

# Operation Allied Force

## Civil Engineers Support NATO in the Fight for Kosovo



by MSgt Reginald Dawkins  
*31st Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs*

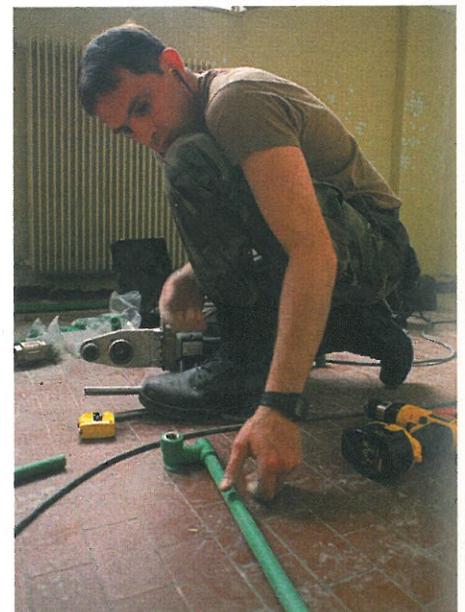
Air Force civil engineers provided crucial air operations support to one of the largest Air Force combat wings in history at Aviano Air Base, Italy, and at other bases throughout Europe during NATO's Operation Allied Force. The work they performed was no less than pivotal to the success of NATO's bombing campaign against Slobodan Milosevic's military regime.

Engineers with the 31st Air Expeditionary Wing at Aviano pulled

out all the stops in their endeavor to bed down more than 4,000 deployed troops in operations and lodging facilities. Even though it was the aircraft that delivered the bombs to the targets, it was the people who made this operation work, and wing leadership did their best to provide quality living arrangements for the deployed forces.

One such project was the renovation of a dilapidated Italian army dormitory in the Flightline Support Area. This "combat rehab," which was completed June 11th, provided housing for more than 600 members of the 31st AEW.

Instead of using the usual method of contracting out the complete project, civil engineers performed the vast majority of the labor, including: chipping paint, spackling walls, putting up new walls with sound insulation, installing new windows, and running



SSgt Bruce Stocking, 31st CES, Aviano AB, Italy, works on renovating an old Italian army dormitory for personnel deployed to Aviano as part of Operation Allied Force. (Photo by A1C Scott Nichols)

---

A civil engineer transports Harvest Eagle assets to the tent city at Aviano AB, Italy. Civil engineers bedded down thousands of deployed troops throughout Europe in support of Kosovo-related military operations. (Photo by MSgt Keith Reed)

wires, new plumbing and water lines in tandem with a contracted paint crew.

"This would normally have been a total contract project, but because it was needed so quickly we cut into our entire labor pool that maintains the rest of the base," said SMSgt Antonio Francis, 31st Civil Engineer Squadron facility maintenance superintendent.

With the workload of the major projects and the normal day-to-day commitments, Aviano's 31st CES averaged 60 hours per week per person while juggling several mission requirements at the same time during Allied Force.

Outside help came from several units. Fourteen engineers from the 823rd RED HORSE Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Fla., installed high-voltage lines for three new substations to provide electrical power to Caserma Barbarisi, Aviano's tent city, and several

other projects.

Construction of Caserma Barbarisi began in February when engineers from the 86th Civil Engineer Group from Ramstein AB, Germany, joined their counterparts at the 31st CES to assemble a tent city for incoming troops.

Members of the 52nd CES from



**SSgt Gregory Bradford (left) and A1C James Silcott from the 52nd CES, Spangdahlem AB, Germany, assemble a Harvest Eagle shower/waste water distribution pump for the tent city at Aviano AB, Italy. (Photos by MSgt Keith Reed)**

Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, deployed to Aviano next to continue construction and help maintain Caserma Barbarisi.

"We had people from Spangdahlem here to support tent city, which in itself was a city," said Francis. "The M-80 boilers that came with the shower-shave units weren't providing sufficient hot water, creating another immediate project. Tent city needed a water and boiler plant installed. They were instrumental in making sure that the boiler plant got erected as soon as possible."

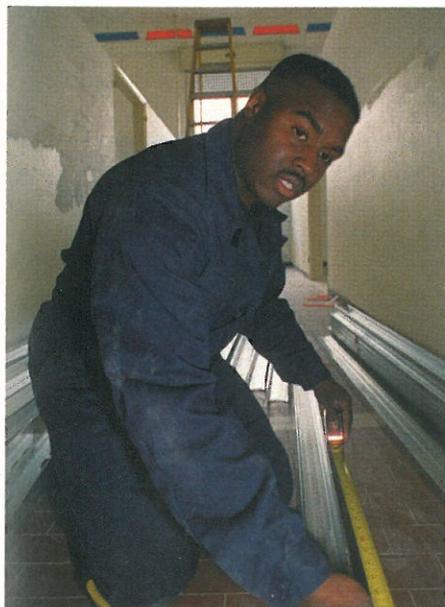
Civil engineers at Aviano helped ensure the success of NATO's efforts with a long list of accomplishments. These included: erecting the more than 200 tents that made up Caserma Barbarisi and housed almost 2,000 occupants; constructing the tent city dining facility in one week; resurfacing six F-16 parking pads in four days; and providing high-voltage power feeds from a new substation to tent city and the tent city dining facility.

Other achievements included: building a permanent boiler facility with a 1,000-gallon water heater and

recirculating tank; completing four renovation projects involving office space and storage space; painting and electrical upgrade on a building near tent city used as an emergency clinic; moving an automatic teller machine and barber shop and building a troop support area in tent city.

In addition to these concerted efforts at Aviano, civil engineers in a host of Air Force specialties worked behind-the-scenes to support day-to-day Allied Force air operations at air bases throughout Europe. Liquid fuels maintenance engineers maintained the systems used to fuel aircraft flying tens of thousands of sorties. Runway maintenance troops swept runways and kept them free of foreign object damage. Electricians maintained airfield lighting systems to sustain 24-hour, all-weather operations. Power production troops maintained and repaired fixed aircraft arresting barriers and mobile arresting systems (MAAS) when necessary.

Firefighters and explosive ordnance disposal specialists worked extended alert hours to support increased sortie rates and respond to emergency



**SSgt Shannon Fortune, 31st CES, Aviano AB, Italy, measures metal studs for the dormitory renovation. 31st CES craftsmen performed the majority of the work on the dormitory. (Photo by A1C Scott Nichols)**

SSgt Angel Montalvo and TSgt Mark Kruse (below) and SSGts Al Johnson and Gardner Jones (right), from the 86th CEG at Ramstein AB, Germany, help construct the field kitchen at Aviano's tent city. (Photos by MSgt Keith Reed)



Team (CEMIRT) assisted U.S. Air

situations. Approximately 70 firefighters and 10 aircraft rescue firefighting vehicles were deployed to 11 locations to support Joint Task Forces Noble Anvil and Shining Hope.

The requirements varied by location. Some main operating bases needed additional personnel because of the ops tempo, other locations needed firefighters and vehicles, while some locations only needed one firefighter for egress training.

Sending one firefighter for egress training ensured the host nation fire department was trained in the proper rescue techniques for the type of aircraft deploying to their location. This training typically involved the firefighter arriving a couple of days before the fighters or tankers to give the academic portion of the class. When the aircraft arrived, orientation was given followed by actual egress exercises. When the firefighter and operations group commander were satisfied that the host nation fire department was proficient on the procedures, the deployed firefighter was then released back to his unit.

Other locations involved Air Force firefighters working side-by-side with sister service and host nation firefighters to provide fire protection.

The Air Force Civil Engineer Support Agency's Civil Engineer Maintenance Inspection and Repair

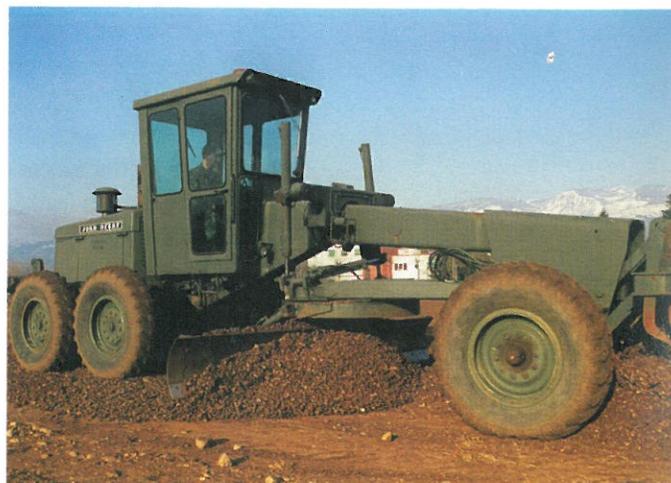
Forces in Europe in purchasing hydraulic power units for its inventory of MAASs. CEMIRT also arranged for production of lightweight fairlead beams for the MAASs, to prepare them for use with wide-body aircraft such as the C-5 and C-17.

AFCESA deployed six members of its Airfield Pavements Evaluation Team to Europe to assist USAFE pavements engineers and Air Mobility Command Tanker Airlift Control Elements in performing structural assessments and determining load-bearing capabilities of runway, taxiway and apron pavements at all of the bases where NATO aircraft could potentially operate.

The team also conducted condition surveys to provide baseline documentation on existing structural conditions at runways, so that the U.S. could avoid paying for damages it did not cause once operations ended. AFCESA pavements engineers performed analyses at 17 sites in 10 different countries during April and May.

Now that operational requirements are changing with the end of Operation Allied Force and the beginning of the peacekeeping mission, Operation Joint Guardian, CEs are beginning to redeploy as the region is stabilized by ground troops. Others are staying to perform their tasks in support of the expanding humanitarian and new peacekeeping missions in the region as tens of thousands of Kosovar refugees return to their homes.

*The fall edition of The CE will feature additional stories related to operations in the Balkans.*



SSgt William Chilcott was part of the 31st CES team that accomplished a lot of beddown in a short time at Aviano AB, Italy. Here, earth is leveled and compacted in preparation for construction of Caserma Barbarisi, the tent city home for personnel supporting Operation Allied Force. (Photo by MSgt Raul Navas)