


Joint Task Force Proven Force and the Gulf War (Part 6)



An Air Force HC-130P Combat Shadow of the 67th Special Operations Squadron is framed in the cockpit of a Navy CH-53E Super Stallion of Helicopter Combat Support Squadron (HC) 4, while preparing to conduct an in-flight refueling during an Operation PROVIDE COMFORT (OPC) mission. The four HC-130N/Ps were part of the first group of aircraft to be deployed to Incirlik after the initiation of OPC. [USN, PH3 Klein]

Theo van Geffen

After the liberation of Kuwait City on February 27, 1991, President Bush ordered the suspension of offensive military operations as of midnight eastern time. As a result, on 28/0800L February, a Coalition-declared ceasefire went into effect. The next month, the redeployment of 545,000 U.S. troops was initiated. However, as part of USAF's residual assets in the Gulf Region during the ceasefire period, F-4G Wild Weasels would continue to provide SEAD (Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses) capability in case hostilities would begin again. Some three weeks after redeploying to Spangdahlem, part of the 23rd TFS returned to Incirlik with F-4Gs.

Earlier we looked at the development of EC-130E, EF-111A and F-4G Advanced Wild Weasel aircraft, and at Joint Task Force PROVEN FORCE (JTF-PF), B-52G, EC-130E, EF-111A and F-4G combat operations. In this 6th and final part the focus is F-4G post-war (combat) operations.

Post-Desert Storm, Turkey

1991

After Iraqi acceptance of the cease-fire terms on March 3, USCENTAF (United States Central Command Air Forces) on the 9th verbally approved JTF-PF's plan to redeploy personnel, aircraft and equipment. Return of U.S. forces from the Gulf Region and Turkey was called DESERT FAREWELL, popularly called DESERT CALM. For instance, aircraft of Tactical Fighter Wing Provisional, 35 (TFWP 35) flew 525 sorties with 1,057 flying hours from Shaikh Isa, of which 304 and 632 respectively by the two F-4G squadrons (561st and 81st TFS) and 221 and 425 respectively by the two RF-4C units (12th and 192nd TRS).

Aircraft being redeployed on the 9th from Incirlik (nicknamed the Lik) were 22 F-111Es of the 20th TFW (Tactical Fighter Wing) and five EF-111As of the 42nd ECS (Electronic Combat Squadron). On March 15, the first 23rd TFS contingent returned to Spangdahlem (nicknamed Spang). Five days later, the JTF-PF headquarters element redeployed to Ramstein, but Composite Wing Provisional, 7440 (CWP 7440) remained at Incirlik with a residual force until the official conclusion of the Gulf War ceasefire (it was announced by the United Nations on April 11). This meant continuation of defensive Combat Air Patrols (CAPs), reconnaissance, E-3 AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) and Scud response sorties.

Iraqi response to the rebellion of Kurds in northern Iraq, with the goal to establish an autonomous Kurdistan Region,



(Above) Army Sgt Frederick McMullen prepares for the start of his UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter before flying a mission in support of Operation PROVIDE COMFORT to protect and supply Kurdish refugees. [USAF, SrA Gudrun Cook]

(Below) USAF fighter forces returned to Incirlik Air Base in Turkey after President George Bush ordered U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) to assist the Kurds and other refugees in the mountains of northern Iraq, to begin on April 6. F-4Gs of the 52nd TFW were also involved. The 'hero shot' shows one of the aircrews, Captains Bruce 'Spike' Benyshek and Larry 'LA Bud' Allen (EWO). [via Bruce Benyshek]



resulted in an estimated 1.5 million refugees. On March 3, General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), warned the Iraqis that Coalition aircraft would down any aircraft flying over the country, violating the ceasefire. The Iraqis did anyway and pilots of two Bitburg 53rd TFS F-15C Eagles, Captains John Donecki and Thomas Dietz, each downed a SU-22 Fitter in northern Iraq, on March 20 and 22 respectively.

As a result of Iraq's repression of its civilian population, the United Nations Security Council on April 5 passed Resolution (UNSCR) 688, which, among others, condemned Iraqi repression, demanded an immediate end to it, and insisted that Iraq would allow immediate access

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One of the Coalition partners in Operation PROVIDE COMFORT (and later in NORTHERN WATCH) was the UK, nicknaming their part Operation WARDEN. Provided were, among others, VC-10 tankers and Jaguar fighter/reconnaissance aircraft. The photo shows three Sepecat Jaguar GR.Mk 1As of RAF's No. 54 Squadron. [USAF, TSgt Anna Hayman]

by international humanitarian organizations to those in need of assistance in all parts of the country. Later that day, President George Bush ordered U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) to assist the Kurds and other refugees in the mountains of northern Iraq, to begin the next day. This resulted in a chain of reactions. On the 6th, only some six weeks after the Coalition-declared ceasefire, Operation PROVIDE COMFORT was initiated. USEUCOM assigned Major General James Jamerson, the former commander of JTF-PF, as its commander and directed him to deploy to Incirlik immediately, where he arrived by C-20 Gulfstream early on Sunday, April 7. With no prior planning JTF-PC was underway. Earlier, on the 6th, Colonel Bryan Hooten, commander of the 39th Special Operations Wing (SOW) at Rhein Main (Germany) had been alerted for immediate deployment to Turkey. He was directed to load three of his COMBAT TALON MC-130Es (7th SOS) and deploy them to Turkey as soon as possible to airdrop relief supplies to refugees, to be followed by three additional MC-130Es, four COMBAT SHADOW HC-130N/Ps (67th SOS) and six PAVE LOW MH-53Js (21st SOS). The three MC-130Es arrived on April 6 with two aircraft accomplishing the first airdrops the next day, totaling 27 tons, with coordinated fighter protection, supplied by aircraft of CWP 7440. 'Slick' C-130s followed. On the 9th, the mission was expanded to sustain the entire refugee population for 30 days. On arrival in Turkey, the 39th initially became part of JTF EXPRESS CARE in Silopi (Turkey), which was renamed on April 17 as JTF ALPHA. The 10th Special Forces Group and British marines were also part of JTF ALPHA. Its counterpart JTF BRAVO was established on April 18 near Zakho, northern Iraq. Its mission included, for example, the establishment of a 30-kilometer Iraqi security zone and construction of humanitarian service support bases. It was augmented by the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), which arrived on April 15 with 16 helicopters and also supported JTF ALPHA. Initial Naval involvement comprised USS Theodore Roosevelt's Carrier Battle Group.

During the first twenty days, C-5 Galaxy and C-141 Starlifter aircraft flew 75 missions from CONUS and Europe to Turkey. C-5s also transported allied troops from Italy to eastern Turkey, from where they moved overland to Zakho.



Another Coalition partner in PROVIDE COMFORT (and later also in NORTHERN WATCH) was France, which supplied, for example C-135FRs and Sepecat Jaguar As. The photo shows a C-135FR in company of a Jaguar A. The shadow of a second Jaguar A is superimposed on the tanker with the photo probably made by its pilot. [via Bruce Benyshek]

7440's Mission was to provide air security for air drops and combat air support for any ground forces committed in the future. To bolster the Wing, the 20th (42nd ECS, EF-111A), 36th (525th TFS, F-15C), 52nd, 81st (92nd TFS, A-10A) and 86th TFW (F-16C), plus the 66th ECW (Electronic Combat Wing, 43rd ECS, EC-130H) were directed to deploy additional aircraft to Incirlik. For instance, the 52nd TFW began deploying personnel and six F-4G WILD WEASEL aircraft of the 23rd TFS to Incirlik, also on April 6. After arrival on the 7th of personnel and cargo aircraft of Coalition partners United Kingdom and France, General Jamerson renamed his organization Combined Task Force Provide Comfort (CTF-PC) on April 9. Jamerson remained commander until April 17, when he was replaced by Army Lieutenant General John Shalikashvili, becoming the latter's deputy commander for air. That day, ground forces were added to protect the refugees, for whom temporary camps were built. To allow the Kurds to return to their homes, a safe zone was established, using air and ground forces.

At the same time, a No-Fly Zone (NFZ) was established north of 36° N, covering some 19,000 square miles, to be enforced by U.S., UK and French aircraft, specifically banning all Iraqi air activity. Although the NFZ technically was in CENTCOM's zone, EUCOM was allowed by CENTCOM to patrol northern Iraq. PROVIDE COMFORT's northern NFZ set the stage as model for NFZs elsewhere, notably Operations SOUTHERN WATCH in southern Iraq and DENY FLIGHT in Bosnia.

Delivery of humanitarian relief goods was the responsibility of a six-nation airlift operation, which also involved



An F-4G Phantom of the 81st FS at Incirlik about to taxi out for the next PROVIDE COMFORT mission. [Bruce Benyshek]



The 23rd FS still teamed up with F-4Gs in PROVIDE COMFORT, but this time the Phantoms were not theirs like in PROVEN FORCE, but of their colleagues in the 81st FS. Four 23rd pilots by one of their F-16Cs, from left to right, Cal Tinkey, Mark Kirchoefer, Mark Altobelli, and Brad Cushman. [Karl Dittmer]

countries such as Canada, Germany and Italy. On May 7, in two separate incidents ten minutes apart, pilots of an A-10A and F-16C reported coming under AAA fire over northern Iraq.

CTF-PC withdrew from northern Iraq on July 15, with a residual force remaining in Turkey to deter Iraqi reprisals against the Kurds. By that time, 23,000 Coalition personnel, of which 12,300 U.S. personnel, had been involved in CTF-PC. USAF transport aircraft had transported more than 7,000 tons of relief supplies. Nine days later, July 24, PROVIDE COMFORT ended. U.S. and coalition fighter aircraft provided air cover for such aircraft as USAF C-130s, Italian G-222s, British Hercules C.Mk 1/3s and French C-160 Transalls. Coalition forces flew 700 fixed-wing sorties, including 500 by U.S. aircraft.

On the same day, Operation PROVIDE COMFORT II (OPC II) was initiated. It included 5,000 personnel of six Coalition nations, 70 helicopters, 26 Incirlik-based aircraft and a Carrier Air Wing. Air Force Reserve (AFRes) units supported the Operation with HC-130 rescue, C-130 transport and MH-60G special ops aircraft.

Operation WARDEN was the British contribution to PROVIDE COMFORT. On September 3, Jaguar GR.Mk 1As of No. 54 Squadron (RAF Coltishall) initiated patrol of the airspace over northern Iraq, supported by VC-10 K.Mk 2/3 tankers of No. 101 Squadron (RAF Brize Norton).

On October 1, the 52nd TFW not only was re-designated 52nd Fighter Wing (and the squadrons, Fighter Squadrons), but its overall aircraft authorization decreased from 72 to 60, to include one squadron with 24 F-4Gs (81st FS) and two squadrons with 18 Block 30 F-16C/Ds each (23rd and 480th, the latter unit transferring six F-16C/Ds to the 23rd). This resulted in a swap-out of personnel, F-4G and F-16C/D aircraft, and equipment. Non-authorized F-4Gs and F-16C/Ds, except for a small number of BAI (Backup Aircraft Inventory) aircraft, were transferred to other units. At Incirlik, the F-4Gs of whoever provided them were then teamed up with F-16s from various USAFE Viper squadrons. Also, ANG and AFRes F-16 squadrons would be deployed to Incirlik for 60 days for this reason.

On January 1, 1992, the 52nd FW had personnel and eight of its F-4Gs deployed to Southwest Asia, four aircraft at the Lik and four at King Abdul Aziz AB at Dhahran (Saudi Arabia, SA). According to the publication 'United States Air Forces in Europe, Historical Highlights, 1942-1992', the Wing maintained personnel and eight F-4Gs in Southwest Asia up to August 27, 1992 as part of CENTCOM's Operation DESERT CALM residual force to help enforce Iraqi compliance with the ceasefire conditions (see later).

During the winter of 1991-92, USAF transport aircraft, supplemented with Coalition and commercial aircraft, transported 119 tons of food and water and more than 4,000 bundles of clothing to the Iraqi Kurds.

After the A-10A's Combat Air Support (CAS) capability of the 81st FW (RAF Bentwaters) was no longer necessary in the course of the year and with the impending inactivation of the Wing, aircraft and personnel were redeployed and replaced by Precision-Guided Missile (PGM)-capable F-111Fs of the 48th FW (RAF Lakenheath), giving CWP 7440 a deep-strike capability. The 48th was converting to F-15E Strike Eagles with the first one arriving on February 21. While deployed to Incirlik, Aardvark pilots of the 48th, which included those of the 492nd FS, flew 1,185 sorties.

In 1992, the 52nd FW continued to support OPC II with all three squadrons participating. It looks like the F-16C squadrons deployed for 45 days at a time, joining the already present F-4Gs of the 81st.

1993

In the second half of January the Iraqis kept aircrews of Coalition aircraft quite busy while they flew their missions over northern Iraq preventing them from violating the NFZ. In two separate incidents on January 15 a pair of F-111Fs were fired at by Iraqi AAA, resulting in no hits



F-4G 90263 of the 81st FS taxiing at Incirlik. It is adorned with a shark mouth. Design and stencil was done during the Squadron's final deployment to the Lik in 1993 by Bruce Benyshek. He painted the first jet. According to him, six to seven F-4Gs had it at Incirlik. A violation of Air Force rules, but the Squadron Commander did it for the troops and esprit de corps. [Matt Ellis via Bruce Benyshek]



Aircraft supporting PROVIDE COMFORT also included EF-111A Ravens. A crewmember of an EF-111A is pre-fighting his aircraft in a shelter at RAF Upper Heyford before deploying to Incirlik in September 1991. [USAF, SSgt Cynthia Alderson]

and no retaliation. Also, the 81st FS deployed personnel and five F-4Gs to Incirlik, joining their Wing colleagues there of the 23rd FS with their F-16Cs. Two days later, Iraqi AAA fired at two F-16C Fighting Falcons. As on the 15th, there were no hits and no retaliation. On January 17, Captain Craig Stevenson of the 23rd FS scored the second F-16 kill with a single AIM-120 AMRAAM, while flying F-16C 86-0262. The Iraqi aircraft involved was a MiG-23 Flogger, whose pilot violated the northern NFZ. Stevenson's flight lead was Major Steven Heil of the 81st FS, who flew an F-4G and gave him the OK to press the attack. Also on the 17th, the aircrew of one of a flight of two F-4Gs struck an air defense site. F-4G aircrews came into action again the next day, when they struck SAM sites in northern Iraq, again with AGM-88s. Pilots of F-16Cs dropped CBU's on Bashiqah Airfield after being shot at by AAA. On the 19th, a 81st FS F-4G aircrew fired a HARM at a SAM radar site east of Mosul, after it 'locked on' their aircraft. About three hours later, pilots of two F-16Cs dropped CBU's on an AAA site after being fired at. A missile battery was struck on January 21 by aircrews of an F-4G and F-16C, who escorted a French Mirage F1CR recon aircraft when the Iraqi search radar began tracking the aircraft.

While personnel and aircraft were deployed at Incirlik, the 81st received its first (Block 30) F-16C on February 18 from the 56th FW at MacDill (FL), initiating its re-conversion from F-4Gs to F-16C/Ds.

On April 9, three F-16Cs, accompanied by an F-4G, were fired on by Iraqi AAA near the Saddam Dam in northern Iraq. The F-16 pilots expended their CBU's. Nine days later, a flight of one F-4G and one F-16C, flying north of 36° N, were illuminated by an Iraqi tracking radar site, which was situated south of the parallel. The crew of the Phantom fired an AGM-88 at the site and destroyed it.

To continue its SEAD mission after the phase-out of its Phantoms, conversion of the 52nd FW from Block 30 F-16Cs and F-4Gs to WW F-16CJ Block 50D aircraft was initiated on June 25, 1993, when the 480th FS received the first five of its complement of Fighting Falcons. It was expected the Wing would possess two Block 50D F-16C squadrons by early 1994 (squadrons would also receive a couple of Block 50 F-16Ds). A little over a month later, the 480th transferred the first of its 20 Block 30 F-16C/Ds to the 178th FG of the Ohio ANG at Springfield. Block 50D



The caption states that a USAF F-16 is refueled in flight over southern Turkey prior to a PROVIDE COMFORT mission over northern Iraq as the pilot of another F-16 awaits his turn. A closer look at the photo reveals the aircraft are F-16Cs of an Air Combat Command unit. [Sra Gudrun Cook]

(and 52D) F-16CJs were configured with the HARM ALIC, Avionics/Launcher Interface Computer, which furnished the aircraft an additional mission, the full autonomous HARM employment capability. In this respect, the AN/ASQ-213 HTS, HARM Targeting System, was developed by Texas Instruments, which received a contract in 1991. The pod, externally mounted on either the left or right engine inlet hard-point of the F-16, provides substantial all-weather situational awareness to pilots on the types and locations of surface-to-air defense radars, as well as passing ranging solutions to the missile when launched. As first Block 50/52 F-16CJ Squadron, the 480th FS achieved IOC (Initial Operational Capability) in January 1994. On the 15th, it deployed personnel and F-16CJs to Incirlik to support OPC II. The original HTS pod was upgraded in 1996 with software Release 5 (R5). R6 was fielded in May 2000 and R7 in September 2006, employing a new digital receiver and GPS hardware capability, along with using Link-16 connectivity between aircraft.

In September, personnel and F-4Gs of the 81st FS returned from Incirlik to Spang for the last time. They were replaced by personnel and six F-4Gs of the 561st FS, which deployed from Nellis for their first and only, but extended deployment to Incirlik. It was also the Squadron's first deployment since its reactivation on February 1, 1993. A



RAF VC-10 K.Mk 2/3s operated from Incirlik in Operation Warden. The September 1993 picture shows VC-10 ZA-142 'C' of No. 101 Squadron in company of F-4G 97232 of the 561st FS. The aircraft joined up for a picture as an F-4G cannot be refueled by a VC-10. [Bruce Benyshek]

swap-out of 561st personnel took place on December 27. The majority of Spang's F-4Gs and aircrews were transferred to the 561st FS, with the final four aircraft leaving for Nellis on February 18, 1994, ending more than 27 years of Phantom II ops at Spang. The 561st FS was reactivated at Nellis and assigned to the 57th Operations Group through Air Combat Command (ACC) Special Order (SO) GB-37 of January 27, 1993 as a second F-4G unit to support both PC and OSW. Idaho ANG's 124th FW was also responsible for F-4G training, while the 422nd TES with its two CB-coded F-4Gs at Nellis was responsible for test and evaluation of new equipment and development of tactics with maintenance being accomplished by the 561st. The total PAA (Primary Aircraft Authorized) on September 30, 1994 was 50, with 26 at Nellis and 24 at Boise.

The first 48th FW F-15E Strike Eagles to serve with OPC II arrived at Incirlik on August 2. It initiated a hectic pace of deployments that would, for nearly six years, keep at least one squadron constantly deployed. The deployment involved six aircraft, personnel and equipment of the 492nd FS. Seventeen days later, the crews of two mixed pairs of F-4Gs and F-16Cs reported possible SA-3 launches west of Mosul. Response was by the F-16C pilots with CBU's. Three hours later, 492nd aircrews of two F-15Es dropped four Laser-Guided Bombs (LGBs) on the site.

On October 1, USAFE re-designated the 39th Tactical Group at Incirlik as the 39th Wing. The mission of the Wing was to provide operational and logistical support for all U.S. forces in Turkey and to operate a Quick Reaction Alert Force for Supreme Allied Command Europe. As of October 15, 1971, the Wing was assigned to TUSLOG, The United States Logistics Group, until its reassignment to 16th Air Force on July 17, 1992. Attachment (since January 16, 1991) to CWP 7440 remained unchanged until November 30, 1995, when the Operations Group Provisional, 7440 was assigned to CWP 7440 as an element.

1994

A CTF-PC February 14 message to USAFE contained the Concept of Operations during the pending runway closure at Incirlik, which was a planned 6-9 month effort. The 39th Wing plan called for fighters to operate on the parallel, E-3 AWACS aircraft out of Adana and KC-135s out of Ankara.

In March, Lieutenant Colonel Jim 'Uke' Uken, Ops Officer of the 561st FS, took over the Detachment at Incirlik with a swap-over of personnel only. According to Jim deployments were made as 'packages'. When aircraft were rotated, a transport, usually an C-141, would accompany the jets with onboard a maintenance EST, Enroute Support Team, spare engines and 'all kinds of stuff' that might be needed to fix any maintenance problems. "We had the oldest aircraft on the ramp, but we were famous for our Fully Mission Capable (FMC) rate and never fell below the USAF standard. Ever!" He returned to Nellis in June. At that time, the 23rd FS with its F-16Cs were also deployed to Incirlik, still with its Block 30 F-16s. Uke, as to the standard OPC II mission,



While deployed with the 561st to Incirlik in June 1994, Bruce Benyshek completed his 2,000 F-4 Phantom flying hour. Result was the traditional water hose down. [via Bruce Benyshek]

It was flown with two F-4Gs and two to four F-16s. The Phantoms were configured with two fuel tanks, two AGM-88 HARMs, two AIM-7 Sparrows, an ALQ-184 and ALE-40 chaff and flare dispensers. When F-16s launched as a four-ship, they would split into pairs to enter east and west CAPs on border crossing. When there were only two F-16s, they became wingmen. As usual, we were out in front doing our own thing first. We had support from USAFE tankers, but they came in from a different base as they were no longer stationed at Incirlik as in the war. The refueling track was well east of Incirlik and not too far from where you could turn directly south into northern Iraq after refueling. If an F-4G had a problem requiring RTB, Return to Base, an F-16 would escort him home and we would revert to one F-4G and three F-16s operations. The two 'pushes' a day, and us flying six sorties a day, left us only two sorties a day to do local training like air-to-air currency, etcetera. We probably did some two versus two against the others in that case.

On April 14, two U.S. Army UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and their crews (159th Aviation Regiment, 6th Battalion, Giebelstadt, Germany), assigned to Operation PROVIDE COMFORT II, were transporting U.S., United Kingdom, French, and Turkish military officers and diplomats of the MCC (Military Coordination Center) and Kurdish representatives to a meeting south of the security zone. Two 53rd FS (52nd FW, Spangdahlem) pilots of F-15C Eagles mistakenly identified the two helicopters as Iraqi Mi-24 Hind helicopters and shot them down, killing all 26 people on board the UH-60s. Improper coordination of Army helicopter activities with USAF operations, poor coordination aboard the 963rd Airborne Warning and Control Squadron (552nd ACW, Tinker) E-3, and poor recognition skills displayed by the Eagle pilots were examples that contributed to the tragic accident.

Not so long after the Black Hawk losses, Jim Uken was on a PC II mission with two F-16 elements, which were there as much for air-to-air as being Wild Weasel support. The F-4Gs were centered between the two F-16 elements. Jim stated,

An 'intruder' was called out by NATO AWACS as coming in high and fast heading to the no-fly line. This obviously spurred interest among the Viper crews with their see all radars and it soon became apparent the vector was to the northwest. With our 30+-year old radar I gained a contact, at some distance, and quickly assessed they were at approximately 65,000 feet and not fast. My immediate thought was it looked like a U-2. I warned the F-16s to not shoot until we had AWACs approval, etcetera. In the interim, the Viper pilots started losing their radar contact as the thought of moving their search pattern to higher altitudes didn't occur to them while their 'fangs hanging out'. The intruder 'punched' the line, went about 20-30 nautical miles northwest to Saddam Lake and did a 180 turning south. At mission debrief I relayed the events to Intel, etcetera, and it became a discussion point that PC II and OSW were not keeping each other informed. It was a U-2 on the OSW Air Tasking Order.

On November 27, the 190th FS deployed for the first time to Incirlik, relieving the 561st FS, which returned to Nellis with personnel and six F-4Gs on December 12. During its extended tenure at Incirlik, July 30, 1993-December 9, 1994, the 561st was concurrently at Dhahran for the October 30, 1993-January 4, 1994 and July 15-October 5, 1994 periods. Colonel Uken in this respect,

We set up three-month rotations as the standard. After returning home, it would normally take six months before somebody would deploy again. To keep track, I kept a 'good deal / bad deal' book. With rare exception, you did not go to Incirlik unless you'd been at Dhahran first. Given deployed and home station reality, e.g., accomplishing deployment training and playing in every Red / Green Flag at Nellis, we never 'maxed out'. In addition to the 24 F-4Gs we had 'on our books', we also had five spares, which never happens unless there is a reason. Normally, a squadron has to absorb major phase inspections and depot level maintenance with the number of aircraft it has. In our case, the spares allowed us to do so without losing any of our basic 24 aircraft. We also had two F-4Gs which were being used for BDR (Battle Damage Repair) and WLT (Weapons Load Trainer). So, we



An F-4G of the 561st FS streaks past the Erbil Observatory in the eastern part of the northern NFZ during a PROVIDE COMFORT II mission. It looks like it's not undamaged anymore. [Bruce Benyshek]

had six F-4Gs with eight aircrews at both Incirlik and Dhahran. If we had to bring jets home for major phase or depot level maintenance, two of the incoming crews would arrive a day or two early and the jets flown back by two crews going home. There was frequent airlift from Ramstein to both locations, so replacement aircrews and maintenance personnel arrived through Ramstein.

The 190th started three, thirty-day rotations to The Lik. The unit returned to Boise on March 15, 1995.

France's contribution at Incirlik in the 1993-94 period included four Mirage F1CR recce aircraft, four Jaguar As and one C-135FR. For 1995 this was five Jaguar As and one KC-135FR. Aircraft in Operation Warden in the 1993-4 period included eight Tornado GR.Mk 1s and two VC-10 K.Mk 2/3 tankers. For 1995, the number of Tornados was decreased by two, but the number of tankers did not change.

1995

The 190th returned to Incirlik on September 15 for its second and OPC II's final F-4G deployment. Eleven days later, an F-4G aircrew flew OPC II's 50,000th combat sortie, an accomplishment nearly five years in the making. As the CTF's Chief of Staff, Army Colonel Tom MacHamer, stated,

This is a Coalition accomplishment. It's not an American achievement, but true teamwork effort between the four Coalition partners. The presence and resolve of the Coalition proves the dedicated professionalism of all the people who have passed through Incirlik in the four plus years of Provide Comfort.

With regard to the scheduled departure of the F-4G from USAF's inventory in 1995, Major Mike Bell, the 190th FS Det commander, stated the unit had worked with F-4 Phantoms for 20 years, initially with the recce version, RF-4C, since 1975, and then with the F-4G, since 1991, and it would be a sad day when they were gone.

To celebrate the F-4G's departure from Incirlik, CWP 7440 organized a 'Pharewell Dinner' and an open house, including an F-4G four-ship flyby on December 3-4. Redeployment was initiated on the 12th. IDANG spent almost two years in the Gulf area, longer than any other ANG flying unit. More than 1,000 combat sorties were flown during two deployments each to Incirlik and Dhahran. HARMs were expended in four separate combat missions from the latter. Two aircrew members became the first, and possibly the only, ANG officers to fly 100 or more combat sorties over Iraq. F-4G operations at Boise were ended on April 18, 1996 with the final four aircraft departing Gowen Field, ID for AMARC two days later.

Epilogue

From the inception of PROVIDE COMFORT through 1995, 19 nations contributed. The cost to the U.S. of hu-



Training at Shaikh Isa got a boost when it was possible to coordinate missions with units of Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9 onboard the USS Nimitz (CVN 68) after it replaced the USS Ranger (CVA 61) in the Arabian Gulf. The photo shows a formation with a Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 147 F/A-18C Hornet, an Electronic Attack Squadron (VAQ) 138 EA-6B Prowler, and two 81st TFS F-4G Phantoms. [via Bruce Benyshek]

manitarian aid alone was \$M 150.2. A total of 153,389 hours were flown by USAF aircraft, directly supporting the Operation for a cost of \$M 544.4. Through October 31, 1995 Coalition sorties numbered more than 50,000. Ultimately, the U.S. would fly over 62,000 sorties, including 42,000 fixed-wing and 20,000 rotary-wing, before OPC II ended on December 31, 1996 and was replaced by Operation NORTHERN WATCH.

Units deploying to Turkey were primarily USAFE units and usually did so with 4-8 aircraft. As major maintenance and inspections could not be accomplished at Incirlik, aircraft concerned were flown to home base and replaced by 'fresh' ones. Although, for instance, ANG and AFRes units stepped in, USAFE units had to deploy virtually every year, impacting training and scheduled maintenance. But it could even be worse, as elements of the 81st (T)FS not only deployed continuously to Shaikh Isa/Dhahran in the March 1991-May 1993 period, but also to the Lik in the 1991-September 1993 period.

F-4G post-DESERT STORM deployments to Incirlik (source, ACC/HO)

PERIOD	UNIT/NUMBER
Apr 6-14, 1991	81TFS/6
Mar-Sep 1993	81FS/4-6-5
Sep 1993-Dec 9, 1994	561FS/6
Dec 10, 1994-Mar 15, 1995	190FS/6
Sep 15-Dec 12, 1995	190FS/6

Post-DESERT STORM, Bahrain

1991

When the remaining 13 F-4Gs of the 561st TFS departed Shaikh Isa on March 23, 1991, the Squadron left behind personnel and 24 F-4Gs of the 81st TFS. As Tactical Fighter Wing Provisional, 35 (TFWP 35) still existed, OPCON (Operational Control) remained with that Wing, which was headed by Colonel Neil Patton, the DO (Deputy

for Operations) of the 35th TFW, who did not return to George. Redeployment of the 81st was initiated on April 5, when personnel with eight aircraft returned to Spang. Left behind at Shaikh Isa then were the 16 aircrews and some 100 maintenance/support personnel, a mix of those who remained and volunteers after the war, plus 16 F-4Gs, 'the Shaikh Isa 16'. The next rotations were scheduled and non-voluntary for the most part, but routine deployments for all personnel. Lieutenant Colonel Pete O'Day became the first 81st TFS Detachment commander.

On May 10, another eight Phantoms with personnel returned to home base. When Colonel O'Day returned to Spangdahlem in late May, his job was taken by Major Bart Quinn. He was a 1975 ROTC graduate and, except for a spell flying CT-133s while on exchange to the Royal Canadian Air Force, flew all four Air Force versions of the F-4 Phantom, of which the last 11 years the F-4G. On December 26, 1990, as an Assistant Ops Officer in the 480th TFS, he led a six-ship from Spang to Shaikh Isa, where all 480th personnel was reassigned to the 81st TFS, including scarves and patches.

After the departure of personnel and aircraft, those remaining of the 81st Det had Shaikh Isa for themselves except for the Bahraini Air Force units. For instance, rooms usually had one officer to a room. After the Gulf War, mostly training missions were flown, but no tankers were available, although in-flight refueling was accomplished for currency. There were no real radars to work against, other than the own air traffic control radar. Missions were in the 1.2 to 1.9-hour range. Aircraft were not configured with AGM-88 HARMs and/or AIM-7 Sparrows, which saved fuel. Day-to-day flying post-fighting was making up various scenarios. One involved defense suppression (weaseling), using APR-47's 'phantom ranging'. The computer in the F-4G's AN/APR-47 included a program that could generate its own Electronic Order of Battle (EOB). It could generate SAM symbols on the system's screen that the crew could use for training purposes. The EWO could input latitude and longitude coordinates to tell the computer where to center the simulated SAMs. Another scenario involved some of the other F-4Gs acting as interceptors, so 'turn and burn' could be done doing a little dogfighting. Although there were rails on the F-4Gs, no missiles were carried. No BFM (Basic Fighter Maneuvers) was flown, as this would require downloading the wing tanks while BFM was only flown with a centerline tank. It would take too much work to reinstall the wing tanks in case of an emergency. Major Jim Healy, EWO in the 81st TFS at Shaikh Isa, described the intercept scenario as follows,

Usually, two or four aircraft split up and flew to opposite ends of the airspace to get 20 or so miles of separation, and then turned toward each other. One airplane was designated as 'fighter', doing the intercept and the other as the 'target', being intercepted. The crew of the fighter tried to find the target on their radar and conduct an intercept, ideally resulting in a 'stern conversion', where the fighter ended up in a position behind the target. Then the target/fighter



'Shaikh Isa Shacks Moving Day'. The trailers that were used by the 81st TFS as Ops buildings were loaded on flatbeds/eighteen wheelers for transportation to their new home, King Abdul Aziz AB at Dhahran. The Squadron even brought its duty desk along and used it there for life support, helmets, etcetera. [Bart Quinn]

roles would be reversed for the next intercept. Often we'd brief that at the point in the intercept the target saw the fighter, the target would begin to maneuver and a 'dogfight' would ensue.

In general, forces flying in Saudi Arabia, including Shaikh Isa's F-4Gs, were very restricted on what they could do and where they could fly.

USS *Nimitz*, CVN 68, departed home port Bremerton on February 25, 1991 to deploy to WestPac, relieving USS *Ranger*, CVA 61, on April 18. Onboard was Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9, with, among others, two squadrons with F-14B Tomcats and two with F/A-18C(N) Hornets. ATO (Air Tasking Order) tasking included maintaining a six-hour alert strike package, while the Wing's Carrier Airborne Early Warning Squadron (VAW) 112 with its E-2C Plus Hawkeyes, making the aircraft's maiden deployment, maintained an AEW barrier in the North Arabian Gulf. After being relieved by USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), she returned to Bremerton on August 24, 1991. Major Healy stated the following,

They and the 81st TFS took advantage of our mutual proximity to do some training, inter-service cooperation, that was normally not available and to break up the routine of 'peacetime' ops at Shaikh Isa. It was also good both would become familiar with each other in case we would have had to restart combat ops. They appreciated the fact they could get ashore and off the ship for a couple of days either at our base or at the U.S. Navy base in Manama, Bahrain. And most of us had never been on a carrier.

Major Quinn in this respect,

*We developed a great working relationship with the Bahrainis and the aircraft assigned to the *Nimitz*. We flew composite training exercises down in southern Saudi Arabia, 'the Empty Quarter', an area of nothing than desert. Of*

course the Saudis were aware of this. It was package training like we would actually employ if required. Navy aircraft would fly out of Shaikh Isa with us or launch from the carrier and we would meet like in the war at a rendezvous point, form up and go in. Bahraini F-16s generally flew fighter cover and F-14 Tomcats would be Red Air or reserve, pending on training requirements. The Ops Order we followed was developed by our Ops Officer and EWO Major Tom Moe, who did a great job organizing all this.

Major Healy was deployed in late March from Shaikh Isa to CENTAF's TACC, Tactical Air Control Center, in the basement of the Royal Saudi AF headquarters building in Riyadh to coordinate Weasel operations and tasking when necessary, doing all phases or parts of a renewed air campaign. Joe drove back and forth to Shaikh Isa a couple of times to keep current, taking him 2-2½ hours each way. According to Jim 'the scenery was desolate and boring with hours of nothing but sand'. The second time to do so was May 2, driving from TACC to Shaikh Isa around noon. Joe in this regard,

After I had been in about an hour, I was suddenly tasked to provide a tentative plan to provide F-4G escort for a U-2 mission over Iraq. I put a plan together after getting the basic facts, like targets, TOT, threat, SAM EOB, and tanker tracks. I then called the Squadron to give them a heads-up and left for Bahrain. I got there later in the afternoon and briefed Bart Quinn on the plan and said I'd wanted to take part if it came off. My training flight on the fourth was cancelled because of a horrendous dust storm. The word was the U-2 mission was on hold. Then on Sunday, the mission was on for the next day. I did fly and it was probably a unique instance when someone on a staff planned a combat operation and then flew in it!

Joe teamed up with his Desert Storm pilot, Captain Jim Hartle. They flew as Pearl 02 on Colonel Patton's wing. Aerial refueling was accomplished over Saudi Arabia. The flight was directly over Al Taqaddum, just south of the cen-



Before flying their F-4G Phantom from Shaikh Isa to their new home in Dhahran, Bart Quinn, the 81st TFS Detachment commander, was interviewed by Bahraini TV. Bart's EWO was Jim Parker. [via Bart Quinn]

ter of Baghdad and right over Salman Pak, which was Jim's and Joe's target on the first night of Desert Storm. No signals came up. Flying time was 4.1 hours.

Bart Quinn with regard to the U-2 escort mission,

On May 6, we flew in a large mission in support of a U-2. It was in response to some opposition / threats to U-2 flights over Iraq, i.e., SAM activity. It was flown on May 6, but was called Cinco de Mayo Raid according to Zulu time. Fourteen of the 16 F-4Gs at Shaikh Isa participated. The aircraft were configured with two AGM-88 HARMs, two AIM-7Fs, an ALQ-131 ECM pod and three fuel tanks. Six aircraft, led by me, were planned in western Iraq and another eight, led by Colonel Patton, in Central Iraq, including Baghdad. We had tanker support on the way in, but none on our return trip. The only opposition seen was AAA fire along a road out west, which appeared to be large caliber guns. We could see smoke coming from the barrels. Accordingly, we moved away to deny them any barrage or lucky hits. Not a single Iraqi radar came on the air. The mission was a success with all aircraft returning without incident. No ordnance was expended.

Bruce 'Spike' Benyshek, an F-4G pilot, added the following,

Notification and planning were a couple of days prior to the mission. The most important information for us would be where the U-2 would be and when, so that we could evaluate threats and which ones to shoot. Wasting a HARM on a SAM that could not hit the U-2 would be defeating half of one's weapons load. There was a mass-brief, then each flight individually. My EWO was First Lieutenant Jim Parker. The flights of two were staggered to cover the U-2's TOT, Time-over-Target, which was quite long. The flights apart gave one hour thirty minutes. One or two flights might have gone to the tanker, and come back north one more time.

On the evening of May 21, the 81st had a party with all personnel, the Navy crews and their maintainers. Of the remaining eight WILD WEASEL aircraft, four were returned on June 27, soon after the Det's move to Dhahran. The final four F-4Gs were still at Dhahran as of December. TFWP 35 and Combat Support Group Provisional, 35 (CSGP 35) were inactivated effective August 2, 1991 through TAC Special Order (SO) GB-78 of the same date. In the meantime, TAC SO GB-37 of March 13, 1991 had designated and activated TFWP 4404 at Prince Sultan AB, Al Kharj (SA) and assigned it to USCENTAF for the purpose of command and control, administration and the exercise of Special Courts-Martial convening authority (UCMJ), all effective March 13. In addition, CSGP 4404 was designated, activated and assigned to TFWP 4404, also effective March 13. The new Wing replaced TFWP 4, assuming its mission, personnel and equipment, which, together with CSGP 4, was inactivated effective March 13 through SO GB-37. Assets assigned to TFWP 4404's subordinate units were F-15C (53rd TFS) and F-15E (335th TFS), ANG F-16As (138th and 157th TFS) and ANG C-



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130H (166th TAG) aircraft, while plans were in place to also include F-4Gs, EF-111As and A-10As. EF-111A maintenance personnel visited Al Kharj on March 27 to check out base facilities, while two F-4Gs arrived at Al Kharj in the final week of March for the same purpose. Personnel and EF-111A aircraft of the 42nd ECS supposedly arrived at Al Kharj on April 11. Although eventually a move of personnel and F-4G aircraft from Shaikh Isa took place, the destination was not Al Kharj (see later). In the first week of April, the government of Saudi Arabia approved a block of airspace for training sorties by Wing aircraft. Also, F-15C aircrews of the 53rd TFS started flying exclusively at night. On April 18, the mission was taken over by the 335th TFS. Five days earlier, the Wing was informed by CENTAF that its aircraft were not to fly north of 36° N. CAP missions up to 36° N were continued to be flown to protect redeploying U.S. ground forces.

Aircrews of Navy F-14 Tomcats and F/A-18 Hornets arrived at Al Kharj on the 29th to discuss how they could conduct CAP in conjunction with USAF aircraft.

The May 7 redeployment plan put in motion, changed the nature of CAP sorties: it was no longer flown north of the DMZ, Demilitarized Zone, in Iraq, while CAP sorties over Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were flown to protect allied forces from a potential air threat. As of May 10, the alert commitment for F-15E aircrews of the 335th TFS was ended. On May 29, the Wing added the A-10A to its inventory when the 91st TFS arrived at Dhahran from RAF Bentwaters. The first sorties were local orientation sorties. Redeployment was on September 13.

On June 15, the Wing initiated its move to King Abdul Aziz AB at Dhahran. Four days earlier it was announced

that the 22nd TFS (F-15Cs) would remain at Al Kharj until its redeployment to Bitburg (Germany). Personnel and four F-4Gs of the 81st joined the Wing from Shaikh Isa after Colonel Patton had been directed by CENTCOM to move Spang's Det to Dhahran. He arranged money for the contractors to move its buildings.

Maintenance was part of the detachment. All routine maintenance could be accomplished locally, however, major work/inspections required the aircraft to be swapped out with jets from Spang. Maintenance personnel made a couple of Dhahran site visits to check out base facilities and prepare for the coming move, resulting in setting up operations there very easily. The Det never stood down with ops ending at Shaikh Isa and jets being ready after arrival at Dhahran. Bart Quinn,

At Shaikh Isa the Det had a couple of Crown Victoria vehicles. The 4404th guys were aware of them. They would brief us how they would take them when they got to Dhahran. However, Colonel Patton threatened non-judicial Article 15 punishment for ANYONE who gave up a vehicle! Lol! Most of the CVs remained with the Det and it was always fun to drive to our jets in a convoy of four Crown Vics!

Bart led a flight of two F-4Gs out of Shaikh Isa with two Bahraini F-16s on his wing. Bart's wingman was Bruce 'Spike' Benyshek. The flight could have been 15 minutes, but a ceremonial flyby was made over the harbor in fingertip formation and close aboard to Hotel Diplomat with a bunch of VIPs out on the balcony on the top floor. With the wait for the final appointed time, flying time was some 45 minutes. In the meantime, the infrastructure at Shaikh Isa had been dismantled. Bart in this respect,

The ops buildings were loaded on flatbeds / eighteen wheelers. To drive them over the causeway, where they barely fit, the air in the tires had to be let out. The Saudi border guards were losing their minds. But we got them to Dhahran, otherwise our maintenance, intel and ops would not have had any space to work. We even brought the duty desk with us and used it for life support, helmets, etcetera.

One of the pilots making the move to Dhahran was Spike Benyshek. He was stationed at Spangdahlem from May 1988 to April 1994 and then continued to fly the F-4G at Nellis with the 561st FS until the Squadron was shut down in April 1996. Initially, he had three-year orders in 1988, but after the war he was asked if he would like to stay longer. "Hell, yes" he reacted. He loved his 81st (T)FS assignment, the best Squadron he was ever in. And he loved Europe, in fact still does. Bruce was single and volunteered to do a lot of rotations from 1992-1995, helping the married guys out. Spike in this regard,

It typically went like this, three months in Dhahran, come home to Spang for a month, deploy to Incirlik for a month, back home for one month, back to Dhahran for three months, etcetera. That's how I got 238 No-Fly Zone sorties with no ordnance expended in any of them.



Two F-4Gs of the 81st FS in the de-arming area at Dhahran. The aircraft still have their chutes trailing. On the right, two F-15 Eagles of the Royal Saudi AF. F-4G 97210 was one of the F-4Gs which were reassigned to the 561st FS when the Phantoms departed Spang. [Bruce Benyshek]

Around June 10, another Nimitz detachment visited Shaikh Isa and Joe Healy visited the carrier for some 5½ hours, getting a tour of the ship and watching launches and recoveries of several aircraft.

Joe was Colonel Patton's back seater when on June 18 they flew the last F-4G Phantom, 97202, out of Saikh Isa. After takeoff they meandered around eastern Saudi Arabia at relatively low altitude, until enough fuel was burned down and the aircraft was at landing weight. This meant, with the scheduled return to Spang on the 27th, he, and others, would be at Dhahran only for nine days. Most of the redeploying personnel were not happy about this.

According to Major Quinn, his Det was the second unit to arrive at Dhahran with the EF-111As being first. For a short period, the F-4G and EF-111A detachments were the only ones there.

Post-DESERT STORM, Saudi Arabia

1991

Operations at Dhahran were different from Shaikh Isa. Initially, the Det had a squadron space in a RSAF, Royal Saudi Air Force, building. However, there was not much interaction with them. The F-4Gs were almost two miles away and it took a while to get to them after the briefing. Later on, a new building was built closer to the

jets, called 'Tad-Town'. Every deployed U.S. squadron was in it. As commander of TFWP 4404, Brigadier General Tad Oelstrom directed its construction. No routine type training was accomplished any longer, but all Det's missions supported ongoing coalition operations such as air defense CAPs over Kuwait. All missions came down on the CENTAF-issued Theater ATOs and in general had tanker support fragged. However, SOUTHERN WATCH changed this all. Flying was still accomplished off the ATO, but now it was over all of southern Iraq. The rest was very much



F-4G 97558 of the 81st FS is being refueled by a KC-135R Stratotanker near the Iraqi border while on a SOUTHERN WATCH mission. It was another F-4G reassigned to the 561st FS. [Bruce Benyshek]



The 429th Electronic Combat Squadron (ECS) of the 27th Fighter Wing at Cannon (NM) was the sole EF-111A Raven operator in 1993-1998. Hence it had the responsibility to deploy detachments to both Incirlik and Dhahran. The photo shows EF-111A 60033 on a mission over Saudi Arabia. The Squadron's call sign was 'Elvis'. [Bruce Benyshek]

in-house. The Wing at Spang remained responsible for the Det, including personnel, aircraft, etcetera.

Not only operations at Dhahran differed from Shaikh Isa, but also the living conditions. As to his new living conditions, Bruce stated,

The stay at Shaikh Isa was not bad. Basically, Bahrain was much more westernized and normal place to be. We'd fly a training sortie in the morning over Saudi Arabia, had lunch and dinner and maybe go downtown to Manama, which was a nice city. In June 1991, the powers that be decided to relocate us to Dhahran, only 30 miles away, but a different world. We lived in Khobar Towers, four or more aircrews in a suite setup, which was OK, but it was a closed compound inside the city. Saudi Arabia was a much more strict and controlled country. We didn't really like it there (Bruce used a less diplomatic term, but this author preferred to use a more diplomatic 'didn't like it there').

On June 20, the 49th TFW sent personnel and F-15A Eagles of the 9th TFS to Dhahran for the Wing's first of two F-15A deployments. The 9th flew some 850 sorties and was relieved by the 7th TFS, which returned to Holloman on December 12 with some 650 sorties flown.

July 1 saw a total swap of 81st Det personnel with four of the F-4Gs remaining at Dhahran. The other four Phantoms were flown back to Spang at 1300L on June 27 with the support of a KC-10A Extender. Joe about the redeployment,

Today was incredibly hot. After engine start, the wind was behind us and blew the engine exhaust and the 105°F desert air over us in the cockpit. I don't think I've ever been that hot. We were refueled 2-3 times. The flight took us up the Red Sea, across Egypt south to north, then turning north, once west of Sicily, going feet dry at the French coast, then into Germany.

Bart Quinn, Bruce Benyshek and other personnel followed on July 1 by commercial charter plane. Bart then be-

came the Wing's Chief of Wing Stan/Eval. Lieutenant Colonel Byron Beale took over the Detachment. While Dets remained deployed longer, personnel rotations in general lasted 45 days.

TAC SO GB-78 of August 2 inactivated TFWP 4404 and CSGP 4404 effective the same date, activated Wing Provisional (WP) 4404, assigned it to CENTAF Forward, activated four Provisional Groups, including Operations Group Provisional (OGP) and Logistics Group Provisional (LGP) 4404, and assigned them to WP 4404. In addition, GB-78 moved USCENTAF Forward from Riyadh to Dhahran.

To bolster the 81st TFS Det, the 35th TFW deployed personnel and four F-4Gs to Dhahran in late June as part of the ongoing U.S. presence in the Gulf Region. Bruce in this respect,

I think they deployed because we needed to give 81st personnel a break, as some had only been home for three months. We flew joint operations in contrary to missions flown in the Gulf War, so a Spang pilot might fly with a George EWO, etcetera. However, the big difference between TAC and USAFE was respectively, 'You will not do anything unless I approve it' and 'Don't do anything stupid or prohibited', which was refreshingly trusting. I loved USAFE. George personnel and aircraft joined our Det, which led to the unofficial 'activation' of the 3552nd VSF, 35 and 52 for the parent wings we were assigned to. We told the Wing commander 'VSF' stood for 'Vast Saudi Frontier' or 'Vicious Sand Fighter'. But it really meant 'Very Severely F..d'. The Wing commander supposedly bought it and I designed a patch.



Of the eight F-4Gs which were flown to Dhahran, four redeployed to Spang on June 27. To bolster the 81st TFS Det, the 35th TFW deployed personnel and four F-4Gs to Dhahran in late June as part of the ongoing U.S. presence in the Gulf Region. The result was the 'activation' of the 3552nd VSF, the 'Desert Weasels'. It was designed by Bruce Benyshek. [via Eric Bosch]

Yet, '3552nd VSF' was used for tasking purposes on the ATO produced in Riyadh. A George personnel rotation took place August 11-17.

On August 11, higher headquarters cancelled six F-4G and two EF-111A sorties. Ten days later, F-4G 97550 of the 561st TFS, on a training mission, crashed about 63 miles southeast of Dhahran in the Saudi desert. The crew ejected successfully and was recovered. The 52nd was tasked to send a replacement aircraft. Between September 22-28, F-4G and unit aircrew movements took place.

1992

In April, the 3552nd VFS was 'inactivated', when George's personnel and F-4G aircraft redeployed, meaning the end of the involvement of the 35th (T)FW in the Gulf Region, which had started in August 1990 and leaving the 81st at Dhahran. Effective June 30, both 35th FW F-4G squadrons, the 561st and 562nd FS, were inactivated through SO GB-97 of July 15. This meant that between Incirlik and Dhahran there was never a time when 81st (T)FS personnel and F-4Gs were not dual-deployed to both bases until May 1993, when Idaho ANG's 190th FS took over at Dhahran. Added to this was the fact 81st FS aircrews were sent to Nellis, to get the 561st FS operational, which was reactivated on February 1, 1993. Jim Uken in this respect,

There was about a six-month period where every two weeks a new F-4G pilot and EWO would go to Dhahran for three months, then deploy to Incirlik for another three months, followed by two-four weeks at Spang, before starting all over again.

On June 1, TAC was inactivated and replaced by ACC, Air Combat Command, which was activated the same day. This meant units assigned to TAC were inactivated, reactivated and assigned to ACC, also effective June 1. For WP 4404 and its four Groups this resulted in two different SOs: TAC's SO GB-1 of June 10 inactivated the Wing and ACC's SO GB-68 of June 8 activated the 4404th. The Special Order also activated and assigned an additional six Groups to the Wing, including OGP 49 at Khamis Mushayt (SA) with F-117As and OGP 4401 at Rhiyad (SA) with U-2s (Reconnaissance Squadron Provisional, 4401) and KC-135 tankers (Air Refueling Squadron Provisional, 4401).

As the U.S. and UK deemed that Iraq's president Saddam Hussein was not complying with UNSCR 688 of April 5, President Bush, on August 26, announced Operation SOUTHERN WATCH (OSW) to ensure Iraqi compliance.

OSW involved the establishment of a No-Fly Zone (NFZ) in Iraq south of 32° N. The zone, called 'The Box', would be enforced by Coalition forces from the U.S., UK, Saudi Arabia (SA), France (and later) Kuwait. As a result, the 52nd FW deployed an additional four F-4Gs to King Abdul Aziz AB on August 27, bringing the total there to eight. The first operational sorties were flown on the 27th, less than 24 hours after President Bush's announcement. AFRes contribution included deployment of HC-130 and



When the 561st FS Det at Dhahran redeployed to Nellis in early October 1994, it was replaced for the first time by a F-16CJ Wild Weasel Detachment of personnel and six F-16CJs of the 79th FS of Shaw's 20th Fighter Wing. The photo shows an F-16CJ, configured with AIM-9s, AIM-120s and AGM-88s, being refueled by a KC-10A Extender near the Iraqi border. [USAF, A1C Greg Davis]

HH-60G rescue aircraft. The British contribution was called Operation Jural and involved Tornado F.Mk 3 interceptors stationed in Saudi Arabia and Tornado GR.Mk 1s, which operated out of Kuwait. France's contribution included Mirage 2000, Mirage F1CR and C-135FR aircraft. Bruce Benyshek was one of the pilots augmenting the 81st FS Det. On August 27, he was the F-4G SEAD commander for a mission where eight F-16s dropped leaflets from a cluster-bomb type clamshell container along the Tigris and Euphrates, warning the Iraqis to not fly anything in the NFZ. There was pre- and post-mission aerial refueling. Support was by F-15Cs and EF-111Es. According to Bruce, the Iraqis did not even turn on a radar. In OSW, SEAD missions were always flown as F-4G-F-4G.

In October, the 4404th conducted its first composite training exercise since the beginning of OSW, SANDSTORM. Participants included USAF fighters, aircraft from the carrier USS Ranger, and RAF Tornado GR.Mk1s.

Throughout the fall, Coalition aircraft flew an average of 100 sorties per day, at medium altitude to avoid shoulder-fired SAMs and AAA. When on December 27 an Iraqi MiG-25 Foxbat penetrated the southern NFZ, Lieutenant Colonel Gary North, the commander of the 33rd FS (20th FW, Shaw), shot it down with an AIM-120 while flying F-16D 90-0778 as 'Benji 41', after the Iraqi pilot ignored verbal warnings. It was USAF's first F-16 kill and one by an AIM-120.

Between November 10 and 16, the 52nd FW deployed two F-4Gs to Dhahran as part of a scheduled rotation. In December, Major Quinn returned to Dhahran for a 90-day TDY. As to the differences between his first, short, deployment in June 1991 and this one, Bart stated,

The biggest difference was that back then the war was over and it was really just post-war ops. The USAF was forming an Expeditionary Wing, but that would not be solidified for

months. Also, Dhahran was a big transportation port for flights in and out with troops and cargo.

Bart took part then in the limited punitive strikes ordered by President Bush (see '1993').

1993

By January, the Iraqis had moved additional SAM sites into both the southern and northern No-Fly Zones and openly challenged Coalition efforts to protect the Shiites in the south and Kurds in the north. In addition, they used their SAM radars to track Coalition aircraft while on routine patrol sorties, while Iraqi aircraft made incursions into the southern NFZ, supposedly trying to lure Coalition aircraft into concentrated SAM traps.

Although the U.S., UK, France and Russia on January 6, 1993 issued a joint ultimatum to Iraq, to expire at 28/2230Z January, demanding withdrawal of all SAMs south of the 32° N, missile sites were still operational on the 13th.

As Iraqi troops also made repeated forays across the new demarcation border with Kuwait, President Bush ordered limited punitive strikes against 32 SAM sites and air defense command centers. Strikes took place in the January 13-18 period. For instance, on the daylight mission of the 18th, 75 U.S., British and French aircraft re-struck three Interceptor Operations Centers (IOCs), which were also earlier targets on the April 16 night mission. The IOCs were destroyed. Bart Quinn in this respect,

On January 13, I led one of the two-ships of F-4Gs in support of F-117As bombing targets, including an SA-3 Goa site by Tallil Air Base, southwest of Nasiriya. My EWO was Major G. Tovrea and the other crew consisted of Captain John Goode and Lieutenant Colonel Mike York. Our aircraft were configured with three bags, an ALQ-131 ECM pod, two HARMs and two AIM-7s. The warning came that day for a same night launch. There was a mass brief with a time hack. The F-117As were from King Khalid AB near Khamis Mushait. Other aircraft that participated were EF-111As and F-15Cs. There was Bar Lock early warning radar and a Thin Skin height finder together on a hill to the north, which had been on and off. I wanted to hit them, but the ROE was no HARM shots until bombs hit and/or after TOT of 3:15 am. I had my thumb on the pickle button, but the darn F-117 bombs hit exactly at 3:15 am and the radars shut down simultaneously. The SA-3 site was destroyed and its missiles ignited from the heat of the explosions and went across the desert like bottle rockets. Flying time was some three hours.

To support USAF in meeting F-4G mission requirements in the Gulf Region, part of the 190th FS/124th FW of the Idaho ANG, which had converted from RF-4Cs to F-4Gs, on March 2 received tasking for a deployment to Southwest Asia. Its first deployment of (volunteer) personnel and six aircraft followed later that month. All deployments were supported by the Wing's 189th Wild Weasel FTU. It proved to be the first deployment of four almost



Personnel and the six F-4Gs of the 561st FS Det returned home from a 90-day deployment to Dhahran on October 5, 1994. Some twelve days later, the Squadron redeployed to Dhahran with personnel and ten F-4Gs to augment Coalition forces for Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR. One of the ten F-4Gs is being refueled by an KC-10A Extender over the Mediterranean. [USAF, A1C Brett Snow]

back-to-back deployments to support both SOUTHERN WATCH and PROVIDE COMFORT. The 190th replaced the 81st, which returned to Spangdahlem on March 30 with personnel and its six F-4Gs, officially ending the Squadron's 31-month deployment to the Persian Gulf. Over a 938-day period, its aircrews flew 5,450 sorties, logging 13,850 flying hours.

The crew of one of the two 190th FG F-4Gs, Majors Larry Kaufmann and Eddie Payne in 90298, who on June 28 were escorting OSW aircraft over the southern no-fly zone, fired a HARM at an air defense radar after it illuminated the aircraft, and destroyed it. A radar site encountered a similar fate on July 24, after it illuminated two F-4Gs on a routine patrol. Five days later, aircrews of two Navy EA-6B Prowlers expanded AGM-88 HARMs at another Iraqi radar site.

After being relieved by personnel and six F-4Gs of the 561st FS, the last IDANG personnel and F-4G aircraft returned home on October 2.

1994

The IDANG returned to Dhahran on January 9 for its second OSW deployment, replacing the 561st FS. On June 6, Major Mike Williams, EWO with the 190th FS, flew his 100th combat sortie over Iraq. This deployment also lasted



An air-to-air overhead view shows three of the ten deploying F-4Gs in formation over Saudi Arabia. Note the travel pods on the inboards. [USAF, A1C Brett Snow]

six months, departing mid-July and being relieved once again by the 561st on the 15th with personnel and six F-4Gs. Personnel and aircraft redeployed to Nellis, arriving on Friday October 7. This was when the very first Block 50/52 F-16CJ Wild Weasel aircraft (six) and personnel (Shaw's 79th FS) deployed on October 1 to Dhahran. For this deployment Fighter Squadron (FS) Provisional, 79 was activated by ACC and assigned to OGP 4404. At that time some 74 aircraft were in-theater, including 24 F-16Cs, nine F-15Cs, 29 fixed-wing support aircraft, including EF-111As, and 12 Coalition fighters.

For much of the year, the Iraqis seemed to accept the Coalition's daily patrols, since little activity warranted defensive protection and/or retaliation. However, when by the first week of October Iraq had moved elements of its Republican Guard to Kuwait's border, CENTCOM activated its Crisis Action Team (CAT) on October 7. As a result, President Clinton directed the sending of additional troops, aircraft and equipment. On the same day, the USS George Washington Carrier Battle Group, including the carrier's CVW-7, began moving to the AOR (Area of Responsibility) from the Adriatic, while KC-135 tankers, U-2s and RC-135s were directed to move to the AOR. Two days later, lead elements of the 24th Infantry Division (Fort Stewart, GA) and two Patriot air defense missile batteries (Fort Polk, LA) initiated their move to Kuwait. On October 11, the U.S. initiated Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR. U.S. troop strength was increased to some 25,000 personnel and the number of aircraft temporarily increased with some 200 aircraft to over 270, including Langley F-15Cs (1st FW), Pope A-10As and F-16Cs (23rd Wing), Shaw twelve F-16CJs (78th FS) and Nellis ten F-4Gs (57th Wing). Some ten days after arriving at Nellis from Dhahran, the 561st FS was directed to redeploy to Dhahran with a detachment of personnel and ten F-4Gs. The route was Nellis-RAF Lakenheath (11.6 hours)-Dhahran (8.5 hours), arriving on the 17th. Personnel and the F-4Gs were back at Nellis by November 19. On October 22, the 4404th flew 165 sorties. For the month, 2,889 sorties were flown with 8,726 hours.

USAFE placed some units on alert for possible deployment and provided en route and aerial refueling support to deploying forces from CONUS. Surveillance over the no-

fly zone was increased. As the Iraqi push south never developed, CINCENT in a November 5 message recommended redeployment of the VIGILANT WARRIOR forces, which was initiated on the 19th. On November 15, 1994, ACC's SO GB-26 activated, effective November 15, nine Provisional squadrons at Dhahran, of which five flew fighters, one EF-111As, one flew C-130Hs, one EC-130Hs and one EC-130E ABCCCs. All were assigned to OGP 4404. Among the activated fighter squadrons were Fighter Squadron Provisional, 79 (FSP 79) and FSP 561.

ACC SO GB-40 of December 23 activated two provisional and inactivated three provisional units, effective the SO's date. It seems GB-40 should have inactivated a fourth provisional unit, FSP 561, as ACC's Special Order GB-119 of September 18, 1995 amended GB-40: 'Change paragraph 2 to include the inactivation of Fighter Squadron Provisional, 561'.

1995

FSP 79 was inactivated effective January 27 by ACC GB-50 with the same date. In addition, FSP 78 was activated, replacing the 79th at Dhahran. After flying 1,150 sorties and 3,293 hours, personnel and its F-16CJ WW aircraft returned to Shaw. FSP 78 was inactivated, effective March 20, by ACC Special Order GB-71 of March 20.

When personnel and initially nine F-4Gs of the 561st FS redeployed to Dhahran on April 12 to replace FSP 78, it did so as 'Fighter Squadron, 561 (Detached)' as directed by GB-71, but effective April 7. The unit was assigned to OGP 4404 for the purpose of command and control, administrative support, and the exercise of UCMJ authority. This meant formally that up to GB-119's publication, there were two F-4G detachments at Dhahran, Fighter Squadron, 561 (Detached) and Fighter Squadron Provisional, 561.

According to the March publication 'Peace Operations' of the United States General Accounting Office, USAF had 33 F-4Gs assigned in June 1994, of which 19 were available for training and/or contingency deployment (others were used as test aircraft or undergoing maintenance) and 14 were deployed to peace operations. This latter and small number resulted in increased flying hours, plus additional wear on the aircraft. Were 561st FS aircraft undergoing major phase maintenance every 7-8 months one year earlier, this changed to every 4-6 months. Also, F-4G personnel approached or even exceeded Air Combat Command's recommended maximum number of TDY days in a year, 120. According to Squadron officials, this affected the morale of the personnel concerned.

Units assigned to OGP 4404 on December 31, 1995 included, among others, ECSP 41 (EC-130H), ECSP 429 (EF-111A), FSP 34 (F-16C), FSP 1336 (F-15E), and FS 561 (Detached) with (six) F-4Gs.

1996

USAF's final F-4G combat mission in the Gulf Region was flown on January 11 by aircrews of the 561st FS. Relieved on January 13 by personnel and 12 Block 50/52 F-



VIGILANT WARRIOR in October 1994 not only resulted in the deployment of additional fighter aircraft to the Gulf Region, but also made it necessary to deploy KC-10 and KC-135 tankers to refuel those fighters. The photo shows four KC-10A Extenders on the flight line at Moron AB in Spain. [USAF, A1C Brett Snow]

16CJs of the 77th FS, redeployment to Nellis was initiated on the 15th.

On March 25, Squadron Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Uken, and his EWO, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Bruggemeyer, in F-4G 97295, led USAF's last eight F-4Gs into retirement at Davis-Monthan (AZ). The Squadron was, once more, inactivated effective October 1 through ACC SO GB-109 of August 15.

Epilogue

In the August 1992-February 1995 period, Coalition aircraft flew 58,000 sorties in Operation Southern Watch, of which 38,000 over Iraq. Involved were over 100 U.S. and a smaller number of allied aircraft. U.S. aircraft came primarily from CONUS bases and came under operational control of CENTCOM. In the years 1992-1995 (DESERT CALM and OSW), USAF aircraft flew 269,859 hours at a cost of \$B 1.94, including \$M 105 for Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR. With regard to the limited training in OSW, focus was mostly on air-to-air. Surface attack suffered the most due to altitude limitations and other restrictions. Normally USAF personnel were deployed on a 90-day rotational basis with operational flying units deploying the necessary aircraft, personnel and equipment.

However, emergency deployments, like VIGILANT WARRIOR, and routine deployments, like PROVIDE COMFORT I/II/NORTHERN WATCH, SOUTHERN WATCH, and DENY FLIGHT in Bosnia, created several personnel and operational problems. As to the former, some USAF personnel faced multiple TDY assignments within a year. For instance, E-3 AWACS or RC-135 aircrews deployed as many as 200 or more days. This resulted in problems, such as in proficiency training, quality of life, and pilot retention. After assessing its overall Ops-Tempo, USAF took a number of measures, such as limiting the number of days personnel deployed and cutting back higher headquarters inspection visits, competitions and peacetime training exercises. From August 1992 through

December 1996, ACC, activated 81 provisional wings, groups and squadrons at various times to meet the manpower and force structure requirements.

F-4G post-DESERT STORM deployments to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia (source, ACC/HO)

PERIOD	UNIT/NUMBER
Apr 1991	81TFS/16
May 5-Jul 21, 1991*	81TFS/16-8-6
Aug 24, 1991-Apr 1992	'3552 VSF'/8-9
Apr-Aug 1992	81FS/9-8
Aug 1992-Mar 1993	81FS/12
Mar-May 1993	81FS/6
May-Oct 3, 1993	190FS/6
Oct 3, 1993-Jan 9, 1994	561FS/6
Jan 9-Jul 14, 1994	190FS/6
Jul 15-Oct 5, 1994**	561FS/6
Oct 17-Nov 16, 1994***	561FS/10
Apr 12, 1995-Jan 15, 1996	561FS/9-6****

* moved to King Abdul Aziz AB, Dhahran mid-June.

** replaced by six F-16CJs of the 79th FS (20th FW, Shaw).

***in Operation VIGILANT WARRIOR.

**** reduced from nine to six on July 10, 1995.

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Memoir of First Night



Joe Healy with his pilot Jim Hartle after a DESERT STORM combat mission in late February 1991. They brought home at least one AGM-88 HARM. The ECM pod is an AN/ALQ-131. The F-4G was assigned to the 81st TFS, but its wing and squadron markings were removed. [Via Joe Healy]

Joe Healy

Major Joe Healy, F-4G EWO, arrived at Spangdahlem in August 1989 after a non-flying staff job at Eglin and getting re-current in the F-4G at George (CA). Sometime in mid-1990, he became airfield manager and was assigned to the 81st TFS for flying. Joe deployed to Shaikh Isa on December 26 with USAFE's second F-4G group. There he teamed up with Captain Jim Hartle and flew 36 Desert Storm combat sorties, expending a total of 11 AGM-88 HARMs. Joe always states Jim and he flew 37 combat sorties and around 130 hours, counting the sortie and flying hours in May 1991 while escorting a U-2. In late March, Joe exchanged Shaikh Isa for Riyadh as a Weasel fighter duty officer at CENTAF's Tactical Air Control Center (TACC). His quarters were good and he drove every day from Eskan Village to CENTAF in the basement of the Royal Saudi AF headquarters building in Riyadh. Joe drove back to Shaikh Isa a couple of times to keep current in the F-4G. In mid-1992 he returned to Eglin and retired in 1994.

After 15 years in the military, waiting and wondering what it would be like and how I would react and perform, I have experienced combat.

At 10 pm that evening of 16 January our squadron, the 81st TFS, assembled in the building known as 'The Church', because our squadron commander had once referred to it as 'The Church of What's Happin' Now' in one of his characteristic nervous ad-libs. That humorous note was forgotten now. I surveyed the room. The near total silence and straight, somber faces were striking. This was a *very* BIG deal and all present sensed we were each a small part of an immense and complex undertaking. I imagined this must have been how it was for the Airborne troopers immediately before they boarded for Normandy late on 5 June 1944.

Our mission was to support F-117 and F-111 strikers hitting the biological and chemical weapons storage and production facilities at Salman Pak, just south of Baghdad. The eight-ship F-4G Weasel package was to be led by Bart (Major Quinn). The squadron commander made sincere, encouraging remarks, standing before men who very well might not be alive eight or less hours hence, in accord with what he, correctly felt, was his necessary duty and responsibility on such a momentous occasion.

* **Editor's Note:** Joe Healy, who authored this memoir, figured extensively in the preceding Part 6 of Theo van Geffen's narrative on Desert Storm. His story was sufficiently indicative of the events that transpired to merit a more complete treatment, which is contained here. These are the words of Joe Healy.



Shaikh Isa's flight line with Marine Corps F/A-18A Hornets and 561st TFS F-4Gs in the foreground and Marine Corps AV-8Bs in the background. Note the AGM-88s on the Hornets and Phantoms. [USAF, SSgt Mark Cormier]

After the remarks we emptied out of 'The Church' and walked to the mission planning building a few yards away in the compound. Around eleven, our two flights of four met in one of the briefing rooms and Bart went over the details of the mission one more time. Then it was off to life support to suit up before heading to the jets.

We got our gear on and headed for the jets schlepping all kinds of extra, 'just in case' stuff, mandated and otherwise. I had large-scale maps I thought would help in an evasion situation, stuffed inside my flight jacket where I felt they would be secured by the harness and not fly away during an ejection.

By the time we stepped, the clock had advanced beyond midnight and it was now the first hour of 17 January, 1991. We got out of the crew van and into surrealistic environs. On this moonless night the flight line was painted in one of two colors, bright blue-white light or total blackness in the sharply defined shadows. That vision was accompanied by a sound track consisting of the combined roar of jet engines running up and dozens of un-muffled gasoline-powered generators providing power to the flood lights and the airplanes, reverberating off the metal revetment walls. We walked 30 yards or so to our plane. I was wired on adrenaline like I hadn't been since my first HALO, High Altitude-Low Opening, jump.

After doing pre-flight, we climbed the ladder (I couldn't help wondering if it was for the last time) and began the strapping-in ritual. After the crew chief had connected my shoulder straps he said, "Good luck and God bless you Sir. I'll be praying for you." I replied, "Thanks, Chief. I appreciate that."

Following engine start and pre-flight checks we rolled straight out of the revetment and made an immediate left turn onto the taxiway. There we were greeted by the sight of the seven ground personnel who'd spent the previous hours preparing our jet, lined up along the edge of the taxiway. They were standing in a perfectly spaced row, as if they'd done a 'dress-right-dress'. As we came abeam them they simultaneously came to attention and then snapped us the sharpest salutes I'd ever seen! We returned them and rolled on.

After quick check and arming, we followed our flight lead Durch (Captain Jim Durch) and Sid (Major Crumley) onto the runway and went through the before takeoff checks. When Durch began to roll at 2334Z or 0234 local time, Jim asked his traditional question, "You ready?" I answered, "Yeah, let's do it!"

Now there were a few brief moments before he lit the burners and the familiar acceleration began; a few short seconds to myself before I'd have to say, "Off the peg...". I quickly blessed myself and silently recited, "Saint Michael, Archangel, defend us in battle, that we may not perish in the awful judgment" as I'd promised myself I would, years before in the Chapel at St. Michaels College in Winooski, VT. I added, "That goes for everybody in the coalition flying tonight. Protect us Lord". We lifted off. I tried to watch the ground behind us on both sides of the aircraft for signs of an SA-7 launch, my finger on the flare button.

We rejoined with lead and proceeded, coms out, to the tanker track. One of the little known aspects of the whole operation was the complexity of the refueling plan which had to go well before any airplanes crossed the border on their missions.

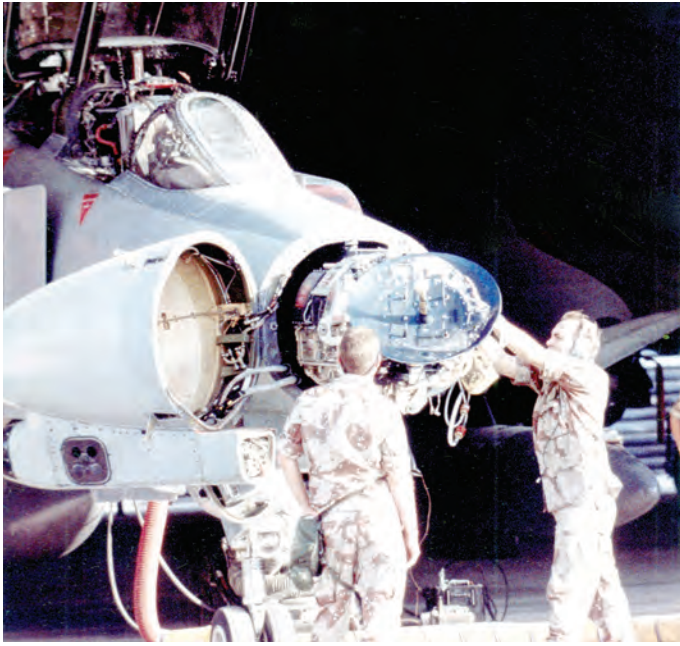
There were five, north-south oriented tanker tracks, side by side, over the middle of Saudi Arabia. The complicating factor was that each of the five tracks was three deep, three vertically separated refueling orbits stacked one above the other! Each of the fifteen tracks had a cell of three tankers orbiting in it.

The receivers, the flights of fighters, were assigned to refuel from a specific tanker in one of the 15 tracks. Hundreds of receivers had to enter the track, rendezvous, refuel, and depart. Arriving receivers entered their track from an altitude below it and departed by climbing above it. All of this was accomplished without communication *in the dark*, on a moonless night! The average daylight refueling in peacetime required a certain amount of radio coordination between tankers and their receivers. The fact that this incredibly complex, hazardous plan did not result in a single midair collision was truly miraculous.

But as with any intricate human endeavor, things rarely go perfectly. Bart led all eight planes successfully into our track, with the tankers about 30 or 40 miles ahead



A weapons specialist loads chaff and flares aboard an F-4G. The missile is an AGM-88 HARM. [USAF]



Tactical Fighter Wing Provisional, 35 (TFWP 35) avionics specialists work on an F-4G radar in the South Loop area at Shaikh Isa. [USAF]

of us, northbound. I was watching them on radar. When they reached the northern end of the track they would turn south toward us and we would swing in behind them. Each of our two flights had a specific tanker we were to refuel from. The flights would be within two or three miles proximity while getting our gas, flying in the same direction, after which we'd depart to the north together.

As I watched, I saw our tanker, the second of the three, begin his turn south prematurely while his leader and cell mate continued north! In a few minutes this could cause big problems. We would either have to turn south to rendezvous with our gas while Bart's flight continued flying north, thus separating us and leading to a big fuel and time consuming effort at getting back together, in the dark, in crowded airspace, or we could continue ahead to stay with Bart, finding a means of getting the necessary fuel from another tanker, without using the radios! I was confident that Sid saw what was happening and imagined he and Durch were trying to come up with a solution, but the urge to say something to him, to confirm it, was strong! When I first noticed the turn I had hoped the tanker pilot or his leader would recognize his mistake and he'd get back into formation. But as I watched, he continued it and established a southerly heading. As he got closer, we began a lead turn to the south and rolled out behind him. But now we were heading directly away from Bart's flight. I don't recall what we did to eventually get back together, but we did. We survived the five side-by-side, multi-layered orbits with the swarm of arriving and departing aircraft and headed north for hostile Iraqi airspace and whatever fate awaited us.

Even before the first fighters crossed into Iraqi skies, a special joint Air Force-Army helicopter task force attacked a key Iraqi EW radar site guarding their southern border, in order to blast a gap in the radar coverage and allow coalition attack flights to flood across into enemy air-

space with little specific prior warning. Air Force Pave Low helicopters used their GPS navigation systems to guide Army Apache gunships to the radar sites where they unleashed rockets, cannon fire, and Hellfire missiles to destroy the facilities. I think it's somewhat ironic that the first SEAD action of the campaign was carried out by Army helicopters!

In another unconventional, dastardly, sneaky, Yankee move, unarmed drones, normally used for air-to-air target practice and weapons testing, were launched from Saudi Arabia ahead of the first wave of strikers. They flew to a number of targets around Baghdad and began circling around the area at the same time cruise missiles were slamming into those targets. The Iraqis, fooled into believing the drones were manned aircraft in the area and the cruise missile impacts were their bombs landing, obliged us by turning all their radars on, giving away their positions. They were rewarded with a hail of HARMs! Additionally, our airborne jets could see and avoid the threats, to some extent, by using their RWR systems. Yet another bonus of the drone effort was for our intelligence people who recorded and cataloged all the emitters.

The next thirty minutes would be epic to say the least, if indeed, there were thirty minutes left to be had. The last few miles of friendly Saudi territory slipped under our wings. Penetration of Iraqi airspace was denoted by the absolute absence of any light on the ground. Below us was a black, bottomless void. Appropriate. Light was lacking in more ways than one down there. We cruised along silently except for the usual flying noises. I had set the radar at level to help Jim keep track of lead on his scope in the front. I concentrated on the APR-47 knowing it would give us the first indication of any immediate threat to us. Periodically, AWACS transmitted "Miller, (Bart's flights' call sign) picture clear" on our frequency, meaning they saw no Iraqi fighters in our vicinity.

I thought this would have been the perfect time to have transmitted 'The Ride of the Valkyries' or 'Darth Vader's Theme' from Star Wars to the Iraqis over the radio.

Shortly after I momentarily speculated about how it was I had come to be at this particular point in space and time, the first physical confirmation that this whole thing was for real manifested itself. Off to the left I saw the first red tracer appear and float up against the black background. Then I knew for sure we were experiencing something new.

Shortly, the eight-ship heard an electrifying call from someone in our formation about a radar contact 40 miles ahead! I looked down and saw it on my scope while simultaneously reaching for the radar antenna controller with my right hand. I thought, "This ain't good!" The APX produced no return in any of four modes, telling me it wasn't friendly. It was a device that allowed us to interrogate the IFF, Identification Friend or Foe, transponders in other aircraft and it displayed a symbol on the radar screen in our aircraft. You could almost feel the pucker factor spiking in the formation.

I was incredulous. I couldn't believe one of these [Iraqis] had been lucky enough to get airborne, at night,

evade AWACS *and* the Eagle MIGCAP *and* position himself right in front of *us*! What were the odds?! And there was no indication on the 47 of a MiG or Mirage radar, anywhere! He'd *have* to have his radar on to make a head-on attack at night!! This just didn't add up. But, there was solid proof, right in front of me on the radar.

As calmly as I could I told Jim, "OK, switches air-to-air, CW (continuous wave missile guidance radar for the AIM-7 Sparrow) standby, tune up the missiles", meaning our Sparrows. "When I tell you to, turn the CW on." I intended to lock onto him to try to scare him off. From intelligence briefings we knew that their standard reaction to being locked onto was to do a 180 degree turn and run away. I hoped lighting up his radar warning gear with our CW missile guidance radar, would motivate him to do just that, while he was still out of range of our Sparrows... and we of *his* weapons! With a little luck, he might turn and run right into the arms of the F-15s! If he didn't turn north, then we'd shoot him in the face at maximum range, if someone in front of us didn't do it first.

Even a weakly executed attempt at an attack could throw a monkey wrench into our whole effort. If the formation got scrambled as people broke left or right to avoid a missile from this interceptor, getting back together in the dark, in time to make our TOTs, would be next to impossible. The fact my best friend was 10 miles closer to the bogey and more likely to be shot at than I was, concerned me too. As I looked at it, there seemed to be something suspicious about this contact. Dare I hope? Could it be...? "Wait a second, wait a second. Lemme see something", I said to Jim. I locked onto it and checked the Vc (velocity [of] closure, or the combined speed that our aircraft and whatever the radar was locked onto, such as another plane, chaff, etcetera were converging at) against our ground speed according to Arnie (our nickname for the ARN-101 INS, Inertial Navigation System, in the F-4). Both numbers were the same! The aspect angle said 90. That meant what I was locked onto wasn't moving; it was suspended in mid-air! I'd thought it had looked a little fuzzy around the edges!

I keyed the mike "Miller 01, ahh, Budweiser 02, Contact chaff." I paused and keyed the mike again "Contact is CHAFF!" I'd really wanted to just blurt out "BART, IT'S JUST CHAFF!", but my consummate professionalism overrode the urge. My message echoed through the flight as at least two other guys said "Contact is chaff!", "Contact is chaff!" I thought I noted a bit of relief in their voices. I know I felt it! My faith in AWACS and F-15s was restored. A minute or two after that I was again looking out into the pitch dark to the left when a bright red-pink light blazed up instantaneously in mid-air right next to us! Another jet in the formation, one of Bart's flight, had somehow drifted back parallel to us and decided to dispense an IR decoy flare! I imagined they must have thought they were being shot at by a ground based IR-guided SAM, which wasn't true. All it accomplished was to startle us and ruin our night vision. A few moments later they dispensed another! I keyed the mic again and said, "Knock it off with the flares!" and complained to Jim questioning why in the hell they were doing that! What they were really doing was at-



Sgt Deborah Thompson, TFWP 35 intelligence specialist, provides F-4G aircrews with current intel. [USAF, SSgt Mark Cormier]

tracting unwanted attention and giving our position away to gunners on the ground so that they could aim more accurately! "Good grief", I thought, "are people losing their nerve?" As tense as those moments were, more were in store.

The further north we progressed, the heavier the fire became. A few scenes are indelibly etched in my mind. At one point we were flying parallel to a major interstate-like north-south highway with light poles in the median. I was surprised that the lights were still on and had not been switched off. Cars were clearly visible with their headlights on, racing at high speed along the south-bound lanes! I could see them through a thin cloud deck not more than a few thousand feet below us. The cloud deck was a surprise too. The weather briefing had predicted clear skies. It was only days later that it dawned on me that what I saw was not cloud but smoke from burst AAA rounds! There had been so much that it had merged together into a continuous layer!

While I was watching the cars scream south I saw twin parallel streaks of lime green colored tracer passing just beneath us coming from our two o'clock. I looked twice to confirm the color to myself. Yep, green! That was the only green tracer I saw during the whole campaign. All the rest was bright red, the same color as automobile tail lights, but brighter. At the same time white flashes were popping around us, mostly at or slightly above our altitude.

I looked to the left, where most of the fire was and saw dozens of bright white lights moving against the dark sky. My impression was that most of them were far off, 10 miles or more. Some behaved like the first red AAA we'd seen. They floated up, winked out and then there would be a lot of flashbulb-like bursts in their place. Others streaked up and didn't go out. Those were SAMs flying off the ground. Knowing the rounds that would hit us were the ones that did not move fore or aft on the canopy, I tried to judge whether some were moving or not. I couldn't really tell so I put my finger over one or two of the more threatening looking ones, but that didn't work either and within a few seconds, I gave up the effort because there were just too many to keep track of!

It was early in this phase of the mission, as the ground fire was intensifying, that one of the EF-111s radioed that

he was “bugging out!”, that is, leaving his jamming orbit and heading south. Was it that bad? Maybe he was being attacked by an Iraqi fighter. But I didn’t think that was likely. They were not in the same heavy fire we were, yet they were running for it? I had the urge to key the mic and say, “Hold your ground! People are counting on you!”, but didn’t.

As the ground fire got heavier, it seemed inevitable that we were going to be hit. I had an irrational thought that, momentarily, a hole was going to open in the floor right between my feet and I’d be looking down through it at the highway and ground lights. Of course if a hole had been blown in the floor, it probably would’ve done some serious damage to me too!

I found myself thinking, “Well, so far so good. We haven’t been hit yet.” Then, “If we get hit one thing or the other will happen; either we’ll be killed or not. If we’re not, either we’ll be knocked down right away, or be able to limp south a ways and punch. We might be able to evade and get rescued or we might be captured. Or we might ride the stricken jet all the way back across the Saudi border.” This whole thought process seemed to go on for two or three minutes but was probably more on the order of 10 or twenty seconds, I don’t know, but I finally ended it by telling myself, “Oh screw it! Do your job and deal with a hit *when* it happens”, and then got back to work.

When I took another look out to the left, I saw a SAM fly past so close that I could see its long exhaust flame flickering through a halo of light at the rear of the missile! There was no indication of a radar associated with it on the 47 and it occurred to me that the Iraqi’s were firing them off ballistically, unguided, literally ‘a shot in the dark’, just hoping for a lucky hit! I watched the missile fly up behind us as long as I could, hoping to see it detonate at the end of its time of flight, but I couldn’t crane my head around far enough and turned back to the more pressing business at hand.

I glanced at the ALQ-131 jamming pod control and was astounded. It looked like a pinball machine! Most of the symbols in all three bands were flickering continuously indicating the pod was actively detecting and jamming threats across the radar spectrum.



An 561st TFS aircrew prepares for another mission, while 561st AMU personnel await to launch the F-4G. [USAF]



The aircrew of an F-4G of the 81st TFS pulls out of the arming area for their next mission. Note the F-4G which is still in the ‘European’ camouflage scheme. [Bruce Benyshek]

It was about this point in the mission that I experienced a malfunction of the 47 I’d never seen before nor ever again after. I was looking at the scope when the concentric range rings and all the displayed emitter symbols essentially collapsed uniformly, in stages, into the center of the scope and vanished in a matter of a second or two! “What the f__ is that!?! Not NOW!! Of all times!! You gotta be shittin’ me!!!” I thought. After a few agonizing seconds, the display suddenly popped into being again and everything was where it belonged. I felt momentary relief, but then the cycle repeated! It did the same thing intermittently for the rest of the mission. Everything would look OK for a while, then march into the middle! The only cure I could think of was to run a BIT (built in test)-7. A BIT-7 was akin to a partial reboot of the computer and often cleared problems, but there was no way I was going to take our super RWR offline here and now in this environment! I had no doubt that if I ran the short test that was precisely when we’d be locked onto and engaged by a SAM! So a BIT-7 was out. I did try the age old cure-all of hitting the scope hard, but that had no discernable effect.

As soon as Baghdad and our target area rose above the radar horizon the 47 really came alive. A whole menagerie of emitters popped onto the screen. There were more signals than I’d ever seen simultaneously in any Red Flag or Green Flag or in the simulator! By the time we got into the target area proper, the air was alive with invisible signals, and very visible SAMs, tracers, and exploding AAA!

Jim and I were tasked to cover a group of four, Soviet-built SA-8 Land Roll systems, suspected to be northeast of Salman Pak. As I watched, they showed up on the 47 as predicted, right where they were supposed to be, in a nice row, oriented east to west! During one of the 47’s periods of quiescence, I designated the second SA-8 from the eastern end of the line and told Jim, “I’ve selected our victim.” We were still out of range but I wanted the 47’s brain to have plenty of time to work out an accurate position on it.

Now it was only a matter of waiting until we were in range. I continued to monitor the 47 for anything that might be targeting us and stole occasional glances outside

at the fireworks! Finally we were in range and based on the strikers TOT, it was time to shoot our first missile in actual combat! Jim selected the HARM on the left wing and I pushed the handoff button on the panel directly in front of me. A few moments later I was rewarded with a green 'RDY' light (the 'ready light' that illuminated on the APR-47 panel after the EWO handed off a threat to the AGM-88 HARM to go after, meaning the missile had all the data and was ready to be launched). Here we go! "Eye's!" I said to Jim so he could momentarily close his eyes to avoid being blinded by the flame of the rocket motor. About half a potato later I mashed my right thumb down on the pickle button on my stick. There was a heavy 'CHUNK' feeling accompanied by a rushing roar and then the whole airplane shuddered side to side as the big missile streaked off towards the SA-8. As the time of flight counter for the HARM counted down to '0', the site went 'dotted', and I didn't hear any more audio from it, a pretty good indication that we'd killed it and, in all probability, the three radar operators and the driver sitting directly under the antennas.

I targeted another of the SA-8s with the second HARM. We had good information on it so I pressed the handoff button right away. But this time, instead of 'RDY', I saw the yellow 'FAIL' light illuminate! That meant the targeting information the 47 had about the SA-8 was not being handed off to the HARM. I pushed the handoff again. 'FAIL'. I pushed the pickle button hoping it might launch anyway, but it just hung there, inanimate, on its launch rail.

I ran through the checklist again in my head. Jim confirmed that the proper station was selected and the master arm was on. Demonstrating Einstein's definition of insanity, I went through the steps a third time and got the same non-result! This was maddeningly incongruent! Why were we able to launch the first missile successfully but not this



F-4G Phantoms were deployed to Incirlik in Turkey, Shaikh Isa in Bahrain and Dhahran in Saudi Arabia in the August 17, 1990-January 15, 1996 period. Two aircraft were lost. On January 19, 1991 F-4G 97571, assigned to the 81st TFS, crashed in Saudi Arabia while on a night Wild Weasel mission. Its crew, Capts Tim Burke and Juan Galindez (EWO), ran out of fuel after their aircraft was hit by AAA. They ejected safely, were recovered and back in business two days later. The 561st TFS was directed to transfer one of its F-4Gs to the 81st. With 2,676 combat sorties flown, the loss rate per 1,000 sorties was 0.4. The second F-4G was lost on August 21, 1991, when F-4G 97550 of the 561st TFS, on a training mission, crashed about 63 miles southeast of Dhahran in the Saudi desert. The crew ejected successfully and was recovered. The 52nd was tasked to send a replacement aircraft. The photo shows what was left of '571' after it was trucked back from Saudi Arabia to Shaikh Isa. [Bruce Benyshek]



F-4G 69-286 of the 81st TFS being refueled by a KC-135. The colored band on the vertical and the 52nd TFW emblem on the intake were removed. The aircraft is configured with two AGM-88 HARMs and an AN/ALQ-131 ECM pod. [Bruce Benyshek]

one?! Now I was in a quandary. Again, I considered, and instantly rejected the idea of doing a BIT-7 in an attempt to clear *this* problem, but there were even more SAM radars on the air now, than before. No way was I going to knowingly blind us to them at this point!

By now we had reached our furthest northern point and had begun a gradual left turn back to a southerly heading. Baghdad was to our northwest and alive with signals just asking for a HARM! I designated a strong one coming out of the middle of the city. Maybe the 47 will like this one better, I thought. Handoff, 'FAIL'. In total, I probably tried to shoot that second missile five times, but it never would take flight.

I suspected the same problem that was causing the display to malfunction was causing this trouble too. My frustration level was off the charts. There we were, in the most target-rich environment a Weasel crew might have ever seen or see again, a veritable smorgasbord of emitters, with a missile on our jet, and the cursed thing refused to do its job! "Swine HARM!!"

While we were pointed west Jim told me to take a look to the right at Baghdad. What I saw was impressive to say the least! There was a solid, fairly narrow layer of smoke above the still lit city, everywhere this manmade cloud was sparkling, glowing, and churning within from bursting AAA, tracers, and SAMs. It was the perfect analogy for the intensity of cussing emanating earlier from my cockpit directed at the malfunctioning 47 and/or HARM, as I gave rein to my full repertoire of colorful language gleaned from paratroopers and fighter aviators over two decades. Alas, it made no impression at all on the inhuman computers. They defiantly refused to cooperate.

Our southbound return trip to the safety of the Saudi border was uneventful, with only a few cursory, ineffective amounts of AAA haphazardly tossed into the air, here and there. Looking east toward Kuwait in the pre-dawn gray during egress, I saw what I can only describe as a green vapor that seemed to cover a patch of the desert. I don't know what it was, but that's what I saw. It may have been fog lit from below by some green light source, but it covered an area that would've consisted of several square miles. We rendezvoused with our post-strike tankers. I was anxious

to take a nose count and see if all the planes and crews showed up. To my relief all eight jets were there and without any damage! After what we'd flown through, I was somewhat amazed by that fact. I at least expected we'd see a hole or two in a wing or tail!

Indeed, a year later Ken Hanson gave an interview to a reporter from 'Stars and Stripes' about the first night. In it he said, "The fire was so intense, I don't know how we made it through. It was a miracle". When I read that, my quiet prayer to Saint Michael immediately came to mind. I had never mentioned my short prayer to anyone, so Ken's comment was unbiased confirmation it was answered.

Because the formation got a little shuffled on the way out and the fact that one crew had jettisoned their wing tanks, Jim and I RTB'ed with Durch and Sid and two guys from Bart's flight. I was mildly relieved to see that Durch and Sid still had one of their HARMs too. I was anxious to ask Sid what had happened and if he'd experienced the same thing I had. Later we found out, there was a software failure that kept the missiles from launching.

A maintenance guy later tried to tell Jim that our recalcitrant missile's motor had actually fired but it had stayed on the launcher! An impossibility! I think we could not have helped but noticed the bright flame, noise, and horrendous extra thrust on the right wing! If the wing had withstood the stress, we would've blazed across the sky like a comet! What a ride that would've been!

A few minutes after leaving the tanker on the way back it was pretty quiet. To break the silence I made one of the more outrageous comments of my life. In a matter-of-fact tone I said to Jim, "Well ... that wasn't so bad." He must've thought I'd completely lost it! There was no response. He was too polite to call me an idiot. I went cold mike and laughed out loud at my own cheekiness. It just goes to show, there are an infinite number of ways of relieving stress!

We were back on the ground just after first light. What a reception we got! All the ground support troops were gathered at the entrance to the revetment parking area. They had waited for our return after the end of their all-night shift. There was a blue Air Force bus pulled off on the dirt waiting to take them back to their quarters. As we taxied past they were all waving, cheering, saluting, giving us thumbs up and pumping their fists! We turned, stopped and were pushed back into our spot where Jim shut down the engines. I unstrapped, gathered up all my stuff, and climbed down the ladder to solid ground. The first thing I did was to shake Jim's hand and say, "Great job", wearing an enormous smile! There were more handshakes all around with the daytime ground crew and the other guys in the formation when we met up at maintenance de-brief. Excited descriptions of personal experiences and impressions went on for several hours after the official mission debrief. But they were tempered by the realization that we were going to do it again that evening, and again after that, and yet again... I wondered how many times we could do what we'd just done and get away unscathed. I imagined that, inevitably, someone would pay the fine levied by the law of averages. But who? Jim and I?

We went back to our quarters on the other side of the base and then to the chow hall. I stopped by Bart's building on the way and that's where Maj Gary 'Rat' Rattray took the picture of Bart and I immediately after mission with my camera. In the chow hall the TV was playing live reports from CNN reporters in Baghdad. It was something to listen to their impressions of events they had witnessed which we had just participated in.

At the same time we had been penetrating to the heart of Saddam's fiefdom, many other attacks had assaulted his forces of occupation in Kuwait. This effort would continue around the clock for weeks.

By unanimous agreement our second mission, a night sortie over Kuwait, was anticlimactic. Lead shot at one signal twice, with no apparent effect. In stark contrast to our baptism of fire earlier, this time we saw no AAA or SAMs at all! We did see a strike by B-52s, an impressive sight. Long strings of bombs detonated on the ground in a matter of a few seconds. The individual orange fireballs penetrated upward through a low lying layer of fog.

One interesting aspect of all the destruction we witnessed characteristic of air warfare is that it is like watching a silent movie! Our minds are so accustomed to hearing appropriate sounds when our eyes observe explosions that we, at least I, almost reflexively provided the missing appropriate sound track by making explosion exclamations like 'BAM!', 'Ka-BLAM!' or 'Ba-Boom'!

Whenever I see a History Channel documentary about Desert Storm I'm amused by videos of bombs hitting targets because they dub in explosion sounds that, of course, are impossible to have been recorded by non-existent microphones on an the airplane flying 400 mph, several miles away! But it seems too unrealistic to the viewing audience without them!

Our flight was walking back into the ops area after the second mission at about 10 pm. I noted to myself that time had flown. It had already been 24 hours since we'd had the mass briefing before the start of offensive operations and we'd already flown two combat missions. We were veterans.



A Shaikh Isa gaggle being refueled by a KC-135R tanker, one 561st TFS and three 81st TFS F-4Gs and a 12th TRS RF-4C. The photo was made by the RF-4C's wingman. [via Bruce Benyshek]



F-4G 97212 returned from DESERT STORM with a sortie number in the sixties and five confirmed Iraqi radar kills. Bruce Benyshek and Larry Allen were the aircrews of its final DESERT STORM combat sortie. The HARM silhouettes were designed by Bruce. '212' eventually became the 52nd FW commander bird. From Spang it was assigned to the 561st FS at Nellis and as with so many F-4Gs, ended up as QF-4G. [via Bruce Benyshek]

After eating mid-night chow at the Marine Corp mess tent, I called my parents in Center Moriches (Long Island, NY) on the phone in the hall outside my room. My mother answered and I said, "Hi Mom! You'd never *believe* where I was this morning"! After reassurances that I was OK and being careful not to discuss anything classified, I said good-bye and went to sleep so as to be ready for the next one. And so ended my introduction to air combat and war. More followed.

At home, my parents had been watching the news reports since my brother Andy called them and told them the attacks had begun. They said that many reports, including a briefing by Marlin Fitzwater at the White House, had mentioned the Weasels and that we were 'famous!' Ha! I guess this is our 15 minutes in the spotlight. They said the newspaper also had an article about the Weasels and our role. They said one of the press briefings specifically said that, "We are/or were waiting for the Weasels to come out". This may have been a reference to our 8-ship. I guess people have been calling home all day asking about me. All the concern and support of the people at home really means a lot to us. We're very aware and appreciative of it.

Heard a true story of one 561st TFS crew who had a **dual** flameout during egress coming out of Baghdad and descended to 1700 feet before getting one of them restarted! He then restarted the other! Bart had one flame-out on him because of exhaust from one of his HARMs! But his engine restarted immediately.

On June 27, it was time for Joe to redeploy to Spangdahlem, after some six months in the desert. On that day, he wrote the following while flying 155 nautical miles east of Sicily, westbound at 25,000 feet, while in company of three other F-4Gs and their KC-10 Extender tanker / transport aircraft. Joe described this as follows,

Finally the day we've been waiting for, for so long, came.



Three newly arrived recce Phantoms, RF-4Cs, taxiing through the South Loop to their parking spots. The aircraft were assigned to the 152nd Tactical Reconnaissance Group of the Nevada Air National Guard and arrived from Al Dhafra, UAE. All USAF Phantoms were then located at Shaikh Isa. [USAF]

We departed Dhahran at 1300L for Spangdahlem. The remainder of the people (Bart, Rat, Paul Gregory et al) should be coming home on a commercial charter airplane on Monday 1 July. Today was incredibly hot. After engine start the wind was behind us and blew the engine exhaust and the 105-degree Fahrenheit desert air over us in the cockpits. I don't think I've ever been that hot!

The stripes on the top of the Phantom tails had been yellow, the color of the 81st TFS. However, when we got to the airplanes, the maintenance guys from the 480th had painted red stripes on the tails, their squadron color, and had a sign that said "the 480th TFS LIVES!" (When aircrews, maintenance personnel and aircraft deployed to Shaikh Isa, they were all reassigned to the 81st TFS. TvG). I don't think it was such a horrible crime but Colonel Neil Patton was a bit irate. Oh well. Our Squadron commander, Lieutenant Colonel Randell Gelwix will be PO-ed when we roll into parking! That will be worth seeing!

As I was strapping in, I looked up at Colonel Patton standing on the ramp. He shrugged his shoulders and raised his arms in a 'Oh well...' gesture. I'm not sure what he meant. I went back to strapping in and the next thing I knew he (Colonel Patton) was standing on the intake with his hand outstretched saying "Have a good flight". I told him "Thanks very much for everything. I really appreciated it. Good luck." I had told him the day before how much I had appreciated his leadership. A few days prior to that when he and I flew the last jet out of Shaikh Isa and Bahrain, we were talking about the war, etcetera. I really liked the guy.

Well, I still don't really believe we're going home. We're past Sicily now.

The homecoming arrival was nice. We arrived overhead about 20-25 minutes early and instead of landing immediately after a 7½-hour flight, we were asked to **hold!** I was irate! But we eventually got down through the weather, making individual approaches. There were rain showers in the area. We taxied in with canopies up and lined up and shut down on ramp four, next to the tower. There was a crowd of about 150 people waiting even though it was cold, windy and rainy. ■