

## **52 TFW gets Desert Storm Deployment Order**

**By Uke**

The Warning Order for Spangdahlem, 52 TFW, came on 1 Sep 1990. Although Spang had three mixed F-4G/F-16 squadrons the order was to deploy 12 F-4Gs only to an undisclosed location in the Middle East. As Lt Col Gelwix was the only sq commander who was F-4G qualified the 81 TFS became the selected sq.

I received a phone call that evening and was told to report to the Wing Commanders office at 0530 the following morning. On arrival I met up with Lt Col Dan Shelor, 81st Ops Officer, who was the acting 81st commander at Spang as the squadron was deployed to Karup AB, Denmark, for the annual Oxboel Exercise. Dan and I were informed about the Warning Order that morning and told we were going to Shaikh Isa to join the 561st who were already there. Although I was in the 480th TFS as an Assistant Ops Officer, I was told to select 4 crews from my squadron to make a 4 ship who would deploy as a part of the 81st. In the interim, the Wing was recovering all the F-4Gs from Karup and also swapping some out with the 23 TFS who were deployed to Zaragoza for semi-annual weapons employment training. Spang was feverishly generating aircraft as the F-4Gs arrived back from Karup and Zaragoza. The reason for the haste was we were told Intelligence had indications Hussein was about to launch his forces further south into Saudi Arabia with accompanying air strikes, etc. Accordingly, we were told that upon arriving in Saudi airspace we could be entering contested air space and might have to fight our way across to Bahrain. As such, all the primary and air spare aircraft were loaded at Spang with a full combat load of 2 x AGM-88, 2 x AIM-7, chaff and flare counter measures, ALQ-184 jamming pods, and three external fuel tanks.

All primary deployment and spare aircrew received deployment and intel briefings and were put into crew rest for an 0230 departure the morning of 5 Sep. The big surprise, we were taking off using ICAO "due regard" operations which most of us had never heard of before. In essence, we had no diplomatic flight clearances, approved refueling tracks, etc. and were assuming sole responsibility for safety of all traffic en-route. Needless to say, the French didn't see it our way and we were intercepted twice in their airspace. Apparently, our full, live, combat loads was enough to convince them we weren't doing this on a whim. Eight hours later and not having to fight our way across Saudi Arabia we landed in 114 degree heat and the saga begins.