





*Above: A B-1 Lancer from the 9th Bomb Squadron, Dyess AFB, Tex., flies over the Nevada desert with its wings swept fully aft. Here: The target area takes a pounding from live ordnance. Right: A 509th Bomb Wing B-2 from Whiteman AFB, Mo., drops general-purpose bombs.*



# Firepower on the Wing

**Live munitions dropped in the desert made an awesome demonstration.**

Photography by Ted Carlson

**A**T A DESERT RANGE near Nellis AFB, Nev., the Air Force periodically holds a firepower demonstration. It's a chance to showcase front-line fighters and bombers, their munitions, and other USAF capabilities in the air and on the ground. This past September, more than 2,000 people turned out for the demonstration, held at a remote site called Point Bravo. Congressional staff members, active duty military, veterans, local business leaders, law enforcement and rescue agency personnel—all were invited to bring cameras and binoculars. The observers sat on bleachers set up three miles away from the actual bomb dropping and watched the action on large screens.



The firepower demonstration began with a desert warfare scenario, using grenade launchers and .50-caliber and M-60 machine guns. Then came an hour-long demonstration of flying firepower. [1] An F-15E Strike Eagle, from the 422nd Test and Evaluation Squadron at Nellis, turns for a bomb run at a target. [2] A 4th Special Operations Squadron AC-130U Spectre gunship performs a flare salvo to defeat simulated infrared guided surface-to-air missiles. [3] An A-10 fires its 30 mm cannon. [4] An F-15E moves in for a kill. [5] During a combat search and rescue simulation, an HH-60G Pave Hawk releases flares.





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*[1] USAF security forces in Humvees man machine guns as they secure an area during their live-fire exercise. [2] This F-117 Nighthawk came to the demonstration from Holloman AFB, N.M.*

*More than two dozen aircraft from across the US brought their firepower to Point Bravo. A 50-minute drive north of Nellis, the site consists of a few brick buildings and antennas. It is part of the three-million-acre Nevada Test and Training Range.*



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*[3] A Warthog takes out a target with 2.75-inch rockets. Between rockets, bombs, missiles, and its cannon, the A-10 is a serious threat to enemy armored units. [4] "Red Air" came in the form of F-16Cs from the 64th Aggressor Squadron at Nellis.*

**[1]** An A-10 fires a volley of rockets. At Point Bravo, the Warthogs expended more than 50 2.75-inch rockets and more than 4,000 rounds of 30 mm cannon shells. **[2]** In the CSAR demonstration, an HH-60 (foreground) and an A-10 (background) work together, as the Warthog suppresses potential threats and the Pave Hawk carries out the rescue. **[3]** A Red Air F-16 pulls hard. With a small frontal cross section and its blue camouflage paint scheme, the F-16 is hard to visually acquire.



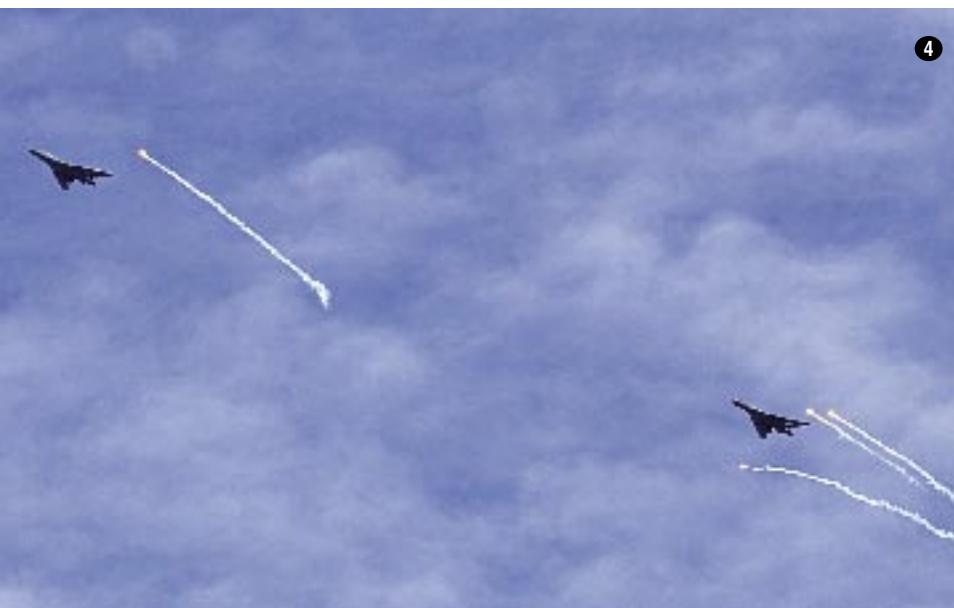
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**[4]** Two B-1s fire defensive flares during a bomb run. The "Bone" specializes in both low-level and medium-altitude penetration for weapons delivery. **[5]** A B-52 drops bombs over a target. It was one of two participating from the 2nd Bomb Wing, Barksdale AFB, La.



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*[1] A BUFF fires flares as it releases bombs. [2] Aircraft dropped 500-pound, 1,000-pound, 2,000-pound, cluster, and laser guided bombs. Bombing on this scale would be done against large enemy troop and armor concentrations. [3] As Pave Hawks approach a downed pilot during the CSAR mission, door gunners keep an eye out for enemy fire.*

*The HH-60s and A-10s were able to fly within a few hundred yards of the spectators, to provide them with a closer look.*



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*[4] An F-16 drops cluster munitions, generally used for anti-armor and anti-personnel strikes.*

**[1]** Pararescue jumpers use Fast Rope, which has loops and rings woven into it, for a quick CSAR insertion and extraction from the Pave Hawk. **[2]** Pilot or decoy? PJs first make sure they are picking up a downed pilot and not an enemy pretending to be one. **[3]** An F-22 attached to the 422nd TES flies past the spectators. **[4]** The B-2 delivers a long stream of bombs.







*[1] At the demonstration, the F-117 contributed awesome firepower along with the F-16s and F-15Es. USAF's first stealth fighter, the F-117 has functioned as the service's primary "first day of war" attack aircraft, able to penetrate high-threat areas with laser- and GPS-guided munitions. The Nighthawk made its first flight in 1981. It is being retired this year. [2] A Viper lights the afterburner during takeoff at Nellis. It carries cluster bombs and AIM-9 Sidewinders under its wings and AIM-120C AMRAAM missiles on its wingtips. [3] F-15Cs, such as this one, and F-22s took on the aggressor aircraft, demonstrating air combat maneuvering.*



*[4] Its CSAR mission a success, the Pave Hawk flies off with the rescued pilot on board, while the A-10 continues to work the perimeter. The demonstration in the desert showcased the Air Force's firepower, wide-ranging capabilities, and deadly precision. ■*