have played in air campaigns, air base operability (and availability) has long been an intense interest of mine. Unfortunately, I see little evidence that the Air Force has ever really learned what is needed to ensure our bases will remain operable in war [*"The Lessons of Salty Demo," March, p. 54*]. Despite organizing to be "expeditionary" and fielding aircraft like the F-22 designed to counter highly capable adversaries, air base operability remains an unexamined assumption causing our bases to be far too vulnerable.

As was sadly the case in World War II, we cannot wait until our bases are attacked to take seriously the threat to their operability. One way we will know that the Air Force has finally learned the lessons of Salty Demo will be when the requirements for our fighters don't ignore their operating surface requirements.

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The Balkan Air War

In the article "The Balkan Air War" [*March, p. 42*], *Air Force Magazine* does a disservice to the men and women of the US Air Force and nation they serve by continuing to publish distorted accounts of the Balkan war of the '90s.

The purpose of this letter is not to question the performance of the aircrews in that war. As a Vietnam combat veteran, I fully appreciate the difficulty of operating under unrealistic rules of engagement and confusing mission objectives. However, to claim that this was a war won "with airpower alone" is factually wrong. Slobodan Milosevic's only objective was to remain in power. That goal was threatened by the terms of the proposed Rambouillet Treaty, presented by then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright as a non-negotiable ultimatum that would have surrendered Serbian sovereignty to NATO occupation. It was only after 78 days of bombing, growing concern over civilian deaths, embarrassing mistakes, and weakening resolve by some NATO members that the objectionable clause

was removed. Milosevic had saved his skin by making a show of trying to save Kosovo.

Col. George Jatras,
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Regardless of how well our airmen performed their mission, I take no pride in my Air Force's participating in the establishment of a new Islamic terror state in southern Europe.

Even as I write this, the non-Muslim population of Kosovo is being purged, their history and their culture expunged, their churches and property confiscated, looted, and destroyed, and any lingering resistors to this cultural genocide are being killed, converted by force, or driven out in a relentless wave of Islamic purification. Even as I write this, Islamic agitators and "immigrants" are infiltrating from Kosovo into Serbia proper and all the surrounding countries of Europe, for the express purpose of spreading sedition and terror, and then repeating this successful Kosovo landgrab on behalf of a newly resurgent Islamic global totalitarian empire.

Maj. Robert D. Klimek,
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The Pararescuemen

I believe the article titled "The Pararescuemen" in the March issue (p. 48) was mistitled. A more appropriate title would have been "The Combat Search and Rescue Team" as evidenced by the content of the article's photos. By my count, more than half the photos included members of the CSAR team other than PJs. PJs may be the "tip of

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To support the United States Air Force and the Air Force family and aerospace education.

the spear" of the team, but without the other team members, the PJs would be unable to do their job.

I have great admiration for the PJs and their myriad accomplishments and heroic efforts; however, since becoming acquainted with the efforts of the CSAR team in the mid-'60s, I have observed that PJs have received an abundance of publicity at the expense of the other members of the CSAR team.

Col. J. M. Nall,
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Bullet Vs. Bullet

I'm surprised and dismayed that *Air Force Magazine* reiterates the daily press' mantra that the national missile defense system is akin to a bullet hitting a bullet [*"Bullet Vs. Bullet," March, p. 58*]. It's not that difficult. You omitted a description of the final moments of the interception.

Your article adequately explains the radar systems deployed to detect, track, and handoff the incoming missile to the interceptors. What's lacking is how the interceptor actually works.

The technology for this endgame is simple in concept, difficult to achieve.

The interceptor contains its own detection, guidance, and propulsion system. It stares at a hot, incoming target against the cold blackness of space with its infrared detectors, calculates where the target is heading, and moves laterally to hit it head-on. Small, onboard thrusters accomplish the movement. This rapid sidewise movement is the key to the interception because at a closing speed of 10,000 to 20,000 miles per hour, the last millisecond before contact is most important. Numerous tests and one actual interception show it will work when required.

Frank P. Klatt
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The Matterhorn Missions

[In regard to the article, *"The Matterhorn Missions," March, p. 62:*] The truth is finally emerging about the disastrous convoluted deployment of the B-29s, in the Matterhorn missions to the Pacific Theatre, that validated General Claire Chennault's theory that they would eat up valuable resources and accomplish little. Strapped with a late-arriving and trouble-plagued airplane, we waited an unbelievable three years after Pearl Harbor before we were in a position to attack Tokyo. (See *Point of No Return*, by Wilbur Morrison.) That and many other failures finally convinced our leaders that single airplane nighttime bombing, later described as safer than training missions over Kansas, should be accepted. This entire disaster could all have been avoided had the Air Force recognized

the potential of aerial refueling in 1943, when first presented by B-24 copilots, instead of 1948.

This relatively simple idea had the potential to bring Japan to the peace table at least six months sooner, saving thousands of American casualties that were incurred in fighting for airfields closer to Japan that would not have then been needed. The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the five-day Soviet entry, the division of Korea, and its ongoing war could all have been avoided.

Did we learn a lesson from all this? Probably not. Former President Jimmy Carter would be the first to admit he handed the White House over to Ronald Reagan on a silver platter when he let his fellow naval friends talk him into not using the Army's aerial refueled helicopters to save the hostages in Iran. The Navy claimed the Army pilots were not capable of flying off carriers, forgetting their fantastic performance on the same carriers during our retreat from Saigon. The Air Force to this day still has its writers following the bizarre statement in an official training film that aerial refueling was not needed during World War II because our bases were close enough to our enemies.

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