

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

**01-May-60**

4979

CIA pilot Francis Gary Powers, flying a U-2 over the Soviet Union, was shot down by an SA-2 surface-to-air missile (SAM). This was the first of the Russian SAMs that U.S. planes would later encounter in 1962 during the Cuban missile crisis and in North Vietnam beginning in the summer of 1965.

In the morning of 1 May 1960, "... Gary Powers, then a veteran of 27 [U-2 photo reconnaissance] missions [from Incirlik AB, Turkey, and from forward operating locations at Lahore and Peshawar in Pakistan to facilities in the Soviet Union], took off from Peshawar destined for Bodo, Norway. He was to overfly and photograph two major intercontinental ballistic missile test sites in the Soviet Union en route, one at Sverdlovsk, the other at Plesetsk. Heavy anti-aircraft missile concentrations guarded both sites.

"Powers took off on time, as did the diversionary flight from Incirlik, and the mission continued as planned until he reached Sverdlovsk. While on the photo run at 67,000 feet, the Soviets launched a volley of 14 SA-2 surface-to-air missiles at Powers' aircraft. Although the SA-2s could not achieve the same altitude as the U-2, the aircraft disintegrated in the shock waves caused by the exploding missiles. Soviet authorities subsequently arrested Powers after he successfully ejected from the plane, and held him on espionage charges for nearly 2 years. The Turkish, Pakistani, and Norwegian governments claimed to have no knowledge of the American U-2 overflights, and shortly afterwards all U-2s and support personnel [in Turkey, Pakistan, and Norway] quietly returned to the United States."

The U.S. had lost their first encounter with the SA-2 SAM.

*"SENIOR YEAR / AQUATONE / U-2 / TR-1" at <http://www.fas.org/irp/program/collect/u-2.htm>*

**15-Sep-62**

4973

Since Fidel Castro had come to power in Cuba in 1959, the US government had become increasingly concerned with the dictator's alliance with the Soviet Union and the build up of military equipment being delivered by ship to Cuba from Russia and Eastern Bloc countries. Cuba's military build up was a reaction to the failed 1961 invasion at the Bay of Pigs on the coast of Cuba, called "Operation Zapata", by CIA-funded Cuban exiles.

"In August and September 1962, Soviet deliveries surged to the highest levels ever seen. In August, CIA analysts saw the first indications of an ominous new development, the construction of SA-2 surface-to-air missiles. These represented a new turn in the arming of Cuba -- such weapons could shoot American military aircraft out of the skies, including CIA's U-2 photographic reconnaissance planes. It had been an SA-2 that had shot down Francis Gary Powers's U-2 over the Soviet Union two years earlier."

On 15 September 1962, "... NSA reported the first operation of a Spoon Rest radar, associated with the SA-2. The SA-2 was operational and could shoot down a U-2. Subsequent overflights would be at risk."

"SA-2s ... were very expensive. Was the Soviet purpose to keep U.S. reconnaissance aircraft out of Cuba, and if so, why? John McCone, Director of Central Intelligence, came up with an answer that no one wanted to hear -- that SA-2s were on the island to deny the United States the capability to see the construction of offensive missile installations. Others in the defense and intelligence communities dissented from this opinion."

The circumstances over the next three months became known as the Cuban missile crisis. The U.S. reaction involved placing F-105s and other aircraft on alert in Florida that could have led to the first direct attack on SA-2 SAM sites, an event that first occurred 3 years later in North Vietnam.

"... After weighing such options as an armed invasion of Cuba and air strikes against the missile sites, Kennedy decided on a less dangerous response. In addition to demanding that Russian Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev remove all the [nuclear tipped SS-4] missile bases and their deadly contents, Kennedy ordered a naval quarantine (blockade) of Cuba in order to prevent Russian ships from bringing additional missiles and construction materials to the island. In response to the American naval blockade, Premier Khrushchev authorized his Soviet field commanders in Cuba to launch their tactical nuclear weapons if invaded by U.S. forces. Deadlocked in this manner, the two leaders of the world's greatest nuclear superpowers stared each other down for seven days - until Khrushchev blinked. On October 28, thinking better of prolonging his challenge to the United States, the Russian Premier conceded to President

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Kennedy's demands by ordering all Soviet supply ships away from Cuban waters and agreeing to remove the missiles from Cuba's mainland. After several days of teetering on the brink of nuclear holocaust, the world breathed a sigh of relief."

*"NSA and the Cuban Missile Crisis" at <http://www.nsa.gov/publications/publi00033.cfm>, pg 2 & "The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 18-1962" at <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>.*

**10-Oct-62**

4974

The Cuban air defense system was complete and ready to use SA-2s to shoot down US aircraft.

"On October 10, NSA reported that the Cuban air defense system seemed to be complete. They had just begun passing radar tracking from radar stations to higher headquarters and to defensive fighter bases using Soviet procedures. Their system, with Russians in advisory positions at every point, was ready for business."

*"NSA and the Cuban Missile Crisis" at <http://www.nsa.gov/publications/publi00033.cfm>, pg 2.*

**23-Oct-62**

4982

In today's 10:00 meeting with his ExCom over the Cuban missile crisis, President Kennedy reviewed "... the latest intelligence from Cuba and the proclamation and implementation of the quarantine". The taped discussions documented the group's deliberations.

"Robert Kennedy expresses irritation about the failure of US intelligence to discover the missiles earlier. 'Now we are closing the barn door after the horse is gone.'

"McNamara indicates that a ship carrying offensive weapons will have to be stopped and perhaps disabled. But Kennedy states that the Soviets will likely turn around such ships on their own to avoid a confrontation."

"McNamara reviews plans for destroying any SAM site which shoots down a U-2; JFK adds that when taking out the SAM site, the US should simultaneously announce that if another plane is brought down all the SAM sites would be destroyed. When a U-2 is actually brought down by a missile from a SAM site four days later, JFK decides not to issue the order."

"Bundy suggests that the president should delegate the authority to order an air strike against a SAM to the sec. of defense. JFK does not object but insists that there must be absolute verification that the plane was brought down by hostile military action and not as the result of an accident."

On 24 October, "Soviet ships reach the quarantine line, but receive radio orders from Moscow to hold their positions."

During further deliberations of the ExCom members on the 24th, "Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield, expresses his concern about the 'congenital habit of overstating the ease as well as the results of an air strike. I don't think there is any such thing as one of these quick, easy and sanitary air strikes. There is no such thing as a small military action. Now the moment we start anything in this field, we have to be prepared to do everything.' Urges careful analysis of Soviet intentions over the next few days before taking this critical step."

*"The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 18-29, 1962" at <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>*

**27-Oct-62**

4975

"A U-2 plane is shot down over Cuba by a Soviet surface-to-air missile and the pilot [Major Rudolph Anderson, Jr.] is killed. JFK decides not to order an attack on the SAM site as agreed earlier ... but agrees to strike all the SAM sites if any additional planes are attacked."

"On Jan. 8, 1964, Maj. Rudolf Anderson Jr., the sole casualty of the Cuban Missile Crisis, was posthumously awarded the first Air Force Cross by order of President John F. Kennedy. Major Anderson lost his life on Oct. 27, 1962, when his U-2 aircraft was shot down by a SA-2 missile during a photo reconnaissance run.

"He was also posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and the Cheney Award. Because of the classified nature of his work, Major Anderson belonged to a select group of unheralded and unrecognized reconnaissance pilots."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Air Force U-2 pilots of Strategic Air Command's 4080th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing flying out of Laughlin Air Force Base, Texas, played a major role in preventing a global war. In the summer of 1962, shipments of people and equipment from the USSR to Cuba increased dramatically. Despite Premier Nikita S. Khrushchev's denial, President Kennedy directed SAC to begin U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance flights over the island. The U-2 flights were made by Major Anderson and Maj. Richard S. Heyser. Later, flights were flown by RF-101s.

"On Oct. 14, Major Anderson returned from a mission with pictures of ballistic missile sites and nuclear storage facilities under construction. On Oct. 22, President Kennedy addressed the nation and six tense days followed. While negotiations between President Kennedy and Premier Khrushchev were still under way, Major Anderson attempted another reconnaissance run and his U-2 was shot down and he was killed.

"By personal direction of the president, Major Anderson was posthumously awarded the first Air Force Cross. At the time, the Bronze Star was the highest combat decoration that could be made for Cold War action.

"Anderson was a Greenville, S.C., native and was a graduate of Clemson University before joining the Air Force." (<http://www.af.mil/history/spotlight.asp?storyID=123009509%20>)

"The CIA reports that five of the MRBM sites are now fully operational. A new message arrives from Khrushchev in which he expresses willingness to remove the [nuclear] missiles from Cuba under UN supervision in return for a US commitment to dismantle its missiles in Turkey. Kennedy tells the ExComm that going to war in the face of Khrushchev's offer to trade missiles would be 'an insupportable decision.'"

The White House taping system recorded the Saturday morning ExCom discussions about the crisis and ways to get the Cubans and the Soviets to remove the nuclear-tipped missiles from Cuba.

"General Taylor [JCS Chairman] reports that the JCS wants an air strike no later than Monday morning unless there is irrefutable evidence that the missiles are being dismantled. RFK responds, 'Gosh, I'm surprised!' resulting in a great deal of laughter."

"McNamara recommends more surveillance flights Monday morning with proper cover. If attacked, he insists, 'we must attack back.' "

"News arrives that a U-2 has been shot down and the pilot killed. 'This is much of an escalation by them, isn't it?,' JFK concludes. How can we put more U-2 pilots over Cuba, he asks, unless 'we take out all the SAM sites.' Kennedy seems ready for a reprisal strike without any prior warning."

"McNamara: 'Max [General Maxwell Taylor] is going back to work out the surveillance plan for tomorrow with the Chiefs as to how much cover we need and so on. We're just going to get shot up sure as hell. There's no question about it. We're going to have to go in and shoot.' "

"JFK reopens the discussion of trading the missiles in Turkey. McNamara insists that the case should be made that this is not so much a trade as a way of preventing a Soviet military attack on a NATO member nation. ... Vice President Lyndon Johnson responds: 'If you're willing to give up your missiles in Turkey - why don't you...make the trade there and save all the invasion, lives and everything else?' "

"LBJ questions the value of the surveillance flights: 'I've been afraid of these damned flyers ever since they mentioned them...some crazy Russian captain...might just pull a trigger. Looks like we're playing Fourth of July over there. I'm scared of that and I don't see what you get for that photograph. ... Psychologically you scare them. Well hell, its like the fellow always telling me in Congress, 'Go on and put the monkey on his back.' Every time I tried to put a monkey on somebody's else's back, I got one. If you're going to try to psychologically scare them...you're liable to get your bottom shot at.' "

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"The meeting resumes later in the evening with further discussion of surveillance flights over Cuba. McNamara declares 'I think the point is that if our planes are fired on tomorrow, we ought to fire back!'"

JFK disagrees: 'I think we ought to wait till tomorrow afternoon' to see if U Thant [at the UN] makes any progress. 'If tomorrow they fire at us...we ought to put a statement out...if we don't get some satisfaction from the Russians or U Thant or Cuba tomorrow night, figure that Monday we're going to do something about the SAM sites.' "

*"The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 18-29, 1962" at <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>*

**28-Oct-62**

4976

"In a speech aired on Radio Moscow, Khrushchev announces the dismantling of Soviet missiles in Cuba and does not insist on his demands concerning the removal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. The crisis is over."

"The CIA's early morning intelligence update concludes that Soviet technicians have completed the work necessary to make all the MRBM sites fully operational. Radio Moscow announces that the Soviet Union has accepted the proposed solution and releases the text of a Khrushchev letter confirming the details. JFK suspends U-2 air surveillance over Cuba and orders that no military action be taken against ships approaching the quarantine line. Several members of the Joint Chiefs warn of possible Soviet deception and urge the president to reconsider air strikes against the missile sites. Fidel Castro, furious over the fact that he was not consulted before Khrushchev's decision, refuses to allow UN inspection of the dismantling of the missile bases."

Due to the agreement with the Soviet Union, attacking the SAM sites, considered in yesterday's ExCom meeting, was no longer necessary.

Now that the Air Force had experienced the capability and danger of the SA-2 SAM in Cuba and over the Iron Curtain they would be expected to recognize the need to redo their tactics planned for SIOP missions into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. The early sixties were the depths of the Cold War during which we prepared for nuclear retaliation so someone in the DoD, Air Staff, or HQ TAC should have recognized the threat of the SA-2 on our SIOP missions by tactical fighters from Europe and B-52s. If Soviet SAMs could hit high-flying U-2s, they could obviously hit F-100s and F-105s launched to targets behind the Iron Curtain from Victor alerts at Bitburg and Spangdahlem and BUFFs on nuclear retaliatory strikes. They did not. Capt James E. McInerney was assigned to Nellis AFB from 1960 to 1963 and commented on his experiences during this period.

"I was in the TR&D Section of the Fighter Weapons School from June 1960 until December 1963 and perhaps can shed some light on what the Air Force was doing and thinking about the SAM threat. It was simply 'fly as low as you can and as far as you can'. We actually ran a numbered TAC Test working out the details and parameters for pitching up from the deck to obtain desired delivery conditions for a dive bomb run for both the Hun and the Thud. Seems rather pathetic in retrospect but that was how we prepped for Cuba.

"Even more pathetic is the fact that after we got the jamming pods some tacticians were reluctant to put the 'low level and pitch up' tactics aside." (MG James E. McInerney, e-mail <[jmcinerney@NDIA.ORG](mailto:jmcinerney@NDIA.ORG)>, 13 Jun 2006.)

*"The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 18-29, 1962" at <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>*

**29-Oct-62**

4985

The Cuban missile crisis is nearly resolved but the President's ExCom met again to iron out details of the settlement. The White House tapes captured the discussions and decisions.

"JFK orders US ships to remain on the quarantine line and authorizes continuation of low-level reconnaissance flights. Soviet deputy premier Vasily Kuznetsov meets with U Thant to work out details for the removal of the missiles from Cuba. Citing Khrushchev's October 28th letter agreeing to remove 'those weapons you describe as offensive,' JFK decides that until the Soviets remove the IL-28 nuclear bombers, which the US has classified as 'offensive weapons,' the quarantine cannot be lifted."

"JFK states that the committee must immediately address the question of how to maintain satisfactory intelligence about Cuba since 'we can't rely on the UN to do it.' "

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Rusk recommends that surveillance and the quarantine remain in effect until UN machinery can effectively replace them "because if we give up that point we may be subject to a massive trick here."

"Some discussion of whether U-2 flights are technically capable of revealing any Soviet effort to hide some of the missiles in Cuba."

"Kennedy insists that only continued aerial photography can prove whether the missile sites are actually being dismantled notwithstanding U Thant's upcoming inspection trip to Cuba. U Thant, he insists, 'doesn't know what the hell to look for anymore than I would.' "

The agreement with the Soviet Union eliminated the threats from the Cuban SAM sites so the reconnaissance flights are now possible.

*"The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 18-29, 1962" at <http://www.hpol.org/jfk/cuban/>*

**13-Oct-64**

5568

Pilots and aircraft of the 35 TFS, TDY to Korat, prepared for rescap and air defense missions into Laos. "Operations prepared profiles and maintenance loaded aircraft with 2.75" rockets and AIM-9B missiles.

Col Chester L. Van Etten, the 41 AD vice commander, Capt Robert B. Bennett, the accident investigating officer, and Capt Earl L. Thornton arrived at Korat from Yokota to investigate Capt Sam P. Morgan's accident on 27 September 1964.

*35 TFS history, 1 July - 31 Dec 64, Report of Deployment, pg 5, AFHRA Call # K-SQ-FI--35-HI, IRIS # 1026422.*

**17-Nov-64**

3885

A month after Leonid Brezhnev replaced Nikita Khrushchev as leader of the Soviet Union, " ... the Soviet Communist Party Politburo approved the dispatch of military aid and military advisors to [North] Vietnam. The aid included SA-2 ... ( SAM ) missiles."

*"The -Ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in The Journal of Military History, Jan 2003, pg 177.*

**07-Jan-65**

3886

On the same day that the Air Force accepted the last F-105 from production at Republic Aviation, the North Vietnamese formed the 236 SAM Regiment, the first of their SAM organizations that resulted from the Soviet Union approving the deployment of SA-2s to North Vietnam on 17 November 1964. "With orders giving the regiment the highest national priority, officers scoured the armed forces, civilian universities, and technical schools of North Vietnam to find the best engineers, electricians, technicians, and mechanics to form the new regiment. Once the regiment's equipment, missiles, and seventy Soviet missile advisors arrived aboard a Soviet ship in April 1965, the regiment began a crash training program at a training facility near Son Tay." (-Ology War)

"... The regiment was made up of four missile launch battalions (the 61st, 62nd, 63rd, and 64th), the 65th Technical Battalion, plus headquarters staff agencies (combat operations, political, rear services, and technical). The unit's cadre were selected from the entire armed forces and from universities and specialized technical high schools outside the armed forces.

"Because our combat requirements were so pressing, organizational activities had to be carried out on a crash basis. Units had to arrange to receive their weapons and equipment while simultaneously beginning training activities. With the whole-hearted assistance from higher headquarters and from the Province Party Committee and the people of Ha Tay Province, and with the efforts of the cadre and enlisted men of the unit, in less than two months a training center had been built while keeping it a strict secret, both from the air and from the ground. Training ranges to deploy equipment and missiles that covered more than ten hectares were carefully camouflaged. High voltage electrical power cables were run from Son Tay city to the training area. The cables stretched dozens of kilometers, and to maintain secrecy they had to be buried underground, a process that was completed in the space of only ten days." (People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pg 26,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Translated by Merle Pribbenow.)

*"The -Ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in The Journal of Military History, Jan 2003, pg 177.*

**16-Mar-65**

5048

A Central Intelligence Agency intelligence report foretold of the Soviet Union supplying SA-2 SAMs to North Vietnam.

"1. (Fedor Malgin, a Soviet senior political affairs officer of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs, United Nations Secretariat, is suspected of being a Soviet Intelligence Officer.)

"2. On 16 March 1965, Fedor Malgin made the following comments on the Vietnam Situation: Although the USSR will give anti-aircraft missiles to North Vietnam, the Soviets do not want war with the United States over Vietnam. The Soviets will send anti-aircraft missiles to Vietnam via sea from Sevastopol. Malgin did not indicate whether or not a shipment of missiles is already on its way to North Vietnam.

"3. The Chinese Communists and the Soviets have no plans to coordinate the training of North Vietnamese technicians to man anti-aircraft missiles. Malgin implied that the Soviets are training North Vietnamese technicians to operate anti-aircraft weapons either in the USSR or in Czechoslovakia. He also implied that the Chinese have their own program for training North Vietnamese technicians to use modern anti-aircraft weapons.

"4. The USSR currently does not know whether or not the North Vietnamese government will agree to negotiations on Vietnam. However, the Viet Cong have advised the Soviets that they do not want negotiations. The Soviets also 'know' that the Chinese do not support negotiations.

"5. Malgin implied that the United States is keeping the USSR advised of United States action in North Vietnam."

*CIA Intelligence Information Cable, CIA Collection, Texas Tech Vietnam Archives, Item #: 0410219005.*

**02-Apr-65**

1644

(Date approximate) John A. McCone, the Director of Central Intelligence, sent a letter to President Johnson expressing his concern over the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign.

"I remain concerned, as I have said before to you, Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara, over the limited scale of air action against North Vietnam which we envision for the next few months."

"Specifically I feel that we must conduct our bombing attacks in a manner that will begin to hurt North Vietnam badly enough to cause the Hanoi regime to seek a political way out through negotiation rather than expose their economy to increasingly serious levels of destruction. By limiting our attacks to targets like bridges, military installations and lines of communication, in effect we signal to the Communists that our determination to win is significantly modified by our fear of widening the war."

"In these circumstances the Communists are likely to feel they can afford to accept a considerable amount of bomb damage while they improve their air defenses and step up their insurgency in South Vietnam. If they take this line of action, in the next few months they can present us with an ever-increasing guerrilla war against the reinforced Viet Cong in terrain and circumstances favorable to the Communists."

"If this situation develops and lasts several months or more, I feel world opinion will turn against us, Communist propaganda will become increasingly effective, and indeed domestic support of our policy may erode."

"I therefore urge that as we deploy additional troops, which I believe necessary, we concurrently hit the north harder and inflict greater damage. In my opinion, we should strike their petroleum supplies, electric power installations, and air defense installations (including the SAM sites which are now being built). I do not think we have to fear taking on the MIG's, which after all the ChiNats defeated in 1958 with F-86's and Sidewinders."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"I am not talking about bombing centers of population or killing innocent people, though there will of course be some casualties. I am proposing to 'tighten the tourniquet' on North Vietnam so as to make the Communists pause to weigh the losses they are taking against their prospects for gains. We should make it hard for the Viet Cong to win in the south and simultaneously hard for Hanoi to endure our attacks in the north."

"I believe this course of action holds out the greatest promise we can hope for in our effort to attain our ultimate objective of finding a political solution to the Vietnam problem. This view follows logically, it seems to me, from our National Intelligence Estimate of 18 February 1965/2/ which concludes that the Hanoi regime would be more likely than not to make an effort to "secure a respite" by some political move when and if, but not before, a sustained U.S. program of air attacks is damaging important economic or military assets in North Vietnam."

"I attach a copy of my memorandum of April 2nd, which may not have come to your attention, since it argues this case in a little more detail."

Some of the points in the attached document were "... I believe our proposed track offers great danger of simply encouraging Chinese Communist and Soviet support of the DRV and VC cause if for no other reason than the risk for both will be minimal. I envision that the reaction of the NVN and Chinese Communists will be to deliberately, carefully, and probably gradually, build up the Viet Cong capabilities by covert infiltration of North Vietnamese and, possibly, Chinese cadres and thus bring an ever-increasing pressure on our forces. In effect, we will find ourselves mired down in combat in the jungle in a military effort that we cannot win, and from which we will have extreme difficulty in extracting ourselves."

"Therefore it is my judgment that if we are to change the mission of the ground forces, we must also change the ground rules of the strikes against North Vietnam. We must hit them harder, more frequently, and inflict greater damage. Instead of avoiding the MIG's, we must go in and take them out. A bridge here and there will not do the job. We must strike their air fields, their petroleum resources, power stations and their military compounds. This, in my opinion, must be done promptly and with minimum restraint. ..."

*FRUS at [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/221\\_240.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/221_240.html), Document 234 Letter From Director of Central Intelligence McCone to President Johnson.*

**04-Apr-65**

2185

Capt Donald W. Kilgus, one of the F-100 pilots supporting the F-105 strikes led by Lt Col Robinson Risner from the 67 TFS, claimed he shot down one of the MiG-17s that were defending the Thanh Hoa Bridge. Kilgus was from the 416 TFS, 3 TFW, England AFB, LA, on TDY at Da Nang. Twelve aircraft from the 416th had deployed to Da Nang on 18 March 65. The full squadron arrived on 22 April.

Other members of this flight on 4 April were Capt Wayne Lanphaer, Ron Green, and Ralph Havens.

The history of the 3 TFW for the period documented the 416th's F-100 MiG engagements. "On 4 April, the 416 TFS was flying RESCAP and MIGCAP when the strike aircraft were attacked by at least three flights of MiGs. The MIGCAP flight spotted two MiG-17s making an attack on an F-105. The flight leader, Lt Col Hays, closed on the first MiG and launched an AIM-9B Sidewinder. The Sidewinder guided within ten feet of the MiG but failed to explode. The MiG ceased attacking the F-105 and took evasive action into the heavy haze layer. The MIGCAP leader's wingman, Captain Connolly, attempted to make a gun attack on the second MiG, firing a quartering head-on burst at the MiG but missed. This MiG also took evasive action into the haze. The MIGCAP flight failed to jettison tanks prior to the attack, which cost them vital maneuverability. Tanks were jettisoned after the first attack but they were unable to relocate the MiGs.

"The RESCAP flight, led by Capt Lanphaer, engaged two MiGs at the same time as the MIGCAP flight. They met head-on at about 19,000 feet. The F-100s attempted to jettison external stores, but only the first two were successful. After one turn, the MiGs were in firing position. One MiG attacked the first element and the other MiG attacked the second. The second element successfully evaded, even though they couldn't get rid of their stores. The first element split, which gave the wingman, Capt Kilgus, a chance to get a few hits on the MiG. This MiG evaded with a low altitude split ess which almost placed the F-100 in a dive too low to recover. (The History of the 3rd

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

TFW, 1 Jan - 30 June 1965, AFHRA Call # K-WG-HI, IRIS # 446796.)

An Air Force historian described a political element to this MiG encounter. "One PACAF pilot believed he scored a hit. As the air-to-air incident appeared to be unduly inflammatory, President Johnson informed the service chiefs he did not want any more MiGs shot down, although circumstances would soon dictate otherwise." (Jacob Van Staaveren, "Gradual Failure", pg 108)

North Vietnamese records of this air battle confirmed that three of four MiG-17s and their pilots in one flight who were defending the Thanh Hoa bridge were lost in combat that day. The MiG-17 attack flight consisted of four aircraft flown by Tran Hanh, the flight leader, with Pham Giay, Le Minh Huan, and Tran Nguyen Nam. In a narrative, Tran Hanh described how he and Le Minh Huan shot down the two F-105s from the 354 TFS. "In the ensuing combat, the numerical superiority of the Americans resulted in the loss of my wingman, as well as Le Minh Huan and Tran Nguyen Nam." ( Istvan Toperczer, "MiG-17 and MiG-19 Units of the Vietnam War", Osprey Publishing, Ltd., 2001, pp 30 - 31.)

The Air Force did not credit Don Kilgus' MiG-kill claim, which, if officially recognized, would be the first MiG kill of the Vietnam War and the only MiG kill credited to an F-100 pilot.

Don Kilgus had three combat tours during the Vietnam War. Between March and June 1968, Capt Kilgus flew 53 combat missions as a Misty FAC in F-100Fs from Phu Cat AB, South Vietnam. He was "Misty 47". ("Misty", pg 583.)

Capt Kilgus upgraded to F-105s at Nellis during the fall of 1969 and attended Wild Weasel class 70BWW between 3 November and 18 December 1969 from which he received Wild Weasel # 835. He was one of the five Wild Weasel pilots supporting the Son Tay raid on 20 November 1970. As "Firebird 5", he and his EWO, Capt Clarence T. Lowry, were shot down in Laos and rescued by two of the empty helicopters returning from Son Tay.

*Interview with Kay Kilgus, Don's widow, at Fort Worth River Rats convention, 24 May 2002 & Corona Harvest Chronology of Significant Airpower Events in Southeast Asia, 1954 - 1967, pg 58.*

### 05-Apr-65

944

"Photos taken by a U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft (from the 4080 SRW TDY to Bien Hoa AB, South Vietnam) on April 5, 1965, disclosed for the first time an SA-2 surface-to-air missile [SAM] site under construction about fifteen miles southeast of Hanoi. The JCS unanimously urged the destruction of the site and others that might be detected before they became operable. McNamara deferred a decision pending discussions with the State Department and the White House, but authorized the services to maintain a 48-hour alert for a strike on the site. A strike order was not forthcoming. Washington's civilian authorities were still committed to limiting the bombing well below the Hanoi-Haiphong area and were inclined to discount the seriousness of the SA-2 threat. One high-ranking civilian, John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, believed that the sole purpose of the Soviet Union in placing missiles around Hanoi was to bolster the sagging morale of the North Vietnamese, not to fire them against aircraft ... "

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pgs 113 - 114.*

### 08-Apr-65 15-Aug-65

13

The 563 TFS from the 23 TFW, McConnell AFB KS, deployed eighteen F-105s to combat operations at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, under "Operation Two Buck Charlie".

The squadron commander was Maj Jack F. Brown. Maj Everett Wayne Harris was the Operations Officer. Maj Billy J. Ellis was the Assistant Ops Officer. "After 51 combat missions, [Ellis] ... returned to Langley AFB in November 1965 and was assigned to Headquarters Tactical Air Command in the Directorate of Operations as F-105 weapon systems project officer. "

The F-105s left McConnell at 10:00 AM on 8 April 1965 with stops at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and Andersen AFB, Guam.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Six pilots had departed with the Initial Support Team (IST) on 7 April. They were Capt Kile Dag "Red" Berg, Capt Jack L. Fowler, Capt Paul W. Hanson, Capt Thomas D. Scott, Capt Robert C. Wistrand, and Capt Charles N. "Charlie" Warner.

Eighteen more flew their F-105s on today's deployment. Seventeen of the pilots were:

Capt Robert Norlan Daughtrey	Capt Bill Sauers
Capt David L. Hrdlicka	Capt Kenneth C. Schow
Capt Robert Jackson	Capt Billy Reid Sparks
Capt Kenneth Johnston	Capt Russell L. Violett
Capt Larry G. Lighty	Capt Richard D. Vogel
Capt Albert L. Logan	Capt Sam Woodworth
Capt Edward D. McCabe	Capt Martin V. Case, Jr.
Capt Craig Miller	Capt Robert R. Reed
Capt James M. Rhodes, Jr.	

The 23 TFW commander, Col Edmund B. Edwards, accompanied the squadron during this deployment. He remained at Takhli as Base Commander until July 1965, when he returned to McConnell for his reassignment to Hq 2nd Air Division at Tan Son Nhut. "He flew more than 40 combat sorties in the F-105 Thunderchief." (USAF Bio Brig Gen Edmund B. Edwards)

Capt Robert R. Reed deployed with the squadron but "... flew only three missions with the 563rd as I had orders to the 35 TFS in Yokota, Japan."

Capt Billy R. Sparks described the squadron's deployment. "The 563TFS, 23TFW, at McConnell were put on alert to deploy to an unknown base in SEA in early Feb. '65. We had been OR for about 6 months and thought we were heading to Japan until the alert orders. We sat around on our butts and tried to figure out what we were going to be doing. We heard that we would be flying combat missions in NVN and that's about all we knew. The siren hooted at 0'Dark-30 on 11 April and we went through a full deployment drill and then sat around for the rest of the day waiting to find out WTFO."

"We had just lost our Squadron CO, Red Hendricks, and had a new CO, Jack Brown, and, due to a retirement, a new Ops Officer, Wayne Harris; so we were a little nervous. We were finally given a departure time of AM 13 Apr. '65 and went home to tell our Ladies that we were going somewhere for sometime."

"Launch was a thing of beauty. The Senior NCO and the Maintenance Officer had all of our birds (21 F-105Ds) lined up and ready to go on the edge of the flightline all in a row. Each of us was greeted by the crew chief and handed forms, all of which had ZERO discrepancies. We all climbed in like the T-Birds and started from a hand salute from the Senior NCO who was starched and standing at rigid attention. Twenty-one birds at once makes one hell of a lot of smoke."

"We took off in flights of 4, with 2 sections of 8 and 1 of 4, headed for our 1st refueling near LA. We carried 4 of the spares all the way to Hickam. We had a terrible time with the first refueling because FAA screwed up everything by delaying the tanker takeoffs. Jack Brown finally got on Guard channel and had everyone head towards Edwards and assigned altitudes for rendezvous with our assigned tankers. I had 1200# when I hooked up and we weren't even feet wet yet. "

"From then everything calmed down and we made it to Hickam -- piece of cake. The pilots had our asses chewed for being motor mouths and then went to the club annex and had a Mai Tai drinking contest. Al Logan (later Maj. General) won with 14 Mai Tai and I finished 2nd with 13. The whole Squadron went to dinner at the Hickam Club and made absolutely wonderful asses of our selves. It looked like the Scene from The Great Santini."

We went to Guam the next day and there were exactly 4 radio transmissions total from take off until landing. The

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

first was "Look at all that water". The next two were exactly the same, and the third was "It's only the top". ... We landed at Guam and were put in the worst barracks I had ever seen. We ended up spending 2 nights there due to really shabby weather between there and Takhli. That was the first time that we were told officially that we were going to Thailand."

"We arrived on 17 Apr. due to the weather and the Dateline. I was met by the same crew chief who launched me. He handed me my banjo and a fairly cool beer. We slept on the floor of the Officers club since they were still building the hooches. We had 2 hooch-type buildings on the flight line and parked our birds on hardstands in pairs. We had 2 officer hooches by the 2nd night and flew our first sorties on the 3rd day we were there. We lost our first aircraft on the 4th day (Sam Woodward) and had our first wake that night."

"The pool was built about 2 months after we arrived. Showers and latrines were built by the end of the third month, of course with no hot water. Each shower had a couple of towers that held water because we had daily power failures and the only water was what was in the towers. The only AC units were in the Comm Shack and one room in the Clinic that was in the old Japanese teak building that still stands at the same place."

"There was NO wing staff or Commander above the Squadron COs from the TAC and PACAF Squadrons that were there. The COs divided up the duty by having the TAC Squadron run things on odd days and the PACAF Squadron run things on even days. Worked for 5 months like a charm."

"The 563rd was deployed there for 4 1/2 months and lost 10 aircraft and 6 pilots. That was when it was easy before things got harder. We watched the bad guys build their SAM system and I watched the first missile lift off from southwest of Hanoi on 20 July '65. There were 3 SA-2 missiles on that launch and they killed 1 F-4C and blew hell out of 2 others that landed at Udorn. We were on the first SAM raid on 27 July where we lost 2 birds and both pilots, and Korat lost 4 birds and 3 pilots. Two of the 5 downed pilots were POWs and the other 3 names are on the 2nd panel of the wall about eye level. ... "

During their Takhli deployment, the squadron flew 3,794 combat hours. They lost eight F-105Ds -- two to accidents and six to combat. Four of their pilots were killed and one became a POW. Pilots and support crew returned home to McConnell after they were relieved on 15 August 1965 by the 562 TFS.

*"Thud" by Lou Drendel. Pages 9 -12 & 23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 65, USAF microfilm MO554 & Bill Sparks, 563 TFS pilot, e-mail to 355TFWTakhli@egroups.com, 27 Nov 00.*

### 08-Apr-65

5052

As a defensive measure against SAMs, discovered in North Vietnam by a U-2 three days earlier, "... SAC was instructed to install 'System 12' electronic countermeasures equipment in its U-2s in Southeast Asia. This equipment was designed to warn pilots if they were being tracked by the SAM's Fan Song radar, but it had very limited jamming capability. Pending the installation of improved 'System 15' ECM equipment, U-2 pilots were directed not to fly within thirty n. m. of known SA-2 sites."

System 12 was the U-2's first-generational electronic warning system that was geared towards monitoring the missile radar guidance systems.

*"Gradual Failure", pg 114.*

### 17-Apr-65

4893

"On April 17 following a week-long visit to Moscow by the First Secretary of North Vietnam's Communist Party, Le Duan, the Soviet and North Vietnamese Governments issued a joint communiqué in which the Soviet Union promised additional military assistance to North Vietnam." This assistance included SA-2 SAMs.

*FRUS at [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/261\\_270.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/261_270.html) Document 263 Editorial Note.*

### 28-Apr-65

4895

On the day he retired as Director of the CIA, John A. McCone sent a letter to President Johnson, once again giving his views of the air war in North Vietnam. The letter was a repeat of the one he had sent earlier in the month (sometime after 2 April 1965).

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Dear Mr. President:

"I remain concerned, as I have said before to you, Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara, over the limited scale of air action against North Vietnam which we envision for the next few months.

"Specifically I feel that we must conduct our bombing attacks in a manner that will begin to hurt North Vietnam badly enough to cause the Hanoi regime to seek a political way out through negotiation rather than expose their economy to increasingly serious levels of destruction. By limiting our attacks to targets like bridges, military installations and lines of communication, in effect we signal to the Communists that our determination to win is significantly modified by our fear of widening the war.

"In these circumstances the Communists are likely to feel they can afford to accept a considerable amount of bomb damage while they improve their air defenses and step up their insurgency in South Vietnam. If they take this line of action, in the next few months they can present us with an ever-increasing guerrilla war against the reinforced Viet Cong in terrain and circumstances favorable to the Communists.

"If this situation develops and lasts several months or more, I feel world opinion will turn against us, Communist propaganda will become increasingly effective, and indeed domestic support of our policy may erode.

"I therefore urge that as we deploy additional troops, which I believe necessary, we concurrently hit the north harder and inflict greater damage. In my opinion, we should strike their petroleum supplies, electric power installations, and air defense installations (including the SAM sites which are now being built). I do not think we have to fear taking on the MIG's, which after all the ChiNats defeated in 1958 with F-86's and Sidewinders.

"I am not talking about bombing centers of population or killing innocent people, though there will of course be some casualties. I am proposing to 'tighten the tourniquet' on North Vietnam so as to make the Communists pause to weigh the losses they are taking against their prospects for gains. We should make it hard for the Viet Cong to win in the south and simultaneously hard for Hanoi to endure our attacks in the north.

"I believe this course of action holds out the greatest promise we can hope for in our effort to attain our ultimate objective of finding a political solution to the Vietnam problem. This view follows logically, it seems to me, from our National Intelligence Estimate of 18 February 1965, which concludes that the Hanoi regime would be more likely than not to make an effort to 'secure a respite' by some political move when and if, but not before, a sustained U.S. program of air attacks is damaging important economic or military assets in North Vietnam."

On 28 April 1965, McCone was replaced as the Director of the CIA by Admiral William F. Raborn, Jr. (USN, Ret.)

[http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/271\\_285.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/271_285.html) Document 279.

**03-May-65**

5064

After being formed on 7 January 1965, the first missile unit in North Vietnam began their training on the SA-2 system.

"On 3 May 1965, 236th Regiment began its training, following a six-month branch conversion training program, with Soviet specialists personally teaching the classes. The training formula utilized was to make practical application the primary focus, concentrating on the actions of each individual missile operator and gunner, and ensuring close coordination within the entire combat crew of each individual missile battalion. Every theoretical lesson was immediately followed by practical training to put the theories into practice.

"Because only one set of missile equipment was set up to conduct training, the crews had to take turns in conducting practical training. For this reason, on average training was conducted 14 or 15 hours every day under conditions in which the temperature inside the equipment [vans] sometimes reached 450 degrees Centigrade.

"Less than two months after the training program had begun, an order was received from the Supreme Commander, Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap: 'The members of the 236th Regiment must rapidly master their weapons and

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

equipment in order to quickly enter the fray and win victories.'

"To implement the order received from the Supreme Commander, the Air Defense-Air Force Service Party Committee and Headquarters decided to reduce the training period from six months to two months and fifteen days. The slogan put forward during this period was, 'Time is victory; time will be decisive in determining victory.' The cadre and enlisted men threw themselves into their studies, night and day, concentrating primarily on practical training in order to be able to begin combat as quickly as possible."

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 26 - 27, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**10-May-65**

621

(Approximate date). Pilots of the 563 TFS, 23 TFW, flying combat from Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, reported seeing SAM sites being built in North Vietnam. Capt Billy R. Sparks recalled that, "Al Logan came in to Ops in mid May and said, 'The gomers are building a SAM site about 25 nm south of Hanoi.' ... I took off later and went to have a look. They were building something that looked like a weird star and I reported it (to Intelligence) as soon as I landed. Russ Violet landed just after and did the same thing. Nothing happened. Maj. Jack Brown, 563rd TFS Commander, went down to (Second Air Division in) Saigon to get permission to hit it and was told to not 'bother the Russians'. We were ordered to leave (the sites) (by now 4) alone. "

*Lt Col Bill Sparks, retired F-105 pilot, e-mail to Weasel Net, 12 November 1998*

**16-May-65**

4898

Discussions in a meeting in President Johnson's office at 6:45 p.m. in the White House, attended by the President, Rusk, McNamara, Acheson, Ball, Raborn, and Jack Valenti (Special Assistant to the President), centered around ending the bombing pause ordered on 12 May 1965 and some of the targets to strike after the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam.

"Rusk: In my talks with Dobrynin and Gromyko, they said the Russians were not going to trade with or negotiate. We must deal with Hanoi and Peking. Therefore, there is nothing on Russian side to cause us to hold off bombing." This comment was about the failure of the peace feelers, called Project Mayflower, that the Soviets were involved in when, on 13 May, Mike Sagetallyan, former TASS Bureau Chief in Washington approached Pierre Salinger who was in Moscow on a private movie production deal.

"Perhaps we should bomb again, then pause, and then bomb again.

"The President: I thought we were going to pause only 5 days.

"McNamara: To achieve proper objective, we should go 7 days. One advantage is we will answer Times. They wanted us to take a week. We can hold until Wednesday." His reference was to an editorial in the New York Times on Sunday, May 16, dealing with the bombing pause. The New York Times called for an extension of the pause to allow additional time for negotiations to develop.

"McNamara: Let's talk to the leaders on Monday and tell them we are starting again to bomb on Monday night.

"McNamara: Target #29 (JCS 29) is a military barracks 10 miles further north than we have ever gone. I urge to leave this target in. Our own military will say we have gone soft if we take it out [of the target list] again. Also, it can be our message to Hanoi and Peking.

"The President: What do you think about the threats from Russia about coming in?

"Rusk: There is a flash point in the Hanoi area in how far you can go without bringing the Russians in. Gromyko said he was going to help North Viet Nam and help them decisively.

"The President: What about the SAM sites? Question is whether we let the clock tick or whether we take them out now." The reference was to a series of surface-to-air missile sites being established by Soviet technicians as an

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

integrated anti-aircraft system in North Vietnam.

"McNamara: We can't go after the SAM sites unless you go after the MIG airfields. We don't think we are at that point now. Most you would lose would be 3 or 4 crews. They don't have one SAM operational right now.

"We have to go after MIG airfields first. First.

"B-52's to plaster the airfields at night. There may be civilians involved since all bombs won't hit target. Then fighter bombers go in. And then we take out the SAM's.

"This is a major operation from the Hanoi point of view.

"Fair to say not more than one SAM site will be operational in 4 weeks." (DOS Historian's note: "McNamara and Rusk agreed, in a telephone conversation on May 17 [the day after the White House meeting], that it would be "a great mistake" to attack the SAM missile sites. Rusk felt that such an attack would guarantee a rapid escalation of the conflict. (Department of State, Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)"

[http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/301\\_310.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/301_310.html), Document 304 (Valenti notes of meeting).

**18-May-65 24-May-65**

953

At 0600, the Rolling Thunder 15 (RT 15) campaign restarted the bombing of North Vietnam after the 5-day 20-hour bombing halt during which "... no reduction in NVN support of the VC was detected."

The start of Rolling Thunder 15, also marked the second of six "phases" of the Rolling Thunder campaign. This second phase lasted until 24 December 1965. (Air Interdiction in WW II, Korea, and Vietnam", USAF Warrior Studies, Office of Air Force History, footnote pg 61.)

"... Specific areas were named for the armed reconnaissance for the first time. There was one raid allowed above the 20 degree parallel, which was on the barracks at Quang Suoi (JCS 29) (near Ninh Binh)."

"Program 15 also permitted more armed reconnaissance of coastal areas, harassment of offshore shipping and more night reconnaissance. However, reconnaissance was restricted to 40 sorties a day and no more than 200 sorties in a week. Twelve more sorties could be flown to destroy suddenly discovered trucks, rolling stock, and naval craft not hit within the week's sortie allocation. Finally, the directive enjoined the services once again to exercise 'utmost caution' and avoid populated areas in close proximity to the targets."

"The specific goal of the Rolling Thunder program, according to the Secretary of Defense, was to destroy targets essential to the infiltration of men and materiel into Laos and South Vietnam within limitations imposed by higher authority. To do this, the program resumed in late May, was to be directed against certain categories of targets south of the 20th parallel, avoiding population centers. These targets were (1) LOCs, including land transport systems, storage areas, inland waterways, and coastal shipping, (2) military installations, including barracks and headquarters, training facilities, communication facilities, ammo dumps, POL storage, supply areas, airfield and naval bases [but not SAM sites], and (3) thermal power plants. Strikes against fixed targets could be accomplished on an incremental basis by scheduling appropriate numbers of aircraft for repeated strikes, as indicated by BDA. In addition to attacks against fixed targets, extensive day and night armed recce would be conducted over North Vietnamese LOCs from the DMZ to the 20th parallel, including estuaries and coastal islands. The objective of armed recce would be the maximum interdiction of LOCs through surveillance and destruction of targets encountered, including railroad rolling stock, trucks, ferries, lighters, radar sites, secondary bridges, road repair equipment, bivouac and staging areas, naval craft mooring areas, North Vietnamese naval craft and other craft which fired on friendly aircraft."

"One strike per week was to be planned against a military target north of the 20th, avoiding the Hanoi-Haiphong area and population centers. Sorties used for this purpose would be in addition to 400 strike sorties a week authorized for allocation to attacks against fixed targets and armed recce."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 25-6 & "Rolling Thunder" by John T. Smith, pg 335 & "Gradual Failure: 1 Air War Over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966.", pg 136 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, March - June 1965, pgs 51 - 52.*

**25-May-65 03-Jun-65**

954

"The next series of Rolling Thunder programs, numbers 16 to 21 (RT 16) and encompassing the period from May 25 to July 8, continued the gradual northward trend of Air Force and Navy strikes and included restrikes against fixed targets and armed reconnaissance missions. The weekly cycle of Washington's authorization for U.S. attacks on the north's targets was uninterrupted except for program 16, which lasted ten days, from May 25 to June 3."

In phase 16, "the number of armed reconnaissance sorties was increased to 40 per day with no more than 200 during the package. The total number of strikes during May had increased to 4,000."

"Still under orders to achieve 'maximum feasible damage,' air commanders often scheduled large armadas of thirty, forty, or more aircraft against a single target area. Operational rules for aircrews continued to be relaxed gradually, but OSD, the State Department, and frequently the President still dictated target selection and the overall sortie rate. Administration authorities also maintained a ban on strikes in populated areas, MiG bases, and SA-2 missile sites."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966.", pg 137 and 138 & "Rolling Thunder" by John T. Smith, pg 335*

**27-May-65**

2760

On 27 May, the JCS "... warned Secretary McNamara that the growing SAM menace could threaten US air operations within a considerable area around Hanoi. Because the first SAM site discovered could become operational at any time, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended that, despite political factors, the site be destroyed as a matter of 'military urgency' and that this attack be coordinated with a B-52 strike on Phuc Yen airfield."

"On May 27 the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a memorandum to the Secretary of Defense recommending air strikes against the surface-to-air missile sites (SAM) being developed by Soviet technicians in North Vietnam, and against the Phuc Yen air base outside of Hanoi, where Soviet-supplied MIG fighters had recently been augmented by five IL-28 light bombers provided by the Soviet Union. (Washington National Records Center, RG 330, OSD Files: Lot 71 A 6489, Misc Sensitive Files, Vietnam 381)

"The Joint Chiefs considered that, although the offensive threat posed by the bombers was limited, 'a failure to act could connote a weakening of US resolve to fulfill its commitment to defend Southeast Asia in the face of support of the DRV from the USSR.'" (Ibid.) McNamara considered the proposal, and his marginal notations on the memorandum, although difficult to decipher, apparently indicate his concern over the risk of losses involved in the proposed operations, as well as the risk of an embarrassing international reaction to such attacks.

"On May 27 McNamara sent a memorandum to the Director of Central Intelligence to ask for an intelligence assessment of the probable and possible Soviet, Chinese, and North Vietnamese reactions to the military operations proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. (Department of State, Central Files, ORG 1 OSD-STATE) The CIA responded on June 2 with SNIE 10-6-65, 'Probable Communist Reactions to Certain US Actions', which concluded that the probable Soviet, Chinese and North Vietnamese reactions would be limited, and would not involve direct Chinese intervention nor a North Vietnamese invasion of the south.

"The Department of State dissented from the conclusion, and anticipated that the proposed attacks might prompt a response from air bases in mainland China. (Ibid., INR-NIE Files) The Department of State had indicated a similar concern on May 27 when Rusk called McNamara to discuss the rules of engagement governing immediate pursuit in connection with the Rolling Thunder bombing operations. Rusk asked that McNamara make it clear that pursuit operations against North Vietnamese aircraft include a caution against attacking air bases or other ground targets that were not on the designated target list. (Ibid., Rusk Files: Lot 72 D 192, Telephone Calls)

"McNamara returned the call on May 28 and indicated that instructions had been issued that no North Vietnamese SAM sites or air bases were to be attacked by U.S. aircraft. (Ibid.)

"On June 2 McNamara sent a memorandum to the President in which he indicated that three senior U.S. military

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

and diplomatic officials in Europe recommended against attacks on the IL-28 bomber base in North Vietnam (Document 325)."

The discussions about the Russian-installed SAM sites in North Vietnam apparently failed to consider the danger they posed to U-2s during the Cuban missile crisis nearly three years earlier. McNamara was President Kennedy's Secretary of Defense during these October 1962 deliberations and should have remembered that the Russian SAM site operators did not hesitate to use them against our surveillance aircraft over Cuba.

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 26-2 & FRUS at [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/311\\_320.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/311_320.html), Document 318 Editorial Note.*

**30-May-65**

2697

In an effort to secure better defenses against potential North Vietnamese air attacks in South Vietnam, "... COMUSMACV (General Westmoreland) notified CINCPAC (Admiral Sharp) that three SA-2 missile sites near Hanoi were nearing operational readiness and posed a potential threat to Trojan Horse (SAC U-2) recce operations. When the sites were operational, they could deny U.S. high altitude photo intelligence of the Hanoi area unless destroyed, he added."

"... There were several factors, he said, which dictated the destruction of these SAM sites before they became operational. Trojan Horse high-altitude photo intelligence could continue without high risk. Knocking out the sites one at a time just prior to their becoming operational would involve minimum risk and cost. Waiting for the first one to be activated would involve high risk and potentially high losses. The destruction of the sites would have a demoralizing effect on North Vietnam while giving the Republic of Vietnam a psychological lift. Finally, every SAM site allowed to reach completion would improve the defense of Phuc Yen Airfield, thereby increasing the risk of attack on South Vietnam airfields (by IL-28 bombers and MiGs that were being based at Phuc Yen)."

General Westmoreland's rationale for destroying the SAM sites did not envision the serious consequences of SAMs to the F-105s and F-4s involved in the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign over North Vietnam.

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, March - June 1965, pg 54.*

**01-Jun-65**

4900

In a telegram to the American embassy in Saigon, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, discussed the purpose of and approach to the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign and solicited Ambassador Taylor's comments.

"To Ambassadors Taylor and Johnson only from Under Secretary. We have now reached a point in planning for successive Rolling Thunder operations where we must be clear as to precisely what we are trying to do.

"In broad terms, there are two possible approaches to the Vietnamese struggle:

"I. The major premise of the first approach is that the war must be won in the South. Under this approach, airstrikes in the North should be regarded as ancillary to our operations in the principal theater. Such air strikes should be designed to achieve three purposes:

"A. To raise morale in South Viet-Nam and give credibility to our intention to stay the course.

"B. To lower the morale of the North Vietnamese and to create concern in Hanoi that the USG might extend its bombing so as greatly to increase the costs of trying to overrun SVN by military means.

"C. To harass supply lines and reduce the ability of North Viet-Nam to conduct effective infiltration of men and materials.

"II. The second approach places much greater emphasis on the total contribution of the air attacks in the North to the ultimate decision. Under this approach our air offensive would so be designed as to impose increasing pressure on the North Vietnamese until they stopped their action against the South even though we might not be winning the war in the South.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"The distinction between these two approaches has direct relevance to the conduct of the air offensive. Since, under the first approach, it is assumed that the war must ultimately be decided in the South, we should avoid those North Vietnamese targets (such as those in the Hanoi-Haiphong area) that would be most likely to trigger a greater Chinese and Soviet intervention. If, as suggested in Embtel 768,<sup>2/</sup> the tonic effect of bombing on South Viet-Nam morale is wearing off, do you believe that this effect would be heightened by intensifying the bombing of North Viet-Nam even though it might bring a larger Chinese and Soviet involvement?

<sup>2/</sup>Reference is to telegram 3768 from Saigon, May 15, in which the Embassy reported that Buddhist leader Tri Quang had told Embassy officers that he believed that the psychological lift achieved by the U.S. bombing of North Vietnam and the landing of U.S. troops in South Vietnam was wearing off. (Ibid.)

"If on the other hand, we accept the logic of the second proposal, we should presumably be prepared to assume greater risks of Chinese and Soviet involvement in an effort to persuade Hanoi to stop. This means that we might logically proceed, within the relatively near future, to bomb the military installations in the Hanoi-Haiphong area. Such an action would seek to achieve the ultimate US objective without the need to depend on victory in the South which would make the risks of a greater Moscow-Peiping involvement worth assuming.

"The relevance of all this to the present situation is obvious. Action against NVN by US-GVN forces has now reached a critical point. We must decide whether to proceed on one of the three following courses:

"The first is to continue progressively to move northward in our air attacks, recognizing that any further movement nearer the Hanoi-Haiphong area poses grave danger of a serious encounter with MIGs that could draw us into attacks on MIG bases and SAM sites and the attendant possibility of greater Chinese and Russian involvement. In fact, the Rolling Thunder operations, for several weeks, have been in areas where the MIGs might easily have engaged. Their failure to do so (except once) may well be because they are waiting for the early activation of the SAM sites. Attacks on Haiphong and Hanoi could be expected to offer the same dangers as strikes on the MIG bases.

"A second possibility is to move northward but keep far enough west of the Hanoi-Haiphong area to avoid the range of the SAMs. This would be on the assumption--not yet proven--that this course would offer less danger of escalation. We would like your comments on the validity of this assumption. Would the Chinese permit us to approach nearer their territory without reacting?

"A third possibility is to expand the present rules to include industrial and other non-military targets that would not entail high civilian casualty rates. This course would permit a continuation of bombing south of the 20th Parallel without providing reactions appreciably different from attacks on the present target systems.

"In order to make these decisions we need your answers to the following questions:

"1. Do you believe that our best hope is to seek to win the war in the South while employing air attacks in the North for the ancillary purposes outlined in assumption I above maintaining approximately the same level and geographical scope of bombing as Rolling Thunder programs to date?

"2. Do you now believe that, in view of the military and political difficulties in SVN we should begin to shape our air effort against the North more in the direction of assumption II above?

"3. Do you believe that we would have a reasonable chance of persuading Hanoi to quit by increasing the destructiveness of our air attacks so long as the Viet Cong were winning or at least holding their own in the South? If so, do you believe that such pressure could be mounted without unacceptable risks to the United States from an enlarged Soviet/Chinese involvement?

"4. Taking into account your answers to the above questions, how do you apply these answers to the requested authorization for Rolling Thunder 17 tomorrow morning?<sup>3/</sup> RT 17 includes suggested strikes on target 43, Qui Hau

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Ammo Depot, which is 12 NM farther north than target 47.11 in RT 16 program, 4/ 3 NM closer to Phuc Yen (47 NM) and same distance (40 NM) from Hanoi; target 82.11 Ben Thuy Thermal Power Plant; and target 71/18.17 Ben Thuy Port and Ferry with estimated civilian casualty loss of 59 persons.

"3/In JCS telegram 3263 to CINCPAC, June 2, the JCS detailed the target list and intent of Rolling Thunder Seventeen and authorized CINCPAC to implement the bombing program. (Ibid.)

"4/Target 47.11, authorized as a bombing target in the execute message for the Rolling Thunder Sixteen program, was the Hoai An ammunition depot, located 26 nautical miles north of the 20th parallel. (JCS telegram 2672 to CINCPAC, May 22; *ibid.*)

"Finally let us know how you feel about the method in which authorized strikes are carried out. Do you learn about targets sufficiently in advance? Do you favor existing authority to permit repeated restrikes of given target until given damage level achieved? Should strikes against North be run daily or intermittently?

"Question of IL-28s is being given separate study here."

Two days later, on 3 June 1965, Ambassador Taylor replied to the questions directed at him.

"1. In answer to your questions, we do not see here that the line between the two possible approaches set forth in refel is quite as sharp as it comes out in that telegram. The air campaign in the North and the anti-Viet Cong campaign in the South are, in our thinking, two parts of a single coherent program. The air attacks have as their primary objectives the termination of Hanoi's support for the VC whereas the campaign in South Vietnam has as its primary objective the destruction of the Viet Cong military apparatus within the country. In addition to their primary objectives, each program reacts upon the other. Thus, the anti-Viet Cong effort is made easier by any reduction of infiltration, and the will of Hanoi is sapped by evidence of failure of the Viet Cong effort in the South. Viewed in this light, there should be no question of holding back the air strikes in the North while maximizing the in-country campaign against the Viet Cong (Approach I) or of stepping up the air strikes to compensate for the deficiencies of the in-country program (Approach II). Rather, both should be maximized concurrently, not only for the purpose of attaining their primary objectives, but for the collateral effects in support of one another.

"2. In further comment on Approach II, we should like to make very clear that we do not believe that any feasible amount of bombing of the North is of itself likely to cause the DRV to cease and desist in its actions in the South. Such a change in DRV attitudes can probably be brought about only when, along with a sense of mounting pain from the bombings, there is also a conviction on their part that the tide has turned or soon will turn against them in the South. Obviously these two conditions have not yet been met and our job in the coming months will be to bring them about. This may take a long time and we should not expect quick results. Holding this view, we do not here sense that our action against the DRV by US-GVN forces has yet reached a 'critical point' in the sense that we must sharply change the pattern and objectives of our attacks against the DRV. We do think, however, that the pattern should be constantly evolving. Our air actions against Hanoi should always be on an ascending scale expressed both in weight of effort and geographical location of targets. It is true that the last two Rolling Thunders have had single targets progressively somewhat closer to the Hanoi-Haiphong area, but in general after commencing Rolling Thunder attacks, we quickly reached a plateau which is still being maintained. Also as set forth in our Embtel 3753, we feel that the pattern should be somewhat more random. This thought was to some extent incorporated in Rolling Thunder 16 and weather has also contributed by forcing on us a more random pattern. We understand that weather will be an increasing factor in the coming months.

"3. If our assumptions with respect to DRV reactions are correct, there is no strategy that can bring about a quick solution, but rather our strategy must be based upon a patient and steady increase of pressure following an escalating pattern while making maximum effort to turn the tide here in the South. This does not mean that we must 'win' in the South to bring about a change in DRV attitudes, but rather the DRV must perceive that the tide has turned or is likely soon to turn. Hopefully at this point the DRV will seek to find some way out, and if and when it does, there could be a 'bandwagon' effect that would so lower VC morale and so raise that of South Vietnam as to permit

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

bringing major hostilities to a reasonable early conclusion.

"4. In extension of the foregoing observations, we would answer your questions as follows:

(A) Question No. 1--We do not believe in employing air attacks in the North for purposes precisely as expressed in Approach I. In particular, with regard to No. I-B, we would not take as our purpose to 'create concern in Hanoi that the U.S. Government might extend its bombing so as greatly to increase the costs of trying to overrun South Vietnam by military means'. This statement suggests that a fear of possible consequences alone is our main purpose, whereas it seems to us that there must be actual pain inflicted by attacks and, in addition, the fear of increased pain in order to have maximum effect in changing Hanoi's behavior. Of course, we would also like to raise morale in the South and lower morale in the North, but these benefits are coincidental to the drive on the Hanoi will to continue to support the Viet Cong. Also, we would like to do as much as possible in the harassment of supply lines to reduce effective infiltration, but we recognize and accept the impossibility of attaining this objective except to a limited degree.

"(B) Question No. 2--We do not believe that we should re-shape our air effort with the idea that increased bombing will compensate for losses on the military and political fronts in the South. On the other hand, we would not cease to apply the kind of mounting pressure described in paragraph 2 above. While we should do everything possible to win on both fronts, North and South, we should not let up in the North because things are not going well in the South.

"(C) Question No. 3--As we have indicated above, the chance of persuading Hanoi to lay off while the Viet Cong are winning or holding their own in the South is obviously not good. However, we repeat that this fact is no reason to limit the bombing effort in the North. It simply means that we must try harder in the South while bearing down on the North. It is impossible to say whether added pressure would create unacceptable risks of an enlarged Soviet-Chinese involvement except in terms of specific targets. Obviously, any extension of the present target system should be examined closely for [from] this point of view.

"(D) Question No. 4--In consideration of our views expressed above, we have recommended the approval of Rolling Thunder 17 (Embtel 4004).

"5. With respect to the method of carrying out authorized strikes, the present pattern is generally satisfactory to us. We need approximately 48 hours, from receipt of the execution order to bombs on target, for me to clear with the Prime Minister and General Westmoreland the Minister of Defense and Commander-in-Chief of the RVNAF. A two-week program is preferable to a one-week program. Desirably, operating units should receive the warning order one week prior to execution in order to permit adequate planning. A two-week program with execution delegated to the operation level would provide flexibility in coping with the vagaries of the weather and other factors, including in-country competition for sorties. Whether strikes are made daily or intermittently would not seem to be significant, but experience suggests that more frequent strikes by fewer aircraft reduces losses. Additionally, varied and repeated strikes serve to complicate the problem for the DRV defenses.

"6. In addition to answering your questions, we would like to make some specific comments on targeting, derived from the three courses of action discussed in refel. As we understand these three courses of action, the first involves a progressive movement northward without consideration for the sensitivity of the Hanoi/Haiphong area; the second moves northward but sideslips to the west, and perhaps to the east, to avoid the SAM's; and the third confines our efforts south of the 20th parallel but includes industrial or non-military targets.

"7. In consonance with the concept earlier expressed, it is important that we constantly add to the pressure on the DRV. If we continue to concentrate on lines of communications as in the past, the very repetition of our actions designed to disrupt and maintain the disruption of these communications is in itself a form of escalation. In addition, while maintaining this interdiction program, we would like to introduce variety by occasionally striking a target on a random basis outside of the LOONC [LOC?] pattern, such as a power plant, military installation, dam site, supply area, industrial complex. By so doing, we complicate the DRV defense problem and make it clear that we are limited to no single target plan. Thus, nothing other than populated areas is immune to attack.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

"8. Under this concept, we would avoid the sensitive area of Hanoi/Haiphong except for an occasional well selected target within the area struck to show that we can penetrate and that there is no sure sanctuary. We do not feel that an occasional selective intrusion into this area is likely to invoke a Chinese reaction even though we tangle with MIG's.

"9. The number of industrial and other significant non-military targets below the 20th parallel are few and far between. In fact there are very few such targets outside of the Hanoi/Haiphong complex. We agree that non-military targets should be struck as a variation from the LOC pattern, but only occasionally and selectively, both North and South of the 20th parallel.

"10. In summary we recommend a basic pattern of LOC targets varied occasionally by other kinds of targets both South and North of the 20th parallel to include the Hanoi/Haiphong area. Upon this pattern, we would superimpose a program of full fledged psywar operations as an integral part of Rolling Thunder. This would require only a slight increase in air effort. Leaflet drops should precede and sometimes accompany strikes, having the primary purpose of explaining the cause and nature of Rolling Thunder and of magnifying popular anxiety.

"11. We appreciate this opportunity to present our views on these important subjects."

*[http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/321\\_330.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/321_330.html), Document 324. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam & Document 328. Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to the Department of State.*

**04-Jun-65 10-Jun-65**

957

"In Rolling Thunder 17 (RT 17), emphasis was placed on armed reconnaissance of routes emanating from Vinh with sufficient repetitive attacks to insure proper interdiction of the LOCs. SAM sites were explicitly excluded as targets."

"In this package the total of armed recon. sorties was again increased to 260."

This was "... still well below existing capabilities and too small an effort to be effective. The authorization for armed reconnaissance was at least changed from stated routes to broadly defined geographical areas; all of these, however, were still south of twenty degrees latitude. At long last the people in the field were given just a little opportunity to use their initiative, but their freedom of action still was severely limited."

"The kinds of reconnaissance targets that might be specified were also expanded somewhat during this period to include railroad rolling stock, trucks, ferries, lighters, barges, radar sites, secondary bridges, road repair equipment, North Vietnamese naval craft, bivouac and maintenance areas. ... Emphasis was directed on armed reconnaissance routes emanating from Vinh in order to restrict traffic in and out of this communication hub."

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 25-10 & "Rolling Thunder" by John T. Smith, pg 335 & "Strategy for Defeat", by Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, USN (Ret.), pgs 85 - 86.*

**09-Jun-65**

4901

Secretary of State Dean Rusk asked Ambassador Johnson in Saigon his opinion on a proposal for B-52s to attack IL-28 bombers at MiG bases and SAM sites in North Vietnam.

"Washington, June 9, 1965, 7:29 p.m.

"1/Source: Department of State, Central Files, POL 27 VIET S. Top Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Drafted by William Bundy. Bundy initialed the source text to indicate that he had cleared the message in the Department of State with Rusk and in the Department of Defense with McNamara.

"2847. Eyes only Ambassador Johnson from Secretary. We are considering here proposal to knock out IL-28's and SAM sites nearest completion through major single air strike including use of SAC B-52's. We would like your personal reaction, in consultation with Westmoreland only, if he is available, concerning such a course of action.

"Intelligence community estimates that such attack would cause DRV to believe future attacks on urban centers much more likely and that general US actions might be stepped up. However, conclusion is that Hanoi would accept

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

punishment as long as it believes it is winning in SVN and would not be led to make conciliatory gestures. Retaliatory VC raids and even possibly air strikes would be considered by Hanoi, but intelligence community does not believe DRV would react by overt invasion of SVN although it might step up VC support and increase DRV line units in SVN.

"Estimate is that ChiComs would furnish additional support, which DRV would probably request, including additional fighter aircraft. Majority believe ChiComs would not engage in air combat over DRV from ChiCom bases but minority thinks this probable. Sovs would be put on major spot but would probably react initially by replacing most of destroyed equipment, though perhaps not IL-28's themselves at once. Sovs would probably reach general conclusion they had little choice but to increase aid to DRV.

"On other hand, intelligence community estimates that not attacking these targets might lead to Communist conclusion US, at least for time being, has accepted certain limitations and ground rules in bombing of DRV. Sovs might take somewhat more rigid position though still hoping for negotiated settlement and Hanoi might conclude it could press war in South at no greater risk to key DRV areas. Intelligence community does not believe Sovs would necessarily increase build-up of offensive weapons, although they might do so. Also conclude that it is unlikely DRV now intends to use IL-28's in offensive operations with or without attack, although special circumstances might arise or Hanoi might conceivably try an individual raid with them.

"Your comments should cover your general reaction and any comment you may have on above intelligence community estimates. I personally am not of course necessarily in agreement with the estimates but they are part of the material I must use in reaching my personal judgment. Request reply to reach here morning June 10 if possible./2/

"2/Ambassador Johnson responded with telegram 4134 from Saigon, June 10, sent as a personal message to the Secretary. Johnson noted that he considered the IL-28s and SAMs to be differing problems, in that the bomber was an offensive weapon and the missiles had a strictly defensive capability. On balance, taking into account the danger of involving Chinese forces in the conflict, Johnson concluded that the purpose of demonstrating U.S. resolve without broadening the war could be achieved by limited, selective attacks on SAM missile sites. He noted that Westmoreland concurred in this recommendation. Johnson added: 'This is going to be a long war and there are no shortcuts yet in sight. We should not let our natural frustrations and impatience mislead us into ill considered efforts to find shortcuts.' (Ibid.)"

*FRUS in [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_ii/341\\_343.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_ii/341_343.html), Document 342. Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Vietnam.*

### 12-Jun-65

742

Personnel of the 354 TFS were relieved from temporary duty at Korat RTAFB, Thailand, by the 357 TFS from the 355 TFW, McConnell AFB KS. The 354th commander was Lt Col Charles A. Watry who had flown 48 combat missions during his TDY. Capt Charles Loucks was a 354 TFS pilot on the redeployment.

The 357 TFS was commanded by Lt Col George C. McCleary who had led the squadron during its first deployment between August and December 1964 to Yokota AB, Japan.

During their three months of combat at Korat, the 354 TFS had flown 1274 sorties out of the 1488 scheduled. They flew 2360.4 hours of combat and combat support flying time out of a total of 2766.3 flying hours. Squadron pilots flew 632 Rolling Thunder missions over North Vietnam, and 102 Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger missions into Laos. Among the targets struck were 13 bridges damaged and 9 destroyed; 18 trucks destroyed and 7 others damaged; 10 barracks and supply areas damaged and 7 destroyed; seven radar sites damaged, and one POL storage area destroyed. (Frames 0758 - 0759)

While at Korat, the 354 TFS lost five aircraft and two pilots and many aircraft were damaged in combat.

"Throughout the deployment, aircraft losses were suffered on several occasions due to enemy action. One was hit by flak and had to be transferred to Taiwan for repairs. Five were shot down. Of these five, two were aircraft and pilots lost to MiG attack on 4 April 1965. Another was lost to ground fire but the pilot was recovered from the sea

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

with minor injuries by an HU-16. The fifth aircraft was hit near Vinh, but the pilot flew to the sea for bailout, where he was picked up by an HU-16. He was only slightly injured. One other aircraft was hit by flak, causing the aircraft to pitch up violently. Subsequent damages from this necessitated shipping it to a depot for final determination of its air-worthiness. There were 21 other aircraft hit by flak or small-arms fire, with all repairs being made on station." (Frame 0756)

The five F-105D losses in the 354 TFS during this combat deployment at Korat were:

04 April 1965 - 59-1754 - Capt Frank E. Bennett - Shot down by MiG-17. KIA.  
04 April 1965 - 59-1764 - Capt James A. Magnusson, Jr. - Shot down by MiG-17. KIA.  
05 April 1965 - 59-1718 - Maj Robert E. Lambert - Rescued by HU-16  
23 May 1965 - 61-0054 - Maj Robert F. Herman - Rescued by HU-16  
08 June 1965 - 62-4290 - Capt Harold W. Rademacher - Rescued by HH-43B helicopter.

"The redeployment of the 354th Tactical Fighter Squadron to McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas, was a personnel rotation only, and deviated considerably from the schedule that was agreed upon by TAC and MATS. In general, it appeared that the MATS crews were not aware of the schedule published by TAC. Due to the critical lack of facilities at the FOB, and the importance of air operations there, detailed phasing and planning of the cross switch was a necessity. When the first aircraft was one day late at the FOB, the smooth transition of air and ground crews was interrupted, thereby degrading the efficiency of the operation. The fifth and final aircraft was delayed three days by a higher priority move. With no warning, another aircraft was diverted into the FOB and was unnecessarily delayed because the personnel were not expecting it. The move back to McConnell was completed by 18 June 1965." (Frames 0757 - 0758)

After replacing the 354 TFS, the 357 TFS remained at Korat for June and July 1965. During this time it's pilots were involved in the first SAM site attack on 27 July 1965.

The 357th then moved to Kadena AB, Okinawa, in August. Some of its pilots returned to Korat until November 1965. In addition to the commander, Lt Col McCleary, the 357th squadron roster during this period included the following pilots:

Maj Jack Graham Farr - Operations Officer	Capt William S. Koenitzer
Maj Robert W. Wilson	Capt William Thomas May
Capt Richard K. Ely	Capt John F. Manning
Capt Glen H. Hales	Capt Gilbert Bruce Holmes, Jr.
Capt John C. Gordon	Capt Harold "Buff" Rademacher
Capt Herbert T. Standing	Capt George M. "Squeeks" Weeks
Capt Richard W. Cullen	Capt Donald E. Langwell
Capt Robert T. Saffel	Capt John O. Colton
Capt William Jennings "Bart" Barthelmas, Jr.	Capt Stanton G. Lockley
Capt William T. Ramage	Capt Larry C. "Muff" Mahaffey

Capt Gordon had arrived "... as advance party for the deployment in late May '65."

Capt Willie May arrived at Korat on 11 June 1965.

*355 TFW History, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 1965, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 0737 and 0756 - 0759 & squadron photo with names & Charles Watry letter dated 13 Feb 85 to Bauke Jan Douma.*

**15-Jun-65 25-Aug-65**

535

With its personnel traveling by C-54, the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, deployed from Kadena AB, Okinawa, to Korat RTAFB, Thailand, to relieve the 44 TFS as the PACAF fighter squadron on temporary duty at Korat.

This rotation ended the 44th's second combat deployment during which "... the 44th flew a record of 813 combat sorties. During their sixty-day stay, they amassed 1768 hours, averaging about twenty-five combat sorties per

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

pilots. The results of their strikes, as shown by BDA and strike photography, was almost without exception more successful than planners had expected. Continued success became increasingly difficult, with the onset of the monsoon season.

"...The battle damage received by the 44th was extremely low for the period, when they came under fire on almost every mission. This damage rate is attributed to experience, increased use of proved tactics, and excellent flight discipline. The transition of command to the 12 TFS was carried out once again with no noticeable disruption in the normal operation."

The 12th squadron commander was Lt Col Charles W. Reed. "Combat missions, in support of PACAF OPORD 131-65, were initially flown on 17 June and the next day all 12 TFS pilots were in place and flying an average of 12 sorties a day."

The 26 officers from the 12th on the deployment were:

Lt Col Charles W. Reed	Capt John H. Busbee
Maj Paul S. Cleland, Jr.	Capt George A. Bogert
Maj Ralph H. Bowersox	Capt Charles M. Yeokum
Maj William J. Hosmer	Capt Wesley G. Carey, Jr.
Capt Charles R. Copin	Capt Robert M. Crane
Capt Dana B. Cromack	Capt Samuel E. Waters, Jr.
Capt Harrison W. Matthews	1Lt James R. Hostetter
Capt Vernon E. Frank	1Lt Frank J. Tullo
Capt Robert B. Purcell	1Lt John C. Morrissey
Capt Donald F. Smith	1Lt Charles P. O'Hara
Capt Raymond V. Moss	1Lt Charles C. Large
Capt John C. Jones	Capt Lowell F. Peterson - Flight Surgeon
Capt Thomas E. Boatman	
Capt Don I. Williamson	

Capt Harrison W. Matthews was an F-105 flight examiner in the 18 TFW Stan/Eval Flight. (18 TFW history 1 Jan - 30 June 1965, Vol I, pg 12, USAF microfilm MO497.)

"Normal operations progressed through the 26th of July. Daily armed recce strikes against targets in North Vietnam and Laos were flown, with primary emphasis on military staging areas, ferries and bridges, leaflet drops, and road cuts. ... The armed recce mission increased the effectiveness as only a primary target was designated to the F-105s, with the flight authorized to expend on any suspected targets along a road segment in North Vietnam. The standard armament for the armed recce mission was 6 x 75 lb gp bombs on the centerline rack, two LAU rocket pods outboard, and a full load of 20-mm in the gun."

During this deployment, pilots from the 12th faced their first combat against the SA-2 SAM including participating in the first SAM site attack on 27 July 1965.

Capt Hansel W. "Turk" Turley was one of the 44th pilots returning to Kadena after the 44th's second combat period.

*44 TFS history, 1 Jan 65 - 30 Jun 67, pp 37 and Appendix III, Exhibit 10 & 12 TFS History, 1 July - 31 December 1965, pp 3 - 4 & 18 TFW TDY Order dated 10 June 1965 reproduced in "The Birds Were Silver Then" by Lowell Peterson, pg 48.*

### 15-Jun-65

2761

The Secretary of Defense, McNamara, disapproved the JCS recommendation that they had submitted on 27 May to bomb the first completed SAM site in North Vietnam. His rationale was that the "... SAMs had not interfered with Rolling Thunder. He informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that if such interference occurred he would reconsider their recommendations. He offered also to arrange for them to discuss the matter with the President if they desired."

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff did not ask to see the President ..."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 26-2.*

**26-Jun-65**

2762

In another futile attempt to get permission to bomb SAM sites in North Vietnam, the JCS "... recommended to Secretary McNamara that the SAM sites be destroyed 'as they near operational status.' In support of their recommendation they reviewed for him the adverse effects that the presence of the SAMs were having on air operations by inhibiting reconnaissance and creating geographic sanctuaries which hindered Rolling Thunder. They asked to discuss this matter with him. The Secretary met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 28 June but did not grant permission to strike the sites."

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pp 26-2 - 26-3.*

**01-Jul-65**

5289

"Effective July 1, 1965, the combat units assigned TDY to the 6235 CSG [at Takhli RTAFB, Thailand] were under the command of the Senior Tactical Air Commander (STAC): the 80 TFS, Yokota AB, Japan; the 563 TFS, McConnell AFB, Kansas, and the 9th Reconnaissance Task Force (TAC), Shaw AFB, N.C. The STAC was Colonel William B. Hawkins, Jr.; the 80 TFS was commanded by [Maj] John P. Anderson; Major Jack Brown was commander of the 563 TFS, and the 9th was commanded by Lt Col Willard Mattson."

"During July, the two TFS, flying F-105D aircraft, flew 884 sorties for a total of 2,515 flying hours. Ordnance expended during July consisted of 2,800 2.75-inch rockets, 112,000 rounds of 20-mm ammunition, and 2,050 tons of conventional bombs.

"... During this month the 9th RTF, equipped with RB-66C aircraft, flew 72 Electronic Countermeasures (ECM) and ELINT missions for a total of 185 hours. This aircraft has a six-man crew: pilot, navigator and four electronic warfare officers (EWO). ... On ELINT mission they did a valuable job of detecting Fan Song radar, which aided immeasurably in determining the locations of SA-2 missile sites and also were able to plot locations of Fire Can radar used for tracking of aircraft with 37, 57, and 85-mm anti-aircraft guns. On ECM missions, the RB-66s flew in support of the F-105 combat missions in North Vietnam. With their electronic gear, they were able to effectively jam gun laying radar and had a high capability of making the Fan Song radar ineffective."

*355 TFW history, 1 July - 31 December 1965, USAF microfilm NO461, frames 0838 - 0839, 0988.*

**01-Jul-65**

308

The 80 TFS, 6441 TFW, Yokota AB, Japan, deployed to Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, to replace the 35 TFS. The 80 TFS commander was Maj John P. Anderson. (NOTE: In "Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 147, the date was given as 26 June 1965.)

This was their second combat deployment to SEA. During this deployment, the 80 TFS remained at Takhli until 26 August 1965 when they were replaced by the 36 TFS. The pilots were involved in hunting for and contending with SAM sites beginning with their participation in the first SAM site attack on 27 July 1965.

Capt Ralph L. Detwiler, Capt Victor Vizcarra and Capt Cecil W. Powell were three of the pilots from the 80 TFS who deployed to Takhli.

Capt Robert P. Taylor was another of the 80th pilots on this deployment. "I was a flight commander at this time and was still a Captain. We went into the first windowless air conditioned barracks at Takhli, saw the club get air conditioned, the pool built, and the base in general start its big buildup. ... Our Squadron Commander, Major Anderson, was something else, He was an accident waiting to happen and was eventually replaced after we had done a lot of complaining about him." (NOTE: Anderson had taken over the squadron in May 1964 was replaced as 80th squadron commander by Maj Bobby J. Mead on 1 November 1965.)

Capt Taylor flew some missions with Col Edmund B. Edwards, who had been the 23 TFW commander and had arrived with the 563 TFS during their TDY from McConnell in April 1965. During this TDY he had become Takhli's base commander. In July, Col Edwards had returned to McConnell and was next assigned as Director of Out-of-Country Operations, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations, for Headquarters Second Air Division at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. Robert Taylor recalled, "Col Edwards did fly with us from time to time to

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

'check out procedures' he said. ... He always ... turned the flight he was leading over to #3 whenever the target was more than 200 miles from Udorn. We finally figured it out. He couldn't find the targets unless he could track out on the Udorn ILS signal for heading and distance information. The Thud TACAN broke lock at 200 NM so he was lost after that. He also wanted to use Hanoi airport's TACAN for locating targets until we explained to him that only the US uses TACAN stations, Hanoi only had ADF and UHF radios. He then wanted to have ADF and UHF homers installed in the Thuds to home in on for target info. We had to explain that this wouldn't work either since they would shut them off just like the US radio stations do when they all go to the same radio frequency for emergency broadcasting. ... We had some real boneheads flying over there to say the least."

*6441 TFW History, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilm PO232 & Robert Taylor letter to Bouk Jan Douma, Dec 2, 1988 & USAF bio, BG Edmund B. Edwards.*

**03-Jul-65**

2763

Once again, the JCS tried to convince Secretary McNamara to allow bombing of SAM sites in North Vietnam. "On 3 July, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary, in response to a query from him, that striking the SAM sites after they became operational and after their defenses improved would be more costly than striking them while they were uncompleted. They reiterated their earlier recommendation for destruction of the SAMs."

"No action was taken to destroy the sites ... "

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 26-3.*

**04-Jul-65**

2612

"On July 4, 1965, [U-2 reconnaissance] photography disclosed work on a fifth [SAM] site about twelve miles southwest of Hanoi. Secretary McNamara, again pressed by the services to strike the sites before they became operational, asked the JCS to compare the anticipated aircraft attrition rate if the sites were hit quickly with the rate after the sites became an integral part of the north's air defense system. The service chiefs replied quickly that the price of postponing an attack would be a significant rise in aircraft attrition."

The SAM sites were located " ... roughly in a circle within twenty N.M. of Hanoi. Each consisted of six firing, one guidance control, and one missile-holding revetment plus associated roadways. The diameter of the firing revetments and sites averaged about 75 and 750 feet respectively. The configuration was similar to that employed by the Soviet Union."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pgs 161 and 163.*

**07-Jul-65**

2614

"On July 7, [USAF Chief of Staff, General John P.] McConnell informed the administration through the JCS that three of the five SA-2 sites [detected in North Vietnam so far] might be ready to receive the necessary operational equipment within any 48-hour period. But the administration still refused to issue a strike order."

"8,000 additional Marines landed at Da Nang and Qui Nhon."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 161 & Seventh Air Force Chronology 1 July 65 - 30 June 1966 CHECO 66-0044.*

**18-Jul-65**

5065

The first SA-2 missile unit in North Vietnam completed their training and prepared for battle.

"On 18 July the Party Current Affairs Committee of the Air Defense Service met to review the plan for the first use of our anti-aircraft missile forces in combat. Comrade Le Quang Dao, Deputy Chief of the General Political Department, attended this meeting. In the face of the enemy's escalation of his attacks against the North and his threats to areas around Hanoi, the Service Party Current Affairs Committee unanimously reached the following conclusions:

"We believe the enemy is not yet ready to attack Hanoi. For this reason, if we deploy our missiles to the launch positions we have prepared we will not be able to hit and destroy the enemy. Although our Air Force has begun combat operations and has scored victories, the Air Force has not yet significantly impeded enemy operations. For this reason the enemy's operations are still subjective and he has left us many openings and weaknesses that we can

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

attack. If we send our missile forces outside the Hanoi area to attack the enemy we will secure the element of surprise. We will have many advantages and be able to create the element of surprise, which will allow us to secure victory in our first engagement.

"Based on this assessment, the following combat guidance for the employment of our missiles was issued: Secure the elements of secrecy and surprise, strike when victory is certain, and fight to win victory in the first battle, to build a tradition of victory, and to hone the combat skills of our troops. Our tactics will be to coordinate closely with anti-aircraft artillery forces, maintain secrecy, conduct a mobile ambush, and destroy the enemy as he flies in to attack our targets. Our targets for this battle will be U-2 high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft and groups of enemy aircraft in level flight at medium altitude. (HISTORY OF THE AIR DEFENSE SERVICE, VOLUME II, pg 42)

"On 18 July 1965, the regiment completed its training, and the entire unit quickly set to work to carry out preparations for battle. Battle plans were developed, but we continued to keep all our intentions completely secret.

"In addition to the 236th Missile Regiment, the following units would also participate in this air defense operation:

"The 224th AAA Regiment (consisting of five batteries of 100-mm guns); the 234th AAA Regiment (five batteries of 57-mm guns plus 6th Battery from the 250th AAA Regiment); the Air Defense Service's 3rd AAA Battalion (three batteries of 57-mm guns); a battalion of twin-barreled 14.5-mm self-propelled anti-aircraft machineguns; two batteries of 37-mm guns from the Air Defense Officers School; the 18th, 21st, 26A, and 37th Radar Companies; and ten local anti-aircraft machinegun positions along with local teams specializing in firing at low-flying enemy aircraft. There was also an element from the Air Defense Service's Military Science Office with a set of fake missile equipment, missiles, and missile launchers made from bamboo and bamboo matting.

"... The regiment's cadre and enlisted men understood the technical capabilities of the equipment and were able to perform the basic actions required for combat operations. The unit had high combat spirit, there was a powerful force ready to fight in coordination and support of the regiment, and there were sufficient combat support forces to properly supply and support the missiles to enable them to win their first engagement.

The "... 236th Regiment was assigned the following mission:

- Conduct a mobile ambush in the Suoi Hai-Trung Ha area. Secretly take the enemy by surprise and concentrate the unit's firepower to destroy enemy aircraft and protect the capital city, Hanoi.

"The regiment's specific mission:

- 63rd and 64th Missile Battalions, fighting in close coordination with anti-aircraft artillery units and people's air defense forces, would conduct a mobile ambush along the enemy's usual flight path with the goal of destroying enemy aircraft within range of the regiment's missiles to defeat and restrict the enemy's escalatory actions while simultaneously honing and improving the technical and tactical skills of the troops."

"... To ensure secrecy, the [AAA] firing positions were constructed during a period of two days and one night, just before the missiles moved into position. Forces participating in the construction effort included an engineer regiment with additional mechanized equipment from the Engineer Command; 1200 cadre and officer cadets from the Army [Infantry] and Air Defense Officers Schools; and almost one hundred militia self-defense personnel from the Ba Vi State Farm and the surrounding villages.

"Fortified positions, which were continuously camouflaged as they were being built and included a network of field positions for missiles, anti-aircraft guns, radars, and command posts, was completed on time, and complete secrecy was maintained."

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 27 - 28, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**20-Jul-65**

5066

The North Vietnamese SA-2 missile units begun to move equipment into their two prepared SAM sites. The sites were the ones that the Air Force would label "Site 6" and Site 7" and were outside the SAM sites known to be

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

ringing Hanoi.

"On 20 July 1965, photography revealed two SAM sites, numbered 6 and 7, under construction some 28 to 30 miles northwest of Hanoi." (Prong Tong Study Group Report, Vol I, pg 4.)

"The 63rd and 64th Missile Battalions received their orders to move out at 2030 hours on 20 July."

The two SAM sites were to be protected by an extensive anti-aircraft artillery network.

"The deployment formation of our anti-aircraft artillery units would be centered on the [two] missile launch sites, which would be surrounded by three contiguous AAA sub-clusters.

- Sub-Cluster A: This sub-cluster would protect 63rd Missile Battalion's launch site. This sub-cluster would consist of two batteries of 57-mm guns from the 234th Regiment; three batteries of 57-mm guns from 3rd Battalion; two batteries of self-propelled anti-aircraft machineguns mounted on armored cars; and a number of militia self-defense machine gun positions. The sub-cluster would be deployed surrounding and immediately next to 63rd Missile Battalion's launch site on Ghe Pagoda Hill. This sub-cluster's mission was to destroy enemy aircraft as they flew in along the Da [Black] and Red Rivers or across the peak of Luoi Hai Mountain to attack 63rd Missile Battalion. Sub-Cluster A was commanded by the commander of 234th Regiment, Tran Trung Tin, and the regiment's political commissar, Han Nghi.

"- Sub-Cluster B: This sub-cluster would protect 64th Missile Battalion's launch site. The sub-cluster would consist of three batteries of 57-mm guns from 234th Regiment; a battery of 37-mm guns from the 250th AAA Regiment (this unit later became 234th Regiment's 6th Battalion); the battalion of 37-mm guns from the Air Defense Officers School; two batteries of self-propelled anti-aircraft machine guns; and a number of local force anti-aircraft machinegun positions. The sub-cluster would be deployed around 64th Missile Battalion's launch site at Vo Khuy, Ngoc Nhi, and was assigned the mission of destroying enemy aircraft flying in over the peaks of Luoi Hai and Ba Vi mountains to attack 64th Battalion's launch site. Sub-Cluster B was commanded by Deputy Regimental Commander Vu Y and Deputy Political Commissar Nguyen Thuoc.

"- Central Sub-Cluster. This sub-cluster would consist of five batteries of 100-mm guns from the 224th AAA Regiment, ten four-barreled 14.5-mm anti-aircraft machineguns, and a number of militia self-defense anti-aircraft machine gun positions. This sub-cluster was responsible for destroying enemy aircraft at long range (at medium altitudes) to provide general protection for all elements of the air defense cluster. Central Sub-Cluster was commanded by Regimental Commander Dinh Dinh Sanh and Political Commissar Nguyen Thanh Liem.

"26A Radar Company was assigned the mission of providing direct support for missile forces in their combat engagement. The company would deploy one P-10 radar, under the command of Deputy Company Commander Second Lieutenant Nguyen Van Chuyen, to provide 360-degree coverage and to report the air situation to the command post.

"18th, 21st, and 37th Radar Companies would work with 26A Company to closely monitor the skies to the west to support the combat operations of the entire air defense cluster.

A local 14.5-mm anti-aircraft machinegun platoon would be deployed on High-Point 600 (Ba Vi Mountain) with the mission of engaging and destroying low-flying enemy aircraft penetrating the area through the gaps between the mountain peaks. This platoon would fire in accordance with a pre-arranged battle plan." (pp 29 - 31)

[The three peaks of Ba Vi Mountain, only 60 km from Hanoi offer spectacular views of the Red River Delta. The three summits are Vua, the tallest at 1,296 metres, Tan Vien 1,227 m and Ngoc Hoa 1,131 m. (<http://kiwinhanoi.blogspot.com/2005/11/ba-vi-national-park.html>)]

"... The following routes of march were specified for each battalion:

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

- 63rd Battalion would move from Lai Xa along Route 32 through Son Tay to Trung Ha and would occupy the Ghe Pagod [Chua Ghe] launch site in Trung Ha.

- 64th Battalion would move from Ba La Bong Do along Route 6 to Xuan Mai, turn onto Route 21 to proceed to Tung Thien in Son Tay, and then follow Provincial Route 423 to occupy the Vo Khuy launch site in Suoi Hai.

"To maintain secrecy and to ensure the absolute security of the missiles during the move, mobile public security forces from Hanoi and Ha Tay implemented a plan to escort the missiles and protect them during the trip. Plans, mission orders, time schedules, and routes of movement were only disseminated to each individual specified sections of the route of movement.

"AAA units were only allowed to move at night. They were instructed to move in one night before the missiles arrived to be ready to protect the missiles as they deployed for battle. (pg 34)

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 29- 31, 34 , Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**21-Jul-65**

5067

"At 3:00 in the morning of 21 July, the [North Vietnamese SA-2] missile battalions arrived safely at their designated launch sites. At dawn on 21 July, the missiles occupied their launch sites and deployed for battle. Because they were still inexperienced, it took them a long time to set up in position, and it was not until 2030 hours that night that the missile battalions were fully prepared and ready for battle. All anti-aircraft artillery and anti-aircraft machine gun units were in position and ready to fight to protect the missiles by 6:00 in the morning on 21 July." (Vol I)

"During the night of 21 July the two missile battalions occupied their positions. These were not the positions that had been originally prepared for them on the outskirts of Hanoi, but were two new firing positions in the Trung Ha area of Son Tay. Engineer troops and cadets from the nearby Army Officers School had just completed construction of these two new positions the previous night." (Vol II, pg 44)

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pg 35 , Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**22-Jul-65**

2698

"By mid-July, 91 of the 117 JCS numbered targets south of 20 degrees North had been attacked. All POL storage areas and airfields were damaged, four being temporarily unusable. Twenty-two of the 24 JCS scheduled bridges south of 20 degrees had at least one span collapsed with another severely damaged. The Thanh Hoa Bridge, struck four times, was restored on a limited basis by the enemy, and sporadic re-strikes by U. S. Navy armed reconnaissance aircraft failed to collapse its spans. At least 100 other bridges, struck as 'bonus' targets were made unusable. ... Nearly all of the JCS targets in the barracks/headquarters, ammo/supply depot category were hit."

"Although most Rolling Thunder strikes as of mid-July were south of 20 degrees, 18 of 132 JCS numbered targets north of the 20th parallel were struck as of 22 July. Two airfields, one supply depot, one POL storage (Phu Qui and Vinh), one island radar site, two coastal bridges, six ammo depots, and five barracks areas were struck in the northern part of North Vietnam."

"... The Phuc Yen and Cat Bi airfields in the Hanoi-Haiphong area were untouched. Nor had any of the five SA-2 sites been hit as of 22 July. ... Except for damage to three thermal power plants, no industrial targets were struck."

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, March - June 1965, pgs 65 - 67.*

**23-Jul-65**

1058

An EB-66C, flying an electronic reconnaissance mission from Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, "... intercepted 'Fan Song' missile guidance radar emissions in the Hanoi area." The signals were "... a type employed in the SA-2 guidance system. The location was estimated 23 nautical miles west of Hanoi where there were no previously identified SA-2 installations. Although five of these sites had been located earlier in July, there had been no previous evidence that any were operational."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

"Pilots preparing for strikes against NVN the following day, 24 July, were briefed on the SA-2 envelope around Hanoi and the signals which had been picked up the previous day."

*"Sparks Over Vietnam", ARI Paper 2000-03 by Capt Gilles Van Nederveen, pg 35 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg 2.*

**24-Jul-65**

1044

This Sunday, F-105 squadrons from Takhli launched four flights of aircraft into North Vietnam supported by F-4Cs from Ubon. Each F-105 carried eight 750-pound bombs. One of the targets struck was the Lang Chi munitions factory (JCS 47.2), an army ammunition supply depot at Dien Bien Phu, North Vietnam.

Also striking the target was a flight of four F-4Cs from Ubon, each of which carried two 750-pound bombs. After dropping their bombs, the F-4Cs then flew MiG CAP for the F-105s by positioning themselves between Dien Bien Phu and the MiG-17 base at Phuc Yen airfield.

The lead strike flight consisted of four F-105 pilots from the 80 TFS. Maj Arthur Stewart Mearns led the flight with Capt Murphy N. Jones #2, Capt James E. Hayes #3, and Capt Giles W. Gainer as #4. Gainer recalled that their primary target was a military storage site at Yen Bai, with a secondary target of the bridges south of Dien Bien Phu. "The four flights of four F-105s had five minute separation with the lead flight as mission controller. ... After refueling over Udon RTAFB, we proceeded toward Yen Bai, and were forced by weather to our secondary target at Dien Bien Phu. All flights including the F-4 MIG CAP were informed of the change of target by Art. The mission was uneventful. We expended our ordinance, eight 750-lb GP bombs per aircraft, on the secondary target. Art and #2 stayed over the target to direct the other flights, and #3 and I returned to base.

"While en route [home] over Laos, a call, PAN PAN PAN (distress code just below May Day), came from Panther [Leopard] lead, our MIG CAP. #2 has been destroyed by a SAM [SA-2], there's nothing falling but pieces, I am 350 miles north of UBON, but that doesn't mean I'm landing there'."

Flying as number 2 in one of the F-105 strike flights was Capt Victor Vizcarra from the 80 TFS on temporary duty at Takhli from the 6441 TFW, Yokota AB, Japan.

Capt Paul R. Craw from the 563 TFS, 23 TFW, at Takhli led one of the F-105 flights. In April 1965, Capt Craw had moved from the 12 TFS at Kadena to the 23 TFW at McConnell and had joined the 563rd at Takhli at the end of May. "The big mission of the day was an ammo factory located sixty miles or so north of Hanoi. We were scheduled as a flight of eight F-105s loaded with eight 750-pound bombs with a 0.25 (second) fuse delay. The target was not the factory itself, but the numerous underground storage sites located near the factory. The mission was so important that I had eight F-4s to escort our flight of eight. The real stupid part of his mission was a stern warning from McNamara that damage to the factory ... would result in Courts-Martial for the guilty individuals. ... The mission was rather uneventful, except that the F-4 drivers complained that they couldn't keep up without using their burners all the time. Our ingress was at eighteen thousand and around four hundred sixty knots ... . About the time I rolled in, I cleared the F-4s to return as there was no MiG activity and I don't even recall getting any flak that day. We busied ourselves with making little pock marks on the underground storage silos."

"We regrouped and headed home. The F-4s were probably 60 to 70 miles in front of us in the clouds between 25 and 30 thousand feet when up comes the first missile of the war from one of the sites that McNamara made us draw a thirty-mile ring around that we were not allowed inside of because we might hurt a Russian. ... Up comes a missile and down goes an F-4."

*"Thud Pilot", Col Victor Vizcarra, unpublished memoir, chapter 4, pgs 1 - 5 & "The Whims of an Idiot", by Paul Craw, unpublished mem sent via e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 30 Jan 00 & Paul R. Craw, letter to Ron Thurlow, undated.*

**24-Jul-65**

5068

A North Vietnamese history told the story of the two North Vietnamese SA-2 SAM battalions that succeeded in shooting down their first American aircraft.

"Early in the morning, enemy weather reconnaissance aircraft conducted very deep penetration operation along the

---

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Vietnamese-Lao border and into the Northwest Military Region. At 8:40 A.M., the entire cluster went to Combat Condition 1. Two enemy aircraft target groups appeared on the 9 x 9 plotting board, flying in toward Moc Chau and Ba Vi. The Service forward command post ordered the missile battalions and the AAA units to closely monitor and track these two target groups. When the targets were 50 kilometers from our launch sites they turned to the north and followed the Red River Valley to attack the Lam Thao Super-Phosphate Fertilizer Plant [JCS 78.1].

"At 1530 hours two RF-101 reconnaissance aircraft appeared on the 9 x 9 plotting board, approaching from the southwest, and many other aircraft targets were seen operating on the other side of the border.

"Our early warning search radars continuously tracked the enemy activities. When the two RF-101s reached Moc Chau, they turned north and followed the Red River up to reconnoiter the Viet Tri Industrial Zone and then exited our airspace. The Service Headquarters ordered the Service forward command post and 236th Regiment to intensify its monitoring of enemy activities in the southwestern sector.

"At 1540 hours, virtually all of the targets marked on the 9 x 9 plotting board had begun to cross the Vietnamese-Lao border. When the targets reached the Moc Chau area, they split in two directions. The first group of targets followed the flight path of the two RF-101 reconnaissance aircraft up to attack the Viet Tri area and the Lam Thao Super-Phosphate Plant. The second group, a flight of three F-4Cs, flew along the Da [Black] River and over Luoi Hai Mountain to the north. This was the group that the plot indicated would approach closest to our positions. It was assigned to provide fighter interception support [MiGCAP] to the flights of attack aircraft bombing the Viet Tri area and the Lam Thao Super-Phosphate Plant. The flight path of these F-4Cs was designed to protect against any of our fighters approaching from the Hoa Lac or Noi Bai airfields, so the aircraft flew straight along the Da River valley.

"When it was determined that the flight of F-4Cs was flying along the Da River, Acting Regimental Commander Tran Nhan issued an order from the 236th Regiment's command post to the two missile battalions to monitor and track this flight of F-4Cs. In his role as commander of the cluster's anti-aircraft artillery units, Deputy Chief of Staff Le Van Thiem gave timely orders to the AAA regiments to monitor and track the enemy, to be prepared to support the missiles when they fired, and to intensify surveillance in Sectors 12, 32, and 3. Radar Company 26A was tracking the flight of F-4Cs and provided timely, accurate data on their movements.

"The combat crews of the 63rd and 64th Battalions worked harmoniously and in a lively manner, but there were many times when they were loud and disorganized since this was their first battle and they still were awkward and uncertain. With direct assistance provided by allied [Soviet] instructors, the entire combat crew, from the Service down through the battalions to every single officer and enlisted man, including telephone operators and plotting personnel, gradually became accustomed to their duties.

"When the flight of F-4Cs reached a range of 76-78 kilometers, the commander of the combat watch at the forward command post recommended to the acting regimental commander that he give the order to destroy this target. The acting regimental commander had intensely studied this flight of F-4Cs since it had broken off from the other groups and had confirmed to himself that it was a flight of enemy fighters.

"The question was, whether to engage or not.

"The resolution approved by the Regimental Party Committee had stated: 'To ensure victory in our initial engagement, our primary targets should be a U-2 or a high-altitude unmanned reconnaissance aircraft. We should not engage enemy attack aircraft until after we score this initial success. We must win victory; we must not miss opportunities; we must not allow the enemy to gain the initiative by attacking our units first; and we must ensure the safety of our personnel, weapons, and equipment.'

"The Service forward command post received a continuous stream of target data reports from the 63rd and 64th Battalions. The target reached a range of 65 kilometers. The commander of 63rd Battalion, Nguyen Van Than, the commander of 64th Battalion, Nguyen Van Ninh, and the allied [Soviet] instructors all recommended that the

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

battalions engage and destroy this flight of F-4Cs. The missiles were kept constantly prepared and ready to fire at any time.

"Under the direct guidance of the Deputy Director of the General Staff's Combat Operations Department, the Service Deputy Chief of Staff for Missiles, and the allied [Soviet] instructors, the acting regimental commander quickly analyzed the situation, confirmed that this was a favorable opportunity, decided to destroy the flight of F-4Cs, and issued the order: '63rd and 64th Battalions, concentrate fire to destroy Target 04, Coordinate 69.'

"To carry out this order, the commanders of the 63rd and 64th Battalions quickly issued their own orders: 'Search bearings 240 to 260, range 50 kilometers, altitude 7.'

With the smooth, skillful movements of the allied missile instructors corps, the missile guidance officer quickly moved the target signal right to the center of the crosshairs formed by the vertical line (VM) and the horizontal line (GM) on the control screen. The signal was clear and fluctuated regularly. On the control panels of the missile guidance officer and the missile guidance operators, the dials all precisely indicated the bearing, range, and altitude of the target. The target data acquired by 63rd and 64th Battalions was quickly reported to the regimental command post.

'63rd Battalion has acquired Target 04, range 36, bearing 250, altitude 7.'

'64th Battalion has acquired Target 04, range 34, bearing 245, altitude 7.'

"The regimental command post issued the order: 'Engage'

"The commander of 63rd Battalion conferred quickly with the allied [Soviet] instructor and then issued the order: 'Destroy Target 04, use half angle lead missile guidance method, warhead fuse RV, two missiles, launch separation six seconds, launch range 30 kilometers, bearing 245.'

"At that very moment 64th Battalion was also issuing its order: 'Destroy Target 04, use half angle lead missile guidance method, warhead fuse RV, two missiles, launch separation six seconds, launch range 29 kilometers, bearing 240.'

"Monitoring the missile guidance officers display screens, the missile guidance officers of both 63rd and 64th Battalions noted that the target signal was clear and stable. Both missile guidance officers ordered their missile guidance operators to use 'automatic tracking.' The elevation angle operator, the range operation, and the bearing operator quickly pushed their buttons to switch from the manual tracking (RS) system to the automatic (AS) system. The automatic tracking systems functioned properly.

"The alignment light was lit and the missiles on the launchers all indicated 'ready.' The white missiles sitting on their launch arms were aligned with the guidance antenna in both elevation angle and bearing, and were now pointed at the flight of F-4Cs.

"When the target reached a range of 32 - 34 kilometers, the warning siren sounded, blasting across the launch site. The missile guidance officer shouted, 'Target in launch range. Switch on the combat circuit.' The three guidance operators, elevation, range, and bearing simultaneously reported, 'circuit good.' The missile guidance officer nervously reported, 'Range 30.' The commander of 63rd Battalion issued the order: 'Launch!' The missile guidance officer quickly pushed the launch button, and the two missiles launched, one by one, with a separation of six seconds between the launch of the first missile and that of the second. The display screen revealed that both missiles were guiding properly.

"After 63rd Battalion launched two missiles, in 64th Battalion's missile control van, the missile guidance officer reported, 'Target in launch range - Range 29.' The battalion commander gave the order to launch, and two missiles were launched with a launch separation of six seconds. Both missiles guided properly. The display screens indicated that the trajectory of the missiles was being properly controlled by the automatic guidance system. 63rd

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Battalion's two missiles merged with the target at a range of 25 kilometers, and 64th Battalion's two missiles met the target at range 23 kilometers.

"When the missile signals met the target signal, on the display screens of the missile guidance officers and missile guidance operators of both battalions the target signal grew bright, then expanded, quickly lost altitude, and disappeared. The missile control officers quickly reported to their battalion commanders, 'Target has been destroyed.'

"The result of this first combat engagement was that the four missiles fired by the 63rd and 64th Missile Battalions of 236th Regiment had shot down the entire flight of three F-4Cs, one of which was shot down on the spot, and an enemy pilot was captured.

"During the course of the missile engagement, the AAA regiments and battalions and the anti-aircraft machine guns had intensified their scanning and monitoring of all sectors in order to be able to fight back quickly if the enemy responded with an attack against a missile launch site. During this engagement, however, because the enemy was

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 35 - 40 , Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**24-Jul-65**

5063

Recently translated histories from North Vietnam described their first use of the SA-2 to shoot down the F-4C. The SAM sites belonged to the 236 SAM Regiment, the first of North Vietnam's SAM defense forces that had been formed on 7 January 1965. "Because there had not been enough time to train the Vietnamese missile crews, Soviet 'advisors' personally took part in this missile launch." ("The -ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in *The Journal of Military History*, Jan 2003, pg 177.)

The "official history" of the Vietnam war written by the Vietnamese, reported their view of this battle. "At 1553 hours on 24 July 1965, the 63rd and 64th Battalions, located at firing positions at Suoi Hai, Bat Bat district, Ha Tay province, launched their first missiles, shooting down one F-4C aircraft and capturing one pilot. This was the 400th aircraft to be shot down over North Vietnam. Uncle Ho was overjoyed when he heard the report of the results of this first battle victory of our missile troops. He personally wrote a letter of commendation to our air defense missile cadre and soldiers. The official birthday of our heroic missile troops became 24 July. On 25 July the American imperialists halted all operations in the skies over North Vietnam to seek ways to deal with this new threat. Meanwhile, our two missile battalions moved to new firing positions." ("Victory in Vietnam. The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954 - 1975", translated by Merle L. Pribbenow II, published by University Press of Kansas, pg 167.)

Another report from Vietnam added additional information about this episode. "The air defense combat operations conducted in the Suoi Hai-Trung Ha area from 24 to 27 July 1965 scored an important victory and were extremely significant. This was the first time that the Air Defense-Air Force Service had organized an air defense combat cluster made up of several different branches, including the first combat action fought by our air defense missile forces.

"The engagement on 24 July 1965 was the first battle fought by the Missile Branch. Using creative air defense tactics, the very first time they went into battle our missile troops scored an outstanding success, destroying an entire flight of three American aircraft (one of which crashed on the spot) and capturing an enemy pilot alive. 24 July became the tradition day of the Air Defense Missile Branch.

"Following the first victory scored by our missiles, we used a ruse to trick the enemy and lure him into a pre-arranged ambush, enabling our anti-aircraft guns to fight a large battle of annihilation on 27 July 1965.

"The air defense combat operations conducted at Suoi Hai-Trung Ha in 1965 provided many valuable lessons in aggressively working to create opportunities to destroy the enemy and in the creative use of tactics, providing a foundation for study to develop theoretical concepts and practical operations by our air defense forces."

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and*

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

*the Americans*", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pg 23, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.

**24-Jul-65**

948

Two SA-2 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) hit a flight of four F-4Cs over North Vietnam. The missiles were launched from mobile missile sites approximately 30 miles northwest of Hanoi. They shot down one of the F-4Cs and damaged the other three in the flight. This was the first American aircraft lost to the SAMs deployed by Soviet technicians in North Vietnam. "Air reconnaissance located two mobile SAM sites in the area of the attack, identified as mobile sites 6 and 7 in the series of (eight) SAM sites established near Hanoi."

"The surviving aircrews likened each SAM to a 'telephone pole with fins,' judged they had been set with proximity fuses, and were fired from two previously undetected sites quickly numbered sites 6 and 7."

The four F-4Cs in "Leopard" flight were from the 45 TFS deployed from the 15 TFW, MacDill AFB, Florida, to Ubon RTAFB, Thailand. They were the MiG CAP flight supporting the F-105 strike against the Lang Chi munitions factory (JCS 47.2) near Dien Ben Phu, and were "... cruising in loose fingertip formation at 23,000 feet, some 37 nautical miles west of Hanoi". ("Tactics and Techniques of Electronic Warfare", pg 1, by Bernard C. Nalty, AFHRA Call # K168.01-52, IRIS # 1019694.)

The F-4C that was hit was "Leopard 2" in a flight of four led by Lt Col William A. Alden commander of the 45 TFS. Other members of his flight were Capt Orville B. Baird and 1Lt Gerald D. Larson, a former F-100C Thunderbird pilot in 1961. The flight had taken off from Ubon at 14:00. "At about 0805 local time [probably Zulu time], a Douglas RB-66C electronic reconnaissance plane detected a radar signal from a Russian-designed SA-2 surface-to-air missile battery, the second time in as many days that one of these planes had intercepted this type of transmission originating within North Vietnam. The RB-66C radioed a warning, and shortly afterward, Lt Col Alden, on the far left of the Leopard formation, saw two missiles streaking skyward, closing rapidly from the right and below. The first missile exploded directly beneath Leopard 02, on the opposite flank from Alden. He saw flames erupt from the trailing edge of the Phantom's wing, as the stricken plane rolled onto its back and spiraled out of sight into the clouds." (Ibid.)

The 45 TFS aircraft that was shot down was F-4C 63-7599 flown by an aircraft commander from an advance party of seven combat crews from the 47 TFS that had arrived at Ubon on 16 July from the 15 TFW under TWO BUCK 7. The 47 TFS was to replace the 45 TFS that had been on TDY at Ubon since 7 April 1965 under TWO BUCK 2. "This aircraft was #2 in a flight of 4 F-4Cs which was attacked by SAM missiles while flying in close weather formation. The first missile detonated on or just below this aircraft. The aircraft apparently went out of control immediately and was enveloped in flames from the wing root aft. The aircraft rolled inverted and two large objects fell away. Other members of the formation assumed that these were the ejection seats. No chutes were observed and no electronic contacts were made. No search effort was conducted." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-024.)

The two pilots went down at location 21-07N and 105-09E. The 45 TFS GIB, 29-year old Capt Roscoe Henry Fobair, was killed and the 47 TFS aircraft commander, Capt Richard Paul "Pop" Keirn, was captured to become a POW in Hanoi. It was the second time Capt Keirn had been captured by an enemy. In 1944, during WW II, he had been shot down in a B-17 over Germany and had spent the rest of the war in a German prison camp. On 12 February 1973, the first day of "Operation Homecoming", he was one of the 116 POWs released from Hanoi.

In his autobiography, Pop Keirn described what happened. "At approximately 2:20 P.M. that afternoon, from the corner of my eye, I saw what looked like a flying telephone pole! It happened so fast, my pilot systems operator had no time for comments to me, or I to him before there was an explosion. I have never heard anything so loud in my life - it left my ears ringing. It rocked the entire airplane, sent it straight up at least thirty feet, then down thirty feet. We bounced like hell all the way. The entire plane was engulfed in flames. The control panel of the aircraft indicated all systems out of operation and it was a sheet of flames, inside and out, whipping around my face. I was beating on the canopy with all my might, trying to get some response from my pilot systems operator. I could barely see the side of his helmet and part of one side of his face. It was impossible to get a good view of him due to his oxygen mask and the flames between us. There was no response whatsoever. I doubt very seriously that he ever

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

knew what hit us."

Capt Fobair was killed by the SAM blast or died in the crash. Keirn ejected through the flames and landed on a steep ridge. He spent the night in the rain in a hole on the ridge but was captured the next morning and taken to Hanoi. (Col Richard P. "Pop" Keirn, *Old Glory Is the Most Beautiful of All*, (Dorrance Publishing Co, 1995), pg 64; CNA Loss/Damage Database, USAF loss 101, pg O16.)

Capt Fobair was born 30 September 1935 in Burke SD. His name is on the Vietnam Memorial Wall, Panel 02E , Line 43. His recovered remains were identified on 28 June 2000.

1Lt John C. Morrissey from the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, was in a two-ship F-105 flight on this day and recalled the SAM hitting the F-4C. "... We were ... working in Pack 1. On the way home I heard one of the F-4s ... say ... that they had been attacked [by] a SAM, that one aircraft was down, one was hit badly, and another had battle damage. We were then contacted by a GCI site (I believe Brigham) and were being vectored to a tanker in order to head north. At the time we received that transmission we had just entered Thailand from the west about half way between Nakhon Phanom and Udorn. While we were en route to the tanker (it was in Laos) our mission was cancelled and we returned to Korat. All of our weapons were expended in RP 1 except 20 mm." (John Morrissey, e-mail 30 June 2009)

The SAM explosion damaged the other three F-4Cs in the flight. "The number one aircraft landed at an alternate base [Udorn] due to battle damage. The number three and four aircraft also sustained battle damage." The lead F-4C was so badly damaged "... that at the time of the squadron redeployment the damaged aircraft had been declared Class-26." The 45 TFS returned to MacDill on 2 August 65. (15 TFW history, Vol II, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pg 6, AFHRA Call # K-WG-15-HI, IRIS # 448324.)

Capt Giles W. Gainer from the 80 TFS was another F-105 pilot who had flown on this mission while TDY to Takhli. "I saw lead's F-4 a week or so later at Udorn RTAFB. I could put my whole arm into the compressor section of his right engine, and saw holes in the main wing spar and the fuselage spars that looked like an acetylene torch had cut them." (Giles Gainer, letter to author Aug 13, 2006.)

The plane that landed at Udorn, F-4C 63-7551 from the 45 TFS, was so badly damaged that it was scrapped. After its condition was evaluated at Clark AB, Philippines, the plane was sent by ship to the Navy's F-4B overhaul and repair depot at NAS North Island CA where a USAF team from the F-4 depot at Ogden UT "... ordered the aircraft officially struck from the rolls effective 16 December 1965".

The aircraft was refurbished, used for munitions training at Lowry AFB CO, then placed on display in Lowry's aviation museum. When the museum acquired an F-4E, their F-4C moved to the Veterans Memorial Park, Canon City, CO. On 16 Sep 2001, the aircraft became part of a 12 TFW memorial at Canon City. During the Vietnam War, the 12 TFW was based at Cam Ranh Bay, South Vietnam. (Bill Peake, e-mail 26 Nov 06, & 12 TFW Memorial Web site at <http://www.12tfw.org/memorial/>)

*"Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964 - 1968", Vol III, Vietnam, June - Dec 1965, NARA Library Depository 1065A Item 0872B, 240 & CNA Loss/Damage Database & "Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 164.*

**24-Jul-65**

5069

After firing SAMs that shot down the USAF F-4C earlier today, the North Vietnamese removed the SA-2s and set the trap for the expected reprisal attacks. Their history described how they did this.

"According to the plan, after the missile engagement was over, 63rd and 64th Battalions would withdraw from the battle area and move to new launch sites. The entire AAA cluster would remain in their original positions in order to continue the battle. At 1800 hours on 24 July, the 63rd and 64th Battalions received the order to pack up their equipment. It was dark and raining hard, and the launch sites turned into muddy bogs. The mud, the darkness, the rain, and the fact that the troops were still not yet proficient at their jobs caused the units to experience considerable difficulties. The vehicles that moved in to tow out the equipment vans, including even tracked vehicles, became bogged down in the mud. Some of the missile tow trucks and the tracked missile launcher towing vehicles had to

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

hook two vehicles together in order to have enough power to tow the guidance equipment and the launchers out to the main road. With enthusiastic assistance from the Ba Vi State Farm, local militia personnel collected tractors and manpower to help the missile battalions withdraw from their launch sites. Because of all these problems, it was not until 10:00 in the morning of 25 July that the battalions finally were completely out of their original launch sites. Exhibiting an understanding of the need for constant combat readiness, by 1600 hours on the afternoon of 25 July 64th Battalion was fully deployed and ready for battle at a rough field launch site at Kim Dai in Tung Thien, almost ten kilometers from the Vo Khuy launch site [SAM Site 6].

"63rd Battalion [at SAM Site 7] had farther to travel, and it was not fully deployed and combat ready at its new launch site at Thuong Thuy village, Dan Phuong district, Ha Tay province, until the night of 25 July.

"After the two missile battalions withdrew from the launch sites, under the direction of Comrade Le an Vong of the Service Military Science Office, our forces moved two entire sets of fake missile equipment made from bamboo matting in to replace the real missile guidance equipment and missiles at the Ghe Pagoda [Chua Ghe] launch site in Yen Ky and the Vo Khuy launch site in Ngoc Nhi. The fake missile sets were built by the Air Defense Officers School. The Service headquarters concluded that after our missiles won their initial battle, the enemy would certainly try to retaliate. We laid a trap to lure the enemy in order to destroy his aircraft using the anti-aircraft artillery and machine guns that were already deployed at the old launch sites.

"On 25 July, the skies over North Vietnam were quiet. Not one single flight of enemy aircraft operated north of the 20th Parallel."

Three days later, this North Vietnamese AAA flak trap would take their toll against F-105 pilots from the 12 TFS and 357 TFS from Korat, and the 563 TFS and 80 TFS from Takhli.

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 40 - 41, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**25-Jul-65**

1046

Ambassador to South Vietnam, Maxwell D. Taylor, cabled the State Department and President Johnson recommending an air attack against the SAM sites that shot down a USAF F-4C on 24 July. The attack would "... show Hanoi how seriously we view this incident and ... prepare political opinion for our subsequent anti-missile campaign."

However, in another telegram to the State Department, W. Avril Harriman, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, "... advised against attacking the sites, since this would be seen abroad as an escalation and would prejudice efforts to bring Hanoi to the negotiating table." Since the sites had been manned by Soviet technicians, "Harriman also felt that Soviet leaders would interpret the attacks as a direct challenge, requiring some sort of retaliation."

This reluctance to attack SAM sites was reminiscent of similar discussions by President Kennedy and his advisors in October 1962 of attacking SAM sites in Cuba during the Cuban missile crisis.

*"Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964 - 1968", Vol III, Vietnam June-Dec 1965, NARA Library Depository 1065A Item 0872B, P 240, footnote 2.*

**26-Jul-65**

1045

In two afternoon meetings at the White House, President Lyndon B. Johnson and his senior staff discussed the issues involved in striking SAM sites in North Vietnam in retaliation for the first loss of an American aircraft to a SAM two days earlier.

The issues centered around the political ramifications of the strikes, the risks of attacking Rolling Thunder targets if the SAM sites were not destroyed, and how many sites to strike.

In the first meeting that took place between 12:30 and 3:15 PM, information presented by General Earl J. Wheeler, JCS Chairman, confirmed that the sites were mobile, and that SAM site 4 as well as sites 6 and 7 could have been involved in the shoot down. He said intelligence reported that Russians operated sites 6 and 7. He stated, "We don't know if any of these sites have equipment. We should attack all sites. At the minimum, we should take out 4, 6,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

and 7."

However, Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, disagreed. "I would not hit one of the sites close in to Hanoi. The only reason to hit 6 and 7 is to give warning to NVN. It is very important if we strike that nothing be said about Russians being there. The political effect of hitting 6 and 7 is a warning to not move sites further out from Hanoi. I'm not at all sure we'll hit anything -- they may have moved them out from there."

In response to a question from the President, Henry Cabot Lodge expressed concern about hitting SAM sites close to Hanoi. "Six and seven are 40 miles away -- the rest are 10 miles away. I would go ahead on the two that are 40 miles away. But I don't think it is of pressing urgency."

The President asked General Wheeler, "If we leave 6 and 7 for awhile, what would it do to Rolling Thunder?" General Wheeler replied, "It would cut targets in half. It will cut down on armed recce." However, Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara asserted, "It hasn't been necessary to take out the SAMs in order to get to a military target."

The President expressed his concern in not responding to the shoot down. "One of the great dangers is conveying the wrong message by letting the enemy miscalculate our motives. What will be the reaction of the enemy if he can knock down US planes and we do nothing about it? The sites are put there to destroy us. Are we going to sit and sit and let them knock down our planes? Are we going to let them move first?"

The discussion then focused on possible Russian reactions to hitting the SAM sites and whether or not the SAM sites would prevent Rolling Thunder targets from being hit. After General Wheeler showed on a map the locations of the SAM sites in relation to certain Rolling Thunder targets, Arthur J. Goldberg, UN Ambassador, stated, "It is difficult for the public to distinguish between 6 and 7 and the rest. What will be the Russians reaction to this? This is what they have given to NVN. Where will they go for the future? There may be a specific reaction to pinpointing the target. Do we know enough out of this episode -- is it worthwhile to know how these sites are to be utilized? Is this their policy -- or is it a gesture? Is it definitely their policy or is it a trigger happy officer?"

President Johnson then asked further questions. "Why do we ferret out ammo dumps, etc. and lose men -- and fail to take out something that is more dangerous like a SAM site? How do you justify this? You bring bombing to a standstill. If you are to continue bombing these targets, how can we not take out the SAMs?" Dean Rusk said, "You cannot order pilots to bomb without helping them get back. We don't know enough about the sites." To which the President replied, "Then we ought to cancel targets -- we can't send pilots over the missile sites."

Vice President Hubert Humphrey agreed. "We ought to face up to Russian involvement. What impact this will have on Russian relations, I don't know. All the press knows the Russians are in the site business. Wheeler says if we delay it will aggravate the situation. They have to be taken out. If I were forced to decide, then if targets are to be kept, take out the sites. If targets can be altered, 2 or 3 days later is not a matter of significance. We can't leave ourselves without response. But I think we can allow ourselves a little time."

After discussions about the lack of intelligence on the sites and their specific locations, the Secretary of Defense summarized his position. "We simply have to change targets -- we can't keep target schedules with the sites in. ... If striking 6 and 7 properly, at low altitude, we will be protected from 8, 9, and 10. There are two problems: Should we take out 6 and 7 now -- or wait? My decision on taking out 6 and 7 depends on taking out Rolling Thunder targets. ... We don't want to send planes to Rolling Thunder targets if they must be shot down."

After deciding to wait for the results of an intelligence study expected later in the day, the meeting turned to other topics.

The second meeting on the SAM site situation began in the White House at 6:10 PM and lasted for 55 minutes. The Secretary of Defense began the meeting by announcing that they had no further intelligence since the earlier meeting.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

General Wheeler stated the position of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "The Chiefs would take out all 7 sites at one time. If not, take out 4, 6, and 7. There is the possibility that #4 was mixed up in this shoot-down.

The Secretary of Defense disagreed with striking site 4, and in response to the President's question for his reasons, replied, "Number 4 is part of the Hanoi-Haiphong package. It would vex the Soviets. It is not directly associated with Lao Chi and the ammunition dump. There is no operational need to take it out. It is too close to the MiGs and would increase the number of aircraft in the air. We have never hit a SAM site and there is no need to make a difficult target more difficult. The chances of success are not perfect. They are about 50-50."

Responding to the President's request, Mr. McNamara then summarized the pros and cons of taking out the sites. "We think we should take out 6 and 7 because they lie athwart targets on our authorized list. If we don't, we will give an incorrect reading to the Soviets that we are willing to omit targets because of SAMs. It is hard to explain to Congress and the people that we will take out ammo depots but not SAM sites."

During discussions about MiG threats and also taking out ammunition dumps during the SAM strike, Dean Rusk commented, "I see some advantage to striking other targets. However, it is unlikely we'll find anything to hit. They will have moved. I wouldn't rely on clearing out a path for the future. ...". The Secretary of Defense did not agree to combine missions. "I would not complicate matters by hitting targets simultaneously. That's a very difficult mission."

The President then asked for any objections to taking out the two SAM sites. Ambassador Goldberg recommended delay and listed his reasons: "In light of danger of Soviet involvement; intelligence is not sure #4 is not involved; not sure SAM is not mobile; I think we ought to know they are there and #6 and #7 are the responsible ones before making this attack." He recommended a reconnaissance mission to learn more.

The President restated his position. "If we don't take them out, I want the targets off the list. If we do take them out, we can go on to better targets. I don't want to send boys over those sites where we know they will be shot down. We may be misleading the Russians again. ... For 20 months we have been restrained -- and I don't want them to misunderstand us. The only pressure we can have is our bombing. We have nothing else to bargain."

Clark Clifford agreed to the strike. "... We show the enemy our determination by taking out #6 and #7. The most valuable asset NVN has is the industrial complex they have laboriously built. If they think SAMs can protect their industry, they have won an important element. We have no bargaining point if their industry is safe. If the Soviets put their men and material into a situation that knocks down American planes, they must expect retaliation."

The Vice President agreed but expressed one concern. "... If these targets are valuable, we have to do something about what blocks us. I am concerned that we have changed emphasis -- that we do indeed have mobile units to face." In response to this concern, Mr. McNamara downplayed the mobility of the SAM equipment. "We are over-emphasizing the mobility of these units. They are semi-mobile. They haven't been mobile in 99% of the cases we have examined."

At 6:55 PM, after being assured the strike could be launched by 1 or 2 in the morning Washington DC time, the President issued the order, "Take them out".

*"Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964 - 1968", Vol III, Vietnam June-Dec 1965, NARA Library Depository 1065A Item 0872B, P 240 - 244 & 253 - 257.*

**26-Jul-65**

566

As a result of the loss of the F-4C to a SAM on 24 July 1965, fighter squadrons at the two F-105 bases in Thailand were ordered to prepare strikes against all eight SA-2 SAM sites known to be in North Vietnam. Starting in the late afternoon, both Takhli and Korat began planning 48-plane strikes that would employ two thirds of all the F-105s at each base. The attack was code named "Spring High".

Maj Art Mearns and Capt Victor Vizcarra, on temporary duty with the 80 TFS from the 6441 TFW at Yokota AB,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Japan, were two of the mission planners at Takhli. At Korat, the people breaking out the frag order and doing mission planning included Major Roger B. Myhrum and Captain Chuck Horner both on temporary duty from the 4 TFW at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina. At Korat they were assigned to the 357 TFS. Despite working most of the night, all four of these pilots would fly the mission the next day.

The initial 48-plane strike plans had to be altered after President Johnson approved bombing only the two SAM sites that were believed to have shot down the F-4C. The retaliatory strike on SAM site number 6 was to be carried out by twenty-four F-105s from the 12 TFS and 357 TFS at Korat. F-105s from Korat were to approach the target from the South. A strike against SAM site number 7 was assigned to twenty-four F-105s from the 563 TFS and 80 TFS at Takhli. Takhli planes were to come into the SAM site from the North. Both groups had to carefully plan their flight paths to avoid colliding with each other over the targets.

After all-night planning sessions, the mission was carried out on 27 July. Six F-105s were lost during the strike. Three pilots were killed, two became POWs, and one was rescued.

"Poststrike reconnaissance photos revealed both sites were decoys, filled with dummy cardboard missiles. The North Vietnamese had removed the real missiles and concentrated every available AAA gun in the area around the empty sites."

*"Thud Pilot" by Victor Vizcarra, unpublished memoir, chap 4, pgs 5 -6 & "Every Man a Tiger, by Tom Clancy, pgs 90 - 91 & "The Vietn Experience, Thunder From Above" by John Morrocco, pgs 106 - 110.*

**26-Jul-65**

5070

While President Johnson was deliberating whether or not to attack the SA-2 sites in North Vietnam and the pilots at Korat and Takhli were planning the attacks, the North Vietnamese were watching their skies for the expected retaliation.

"At 11:30 in the morning on 26 July, the 293rd Radar Regiment's 18th Radar Company detected two targets, reconnaissance aircraft flying at different altitudes. One unmanned QBM-34A reconnaissance drone at an altitude of 18 kilometers was flying in from the southwest across the Vietnamese-Lao border toward the market at the Thanh Son ferry crossing [Ben Thanh Son] in Phu Tho. When the aircraft reached Thanh Son, 64th Battalion, deployed at Kim Dai, shot it down. The drone aircraft crashed on the peak of Yen Khoai Hill, near Suoi Hai, at 12:26 P.M.

"At 12:42, a reconnaissance flight made up of two RF-101 aircraft flying at low altitude flew up toward Phu Tho and Viet Tri. The 64th Missile battalion shot down one of the aircraft in the Thanh Son area. In the space of just 16 minutes, 64th Missile Battalion had shot down two enemy aircraft.

"Knowing that the enemy would retaliate ferociously, on the afternoon of 26 July, the commander and the political commissar of the Air Defense-Air Force Service personally visited the anti-aircraft artillery cluster to assess the situation and to bolster the morale of the soldiers."

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 41 - 42, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**27-Jul-65**

1048

Twenty-four F-105s, under "Operation Spring High", launched from Takhli against SAM site #7 in six flights of four planes each. The first three flights were targeted against the SAM site itself and carried CBU-2 cluster bombs. The target for the second three flights was a nearby support facility. Each of these planes carried four BLU-27/B napalm canisters.

Pilots in three of the flights belonged to the 80 TFS from Yokota AB, Japan, on temporary duty at Takhli:

"Rambler"

#1 - Maj Arthur Stewart Mearns

#2 - Capt Victor Vizcarra

#3 - Capt James E. Hayes

#4 - Capt Giles W. Gainer

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Corvette"

- #1 - Capt Ralph L. Detwiler
- #2 - Melvin C. "Buddha" Boswell
- #3 - Maj Delbert F. Smith
- #4 - Capt Gordon M. Walcott

"Valiant" flight targeted against the SAM site consisted of;

- #1 -Maj. Phil Coll, Operations Officer of the 80 TFS;
- #2 - Capt. John Atkinson
- #3 - Capt. Bob Reichart
- #4 - Capt. John W. "Jack" Redmond

While approaching their target at low altitude and high speed, the flight misjudged their position and ended up dropping their CBU's on the support facility instead of the SAM site.

Jack Redmond recalled his experiences during the mission. "I do not for the life of me remember our call sign. There are some things that I do remember as if it were yesterday.

"First, I was scheduled to go to Bangkok that day on a short R&R. It was very early in the morning when I was awakened and told that I was going on a special mission. Our squadron had us set up in four ship flights and tried to keep us together as much as possible. This day was not a normal schedule; however I did fly on Bob Reichart's wing as I normally did. One thing I will never forget is after we dropped off the tanker I was really thirsty. I was going to take a drink from the water bottle (for non Thud pilots we had one built in to the aircraft with a hose and mouth piece that was hooked to the right side of the seat) only to discover that I had closed the canopy with the hose smashed under it. Needless to say I was really dry when we landed. More about that later.

"Second, as were descending toward the target area the radio chatter was unbelievable, anyway, our flight lead had not made the normal 'check um hot' call on the way in so I decided I better do it for him. My transmission must have been heard by everyone, because, to this day Marty Case reminds me of my 'check um hot' call. ... Shortly after that John Atkinson made a call changing his call sign from number 2 to 5. That was because three number 2's had been shot down ahead of us.

"Third: as we approached the target area at a very low altitude all I could see ahead was a wall of triple-A. It was so thick I didn't see how anyone could fly through it. About that time one of the flights from Korat, flying in the opposite direction, flew right through our flight. I, to this day, cannot see how we missed having a mid-air. I don't know if they even saw us. We were all going the speed of heat and were very low.

"Last: As we departed the area lead and two were held to res-cap and Reichart and I were sent to the tanker to hold for further instructions. That was when I heard Bart and Farr run together. After holding for some time we were sent back to Takhli where someone climbed up my ladder and handed me a drink (I was so thirsty I didn't care what it was). I threw it down and ugg, It turned out to be some rot-gut whisky from the flight surgeon. Straight and no ice. I almost tossed it back up on the guy that gave it to me. It was some time before my stomach settled down."

The four 80 TFS pilots of "Rambler" flight were the first of the three Takhli flights targeted against the SAM support facility. Maj. Arthur Mearns was flight lead; Capt. Victor Vizcarra, flying his seventh mission during this deployment, was number 2; Capt. Jim Hayes was number 3; and Capt. Giles W. Gainer was number 4. The flight approached the target at 500 knots and 50 feet. Each plane dropped four napalm canisters on the support facility and pulled up from the target in a hard right turn heading southwest to avoid colliding with the F-105s from Korat that were approaching nearby SAM site #6 from the south. The four pilots heard the radio calls from others ahead of them who were hit by AAA. Ground control directed them to a refueling tanker so they could return to fly rescap over the downed pilots. Rambler flight landed back at Takhli after flying for over two and a half hours.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Giles Gainer recalled his experiences during this mission. "Tuesday, 27 July 1965, I woke up late and thought I had slept through a mission briefing, and saw that Art Mearns was still in bed. I woke him up, and he said, 'Our mission had been cancelled', and he let me sleep. We went to breakfast, and then to the flight line, and found out that we were going to attack the SAM site.

"2nd Air Division had set up the mission with 48 F-105s, MIGCAP, and one EB-66 for radar jamming. The F-105s, all 48, were to have 5-minute intervals going up the Black River to the Red River to the target at the big bend. After much discussion with 2nd Air, we (the Takhli force) convinced them that Korat should take the Black River route, and Takhli would come down the Red River. After this was settled, how we attack the SAM site was the next question. Since the ordnance selected for this mission were CBU-2s and napalm, a low level attack was necessary. We knew that if we flew our normal ingress altitude (between 13 & 16,000 ft), we would be exposed to SAMs and heavy flak (85- and 100-mm). Our information on the SA-2 at that time, was that it was not capable of tracking below 5000 ft. (Later we learned they could track an aircraft down to 200 feet). Below 5000 ft put us into almost every weapon available to the N. Vietnamese, so high speed, low level (about 100 ft) was our best bet of getting there and back.

"Takhli units, the 80 TFS from Yokota and a unit from McConnell AFB, Kansas [the 563 TFS], put up three flights of four each. My flight, call sign Chevrolet [or Rambler], would be the last flight armed with six cans of napalm and our targets were the barracks near the site. Take off times were near noon (I don't remember the exact time) with five minute separation after forces from Korat had departed. Needless to say, we were all nervous about the attack that had never been done against a target whose capabilities were vaguely known to us.

"After refueling over Udorn RTAFB, we continued over Laos toward North Vietnam. Somewhere over Laos, Jim Hayes called out flak and Art took the flight down to low level into North Vietnam. Upon leveling off, we saw a waterfall zigzagging down a mountainside, and I called it out to the flight, thinking that would be the last beautiful thing we would see. We were still about twenty-five minutes from the target, and four F-105s were already shot down. We reached the Red River and Art brought the flight to attack level, and increased our speed. We were flying just above tree top level and the last time I looked in the cockpit, we were doing over 500 knots.

"We delivered our napalm on target, and broke right to go beyond the mountains south of the Red River. Climbing to 25,000 ft, we stayed in orbit if needed for RESCAP (rescue cover) and were released as the only rescue had been completed by some of the bravest men I know in an HH-43 helicopter.

"Our return to base was uneventful, but our adrenalin was still sky high. I must have smoked five cigarettes on the way home. After parking my bird, George Gifford came up the ladder and gave me a cup of liquid that I swallowed in one gulp! It was Remy Martin Cognac, and I didn't taste or feel it."

*"Thud Pilot" by Col. Victor Vizcarra, unpublished memoir, Chapter 4, pgs. 5 - 13.*

**27-Jul-65**

564

As the second F-105 squadron TDY to Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, the 563 TFS from the 23 TFW, McConnell AFB, Kansas, provided three flights of eleven F-105s in striking SA-2 SAM site number seven northwest of Hanoi. The mission was part of Operation Spring High, the first attack against SAM sites in North Vietnam.

The 563 TFS squadron commander, Maj Jack Brown, led the first flight, Maj Everett W. Harris led the second flight, and Capt Paul R. Craw was "Hudson Lead" in the third flight. The other three pilots in Hudson flight were Capt Kyle Berg #2, Capt Bill Sparks #3, and Capt Martin V. Case #4. Their planes also carried napalm cannisters.

Paul Craw remembered flying the mission. "The Takhli group proceeded north to about Yen Bai and (flew) down the Red River valley on the deck. I do recall it being rather pretty with all the farms and grass-roofed huts. ... We flew low and when we got to the intersection of the Red and Black rivers which was just short of the target, I really got low. In the past I had been able to drop napalm as fast as five hundred twenty five knots without getting tank break up, so I held the speed right at 500. I had to climb when I got across the Black, so I was low. At this time I was perfectly lined up on a missile, or the dummy put in its place, so it should have been a sure kill. Just past the target, I called for burners and started a right turn to get back across the Black River which was safe haven so to

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

speak because the choppers were not to cross the river for a rescue attempt."

Capt Bill Sparks was Hudson 3 on the mission. "On 27 July, someone shook me awake at O'dark 30 and told me not to get up since I was going on a SAM raid. I tried to hold still and then went to the club and had a Martini with (Capt Paul Craw) and the other members of (his) flight."

"We waited around until afternoon and went to the briefing and were told we were going to carry CBUs or napalm and fly at 100' and 360 kts to one of the sites. Three flights of 4 in trail using Yen Bai as an IP. ... Korat was to do exactly the same thing to the other site ... at the same time only ... head on to us and about 3/4 (of a) mile away. Another 12 birds from each base were to hit the supporting barracks with 750s. ... After the shortest brief on record, we mounted our steeds and started for the valley."

"Yen Bai was easy to find at low level since they were shooting like stink before we got there. It seems that McNamara had told the South Vietnamese our route, ordnance, and timing two days before. The only change was that we were doing 540 K CAS at less than 20'. We were the 3rd flight to our target and we went ... at very low level. I was hit 11 times between the IP and target and my bird was 1 of only 4 flyable the next day."

Capt Sparks received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism. "... Captain Sparks participated in a strike against a heavily defended Surface-to-Air Missile site near Hanoi, North Vietnam. This was the first attack by fighter aircraft on an operational SAM site in military history, and the hazards involved cannot be over-emphasized. Penetrating target defenses on a high speed low level run in the face of heavy anti-aircraft fire, Captain Sparks courageously pressed his attack to inflict heavy damage upon his assigned target. ... ." (General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Order G-161 (September 30, 1965) on line at <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=45399>)

Other strike pilots from the 563 TFS on this mission were Capts Russell L. Violett, James M. Rhodes, Jr., John R. Carson, and Jack Fowler. Two squadron planes and their pilots were lost. Capt Kile Berg, was shot down and became a POW. Capt Walter B. Kosko was shot down and killed. Captains Berg and Kosko were awarded the Silver Star while other squadron pilots received the Distinguished Flying Cross for the mission. (563 TFS History provided by Marty Case.)

Capt Berg's Silver Star citation read: "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 8, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Captain Kile Dag Berg (AFSN: 0-19609685), United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as Pilot of an F-105 Thunderchief Fighter-Bomber of the 563d Tactical Fighter Squadron, in action over North Vietnam, on 27 July 1965. On that date, as a Flight Leader, Captain Berg participated in a strike against a heavily defended Surface-to-Air Missile site near Hanoi, Vietnam. This was the first attack by fighters against an operational SAM site in military history and the hazards involved cannot be overemphasized. Penetrating hostile defenses and heavy anti-aircraft fire on a low-level, high-speed run, Captain Berg courageously pressed the attack to score a direct hit on his assigned target. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Berg has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24096>)

After Capt Berg and Capt Kosko were shot down, Capts Dick Moore, Phil Kiernan, Hal Dortch, and Russ Schoonover, launched on RESCAP from Takhli. These four pilots were also awarded the DFC.

"We lost #2, Kyle Berg, at the target and our 1st flight lost #2 just past the target coming out. Korat lost 4 Thuds, three on their SAM site and 1 on the barracks. We also lost 2 of 3 RF-101 RECCE birds and hit 2 dummy sites that had over 250 37-mm or larger guns around each one."

"The score was 3 dead Thud drivers, 1 dead RECCE driver, 2 POW Thud drivers, 1 POW RECCE driver, and Frank Tullo picked up by the 1st Jolly Green in the north."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"We got fair to middlin' drunk and tried to wreck the base; but, unfortunately, there were NO full bulls at Takhli to beat to death. The upshot of IRON HAND 1 (mission designation) was that we had under-whelmed them a lot."

*23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 65, USAF microfilm MO554 & U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & Bill Sparks, E-mail to the Weasel list, 12 Nov 1998 & "The Whims of an Idiot", unpublished story by Paul R. Craw, sent via e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 30 Jan 2000.*

### 27-Jul-65

F-105D 624257 563 TFS 23 TFW Takhli Hit by heavy 37-mm AAA while attacking SAM site No 7 in RP-6A, NVN. Crashed in RP-5, North Vietnam. 21-04N 105-18E Walter B. Kosko 563 TFS pilot ejected. Initially declared MIA then KIA. Call sign: "Healy 02". "Other members of his flight were Maj Jack F. Brown, 563 TFS commander; Capt Russell L. Violett from the 563 TFS; and Maj Louis G. Pazel from the 80 TFS. They were attacking SAM site #7 at location 21-10-30N and 105-21-40E. Capt Kosko went down at 14:03 at location 21-04N and 105-18E.

"The following is an extract from the statement of Major Jack F. Brown, Healy Lead: '... Immediately after weapon release, the flight came under intense 37-mm and AW fire. A turn to the right was started in an attempt to escape behind some nearby hills. Lead and #2 (Capt Kosko) were in rather close formation with Capt Kosko on the left. In attempting to evade the anti-aircraft fire, the lead aircraft rolled level from the right turn off the target. At that instant, Lead heard a distinct explosion to his immediate left, and the number two aircraft pitched over the lead aircraft in a steep right bank, then righted and began climbing at an approximately 15-degree angle. The pilot called that he had been hit and had smoke in the cockpit. Lead aircraft told him to head for the hills ahead, and fell into trail formation behind. The number two aircraft was streaming a slight amount of white vapor from the tail section. After approximately ten seconds more of flight, the number two aircraft started to porpoise and the pilot ejected. The parachute opened normally and the pilot deployed the survival gear. He landed in a river in what appeared to be water well over his head. The lead aircraft made repeated low passes over the river, but could discover no sign of the pilot or parachute. The dinghy was inflated and floating upright, but empty. No sign of the orange LPH bladders was detected and no movement was seen in the water. The lead aircraft circled the area until low on fuel, refueled on a tanker, and returned to the downed pilot's area. The area was again searched thoroughly and numerous low passes were made over the area, but no sign of either the dinghy or pilot could be found. At no time were signals from the URT-21 received nor any voice from the URC-11." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-025, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

"... Captain Kosko was ... In ("Healy" flight), a flight of four aircraft from Takhli Air Base, Thailand, on a bombing mission over Phu Tho Province, North Vietnam. There was intense anti-aircraft fire directed at the flight. Following an explosion near his aircraft, Captain Kosko reported he was hit and there was smoke in his cockpit. He later ejected and other flight members observed a fully deployed chute and survival gear. There was no beeper or voice contact with him after his ejection. Captain Kosko was seen to land in the Black River. A search of the river disclosed an inflated life raft which was empty and no evidence of the pilot. On July 27th and 28th, Radio Hanoi reported eight U.S. aircraft shot down on July 27, 1965 and stated that pilots had been taken into custody from shoot downs in Ha Tay Province. Captain Kosko landed on the border of Ha Tay and Vinh Phu. Captain Kosko was initially declared missing. Returning U.S. POWs were unable to provide any information concerning his fate. In November 1977 he was declared dead/body not recovered, based on a presumptive finding of death. U. S. investigators in Vietnam in 1988 and 1990 visited the area of Captain Kosko's loss. Vietnamese officials stated that Captain Kosko's life raft was recovered during the war. One witness stated it was used as a fishing boat in the local river until it deteriorated and was discarded. U.S. investigators were told Captain Kosko had indeed landed in the Black River, had never reappeared after going under water, and they believed he drowned in the river."

Capt Kosko was born 26 May 1938 in Blacksburg, Virginia, from where he entered the service. He was declared dead on 9 January 1978. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial wall on panel 02E line 44.

*Report of the Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, United States Senate. Jan 13, 1993*

### 27-Jul-65

F-105D 610113 563 TFS 23 TFW Takhli Hit by heavy gunfire during the strike on SAM Site 7 in RP-6A NVN. Crashed in North Vietnam. 21-12N 105-18E Kile Dag "Red" Berg 563 TFS pilot ejected and became a POW. Released 12 Feb 73. Call sign: "Hudson 02". Hudson Flight from the 563 TFS consisted of four F-105Ds flown

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

by Capt Paul R. Craw, Lead; Capt Kile D. Berg, #2; Capt Billy R. Sparks, #3; and Capt Martin V. Case, #4. The flight attacked SAM site #7 at location 21-10-30N and 105-21-40E. Capt Berg crashed at 14:07 at 21-12N and 105-18E.

"The following is an extract from the statement by Capt Billy R. Sparks, Hudson 3: '... Just after weapon release, I broke hard right through Lead and 2's smoke. As I rolled out, I saw Hudson 2 in a slight climb burning from forward of the intakes past the speed brakes. The aircraft continued to climb to about 1000 feet, snapped over and crashed almost vertically. Several radio calls were made to Hudson 2, but none were acknowledged. Two puffs of smoke were seen coming from the cockpit area as the aircraft snapped over. The aircraft crashed 3 miles from the target and the intense flak in that area made it illogical to return for a better look.'

"The following is an extract from the statement by Capt Paul R. Craw: '... Hudson 2 received a hit that started the aircraft burning from the intake back. The fire was clean and no smoke. The aircraft fell straight forward. Several radio calls were made for him to eject. He said nothing. When the aircraft reached a vertical dive, I noted two puffs of white smoke come from the aircraft which could have been the canopy and parachute leaving the aircraft. The aircraft crashed in the vicinity of the target and anti-aircraft fire made it illogical to return to verify crash results.'

"On 16 Mar 66, Capt Berg's status was officially changed to detained. Basis for this change was a Prague radio broadcast concerning him and a letter to his wife." (PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-027, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

Capt Paul R. Craw was Capt Berg's flight lead. " ... I looked in the rear view mirror and sure enough I picked up Kyle Berg's aircraft. All I could see was radome and fire. It had decelerated and had fallen back a couple of thousand feet. I thought I saw the nose come up just before it rolled to the right and splashed. There appeared to be a puff of smoke which was obviously the ejection seat in operation. Marty Case, the number four man, assured me that Kyle did not get out of the aircraft. ... As it turned out he got out OK and was picked up by the bad guys within about five minutes. ... We finally determined that Kyle was a POW about two years later."

"(Earlier) ... I (had) tried to talk Kyle out of going since he was to get out of the Air Force in a few days. His answer was, 'Boss, this will be a big mission and I don't want to miss it.' He got a Silver Star for it but I doubt that that medal was worth eight and a half years in jail." (Craw story)

As number 2 in "Hudson" flight, "... Kyle Berg's F-105 was hit just seconds before he reached the target. ... A few hundred feet off the ground when he ejected, Berg swung once to the left and once to the right then hit the dirt. Berg landed 150 feet from the burning wreckage of his Thunderchief and was quickly surrounded by a group of wide-eyed teen-agers toting 'awfully big weapons.' His premonition had proved true. Kile Berg did not return to Takhli that afternoon, nor did he leave North Vietnamese captivity for over seven years. ... After spending his first thirty-one days as a POW in solitary confinement, Berg was given a cell mate. Ironically it was Pop Keirn, the man whose supposed death he had been sent to avenge." (Vietnam Experience)

*U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & "The Vietnam Experience, Thunder From Above" by John Morrocco, pg 108 & The Whims an Idiot", unpublished story by Paul R. Craw.*

**27-Jul-65**

1047

Under "Operation Spring High", three flights of F-105Ds from the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, joined three flights from the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, to attack SAM Site #6 in North Vietnam, located at coordinates 21-09-04N and 105-22-18E, northwest of Hanoi near Son Tay across the Red River from Viet Tri. Both squadrons were on TDY at Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

Two other F-105 squadrons on TDY at Takhli, the 563 TFS from McConnell and the 80 TFS from Yokota, attacked the nearby SAM Site #7 at coordinates 21-10-30N and 105-21-40E.

The SAM sites had shot down an F-4C on 24 July 1965. SAM Site #6 had been manned by the North Vietnamese 64th Missile Battalion supported by Russian technical advisors who had fired two SA-2 missiles from this site. However, anticipating a retaliatory strike, the North Vietnamese evacuated their equipment and missile crews from

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

both sites, and by 27 July, the sites were empty of missile equipment. They became flak traps heavily ringed with AAA guns.

Capt George M. "Squeeks" Weeks from the 357 TFS was one of the F-105 pilots who flew on the strike against SAM site 6. He flew as "Pepper 04" in the flight led by Maj Jack G. Farr, the squadron Operations Officer. "I not only was one of the first to hit a missile site, but probably have come closer to a North Vietnam SAM site than any other Air Force pilot," said Captain George M. Weeks, 28, who flew with a group of 16 F-105 Thunderchief pilots to launch history's first attack on a SAM site, 30 miles northwest of Hanoi.... 'We went north toward a target we had been hitting before, then turned along a river, flying very low to sneak under their radar defenses. We even sent some aircraft to a decoy target to keep the North Vietnamese from knowing where we were actually going to hit. As we neared the target, we dropped to 50 feet above the deck, flying over 630 mph. When we entered the target area of the SAM complex, I could see 37-mm and 57-mm cannons pointing at us in a horizontal position.'

'I glanced up and there was a solid cloud of flak at 2,000 feet. I banked slightly to my left, and spotted my target. Just before I reached the target, two shells hit my aircraft, both in the aft section of the fuselage. I hit my afterburner and climbed just as I came over the target. I punched the release button for the bombs, then dove, turning hard to my left as I left the target area.'

"The other F-105s completed their runs on the SAM site."

'We regrouped, staying at low altitudes until we reached some mountains. We then followed a river south, keeping low to avoid the enemy radar and automatic weapons fire. We learned much on the first raid, consequently we have improved our tactics.'" (Republic report)

"Redwood" flight from the 357 TFS consisted of:

- #1 - Maj Roger B. Myhrum
- #2 - Capt Charles A. "Chuck" Horner
- #3 - Capt William S. Koenitzer
- #4 - Capt Richard W. Cullen

Originally there were four members of "Willow" flight from the 357 TFS in the attack against SAM Site 6. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Harold W. "Buff" Rademacher
- #2 - Capt John C. Gordon
- #3 - Capt William Thomas May flying F-105D 62-4320
- #4 - 1Lt David L. Ferguson flying F-105D 61-0062

Capt Rademacher ground aborted and Capt May became the lead of the three-ship flight with Ferguson and Gordon flying as #2 and #3. They carried BLU-27/B napalm canisters.

Years later, John Gordon described his experience on this mission. "... After a two-day stand down, I remember being awakened late (about 9:30 or 10:00 AM) on the 27th and arriving at the briefing and thinking that this is the most important target we've been given thus far in the war and we weren't being giving adequate time for mission prep and briefing of individual flights nor were we told of Takhli's plans of ingress and egress.

"... Willie May, Dave Ferguson and I were Willow Flight. We each carried 4 cans of napalm. This was the first time napalm and CBU's were employed on strikes in NVA by F-105s to my knowledge. Start, taxi, takeoff, and flight to the tanker and refueling were routine. I do recall some WAG of a tanker crew member saying, 'Don't fire until you see the whites of their eyes', just before we left the refueling frequency. We changed to mission frequency and it was immediately apparent the targets were well defended, there was talk of AAA and aircraft being hit, comments of you're on fire and bailout.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"We continued on the profile and descended to low altitude in the vicinity of Sam Nuea on the NVA Laotian border. The elements were to take separation approaching the IP for the attack itself. I took separation but not as much as I would have taken if I'd had a wing man. I thought I shouldn't get too far from the lead element in case I was hit and needed support. As I was approaching the IP, I heard the F-4 MIGCAP call a single-ship bogey and then a bandit approaching the IP. I recall thinking, that's all I need is to be shot down by an F-4 today, then I noticed off to the left of my course lots of dust beginning to rise from what I thought were CBU impacts from Takhli attacking SAM site 7. A second or two later I was disabused of that notion by the bursting of the 85-mm and larger AAA rounds just above my head. What I saw was apparently the muzzle blast of the guns that had been lowered to fire at us at our low altitude. I also thought I don't have to worry about the F-4s coming down here, they're not exposing themselves to this situation any more than necessary. For the first time, in my 30 or 40 missions to that point, I think all of the AAA sites that were annotated on our target area maps, and some that were not annotated, were occupied and firing.

"Just after passing the IP I saw some troops on the ground running for a series of trenches. I thought I would strafe them. When I pulled the trigger as the pipper reached them, the aircraft seemed to speed up. I had not pushed in the gun control circuit breaker and so the gun did not fire. I remember thinking well shit I'll just push the circuit breaker in and drop some napalm on them as I get closer. As I got closer I saw what I thought was a radar control van that the troops who were headed to the trenches were evacuating. I dropped the napalm there and began looking for Willie and Fergie. I saw them and cut them off in the egress turn as we crossed the run-in path that Takhli was using in their north-to-south attack on SAM site 7. All of this is happening at around 600kts and 50' AGL.

"After rejoining with Willie and Fergie, I learned that Fergie had sustained damage to both the aircraft and the engine. Also, while climbing out on egress, we became aware of a rescap operation for Dogwood 2 [Capt Frank Tullo of the 12 TFS], one of our sister flights from Korat, that had been shot down. We were unable to participate because of Fergie's damaged aircraft and our being a man short in the flight from the beginning. ... What is amazing is that we flew the next day and the next until we were finished." (John Gordon, e-mail 22 Aug 2010.)

During the attack, Capt May's and Lt Ferguson's F-105s were damaged by AAA that burst above them resulting in 53 holes on the top of Capt May's plane and damage to the intake of Lt Ferguson's. Capt May related what happened. "We were down around 50 feet, I guess. It's pretty hard to judge 50 feet but we were down on the deck - as close as you can comfortably want to get there going as fast as we were. And of course the flak was all over the place and it was going off above us as well as around us. But we had one good one go off right between us and he was only about two ship lengths out from me and we figured that was the same one that got his intake that got the top of my airplane.

"... I came out of the target area - of course you check the airplane as much as you can see - and I kept wondering what the heck all these holes were on top of the wing. I thought that was the extent of it. My wingman at the time [Lt Ferguson] had taken a pretty good hit in his intake and he was a little concerned about that and so I was too. He was on my wing and we kept checking him. He didn't mention anything being wrong with my plane so we cautioned him all the way home and landed OK. So when I got back - climbed out of the airplane - everyone was up on the wings - counting, started pulling little fragments out of the airplane. 'Good grief what's going on?', you know. I climbed out of the cockpit and looked up on top and there was the whole top of the airplane just covered with the holes." (Transcript of Capt May's 100-mission interview conducted by the 469 TFS on 15 Jan 66.)

Capt May received the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism on this mission. "... Capt May participated in an airstrike against a well defended surface-to-air missile site deep within hostile territory. Under intense hostile anti-aircraft fire, Capt May delivered his ordnance on target depriving the hostile forces the use of their missile site. ..."

Capt Gilbert Bruce Holmes was another 357 TFS pilot who flew on the strike. He flew as # 4 in "Lemon" flight led by Capt William T. Ramage. Holmes was also awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. His award citation was identical to Capt May's. "... Capt Holmes participated in an airstrike against a well-defended surface-to-air missile site deep within hostile territory. Under intense hostile anti-aircraft (fire), Captain Holmes delivered his ordnance on target depriving the hostile forces the use of their missile site. ..."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

The mission against the two SAM sites resulted in six F-105s being lost, two from the 563 TFS from Takhli, and two in each of the two squadrons from Korat.

Two of the three pilots who died were from the 357th as a result of a post-strike mid-air collision over Thailand. They were Operations Officer, Maj Jack G. Farr and his wingman, Capt William J. Barthelmas, Jr., whose plane had been severely damaged by AAA.

Two pilots from the 12 TFS were shot down. Capt Robert B. Purcell was captured and Capt Frank J. Tullo was rescued.

*Republic Aviation Thunderchief Report, Vol I, No. 4, Dec 1, 1965 & Capt May's and Capt Holmes award citations.*

**27-Jul-65**

1049

At Korat, after spending most of the night planning the strike for attacking SAM site #6, Maj. Roger B. Myhrum and Capt. Charles A. "Chuck" Horner ended up flying on the mission. They were initially assigned as ground spares for the 16 F-105s flying from Korat. Two planes in one flight ground aborted and the two pilots were ordered to join the flight. They became part of "Redwood" flight from the 357 TFS. After two more planes air aborted over Laos due to malfunctions in their F-105s, Maj. Myhrum, as "Redwood 01" assumed the lead of the strike force from Korat. Capt. Horner was his wingman as "Redwood 02". During his approach to the target, Capt. Horner heard a radio call that one of the planes from Takhli had been shot down and then saw a plane in his flight burst into flames, hit the ground, and explode. Racing in at 550 knots (exceeding their napalm canister's delivery limit of 375 knots) the flight dropped their ordnance and pulled off the target. During joinup they heard a radio call that one pilot was ejecting. As they were heading home, more radio calls told of the mid-air collision between two

*"Every Man a Tiger" by Tom Clancy with General Chuck Horner, pgs. 89 - 95.*

**27-Jul-65**

538

The 12 TFS, from the 18 TFW, Kadena AB, Okinawa, on temporary duty at Korat, Thailand, participated in the first strike against an SA-2 missile site and its associated barracks area called "Operation Spring High". Eighteen squadron pilots flew on this strike. Two flights carried "... napalm and CBU's, two with rockets and guns for recce, and one flight [was] ... a diversion force. Napalm and CBU's were delivered on target, despite extremely heavy flak."

Three flights from the 12th were in the attack on SAM site #6. They were:

"Cedar"

- #1 - Lt Col Charles W. Reed (Sq Commander)
- #2 - Capt Robert Baldwin Purcell
- #3 - Maj Paul M. Kunichika (Aborted on the tanker due to ATM failure)
- #4 - Capt William H. Joyce

"Dogwood"

- #1 - Maj William J. Hosmer
- #2 - Capt Frank J. Tullo
- #3 - Capt Allen L. Anderson
- #4 - Capt Robert Norlan Daughtrey

"Chestnut"

- #1 - Capt Charles R. Copin
- #2 - Capt Vernon E. Frank
- #3 - Capt Matthew J. Kelch, Jr.
- #4 - Capt George A. Bogert

Capt John C. Jones was scheduled to fly the mission but was pulled from the squadron's lineup. "As squadron navigation officer, I was deeply involved in preflight planning and was originally scheduled to fly but our Ops Officer, Lt Col Bob Fair, replaced me with Bill Joyce and made me Supervisor of Flying at Korat for that mission. I

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

spent the entire time in the Control Tower."

Another pilot from the 12 TFS who did not fly on this mission was 1Lt John C. Morrissey. "The 27th of July was the day I was supposed to leave for 2nd Air Division in Saigon as we always kept at least one combat-ready 105 pilot down there to keep them from fragging something totally unrealistic. ... I tried everything I could to get my flight commander, Charlie Copin, to take me off of Saigon duty and let me go. ... Every pilot who flew across the target that day was awarded the DFC. I am fairly certain that the only other time this ever happened was the big B-24 mission against Ploesti [in World War II]." (John Morrissey, e-mail 20 June 2009)

Two squadron pilots were shot down. Capt Robert Baldwin Purcell, the second man in "Cedar" flight, became a POW. Capt Frank J. Tullo, the second man in "Dogwood" flight, was rescued.

*12 TFS History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1965, pgs 5 - 6 & U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & JC Jones e-mail 18 Jan 2010.*

### 27-Jul-65

F-105D 624252 12 TFS 18 TFW Korat Hit by heavy gunfire near the Can Doi Barracks near SAM site #6 in NVN. Crashed in RP-6A, North Vietnam. 21-05N 105-14E Robert Baldwin "Percy" Purcell 12 TFS pilot ejected and became a POW. Released 12 Feb 73. Call sign: "Cedar 02". Capt Purcell was number 2 in a flight of three F-105Ds that left Korat at 13:20. Other members of the flight were Lt Col Charles W. Reed, flight lead; and Capt William H. Joyce, Jr., Cedar 4. (Number 3 had aborted.) They attacked the Can Doi Barracks near SAM site #6 at location 21-09-04N and 105-22-18E. Capt Purcell went down at 14:22 at location 21-05N and 105-14E.

"The following is an extract from the statement of Captain William H. Joyce, Jr., Cedar 4" '... As we approached the target, #1 and #2 lined up on the left side and I lined up on the right. The leader called the release. I delayed slightly to get a better sight picture. Just prior to release, I lost sight of #1 and #2 due to a dust cloud over the target and concentrating on the weapons delivery. As we crossed the target and I had released my ordnance, I looked to my left. At this time, I saw #2 come out of the dust and smoke. He was burning from the left wing root area and back along the left fuselage. There were also numerous pieces coming off the aircraft and part of the left wing was gone. When I saw #2, he was in a slight right turn. The aircraft started a climb and turn to the left at about 30-degrees of bank; the aircraft rolled slowly back to the right, continuing until impact which was about 70-degree pitch, almost inverted. Pieces were coming off the aircraft and it was burning very badly. I watched the aircraft the entire time. I could see no seat come out and as I turned I looked back and saw no chute. I then picked up the leader and proceeded out from the target.'

"A Radio Hanoi broadcast in English on 27 July 1965 stated that three aircraft had been shot down on that date and that the pilots had been taken into custody. Although no names were given, the location was the same as that in which Captain Purcell and two others were lost on that date.

"On 28 July 1965, an aircraft flew beacon listening search in the area from 0607 to 0754 local. There were no beacon contacts or sightings. Formal air search operations were suspended on 29 July 1965 because of no contacts, no sightings, and the hostile location." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-026, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

"... Captain Robert B. Purcell, the second man in Cedar Flight, was hit over the target and his aircraft was last seen in flames at a very low altitude. He is considered Missing In Action. Rescue was impossible due to intense enemy ground fire and his proximity to the target area." Capt Purcell was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Capt Purcell landed in the middle of the SAM site he was trying to bomb. He found out it was a dummy site. (David Duart, ex-POW, interview, 30 Sep 00).

*U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & 12 TFS History, 1 July - 31 December 1965, pg 5.*

### 27-Jul-65

F-105D 624407 12 TFS 18 TFW Korat Hit by heavy automatic guns near a barracks area and SAM site in NVN. Crashed in RP-5, North Vietnam. 21-10N 105-13E Frank J. Tullo 12 TFS pilot ejected. Rescued by a USAF CH-3C helicopter. Call sign: "Dogwood 02". Combat loss during TDY of the 12 TFS from Kadena AB, Okinawa,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The aircraft carried two pods of 2.75" rockets on the outboard stations. "Captain Frank J. Tullo, the second man in Dogwood flight, was hit by very heavy ground fire just prior to the target but ejected successfully after the aircraft's flight controls failed. Radio contact was made and rescue efforts by the 12th and other pilots were completed when a CH-3C helicopter [piloted by Capt George Martin from NKP with call sign "Shed 85"] picked Captain Tullo up out of enemy territory, ... west of Hanoi. He returned to Korat the following day."

"Two U.S. Navy A-1 'Spads' flew over his position (and) ... Tullo was able to establish line-of-sight radio contact so he could be retrieved later the same day. Tullo was the first pilot picked up in the war by a USAF helicopter with the famous call sign 'Jolly Green'."

In addition to Capt Martin, the CH-3 crew included 1Lt Orville N. Keese, copilot; Sgt Curtis W. Pert, crewchief; and Sgt George C. Thayer, PJ. They were on TDY from Eglin AFB, FL, to NKP. Their helicopter was one of two C-3Cs in SEA that had been loaned by TAC. To be closer to North Vietnam, "Shed 85" staged out of Lima Site 36 (LS 36) at Nha Khang, Laos. During the pickup, the helicopter hoist jammed with Capt Tullo 10 feet off the ground. The helicopter pilot moved his aircraft to a nearby rice paddy and dropped Capt Tullo on the ground then landed for the pickup. The helicopter's engines overheated and it was shot at by North Vietnamese soldiers with AK-47 rifles. The Navy A-1s strafed the enemy troops so the helicopter could take off. They landed back at LS 36 at night.

Rescue Mission Narrative 38-754-27 Jul 65.

"Four F-105 aircraft were downed while flying against surface to air missile sites in North Vietnam. Of the four downed aircraft only one chute was reported. A CH-3C helicopter, which was prepositioned at a forward site in Laos, was launched to recover survivors. It entered the same area where the four aircraft had been downed, approximately 40 miles west of Hanoi, and was led to the downed pilot by RESCAP aircraft. The survivor was on a heavily wooded slope and marked his position with red smoke. The helicopter was forced to hover at approximately 80 feet above the pilot due to the high trees. After the pilot had put on the hoist harness and was raised 10 feet a hoist malfunction occurred. The crew was unable to lift the pilot the remaining 70 feet manually. The crew decided a landing would have to be made in order to rescue the survivor, so they flew to a rice paddy ½ mile away with the survivor dangling 70 feet below the helicopter. Immediately after landing and recovering the survivor the helicopter came under automatic weapons fire and received 3 hits, one of which missed the fuel tanks by 6 inches. The remainder of the return journey was uneventful. CH-3C aircraft commander was Capt George C. Martin, and rescued F-105 pilot was Capt Frank Tullo."

"The following account is in Captain Tullo's own words. 'When the chopper arrived, he flew directly towards my position. I fired a pen flare which he did not see, and three tracers which he said were very prominent. He did a 360 turn and when he came over my position again, I had two day/night flares going. He started to hoist me, but when he got me about 5 feet off the ground, the hoist locked. After about 10 minutes of hanging at the end of the hoist, at 50 to 100 feet off the ground, they lowered a rope to me, which I fastened to the sling. This was just about the last thing I would have been able to do with my arms because they were becoming numb from my position. They attempted to pull me up manually and managed to get me up about 8 feet. This was just enough to make a loop in the original cable, where I put my feet and took some of the weight off of my arms. After hanging there for about 20 minutes, they put me down in a field nearer to the house that I had seen during descent. Then they landed and picked me up. I jumped into the chopper. As they were taking off, I heard a burst of fire and the chopper sustained 3 hits.'" (Project CHECO SEA Report, "Enemy Capture/Release of USAF personnel in SEA", AFHRA K717.0413-57, pg 83.)

On 10 August 1965, Capt Frank J. Tullo departed the 12 TFS for McConnell AFB, Kansas.

*12 TFS History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 65, pg 6 & "Tullo and the Giant" by Robert A. Hanson, Air & Space Smithsonian, June/July 1997 & Avia Week & Space Technology, April 17, 2000 & "PJs in Vietnam", by Robert L. LaPointe, pgs 122 - 129 and 417.*

**27-Jul-65**

959

Two F-105 pilots from the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, returning to Korat RTAFB, Thailand, after the strike on SAM site No. 6, died in a mid-air collision. "Four of five U.S. Air Force F-105 jet fighter-bomber pilots lost in Tuesday's

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

air strike on Missile sites near Hanoi, North Viet Nam were from Wichita's McConnell Air Force Base, the Air Force said today. Two of the pilots are dead. The other two are missing and were seen parachuting from their damaged aircraft over the target area. The dead pilots were identified as Maj Jack G. Farr ... (and) Capt. William J. Barthelmas, Jr. ..."

*The Wichita Beacon, 29 July 1965*

### 27-Jul-65

F-105D 624298 357 TFS 355 TFW Korat Crashed in a mid-air collision with F-105D 61-0177 after bombing SAM Site 6 in North Vietnam. Crashed in Thailand. 15-05N 105-05E Jack Graham Farr 357 TFS pilot was killed in the crash. Call sign: "Pepper 01". While returning from the target, Maj Farr's aircraft collided with F-105D 61-0177 piloted by Capt William J. Barthelmas, Jr. "... Farr, 41... was married and the father of five. He was assigned to McConnell last February. He was a member of the 357 Tactical Fighter Squadron of the 355 TFW. ... The two pilots of the 355th Tactical Fighter Wing killed Tuesday, ... were part of an attack group of 46 aircraft that bombed surface-to-air (SAM) sites in North Viet Nam. Five planes were lost."

"Jack had flown in Korea as a FAC before going on to the F-86. At 41, he was still a Major due to crashing a military vehicle whilst disqualified due to medication. He crashed an F-86 in Korea when, on the pitch for landing, only one leading edge slat came out, spinning him into the ground. His son, who was five when Jack was killed, lives near me in Australia.

(E-mail from Garry Cooper <tamale35@bigpond.net.au> to the FACNET on 17 June 2007 forwarded by Rick Atchison.)

Maj Farr was born 21 December 1923. He entered the service from Harrison, Mississippi. His body was recovered. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial wall on panel 02E line 44.

*The Wichita Beacon, 29 July 65.*

### 27-Jul-65

F-105D 610177 357 TFS 355 TFW Korat Hit by heavy gunfire near SAM Site 6 in RP-6A, NVN. Crashed south of Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, after a mid-air collision with his flight lead in F-105D 62-4298. 17-00N 102-40E William Jennings "Bart" Barthelmas, Jr. 357 TFS pilot was killed in the crash. Call sign: "Pepper 02". While returning from the target, Capt Barthelmas' aircraft began vibrating badly, possibly as a result of being hit by AAA. His flight lead, Maj Jack G. Farr, in F-105 62-4298 flew in close to assess the damage. Capt Barthelmas' aircraft pitched abruptly and the two aircraft collided killing both pilots. "Bill had holes in his jet behind the canopy and asked ops officer, ... Jack Farr, to check him over for fire, leaking fluid, or anything else. Sure enough, fluid was leaking. Suddenly Barthelmas' flight controls locked up from loss of hydraulic fluid, and he pitched up, smashing into Farr's jet, killing him. Barthelmas jumped out, but his chute streamered, and he was later found dead in a rice paddy with multiple broken bones and water in his lungs." ("Every Man a Tiger" by Tom Clancy with General Chuck Horner, pg. 93)

"... Capt. William J. Barthelmas, Jr., 29, (was from) Circleville, Ohio. He was single and a member of the 469th Tactical Fighter Squadron of the 355 TFW ... ." (The Wichita Beacon, 29 July 65.) During this mission he was flying with the 357 TFS.

Capt Barthelmas was born 27 June 1936 in Circleville, Ohio. He was raised on the family farm and was the first Circleville native to die in the Vietnam war. His home town named a city park for him and Circleville's AMVETS Post 2256 adopted his name. On 6 June 1998, the post dedicated an F-105D they restored as a veterans memorial to him. F-105D 57-1771 was marked with a "Black Bart" name and emblem and displayed in front of the post hall. Capt Barthelmas' name appears on the Vietnam Memorial wall on panel 02E line 44.

*"Every Man a Tiger" by Tom Clancy with General Chuck Horner, pg. 93 & The Wichita Beacon, 29 July 65.*

### 27-Jul-65

5071

A North Vietnamese history told their story of the US retaliatory attack against their two SAM sites that shot down pilots from the 12 TFS, 357 TFS, 80 TFS and 563 TFS.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Early in the morning of 27 July, while mist still enveloped the base of Ba Vi Mountain and the area where our firing positions were located, our anti-aircraft cannon and machineguns, which had just finished replacing their camouflage with fresh leaves and branches, was ordered to Combat Condition 1.

"At 8:43 A.M., two RF-101s flew in from the southwest at extremely low altitude. Our forces were slow to spot these aircraft, so that by the time the alert was given, the enemy aircraft had already flown over the heads of the anti-aircraft guns and our units did not have time to open fire. The enemy was able to photograph the entire area where our positions were located.

"Many people now said that our intentions had been exposed and that for that reason the enemy might not attack. The Service forward command post, however, concluded that the enemy had spotted our surface-to-air missile positions, but the location of our anti-aircraft artillery positions was still secret. The enemy was still eager for revenge against our surface-to-air missiles, so it was certain that they would make a retaliatory attack. The forward command post decided that our opportunity to destroy the enemy was still alive and ordered the entire cluster to prepare to engage the enemy.

"At 1340 hours, the entire cluster was again ordered to Combat Condition 1. In the forward command post, many targets appeared on the southwestern corner of the 9 x 9 plotting board. The total number of aircraft detected reached almost 50 aircraft of all types, principally F-105 attack aircraft and F-4 fighters. In addition, there were also KC-135 aerial refueling tankers, HH-53 helicopters, and AD-6 aircraft escorting the helicopters. The commander of the anti-aircraft artillery cluster quickly concluded that there were clear indications that the enemy was preparing to launch a large air strike and again reminded all units to be ready to engage the enemy.

"The 18th and 26A Radar Companies continuously tracked the enemy aircraft and provided timely targeting data to the forward command post. The target groups began crossing the Vietnamese-Lao border. They flew in the direction of Moc Chau-Thanh Son (Phu Tho province) and followed the course of the Red River down across the peak of Luoi Hai Mountain. A number of flights followed the Da River down toward the peak of Tan Vien Mountain.

"After monitoring and analyzing the situation, the commander of the anti-aircraft artillery cluster concluded that the enemy's primary attack sectors would be Sector 32 and Sector 12, while Sector 3 would be an important [secondary] attack sector. The commander instructed all units to intensify their surveillance of Sectors 12, 32, and 3.

"The targets approaching from Sectors 12 and 32 reached ranges of 60 kilometers, then 50 kilometers, then 40 kilometers. The SON-9A fire control radars of the individual sub-clusters focused their radar searches and picked up enemy targets in Sectors 12 and 32. Many of the 100-mm and 57-mm gun batteries had spotted the targets at ranges of from 30 to 40 kilometers, but when they reached ranges of 18 - 20 kilometers, the enemy, using the cover of the Ba Vi and Luoi Hai mountain ranges, descended to low altitude, causing virtually all of our fire control leaders to lose the targets.

"At 1410 hours, Sub-Cluster A's visual reconnaissance [observation] post spotted a target with a one-meter range-ranger and reported back to the command post: 'Sector 32, two F-105s, range 10 kilometers and closing.'

"234th Regiment's 57-mm batteries simultaneously called out, 'Target!' The two F-105s flew in from the direction of the top of Luoi Hai Mountain and dove at the missile launch site located on Ghe Pagoda [Chua Ghe] Hill. The anti-aircraft shells exploding all around them terrified the two F-105s in the lead flight. They hastily fired rockets into the Ghe Pagoda missile launch site, scattered their bombs hastily around the launch site, and flew away as fast as they could.

"Many of our troops displayed exemplary heroism and cleverness during this battle. A napalm canister landed in the middle of the firing position occupied by 1st Battery, 224th Regiment. Even though two soldiers were killed and six were severely burned, after the battery rapidly consolidated its troops and encouraged them to continue fighting it shot down one enemy aircraft." (Vol II, pg 48)

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"A second flight of two F-105s dove in over the top of Luoi Hai Mountain and were greeted by a volley of anti-aircraft shells from our guns. Because the enemy aircraft were flying at extremely low altitude, all of our shells overshot them and exploded above them. More flights of F-105s followed, diving on the launch site one after another. Our troops lowered the elevation of their gun barrels to the minimum possible (so that the gun barrels were right down to the top of the protective revetments, but the shells continued to overshoot the enemy aircraft.

"The battery commanders decided to leave a few key gunners at each gun position while assembling the rest of their men to work to lower the height of the walls of the gun revetments in the primary firing sectors, Sectors 12 and 32.

"The two aircraft were flying very low, causing the 57-mm guns of 1st Battery to lower the muzzles of their guns so low that one round fired by one of the guns in the rear hit the fortified earthen berm protecting one of the forward guns. Even though the unit had a great deal of experience fighting American aircraft, this was the first time the gunners of the Tam Dao Group had ever encountered the enemy's low altitude 'scraping the ground' attack tactics. The gun crews lowered their barrels until they hit the tops of the protective earthen berms surrounding each gun, but their shells still flew over the top of the aircraft in the second flight! First Battery immediately ordered its troops to lower the height of the protective berms. Everyone except the Numbers 1, 2, and 5 Gunners actually manning the guns grabbed picks and shovels set to work scraping away the tops of the berms, even though the flames from the napalm still blazed and their noses were filled with the stench of smoke from burning gasoline." ("History of the 234th Air Defense Brigade, the Tam Dao Group (1963-1998)", pg 81, translated by Merle Pribbenow)

"As the battle entered its eighth minute, Sub-Cluster A reconnaissance [observers] spotted a group of eight F-105 which split in two to attack the missile launch sites at Ghe Pagoda [Chua Ghe] and Ngoc Nhi (Vo Khuy). Sub-Cluster A was ordered to destroy the flight of F-105s attacking the Ghe Pagoda site. 1st Battery/234th Regiment, under the command of Battery Commander Nguyen Van Ngan, joined the other 57-mm batteries and 14.5-mm machine guns in focusing their attention on four F-105s that were then flying over the peak of Luoi Hai Mountain and diving to attack the Ghe Pagoda launch site.

"The 1st Battery commander issued a concise, one-word order: 'Fire!' The 57-mm guns and low-altitude machine guns opened fire simultaneously, their rounds enveloping the flight of F-105s. One F-105 burst into flames, and the pilot ejected.

"At this same moment, another flight of F-105s flew in through the gaps in the peaks of the Tan Vien Mountain to the west and dove in, two aircraft at a time, to make low-altitude bombing attacks against the Ngoc Nhi (Vo Khuy) missile launch site. Two batteries of 37-mm guns operated by personnel from the Air Defense Officers School, fighting in support of Sub-Cluster B, fought back ferociously against the waves of enemy attacks. During the twelfth minute of the battle, Sub-Cluster B hit another F-105, which crashed in the Thanh Son area of Phu Tho. The pilot ejected, but the enemy sent in helicopters to rescue him.

"During the fifteenth minute of the battle, two helicopters escorted by AD-6s flew in to rescue the pilot then floating beneath his parachute in the skies over the Ba Trai area. 224th AAA Regiment fired volleys of shells from its 100-mm guns at the flight of AD-6 aircraft. One of these aircraft caught fire and crashed at the foot of Luoi Hai Mountain, while the surviving aircraft and the two helicopters quickly turned and fled to the west. We captured the downed enemy pilot alive.

"Angered by this defeat, the enemy reacted ferociously, insanely firing rockets and dropping bombs on our anti-aircraft artillery and machinegun positions, wounding a number of soldiers. One napalm bomb landed in the middle of 1st Battery/224th AAA Regiment's gun positions. Two men were killed and six were badly burned. With the Central Sub-Cluster under ferocious attack, Sub-Clusters A and B massed their fire to support the Central cluster, forcing the enemy aircraft to scatter their bombs haphazardly and flee for their home bases.

"At the fortieth minute of the battle, a group of eight F-105s flew in over the top of Luoi Hai Mountain. Dividing into pairs, they made diving attacks on the Ghe Pagoda launch site and on our anti-aircraft artillery positions. 3rd

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Battalion, equipped with 57-mm guns, closely coordinating with the other gun positions, fought back ferociously, hitting one F-105 that crashed right near the firing position. The enemy pilot was captured alive.

"At 1451 hours, a final flight of F-105s, a total of four aircraft, flew over Tan Vien Peak (Ba Vi Mountain) and dove to attack the Ngoc Nhi (Vo Khuy) missile launch site. Having learned lessons from the unit's previous unsuccessfully attempts to shoot down any aircraft, 2nd Battery/234th AAA Regiment readjusted their speed setting, from 180 meters/second to 200 meters/second, to match the speed of F-105s making low altitude attacks. Battery Commander Cam Van and Political Officer Luong Xuan Moi encouraged their men to coordinate closely with one another. Firing at precisely the right moment, they shot down another F-105. The pilot bailed out and was captured."

"Vying to emulate the outstanding achievements of 1st and 4th Batteries at A Cluster, the soldiers of 2nd Battery, located right next to the fake missile position north of Vo Khuy Hill, also demonstrated their skill and their combat techniques. ("History of the 234th Air Defense Brigade, the Tam Dao Group (1963-1998)", pg 81, translated by Merle Pribbenow)

"Command cadres like Battery Commander Cam Van, Battery Political Officer Luong Xuan Moi, Deputy Battery Commander Huong, and Deputy Political Officer Hoang Trung Ngan all had combat experience and they maintained unity of command. When an F-105 piloted by Captain 'Pooc-xen' from the 40th Squadron swept in from the direction of Ba Vi Mountain to attack the fake missile position, the entire battery opened fire in a simultaneous volley. Before the two napalm bombs could be released from their pylons, a piece of the 'Thunderchief' broke off, the entire fuselage burst into flames and dove into the ground.

"At 1451 the last F-105 to be shot down that day crashed and the battle ended. However, during the return flight to their base in Thailand, two F-105s, one of which had been damaged by our guns, crashed and exploded in the jungles of the Annamite Mountain Chain along the Vietnamese-Lao border.

"During 40 minutes of ferocious fighting, our anti-aircraft forces in the area shot down five U.S. aircraft. 234th Regiment shot down two of these aircraft, and 1st Battery was the unit that shot down the first aircraft downed by the cluster. ("History of the 234th Air Defense Brigade, the Tam Dao Group (1963-1998)", pg 82, translated by Merle Pribbenow.)

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 42 - 45, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**27-Jul-65**

5072

After the USAF raid against their two SAM sites, the North Vietnamese assessed their strengths and weaknesses in the battles and lessons learned.

"a. Strengths

"- Analyze and gain a firm understanding of the plots, schemes, and pattern of operations of the enemy's air force to provide a foundation on which to correctly select combat areas and determine the correct moment to strike and the proper tactics to be used by our air defense missile forces.

"- Maintaining high resolve, the leaders of our missile forces reduced the training time and sent their troops into battle early in response to the requirements of the mission assigned to them by higher authority. By doing so, they created the element of surprise, enabling them to defeat the enemy's air forces in their very first engagement.

"- Our air defense missile forces made clever and creative use of their forces, using proper deployment formations and engagement methods suited to Vietnamese conditions from the very first battle, building a formation for all future air defense missile combat operations.

"- Our forces knew how to properly exploit the initial victory won by our missiles, using clever ruses to trick the enemy and create conditions that enabled our anti-aircraft artillery units to secure an even greater victory.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

### b. Weaknesses

"- We did not fully anticipate all eventualities, did not have a plan to coordinate action with our Air Force fighter aircraft, and were not observant enough or sensitive enough in our local assessment of the situation, thereby enabling the enemy to rescue a downed pilot in the Don Vang area of Phu Tho.

"- We did not fully anticipate all the enemy's operational tricks, so that initially our anti-aircraft gunners ran into many difficulties and our fire was ineffective when the enemy shifted from high-altitude to low-altitude attacks.

"- Our initial efforts to camouflage of the missile launch sites did not receive the proper level of attention. 63rd Missile Battalion's launch site was located on a high hill with little vegetation, the missiles were pure white, and they were not adequately camouflaged."

### "c. A number of lessons learned

"- Resolving to send our air defense missile forces into battle at the correct moment, selecting the correct combat area, and creating the element of surprise are extremely important factors in defeating the enemy from the very first engagement. The surface-to-air missile systems supplied to us by the Soviet Union were extremely modern, but at that time our nation was still very poor and our level of education, including in science and technology, was low. It would take years of training for us to be able to utilize these systems. Because our combat requirements were extremely urgent and we had to create the element of surprise and seize the offensive initiative against the enemy, the Central Military Party Committee and the Air Defense-Air Force Service Party Committee decided to shorten the training time by following a formula of first studying only those subject that were absolutely essential and relying on on-the-job training as our primary training method in order to be able to quickly send our missile units into battle. If we had waited until our units were fully and completely trained before sending them into combat, we would miss our opportunity and would not be able to respond to the pressing requirements of our resistance struggle.

"The enemy knew that surface-to-air missiles had arrived in North Vietnam, but he thought we would not be able to deploy them for combat until mid-1966. After fully digesting the intentions of our superiors, it was clear that it was extremely important for our missile forces to enter the battle at this time. If we delayed, the opportunity would be lost, and the enemy might easily spot our missile units and attack them first, before we were ready. The 236th Regiment Party Committee and the regimental command group decision to reduce the training period from eight months [sic] down to two months and fifteen days so that the unit could quickly begin combat operations in July 1965 took the enemy completely by surprise and provided us a favorable opportunity to destroy enemy aircraft.

"The selection of the right battle area to enable our missiles to win victory in their very first engagement was extremely important. We had to select an area where enemy aircraft were operating, where we could achieve secrecy and surprise, and where we could move the missile units in and set them up in launch sites easily. If we deployed the missiles in the primary [static] launch sites around Hanoi to aid in defending the city, we would be able to use the fortified launch sites that had already been built, but at this time the enemy still was not attacking Hanoi. In addition, the enemy constantly monitored the fortified positions we had built, so if they spotted our missiles there they would seize the initiative and attack us first. If we deployed our missiles to fight in the south, there were enemy aircraft operating down there, but we would have to move the missile equipment a considerable distance across many difficult bridge and ferry crossings, so the enemy might easily spot our missiles and we would lose the element of surprise.

"It was decided that the best area to enable our missile units to win their initial engagement would be the Suoi Hai-Trung Ha area (Bat Bat district, Ha Tay province). This location was next to an area where enemy aircraft were currently operating, and enemy aircraft flew close to this area when they attacked Viet Tri and Lam Thao in Phu Tho province. In addition, this area had many other conditions that were favorable for our missile forces. The units would have to drive only a short distance from their starting point to the launch sites, and the roads were good, and the battle area was in terrain consisting of interspersed hills and high mountains, so it would be easy for us to achieve the element of surprise in order to destroy enemy aircraft.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

"The lesson about the need for high resolve to send our air defense missile forces into battle at the correct moment and to select the correct battle area for them were extremely important factors in enabling our missiles to win their first battle, thereby creating confidence and enthusiasm among our missile troops for use in the future. These decisions responded to our urgent combat requirements at that time and put the enemy on the defensive, leaving him passive and uncertain for a long period of time as he tried to find ways to deal with our missiles."

*People's Army of Vietnam Air Defense Service, "A Number of Anti-Aircraft Battles During the Resistance Wars Against the French and the Americans", Volume I, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, pp 46 - 49, Translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**27-Jul-65**

1050

In Washington DC, President Lyndon B. Johnson was informed of the results of the strike against the two SAM sites near Hanoi, North Vietnam. "A ... situation report for the President, prepared at 6:40 a.m., July 27, indicated that the SAM sites and their associated barracks had been struck, and the pilots reported the destruction of site 6. The results of the attack on site 7 were not clear. Six F-105 aircraft were reported lost in the attack. ..."

"On August 3, R. C. Bowman sent a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy in which he noted that the attacks on the SAM sites 'may have been a DRV trap.' Site 6, he noted, was evidently a dummy site, and there was probably no equipment at site 7. He added that General Wheeler had proposed to McNamara that strike aircraft be given authority to attack mobile SAM sites wherever they were discovered outside the Hanoi area."

The "official history" of the war, written by the Vietnamese in 1994, described how they modified the SAM site. "At the firing positions that our two missile battalions had occupied during the battle on 24 July, our soldiers, assisted by the local population, constructed fake missiles made of bamboo and mats. Around these 'firing positions' we deployed two regiments of 57-mm anti-aircraft guns, two battalions of 37-mm anti-aircraft guns, and ten militia anti-aircraft teams from Bat Bat district. On 27 July, when the American pirates sent 48 aircraft sorties to 'retaliate' against our 'missile firing positions,' 120 anti-aircraft cannon and hundreds of machine guns and rifles instantly fired back in a fierce barrage, destroying five aircraft, two of which crashed on the spot." ("Victory in Vietnam. The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954 - 1975", translated by Merle L. Pribbenow, published by University Press of Kansas, pg 167.)

*"Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964 - 1968", Vol III, Vietnam June-Dec 1965, NARA Library Depository 1065A, Item 0872B, F 257, footnote 3.*

**28-Jul-65**

838

"Early on the morning of 28 July, the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, flew a check over the (27 July) strike area at a very low altitude to possibly establish contact with any of the four pilots lost on the (SAM site) raid. However, no further radio or beacon signals were heard. This first SAM site strike was followed by a continuing requirement for an alert strike force of F-105s, either already airborne or on a 15-minute posture, to be able to strike any future sites that are discovered by reconnaissance."

This alert tactic was not effective and was abandoned a short time later.

*12 TFS History, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 1965, pg 6 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 169.*

**29-Jul-65**

6543

On July 29, 1965, two days after F-105s from Takhli (the 563 TFS and 80 TFS) and Korat (the 357 TFS and 12 TFS) attacked the two SAM sites, the Air Force attempted to get post-strike reconnaissance photographs of SAM Site 7. The reconnaissance pilot was 29 year-old Capt Jack Wilton Weatherby from the 45 TRS on TDY to Tan Son Nhut AB, South Vietnam. He was hit by AAA and the pilot died in the explosion of his plane, RF-101C 56-0067.

Capt Weatherby, from Fort Worth, TX, was awarded the Air Force Cross. "Captain Richard Weatherby distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over the Republic of Vietnam on 29 July 1965. On that date, Captain Weatherby voluntarily flew an unarmed aircraft at extremely low altitude deep into hostile territory which was heavily defended, to photograph a target of vital significance to the United States Air Force and Republic of Vietnam Air Force. As he approached the target area, his aircraft was severely damaged by accurate ground fire. With complete disregard for his personal safety, Captain Weatherby elected to press on to the target until his badly damaged aircraft exploded and crashed. Captain

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Weatherby's courage and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the American fighting man under attack by an opposing armed force. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness, Captain Weatherby reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

His name is on the Vietnam Wall panel 02E line 45.

*CNA Loss/Damage Database, microfiche sheet 1, pg A17, USAF loss 108 & "Recipients of the Air Force Medal of Honor and Air Force Cross", by Eric R. Caubarreaux, pp 276 - 277.*

### 02-Aug-65

1054

Four flights of F-105s, originally targeted against storage areas at Yen Bai, North Vietnam, diverted to bomb Dien Bien Phu army barracks (JCS 26) when weather obscured their primary target. Maj Arthur Mearns from the 80 TFS led the third flight of four F-105Ds from Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, with Capt Victor Vizcarra flying as number two in the flight. The flight released their bombs on the target without encountering AAA. It was Capt Vizcarra's ninth mission during this second combat deployment of the 80 TFS from Yokota AB, Japan.

Eight other F-105s from Takhli struck the same ammunition depot near Dien Bien Phu that had been placed off-limits on 24 April 1964 during their attacks on the adjacent ammunition storage area. The planes were flown by a mix of pilots from the 563 TFS who had been at Takhli since April 1965 and the 562 TFS who had just arrived from the 23 TFW at McConnell to replace the 563rd.

Capt Paul R. Craw from the 563 TFS led the two flights. "As a result of losing Kyle Berg on the 27th (27 July 1965), I had a new guy as my number two man. ... He was from the 562nd that was about to replace us." Number two was Capt Dwight Bowles from the 562 TFS. Capt Craig Miller from the 563 TFS was another flight or element lead on the mission.

Capt Craw decided to ignore the higher-headquarters' directive to deliver bombs from 5,000 feet in a 45 degree dive at 500 knots and recover at 3,000 feet. "My plan was to ... ingress at 18,000' and roll in with all eight aircraft in a relatively tight formation." Despite a call from the EB-66's that SAMs were coming up, Capt Craw proceeded to the target. "Today we were pissed off so we can bomb the factory itself. A few days ago it was a court martial offense. ... We pressed on and I rolled in from 18M and quite steep. (About a 70-degree dive angle). ... As we approached supersonic at about fourteen thousand feet, target solution had arrived. Bombs away. ... I ... rolled to the left and watch(ed) my bombs strike the ground. I bottomed out at about 9M when the whole area turned white from 37-mm flak. The area above the now white undercast became very dirty looking from all the 57-mm flak that filled the sky between three and eight thousand feet. As I started a hard turn to the left over the target, I noticed a lot of bombs explode about a mile or so at the twelve o'clock position from my roll in heading. I did a three-sixty over the target to get my flight members joined up to head out. The ground actually disappeared below me as a result of the tremendous amount of 37-mm flak all of which was at or about three thousand feet, our normal bottom-out altitude if we released at 45 degrees at 5 thousand feet. ... Now you can just imagine what would have been the post-strike report if I had used the 5,000' release altitude at 45 degrees and 500 knots as directed instead of the near 75-degree dive angle releasing at fourteen thousand feet at near supersonic. What was the BDA? The most beautiful blast one could realized -- we completely destroyed the ammo factory."

"Those bombs that exploded about two miles at twelve o'clock were from the Navy flight that was at twenty-six thousand feet above the overcast. They reacted to the (SAM) call from the B-66s and released their bombs through the clouds through us and the bombs were hot."

"Lessons learned -- don't be predictable. ... I didn't get around to writing up the 2 August mission, but it could well have qualified as an Air Force Cross mission as it was the first confirmed SAM defended target."

*Victor Vizcarra, "Thud Pilot", unpublished memoirs, chapt. 5 pgs 1 - 3 & "The Whims of an Idiot", unpublished article by Paul R. Craw.*

### 06-Aug-65 19-Aug-65

2615

"In Rolling Thunder 26/27 (RT 26 and RT 27), fixed target authorization moved over the 22-degree N Parallel, and CINCPAC was finally authorized to strike a highway bridge on the highway to China. Other bridge targets in that same area were rejected by higher authority. Naval craft berthing areas and airfields were also authorized for

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

armed reconnaissance strikes in this program."

Now that a SAM had downed the first U.S. plane on 24 July 1965, " ... SAM installations were first priority targets ... . The sudden detection of another site, number 8 northwest of Hanoi, again outside the sanctuary area, was cleared for a strike." This SAM site was attacked on 9 August.

For these Rolling Thunder phases, " ... the Joint Chiefs proposed striking a number of new and more significant targets, but administration authorities again overruled their selection in favor of targets deemed less provocative. These included the barracks and SAM installations around Dien Bien Phu, warehouses at Long Giem Da and Dang Thanh, two bridges, and the Long Chi explosives plant. The Air Force made seven separate assaults on the targets around Dien Bien Phu ... ".

More specifically, "the JCS sent Secretary McNamara proposals for attacking twelve new 'significant' non-SAM targets (including Phuc Yen airfield near Hanoi, now harboring sixty-three MiG-15s and MiG-17s and eight IL-28 bombers), an accelerated and systematic campaign against all SAM installations regardless of location (i.e. including SAM sites within the Hanoi-Haiphong sanctuary area), and more sustained interdiction of LOCs supporting the SAM system. However, Mr. McNamara and State Department and White House officials drastically pruned the Joint Chiefs' requests, deleted all twelve targets, substituted nine others of lesser importance, and reduced the planned sortie rate accordingly. They approved an increase only in attacks on SAM sites that were outside of the sanctuary area."

"In RT 26/27, the limit on armed reconnaissance sorties was raised from 500 to 600 for the two week period." (JCS History)

"The beginning of August ... coincided roughly with a transition point in the Rolling Thunder program when air commanders began scheduling more sorties for armed reconnaissance than for fixed targets. There were two principal reasons for the change: the intensive search for SA-2 SAM sites and deteriorating flying weather. In the period from August 6 to 19, for example, eighty-eight scheduled Air Force sorties were canceled because of weather before takeoff and ten were aborted after launch due to poor weather."

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pgs 25-14 and 25-15 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam, 1965 - 1966", pgs 167, 177, 179 and 188.*

### 09-Aug-65

841

"On 9 August, an attack was made by USAF aircraft on SAM Site #8, with tactics differing from those used during the strike of 27 July [against SAM sites 6 and 7]. Although the site was later determined to be unoccupied, the new tactics were effective in terms of survival against ground fire and in the ability to deliver an effective weight of ordnance. The basic method consisted of three flights of F-105s (two aircraft per flight) armed with napalm and CBUs, and attacking at minimum altitude and high speed from widely divergent approach headings, followed by six F-105s delivering 750-pound bombs from a low-altitude 'Pop-up' attack. The initial low-altitude attacks being concentrated on the missiles and launchers. Attacking forces were backed by MIGCAP, ECM, ELINT and SAR and, despite intense ground fire, only one aircraft received damage."

F-105 pilots from the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, flying from Korat RTAFB, Thailand, struck SAM site #8, northwest of Hanoi. "Spruce" flight was led by Maj William J. Hosmer, with Captains Anatole Semenov, Jr., Pike G. Grubbs, and 1Lt John C. Morrissey. They dropped CBUs and fired rockets but the SAM site hardware had been removed prior to the attack. Major Paul M. Kunichika and Captain Raymond V. Moss also hit the same site with 750-pound bombs. They received very heavy flak but returned without aircraft damage.

"A 101 Recce pilot took a photo of our target and the powers that be assigned the target to our Sq. (12 TFS.) We had 3 flights only going up. Our flight had CBU's, one flight with rockets and one flight with 750's. (We attacked in that order). Our flight went up low level, through the valleys and used the telephone poles from the 27 July raid as our IP. Our flights were the only ones up that morning. We found that the site had moved when we got there. All went well for the strike, I took a hit in the tail section but nothing serious."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Maj Hosmer was awarded the Silver Star for leading this strike.

"On August 9, a force of twelve F-105 Thunderchiefs with Maj. William J. Hosmer of the 12 TFS as mission commander, headed for the installation accompanied by many supporting aircraft flying MiG and rescue CAP, ECM, and ELINT. Because the area was heavily defended by 37-mm, 57-mm, 85-mm, and 100-mm guns, Hosmer split his force into three flights of four aircraft each. The lead flight, led by Hosmer, winging at minimum altitude and high speed from divergent directions, dropped 173 CBUs on radar-directed and other antiaircraft guns. Behind them flying in train, came the remaining Thunderchiefs, dropping their 750-pound general-purpose bombs in a series of low-altitude, pop-up strikes. The tactic of targeting the gun emplacements first, of which several were hit, and of drawing away fire allowed the follow-on aircraft to strike the missile area more accurately. No aircraft were lost and only one Thunderchief was damaged. For his leadership, Major Hosmer won the Silver Star. Unfortunately, as in the assault on July 27, bomb damage assessment disclosed that the missile revetments were unoccupied, indicating that the DRV was able to anticipate and attack and to disperse missiles and associated equipment quickly." ("Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 167.)

Lt Morrissey received the Distinguished Flying Cross for flying this mission. "First Lieutenant John C. Morrissey is awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism while participating in aerial flight as pilot of an F-105 jet fighter during an attack against Surface-to-air Missile Site 8, located thirty-two miles northwest of Hanoi, North Vietnam, on 9 August 1965. On that date Lieutenant Morrissey refused to withdraw after sustaining direct hits to his aircraft from intense hostile ground fire. At the risk of his life, Lieutenant Morrissey pressed his attack, significantly enhancing the success of the mission. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Morrissey reflect great credit himself and the United States Air Force." (DFC Society Web site, [http://www.dfcsociety.org/citation\\_detail.asp?ID=4529](http://www.dfcsociety.org/citation_detail.asp?ID=4529))

Capt Stanton G. Lockley from the 357 TFS flew this mission and was awarded the DFC. "Captain Lockley was cited for an Aug. 9 action that saw his flight penetrate heavily defended North Vietnamese positions to execute a pitchup dive bomb attack against a SAM missile site. Although this tactic required a low-altitude approach within full range of hostile guns, determination coupled with knowledge of low-level navigation and pitchup bombing methods figured prominently in this attack on a priority target with previous untried tactics."

*Project CHECO Report, Rolling Thunder #2, pgs 5 - 6 & 12 TFS History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pg 7 & Pike Grubbs, e-mail 11 June 00 & McConnell AFB Contrails base newspaper, Fri Nov 26, 1965, pg 5.*

### 11-Aug-65

2759

An SA-2 missile shot down the second aircraft lost to a SAM during the Vietnam war. The SAM hit "... a Navy A-4E Skyhawk [serial number 151185] and damaged a second about fifty-five miles southwest of Hanoi. ... Both aircraft were part of a flight engaged in armed reconnaissance along Route 119 at about 9,000 feet, outside the range of known SAM sites."

One Navy Reserve pilot from Berkley, California, 26-year old Lt (jg) Donald Hubert Brown from VA-23 aboard the USS Midway, was killed and the second, Lt Cdr Francis D. Roberge, made it back to his ship with his A-4 that had over 500 holes.

Lt Brown's name is on the Vietnam Memorial Wall at Panel 02E - Line 51.

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 168 and 169.*

### 11-Aug-65

2616

"On August 11, with administration approval, the JCS directed (CINCPAC) Admiral Sharp to step up attacks and extend the boundary for armed reconnaissance slightly northward to 20-30N. Strikes on selected targets above this line, such as SAM site numbers 6, 7, and 8 and bridges northwest of Hanoi were permitted. However, armed reconnaissance pilots could not fly within an extended radius of Hanoi, within 10 nautical miles of Haiphong, nor within the twenty-five to thirty nautical mile buffer zone between North Vietnam and China. ... The service chiefs exempted sorties flown by specialized aircraft earmarked for anti-SAM missions -- nicknamed "Iron Hand" by PACOM -- from the sortie limitations imposed on the biweekly Rolling Thunder program."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

"General Harris quickly selected a number of F-105Ds as Iron Hand aircraft and PACFLT designated a few A-6A Intruders and A-4E Skyhawks for the same purpose."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 167 and 168.*

**12-Aug-65 13-Aug-65**

2617

"In reaction to the shooting down of another US jet by a SAM about 50 miles southwest of Hanoi on 11 August, a costly and futile attempt was made to locate and destroy the site from which the SAM had been launched. Flying 124 sorties in search of the suspected target area during a 30-hour period on 12 - 13 August, US planes failed to locate any SAM sites. ... "

"On August 12, Adm. Sharp got the authority to launch anti-SAM search and destroy missions on his own initiative. They were code named Iron Hand." ("The Vietnam Experience, Thunder From Above" by John Morrocco, pg 110.)

CINCPAC, Admiral "Sharp, immediately dispatched his first Iron Hand search and destroy directive to PACAF and PACFLT commanders. But in selecting Navy aircraft for the initial missions, he ordered PACAF to 'stand down' its Rolling Thunder operations for the remainder of the day while aircraft from the Coral Sea and Midway undertook a massive hunt for the offending SAM site or sites."

"During the next two days, the Navy flew 124 missions, with an outcome not unlike the Air Force's first anti-SAM effort on July 27 [under Operation Spring High]: high cost and no verifiable results. Intense groundfire downed five Navy aircraft and damaged seven. Two pilots were lost. Once again, North Vietnam's air defense cadres had camouflaged the sites, positioned many anti-aircraft weapons in the surrounding area, and dispersed their missile equipment prior to the Navy's search."

On 12 August the Navy lost an A-4E and an F-8D from the USS Midway. The F-8 pilot, 26-year old Lt (jg) Gene Raymond Gollahon, was killed. Lt Gollahon was from Cincinnati, Ohio, and had graduated from the Naval Academy in 1961. His name is engraved on the Vietnam Memorial Wall at Panel 02E - Line 51. The A-4E pilot Lt (jg) William E. Newman, Lt Gollahon's friend and Annapolis classmate, was rescued.

On 13 August, AAA shot down two A-4Cs and an RF-8A, killing one of the A-4C pilots, 37-year old Cdr Harry Eugene Thomas from Taft, California. His name is on the Vietnam Wall, Panel 02E - Line 52.

The Air Force also lost an RF-101C on 13 August while the pilot was looking in the area of the SAM site that had shot down the Air Force F-4C on 24 July. The pilot, 42-year old Capt Fredrick Moore Mellor from the 20 TRS on TDY from Shaw AFB to Udorn, successfully ejected but was killed by local North Vietnamese militia after he opened fire with his pistol while he was evading capture. His name is on the Vietnam Wall, Panel 02E - Line 52.

In commenting on the two unsuccessful attacks against SAM sites to date, the 27 July USAF "Spring High" attack and the Navy's "Iron Hand I" strikes on 12 and 13 August, the JCS "Prong Tong" study report stated the obvious. "[T]he enemy strives to harass, to hamstring, and to wear down US patience, by persistent and steady attrition. In such an environment, Operations SPRING HIGH and IRON HAND I ... which resulted in U.S. losses with no loss to SA-2 units, becomes a victory for NVN. ... For US tactical air power, the SAM tactics ... pose a problem similar to the sniper. Both are harassing, annoying, and unsettling, and may, if reacted to improperly, achieve effectiveness by random actions beyond their actual ability to damage." (JCS Prong Tong Study Report, Vol I, pp 6 - 7, AFHRA Call # K178.2-140 V.1, IRIS # 01129309.)

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 26-4 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 168 and 169 & "Vietnam Air Losses", pg 29.*

**12-Aug-65**

5081

"On 12 August 1965, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the formation of a committee to study the use of SAM against US aircraft in NVN in order to determine the best means of countering this threat. The committee was formed, consisting of representatives from the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army; Chief of Naval Operations; Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force; Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps; the Joint Staff; Director of Defense Research and

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Engineering, Office of the Secretary of Defense; and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The committee was subsequently designated the PRONG TONG Study Group."

Rear Admiral F. A. Bardshar headed the group.

The study had three objectives:

"a. To examine the capabilities, procedures, and likely concept(s) of Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) employment in North Vietnam (NVN) and the capabilities, procedures, and concept(s) of current US air operations in NVN.

"b. To identify the tactics, employment of assets, and short-term improvement in capabilities which will collectively generate the elements of a concept or concepts permitting US air operations anywhere in NVN without inhibitive SAM interference.

"c. Because of the close association of Automatic Weapons (AW) and Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) with SAM defenses, the study scope includes consideration of these weapons systems." (pg 1)

"A three-phase study concept was planned. Phase I, a short review of the situation, was completed on 17 August 1965 and was followed by a visit to CINCPAC, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Fleet (CINCPACFLT) and Commander in Chief, Pacific Air Force (CINCPACAF). General agreement to the initial assessment of the problem and the PRONG TONG Study procedures was established. Phase II was a draft final report. Phase III, the final report, is a revised version of the Phase II draft and reflects information obtained during the 26 September to 8 October 1965 Pacific trip and the overall results of the PRONG TONG Study period." (pg 2)

*JCS Prong Tong Study Report, Vol I, pp 1 - 2, AFHRA Call # K178.2-140 V.1, IRIS # 01129309.*

### 13-Aug-65

1511

To counter the increasing threat from SAM sites in North Vietnam, one day after the JCS initiated the "Prong Tong" study for the same purpose, the USAF Chief of Staff directed an Air Staff Task Force to study the threat and to recommend means for coping with SAMs. BG Kenneth C. Dempster, Directorate of Tactical Fighter Requirements, AF/RDQRT, led the task force.

Their problem was simply stated: "What is the most effective means of neutralizing the threat posed by surface-to-air missiles and the complementing heavy anti-aircraft artillery in Southeast Asia?"

The Navy and the Joint Staff also established similar committees to study the problem.

The Dempster committee "... listed the requirements for countering SA-2 missiles: a warning system to alert air crews when they were under enemy radar surveillance, better pinpointing of enemy radar locations, timely processing of intelligence data, prompt air strike decisions, adequate ECM for all fighter aircraft, precise navigation for aircraft flying at high speed and low altitude into a target area, and suitable tactics for strikes in areas defended by anti-aircraft weapons. The Dempster group divided the remedial measures between those to be completed in the short term (6 months) and the long term (6 to 18 months)." (Davis)

Their final report stated the Task Force's approach to the problem: "The Task Force decided early in its deliberations that its efforts should be oriented toward identifying military means for neutralizing the SAM threat. It was conceded that political and diplomatic constraints do exert a direct influence on full utilization of available military capabilities and must be considered in any solution. The Task Force fully recognized these constraints but did not address itself to any in-depth rationale for relaxation of them. It became readily apparent that a variety of military options should be available for adaptation to any foreseeable politico-military situation. The Task Force pursued a vigorous and time-compressed two-pronged approach to the isolation of the capabilities which would provide these flexible options. Both Group A (short-term solutions) and Group B (long-term solutions) thoroughly considered cost and effectiveness of available hardware and tactics; however, because of the time-urgency of the problem, no formal cost-effectiveness studies were accomplished.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Lt Col William B. Williamson was the primary task force officer of the Dempster group assisted by Maj Dick Haggren, an F-105 test pilot previously stationed at Eglin. Maj Haggren had been assigned to RDQ in January 1965. "When the first Dempster Committee meeting was held, the primary conclusion was that this was a tremendous task and they needed large amounts of help. The committee members discovered how ignorant they all were of the SAM threat - no one knew enough about the SA-2 to even discuss possible countermeasures. The committee had decided that the fastest way to get help was to brief selected contractors on the problem, provide them with all the tech data we possessed, and ask them for ideas and proposals on implementing solutions."

"The contractors were contacted at the highest management level to assure that whatever was done would be given the highest priority within their organizations - so there were some high ranking top management people attending. The same approach would also be used to bring Air Force Systems Command on line. The briefing was given to the selected contractors within 2-3 days after the decision was made to bring the contractors on line. ..."

"To prepare for the briefing, the committee collected all the information known by the Air Force about the SA-2 SAM system. This was initially hard to do because all the known technical data we had on the SA-2 was so classified that the Intelligence folks were shaking their heads at the very thought of releasing it to contractors. They didn't even want to give it to the committee. ... But when the Chief of Staff said release it - they did."

"We were fortunate to have highly experienced Electronic Warfare officers available who knew the types of tech data which would be needed and also knew it existed. Pierre Levy, who had flown on many snoopers missions in special aircraft gathering and analyzing radar data, was appointed head of the ECM group."

"... At the beginning of the 1st briefing the contractors were essentially assigned a clearance on the spot to permit them to legally receive and use the data. They were also told that we wanted to hear any ideas their engineers might propose - even if the company thought they were crazy and should not be briefed."

*Wild Weasel, The SAM Suppression Story, by Larry Davis, pg 8 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 195 & E-mails from Dick Haggren, 24 Jan 1999 & 5 Jan 2000.*

### 13-Aug-65

7197

RF-101C 56-0186 was shot down during a SAM site search on August 13. The reconnaissance pilot, "Wolf 04", was flying at 700 feet and 500 knots looking in the area of the two SAM sites that had shot down the F-4C on July 24. He was hit by AAA and went down about 30 nautical miles SW of the SAM site area. The pilot, 30-year old Capt Fredrick Moore Mellor, was from the 20 TRS out of Shaw AFB on temporary duty at Udorn. He successfully ejected but was killed by local North Vietnamese militia after he opened fire with his pistol while trying to evade capture. Mellor was declared dead on December 6, 1977. His name is on the Vietnam Wall panel 02E line 52.

Capt George N. Zigelhofer who had arrived at Takhli yesterday with the 562 TFS flew his first mission over North Vietnam today. "I flew my first combat mission on 13 August 65 and before we reached our target we diverted to support a RESCAP mission for a pilot that was shot down ... and not rescued. An emergency beacon was detected in the area so, with the help of a couple of A-1's and a C-54 command ship, an attempt was made to home on the beacon. Apparently the bad guys had found the beacon and set up a flak trap as one of the A-1's was shot down while homing on the beacon and the C-54 suffered some battle damage. The rescue was unsuccessful and I logged 5+15 flying time on the first mission."

*CNA Loss/Damage Database microfiche sheet 1, pg C17, USAF loss 118 & George Zigelhofer, e-mail 3 Sept 2012.*

### 16-Aug-65

2816

"On August 16, the Air Force flew its first Iron Hand mission while attacking the Binh Linh barracks, the Bai Du Thon highway, and Kbu Mai staging areas. To assure quick reaction to ELINT or other data pinpointing a SAM site, it established an Iron Hand F-105 ground alert force. But the tactic proved ineffective. As a consequence, Iron Hand planes were henceforth dispatched with regular daily missions against fixed or armed reconnaissance targets."

"By August 19, there was more evidence to indicate that the DRV had embarked on an expansive SAM emplacement program: nine sites were confirmed and ten suspected."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

As eager as they were to destroy a SAM site, pilots flying these early Iron Hand missions lacked the means to locate them. SAM site locations derived from ELINT reports were not timely. When they searched a suspected location, Iron Hand pilots could not confirm that it was a SAM site since the North Vietnamese had them cleverly camouflaged and had usually moved the equipment. When a SAM site could not be located, Iron Hand flights flew alternate pre-planned or armed reconnaissance missions.

It would take several months to get the initial radar homing and warning systems into strike aircraft that gave real-time alerting to transmissions by SA-2 radars and helped pinpoint their locations.

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam, 1965 - 1966", pg 169.*

**16-Aug-65 18-Aug-65**

5505

The Tactical Air Warfare Center hosted a three-day anti-SAM seminar at Eglin AFB. Their final report detailed what they recommended.

### Introduction

"During the latter part of July and the early part of August 1965 it became apparent that the development of sites and deployment of the SA-2 Surface-to-Air missile systems in North Vietnam presented a threat to our continued freedom of operation in that area. In fact, for the first time in history it appeared that a missile system was rapidly developing as a primary counter-air program. Penetration of the air space in the vicinity of the SAM sites resulted in losses from both high and low altitude defenses. It became apparent that more effective penetration and attack capabilities against SAMs were urgently needed.

"The decision was made that the problem was of sufficient significance to warrant convening experts on the subject to seek means of dealing with this threat. Accordingly, on 12 August an invitation was dispatched to all interested agencies to participate in a seminar, to be held at the TAWC from 16 to 18 August 1965." (pg 2)

### Problem

"... The preconceived idea that avoidance of SAM-defended areas would eliminate the problem was advanced but after deliberation it was discarded. There was agreement that the relatively limited geographical area outlined by the political boundaries of North Viet Nam made avoidance tactically impractical. The presently known disposition of SA-2 sites with a mutually supporting overlap capability tends to deny our striking forces freedom of access to several identified targets and routes of communication which lie within the defended area. The lethal envelope of the SA-2, 1500 to 100,000 feet, dictates a low altitude approach and maneuver envelope to our presently equipped strike and recce forces.

"Very simply stated, the problem resolved itself into elimination of this threat and resumption of air superiority over North Vietnam." (pg 8)

### Seminar Solution

"Based on a review and analysis of the briefings by the conferees, the findings of the individual working groups, discussions with participating specialists, and correlation of results from the TAWC Fighter Seminar held concurrently, a concept for countering the SA-2 threat with forces now in being evolved.

"The basic concept included development of a specialized hunter-killer task force composed of fighter aircraft manned by highly qualified, professional, and responsible pilots. A part of this task force would be an intelligence section receiving direct inputs of recce, ELINT, ECM, and other intelligence with specialization directed to the anti-SAM mission. This composite unit would be commanded by a senior officer responsible directly to the Commanding General, 2d Air Division, with authority to schedule strikes against the SA-2 system on a random basis within specific areas of responsibility as delineated by the Theater Air Commander, considering intelligence information available, national policy restraints, and other theater operations.

"It is anticipated that this task force would operate with considerable latitude in timing of attacks and tactics, but, in general, would attack in two-ship elements penetrating at minimum altitude utilizing this small raid size, single pass attack, maximum accuracy, and surprise to assure successful engagement. No attempt would be made to destroy all

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

sites in any one raid but rather to harass and attack FAN SONG radars, other equipment, and technical personnel utilizing the one-pass attack at frequent and irregular intervals. Missions would be scheduled at the task force level after considering overall air activity programmed throughout the area, intelligence data on SA-2 activity and deployments, and national policy directives. 20MM HEI/API activity and CBU and/or napalm would be delivered on a single low level pass or pitch-up and shallow dive delivery. They would exploit tactical air power flexibility to the maximum varying their attacks, accomplishing diversionary attacks and, for the present, would operate without top cover, ECM, or major support from other units. (pg 13)

### Recommendations for Development

"... The more significant development recommendations made by the seminar groups included:

"1. Refinement of anti-radiation missiles such as SHRIKE to provide a stand-off capability against the FAN SONG radar.

"2. Development of a long range (30 miles), air-launched, anti-radiation weapon.

"3. A strike aircraft-carried ECM capability against gun-laying and missile-guidance radars. This could include improvement and early delivery of QRC-160, -249 or similar type pods. ...

"6. Improvement of present radar warning and homing devices to provide the pilot information on azimuth, range, type or frequency of emitter, and any peculiarities of the emitter such as change in frequency as various events occur in the acquisition, tracking, and missile guidance phases. ..."

"7. Refinement of ELINT capability to give cuts accurate within one square mile.

"8. Refinement of procedures to permit more rapid reporting of initial ELINT information on SA-2 site locations." (pg 14)

*Final Report on the Anti-SAM Seminar, USAF Tactical Air Warfare Center, pp 13 - 14, AFHRA Call # K417.0732-7, IRIS # 00503093.*

### 17-Aug-65

4646

During the first day of transition of the TDY squadrons from the 18 TFW at Kadena when the 67 TFS replaced the 12 TFS, "Maj Mathews, Maj Bollinger, Maj Wylie and Capt Schierman flew with the 12 TFS dropping CBUs in a high altitude drop in the Xom Dang barracks. This was an alternate Iron Hand mission as well as refamiliarization for the four 67th pilots. Damage assessment was not available due to a low overcast. Flak was heavy."

*67 TFS history, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pg 18 (frame 1904).*

### 20-Aug-65 02-Sep-65

2619

"Rolling Thunder program 28/29 (RT 28 and RT 29) (August 20 - September 2) was the first to include Iron Hand missions. In another significant change, the biweekly JCS operational directive increased the level of preplanned armed reconnaissance from 600 to 1,000 sorties. ... Pilots were allowed to fly additional sorties to destroy trucks, rolling stock, and naval craft that were detected accidentally. Non-Iron Hand aircraft were instructed to fly outside of the effective range of installations containing SA-2 missiles."

For these programs, " ... the JCS authorized strikes and restrikes on nine fixed targets and slightly expanded the boundaries for armed reconnaissance. SAM sites 1 and 9 and airfields used by attacking MiGs remained off limits to Air Force and Navy commanders because of their proximity to Hanoi. This meant that SAM sites 6 and 7, having been attacked once, could not be attacked again."

"The armed reconnaissance area limits were expanded ... to a line from a point on the Laos border 30 nm from the border of China, extending eastward to 105-20E ... then south to 20-30 latitude, then eastward to the coast. Strikes against SAM sites were forbidden within 30 nm of the Chinese border from Laos eastward to 106E longitude, within 25 nm of the Chinese border from that point eastward to the Gulf of Tonkin; within 30 nm of the center of Hanoi; or within 10 nm of the center of Haiphong."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

"In its final form RT 28/29 authorized CINCPAC to strike nine fixed targets, none of them particularly valuable. None of the Haiphong/Hon Gay targets (proposed by the Joint Staff) were included."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 170 and 178 & The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 19 Vol II, pgs 26-8 and 25-16.*

### 22-Aug-65

4649

Teak Flight from the 67 TFS, 18 TFW, led by Capt Robert N. McCoy flying F-105D 62-4328, with Capt John L. Mesenbourg in 61-0187 and Capt Jerome H. Maier in 61-0217, (1Lt Duane H. Zieg ground aborted as Teak 2 in 62-4221) was sent against a verbally described military area at a given set of coordinates. "Due to the flimsy description, the flight was unable to locate the target so dropped their 750-lb bombs on a key road segment. ... Flight was unable to locate the tgt due to lack of tgt info (no picture or description)."

Capt William H. Bollinger, flying F-105D 58-1165 and Capt Wesley Duane Schierman in 62-4316 made up Oak flight after Majors James W. Mathews in 61-0185 and Sherrell W. Wylie in 61-0195 air aborted as Oak 1 and 3. "This was against the Bic Phong Locks. Oak flight flew in at low altitude and popped up at the initial point to drop four 3000 (baby hueys) on the locks. Moderate damage was done to the upper lock. ... 650 tanks would not feed on Oak 1 & 3. Possible moderate damage to upper lock."

Lt Col Robinson Risner and 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson flew as Pepper 3 and 4 with the 12 TFS on an Iron Hand search and destroy mission against surface-to-air missile site No. 11. Col Risner in F-105D 61-0193 carried four cans of napalm, and Lt Dotson in 62-4335 two pods of CBU's. "However, they were unable to locate the site due to the inexact location given by Intelligence. Flak and automatic weapons in the area were heavy; however, all aircraft returned unscathed after dropping ordnance on barracks area."

As Willow 4 in a flight of 12 TFS pilots, 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson from the 67 TFS flew 62-4335 and dropped six 750-pound bombs on two ferries. "2 ferries hit - tgt & tgt of opportunity."

Capt Robert V. "Boris" Baird flew 62-4239 with pilots from the 12 TFS in Walnut flight on a weather reconnaissance mission.

*67 TFS history, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pp 20 - 21 (frames 1906 - 1907).*

### 23-Aug-65

782

"Eight USAF F-105s supported by three other aircraft struck the Lang Bun railroad bridge, (JCS 18.27) 120 miles NW of Hanoi and 30 miles SE of the Lao Cai-Red China border. Action took place about 1 mile closer to the Red China border than on any previous occasion. Pilots reported the bridge lightly damaged and approaches cratered. All airplanes returned safely."

"On the 23rd, Air Force aircraft dropped eight 3,000-pound bombs on the (Ban Thack Dam and hydroelectric plant's (JCS 82.21)) generator building and the dam. The attacks created news headlines and speculation there would be more bombing of dam, dikes, and locks in the flood-vulnerable Red River Delta. Although the two targets were not part of the DRV's river irrigation system, their bombing alarmed the State Department. Taking seriously Hanoi's allegations that such targets had been hit before, State directed OSD to desist from targeting dams and locks."

"When Air Force Iron Hand searches on August 23 and 24 uncovered no missile sites, the aircraft struck the barracks areas at Xom Ban(g) (JCS 39.32) and Ban Na Pew as secondary targets."

"On the 23rd, the Navy attacked a suspected (SAM) site about thirty-five miles northeast of Hanoi. Sixteen A-4Es, escorted by six F-8s, zoomed in at low level to drop Snake Eye ordnance. Once more, poststrike photos disclosed an empty site and the cost was considerable. DRV gunners damaged six aircraft, filling two with so many holes in their wing tanks they had to fly back to their carrier plugged into refueling tankers."

*Thunderchief World Wide Report on Republic's F-105 Fighter-Bomber, Vol I No I, Sept 1, 1965 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 170 and 178.*

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

**23-Aug-65**

4650

"Elm flight, led by Col Risner with Capts Nowokunski, "Boris" Baird, and Stadler, attacked the Lang Bun railroad bridge (JCS 18.27) 30 N.M. from the Chinese border on the Red River. The Lang Bun Bridge was a key point on the railroad running to Hanoi from China, and all aircraft released two 3,000-lb bombs each on the bridge and completely demolished the approaches with moderate damage to the bridge.

"In the afternoon, Elm Flight, this time led by Maj Mathews with Captains Nowokunski, Schierman, and Stadler, attacked the Ban Thao Locks and power plant. Eight 3,000-lb bombs were detonated on target, destroying the generator building and the dam. No flak was observed in the area, although thickly settled and many gun emplacements were visible.

"Capt Baird and Lt Dotson were scrambled on a Whiplash and were directed to a target on bunkers and trenches in Laos by FAC. Four pods of rockets were fired against the buildup with direct hits confirmed by the T-28.

"Capt McCoy led Apple Flight as an Iron Hand alternate. Captains Mesenbourg, Maier, and Bollinger completed the four-ship flight. All aircraft dropped six 750-lb G.P. bombs each on the Xom Bang Barracks (JCS 39.32) in a devastating pattern, destroying many of the barracks and severely damaging many others. Toss bomb computer was used by all aircraft with outstanding results."

*67 TFS history, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pp 21 - 22 (frames 1907 - 1908).*

**24-Aug-65**

949

Capt John T. Clark, Jr. arrived from Kadena to Korat via C-130 to fly combat missions on TDY with the 67 TFS, 18 TFW.

Flying from Korat RTAFB, Thailand, two flights of F-105s from the 67 TFS bombed targets in North Vietnam during Rolling Thunder 28-C-5.

"Cap" flight consisted of four F-105Ds that destroyed eight buildings as their primary target, and a bridge and four buildings during armed reconnaissance along routes 6 and 13A. Capt Robert V. "Boris" Baird was flight lead in F-105D 62-4316. Number 2 was 1Lt Zieg in F-105D 62-4335. Both pilots dropped eight 750-pound bombs. Capt Baird's plane was hit in the radome by 37-mm flak, the first combat damage received during the 67th's current tour. Lt Col Robinson Risner was Cap 3 flying F-105D 58-1165 and Capt John T. Stadler was Cap 4 in F-105D 61-0189. They each dropped six 750-pound bombs and fired LAU-3 rockets.

In the afternoon, three F-105Ds in "Elm" flight flew armed reconnaissance along Route 7 and bombed a bridge. Capt Jerome H. Maier was flight lead in F-105D 62-4316. He dropped six 750-pound bombs on the target and fired two LAU-3 rockets. 1Lt Duane H. Zieg was number 2 in F-105D 62-4335 and Capt McCoy was Elm 3 flying F-105D 61-0206. They each dropped six 750-pound bombs on the target. The bridge was not destroyed by the 18 bombs.

"Apple Flight of four aircraft was led by Capt Bollinger in Iron Hand alternate against the Ba Na Peu barracks area. Each aircraft was armed with six 750 G.P. bombs. Due to weather, the target area was not struck, but a military barracks area was deeply cut into on the ensuing recce. Maj Mathews, Capt Schierman, and Lt Dotson constituted the remainder of the flight."

*67 TFS History 1 July 1965 - 31 December 1965, pp 22 - 23 (frames 1907 - 1908)*

**27-Aug-65**

2886

The JCS recommended to the Secretary of Defense stronger air action against North Vietnam. In JCSM 652-65 they said, "The physical capability of the DRV to move men and supplies through the Lao Corridor, down the coastline, across the DMZ and through Cambodia must be reduced to the maximum practical extent by land, naval and air actions in these areas and against infiltration-connected targets."

"Six days later, on 2 September, the Joint Chiefs of Staff gave the Secretary a list of air actions which they believed to be 'in concert' with this strategy. They recommended that the United States should begin air strikes immediately

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

and 'as a matter of urgency' against: 1) Phuc Yen airfield, including the aircraft thereon; 2) rail, highway, and waterway routes and traffic between Hanoi and Haiphong and between Hanoi/Haiphong and south China; 3) POL storage facilities at Haiphong; 4) SAM sites and other AA defenses which threatened US air operations."

The JCS reported that North Vietnam now had 66 MiGs and 8 IL-28s at Phuc Yen, and a total of 18 SAM sites, with 16 of them close to Hanoi. They also claimed that, "... destruction of the POL storage at Haiphong would deprive NVN of nearly half of its remaining national capacity for oil storage. This facility was the only one in NVN capable of receiving POL imports from tankers." They proposed that "... B-52s would strike Phuc Yen at night, with the other NVN airfields being attacked at first light the next day." They pointed out that, "... each day's delay produces increased enemy capability which will have to be destroyed eventually at an increasingly higher cost to the United States."

The JCS incorporated these targets in a draft planning message for Rolling Thunder 32/33, scheduled for 17 - 30 September. In addition, they included "... four thermal power plants generating nearly 50 percent of NVN electrical power."

On 15 September, Secretary McNamara disapproved the JCS's proposed Rolling Thunder targets. He stated "... that he had not been persuaded that the military advantages would outweigh the military and political risks. He maintained that ... intelligence estimates showed that such strikes could very well cause the NVN to make 'more vigorous efforts' to support the VC. Strikes as proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would not, according to the estimates he had seen, injure the VC or persuade NVN that the price of continued support to them was too high. 'More important is the risk of a US-Chinese confrontation, which could well be increased by a program of the kind proposed.' Pointing to a JCS warning that NVN might use its IL-28s and MiGs against the US air base at Da Nang, the Secretary cited an intelligence analysis that such an attack was unlikely. On the other hand the analysis had also shown that if the US struck the Hanoi/Haiphong area, NVN might in retaliation attack Da Nang, and that substantial risk existed that a strike program of the weight and kind recommended by the Joint Chiefs of Staff would cause the Chinese Communists to intervene with air from Chinese bases."

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pgs 26-9 through 26-11.*

### 31-Aug-65

2625

After failing to locate a SAM site on 21 August 1965, two Ryan 147D electronic reconnaissance drones successfully helped to locate active SAM sites in North Vietnam. The two drones were "... escorted part of the way by twelve F-105 Thunderchiefs. Sixty other Air Force aircraft, including EC-121s, EB-66s, F-105s, F-4Cs and KC-135s along with Marine EF-10Bs, were launched separately. As the drone began its 'coast in' period, an RB-47 began recording the anticipated Fan Song radar signal. After an eleven-minute break, Fan Song signals were received continuously for one hour and twenty minutes. This data permitted three fixes on SAM site installations within a five-mile circle."

"An SA-2 missile destroyed the drone, but a flight of F-105 Thunderchiefs [from the 67 TFS] was dispatched quickly to the area. The strike pilots were unable to find the sites and finished their mission by striking a bridge as an alternate target. Antiaircraft guns downed one of the planes, but the pilot was rescued."

The 67th dispatched two two-ship flights on this mission. "Fig" flight, led by Capt William Henry Bollinger, included 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson. Capt Bollinger was shot down but rescued.

1Lt George H. Vipond was #2 in "Pecan" flight led by 67 TFS commander, Lt Col Robinson Risner.

"... On return Fig flight expended napalm against wooden bridge. Fig #1 hit his napalm dead square on bridge but picked up small arms fire and controls locked. Successful ejection in excellent terrain for concealment. Pecan lead swooped past Bo several times exposing himself to 37-mm fire in attempts to aid rescue aircraft. ..."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 174 & hand written squadron mission log 18 Aug - 21 Oct 65 in 67 TFS history.*

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

### 31-Aug-65

F-105D 610185 67 TFS 18 TFW Korat Hit by moderate 37-mm AAA while attacking a bridge. Crashed south of Yen Bai, RP-5, North Vietnam. 21-05N 104-20E William Henry Bollinger 67 TFS pilot ejected. Rescued by a USAF HH-43 helicopter. Call sign: "Fig 01". Combat loss during a deployment of the 67 TFS from Kadena AB, Okinawa, to Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

The 67th sent two flights to look for a SAM site. "Pecan Flight, led by Lt Col Risner with Lt Vipond carrying CBU's and Fig Flight with Maj Bollinger and Lt Dotson carrying finned Napalm scrambled on Left Hook (a mission flown by a Ryan 147 Drone) against suspected SAM site southeast of Yen Bay. No joy."

"Pecan 1", Lt Col Robinson Risner, was in F-105D 62-4227. "Pecan 2", 1Lt George H. Vipond, flew F-105D 61-0197. "Fig 2", 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson, flew F-105D 61-0208.

"On return, Fig Flight expended napalm against wooden bridge. Fig 1 had a direct hit on bridge but was hit by 37-mm flak and forced to eject (95 miles west of Hanoi). After approximately 30 minutes, helicopters plucked Capt Bollinger from a 200 ft tree atop the highest mountain in the area and returned him to Udorn. Pretty lucky day for old rough and tough." Capt Bollinger was from Maquoketa, Iowa.

On 1 Sep 1965, Capt Bollinger was promoted to Major. "He made the comment that it sure was a tough way to make it, even though it was a coincidence that it came about the day after his recovery."

"Capt Bollinger's controls locked. "Successful ejection in excellent terrain for concealment. Pecan Lead swooped past Bo several times exposing himself to 37-mm fire in attempts to aid rescue aircraft. Bo was winched up by chopper and returned to Site 36."

### Rescue Mission Narrative 38-882-31 Aug 65.

"Capt William Henry Bollinger was making a bomb run on a target in North Vietnam when his F-105 was hit. He was able to fly over one mountain ridge and ejected. HH-43s were scrambled from a forward site in Laos upon notification of the downing. While the helicopters were on the way, A-1E RESCAP aircraft had located the survivor's position in a heavily wooded area with trees 125 feet high. As the helicopter hovered and lowered the hoist, several groups of people were seen running toward the pickup area. The A-1Es fired warning rockets which discouraged further approaches. Two men were also seen about 100 yards from the hovering helicopter; the copilot fired his M-16 almost continuously during the recovery to protect the survivor as he was being hoisted into the helicopter. The survivor was returned to Udorn AB, Thailand. He had slight lacerations which he incurred when his head struck a tree branch during landing. The HH-43 aircraft commander was Capt David E. Allen."

Narrative Report, Mission 38 ARSQ 882 - 31 Aug 65 submitted by Capt David E. Allen RCC.

"1. At 1435L on 31 August 65, PEDRO 1 and 2 (Rescue Helicopters of Det 5, 38 ARSQ) departed deployment site 107 (20-24N and 103-43E) en route to an orbit point as near as practicable to the next scheduled air strike.

"2. At approximately 1450L, the phrase, 'Number 1 is down' or something similar was heard on UHF. PELT 06 (Rescue C-54) attempted to direct us toward the general area of bailout, the exact coordinates being unknown at that time.

"3. Approaching the target area, PEDRO flight was very heavy with fuel because they had been prepared to fly orbit for an extended period. Realizing the difficulty of hovering with such a fuel load, PEDRO 1 jettisoned a barrel of JP-4 (460 lbs).

"4. Prior to the arrival of PEDRO flight, PELT 06 and the Rescap had positively located the downed pilot at 21-05N and 104-20E. PEDRO flight arrived overhead at 1510L. PEDRO 1, the pickup helicopter started descent immediately. PEDRO 2 stood by at 10,000 ft. At approximately 2500 ft above the terrain, PEDRO 1 spotted the

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

chute and an orange smoke flare and moved in for the pickup.

"5. The terrain was made up of many small hillocks, 200 - 300 ft high and heavily covered with vegetation, tree height estimated 100 - 125 ft. The hillock on which the survivor was located was approximately 300 yards from the edge of a cultivated valley, down the middle of which was a well-marked road. Estimated average terrain altitude, 2500 ft.

"6. As the helicopter hovered over the chute, the hoist operator's interphone went dead. The survivor could not be seen. The hoist was lowered into the heavy foliage and within a minute or so, the hoist cable became taut. The hoist was raised and within seconds the pilot was seen emerging from the foliage. The survivor was secured in the helicopter and PEDRO 1 quickly departed the scene at 1520L.

"7. During the hoist operation several groups of people were seen running toward the pickup area. However, warning rockets from the Rescap discouraged further approach. Additionally, two men were seen running up a stream bed about 100 yards from the hovering helicopter. The copilot, alert to such an emergency, fired his M-16 in automatic almost continuously during the entire hoist operation. The helicopter did not sustain any battle damage.

"8. The survivor was in good condition, although he had a deep laceration in his left ear. The medic treated it and bleeding stopped.

"9. Pedro 1 rejoined PEDRO 2 and both helicopters proceeded to deployment site 36 (20-00N and 103-30E) for refueling, landing at 1645L. They departed site 36 at 1715 arriving Udorn AB, Thai at 1925L. Total time: 8:20 -- 6 sorties.

"10. Crew members were as follows:

PEDRO 1

RCC Allen, David E. Capt

CP Forsythe, John K. 1Lt

MT Lockard, Bedford T. A2C

HM Lepsey, George O. A3C

PEDRO 2

RCC Hurt, Hoyt B. Capt

CP Hart, Jake C. Capt

MT Fulford, William (NMI) TSgt

HM Dager, Robert W. A1C

*U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & 67 TFS History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1965, pp 29 - 30 (frames 1915 - 1916) & "PJs in Vietnam" by Robert L. LaPointe, pg 418.*

**02-Sep-65 16-Sep-65**

2634

"For Rolling Thunder program 30/31 (RT 30 and RT 31), (September 2 - 16), the JCS again selected more important targets, but administration authorities vetoed seven, added two of their own, and again permitted only a modest increase in the bombing level. They raised the biweekly sortie rate for armed reconnaissance from 1,000 to 1,200 to allow more attacks on SA-2 sites, trucks, rolling stock, naval craft, and other targets of opportunity. They also approved a slight extension westward of the armed reconnaissance area, from the coast at latitude 20-30N to longitude 105-20E, then north to a point 30 nautical miles from the Chinese border, then southwest to the Laotian border, remaining a 30 nautical mile distance from China."

"Administration authorities also eased strike operations by making an exception to the rule prohibiting aircraft from entering the 25 nautical mile to 30 nautical mile buffer zone between North Vietnam and China. In the future, strike aircraft maneuvering to hit a target close to the northern edge of the zone could penetrate as far as 15 nautical miles from the Chinese border."

"... Another new feature of this package was authority for CINCPAC to assign to strike aircraft returning from

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Barrel Roll and Steel Tiger alternate missions in the Rolling Thunder area. ... The directive on RT 30/31... provided that any JCS numbered target within the currently authorized armed reconnaissance area which had previously been designated for attack could again be attacked if necessary."

"During Rolling Thunder 30 and 31 ... the USAF struck two JCS hard targets and provided the major effort against three other barracks targets assigned the VNAF. Sorties against these targets, plus 610 armed reconnaissance sorties flown in the two-week period, raised the USAF strike sortie level to 1,027, the highest achieved during any previous two-week cycle. Efforts to locate and destroy SA-2 sites continued to be a major portion of the effort. ... "

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 180 & The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pgs 26-8 and 26-11 - 26-12 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pgs 6 and 7.*

### 02-Sep-65

2621

The number of SAM sites in North Vietnam increased considerably since they were first discovered in July 1965. "The number of known sites rose from seven at the end of July to eighteen confirmed and a further eighteen suspected by September 2. Furthermore, DRV air defense personnel demonstrated an ability to construct missile installations quickly. One appeared to have been built in forty-eight hours. In consonance with a mobility concept, the sites considerably outnumbered available missiles and missile launchers. Air defense crews demonstrated that they could move missiles, launchers, and associated equipment in or out of a site in a few hours."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 170.*

### 05-Sep-65

4657

F-105 pilots Capt Michael C. Stevens, Capt Jack L. Francisco, and Capt Merwin Lamphrey Morrill from the 67 TFS, arrived on TDY at Korat from the 18 TFW, Kadena.

Also in the 67 TFS:

"Two flights of four [all planes carrying eight 750-lb bombs] took off on a Rolling Thunder mission against the Ban Tha ammo dump but were recalled by 2nd Air Force. ...". They were "Elm" flight led by Maj Merritt and "Oak" flight led by Lt Col Risner.

"Elm" flight's lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Raymond James Merritt flying 61-0187.
- #2 - 1Lt Dean Albert Klenda flying 62-4244.
- #3 - Capt John E. Cozine flying 61-0206.
- #4 - Capt Paul E. Dillon flying 61-0195.

"Mission was recalled. Dropped ordnance at Sattahip." Each pilot logged 1+45 flying time.

The lineup of "Oak" flight was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robinson Risner flying 61-0191. 2+00.
- #2 - Capt John T. Clark, Jr. flying 61-0189. 2+10.
- #3 - Capt Robert N. McCoy flying 61-0208. 2+00.
- #4 - 1Lt George H. Vipond flying 62-4221. 2+05.

"Mission recalled by 2nd Air. Ordnance expended live on Sattahip Range. Returned low level."

"Maj Kunichika led flight of four on Whiplash under FAC against troop positions on top of ridge 35 miles west of Sam Neua. ...". The lineup of "Whiplash Alpha" flight was:

- #1 - Maj Paul M. Kunichika flying 62-4335. 1+55.
- #2 - Capt Edgar Lee Hawkins flying 62-4265. 1+45.
- #3 - Lt Col Robert Leonard Fair flying 61-0165. 2+00

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

#4 - Capt Benjamin D. Stanton flying 61-0217. 1+55.

"Troop positions on top of a ridge 35 miles SW of Sam Neua hit with 750s. FAC confirmed good hits. Weather prevented strafing."

"Spruce Flight and Pine Flights led by Capt Ward and Maj Mathews against Bac Can ammo storage (JCS 47.22 in RP-6A) diverted to secondary because of Fan Song singing [SAM warning passed by EB-66]. Struck four bridges north of Yen Bai severely damaging one and destroying another."

The lineup of "Pine" flight was:

#1 - Maj James W. Mathews flying 61-0197.

#2 - Capt Edward D. Nowokunski flying 62-4244.

#3 - Capt Eddward L. Jones flying 61-0206

#4 - 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson flying 61-0189.

Each pilot logged 2+30 flying time on this mission. "Pine flight had to abort strike on target due to Fansong singing. Struck bridge north of Yen Bay, severely damaging same."

In "Pepper" flight, "Capt R. McCoy led a flight of three against Bac Can ammo storage [JCS 47.22 at location 22-06-50N and 105-53-10E]. Was not diverted due to Fan Song as other flights were and struck target with 24 750-lb bombs. One building and two bunkers destroyed and three buildings heavily damaged with no secondary explosions." "Pepper" flight's lineup was:

#1 - Capt Robert N. McCoy on his second mission of the day flying 61-0187. 2+15

#2 - 1Lt George H. Vipond flying 62-4335 on his second mission of the day. 2+25

#3 - Capt John L. Mesenbourg flying 68-1165. 2+20.

"Struck Bac Can ammo storage depot. Cobweb (B-66 coordinator) said area was clear of MiGs and SAMs at our time of arrival and cleared us into target area. Pepper was the only 67th flight able to expend on this target. Lead hit bldgs 17 and 18 -- #2 hit area (ammo dump). #1 and #3 hit bldgs 19, 20 and 21. No flak in target area. Great day! Lead had radio problems. 1 bldg destroyed, 2 bunkers destroyed, 3 bldgs heavy damage. No secondary explosions."

*67 TFS History, 1 Jul 65 - 31 Dec 65, pg 32 (frame 1918) & hand written squadron mission log 18 Aug - 21 Oct 65 in 67 TFS history.*

### 08-Sep-65

2645

To assist in countering SAM sites, the " ... Air Force augmented its EB-66 force variously equipped with radar detection, jamming, and infrared equipment and cameras. Three more of the aircraft were sent from Shaw AFB in North Carolina TDY to Takhli, where they arrived on September 8 to join six similar planes already there and assigned to the 9 TRS."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 196*

### 09-Sep-65

960

During Rolling Thunder 30A, three flights of F-105Ds from the 67 TFS struck the Yen Khoai barracks (JCS 47.1) in North Vietnam. The twelve F-105Ds flying from Korat each dropped eight 750-pound bombs on the target. This was the first of three strikes on this JCS target over the next three days (the second was on 11 September and the third on 12 September), all of which were led by Lt Col Robinson Risner, commander of the 67th.

"Oak" flight was led by Lt Col Robinson Risner in F-105D 62-4335. Number 2 was Capt James L. Goode in 61-0187, number 3 was Capt Jack L. Francisco in 62-4265, and Capt John E. Cozine was number four in 61-0191. Oak 4 received a three-inch tear in the bomb bay door. "Low clouds prevented normal dive bomb passes. Lead delivered level, 2, 3, 4, from low angle dive. Bombs were in selected area among barracks."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Elm" flight consisted of Col William D. Ritchie in 62-4221, Capt Ivy J. McCoy, Jr. in 61-0194, Capt Ward in 61-0189, and Capt John T. Clark, Jr. in 61-0127. "Low level hi speed run - couldn't pop up due to weather - low angle release afforded excellent bomb damage in Area 'A'. # 2 & 4 hit and lost wing tank on the right side."

"Pine" flight was led by Maj James W. Mathews flying F-105D 62-4244. Pine 2 was 1Lt Duane H. Zieg in 62-4277, Pine 3 was Capt John L. Mesenbourg in 62-4283 and number 4 was 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson in 62-4231. "Pine flight was the 3rd flight of the afternoon on target. All members had good hits & extensive damage was wrought. Damage to 8 bldgs."

The 67 TFS also launched a three-ship Whiplash strike against a gun emplacement. Each aircraft carried 4 750-pound bombs and 2 LAU rocket pods. The flight was led by Maj Raymond James Merritt in F-105D 62-4278. Number two was Capt Michael C. Stevens in 61-0188 and number 3 was Capt William H. Bollinger in 61-0208. "Gun emplacement and troop concentration spotted by Air FAC and TAC Gnd controller. All 3 aircraft made 1 bomb pass and 1 rocket pass. All ordinance reported on target by ground controller."

SAMs continued to threaten strike aircraft. "On the 9th, an SA-2 was fired against four F-105 Thunderchiefs returning from a strike mission about twelve miles from the Laotian border and sixty-two miles west of Hanoi. The missile passed between the flight leader and the wingman, but caused no damage."

*67 TFS History, 1 July 65 - 31 December 1965 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 171 and 181.*

### 12-Sep-65

540

During the third combat mission against Yen Khoai barracks (JCS 47.1) in North Vietnam, Lt Col Robinson Risner, call sign "Elm 01", flying F-105D 61-0191, was hit in the canopy. Other members of the flight were: Captains Edward Nowokunski in 62-4221, Jack L. Francisco in 61-0188, and John T. Stadler in 62-4335, all TDY with the 67 TFS from Kadena AB, Okinawa, to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. "Elm Lead got no release on target, but 2, 3, and 4 had all bombs on target. Elm lead attacked flak site in target area on re-attack, and at that time received hit in canopy shattering it."

He was able to return to Korat at "low altitude and slow speed after refueling." Elm 3 was hit in the radome, and Elm 4 was hit in the stabilizer. For his courage and professionalism in leading these three days of strikes against this JCS target, Lt Col Risner was awarded the Silver Star. His citation read, "The President of the United States of America ... takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Second Award of the Silver Star to Lieutenant Colonel James Robinson Risner, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 9, 11 and 12 September 1965. On these dates, Colonel Risner led a strike force of F-105 aircraft against a highly important and heavily defended target deep in enemy territory. His courage and aggressiveness were continually evident as he faced multiple enemy threats in the successful accomplishment of each assigned mission. By his gallantry and devotion to duty Colonel Risner has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (PACAF Special Order No. G-184, October 26, 1965, on-line at <http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=3441>)

"Pine" and "Spruce" flights from the 67 TFS also struck JCS 47.1. Each plane dropped six 750-lb bombs. The lineup for "Pine" flight was:

- #1 - Capt William H. Bollinger flying 62-4231. 2+30
- #2 - 1Lt Patrick S. "Rick" Dotson flying 61-0208. 2+25
- #3 - Capt Eddward L. Jones flying 62-4244. 2+20
- #4 - Capt Merwin Lamphrey Morrill flying 61-0189. 2+20

"Partially destroyed Area C."

The lineup for "Spruce" flight was:

- #1 - Capt Robert N. McCoy flying 62-4247. 2+10
- #2 - Capt Michael C. Stevens flying 61-0191. 2+15
- #3 - Capt John L. Mesenbourg flying 61-0187. 2+05

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

#4 - Capt Burton C. Spurlock, Jr. flying 62-4271. 2+10

"Target barracks area C & F."

"The three day effort (against this target) left about 100 barracks and other buildings destroyed or damaged."

Also today, the Navy continued to search for SAM sites. " ... From September 12 to 14 Navy pilots launched another intensive effort to locate and destroy sites, flying 338 Iron Hand sorties without success."

*67 TFS History, 1 July - 31 December 1965 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pgs 170 and 181.*

### 16-Sep-65

786

Two F-105 pilots from the 67 TFS were shot down by anti-aircraft fire as they attacked a SAM site near Thanh Hoa, North Vietnam. Lt Col Robinson Risner and Maj Raymond Merritt were both captured and became POWs.

"Risner's flight of six F-105 Thunderchiefs, ... had streaked off on a late-morning mission against a 'military target' near the Pho De Van Chan mountain range, 80 miles northwest of Hanoi. The weather was clear, visibility good, and the jets dumped three tons of bombs on the site. ... Risner's jet and that of another pilot were hit. Desperately, they headed southeast, hoping to reach the South China Sea, where Risner had bailed out last spring. "

"... Nursing their crippled craft, the two pilots kept airborne for 170 miles -- then had to eject near the town of Thanh Hoa, within sight of the water .... Risner landed in a paddyfield, his buddy several miles away. Their squadron mates, circling them, saw both flyers on the ground with no signs of injuries. But by the time rescue aircraft from the carrier Independence reached the area, Risner and his buddy had disappeared, and the beeps from Risner's emergency transmitter had ceased."

F-105s of "Pepper" flight from the 67 TFS, led by "... Lt Col Risner and Capt Stevens, launched on Iron Hand against a SAM Site in the Thanh Hoa area, one of the most heavily defended areas in North Vietnam. The location of the site to be hit was only approximately known, and the mission required a systematic search of the area at low level. As Pepper approached the coastal plain of North Vietnam, they descended to an altitude below 500 ft and increased airspeed to above 500 knots in order to dodge the surface-to-air missiles. On this day the gunners found their mark as Lt Col Risner took several large caliber hits in the engine and bomb bay area of his aircraft. Lt Col Risner immediately headed out towards the Gulf of Tonkin; however, he was forced to eject approximately four miles short of the coast. Capt Stevens remained with his lead making low passes in the area and contacting Search and Rescue. Lt Col Risner was seen on the ground rolling up his parachute and then no more. Capt Stevens was forced to recover at Danang due to low fuel, after directing SAR aircraft."

*Time Magazine, 23 Sep 65, pg 28 & 67 TFS History, July - Dec 1965.*

### 16-Sep-65

F-105D 610217 67 TFS 18 TFW Korat Hit by 37/57-mm AAA while attacking a SAM site near Thanh Hoa. Crashed in RP-4, North Vietnam. 19-59N 105-53E Robinson Risner 67 TFS pilot ejected and became a POW. Released 12 Feb 73. Call sign: "Pepper 01". Lt Col Robinson Risner, the commander of the 67 TFS, led Pepper flight, a strike mission against a SAM site at location 20-24N and 105-47E. Capt Michael G. Stevens was Pepper 2 in this two-ship flight that left Korat at 07:40. Col Risner ejected at 10:15.

"The following is an extract from the statement of Captain Michael G. Stevens: '... Shortly after Pepper Flight turned over the IP for the final run-in to target, Pepper Lead was hit by AW fire and immediately began a steep climb for altitude. Pepper Lead began streaming great quantities of fuel which immediately caught on fire. Pepper Lead declared he had to eject and was observed to eject successfully from the aircraft. Pepper Two observed the ordnance and aircraft impacting on the ground. Pepper Lead landed in a well-cultivated rice paddy, equidistant from two neighboring villages. After landing, Pepper Lead was observed to gather his parachute together and turn off his emergency beeper until rescue could be brought onto the scene. Rescap was initiated; however, when the rescue helicopter arrived over the area 3 ½ hours after, intense ground fire was received. Pepper Lead's emergency beeper emitted signals until approximately 1600 local, when no more signals were received. ..." Further rescue attempts were unsuccessful and search was suspended 2400L, 17 Sep 65.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"As of 14 April 1966, Mrs. Risner had received two letters from her husband, Colonel Risner. Photographs have been released identifying him as a prisoner." (PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-036, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

In his book, "The Passing of the Night", Col Risner told how he was shot down. "This morning our mission was to hit a SAM site about ten miles north of the provincial capital of Thanh Hoa. Just as we came in over Highway 1, I heard one of my flight commanders, leading another flight about fifteen miles to my left, say, 'Heads up. They're shooting.' I knew we were going to get ground fire. As we approached we turned left to go right up the highway. It was cut through a little hill perhaps a hundred feet high. We were right down on the deck. I had to lift to go over the hill, and as I topped it, the first thing I saw were tracers. I was hit immediately. My engine shuddered, followed by several quick explosions in the cockpit, which immediately filled with smoke. Fire was coming in behind me from the right side, and I couldn't see anything else. As soon as I was hit I said, 'Oak Lead -- I'm hit.' Within a second or two my wing man was shouting, 'Get out, Lead! Get out, Lead! You're burning! You're burning all over!' He kept hollering, but I did not intend to get out. I was staying with the airplane until I was either over the water or blown out. I had no intention of being captured. I went to afterburner and got a surge of power. As I did, I hit the 'Jettison All' button, thinking maybe since I wouldn't be able to get the (SAM site) control trailer I could get the ordnance off in time to hit the gun emplacements. I was already in a right pull up and only two or three miles from the ocean. The nose was coming up when the engine quit, but I had about 550 knots by then because I had gone to afterburner. Suddenly my stick came right back into my lap and the aircraft pitched forward, throwing me up against my shoulder straps toward the canopy. My options were gone -- I was out of control. I reached for the handle to eject the canopy. After it went, I squeezed the trigger and ejected. I had never heard such a thunder of gunfire in all my life. It was a constant, awesome roar. I grabbed for my emergency radio that was stored under my right arm in a survival vest pocket and pulled out the aerial. I tried calling my wingman, Mike Stevens, to tell him to get moving. I was sure they were going to knock him down, too, for he was circling at about 9,000 or 10,000 feet. Before I realized it, I was almost ready to hit the ground. I was headed for a rice field between two hamlets. I could see the people running toward me. ... The man who said he would never be captured was down in enemy territory. And I had just dropped a load of napalm on them..."

Since his first flight in the F-105 in July 1964, Risner had accumulated 283.7 hours in the plane.

Col Risner received his second Air Force Cross for the period 31 Oct - 15 December 1965 while he was a POW. "The President of the United States of America ... awards the Air Force Cross to Brigadier General Robinson Risner for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force while a Prisoner of War in North Vietnam from 31 October 1965 to 15 December 1965. During that period the Vietnamese intercepted a series of prisoner messages which clearly indicated the danger of General Risner's leadership to their exploitation methods. He was extensively tortured for information but successfully resisted their demands and established a standard of honorable conduct and resistance which was followed by hundreds of Americans after him. The extremely harsh treatment inflicted upon him was to become a way of life for him in the subsequent years. Through his extraordinary heroism, leadership, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, General Risner reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Citation on line at <http://www.veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.php?recordID=19>.)

Maj James W. Mathews became commander of the 67 TFS until the arrival of Lt Col Gerald F. Fitzgerald on 22 Oct 1965.

*"The Passing of the Night" by General Robinson Risner, pgs 7 & 8, & 67 TFS History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965.*

### 16-Sep-65

F-105D 610189 67 TFS 18 TFW Korat Hit by moderate 37/57-mm AAA while attacking a SAM site. Crashed in RP-4, North Vietnam. 20-02N 105-57E Raymond James Merritt 67 TFS pilot ejected and became a POW. Released 12 Feb 73. Call sign: "Oak 01". Combat loss during a deployment from Kadena AB, Okinawa, to Korat RTAB, Thailand. Maj Ray Merritt from the 67 TFS led the two-ship "Oak" flight on an Iron Hand hunt for a SAM site at location 20-24N and 105-47E in North Vietnam. Capt Jimmy L. Goode was #2. The flight left Korat at 07:30 and Maj Merritt was shot down at 10:15.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"The following is an extract from the statement of Capt Jimmy L. Goode Oak 2: '... Maj Merritt was hit while at minimum altitude in the target area. He called, 'I think I'm hit, I'm losing oil pressure.' ... he pulled up sharply to the left, jettisoned his ordnance and tanks and called 'Give me a heading to the sea.' I gave him 135-degrees and he continued his left turn to this heading. At about 4,000' we began to get ground fire although I did not observe any hits on Oak Lead, I saw flame burst from the aft section a short time later and a large piece fall off. At this time, I saw the coast just north of Thanh Hoa and told him to head 150-degrees. He answered 'Well, I'm going to have to get out.' His altitude was between 6000 and 7000 feet and airspeed was about 450 kts. The aircraft leveled momentarily, streaming fuel vapor and/or smoke; the canopy jettisoned and the pilot ejected. The parachute opened shortly after ejection and the beacon began to sound on guard channel. I watched the aircraft crash ... and circled the parachute as it descended. Maj Merritt landed in a cultivated field just across a river from a village and appeared to go into the vegetation clear up to his head. ... He gathered his chute and folded it so an orange panel was visible. I didn't see anyone approach him or any boat cross the river. I believe he landed in a muddy field and was uninjured. ... I capped his position about thirty minutes until relieved by Whiplash Flight. ... "

"Rescue aircraft arrived approximately 3 ½ hours later; however, heavy ground fire was received from the area. Further rescue attempts were unsuccessful and search was suspended 2400L 17 Sep 65. A Hanoi radio broadcast on 27 May 1969 made reference to Maj Merritt which verifies his present status." (PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-037, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

"Two U.S. Air Force jets were shot down in North Vietnam Thursday, a U.S. military spokesman said Friday. The F-105 Thunderchiefs, part of a six-plane raid, apparently were hit by intense antiaircraft and automatic-weapons fire 80 miles northwest of Hanoi, the spokesman said. Other pilots on the mission reported seeing two parachutes and the downed pilots were believed alive. They were listed as missing. The two planes brought the total of U.S. planes shot down in North Vietnam to 92 since air strikes began last February, the spokesman said." (Stars and Stripes)

"Oak Flight, led by Maj Merritt, with Capt Goode, was launched on Iron Hand mission against a SAM site in a heavily defended area, carrying napalm and fragmentation bomblets (CBUs). The mission involved a systematic search area which afforded no terrain masking protection for the flight. Almost immediately after searching the designated area, Maj Merritt was hit several times in succession. He quickly delivered his ordnance and pulled up, attempting to depart the area and assess the damage to his aircraft. Moments later he was forced to eject in a heavily populated area. Capt Goode, who had also delivered his ordnance on the designated target area, immediately started search and rescue operation. Relief arrived prior to Capt Goode's departure due to low fuel but no contact with Maj Merritt was made. Capt Goode recovered at Danang." Maj Merritt was awarded the Silver Star for this mission.

Capt Goode flew F-105D 61-0188. When hit, Maj Merritt jettisoned his napalm and Capt Goode jettisoned his CBUs to fly rescap for Maj Merritt. "Oak lead was hit in target area and tried to make it to sea. He didn't get that far, ejecting north of Thanh Hoa. Oak 2 capped 'till relieved by Whiplash flight and recovered at Danang."

Using call sign "Soup 1", Capt Goode flew his plane back to Korat the next day accompanied by Capt Stevens flying wingman as "Soup 2" in F-105D 61-0206.

*Stars and Stripes, 19 Sep 65, Page 1 & 67 TFS History, 1 July - 31 December 1965*

### 16-Sep-65

963

"Sixteen Republic F-105s conducted an armed route reconnaissance and strike in North Vietnam. Pilots reported 12 buildings destroyed and 2 damaged, at the Co Din barracks area (JCS 39.35) west of Thanh Hoa. All planes returned safely."

Pilots from the 67 TFS flew in five other flights from Korat RTAFB, Thailand. "Capt Ward led a flight of four against the Pahang radar site on BR-242 (in Laos). The GCI site was bombed with thirty-two 750-pound bombs, but BDA was not feasible due to excessive smoke." The lineup for "Maple" flight was:

#1 - Capt Glen C. Ward flying 61-0187. 2+30

#2 - Capt John T. Clark, Jr. flying 61-0195. 2+40

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

#3 - Capt Eddward L. Jones flying 62-4271. 2+30

#4 - Capt Burton C. Spurlock, Jr. flying 61-0194. 2+30

"Bombed GCI radar (20-43N/104-30E). All bombs impacted in target area. Damage could not be seen due to smoke in area."

Also in Laos on BR-41, "Redwood flight, led by Capt John L. Mesenbourg, cratered Route 6 and seeded eight delayed 750-pound bombs ... ."

67 TFS squadron commander Lt Col Robinson Risner ("Pepper 1" flying 61-0217) and Maj Raymond James Merritt ("Oak 1" flying 61-0189) were both shot down while attacking SAM sites and became POWs.

"Pine flight of Capt Robert N. McCoy [flying 62-4335] and 1Lt George H. Vipond [flying 62-4221] launched on Iron Hand against a SAM site at Yen Bay carrying four napalm and two CBU's. Both aircraft had direct hits on the area (that was) claimed to be occupied by a SAM site, but due to low altitudes and high airspeeds, aircraft were unable to confirm occupancy. Suspect that the equipment was camouflaged. Both aircraft were hit two times each by ground fire, and upon recovery, were recycled on rescap for Lt Col Risner and Maj Merritt." Both pilots logged 3+30 for this mission.

"Whiplash Alpha flight, with Capt Ivy J. McCoy, Jr. [62-4264] and Capt Merwin Lamphrey Morrill [62-4278] launched on a FAC flight ... (but was) diverted to rescap for Oak and Pepper leads [Merritt and Risner]. (They) remained on station approximately twenty minutes then rendezvoused with a Navy tanker and returned to Korat. No contact was made with the downed pilots. ... Diverted to RESCAP for Oak & Pepper lead. Took over capping Oak Lead from Oak 2 [Capt Jimmy L. Goode]. We stayed on station approx 20 min when fuel was down to minimum. 1 & 2 bombed a pontoon bridge. Refueled over Bonecrusher with Navy AD-6. Returned to base."

"Capt John E. Cozine and Capt Edward D. Nowokunski (were) launched on rescap. Although a beacon was located, (the) downed pilots were not and the flight returned to base. Heavy flak was encountered in the area."

*Thunderchief World Wide Report on Republic's F-105 Fighter-Bomber, Vol I No 2, October 1, 1965 & 67 TFS History, 1 July - 31 Dec 65 & hand written squadron mission log 18 Aug - 21 Oct 65 in 67 TFS history.*

### 16-Sep-65

3614

The IR-133 radar system installed on four F-100F aircraft by North American Aviation Corporation and Applied Technology Corporation (ATI) passed its initial tests in North American's hanger in Los Angeles and, on 8 October, the planes were flown to Eglin AFB for further testing. The program was called Wild Weasel I.

*"Air Force Logistics Command Support of Forces in Southeast Asia", June 1972, pg 51.*

### 17-Sep-65 30-Sep-65

2678

"The reduced RT 32/33 (RT 32 and RT 33) package finally approved by the Secretary of Defense permitted strikes on a railroad bridge and on a highway bridge NW of Hanoi on routes leading to China. These bridges could only be struck one time. These were the first strikes on a LOC in this area. Apart from these, the package contained relatively unimportant targets, most of them restrikes. CINCPAC was directed not to strike fixed SAM sites located within a 30 nm radius from the center of Hanoi." The directive also restricted attacks against LOCs to only those that were under repair, limiting the authority the military had during RT 30/31 to restrike these approved targets whenever necessary.

"The bridges were struck with 'limited success.' But the net effect of the package was, CINCPAC noted, to leave the entire northeast quadrant of NVN free from harassment."

"During Rolling Thunder 32 and 33, the USAF struck three JCS-targeted ammunition depots at Yen Son (JCS 47), Tai Xuoan (JCS 47.13), and Ban Nuoc Chieu (JCS 47.19), and made the primary effort against two JCS barracks areas at Hoan Lao (JCS 39.11) and Vinh Linh (JCS 39.2, 39.6, 39.7, or 39.8). The U. S. Navy hit four JCS targets during this cycle. Each being authorized 600 armed reconnaissance sorties, the USAF flew 666 and the Navy 575. The VNAF effort was dropping off, with the Vietnamese flying only 10 of the 2,675 sorties flown during the two-

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

week period."

"Beginning with Rolling Thunder program 33 in late September, the Air Force augmented its night interdiction effort by introducing specially equipped F-4C Phantoms of the 68 TFS whose two-man crews were trained in night-time flying techniques."

"By the end of September, it was estimated that 91 percent of the 93 JCS targets south of 20 degrees latitude had been damaged, as were 24 percent of the 125 JCS targets north of 20 degrees. Except for damage to five thermal power plants, no industrial targets had been struck."

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pgs 26-11 through 26-12 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pgs 7 and 8 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 182.*

### 20-Sep-65

2623

The Navy achieved a second success in the air battle against North Vietnamese SAMs when A-4Es equipped with ALQ-51 deception jammers " ... believed they diverted the aim of six SAMs fired at them and other aircraft in the vicinity."

"A U.S. Navy force of 12 A-4s, six A-6s, and four F-4s were attacked by SA-2 missiles near Kep Airfield. Three missiles were fired at the F-4s, which executed a split-S maneuver and evaded. Four more missile contrails were observed by the strike group and they initiated a split-S and hit the deck as the missiles detonated overhead. Later, as the A-4s prepared to attack, the strike leader saw two contrails followed by detonations at 1,500 - 2,000 feet AGL. Two additional contrails were later observed, but no detonations were noted due to the evasive action taken. After the attack, two contrails were observed and one missile was seen detonating at about 1,500 - 2,000 feet AGL. In all, 13 SA-2 missiles were fired, with no hits ... "

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 173 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder July 1965 - December 19 pgs 7 - 8.*

### 23-Sep-65

5053

Five and 1/2 weeks after they had begun on 13 August 1965, the Air Staff's Task Force under BG Kenneth C. Dempster, chartered to study what needed to be done to counter SAMs in Southeast Asia, issued their final report. The report listed 22 specific short-term actions and 25 long-term actions and identified the Air Staff agency responsible for implementing them.

This report was a seminal document that kicked off most of the Air Force programs that were implemented to counter the SAM threat. The programs included formulation of the Wild Weasels, developing Radar Homing and Warning (RHAW) Systems and incorporating them into USAF aircraft, fielding of improved ECM jamming pods and development of techniques for employing the pods, and the development of other ECM systems and electronic intelligence (ELINT) techniques.

Section IV of their report listed the actions -- some of which had already started:

A. Short-term (less than 6 months)

- (1) Expedite testing of the Vector System in the F-100F. (Action: AFXOP, AFRDRE and AFRDQR)
- (2) Evaluate the Vector System installation compatibility with the F/RF-4C, RF-101, and F-105. (Action: AFRDR and AFRDQR)
- (3) Immediately and comparatively evaluate the Maxon and Watch Dog receivers to provide 360-degree warning to the APR-23B. (Action: AFRDR)
- (4) Immediately deploy QRC 192 and QRC 231 equipped aircraft to SEA. (Action: AFXOP)
- (5) Activate an EC 121 aircraft and install G-1176 receivers for deployment to SEA. (Action: AFRDR)

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

- (6) Deploy only APQ-102 configured RF-4C aircraft to SEA. (Action: AFXOP, AFSPD, AFOAP)
- (7) Expedite AF Systems Command test and report on RF-4C/APQ-102 capability. (Action: AFRDR and AFXOP)
- (8) Determine by test the most effective fighter formations and maneuvers to degrade SA-2 accuracy. (A joint Air Force/Navy project is underway). (Action: AFXOP)
- (9) Consistent with electronic countermeasures equipment availability for tactical aircraft, conduct tests to establish the most effective jamming techniques. (Action: AFXOP and AFRDR)
- (10) Modify two QRC 160-1 ECM pods with anti-Fan Song modulation technique and flight test against Eglin AFB SADS-1 radar. (Action: AFRDR and AFXOP)
- (11) Install the AN/ALQ-51 deception jammer in an F-4C and F-105 aircraft and flight test against Eglin AFB SADS-1 radar. (Action: AFRDR and AFXOP)
- (12) Deploy B-66B (Brown Cradle) ECM support aircraft to Southeast Asia to support armed reconnaissance missions against targets in SAM/AAA defended areas. (Action: AFXOP)
- (13) Install AL-29 chaff dispenser system on a fighter aircraft and flight test for performance. (Action: AFRDR and AFXOP)
- (14) Investigate feasibility and applicability of the pneumatic chaff/IR flare dispenser for installation and operation in fighter aircraft. (Action: AFRDR)
- (15) Procure an interim quantity of KA-60 strike cameras for immediate use in SEA to provide the operational commander a means of assessing selected strike results. (Action: AFRDQR and AFSDC)
- (16) Expedite the CA-119 strike camera test to facilitate a comparative evaluation with the KA-60, to identify and select a strike camera. (Action: AFRDQR and AFRDR)
- (17) Expedite the flight test of the F-100F (Vector/IR 133) prototype and determine the optimum employment tactics. (Action: AFXOP and AFRDR)
- (18) Deploy the modified F-100F to SEA to validate the combat capability of this technique. (Action: AFXOP)
- (19) Authorize the funding for the F-105F prototype development. (Action: AFRDQR and AFRDR)
- (20) Flight test the F-105F prototype and determine the optimum tactics. (Action: AFXOP and AFRDR)
- (21) Deploy the modified F-105F to SEA to validate the combat capability of the technique. (Action: AFXOP)
- (22) Authorize the Bell Telephone Laboratory to immediately begin the SA-2 vulnerability study. (Action: AFRDR)

### B. Long-Term (Beyond 6 months)

- (1) Comparatively evaluate the DPN-61 and modified QRC 253-2 for F-100 installation compatibility. (Action: AFRDR and AFRDQR)
- (2) Comparatively evaluate the DPN-61 and TFR for installation compatibility with the RF-101 and F-105. (Action: AFRDR and AFRDQR)
- (3) Expedite the APS-107 developmental test program to provide 360-degree directional warning and accurate

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

- homing in the forward field for S, C, and X-bands with specific threat discrimination. (Action: AFRDR)
- (4) Determine the feasibility of increasing sensitivity of the APR-23B to permit homing on the Fan Song radar while in dummy load. (Action: AFRDR)
- (5) Develop a homing capability for use against all enemy early warning, acquisition, and GCI radars. (Action: AFRDR)
- (6) Update ELINT capabilities of RB-66 aircraft. (Action: AFRDR)
- (7) Identify F/RF-4C ELINT equipment and obtain program approval. (Action: AFRDR)
- (8) Expedite the foliage penetration radar development. (Action: AFRDR)
- (9) Expedite development work on radar polarization techniques. (Action: AFRDR)
- (10) Develop a USAF ELINT/ECM master plan to satisfy both near and long term objectives. (Action: AFXOP and AFRDR)
- (11) Expand current development work on micro-miniaturizations to provide radar homing and warning, ELINT, ECM, and related electronic equipment more compatible with tactical fighter/reconnaissance aircraft. (Action: AFRDR)
- (12) Expedite completion of the QRC 160-8 ECM pod simulator and necessary flight tests to determine capability. (Action: AFRDR and AFXOP)
- (13) Expedite action to acquire and test QRC 249B ECM deception jammer pods against Eglin AFB SADS-I and II radars. (Action: AFRDR and AFXOP)
- (14) Expedite investigation to demonstrate feasibility and applicability of techniques to vary radar cross-section. (Action: AFRDR)
- (15) Accelerate fuse jammer and retro-directive jamming antenna development efforts. (Action: AFRDR)
- (16) Expedite development of a color film processing capability for use at unit level. (Action: AFRDR)
- (17) Expedite development of more rapid, multi-copy, high-definition photo printing capabilities. (Action: AFRDR)
- (18) Expeditiously procure and test prototype models of the NOMAD (Noise modulation adapter) equipment to determine its capability to provide secure air-to-air UHF voice radio transmissions. (Action: AFRDQR)
- (19) Expedite the development of the low cost digital data link system as a longer term alternative solution for communications security. (Action: AFRDQ)
- (20) Approve, fund, and test prototype LORAN avionics for the F-100, F-105, F/RF-4C and RF-101 aircraft. (Action: AFRDQR and AFRDD)
- (21) Retrofit LORAN D navigation sets in tactical aircraft. (Action: AFROQR)
- (22) Accelerate acquisition of LORAN C ground chain in SEA. (Action: AFRDD)
- (23) Based on the evaluation of the KA-60 and CA-119 cameras, determine the total strike camera retrofit program. (Action: AFROQR and AFXOP)

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

(24) Expedite the target signature measurement study in progress by AFAL/ University of Michigan to provide the necessary data to identify targets from multi-sensor signal comparison. (Action: AFRDR)

(25) Establish a follow-on study of the characteristics of the Fan Song C, E, SA-3 and SA-4 systems so that effective countermeasures may be developed prior to encountering the threats. (Action: AFRDR)

*"Report of the Air Staff Task Force on Surface-to-Air Missiles in SEA", dated 23 September 1965. AFHRA Call #: K168.034-1. IRIS # 0908270.*

**23-Sep-65**

5076

The Dempster Report did not use the term Wild Weasel but described the Air Staff Task Force's concept of an "EF-105F". On pages 45 - 50 the report addressed the topic "Aircraft Modifications/Prototyping" and described the Air Staff's concept of what turned into the Wild Weasel program. Here are pertinent extracts:

"A 'Hunter-Killer' proposal envisioned converting the rear cockpit of a current two-place TAC fighter into an ELINT/ECM operators position and equipping the aircraft with an S, C and X-band omni-directional radar homing and warning device. The aircraft could be loaded with standard ordnance. If FAN SONG radar emissions are detected, the radar warning device will so indicate and the Hunter-Killer can 'home' on this signal below 1500' until visual contact with the target is made. Upon identifying the target, ordnance can be released or a 'marker' released for target identification purposes for other fighters. The proposal also visualized an ECM pen/aid, permitting operation above the range of small AAA weapons. As this appeared to have considerable merit the Task Force recommended immediate exploitation of the concept" (pp 46 - 47.)

Under "Candidate Systems", the report described the F-100F Hunter-Killer Modification (WITHOUT using the term EF-100F) and then had a paragraph titled, "Modification of F-105F to EF (Hunter-Killer) Configuration." In this paragraph are such sentences as, "The EF-105F would possess ECM jamming as well as an ELINT capability. The configuration of the rear cockpit of the F-105F will be altered by removal of controls and instrument panels. The equipment currently considered for installation in the EF-105F is: (a) DPN-61, Vector, or TFR Radar Homing and Warning receiver. (b) Two ALT-13/QRC-218 ALT-51, or QRC-160-1 modified active ECM and (c) a bomb damage assessment strike camera." (pg 49)

Under the "Recommendations" section are these sentences:

- "c. Obtain funding and authorize the EF-105F prototype development.
- d. Flight test the EF-105F prototype and evaluate employment tactics.
- e. Deploy the EF-105F to SEA." (pp 49 - 50)

These Air Staff directions were the insemination of the Wild Weasel program. Its gestation period took 3 months until the F-100F was born and delivered to Korat in November 1965 followed by its younger brother the "EF-105F", which by that time had dropped the "EF" designation.

*"Report of the Air Staff Task Force on Surface-to-Air Missiles in SEA", dated 23 September 1965, pp 45 - 50, AFHRA Call #: K168.03-1. IRIS # 0908270*

**23-Sep-65**

2624

For the first time, an F-105 pilot used a SAM break maneuver to successfully evade a SAM fired at him. "On September 23, while attacking an ammunition depot at Tai Xouan (JCS 47.13) northwest of Hanoi, Air Force Thunderchief pilots observed two SAMs heading towards them. As one missile soared toward an aircraft, the pilot made a 'SAM Break' maneuver that allowed him to elude it."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 173.*

**25-Sep-65**

2626

In an attempt to develop a weapon to counter the SAM threat, the Navy began a combat evaluation of the AGM-45 Shrike radar-seeking missile in August 1965. "By September 25, the results of the twenty-five Shrikes fired at radiating targets were as follows: seven probable and two possible hits, two probable misses, and fourteen unknown results."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Because of the limited number of missiles, testing ceased in September and the remaining weapons were set aside as a reserve. After further development, an improved Shrike became combat ready early in 1966 and Air Force and Navy aircrews began using it on a regular basis."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam; 1965 - 1966", pg 176.*

**30-Sep-65**

80

The first F-105 lost to a SAM was hit over North Vietnam near the Ninh Binh railway and highway bridge (JCS 10). The pilot, Lt Col Melvin J. Killian, Jr., commander of the 334 TFS, flying from Takhli RTAFB, was killed by the SAM hit. He was replaced as squadron commander by Maj Hershel E. Galyon.

This was the fourth US plane downed by a SAM.

One F-4C from the 47 TFS at Ubon was lost to AAA during this strike and both crew members were killed. They were Capt Chambless M. Chesnutt from Little Rock AR, and 1Lt Michael Daniel Chwan from Bayonne, NJ on TDY from the 15 TFW at MacDill AFB. "... The number four aircraft was hit by AAA and crashed near the target. The number two aircraft sustained battle damage."

Capt Chesnutt's name is on the Vietnam Memorial Wall at Panel 02E Line 98. Lt Chwan's is at Panel 03E Line 99. Their remains were recovered.

Capt George N. Zigelhofer, 562 TFS, 23 TFW, was one of the pilots on this mission. "My 38th mission was on 30 Sep 65 and was the worst mission I flew. The bridge at Nihn Bihn had been designated a JCS target and a 40 airplane raid (10 flights of 4 aircraft) was fraged against the bridge with three minutes spacing between our TOT's. I was flying as element lead in the 6th flight so I was to be the 23rd aircraft over the target. We came up on strike frequency 10 minutes before our TOT and in that time frame they shot down the mission commander ... and an F-4 over the target. We hit our IP about 50 miles from the target and started picking up ground fire at that time. We were flying at probably 100 feet or less AGL in full afterburner, and indicating around 600 knots. As we approached the target my flight leader missed the pull-up point but was smart enough to stay on the deck and continue toward the Gulf. Having been there four days before I recognized the target and pulled up to make my bomb drop. I think I immediately became the target for every gunner in NVN, I simply had not seen the amount of ground fire, tracers, and flak that was directed at my aircraft! After making the bomb drop we egressed toward the Gulf, rejoined the flight, and located a tanker for fuel as we were all running low due to the use of afterburners. As we looked the aircraft over for battle damage three of the four of us had been hit. I was the only one not hit. Lead and #2's damage was bad enough to cause them to recover at Da Nang. I and my wingman continued south over the water, crossed NVN just north of the city of Vihn, and recovered at Takhli. We were awarded DFCs for that mission." (George Zigelhofer, e-mail 3 Sept 2012.)

*The CNA Loss / Damage Database & 15 TFW history Vol 1, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pg 18, AFHRA Call # K-WG-15-HI, IRIS # 448323.*

**30-Sep-65**

F-105D 610117 334 TFS 4 TFW Takhli Hit by a SAM near the Ninh Binh RR and highway bridge (JCS 10). Crashed in RP-4, North Vietnam. 22-11N 106-02E Melvin Joseph Killian, Jr. 334 TFS commander KIA. Awarded AFC. Call sign: "Mercury 01". The aircraft and pilot were TDY to Takhli RTAB from the 4 TFW, Seymour Johnson AFB NC. Flown by the 334 TFS squadron commander, Lt Col Melvin J. Killian, Jr. who was awarded posthumously the Air Force Cross for attacks against the Ninh Binh RR and Highway Bridge (JCS 10).

Col Killian had accumulated 354.5 hours in the F-105. (F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

"Mercury" was a two-ship flight with an airborne spare. Mercury 2 was Maj Herschel E. Galyon. Mercury Spare was Capt Michael P. Cooper. The flight left Takhli at 13:03. Col Killian crashed at 14:21 at location 20-10-45N and 106-01-25E, SSW of Ninh Binh, North Vietnam.

The following is an extract from the statement by Capt Michael P. Cooper, Mercury Spare: "... We briefed for 1 and

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

2 to fly an orbit approximately 5 - 10 miles east of target out of known surface-to-air missile environment and for the spare to orbit south of this position, all at altitudes varying from 12 - 18,000 feet. The two orbits formed a figure S in such a way that either Mercury 1 and 2 or spare had visual contact with the target nearly 100% of the time. At 0721Z, I heard Mercury #2 call 'something' about a missile. At this instant, I observed a missile pass through a cloud heading easterly at steep climb altitude. I acknowledged that I saw a missile. Mercury #2 retransmitted that, 'Mercury Lead was down with a missile.' At this time my orbit was again coinciding with the Lead element and I saw Mercury Lead at about 13,000 tumbling and spinning through the air in a complete ball of fire from one end of aircraft to the other. I attempted to join in formation on Lead; however, due to the erratic flight, I could not. I observed the aircraft severely damaged, but reasonably intact. The left wing was missing, all but the main spar; the radome was gone, and ammunition was cooking-off in the gun-drum area. The aft section was partially missing. I followed the aircraft until it impacted. ... It exploded on impact. I heard no radio calls at the time from Mercury #1, or any URT-21 'beeper' signals. I saw no parachute.' Other aircraft in the flight remained in the area approximately 40 minutes after SAM impact, but without any visual or electronic contact with Lt Col Killian." (PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-046, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640.)

Col Killian "... was brought down while [using binoculars for] directing flights onto a target southeast of Nam Dinh, DRV. Although he had been alerted to the fact that SA-2 enemy missile sites were active, he still chose to continue on the mission. Obscuration by clouds prevented him from seeing the rising missile. Had he been able to see it, he might have been able to use evasive measures to avoid it. Colonel Killian (whose name appeared on the promotion list to full Colonel) was listed as MIA.

"Lt Col Killian was directed to lead a flight of five aircraft on the Ninh Binh Highway and Railroad bridge. He was to be mission coordinator for a follow-on strike of four more flights of four aircraft each. The orbit for the flight was in a suspected SAM site radius and the weather was marginal. Lt Col Killian was shot down by a direct hit from a surface-to-air missile." He was hit while flying at 18,000 feet. "Another SAM was also observed in the same area, and an F-4C on the same mission was shot down by antiaircraft fire."

Lt Col Killian was born 31 January 1922. He entered the service from Council Bluffs, Iowa, in 1942. His body has not been recovered. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial wall on panel 02E line 99.

*355 TFW and 4 TFW Histories, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilms NO461 & MO292 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War Over North Vietnam, 1965 - 1966", pg 173.*

### 05-Oct-65

1701

F-105s from Takhli attacked the Lang Met bridge (JCS 18.75) in North Vietnam. This bridge (BE 616-1159) was at coordinates 21-30-23N and 106-21-08E along the Northeast Rail Line connecting Hanoi with Yungning in Red China. Two pilots from the 36 TFS were shot down and declared MIA. In a follow-on strike on the bridge, an F-4C from Ubon was also lost and its crew became POWs.

"Twenty-four F-105s ... took off from Takhli, each carrying two 3,000-pound bombs and a 650-gallon centerline fuel tank. The fighters were divided into six flights, with five-minute separation between each. As each flight neared the missile-defended area, it descended to 2,000 feet for the low altitude run-in. The Thunderchiefs jettisoned their external tanks and as they accelerated to 520 knots, they were hotly engaged by light and medium caliber AAA. At the Initial Point, three miles short of the target, each flight pulled into a steep climb to 7,000 feet to identify its target, then commenced its dive attack. After bomb release, the F-105s returned to low altitude until they were clear of the missile-defended area. The attackers dropped one span of the bridge, but in doing so they took a pummeling from AAA. Two F-105s were shot down, while no fewer than fourteen suffered battle damage serious enough to force them to divert to Da Nang or Udorn."

Three of the planes diverting to Da Nang were from the 562 TFS. Two of them had battle damage. Capt "Nasty Ned" Miller " was hit as he pulled up off his target, the Lang Met bridge. His plane pitched up and he got several fire warning lights. His wingman, Maj "Foxy" Flowers, told him to get as close to the sea as he could before ejecting. On the way to the coast, the fire blew out and Capt Miller got the plane under control. He decided to head toward Da Nang where he landed despite another episode of pitching when he lowered his gear. His plane had a

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

large hole on the underside of the fuselage behind the wing. Electrical wiring and control cables were also burned away. Maj Flowers said he didn't have the heart to tell Capt Miller how bad the plane looked, as long as it kept flying. They're both being nominated for the Distinguished Flying Cross." Both pilots returned to Takhli the next day.

During the mission, a KC-135 tanker based in Thailand crossed into North Vietnam to refuel three F-105s that had received battle damage and were running out of fuel. Capt Marion H. Smith, the tanker's navigator, wrote the story as he remembered it, which was published in the Beaumont, Texas, Enterprise newspaper. "Our aircraft had ... had 160,000 pounds of fuel to be offloaded during a six-hour period. All tanker aircraft had received a directive not to go north of the 19th parallel due to the danger of an occasional MiG or SAM attack. ... We were positioned south of the 19th parallel in the Gulf of Tonkin. We had been on station for more than five hours and had offloaded most of the fuel planned to be pumped to the attack aircraft.

"On the last lap of our holding pattern we were heading due north. In about two minutes I had planned to turn south toward Da Nang. Just short of the turn, the UHF emergency frequency came alive with 'Mayday. Mayday. Mayday.' It was a flight of three F-105s northeast of Hanoi. One of their planes was already lost to enemy action. Their call was answered by Orion. The airborne strike commander was just off the coast and north of us. It seemed that the major problem with the flight was not having enough fuel to make the round trip. This was due to additional anti-aircraft batteries being installed during the 'Johnson stand down.' They had also received battle damage to fuel cells and wing structures.

"Capt Don Herrington, my aircraft commander, turned toward me and asked over the intercom, 'What do you think Smitty?' My reply was 'If we hurry.' With a grin that always meant we were in for a ride, he pushed all four throttles as far as the slots would allow. We shot across the 19th parallel at 0.97 Mach. 'Heading?' came his question. 'Go left, heading 310 degrees' was my answer.

"After about three sweeps of Orion's radar, a voice came over the radio. 'Baker 21, do you know where you are going?' Capt Herrington nodded to the copilot. Lt Ken Schmitz. The copilot answered with 'We do.' There was a silence that seemed very long. Then a different voice came back, 'Very well, I'll send help.'

"... In a short time, I think every branch of the armed services was with us. What a motley sight we must have been streaking over the port of Haiphong. I think some of the support we got was from random aircraft in the area that heard the original distress call and wanted to do something. ... Formed up on us was a massive escort of every kind of aircraft in the US inventory. Orion was steadily giving intelligence on MiG and SAM activity. Each branch of our escort peeled off to destroy any threat that seemed to affect our flight toward Hanoi.

"In the beginning, the F-105s did not want to take my reciprocal heading of 130 degrees. I can't really blame them as they didn't believe we were on the way. The usual procedure would be to steer 90 degrees and bail out over the water if possible. At each threat from MiGs, one flight or the other would peel off and kick some butt.

"If my guess was right, the F-105s had to fly almost the same distance if they steered 90 or 130 degrees to get to water. ... After my instructions to them to take heading 130 degrees, there was another silence that upped my already shot nerves. After a few seconds I heard 'Steady up 130.' Now we're closing head to head at almost twice the speed of sound. ... We held our headings until I watched Hanoi disappear under our port wing. With very little to indicate our relative position except an occasional ADF short count from the fighters, I had nothing to go on but 'feelings.' When I could not stand it any longer, I gave a left turn heading to 130 degrees, the heading of the F-105s. If the fighters were to see us at all, it would be when we were belly up to them half way through the turn.

"Seconds passed without any word from the fighters. It seemed forever. Nothing sounded so good as 'Tally-ho the tanker.' As we rolled out steady up on 130, the first fighter slid onto the boom being flown by Sgt Leonard Bose. There never has been such a smooth rendezvous before or since this one.

"The fighter had just made contact when his engine quit from fuel starvation. We had a 5,000-pound brute force

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

disconnect hard boom. This meant that it was possible to actually pull the smaller plane as a tow truck might pull a disabled car. Sgt Bose was able to pump enough fuel for the engine to be restarted in flight. Just five seconds later and the plane and pilot would have been lost for the rest of that conflict.

"Each plane in turn was able to get a few hundred pounds of fuel, get off the boom and make room for the next until all three planes had fuel showing on their instruments. After the initial rounds of fuel, each was able to top off with enough fuel to make it to Da Nang. ... After crossing the 19th parallel, we landed at Da Nang with nothing showing on the fuel gauges.

"In the command post we were informed that a court-martial was convening for our placing so many lives at risk during our little raid into 'Nam. It seems we had unjustifiably and without instructions to do so disabled or otherwise damaged the North Vietnamese war machine beyond anything a planned attack might do. I guess it was a little embarrassing to accidentally destroy the North Vietnamese Air Force, knock out most SAM sites between Haiphong and Hanoi, scare the snot out of the North Vietnamese high command and improve American morale by 1,000 percent. All of this occurred inside of an hour.

"... I am told that one of the three fighter pilots, I think his name was Ned Miller, was killed a few days after this event. He ate my flight lunch on the way back with us to Thailand to rejoin his squadron. ... There weren't any 10 people in Washington worthy of washing Ned's flight suit.

"... One of the three fighter pilots was up to be promoted to Colonel and had some friends in higher circles. After a few calls to friends, the court-martial was 'reduced' to Air Medal."

*"History of U.S. Electronic Warfare Vol III", pgs 54 - 55 & "Takhli - August to December 1965", AFM Friends Journal, Vol 17, No. 4, WII 1994, pgs 22 - 23.*

**05-Oct-65**

2657

" ... Air Force planes struck the Kep highway bridge ... (JCS 18.31). Bombs missed the ... bridge, but cratered its southern end. ... During the ... attack, pilots observed numerous bursts of fire, apparently SAMs. One flash was seen in the target area and others appeared about fifteen miles east and southeast of Haiphong.

"A Navy F-8E was hit by a SAM and disabled. The pilot was forced to eject offshore and was rescued." This was the fifth US aircraft shot down by a SAM. The F-8E belonged to VF-162 from the USS Oriskany. The pilot, Lt (jg) Richard F. Adams, flew his plane back over the Gulf of Tonkin and ejected when his plane exploded. He was picked up by a Navy helicopter.

"Eight F-4Cs from Ubon struck the Lang Het Ammunition Depot (JCS 47.12) - in the face of heavy ground fire - causing one secondary explosion. An F-4C was downed, both pilots ejecting safely but rescue efforts failed." The two crewmembers, Capt James Otis Hivner and 1Lt Thomas Joseph Barrett from the 47 TFS TDY from the 15 TFW at MacDill AFB, became POWs.

"The Navy damaged the southern approach to the Kep Highway Bridge and destroyed the northern half of the Vu Chua Bridge (JCS 18.74).

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 200 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1965, pg 9.*

**11-Oct-65**

5080

"The Wild Weasel I [OT&E] test started on 11 October [at Eglin AFB] and was completed on 18 November 1965, and the four F-100F aircraft departed Eglin AFB on 21 November and arrived in SEA on 25 November 1965,"

The test was conducted under the "... joint TAWC/APGC Wild Weasel I Test Plan and the APGC Wild Weasel I PD (Project no. 0510T1)." Lt Col Richard "Dick" F. Bailey was the Project Director.

*"First In, Last Out: Stories by the Wild Weasels", pp 114 - 115.*

**15-Oct-65 28-Oct-65**

2648

For RT 36/37 (RT 36 and RT 37), the JCS proposed five rail and highway bridges, " ... Kep airfield, Kep POL,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

and four additional bridges leading to the Chinese border. The Staff also proposed raising sorties from 1,200 to 1,500 and increasing the armed reconnaissance area to coincide with the Iron Hand area."

In his review of the JCS proposal, Mr. McNamara "... struck out all the proposed targets but four bridges for US forces and one target for the VNAF in the southern part of NVN. Thus started a pattern that continued for the remainder of 1965; fixed target authorization for Rolling Thunder packages was restricted to four bridge targets in the northeast quadrant and one VNAF target in southern NVN. Exceptions were made on only three occasions when special authorization was granted for attack of SAM support facilities."

"In acting on RT 36/37, Mr. McNamara rejected raising the sortie limit to 1,500. He also directed that planes keep their flight paths 20 rather than the earlier 15 miles from the Chinese border, and ... specifically excluded locks and dams from JCS numbered targets that might be restruck by armed reconnaissance to keep them nonoperational."

"... Rolling Thunder 36 and 37 continued emphasis on the armed reconnaissance program and interdiction of the Hanoi/Red China supply routes. The USAF was assigned the Bac Can Highway Bridge (JCS 18.61) and the Choi Moi Highway Bridge (JCS 18.35), plus the Phu Van Army Barracks (JCS 39.39) originally assigned the VNAF. Navy was authorized strikes against the Thai Nguyen (JCS 18.33) and Lang Luong Highway Bridges. (JCS 18.62)"

"In addition to strikes against the JCS targets, the USAF flew 603 armed reconnaissance missions (Navy, 584) during the 15 - 28 October period. The total of 1,380 sorties represented a slight drop from the 1,454 of the previous cycle."

"... Restrikes on bridges on the northwest line between Hanoi and Cai Cao (Lao Cai ?) were also authorized, but JCS directives limited the services to 'a single coordinated attack' on each bridge during a seven-day period. Unhappily for aircrews, this rule would enable repair crews to nullify much of the bombing impact."

*The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol II, pg 26-14 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, 9 - 10 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 199.*

### 17-Oct-65

2641

While an Iron Hand strike was going on, "... sixteen F-105s hit the Bac Can bridge, dropping thirty-two 3,000-pound bombs that cratered the south approach and left two holes in the bridge's deck. No aircraft were lost. The attack was coordinated with the Navy's strike on the heavily defended Thai Nguyen bridge that, in turn, served as a cover for the ... successful air strike on (the) SA-2 site near Kep airfield."

For the assault on the Thai Nguyen bridge, "... the Navy used about thirty-two strike and support aircraft with the attackers dropping forty 500-pound bombs, thirty-one 1,000-pound bombs, and twenty-six 2,000-pound bombs. These damaged the bridge severely, left a large traverse crack on the deck, damaged the southern pier, and cratered the abutments and approaches. However, the mission was costly, with three aircraft downed and three damaged."

In the first confirmed destruction of a SAM site in North Vietnam, "... five Navy Iron Hand aircraft, accompanying a joint Air Force and Navy Rolling Thunder mission against the Bac Can (JCS 18.61) and Thai Nguyen (JCS 18.33) bridges on the northeast rail line, prepared to strike a missile site near Kep airfield, not far from the rail line. The missile installation, assigned number 32, had been detected two days earlier by a drone. As the Rolling Thunder mission neared the target, the Iron Hand aircraft [from Carrier Air Wing Seven, CVW-7], consisting of one A-6A Intruder [from VA-75 the Sunday Punchers] (as a Pathfinder) and four A-4E Skyhawks [from VA-86, the Sidewinders], all from the carrier USS Independence (CVA-62), broke off, popped up to 8,000 feet, and attacked the missile and associated equipment from two directions. As the lead aircraft, the A-6A strung eighteen Mark V 500-pound bombs across a missile transporter park, each of the A-4Es dropped 500-pound and 1,000-pound bombs from about 4,500 feet on the revetments. One missile was destroyed by a bomb, and the second missile, after snaking on the ground, burned itself out. The (Iron Hand) attack also destroyed ten missile transporter vehicles, damaged four others, and left three vans in flames. All five aircraft returned safely to the Independence."

The CIA/DIA's monthly report, "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam", dated 27 Oct 1965, prepared for the Secretary of Defense and the JCS, also described the results of this SAM site attack. "Quick reaction paid

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

dividends last week when an air strike was launched against an occupied SA-2 site near Kep Ha within 48 hours of the site's detection. The attack surprised the North Vietnamese and resulted in destruction of missiles, radar vans, and missile transporters, marking the first successful attack on such a site. The losses incurred constitute a sharp setback to North Vietnamese plans for augmenting SA-2 firing elements northeast of Hanoi. Nevertheless, North Vietnam is steadily increasing its AAA and SA-2 sites, primarily in the Yen Bai and Lang Son areas, and SA-2 firing elements are now in operation to the south, east, and north of Hanoi."

(CIA Directorate of Intelligence, Intelligence Memorandum, "An Appraisal of the Bombing of North Vietnam", 27 October 1965, pg 6, from CIA collection in the Vietnam Archive, at [www.vietnam.ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu).)

The official history of their air defense service written by North Vietnamese, told their view of this battle. "At 10:20 A.M. on 17 October, enemy aircraft made a diversionary move from one direction while enemy bombers flew in at low level from another altitude, climbed rapidly when they neared the position, and make dive-bombing attacks on 82nd Battalion's position. The anti-aircraft guns protecting the missile position quickly opened fire and shot down one enemy aircraft on the spot. Many other flights of enemy aircraft appeared to the west and the northwest, but they kept flying just outside the range of the battalion's missiles. Meanwhile a flight of A-4Es made an unexpected approach at very low altitude and dropped their bombs right in the center of the battalion's position. The missile control radar broke down and enemy bombs hit Launchers 3 and 4. Seven soldiers were wounded.

"Under the leadership of the Party chapters and utilizing the fighting spirit and the courage of our cadre and soldiers, after only ten minutes the fires in the battalion's position had been extinguished, the equipment repaired, and the battalion returned to combat status. At 11:40 A.M., Battalion Commander Bui Danh Chau and Political Officer Nguyen Manh led the battalion in a victory by shooting down a high-altitude BQM-34A reconnaissance drone."

("History of the Air Defense Service", Volume II, pp 59 - 60, translated by Merle Pribbenow.)

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pgs 192 and 200-201 & "History of U.S. Electronic Warfare", Vol III, p 50.*

### 21-Oct-65

2646

To further assist in countering the growing SAM and radar-controlled AAA threat, five EB-66s arrived at Takhli RTAFB to augment the nine already operating from there. The planes came from the 25 TRS at Chambley AB, France, part of the NATO forces provided by the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE). The JCS had ordered their deployment on 7 October 1965.

"On October 13, the 355th TFW received five B-66B aircraft and crews TDY from United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) to supplement their force. This aircraft, with crew of three, has no Elint capability but has a more powerful ECM capability against SA-2 Fan Song radar." (355 TFW history, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 0844)

To conceal the drawdown of NATO aircraft from Europe, the EB-66's departure from France was attributed to their participation in an exercise in Spain. The families of the aircrews expected their men to return shortly -- when in fact they were halfway around the world participating in combat operations over North Vietnam. (Navigator interview)

"More specialized than the first EB-66s, each of the five USAFE aircraft carried a crew of three. Although not equipped for gathering electronic intelligence, all were very well suited for performing passive ECM. They possessed twenty-three jammers configured to counter all known North Vietnamese air defense radar emitters. The 2nd Air Division developed anti-SAM radar tactics that called for the use of destroyers and jammers within 15 nautical miles of an installation. A minimum of two aircraft were assigned to each ingress route. While one EB-66C (for active ECM) was placed in an orbit outside of the SAM ring, another penetrated the target's airspace. The tactic proved quite successful."

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 196 & interview with EB-66B navigator, 21 Oct 65.*

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

**22-Oct-65**

3615

In early October, SMAMA installed an F-105D with the initial ATI APR-25 and APR-26 RHAW equipment to provide warning indications of SAM radar. "On 22 October, this aircraft was flown to Eglin AFB for more tests. At the same time, Hq USAF instructed AFLC to procure 500 ATI Vector sets and to develop a plan for modifying the F-105 aircraft which were in SEA."

*"Air Force Logistics Command Support of Forces in Southeast Asia", June 1972, pg 51.*

**25-Oct-65**

5054

By Monday 25 October 1965, the Air Force and Navy had flown 63 strike and flak suppression sorties to attack five SAM sites in North Vietnam. One site, struck by Navy aircraft on 17 October, had been confirmed destroyed.

A CIA report assessed the effects of air strikes on other military targets in North Vietnam. "Air strikes against North Vietnam have further eroded national capacities in measurable areas, while far-ranging armed reconnaissance has disrupted movement along lines of communication.

"Further reduction in national capacities in certain categories will be inhibited to some extent by the heavy concentration of targets in the sanctuary areas. About 51 percent of maritime ports, and about 60 percent of POL, power plant, and railroad yard capacities are within the restricted areas. However, only 10 percent of barracks, 14 percent of supply, and 15 percent of ammunition storage capacities are located in these areas. The continued absence of restoration of barracks and supply and ammunition depots confirms earlier assessments that a large-scale dispersal of men and materials to less vulnerable facilities has occurred. No indications of shortages of ammunition have been detected, and the movement of such materiel is given top priority on the disrupted transportation nets.

"The four damaged airfields at Vinh, Dong Hoi, Na San, and Dien Bien Phu remain unserviceable. The North Vietnamese appear to be discarding these facilities and concentrating on improving and reactivating airfields in and north of the Hanoi area."

*"An Appraisal of the Bombing Of North Vietnam", Intelligence Memorandum, Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, 2: Oct 65, report annex and pg 5.*

**27-Oct-65**

4920

A SAM claimed its sixth U.S. aircraft when one shot down a Navy F-8E belonging to VF-191 from the USS Bon Homme Richard. The pilot, Lt Dennis Anthony Moore, became a POW. He was released 12 February 1973.

A flight of F-105s from the 44 TFS, 18 TFW, on their third combat deployment to Korat, launched a RESCAP flight, probably for the Navy F-8E, the only plane downed in NVN this day.

The lineup of "Whiplash" flight was:

- #1 - Capt Gerald M. McGauley
- #2 - 1Lt Burton W. Campbell
- #3 - Capt Jimmy D. Ginger
- #4 - 1Lt Russell M. Lanning

The flight dropped 32 M-117 bombs and logged a total of 9.0 hours.

*"Vietnam Air Losses", pg 37 & 44 TFS History, 1 Jan 65 - 30 Jun 67, Appendix 1, Exhibits 11 - 12.*

**29-Oct-65 11-Nov-65**

2680

"Rolling Thunder 38 and 39 (RT 38 and RT 39), in the period 29 October - 11 November, authorized six strikes against JCS targets. The USAF was assigned the Phu Ly RR Bridge (JCS 18.21) and the Dong Em SAM Support Facility (JCS 65.8?) ; the Navy was given the Hai Duong RR/Highway Bridge (JCS 11), Me Xa highway Bridge (JCS 18.66) and the Lang Luong Highway Bridge (JCS 18.62), with the Kep Highway Bridge (JCS 18.31) as an alternate. A VNAF-assigned target, Vinh Linh Barracks (JCS 39.6, 39.7, or 39.8) was not struck as the damage level from previous strikes was considered adequate."

"... The USAF also flew 635 armed reconnaissance missions during the two-week period, as compared to 576 for

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Navy. Sixteen Iron Hand strikes were flown; another 145 Iron Hand sorties being diverted to armed reconnaissance or cancelled. ... "

Beginning with RT 38/39, each of the five successive Rolling Thunder phases through the end of 1965 "... were cautiously crafted, contained little innovation of a worthwhile military nature, and had little real effect on enemy capabilities or determination."

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pgs 10 - 11 & The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1960 - 1968, Vol . pg 26-16.*

**31-Oct-65**

161

A Navy A-4E led eight F-105s from Takhli RTAFB on a mission to destroy SAM sites. Lt Commander Trent Richard Powers from VA-164 of the USS Oriskany arrived in his A-4E (S/N 151173) at Takhli during the afternoon of 30 Oct 1965. Powers was single, 43 years old, and from Minneapolis MN. "He was a real likeable person and exuded confidence in his approach to flight planning and flying the mission. He almost had the F-105 pilots thinking that it would be a 'no-sweat' mission." He was accompanied by a second Navy pilot in another A-4 who remained at Takhli during the combat mission.

His A-4E had a Melpar APR-23 radar warning receiver to detect SAM radar signals. It was a rudimentary system but more than F-105s had at the time.

The next day Commander Powers led two cells of four F-105s on the Iron Hand portion of a strike by US Navy aircraft on the Kep highway bridge (JCS 18.31) north of Hanoi. The Navy's attack on the bridge dropped all spans off their piers and into the water. During the bridge strike "... Navy pilots were attacked by seven SA-2 missiles but were successful in evading."

"Upon execution by 2nd AD, these nine aircraft took off and headed for the target. In the target area, LCdr Powers led the eight F-105s toward the SAM sites."

The F-105 pilots in the first Iron Hand flight from the 562 TFS, 23 TFW, were:

- #1 - Capt Robert L. Harris
- #2 -
- #3 - Capt Gayle D. Williams, Jr.
- #4 - Capt Gary D. Barnhill

In the second F-105 Iron Hand flight from the 334 TFS, 4 TFW, were:

- #1 - Capt Michael P. Cooper
- #2 - Capt James J. Butler, Jr.
- #3 - Capt John Stell
- #4 - 1Lt Lee Aaron "Larry" Adams

"Upon picking up a Fan Song radar, ... LCdr Powers led the first flight to this target. As he approached the first target, he sighted two missiles launched from a second site. ... He immediately pointed this out to the second flight of F-105s, led by Capt Michael Cooper of the 334 TFS, and directed him to hit that site. ... Capt Cooper and his flight popped up and skip bombed and strafed his target on one pass, leaving the site in billowing flame. At the apex of their pop-up, his number three man, Capt Stell, spotted another site nearby and rolled in and dive bombed it." (Frame 0990)

LCdr Powers continued onto the first SAM site. When he reached the target, he released two MK-82, high-drag snakeye bombs, which hit directly dead center on the target.

"The flight of F-105s following him, [led by Capt Robert Harris, 562 TFS], ascended to about 8,000 feet and dive bombed this first site with all four aircraft. The complete site, with the control van in the center and several SAMs,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

was destroyed.

"At the same time the second cell skip bombed and strafed their target on one pass, leaving the site in billowing flames. At the apex of their ascent, the number three man spotted another site nearby and rolled in and dive bombed it. At least four missiles were seen launched -- which none were effective. In all, two SAM sites were destroyed and a third possibly destroyed. Several missiles were launched from the site as if to get rid of them and reduce the damage prior to the site being attacked.

"But all was not a success, as LCdr Powers pulled off his run on the first missile site, his aircraft was hit by ground fire and [he] had to eject at 200 feet." He was seen parachuting but due to his location no rescue attempt was made and he was listed as MIA and became a POW. He died in captivity. ... The US Navy and the US Air Force lost a brave pilot that day. That night at the Officers Club, a toast was drunk to that gallant and fearless officer." (355 TFW history frames 0843 - 0844, 0990)

Commander Powers' name is on the Vietnam Wall Panel 03E - Line 10.

In all, the Iron Hand flights destroyed two SAM sites and damaged a third.

Capt John Stell from the 334 TFS was one of the eight F-105 pilots on this mission. "To give you an idea what was going on, we were an eight ship (two four ships), and I was #3 in the second four. ... We were following the Navy A-4 because he had some 'vector' equipment on board which could pick SAM sites better than we could, and he was from a ship that had a big attack package going against a bridge close to where these SAM sites were located. He had coordinated this SAM strike with his shipmates. I don't know how sophisticated his equipment was. I doubt it was much better than what we had on board. I think coordination was the big factor in his leading us. I do remember that as we approached the target area, I felt we were flying with the throttle nearly in idle! We were accustomed to attacking at 550-575 knots. I think his top speed was around 450, if that. The Navy was going in high. We came in very low, 50-100' AGL to avoid the site picking us up on their radar until we popped up for weapon delivery. Everyone was loaded with hard bombs, probably 8x750's. I think the A-4 had a couple of MK-82's on board, mainly for marking the target area. We were in and out in one pass from the west and southwest, and egressed the area to the east and to the Gulf of Tonkin. It was a bit wild, as this was one of the first SAM raids. No experience in seeing the launch of several missiles, and going at their throats. The entire flight of eight left the target area jinking like crazy. ...

"I accompanied another Thud to Danang AB that day. He'd strafed something after we pulled off the target and the entire gun panel blew off of his plane. As that panel was directly in front of the intake, caution directed that he land as soon as possible. I don't recall who the pilot was. He probably was from the 562nd. ... The flight to Danang was uneventful, and I escorted the damaged plane to touchdown, went around and landed myself. I was surprised to discover I had a flat tire, and I spread rubber clear down the runway. After examining the aircraft, I discovered that I had taken a series of small arms hits on the plane, one or two of which went through the gear doors and punctured the tire. There were none through any critical parts of the craft. I had the ground crew change the tire, and then I returned to Takhli late the same day. That was the first and only Iron Hand mission I flew, and I guess the official history is accurate on the accounting of sites destroyed."

This is a pretty good story passed along from Frank Tullo a retired CAL pilot who was a "Thud" driver during the early days of "Rolling Thunder." Those "Thuds" were some machine. Michael Cooper wrote a great article in the Summer Mig Sweep about a Joint Navy/Air Force Hunter Killer mission to knock out SAM sites near Hanoi on October 31, 1965. I was one of the F-105 Thud pilots on that mission and here's what I remember of that day.

SAM Hunter-Killer Mission By: Gary Barnhill

During an F-105D combat tour out of Takhli, Thailand in 1965, Russian SAM (SA-2 Surface to Air Missiles) begun to appear in North Vietnam. Previously, we had driven over our targets unmolested at 18,000 feet to begin a dive bomb attack. The newly arrived SAM's canceled out our high altitude sanctuary and forced pilots down low, where anti-aircraft fire was intense.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

We begged permission to take out the proliferating SAMs before they got to us. Request denied. Prez Lyndon Johnson feared it might hurt the Russians' feelings since they provided the SAMs to North Viet Nam.

One day our base commander, a colonel who did not fly combat missions, bravely announced: "We" are going after the SAM's. Captain Mike Cooper, showing more guts than tact, called out from the back of the room, "What's this 'we' crap, Colonel, are you going along in the F105F two-seater. Getting shot at everyday tends to loosen up one's military decorum.

Navy LtCmdr Powers landed his A4E at Takhli carrying his own 500 lb bombs. Powers was the XO of the USS Oriskany's VA-164 squadron. The Navy had sent their very best. Powers knew this was a big time White House directed mission, and dangerous.

Takhli scheduled two outstanding Flight Commanders. Mike Cooper would lead a flight of four Thuds from the 334th TFS, with mates: Jim Butler, John Stell and Lee Adams. Gayle Williams would lead four from the 562nd: Gary Barnhill and two others whose names escape me. Each Thud would carry 8x750 lb. bombs. This was in the days before "smart" and "dumb" bombs.

This joint Navy/Air Force mission briefing was more like a focus group. Powers wanted to fly across the target level at 50 feet and skip bomb it. We preferred to dive bomb, using a pop-up from the deck to create a dive bomb run. That made it tougher for the ground gunners to track us. No sweat, since Power's would be first across the target and out of the way, his flat pass would not conflict with our dive-bombing.

These were called "Dooms Day missions", because invariably someone got shot down from the heavy defenses around Hanoi. Did guys shy away from these missions? Are you kidding? Your best friend would lie, cheat and screw you to get your slot on a Dooms Day mission.

Power's plane had a magic black box, well, what passed for magic, circa 1965. Actually it was similar to the old coffee grinder ADF (Direction Finder). A needle would point in the general direction of a SAM site, when and if the SAM was in the SEARCH mode. Operator skill required.

We launched, joined up, refueled and headed North only to find a solid overcast at the let down point. It was a No-Go. Or was it? Power's pulled the Thuds into a tight nine-ship "V" formation and descended into cloud. No one would have criticized him one bit if he canceled for weather and returned to base. He pressed on.

Nearing the target, we finally broke out of cloud and went to the deck. No longer a "formation", now just a gaggle of bomb-laden Thuds strung out in loose single file. At one point, there were hills on both sides and overcast above making a sort of tunnel. I got slung into cloud during a turn and immediately punched the nose down desperately hoping for valley beneath and not hillside. I remember thinking; I'm NOT going to miss this (mission) for anything. I flew so low over a guy driving a farm tractor that he leapt to the ground. He was doin' about two knots, we were doin' 550. When they are shooting at you: Low is good...Fast is good.

My plane was hit by small arms fire causing some yellow caution lights to glow, as we screamed low level towards the target.

The Thud was well built. Once, when all Thuds were grounded do to several inexplicably blowing up, someone suggested giving them to the Army for use as tank crushers. Taxi a Thud over a tank and collapse the gear...crushing the tank. Another joke suggested painting Thuds yellow and using them for ground power units. Rumor was: Republic was going to make the Thud out of cement, but they found out steel was heavier.

We didn't know the SAM's exact location, but hoped the Navy's magic black box could point the way. We were the goats, tethered to lure the lion out into the open for the kill. Until that day, it was a big deal when just one or two SAMs were launched. Now they were firing SAMs like artillery. Fifteen is the number I remember. It's what they

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

mean by: "All Hell's Broken Loose".

Powers calmly transmitted; "I've got 'em on my nose...starting my run". He flew directly over the target at tree top level and was literally disintegrated by withering ground fire.

My turn. I lit the burner and popped up to about 7500 feet, Power's emergency locator beacon screeching in my headset. As the nose came up, I clearly remember saying aloud to myself, "Oh crap, I don't want to do this".

During that brief dive bomb run, which seemed an eternity, there was a sharp knocking sound, like a fist on a door; it was enemy ground fire hitting the plane. I instinctively shouted into my oxygen mask: "Stop It. Stop It".

Years later, a VA shrink would explain that utterance was related to the trauma of a severe belt whipping when I was ten. Got my feet wet in the snow on the way home from school. My Dad held me tightly by the wrist beat my buns and legs with a leather belt. Shrink said I had no evidence at age 10, or on the bomb run that either event was survivable. In both cases, my mind thought I would die. In both cases, I pleaded hopelessly: "Stop it. Stop it".

The anti-aircraft hits caused multiple red and yellow emergency lights to blink incessantly, I transmitted my intention to get to the water off Haiphong before ejecting. Radio chatter was understandably chaotic. Each Thud pilot was individually living his own Hell, jinking violently to get away from the unrelenting ground fire.

Alone and doing 810 knots on the deck (that's right, Buddy, 810 knots) I slowly overtook a Navy F-8 Crusader as if passing a car on the freeway. We exchanged gentle pathetic waves as if to say: "Oh, Hi there, don't know you, but hope you're having a nice day?" I swear it was the most surreal moment of my life.

Still on the deck, but now over the safety of Gulf of Tonkin water, a sort of euphoric invincibility set in. If I ejected over the water, the Navy would surely pick me up.

But the fire warning light had gone out, so I strafed a couple of boats capable of capturing downed pilots. The Vulcan fired six thousand rounds a minute. That's one round of 20 millimeter every 37 inches, literally a stream of lead. It sounded more like a Hoover than a machine gun.

Decided there was no reason to jump out if this bird was still running. Did that last month and it scared the crap out of me. On the radio now, with precious little fuel remaining I was begging for a tanker. Made radio contact with a KC-135 somewhere in cyberspace. Following a terse debate challenging HIS priorities, we got together with barely any fuel reading on my gauge.

Made it back to Takhli. Gear, flap and flight control problems but landed in one piece.

Had hits all over the plane, except the extremely vulnerable underbelly engine area. It required 4,000 man-hours of work just to ferry it somewhere else for repair.

I pleaded with the base commander to award Power's the Air Force Cross. He didn't like the idea. Reminded me that the Navy had their own Navy Cross and handled their own decorations. I pushed my point as if we were equals. Don't you get it; the USS Oriskany lost their top guy while USAF gets a big headline back home. Power's brilliant leadership was why the mission succeeded! Give the NAVY guy the AIR FORCE CROSS! The colonel wasn't a fighter pilot. He didn't get it.

General George Simler flew in from headquarters to have a beer with the guys on the mission. Sitting at the sorry-no-ice-today, O'Club bar, Simler and I were hangar flying like two young cadets. He was that kind of General.

I passionately pitched Simler on awarding the Air Force Cross to Powers. He loved it, instantly. Turned and said dismissively to the Base Commander: "take care of that, Colonel".

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

Navy LtCmdr Powers did not receive the Air Force Cross but was awarded the Navy Cross.

POWERS, TRENT RICHARD

Captain, U.S. Navy

Attack Squadron 164 (VA-164), U.S.S. Oriskany (CVA-34)

Date of Action: October 31, 1965

Citation:

The Navy Cross is presented to Trent Richard Powers, Captain, U.S. Navy, for extraordinary heroism on 31 October 1965 while serving as a pilot of jet attack aircraft with Attack Squadron ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR (VA-164), embarked in U.S.S. Oriskany (CVA-34) during a combat mission over hostile territory in North Vietnam. Captain (then Lieutenant Commander) Powers was assigned the demanding and unusual task of leading a two-division, United States Air Force flight into an area heavily defended by antiaircraft artillery and surface-to-air missiles, with the mission of locating and destroying the missile installations. He planned the attack route and led the eight-plane group over more than six hundred miles of unfamiliar, cloud-shrouded, mountainous terrain, arriving in the target area precisely at a pre-briefed time that had been selected to coincide with the strikes of two carrier air wings against a bridge. The target area was the scene of an intense air-to-ground battle, many surface-to-air missiles were being fired and heavy enemy antiaircraft fire was observed in all directions. With full knowledge of the serious hazards involved, Captain Powers courageously led the Air Force aircraft into battle. His bombs and those of the Air Force aircraft which he led inflicted severe damage to both missile sites. By his superior aeronautical skill and valiant determination, Captain Powers upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Authority: Navy Department Board of Decorations and Medals

Home Town: Minneapolis, Minnesota ([http://www.homeofheroes.com/valor/1\\_Citations/07\\_RVN-nc/nc\\_19rvn\\_usn.html](http://www.homeofheroes.com/valor/1_Citations/07_RVN-nc/nc_19rvn_usn.html))

[When he failed to turn up as a released POW during Operation Homecoming, he was declared dead on 27 November 1973. His name appears on the Vietnam memorial wall on panel 03E, line 10.]

A DFC awarded that day could have described any of the pilots on the mission: Thunderchiefs...Hunter-Killer mission...against Surface to Air Missiles...deep within hostile territory...low level high speed run...encounter withering ground fire...pressed the attack...dropped bombs in heart of target complex...remarkable mission...overwhelming odds...skill...aggressiveness...

An old man who served in WWII told his grandson, "I was never a hero, but I served with many who were." That's how I feel. The most remarkable characters in my life were the heroes I was honored to fly with in 1965. They didn't all come home. Nam was not a very glamorous or patriotic war, but every fighter pilot I knew put his life on the line as if it were.

The official history of their air defense service written by North Vietnamese, told their view of this battle. "In the Ha Bac-Lang Son area, on 31 October we organized a coordinated engagement involving both missiles and AAA units designed to counter the enemy's tactic of flying in at low altitude to make dive-bombing runs against our missile launch positions. Our anti-aircraft artillery units, having correctly anticipated their flight path and where they would begin their dives, opened fire at the correct moment, but a number of flights of enemy aircraft were still able to hit the missile position. Our forces suffered losses, but continued to be capable of conducting combat operations." ("History of the Air Defense Service", Volume II, pg 60, translated by Merle Pribbenow.)

*355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilm NO461, frames 0842 - 0844, 0990 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pgs 10 - 11 & 12 & Mar 98 phone interview with Mike Cooper & e-mail from John Stell, 25 Nov 97.*

**05-Nov-65**

272

Lt Col George C. McCleary, commander of the 357 TFS flying F-105D 62-4342 from Korat RTAFB, Thailand, was hit by a SAM over RP-4, North Vietnam. Call Sign: "Oak 01".

"... Lieutenant Colonel McCleary was the ... leader of a flight of four aircraft on a SAM suppression mission over North Vietnam. A surface to air missile was launched and exploded approximately 20 feet from his aircraft. His aircraft burst into flames, pitched nose up, and began shedding pieces. The canopy was observed to separate before

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

the aircraft disappeared into overcast tail first but his wingman couldn't determine if he was able to eject from the aircraft. No search and rescue mission was possible due to extremely hostile ground environment and Colonel McCleary was declared missing in action."

Other pilots in "Oak" flight were:

#2 - Capt Richard W. Cullen

#3 - Capt Robert T. Saffel

#4 - Capt John C. Gordon

John Gordon recalled that the mission "... was supposed to be led by one of two Navy A-4 aircraft sent from an aircraft carrier, I think it was the Midway [CV-41], to assist us with their ALQ-51 detection devices. Each A-4 was to lead two flights of four F-105s on an Iron Hand mission. The A-4 leading Col McCleary's two four-shippers aborted. The flight, however, proceeded as if the A-4 was with us. ... I couldn't believe we were in a SAM environment and on top of a broken-to-overcast sky condition. I have learned since, that the second flight of four was beneath the overcast. However, after the shoot down, I recall being in the clouds and being very concerned about hitting a karst ridge before coming out of the bottom."

*Report of the Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, United States Senate. Jan 13, 1993 & John Gordon, e-mail 25 Aug 10.*

### 05-Nov-65

F-105D 624342 357 TFS 355 TFW Korat Hit by a SAM during a SAM suppression mission. Crashed in RP-4, North Vietnam. 20-13N 105-43E George Carlton McCleary 357 TFS Commander was KIA. Call sign: "Oak 01". The four F-105s in Oak flight took off from Korat at 10:45 to hunt for SAM sites on an Iron Hand SAM-suppression mission. At 12:02, Col McCleary was hit by a SAM at location 20-13N and 105-43E, approximately 8 miles SSW of Phun Ho Quan, North Vietnam.

Other pilots in "Oak" flight were:

#2 - Capt Richard W. Cullen

#3 - Capt Robert T. Saffel

#4 - Capt John C. Gordon

"The following is an extract from the statement of Capt Robert T. Saffel, Oak 3: '... The flight proceeded to the target area and was flying a heading of 140 degrees, approximately 500 feet above an overcast extending from an estimated 1500 - 2500 to 6000 feet. At approximately 1200 local time, a missile was observed to come up from the flight's eleven to twelve o'clock position and detonate approximately twenty feet under the lead aircraft, which immediately burst into flames. In rapid sequence, Oak Two called that missiles were coming at us; I called for Oak One to eject; and two more missiles went through the formation. Both Oak Two and myself had started a turn toward the lead aircraft which now pitched nose up to approximately 70 degrees and began shedding pieces. Although Oak One was now belly up to me, I was able to see the right drop tank separate and observed that the canopy was ejected from the aircraft. At this time, the aircraft disappeared into the overcast tail first. Realizing that we were over a densely populated and heavily defended area and not knowing the bottoms of the overcast, I decided that search and rescue operations were extremely impracticable. Therefore, I ordered the flight to jettison ordnance and depart the area. ...' No organized search was conducted due to adverse weather and heavy ground fire. Listening watch was conducted by HU-16 on precautionary orbit, with negative results. All aircraft in vicinity 20-13N and 105-05E were instructed to watch and listen. Search was discontinued 8 Nov 65." (PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 1-065.)

"... Lieutenant Colonel McCleary was the ... leader of a flight of four aircraft on a SAM suppression mission over North Vietnam. A surface-to-air missile was launched and exploded approximately 20 feet from his aircraft. His aircraft burst into flames, pitched nose up, and began shedding pieces. The canopy was observed to separate before the aircraft disappeared into overcast tail first but his wingman couldn't determine if he was able to eject from the aircraft. No search and rescue mission was possible due to extremely hostile ground environment and Colonel McCleary was declared missing in action. (Senate report)

"... (On 2) November 1973, Colonel McCleary was declared dead/body not recovered, based on a presumptive

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

finding of death. In July 1988, Vietnam turned over remains at Hanoi which it stated were those of Colonel McCleary. In May 1991 they were identified as his." (Senate report)

Lt Col McCleary was born 18 October 1922. He entered the service from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. His name is on the Vietnam Memorial wall panel 03E line 22.

*Report of the Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs, United States Senate. Jan 13, 1993 & John Gordon, e-mail 25 Aug 10.*

**06-Nov-65**

273

Over the next two days, several aircraft and crews were lost during a series of search missions for Lt Col George C. McCleary, call sign "Oak 01", the squadron commander of the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, who was shot down by a SAM in his F-105D on 5 November 1965.

The 38 ARS history for the period provided an overview of the rescue attempts. "... On 6 Nov, two A-1Es, Sandy 11 and 12, went into the area to search for Oak 1. During the course of the search, Sandy 12 was hit by ground fire, and the pilot bailed out. His wingman observed him on the ground. A CH-3C was scrambled from a forward site in Laos, and two more A-1Es were sent from Udorn, but Sandy 11 was not able to relocate the downed pilot prior to his bingo fuel time. The CH-3C, Jolly Green 85, was hit by ground fire in the search area. The four-man crew bailed out, and four good chutes were observed by their A-1E escort. Voice and beeper contact was made with at least one crewmember, and a visual sighting was made on another. At this time, the on-scene commander received a call stating that the Navy had a helicopter en route to the search area. Two A-1Es, Sandy 13 and 14, were sent to the coast to escort the Navy helicopter in, and while escorting the helicopter Sandy 14 was hit by ground fire. A transmission from him stating he had been hit followed, but there was no further contact. The remaining A-1E and the Navy helicopter remained in the area until the helicopter had to depart due to fuel limitations. After refueling, the Navy helicopter returned to the search area, accompanied by Navy A-1H RESCAP. The A-1Es picked up a beeper in the vicinity of the CH-3C bailout location. Soon after this voice contact was made and the Navy SH-3, call sign Nimble 62, went in low to attempt visual contact. It was dark at this time, but fortunately the survivor had a cigarette lighter which was used to signal the helicopter. His flashes were observed and Sgt Naugle, a crewmember from the downed Jolly Green 85, was picked up and taken to the carrier. The only injuries Sgt Naugle suffered were slight burns on his hand.

"The following morning Nimble 62, piloted by Lt JC Campbell, returned to the search area in an attempt to locate additional survivors. While en route, a MiG alert was received, and Nimble 62 descended to get between cloud layers at 2000 and 3000 feet. As it flew over a hole in the bottom cloud deck it was hit by automatic weapons fire. The fuel lines were ruptured and a rapid loss of fuel was experienced forcing the pilot to make a controlled landing in North Vietnam. The two A-1H aircraft that escorted Nimble 62 were also hit; however, both made it safely to Danang; although one aircraft had to make a gear-up landing. A short time later another Navy helicopter, a UH-2, arrived at the landing site of Nimble 62 and was able to pick up 2 of the 4 crewmembers. Jolly Green 76, was en route to the bailout site of Jolly Green 85 when informed of the Navy helicopter in distress. It diverted to the Navy helicopter landing scene and picked up the remaining two crewmembers. In order to hover it was necessary to dump fuel which precluded its continuing on to the CH-3C bailout area. The two Navy survivors were taken to Udorn.

"On the morning of Nov 8, a first light search was initiated in the CH-3C bailout area. Several passes were made and no ground fire was observed by the A-1Es that were receiving a beeper. However, as more aircraft entered the area to attempt to pinpoint the beeper, heavy ground fire erupted. Two A-1Es were hit and had to withdraw; both landed safely at Udorn. Due to the intensity of the ground fire, the further recovery of survivors was deemed to be not feasible without additional losses. The mission was suspended on 8 Nov. The missing CH-3C crewmembers are: Capt Warren Lilly, 1Lt Jerry Singleton, and SSgt Arthur Cormier." (History of 38th Air Rescue Squadron Tan Son Nhut AB, RVN, 1 Oct - 31 Dec 65, pp 7 - 8, Mission 38ARS-1110-6 Nov 65, AFHRA Call # K318.221-38, IRIS # 492259.)

The two A-1Es, Sandy 11 and Sandy 12, from the 6251 TFW at Udorn, were dispatched to the crash site 60 miles south of Hanoi. AAA shot down Sandy 12 (A-1E 52-132469) and its pilot, Capt Richard Eugene Bolstad, bailed out and became a POW.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

The CH-3C 63-09685, "Jolly Green 85" from Udorn, but staging from Lima Site 36 in northern Laos, searched for the lost F-105 and A-1E, but was also shot down. All four members of the CH-3C crew bailed out. Three crew members, Capt Warren R. "Bob" Lilly (pilot), 1 Lt Jerry A. Singleton (copilot), and SSgt Arthur Cormier (PJ), became POWs. The Flight Engineer, SSgt Berkeley Naugle, was rescued.

"A Navy Sikorsky SH-3 helicopter, Nimble 62, reported it was flying toward the crash scene from the carrier Independence. Two USAF A-1Es, Sandys 13 and 14, also from the 6251 TFW at Udorn, flew to intercept the Sea Night and escort it into the rescue area. ... When the pilot of Sandy 14 spotted 37-mm tracers he peeled off into a cloud in an evasive maneuver. Like Oak 01, Sandy 14 disappeared forever." The pilot of Sandy 14 (A-1E 52-132439), Capt George Grigsby McKnight, bailed out and became a POW.

"... After refueling, Nimble 62, with an escort of Navy A-1Es, returned to search for Sandy 14, but after an hour without contact with the missing pilot they flew on to the wreckage of Jolly Green 85. At dusk, just before abandoning the search until dawn, a Navy A-1 pilot monitored a beeper's signal. As darkness engulfed the circling task force, Nimble 62 dipped down for a tree-top level visual search. The copilot spotted a tiny light and ordered the penetrator down to pick up the parajumper from Jolly Green 85, (SSgt Berkley Naugle). The A-1Es and the helicopter, with an Air Force sergeant - who would be forever grateful to the U.S. Navy and his Zippo lighter - safely aboard, returned to the Independence."

The Navy SH-3A that rescued SSgt Naugle was from HS-2 flying from the USS Independence (CVA-62). Its call sign was "Nimble 57 and the crew was:

Lt Commander Vern Frank - Pilot  
Lt JG Steve Koontz - Copilot  
Petty Officer William Bush  
Petty Officer Benton  
(E-mail Tom Phillips to John Birch, 2 Feb 06)

SSgt Naugle was the Flight Engineer on Jolly 85. When he bailed out he found himself still attached to his 20-foot long safety belt. As he worked to free himself dangling outside the burning helicopter he was carried away from the area where his crewmates had bailed out. When he finally located the release buckle of the safety harness and pulled his parachute ripcord he landed several miles away from the populated area where the other three crew members landed. He used his URC-11 survival radio to contact the Navy rescue helicopter and the flame from his Zippo lighter to let them see where he was. ("PJs in Vietnam", pgs 148 - 152.)

Rescue attempts for the other three crew members of Jolly Green 85 continued on 7 November 1965. The Navy SH-3C, Nimble 62, with two escorting Navy A-1Hs, returned to the crash site of Jolly Green 85. AAA shot down Nimble 62 and severely damaged the A-1Hs that crash landed at Da Nang. A second SH-3C from the Independence picked up the downed crew of Nimble 62.

On 8 November 1965, another task force of Air Force and Navy A-1s, SH-3s, with F-8s and F-100s flying MiG cap, and the remaining CH-3 from Udorn returned to search again for the crew of Jolly Green 85. This time, two more USAF A-1Es were damaged by AAA and limped back to Udorn. After this episode, the Rescue Center at Tan Son Nhut called off further rescue attempts.

During a 1992 interview, Lt Col Singleton described how his helicopter (Jolly Green 85) was shot down. "... We had flown to the staging site (in northern Laos) the day before. ... We understood that a Thud ... Had been shot down .... Sandie had not been able to find the pilot. Next morning a search was back up looking again, and one of the Sandies got shot down. As soon as that happened, they scrambled us. We went in not knowing where we were going. Two other Sandies had taken off from northern Thailand ... And they knew the way. ... So we rendezvoused with two new Sandies and were following them in. ... They were about 30 seconds to a minute ahead of us. We couldn't keep up with them. ... We were trying to stand off the side of the road a little bit as we followed them, but they'd wake up the gunners, and here we came. ... We got hit by a .37 millimeter. ...

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Our (cargo) helicopter ... was jury-rigged for rescue with a hoist, and in order to give us enough fuel, we had a 400-gallon fiberglass auxiliary tank bolted to the floor. ... The tank was empty, but of course, it was full of fumes. ... We took a .37 millimeter right through the floor. It went through the main tank, ruptured it, went through the auxiliary tank and ... It was instant fire, and that set the main on fire, and we were just a huge torch. ... Our paramedic bailed out. The IP gave the order to bail out, and that time the crew chief went and then the pilot and I. ... We had been far enough off the road that we were out of population, and we were over some heavy jungle karst ridges ... About 35 or 40 miles southwest of Hanoi." After evading for five days, the three members of the helicopter crew were captured and taken to Hanoi.

Eye witness reports described the losses of Sandy 12, Sandy 14, and Jolly green 85.

"The following extracted from statement by Maj Louis C. Gang (Sandy 11): '... On 6 Nov 65, observed Sandy 12 bail out of his A-1E which had been hit by heavy ground fire. He landed in the middle of a huge complex of rice paddies. He immediately gathered up his chute and started beeping on his URC-10 survival radio. I attempted to contact him on voice without results. I started to climb to make radio contact with Air Rescue Service to scramble the nearest available choppers. I remained in the area for one hour and twenty minutes before having to depart due to low fuel. During his time, the chopper en route to Sandy 12's position was also shot down.' "

"The following extracted from 38 ARS Search Reports: '... Sandy 12 hit by ground fire and bailed out. Pilot observed on ground O.K. Rescue chopper with four aboard also downed. Four chutes sighted, one man recovered. Pilot of Sandy 11 searched 20 orbits, Sandy 12 aircraft was on fire. ... Chute was gathered in and beacon turned on. Sandy 11 departed area on bingo fuel. About 8 people were moving out of the nearby burning village toward downed pilot's position. Not known if they were evacuating the village or searching for downed pilot. No rugged terrain in near vicinity of pilot; tall grass and rice paddies offered visual concealment only. ...'

"There was no further contact with Capt Bolstad on 6 or 7 Nov 65. A first light search on 8 Nov also proved negative, although beeper signals were heard at separate times later in the morning of 8 Nov. Search aircraft were forced to withdraw from the area, however, because of intensive ground fire and direct hits on aircraft. Search was suspended at 1044 hrs, Saigon time, after coordination with Comdr, 2 AD." Capt Bolstad was lost in North Vietnam at coordinates 20-06N and 105-32-30E. ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW Southeast Asia", AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640, pg 1-066.)

"The following is extracted from statement by Capt George W. Kronsbein (Sandy 13): '... 'lost contact with Sandy 14 while IFR over DRV. Flying below the clouds, Sandy 14 called ground fire and we both pulled up into the clouds. Seconds later I heard a loud explosion behind my aircraft and attempted to contact Sandy 14 without results. Dropping below the cloud layer, I looked over the area and could not find wreckage, signs of a parachute, or any radio contact. At the same time, a US Navy ship, call sign Astronaut, lost radar contact with Sandy 14.'

"The following is extracted from 38 ARS Search Reports: 'On rescue mission returning to Udorn, (Sandy 14) received call that a chopper was being dispatched. Sandy 13 and 14 then turned west and met the chopper over water and escorted it toward the downed position of Jolly Green crew. While climbing into the clouds to avoid automatic weapons fire, Sandy 14 called out that he had been hit. This was Sandy 14's last transmission. ... 105Z, 6 Nov 65, no contact with Sandy 14. Sandy 14 has not arrived at his home station and wingman had no visual or electronic contact with him after the reported radio loss. Last open report transmission was 1130 hours, Saigon time. 0520Z, 7 Nov 65, no information at this time on pilot of missing A-1E (Sandy 14). 8 Nov 65, a first-light search was initiated and no beacon signals were received during early portion of the search by aircraft in the area. ... After several passes over the area without drawing any signals or ground fire, a beeper was heard at 0930 hrs; a few minutes after the beeper signal was received, an aircraft entered the area to pinpoint the position, heavy ground fire was reported. At 1005 hrs, the second beeper signal was received and when the aircraft went into the area, they drew more intensive ground fire. ... Two A-1Es suffered serious enough damage to cause them to withdraw from the area. The mission was suspended at 1044 hrs, 8 Nov 65, Saigon time, after coordination with Comdr, 2 Air Division." Capt McKnight was lost in North Vietnam at coordinates 19-49N and 105-36E. ("PACAF Intelligence

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW Southeast Asia", AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640, pg 1-067.)

"The following is an extract from the statement of SSgt B. E. Naugle, Crew Chief of the downed Jolly Green: '... The purpose of the mission was to pick up a downed A-1E pilot who was down somewhere southwest of Hanoi. ... I noticed we were just dropping thru 8000 feet. ... We were hit all over the cargo compartment. ... At this time, I heard the pilot say something, which I think was, 'There goes a blade, bail out, bail out.' I started to go to the cabin door and noticed that the plane was vibrating heavily. Just as I reached the door, there was a large explosion, which I think was the aux fuel tank blowing up from a big hit. ... When I finally got my parachute open, I noticed in the distance what I thought was the paramedic just starting through some clouds or fog. Since I was spinning and blowing around, I became disoriented; but a few seconds later I saw two parachutes together. These I supposed to be the pilots'. ... I hit about three quarters of the way down the side of the hill in some bushes 8 to 10 feet tall. ... When I finally calmed down, I heard voices, hacking sounds and realized they were looking for me at the bottom of the hill and they continued to do so the rest of the day. ... Just shortly after dusk, a Navy AD flew right over my head and I turned on my beacon. When he came back, I made radio contact with him and identified my self as Jolly Green crew chief, and he asked me to give a signal showing exactly where I was. ... I lit my cigarette lighter ... and within a few seconds, he had me spotted exactly. The pilot of the AD told me that a Navy chopper was on the way in for me and that he was going to move away from my position so as not to attract attention to me. Later, I heard the chopper approaching, and the Navy plane came back in to show the chopper the way. When I could see the chopper, I told them I would light my lighter again. They said they had me in sight and came in and proceeded to pick me up on the hoist. ..." Rescue aircraft had negative results in sighting the remaining members of the downed Jolly Green crew." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW Southeast Asia", AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640, pg 1-068.)

While in prison in Hanoi, SSgt Arthur Cormier, PJ from "Jolly Green 85", (along with A3C Black and A1C Robinson, HH-43B crewmen shot down on 20 Sept 65) was made a commissioned officer by unanimous consensus of his fellow prisoners. After he was released from Hanoi, the Air Force confirmed his battlefield commission on 9 April 1973. He served as an officer until his retirement as a captain. (Air Force Magazine, April 2010, "Commissioned in Hanoi" by Leo K. Thorsness, pp 56 - 60)

*The CNA Database & "The USAF Search and Rescue in South East Asia", pp 71-72 & Air Force Academy Oral History Interview with Col Jerry A. Singleton, 30 Oct 92, pgs 35 - 38 & Wings of Fame, "USAF Search and Rescue, Part 2", Vol 14, 1999, pgs 23 - 24.*

**07-Nov-65**

2702

"The USAF struck ... (the Phu Ly RR bridge (JCS 18.21) and the Dong Em SAM Support Facility) on 7 November, dropping two spans of the Phu Ly RR Bridge and damaging 22 buildings of the Dong Em SAM Support Facility."

Capt Robert V. Hannah, Jr. was possibly an F-105 pilot on one of these strikes. He was from the 44 TFS, 18 TFW, on TDY to Korat supporting the 357 TFS in "Spruce" flight. He dropped his six M-117s on a target in North Vietnam. He logged 2.5 flying hours.

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pgs 10 - 11 & 44 TFS History, 1 Jan 65 - 30 Jun 67, Appendix 1, Exhibi 11 - 12.*

**07-Nov-65**

3887

"Iron Hand missions severely affected North Vietnamese SAM operations. A Vietnamese account of an early Iron Hand operation, a series of U.S. Navy attacks on the 236th Missile Regiment southeast of Hanoi on 7 November 1965, details the destruction of two of the regiment's four missile battalions and of the regimental technical support battalion responsible for assembling and transporting missiles to re-supply the launch battalions. The 236th Missile Regiment would be out of action for some time."

The official history of their air defense service written by North Vietnamese, gave a fuller picture of this battle. "On the morning of 7 November, while many flights of enemy aircraft were operating out over the ocean, one enemy aircraft flew in at low altitude from the southeast to reconnoiter the missile position. The missile and the anti-aircraft artillery units were both taken by surprise and were unable to fire at the enemy aircraft."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"At 10:50 A.M., four AD-6 aircraft flew in from the sea at an altitude of 200 meters. They climbed to 800 meters and fired rockets and dropped bombs on the missile and anti-aircraft artillery positions. 62nd Battalion was unable to engage these aircraft. Many of the AAA batteries opened fire, but did not shoot down any enemy aircraft. Although the missile control van and a number of missiles were damaged, the battalion was still capable of combat operations.

"After this attack, two RF-8 aircraft flew over to reconnoiter the position once again. At 1615 hours, the enemy sent four F-4s in from the southeast. When they reached the outer range limit of the missiles, they turned away. Meanwhile, four A-4Ds flew in at low altitude from the southwest and dropped their bombs into the missile position. 62nd Battalion was rendered incapable of combat operations.

"At 1625 hours, the enemy sent in one A3J [RA-5] reconnaissance aircraft and four A-6A bombers to reconnoiter the position and to bomb any missile equipment that had survived the earlier attacks. Comrade Tran Chu Kinh was killed in this attack.

"On the afternoon of 7 November, the Air Defense Command concluded that the enemy was using diversionary tactics and making low-altitude surprise attacks using smoke bombs [white phosphorous?], high explosive bombs, and rockets to make repeated attacks designed to destroy our air defense positions. Our side had made many mistakes. We had not kept our positions secret, our organization for battle was inadequate, our deployment of forces and tactics were not suited to the situation, and our commanders had been indecisive, so we have been unable to maintain the combat strength of the cluster."

("History of the Air Defense Service", Volume II, pp 61 - 62, translated by Merle Pribbenow.)

*"The -Ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in The Journal of Military History, Jan 2003, pg 177.*

**16-Nov-65**

796

F-105 pilots flew 48 strike sorties over North Vietnam, dropping 117 tons of bombs. "Thunderchiefs ranged northeast of Hanoi to destroy two key bridges along North Vietnam rail and roadways leading to Communist China. Other F-105s heavily damaged two surface-to-air (SAM) sites."

Twenty-four F-105 pilots, "... destroyed the Cao Nung Railroad bridge (JCS 18.24), 55 miles northeast of Hanoi, hitting the multi-spanned bridge with 60 tons of 3,000-pound bombs. Heavy flak was reported in the target area, but all airmen returned safely." (Thunderchief Report). Twenty F-105s damaged the southwest end of the Cao Nung Bridge but the bridge was left serviceable." (CHECO).

"Sixteen F-105s struck the Lang Luong Bridge (JCS 18.62) ... cratering the west approach and ford, but failed to drop a span." (CHECO)

"F-105 pilots ran the total of SAM sites struck by American airmen to 15 when they attacked two separate missile facilities, 35 miles northwest of Hanoi."

"The Navy struck the Hai Duong RR/Highway Bridge (JCS 11), cutting the rail line and causing structural damage to the east span, rendering the bridge unserviceable." (CHECO).

One day after their arrival at Korat, pilots from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, flew their first combat missions over North Vietnam. They lost one pilot when his F-105D was shot down by a SAM. A total of 94 aircraft flew on the mission.

Four F-105D pilots in "Elm" flight from the 469 TFS flew a flak suppression mission supporting a JCS mission north of Hanoi in RP-6A. The flight line up was:

#1 - Capt William S. Koenitzer 62-4334

#2 - Maj James L. Jones 62-4325

#3 - Capt Gilbert Bruce Holmes, Jr. 62-4248

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

#4 - Maj Robert M. Krone 62-4409 on his first combat mission  
Spare - Capt Larry C. Mahaffey 61-0048

The flight took off from Korat at 12:20 and at 14:00 reached their target, the Kep railroad yard near Lang Son at location 21-35N and 106-34E. The 0.1.2 mission lasted 3 hours 30 minutes.

Two other flights also flew from Korat. "Oak" flight took off at 12:20 and "Spruce" flight at 12:40. Capt Donald George Green also from the 469 TFS, number 4 in "Oak" flight, was shot down by a SAM during this mission. (Combat mission cards of Maj Robert M. Krone in Archives of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

Capt Joseph R. Steen from the 469th commented on today's missions. "On November 16th I wasn't scheduled to fly or spare as the other half of the squadron flew their first, so watched the launch. You are always apprehensive when you are going, but watching them go and sweating out the return, especially the big ones is the worst. They went north of Hanoi by the water route, and the weather was only fair to marginal. The Task Force Commander led them in under the weather and they aborted or hit targets at random. On egress from the target during the climb, a missile launch was called and Captain Don Green said yeah, 'I got it and it's on me.' He took the hit and later in the day the Navy declared him KIA. His first mission and our second day as a squadron. He was just off the coast of North Vietnam." (Joe Steen narrative in 469 TFS history file compiled by Jeff Kolln.)

*Republic Aviation Thunderchief Report, Vol I, No. 4, Dec 1, 1965 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg & <http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum/history/vietnam/469th/p28.htm>.*

**22-Nov-65**

794

"On 22 November, USAF launched two successful Iron Hand strikes. On one, four F-105s (using terrain masking at minimum altitude), in line-abreast formation, 'popped-up' 10 miles from the targets, selected one of two sites visible and struck with rockets at 5,500 feet and 450 knots. No flak was encountered on the run-in and the site was left burning as the result of a large secondary explosion. In the other attack, three of four F-105s (one aborted) used 'pop-up' tactics and again achieved surprise - encountering flak only when leaving the target area. One F-105 was lost during the period 12 - 25 November to a SAM ... ." (CHECO Report)

Using the CHECO report in his book, an Air Force historian also reported on this mission. "... Four Thunderchiefs, employing terrain masking at minimum altitude and flying in a line-abreast formation, popped up ten miles from the target and released rockets from 5,500 feet while flying at 450 knots. The absence of flak suggested that the strike surprised enemy gunners. In a similar attack on the second site, despite SAM and MiG warnings, the Thunderchiefs encountered only flak leaving the target area while flying at 6,600 feet." ("Gradual Failure")

A publicity announcement from Republic Aviation provided more details. "... Two Republic F-105 Thunderchief flights, led by Major Jim L. Jones, 34, of Luling, Texas, and Major John J. Gaudion, 37, of Austin, Texas, [both from the 469 TFS at Korat] hit SAM sites 34 miles west-north-west of Hanoi. So quickly did the Air Force F-105 pilots strike, Communist gunners in the heavily defended area failed to get anti-aircraft guns into action in time to retaliate. The Thunderchief pilots streaked out of the area without taking a single hit." (Republic Report)

Maj Jones' flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Jones
- #2 - Capt Glenn E. "Wally" Belew
- #3 - Capt Joseph R. Steen
- #4 - Capt Harold Victor Smith

Capt Steen recalled the mission. "... We were flying Iron Hand for a big one. (Iron Hand was SAM suppression, this was before the first F-100 Wild Weasels arrived.) We were briefed there were two suspected sites just south of Yen Bai. We had one 8 x 10 photo of one site and a location of the other, and they were near each other. We were loaded with four pods of 2.75 rockets and a centerline 650-gallon tank. The intelligence briefing was to hold and wait until a Navy EA-6B ELINT Bird told us which one was hot, then go. [NOTE: The EA-6B wasn't operational in November 1965. The Navy plane was probably an A-4, which had RHAW equipment and had previously led F-

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

105s on SAM site attacks.]

"We decided to split [our flight], Jim on the northern one on our left as we ran in, and Smitty and I on the one on the right, the one we had a photo of. We were supporting Tahkli, who would act as Mission Commander.

"We launched, topped off on the tanker, and press in. We were spread out pretty much line abreast, about 6000 feet apart. Weather forced us down over Laos and at times we were in the weeds. Jimmy called a couple of times that it looked like we might have to weather abort. Each time he would call, 'How you guys doing?' ... and Smitty would just say, 'Rog! Press On!' We pressed to the hilt and I heard Foxy Flowers' voice from Tahkli, [Maj James L. "Foxy" Flowers, Operations Officer from the 562 TFS] he was Mission Commander, and I said, 'How's the weather?' They were coming down the North side of the Red River. He answered CAVU and I told Jimmy it's the Force and its okay. We came through a valley at a crook in the Black River and Jimmy called fog and I said no haze.

"We dumped the 650 gallon tanks and started in from the IP (initial point). We pushed up the power to get 600 knots and eased up to just below the clouds. Just at the split point, the overcast stopped and we were in our pulls. We had picked up a visual on my site and Jimmy was looking for his. I was waiting for him to call when Smitty (#4) called, 'I'm running out of airspeed.' I called to Jimmy and he said no joy on his and to roll in and he would follow us. I rolled in from 12,000 feet. We were briefed to fire at about 6,000 feet above the ground. This kept us out of the small arms fire. I was good and steep, a good 45 degrees and looking for 450 knots. I had the piper working up to the middle of the site and at 45 degrees plus and at about 500 knots I fired four pods of 2.75 rockets in salvo. I thought 'Holy Shit!' look at all the rockets (74) and set the hook as I called it.

"I started a 6-G pull out and lit the burner. Once the dive was broken, I unloaded and jinked out and saw the fire boiling along the ground. Two also confirmed the hit. I pickled off the rocket pods and then I was an F-105 with 5 pylons, and that's almost clean, and it is a smoker. We screamed out at about 600 plus. I was leading as I had been first in. #4 said, 'Move #3, they are shooting', so I jinked some more. Jimmy made what became the classic call, 'Okay guys, slow down some, I can't get a burner light and I am the leader.' Later we had a good laugh over that. At the time I was so cotton mouthed I had to pry my lips open to get the tube from the thermos we carried behind the headrest to get a drink. We were all four put in for DFC's." (Joe Steen narrative in 469 TFS history file compiled by Jeff Kolln.)

Capt Gilbert B. Holmes, Jr. was another of the 469 TFS pilots on this mission for which he was awarded the Air Medal (Third Oak Leaf Cluster). " ... Capt Holmes proceeded deeply into hostile territory which was one of the most heavily defended areas in North Vietnam. Exposing himself to heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire surrounding the target, Captain Holmes delivered his ordnance on target resulting in complete destruction of the target. ... " (Holmes Citation)

The 469 TFS pilots had been assigned to Korat RTAFB, Thailand, for only a week, having arrived on 15 November 1965.

In a letter home dated Nov 26, 1965, Maj Robert M. Krone, the 469 TFS Ops Officer, alluded to another version of this SAM site strike. "There is more to the missile story than meets the eye and I am afraid Jack Gaudion has ripped it pretty well with this one. Jack and Jimmy both went to the news conference and debriefing in Saigon. Jack, of course, dominated the interview with Jimmy taking a back seat while Jack described his 'new tactics'. But we all knew here and the newsmen evidently suspected after asking Jack a few penetrating questions, that it was Jimmy's flight that did the effective work. Jack wanted that site to be there so bad that I think he convinced himself, even, that it was. In reality, there was nothing there and Coop [Maj William E. Cooper, 469 TFS commander] is furious

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg 13 & Republic Aviation Thunderchief Report, Vol I, No. 4, Dec 1, 1965 & "Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pgs 194 and 195 & Capt Holmes' award citation.*

**25-Nov-65**

622

The first four Wild Weasel I F-100Fs arrived at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The planes had left Eglin AFB, Florida, on 20 November 1965, where they had been training since 11 October 1965. The tail numbers of the four F-

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

100Fs were:

58-1221  
58-1226  
58-1227  
58-1231

The deployment of the four Wild Weasel F-100Fs from Eglin coincided with the last flights from McConnell of the F-105s with the 421 TFS and the Wild Weasels took advantage of the 421st's deployment support.

The four Wild Weasel I aircraft launched from Eglin in the morning of November 21 and headed west. The crews ferrying the F-100Fs were:

#1 - Maj Garry A. Willard, Jr. the deployment commander, with pilot Capt Maurice G. Fricke in the rear cockpit  
#2 - Capt Leslie L. Lindenmuth with EWO Capt Robert D. Trier  
#3 - Capt Allen T. Lamb with EWO Capt John E. "Jack" Donovan  
#4 - Capt George H. Kerr with EWO Capt Donald J. Madden

Al Lamb recalled, "We took off at 1000 hours on Sunday 21 November 65 on the first leg of our flight from Eglin AFB to Hickam AFB, Honolulu, Hawaii. We rendezvoused with three aerial refueling tankers that were there just for us, over St. Louis, MO. We did this in radio silence. We had cancelled our normal flight plan with air traffic control, switched to a special frequency just for the tankers and us, and went to a new call sign that would take us to Korat. We were trailing the 421st TFS, which was deploying from McConnell AFB, KS to Korat at the same time and along the same route of flight we were using. This was so that we would have air sea rescue support ... while crossing the pond between California and Korat. They were on different radio frequencies and they never knew we were there.

After stops at Hickam AFB, Hawaii, and Andersen AFB, Guam, all four Wild Weasel aircraft landed at Korat on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1965. Al Lamb remembered that they "... landed ... around 1430 hours local time. By the time we got to the Club all of the turkey was gone." (Ed Rock, "First In, Last Out", story by Allen Lamb, pg 90.

The SEA deployment was the second phase of a test program for the Radar Homing and Warning Equipment (RHAW) equipment. The first phase had started at Eglin under TAC Test 65-85 and was completed on 19 November 1965. "The primary objective of this evaluation was to determine, in a combat environment, the overall effectiveness of F-100F aircraft, equipped with special Radar Homing and Warning Equipment, to detect locate and, in conjunction with strike aircraft, destroy SA-2 installations. Proposed tactics to effect this mission were also evaluated and modified." (Wild Weasel Report pg iii.)

The Vector Homing and Warning System was produced by Applied Technology, Incorporated and was installed in the four F-100Fs under Modification 1778. (Wild Weasel I Report, pg 1.)

"Each aircraft had a radar homing and warning (RHAW) system, a panoramic Scan Receiver (IR-133), and a missile guidance warning receiver (WR-300) that were controlled by an electronic warfare officer in the rear cockpit. The front cockpit had a duplicate scope of the RHAW for the pilot." (SAM Suppression Story)

During their deployment, the Wild Weasel I Team was assigned to the 6234 TFW at Korat and flew SAM hunter-killer missions with the 469 TFS and 421 TFS, the first two F-105 squadrons to be permanently assigned to Korat.

Maj Garry A. Willard, Jr. was the deployment commander and Maj Robert J. Swartz was the Operations Officer. There were six pilot/EWO crews on the deployment:

Capt Leslie L. Lindenmuth with EWO Capt George Low

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

Capt Allen T. Lamb with EWO Capt John E. "Jack" Donovan  
Capt George H. Kerr with EWO Capt Donald J. Madden  
Capt Maurice G. Fricke with EWO Capt Truman Walter Lifsey  
Capt Edward B. White with EWO Capt Edward E. Sandelius  
Capt John J. Pitchford with EWO Capt Robert D. Trier (WW I Report, pp i & 2)

*"Wild Weasel The SAM Suppression Story" by Larry Davis, pg 11 & Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase), K143.5072-5.*

**26-Nov-65 09-Dec-65**

2682

"On 23 November, JCS issued an execute order pertaining to Rolling Thunder 42 and 43 (RT 42 and RT 43). The period of this order covered 26 November - 9 December and listed a number of targets for attack; it also defined the U.S. armed reconnaissance area for the cycle. The order stated that the objective of armed reconnaissance was to sustain, for maximum feasible periods, day and night interdiction of LOCs, through surveillance and destruction of military targets encountered. The JCS authorized recipients of the order to include attacks on pre-briefed, small military targets, followed by route recce. JCS targets, within the armed recce area and previously assigned to Rolling Thunder strikes ... were authorized targets. ... The planned number of strike sorties were limited to a maximum of 1,200 for the 14-day period."

"... For Rolling Thunder 42 and 43, the USAF was authorized to strike Dong Em SAM Support Facility, Cao Nung Railroad Bridge (JCS 18.24), and the Lang Luong Highway Bridge (JCS 18.62). The Dong Em target was struck on 27 November ... . The Cao Nung Railroad Bridge was struck on 1 December. The Lang Luong Highway Bridge was scheduled for attack on five separate days, with 20 aircraft ready each day; however, weather forced cancellation."

"Against a quota of 600 armed recce sorties, the USAF flew 601; the Navy flew 433 of its quota of 600. Poor weather, which affected target areas and resulted in high seas hampering launch and recovery from carriers, was responsible for the Navy underflying its quota."

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pgs 14 - 18.*

**27-Nov-65**

2642

"On November 27 at Dong Em, about twenty-two miles from Hanoi, USAF aircraft first hit a suspected SAM assembly and maintenance facility that was believed to support three nearby SAM sites. Pilots reportedly destroyed at least eight buildings and damaged eight others. An SA-2 missile, although struck by 2.75-inch rockets, became airborne and exploded at about 1,000 feet. The aircraft also dropped 3,000-pound bombs on two cave entrances, but with unknown results."

"The Dong Em target was struck ... with one-hundred-fourteen 750-pound bombs and eight 3,000-pound bombs, damaging four buildings and destroying eight raising the damage level on this target by 15 percent."

The Dong Em facility was a JCS target under Rolling Thunder 42 and 43.

*"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 195 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg 16.*

**28-Nov-65 30-Nov-65**

4919

Three days after their arrival at Korat, the F-100F Wild Weasel I crews flew the first of their eight orientation sorties into North Vietnam. "Sorties were flown using F-100F aircraft in formation with RB-66C and B-66B aircraft which were regularly fraggged ECM and ELINT missions. The purpose of the orientation sorties was to provide area familiarization, experience in the multiple threat environment of the DRV, establish preliminary verification of the radar warning and homing capabilities determined during the Eglin phase of Wild Weasel I testing, and observe effects of jamming on the Vector and the IR-133." (pg 20)

"On these sorties, twenty-three signals were received simultaneously by two F-100F aircraft and verified as to type and frequency. Four of these signals (Fan Song radiations) were also verified by RB-66C signal intercepts." (pg 21)

Capt Maurice Fricke was one of the F-100F Wild Weasel pilots who flew an orientation mission. "Our first WW I

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

in-theater ride was to fly on the wing of an EB-66 for an orientation ride in NVN. All was going pretty well until an SA-2 locked onto us. We asked the 66 if he was going to jam the signal or what. He said what signal? I'm looking at a three ringer and (EWO Capt) Walt Lifsey in back is almost going blind from the bright light coming from his (IR-) 133. Since we were already violating our rules for straight and level flight, I informed the EB-66 crew of their situation and broke down and away. The 66 never saw the signal and we think the only thing that saved him was we may have drawn the radar off him when we broke away. The irony of the whole episode was that was our best chance to get an SA-2 on our tour and we had no ordnance nor Thuds with us -- rats!"

The Wild Weasel I Final Test Report commented on this situation. "The relatively high percentage of Fan Song intercepts that were neither heard nor identified by the RB-66C crews is attributed to the transmitting procedures of the Fan Song operators. Short intermittent bursts could be detected by the Wild Weasel more readily than by the RB-66C crew and because of the difference in receiver capabilities." However, this situation was not the norm during later missions since the 84 signals of the 109 received during ELINT missions between 5 through 26 January 1966 were also received and identified by the RB-66C crews. (pg 92)

*Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase), K143.5072-5, pp 20 - 21 & e-mail 22 May 2001, Maurice Fricke <mf@QWEST.NE*

**01-Dec-65**

561

The first F-100F Wild Weasel mission escorting F-105s was flown from Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Maj Gary Willard and EWO Capt Walt Lifsey, in F-100F 58-1231, and Capt Edward B. White with EWO Capt Edward "Sandy" Sandelius, in a second F-100F led F-105s on the Wild Weasel's first IRON HAND mission of the Vietnam war.

"... Each led a flight of F-105s to 'troll' past a missile site to provoke it into action. For the attack on any site found, each Super Sabre carried two pods of 2.75-in unguided rockets. The F-105Ds carried various armament loads. The mission failed to stir any response from the SA-2 sites, however, as did similar missions in the weeks to follow."

*"Wild Weasel. The SAM Suppression Story" by Larry Davis, pg 11 & "History of U.S. Electronic Warfare, Vol III", pg 68.*

**02-Dec-65**

5516

After a 36-hour delay of the mission against a military area northeast of Dien Bien Phu, "Spruce" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, took off from Korat at 08:05 and refueled from White Anchor 30 at 08:35. Each plane carried five 750-pound bombs. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Phillip O. Bradley in 60-0473
- #2 - Capt William S. Koenitzer in 59-1768
- #3 - Maj Robert M. Krone flying 62-4315 on his mission #10
- #4 - Capt Eugene D. "Dave" Hamilton in 61-0068
- Spare Capt Anthony J. "Tony" Gangol in 61-0120

The mission was cancelled, probably due to weather in the target area.

That evening, Maj Krone wrote a letter home that described what he and the squadron were doing. "I know you would like to hear more about the missions and I will tell you as much as I can. They are pretty serious about restrictions, however, and a tour in Leavenworth is hardly worth the risk. My ten missions to date have been fairly 'routine'. One of my problems is that I cannot fly when Coop does and as a result I have missed a couple of the good missions. Our mission is primarily interdiction - cutting lines of transportation, supply areas, etc. Two or three of my missions have been aborted due to weather when once we got in the area and the others really have not been significant other than from the standpoint of building up some experience and learning the area of operations. I think this is better than being thrown into the tough ones immediately. There is a real variety of types of missions and almost every one has been with a different weapons load and to a different area. We are moving into a new activity, which is very sensitive at the moment and I won't be able to discuss it at all."

He was referring to the F-100F Wild Weasels, which arrived at Korat on 25 November. Maj Krone flew on the first completed mission of the Weasels into North Vietnam on 3 December 1965.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"... Today was a slow day. I got cancelled again and I took my first trip into town. It reminds me a bit of Adana [Turkey] except that the standard of living is higher.

"We have started an R and R program to Bangkok. Two pilots will be gone all the time. At first we started for three or four days and may jump to a week for the second round. We sent all the pilots who have been here with the 357th and McCurdy is the first of our group. Nobody really wants to go right now but I am insisting that we keep it going because I suspect that in another month everyone will want a break and two is the most we can let go until we get some more pilots.

"Tomorrow is another 5:30 A.M. briefing day; I'm getting tired of briefing at horrible hours and then getting cancelled."

*Combat mission cards of Maj Robert M. Krone in Archives of the National Museum of the United States Air Force & Bob Krone "Copy of part of letter from Bob, Korat, 2 Dec 1965".*

**03-Dec-65**

5517

In the morning of December 3, the F-100F Wild Weasels flew their third hunter-killer mission (the first two weather aborted). This was the first one to fly into North Vietnam and was flown with a flight of F-105s from the 469 TFS. Maj Garry A. Willard and EWO Capt Truman Walter Lifsey were in F-100F 58-1226. (WW I Test Report)

The four F-105D pilots in "Bamboo" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, accompanied the Wild Weasels. They took off at 8:15 a.m. and refueled from Orange Anchor 50 at 08:40. Each plane carried four LAU-3 rocket pods. Their flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj Robert M. Krone flying 62-4242 on his mission #11  
#2- 1Lt Jerry Donald Driscoll in 62-4341  
#3 - Maj Fred T. Coleman in 59-1769  
#4 - Capt Steven R. Sanders in 62-4302  
Spare - 60-0428

The Wild Weasel flight failed to rouse an SA-2 site in North Vietnam and so they "... experimented with some tactics and coordination between the Weasel birds and the strike flight, then hit a military barracks area southwest of Son La, about 15 nm north of the Laos border [at coordinates 21-09N and 104-09E]." (Bob Krone's flight lineup card and undated explanatory memo on file in the archives of the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force.)

Willard and Lifsey landed back at Korat after flying for 3 hours. (Test Report)

*Final Report TAC Test 65-85, APGC-TR-66-22, "Test and Evaluation of Threat Radar Homing and Warning Systems 'Wild Weasel I' (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5, IRIS # 0470670, pg 74.*

**03-Dec-65**

5792

In the afternoon of 3 December, four F-105D pilots in "Ebony" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, took off from Korat RTAFB at 12:45 p.m. They escorted another F-100F Wild Weasel aircraft. The flight refueled from KC-135 "Orange Anchor 51" from Takhli. Their time over target was 1400.

The flight lineup was:

#1 Maj John J. "Jack" Gaudion in 61-0181  
#2 Capt Gordon E. Lewis in 60-0473  
#3 Capt William Thomas May in 59-1820  
#4 Capt Anthony J. "Tony" Gangol in 61-0051  
#5 Wild Weasel: Capt Lesley L. Lindenmuth and EWO Capt Robert Douglas Trier in F-100F 58-1221  
F-105D Spare: Maj James L. Jones  
Wild Weasel Spare: Capt Allen T. Lamb and EWO Capt John E. "Jack" Donovan in F-100F 58-1227

The Wild Weasel landed after flying for 2 hours 40 minutes. The mission was completed but they did not locate a SAM site. "Completed - No Homing"

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

*Undated combat mission cards of Capt William T. May in Archives of the National Museum of the United States Air Force (Wild Weasel crew matches Wild Weasel report for 3 Dec 65); Final Report TAC Test 65-85, APGC-TR-66-22, 'Wild Weasel I'.*

**04-Dec-65**

5936

On December 4, the F-100F Wild Weasels flew their fifth hunter-killer mission with a flight of four F-105s from the 469 TFS. Capt Edward B. White and EWO Capt Edward "Sandy" Sandelius were in F-100F 58-1221. Flying as an airborne spare in F-100F 58-1226 were Wild Weasels Capt George H. Kerr with EWO Capt Donald J. Madden.

The full F-105D flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Robert M. Krone flying 62-4242 on his mission #12
- #2 - 1Lt Jerry Donald Driscoll flying 62-4341
- #3 - Maj Fred T. Coleman flying 61-0068
- #4 - Capt William S. Secker, Jr. flying 61-0196
- Spare - Capt Steven R. Sanders in 61-0051

The four F-105D pilots in "Spruce" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, took off at 13:25 and refueled from Orange Anchor 51 at 14:00 using the drogue from the tanker and probes on the F-100F and F-105Ds. Maj Krone told of some difficulty in refueling. "Jerry Driscoll was number two and we pulled up behind a tanker for some gas. It was a probe-and-drogue tanker rather than the normal boom type and when I had completed refueling, this little voice said, 'How do you do it?' This was the first clue I had that he had never refueled with the probe and drogue system. He hadn't said a word during the briefing nor had his flight commander Fred Coleman. Fred was number three and the two of us talked him through his hookup. I was sweating it out thinking I might have to send two airplanes back if he couldn't get hooked and the resulting investigation would have been pretty embarrassing for all - especially me. Fortunately after numerous stabs, he got hooked up and refueled successfully. Probably the only pilot ever to check out in probe and drogue refueling under those conditions. I had to congratulate him for a good job after chewing him out for not telling me - he missed part of the briefing somehow." (Bob Krone, letter home "Dec 6 Letter # 12". Note: Based on its information, the letter was probably written on 5 Dec 65.)

The targets were three SAM sites N.W. of Hanoi. However, the mission was scrubbed due to weather at the IP. "Struck Hanoi-China Red River R/R line as alternate target." Target coordinates were 21-56N and 104-37E.

The Wild Weasel report documented their mission as "Completed - No Homing."

*Combat mission card of Maj Robert M. Krone & Final Report TAC Test 65-85, APGC-TR-66-22, "Test and Evaluation of Threat Radar Homing and Warning Systems 'Wild Weasel I' (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5, IRIS # 0470670, pg 74.*

**08-Dec-65**

5793

"Spruce" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, took off from Korat at 12:35 and refueled from KC-135 "Orange Anchor 51" at 13:00. They accompanied an F-100F Wild Weasel. The mission was an 'Iron Hand' armed reconnaissance in North Vietnam.

The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Robert M. Krone flying 61-0196 on his mission #15
- #2 - Capt William Thomas May in 58-1161
- #3 - Capt John Anthony McCurdy in 62-4302
- #4 - Capt Anthony J. "Tony" Gangol in 62-4410
- #5 - Capt Allen T. Lamb and EWO Capt John E. "Jack" Donovan in F-100F 58-1231
- Airborne F-105D Spare - Capt Eugene "Dave" Hamilton in 60-0425
- Airborne F-100F Spare - Capt Maurice G. Fricke and EWO Capt Truman Walter Lifsey in F-100F 58-1227

Configuration for the F-105s was 76 2.75-inch rockets carried in four LAU-3 pods, one on each of the four wing stations. The aircraft had full internal fuel plus a 390-gallon bomb bay tank and 650-gallon external centerline tank. The two F-100Fs were to take off first, join the F-105 flight in the refueling area, refuel, and proceed to the target area.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Bob Krone wrote on his mission card what happened. "McCurdy flamed out 40 miles north of Korat. Aircraft caught on fire and McCurdy bailed out. Picked up by chopper from Korat. Gangol, May, and I capped until he was picked up then proceeded on with the mission, striking possible AAA site and bridge at 20-55N and 103-55E." These target coordinates were just north of the border of Laos into North Vietnam about 60 nautical miles SE of Dien Bien Phu.

The mission lasted for 3 hours 5 minutes.

*Combat mission cards of Maj Robert M. Krone and Capt William T. May in Archives of the National Museum of the United States Air Force; USAF Accident/ Incident Report 65-12-8-1 dated 9 Jan 66.*

**12-Dec-65**

5795

"Ebony" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, took off from Korat at 14:20 and refueled from KC-135 "Red Anchor 21". The four F-105Ds escorted an F-100F Wild Weasel. Their time over target was 15:40.

Flight line up was:

#1 - Capt Gordon E. Lewis in 62-4242

#2 - Capt Frank R. O'Neil in 62-4248

#3 - Maj John J. "Jack" Gaudion in 62-4315

#4 - Capt William Thomas May in 60-0426

#5 - Capt John Joseph Pitchford and EWO Capt Donald J. Madden in F-100F 58-1231

F-105D ground spare - Capt Glenn E. "Wally" Belew in 59-1768

*Undated combat mission cards of Capt William T. May in Archives of the National Museum of the United States Air Force (Wild Weasel crew matches Wild Weasel report for 12 Dec 65); Wild Weasel I' Final Report, pg 76.*

**19-Dec-65**

818

"The USAF ... struck the Bac Can Highway Bridge (JCS 18.61), on 19 December, after scheduling attacks for four consecutive days. This target was located sixty-nine miles north of Hanoi. The bridge served as an important link on Route 3, the main line of communication between Red China and central North Vietnam. The 355 TFW allocated a strike force of twenty-four F-105s and eight RB-66s. Four of the Thunderchiefs were assigned to flak suppression, since the target was defended by four confirmed and 12 suspected anti-aircraft weapons, and 19 confirmed and 10 possible weapons sites."

Fifty-four 750-pound bombs were dropped on the bridge.

One F-4 aircraft was disabled by a SAM on the strike, but both pilots ejected and were rescued. The aircraft lost was F-4C 63-7527 in "Grizzly" flight from the 433 TFS, 8 TFW. The crew punched out over Thailand near NKP. Capt R. S. Kan and 1Lt Joseph L. Moran on their first combat mission were picked up by a CH-3. This plane was the ninth U.S. plane lost to a SAM.

"F-105 pilots flew 34 strike missions dropping 49 tons of 750-pound bombs on (the) highway bridge, supply storage area, and six antiaircraft gun positions 75 miles north of Hanoi. Two spans of the bridge were knocked down and the remainder of the bridge heavily damaged. Pilots encountered moderate to heavy flak over the target, one of the key routes of travel from China to the Communist North Vietnam capital, but all aircraft returned safely." The four aircraft in each of the two F-105 flights, "Volvo" and "Essex", from the 355 TFW each dropped their six 750-pound bombs on the bridge.

Maj John M. Lowery from the 333 TFS led a flight that struck the bridge. He logged 2:55 flying time for the mission. (John Lowery e-mail 20 Mar 13.)

Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry, 333 TFS, flew his 5th combat mission against this bridge. He flew as number 3 in his flight replacing Capt Donald M. Ware who aborted. Capt Calvin T. Broadaway was in his flight. Capt James E. Bayles was number 4.

"Got up at 09:00 for a 09:40 brief. Same target but we had five 21As. Finally narrowed them down to 2 for a 14:30

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

TO.

"Mission received a go so we went. Hit the tanker at Green Anchor and extended way up north. Dropped off over a solid undercast and just kinda stumbled from there to where we let down for the IP. There was supposed to be a dam with a lake behind it. We popped out and there was nothing. I called out a hell of a fire at 6 o'clock but Cal said he didn't hear it. It turned out that we were right over the target (a bridge). We finally hit it and there were a lot of 105s buzzing around raising hell with the ground. I was number 3 today since Ware aborted. Jim Bayles took his place and flew my wing. I rolled in about 3 miles behind and 90-degrees off 1 & 2. My bombs hit exactly where I aimed them and I think they did great damage to the bridge. There is really no way to know since so many people hit the target.

"The overcast was 9000' (our release altitude) so I had to pull a setting out of my fanny and was real pleased with the results. Another flight called me a good hit. Jim had a good hit, too.

"We lost 1 & 2 off the target because there were so many 105s. Jim and I hit the emergency tanker back at Orange. It was a basket so we got both kinds on this mission. 3+15 flying time, six 750# bombs. I was scared to death because of all the radio talk. I still haven't been shot at (I don't think)."

On 11 February 1966, MG Charles R. Bond, Jr., Deputy Commander, 7AF/13AF nominated the 355 TFW for the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for this mission. The nomination read, in part, "... the target was within range of enemy SAM sites, therefore low altitude navigation was required for the final portion of the flight from the IP to the target. This fact, coupled with poor weather conditions and mountainous, wooded terrain made navigation extremely difficult. ... All flights arrived over the target below a low solid overcast. The lead flight placed all their rockets so effectively on the anti-aircraft positions that further reaction from enemy guns could only be described as light and inaccurate. The following flights of aircraft delivered their bombs directly on the target, and this important bridge and its approaches were totally destroyed. The resulting destruction of this target severely hampered the flow of munitions and other war materiel to North Vietnam."

*Project CHECO Report, Rolling Thunder #1, pg 18 & Republic Aviation Thunderchief Report, Vol. I No 5, January 1, 1966 & CNA Loss/Damage Database, pg O17 & 355 TFW history, Dec 65, USAF microfilm NO461, frames 1011 and 1161 - 1162.*

### 19-Dec-65

5056

Today, the F-100F Wild Weasels in the 6234 TFW at Korat flew two missions hunting for SAM sites. During this first mission, the Wild Weasel equipment detected the SAM site, giving indications of overflying the site, but the crew couldn't find the site visually. The Wild Weasel I final report described the mission.

Aircraft F-100F 227. Take off at 0645Z. Pilot was Maj Garry A. Willard, Jr. EWO was Captain Truman Walter Lifsey. Flying time was 2 + 45.

Route: Korat, 18-06N and 103-19E, 19-00N and 103-29E (REFUEL), 21-13N and 104-02E, 21-57N and 104-36E, 21-57N and 105-13E, 21-42N and 104-53E, 21-05N and 104-19E, 20-28N and 104-06, Korat.

"Formation was one F-100F and four F-105s. F-100F flew in #5 position until within target area, then took over lead. F-105s flew in elements of two, on each side of F-100F approximately 3000 feet behind. Ordnance: F-100F carried 2 each LAU-3 Rocket Pods plus full 20-mm HEI. Each F-105 carried 4 each LAU-3 Rocket Pods plus full 20-mm HEI." (pg 104)

"This was a mission in support of a JCS strike north of Hanoi and was to seek and destroy radiating SAM installations posing a threat to the strike force. When 60 miles from the Vietnam border, the Weasel began picking up Fire Can signals from the north. By the time the border was reached, these returns had become so numerous on the IR-133 that interpretation was difficult. Fire Can returns continued as the flight turned on an easterly heading north of Yen Bay. When 23 miles northeast of Yen Bay, a Vector Fan Song strobe of two ring intensity was received. Flight turned to the right toward the signal and starting descent from 8000 to 3000 feet. As the aircraft descended, Fire Can signals began disappearing from the IR-133 scope. The initial Fan Song return on the Vector scope remained up through station passage, which was a mile west of Yen Bay. While descending inbound toward

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

the target, the IR-133, in low sensitivity, presented a signal. The Fan Song return was in high PRF. The aural return was clear and distinct, verifying a Fan Song signal. Upon approaching Yen Bay, the Vector strobe at 12 o'clock grew to full scope deflection. As the flight passed over Yen Bay, Weasel pitched up to 5000 feet, and Vector scope indicated station passage by decreasing length from 12 o'clock, and backing out to full scope deflection at 6 o'clock. Both the, Weasel and lead F-105 pilot saw a cleared area but no indication of activity or an installation. The area was no longer discernible after pitch up. The Weasel pilot did not mark the target because of inability to acquire; the F-105 leader fired 76 rockets into an AAA site. None of the other three F-105s fired his rockets because of inability to acquire target.

"The flight experienced heavy and continuous barrage flak while on attack run and in the target area, but suffered no battle damage. On departing the area, when approximately 20 miles from Yen Bay, heading 200 degrees, altitude 13,000 feet, Weasel received a steady signal with the IR-133 in low sensitivity, three rings at 6 o'clock position on the Vector. These returns disappeared from scope as flight broke down through 8000 feet. No further activity." (pg 29)

*"Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5.*

**19-Dec-65**

5057

A second mission today by the F-100F Wild Weasels from Korat to find a SAM site also resulted in the electronic equipment detecting the site but the crew not spotting it due to camouflage. The Wild Weasel I final report described the mission.

Aircraft F-100F 231. Take off at 0720Z. Pilot was Maj Robert J. Swartz. EWO was Captain Robert D. Trier. Flying time was 2 + 20.

Route: Korat, 20-30N and 102-35E (Refuel), 21-20N and 103-50E, 21-40N and 104-20E, 21-45N and 105-00E, 21-25N and 105-20E, 21-20N and 104-20E, Udorn, Korat.

Formation and ordnance same as Mission #1. (pg 106)

"This mission was in support of a JCS strike north of Hanoi and was to seek out and destroy radiating SAM installations posing a threat to the strike force. Weasel aircraft took the lead when 30 miles west of Yen Bay, heading eastward, altitude 12,000 feet. Fire Can activity was visible from the east and southeast on IR-133 and Vector. When 20 miles from Yen Bay, 4000 feet AGL, the Weasel received Fan Song audio, low then high PRF, low intensity on IR-133, Vector strobe 2 rings from 12 o'clock. This signal disappeared and flight passed over Yen Bay at 5000 feet AGL, then turned ESE down the valley. Three Fan Song signals were received on the Vector from 1, 3, and 4 o'clock. The EWO selected the strongest one, from 1 o'clock, and began homing; he went from sweep to manual to DF and low sensitivity on IR-133. The DF mode was so strong both strobes went off scope, making homing on the IR-133 impossible; EWO used Vector for final homing. Vector strobe started at 2 rings and kept increasing to full scope strobe. The Fan Song went off for 15 to 20 seconds, and pilot saw a recently cleared area and what appeared to be a small village adjacent to this area. The cleared area, although of sufficient size, contained no visible evidence of being a SAM installation. Prior to the station going off the air, the Vector strobe was taking the aircraft toward the small village. When the Vector strobe came back on, it was from 6 o'clock. The pilot transmitted information that he was over target, pitched up, but could not visually acquire target. The F-105s were trailing Weasel at about 3000 feet, but had been taking maximum evasive action because of heavy flak, and ended up 2 to 3 miles behind. Approach to target made at from 4000 to 6000 feet. The F-105 leader saw an area which was similar to that described by the Weasel pilot, pitched up, and as he broke down, entered thin clouds at 5000 feet, pulled out and broke away. Remainder of F-105 flight had no visual contact, and no ordnance was expended. Because of fuel requirements, the flight departed the area and returned to home plate." (pg 29)

*"Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5.*

**20-Dec-65**

1775

A "... JCS target strike against the Vu Chua Railroad Bridge ( JCS 18.74, BE 616-1150 at coordinates 21-26-35N and 106-21-28E) was flown on 20 December but reports indicated the bridge (remained) serviceable. On this mission, one [355 TFW] F-105D [from the 354 TFS at Takhli], one F-100F Wild Weasel aircraft [from the 6234

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

TFW, Korat], and one F-4C [from the 8 TFW, Ubon] were shot down. ..."

Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry, 333 TFS, flew his 6th combat mission against the Vu Chua Bridge.

"Had a hot JCS target today. Way up north above Hanoi. The run-in was picked for the same one as the power plant when everyone got shot to hell but we picked one further north. We took off at 12:40 and hit our tanker at Ginger about an hour later. We all filled up and pressed on into the target. The weather as usual was real bad. We punched through the stuff at about 8000' and there were broken clouds above, below, and everywhere. Really bad. We stumbled on at 4000' and I was saying to myself why don't we go back since that is what we are told to do. The mission commander never said one damn thing so we pressed on. Cal did a pretty good job of flying and navigation.

"The target was clear and we didn't get shot at until we hit the target area. We didn't find our IP lake but saw fires so assumed it was the target. 1 & 2 popped up through the clouds and rolled left towards what we thought was the target. 3 & 4 popped up behind them. In burner I finally rolled in at 16,000' and picked up a perfectly good railroad bridge. I aimed for it and had about 70-degree dive angle. Pickled and pulled, broke to the left back out and saw my bombs in the mirror. Direct hit! Confirmed by #3. He said they went through the bridge ....

"Couldn't help but hit it with some of them. It wasn't the correct bridge but it's the same railroad and it's down so who cares. Anyway, I'm nothing but a damn wingman so it's not my responsibility to navigate.

"We got the hell out of there on the deck at 575K with flak eating at our tail. Returned same route and didn't get shot at. Lost one plane from here on the mission but pilot was picked up in the harbor." The pilot was Capt John S. Ruffo from the 354 TFS who was rescued by an HU-16 that landed in Haiphong Harbor.

"Col Young was kinda short on fuel returning. 3+20. Six 750s. The radio was terrible."

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg 18 & Tony Cushenberry combat diary.*

**20-Dec-65**

1776

Four F-105Ds in "Healey" flight from the 355 TFW provided MiG-cap support to B-66s that were part of the forces attacking JCS 18.74, the Vu Chua railroad bridge. The flight left Takhli at 11:55 led by Maj. John M. Lowery from the 333 TFS. "Healey 4" was Capt Robert D. Gobble flying F-105D 61-0135 on his 4th combat mission. Each plane carried four GAR-8 (AIM-9B) air-to-air missiles. "I don't know why the tough ones always get cancelled until it's my turn to go then the mission goes, but it has been five days since I had flown and I was ready. We were giving top cover to the B-66s. They were 'Goose' flight and we were supposed to keep the MiGs off their backs. The target was a railroad bridge just a few miles from Kep airfield. I'm not sure if they got the bridge but we lost three aircraft: two F-105s and an F-4. The F-4 was hit by a missile and the guys didn't get out. There were MiGs around but we didn't see any. We refueled on the way out. ... " The flight logged four hours and 15 minutes of flying time.

There was only one F-105D lost, 61-0090 shot down by AAA. The second plane was a Wild Weasel I F-100F 58-1231 also lost to AAA.

The F-4C lost to 85-mm AAA was 64-0678 from the 433 TFS at Ubon. The plane was in "Deer" flight and its two crew members were not rescued. 1Lt George Ivison Mims, Jr., flying his first combat mission, was KIA and Capt Robert Duncan Jeffrey became a POW. Lt Mims' name appears on the Vietnam Memorial Wall at Panel 04E, Line 30.

*F-105D Combat Diary of Capt. Robert D. Gobble & CNA Loss/Damage Database, loss 190, pg O17.*

**20-Dec-65**

562

The first Wild Weasel I F-100F was lost to combat while leading a strike by twelve F-105s on Kep Airfield (JCS 9.1). This target was part of the Rolling Thunder 45 strike on the Vu Chua Bridge (JCS 18.74). The specific target for the Wild Weasel flight was SA-2 site VN 33 at location 21-20-15N and 106-20-15E, 30 miles from Hanoi. The five-ship flight left Korat at 13:25 and the F-100F was shot down at 15:25.

On their third mission, 28-year old Capt John Joseph Pitchford and 32-year old EWO Capt Robert Douglas Trier, in

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

F-100F 58-1231, call sign "Apple 05", were hit by heavy 100-mm AAA. Their plane crashed at location 21-25N and 107-05E. Two other members of the flight flying F-105Ds were Maj John C. Shay and Capt Richard K. Ely, both from the 421 TFS. Capt Pitchford was captured by the North Vietnamese and became a POW. He was released on 12 February 1973. The North Vietnamese also captured Capt Trier but they shot and killed him. His remains were returned to the U.S. on 3 November 1982. His name on the Vietnam Memorial Wall is on Panel 04E, Line 32.

The Wild Weasel I Final Report described what happened. "This mission was in support of a JCS strike, and was to seek out and destroy any radiating SAM installations in the area 30 to 40 miles NE of Hanoi. ... The Weasel aircraft took the lead when 35 - 40 miles SE of Haiphong, heading to the north. Weather along the coast forced flight to descend to 1500 feet AGL, but flight proceeded on westward heading because weather ahead was improving. Moderate flak was observed while on westerly heading, approximately 30 miles ENE of Kep Airfield. Flak was extremely heavy, and appeared to be concentrated on Weasel lead. Altitudes were varied between 4000 and 6000 feet MSL. The F-105 lead saw Weasel pitch up when 5 miles SE of Kep, break right, then roll level to the left and fire marking rockets. Weasel then pulled off to the right and called, 'I am hit.' Although F-105 lead saw only some small buildings and trees, he fired his rockets into the area marked by the F-100F; his wingman also fired his rockets into the same area. Second element F-105 lead got separated from the flight when passing Kep on southerly heading, circled once, and flew, while in right turn, over Kep Airfield. At this point, he spotted the F-100F heading to ENE, and observed pieces of the aircraft falling off. The F-105 followed the F-100F to approximately 21-25N and 107-05E, at which point the pilot saw the canopy come off the F-100, saw one parachute open, then observed the F-100F pitch forward and disappear into the clouds. No further reports were received on the aircraft or crew."

"The following is an extract from the statement of [Maj] J. C. Shay, Apple 3: '... Apple 5 ... Was leading the flight. Apple 5 made a pass on the target and I joined with him as he came off. He was hit in the turn and large pieces of his aircraft were seen coming from his tail. Seconds later he said he was hit, had lost both hydraulic pumps, and that the aircraft was hard to control. I capped him and we flew for 6 or 7 minutes on a general heading of 080 degrees. Radio contact with Apple 5 was sporadic, and he gave no call when I saw some greenish yellow smoke, parts of the aircraft, and one parachute. Seconds later, the aircraft nosed over, went into the clouds and moments later a large white cloud was observed. Due to overcast conditions, Apple 3 was unable to determine whether more than one chute was deployed. Apple 3 heard a clear beeper while making orbit over the crash site, but was unable to descend due to mountainous terrain and had to leave the area due to fuel shortage. No organized search was initiated because of the distance of missing aircraft from nearest friendly territory. Crash area was mountainous terrain with heavy vegetation, making possibilities of concealment and evasion good.'" ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW Southeast Asia", AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3, IRIS # 1028640, pp 1-075 - 1-076)

*"Wild Weasel. The SAM Suppression Story" by Larry Davis, pg 12 & Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase), K143.5072-5 pg 30.*

**22-Dec-65**

563

At 12:41 p.m., an F-100F Wild Weasel led four F-105s in destroying their first SAM site in North Vietnam. Capt Al Lamb and EWO Capt John E. "Jack" Donovan, in F-100F 58-1226, call sign "Spruce 05", led four F-105Ds from Korat RTAFB, Thailand, in an attack on a SAM site near the rail yard at Yen Bai. The five aircraft destroyed the SAM site with rockets and 20-mm gunfire. For leading the mission, the F-100F crew was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The four F-105D pilots of "Spruce" flight from the 421 TFS were Capt Donald E. Langwell, lead; Capt Van F. Heywood, #2; Capt Robert Edward "Bob" Bush, #3; and Capt Arthur L. Brattkus, #4.

Probably due to security restrictions, a Republic Aviation news release did not identify the F-100F Wild Weasel, calling it an F-105 instead. The release reported that "five ... F-105 pilots caught a missile site by surprise 58 miles northwest of Hanoi. Pilots said they slipped up on the SAM site while enemy missile men were apparently tracking a second flight of Air Force jets in the same area. 'There were several missiles elevated on launchers within the site. They were long, white-colored objects,' the Thunderchief flight leader said. Pilots struck with 2.75 rockets and reported fires, explosions and heavy smoke. Thunderchiefs dropped 72 tons of 750-pound bombs during the attacks."

Nearly forty years later, Van Heywood described his experience as "Spruce 2".

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"To start off, I flew about 12 "IRONHAND" missions (4 Thuds following a Wild Weasel F-100F). The technique that we used was what we described as trolling (like the technique used in fishing). We acted as the bait, the SAM site was the fish. In the designated area we would fly in loose and flexible formation. At about 15,000' and 400 to 450 KTS, we would try to present an irresistible target for SAM sites. Many times a missile site would come up and start tracking us. We would start a turn towards the site to try and set up for an attack. It seemed that the missile guys got the word about who we were and what we were up to, and when we turned toward the site it would go off the air. Sometimes the lead F-105 carried a Shrike missile and we got close enough for him to fire it. One Shrike hit an empty field and devastated the dirt. Another time we were receiving heavy 57MM flak when the Shrike was fired. The firing stopped suddenly and an F-4 with camera pods dashed in to get a shot of the Shrike hit. The Shrike really messed up the firecan radar that was aiming the guns. We didn't seem to be getting anywhere with the tactics we were using.

"On the 22 of December 1965, we launched as Spruce flight with the area of patrol up around Route Pac 5. Leading the flight was Don Langwell, I was Spruce 2. #3 was Bob Bush with #4 Art Brattkus on his wing. Spruce 5 was the F-100 Wild Weasel with pilot Al Lamb and EWO Jack Donovan.

"After refueling enroute, we started on our way in what seemed to me to be a repeat of previous missions. Spruce 5 was now in the lead. Somewhere along the way Spruce 5 said something like 'Spruce lets take it down' and made a fast descent to several hundred feet above the forest. There is a video that depicts the stalking phase of our attack (First In, Last Out). It is a most accurate representation of the sequent of events. Rolling, green hills with the terrain rising off of our left wing. I could tell that this was a very different thing going on here from previous Ironhand missions that I had been on. Al would start a climb with the 4 F105s in trail and suddenly drop down again. This went on for a number of cycles. On the combat frequency I could hear another flight in our area trying to join up after attacking some target. One of their flight had been hit and they were trying to get him out of the target area which was along the Red River. We started out heading about North East, but were gradually turning around to the North all the time keeping the rising terrain to our left. Somewhere just to the west of the Black River, and heading toward the Red River we came on one last finger of hills running North. There was no more hiding behind hills. We were coming into the flat, open area bordering the Red river. Al turned to the North West and paralleled the river. We were fairly low, and the Weasel was making as many knots as I think he could get out of the F-100F. In not more than 2 minutes (it seemed to me), the Weasel called the Sam site swinging off our left. He started a turn as likewise we all did. A voice transmitted excitedly 'I've got him'. At that point, things started happening really fast. I had lost the Weasel in the turn, but was locked on to Langwell. As we continued turning, I looked at the grove of trees almost immediately beneath our flight path. As we continued turning, I saw two long, slender tubes on a what appeared to be a transporter. They were pointed up at about 60 degrees and stuck out just barely beyond the tree line. 'Missiles', I said to myself. I took spacing on Langwell and set up my own attack. We had 4 LAU-3 rocket pods with 19 rockets in each pod. On the tip of each 2.75 " FFAR (Folding Fin Aerial Rocket) was a hand grenade looking HEAP head (High Explosive Anti-Personnel). I had armed up all 4 pods to fire at once. If I got only one shot, I wanted it to be a memorable one. I saw Langwell pulling off. Dirt and debris was rising from the North West side of the grove of trees. That left me the untouched rest of the grove. Sometime while this was happening, someone transmitted 'Watch it Spruce, we're getting flak from the river'. I was concentrating on my run and wasn't about to let the flak deter me. My gun was set up to fire and just before firing the rockets, I fired a long burst while gently walking the rudders. It was quite a stretch for the gun, but I figured that with the mils of depression set in the gunsight for the rockets, surely some of the rounds would lob in. I steadied just long enough to get my sight picture for the rockets, and fired. What an impressive sight! 76 rockets spewing out in front of my aircraft. I was sure that the guys on the ground were impressed. But, I had to pull out. As I was bottoming out over the target, I could hear the explosions from my salvo. I started a left turn for a gun pass, reached down and pushed the jettison button for the 650 gallon centerline fuel tank. In the turn I picked up Spruce 1 who was setting up for another attack. I never saw the Weasel or Spruces 3 and 4 during the attack. I was too busy to even look for them. On my second attack I elevated the gunsight pipper, held the trigger down and gently walked the rudders until the gun fired out. The target was by now a roiling, boiling mass of dust and debris in which nothing could be seen except a few of the taller trees. When I picked up Spruce 1 again he was headed out from the target, so I made knots to join back up. I felt a little disturbed when the Weasel started calling out 'Everybody get down, he's on us'. After a couple of calls like that I started thinking 'How is that possible, we just killed him didn't we?'. It wasn't until later,

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

at the Intel debriefing when I asked Donovan what he meant, that I found out a SAM site over by the river came up and was trying to get a shot at us." (Van Heywood, e-mail 29 Mar 05.)

*"Wild Weasel. The SAM Suppression Story" by Larry Davis, pg 12 & Allen Lamb, e-mail to Weasel Net, 22 Dec 00 & Republic Aviation Thunderchief Report, Vol. I No 5, January 1, 1966.*

**22-Dec-65**

5058

The Wild Weasel I final report included the mission debriefing statement of the F-100F Wild Weasel pilot (Spruce 5), Capt Al Lamb, for the Wild Weasel's first successful attack on a SAM site in North Vietnam.

"I took over flight lead at the IP, 20-50N, 103-38E, at 16,000 feet MSL. The EWO reported a Fan Song signal on the Vector, gave the bearing of the signal, and we descended until we lost the signal. Heading was approximately 070 degrees. We maintained this general heading in the direction of the signal descending until the signal was lost then climbing until we picked up the signal, got a bearing and then descended. After we had proceeded toward the signal in this manner for approximately 40 miles, I started using terrain masking by keeping a hill between the Fan Song and us. In the mountains there were a series of four or five valleys that were generally perpendicular to the direction we wanted to go so I would pull up over a ridge, roll the wings level and as soon as the EWO called a bearing to the signal I would roll on over using a half barrel roll descending into the next valley, turning sometimes up the valley and sometimes down the valley. The valleys varied from approximately one to three miles across and maybe as little as 500 feet to over a thousand feet below the tops of the hills. These maneuvers rolling up over the ridge, popping the wings level, and rolling down into the next valley kept an almost constant load of 4 to 6 gs on the aircraft. By continuing in this way pulling up to get a signal, popping the wings level to get a bearing, and rolling over into the next valley we proceeded toward the Fan Song. This wasn't homing per se because the turns as we rolled into the valleys were sometimes as much as 120 degrees from the bearing to the signal. Each time the EWO called a bearing I would fix a landmark along that bearing and the next time compare the landmark with the new bearing. By doing this and noting the rate at which the bearing changed, I could get a good estimate of where the site was and how close we were getting to it. As I pulled up over the next to the last ridge I could see the Red River Valley ahead and was certain that the Fan Song was on the West (near) side of the river and about 3 to 5 miles away. There was one small hill beyond the last ridge between us and the site so I turned south, descended to stay down below the top of the last hill and turned around the hill into the valley heading toward the point where I thought the Fan Song must be. The hill appeared to be about 700 to 1000 feet above the valley floor and we were about 300 feet above the valley so I started a gradual climb to get back to 4500 feet altitude. There was no sign of automatic weapons or small arms firing so I didn't climb too fast. I didn't want to use AB (afterburner) because the noise might alert the gun defenses. Just as I rolled the wings level and started the climb, the EWO called the signal on the nose at 12 o'clock. As we started the run-in on the Fan Song I aimed a little to the right because of the past experience at Eglin where we had almost always gone to the left of the station. As we went on in I made a couple of turns left and right so as not to stay on one heading all of the time. A second Fan Song signal came up on the right side but I continued in on the first signal. As the EWO called the signal moving toward the 9 o'clock position, all I could see were fields and rice paddies and a small group of buildings and trees that looked like a little village. At station passage the village was about 300 yards to the left; I pulled up with about 45-degree left bank to gain altitude to attempt to make visual acquisition of the missile installation and mark it for the F-105s. When I had pulled up to about 2500 feet and was in a 75-degree left bank I saw a Fan Song radar sitting in about the center of what I had thought was a village. The radar was parallel to a long hootch. The radar van blended into the background, which kept it from standing out prominently. As I followed through on the turn, I continued around the installation and saw three missiles. I could see only the front part - long white tips - because the missiles appeared to be partially covered by a semi-circular thatched hut. I had called out station passage to the "fives" but none of them had seen the target. I started my pass to mark the target by rolling into a 45-degree dive. I realized I was a little too low and slow to get on the target so I pulled up the nose and fired the rockets. The rockets hit about 300 feet left and short of the target. I called out the target location with respect to the rockets. As I continued the pull up from this pass, saw 18 - 20 men running across the clearing. I fired a 20-mm burst through them, pulled up, and pitched left. Turning off the target, I could see the 105 lead's rockets hit short of the trailer; as he fired his 20-mm I could see hits in the van and hootch area. Number two's rockets hit in the center of the van and hootch area. The Fan Song signal went off at about the time No. 2 aircraft was making its pass. I was about 2 1/2 miles south of the target when No. 3 rolled in and made his pass. After making a 360-degree turn, I saw lead pull off from his second pass so I turned left and departed the area. The EWO reported the Fan Song across the river was now in high PRF so the flight

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

descended down into the hills on the outbound heading. The target area became covered with smoke and dust as soon as firing began. Smoke, white and black, and mixed with dust rose to from 400 to 500 feet. There was a road going NW to SE paralleling the river and about 2500 to 3000 feet from the target. The area in the village, around the buildings, and under the trees appeared to be hard packed earth." (pp 112 - 113)

An article Al Lamb wrote about this mission was posted to a Web site called Situational Awareness. Situational Awareness is a blog by the FORMER editors of eDefense Online. Now it's just a sounding board. Is there anybody...OUT THERE?

In Their Own Words #8: Eleven Stories For Veterans Day

Lt Col Allen Lamb, USAF (ret.), is currently president of The Lamb Group LLC, an international industrial safety consulting firm based in Lumberton, NC.

The first SAM kill by Wild Weasels showed that good technology and solid tactics are fine things to have, but great teamwork is what gets the job done.

I was taking off from Korat Air Base in Thailand two days after Bob Trier became the first Wild Weasel killed in action. Bob and his pilot, John Pitchford, had fallen to a SAM site while leading a strike package of F-105s against the Kep airfield, located about thirty miles northwest of Hanoi. After punching out of their stricken F-100F, Bob had apparently shot it out with North Vietnamese militia and lost, while John would spend seven years as a POW. Of course, we didn't know any of that at the time. All we knew is that the Wild Weasels were off to a bad start.

It was December 22, 1965, and we hadn't killed a single SAM, yet. At least the mission we were rolling on that morning was more to our liking. It was a so-called "Iron Hand" strike, which was code for a Wild Weasel mission, with the objective of hunting and killing a SAM site, as opposed to leading a strike against a known target. Our F-100F was loaded with LAU-3 canisters of 2.75-in. HEAT and HEAP rockets and two external fuel tanks. Jack Donovan, my EWO, had flown back seat to Bob Schwartz, the operations officer, on the day Bob Trier was killed. Their F-100F has been leading a second strike package against the same target. Like Pitchford and Trier, they were supposed to sniff out radar threats with their Vector IV and IR-133 radar-warning receivers. Weasels also carried the WR-300 launch-warning receivers, which could detect the increased signals when a SAM was about to launch.

The most dangerous threats were the SA-2 Guideline SAM sites with their Fan Song radars. This is what the Wild Weasels were born to tackle. These missiles had come as a nasty shock to US aircrews operating over North Vietnam in 1965. On July 24 of that year, a SA-2 exploded in the middle of a strike force of F-4 Phantom IIs, knocking down one aircraft and damaging all the others in the flight. Losses to SAMs became regular occurrences. Something had to be done about it.

I had been the first pilot picked for the Wild Weasel program per request of General Benny Puttman, who was commander of the Tactical Air Warfare Center at Eglin AFB. This is where the Wild Weasels would be pulled together. Col Charlie Joseph, Tactical Air Command Coordinator, had come down to Myrtle Beach AFB where I was stationed on September 15, 1965, to have lunch and ask me to volunteer for something without telling me what the job was. I knew Col Joseph from Misawa, and I said yes. He handed me orders TDY (Temporary Duty) to Eglin with variations in itinerary authorized (these carried me all the way to Nam).

I disappeared from Myrtle Beach the next morning, and the rest is history. The original orders said the assignment would be to fly a F-100F command post (another job for the two-seater), but Joseph told me after I was on board that I would be hunting and killing SAM sites in North Vietnam. Quite hush-hush on everything. One of the first pilots broke security by talking to a nurse at the beach club at happy hour. We were being watched. He was gone the next morning and lost his career. We were all chewed out and kept isolated from then on. There were to be two birds, but later this was upgraded to four in case we lost one and one was out of commission, etc. Ultimately, there were five crews assembled for the four aircraft. In the days before the Shrike anti-radiation missile, Wild Weasels attacked enemy SAM sites with cannon and rockets and initially fin napalm, although this latter weapon was the 7th Air

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Force's idea, not the aircrews'. We didn't like napalm, nor bombs for that matter, because the parameters for using dropped ordnance were more restrictive than for rockets. We could get off snap-shots with rockets, something we couldn't do with fin napalm or bombs. Iron Hand strikes typically consisted of a Wild Weasel leading four F-105s heavily laden with bombs or rockets or both for pasting the SAM sites. The "Thuds" didn't carry any special electronics for ferreting out enemy radars. That was our job.

Nevertheless, we didn't just mark the target, as some have claimed. We went in first with rockets and came back around with cannon even before some of the Thuds had started on a first run. The F-100F was an excellent hunter-killer in that it was very agile. I was very fond of it, and of my ability to fly it. In those days, I had "World's Greatest Fighter Pilot" printed on my helmet - backwards so I could read it in the mirror. No apologies for youth: That was the sort of attitude we all had. I just put my attitude in writing.

Jack Donovan's contribution to the vernacular when introduced to the Wild Weasel concept was more enduring, and became the semi-official motto of the Wild Weasel profession: YGBSM - "You gotta be shitting me." This was the natural response of an educated man, a veteran EWO on B-52s and the like, upon learning that he was to fly back seat to a self-absorbed fighter pilot while acting as flypaper for enemy SAMs. What would you say?

Our flight that December morning was call sign Spruce, and our F-100F was Spruce 5. The F-105s - Spruce 1-4 - took off after right after we did. Everything was standard through form-up and and refueling at tanker over Laos. We took the lead at our pre-briefed initial point, and with two Thuds on each wing, we headed for the Red River Valley, a flood plain that was home to some of the best air-defense systems in North Vietnam. The mission parameters were fairly fluid after that. We didn't have a specific objective or a series of known targets. Our job was to probe the enemy's air defenses until they warmed up to take a shot at us.

There was complete radio silence after going to the strike frequency. A little after noontime, Jack told me that the Vector IV had picked up a Fan Song radar in search mode about 100+ nautical miles out. I pushed the engine up to 98 percent and locked the throttle. This gave us 595 knots airspeed, just under max while carrying ordnance. After I started homing in, I transmitted "Tallyho." That was it. I kept the SAM at 10 to 11 o'clock so he wouldn't get the idea I was going after him. When I could, I dropped into shallow valleys to mask our approach. Every now and again, I'd pop up for Jack to get a cut. This went on for about 10 to 15 minutes.

After breaking out into the Red River Valley I followed the strobes on the Vector and turned up with the river along side. The IR 133 had receiver antennas located on either side of the fuselage in line with the cockpit for homing on target. The strobes started curling off at 12 o'clock, both to the right and left. And I knew we were right on top of him. I started climbing for altitude and Jack kept calling out SAM positions literally left and right. The right one turned out to be a second site. I was passing through 3,000 feet, nose high, and I rolled inverted while still climbing to look.

Jack started calling the first site to the right. I said it was to the left, because I could see it below. "Right!" he said. "Left!" I said. "Right!" he said. "Look outside!" I said. Jack did and saw that we were inverted, so the signals from the left and right antennas were reversed. "OK, left," he agreed.

I rolled in to line up the site but came in way too low. Later, some of the Thud drivers told me they thought I was going to mark the target with my aircraft. My rockets hit short, but as I pulled off there was a bright flash. I figured I must have hit the oxidizer van for the SA-2s' liquid-fuel motors. I called out the site, and the F-105 lead, Don Langwell, said that he had it. He went in, and Spruce 2, Van Heywood, came after him, firing rockets on the site. We all broke the cardinal rule - "one pass, haul ass" - to assure the kill. I came back around for a second pass in front of Spruce 4, Art Brattkus (the F-100s were agile birds!), and went down in beside Spruce 3, Bob Bush, who was hitting the AAA along side of the Red River (Bob Bush would be KIA on a subsequent mission). On this pass I strafed the control van, and he went off the air. Each of the Thuds came around again, expending all their 20mm ammunition. Jack was now calling out the second SAM site, but we had nothing left to hit it with. But we really blew away the site that we did hit.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

We got out of there, rejoined, and refueled. There was a USO show with Bob Hope that day at Korat, and we made a fly over with the F-100 leading and two F-105s on each wing. A number of people down there knew that meant we had made a SAM kill and left the show early to celebrate.

After landing, we debriefed and went to the club. What a party. Jack drank martinis. After a while, he started holding them by the rim with his thumb and finger. And began dropping them. The more he drank the more he dropped. The club was raising Cain as they were running out of glasses, so we taped a glass in his hand. After dinner he drank creme dementhe and went around sticking out his green tongue.

All six of us in Spruce Flight received the Distinguished Flying Cross for killing the first SAM site. Jack would fly twelve more missions with me before going stateside in February 1966 to get the ball rolling on what would become the Wild Weasel School at Nellis AFB. I stayed in Southeast Asia for a total of six months and received credit for two more SAM kills. When we flew together, Jack said he would sleep through my air refuelings and would tell me to wake him up on ingress for him to go to work. The only time he looked outside was when I told him to take a look at Hanoi and the flak. Jack and I were a very strong team; we lived together and flew together, and we always knew what the other was thinking, even before he thought it. We were closer than many marriages. Jack also named his second son after me.

October 2001

posted by Michael Puttre @ Friday, November 11, 2005

Michael Puttre

Age: 43

Gender: Male

Astrological Sign: Cancer

Zodiac Year: Dragon

Industry: Publishing

Occupation: Editor

Location: Norwood : Massachusetts : United States

About Me

Michael Puttre is editor-in-chief of eDefense Online and JED, the Journal of Electronic Defense, both published by Horizon House in Norwood, MA. He has eighteen years experience in the technology and engineering media as a writer and an editor. He began his career with InformationWEEK in 1987 and went on to write for a number of magazines including Mechanical Engineering and Design News. Michael came to Horizon House in 2000 as managing editor of JED. He became editor-in-chief in 2002 and assisted with the launch of eDefense Online in 2004. Michael is a graduate of the University of Rochester and has degrees in political science and history.

Blogs

Blog Name

Team Members

Situational Awareness Michal A. Fiszer Brendan P. Rivers TMcKenna

*"Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5.*

**22-Dec-65**

5059

The F-100F Wild Weasel I final report included the mission debriefing statement of the F-105D formation leader (Spruce 1), Capt Donald E. Langwell from the 421 TFS, for today's first successful Wild Weasel attack on a SAM site in North Vietnam.

"When the F-100F took over the lead, the 105 formation used a basket weave as depicted in Figure 12. Altitude varied from about level with the F-100F to two thousand feet above. The 105s maintained this weaving formation on the F-100F throughout the approach to the target. On the final run in to the target, the 105s pulled into a trail formation.

"As the F-100F passed about 100 yards right of the target, I had the village about 100 to 200 feet off to my left. My

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

attention was drawn to an earthen dike just south of the village area. As the 100-F pulled up and to the left going from about 500 feet climbing to 2500 feet, I slid to the outside in the turn and the others probably pulled into trail. As about 180 degrees of turn had been completed, the F-100F pilot called out that he had identified the target. I did not have it yet. My attention was still on the dike since it stood out so plainly and was obviously man made. We continued on around to a N NW heading and the Wild Weasel fired his rockets and called 300 feet left. This focused my attention on the trees and area that I had dismissed as a small village. The trees were small and looked like fruit trees because the underbrush and area around the trees was cleared out. Then I saw three missiles on the left hand and top portion of the area. I could see about half of each missile. They appeared to be at about 20 to 30 degrees elevation. The hootch in the center of the clearing had a large dark object next to it but I could not positively identify what it was. I had followed the F-100F around and was lined up on the area so as soon as I saw it was the target I fired my outboard rockets. The rockets hit short of the target. I walked 20- mm through the area and then pulled up and to the left to about 6 thousand feet to make another pass on the target. I saw the rockets from No. 3 and No.4 impact into the tree area containing missiles. I pulled into my second pass on a more westerly heading, fired inboard rockets and strafed. Trees were obscured by dirt and smoke - black smoke and dust rose to 200 - 300 feet in the air. My rockets impacted in the center of the area on the second pass. I pulled off to the left again, saw AAA fire and about 1 1/2 miles from the target saw some 37-mm bursts. I climbed to 5 or 6M to pick up the Wild Weasel on the way out from the target. The Wild Weasel called for a descent because of a Fan Song threat. The flight descended and continued southwest until clear of the SA-2 area; then climbed and returned to home plate." (pg 114)

*"Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5.*

**22-Dec-65**

5060

The Wild Weasel I final report included the mission debriefing statement of the F-105D pilot #2 (Spruce 2), Capt Van F. Heywood from the 421 TFS, for the first successful Wild Weasel attack on a SAM site in North Vietnam.

"After the F-100 took over the lead, I followed the F-105 leader by about 1000 feet. We used a scissors or basket weave formation moving from one side to the other on the F-100F. Formation altitude was varied and maintained on the lead F-105. When the F-100 began his pull-up, I moved into trail position approximately 1500 feet behind lead. I locked onto lead and followed him around in the turn. I noticed a village but did not have any time to look at it closely. The Weasel fired his rockets and I heard lead ask if that was a mark. I saw the smoke from the F-100's rocket launch and then heard lead say 'I've got it'. I had followed lead around so I saw where he was aiming. I went into afterburner as I rolled in on the rocket pass and fired all four rocket pods into the tree area. I stayed in AB the rest of the time. I pulled off to the left, climbed, and toggled off the centerline tank. As I looked back and down to watch the tank go, I saw a long white pole on the west or northwest fringe of the village. It looked like a missile and was pointed in the direction of Nghia Lo Airfield (Northwest of the village). I pulled up to about 3500 feet and followed lead around for my second pass. On this pass, I fired 20-mm working my rudder pedals and walked the 20-mm back and forth across the target area. Smoke and dust was billowing up to the tree tops and I could not determine the damage to the target area. After pulling off the target toward the Southwest I climbed to 3000 feet and jettisoned my rocket pods. SAM threat was called so we descended to about 500 feet. I followed leader and we returned to Korat." (pg 115)

*"Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5.*

**22-Dec-65**

5061

The Wild Weasel I final report included the mission debriefing statement of the F-105D pilot #3 (Spruce 3), Capt Robert Edward "Bob" Bush from the 421 TFS, for the first successful Wild Weasel attack on a SAM site in North Vietnam.

"After the Weasel pilot told the rest of the flight that we were tracking an active SAM installation, he began using terrain masking. The nature of the tactics used (close to ground, up and over ridges and frequent turns) made it necessary that I concentrate on the formation; consequently, I couldn't look around for the target. As the Weasel got an offset station passage, he called a visual 'tally-ho'. At this time, I had no idea where the target was. Because I was approximately 5000 feet from the Weasel when he fired his marking rockets, I did not see them impact; only the smoke as they were fired. I then transferred my attention to the F-105 leader and decided to watch his delivery pass

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

hoping to identify the site. The number one and two F-105s fired their rockets and strafed on their first pass, creating a great deal of dust. This made identification of a specific aiming point difficult. The aiming point I selected was the trees, which the F-105 lead and Weasel pilot said covered the missiles. In order to completely saturate the site, I decided to switch to sequence-single, firing my rockets individually. I fired my rockets from a 20-degree dive, starting at 2000 feet AGL and pulling out at 500 feet AGL. As I made a left turn for a second pass in order to strafe, I noticed ground troops who appeared to be in a state of confusion. I never did observe hostile ground fire of any sort. On the second pass (strafe only), I yawed the aircraft to get better dispersion, and again fired into the foliage. I recovered at 300 feet AGL and immediately made a sharp left escape turn. With the left wing down, I again saw the troops and some objects, which I couldn't identify. It occurred to me that the objects did not appear native to a village. In departing the target area, the flight was basically in trail. Ascending to 7000 feet MSL, I heard the Weasel call another SAM threat so we descended. My wingman and I then joined up with Weasel and escorted him home." (pg 116)

*"Wild Weasel I Final Report (Southeast Asia Phase)", AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5.*

**22-Dec-65**

5801

"Aspen" flight from the 469 TFS, 6234 TFW, took off from Korat at 14:00 and refueled from KC-135 "White Anchor 21" at 14:30 at 20,000 feet. The four F-105Ds escorted an F-100F Wild Weasel on an Iron Hand Strike mission. Their time over target was 15:10.

Flight line up was:

#1 - Maj Robert M. Krone in 62-4242 flying his 23rd mission

#2 - Capt Gordon E. Lewis in 58-1161

#3 - Capt William Thomas May in 60-0409

#4 - Capt Anthony J. "Tony" Gangol in 62-4334

#5 - Capt Edward B. White and EWO Capt Edward "Sandy" Sandelius in F-100F 58-1221.

The F-105D spare was Capt Frank R. O'Neill in 58-1163

The crew in the F-100F Wild Weasel spare aircraft was Capt Leslie L. Lindenmuth and EWO Capt Donald J. Madden.

The flight struck two targets in North Vietnam - a military area at coordinates 20-13N and 105-28E, which was 30 NM NNW of Thanh Hoa, and a nearby bridge at 20-12N and 105-30E. Maj Krone's aircraft received AAA damage to its right wing. The Wild Weasel crew from "Aspen" flight did not find a SAM site.

However, the F-100F Wild Weasel crew from another flight ("Spruce") escorted by four F-105D pilots from the 421 TFS found and destroyed a SAM site, the first (and only) success for the Wild Weasel I detachment that had arrived at Korat from Eglin on 25 November 1965.

Maj Krone was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission. "Major Robert M. Krone is awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism while participating in aerial flight as a F-105 pilot over North Vietnam on 22 December 1965. On that date, Major Krone led a flight of F-105 aircraft against a hostile missile site. With outstanding leadership and superior airmanship, Major Krone dangerously exposed himself for lengths of time well above and beyond normal mission requirements. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Major Krone reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

([http://www.dfcsociety.org/citation\\_detail.asp?ID=1649](http://www.dfcsociety.org/citation_detail.asp?ID=1649))

*Combat mission cards of Capt William T. May (undated) and Maj Bob Krone in USAF Museum Archives (May's lineup, daily code work and SIF code entries match Krone's card for 22 Dec 65); Wild Weasel I final report, pg 77.*

**22-Dec-65**

2709

"On 22 December, the Navy struck (the Uong Bi Power Plant) (JCS 82) again with three waves of aircraft (44 A-4s, 11 F-4s, and 10 F-8s) this time damaging the boiler house and rendering the plant unserviceable. Two A-4s were shot down."

"The Navy also hit the Hai Duong Railroad Bridge (JCS 11) on 22 December, with minor damage inflicted, in conjunction with the attack on the Uong Bi Plant. In this strike an A-6A and RA-5 were lost to [ SA-2 ] SAMs"

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

"A 'massive coordinated strike' by 110 aircraft from attack aircraft carriers Enterprise, Kitty Hawk and Ticonderoga (CVA-14) against the Uong Bi plant 'virtually' destroyed the facility, temporarily disrupting approximately two-thirds of the power to Hanoi and Haiphong.

"A salvo of three SAMs bracketed Flint River 603, however, an RA-5C (BuNo 151632), LCDR Max D. Lukenbach, and LT(JG) Glenn H. Daigle, RVAH-13. One detonated below the Vigilante and shot it down, while it was making a photo reconnaissance pass over Hai Duong Railroad Bridge, North Vietnam, 20°59'N, 106°24'E. Daigle survived but was captured, and did not return to the U.S. until 12 Feb 1973.

"A SAM most likely downed Buckeye 801, an A-6A (BuNo 151781), CDR Billie J. Cartwright, and LT Edward F. Gold, Attack Squadron (VA)-85, during a radar systems attack on the Haiphong Highway Bridge, 21°13'N, 106°57'E. ([http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/k4/kitty\\_hawk-ii.html](http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/k4/kitty_hawk-ii.html))

In their official history, the North Vietnamese described their defense of the Uong Bi Power Plant. "At dawn on 22 December, two enemy A-6A aircraft made a sneak attack on the Uong Bi Electrical Power Plant. 81st Battalion/238th Missile Regiment fired two missiles and destroyed one of these aircraft. Immediately thereafter, the AAA battalion protecting 81st Missile Battalion, under the command of Deputy Battalion Commander Meo, shot down one enemy aircraft on the spot. At 1350 hours, 16 A-4Es, divided into four flights, flew in taking cover behind the Yen Tu mountain range. Using Vang Danh Mountain as a checkpoint, the aircraft attacked the electrical power plant. Our forces defending the power plant shot down one A-4E. Twenty minutes later, three more flights of A-4Es mounted a second wave of attacks, and our forces shot down one of these aircraft. At 1530 hours U.S. Navy aircraft made a follow-up attack on the electrical power plant but met ferocious resistance from our forces. The battles lasted almost the entire day and finally ended at 1600 hours. The units of the forward cluster had fought three battles in succession and had achieved a high level of combat effectiveness. Five enemy aircraft were shot down, four of which crashed on the spot, and our forces had successfully protected the Uong Bi Electrical Power Plant. The Air Defense Command quickly issued a commendation to Forward Cluster 3 and cited numerous cadre and soldiers who had fought courageously and had performed outstanding feats of arms."

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, pg 19.*

### 23-Dec-65

1781

For the third day in a row a flight from the 333 TFS, 355 TFW, was fragged against a target near Vinh, North Vietnam. "Nash" flight was led by Maj. John M. Lowery. Number 3 was Capt Robert J. Tastet, while #4 was Capt Robert D. Gobble flying F-105D 62-4318 on his seventh combat mission. The flight took off at 0710, each plane loaded with eight 750-pound bombs.

Gobble: "This was about (a) repeat of yesterday. We refueled and went to a target just 17 NM SW of Vinh. We had ELINT support from 'Lark', a B-66, because of the possible SAM site ... at Vinh. The weather was bad so we went down the mountain looking for a target. We saw what looked like ... a truck park with several buildings, but it may have been a logging camp that far up in the mountains. We bombed but didn't strafe because fuel was low. Tastet and I hit a tanker on the way home. No enemy fire." The flight returned to Takhli after flying for 2 hours and 45 minutes.

*Combat Diary of Capt Robert D. Gobble & 355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 1012.*

### 24-Dec-65 31-Jan-66

164

U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson halted the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign over North Vietnam as well as the bombing of targets in Laos "... to try to reach a peaceful settlement with the communist country." The halt was effective at 6:00 PM Saigon time.

The U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, had been trying for "... a month ... to persuade Johnson to order a bombing pause with the hope that it would open the door to negotiations with Hanoi. The Joint Chiefs, Clark Clifford and many other advisers opposed the idea. But when (National Security Advisor McGeorge) Bundy made it clear that he supported McNamara, a skeptical president finally agreed on December 18 to order a pause."

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Bombing resumed in Laos on 25 December 1965 but the halt over North Vietnam lasted 36 days and 15 hours, ending on 31 January 1966. The 355 TFW never was officially notified of the bombing halt over North Vietnam. The wing was just not fragged for targets in that area.

A total of 25,000 Rolling Thunder sorties were flown in 1965, the first year of the bombing campaign.

The bombing pause interrupted the Iron Hand campaign being conducted by the F-100F Wild Weasels and F-105s at Korat.

*355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 1101 & "The Color of Truth" by Kai Bird, pg 345 & "Interdiction in South Laos 1960 - 1968", pg 103 & "Rolling Thunder", by John T. Smith, pg 335.*

### 25-Dec-65

1784

After eleven months of ROLLING THUNDER, the bombing program had not achieved its objectives. "Of 234 JCS targets in North Vietnam, 134 had been struck by the end of December, 1965." Also, six SAM sites had been destroyed and 5 damaged between July and December 1965. However, the U.S. and the VNAF had lost a total of 171 aircraft with 450 more damaged while flying a total of 23,194 strike sorties. The USAF had lost 80 aircraft, the Navy 83, and the VNAF 8.

At the end of the year, Admiral Sharp, CINCPAC, assessed the effectiveness of the Rolling Thunder program. "When the 'bombing pause' was begun on 24 December, CINCPAC reported that all major LOC's were open and being used extensively by truck traffic. The (north west) rail line from Hanoi to Lao Cai was also open."

"... After some eleven months of Rolling Thunder operations, it was evident the program had not achieved its objective of pressuring Hanoi into halting support of insurgency in South Vietnam and Laos. It did, however, affect the economy of North Vietnam with indications of weakening the economic base."

"Indications pointed to a prolonged struggle, since Hanoi's attitude did not change as a result of Rolling Thunder nor was the NVN morale significantly shaken to produce a change."

CINCPAC stated, "... Rolling Thunder operations had not been conducted in a manner sufficient to increase the pressure on Hanoi in late 1965. Targets vital to effective military operations had not been struck in significant numbers. Enemy military and civilian activities had accommodated to limited operations. ... Rolling Thunder had not forced Hanoi to the decision the U.S. had sought. There was now every indication that Ho Chi Minh intended to continue support of the Viet Cong until denied the capability to do so. He had the political-economic support of the Chicoms which increased his obligation to that regime. This, with pressure from that direction to continue support, probably left him little alternative. This resolve had caused a significant change in the complexion of NVN support to the Viet Cong. With this final conclusion, CINCPAC recommended resumption of the (Rolling Thunder) program."

In 1970, Hq 7 Air Force summarized the results of the bombing campaign between the first attacks against North Vietnam in August 1964 and the Rolling Thunder halt on 25 December 1965. "The results of the 1964 - 1965 campaign were about as expected: neither devastating nor disappointing. On the highest level of national policy, the stepped-up air war in Laos and North Vietnam served notice to the enemy that the US would defend the Republic of Vietnam, and that North Vietnam would suffer for its aggression. However, the bombings also sought to impede logistical support of the Viet Cong in the South. The most noticeable achievement of the Steel Tiger and Rolling Thunder operations was the restricting of enemy movement to night hours. In the North Vietnamese panhandle, the destruction of bridges, the lone railroad, and chains of barracks and supply depots reduced the transportation system to a more primitive, less efficient level. The enemy response of dispersal, shuttles, and night operations increased the time and cost of moving supplies south. However, as CINCPAC emphasized, the bombing could neither stop the movement of supplies nor close the LOCs for any appreciable time. The same held true in the Steel Tiger area, except that the much more primitive road network winding through thick tropical forests presented far fewer lucrative targets."

*Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder #1, pgs 20 - 21 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder, July 1965 - December 1966, Fig. 9 and pg 23 & 7AFP 55-3, "Southeast Asia Air Interdiction Handbook", 7 Air Force, 1 Apr 79, pg 80.*

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

31-Dec-65

5078

The official North Vietnamese history described the air defense improvements they had made during the first year of the air war over North Vietnam.

"When 1965 ended, the Air Defense-Air Force Service had overcome the tremendous challenges of the initial phase of the war. Our air defense cadre and enlisted men had been courageous, steadfast, resourceful, and creative. They had seized the offensive initiative and defeated each of the enemy's escalatory steps and a host of technical and tactical schemes used by the American air forces. After less than one year, the Command's air defense forces were deployed throughout North Vietnam, from the southern part of Military Region 4 up through Route 1 South, Route 1 North, Route 5, the Northwest, and the Northeast."

"... After one year of war, the Service had matured rapidly in all respects. Its air defense combat operations and tactics had grown steadily, demonstrating the creativity and the unique tactics of Vietnamese air defense troops. Fighting and force-building at the same time, the Service's forces had grown constantly. The number of personnel assigned to the Service had grown 2.5 times larger than the number assigned to the service in 1964.

"While at the beginning of 1965 anti-aircraft artillery forces had a total of 14 regiments and 14 independent battalions, by the end of the year this figure had increased to 17 regiments and 41 independent battalions. Our radar forces had grown from three regiments to four regiments. The Air Force had expanded from two regiments to three regiments (two fighter regiments and one air transport regiment). Our [ SA-2 SAM ] missile troops had formed three missile regiments and were actively preparing to form many new regiments."

*"HISTORY OF THE AIR DEFENSE SERVICE", VOLUME II, People's Army Publishing House, Hanoi, 1993, pp 68 - 70, translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

31-Dec-65

5055

In June 1966, the CIA and the DIA jointly published a large Top Secret report, "An Appraisal of the Effects of the First Year of Bombing in North Vietnam", analyzing the 43 weeks of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign from March through December 1965. Some of the information in the report were estimates of the costs to the Soviet Union and China of the aid they provided to North Vietnam.

"In 1965, the levels of military and economic assistance provided to North Vietnam by Communist China and the USSR increased sharply and are believed to have totaled somewhere in the range of \$250 million to \$400 million. After a two-year lull, economic aid, believed to be on the order of \$100 million to \$150 million, was extended to North Vietnam in 1965. Military aid, which previously had been supplied on a very small scale, reached an estimated level of \$150 million to \$200 million in 1965. Technical aid grew to a value estimated at \$10 million to \$25 million.

"This increased assistance to North Vietnam appears to be largely in response to the intensified allied air offensive. By far the largest part of the military equipment (by value) delivered in 1965 represented SAM sites, antiaircraft artillery, and related air defense equipment, most of which was supplied by the USSR. Communist economic and technical assistance to North Vietnam in 1965 consisted in large part of equipment and personnel needed to restore and maintain power, transport, and communications.

"... More than four-fifths of the Soviet deliveries consisted of air defense equipment, including operational SAM sites, antiaircraft artillery, and radar, which together reached an estimated value of roughly \$115 million." (pg 58)

The report provided the status of the U.S. efforts in countering SAM sites during the 1965 bombing campaign.

"From July through December [1965], 27 of North Vietnam's 64 known surface-to-air (SAM) sites were struck. It is believed that no more than 15 to 20 of these sites were operational at any one time. Most of the SAM sites are located within the greater Haiphong-Hanoi area and the remaining sites guard segments of the Hanoi-Vinh, Hanoi-Lao Cai, and Hanoi-Dong Dang rail lines outside the delta region.

"Sixteen of the 27 sites attacked were unoccupied or were staffed with dummy missiles. Eleven of the sites attacked

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

contained SAMs and sustained considerable damage, as shown in the following tabulation:

	Destroyed	Damaged
SAMs	5	1
Sites	0	17
Radar vans	1	2
Missile transporters	10	2
Launchers	4	1
Support buildings	17	30

"Damage to SAM facilities in North Vietnam is estimated to be at least \$630,000. (This total includes cost estimates for SAMs, radar vans, missile transporters, and launchers damaged or destroyed. It is based on an average, reflecting the probability that neither the best nor the newest equipment has been furnished to North Vietnam. It has not been possible to assign a dollar value to the damage of launch sites or support buildings.)

"Initially, SAM installations were designated as JCS targets only, but authority was given later for attacks by armed reconnaissance under strictly limited conditions.

"Approximately 200 missiles were fired in 1965 against allied targets. A total of 10 planes and 7 drones were lost to missiles during the Rolling Thunder program through 24 December." (pg 33)

The CIA/DIA assessment did not consider the number of planes that were lost due to AAA during their attacks on SAM sites.

The report summarized the costs of the bombing to the U.S. forces compared to the costs to the North Vietnamese of the economic and military damage done by the bombing. During the period March through December 1965, the Rolling Thunder program cost the U.S. \$440 million in aircraft losses, sortie overhead costs, and the cost of ordnance expended. The cost of damage to the economy of North Vietnam was \$63 million during this same period. In other words, the U.S. spent nearly \$7 to inflict \$1 worth of damage to North Vietnam. (Illustrations B-16 and B-17)

*"An Appraisal of the Effects of the First Year of Bombing in North Vietnam", CIA/DIA Report, 1 June 1966, declassified 1 Sep 92, in Vir Vietnam Archive, at [www.vietnam/ttu.edu](http://www.vietnam/ttu.edu).*

### 01-Jan-66

6934

At the start of 1966, the halt to the bombing of North Vietnam, initiated by President Johnson on 24 December 1965, was still in effect. It would last the whole month of January. 1966 was the first full year of the Rolling Thunder bombing campaign begun in March 1965. "... The American-South Vietnamese and allied military posture in Southeast Asia had improved over that of [1964]. The U.S. decision in 1965 to alter its mission from advice and support of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) to open participation in air and ground combat had saved the Saigon government, now headed by Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky, from certain defeat."

"... Most of the U.S. air and ground units in South Vietnam and Thailand had arrived in the last half of 1965 in accordance with a 'Phase I' deployment plan adopted in July of that year. Phase II deployments were about to begin."

1966 would be the year in which the anti-SAM programs initiated in 1965 would be fielded. The Wild Weasel I team had deployed with its four F-100Fs to Korat in November 1965 and had proven its SAM hunter-killer concept with a success against a SAM site less than a month later.

In the first part of 1966, the Wild Weasel III F-105Fs began flying from Korat and then in July from Takhli.

After imparting their hard-learned lessons to the F-105F Weasel crews at Korat, the F-100F Wild Weasel team returned to Eglin in July 1966. These returning combat veterans started the Wild Weasel training program at Nellis.

Both Wild Weasel programs proved to be technical and operational successes.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

Also successful were the radar-homing, Navy-developed, AGM-45 Shrike missiles that reached the Navy fleet in March 1966 and which the Air Force first fired a month later from its F-100F Wild Weasels.

Two other successes in 1966 were the Radar Homing and Warning equipment being rapidly installed in fighters and ECM jamming pods that dramatically degraded the effectiveness of the SAMs. Both systems, scarce at first, became so vital that the equipment was deemed necessary to fly into the highly defended north-east regions of North Vietnam.

The one unsuccessful anti-SAM program in 1966 was the F-4C Wild Weasel. In tests at Nellis, the equipment, mounted in a pod in a Sparrow well in the four aircraft, did not meet operational needs. The program's combat deployment was delayed several times throughout 1966. The program was eventually deferred until the system could be redesigned.

However, due to expectations that the defects would be corrected, the team's six two-pilot Wild Weasel crews and two EWOs deployed to Ubon to await the arrival of their aircraft, which never showed up. The skilled pilots didn't wait for their special airplanes but jumped into combat, contributing to the achievements of the MiG-downing 8 TFW. The two EWOs found employment as crew members on EB-66s at Takhli.

The systems deployed and lessons learned in 1966 would influence air combat over North Vietnam for the remainder of the war.

*"USAF Deployment Planning for Southeast Asia 1966", pp 1 - 2, by USAF Historical Division Liaison Office, AFHRA Call # K168.011-2 IRIS # 01056941."*

### 01-Jan-66

7124

While the U.S. Air Force continued developing and fielding anti-SAM forces during 1966, the North Vietnamese Air Defense Service continued expanding their anti-aircraft forces. "After one year of war, the Service had matured rapidly in all respects. Its air defense combat operations and tactics had grown steadily, demonstrating the creativity and the unique tactics of Vietnamese air defense troops. ... The number of personnel assigned to the Service had grown 2.5 times larger than the number assigned to the service in 1964."

As Rolling Thunder missions moved northward, the North Vietnamese steadily moved SAM and AAA units south. "... In January 1966, U.S. aircraft began attacks from Vinh north to Thanh Hoa. ... The Air Defense Command requested that the General Staff maintain a force of sufficient combat strength in the North [to protect Hanoi and Haiphong] and at the same time aggressively send a portion of the Command's forces into Military Region 4 [in North Vietnam's southern panhandle] to join local air defense forces in destroying enemy aircraft and protecting our lines of communications and transportation network. These forces would also be ready to move back north whenever so ordered. The high Command approved this request."

*Vietnamese History of the Air Defense Service, Volume II, Chapter 5, pg 39, translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

### 07-Jan-66

2033

The 333 TFS launched 15 F-105s on Steel Tiger combat missions to Laos. All four flights were with B-66s. Results were unknown.

Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry, 333 TFS, flew his 24th and 25th combat missions. "Got up at 03:00 and took off 1+20 before sunup. That's too damn early. We were to crater a road about 7 NM south of Mu Gia Pass. The rendezvous and refueling were not normal. Tanker screwed up and the last man on got really shorted. We called for an emergency tanker and pressed on to the target. Everyone said we did not hit our assigned target but under the circumstances who can say. I had ATM failure on the return and was very pleased with my handling of the situation. 2+25. 6-750s.

"Second mission was another real late one. B-66. I had a Wild Weasel bird but it was partially bent [a reference to the APR-25 RHAW display being installed in F-105s at Takhli]. The target was 'hit' and we went straight home since it was already dark. Cal landed with a hung 750 [Capt Calvin T. Broadway]. Borden aborted [Maj Robert E.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

Borden]. Ware was 3 [Capt Donald M. Ware]. 3 shipper. I am very tired and unhappy because of these type missions. Only 2 more days of this schedule. Sleep at last. 2+00. 8-750s. I am the 1st one to get the Air Medal."

His Air Medal citation read, "Captain Anthony S. Cushenberry distinguished himself by meritorious achievement while participating in sustained aerial flight as a combat crew member in Southeast Asia from 12 December 1965 to 7 January 1966. During this period, outstanding airmanship and courage were exhibited in the successful accomplishments of important combat missions under extremely hazardous conditions including the continuous possibility of hostile ground fire. His highly professional efforts contributed materially to the tactical air mission of the United States Air Force in Southeast Asia. The professional ability and outstanding aerial accomplishment of Captain Cushenberry reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force."

Capt Martin H. Mahrt from the 333 TFS flew as #2 in a flight of F-105Ds on his 20th combat mission. Capt Robert J. Straubinger was also in the flight. "#20 ST - Had a 06:30 brief which is just right. Flew it as #2 and proved to younger men you can fly formation and shoot the gun too. Straubinger's tanks didn't feed and he was down to 2200#. This was First Friday & went to Mass & Communion. Got a letter from Colleen !! Lost \$1.54 playing cribbage. Have to go to bed early. We have a 03:00 brief tomorrow."

Capt Donald L. Totten from the 334 TFS flew his 94th combat mission today. His mission lasted for 2 hours 15 minutes.

*355 TFW History, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 1345 & edited from combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry and Capt Martin H. Mahrt.*

**08-Jan-66**

4958

Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of The Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a memorandum to Secretary of Defense McNamara recommending the resumption of bombing in North Vietnam. The memo contended that "... continuation of the stand-down is placing our forces under serious and progressively increasing military disadvantage."

The memo stated that the North Vietnamese were continuing their build up of troops and equipment in South Vietnam. "There is increasing evidence that considerable effort to repair damaged LOCs in NVN is now underway. Air defense capabilities [including additional SAM sites] are being improved, and a general recovery program is underway. While intelligence is lacking, DRV self-interest dictates that an increased flow of personnel and war material is moving to SVN. On the basis of past experience, confirming evidence may not become available until personnel and material are identified in SVN or until new units make contact with friendly forces. Of additional concern is the growing ability of the DRV, through reconstitution of its LOCs, to support overt aggression in the south. Thus, the results of our costly air effort against the north will have been negated unless operations of expanded scope are soon resumed. The decision to resume air strikes should be based on enemy capabilities to improve their posture. It should not be contingent upon obtaining hard evidence of infiltration and build-up in SVN.

The memo's conclusion stated, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff therefore recommended that a policy decision be taken now to terminate the stand-down of offensive air operations against the DRV 48 hours subsequent to Shelepin's return to Moscow from Hanoi, by which time the Soviets would have had opportunity to communicate to us any substantive results of his visit."

*FRUS Document 13 at [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_iv/01\\_13.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_iv/01_13.html)*

**10-Jan-66**

6859

"On 10 January 1966, Headquarters USAF directed that an increased Wild Weasel capability be provided to counter the expanding SAM threat. This included the modification of three additional F-100F aircraft to Wild Weasel I configuration, two of which would be deployed to SEA for the Wild Weasel I force after completion of the crew training at Eglin. The third aircraft was to remain in the CONUS for further crew training. TAWC was tasked to establish a training program to qualify ten F-100F aircrews in the operation of the Wild Weasel equipment and in tactics and techniques. Eight of these aircrews would deploy to SEA as replacement of the Wild Weasel I force and the remaining two would stay in the CONUS as crew training instructors. Each crew consisted of an F-

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

100F pilot and an electronic warfare officer (EWO)."

This Eglin class was designated 65WW 1-2.

"The TAWC plan for this training was published in TAWC Oplan 154, Wild Weasel I Replacement Training, January 1966.

"During the period 31 January - 25 February 1966, the Tactical Air Warfare Center trained and qualified ten (10) aircrews in F-100F Wild Weasel equipped aircraft.

"The program was conducted in two phases. The first, a one-week session at North American Aviation, Long Beach, California, gave the aircrews an introduction to the equipment and the mission and allowed them to fly missions in an aircraft simulator equipped with Wild Weasel type equipment. The second phase was ground and flight training at the Tactical Air Warfare Center at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

"During the flight training phase, the crews simulated attacks against several radars in the Eglin complex including a mobile radar used in conjunction with several simulated missile sites and Vietnamese villages with varying degrees of camouflage. These flights trained the aircrews in the operation of the Wild Weasel equipment and in tactics.

"Ground training included review of the Wild Weasel program and results, both at Eglin and in Southeast Asia, general and specialized intelligence, escape and evasion, equipment theory and operation, mission planning, and tactics. Approximately 55 hours of ground instruction was given to each crew member during his training at Long Beach and Eglin.

"Each crew departed Eglin after its second week of training, the last two crews ferrying the aircraft to Southeast Asia. A total of eight crews were deployed, two remaining in the CONUS as crew training instructors."

*TAWC Report "Wild Weasel I Replacement Training" dated March 1966, AFHRA Call # K417.0732-20, IRIS # 1008602.*

### 10-Jan-66

7102

On 10 January 1966, Headquarters USAF also "... directed that an increased Wild Weasel capability be provided to SEA. This program, nicknamed Wild Weasel Roman 3, was to follow the same basic concept as Wild Weasel Roman 1 but would employ F-105F aircraft with other supplemental electronic equipment [not] installed in the F-100F aircraft. The additional 'Heads-Up' system was to be complementary to the RHAW equipment and directed towards providing a blind target marking/weapons delivery capability."

The program was tested at Eglin AFB under TAC Test 65-85B and APGC Project Number 0510T-3.

"... The following equipment was installed in the [five test] aircraft with appropriate OT&E:

"A. APR-25V, Model Number 4A1, Vector Homing and Warning System manufactured by Applied Technology, Inc. (ATI). This system is designed to provide homing and warning of S, C, and X-Band signals with instantaneous relative bearing to the radiating source. Threat warning lights and CRTs (scopes) duplicated in both cockpits indicate the type of emitter and relative bearing. All active audio signals are available for operator alerting.

"B. IR-133 Panoramic Scan Receiver (ATI). This system is designed to receive and display signals within a 2 to 4 GC RF range. The display unit provides for a limited analysis of received signal characteristics. IR-133A functions are: signal analysis, DF/homing, and gating of other receivers.

"C. APR-26V, Model WR-300-1 (ATI). The APR-26V is a crystal video airborne warning receiver operating in the 700 to 850 megacycle range (L-Band). The receiver detects the presence of signals radiating from ground based, missile guidance equipment and identifies the threat to the aircrew with indicator lights as to low level activity or high level imminent launch/intercept conditions.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"D. Tape Recorder. This unit is to record all signal audio/voice received or transmitted by any Wild Weasel Roman 3 aircraft and any conversation passed between the two aircrew members. This information will be utilized for timely analysis of capabilities, tactics, and RHAW system performance.

"E. Strike Camera (KA-71 substituted for the KA-60). The strike camera is to provide timely confirmation and/or intelligence of the radar installations located and/or attacked by the RHAW equipped F-105F aircraft.

"F. Pointer Roman 3 'Heads Up' homing equipment. This equipment is to provide on the fire control combing glass a display of the target at a 1 to 1 ratio with surface images. In this manner both azimuth and elevation information is available."

The Eglin test program had eight objectives:

"1. Determine the RHAW installation acceptability in an F-105F and confirm the system's warning features, plus the homing accuracies.

"2. Functionally check those items not specifically RHAW equipment, i.e. tape recorder, strike camera.

"3. Train and develop the capability of the aircrew to detect, home, and place the aircraft within visual range of the threat radar during its constant emission and when it is turned off after the initial bearing information is received. This aircrew capability will be obtained through a ground and flying training program.

"4. Develop and/or further refine the tactics for employment of the F-105F against SAM targets based on the latest available information and recommendations obtained.

"5. Effectively test any additional equipment which may be made available for this weapon system.

"6. Develop the organization necessary for the proper employment of this system and to train the assigned personnel in the use and maintenance of the equipment.

"7. At the completion of the Eglin OT&E phase, deploy the Wild Weasel Roman 3 package to SEA as an entity for combat employment as directed.

"8. Specifically train crews for Shrike delivery employing captive systems."

*USAF TAWC TWX 262155Z May 66 in PACAF DO Read File 28 - 31 May 66, AFHRA Call #K17.312, IRIS # 1035162.*

**15-Jan-66**

1731

Four F-105 pilots from the 6234 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, completed 100 combat missions over North Vietnam and Laos. Two of the pilots were from the 469 TFS and two belonged to the 421 TFS. All four pilots had flown combat missions during the deployment of the 357 TFS to Korat in June and July 1965.

After two pilots from the 334 TFS on temporary duty at Takhli became the first F-105 pilots to fly 100 missions on 11 January 1965, these four from Korat were the second set of F-105 pilots to complete 100 combat missions during the Vietnam war.

The lineup of "Elm" flight and the F-105Ds the pilots flew were:

- #1 - Capt William T. Ramage from the 421 TFS flying 61-0201
- #2 - Capt Richard K. Ely from the 421 TFS flying 62-4242
- #3 - Capt William Thomas May from the 469 TFS flying 62-4325
- #4 - Capt Gilbert Bruce Holmes from the 469 TFS flying 62-4334
- Spare - Capt Fred H. de Jong from the 469 TFS in 62-4326

The flight took off from Korat at 12:50 with a scheduled time-over-target of 13:25.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

"Pilots of the 469th designed the new traditional '100 mission patch' which can be seen proudly displayed on flying suits around the world. The first patches were made in Bangkok in time for (this) mission ... ."

"The 469th also initiated the '100 mission reception' for the returning fighter pilot which consisted of: a motor escort from the end of the runway to the ramp (fire engines, pick-up trucks, motorcycles); congratulations from the Wing commander, Squadron Commander, and the entire squadron; champagne, a case of beer for the crew chief; immediate removal of the duty flying suit and its replacement with one with the 100 mission patch on the shoulder; the 'ringing-of-the-bell' in the bar; and many other variations as time went by. The 100 mission reception immediately became a great morale booster for the entire base and spread to bases throughout Southeast Asia. ... The joy of the returning pilot and the exuberant reception served, also, to remind fellow pilots that 'there is a way' to reach the 100 mission mark."

Capt May received the Air Medal (second and third Oak Leaf Clusters) for "meritorius achievement while participating in aerial flight" during the period 1 Nov 1965 to 15 January 1966 when he completed his 100th combat mission with the 469 TFS. (Capt May's award certificate)

After his 100th mission, Capt May was interviewed as part of the 469 TFS oral history program instituted by Maj Robert M. Krone, the squadron's Operations Officer. The 30-minute tape recorded interview was conducted by the squadron historian Capt Harold V. Smith. Comments during the interview included:

Smith - Could you compare the feelings that you had on your first few missions with your last few missions and how they differed? Do you think - do you feel that combat could ever become routine - the type of flying that we've done here?

May - Yeah, yeah sure do. As a matter of fact, I feel as though that the last few - not just the last few but for some time now - it's been a routine type thing. Not that the mission itself is going to be a snap or a piece of cake. That's not what I mean; but it's the fact that you're not all clanked when you go out to the airplane, when you're sitting around before you go out, and when you're in the target area. The first couple of missions all you're doing is hanging on, you know. You're really not paying that much attention to where you're going or what you're going to do when you get there.

Smith - ... Do you personally feel, and this is strictly your opinion, do you think there is any other type tactic change that you'd like to see them make if you had 100 missions to fly ahead of you instead of behind you; anything in particular that you'd like to see them change?

May - Well, yeah. I'm sure I'm not alone in this -- that is to stay away from as much as possible the big gaggle-type missions. It looks like we're going back into this. I don't know what happened to bring this back on because we thought at one time they had learned from past experience that we were losing too many unnecessary aircraft simply because of the mass gaggle.

Smith - How do you feel about standardization, Willie, on the standardization programs that you've been involved with since you've been in TAC in their relation to combat flying -- the standardization at this base right now? Or do you think that we should have it? What do you think of it?

May - There is a place for it. ... I don't think it's over the target. If standardization is drummed into you to the point where you can't say what you want to say over the radio without being called down on it. In other words, being told how to make certain calls, just taking the active, or landing, this can get to the point where people are going to be reluctant to call out something that might be needed. Not just in the target area but with tanking, with the tankers in refueling. Standardization is great when everyone understands that they want something done in one manner. But to go to the smallest detail in making these standards, I think they're pushing it too far. Training? That's great. You know, you're teaching someone how to do something and you might as well teach them the right way. But you've got a wing full of people here; well, I think they're through training.

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

Smith - ... Is there any particular mission that stands out in your mind as far as being particularly hairy or interesting?

May - Oh yeah. That's the one that we've already been through -- 27th of July. I think I'll probably remember that date. That was the first SAM strike. ..."

*William T. May mission card in Nat'l USAF Museum archives & "100th Mission", monograph by Col Robert M. Krone, August 1970 & extracts from transcript of May's 100 mission interview.*

**18-Jan-66**

5531

An F-100F Wild Weasel I crew attached to the 6234 TFW at Korat flew with a flight of four F-105Ds flown by pilots from the 469 TFS on an Iron Hand mission over Laos. "Spruce" flight took off at 06:20 and refueled from "Ginger 22" at 0710 to meet a TOT of 08:00. The flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj John J. "Jack" Gaudion in 59-1768

#2 - Capt William Thomas May in 61-0181 three days after flying his 100th mission

#3 - Capt Gordon E. Lewis in 61-0188

#4 - Capt Frank R. O'Neill in 62-4315

#5 - Capt Allen T. Lamb and EWO Capt John E. Donovan in F-100F 58-1226. 3:35 flying time

F-105D Spare - Capt Anthony J. "Tony" Gangol in 62-4410

F-100F Airborne Spare - Capt George H. Kerr and EWO Capt Donald J. Madden in 58-1221. 1:30 flying time.

Shortly after this mission, Capt May left Korat. "When the four guys finished their 100, they had no orders so they were told to go and hide in Bangkok until they could cut the orders. They were also told they could pick their next assignment. So, In February of '66 we were at Williams AFB in AZ where Willie was an IP in the T-38 -- which he loved -- said it was like driving a sports car after the 'Thud'. ..." (Betty May, e-mail)

After his combat tour at Korat in F-105s, Willie May's assignments were:

Feb 1966 - 1 Jan 1969 - T-38 Instructor Pilot, Williams AFB, AZ.

1 Jan 1969 - 15 July 1971 - Chief of Safety, 3525 Pilot Training Wing, Williams AFB.

30 Jul 1971 - 6 July 73 - Flying Safety Officer, Hq 13 Air Force, Clark AB, Phillipines.

July 73 - Sept 1974 - Remote assignment to Korat and then back to the Phillipines.

27 Sept 1974 - 31 Jul 1977 - Safety Division Chief, 31 TFW, Homestead AFB, FL.

He retired in August 1977 as a Lt Col at Homestead and moved his family to California.

*William T. May mission card in Nat'l USAF Museum archives & "Test and Evaluation of Threat Radar Homing and Warning Systems 'V Weasel I' (Southeast Asia Phase)" pg 80, AFHRA Call # K143.5072-5, IRIS 0470670 & Betty May, e-mail May 31, 2009.*

**18-Jan-66**

4959

In anticipation of renewed bombing of North Vietnam, General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, sent a memorandum to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommending that the level of the bombing be significantly increased.

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff have reviewed the air strike program against NVN, taking into account the recent views of CINCPAC. They have concluded that restrained air strikes against the north, as conducted thus far, will not achieve the primary military objective of causing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) to cease its support and direction of the aggression in South Vietnam (SVN). The piecemeal nature of the attacks against the DRV has permitted the enemy greater freedom to replenish and disperse his stocks, redirect the flow of materials, and improve his defenses. The geographic restrictions and limitation on the number of armed reconnaissance sorties authorized have limited effective interdiction of the extensive rail, highway, and inland waterway LOCs. Moreover, these restrictions and the requirement for single coordinated attacks on specified targets have exposed our forces to greater risks.

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that offensive air operations against NVN should be resumed now with a sharp

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

---

## Research Notes

---

blow and thereafter maintained with uninterrupted, increasing pressure. ... These operations should be conducted in such a manner and be of sufficient magnitude to: deny the DRV large-scale external assistance; destroy those resources already in NVN which contribute most to the support of aggression; destroy or deny use of military facilities; and harass, disrupt, and impede the movement of men and materials into SVN.

"The destruction of resources already in NVN would include the entire POL bulk and dispersed storage, distribution, and transportation system which contributes directly to the movement of supplies to the south. Large military facilities in the northern part of NVN would be destroyed. An intensified armed reconnaissance program, without sortie limitation, would be mounted to harass, disrupt, and attrite the dispersed supply and transport activities which have been identified through detailed intelligence analysis. Day and night air operations would concentrate on LOC centers, predicted traffic flow areas, transshipment points, vehicle/boat concentrations, and LOC exits from the DRV. Electric power would be disrupted in order to hamper command and control as well as bring home to the DRV leadership and populace the heavy price of continuing the war. As in the past, these attacks would be designed to minimize civilian casualties and damage to population centers.

"The increasing DRV air capability is a continuing threat to the security of our military forces and should be destroyed. In the execution of the air campaign, continuous surveillance of DRV airfields would be maintained. The neutralization of these airfields must be authorized whenever interference with our planned air operations, or offensive air actions against our military forces in SVN, is initiated. Further, the operational commander must be furnished the authority to deal with the SAM threat, as required to prevent interference with planned air operations.

...

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff, therefore, recommend that:

a. The authorized area for offensive air operations be expanded to include all of NVN less the area encompassed by a ten-mile radius around Hanoi/Phuc Yen Airfield, a four-mile radius around Haiphong, and a twenty-mile China buffer zone. Exceptions to permit selected strikes within these restricted areas, in accordance with the air campaign described herein, will be conducted only as authorized by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

b. Numerical sortie limitations on armed reconnaissance in NVN be removed.

c. No tactical restrictions or limitations be imposed upon the execution of the specific air strikes.

d. The Joint Chiefs of Staff be authorized to direct CINCPAC to conduct an air campaign against the DRV as described herein.

*Document 27. Memorandum From the Joint Chiefs of Staff to Secretary of Defense McNamara, JCSM-41-66 at [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_iv/14\\_29.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_iv/14_29.html)*

**21-Jan-66**

7125

Some North Vietnamese SAM regiments began moving into the southern panhandle of North Vietnam. "During the Tet Lunar New Year celebration, [North Vietnam's] 236th Missile Regiment and the 230th AAA Regiment were ordered to make all necessary preparations to move south into Military Region 4 [in the southern panhandle]. ... There were ... concerns about moving into an unfamiliar area that was under ferocious attack by the enemy air force. This was especially true of the 236th Missile Regiment, which had just suffered heavy losses ... [on 7] November 1965. ... Following guidance from the Service Party Current Affairs Committee and the Air Defense Headquarters, the Party Committees and command groups of the two regiments agreed upon tactics: 'The missiles will conduct guerilla-style battles, fighting when victory is certain, and engaging at night or when the sun has almost set in order to limit the enemy's capability of reacting. ... All forces will actively support and defend one another.'

"After reviewing the situation in preparation for crossing the Ham Rong [Dragon's Jaw] Bridge, on the eve of the Tet Lunar New Year, ... the commander of the 236th Missile Regiment ordered 61st Battalion to move from its firing position in Ha Trung (Thanh Hoa Province), cross the Ham Rong Bridge, and occupy a firing position at Sim (also in Thanh Hoa). This was the first time in the battle history of our missile forces that our missile forces had

# Wild Weasel History - 1962 - 1972

## Research Notes

---

crossed the 20th Parallel and moved further south."

*Vietnamese History of the Air Defense Service, Volume II, Chapter 5, pp 40 - 41, translated by Merle Pribbenow.*

**31-Jan-66 28-Feb-66**

1033

The 37-day bombing halt against targets in North Vietnam came to an end when President Johnson approved Rolling Thunder 48 (RT 48). "President Johnson's statement announcing the resumption of air strikes was broadcast over radio and television from the White House Theater at 10 a.m. on January 31. ... Later the same morning Secretary Rusk made a statement on the resumption of the bombing and held a news conference." (FRUS Document 57. Editorial Note, at [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_iv/55\\_70.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_iv/55_70.html))

"The restart of the bombing campaign saw the re-imposition of several of the restrictions on the bombing. The armed reconnaissance sorties were again restricted to below 21 degrees north. The weather was particularly bad during February limiting the carrying out of the package." The attacks "... concentrated on the transport system." They were "... also limited to 300 sorties a day for both the Navy and the Air Force."

The start of Rolling Thunder 48, also marked the third of six "phases" of the Rolling Thunder campaign. This third phase lasted until 31 March 1966. (Air Interdiction in WW II, Korea, and Vietnam", USAF Warrior Studies, Office of Air Force History, footnote pg 61.)

"... Rolling Thunder 48 ... consist(ed) only of armed reconnaissance strikes south of twenty-one degrees north and, as usual, prohibiting air operations in the vital Hanoi/Haiphong area an the northeast sector. Further, SAM suppression operations were now to be restricted to this armed reconnaissance area. We were starting 1966 with heavier restrictions than we had had in late 1965! The vacillating nature of the air campaign could not help but be readily apparent to the enemy and must have convinced him that his propaganda was having the desired effect."

Starting with Rolling Thunder 48, " ... weekly bombing programs were replaced by five multiweek programs (RT 48, 49, 50, 51, and 52) each lasting from one to four months." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 24.)

"Bombing for Rolling Thunder 48 was to be south and west of a line due west from the coast at latitude 20-31N to longitude 105-20E, then due north to 21 degrees north, then due west to the Laos border. A maximum daily strike level of only 300 sorties - rather than 450 or 500 - was established. ... Sorties would be apportioned, with route packages 2 and 3 receiving the majority of the sorties. Strike aircraft should concentrate on moving targets along infiltration routes leading into Laos and the principal north-south rail, highway and waterway routes, with second priority for pontoon bridges, truck parks, and transshipment and dispersed storage areas." ("Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 225.)

"The program was plagued by bad weather and although there were a few strikes on 31 January, they did very little damage because no surprise was achieved. ... "

On 31 January 1966, " ... the 355 TFW was scheduled to fly 62 combat sorties, but due to poor weather, and higher headquarters cancellations, only a small portion of the aircraft completed their mission successfully."

*"Rolling Thunder" by John T. Smith, pgs 85 & 335 & "Strategy for Defeat", by Admiral U.S.G. Sharp, USN (Ret.), pg 111 & Project CHECO, Rolling Thunder #1, pg 33 & 355 TFW history, microfilm NO461, frame 1294.*

**03-Feb-66**

1623

"Plymouth" flight, four F-105Ds from the 333 TFS, bombed a road choke point in North Vietnam. Pilots were:

#1 - Maj John M. Lowery

#2 - Capt Robert J. Tastet

#3 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt on his 39th combat mission (38 counters)

#4 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 62-4378 on his 37th combat mission (36 counters).

Departing after an 05:10 briefing, each aircraft dropped eight 750-pound bombs, cratering the road. As they pulled off the target, they encountered light to moderate flak from a nearby AAA site. Lead's plane was hit lightly with