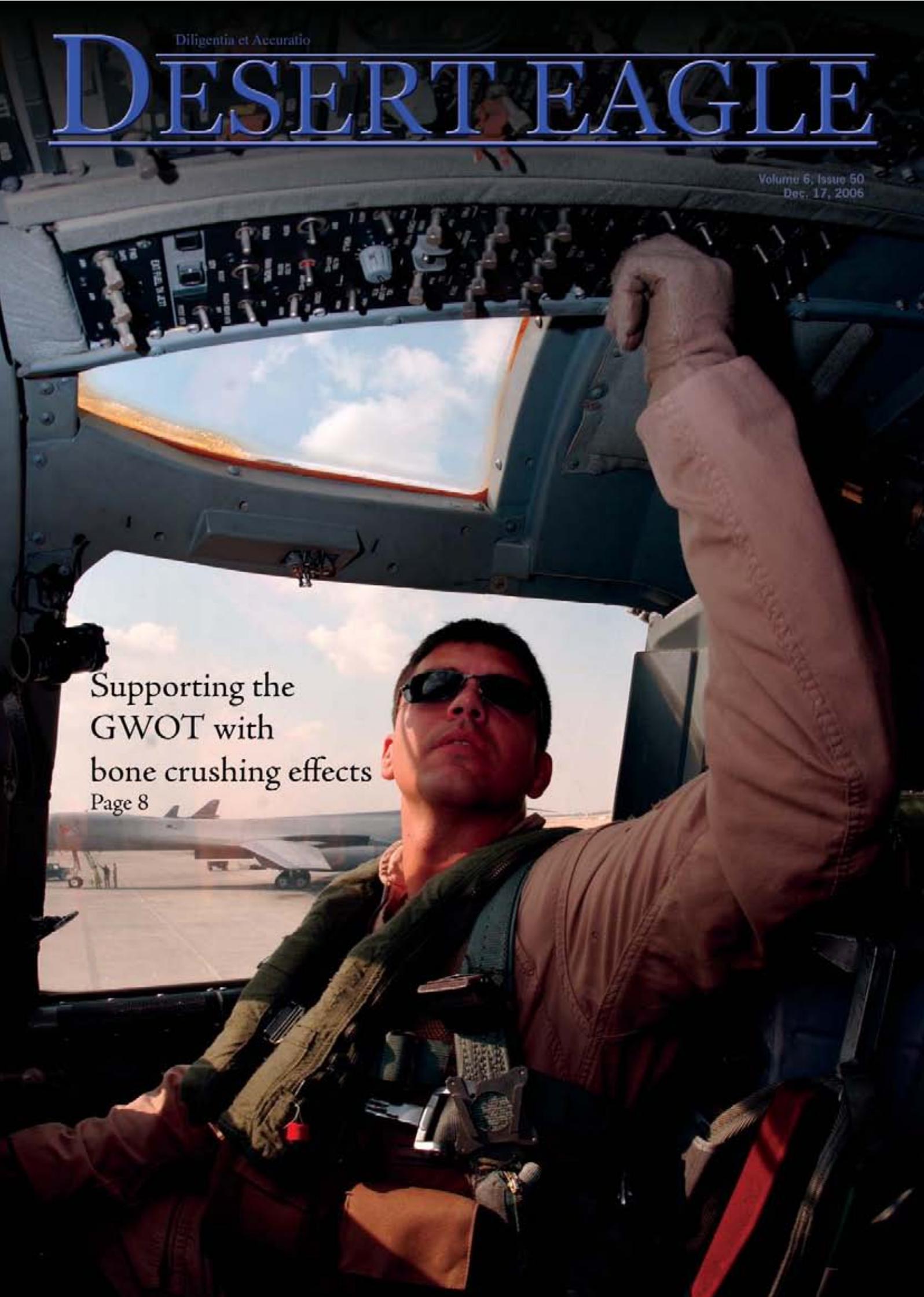


Diligentia et Accuratio

DESERT EAGLE

Volume 6, Issue 50
Dec. 17, 2006

A photograph of a pilot in a cockpit. The pilot is wearing sunglasses and a flight suit, looking out the canopy. The cockpit interior is visible, including various instruments and controls. Outside the canopy, an aircraft carrier is visible on a tarmac under a clear sky.

Supporting the
GWOT with
bone crushing effects
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Photo by Senior Airman Ricky Best

**On the cover:
Capt. David Grasso, a B-1
pilot with 37th
Expeditionary Bomb
Squadron, performs a pre-
flight check before flying a
mission.**

Desert Eagle

Bombs Away

B-1 crews let enemy know airpower is ready to strike

by Maj. Ann Peru Knabe
Chief, 379th AEW Public Affairs

Capt. Craig Morrison tucked himself into the bottom bunk around 9 a.m. as the bright sunlight bounced off the desert rock and sand outside his dorm window. The 29-year-old weapon systems officer would sleep almost 12 hours, reporting for duty later in the evening when the rest of the B-1B Lancer crew from the 37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron met for a mission brief.

Once at the squadron operations building, the former finance officer was joined by Aircraft Commander Maj. Mike Jason, Copilot Capt. David Grasso and fellow WSO Capt. Richard Kovsky. On this particular mission, Captain Morrison sat in the offensive systems officer seat in the B-1, where he was responsible for the jet's basic navigation. Captain Kovsky, on the other hand, was in the defensive systems officer's seat. Both WSOs serve unique roles in the B-1.

"When I sit in the OSO seat, I'm responsible for getting the jet to the target area on time," explained Captain Morrison. "The OSO acts as a

bombardier, managing all the weapons while building the individual and group target sets for CAS (close air support) missions, and we manage the inertial navigation system and operate the radar."

The late-night mission brief gave the crew an overview of the sortie, and the locations and call-signs for the Joint Tactical Air Controllers on the ground in Afghanistan. JTACs are attached to Army or Marine units, serving as the direct communication link between the B-1 aircrew and the ground forces supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

The crew listened intently to the information about their primary JTAC who was a coalition partner from Spain, and the specifics of the upcoming mission.

Thirty minutes later, Captain Morrison and the rest of the aircrew stopped at the 37th EBS life support section and grabbed their survival vests, harnesses for the ejection seats, 9-mm pistols and helmets. Their last stop was the grab 'n' go flight kitchen, where the crew loaded up on food and water. From

there they headed to the flight line and flew off to the night.

Three hours later, the crew was flying in the dark sky, high above Afghanistan. Using radios, they checked in with the JTAC who was attached to an Army unit that was guarding a village. As Army troops in vehicles patrolled the perimeter, the B-1 crew circled the area looking for enemy forces.

When the Spanish JTAC requested a "show of force," the B-1 crew flew down near the suspected enemy activity.

"The B-1 is great for showing power," said Captain Morrison. "We fly low, we fly fast and let the enemy know we are there."

Sometimes it's simple intimidation, and other times it's just letting the enemy on the ground know airpower is ready to strike. Regardless, B-1 crews contend a "show of force" helps keep the enemy in check.

In some cases, the ground forces face life-

"We're the backbone of America's long-range bomber force"

*--Capt. Craig Morrison
37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron*

or-death situations.

"There are times we have no doubt we are saving lives on the ground," said Lt. Col. David Been, 37th EBS commander. "Part of our mission is responding to 'troops in contact' requests, supporting the JTACs with precise bombing or shows of force."

Colonel Been said when the aircrew receives a TIC request, it means friendly forces on the ground need help immediately and there's no time to spare. Typically, the ground forces are under enemy attack.

"The B-1's wicked fast," said the squadron commander. "At Mach 1.2, it's faster than the speed of sound. So we sweep the wings back, and a "Bone" can usually respond anywhere in Afghanistan within minutes."

The B-1B's blended wing-body configuration, variable-geometry wings and turbofan afterburning engines combine to provide long-range maneuverability and high-speed while enhancing survivability. Forward wing settings are used for takeoff, landings, air refueling and in some high-altitude

weapons scenarios. Aft wing settings – the main combat configuration – are typically used during high, subsonic and supersonic flight, enhancing the jet's maneuverability in the low- and high-altitude regimes.

"The B-1 is capable of creating a multitude of far-reaching effects across the battlefield," said Captain Morrison. "It's a highly versatile weapon system with an offensive avionics system that includes high-resolution synthetic aperture radar, capable of tracking, targeting and engaging moving vehicles on the ground."

In addition, an extremely accurate global positioning system enables aircrews to navigate globally without the aid of ground-based navigation aids, as well as engage targets with a high level of precision. All of these features are used in Operation Enduring Freedom missions like the one Captain Morrison flew into Afghanistan.

By late morning, a KC-135 crew from the 340th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron arrived to refuel the B-1. As the OSO, Captain Morrison coordinated the "electronic rendezvous," using the air-to-air mode of the radar to give the pilots headings and airspeeds for a successful refueling. The crew then flew back to support the Spanish JTAC

for several more hours before leaving Afghanistan. In all, the sortie lasted 11 and-a-half hours.

Once back on base in Southwest Asia, the B-1 crew met with 37th Aircraft Maintenance Unit maintainers to discuss any maintenance issues.

Then they dropped

off their life support gear and met with 37th EBS intelligence Airmen and the mission planning cell to discuss specific threats and findings associated with the mission. The last thing the crew did was debrief the day's mission, evaluating their successes and looking for areas to improve.

"We fly as a 'hard' crew," said Captain Morrison, explaining that Major Jason, Captain Grasso and Captain Kovsky always fly together during their OEF missions tasked to the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing. "So it's important we discuss any lessons learned and strive for continuous improvement as a team." Captain Morrison said it's exciting to be part of the aircrew that flies the largest payload of both guided and unguided weapons in the Air Force inventory.

"We're the backbone of America's long-range bomber force," he said, adding, "At the end of the day, I know we are making a difference in the War on Terror. I can't think of a better job to have in the Air Force. Flying the B-1 definitely beats accounting."



(Left) Maj. Mike Jason, B-1 B Lancer pilot with the 37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, reviews the aircraft forms prior to flying a mission.

(Below) Capt. Craig Morrison, offensive weapons officer with the 37th EBS, sets up his monitors in preparation for a mission.

