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Interview by Dr. Charles Gross, Air National Guard (ANG) Historian, NGB-PAI-H.

With COL Dan Swift, Commander, 104th Expeditionary Operations Group. Interview conducted in Washington, D.C.

Subject: Air National Guard Involvement in Kosovo [i.e., Operation Allied Force]

DR. GROSS: Make that 19 November, 1999. I'm Dr. Charles J. Gross, the Air Guard historian, and I'm going to be interviewing COL Dan Swift, who was the commander of the Air Guard A-10 composite group at Trapani during Operation Allied Force.

Sir, if you could identify yourself for the historical record and your assignments before and during Operation Allied Force?

COL SWIFT: I'm COL Dan Swift, and before Allied Force I was the 104th Fighter Wing Commander at Barnes [phonetic] Air National Guard Base in Westfield, Massachusetts.

During the Kosovo operation I was appointed the 104th Expeditionary Operations Group Commander that led the 18 A-10s into combat from Trapani Air Base in Sicily over Kosovo.

DR. GROSS: Okay. When did you all learn that you might be involved in the operation, and why was it set up as a rainbow operation with your unit in the lead?

COL SWIFT: Okay. It's a fascinating historical perspective. At the safety focus in Pittsburgh, I believe, in February, the three of us commanders who were -- the other three A-10 units were already on the books to go to Kuwait -- April, May, and June, I believe -- the other three units were scheduled in the AEF 15, 18 months later, and having talked to the commander of the A-10 unit who was the active duty at Aviano, an old squadron mate, I'd offered him at the very early onset of the air campaign, if he needed any of our fighter weapons school graduates to come over and help him make maps and do mission planning, any Intel specialists.

I knew they were working long hours and I offered him personnel to augment, if he would make the request through his headquarters.

Also knowing that they were going to be running 24 hour ops with one squadron

and having done that before, I knew how stretched he would be.

We met with [Maj.] Gen. [Paul] Kimmel [Office of the ANG Director, NGB] at the safety focus and offered an idea of if this thing really gets hot and goes more than the three, four, five days we think it will, we could put together from the three squadrons a package to go over and augment that over-tasked group with our experience.

And his concern was, how would that affect the AEF? We said well, you know, it's 15 months later, let's not worry about the AEF, let's worry about the air war in Kosovo, because that's the closest alligator to the canoe.

We left that with him, and I assume a lot of things happened during the ensuing month or so. Long story short, somewhere about the end of April [1999], we were on a short list, we got a phone call, said you're on a short list to go.

The game plan was to send Pope [AFB], and then probably ten days later we would go. The 23rd Wing was going to go, and we said okay and we used that as our time clock. And we've had lots of calls to our friends at Pope, saying okay have you heard anything, have you heard anything, the original game plan was Pope was going to go into Trapani and the Air National Guard was going to go to a base in Hungary, a MIG-21 base, so a lot of phone calls, lot of confusion, lot of interaction with the CAT [i.e., Crisis Action team] and with GEN Weaver's office, and COL [Mark] Doherty [ANG Director of Operations, NGB].

Bottom line, it all came down somewhere in that mix of who's going to move when the world shifted. I'm not privy to any of that, but what happened is Pope got, they sent five airplanes to Spangdahlem [AB, Germany] and the rest of their unit got put on hold, and the Air National Guard was called up. So the time frame crunched real quick on us.

We got the official notification on Friday, the 7th of May, and we said okay, it's a go; the next morning, Ken Heaton from Michigan and Pat O'Rourke from Boise [Idaho] and myself met at the readiness center with COL [Larry] Brooks [ANG Deputy Director of Operations], we met with the CAT Director, and COL Andy Turley [phonetic], who's the JAG from Massachusetts but also works here in town, to start working out the details.

We didn't still have an official order, PSRC was still on the SECDEF's desk, but it was looking like it was going to come out within 48 hours, so we set up some basic guidelines of what the organization would look like and the tasking would follow.

That weekend we tried to notify our Guardsmen, but obviously to keep them in the loop, but we didn't have an official order.

On Monday, we got the official order and it said there would be an organization formed as the 131st Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, and it was going. It gave us the taskings that we were going to have to play with.

While we were down at the Guard Bureau on that Saturday, we looked at the UTCs they had. It was obvious that going to an Italian air base that had no U.S. presence, that we needed a headquarters element. We couldn't expect a fighter squadron commander to go in there with a war fighting UTC and have to do all the things that were going to be needed as far as bed down 750 people total, transportation, letters of agreement.

And although the USAFE ADVON team had gone in there and done that, we didn't feel it was sufficient to do an ongoing 270-day deployment without some kind of headquarters element. So we did add that.

Written orders on Monday, the 10th of May. Well, we established a deployment date of the following Monday, the 17th, and that was based on USAFE not having the bed down capability at Trapani yet. That meant that Boise and Battle Creek had to get to -- they came to Barnes on Friday, so they only had four days to prepare their airplanes and deploy [inaudible].

We deployed on Monday, arrived on Wednesday, Wednesday was the 19th, with a 36-hour layover in the Azores, once again letting all of our folks on the C-17s get in place for a reception team and then bring the airplanes in.

The airplanes came in. Eight hours later we were on status ready to go. We had forward deployed pilots; as soon as the notification came out we sent the first pilots we could get our hands on directly to Gioia del Colle, which is the airbase in southern Italy that the USAFE A-10s were at. We sent four pilots over there to fly with those guys, so they would be ready to lead the first day in combat.

We sent the ops group commander from Barnes [Massachusetts] directly to the CAOC at Vicenza, the headquarters, to start working out the letters of agreement, how we'd be tasked, what was expected of us, in doing the behind-the-scenes work to get into the FRAG as soon as possible.

We sat down Thursday, the 20th, not because we weren't ready to go, but USAFE wanted to send somebody down to give us the ROE briefings, the rules of engagement, to make sure that we understood everything in the sequence they wanted it.

The following morning, it was probably about 3:00, 3:30, we launched our first sortie. So about 36 hours after we arrived, we started the first flights.

DR. GROSS: Could we back up a little bit? Could you talk about what was in that headquarters element that you all wanted to add to your UTCs?

COL SWIFT: There were several -- there were 24 people in the headquarters element, primary from a war-fighting standpoint that gives you about eight extra pilots, it gives you your STANEVAL, your plans, your mission planning cell, your weapons officer. So it bolstered us from about a 36-pilot package to about 45.

It also significantly -- it brought the JAG, which we felt was always vital, it brought Public Affairs/Protocol, and it brought a historian, which is very vital because the story wouldn't be recorded otherwise. Because in the heat of battle, your PA can't do it because they're fending off a lot of other requests. Your commanders want to do it but they have a whole flight suit full of cocktail napkins that they wrote significant events on, so a historian is critical to that.

It also brought a chaplain, two chaplains, one Protestant and one Catholic, because there was no other American presence, we weren't sure how much English language would be available and spoken. So basically, the headquarters element you'd normally use, from the chaplain to public affairs to legal to the historian, things that would round out the whole mission.

DR. GROSS: In the basic UTCs, I assume you got them from ACC. Was there any leeway in what you all wanted to do with what came down from Langley, and how did that process play out?

COL SWIFT: I think there was, because of the need to react very quickly. Initially, it was take what you got, that's the way it's going to be.

DR. GROSS: From Langley? Take from Langley what we gave you?

COL SWIFT: From Langley, which is the normal sequence. You guys approved this, you guys knew this was UTC, you should have changed this during peacetime, don't try to change it during a crisis.

We did get some leeway. The original package was for 506 people, with the original UTCs. By adding 24, we really didn't get any more beds or airplane seats, so we had to take some of the AFSCs that we thought we could live without to bolster ourselves with this headquarters element.

We also got a little bit of leeway -- every wing in the Guard you've got that superstar master sergeant who for 20 years was in an AFSC "X", and because he wanted to do something else or his AFSC was downsizing, maybe he went to a

new AFSC, but he hadn't gotten to the five level school because it was a civilian job. But the UTC required a five level.

So we were able, by having a little bit of literary license, to move in a three-level who we knew could do anything on the base. Although it didn't fit the letter of the law, it fit what we needed at the time, so there was some leeway.

I think the Guard Bureau did a fabulous job in the Crisis Action Team of interceding. Our 265 [i.e., ANG statutory tour officer] in USAFE helped a lot, because he'd call up and go you can't be adding more people, there's only X number of beds, and I said okay, can I move, if I don't need airman Y but I need airman X, can I have some leeway here? And they kind of penciled it in.

So there was some -- we're probably talking a couple of handfuls of people that you could do that with.

DR. GROSS: With the number of planes, I understand, was 18, why not go with two units rather than three? Why three units?

COL SWIFT: That's a good question.

DR. GROSS: That's what I do. [Laughter]

COL SWIFT: I had some very strong feelings on why go with three, and they were based around mission, ability to carry on the mission.

If you take the people and you take the machines and you take a long-range view of your organization three to five years later, and you're looking at your recruiting and retention, what you want to do first is you want to take care of the war-fighting CINC's needs. War fighting CINC, all he wanted was us to get over there and stop the atrocities, and get everybody back home.

So you've got to take care of number one, number one's taking care of the mission; we could have done it with two units. What that would have done if it had gone 270 days, those two units would have been decimated, they would have had no other training done, leadership positions would have been in jeopardy for home station training, and the other reason, quite frankly, was why exclude the third unit?

We had three units available, you get to pick the best six airplanes out of each of the three units, so you're going with the most capable airplanes, with the highest amount of flying time, so you don't have to worry about airplanes breaking down on you.

All three units had extremely qualified people. All three units had extremely qualified pilots, and although Boise initially wasn't in the fray because they were new to the weapons system, all their pilots had multiple combat missions in Southwest Asia in their previous life. So we felt that by using the three units, you're using the equipment from three units, we're using the manpower and specialty codes from three units, but you're not decimating any unit.

So the 80 percent of the people who stayed home would still have very solid training programs, they would have good equipment to work with and work on, and we felt that Guard leadership at some point was going to get us to a point where we could rotate it.

This [mobilization] was nine months long. We wanted to go in there, hit them hard, hit them fast, but if we ended up there the whole nine months, we were hoping that as airlift became available and leadership saw these things we could rotate some people through. We needed those people back home.

As a sidebar, on the pilot side we took 45 out of 100 pilots. At seven and one-half hours a sortie, every other day flying, because we flew 20 to 22 sorties a day, you got to the point where you were running out of pilots. The regulation was 100 hours and 30 days; they waived that, but no kidding, they wouldn't waive the 300 hours and 90 days. It's a safety issue, it's fatigue.

So I had already put in at about the 40-day point a request for more pilots to come; the active duty didn't have that option.

In fact, I'd offered Air National Guard pilots to the active duty because they were up against the ropes. I said we still got 60 guys at home who can come over here and replace us without missing a heartbeat.

I said, oh, by the way, I got three other Air National Guard units who I've been talking to who just got back from Kuwait and they would love to get into the fight. So we got another hundred pilots.

So the key there is don't decimate your home court, let them keep working, looking towards a rotation, and get in there with the people you've got right now. You share the wealth, you share the exposure, you share the experience, and you've got three experienced Air National Guard units as opposed to two.

So I was looking at three- to five-year, the health of the organization, as opposed to, hey, let's both capture the flag and leave these other guys out there as back room guys. I don't know if that fit into the national objectives or not, but it was a community thing we were working.

DR. GROSS: Do you think you were effective in that respect?

COL SWIFT: I think we were. You know, if it had gone 270 days, it would have been the best thing for all three organizations.

The 42 to 45-day, where it ended up as, then you had the delicate balance of coming home and having the haves and have-nots, because you promised these guys, hey, I'm going to get you into the fight, but we never got to needing a rotation.

DR. GROSS: Was there a lot of interest in leaning forward, getting into the fight, back home, with other units? That was the big thing in the Desert Shield and Storm.

COL SWIFT: Oh yes. We had people who were leaning forward. Although it was a PSRC, we did not have to beat the bushes and order people to go. In fact, we had to turn people away in every specialty at our base. They wanted to go, they wanted to sign up. We also put a limitation on no more than 50 percent of the deployed people from each base being technicians or AGRs. If you take your full time force, who's going to train your traditionals?

So that caused some heartburn among the technicians and AGRs, but we said, hey, our business, the only reason why we have technicians and AGRs is to train our Guardsmen.

DR. GROSS: Well, how did you go about making that selection at your unit back at Barnes? Who went, and who didn't go, at least the first time?

COL SWIFT: Oh, pretty much what we did in the first meeting at Andrews we decided we would take a third of the UTCs each, looking for volunteers to fill that. If a unit couldn't find anybody, then the other two units would pitch in. Obviously the small UTCs, we couldn't, like the historian, we said who has a historian? I at that point didn't have one in the unit, we'd just sent a young lady to training, the other one had just retired after 30 years.

So it became -- when you got the single digit people, like the chaplains, same thing, do you have a Catholic chaplain or not? But when you get to the big UTCs, like maintenance, we said okay, we're going to take a third, a third, and a third.

We came back, I stood up in front of my commanders and said guys, here's our part of the pie, here's what I want. I said I want the best qualified, your strongest players. However, can't be over 50 percent full-timers, number one, number two I want them to be volunteers.

If we go through the whole organization and don't have volunteers, then I want

you to go -- and when you tell the people I want you -- this is a volunteer thing, although it was PSRC and we could plan a little bit there, I said number one, pick the best qualified people who volunteer, and if the person you need doesn't volunteer, just go and tell them, hey, you're going.

And we didn't have to get to that. We had enough volunteers that, then, we chose the volunteers who said, "Yes, I can go for 270 days," and we kind of played it that way. Once again, looking at long-term retention in the unit, is kind of a -- what we wanted to come back to was a strong unit, we didn't want to just fight a war and then have empty ranks.

DR. GROSS: Did it work out the same way for the pilots in your unit?

COL SWIFT: Oh, yes. The pilots the same way. In fact, we were turning away pilots.

I got to tell you this story. Jim Lawrence, named "Nomad," here's a guy who had two combat tours in Vietnam as a Marine fighter pilot, and was discharged from the Marines by the time he was 22.

DR. GROSS: Good Lord.

COL SWIFT: He's 50 years old, he had a mandatory separation date, and begged, pleaded to get into the fight. We worked that, we got a slip on his mandatory retirement date, and unfortunately, he didn't get into the fight, he was back home helping run the operation, and he was the number one guy to come as soon as I asked for these other six pilots.

And the day he retired they had to pull his fingernails off the curb because he was still hanging on. So, I mean, that type of leadership, we didn't have a problem. We did have some pilots who were just getting hired by new [commercial air] carriers, or they were just having their first child, and they said, "boy, I really want to go but, you know, can I go on the first rotation?" You bet, soon as we get a rotation you're in there, because, I said, Barnes, we had 15 of the pilots, one-third, and out of our 36 guys I think we had at least 30 who wanted into the fight, so that was pretty neat.

DR. GROSS: How did you divvy up the leadership positions between the three wings in your composite or rainbow group over there?

COL SWIFT: Okay. That was one of our objectives, was to make sure that we had leadership from each organization at each level.

General -- your first question was how did you pick the leadership, how did



Barnes get selected? I have no idea. GEN Weaver came down and said it's going to be the 104th Expeditionary Ops group, and 131st Fighter Squadron, Expeditionary Fighter Squadron, and Dan Swift's going to lead it.

I was very honored and humbled to be selected for that position. Our unit has historically been at the cutting edge of the A-10 community, both Active, Guard, and Reserve. We had back-to-back outstandings in our ORIs. We had fought in Deliberate Force in Bosnia four years previous. We led in innovative tactics development in the night vision goggle regime.

So I think the unit's history of outstanding performance both on inspections and in recent combat may have led him to that, say, hey, that organization.

I've never had the opportunity to ask GEN Weaver how he selected us, maybe you can get that answer?

DR. GROSS: Well I'll certainly ask.

COL SWIFT: So what we did then, was we had 500 folks from three bases pretty much evenly divided. The concern was, I had no idea who these other people were and I'm going to be leading them. So when we came together as a group -- it was Pat, Ken, and I -- we said, how can we do this? Obviously you can't have three commanders, because then you get everybody going to their own dad, so we got to do it in a sequence where we have leadership across the board.

So that was one of the first things we did. We said divide it by thirds and now let's pick the leadership. I was the commander. Ken [Heaton] was the vice commander because he had a lot of experience in the A-10. Pat [O'Roarke] we made the fighter squadron commander, he had previously been the ops group commander at Boise. We needed that leadership there. We took my LG from Barnes, Gary Keefe [phonetic], major, and we put him as the LG. And we got Lt.Col. Barker from Michigan, who was the support group commander at Michigan, and we put him in as support group commander. So of the top five, Boise had only one, but that's because there were only five positions.

In the fighter squadron, Pat was the commander, my OG Marty Crotty [phonetic] from Barnes was the deputy OG, then what we did is we made three flights. We took the fighter squadron commander from Barnes, and he was A flight commander and he had his 15 guys; and we took the B, was the ops group commander from Battle Creek, Cliffie Lauder [phonetic], and he had his Michigan pilots; and C flight was Larry Kaufman [phonetic], lieutenant colonel fighter squadron commander from Boise, and he was C flight commander. So they all had -- everybody was assigned to a flight, either assigned or attached.

We didn't fly that way, we didn't restrict people flying from each other, we flew them by their qualifications. If they were really high-time-night vision guys, they were a night guy. If they were the best FAC in the world, they were a FAC guy.

We just really did it for administrative and, you know, so we could pass information to guys. If we went to A flight and said, hey, Marcel, you need to get the word to these guys on this stuff, then he would know which faces to talk to. And the maintenance side, we did the same thing, all the way across there was somebody all the way down to the flight chief from each organization.

And the support group side was a little more diverse. We had 240-plus active duty support group folks: finance, MWR, services, civil engineers, you name it, but they were support group folks from 40 different active duty bases with an Air National Guard commander. But what we did to alleviate some of the concerns there is we put an active duty major who's from combat com as the deputy support group commander to help share the load, but also to provide that access if an active duty person had a concern about where we were going. So that did two things for us, really, the way we divided it. It put somebody you could go to that you knew from home base to raise a concern in a leadership position.

Now we agreed there was not to be any mom and pop stuff. If your guy went to you and wanted an answer because I didn't give him the right answer, you were going to give him the same answer as I was going to give him. There was going to be no distinction between these folks. Everybody's treated exactly alike. And we said from the get-go, the top five guys, we said here's our stance, guys, we say today's word is happy and somebody wants to change it to glad, it's happy. We're just going to go through that.

The second thing it did was once again home station. By not taking the leadership from one base, we allowed that base to run in its normal fashion, although maybe a little bit diminished in capability, which we thought was a special need. That caused some problems with the commanders back home who wanted to go but hey, you got to do what you got to do.

DR. GROSS: Sure, sure. Were there any -- let me back -- how to say this? Understand you had to get some targeting pods and stuff like that. Unfortunately I don't know too much about that. Maybe you can tell me what was involved in those pods, and what armament you carried, how you had to put those together before you deployed?

COL SWIFT: There are some restrictions at civilian bases which most of us, or actually all three of us, are at --what you can store and what you can't store there, and what your environmental impact statement says, which required a lot of logistics, running around at the last minute. The electronic countermeasure pod

that we carry in Massachusetts, and I believe Michigan had the same one, were not the ones that could be reprogrammed in theater in Europe, so we had to go to other Guard units around the country to get the pods we needed. So you can see we had three to five days to do this, and we're trying to get pods from other states.

Also the storage of AIM-9 MIKE air-to-air missiles, you can't keep on some bases, so we had to go take airplanes to go get missiles or send cargo shipment people to get them. There are things -- the combat mix on the .30 millimeter -- so we had to do a lot of logistics things. My primary concern as a war fighter was to show up with as much of the armament we needed to fight the war as we needed, because you can never guarantee, although USAFE said don't worry, you don't have to bring bullets, you don't have to bring chaff and flares, it's going to be there.

I've heard that before. I've had that promise. I wanted to show up day one so that if the bombs didn't show up and the missiles didn't show up, I'd at least be able to do what the CINC wanted with a gun, which is our primary armament.

So we left the continental United States with full-up self-protection, ECM pod, chaff and flares, and AIM-9s and a full gun. It required a lot more legwork on our logistics folks, but I felt it was imperative to get there ready to go. Nothing worse than showing up and saying "I'm here with an empty gun and no gas." You know, we knew we could get the gas, so I knew we could employ day one if we came prepared to fight. So --

DR. GROSS: How about the bombs, and I believe, what, Maverick?

COL SWIFT: Bombs, the Mark-82 bomb is what we dropped, the AGM-65-D infrared Maverick is what we shot, plus we used 2.75 "Willy Pete" rockets for marking targets, and we used 2.75 illumination rockets at night, and we used Lou-one, Lou-twos, Lou-threes, Lou fives parachute flares at night for marking.

That stuff did some in. There was a problem at the base, limited storage capacity, plus the port wasn't cleared for weapons shipments, so we had to fly everything in on C-130s to load us up. We were hand-to-mouth some days --

DR. GROSS: In danger of running out? Running short?

COL SWIFT: Of certain components. We were flying 22 sorties a day. If we had expended every sortie every day, we probably would have been down to the gun only.

At day 30, the port got cleared, and I think we had like 50 or 60 flatbeds come through the front gate, and that happened to be just as we were winding down, but

the stuff was coming, it was just that base is an air interceptor base for the Italians. Other than AIM-9, they didn't use any kind of bomb load, so there wasn't any storage there.

DR. GROSS: Can we talk about the actual deployment a little more from Barnes to the Azores to Trapani? Were there any particular problems as far as, what, refueling or basing or anything?

COL SWIFT: No, this was the smoothest deployment I've ever been on. I've been on probably eight or nine ocean crossings; it was fabulous, we had all 24 planes at Barnes, we had total support from the local airport, that anything we wanted to do was going to get done.

One of our pilots was a controller, a radar controller for Bradley Airport down the road, so he'd schmoozed all the departures and arrivals. Salt Lake City [i.e., 151st ARW, Utah ANG] brought us over, they had deployed into Westover, which is only about eight miles away, and they sat in on our deployment brief.

So we face-to-faced with the tanker guys, it was a crystal-clear morning, we had decided to take eight airplanes from each state, six primaries and two spares, and we would launch like that so that we would ensure that we had six from each unit there.

Equal representation, number one, but number two, even more important, is that way the guys at that home base would have the airplanes to train with. If you ended up with eight from one base, you know, now there is only seven airplanes back home to play with for the replacement folks.

Flight over, seven-and-a-half hours into Trapani, or into the Azores, very good weather, no airplane problems, in fact the six primaries from each organization made it. Took off on time, all the airplanes landed, they were all code one, and no problems.

Thirty-six hour layover, as I said, gives you a little time to get on the body clock time for the next time zone, because that's a USAFE restriction. You've got to be -- you got to take a down day anyway. Took off out of there, once again Salt Lake was with us the whole way then we arrived at Trapani.

The weather, they probably had clouds there twice the whole time we were there, any clouds, and on our arrival that was a cloudy day. Probably 1,500 to 2,000 [feet] overcast, 3 to 5 mile visibility, but no problem, we all got down, the ADVON and maintenance package was all there. They had scoped everything out, they had plotted where we were going to park. They were ready to go.

The weapons loaders, they were as happy as could be to see us, they already had all the jammers and the spots and the bombs, and I mean --

DR. GROSS: Did you bring your weapons loaders with [you]?

COL SWIFT: Right. It was like ants at a picnic. We pulled in, shut down, and these guys were already loading bombs and missiles. They wanted to turn this as fast as possible so if we got called on we'd be ready.

DR. GROSS: Okay. Remind me again, how long was it before you actually did start flying those missions? I know you mentioned that earlier.

COL SWIFT: It was 36 hours.

DR. GROSS: 36 hours, okay.

COL SWIFT: We were ready to go the next morning. We had enough pilots that flew over on the first C-17, we had the pilots who flew over and flew with Spangdahlem guys, so we could have made the first day's tasking with guys who had already been in country, had their maps, and slept a good night before, but we sat down the next day. Everybody got together, we all heard the same briefings, and that was good planning.

DR. GROSS: When did you get your first tasking, actual tasking orders from CAOC?

COL SWIFT: The CAOC sent the FRAG down, I said we sent Marty Crotty over about five days before the airplanes arrived. He got us into the FRAG, and that's when they decided we'd have a down day, and we were in as I say Friday morning the 21st.

A guy named Kingman from Boise was the first guy to employ, the first guy to shoot the gun. Got a great picture of him with a .30 millimeter round with his crew chief, and it was just a classic.

DR. GROSS: So what kinds of targets did they start fragging you guys against?

COL SWIFT: The targets varied. If you could find armor in the open, that was a target. Troops massing, that was a target. Obvious military movements. You also had tertiary targets of weapons storage areas, known army bases were targeted.

Primarily they wanted us to go in and stop the army from going into the villages and killing people. Now we showed up the 21st of May and the Spangdahlem

unit had already been employing down there for probably 30-plus days. We got a lot of insight from them, but by the time we showed up in May, I mean most of the people had been run out of town or run out of their houses, so a lot of refugees still on the mountains trying to get south and west, a lot of refugees in the middle of the country in the mountains.

So it was a difficult task to find army in the open, because they'd been getting beat up for 30 days, so they'd just pull into somebody's garage with their tank, and hide.

So we did a lot of fixed targets and a lot of recce with binoculars.

DR. GROSS: Sort of armed recce with binoculars?

COL SWIFT: Armed recce with binoculars, old tactic. Binoculars are a little better than they used to be, they're gyro-stabilized. Still a very, very difficult task, from the altitudes.

The bad guys knew the lay of the land, and you could see jeep tracks and tank tracks and things going into the trees in the mountains, but you couldn't -- you didn't have any kind of sensor to see in there. You'd look through the infrared Maverick, and, you know, they were back in the trees enough, and it's a lot of evergreens that gave a good masking. And they had no reason to come out.

They'd come out and go burn down a couple of houses and then scoot back into the woods. But without an armed presence or armed force challenging them to real estate, they weren't going to come out of hiding. So, it was a lot of hung packs. Some of the guys would come back, say "man, I just got four tanks," and you'd go, where were they?

He'd point to it on a map, and you'd look at his video, and you'd go "I was there yesterday, there was nothing there." Well, they decided it was time to go on a little excursion, and it was a lot of good timing.

When the UCK, the Kosovar Albanians, put up resistance towards the end of the conflict, then the army had to come out and play, because they were losing real estate, they were losing towns to the UCK. They would come in and liberate them. Then the heavy armor would have to come out to try and retake the village, and when that happened we could find them.

UCK didn't have heavy armor unless they commandeered it, but they were generally going out as just infantrymen with maybe bazookas or whatever, but they were making the army predictable, the Serb army, and that's when we started to get some of our good tank kills.

DR. GROSS: Could you talk about sort of the altitudes and tactics that you worked out? That was discussed a little bit this morning on the 15,000 feet and what was the [inaudible]?

COL SWIFT: As Gen. [John] Jumper [USAFE Commander] said basically, 15,000 feet was an altitude. We needed to employ by 10,000 feet, so you'd stay above 15,[000] using the binoculars, with a cover man looking through you as you were heads down.

Once you decided what the target was and were sure of it, then you could go down and employ at lower altitude.

The forward air controllers were allowed down to 10,000 feet to search, but once again, they always had a cover guy because the guy was screening with his eyes looking at one thing, and he was becoming predictable.

So pretty much the tactics were reduced threat tactics, same as we used in Desert Storm, same as we used in Deliberate Force, generally 15 to 20 to 23,000 feet, find the target, make sure you've coordinated everything, then roll in, drop your ordnance, once again with a cover man who's always looking for SAM launches or triple-A.

DR. GROSS: What altitudes would you drop bombs or . . . ?

COL SWIFT: We'd drop bombs about 12,000 feet AGL, to recover above 10,000 feet AGL.

DR. GROSS: What about Mavericks?

COL SWIFT: Mavericks was about the same thing. We didn't want to go below 10,000 AGL on anything, and that was the theater rules of engagement.

DR. GROSS: Why 10,000 feet?

COL SWIFT: Pretty much, because at that point you get much below that the A-10 with its reduced thrust takes forever to get back altitude, so you're down in the threat zone a whole lot longer.

DR. GROSS: You are a pretty big target then?

COL SWIFT: Yeah, you're climbing back out at 200 knots. An F-16, you could argue that an F-16 could put it in full afterburner and go straight up, but an A-10, you get down to 10,[000], it's going to take you a good four to five minutes to get

back to 20,[000].

DR. GROSS: What about your guns at those altitudes?

COL SWIFT: The gun is not as effective, obviously. It depends on your diving. You get good and steep, you get 60-70 degrees, the gun is very, very accurate because you're slant range is only about 14 or 15,000. You come in shallow, your slant range increases and the gun's effectiveness obviously isn't the same. But we shot about 14,000 rounds on 438 sorties.

The sorties that did shoot, I shot on a couple of sorties, mainly we were going after artillery and mortar pits. They set up a standard tactic, they figured the Army was going to come in so you take, you look back about 800 to 1,500 meters on both sides of the major lines of communication and you find the entrapments. In other words --

DR. GROSS: Oh, they felt that our ground forces were going to come in?

COL SWIFT: Oh, yeah.

DR. GROSS: Oh, really. Well, I've read speculation in the press, but, well, you know --

COL SWIFT: I'm just speculating on the defensive positions. You take the road out of Macedonia and you go up on the Serb border side and it's a main two lane highway that all the transportation trucks come up, and you look back about 800 to 1,500 meters on each side, you would find, it was kind of like red Georgia clay a little bit, so if they dug it out to put in an arty pit for a killing box then that's where you'd find them. It's a standard tactic we saw in Desert Storm as well. If you figure an LOC, you have your folks come in this way, from the sides they lob into a killing box, as soon as they become predictable they chogie [phonetic] back out and move up the road to the next killing box.

So we had some pretty good success there, in fact Pat O'Rourke had a real good one. He looked down at these pits and really didn't see a whole lot of activity, because it was daytime, but he could see where people had walked or driven back into the woods, you know, obviously to eat, sleep, get their weapons, so he went down and shot along the tree line and got some great secondaries, because that's where all their stuff was. They'd pull it out, and move back into the woods.

So you got to use a lot of skill and cunning as a hog [i.e., A-10] driver, and you got to think like a grunt, so that you know what they're -- know their tactics and what they might be doing.



DR. GROSS: Could you describe your most interesting mission, what it felt like and what you did?

COL SWIFT: Probably it was a run we were going after a weapons storage facility just on the eastern side of Pristina. Pristina's the provincial capital, it also happened to have an SA-6 ring all the way around it, it happens to be where the major airport, where the MIG base was, they end up having MIGs at that but they were in the caves.

But we went in and on a clear day it's not so bad as a hog driver. Number one you can see the target a little further out, but you feel a little -- even though the bad guys might see you, you feel a little better because you'd see the shot coming at you.

So we went up there and we knew we were going to get inside the SA-6 ring although nobody had seen activity for a couple of days, so -- and we knew we had the HARM shooters there, we knew we had the jammers there, we knew we had the package, so we skirted around the outside of the threat ring, but it was a broken cloud deck, so you don't have that advantage of seeing the missile launch early. You might only see it in the booster stage, if at all.

And we only had about five minutes, once we got there, because of marshaling of forces and then, when everybody was going to leave. So we had to find the target, employ quickly, and always be conscious of the big rocket, you know the SA-6.

And it was our first employment, my first employment. And we were working a three-ship because one airplane fell out, so. You do that, and --  
[End side A, tape 1.]

-- you are coming out, you're not traveling real fast as the hog driver, you're about 35 to 40 miles from the border, and you got to get to the tanker and everybody, the whole pack is saying they're leaving, then the RAW [i.e., radar warning] goes off and your heart races real hard. But you make your defensive maneuvers, you use all your electronic countermeasures and your tactics, and it just turned out that somebody decided to turn on SA-6 radar and then shut it off. We didn't see any shots, it's just that you knew you did your job, and now is the other guy going to do his job, what he thinks the job is. I only flew in-country six times. I didn't see any missiles shot at me, so my wingmen didn't see any shot at me, had a couple of radar warning spurious inputs.

But I flew -- I tried to fly in each of what was called the KEZs, the Kosovo Engagement Zones; there were different blocks of time, so I never flew at the same time twice. I flew a dawn launch, I flew mid-morning, I flew afternoon, I

flew sunset, and I flew the real, real dark missions at night. I prefer to fly at night because when the bad guys shoot there's no question, it's real easy to spot them. The difficulty is who's bad, who's good, when you get -- we had a real good firefight going, we could pinpoint on the map just about the exact coordinates, but now you got to ask, "mother, may I"? Who's good, who's not so good? And it was probably the UCK and the Serb forces, they were duking it out, but we had no idea, no communication with either force, so there wasn't a whole lot you could do at that point. You don't want to employ against something you're not sure of.

DR. GROSS: Did you have any problems as far as collateral damage or anything? I know that was a big thing for people to try to avoid over there.

COL SWIFT: Yeah, that was a major concern. There were some restrictions placed on, especially after the convoy was hit, that you had to no kidding identify it, you had to say yes, it is armor, or yes, it is a military vehicle.

And we had no incidents of anybody from our organization having any collateral damage. Film review was very, very critical by our mission clients, though. LTC John Mott ran the planning cell division, just an absolutely King Kong job. Each of the three flight commanders were actively involved in film review. They reviewed every one of their guys' films, because we'd rather know and 'fess up than have the big guy come down and say "what were you guys doing?" And we said to the pilots hey, you know, it's not that critical that you go down and duke it out with somebody right now, take the time, talk to AB CCC, find out who the players are and where they are, and we did it very professionally and very thoroughly.

DR. GROSS: Could you back up a little bit, I guess, and talk a little bit about how the mission playing process went after you got the FRAGs in?

COL SWIFT: Okay, after we got the FRAG, we were generally talking to the CAOC 24 hours out, and what you do at the wing level is you let them know your status, how are your pilots, how's your munitions, how are your airplanes, what do you think you can do tomorrow. And that prevents you from getting into the -- that's usually 48 hours prior -- that prevents you from -- you know all of our pilots in daytime, they can't swing to nights -- they're basically coordinating. We had an A-10 representative at the CAOC who did all this legwork for us.

Twenty-four hours out, they let you know that you're going to do probably four sorties in this KEZ, and three are going to be FACS or whatever, so you start to build your shell. Late afternoon, they confirm that, but you don't have any targets yet, but you can start putting together your shell, and let your pilots know what they're going to do, generally time frame. Late evening -- I'll probably get the

times mixed up but you know -- 8, 9 o'clock you'd have pretty much a solid FRAG with targeting information that now Intel can get out on the Web, the LOCE system, L-O-C-E, try and get you some imagery.

Around midnight they'd finish the FRAG, it would be downloaded. The mission playing cell, generally, we'd have three guys in there, we'd bring five in if we had to, just to make the packets. We planned, I think we had like four mass briefings a day because we were in a 22-hour flying window.

In each package, you'd go in, Intel would brief you -- first off, mission director would brief you on what the mission was of the day, any changes to the FRAG, try to make, give the pilot everything he needs, in a packet, all the information, all the political, military, and any type of information that they would need big picture. Intel would break that down specifically into the box they were going to fly that day, and go over the imagery so the pilot understood that, he'd understand who his players were, who his package was, and, it was a fabulous. Motley did such a great job, because you could literally walk, if you had to you could grab this packet and walk straight to the airplane and read it on the way to the war, and be able to do your job, that's how good it was.

We do mission director brief, MPC chief would brief his targeting stuff, Intel would brief the threats, you get your maps, chits, things like that, you would go into your briefing room, try to pair guys up the best we could so they fly multiple times together, so they didn't have to go over the standards and how they do things. We'd brief up for 30, 40 minutes, then you go to get a final Intel brief, see if anything had changed, you go into life support; life support took care of everything from programming the GPS, we carry GPS in our vest that had, they would program all the things that need to be in there, they'd program the survival radio for you, and they'd issue you a weapon.

You'd dress up, suit up, sign out, check the weather one more time -- weather was in the first brief, they would talk about theater weather, what you expect at home, in a way -- and you'd step to the airplane.

So, in all about an hour and 15, an hour and 20 minutes you'd step to the airplane. We'd come in two hours before takeoff, step to the airplane about 40 minutes prior, if you had a pretty significant weapons load on there, they wanted to make sure you understood it, you wanted to make sure that all the codes were in the transponders, and that the airplane is ready to go. Because it was 500 miles to the target, you couldn't dally too long because you'd be late; if you were late the whole package may have pushed and now your ability to get in might not be there, that's all.

DR. GROSS: Pretty crowded airspace?

COL SWIFT: Yeah, it was. Kosovo is about 60 by 60 miles, about, a little smaller than the 70-series range at Nellis [AFB, Nevada]. We had a whole lot of airplanes in there, in a very congested airspace. So a lot of airplanes had a lot of - we used a lot of geography deconfliction, altitude deconfliction, timing deconfliction.

The A-10s were given pretty much a free reign in the area, because we were forward air controllers and strikers, and I think we got to see a whole lot of things. We forward air controlled for the Navy F-14s, F-18s, sometimes they'd be packing, I mean it depended on what the FRAG was. We'd forward air control for the British and the French and the Italians. So, crowded air space, limited number of targets, but everybody did everything so professionally that they didn't let the frustration -- we've been here 30 minutes and you can't find me a target, what's going on? -- there aren't any. That particular day, everybody decided to go and hide in the mountains. There were days when guys had to bring everything back home.

DR. GROSS: Oh, really, that's kind of a fun landing.

COL SWIFT: Ah, it didn't really matter. I mean, you know, we had enough runway. But when you go out for seven and a half hours, you've been in-country, you'd go, you'd hit the tanker, top off, that was about an hour and a half, then you'd go in-country, you'd hit country about two hours after you took off, do about 45 or 50 minutes there, then you'd go back out to the tanker, 15 minutes out, 15 minutes on a boom, 15 minutes back in, you do another 45 or 50 minutes in-country, then you'd go back to the tanker, top off, and go home.

So the A-10 lands fine with a full weapons load, doesn't really have a problem.

DR. GROSS: You're talking about long days here for you guys.

COL SWIFT: Very, very long. Every day was at least 12 hours. When we started, about the first three-and-a-half weeks, everybody worked seven days a week, until we got our systems and our processes down and we felt comfortable. At that point, I can back off and say, okay, we're going to six on, one off.

But that was very, very long days, if you take -- you know, you got to leave the hotel, you got two hours prior to brief, you got seven-and-a-half hour sortie, you got debriefing, I get out of there and fly possibly the next day. To the maximum extent practical, we try to get the pilots on a day, off a day, on a day, off a day. But at day seven that changed. We started a second base at Taszar, Hungary, and when we started at Taszar, that was out of our original package. When we put this UTC together, we planned on one base, now we're doing two.

It only turned out to be about 25 folks, the base was in Hungary, we sent up three airplanes but six pilots, because we thought we had 24-hour ops. That made it very limited at home. We reduced that to four pilots after about a week, so you'd always have -- it gave us two more back home.

DR. GROSS: This was the combat search and rescue mission?

COL SWIFT: Yeah, combat search and rescue. And they sat, strip alert, basically, at Taszar, They regularly practiced, they never had to employ, but they regularly practiced. Their first scramble was eight minutes from the horn going off to them being number one, and then they did one at 2:00 in the morning, just for grins, and I think it was about 14 minutes from sleep.

DR. GROSS: Jeez.

COL SWIFT: I didn't even ask if they were strapped in. But they were number one in 14 minutes.

DR. GROSS: What were, as sort of on a day-to-day basis, what kind of concerns did you have as commander over there at Trapani? What did you have to deal with or worry about the most?

COL SWIFT: Probably I wasn't at all concerned with the ops and maintenance package, at all. Flawless. Great leadership. Talented people, we do that for a living.

Starting up at a, we call it, you know, sometimes, a bare base. Yeah, it was a fully operational Italian air base, normally has one squadron, has about 1,200 people, and a relaxed atmosphere, not 24-hour ops. Our biggest concern was force protection, number one, you know. People say what's your force protection issue? Well, you got 750 people and no on-base billeting, no tents, you're on the economy.

To keep us from getting -- I use this analogy in the Chamber of Commerce, it usually cracks them up -- they say "well, how tough could this thing be? You're in the military, you do this." I say, well, picture you're from Massachusetts, your wife's from Michigan, and your daughter just came home and she's met the perfect guy from Boise, Idaho. They want to get married in Sicily in seven days, and they want to bring 750 people with them and it's tourist season and there's no rooms. Is that tough? And you don't know when you're coming home from this party.

So, primary concerns, get the people billeted, USAFE bed down team got us some

places, we got restricted to four hotels, which was nice because that doesn't have force protection issues. We had a permanent assigned OSI guy, which was great, spoke fluent Italian. He got in with the Carabinieri, the military police, the air base security folks, the local town constables. We didn't have basically any issues at all with terrorist threats, even though we were just across the Med from Libya. There were some Serbians in the local area that had basically been living there for years.

Force protection, security of the folks. Number two, care and feeding. Our maintenance guys were working at least 12-hour days, two shifts, hour and 15 minutes to their hotel on the bus, so they worked there 12 hours, they'd marshal, get everybody together, get on the bus, so they're already at the 15-hour time point when they're heading to their hotel, grabbing a pizza or whatever they could get to eat, you know, an hour and 15 minutes in the morning. So they're working 16-hour days. That was a concern.

Transportation, chartered buses mainly -- driving over there is a real sport, not for the faint of heart -- plus rental vehicles, it's not like you're pulling into National [Airport] and you got six rental agencies to choose from. A limited quantity there.

So care and feeding, communications and morale support, outstanding. The Combat Com unit we had, everybody had, the day they got there, they had an e-mail account, to e-mail to their families or to their home office. We had morale calls, couple of ten-minute calls a week.

DR. GROSS: Was that an active duty?

COL SWIFT: Active duty. Once again, there's a concept out there that we're trying to break the barriers, and I know GEN Weaver's engaged, that the active duty have to use active duty resources before the PSRC the Guard or Reserve.

DR. GROSS: In the BOS area particularly?

COL SWIFT: In the BOS. We had com guys who were dying to come, we had cops who were dying to come. The morning we left, our services guys did the meal for the pilots, they were saying, "sir, can't you get us into this?" You know, they wanted to be there.

I think AEF's [i.e., Air Expeditionary Force] is going to solve some of that, but com was King Kong.

Issues -- trying to move people on base to decrease their ops tempo and also for force protection, plus it was a lot cheaper to live on base. There were a couple of

dorms being refurbished; we spent time on that. We got a dining hall in, we were spending time on getting that up to speed, MWR, whatever you brought in your -- Guard guys are notorious for finding that little bit of extra space in their mobility kit for basketballs or footballs or backgammon or whatever.

But we needed MWR. We pride ourselves on being a healthy, fit organization, but we needed weight lifting and recreational things. As a commander, I spent probably 80 percent of my time on BOS issues, easily.

DR. GROSS: Do you think it would have been any different if, say, you'd had all Guard BOS as opposed to active duty, or was it something else?

COL SWIFT: It would have been easier to translate to them. The Guard guys are used to, we're going to make this happen, you know, I'll go down and find a sporting goods shop and get the weight set here this afternoon, and we'll find a way to do it.

DR. GROSS: Rather than I can find a reg, or a -- ?

COL SWIFT: Yeah, I've got to order this from Ramstein, it's got to be a GSA number, and it takes 30 days. Not to say that regulations aren't necessary, but I think they would have been a little more creative.

I think even if we would have had one or two faces from our organization in each of those things, security, okay, maybe we're not communicating effectively. We grab one of our Guard guys who works for one of us, you know, I'm having some difficulty in the translation here, can you help me out, well, what do you feel, how's your finger on the pulse, where you walk in as an O-6 to a master sergeant security policeman you've never seen before and he doesn't know how to take you, whereas at home you can build the relationship. So even one or two persons in each organization would work a little better.

DR. GROSS: Were there any particular personnel problems that --

COL SWIFT: No, amazingly enough, 750 people working 14- to 16-hour days, around the clock, seven days a week, and really a lot smoother than any of us would have thought. Had a couple of incidents, you always will, had a couple of real bonehead drivers, you know --

DR. GROSS: Without any names, can you tell me, give me an example of what people did?

COL SWIFT: Well, probably one of the -- working that long, we did have some people off-shift and they were combat com guys, they were working off-shift and very late hours, and so they had some rental vans and one of the guys, he wasn't

familiar with the route and he was going too fast, he'd just got off a 14-hour shift, and he drives right through a T-intersection and we were lucky we didn't kill somebody. We beat up about six people, destroyed a van; he didn't drive again.

You know, young kids in a foreign country with great per diem working hard and wanting to play hard, a couple of speeding incidents, I took a set of keys, that word got around real fast, said "you're not driving again for the deployment, and by the way, your organization lost this vehicle for the duration," and that poor youngster walked a lot around the base and had to ride the bus and his buddies had to ride the bus, and that got around --

DR. GROSS: Oh, good, good, very good.

COL SWIFT: But really, no -- that many people crammed together, I mean, we say hotel rooms, basically they were two bedroom with a kitchenette rooms out an hour and 15 minutes away, it was like a cabana, European-style, with a real, thin, short bed. You have two guys in each room, and another guy living out in the cabana; when the kitchenette was free. He had the pullout bed. So you had five people crammed together in pretty small quarters, very few incidents, a little bit of "I'm on the night shift, I'm coming home, I want to let off some steam, the other guy's trying to sleep or whatever."

I've seen a lot worse just going to Savannah for a week.

DR. GROSS: Okay. Any maintenance problems, spare parts, that kind of stuff, given your ops tempo that you had?

COL SWIFT: Spare parts we did have some problems. The ECM pods had to be rotated through Spangdahlem, that was a problem. They were new to us, we didn't have the tech orders to fix them ourselves, the highly capable and qualified EC guys we have kind of tied our hands.

DR. GROSS: Did that have any impact on the missions you flew?

COL SWIFT: It got real close. We brought 150 percent of the pods we needed, we came close to canceling a sortie one day because -- but I called Brig. Gen. Gobretski [phonetic], who is the LG for USAFE, and I told her we were having a problem, we've identified it for about a week now. The next day we had no more problems.

She took no prisoners, absolutely fabulous support. In fact, her office called me every day to ask me if we had any problems with logistics.

Initially, setting up, our two-level maintenance and using FedEx, DHL, or UPS, they don't know where you are, you're not going to get the part. The part says



Trapani Air Base, it's going to come and go into their parts system unless you set up those procedures.

So a little bit of growing pains, but after three weeks I think we had the process pretty well. We got a rotator, went from Ramstein to Gioia to us, back to Ramstein, so the A-10 parts could flow.

DR. GROSS: C-130?

COL SWIFT: C-130 rotator, couple days a week, so that helped a great deal.

DR. GROSS: I think about the 10th of June I guess it stopped, or thereabouts. I'm not sure exactly when the war was over, so once the shooting stopped what did you guys do? I understand you still had to fly some missions?

COL SWIFT: Yeah, we still flew, I don't have the dates exactly with me, we still flew.

The concern there was General Mike Jackson from the RAF, he was the ground commander, when they moved in -- well, first, we didn't, kind of because the ground forces were ready to go in but they still had to sign the deal. So we held outside the country.

DR. GROSS: So you were still flying missions?

COL SWIFT: Yeah. Soon as General Jackson and the multinational force moved in, we still held with fighters right across the border; in case they came up with any resistance at all we'd be close by.

He didn't want us overhead. The concern, the political/military concern was, if they see airplanes overhead, they're not going to pull their tanks out of their hiding places because they're afraid they're going to get swacked. So I guess the big guys made it a concession, they said they won't be overhead unless there's hostilities. But we kept flying until the redeployment order came out; in fact, we were still flying I think 48 hours before we put the tanks on.

DR. GROSS: Did you cut back your number of sorties?

COL SWIFT: Yeah, they cut them back; we probably went down to maybe 16 sorties, I don't have the exact numbers with me, but you cut back from that ops tempo, but they were long sorties, you're just hanging out there, L over D MAX, you know, just saving gas, because we wanted to be there if the ground troops are there.

As far as the operators, we shifted our attention as soon as we started looking like we were going to get to that, we shifted our attention to vehicle ID of the multinationals. Our Intel guys did a great job, they researched every type of vehicle the Italians, the Army, the Marines, the British, the Germans, everybody who was going to play, and we did a lot of VID testing -- what is that, what is this -- from that angle.

We didn't want to get in there into a close air support battle and make a mistake. And we did a lot of instruction on NATO tasking, close air support. Who knew? Maybe they were going to pull across and they were going to come back, so we had to be ready for the absolute worst.

DR. GROSS: How much warning did you get -- "hey, you're going to have to redeploy on today?"

COL SWIFT: It happened fast. Once again, I don't have the date with me, I can get it to you, I went to Pat [O'Roarke] and I went up to General Jumpers' "How We Fought the War" briefing at Ramstein [AB, Germany].

I thought we were going to get a redeployment date on that, but we really weren't sure. They didn't have any solid information, they still had C-17s coming across the ocean with parts, they had the Shaw [AFB, South Carolina] guys, I think just landed at Turkey, I mean just put wheels down or their ADVON was still there and the F-15-Es were still getting ready to deploy across the ocean to Turkey, so you got this whole logistics chain that's coming east, and now you got to instead fly these airplanes back empty, and fly them the other way.

I think logistics did a great job, I want to say it was about the 24th or 25th, somewhere around there, they said you're going, I said, yeah, when, and we were home, we left the 30th of June.

DR. GROSS: So you had five or six days?

COL SWIFT: Oh, max. It was funny, I came back from the Ramstein meeting and I pull in and they're starting to hang tanks on A-10s and I just left Ramstein two-and-a-half hours prior. I said "What's going on?" And they said, "Well, we're going home." I said, "Who said so? Get them damn tanks off the airplanes. We still have a job to do." And we still ended up flying about another three days after that.

It turned around quick. Absolutely incredible that the Guard/Reserve forces got out as quick as they did. Good news is there were probably 150 tankers heading back to the States, because they were being released, too. So there were plenty of tankers.

The airlift airplanes, I tried to work to get the best deal but we ended up coming home at 3:00 in the morning on the airlifter into Barnes, but had about, oh, I don't know, about 800 or 900 folks waiting for people, cheering and screaming, so.

It was fast, a lot faster than we thought it could happen. Logistics, we were ready. Number one goal there was we will not be one minute late on any C-17 or CRAF airplane leaving there.

That means we bring people in three hours early, sorry, but if you're going to move 15,000 people back to the States, if you're late a minute, by the end of the week that turns into a day, so we moved fast, we got everything out [inaudible]. We left 20 people back to close up the base; it was a bare base, we had to turn it back. The rule of engagement there with General Jumper was turn it back in better shape than you got there with.

So we had to clean up, we had to pay our bills, we had to take care of these 40 flatbeds of munitions that had to go back through the port, we had to finish contracts that we established, and Gary Keefe stayed behind, my LG, and he ran the base and he was there for probably another 35 days.

DR. GROSS: Were most of the people who stayed there were they Guard guys, active duty, mixed?

COL SWIFT: Mostly Guard, mostly munitions and logistics. Finance did stay, they were active duty, PERSCO stayed, obviously, to the end, they were active duty, a couple of civil engineers stayed because they had to close down, you know, some things that we were building, or make sure that the contracts -- if we said we were going to paint the walls in the fighter squadron, we painted the walls in the fighter squadron.

DR. GROSS: Once you got back to Barnes, what's the process like of demobilization or reconstitution? Something we don't talk about too much. But, it came up quite a bit in the context of Kosovo.

COL SWIFT: Well, we got all the folks back. The majority of the folks were all back. Let's see, I pulled in the chocks on the 1st of July, with the A-10s. The CRAF was back I think the 30th of June, we had one airplane we left in the Azores, he made it the next day, the 2nd of July. The C-17s continued through the 4th of July and we were done by then.

Reconstitution, demobilization, lot of unknowns there, whole lot of unknowns. General Short, who was COMA4, who ran the air war, got General Jumper, got General Jumper to give folks one day off for every six days they were deployed.

What we had to do is find out from General Weaver if that would apply to the Air National Guard as well.

We took a little bit of time to figure that out, but pretty much most people were deployed for 42 days, so we figured we'd get about six days off before people had to go back to their units to demobilize. Generally we said okay. Two days to out process, make sure you get your TB tine test and do that, and four days paid off.

On the flying side pretty much we tried to downsize the flying program, so people could take time off, not only the people who were overseas but the people now who were manning their base with a lot less technicians and AGRs for seven weeks. So we wanted, once again, equality, we gave the people who came back from Kosovo time to get -- check their mail, see their families, do that, gave them a week to do that, then we brought them back in and we tried to get the technicians and AGRs a week so they could decompress, and then we started to look at what's on our plate next, which was the AEF for next summer.

DR. GROSS: Impacts on recruiting and retention? The tanker community, there's a lot of anxiety because guys weren't fully utilized, necessarily, as well, there's a lot of unhappiness there.

COL SWIFT: As of right now, we don't see -- we don't have any big hiccups there. I think because we approached it as this is a long-term engagement for the Air National Guard. The people who went are happy they went, they felt like they accomplished something.

People back home, we tried the best we could to recognize them for their contributions and we tried to make it say "you can't go to war without a support network, period." So we tried to make it, we didn't want a "we/they," so we tried real hard through different initiatives to make it one team. And then we got on with life. So I haven't seen the retention issues. We do track back about 10 years, and 1991 after Desert Storm, there were a lot of people in the Guard who said, well, there was probably a 30 percent jump in the retention problem at Barnes back then, and that was probably people who said "well, I didn't join this Guard -- I didn't know I could be called up, lose my business, lose my job, possibly."

Right now we're not seeing, in fact we're seeing a little bit of a dip in people who are voluntarily leaving the organization, so hopefully it adds a little booster, you know they're significantly contributing.

My concern more is moving directly into an AEF next summer, and that increased ops tempo. I think we're going to see, because of that ops tempo, doing, going to war and going to war zone next year, I think we're going to see some people -- we're trying real hard not to have that, and that was one of the reasons to have the

volunteerism early -- so the people would say well, it was my choice to go both times, not I was made to.

DR. GROSS: Okay, sure, sure. Any sort of lessons learned that you've personally drawn from this whole experience? Other than what we've talked about, of course.

COL SWIFT: Other than that, I was very privileged to get to go, number one. To get to lead in combat was absolutely a thrill, something I never thought I would ever get to do in the Guard, as a -- you know you're going to come and work for some guy. To lead an organization, the lead American on the base, was kind of neat.

Lessons learned? Ops and maintenance is never a problem. That's their forte, they're very, very strong. We think we're real good at care and feeding and those issues, but you've got to have the right people in the right spot and don't be afraid to ask for help in that regime. When I wasn't getting answers I needed, I wasn't afraid to call and get help from the Guard Bureau, I wasn't afraid to call the wing commander who I worked for at Spangdahlem and say I need help. He was great, he came down I think three times in 45 days.

Probably the biggest lesson learned is "who do you go to when you have a problem?" Here you got three Air National Guard wing commanders coming together to form one organization to be on an Italian base 800 miles from your boss, and USAFE, and you don't know who to go to.

DR. GROSS: For support-type issues?

COL SWIFT: For support issues.

DR. GROSS: You knew where you were getting your tasking, no problem.

COL SWIFT: Tasking, bombs, parts, everything works fine. But probably the biggest lesson learned is "who to go to." It helps having that 265 [statutory tour officer] up on the staff. Unfortunately, he was brand new, so if I asked him a question he'd have to go and find out who the dad was. But it was a resource.

So I think that's the biggest lesson learned -- "who do you go to," and "who do you report to," and "what do they expect of you?"

DR. GROSS: So it took you a while to sort that out, then?

COL SWIFT: It depended on the situation and the problem. Depended on the day, but we did a situation report every night, and we assumed that would get us

tasking, or get us the help we needed. That was just something, you know, they read and they go wow, wow, wow, but they were assuming you were working some other avenue, so the key is having a good staff dedicated to being detectives, being those hound dogs who go out there and they find that one super-sergeant who can answer the question and then they make sure they got his home number, his cell phone number, his [inaudible], and never let go of that guy.

DR. GROSS: Good. I'd heard some comments along those lines when I was at the [ANG Kosovo] "hot wash" in August [1999] back at Andrews [AFB, Maryland], who do you go to?

COL SWIFT: We have that sometimes at the Bureau and the [Air National Guard] Readiness Center, once you find who you can go to, life is great. Those people want to help you.

DR. GROSS: It took a while to sort through, then?

COL SWIFT: Yeah. When I look back, I went through my notes a couple of weeks ago and saw it was only 42 days and what we accomplished, and like you say, the last eight to ten, you know, you're waiting around, you're bringing the bombs back every day, people are starting to get bored because they can't load bombs, the munitions guys are going, come on, you know, so really in 30 days, if you look at the numbers, what those people accomplished is just incredible. It was like everybody had their shoulder to the wheel and they were pushing it, and nobody was looking for a free ride, it was really neat.

DR. GROSS: Good. Well, anything else you'd like to share with us? That's fine. Well, thank you very much.

COL SWIFT: You are very welcome.

[End side B, tape 1.]