

## **52 TFW Arrives in the Middle East ready By Uke**

When we arrived at Shaik Isa the base was already out of ramp space. In addition to the 24 F-4Gs from the 561st TFS, the USMC was in the process of receiving the entire 3rd Marine Air Wing which eventually consisted of more than 120 F-18s, some A-6s, and 36 AV-8 Harriers which were parked on the parallel taxiway at a 45 degree slant. This taxiway ran the entire length of Runway36/18 and as I remember was wider (100'?) than most. In like fashion, as late comers we were also parked on the parallel taxiway with everything aft of the main landing gear actually over dirt. We actually operated like this for several weeks while Red Horse Civil Engineering construction teams were building us parking areas with asphalt loops surrounded by Vietnam style corrugated steel aircraft revetments. Eventually all 36 F-4Gs were moved to the South Loop.

The AV-8s were eventually moved further N to Jubail AB Saudi Arabia but we also had joining us 12 x RF-4Cs (Reno NV) and 24 x RF-4Es (12 TRS, Bergstrom AF, TX). All the recces got their own parking area as well. The last piece of the puzzle was the arrival of all the F-4Gs from the 480th TFS (Spang) the day after Christmas. The USAF Air Staff then ordered the realignment of the 8st and 480th squadron to 24 x F-4Gs and 24 x F-16C/Ds respectively effective 1 Jan 1991. So the F-16s never did make it to the southern AOR to perform their WW wingman role. Knowing I pretty much knew all the crews from both squadrons, being the EWO with the most experience and having flown with most of the pilots, Lt Col Gelwix tasked me to create 8 "hard" 4 ships which would stay the same for the duration of the war. We started training that way immediately and that's pretty much the way we employed the rest of our time there. It certainly made briefing easier as much of the flight brief was "standard" and we could focus on mission specifics. I elected to crew myself with Lt Col Gelwix and the other 4 ship flight leads were all Flt Commanders, Assistant Ops Officers, and Ops Officer Lt Col Shelor. We knew we were getting close to "fights on" when 2 added F-4Gs arrived from the States as battle attrition spares bringing the final tally to 50 x F-4Gs. Only one was lost in the war and that was actually due to fuel starvation, but that's another story.