

A “New



Capt. Eric Cleveringa, deployed from the Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing, Joe Foss Field, Sioux Falls, S.D., signals that he's ready for takeoff on a mission from JB Balad, Iraq. F-16s were valuable assets in Iraq, defending air-space, escorting other aircraft, and providing close air support. A C-17 comes in for a landing in the background.

Dawn” in Iraq

Operation Iraqi Freedom came to an end this summer, but the Air Force will be sticking around.

Photography by USAF photographers
Text by June Lee



USAF photo by TSgt. Caycee Cook

After seven-and-a-half years of war, the last US combat troops officially withdrew from Iraq on Aug. 31. As the drawdown wrapped up, 49,700 US military personnel remain in the country. Approximately 6,000 of them are airmen. This considerably smaller US military presence will provide stability, training, and advise-and-assist support to Iraqi security forces in what is now known as Operation New Dawn. This pictorial commemorates the Air Force's mission during the years of Iraqi Freedom, from 2003 to the present day. **1** Two F-16s from the 332nd Expeditionary Fighter Squadron wait out a sandstorm at Joint Base Balad in September 2008, while maintenance crews deal with winds hurling sand particles into sensitive equipment. **2** A pararescueman from the 64th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron scans the perimeter at Balad, while an HH-60 Pave Hawk hovers above.



USAF photo by A1C Jason Epley



USAF photo

3 Maj. Andrew Kowalchuk, a pilot with the 37th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, performs a preflight check on a B-1 Lancer. **4** Explosive ordnance disposal personnel remove the wings of a C-130 near Sather AB, Iraq, with controlled explosions. The aircraft had made an emergency landing in the field.



USAF photo by SSgt. Robert Barney



USAF photo by TSgt. Jeffrey Allen



USAF photo by TSgt. Erik Gudmundson



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USAF photo by SSgt. Derrick C. Goode



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USAF photo by TSgt. Stephen Faulisi



USAF photo

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USAF photo

11 An F-117 and three F-15s taxi at an air base in Southwest Asia. *12* The silhouette of the air traffic control tower at Balad. *13* At Aviano AB, Italy, C-17s prepare to deliver Army and USAF paratroopers into heavily defended Northern Iraq. This 2003 mission was the largest combat airdrop since 1989. *14* A crew chief with the 46th Expeditionary Recon-

naissance Squadron carries out a postflight inspection on a Predator. Remotely piloted aircraft have been prevalent throughout Iraq, performing both reconnaissance missions and air strikes against insurgents. 15 Capt. Kim Campbell, an A-10 Thunderbolt pilot, surveys the battle damage to her airplane. Campbell's Warthog was battered during a close

air support mission over Baghdad in 2003.

111 At Balad, A1C Laura Smith and SrA. Matthew Wilson place support pins into a gun maintenance stand, while SSgt. Calvin Adger (l) and TSgt. Christopher Knackstedt keep the gun housing steady. 121 A tethered F-16 undergoes a full-afterburner engine run-up at Balad. 131 TSgt. Karyn Kazimer and SMSgt. Elliot Adkisson, clad in hazmat suits, scan the area before checking mail and packages that have been sent to the Victory Base Complex, Baghdad, in March. 141 Lt. Col. Douglas Schaare (center) receives a preflight briefing before a close air support mission. 151 A B-1 lands with full flaps at a Southwest Asia base after completing a combat mission over Iraq.



1 USAF photo by SSgt. Phillip Butterfield



2 USAF photo by TSgt. Erik Gudmundson



3 USAF photo



4 USAF photo by SrA. Matt Coleman-Foster



5 USAF photo by TSgt. Michael Boquette



USAF photo by SSgt. Stacy Fowler

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USAF photo by Lt. Col. Robert Couse-Baker

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USAF photo by TSgt. Erik Gudmundson

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USAF photo by SRA. Jacqueline Romero

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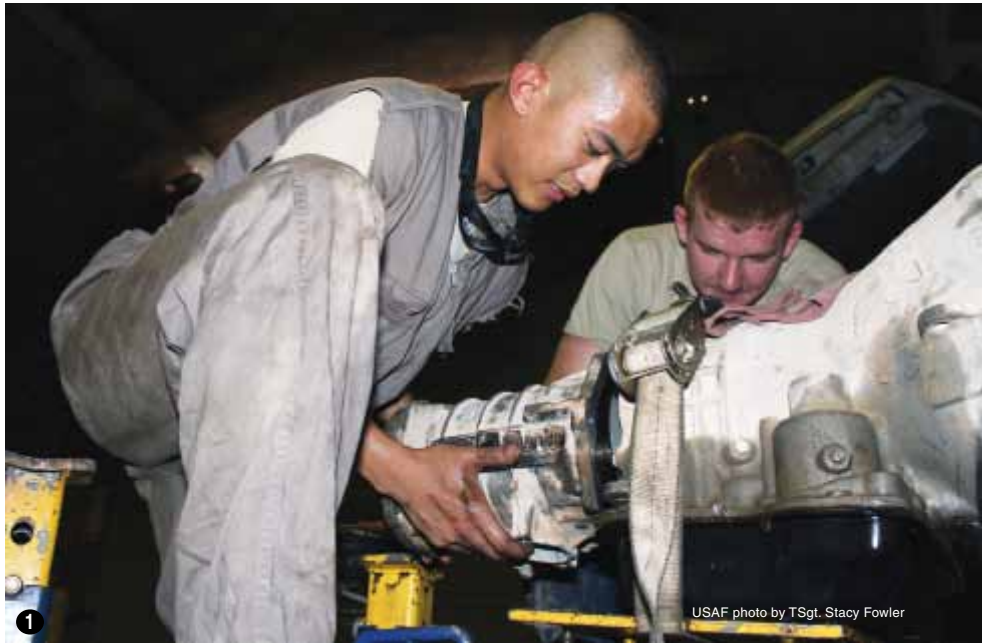
USAF photo by TSgt. Erik Gudmundson

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111 TSgt. Thomas Kennedy and SrA. Michael Schaefer, aircraft mechanics, look over technical orders during a 400-hour phase inspection of an F-16 in Iraq. 121 TSgt. David Duncan, with the 332nd Expeditionary Logistics Readiness Squadron, works on the air-conditioner compressor of a Humvee at Balad. 131 A C-130 and an F-16 taxi in opposite directions at Balad. Counterterrorism missions

continue, though the official combat operations ended. 141 SrA. Elizabeth Gonzalez mans a .50-caliber machine gun at a Sather Air Base defensive position. 151 As the sun sets, an Army Black Hawk helicopter flies over Joint Base Balad.

11 SSgt. Jeffery Ramirez (l) and SrA. Jeffrey Griffin put together a vehicle transmission at Balad. **12** SSgt. Michael Thomas and SrA. William Hunt, crew chiefs with the 37th Aircraft Maintenance Unit, remove fuel hoses from a B-1. **13** A-10s prepare to take off from al Asad AB, Iraq, on a combat mission in 2007. A-10s were crucial in providing CAS to coalition forces doing battle in Baghdad, Fallujah, and elsewhere. **14** A1C Latoya Tapscott performs an inspection at Balad. Her security forces team carried out random vehicle inspections, visa checks, and perimeter foot patrols.





USAF photo by SSgt. Stacy Fowler

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USAF photo

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USAF photo by SSgt. Phillip Butterfield

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11 As a C-17 pulls into position behind them, Black Hawks line a runway at Balad to be transported to their next destination during the drawdown in Iraq. *12* An aircrew deployed from Tinker AFB, Okla., works on an E-3 Sentry in Southwest Asia. The AWACS' command and control and battle management capabilities were essential over Iraq. *13* MSgt. Jesse Mathes checks an F-16 during an inspection at JB Balad. *14* A1C Robert Jacob guides a C-17 to its parking spot at Balad. The nation's attention has largely shifted to Afghanistan, but roughly 6,000 airmen will remain in Iraq. They provide security, intelligence, mobility, and training to Iraq's new defense and air forces. The tens of thousands of airmen who deployed before them made this smaller presence possible by helping defeat the insurgency and stabilize the new democracy in Iraq. ■