Team Sport, Combat Search and Rescue over Serbia, 1999
In the 1990s, United States military forces, as part of the great NATO Alliance, were involved in the Balkans region of Europe, primarily against the forces of Serbia. The last part of that conflict involved direct action against Serbia itself as NATO attempted to staunch their atrocities directed at the southern region of Kosovo. The Serbians had long-considered Kosovo as part of their nation. In 1989 at the Battle of Kosovo Polje, according to Serbian culture, Serbia saved Europe from the Ottomans by “sacrificing itself to halt the Turks in Kosovo.” Serbia’s gaining of independence in 1878 rekindled its desire for control of Kosovo. As a U.S. Air Force study noted, to Serbian nationalists, “Kosovo was an intrinsic part of Serbia.” Under Marshal Josip Broz Tito’s rule following World War II, Kosovo enjoyed a degree of autonomy while under Serbia’s control. But in the post-Tito 1980s, ethnic Albanians in Kosovo—comprising 90 percent of the population—appeared to threaten Serbian aspirations for control of the province. Playing upon Serbian nationalism and fears, Slobodan Milosevic rose to the presidency in Serbia in part upon his promises of retaining control of “ancestral” Kosovo. In 1989, Milosevic withdrew Kosovar autonomy and permitted the removal of Kosovar Albanians from government jobs including the police. By 1991–92 as the former Yugoslavia disintegrated, Kosovar Albanians formed a shadow government. Still, the province remained relatively peaceful.1

In the spring of 1998, however, Kosovo began to unravel. In March, Yugoslav—essentially, Serbian—security forces initiated attacks against insurgents of the independence-minded Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). The violence increased, including the forced evacuation of Kosovar villages and the murders of ethnic Albanians. Nevertheless, by summer the KLA controlled about one-third of Kosovo. Serbia responded with a major offensive. Meanwhile, fearful of what appeared to be the start of another round of ethnic cleansing—as occurred in Bosnia several years earlier—NATO defense ministers considered military options against Serbia. In mid-October 1998, the NATO Council authorized air strikes against Serbia which, for the time being, persuaded Milosevic to comply with a UN-directed cease-fire and the withdrawal of Serbian forces from Kosovo.2

Although Milosevic did, in fact, withdraw a sizeable number of his security forces from Kosovo, the cease-fire was short-lived due to violations on both sides. By early 1999, Serbian forces returned to Kosovo. Reports of human rights abuses against ethnic Albanians increased, including evidence of a massacre, in January, of Kosovar civilians at Racak, Kosovo. Meanwhile, thousands of Kosovar refugees, driven from their homes and villages in what appeared to be a systematic campaign by the Serbs, began crossing the borders into neighboring Albania and Macedonia. In February and March 1999, last-ditch diplomatic efforts at Rambouillet and Paris, respectively, failed to secure a return to the October 1998 agreement or an end to Serbian operations in Kosovo. On March 20, Serbian forces renewed an offensive against the KLA and continued ridding Kosovo of ethnic Albanians. Three days later, the Secretary General of NATO, Dr. Javier Solana, directed the start of air operations against Serbia. The NATO operational name was ALLIED FORCE (OAF); the U.S. component, NOBLE ANVIL (NA).3

Air operations planners calculated on a very short campaign. In fact, U.S./NATO leaders anticipated that only two or three nights of limited air strikes would convince Milosevic to change his rogue-like behavior. As the campaign began, the forces of U.S. Army Gen. Wesley K. Clark, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), had only fifty-one fixed targets approved. He forbade any form of ground attack, instead directing USAF Lt. Gen. Michael C. Short, the commander of Allied Forces Southern Europe, to conduct an air campaign utilizing the almost 550 U.S. and 650 allied combat and support aircraft assigned to strike the designated targets.4

The air planners were also concerned about the possibility of allied aircraft being shot down. They recalled how several NATO aircraft had been shot down in earlier Balkans operations. On April 16, 1994, a British Sea Harrier aircraft was downed by an SA–7 missile near Gorazde, Bosnia.5 A year later, on June 2, 1995, a Serbian SA–6 brought down a USAF F–16 pilot, Scott O’Grady, over western Bosnia.6 Both the British and American pilots were rescued. On August 30, 1995, near the town of Pale, Bosnian Serbs employing a surface-to-air missile scored against a French Mirage 2000K, call sign “Ebro–33.” U.S. aircraft flew ninety-two dedicated sorties in support of recovery efforts for Ebro–33 until officials confirmed that the Serbians had captured the two-man crew. The crews’ release later served as a stepping stone toward the Dayton Peace Accords in November 1995.7

All U.S. forces in OAF were organized as Joint Task Force (JTF)-NA. As expected, SOCEUR would...
provide supporting special forces. Its commander, U.S. Army Brigadier General Eldon Bargewell, activated JSOTF - NOBLE ANVIL to do so. Under it, the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF)-2 headquarters element at Brindisi was assigned to specifically provide combat search and rescue (CSAR) capability. The Air Force Special Operations Command’s (AFSOC) 21st Special Operations Squadron (SOS) reinforced its element there to four MH-53Js and crews. The 20th SOS at Hurlburt Field, FL, was directed to deploy augmenting forces. Capt. Jim Cardoso was serving as the B Flight commander and deployed his flight with five MH-53Js, crews, and support personnel for the operations, as requested by the 21st SOS so that it could have a standardized fleet and intermix crews. However, as the Airmen and aircraft were en route, AFSOC ordered them to return the aircraft to Hurlburt for replacement with five MH-53Ms, which had just been modified with upgraded navigational and threat alert systems. They were joined by four MH-60s and crews from the 55th SOS as part of the larger Task Force Helo, commanded by the 21st SOS commander, Lt. Col. Paul Harmon.8

AFSOC assets at the base also included MC–130P Combat Shadow (tanker), and AC–130H (gunship) aircraft as well as Special Tactics (ST) combat controllers and pararescuemen (PJs)—highly-trained members of the small Air Force special operations community that expected to perform their jobs on the ground, often in denied or hostile areas.9

AFSOC also increased the ST elements. Under the leadership of Maj. Terry “Eugene” Willett and his successor, Maj. William “Bill” Sherman, the 321 Special Tactics Squadron (STS), based at RAF Mildenhall, United Kingdom, was “spun-up” no less than three times in anticipation of contingency operations in response to Serbian actions in Kosovo. The third time, however, in March 1999, was the real deal. Later, Lt. Col. Bradley Thompson—a captain in 1999—recalled he was tasked initially with forming three CSAR teams, totaling about ten personnel. By the time the air campaign against Serbia began, however, he was the mission commander for some seventy personnel, including operators who deployed to the JSOTF2 from Special Tactics and Air Rescue units at Hurlburt Field and Patrick AFB, FL, Portland International Airport, OR, and Moody AFB, GA. It was one of the largest concentrations of deployed Special Tactics operators (even though some personnel were under the conventional Rescue organization) in one location prior to September 11, 2001.10

General Bargewell took a proprietary interest in the rescue mission and closely watched the preparation at JSOTF2. Harmon briefed him on the options that his team had scripted. Bargewell knew that the Serbians expected the allied force to mount recovery operations for any downed aircrews and wanted his Airmen to have the best possible chance for success and survival. He did not want the Pave Lows operating singly or even in two-ship formations. Instead, he accepted a three-ship mini-taskforce option consisting of two MH-53s—one MH-53M and one MH-53J—and an MH-60G. The MH-53s would lead and provide fire support, while the MH-60 would be the designated recovery aircraft. A rescue mission commander (RMC) would be aboard the lead Pave Low. This individual would be someone seasoned—such as Lt. Col. Steve Laushine, the 55th SOS commander, or Lt. Col. Tom Trask, the 20th SOS operations officer—who would be in charge and empowered to make whatever tactical decisions needed to execute the recovery. All helicopters would have an ST element aboard for the actual pickup. Additionally, Bargewell ordered a U.S. Army Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) unit to be dispersed on board the helicopters. The ODA element would be available as another tactical option if, for some reason, it made sense to land the team members and have them execute some form of initial overland recovery.11

Several of the USAF crew members objected to having the “extra” troops on board, arguing that it forced the helicopters to fly with less fuel and placed more lives at risk. They took their concerns to Lt. Col. Harmon. He addressed the issue with Bargewell who “in no uncertain terms” made it clear to the helicopter crews that this was the way the missions were going to be organized. He dictated very specific considerations and criteria for their deployment and use. When that was cleared up, the
aircrews, ST elements, and ODA assumed alert posture at Brindisi.\textsuperscript{12}

Combat operations would begin on March 24. Colonel Harmon worked with Capt. Jim Slife also from the 21st SOS to build five helicopter packages, each led by a very experienced flight lead: from the 20th, Capt. Jim Cardoso and Capt. Paul Pereira, and from the 21st, Capt. Jim Breck, Maj. Lou Caporicci, and Capt. Jim Slife. Every 24 hours, two teams would be on alert as primary and secondary. They would rotate through the schedule with primary, secondary, and local duties. The primary would move forward to Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina, reducing reaction time over Serbia, and the secondary would sit alert at Brindisi and respond to calls in Kosovo. Since two models of Pave Lows were on site, whatever type the lead crew flew would lead. The two squadrons did not intermix their personnel. Captain Cardoso agreed with this plan. He had now flown both the MH-53J and M models and knew that the newer M models were more technologically advanced. However, he also believed that the theater experience of the 21st SOS guys was clearly a mitigating factor, later stating that “having theater experience outweighs the machine.”\textsuperscript{13}

Vega 31

On the night of March 27, a 20th SOS crew, including Captain Cardoso as flight lead for the rescue package and copilot Capt. John Glass, took off in an MH-53M. Their call sign was Mocassin 60. One wingman, Mocassin 61, was an MH-53J from the 21st SOS, flown by Capt. Shawn Cameron with copilot Capt. Matt Daley and crew. The other wingman was Gator 07, an MH-60G from the 55th SOS, commanded by Capt. Chad Franks with copilot Capt. Matt Glover and crew. Colonel Laushine was aboard Mocassin 60 as the RMC. As directed, an ODA package from the 1st Battalion, 10th SFG, as well as USAF special tactics personnel were dispersed among the three aircraft.\textsuperscript{14}

As the flight of three helicopters proceeded to Tuzla, the crews checked in with the NATO AWACS on station and overseeing the strikes that evening. The weather over the region was poor, with mixed rain showers and low visibility, and many strikes had been cancelled. Cardoso and his group landed at Tuzla and taxied to the refueling pits to fill their tanks. As they were doing so, the crews aboard Mocassin 61 and Gator 07 heard a Mayday call on the UHF “Guard” (military aircraft emergency) frequency.\textsuperscript{15}

Immediately, Laushine and the aircraft commanders went into the Tuzla command center to determine what was going on. There they were told that an F–117 had gone down in Serbia. They quickly began to formulate a recovery plan and tasked intelligence for the most accurate location of the pilot, Lt. Col. Dale Zelko, call sign Vega 31, from the 49th Fighter Wing at Holloman AFB, NM. Laushine asked for data on the enemy threats that they would have to deal with to get him out. Cardoso was a bit concerned, thinking, “a Stealth just got shot down and now [they] want us to go in there?” However, he was now a highly experienced Pave Low pilot and knew that, while the immediate plan was not clear, the crews knew what they had to do and would figure out a way to get Zelko out of there.\textsuperscript{16}

The requested information promptly flowed into the command center. Intelligence sources indicated that Vega 31 was down near Novi Sad, Serbia, an estimated 90 miles from Tuzla. Those sources also reported that the Serbs realized they had shot down an F–117 and were scrambling to capture the pilot. Several flights of A–10s and other supporting aircraft were being launched to assist in the rescue. With that information, Laushine directed his task force to take off and head north to set up a rendezvous with the A–10s near Osijek in northeast Croatia.\textsuperscript{17}

An hour later, at 2050Z, the Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) authorized the rescue force to launch. The three helicopters quickly launched and headed north. In this area, at least,
the air was clear, and night visibility was good, although the moon was slowly setting. En route, though, they had difficulties establishing communications with the A–10s and other support aircraft as Laushine tried to organize the recovery effort. Meanwhile, Zelko had been able to use his handheld GPS to determine his location and had securely passed it to a C–130 orbiting over Kosovo. The C–130 crew quickly forwarded it through intelligence channels to Laushine. The reported position, validated by the A–10 flight lead, Capt. John Cherrey, who had established radio communications with and authenticated the survivor, indicated that Vega 31 was on the ground just south of the city of Ruma, 25 miles farther south. This was much closer to Belgrade, the heavily defended Serbian capital, and necessitated a complete rework of the recovery plan as the helicopter crews quickly entered Zelko’s reported GPS location into their navigation systems.\(^{18}\)

To save fuel, Cardoso directed his flight crews to land their helicopters and dismount their ST elements and some ODA troops to provide site security. The ST elements aboard the helicopters consisted of the individuals listed above in Table 1.

Meanwhile, Cardoso, copilot Glass, and seat flight engineer SSgt. Bill Clemons frantically built a new route to the survivor while the crew of Moccasin 60 coordinated for a MC–130P to refuel the helicopters. Once that was worked out, the helicopters re-launched, quickly rendezvoused with the Moccasin 60 to provide direct fire support. They themselves were being engaged by deadly SA-6 missile threats such as trees, towers, or power lines—anything that could damage or destroy a helicopter—as well as enemy forces. Suddenly, Hux spotted an uncharted power line in the haze, just ahead and level with the helicopters. He quickly shouted, “Wires! Climb! Climb!” as copilot Glass echoed his call. Cardoso immediately reacted and pulled back on the controls, flying his helicopter up and over the threatening wires. The other two crews maintained formation and also avoided the threat. Once clear of the wires, Cardoso descended the flight back down about 100 feet and proceeded toward Zelko.\(^{23}\)

Descending to fifty feet above the terrain, the CSAR three-ship proceeded inbound toward the survivor. Several times, Cardoso increased his altitude to one hundred feet to avoid obstacles and populated areas. Throughout the night, the helicopters had been operating mostly in clear air. As they turned inbound to Zelko, though, they encountered a layer of low-hanging clouds, fog, and rain. Flight engineer TSgt. Ed Hux, serving as the right-door gunner and scanner on Cardoso’s aircraft, noted, “It was probably in the top five of the darkest nights that I have ever flown in 30 years of flying.” As visibility rapidly deteriorated, Cardoso and his crew, already wearing NVGs, began utilizing the forward-looking infrared radar (FLIR) system to proceed. Unfortunately, as they entered the low scud, Cherrey and his flight could no longer see the helicopters to provide direct fire support. They themselves were being engaged by deadly SA-6 missile batteries and were now occupied just avoiding Zelko’s fate.\(^{22}\)

Entering the scud at about 50 feet above the ground, the two other helicopters held tactical formation on Moccasin 60 so that they did not get separated while so dangerously close to the ground. On board all three helicopters, gunners and flight engineers were earnestly scanning for immediate physical threats such as trees, towers, or power lines—anything that could damage or destroy a helicopter—as well as enemy forces. Suddenly, Hux spotted an uncharted power line in the haze, just ahead and level with the helicopters. He quickly shouted, “Wires! Climb! Climb!” as copilot Glass echoed his call. Cardoso immediately reacted and pulled back on the controls, flying his helicopter up and over the threatening wires. The other two crews maintained formation and also avoided the threat. Once clear of the wires, Cardoso descended the flight back down about 100 feet and proceeded toward Zelko.\(^{23}\)

Approaching Vega’s location, the helicopters encountered Serbian spotlights vainly looking for them. But there was no ground fire. About three miles from Vega, the CSAR team spotted three Serbian trucks evenly spaced on a road as enemy troops searched for the F–117 pilot. Two miles from Vega’s location, the rescuers contacted the survivor but they could not see him. Vega’s infrared strobe was inoperable and he couldn’t locate his pen-gun flares. Cardoso’s team told him to fire his overt flare. Vega did so. Immediately, SrA. Shawn M. S. (last initial only), the MH–60G flight engineer, spotted it—one-half mile to the east. Seeing the flare, Capt.

| Table 1. Special Tactics Personnel, “Vega-31” F-117 Rescue, March 27/28, 1999 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| MH-53M (Chalk Lead)        | MH-53J (Chalk 2)            | MH-60G (Chalk 3)            |
| Lance Supernaw (PJ)        | Ronald E. (PJ)             | John M. J. (PJ)            |
| Rob F. (CCT)               | Christopher B. (CCT)        | Donald “D. J.” Cantwell (CCT) |

Chad P. Franks, the Pave Hawk aircraft commander, turned toward Vega and headed inbound. The two Pave Lows also turned so as to overfly Vega, then turned to the west to hold. Franks flew the approach to the ground, the helicopter settling down as close to Vega as was relatively safe—the survivor was just outside the path of the rotor blades. Special Tactics personnel—consisting of pararescuemen Eric G. (last initial only) (team lead, 304th Rescue Squadron) and John M. J. (last initial only), and combat controller Donald “D. J.” Cantwell—quickly exited and assisted Vega aboard. Zelko heard the almost incredible greeting for which he might have lost hope. Grabbing him, they announced, “Your PJs are here to take you home!” Forty-five seconds after landing, Franks’ aircraft was airborne, heading that way.

Rejoining the Pave Lows, the MH–60G and the 53s flew a different route leaving Serbia than on the ingress. As they approached the border with Bosnia, they observed Serbian antiaircraft fire in the vicinity of their previous flight path. Without being able to see the aircraft, the Serbians appeared to be firing volleys in hopes that the helicopters were flying the same route as before. After the grueling five and one-half hour mission, Cardoso’s team landed safely at Tuzla at 0254Z. To Captain Cardoso, the results spoke for themselves. “We went in with 37 [personnel], and came back with 38.” Colonel Zelko underwent a physical examination before being flown to Aviano AB, Italy. Both Cardoso and Franks earned Silver Stars for the rescue mission; other crew members received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC), and in 2000, Cardoso received the James Jabara Airmanship Award for the leadership he provided in the rescue.

However, this mission had another significance, perhaps unrecognized at this time but profound in its historical implications. In 1967, at a time when the USAF was engaged in an intense theater war in Southeast Asia (SEA) and losing aircraft and aircrews on a daily basis, its commanders in SEA forwarded to the Pentagon a requirement, SEA Operational Requirement 114, which called for “an integrated system to enable . . . helicopters to perform the essential elements of search and rescue under conditions of total darkness and/or low visibility.” It took another thirteen years of development before that capability was finally consummated in the HH-53H helicopters that then became the MH-53 Pave Low aircraft. However, it took the right crews, PJs, ST airmen, young air commandos, men of consummate professionalism and intense drive, to operationally bring those helicopters alive. It was the men and machines together that made it all work. And this rescue operation was classic air commando. Moccasin 60 did not land to recover Vega 31, although it could have done so. Instead, it provided the overall leadership for the mission to facilitate the recovery action by the brave crew of Gator 07.

The simple truth is that in the early morning...
hours of March 28, 1999 in the skies over Serbia, a concept germinated 32 years earlier in the frustrations of the long war in Southeast Asia finally came to fruition. More than three decades of conceptualizing, planning, modifying, organizing, and training jelled in one seminal moment, and the rescue of Vega 31, Lt. Col. Dale Zelko, was the final and ultimate fulfillment of that requirement. His freedom was the end result of the right equipment and the right men at the right place at the right time, and for all of the right reasons.29

Hammer 34

In spite of the U.S./NATO’s initial expectations of a short, limited air campaign, the operation increased in intensity, continuing until early June when Milosevic, faced with a crumbling economy and dwindling popular support, finally agreed to withdraw from Kosovo. The Serbian leader remained obstinate until perhaps beginning to fear that a NATO ground option into Kosovo—which, unwiseely, had been taken “off the table” at the outset—might be under consideration. In any case, the prolonged air campaign provided a second opportunity for the combat rescue of a downed Airman from Serbia. By that time, the CSAR crews spent several days at a time forward-deployed to Tuzla AB rather than sending crews from Brindisi on a daily basis, a practice that taxed people and machines more than was necessary.30

force forward to the objective area. Once in the area, the rescue helos linked up with Goldfein’s flight lead, Hammer 33, who had assumed the OSC role, and vectored the helicopter task force to the survivor’s position. Two miles from his location, the MH–60G pilot, Capt. Denehan, spotted ground fire from his aircraft’s four o’clock position. The flight engineer, SSgt. Richard D. K. (last initial only), returned fire using the helicopter’s minigun. Immediately, the rescuers contacted the downed pilot and directed him to turn on his strobe light. Making one pass over the survivor, the Pave Hawk and MH–53M failed to obtain a “visual” on him. However, they turned on their Precision Location System which gave them a vector towards the survivor’s location. Denehan spotted Goldfein’s strobe light and dashed in for the pickup as the Pave Lows orbited above, guns ready to suppress any immediate threat to the force. Denehan landed his Pave Hawk at 0245Z on sloped terrain in a field near the survivor. The Special Tactics team of PJs Jeremy Hardy (team lead) and Ronald E. (last initial only) and combat controller Andrew Kubik jumped out to secure the survivor. As they did, they inadvertently knocked out a case of bottled water. In the distance, they could hear guns aboard one of the Pave Lows engaging Serbian forces.

Unfortunately, Serbian soldiers had also spotted Hammer–34, and “were closing in quickly,” as the AFSOC command historian, Mr. Herb Mason, stated later:

As soon as the MH–60G landed, Hammer 34 bolted from the nearby treeline. Unable to identify the pilot as a friendly, Sergeant Hardy trained his M–4 rifle on the pilot who immediately went submissive. Taking just seconds to authenticate the F–16 pilot, the special tactics team placed Hammer 34 aboard . . . and quickly piled on top of him to protect him from any incoming ground fire. A scant 20 seconds after landing, Captain Denehan quickly took off to the sound of gunfire coming from the southwest.

The case of bottled water served as a convenient step for the scampering airmen as they scrambled aboard and shouted “go, go, go!” Unaware that Goldfein’s legs were still partly dangling out of the aircraft, Denehan lifted off and climbed quickly to rejoin the MH-53s. Changing their outbound route, the flight of helicopters encountered minimal ground fire but required a “hard break left” near the border to avoid an enemy position. The rescue team landed safely at Tuzla at 0330Z. As in the rescue of Vega–31, the pickup helicopter pilot (Capt. Denehan) and the lead MH–53M pilot (Capt. Landreth) each received the Silver Star; their crews received DFC’s. Comparing the two rescues, mission commander Laushine noted that overall the second CSAR “went a lot smoother than the first,” despite the fact that radio discipline was poor. There were “way too many people on the radios talking,” he added. There was irony in the fact that the unit to which the Vega and Hammer pickup helicopters belonged was the 55th Special Operations Squadron. The 55th was slated for inactivation later in the year. This deployment was their “swan song.”

For rescuer and rescuee, there was at least one personal remembrance of the dramatic event in later years. In 2010, pararescueman Jeremy Hardy was promoted to chief master sergeant. The presiding official for the ceremony was Maj. Gen. David L. Goldfein—Hammer-34, Hardy’s rescued pilot.
ful combat rescues of Vega–31 and Hammer–34 were, in the words of the official USAF report on the campaign, “among the most significant tactical successes of the air war over Serbia.” Arguably, it was only the success of both rescues—particularly the first—that precluded their strategic significance from being more readily appreciated. Put another way, had a U.S. Air Force F–117 pilot been captured and shown to the world on camera, the situation would have been far more than a tactical issue for the U.S. and its allies; rather, a strategic and political crisis of the highest order.  

Table 2. Special Tactics Personnel, “Hammer-34” F-16 Rescue, May 2, 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MH-53M (Chalk Lead)</th>
<th>MH-53J (Chalk 2)</th>
<th>MH-60G (Chalk 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isaiah S. (PJ)</td>
<td>Juan M. Ridout (PJ)</td>
<td>Jeremy S. Hardy (PJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryan M. Stanhope (CCT)</td>
<td>Christopher B. (CCT)</td>
<td>Andrew Kubik (CCT)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hist, AFSOC, Jan-Dec 1999, vol 1, pp 106-109; vol 5, SD 111-19 ; email (U), SMSgt Jeremy S. Hardy (USAF) to Marion, Sep 3, 2010; various emails.

NOTES

2. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
3. Ibid., pp. 9-11, 45.
4. Ibid., p. 1.
9. History, AFSOC, Jan-Dec 1998, vol 1, p. 92; History, AFSOC, Jan-Dec 1999, vol 1, pp. 86, 88, 96-97. The third specialty included under Air Force Special Tactics was that of Special Operations Weather Team personnel. All three specialties were under the Air Force’s 720th Special Tactics Group. Based at Hurlburt Field, Fla. At the start of operations in March 1999, in addition to the deployed helicopters, AFSOC had four MC–130P tankers and two AC–130U gunships stationed in Italy.
15. Ibid., pp. 448-49.
16. Interview Whitcomb – Cardoso.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., p. 450.
21. Ibid.
25. Interview Whitcomb - Cardoso.
29. Whitcomb, On a Steel Horse I Ride, p. 454.
37. Report, One Year Report . . . Air War Over Serbia, p. 48 [emphasis added].