

# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

## F-105 History

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**20-Aug-67**

235

The thirteenth F-105 RTU Class 68AR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 17 Mar 67 with 18 pilots. However, three pilots with no single-engine background were eliminated due to T-33 flying deficiencies and were re-assigned to PACAF. One pilot was eliminated because he could not roll the aircraft. One was washed back to another class due to an appendectomy. Fourteen graduated with the class.

The class deployed 20 F-105s for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 4 - 14 Aug 67 with the 561 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Lawrence E. McKenney.

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong won the Top Student award. He was assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat. Maj Kenneth E. Stout won the Top Gun award. He was assigned to Takhli.

Other pilots in the class and their SEA assignments were:

Lt Col William N. Reed - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Eddie Vernon Deck - 357 TFS Takhli
Maj William C. Diehl, Jr. - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Harold E. Forman - 357 TFS Takhli
Maj Lucian A. Ferguson - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Rodney W. McLean - 357 TFS Takhli
Maj Robert F. Grubb - 469 TFS Korat	Capt Ronald D. Patchett - 333 TFS Takhli
Maj Donald W. Hodge - 34 TFS Korat	Maj James J. Reynolds - 357 TFS Takhli
Lt Col Robert W. Smith - 34 TFS Korat	Maj Frank D. Shultz, Jr. - 333 TFS Takhli

*23 TFW History, Jan - Jun 67, USAF microfilm MO554 & Airpower History, Spring 1996, "Were We Sitting Ducks" by Spence M. Armstrong.*

**01-Oct-67**

4824

Seven F-105 pilots from RTU Class 68AR arrived at Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The men were assigned as strike pilots to the 388 TFW's two strike squadrons. Those assigned to the 469 TFS were:

Lt Col William N. Reed  
Maj Robert F. Grubb  
Maj Lucian A. Ferguson  
Maj William C. Diehl, Jr.

The pilots assigned to the 34 TFS were:

Lt Col Robert W. Smith  
Maj Donald W. Hodge  
Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

Maj Armstrong, who had been an Air Force pilot for 11 years, along with Lt Col Smith, and Lt Col Reed, had departed the States from Travis Air Force Base and had stopped at Clark AB, Phillipines where they attended Jungle Survival School for a week. They arrived at Korat on a C-47 from Bangkok.

Maj Armstrong kept a notebook log in which he documented each of the 102 combat missions that he flew during the next 6 1/2 months.

*Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 1 - 3.*

**05-Oct-67**

4827

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his first combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 1. F-105D 60-0464. Call Sign: "Waco". Take Off: 1450. Mission length: 1 + 50. Flight Lineup:

#1 - Bob Martin. [Capt Robert L. Martin, 34 TFS]

#2 - Me

"2-ship flight Route Package 1. Fraggged against highway bridge on NVN Route #1 about 10 miles north of DMZ. Diverted in flight to F-100 FAC who picked out 2 trucks in trees next to dirt road south of Quang Che. Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) was 50% bombs on target, one truck damaged. Ordnance - 6 x 750 # GP bombs. No pre or post-strike refueling. No hostile fire sighted."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 1.*

**05-Oct-67**

4826

On the day of his first combat mission over North Vietnam, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS, attended an aircrew briefing at Korat..

"On the 5th of October, all of the pilots were called to a briefing in the Base Theater. Col. Ed (Red) Burdett, our wing commander had just returned from a mandatory meeting in Saigon with General Momyer, the 7th Air Force commander. The purpose of the meeting was to relate to the wing commanders of all of the combat wings the concern that existed in Washington that civilians were being killed in our bombing attacks. I later appreciated the fact that you couldn't be too accurate when shells were flying by your cockpit so it was not a surprise that some bombs fell short. None-the-less, Col. Burdett dutifully passed on the admonition to be more accurate in our bombing -- he never alluded to the fact that he had been instructed to make this speech although we all knew this was the case. He was true to the modicum that commanders never alibi their directions on higher headquarters.

"Major Aquilla Britt of the 469 TFS rose to ask why we weren't trying to rescue Bob Barnett. His words were: 'Why are we bombing 'nit-noi' bridges when poor Bob Barnett is desperately calling for help. Col. Burdett didn't get a chance to respond because the vice wing commander, Col. Jack Flynn rose from his seat in the front row, faced the audience and said: 'Col. Burdett has requested a rescue effort and it has been denied. We don't know the rationale but Col. Burdett personally tried'. That satisfied the pilots. Ironically, the next day a rescue effort was attempted and several aircraft were shot up and they found that a North Vietnamese was now talking over the survival radio. Bob became a POW who was released with the others in 1973."

*Lt General (Ret) Sam Armstrong, unpublished manuscript in chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 6.*

**09-Oct-67**

4828

In the afternoon, two 2-ship flights from the 34 TFS attacked targets in North Vietnam.

Maj John O. Rollins, flying his 100th mission, led Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong in F-105D 61-0132 on his second combat mission into North Vietnam. "Cambo" flight took off at 15:25 for a mission lasting 1 hour 50 minutes. "2-ship flight fraggged against a natural river ford in Laos just west of Vietnam but was unable to go to target due to heavy cloud coverage in eastern Thailand and Vietnam. Instead we received a Combat Sky Spot (CSS) and dropped our 12 bombs together from level flight at 18,000 ft. Target was Mu Gia Pass. Could not see impact because of clouds. Came back to Korat and made low pass in trail and tactical pitchup to honor Maj Rollins completing his 100 missions."

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With a takeoff time of 16:00, Capt David L. Burney flying F-105D 61-0126 led "Laredo" flight. It was his 95th mission. "Laredo 02" was Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying his second combat mission in 60-0409. The flight's spare was Capt Robert M. Crane in 60-0428. Their three targets were:

Primary: 19-37N and 103-27E  
Secondary: 20-02N and 103-43E  
Tertiary: 16-59N and 106-56E

Jake Shuler described the flight in his log. "Proceeded directly to Orange Anchor and refueled with OA 52. 'Rainbow' flight from Takhli was on the tanker when we got there and we were told that all four of us were to orbit with tanker for possible rescap. Before I finished my one gulper, we were notified to go to primary target. Had comm problems with Cricket but finally was turned over to Firefly 17 and 18 (an A-1E and an Air America O-1E). Rainbow flight was already there and the A-1E dropped some 500# bombs to mark the target for them and they got 100% on target, 50% coverage. I still had not acquired the target but Dave had. Firefly 18 told us that he would mark our target with Willie Peter and as he rolled in, I caught sight of him but did not pick up the WP just before Dave rolled in. I rolled in and pickled 9000' above the target. We got 100% on target and 75% coverage and the FAC was pleased. Saw the bomb craters but couldn't see much. We came on home and landed uneventfully.

"Maj James Clements [469 TFS, POW] was shot today by a MiG-21. A chute was seen but no voice contact or beeper. This was the seventh aircraft we have lost since I have been here. Maj Barnett (SAM), Maj Clements (MiG-21), Capt Trautman, Maj Fullum (85), Joe Howard (MiG-21) and his GIB all in Route Pack Six. A Weasel went in in route pack five for unknown reasons and another Weasel ran off the end of runway due to a chute & hook fail and no utility hydraulic pressure. Logged 2+05".

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. flew his 2nd combat mission as "Cleveland 02". His target was a Ba Nam highway segment in RP-1. Due to weather, he dropped his bombs by Sky Spot.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 1 & Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet and "Mission #2 Narrative" via e-mail 28 July 2010 & Rufus Dye, Mission History log.*

**11-Oct-67**

4829

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his third combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 3. F-105D 62-4270. Call Sign: "Cleveland". Take Off: 07:35. Mission Length: 1+50.  
Flight Lineup:

#1 - David B. Waldrop [1Lt David B. Waldrop III].

#2 - Me

"2-ship flight fragged against a road section across a stream in Laos very close to Mu Gia Pass. Weather was bad in target area and we had to use CSS to drop. Drop was routine from 17,000' and bombs disappeared into clouds with no Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA). Made weather reconnaissance sweep over Pack 1 to get counter. Waldrop is the 1/Lt who shot down 2 MiGs one day back in August. [As a 34 TFS pilot, Waldrop was officially credited with shooting down one MiG-17 on 23 August 1967.] GCA recovery into Korat."

"That afternoon late I walked over to the club and went into the bar. I noticed that something was unusual. I noted that some guys from Takhli were raising hell in our bar. I learned later that they had flown over on a C-47 and bombed the base with toilet paper and put dye marker in the pool before going to the bar. They were doing carrier landings on some tables wet down with large quantities of beer. Then I noticed a familiar figure - my old room mate, Ted Moeller [Capt

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Theodore G. Moeller, 357 TFS]. He was doing his flame thrower routine by putting lighter fluid in his mouth and spewing it out over a cigarette lighter. I had a chance to speak with him briefly before we took them down to the rathskeller for dinner and threw them into the pool before their 10 p.m. ride back home."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 1 & chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 9.*

**12-Oct-67**

4830

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his fourth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 4. F-105D 59-1759. Call Sign: "Dallas". Take Off: 0730. Mission Length: 2+50. Flight Lineup:

#1 - Dwight Sullivan [Maj Dwight Everett "Sully" Sullivan, POW 17 Oct 67]

#2 - Me

"2-ship flight fragged against two targets in Laos in the northern part [Barrel Roll]. Cloud decks in this area caused us to be diverted by Cricket to Rt Pack I and a F-100 FAC. We refueled going north out of Korat before the swing down to lower Rt Pack I. Consequently we were almost out of gas and the F-100 FAC was in the NW corner of the package so the flight leader decided to pick out a target of opportunity near Quang Khe. He tried for a suspected truck park and I dropped mine down a road along the river. My bombs hit right on the road and will undoubtedly cause them some grief. An F-105F failed to get a drag chute, blew both tires while taking the barrier and the field was closed for 30 minutes. So back for an emergency refueling so we could stay airborne until the field opened, which we did."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 1 - 2.*

**13-Oct-67**

4831

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his fifth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 5. F-105D 58-1170. Call Sign: "Fresno". Take Off: 1500. Mission Length: 1+30. Flight Lineup:

# 1 - Rod Giffin [ Maj Roderick Gene Giffin].

#2 - Me

"2-ship flight fragged both primary and secondary against a target in South Laos [Steel Tiger]. The target was a natural ford over a stream. We had to circumnavigate some thunderstorms to get to the area. Once there we had two A-1Es mark the road they wanted cut. Rod hit his mark and caused 40 yards of dirt slide along the road. I was slow and low when I finally had my target worked and consequently had poor dive angle. My bombs overshot the road by 200 feet and hit the stream. My bombing problem was compounded by my attack heading which was downslope of the hillside which was the same as my dive angle, 30-degrees. Since we had no tanker and our fuel was low, the armed reconnaissance of Package I, 100 miles to the north, was accomplished "tongue in cheek" for a counter."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 2.*

**15-Oct-67**

4832

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his sixth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 6. F-105D 60-5376. Call Sign: "Vegas". Take Off: 1525. Mission Length: 2+25. Flight Lineup:

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- #1 - Jim King [Maj William J. King]
- #2 - Me
- #3 - Skeets Henzig [Maj Floyd E. Henzig]
- #4 - "Lefty" Leftwich [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]

"This was my first mission that was scheduled to go into Pack VIA. Weather in the Bac Ninh railway area was forecast to be bad so 7th AF cancelled the primary and first alternate targets and put us in on targets in southern Laos with a FAC. We hit a tanker and went off Nakon Phanom [TACAN] for 103-degrees [radial]/ 83 [nautical miles] & hit a wooded area where the FAC marked it for us. We got all of our bombs right on the target but couldn't get any BDA due to the trees. The FAC said that there were V.C. down there shooting at him. We came out and got 2500# of fuel from a post-strike tanker and practiced some ECM pod formation & roll in on the way home. VFR landing."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 2.*

**16-Oct-67**

1438

Thirteen days after Maj Bob Barnett from the 469 TFS was shot down on a raid against this target, F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed the Dap Cau railroad bypass bridge (BE 616-02440) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-12-40N and 107-05-27E. Reconnaissance photos on 17 October revealed the bridge was still serviceable.

The 388 TFW also bombed the nearby Dap Cau Railroad Bridge (JCS 16). Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his seventh combat mission into North Vietnam against this target.

Mission 7. F-105D 58-1152. Call Sign: "Hatchet". Take Off: 1410. Mission Length: 3+35. Flight Lineup:

Mission Commander - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying his 77th counter for 3.6 hours.

- #1 - Lefty Leftwich [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]
- #2 - Me
- #3 - Jim King [Maj William J. King]
- #4 - Larry Klinestiver [Capt Larry R. Klinestiver]

"This was my first mission into Package VIA and what an eye opener. The length of the flight was one thing and the intensity of the AAA fire was the other. We went the sea route which meant we refueled out over the Gulf of Tonkin and entered NVN north of Hanoi heading due west. There were 16 strike aircraft in the gaggle plus 4 MIGCAP F-4s and 4 F-105Fs for Iron Hand (SAM suppression). I saw 2 SAM launches on the way in to the target (Dap Cau Railroad Bridge [JCS 16], 16 miles N.E. of Hanoi) and one on egress. Our flight carried CBU to suppress flak. When we rolled in, I saw many, many orange and grey flashes coming right at me. I was told later that these were 37 & 57 mm fire, but I didn't see how we could get through them unscathed but we did. I dropped when & where Lefty did. We were attacked on the way out by 4 MiGs who fired a missile ineffectively because of our turn." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 2 - 3.)

"This particular target was the Dap Cau railroad bridge 16 miles Northeast of Hanoi. We went the water route which meant that we crossed the Northern part of South Vietnam and rendezvous with the tankers out over the Gulf of Tonkin. The tankers took us up to the 19th parallel where we dropped off with a full load and headed inland just North of Haiphong. On the way in I observed my first two SA-2 launches but they were not a threat to my flight. There was a lot of flak in the air and I lost track of the target so when Left Leftwich, the flight leader, rolled into his dive I followed him down the chute and dropped my bombs a couple of counts after I saw his released. There was 57-

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mm and 37-mm flying by my cockpit in the dive. The red hot ingots reminded me of fireflies in the headlights of a car on a country road at night. It was hard to figure why one of those didn't hit me but it didn't. There was one more SA-2 fired as we exited and a report of some MiGs who fired missiles at us without effect. We didn't lose any aircraft and the photos showed we got some good hits on the bridge. We refueled on the way home and I logged a 3+35 flight and put a red mark on my Aussie hat back in the locker room to signify that I had flown in Pack VIA. We used blue ink marks around the hat band for non VIA missions. This was my 'baptism under fire!' (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 10.)

*Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.*

**18-Oct-67**

1440

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Lang Dang railroad storage yard (BE 616-01586) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-38-02N and 106-35-11E in the northeast buffer zone. Pre-strike photo coverage obtained on 17 October revealed 38 pieces of rolling stock in the yard. Post-strike coverage acquired on 18 October revealed 12 pieces of rolling stock damaged or destroyed, two repair buildings were damaged, the yard was unserviceable, and all through rail lines were interdicted. The target was struck again on 23 and 24 October 1967.

A draft news release from the 388 TFW described the mission. "F-105 Thunderchiefs of the 388 TFW struck two railroad yards in the buffer zone south of Lang Son, about half way between Lang Son and Kep airfield complex.

"The mission commander, Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, 34 TFS, said, 'The weather was clear, which was a change from the usual. It's usually cloudy and pretty overcast. Target acquisition was very simple -- you can always find a railroad. There's a whole slew of them along that northeast rail line. We rolled in on it and saw some strings of bombs going through the yards. We saw one exceedingly large secondary just off the yard. It was rather large, brilliant white flash, several hundred feet in diameter, I'd say, and a good cloud of smoke coming off of it. It wasn't POL -- there was no black smoke. It was probably munitions storage of some sort. Coming off the target, the reaction of flak wasn't as fast as usual. They started shooting and 37/57 was going off around everybody. They've got a lot of guns up there and they used them all today. Our flak suppression troops got some of the guns. They had 85s up there. There were quite a few sites going off. It was quite a bit slow in reacting, quite surprisingly. I think we got them a little bit by surprise. We used a little different approach this time and it seemed to work. Nobody got hit, which is nice. It seemed to be a rewarding mission. We had secondaries and good bombs. We got all our planes in and all of them out. I think it was a good mission. There was a train with about 40 cars sitting down there. We just walked our bombs through. They had apparently unloaded it already -- there weren't any secondaries. There is a few less rolling stock in North Vietnam today.

"There were a few MiG calls. They didn't press the attack on the strike force. Nobody in the strike force saw any MiGs. The calls were mostly about the MiGs being around us but quite a distance away. Our MiG CAP did a pretty good job. It was a smooth mission." It was Capt Hoppe's 78th counter. He flew for 3.3 hours.

"Also on the mission was Maj Dalton L. 'Lefty' Leftwich, 39, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. He is a member of the 34 TFS." (Draft 388 TFW News Release, undated, provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010.)

Two pilots from the 469 TFS were on this strike. Lt Col William C. Decker flew F-105D 61-0132 and his gun camera film showed M-117s dropping and smoke on the railroad complex. Lt Col William N. Reed flew F-105D 59-1743 and his camera film also showed M-117s dropping and a

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small impact on the complex.

Maj Kenneth W. Mays from the 34 TFS also flew on this mission. "On October 18, 1967 I was fortunate to be a flight lead on what was thought to be a tough mission. The target was a railyard and bridge at Lang Dang just south of the Chinese Border. We headed in like we were going to hit Kep and then headed up the North East railway for Lang Dang railyard. All flights dropped good bombs and little to no AAA was seen until we were departing the area. Some MiGs launched from China, but they did not pursue.

"The importance of this mission was that 7th AF had planned our route to the target directly from the coast to the target, but cooler heads prevailed and we did our own planning and successfully completed the mission. Heavy damage was done to the railyard and the approach section to the bridge was dropped. I never understood why the Pentagon and 7th Air Force thought they were superior planners when we executed the missions, were familiar with the area, and knew for the most part where the threats were. On missions that we did the planning for at Korat, a higher level of success was achieved and fewer aircraft were lost." (Col Ken Mays, USAF (Ret), unpublished memoir, "Tour At Korat -- July 67 to Feb 68", dated 15 Dec 2003.)

Four other pilots from the 34 TFS in "Crossbow" flight also attacked this rail yard. It was Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong's eighth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 8. F-105D 61-0208. Call Sign: "Crossbow". Take Off: 1615. Mission Length: 4+00.  
Flight Lineup:

- #1 - Leftwich [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]
- #2 - Klinestiver [Capt Larry R. Klinestiver]
- #3 - King [Maj William J. King]
- #4 - Me

"This was a water route mission against the Lon Dong Railroad Siding. It is on the N.E. railroad about 20 miles from Red China. Our flight was the rear flight and I was the rear man. The weather was perfectly clear and we picked the target up about 15 miles out. There was moderate 37- & 57-mm flak thrown up at us as the lead flight went in. The flak suppression flight laid their CBU's in pretty close and the flak diminished considerably. I released at 10,000' with a good sight picture. All of the bombs ahead of me were in the target area. No MiGs or flak on the way out." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 3.)

*Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Nat'l Archives camera record NWDNM(m)-342-USAFA-42649B & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.*

**19-Oct-67**

4833

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS, 388 TFW from Korat, flew his ninth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 9. F-105D 60-0462. Call Sign: "Vegas". Take Off: 0600. Mission Length: 3+45. Flight Lineup:

- #1 - King [Maj William J. King]
- #2 - Me
- #3 - Lefty [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]
- #4 - Klinestiver [Capt Larry R. Klinestiver]

"This was a water route mission against the Bac Le Railroad Yard on the northeast railroad between Hanoi & China (midpoint). Approaching Pack I, we started picking up an undercast cloud deck. Out over the water refueling we were in and out of the weather. Regrouping and turning

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inbound into NVN, the weather was solid undercast up to about 15,000 feet. The Iron Hand flight went inland about 30 miles and reported all undercast towards the target. The F-4 flight came in from the northwest and confirmed this report, so we made a sweeping left turn dangerously close to Haiphong and came back over the water. We dropped our bombs in Pack I with a Sky Spot control & landed. Uneventful but it was officially a Pack VI mission and a counter."

1Lt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, also attempted to fly into a target in RP-6 but was turned away by weather. Instead, he flew his 29th combat mission into Laos.

"Target: Troops in trenches in southern Laos.  
"Armament: 4xCBU-24s 1 CBU-29.

"Originally scheduled Pack VI. Weather aborted just past wart. Refueled and worked with FAC. Dropped CBU's on troop area then strafed down road (530 rounds). FAC said 5 KIA and 5 probable KIA. Very easy mission but long. Almost ran out of gas."

Two pilots from the 34 TFS formed "Hartford" flight that took off at 14:30. The flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.  
#2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 60-0518 on his 6th combat mission.

The planned targets were:

Primary: 19-30N and 103-59E where they were to meet FACs Firefly 15 and 16.  
Secondary: 21-04N and 102-36E where they were to meet FACs Firefly 17 and 18.

Both targets were in Laos.

"We each had three tanks and two 500# bombs. Our mission was primarily to work with "Wager A", a MISQ site up north just being tested [Lima Site 85]. We refueled behind OA 67 and I did a little better than the last time with three tanks. We dropped off and had quite a communications problem at first and had to orbit a while. Finally we got "Wager A", us, "Cabana" (an RF-4C taking pictures of the hits) and Fireflies 15, 16 (O-1s who were spotting the hits. Comments from the FAC: 'Has he dropped yet - is that it over there on the hill?' I then took the lead and we went for the second target. We never could raise Firefly 17 & 18 but I got permission from "Wager A" to go ahead and drop. As soon as I dropped, I rolled to the right and saw Firefly 17 & 18 flying away from the target. Dropped at 20M, 350 CAS, and 323-degree heading. Saw the bombs hit long. Coming back, we did a little trail acro after I finally figured out what a porpoise meant."

The mission lasted 2.7 hours.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. from the 388 TFW was another pilot who diverted today due to weather. He flew as "Crossbow 02" in a flight whose original target was in RP-6A. Instead, he dropped in southern Laos, the Ban Laboy complex. "Divert due WX/No BDA - WX". It was his 7th combat mission.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 3 - 4 & Earl Henderson, combat diary & Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**22-Oct-67**

4335

In a mission designated RT56A-172, F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW struck the Cau Dau railroad segment on the Northeast Rail line in RP-6A, North Vietnam. The target was located at 21-35N and 106-00E.

Three pilots on this mission from the 469 TFS and their F-105Ds were:

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Capt Russell E. Temperley flying 60-0428  
Maj Roger P. Scheer flying 61-0208  
1Lt Earl J. Henderson flying 61-0134 (Note: His combat diary has no mission this day.)

Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr., flying with the 469 TFS, flew his 115th and last combat mission during his one-year assignment as the director of the 388 TFW command post. (Dick Gimmi, phone message, 10 Nov 09)

Maj Kenneth W. Mays from the 34 TFS flew F-105D 62-4359 on this mission.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Warhawk 2" attacking a road segment in RP-6A. "Road cut." It was his 8th combat mission.

Four other pilots from the 34 TFS made up "Vegas" flight. Flying as "Vegas 2" was Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong on his 10th combat mission to North Vietnam. Take Off: 1440. Mission Length: 3+05. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj William J. King
- #2 - Maj Armstrong flying 61-0132
- #3 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich flying 61-0219
- #4 - Captj Larry R. Klinestiver flying 61-0220

Mission Commander - Col John Peter "Sky" Flynn, 388 TFW Vice Commander (POW 27 Oct 67).

Maj Armstrong describe this mission in his combat log. "Mission was alternate target at Dau Ca, 15 miles east of Thai Nguyen. We went the land route which was the first land route for me. We dropped off the tankers and entered NVN on a northeasterly heading then turned east and finally south to hit the target which was roughly 40 miles due north of Hanoi. There were considerable MiG calls both going in and retracing our path out but no one actually saw MiGs. No SAMs were sighted either. There was considerable 37/57-mm fire rolling in on the target but no one got hit. Larry Klinestiver saw some 85-mm burst but no one else saw it. Col Flynn was mission commander and he's not sure the rail yard we bombed was the right one. I had no idea as I was looking for MiGs all of the time."

*NARA Record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B, "Air Strike Films, Vietnam" & Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 4 & Rufus Dye Mission History log*

### 24-Oct-67

342

After President Johnson had approved it as a target on 18 October 1967, coordinated Air Force and Navy strikes against Phuc Yen MiG airfield (JCS 6) commenced on the afternoon of 24 October followed by combined re-strikes on 25 October. The airfield was hit by bombs and CBUs. Post-strike photos showed that 5 MiG-21s and 5 MiG-17s parked in Area H were either damaged or destroyed, and that two MiG-17s in Area G were destroyed. (Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967)

On Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday, 24 and 25 October, F-105s from the 388 TFW from Korat and the 355 TFW from Takhli struck Phuc Yen for the first time. The airfield (BE 616-8520) was located 18 miles northwest of Haiphong at coordinates 21-13-15N and 105-48-32E in RP-6A, North Vietnam. The U.S. launched a total of 64 sorties against the airfield.

"... USAF bombs made several craters in the airfield runway and taxi areas. Also during the strike, a MiG-17 was downed by an F-4 crew assigned to the 8 TFW." (Chronology)

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The Air Force Times newspaper gave an overview of the Phuc Yen airfield strike. "For the first time in the airwar over North Vietnam, F-4 crews and F-105 pilots recently attacked Phuc Yen airfield, 18 miles northwest of Hanoi.

"The tactical fighter-bomber pilots thundered in through SAMs, heavy flak and MiGs to bomb the 9170-foot runway and parking revetments on the east and west end of the main runway. Another 31 revetted hardstands three miles north of the airfield and the taxiway joining them to the air strip were also hit.

"The strike pilots from the 8 TFW, 355 TFW and 388 TFW reported all bombs on target and the mission highly successful as they rendered the sprawling MiG interceptor base unserviceable and downed a MiG-21 in the process.

"Thunderchief pilots from the 355th TFW led the massive armada in on the installation.

" 'A new target is a great feeling, especially since I was in the first flight in and put the first holes in the MiG haven,' said Capt James G. Thomas, one of the 355th pilots [from the 333 TFS].

"Capt Cal W. Tax [also from the 333 TFS] reported, 'I wanted to make sure so I went in low. In fact, I was so low I heard and felt my bombs exploding -- it was just beautiful.'

"Another 355th F-105 pilot commenting on the mission was Capt James L. Aldrich [333 TFS], who said, 'It was a sensational mission. We hit an untouched target and turned it into a mural of huge fireballs and towering smoke.' "

"The F-4 crews from the 8 TFW were the second wave of AF fighters to hit the airfield.

" 'Strings of bombs impacted in trail straight down the eastern third of the runway, causing multiple craters' reported Maj Arley W. McRae who led one of the F-4 flights in. Another string of bombs cratered the middle third of the runway.

"Leading the 8 TFW strike force was Maj Carl F. Funk, who said, 'We rolled in inverted and dove to the target. We completely demolished it.'

" 'From my position, it looked like all our bombs were right on the money', said Capt Paul W. Showalter, one of the Wolf Pack pilots. 'Phuc Yen airfield is now out of commission,' he concluded.

"While Phantom crews were unloading their ordnance over the target, other 8th TFW crews were keeping enemy MiGs busy.

" 'It was absolutely great, ' said a smiling, elated Maj William L. Kirk, a Phantom aircraft commander and now a double-MiG killer, as he described his latest MiG-21 kill.

"Flying combat air patrol (MIG-CAP) for strike fighter pilots, Kirk caught the enemy aircraft as it attacked the bomb-laden aircraft.

" 'They came at us from behind and I turned my flight around and had a good old knock-down, drag-out rat-race with him for almost 10 minutes. I ran him down and got him with the gun,' said the veteran of more than 30 missions into the heavily-defended Hanoi area.

"Kirk's weapon was the 20-mm cannon, a pod-mounted Gatling gun, which hangs under the belly of the F-4.

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" 'This kill wasn't quite the same as my first one last May 13,' said Kirk. 'That one was a MiG-17 and there was only one pass. I got him with my air-to-air missile. This time it was a good, old-fashioned dog-fight and we fought him for a long time.'

"The rear seat pilot in Kirk's F-4 was 1Lt Theodore R. Bongartz. 'It was my 91st mission,' said the excited Lieutenant. 'I've been waiting since my first flight to get a MiG and it was quite a thrill.'

"Bongartz exclaimed, 'After we shot him down, we made a pass around him and saw the MiG pilot under the canopy of his parachute. We wagged our wings at him and came on home.'

"As the Phantom crews completed their runs on the military installation, Thunderchief pilots from the 388 TFW took their turn at hitting the target.

" 'There were a lot of MiGs up there preceding our strikes,' said Maj Clyde Falls, Jr., a 388th TFW pilot [from the 34 TFS]. 'However, by the time we got there they were all gone. I suppose most of them were low on fuel and were probably looking for a place to land. It's a cinch they couldn't land at Phuc Yen.'

"Maj Donald W. Windrath [from the 13 TFS] estimated that his flight destroyed or damaged three SAM sites which threatened the strike force.

"The aerial reconnaissance following the strike revealed four MiG-21s, four MiG-17s and one MiG-15 were destroyed or damaged by the fighter-bomber pilots. The runway was damaged beyond use and fireballs 280 feet in diameter erupted near the west parking ramp while another huge secondary explosion engulfed the entire western half of the northeast revetments." (Air Force Times newspaper article, Nov 15, 1967, pg 22)

"This highly successful raid left smoking ruins of much of the airfield support complex and large craters in the runway. 354 TFS pilots [from Takhli] were present in the flak-filled skys over Phuc Yen on both ... days." Pilots from the 357 TFS also flew this mission. (355 TFW history, Microfilm NO463, frame 1565).

Four flights of 355 TFW F-105Ds attacked Phuc Yen. "Scotch" and "Wildcat" flights began their attack at 0815Z, followed by "Marlin" and "Wolf" at 0816Z, and "Bison" at 0817Z.

The flights encountered AAA from the east tip of the runway, and two sites 1,100 feet southeast of the runway's center crossover. The AAA sites were firing 85-mm in rings. All flights experienced light to moderate, increasingly accurate, barrages of 37/57-mm AAA bursting between 6,000 to 8,000 feet. The last strike flights also reported moderate, inaccurate, 85-mm bursting between 8,000 and 12,000 feet.

The six M-118s and six M-117s dropped by "Wildcat" flight impacted directly on aircraft revetments, providing a huge secondary explosion that engulfed the entire western half of the revetted area and leaving the eastern half in flames belching black smoke up to 4,000 feet. While coming off the target at 0817Z, when the flight was at 3,000 feet, "Wildcat" flight saw a SAM detonate at 9,000 feet. Approximately 30 seconds later, the flight saw a second missile detonating at 20,000 feet at coordinates 21-26N and 105-43E. The flight was then at 2,000 feet. At approximately 0819Z, the flight saw a third SAM detonating at 8,000 feet, at 21-35N and 105-43E. The flight was at 7,000 feet at 21-35N and 105-35E. Pilots couldn't determine the sites that launched the missiles. All SAM detonations were orange in color.

"Marlin" left their target area covered with smoke and estimated their twenty-four MK-117s hit directly on the target.

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"Wolf 2" had AC power failure on ingress 20 nautical miles short of the target and, accompanied by "Wolf 3", diverted to Udorn. "Wolf Lead" and "Wolf 4" expended twelve M-117s that resulted in explosions across the central portion of the airfield.

"Bison flight's two MK-118s hit directly on the runway at the junction of the western taxiway crossover. Their eighteen M-117s cratered adjacent sections of the western center of the runway. On egress, at approximately 0819Z, "Bison" flight saw a SAM launch from the vicinity of missile site VN 120. The missile appeared to go straight up and detonate at approximately 25,000 feet. This missile also detonated with an orange cloud. (355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI ??? OPREP-4/??? in USAF microfilm NO463, frames 1389 and 1585.)

Capt Malcolm D. Winter of the 354 TFS from Takhli led "Bison" flight. He flew F-105D 59-1731 on his 56th combat mission. Other members of this flight were Capt Edward Larson, and Capt Gary S. Olin. "Big one today - Phuc Yen. We went Green Anchor. 1430 launch for my flight. ... Fergie (Maj Alonzo L. Ferguson) was lead, Larson, Me, Olin. But, Fergie crumped so I took the flight. We had a good roll in & out (with) bombs on target - the NW end, last taxiway exit. The F-4's shot down a MiG-21 inbound while our Iron Hands - Bruce Stocks, Moyer - got a SAM site. I saw the missile's orange cloud about 2 miles off my left wing on egress. It went to 25 miles or so & exploded." (Combat mission log of Mal Winter transcribed by his son, Mike Winter.)

"On October 24, two MiG-21s had taken off against the first wave of attackers -- Air Force F-105s and F-4s from Thailand. As the MiGs were attempting to get behind the attacking force, an F-4 escort used a twenty-millimeter cannon to shoot one down." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 90). The F-4D from the 433 TFS, 8 TFW, at Ubon was flown by Maj William L. Kirk and his WSO 1Lt Theodore R. Bongartz.

Maj James D. Gormley from the 333 TFS at Takhli was one of the 355 TFW pilots on the mission. "Phuc Yen airfield had been off limits ever since the bombing began. Whenever we flew a mission near Hanoi, we would go right over Phuc Yen. We could look down at 'MiG Haven' and see the planes coming at us. It gave us a futile feeling not to be able to bomb them in their sanctuary. ... (When the strike was approved), ... every pilot in the wing wanted to go, ... and I was proud to be one who got a chance. Everything went as we had been briefed. We rolled in through heavy defenses but destroyed the target and got every bird back home safely." (Takhli Times, 29 Mar 68, reporting Maj Gormley's comments after his 100th mission.)

Maj Robert L. Stirm from the 333 TFS received a Distinguished Flying Cross for flying this mission. "... Major Stirm was the element leader of the first bomb flight executed against a high priority military target. In spite of aggressive MiG fighters, surface-to-air missiles, and intense flak, he delivered his ordnance directly on target, destroying major elements of this vital airfield. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Major Stirm reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24781>.)

" ... A wing of F-4s from Ubon held third place in the attack stream (to be followed later by Navy attackers), second place being taken by the F-105s from the 388th Wing ... and our 355th TFW leading the parade. Our 333rd TFS led our wing ... " (Frank Moyer, letter to Ron Thurlow, 21 Sept. 2001).

"The Iron Hand flight estimated it destroyed three SAM sites which had threatened the force." Leading the Iron Hand flight from Takhli was 354 TFS pilot Maj Bruce D. Stocks with EWO Maj Frank N. Moyer from the 333 TFS. Also flying an Iron Hand mission from Korat, were Maj James Mirehouse with EWO Capt Albert L. Michael from the 44 TFS.

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It was Maj Moyer's 45th combat mission as an F-105F EWO. In his diary entry for the day he wrote, "THE BIG ONE! After all our waiting and frustration, the 355 TFW led forces of F-4s from Ubon and F-105s from Korat against the Phuc Yen MiG airfield, and our 333 TFS had the Force Commander + 3 of the five strike flights + Iron Hand flight - which Bruce and I led! How about them potatoes!

"Perfect weather except for clouds on Thud Ridge. Our Weaseling was good, too, despite AC power problems that left our Doppler nav system inoperative. Practically perfect bombing put 18 bomb craters in the runway, destroyed or damaged several parked MiGs, and wiped out four flak sites. Had two valid SAM launches, but our warning call kept all planes out of missile range. Bruce saw blast smoke from one launch, so we went into the flat country and bombed the site, thus earning our SAM Slayer patches. Score for the day: 1 runway, 5 SAM sites, and the F-4s got a MiG-21. What a day!" Maj Moyer and Maj Stocks were awarded the Silver Star for the mission. (Combat diary of Frank N. Moyer.)

F-105s from the 388 TFW were third in the attack stream. They dropped their bombs on the MiG parking revetments.

"Olympia" flight from the 34 TFS was the first from Korat to attack the airfield. Take Off: 1405. Mission Length: 3+10. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich who was also Korat's Mission Commander
- #2 - Capt Hugh W. Davis
- #3 - Maj Floyd E. Henzig
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0124.

It was Maj Armstrong's 11th combat mission into North Vietnam. "Today was the big one, Phuc Yen! This airfield is the major airfield in NVN and had previously been off limits. Today our wing, Takhli, the F-4s from Ubon, and I think the Navy all zeroed in on Phuc Yen Airfield. We went in of course the land route. Lefty was also mission commander so that meant our flight was the first of 20 F-105s to bomb the field. The F-4 MiGCAP drew about 8 SAMs as they preceded us in to the target. There was quite a bit of 85-mm flak as we rolled in and as we pulled off plus some 37/57-mm. At least 2 aircraft got hit though they didn't know it until they got home. We dropped CBUs and as I pulled off, I could see a number of secondary explosions. We picked up several more volleys of 85-mm flak as we came too close to Yen Bay going out. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 4.)

Armstrong commented further on this mission in his memoir. "This was their primary MiG-21 base just Northwest of Hanoi. Up to this point it had been off limits for attack. We never did strike the civil airfield (Gia Lam) outside Hanoi although it was widely known that MiGs sometimes used it. LBJ and McNamara had this dumb idea that we would gradually increase the targets we were willing to strike and this was the way to get the North Vietnamese to sue for peace. Our wing came in first using the land route and dropped CBU's along the flight line to hit the MiGs in their revetments. Takhli rolled in just behind us with 3,000# bombs to destroy the runway. The F-4C's followed them with bombs and maybe even the Navy got in on this historic attack. I think we surprised them and did some considerable damage. There were no U.S. losses. No SA-2s were fired and the 85-mm flak was spotty. I was written up for a Silver Star on this mission but it was downgraded to a Distinguished Flying Cross. This was the first of three Silver Star downgrades -- so I never got one although most Thud pilots did." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 11.)

Capt Davis, "Olympia 02", was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Second Oak Leaf Cluster

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for this mission. "Captain Hugh W. Davis distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial fight as an F-105 pilot over North Vietnam on 24 October 1967. On that date, Captain Davis was wingman for the mission commander on the highly successful mission against the heavily defended Phuc Yen Airfield. Despite hostile aircraft threats, a barrage of surface-to-air missiles, and intense anti-aircraft fire in the target area, Captain Davis successfully struck his assigned target and contributed to the destruction of five hostile aircraft on the ground. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Davis reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Hugh Davis award citation)

"The 388 TFW pilots were fraggd against the revetted aircraft parking areas. They encountered heavy AAA, SAMs and MiGs. Force commander, Maj Dalton L. Leftwich, 34 TFS, said, 'we caused secondary explosions in the target area.' A flight leader, Lt Col Harry W. Schurr, 469 TFS commander, saw many secondaries. He described them as 'the type you would expect from aircraft.' Later ... BDA from the raid gave three MiGs destroyed and four damaged, and extensive damage to the runway." Maj Leftwich received the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star for his actions during the mission. (388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO583, frame 1577.)

Two pilots in the flak suppression flights from Korat, both from the 34 TFS, were Lt Col Robert W. Smith, flying F-105D 61-0068, and Maj Floyd E. Henzig ["Olympia 3"] in F-105D 61-0152. They dropped CBUs on the airfield at coordinates 21-13-07N 105-48-22E. Also from the 34 TFS was Capt Douglas A. Beyer in F-105D 62-4356. (NARA Record NWDNM(m)-342-USAFA-42649B, "Air Strike Films, Vietnam")

Maj Kenneth W. Mays, also from the 34 TFS, flew in this raid. "I was most pleased to be a flight lead on the first attack on Phuc Yen. As expected we received a lot of fireworks. Without exception every pilot put good bombs on the target and numerous MiGs were destroyed on the ground (I have several photos). I came back from this mission with 151 holes in my acft and have a collection of Russian metal that the crew chief picked from my acft." (Col Ken Mays, USAF (Ret), unpublished memoir, "Tour At Korat -- July 67 to Feb 68", dated 15 Dec 2003.)

Another flight lead from the 34 TFS, Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky, received a DFC for the mission he flew today. "The President of the United States of America ... takes pleasure in presenting a Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster in addition to a previously awarded Silver Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Seventh Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross to Major Raymond Walter Vissotzky ... for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot over North Vietnam on 24 October 1967. On that date, Major Vissotzky was Flight Commander of four F-105's ordered to perform armed reconnaissance along a heavily defended segment of a high priority military target. Despite intense anti-aircraft fire, numerous hostile aircraft warnings, and a possible surface-to-air missile threat, Major Vissotzky successfully led his flight to the target area and dropped his ordnance directly on target. The professional competence, aerial skill and devotion to duty displayed by Major Vissotzky reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=24829>)

1Lt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, was another pilot from Korat on the first Phuc Yen strike. It was his 31st combat mission into North Vietnam.

"Target: Phuc Yen airfield.  
"Armament: 4xCBU-24s 1 CBU-29

"First-time target. Went in with bad pod. Flak wasn't too bad but thought I got hit coming off target. 70 airplanes total hit target. Did really good work. Many big secondary explosions and fire. Several MiGs destroyed. Waited long time for this!"

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Lt Henderson received the Distinguished Flying Cross (3rd OLC) for this mission. "...Captain Henderson was a member of a flight of four F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned to deliver ordnance against the most heavily defended airfield in North Vietnam. Flying through almost continuous surface-to-air missiles and some of the heaviest anti-aircraft fire of the conflict, he delivered his ordnance precisely on his assigned target causing extensive damage to the airfield complex. ..." (Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.)

Maj Francis P. Walsh from the 44 TFS was another Korat pilot who dropped 750-pound bombs on the nearby Lang Dang railroad complex at coordinates 21-38-03N 106-35-11E. He flew F-105D 61-0219. (NARA Record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B, "Air Strike Films, Vietnam")

*388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO583 frame 1577 & Chronology of Seventh Air Force 1 July 1967 - 30 June 1968, pg 5 & River Rats Album I, pgs 118 and 120.*

**25-Oct-67**

3062

In the morning, for the second day in a row, the 355 TFW and 388 TFW attacked Phuc Yen airfield (JCS 6), in RP-6A, North Vietnam. Takhli pilots from the 357 TFS were again in this airfield strike. The four flights of F-105Ds attacked in one-minute intervals, "Shark" at 0100Z, "Marlin" at 0101Z, "Scotch" at 0101Z, and "Wolf" at 0102Z, and dropped a total of 54 M-117s, six M-118s, twelve CBU-24s, and eight CBU-29s.

"Shark" flight dropped CBUs on flak sites south of the runway. While over the target, one pilot in the flight inadvertently fired an AIM-9 while he was dropping his CBUs. "Shark 2", Capt Raymond A. Horinek from the 357 TFS, was hit by 57-mm or 85-mm AAA while in his dive bomb run over the target. He ejected and was captured on the ground. He was released as a POW on 14 March 1973.

"Marlin" flight dropped all six of their M-118s and six M-117s on the northeast revetments in Area L. KA-71 strike camera film showed two of the M-118s cratering the parking apron immediately south of Area L.

Strike camera film also verified "Scotch" flight's interdiction of the runway in at least two places. Two impacts were noted at the junction of the west crossover link, one at the junction of the center crossover link, and a string of five good interdictions running immediately west of the center crossover.

"Wolf" flight dropped 18 M-117s on the southwest revetments, Area E. The flight couldn't see their bomb impacts due to evasive maneuvers. "Wolf Lead" was unable to release his bombs over the target and, while on egress at 9,000 feet at 0106Z, jettisoned his six M-117s with their MER in an uninhabited area at 21-42N and 105-25E. The flight received moderate, accurate 37/57-mm, but very little 85-mm AAA, from roll-in through egress, bursting at aircraft altitudes between 6,000 and 15,000 feet. While on roll-in at 15,000 feet, "Wolf" flight saw two SAMs heading in a westerly direction in a steep climb through the strike force. The first SAM detonated over the west end of the target area at approximately 3,000 feet resulting in a large orange fireball. The second SAM passed through the strike force and detonated at 15,000 feet. Both SAMs, which appeared to be unguided, came from an unknown location and detonated within a half mile of the force. On egress, "Wolf" flight also received moderately accurate 37-mm AAA two nautical miles east of the target.

Capt Billy R. Sparks from the 357 TFS flew on this mission. He received a "... Silver Oak Leaf Cluster in lieu of a Sixth Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross ... for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot near Phuc Yen, North Vietnam, on 25 October 1967. On that date, Captain Sparks flew in a flight of F-105 aircraft executed to strike the heavily defended Phuc Yen Airfield of the North Vietnamese Air Force. Despite extremely heavy, barrage-

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type anti-aircraft fire and numerous surface-to-air missile launches, Captain Sparks disregarded his own safety, pressed the attack, and delivered his ordnance precisely on target. ... ." (General Orders: Headquarters, 7th Air Force, Special Order G-744 (March 8, 1968) citation on line at <http://projects.militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=45399>.)

Three F-105 flights from the 388 TFW - "Hatchet", "Olympia", and "Vegas" - struck the airfield. The draft of an expanded strike report, written by 388th Public Affairs, described the mission. "'Today's mission had a little bit of everything ... MiGs, SAMS, and flak,' commented Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, 28, from Roselle, Ill. Capt Hoppe went on to say, 'Inbound to the target, the MiGs had at the back flights and we had to break. About six to eight total came in on the deck and popped up behind us. They tried to hit at us but didn't get anybody, but then we didn't get any MiGs either. Getting in closer to the target, we saw a couple of SAMs come boiling off the ground. We could see the SAMs ignite and the cloud of smoke they create. They just start rising off the ground and arc over and come at us. Just prior to roll-in we got quite a few bursts of 85. You could see them on the ground right next to the runway. One site was really ringing off and throwing up a bunch of flak. The flak was heavy and very accurate. We could also see 37/57 going off beneath us. We had to dive through that. We dropped our ordnance on the runway. Coming around I had a chance to look back and saw four strings of bombs cutting the runway. It looked real pretty. We had good bombing.'

"Capt Hoppe also reported flak and SAMs being fired on the way out from the target, but no MiGs were encountered by his flight.

"Summing up the mission, the captain said, 'All totaled, it was a very good mission; you might say a satisfying mission. You got to do what you've wanted to do for a long time. We felt pretty good.'

"Describing the physical appearance of the airfield, Capt Hoppe said, 'The runway had been hit yesterday and had been cratered, but it looked like during the night, they had filled it in. They had just filled them with dirt. You couldn't determine any pock marks -- it looked like it had been filled in. But they have some more holes they have to fill in now.'" This was Capt Hoppe's 82nd counter. He flew for 3.8 hours.

"A flight leader on the mission, Maj Harold J. Steinke, Jr., 35, Midwest City, Okla., said, "I observed one string of bombs impacting about two thirds down the runway right on the target. The first string of bombs that went off were right in the middle of the runway and no doubt cratered it pretty well. This was a real good mission. We've been waiting a long time to hit Phuc Yen.'

"Major Almer L. Barner, Jr., 37, Ruleville, Miss., was also a flight leader on the second Phuc Yen raid. He said, 'We were the second flight to hit the airfield. We broke and rolled out and jettisoned our bombs but the MiGs had gone. We accomplished the task of getting the MiGs off the strike force. Talking to the other fellows in the flight, they think they did a pretty good job on the runway.'

"Others on the strike were: Capt Russell E. Temperley [469 TFS], 32, Newton Center, Mass; Major James D. Murray, Jr. [469 TFS], 34, Bayonne, N.J.; Maj David D. Igleman [34 TFS], 35, Richmond, Ind; Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver, 38, Hobbs, N.M. and Silverton B.C., Canada; 1Lt David B. Waldrop, 25, Nashville, Tenn; and Maj Spence H. Armstrong, 33, Columbia, Tenn." (Draft Expanded Strike Report - 388 TFW - 25 Oct 67 provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5. NOTE: His Form 5 shows two missions flown on 24 Oct 67 and none on the 25th so I assume the second entry is a typo and should be 25 Oct 67.)

The flight lineup of "Vegas" flight , all from the 34 TFS, was:  
#1 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.  
#2 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver



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#3 - 1Lt David B. Waldrop III

#4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4221

This was Maj Armstrong's 12th mission over North Vietnam. Take off: 0600. Mission length: 2+45. "This was the same target, Phuc Yen Airfield, as I had hit yesterday. Today things were pretty uneventful until we spotted some MiGs as we were coming down 'Thud' Ridge. They were low and coming in at our 5 o'clock position. Since our flight was primary for MiG defense of the strike force of 20 aircraft, we punched off our bombs and tanks, went into afterburner and broke into the MiGs. They fired something but I never saw them again. They must have been trying to avoid the falling tanks and bombs and ducked down to the left. At almost 90-degrees of hard turn, a SAM detonated about 3,000' off my right wing and slightly high. We got down on the ridge and headed NW out of there. On the way out we saw one lone MiG-17 (silver, the other two were camouflaged) high and going away. No chance to get him. Sure was nice chasing MiGs rather than braving the flak." (Maj Spence M. Armstrong, combat mission log for period 5 Oct 67 - 14 Apr 68, pp 4 - 5.)

"... Iron Hand Shrikes hit the radar and the site went off the air. Photo BDA showed the runway to be heavily cratered from this raid. Many support buildings and the Air Defense Center appeared to be badly damaged." (355 TFW Report on Outstanding Achievements, 1 Mar 67 - 29 Feb 68.)

The attacks from yesterday and today, "... cratered Phuc Yen's runway and damaged its tower, thanks to a direct hit on the latter by a Navy Walleye guided bomb. Most of the eighteen MiGs then based at Phuc Yen were caught on the ground; reconnaissance photography indicated that perhaps a dozen of them suffered severe damage." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 90)

F-4s from the 8 TFW flew air cover for the F-105s. They had several engagements with North Vietnamese MiGs but no planes from either side were damaged. (Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", report ending 25 November 1967, Film Report FR-856, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

The JCS history reported the results of yesterday's and today's strikes, as well as a third strike against Phuc Yen on 26 October, as "three MiGs were destroyed, three were damaged, and the runway was made unserviceable."

The PACAF briefing to CINCPAC on 7 November 1967 listed different results and also reported on North Vietnamese progress in restoring the runway. Post-strike photos showed that 5 MiG-21s and 5 MiG-17s parked in Area H were either damaged or destroyed, and that two MiG-17s in Area G were destroyed. Photos on 26 October showed at least 39 craters on the main runway and extensive damage to the adjacent revetted area. Photos from 28 October revealed repair activity on the runway but the runway remained unserviceable. Photography dated 30 October revealed that the runway had been repaired and was serviceable once again.

F-105s from the 355 TFW also struck the main runway at Hoa Lac airfield, dropping 750- and 3,000-pound bombs on the northwest and southeast ends of the center of the runway. Pilots reported large secondary explosions. (Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", report ending 25 November 1967, Film Report FR-856, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

*355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI 5481 OPREP-4/1?? in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1390 & History of the JCS, Vol III, pg 44-10 & Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967.*

**26-Oct-67**

3445

Air Force planes attacked six targets along the Hanoi-Thai Nguyen Rail Line (RR 5) in RP-6A.

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- 1) The Thai Nguyen railroad yard #2 (BE 616-G0777) at 21-33-21N and 105-51-31E. "Pilots reported all ordnance on target."
- 2) The Tung Tu railroad siding (BE 616-M1892) at 21-29-30N and 105-52-59E. Pilots reported all their bombs hit the target with at least one track cut.
- 3) A railroad bridge at 21-26-20N and 105-53-00E. "No BDA."
- 4) A rail segment at 21-27-20N and 105-53-00E. "No BDA."
- 5) A vulnerable rail segment at 21-25-00N and 105-53-00E. "No BDA."
- 6) A railroad segment at 21-30-00N and 105-52-00E. Pilots reported the rail was cut.

The Ha Gia Railroad Bridge was the primary target of "Olympia" and "Crossbow" flights from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW. "Olympia" took off from Korat at 14:05; the mission lasted for 2 hours 50 minutes. Olympia's flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Floyd E. Henzig
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0134
- #3 - Maj Donald W. Revers
- #4 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis

This was Maj Armstrong's 13th combat mission to North Vietnam. "We were directed to hit our first alternate target which was the Ha Gia Railroad Bridge, between Hanoi and Thai Nguyen on the north rail line. Coming in via the land route, the clouds were almost completely undercast around the entire route. The target was completely clobbered with clouds as we traversed down 'Thud' Ridge. Skuts Henzig very wisely decided as mission commander, to roll in on the rail line between Ha Gia and Thai Nguyen instead. We cut the rail line in several places which I think is more trouble for them than cutting a bridge in one spot. There was considerable 37/57-mm fire from Thai Nguyen as we pulled off the target. This was the first mission where I had carried two 3,000# bombs. It is a good load to carry. No MiGs seen, only 2 SAMs, and no 85-mm although other guys saw 85-mm fire." (Maj Spence M. Armstrong, combat mission log for period 5 Oct 67 - 14 Apr 68, pg 5.)

In his memoir, Sam Armstrong further described the mission. "... I carried 3,000# bombs for the first time and was impressed how much sleeker the F-105 was with this load as opposed to the 750# bombs carried on the centerline. The target, Ha Gia between Thai Nyugen and Hanoi, was clearly under the clouds so the mission commander wisely directed us to hit the part of the rail line that was clear and we did so nicely. Two SA-2's were fired without effect. (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished memoir titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 11.)

"Crossbow" flight's lineup against the Ha Gia Railroad Bridge was:

- #1 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying his 9th combat mission
- #3 - Capt Lawrence R. "Larry" Klinestiver
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine

The flight time was 3.2 hours. A draft award justification described the flight's mission. "Major Barner was leader of Crossbow Flight, which was one of five flights in Olympia Force. ... Olympia Force had been ordered to strike the Ha Gia Railroad Bridge located east of Ha Gia and 3 miles

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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south of Thai Nguyen. This rail line is the major link between the huge industrial complex at Thai Nguyen and Hanoi to the south.

"Just after the final turn toward the target, the Ironhand Flight informed the Force Commander that the primary target was overcast and acquisition would be impossible. The force Commander immediately briefed a new attack heading through an opening in the clouds along the rail line to the north of the primary target and south of Thai Nguyen. Quick and decisive action was required making it necessary for Major Barner to reposition his flight for attack while under intense and accurate barrage type flak of 37, 57 MM size.

"The railroad line was visible through a broken deck of clouds but the late afternoon sun reflecting on a thin haze layer made target acquisition extremely difficult. With coolness and precision, [each pilot] maneuvered his aircraft through the flak and clouds to place his 3000 pounders directly on the tracks. Strike photos showed three large cuts on the tracks and attest to the accuracy of [the pilots] while under fire."

*Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & Jake Shuler mission log spreadsheet and e-mail 5 July 2010.*

**28-Oct-67**

179

For the second day in a row, F-105s struck the Hanoi railroad and highway bridge, in RP-6A, North Vietnam. As they did on Friday, "F-105s of the 355 TFW teamed (again on Saturday) with F-105s of the 388 TFW in a combined effort to insure success on the Canal des Rapides Bridge (JCS 13) near Hanoi, North Vietnam. The 388th went ahead of the 355th by mere seconds, its entire force laden with flak suppression ordnance (CBUs). This cleared the way for an unhampered bomb run by the 355th." (355 TFW Outstanding Achievements.)

North Vietnamese SAM sites countered the attack by barrage firing more than 10 SAMs "... using track-on-jam tactics." ("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 194.)

Post-strike coverage on 28 October disclosed that one span was destroyed, one span dropped into the canal, and a third span was damaged. F-105s from the 355 TFW had destroyed the bypass bridge on 22 August and it still was unserviceable. (Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967.)

Beginning at 0050Z, four flights of 355 TFW F-105Ds attacked the bridge. Fifteen planes, four F-105Ds in each of "Shark", "Marlin, and "Wolf" flights, and three F-105Ds in "Cheetah" flight, dropped a total of 30 M-118s on the bridge.

The flights saw impacts near the center of the bridge and also on the southwest end of the bridge with black smoke coming from some of the impacts.

The F-105s encountered heavy AAA and numerous SAMs. However, the pilots acknowledged that excellent CBU flak site coverage provided by the 388 TFW decreased AAA response noticeably from yesterday's strike on the same target. The majority of flak came from south of Hanoi and the Gia Lam airfield. The first flight on the target noticed no flak until pull-off and egress where they encountered moderate, accurate 37/57-mm AAA.

The following flights received heavy, accurate barrage, predominately 85-mm from roll-in through pull-off, and primarily moderate to heavy 37/57-mm bursting at aircraft altitudes of 7,000 to 8,000 feet on egress south of Hanoi. The last flight on the target started receiving 85-mm AAA five nautical miles on ingress to the target but it did not become intense until roll-in. The flak continued through pull-off. Numerous 37-mm AAA sites fired along the east-west road.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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Seven SAMs were launched during the flights' ingress from 20-44N and 106-20E to the target while the F-105s were at 10,000 to 12,000 feet altitude and heading 344 degrees. Pilots could not see the SAMs until they were within 2,000 to 3,000 feet of them due to heavy haze in the area. The flights saw one SAM from L-17 (VN 003) pass approximately 2,000 feet below them. Thirty seconds later, the force saw two SAMs from the vicinity of L-27 (VN 159) or L-5 (VN 19) and four from the area of L-9 (VN 14). The SAMs from L-27 or L-5 passed 2,000 feet below the force. The four from L-9 passed through the force. Three of these SAMs were seen to detonate in the vicinity of 20-45N and 105-56E, at 14,000 to 17,000 feet. Detonations were one mile behind the flights. On egress, at least two SAMs were seen launching from L-5 (VN 19). These two SAMs detonated at approximately 300 feet in the vicinity of 21-07N and 105-52E. All missiles appeared to be unguided.

For their 39th mission, the 354 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Maj James L. Davis and EWO Capt Phillip H. Walker flew on this strike. "Downtown, Canal des Rapides Bridge. Entered Thud Ridge. Fired a Shrike at a SAM site and took it down. Crossed the Delta five miles west of Hanoi. Shot at by flak the whole way. Fired a Shrike at another SAM site and took it down. Bombed a radar site and hit it with two 750-lb bombs. Many SAMs fired." Maj Davis was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (4th OLC) for Heroism. (James Davis mission notes transcribed by his son, Geoffrey Davis.)

At 0050Z, while pulling off the target at 6,000 feet, heading 060 degrees, 550 knots, 37/57-mm AAA hit "Shark Lead", the force commander, Lt Col Thomas H. Kirk, Jr., the 357 TFS Commander flying F-105D 61-0169. The AAA punched a three by four foot hole in the aft fuselage and the engine became engulfed in flame. The hit blew off part of the panel behind the cockpit. The cockpit was smoking when the pilot ejected at approximately 20-50N and 105-47E. The aircraft impacted at approximately 20-50N and 105-46E. The pilot had a good chute and beeper but no voice contact made. (355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI ??? OPREP-4/1?? in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1393.)

Lt Col Kirk became a POW and was awarded the Air Force Cross. Maj James E. Light, 357 TFS operations officer, replaced Lt Col Kirk as commander of the 357 TFS.

Other 357 TFS pilots flying against the bridge who received the Silver Star were Capt Francis T. Torikai, Capt George A. Miklos, Lt Col Obadiah A. Dugan (1 OLC), and Maj Robert T. Cavanagh.

An F-105D pilot also from the 357 TFS at Takhli was Capt Ronald A. Venturini, Shark 4, flying 61-0109. His gun camera footage showed strafing of the bridge at coordinates 21-04-35N 105-54-43E.

F-105D pilots from the 469 TFS at Korat hitting the same target coordinates were Maj Robert M. Clark in 61-0055 and Navy exchange officer Lt James Karg flying 60-0458. Other 469 TFS pilots who struck the bridge at coordinates 21-04-55N 105-54-46E were Capt Steven W. Long, Jr. in 62-4283, Maj Eugene L. Main flying 62-4359, Capt Hal P. Henning in 59-1750, and Maj Roger P. Scheer in 61-0219.

Maj Dalton L. Leftwich from the 34 TFS at Korat flew F-105D 62-4248.

Three other F-105D pilots from the 34 TFS in "Crossbow" flight also struck the bridge. The flight took off at 0605 and the mission lasted 3 hours 5 minutes. The flight line up was:

#1 - Capt Sam P. Morgan in 62-4270

#2 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. in 59-1760, on his 29th combat mission

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong in 60-0488

#4 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver who aborted on tanker for fuel problems.

This was Maj Armstrong's 14th combat mission into North Vietnam. "This was the hairiest of them all so far. The target was the railroad bridge over the Canal des Rapides [JCS 13], downtown Hanoi. Korat was to put 16 birds in to drop CBUs for flak suppression and Takhli was to come in and put 3000# bombs on the bridge. We approached Hanoi from due south, 35 bombs. We started getting SAMs fired at us from the time that we were 4 minutes out until we had dropped and back to the same point. Our flight of three had to evade 7 missiles ourselves. The last four were fired at us in volley and came over and ahead of us by less than 500'. The 85-mm, & 37/57-mm coming up from the target was heavy. The film showed that we put our CBUs on the target. L/C Kirk [Lt Col Thomas Henry Kirk, POW], the Takhli mission commander, was shot down coming off the target & bailed out right in the area. My mouth was dry from all of the action until we were clear of North Vietnam. Nobody else got knocked down." (Maj Spence M. Armstrong, combat mission log for period 5 Oct 67 - 14 Apr 68, pp 5 - 6.)

In his memoir, Maj Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "Our wing and Takhli were both going to hit the Canal Des Rapides railroad bridge just outside of Hanoi. We were to go in first again and again carry CBU's for defense suppression and Takhli carried 3,000# bombs to knock down the bridge supports which were so hard to hit. We all flew the land route then turned Eastward to come up the East side of the Red River. On the way in our flight of three (one guy had aborted and there was not a spare available) ducked 7 SA-2s. The last one passed in front of me close enough that I thought I could see its flight control fins move.

"... We carried jamming pods which transmitted on the same frequency as the SA-2 tracking radars. We could put enough static on their scopes that they couldn't pick out the returns from our aircraft. We had some faith in the pods but sometimes one couldn't be sure so we tried to keep them in sight to see if they were guiding on us. If there were no clouds, we could easily see the swirl of dust as the SA-2 lifted off. Shortly afterwards the booster would fall off and the SA-2 would then be propelled only by a small sustainer motor which emitted a nice flame. If you could see that the missile had a profile, then it wasn't a danger to you. However, if it looked like a 'burning bowling ball' then it was wise to 'take it down'. This called for a firm forward push on the stick, pulling some negative g's, with the wings level. Keeping the wings level was important because the pods radiated in a conical downward pattern and banking would uncover their radar scopes. If the missile was guiding on you it would turn downward and you could then do a rapid pull up and outmaneuver it because of the speed it was traveling it couldn't adjust in time. If it wasn't, you eased up on the stick and let your aircraft climb back to the original altitude.

"So by the time I had done this 7 times, most of them I didn't personally see because my area of responsibility was to the East, I was exhausted. When the time came to roll in on our target, my mouth tasted like it was filled with cotton. The Takhli guys hit the bridge but their mission commander, Lt. Col. Tom Kirk, was shot down and captured.

"Besides the abort in our flight, there were several others to the result that there were other three ship flights between us and Takhli which was close behind. Before we got into the target area, I noticed a lone F-105D trying to join up with us and then visiting other three ship flights when we didn't look familiar. When we got back to Korat and had the mass debriefing, which we held after every Pack VIA mission, I asked if anyone else had noticed this lone F-105D? A voice spoke up: 'It was me. I was taking a leak and I lost my flight'. This was Francois 'Frenchy' Walsh [Maj Francis "Frank" P. Walsh, 44 TFS, flying an F-105D as #2 in a 4-ship Iron Hand flight]. He had been a C-141 pilot and was barely adequate in the F-105. He was born in France of a French mother and an American father. He came to America, as he liked to say, to avoid being drafted by the French and sent to Vietnam. Everybody got a laugh out of this since Frenchy was quite a

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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character if not a good pilot. He would frequently lose the rest of his flight and have to egress by himself. He was lucky he wasn't picked off by an alert MiG." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968" in unpublished memoir, pp 11 - 12.)

*355 TFW Report on Outstanding Achievements, 1 Mar 67 - 29 Feb 68, in USAF microfilm NO462 & National Archives camera records, control #s NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B & NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42718A*

### 30-Oct-67

4834

The four pilots in "Hornet" flight from the 34 TFS at Korat, attacked an alternate target in northern Laos under FAC control. The flight took off at 1440 and the mission lasted for 2 hours 40 minutes. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith
- #2 - Capt Robert M. Crane
- #3 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0068.

This was Major Armstrong's 15th mission into North Vietnam. "The weather was bad in Pack VIA where we were ... to go on primary so we launched on our second alternate. L/C Smith was Mission Commander of the force on only his 17th mission and briefed a good mission. Unfortunately for him, when we went to our 2nd alternate target, we went as flights of 4 aircraft and there was no mission commander. We were sent to a FAC in Northern Laos, just south of Dien Bien Phu. He had some 37-mm guns down there he wanted knocked out. Just before we got ready to bomb, Lefty lost his radio and I had to bring him back home. Fortunately we had swung into Pack V going in so it was a counter."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, flew his 10th mission into northern Laos as "Locust 02" against a ford complex. "Abort - ordnance release malfunction - jettisoned Urdorn." He then flew an armed recce in RP-3. "No significant sightings."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 6 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 31-Oct-67

4835

The four pilots in "Locust" flight from the 34 TFS at Korat, attacked a target in the Barrell Roll region of northern Laos under control of an A-1E FAC. The flight took off at 13:55 and the mission lasted for 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4269.
- #2 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich
- #3 - Navy Lt James L. Karg, USN Exchange Officer
- #4 - Maj George G. Clausen, 34 TFS commander

This was Maj Armstrong's 16th combat mission into North Vietnam. "I got to lead this one since we were going 'Knight Watch' up into northern Laos. The weather was bad in Pack VI was the reason. We refueled and they had me contact an A-1E FAC up about 80 miles south of Dien Bien Phu. He marked our area in the valley where he said there were 37-mm guns. We put our CBUs in there and got 3 large secondary explosions. They shot some at the other 3 guys as they pulled off. Then we went to make an armed reconnaissance of Rt #7, Vietnam, to make it a counter. My radio went out just before getting into the landing pattern."

"On mission # 16, I got to be the flight leader. Mission commanders and flight leaders were picked upon their demonstrated ability to make decisions in flight while flying their own aircraft. Seniority and time at Korat was purely a secondary factor. Bob Smith had already been singled out as a future mission commander. On this mission the target was in Northern Laos about 80 miles South of Dien Bien Phu. An A-1E FAC marked an area where some 37-mm guns had been firing on

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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him. We were carrying CBU's which was providential for this type of target. They fired on us but we got three large secondary explosions so we must have hit their ammo cache. We had already gotten a counter as we swung through Pack V on the approach to the target."

After this mission, Maj Armstrong went on R&R to Japan between 1 and 7 November 1967.

"... Coming back from my first R&R to Japan, two of us spent the night at Ubon. They knew we were Thud pilots and the F-4's would go off 'free-lancing' when we entered the SAM ring. One Lt backseater came up to me and asked: Do you need a wheelbarrow to take your brass balls to the airplane? When I got back to Korat, I went downtown and bought several small brass balls hanging by a small chain. We hung them on the side of our Aussie hats. ..." (Sam Armstrong, e-mail 21 July 2015)

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 6 - 7 & Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968" in unpublished memoir, pg 12.*

### 09-Nov-67

4836

Two days after returning from his first R&R in Japan, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS flew his 17th combat mission over North Vietnam.

His flight's call sign was "Fresno" that took off at 0645. The mission length was 2+00. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver
- #2 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0445
- #3 - Capt Robert M. Crane
- #4 - Maj William J. King

"We went to our 2nd alternate target over in Pack I for some reason. The weather in Pack VI was forecast to be fairly good. We refueled, went directly east and got a CSS from Bravo to the target. The target was a truck park 5 miles inland from Ron Ferry. The target was in the clear but we took a Sky Spot drop and surprisingly enough, covered the target completely. Afterwards, we flew around over there and made a strafing pass on what looked like a truck just off a main road."

Capt Jacob C. Shuler, also from the 34th, flew his 19th mission this day. His mission card shows his flight's call sign was also "Fresno". The takeoff time was 0755 and TOT was 0900. This flight's lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Erving E. LeVine flying F-105D 62-4387
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 60-0435
- #3 - Capt Clyde L. Falls, Jr. flying 61-0161
- #4 - Capt Carl William Lasiter flying 61-0124

"I do not recall any specific details of this mission. The target coordinates, 17-38N and 106-31E, suggests a recce mission in RP-1 near Dong Hoi."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 7 & Jake Shuler's mission card and narrative via e-mail 11 Jan 2011.*

### 10-Nov-67

4837

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS flew his 18th combat mission over North Vietnam.

His flight took off at 0615 and the mission lasted 3 hours 50 minutes. The line up of "Laredo" flight from Korat was:

- #1 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe (Mission Commander) on his 87th combat mission
- #2 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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#3 - Maj William J. King

#4 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0124

"The target was a railroad siding up on the northeast railroad, 20 miles down from China. The weather was forecast to be problematic and it was. We crossed a solid undercast on the eastern edge of Thailand and seldom saw the ground again until we came back over the same area. We dropped off the tankers, proceeded up to the 'island' and the 'wart' and inbound. The 'Iron Hand' flight ahead of us said that there was no way to see the target. We made a left turn and got out of there when about 3 minutes out from the target. We came back and dropped our bombs just north of the DMZ on a spot marked by an O-2 FAC. The target was in the sandy area of the beach. We didn't hit it too well because of working under an overcast of 7,000' and a poor dive angle."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 7.*

**15-Nov-67**

4784

In one of the first missions using the recently installed Commando Club Skyspot radar in northern Laos, the radar station guided F-105s from Korat on a strike of Hoa Lac airfield. The airfield's target designations were BE 616-08593 and ART 5026 at coordinates 21-02-00N and 105-30-00E in RP-6A.

The Wild Weasel crew of Capt Robert E. Dorrrough, Jr. and EWO Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers from the 44 TFS at Korat flew on this mission, their 73rd over North Vietnam.

"Wed - Led a flight to Pack 6 in the afternoon. The target weather was bad at Hoa Lac Air Field so the strike flights dropped on radar. We kept three SAM sites busy, but could not roll in on them because of the weather. Mission #73."

The 34 TFS from Korat flew one of the strike flights on this mission, The flight's call sign was "Fresno"; takeoff time was 1430. The flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj William J. King

#2 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III

#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0458

#4 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe on his 89th counter.

This was Maj Armstrong's 19th combat mission into North Vietnam. "The target was Hoa Lac Airfield using a radar Sky Spot for drop. The weather was completely undercast from dropping off the tankers, northern Thailand until right at the target. We released from 17,000' on command, straight and level. Once we released and looked down we could see the field below in the clear. Had we seen it earlier we could have effectively dive bombed it. As it was, all of our bombs hit 2 - 4 miles past the target. There was light 37/57 flak low as we pulled away. No SAMs or MiGs. Also no post-strike refueling. This was first time Sky Spot was used in the Hanoi delta and it was an unsuccessful venture." Maj Armstrong logged 2+20 on this mission.

Maj Armstrong described this mission in more detail in his memoirs. "On the 15th of November we flew a different kind of mission. Once again, somebody back in Washington was anguishing over the fact that the Navy was able to get Pack VI mission with its A-6's while the Air Force wasn't making its presence felt up there. So the solution was to use a Combat Sky Spot radar site on a mountain in Northern Thailand [Note: It was Lima Site 85 in northern Laos] which would hopefully have enough range to give level bombing directions into the Hanoi area. The difference between this and previous and future Sky Spot missions was that we were going in mission strength with Weasels, a CBU flight and F-4C's for MiG protection.

"The target was the Hoa Lac Airfield Southwest of Hanoi. It was a short runway and we had not



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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bothered hitting it before during my tenure. I was flying #3 in the third flight carrying 750# bombs. We were briefed that the radar site would guide the lead flight which was in fairly tight formation. They would release their bombs on the countdown. The following flights had about two mile spacing and were to also hit the bomb release button on the countdown. The second flight set the release timer on 12 seconds and we set ours at 24 seconds. On cue, everybody hit the bomb release button. We watched the bombs drop from the lead flight and their turning away. Then the bombs came off the second flight as advertised and they broke away from the target area. Then my own came off and I looked down and there was the airfield just sticking out of the overcast and the bombs from the other flights were hitting long. It was clear enough that we could have dive bombed it had we known it was that open. The good news was that there was no SA-2s, flak, or MiGs so everyone returned safely."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, flew his 12th mission into North Vietnam as "Locust 02" against Hoa Lac airfield. "Runway hit/light 37/57mm." (Rufus Dye Mission History log.)

*Bob Dorrough's Combat diary & Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 7 - 8 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 14 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.*

**16-Nov-67**

4838

In the afternoon, the 388 TFW at Korat provided a Wild Weasel flight on the strike against Bac Mai airfield (JCS 7). This was the 388 TFW's second attempt at Commando Club radar bombing. "COMMANDO CLUB procedures involved control of the flight path and determination of the bomb release point by ground-base radar (WAGER) ... thus requiring continual communication between the force commander and WAGER." (Red Baron II report, Event 57, pp 57 - 58.)

The Wild Weasel "Ozark" flight took off at 1400. Their mission lasted 3 hours 45 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Porter Thompson, 44 TFS
- #2 - Maj Robert S. Beale, 44 TFS
- #3 - Maj Oscar Moise Dardeau, Jr., 44 TFS (KIA 18 Nov 67)
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS, flying F-105D 60-0435

This was Maj Armstrong's 20th combat mission to North Vietnam. "We were fragged to hit the Bac Mai airfield in downtown Hanoi. We had been sitting on this target for several days but the weather had been too bad to go. I was in the 'Iron Hand' or 'Wild Weasel' flight. We were going in ahead of the strike force by 4 minutes and launch on the SAM sites. The weather was entirely undercast past the target so we turned around and went back out to the west clear of NVN and then turned and came back in on a heading of 020 degrees for a radar-controlled drop on Thai Nguyen. Our flight went to the south and looked for SAM sites. The bombing was aborted when we lost radio contact with the radar controller. They dropped their bombs safe over NVN. We launched Shrike missiles at a radar site on the way out. I also strafed a radar sited on a hill sticking up out of the clouds."

In his memoirs, Lt General Armstrong further described this day's mission. "The next day we flew another radar controlled mission into Pack VIA. This time the target was the Bac Mai Airfield in the southern outskirts of Hanoi. We had not struck this target previously in my tenure either. This time was flying #4 in the Weasel flight. The other three aircraft (Oscar Dardeau was #3) were Weasels and I was just along to watch their tail and lug some ordnance for them to direct me to launch/drop. We were not being vectored by the [Commando Club] radar site so we just stayed in the area of the mission looking for SA-2 sites which might come on the air.

"In the meantime, the radar controller had to admit that he had lost contact and needed the strike

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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force to turn around so he could reacquire them for another run -- this time on the Thai Nguyen steel mill [JCS 76]. They lost them again so they wound up dropping their bombs 'safe' over North Vietnam. In the meantime, our flight launched Shrike (radar homing missiles) at a radar site on the way out. I also strafed a radar site sticking up out of the clouds on a mountain top."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, flew his 13th mission as "Locust 02" against a target in RP-6. "Divert due weather/released safe/light 37 mm."

Four 8 TFW F-4Ds from Ubon on MIG CAP support to the F-105 strike force encountered two MiG-21s. The flight "... departed Ubon ... refueled ... rendezvoused with the F-105s from Korat ... passed Channel 97 ... and headed 060 degrees toward the target, in the vicinity of Phu Tho." One of the MiG-21s fired two air-to-air missiles at the two F-4Ds in the flight's second element. One of the missiles exploded 1,000 feet behind number 4, which was in a five-G turn, causing no damage and the other missile disappeared. That MiG-21 flew north and escaped. The radars on number 1 and 3 F-4Ds failed. Attacking the second MiG-21, the MIG CAP lead tried to fire an AIM-4, which failed to cool, and an AIM-7 which didn't launch due to the radar failure. He then fired 400 rounds from his 20-mm cannon pod but the MiG was out of range. The lead F-4D reached bingo fuel at location 21-45N and 105-28E and rejoined his flight out of the area. "In the interim the strike force dropped ordnance on the target." (Red Baron II report, Event 57, pp 56 - 61.)

A memorandum for President Johnson on 17 November 1967 described this MiG encounter. "Two North Vietnamese MiG-21s and 4 US F-4s fought a prolonged air battle 50 miles west of Hanoi. The MiGs later recovered at Communist China's Ning-ming Airfield. No aircraft were lost by either side. The engagement was unusual because Hanoi's MiG-21s customarily have refrained from attacking US planes, particularly F-4s, unless they have a distinct tactical advantage. This time they chose to fight despite being outnumbered and extended the battle beyond their usual hit-and-run tactics. The incident also marked the third time North Vietnamese MiGs have landed in China after a combat mission." (Memorandum for the President, Friday, Nov 17, 1967 6:30 AM downloaded from the Vietnam Center Archive.)

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 8 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 14 - 15.*

### 17-Nov-67

4839

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS was one of the four flights from Korat's ALPHA force that attacked Bac Mai Airfield (JCS 7). The flight took off from Korat at 0620 with a TOT of 0855 to 0858, four minutes ahead of Takhli's BRAVO force. Their mission lasted 2 hours 50 minutes.

The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot, KIA 14 Feb 68
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4248
- #4 - Capt Robert M. Crane

This was Maj Armstrong's 21st combat mission to North Vietnam. "We finally got into the Bac Mai Airfield just south of Hanoi and, I think, in the city limits. The weather was absolutely perfect once we crossed eastward from the mountains into the delta. We were tapped by MiG-21s as we turned north into the target, 30 miles south of Hanoi, but they were not able to get a shot at us. Lead and myself launched Shrike missiles toward Hanoi about 12 miles out. I don't know what they hit. We rolled in with the CBU's and were rather fast on airspeed so I released a little early. I was aiming for the flak sites on the southeast end. There was heavy 85-mm flak as we rolled in from the northeast & pulled off. No one got hit despite the heavy fire and the 3 SAMs that were launched. Takhli's Force Commander was shot down just behind us in the delta [Maj Charles Edward Cappelli, 354 TFS, KIA]. No rescue possible there. We got good hits on the airfield targets.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"That night we faced an inquisition because some ordnance had hit the Russian, English and I.C.C. embassies. None of ours, however."

In his memoir, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "The next day the weather was much improved in Pack VIA. Our target that morning was the Bac Mai airfield which we had originally planned to strike the day before. Several days earlier a bunch of us in the 34th concluded that the SA-2 radars seemed to shut down whenever a Shrike missile was fired. The Shrike left a very tell-tale gray trail which couldn't be confused with a Sidewinder, for instance. So we opined that it might be a good idea to just fire some Shrikes just before entering the SA-2 ring and see if that held down the radars. So we persuaded the command post to order a Shrike missile to be loaded on the outboard station of the lead and #3 aircraft in the first two flights. Why they agreed to such a wild scheme, I'll never know but they did. Our plan was for the mission commander to transmit a code word about 20 miles from the target and the four of us would hose off our missiles.

"We headed up the land route and turned East to cross the Red River and fly the last 80 miles on the East side of the river so we could make a left hand roll-in on the airfield. I was #3 in the second flight which meant I was carrying CBU's. We briefed to drop them on any 85-mm site that fired on us. If we didn't see any firing, then lead and his wingman would dump theirs on the 85-mm site on the Southwest end of the field and I would do likewise on the site on the Northeast end which we knew were there from photos of the target. Everything was proceeding according to plan until we were about to cross the Red River. We got a call that two 'blue bandits' (MiG-21's) were closing on us from the North. We executed our standard defensive maneuver: lower the nose, go into afterburner, and race them to the SA-2 ring. I noticed a flicker on my airspeed tape which indicated that I had gone supersonic but I didn't think anything more about that as it I was still concerned about the MiGs. They must have overshoot us because they caused us no more grief.

"When we were about 20 miles from the target (using the Doppler navigation system for reference) the code was transmitted to fire the Shrikes. I hosed mine off and it accelerated away in level flight leaving the tell-tale smoke trail. We saw no SA-2s being launched although we knew there were plenty of them in this area. When the time came to roll-in, nobody was firing so [I] aimed at my pre-designated 85-mm site. Since nobody was firing, I made a picture-perfect dive and released my CBU's right on the numbers. The other guys put their bombs on the barracks on the field which was the real target. The airfield itself was too short for any combat usage.

"Unscathed, we returned to Korat feeling pretty good about the mission and our nifty idea of firing the Shrikes. After dinner, we were all called down to the command post. There was an urgent inquiry from the White House who wanted to know about the report that there were casualties that morning at the International Control Commission, the English Embassy, and the Soviet Embassy. Fortunately, the #4 aircraft was equipped with a 70-mm camera which took pictures upon bomb release. The 180-degree pictures showed the CBU's coming off the rack and starting to spin rather than fall away smoothly pulling the wire that allowed the propeller on the nose of the CBU container to unscrew and open up the container like a pea pod. Normally this was calculated to happen at a couple thousand feet above the target which allowed aerodynamic forces on the curved fins of the bomblets to spread them into a lethal circle of about 200-foot diameter.

"But since they were spinning, the propeller didn't turn and the container did not split in two. The film showed that the containers impacted over a mile laterally and emitted a puff of white smoke which was the indication that the bomblets were not armed by the aerodynamic forces. They impacted along Embassy Row parallel to our run-in heading. This could have been the cause of the casualties that the White House was asking about. Or it could have been that there were radar sites on those buildings which our Shrikes homed in on. Anyhow, that's all that we could tell them and we didn't feel like we owed anybody an apology. But we were told that the Shrike gambit was

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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not to be used again. Too bad -- it seemed to work! It was normal to try different tactics. Sometimes changing from the morning mission to the afternoon mission. The mission commanders had a lot of flexibility as it should have been."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 8 - 9 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 15 - 16.*

**18-Nov-67**

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On 18 November 1967, the 388 TFW flew their third Commando Club mission using the TSQ-81 radar at LS-85 in Laos. It was one of seven such missions the wing flew in November. The mission turned into the disaster that the 355 TFW Commander, Col Giraudo, had feared. Also, the events occurred that had been predicted exactly one year earlier by Hq 7th Air Force in their initial objection to the installation at LS-85 of an MSQ radar.

Korat's target was the MiG airfield at Phuc Yen (JCS 6), 14 nautical miles northwest of Hanoi in Route Pack 6A. Using regular daylight bombing attacks, both Korat and Takhli had hit Phuc Yen, the home of MiG-21s and IL-28 bombers, for the first time on 24 and 25 October 1967. (388 TFW TFW history, Apr - Dec 67, Vol II, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0030 - 034 & Chronology of Seventh Air Force, 1 July 1967 - 30 June 1968, pg 5.)

The mission on 18 November included the large force typical of those assembled for conventional strikes against major targets in North Vietnam. Since clouds obscured the target, sixteen F-105s from Korat, flying at 18,000 feet, were to bomb the airfield shortly after 8 a.m. using the Commando Club radar. The F-105s carried a total of 27 ALQ-71 ECM pods that, when flown in a specific pod formation, had proven effective in jamming SAM radars. The force also included one flight of Wild Weasels from Korat with call sign "Waco" consisting of three F-105Fs and an F-105D. The Weasels flew 25 miles ahead of the strike force to suppress SAM sites around the airfield. Also protecting the strike force were four F-4Ds from Ubon for MiG CAP, three EC-121s with surveillance radar using call signs "Ethan Alpha" flying off the coast of North Vietnam to warn of MiGs, and five EB-66s for jamming SAM and AAA radar signals. To help conceal the location of the Commando Club radar in Northern Laos, one of the EC-121s acted as a communications relay between the strike force commander and the radar controller at LS-85 who used the call sign "Wager Control". (Thompson, pp 103 - 104 & USAF Fighter Weapons Center Report, Red Baron II, Vol IV, Event 59, pp 67 - 72.)

The strike force consisted of four flights of F-105s. The lead flight was "Laredo" led by the strike force commander. The second flight was "Vegas"; the third was "Garage". "Hatchet" flight, split into two elements straddling "Vegas" flight, provided additional MiG-CAP for the force. "Hatchet 1" and "Hatchet 2" flew on the right of "Vegas" while "Hatchet 3" and "Hatchet 4" on the left. (Armstrong mission log)

En route to the target, the strike force commander, "Laredo 1", talked on his radio over the UHF strike frequency using the awkward relay to Wager Control about details of setting up the strike formation for the bomb drops. Unfortunately, their lengthy radio discussions blocked three MiG warning calls from Ethan Alpha. Suddenly, two silver-colored MiG-21s swooped down on the Wild Weasels who had failed to hear Ethan Alpha's MiG alerts. The first MiG fired a missile at Waco 4 and the second launched one at Waco 1. Both missiles hit their targets and the MiGs headed north at high speed -- a hit and run tactic that was becoming all too successful.

Waco 1 was F-105F 63-8295 with Major Oscar Moise Dardeau, Jr. and EWO Capt Edward William "Tiny" Lehnhoff, Jr. from the 44 TFS. Their plane immediately began shedding parts and trailing black smoke then disappeared into the clouds below. Both men died in the crash.

Waco 4 was luckier. He was Lt Col William N. Reed from the 469 TFS (flying F-105D 60-0497)

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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who managed to nurse his crippled plane to Laos. He ejected near the Commando Club radar site at LS-85 where a Jolly Green HH-3 helicopter picked him up.

The strike force continued toward the target but with the loss of the Wild Weasels, became more vulnerable to the SAM sites protecting Phuc Yen airfield.

The F-105 pilots were even more vulnerable than they realized. In recent months, the North Vietnamese had developed a track-on-jam tactic for their SAM operators who used it this morning when the Commando Club formations made it even more effective. As a translator of North Vietnam's military history reported, "... on 18 November, the [North] Vietnamese missileers got the target they wanted. A USAF Commando Club strike of twenty-four F-105s flew in to attack Noi Bai [Phuc Yen] airfield. ... After a sneak attack by two MiG-21s shot down two F-105s, the MiGs peeled off to allow the SA-2s to take over" ("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, pgs 195.)

As the first of the four strike flights approached the target, the pilots in the flight closed their formation from a 1,500-foot separation between their planes to 500 feet so their bombs would hit in a tighter cluster. Unfortunately, the maneuver degraded their precisely spaced ECM pod formation, which sharpened the jamming patterns on the radar screens of the SAM operators. With their track-on-jam technique, SAM crews from six missile battalions fired 13 missiles. Two of them found their targets. One hit Garage 3, Col Edward Burdett, the 388 TFW commander. He was on his 37th mission over North Vietnam and flying F-105D 62-4221. The other blasted Vegas 1, Maj Leslie John Hauer from the 469 TFS. Maj Hauer was killed and Col Burdett was captured but died as a POW.

"Wager Control" then announced that they had lost the strike force on their Commando Club radar and directed the F-105s to turn around so they could reacquire the planes. The pilots decided that they had had enough and, jettisoning their bombs, headed for home. (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, e-mail, 11 July 06)

Capt William Wallace Butler from the 469 TFS flew on this mission and received the Silver Star. "Captain William W. Butler distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 18 November 1967. On that date, Captain Butler was a member of a flight of F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned the task of attacking a high priority military target, using an experimental method of ordnance which required that the entire force assume a formation that left them defenseless against hostile aircraft attacks. Even though he had experienced afterburner failure, he then, with his element leader, egressed the area while under hostile aircraft attack, called a timely break which forced the hostile fire to disengage. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Butler has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (<http://www.veterantributes.org/TributeDetail.php?recordID=1708>)

The 388th wing history for the period tried to put a positive spin on this tragic event that resulted in the loss of their wing commander and one fifth of the F-105s on the mission. "The first COMMANDO CLUB attempt ... used the entire strike force to execute level bombing against Phuc Yen airfield. This mission was significant in that it resulted in the revision of COMMANDO CLUB tactics due to the degradation of ECM pod effectiveness when the entire force closed up from the normal pod formation to decrease bomb dispersal; and resulted in the shooting down of four aircraft (two by SAM and two by MiGs) including the wing commander. After this experience, COMMANDO CLUB missions were executed in single flights in high threat areas and the standard pod formation was adhered to." (388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilms NO583 and Vol II in NO584, frame 0030.)

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"Although SAMs did not destroy any aircraft on ... smaller Commando Club raids ... , aircrews remembered the big raid on Phuc Yen and called the smaller raids Commando Kaze." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 104).

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS led "Hatchet" flight, four F-105s that provided MiG-CAP protection for the other three flights in the strike force. It was his 22nd combat mission and the flight's line up was:

- #1 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #3 - Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky, POW 19 Nov 67
- #4 - Maj Eugene L. Main, 469 TFS

The flight took off at 0605 and the mission lasted for 3 hours 30 minutes. Maj Armstrong's mission log and a portion of his memoirs provided an eye-witness account of this mission. "This was my first try as a flight leader up into Pack VIA. The mission was a complete disaster; we lost 4 airplanes and didn't drop a bomb on the target. We were going to Phuc Yen Airfield. The weather was forecast to be bad so we were to use radar vectors from a ground control station to drop through the clouds. My flight carried CBUs and our job was to provide MiG coverage during the bombing run and to drop on SAM or flak sites if the weather over the target happened to be clear. We went up the land route and left Channel 97 heading northeast. The 'Iron Hand' flight was out ahead of us about 3 minutes as we were over a solid cloud deck at 8,000'. Suddenly MiG-21s fired missiles at the Iron Hand and hit #s 1 & 4. #1 said he was hit and had to bail out immediately with his back seat EWO [Maj Oscar Moise Dardeau, Jr. and EWO Capt Edward William "Tiny" Lehnhoff, Jr., 44 TFS, both KIA.]. We heard one good beeper. #4, L/C Bill Reed [Lt Col William N. Reed, 469 TFS, rescued], was hit and he headed back out with the other 2 and got back to 97 with the burning aircraft before he had to eject. He was picked up OK. #1 and his EWO had no chance as they were on the NW end of Thud Ridge.

"We continued on and turned down Thud Ridge toward Phuc Yen. About 90 seconds from bomb release, the three flights of 4 were in tight, flights in trail to hit the target, and I was on the right side with my wingman while #3 and #4 were on the NE side. We then saw 2 SAMs pass behind the force and explode high. Then in rapid succession about 10 - 12 more SAMs exploded (the orange cloud of debris) right among the three flights at their altitude. They were coming straight up out of the clouds and we couldn't see them until they exploded. 'Vegas' lead [Maj Leslie John Hauer, 469 TFS, KIA] was hit and caught on fire. He turned left for 5 seconds and ejected safely. Then 'Garage' #3, Col Burdett the wing commander [Col Edward Burke Burdett, KIA] was hit. He turned out to the right followed by his wingman. We were getting two MiG calls from 'Castaway' during this 3-minute bomb run. Then about 15 - 30 seconds from bomb release, the radar vector said he had lost contact and was aborting the run. People started going everywhere to get out of there and avoid the SAMs, which were still bursting. I called my flight to punch off our stores and turn, which we did. We (#2 and me) broke right and went back up Thud Ridge to see if there were any MiGs closing on the force. Shortly thereafter, 'Garage' #3 burst into flame and spun down into the undercast. No chute or beeper was heard. The two of us rejoined our flight over 97 and made one circle to see if we could help Bill Reed, but the rescue aircraft were already headed towards him. So we refueled and headed home much the worse for wear and frustration. Jim King [Maj William J. King] was also hit in the target area but he got back to Udorn safely." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 9 - 10)

Lt General Armstrong's memoirs added more details of this mission and its aftermath. "The ... morning of 18 Nov. 1967, was another Pack VIA Sky Spot -- what an oxymoron! As my 22nd mission, this was my first in Pack VIA as a flight leader. I was leading Hatchet flight, which was always the call sign for the morning CBU flight. The target was the Phuc Yen Airfield and we were

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

### F-105 History

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going the land route. MiG-21's attacked the Weasels which were a couple of minutes ahead of us. They scored hits on the #1 and #4 aircraft. #1 was piloted by Oscar Dardeau and both he and his EWO ejected and we definitely heard one emergency beeper which meant that a parachute had opened. However, neither turned up as POW's and were later declared KIA. (They and the others whom I will mention as casualties on this mission can be found on panel # 30E on the Vietnam Wall in Washington. That's the panel I go to when I take a break from a meeting across the street at the National Academy of Science.)

"The #4 pilot was my McConnell classmate, Lt. Col. Bill Reed, who was able to fly back far enough to bail out in Laos and be rescued. I never will forget the specter of his aircraft burning brightly, turning to head south. The other Weasels accompanied him so we had no SA-2 protection from that time forward. The strike force crossed Thud Ridge and headed southeast for the bombing run. There were three flights of aircraft carrying 750# bombs just like on the first Pack VIA Sky Spot. My flight was on the outside of the three flights. As briefed, since we carried CBU's, we were to provide some MiG protection or drop on any flak site that we might be able to attack. A smarter move would have been to have us as the fourth flight carrying 750# bombs but the command post at 7th Air Force in Saigon really didn't have any clue what we were facing since none of them had ever experienced the defenses in Pack VIA and kept ordering the bomb loads that they ordered for clear weather targets. (More on this idiocy later.) Anyhow, I was on the right side of the strike force with Don Hodge on my wing. My #3 man was Ray Vissotsky with Gene Main on his wing. They were on the other side of the strike force.

"There was a thick cloud level just a few thousand feet below our 17,000-foot altitude as the strike force came within 3 minutes from bomb release. The next thing I noticed was two SA-2s self-destructing at about 30,000 feet. When this happened to an SA-2, there was a large orange burst that was unmistakable. Their position indicated that they had passed behind us. Then about 10-12 SA-2s exploded at our altitude in the vicinity of the three flights carrying 750# bombs. The leader of the second flight, Major Les Hauer, was hit by one close enough to catch his aircraft on fire. He ejected a few seconds later. Col. Burdett, our wing commander, was flying in the third flight and he was hit next. I watched his aircraft spin down into the undercast burning fiercely. There was no visual or audio indication that he had ejected.

"Despite these losses, we were pressing on when we received a call from the Skyspot controller that he had lost radar contact and that we needed to go out and start over again! SA-2's were still exploding and we were receiving MiG calls from the radar aircraft over the Gulf. What we said to that controller would be 'R' rated by today's classification. I called my flight to punch off the CBU's and break right towards the area where the MiGs were reported. The four of us got back together and headed back for our post flight refueling and a safe landing at Korat. We had lost four aircraft and Jim King was hit badly enough for him to make an emergency landing at Udorn Air base on the Northern border of Thailand.

"This was the most disastrous mission I personally experienced up to that time and for the next 78! This mission took three pages for me to record in my log whereas I needed only one for all the others. What happened when we got back was equally bizarre. After landing, we stopped into the maintenance trailer to dutifully debrief the aircraft's condition -- we were disciplined to do this even under the emotional low we all felt. Then I stopped by the Intelligence Office in the command post for a personal debriefing. There was an intelligence officer, a major wearing fatigues, who sat in on my debriefing. When I mentioned the SA-2s that were fired at us, he said that I was mistaken in my identification because his data showed conclusively that there were no SA-2 batteries in that area. I protested in a matter-of-fact manner but he was convinced that all of us who had survived were mistaken although we had seen numerous SA-2 bursts previously. I had not the stomach to argue further. I threw up my hands and left!

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"Shortly thereafter, we all assembled in the command post for the mass debriefing. A Maj. Gen. Worley from 7th Air Force walked up on the stage. He had flown up from Saigon in a T-39 when they got word by radio that we had lost so many aircraft, including the wing commander. The intelligence major must have come with him. The general's first words to us were, 'Well, did anybody get any bombs on the target?' This was probably the dumbest question that I have ever heard. But it substantiated my belief the guys in Saigon didn't have a clue what the Pack VIA world was like. We sat in stony silence -- not believing what we were hearing from this insensitive and unknowledgeable senior officer. Finally, he had the good sense to ask us to tell him what happened. We did and he flew back to Saigon to pass this on to General Momyer. Ironically, General Worley was later killed in an F-4C accident in South Vietnam. He's listed on the Vietnam Wall as well as the four brave men who lost their lives on this mission. We never knew what happened to any of the four but they were eventually declared KIA. I've always worried that our escapades the day before had unknowingly kept Col. Burdett up the last night of his life." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 16 - 17.)

*388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilms NO583 and Vol II in NO584, frame 0030.*

**19-Nov-67**

4840

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS flew his 23rd mission into North Vietnam. He was "Goose 1" that took off at 0605. His mission lasted 1 hour 55 minutes. His flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0458
- #2 - Capt Neil F. Blake, 44 TFS

"I was the 'super spare' for the morning strike force. That meant I briefed and taxied out with the Iron Hand flight (always the first flight off) and sat running on the end of the runway until somebody aborted and then I would launch to fill in as needed. There are also always 2 airborne spares for the 20 aircraft strike force and if they are not needed they go to Pack I and bomb. Everybody took off okay this a.m. and I was about to give it up as a lost cause when I heard that one of the airborne spares had air aborted and I was to take off and join the other airborne spare to be a flight of 2. (No single-ship strikes permitted). The guy I joined with happened to have been replaced by a spare already as he had some minor difficulties. We hit a tanker, took on some fuel and made a road cut in Laos just out of Mu Gia Pass then drove into Pack I for a weather reconnaissance and counter. My bombs were good. My wingman was bad all the way around!"

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 10.*

**21-Nov-67**

4841

At 1420, four pilots from the 34 TFS comprising "Waco" flight took off from Korat to be the flak suppression flight in a strike force to RP-6 but weather diverted them to RP-1. The mission lasted 2 hours 20 minutes.

The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #3 - Maj George G. Clausen, 34 TFS Commander flying hi 99th mission
- #4 - Capt Robert M. Crane

It was Maj Armstrong's 24th mission to North Vietnam. "This was originally scheduled as a Pack VI mission, down town. The weather was bad so we went in individual flights to Laos and Pack I. My flight got a Combat Sky Spot over Pack I about 15 miles west of Dong Hoi. It was undercast so we didn't see our bombs hit. No MiGs, no SAMs, and no flak. Happiness!"

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 10 - 11 & 7 AF TWX 242110Z Nov 67, in PACAF DO Read*



# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

## F-105 History

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*File 16 - 30 Nov 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 898727.*

**22-Nov-67**

4842

At 1915, four pilots from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, comprising "Pistol" flight took off from Korat on a mission to RP-6 but weather diverted them to RP-4. The mission lasted 3 hours 5 minutes.

The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #2 - Maj David D. Igelman
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0512
- #4 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer

It was Maj Armstrong's 25th mission to North Vietnam. "Jim Daniel was the Mission Commander for a programmed strike on a rail line 6 miles northeast of Hanoi. I was the Deputy Mission Commander and assisted him in the planning. We were first delayed for 3 hours waiting for the weather up there to clear. We took off finally and got almost to the tankers over the water, when the word came to abort the mission into Pack VI because of weather. We refueled and proceeded all of the way back up into northern Laos (300 miles) and then when the FAC ran out of gas, we dropped in the 'Fish's Mouth', Pack IV, and came home."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 11.*

**24-Nov-67**

4843

On his 26th combat mission, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, fired two Bullpup missiles at a target in Laos. The two-ship "Hatchet" flight took off at 1610. Their mission lasted 1 hour 55 minutes. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Hugh W. Davis
- #2 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0194

Maj Armstrong commented on the mission in his combat log book. "I had been appointed to be one of the pilots in the squadron to fire the AGM-12C (Bullpup) missile. Today was my first try at it. The target was a road segment in southern Laos just outside of Mu Gia Pass. We launched two missiles apiece. My first one came off funny but I finally found it and guided it in pretty close to the target (50 feet). The second one was a little better and I missed only by a couple of feet on that one. We were controlled by an O-1 FAC."

He further described the mission and the AGM-12C in his memoirs. "We had practiced firing this pilot-guided missile at McConnell and I had done some more training so as to be designated as qualified to fire this missile. We were to try to create a landslide over a road in Southern Laos which was suspected to be part of the supply route. The O-1 FAC marked the target and Hugh Davis, my leader this day, and I lined up to aim at a place just above the road so as to start a landslide -- just like we were briefed. I had a Bullpup on each wing. I first lined up and fired the missile from my left wing. I heard and felt it roar off the wing but lost sight of it. I feared that it had dropped down low so I commanded a pitch-up with my side-arm controller. Still it did not come back into view. Then I saw a glint high and to the right. It was my missile that I had inadvertently flown there when I couldn't observe it. I immediately put in down and left corrections on my controller and watched with amazement as the missile actually impacted the target from an obtuse angle! The other one I guided in a more conventional manner to the target but that was my only experience with this weapon. We didn't use it in Pack VIA because the firing aircraft had to continue the dive to a perilous altitude in order to control the missile to its target. And that would have put us right into the small arms danger zone after having weathered the MiGs, SA-2's and the 85-mm flak. Not a good idea!"

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 11 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong,*

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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*unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 18.*

**26-Nov-67**

4844

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS flew his 27th mission into North Vietnam. He was "Goose 1" that took off at 0710. His mission lasted 2 hours. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #2 - Maj James R. Bassett, 44 TFS

"I was one of the two airborne spares for today's strike. Since they didn't go to the primary target because of bad weather up in Pack VI, the two airborne spares took off as a flight of two for a strike in Laos or Pack I. We were given a Combat Sky Spot over the clouds just southwest of Mu Gia Pass. We then flew across Pack I to the coast for a weather check and counter."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Simmer 4" attacking a road segment in southern Laos. "100%. Road cut and slides." He then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sighting." It was his 17th combat mission.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 12 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**29-Nov-67**

4845

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS took off at 07:55. They refueled with Tan 23 going to the target and post-strike refueled with Tan 66. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr. flying F-105D 59-1759
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0072 on his 25th combat mission.
- #3 - Capt Carl William Lasiter flying 62-4359
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine flying 61-0132

The flight worked with the FAC "Nail 70" against a target at location 21-36N and 106-32E. "75% coverage. 100% on target." Their mission lasted 4.3 hours.

At 14:10, four pilots from the 34 TFS comprising "Scuba" flight took off from Korat on a mission to Laos. The mission lasted 2 hours 50 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #2 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0445.
- #4 - Capt Hugh W. Davis

It was Maj Armstrong's 28th combat mission. "The regular afternoon strike was cancelled and we were fortunate to get an add-on flight of four. We went up into Laos just above the Thailand border where we worked with an O-1E FAC. The clouds were thick all about but we were able to roll in on a shallow pass and drop. All of our bombs were on target and the FAC said we destroyed 12 buildings and an area where 200 enemy troops had been reported. After that, we swung into North Vietnam for a road check and counter. It was the first time that my tape recorder worked properly and I was really pleased."

*Jake Shuler's mission log spreadsheet & Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 12.*

**30-Nov-67**

4846

At 0705, four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Pistol" flight took off from Korat on a mission to bomb a target in Mu Gia Pass in RP-1 North Vietnam. The mission lasted 2 hours 45 minutes. The flight line up was:

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj William J. King
- #2 - Capt Robert M. Crane
- #3 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0132.

The mission was Maj Armstrong's 29th. "Weather was bad in VIA [RP-6A] again so we went to 1st alternate target. We dropped on Mu Gia Pass via Sky Spot through clouds. No assessment of BDA."

After this mission, Maj Armstrong went on R&R and attended the 2nd quarterly River Rats Conference at Takhli and Bangkok.

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. also from the 34th flew his 42nd mission into North Vietnam today where he attacked trucks, probably in Mu Gia Pass, too.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 12 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 30 Nov 67.*

**30-Nov-67      06-Dec-67**

4847

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS spent his second R&R at the River Rats tactics conference at Takhli and Bangkok. In his memoirs, he described his experiences in some detail.

"When my flight was scheduled for our next R&R, it coincided with the second Red River Pilots Tactics Conference hosted by Takhli. The first one of these had been held in Ubon under the auspices of Col. Robin Olds. They had actually stopped part of the war for a day to get together and discuss tactics with all of the wings who flew into North Vietnam represented. Ubon added some character to the event by bringing in elephants for the participants to ride. So we knew that between us and a flight from the 469th which was representing Korat with us, that there would be some shenanigans and that we shouldn't stand short!

"We decided to buy some more Aussie hats and have them painted white to wear with our flight suits which we had dyed black for our squadron colors. Not a pretty sight! We stenciled on the brim of our hats: 'S---Hot from Korat'. And we bought some chains and jewelry from downtown to simulate the 'ball of brass' which we hung from the side of the hats. So armed, we flew over to Takhli in the base C-47. The locals met us plane side with much fanfare. We were assigned a flatbed trailer as our float for the parade -- a surprise but what the hell at this point! There were some bales of straw and a few symbols on the flatbed but also a half dozen young Thai women. The parade took us down the flight line and through the base before we came to the destination -- the Officers Club. We noticed that the mechanics on the flight line seemed to know the women so we quickly surmised that our Takhli hosts had requisitioned some women from the local brothels for the parade -- that's all.

"We were assigned to some buildings where we could throw our belongings and hopefully sleep later. We assembled at the Club and had a formal Dining-In. Normally this would require mess dress but since we were told not to bring such, the uniform was prescribed as a white shirt and dark trousers. We had come with shirts from a tailor downtown which had an F-105 over the heart so we were in good form. There was the usual solemnity of a Dining-In with toasts. The toast that got the best response was Eddie Deck [Maj Eddie Vernon Deck, 357 TFS] announcing: 'To the World Bank'. It had just been announced [on 29 November 1967] that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara was leaving to head the World Bank. Some 25 years later he wrote a book to explain/apologize his actions but as far as this crowd of pilots were concerned who were risking their lives daily under his strategy, the vote was already in!

"After dinner, it got rather rowdy! The folks at Takhli had anticipated this and had moved all of the

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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furniture out of the bar area and padded the floor with thin mattresses. I soon found out why. A few guys hollered out: 'Mig Sweep' and locked arms and roared across the floor knocking down everybody in the way. I joined in a couple of these sweeps myself. We had other games that we played. Takhli provided a two foot bongo board which was designed to roll on a log 8 inches in diameter. The trick was to balance on the board without taking a fall. Nobody else would represent Korat in this competition so I mistakenly stepped forward to defend the honor of our base. After about two cycles of the board, I was pitched off, landing on my right wrist. I survived the evening because of the alcohol medicinal effect but my wrist hurt me off and on for the rest of my tour. I even felt it when I had to pull several 'g's' coming off a bomb run.

"The next day we all woke up to gigantic hangovers only to find that we had to pack up and board a couple of C-130's for Bangkok where the celebration would continue. There was no pretense made of a tactics discussion other than at the bar! I was in the group that spent the first few nights in the Manohra Hotel although the party was held at the Oriental Hotel which is one of Bangkok's finest. I recall that Col. Chappie James entertained us with song and that he was quite good at singing! Later I was able to get a room at the Chao Phya Hotel which was the official military hotel in town but heavily booked for folks on official duty rather than party guys like us.

"We ate too richly and drank too much while we were celebrating in Bangkok. I even attended a presentation of 'Barefoot in the Park'. There was a subliminal thought shared by all that this might be the last celebration for some! The time came to go back to Korat. There was a C-130 that left the military base in Bangkok every day to land at every base in Thailand, starting with Korat. No tickets or reservations required -- just show up in a flying suit. Tony Zang, 469th, [Capt Robert A. Zang] and I were out there and watched the C-130 land. The aircraft commander was a 1/Lt. and I balked at getting on board. We didn't have any lieutenant pilots at Korat -- very few captains in fact -- so I didn't feel comfortable flying with him. Tony argued that he felt so bad that he needed to see the Flight Surgeon at Korat so I climbed on board with him.

"The cargo bay of the C-130 was filled with goodies that the troops had bought in Bangkok. There were crated brass candlesticks and other bulky items all over the floor and the ramp. I didn't realize that they weren't tied down. I crawled into one of the seats down the center of the cargo bay and promptly went to sleep. I woke up when my inner ear told me that we were flying at an unusual angle of attack. Pretty soon we touched down at Korat and the aircraft commander went to maximum reverse thrust and applied maximum wheel braking.

"The C-130 stopped in less than 1,000 feet and taxied another 8,000 feet to turn off. In the execution of this minimum distance landing, all of the unsecured crates came rolling forward. I barely dodged one heavy one! I was irate! I knew that I could get killed over North Vietnam but I couldn't stand the news going home that I had been killed by a flying brass candlestick! So when the aircraft was parked, I got off and waited for the aircraft commander to disembark. As he stepped off I said: 'Lieutenant, that was an outstanding short field landing you made. In fact you remind me of General McConnell, Chief of Staff of the Air Force. You've both gone as far as you are going in the Air Force'."

*Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 19 - 20.*

**07-Dec-67**

4848

"South-southwest of Dien Bien Phu Dec. 7, 388 TFW Thunderchief pilots bombed a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery site, cave storage area, and truck park. One sustained fire was reported following a strike on the AAA site, 8 miles south-southwest of the town. A large secondary explosion with multiple detonations was visible from the cave storage complex, 3 miles beyond the flak site." (Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 11, Friday, Dec 15, 1967, pg 1.)

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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At 1430, four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Bass" flight took off from Korat on a mission to bomb this gun site in RP-5 North Vietnam. The mission lasted 2 hours 40 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong in F-105D 58-1152
- #2 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe on his 95th counter. He logged 2.8 hours.

It was Maj Armstrong's 30th combat mission and his first since returning from his second R&R that began on 30 November. "The main strike force was cancelled for bad weather in Pack VI. My flight was launched against a flight in Barrel Roll (Northern Laos). We got refueled and headed on up there. We swept down through the lower half of Pack V and rendezvoused with our A-1 FAC. A flight of 2 F-105s from Takhli was already there and they hit the target first. The target was a gun emplacement in Pack V south of Dien Bien Phu. We put our bombs on it and knocked it out. We even started a fire there. We exited with no further problems."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 12 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.*

**08-Dec-67**

4850

At 1545, four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Gator" flight took off from Korat on a mission to bomb a target in Laos. The mission lasted 2 hours 10 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270.
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying his 96th mission. He logged 2.2 hours
- #4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

It was Maj Armstrong's 31st combat mission. "This was the first alternate target. A Combat Sky Spot under "Wager" control [Commando Club] on a target 5 miles east of Sam Neua, Laos. The refueling and vectoring into the target went like clockwork and the bomb run was smooth. It was completely undercast below us at 6,000'. We swung right off the target and made a weather reconnaissance into Pack IV. #4 had to punch off a bomb over there as it wouldn't drop normally. Otherwise uneventful."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 13.*

**10-Dec-67**

4851

Two F-105D pilots from the 34 TFS were part of a four-plane Wild Weasel flight from the 44 TFS on an Iron Hand mission into RP-1 and RP-2. The Korat flight's call sign was "Bobbin". It took off at 1615 and flew for 3 hours 5 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Michael S. Muskat, Wild Weasel pilot from the 44 TFS
- #2 - Maj Donald W. Revers, F-105D pilot from the 34 TFS
- #3 - Maj Richard W. Arnold, Wild Weasel Pilot from the 44 TFS
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0162

It was Maj Armstrong's 32nd combat mission. "I was flying in the Iron Hand flight on the regular strike force. When the Pack VI strike was cancelled for weather, our flight was sent out to Pack I & II to look for GCI, gun laying radar, and SAMs. We hit the coast and went all of the way up to Vinh and back down but couldn't pick up any signals so we went south of Mu Gia Pass and bombed a river ford under F-100 FAC control. The clouds were pretty thick and it was hard to pick up the target. It took 3 passes before I could drop. Couldn't tell what I hit."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 13.*

**11-Dec-67**

4852

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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At 14:25, four 388 TFW pilots of "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS took off from Korat on a mission to bomb a target in Laos. The mission lasted 2 hours 5 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter (POW 4 Feb 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1152
- #4 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying his 98th mission. He logged 2.1 hours.

It was Maj Armstrong's 33rd combat mission. "This was another Laos mission. We went to an F-100 FAC who was operating in an area just south of Mu Gia Pass. The area to the east of this particular location was completely covered with clouds. Our target was a rock and gravel ford across a river. Carl hit right in the center and the other three of us hit just on the west bank. There was quite a tailwind at release altitude. We weather reced all of the way over to the coast afterwards."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, was in another flight from Korat that attacked targets in southern Laos. It was his 46th combat mission and he struck guns and POL supplies.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew his 19th mission as "Gator 04" against a target in southern Laos. "Ban Senkua ford. 100%/heavy damage/light 37 mm. " He also flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings." (Rufus Dye Mission History log.)

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 13 - 14 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 11 Dec 67.*

**12-Dec-67**

4601

Fourteen flights of F-105s from Takhli and Korat and F-4s from Ubon targeted Kep Railroad Yards at 21-25N and 106-18E and Kep Air Field (JCS 9.1) at 21-23N and 106-16E in Route Pack 6B.

The strike force had a total of 56 aircraft that included F-105 Iron Hands from Takhli, one F-105 flak suppression flight from Takhli, three F-105 strike flights from Korat, and two F-4C MiG CAP flights from Ubon. One MiG CAP flight was supporting the Iron Hand flight, and the other supported the flak suppression and strike flights.

The aircraft departed their bases, refueled over the Gulf of Tonkin, joined up, turned left at the Ile Madeleine, and headed inland north of MiG Ridge. While the strike force was over water, DEEP SEA warned of MiGs airborne from Phuc Yen and later from Kep and Haiphong.

Solid undercast at 8,000 feet caused the Takhli F-105 strike flights to weather abort at 0845L just short of the northeast railroad, followed shortly afterwards by Korat's strike flights. The F-4C MiG CAP aircraft continued ahead to search for MiGs.

One of the MiG CAP flights and two of Korat's egressing F-105 strike flights and its flak suppression flight (Hatchet Flight) encountered MiG-21s. MiG CAP number three fired three AIM-7 missiles at a MiG but all three missiles failed. The F-4C pilot and his wingman pursued the MiG-21 until they received a warning call and broke off 10 to 15 miles from the Chinese border.

A "dirty gray/black" MiG-21 fired an ATOL missile at number four F-105 in Korat's flak suppression flight. "The ATOL exploded just aft of [the plane's] right wing, blowing off half the external fuel tank, igniting the fuel, punching two holes in the right horizontal stabilizer, and tearing the right half of the fuselage from the flap on back." (Red Baron Report)

This pilot was Capt Douglas A. Beyer, "Hatchet 04" from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 60-0512. He was " ... a 100-mission pilot who was attached to the 388 TFW. [He] said that during a mission

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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near the Kep Airfield an air-to-air missile, fired at his aircraft by a MiG-21, exploded directly behind him. 'Fragments struck the right drop tank causing it to explode,' the pilot recalled. Although shrapnel also damaged the fuselage and the alternate and utility hydraulic systems were lost, Byer was able to safely return to a friendly base. ... " The pilot landed at Da Nang AB, South Vietnam. A photo of the plane with the "JJ" tail code, showed holes along the right side of the aft fuselage above and below the stabilator. He received the DFC (3rd OLC) for this mission. (USAF microfilm AVH-7 & Thunderchief Worldwide Report Vol III No 11 July 1968.)

"Hatchet 02", Capt Irving E. LeVine, 34 TFS, fired 121 rounds at the same MiG-21 at point-blank range, 90-degree angle off without hitting the MiG. LeVine was 33 years old with 2,500 flying hours, 225 in the F-105, flying his 76th combat mission, 70 over North Vietnam.

During a Red Baron interview on 25 November 1970, he described his actions. "At first, that MiG looked like an F-4 with a bad paint job. It came up so lazy; most of the MiGs I'd seen had come up very fast, but this one didn't seem to be in any hurry at all until he suddenly snapped up and fired, like the snap-up they do with the F-89. I expected him to go to 35,000 feet and I started to roll right into him, nose down and I didn't think I'd be able to bring my nose up in time. Anyway, I ceased my roll, started up, and he simply made a lazy left bank just like he was on a GCA. At first I thought we were going to collide; I shoved the nose over as far as I could and hosed off the 20-mm rounds. It seemed like a tremendously long fighter. It was silver but not bright silver; there was a gray band of paint behind the cockpit and halfway on the wings and it looked like somebody made a quick attempt to camouflage it. He pulled around (to the right) to parallel my course and I thought if I barrel-rolled to the left I could pull in behind him but my main concern was to help number 4 (who was hit and burning)."

Capt LeVine accompanied Capt Beyer toward Danang where Beyer landed safely after his fire blew out. Capt LeVine flew on to Korat.

Doug Beyer's comments on his experience are posted on Robert W. Smith's autobiography web site. "Early on the morning of 12 Dec 67, we went through the normal mission briefings. Sam Armstrong, Irv LeVine and I were three members of the flight. My memory fades on the fourth. Target was Kep Airfield, northeast of Hanoi. We went the water route, hit the tankers, and entered the area south of Haiphong. The weather was solid, and we were in and out of the clouds the whole time. The Weasel flight kept us advised as to what they found - no breaks, anywhere.

"Finally, they called for a weather abort, and the strike force began a port turn to go feet wet again. About half way through the turn, someone yelled 'Lead, break left'. About eight or nine leads responded, what lead? About that time, I felt a heavy jolt at the rear of the aircraft, and the bird started a roll to the right. My first thought, this is the truth, was 'I don't like rice!' I corrected the attitude with normal aileron, no problem. I lit the burner, punched off the MER, and tried to get rid of both drop tanks. The left one jettisoned, but the right one remained with me.

"Sam joined up with me and gave me a quick rundown on what he could see. I was receiving constant vectors and distances to the coast from those guys we always heard, but never saw.

"As soon as I was feet wet, we turned south to Da Nang. As I began my penetration, I entered the clouds and was under GCA control. They advised me of deteriorating weather, with a rainstorm in progress. There was no problem controlling the aircraft, but not having a chance to run a control check, I had to press forward. I had no hydraulic brakes, but the [backup] air system was in good shape. I broke out at about 500' with good visibility, hit the runway, popped the drag chute, and began braking to a stop. No problems.

"I opened the canopy, and slid down onto the wing. At that time, the aircraft began to move, and I

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thought I was in deep trouble. I was wrong. Ground crewmen already had a Euclid hooked up, and was towing me off the runway. First class service, to say the least!!

"Several hours after I landed, a friend of mine in the maintenance squadron called to say he had something he wanted to show me. He's also the guy that got the pictures of the aircraft for me.

"He met me at Base Ops, and handed me a rolleron that they had gotten out of the rear of my engine area. It had no serial numbers on it, so I assumed it had to be from an Atoll missile. One of the oldest master sergeants I've ever seen explained that the US had quit numbering the rollerons as well, and he was certain the rolleron was from a Sidewinder. Interesting.

"I hitched a ride back to Korat on a T-39 and, upon arrival, joined the squadron party, already in progress. At that point, Irv LeVine began to tell me exactly what had happened. He said that he had seen a MIG 21 pop up out of the clouds, hose off an air-to-air missile, and dive back down into the clouds. He further stated that he had gotten off some rounds of 20 mike mike, and felt sure he had hit the guy in the vertical stabilizer.

"Several days later, I got the pictures of the aircraft. One most noteworthy picture shows a hole in MY vertical stabilizer. The old master sergeant says Sidewinder rolleron. You can understand my doubts about what really occurred that day in December 1967, 35 ½ years ago!"  
([http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch\\_5/iv.html](http://www.nf104.com/ab/ch_5/iv.html))

Irv LeVine told how he remembered this mission. "We were inbound when an airborne abort was called. We had a solid undercast from the coast inland and it was several thousand feet below us. The sky was basically clear and visibility was 15 to 20 miles or more. Our flight did a right turn and headed for the coast. I saw no flak or SAMs. I was in a gentle right turn, almost level, and busy cleaning up the cockpit. Out of the corner of my right eye I saw an aircraft lazily climb out of the undercast a mile or so to my 3 o'clock position and it seemed to be moving rather slow. It was a mottled dark gray and I thought, 'It must be one of ours'. I was startled when it snapped up and fired a missile. The missile hit one of our flight and 70 feet of flame shot rearward from that plane. Radio chatter made me realize it was Doug Beyer's bird that was hit. I didn't know how badly but thought he might not make it to the coast. That fire was really burning and streaming rearward. At the same time I thought the MiG, like so many of the MiGs before him, was now going to grab for altitude and possibly head for China. I hoped to get on his tail and get a shot before he could escape to a much higher altitude. I dumped my bombs and hustled getting my switches to 'Guns Air', lower my seat, get into burner while keeping an eye on the MiG all at the same time. To my surprise, he didn't keep climbing but swung into a 90-degree left turn that would take him across my path but well below me. I came out of burner and shoved the nose of my bird down hard. As he started his turn, my bird's nose was well above the horizon at a 45 to 50-degree angle. The Thud reacted perfectly and I thought we were going to collide. He passed directly across my line of flight and just below me. I pulled the trigger as he shot by but I don't think he even knew I was there. He certainly didn't try to take any evasive action or try to engage me. He reversed to his right leveling off a couple thousand feet above me and appeared to be watching Doug's burning aircraft. I felt confident doing the barrel roll attack and for a moment I considered trying one to get at his 6 o'clock position. I was low at about his 5 o'clock position and we were on approximately the same heading. Guilt took over at the same time and told me my job was to guard Doug's ass as he headed for feet wet. I turned hard to my right and using burner caught up with them. I stayed in a weave pattern behind Doug until we were well out over the water and headed south. He went south to Danang and I RTB'd" (Irv LeVine, letter received 16 April 2010.)

The four pilots in "Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS were targeted against Kep Airfield. The Korat flight took off at 0555 and flew for 3 hours 50 minutes. The flight line up was:



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj Donald W. Revers
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot (KIA 14 Feb 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0449
- #4 - Capt Sam P. Morgan

It was Maj Armstrong's 34th combat mission. "This was the first Pack VI mission for me in 3 weeks. The weather was too bad around Hanoi so we were sent to Kep Airfield, the water route. I was Deputy Force Commander for this force but I lost my DC generator on the tanker and finally got it reset. After that I had to turn off all my navigation equipment to keep it on the line. Don Revers lost his AC generator just before landfall so Sam Morgan wound up leading the force. We were 5 minutes behind Takhli going in. The weather was completely undercast all up the Gulf and inland. Takhli made a weather abort about 15 miles from Kep and we did also a minute later. Consequently, we were all turning through the same airspace. About halfway through the turn back to the coast, we were jumped by MiG-21s. They fired missiles. One hit Hatchet #4, Doug Beyer, but he landed at Danang OK. Some flame shot out of Don Revers' airplane and we thought he was hit but apparently not. What a fiasco. We shouldn't have been sent up there in that weather." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 14)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "The weather over Pack VIA was generally bad so most of the missions were flown in flights into Laos or Pack I. The next Pack VIA mission was on the Kep Airfield Northeast of Hanoi. It was primarily a MiG-17 base. The weather was bad so we wound up doing a weather abort where we could bank only 20 degrees without compromising the effectiveness of our jamming pods. After having seen SA-2's coming up through the clouds and hitting aircraft like they did on 18 November, taking this long to turn and exit the area seemed like an eternity! No SA-2's were fired but two MiG-21's intercepted us and fired a heat seeker which impacted Doug Beyer's aircraft causing him to land at Danang with the missile sticking in the side of his aircraft." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 20.

*Red Baron II Report, Event 69, pp 134 - 145 & 7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-51 dated 16 Dec 67, for week of 8 - 14 Dec 1967, pg 10.*

### 13-Dec-67

4853

At 0640, four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Crossbow" flight took off from Korat on a mission to bomb a target in southern Laos. The mission lasted 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying his 100th counter. He logged 2.3 hours.
- #3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Revers

It was Maj Armstrong's 35th combat mission. "Bad weather again in Pack VI. Our flight was sent over to 'Steel Tiger', southern Laos, for FAC control. There were several flights waiting to get on the target so we had to wait. Our target was a storage area along the river south of Mu Gia Pass. We bombed it pretty accurately and had one small secondary explosion to develop from the target. 'Cricket' wouldn't clear us into Pack I for a reconnaissance but fortunately we had swung into North Vietnam while orbiting the target. We logged it as a 'counter' but will have to wait and see if it holds up."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 14.*

### 14-Dec-67

3488

From Korat, two pilots from the 44 TFS and eight from the 34 TFS flew in today's strike against the Paul Doumer bridge (JCS 12). The mission was designated RT56A-225 and the target coordinates were 21-02-31N and 105-51-43E. The pilots were:

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Maj White flying F-105D 60-0422 and Capt Thomas A. Tobin, Jr. flying 60-0435, both from the 44 TFS.

Four of the pilots from the 34 TFS were: Maj James E. Daniel, Jr. in 59-1759. On 24 April 1968, under SO G-1210, Maj Daniel was awarded his 10th to 16th oak leaf cluster to the Air Medal for missions he flew between 4 Oct 67 - 29 Feb 68.

Capt Sam P. Morgan in 62-4387. On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1244, Capt Morgan was awarded the second oak leaf cluster to the DFC for this mission.

Both Capt Robert M. Crane and Maj David D. Igelman from the 34 TFS received the DFC (2nd OLC) for today's mission.

Four 34 TFS pilots formed "Simmer" flight that took off at 1105. The mission lasted for 3 hours 35 minutes. The flight line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4359.

#2 - Maj William M. Blakeslee in 62-4270. On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1250, Maj Blakeslee was awarded the 3rd Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for this mission.

#3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO

#4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen in 61-0068. On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1250, Lt Col Christensen was awarded the 4th Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal for this mission.

It was Maj Armstrong's 36th combat mission. "We finally got in on the Doumer Bridge [JCS 12] in downtown Hanoi. We were delayed 5 hours waiting for the weather to clear. When we dropped off of the tankers we could see (coming up the Gulf of Tonkin) that the entire delta was clear. They launched 6 SAMs at us from the Red River south of Hanoi as we headed up but nobody got hit. As we approached the target for a left roll-in, we had swung further to the north than we anticipated. Consequently I wound up rolling-in almost straight ahead with a split 'S' maneuver. I had to maneuver the aircraft quite violently to get lined up and I'm not sure I hit the bridge. I saw two bomb impacts to the south of the bridge when I bombed. My #2, 3, & 4 men all lost me as I pulled off and I went out by myself. There was heavy 85-mm, & 37/57-mm in the target area. Cactus #4 did not come back [Capt James Eldon Sehorn, 469 TFS, POW]. His situation is unknown." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 15.)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Sam Armstrong described additional details of this mission. "On 14 December we bombed the Paul Doumer bridge in Hanoi for the third time in the war. It was back on the 25th of October when we last struck it and when Major Britt had been so tragically killed after leading the mission. The weather was questionable so we delayed our take-off for five hours waiting for clearance. When we got a look at North Vietnam from the Gulf of Tonkin, we could see that the clouds were all gone so this one was for real! Earlier, the tactic was to go further North up the Gulf of Tonkin and head almost due West to parallel 'Little Thud Ridge' and attack the Hanoi area from the Northeast. We had concluded that the shielding by these low mountains was really not very effective so that it was smarter to head directly at the target from the Gulf. So when we headed inbound on a Northwesterly heading, we had about 70 miles to cross before getting to the target. I saw six SA-2s being launched against us but they apparently weren't guided so were not a threat. I must say, however, that watching an SA-2 launch -- knowing what the consequences to you might be -- did get one's attention whether it guided or not.

"I was leading 'Simmer' flight, which was the third flight in the formation. My #2 man was Major Bill Blakeslee who was a poor pilot by day and a drunk by night (he lived in my hootch and was apparently so apprehensive about the next day's mission that he drank himself to sleep each

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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night). #3 was Col. Stewart who was our Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations in the wing. Three weeks later when Col. Jim Bean, the D.O., was shot down this very young colonel was elevated to this important position. But this was his first Pack VIA mission. The #4 man was Lt. Col. Christensen who was a recent arrival in our squadron and this also was his first Pack VIA mission. So I sensed the apprehension of the new guys as the flak started coming up in our midst after the SA-2's subsided so I transmitted: 'Steady Simmer. Steady as she goes'.

"That might have reduced their tension some but we were shortly confronted with a difficult roll-in. We got a MiG warning call before the SA-2's started up so the whole formation had increased speed and swung further North than planned. Rather than a roll-in with about a 20-degree angle to the bridge, we were headed right down it. I transmitted: 'This is going to be steep'. With that I rolled upside down and pulled the nose of the aircraft down to achieve a straight-ahead dive angle. Instead of diving at 45 degrees, I was closer to 60 degrees which felt more like vertical. The bridge was only about 10 feet wide so it wasn't easy to line up directly down it for the bomb run. That's where the 'pendulum effect' becomes a factor. Explanation: The orange bomb sight is projected on the combining glass in the windscreen. The sight is depressed a number of mils depending upon the effect that gravity will have on the ordnance being fired/dropped. In other words, depressing the sight caused the pilot to aim long to compensate for gravity. A mil is defined as a foot drop at a thousand feet. About 20 mils depression was enough for the Gatling gun or rockets fired at long range since they had a velocity above that imparted by the F-105. For gravity bombs, more depression was necessary which was greatly dependent upon dive angle, airspeed and release altitude. Normally this was about 120 mils since we planned for a 45-degree release at 500 knots at 8,000 feet altitude. Since the F-105 had tapes for airspeed and altitude, it was convenient to set the markers respectively at those airspeeds and altitudes. When those markers flashed by - hopefully at the same time - it was the instant to hit the bomb release button. So 120 mils depression of the sight put it much lower than the vector of the aircraft through space. If you were left of the target, you rolled right to put the sight on the target. The 'pendulum effect' meant that you would roll to the point that the velocity vector was aligned but when you rolled wings level, the sight was off to the right. Since this defied common pilot logic, the usual outcome was that the pilot never got properly lined up prior to bomb release. That's what happened to me although I should have known better. So my bombs probably didn't hit that narrow target. Fortunately, some of the other guys had better luck since we did do some damage.

"Meanwhile, I pulled a lot of 'g's' after I released my 3,000-pound bombs and turned left to head towards the Gulf. None of my flight was with me! I don't know what happened to Blakeslee at that moment. Stewart and Christensen were so disoriented that they pulled out straight ahead and flew down the main street of Hanoi supersonically. Eventually we all got back together on the tanker." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 20.)

On 27 April 1968, under SO G-1250, Maj Armstrong was awarded the 3rd oak leaf cluster to the Air Medal for this mission.

*National Archives air strike films, archive control number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649C & 388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 1387.*

**16-Dec-67**

1450

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Yen Vien railroad classification yard (JCS 19) (BE 616-0221) at coordinates 21-05-03N and 105-55-12E in RP-6A, North Vietnam.

The 44 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Maj Robert S. Beale and EWO Capt Paul John Mongillo supported this mission and were both awarded the Air Force Cross. Both award citations credited each man with braving " ... many concentrations of heavy anti-aircraft artillery fire and eighteen surface-to-air missiles as he successfully led his missile suppression flight in diverting the hostile

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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defenses away from the main strike force. He contributed to the destruction of one missile site only three miles from the center of a heavily defended target area and damaged at least one other missile complex. As a result of his actions, the main strike force suffered no losses, encountered only four missiles, and successfully destroyed this vital target ... "

Maj Beale's award was approved on 5 April, and he received it at Korat on 27 May 1968. He completed 100 missions in June 1968.

The 34 TFS also participated in this strike. The four pilots in "Hatchet" flight took off at 0745 and flew for 3 hours 45 minutes during the mission. The flight line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0530

#2 - Col James Ellis Bean, 388 TFW DO (POW 3 Jan 68)

#3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer

#4 - Capt William D. Scott, 469 TFS

It was Maj Armstrong's 37th mission. "Another 'Downtown' mission. This time it was the Yen Vien RR yards just north of the bridge across the Canal des Rapides. We went up the water route without incident and turned westward over the 'Wart'. One of the Iron Hand flights with a MIG CAP flight came up the delta the same way we had come the two previous days. They drew some 24 SAMs. We only saw 3 the way we came in. Takhli was coming in from the west and they drew all of the MiGs. They wound up aborting for weather but it cleared the air of MiGs. I was leading the flak suppression flight and we rolled in second on the target. We were in a bad position to roll-in. There were quite a few sites shooting at us but they were bursting above us. The following flights got quite a bit of flak hurled at them. We got in and out with nobody hit. One of the [MIG CAP] F-4s was shot down leaving the target. Don't know the status of the crew." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 15.)

Capt Beyer received the DFC (4th OLC) for this mission.

A MiG-21 shot down F-4D 66-7631 from the 555 TFS out of Ubon, and its crew, Maj James Frederick Low, and 1Lt Howard John Hill, became POWs. (CNA Loss/Damage Database, USAF loss 774, pg H24.)

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1757 & extract from "For Extraordinary Heroism - The Air Force Cross" by Maj Jeffery B. Floyd, provided by Ron Thurlow.*

### 17-Dec-67

612

In the afternoon, F-105s in the Korat strike force from the 388 TFW attacked the Lang Lau railroad bridge. "Fragged against the Lang Lau Railroad Bridge (21-33N and 105-54E) were four F-105D strike flights ..., one F-105F and three F-105Ds flying Iron Hand..., and two Ubon F-4D MIGCAP flights (TOT: 1631H). ... One F-105D aborted shortly after takeoff ... because of a radio malfunction and returned to Korat. There were no spares; hence the Korat strike force was reduced to fifteen strike aircraft." The Korat strike force "... rendezvoused with their tankers, refueled, and set course on their initial track from Channel 97 northeast to the loop in the Red River." MiGs disrupted their planned ingress. F-4Ds in Hornet flight engaged at least four MiG-17s just after crossing the Red River. Multiple engagements followed involving almost all the aircraft of both forces. (Red Baron II Report, Event 75-B, pp 196 - 207.)

F-105D 60-0422, "Bass 1", Capt Jeffery T. Ellis, was downed by a MiG-21.

A MiG-17 shot down "Hornet 3", F-4D 66-7774 from the 497 TFS out of the 8 TFW from Ubon. The plane was flying MiG CAP for the Lang Lau railway bridge strike. The two crewmen, Maj Kenneth R. Flenor, and 1Lt Terry Lee Boyer, became POWs. (CNA Loss/Damage Database,

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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USAF loss 776, pg H24.)

F-4D 66-8719, "Gambit 3" from the 13 TFS, 432 TFW, shot down a MiG-17. The crew was Marine exchange pilot Capt Doyle D. Baker and 1Lt John D. Ryan, Jr. ("MiG Killers", Don J. McCarthy, Jr., pg 90.)

Maj Sam P. Morgan from the 34 TFS was mission commander. "... We had eight F-4s behind us, four weasels out front, and the sixteen thuds. The F-4 leader was Bogislofski (?) and we talked the night before about the MiGs. I told him to not stay with us but to patrol and go after the MiGs. He said he was told he had to stay with us. I told the Weasels to stay out front and not come back when the MiGs jumped us. We were three minutes from the target when the MiGs came down. They got one F-4 and one F-105 right away. I called for burners and take it down as we could race them to the target. We were Mach 1.2 in the dive when the lead Weasel started hollering that he was hit and his back seater looked dead. It turned out he hit a CBU in flight with the back canopy.

"We almost passed the target due to the speed and confusion. I did a very high speed pop up and hit the bridge which was the target. On the pull out I was hit in the left wing root which rolled the airplane to the right and I almost hit my wingman.

"The wingman was Neal Graham, the new wing commander, and it was his first mission in Pack VI. We went into Laos, refueled, and went back over Thud Ridge until it got dark. We could see the F-4 and the F-105 burning on the ground below us.

"When we got back to Korat it was dark and it was late. When I went to the debrief I was alone, no one else showed up. I never saw Neal Graham again as he must have been ill and died a few days later. [NOTE: Col Neil J. Graham had become 388 TFW commander on 22 November 1967 and died of a heart attack on 19 January 1968.]

Capt Morgan was awarded a Silver Star for leading this mission. His was the only flight that reached the bridge. Hq 7th Air Force approved the award on 20 June 1968 under SO G-1834.

In "Ozark", the Wild Weasel flight, EWO Capt Paul John Mongillo, 44 TFS, was killed instantly when he was struck by a CBU pellet dropped by a USAF aircraft. His pilot was Maj Robert S. Beale. "Beale and Mongillo were working their Weasel mission below the strike force. The strike force got jumped by MiGs and had to jettison their loads. One of the CBUs apparently opened and Paul got the BeeBee through the canopy and helmet." The pilot brought the airplane (F-105F 63-8347) down at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand.

Capt Ralph D. Bohr replaced Capt Mongillo as Maj Beale's EWO. (Dave Brog, e-mail to Weasel Net, 1 Dec 2002.)

Capt Mongillo was born 22 January 1933. He entered the service from Riverside, New Jersey. His name is on the Vietnam War Memorial Wall Panel 32E Line 15.

Four pilots from the 34 TFS formed "Locust" flight that took off at 1345 and flew for 3 hours during the mission. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0530
- #3 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
- #4 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III

This was Maj Armstrong's 38th combat mission. "The target was a bridge south of Thai Nguyen

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## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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[the Lang Lau Rail Road Bridge]. We were going in the land route on a heading of due east when some MiG-21s came swooping down from 9 o'clock and fired at the force. Bass 1 who was flying the left rear corner was hit directly by the second air-to-air missile fired by the MiGs. [Capt Jeffery Thomas Ellis, 469 TFS, POW.] He was burning badly and finally got out OK just west of Thud Ridge. No rescue possible there. Locust 1 had called Bass to break but for some reason he hadn't.

"Ozark Lead was hit by flak and the EWO in the rear seat was killed instantly. [44 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Maj Robert S. Beale and EWO Capt Paul John Mongillo, KIA.] We jettisoned our CBUs and broke hard right about the same time. Locust 4 reported 4 MiGs turning in on us and two missiles bracketing my aircraft but I never saw them. We continued the turn and looked for other MiGs but no luck. #4 says he got a shot at a MiG and wound up coming out by himself. Ozark 1 recovered safely at Udorn." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 16.)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstong provided more details of this mission. "My next mission was on the 17th of December and it was memorable ... [as] the mission that I think I was the closest to being shot down. The target was a bridge South of Thai Nguyen and we were going the land route. We knew that this meant MiG action! Sure enough, we were attacked by two MiG-21's after we crossed the Red River. The first one launched two heat seeker missiles at our formation. The first one hit Bass lead who was Captain Jeff Ellis of the 469th that day. The second missile was apparently headed for me but one of the guys in our flight called for us to jettison the bombs and break right. They tell me that the second missile passed right through the position that I would have occupied had we not made the break. Then we heard the sound over the radio of a parachute beeper going off and that was our first indication that Jeff Ellis had bailed out (He became a POW and after being repatriated became a wing commander in Air Training Command). We continued our turn and exited the area. The other aircraft in the formation continued on to the target and successfully dropped their bombs.

"Ozark lead, the lead Wild Weasel called that he had been hit. We listened as Don Hodge [Maj Donald W. Hodge, 34 TFS] came along side and told him (Bob Beale) that his backseater looked like he had been hit and was in bad shape. Bob safely recovered at Udorn but his backseater, Captain Mongillo, was dead. We thought that he had been hit by flak although the shrapnel that killed him had come through the canopy rather than from the bottom of the aircraft. It was later suspected that he had been killed by a CBU from one of the bomblets that we punched off. Normally the Weasels were far enough out in front that this could not have happened but the true facts never came out because we were too busy worrying about the next mission."

*388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilms NO583 & NO584 & Dave Brog, former F-105 EWO, E-mail, 27 May 1998.*

**19-Dec-67**

2577

In the morning missions from Korat, for the second day in a row, four F-105Ds in "Crossbow" flight from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, struck the Hanoi Railroad Classification Yard (JCS 21) at coordinates 21-01-18N and 105-50-39E. Crossbow flight consisted of:

- #1 - Maj Stanley Henry Horne
- #2 - Maj Francis J. "Frank" Byrne
- #3 - Lt Col William N. Reed
- #4 - Capt Dennis W. Jarvi, flying F-105D 60-0435.

Each pilot dropped six 750-pound bombs on the south end of the yard. Capt Jarvi was awarded the Third OLC to the Distinguished Flying Cross. (Dennis Jarvi, undated letter to Ron Thurlow) Maj Byrne was awarded the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross. (Francis Byrne, letter to Ron Thurlow, 22 Sep 2001.)

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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Capt Earl J. Henderson, also from the 469 TFS, was in another flight that attacked the rail yard. It was his 51st combat mission into North Vietnam. His plane carried six 750-lb bombs.

"Short water route to downtown. SAMs started at 3 minutes out. One SAM detonated 50' from me. Heard and felt explosion. Total of 30 SAMs fired. Heavy 85s started as we crossed Hanoi. Steep dive. Good bombs. Intense 37/57 right after pull off. More 85s two minutes later. Worst yet!"

Capt Henderson received the Distinguished Flying Cross (4th OLC) for this mission. "...Captain Henderson was a member of a strike force of twenty-four F-105s assigned to attack an important railroad car repair facility in the vicinity of Hanoi, North Vietnam. Despite extremely heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire, attacks by over fifteen surface-to-air missiles, and greatly restricted visibility, Captain Henderson ... placed his ordnance on target, causing extensive damage to this vital repair complex. ..." (Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.)

The 34 TFS also participated in today's morning strike. The four pilots in "Simmer" flight took off at 0600 and flew for 3 hours 20 minutes during the mission. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0134

This was Maj Armstrong's 39th combat mission. "The first airplane I started up this morning was bad so I had to go to another one and got off about 20 minutes late. I went out to the tankers in the Gulf (350 miles) all by myself but got there in time to make the mission. Our target was a railroad yard [JCS 21] between the Doumer Bridge and the Hanoi Railroad Bridge. There were 3 trains stopped there as we had knocked down the bridges on either side. As we approached up the delta, they fired about 16 SAMs at the force. One came as close as 500' to me but most were no threat. The flak, mostly 85-mm, was the heaviest and most accurate that I have seen. It was bursting all around me for a full minute prior to roll-in. We rolled in and I had a real good bomb run. We really tore up the yard and I could see cars already burning as I dove down. We got in and out with nobody lost although 4 guys got minor hits. No MiGs seen." (Armstrong combat log)

Lt Gen Armstrong provided additional details in his memoirs. "Our target was a railroad yard close to the Doumer Bridge. This was a morning mission so it was dark as I started my aircraft. I discovered some serious problems with this aircraft and aborted it. They hurried me to a spare aircraft and that one was okay. But this delay caused me to takeoff several minutes behind the rest of the guys. I proceeded by myself to join everybody on the tanker in the Gulf. They had already refueled and were just about to get topped off before heading for the target. So I took all of my fuel at once as we dropped off the tanker at the 19th parallel and headed for the target some 170 miles away.

"They fired about 16 SA-2's at us on the way in and the 85-mm flak was the most intense I had ever seen. One of the 85-mm batteries fired their 8 barrels and I noted the flak exploding around me at my altitude, 100 feet away in the sequence in which it was fired. I was sitting right in the middle of it!" (Armstrong memoir manuscript)

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 16 & Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 22.*

**20-Dec-67**

4854

At 0705, four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Seabird" flight took off from Korat on a mission to bomb a

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## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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target in northern Laos. The mission lasted 2 hours 40 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1759
- #2 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine

It was Maj Armstrong's 40th combat mission. "This was planned as a primary Barrel Roll mission for a change. We refueled and went straight to the area which was about 10 miles south of Sam Neua. The FAC put some smoke on suspected troop concentration and we put our bombs right on the area. We had swung up through the spur of North Vietnam that sticks out at 19 ½ N so we had a counter. Otherwise a very uneventful counter."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. was another 34 TFS pilot who flew a mission into an area of North Vietnam just above the DMZ. He was in an Iron Hand flight on his 49th mission.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 17 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 20 Dec 67.*

**21-Dec-67**

4855

Four pilots from the 34 TFS of "Scuba" flight took off from Korat at 14:30 on a mission to bomb a target in northern Laos. They refueled from Red Anchor 40. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1759
- #2 - Maj Lawrence R. Klinestiver flying F-105D 62-4248
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander flying F-105D 60-0462
- #4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying F-105D 62-4270 on his 32nd mission.
- Spare - Maj Kenneth W. Mays in 60-0449

It was Maj Armstrong's 41st combat mission. "This was to be my first flight as Mission Commander of the strike force. The weather was bad up in Pack VI so we went as individual flights instead up into northern Laos to work with a FAC. We had to wait for about 20 minutes orbiting the target, just penetrating Pack IV for a counter. We finally hit a road segment. All four of us put our bombs squarely on the target. Other than that, an uneventful mission." The flight lasted 2.7 hours.

This was one of the last combat missions for Larry Klinestiver. He made his last flight in the F-105 in December by which time he had accumulated 254.1 hours in the airplane.

Jake Shuler described how he remembered the mission. "Due to bad weather over the primary target, we were directed to work with FACs, Firefly 17 & 18, target 120 degrees 20 NM from Channel 97. We may have also worked with Raven FACs 40 & 41 with a time on target of 1510 hours, both targets in northern Laos."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. in another flight with the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 50th combat mission, this one into Laos and Route Pack 2. He struck some trucks.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 3" against a truck park in the Barrel Roll region of Laos. "100%/ 1 large secondary." It was his 22nd combat mission.

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 17 & Jake Shuler's mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 21 Dec 67 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**22-Dec-67**

4856



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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The four pilots in "Cookie" flight were from the 34 TFS. The four-ship took off at 7:05 for a TOT of 08:00. They refueled from Brown Anchor 72. The lineup was:

#1 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying F-105D 59-1759 on his 51st combat mission

#2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 60-0530 on his 33rd mission

#3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr. flying 60-0462

#4 - Col James L. Stewart, the 388 TFW Assist DO, flying 62-4270.

The flight met FAC Nail 49 and was over the target from 08:10 to 08:20. Target coordinates were 16-46N and 106-09E. The mission lasted for 2.1 hours. (Jake Shuler combat mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011)

On his 42nd combat mission, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS led a two-ship flight that carried Bullpup missiles into southern Laos. Flying F-105D 61-0219, he led "Machette" flight that took off at 07:25 and returned after flying for 2 hours 15 minutes. His wingman, "Machette 2", was Capt Douglas A. Beyer.

"This was a scheduled GAM 83C (Bullpup) missile mission into southern Laos. My airborne guidance system didn't check out after I was airborne so I didn't fire my missiles but brought them back instead. Doug Beyer fired 2 and I chased him on his passes. He thought he over controlled them because they got away and didn't hit very close to the intended target. Afterwards, I strafed a road that the FAC marked for me but couldn't see the results. We were in Pack I for a counter as a result of our attack heading on the target."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Bass 2" against the Ban Phoungong truck park in the Barrel Roll region of Laos. "Commando Club. No BDA - Weather." It was his 23rd combat mission. (Rufus Dye Mission History log.)

Capt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, was another Korat pilot who bombed a target in Laos. It was his 54th combat mission. "Target: Road cut in southern Laos. Armament: 6x750. Led two-ship airborne spare flight. Right before drop off from main strike force, we broke into flight of F-4Cs that looked like attacking MiGs. Then drug bombs 200 miles south. Got road cut. No flak. Long, boring mission. Sneaked into pack V for counter."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 17 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 22 Dec 67 & Earl Henderson, combat diary.*

**23-Dec-67      24-Dec-67**

1301

"President Lyndon B. Johnson visited (the 388 TFW at) Korat RTAFB the evening of 23-24 December. The Commander-in-Chief spent the night at the base and made a pre-dawn address to base personnel. He presented medals to six pilots from Thailand-based wings. More than 5,000 personnel gathered for the speech at the base flightline. The President arrived from funeral services (on 21 December) for Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt [who had drowned in the ocean], on the first leg of an around-the-world tour."

"... A new and as yet unoccupied dormitory helped to house the presidential entourage of about three hundred, including some seventy-five reporters. George Christian, the President's press secretary, told reporters that for security reasons they could not file stories until after the president left early in the morning. But the Thai press broke the story, and reporters spent all night using telephones and typewriters at wing headquarters." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 113).

President Johnson arrived at Korat at 10:10 PM Friday 23 December. That night, he met in the Officers Club with General Momyer, 7 AF Commander, and pilots who briefed him on their missions. F-105 pilots speaking were Capt Dennis W. Jarvi from the 469 TFS who described the

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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recent raid (on 14 December 1967) in which he participated against the Paul Doumer highway and railroad bridge. Maj Michael S. Muskat, "... a veteran of 25 combat missions briefed the President on the anti-aircraft and ... SAM suppression missions flown by his squadron, the 44 TFS." Capt John H. Schaub also from the 469 TFS briefed on the role of the mission commander "... including the over-all planning and execution of a combat strike ... " Capt Schaub had "... flown 83 combat missions and served as mission commander on several occasions."

"When asked by General Momyer for an opinion of the value of the bombing and its affect on the abilities of the North Vietnamese to sustain their aggression in the South, ..." Capt Irving E. LeVine from the 34 TFS, who had flown 82 combat missions, outlined "... the tremendous destructive power being unleashed on key communist targets by Air Force strikes ... ."

Many years later, when shown this description of this event, Irv LeVine commented, "B.S. I never said anything like this." (Irv LeVine letter, received 16 Apr 10.)

President Johnson also greeted Capt Douglas A. Beyer, 34 TFS, from Seguin, Texas, who had flown 60 combat missions and had attended Southwest Texas State college, the same school from which the President had graduated in 1930. Capt Byer had graduated from the school in 1957.

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS attended the President's talk at the Officer's Club and documented his observations in his memoirs. "President Johnson visited us just before Christmas. We had only 12 hours warning. Since Col. Burdett had been shot down in November, the Air Force had sent in a senior colonel from Okinawa, Col. Neil Graham. He was all excited about the visit and worked hard to see that we presented a good image to LBJ. The most obvious thing was to remove some embarrassing things from the club. Some artisans in the Philippines made a good living from carving large aircrew wings from mahogany. They changed the middle part of the wings to designate pilot, navigator, etc. But some time earlier, a pilot from Korat had ordered a set of wings with an Edsel grill in the center and it was proudly displayed in the bar where the pilots recognized this as an indictment of Secretary of Defense McNamara. This had to be removed for the time being but I'm not sure LBJ would have understood the significance.

"He gave a speech to all of the pilots at the club that night and a speech to all Korat folks plus Camp Friendship the next morning at 5:00 a.m. before he departed. I don't remember what he had to say except that he didn't understand what we were going through and he looked awfully tired!

"LBJ had heard about Roscoe, our canine mascot. ... Somebody had briefed LBJ about Roscoe because he asked for him that night at the club. Just then Roscoe strolled up for dinner as he always did. LBJ squatted down on his haunches and called for him to come. Roscoe walked right by and into the dining room without acknowledging the President of the United States there on his haunches! We all thought that it was hilarious but couldn't laugh out loud. Our base leadership was already in a tizzy because of the visit and it would have been too much to have done so." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 23 - 24.)

The President was "...quartered in a series of trailers -- his trailer was number one. The trailer had two bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. The President's large double bed filled one of the small bedrooms."

Early the next morning, "the President was up and dressed by 5:00 a.m. -- in khaki shirt and pants and battle jacket. Walt Rostow and Wm Bundy came in the trailer briefly and the President greeted them and then suggested they leave and find a way to get him into Karachi without the press finding out prior to arrival."

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"In the dark of the early morn..." the President, with Gen Momyer, traveled by car to a flightline hanger where, on a stage, he presented awards to eight pilots.

Receiving Silver Stars were:

Capt William Griger, 30, Goldsboro, N.C. - 355 TFW

Capt Donald F. Miles - 432 TRW

Receiving Distinguished Flying Crosses were:

Maj. Myron L. Savage, 35, Ste. Genevieve, Mo -355 TFW

Maj Wintford L. Bazzell, 42, Ft. Walton Beach, Fla. - 388 TFW

Maj James R. Bassett, 32, Ithica, N.Y. (44 TFS) - 388 TFW

Maj. Lloyd W. Boothby, 36, Washington, D.C. - 8 TFW

1Lt John C. Putnam - 355 TFW

1Lt George H. McKinney, Jr., 24, Bessemer, Ala., - 8 TFW

(The President's Daily Diary: Dec 23, 1967, pg 1 LBJ Library and Museum, on line at <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/diary/1967/671223-01.asp>)

After presenting the awards, President Johnson spoke to a crowd gathered in the pre-dawn darkness near the reveted F-105 parking stalls. "In the history of air power, no such difficult set of tasks has ever been assigned as those assigned to you ... . Guerrilla combat provides no easy targets and that is why aggressors here - as elsewhere - have been tempted to choose guerrilla tactics as the means of their aggression. Yet here, for the first time, air power is actually depriving the aggressor of his advantage. ... Air power is denying access to cheap success or to ultimate victory. ... And no man can come here for even a short period and shake your hand or look you in the eye, and have the slightest bit of doubt for a moment that America is going to hold firm and America is going to stay faithful throughout the course - until an honorable peace is secured. ... God keep you, every one of you - and we shall always be deeply in your debt. Thank you and good morning."

The President departed Korat at 5:41a.m.

President Johnson went from Korat to Cam Ranh AB in South Vietnam where he arrived at 0841. " ... The Korat speech marked the apex of good feeling between President Johnson and the military. Since the Stennis hearings in August, he had approved some long-sought targets and shown Secretary of Defense McNamara the door." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 114).

*388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1685 & Sawadee Flyer, Friday Dec 29, 1967 in NO583, frames 1968 - 1973*

### 25-Dec-67

2772

"Christmas day was celebrated with many 354 TFS flights [from the 355 TFW, Takhli] striking targets in Laos. Laos was not included in the one-day truce that covered North and South Vietnam."

At the 388 TFW, Korat, the 44 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Capt Robert E. Dorrough, Jr. and his EWO Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers flew a combat mission into Laos. "Monday - Merry Christmas to Ho Chi. Hit his supply route in early A.M. in Laos. Our flight carried 24 x 750-pound bombs. Sure lit up the sky. Unfortunately this was a non-counter."

Another pilot from Korat, Capt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, also flew a non-counting mission into Laos.

"Merry Christmas!

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"Flew non-counter in far southern Laos. Took off at 3:00 AM. Still very dark when we landed. Combat Skyspot mission. Bombs lit up sky."

"Pancho" flight from the 34 TFS at Korat launched at 10:05 on a two-hour non-counting mission against a target at location 15-51N and 106-47E. Their lineup was:

#1 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying F-105D 59-1759  
#2 - Capt Irving E. LeVine flying 60-0435  
#3 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr. flying 60-0425  
#4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0132 on his first non-counting combat mission. He had 35 counters to date.

"The reason this was a non-counter was that we were not allowed to bomb NVN on Christmas Day. I believe this was my first and only time working with a Covey FAC, in this case Covey 239 flying an O-2A .... Covey FACs with 2xx call signs flew primarily in Zone 2 of southern Laos designated 'Tigerhound'. We made contact on UHF frequency 338.8 after flying towards coordinates 15-50.5N and 106-46E. After making visual contact, Dave (Dickson) started a counterclockwise orbit around Covey 239 who was well below us. He explained that our target was a camouflaged 37MM gun emplacement that had been giving him fits. He fired a white phosphorus rocket then called the target's location relative to the white smoke. Dave dropped his bombs (I'm pretty sure we were carrying 500 pounders) and Covey 239 called the target relative to the bomb impact. Successively, Irv (LeVine) and Clyde (Falls) dropped their bombs and after each drop Covey 239 called the relative location of the target to the bomb impact points. So, by the time I rolled in I had a pretty good idea of where the target was, the advantage of being #4 in the formation. Well I was fortunate enough to get a direct hit, probably the only reason I remember this mission in such detail. I'm sure I would have gotten a lot of ribbing if I hadn't come closer than the other three." (Jake Shuler's combat mission spreadsheet & e-mail 11 Jan 2011)

The 34th also launched the five-ship "Gator" flight into Laos. The flight took off at 11:45 and returned after flying for 2 hours 15 minutes. The flight line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4387  
#2 - Maj Wintford L. Bazzell, 469 TFS  
#3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer  
#4 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis  
#5 - Capt William Eugene Jones, 469 TFS

This was the first non-counting combat mission that Maj Armstrong had flown since his arrival at Korat in October. "Christmas present. Even though there was a 24-hour truce in effect, we launched a number of strikes against infiltration routes in Laos. We had a 5th man as he was originally in another flight and had to change aircraft. Our target was in Laos, about the same latitude as Hue, South Vietnam, and about 5 miles inside Laos. The weather was supposed to be overcast there so we were set up for a Combat Sky Spot. We dropped via Sky Spot but as we released we looked down and saw our bombs hit very close to the target." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100-mission combat log.)

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Ozark 3" against a road segment in southern Laos. "100%. Two road cuts. One possible secondary." It was his 25th combat mission.

*355 TFW history, Oct 67 - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1573 & Bob Dorrough's combat diary & Earl Henderson, combat diary & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"Bob Hope capped the list of distinguished visitors (to the 388 TFW) for 1967 when he appeared 29 December [reported wrong day]. More than 8,000 servicemen from Korat and nearby Army bases viewed that afternoon show." More people attended Bob Hope's show at Korat than had attended President Johnson's visit on 23 December. (388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1687.)

Maj Harold D. "Dave" Wilson, 44 TFS, 388 TFW, flew his 100th F-105 mission over North Vietnam. Upon landing at Korat, he was met by the wing commander Col Neil J. Graham, along with comedian Bob Hope, who was visiting Korat during his Christmas tour of SEA military bases. Maj Wilson was driven by Jeep to the Korat Officers Club where he was pushed into the pool by Bob Hope, Raquel Welch, and Elaine Dunne. Bob Hope pulled Maj Wilson from the pool then pushed him back in again. (Nat'l Archives film list)

This was Maj Wilson's last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 359.2 flying hours in the airplane. (F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

The 388 TFW Supply Squadron's history for December reported that "Christmas was a regular workday, but all but a handful of the squadron's personnel were given time off to see the Bob Hope USO Troupe on 27 December 1967.

The 44 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Capt Robert E. Dorrrough, Jr. and his EWO Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers flew their 88th combat mission in the morning. "Wed - This was quite a day. Flew #88 to Pack 1 in early AM and then saw Bob Hope show in the afternoon. We hit a GCI site on the northern tip of the package and a 37-mm site that did some shooting at us. Another 4-shipper carrying 2 x CBU's on 1 and 3 and 6 x 500-lb bombs on 2 and 4. All I can say about the Bob Hope show was that it was great. He certainly raises everybody's spirits. Maj Dave Wilson finished today." (Bob Dorrrough diary.)

In his memoirs, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS commented on the Bob Hope show. "We also had a holiday visit from Bob Hope and his troupe. He stood on stage with a golf club in hand telling jokes like he always does. Raquel Welch was his primary female star. She didn't need to do anything but stand around and look sexy -- and she did. ... The show was held outdoors because everybody from Korat and Camp Friendship was there it seemed. Our wing commander, Col. Graham, introduced the show and gave the troupe some mementos of their visit." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968" in unpublished memoir, pg 25.)

*National Archives motion picture film shot list control No. NWDNM(m)-342-USA-43469 & 388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 584 frames 0313.*

### 28-Dec-67

4857

The 34 TFS at Korat launched the four-ship "Scuba" flight into North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1430 and returned after flying for 2 hours 45 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #2 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying mission #54
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine

This was Maj Armstrong's 43rd combat mission. "I was supposed to be Mission Commander again today but the weather continued to be bad so everybody went to their first alternate target. Ours was a Commando Club on a target 25 miles west of Channel 97. We had approval before hand to swing up into North Vietnam after bomb drop to see if we could draw some MiGs and keep them

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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off the second flight 30 minutes behind us going to Hoa Lac. We trolled up to about 20 miles NE of Phu Tho and no MiGs came up. We had two missiles fired at us on the way back down south. They didn't look like SAM bursts, they were grayish-white. No MiGs were known to come up and no missiles were fired on the flight going to Hoa Lac. We finally gave up and came home."

Maj Dickson's comment on his after-mission cigar band was "MiG hunt. Only SAMs."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 18 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 28 Dec 67.*

### 31-Dec-67

4858

The 34 TFS at Korat launched the four-ship "Gator" flight against a target in Laos. The flight took off at 1430 and returned after flying for 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1157
- #2 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot, KIA 14 Feb 68
- #3 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #4 - Maj William M. Blakeslee

It was Maj Armstrong's 44th combat mission. "This was a Commando Club mission on a target 20 miles east of San Neua. The weather was undercast. We carefully selected our I.P. to be in the 'Fish's Mouth' so that we would automatically get a 'counter'. The weather was completely undercast so we couldn't see where the bombs hit. No post-strike refueling since we still had gobs of fuel. We did some air work on the way home. Very uneventful."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flew in another 34 TFS flight that bombed trucks and troops near the "Fish's Mouth" in RP-3. It was his 57th mission into North Vietnam.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Simmer 3" against a road segment in the Steel Tiger region of Laos. "100%. Road cut and land slide" It was his 28th combat mission.

Maj David D. Igelman from the 34th flew a mission for which he received the DFC (1st OLC).

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 18 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 31 Dec 67 & Rufus Dyem Mission History log.*

### 02-Jan-68

4859

The 34 TFS at Korat launched the four-ship "Scuba" flight against Yen Bay Airfield in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1430 and returned after flying for 2 hours 40 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Maj David D. Igelman

This was Maj Armstrong's 45th combat mission. "I was supposed to be Mission Commander today but the weather in Pack IV prohibited the mission. Instead, we went to our first alternate target. I had a force of 8 F-105Ds with bombs, 4 F-105s Iron Hand, and 8 F-4s MIG CAP. Our target was the Yen Bay Airfield in Pack V. We drove up on a Commando Club vectoring and dropped over the clouds. We had some flak (85-mm) as we approached Yen Bay as usual. MiGs were up but never got close enough to be a threat. A very simple and uncomplicated mission. Yen Bay is now in Pack VIA."

*Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 19.*

# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

## F-105 History

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03-Jan-68

2229

Although strike activity in the RP-6A area was confined to the period on 3 through 5 January, "... significant results were achieved against the rail network during those three days."

"Beginning in January 1968, MiG pilots were less prone to flee toward China. Instead, they became more aggressive and frequently returned for a second pass against American strike aircraft. The number of their kills increased and the MiG threat became more significant. U.S. forces therefore scheduled more MIGCAP missions and, at the same time, reduced the size of strike forces to provide better force protection." (Aces)

"On January 3, two large Air Force raids, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, hit North Vietnamese railroad yards." (Clashes)

The first MiG confrontation of the new year took place on the morning of 3 January. (Aces)

A major strike effort was fraged this morning to strike targets in the Hanoi area. The aircraft were divided into two forces [ALPHA and BRAVO].

"ALPHA force was scheduled to strike the Kinh No Railroad Classification Yard, 21-09N and 105-51E. The mission was subsequently cancelled due to adverse weather and the force was diverted to an alternate target the Dong Dau Railroad Bridge at 21-06N and 105-54E. (TOT: 0845 - 0853H.)

The force consisted of four F-105 strike flights from Korat with call signs "Hatchet", "Simmer", "Pistol", and "Crossbow". Two F-4D flights from Udorn provided MIGCAP and two flights of F-105 from Korat flew IRON HAND anti-SAM missions. This force was attacked by MiG-21s on its approach to the target.

"Cactus" was one of Korat's Iron Hand flights supporting the morning strike against the Kinh No rail yard. The flight took off at 05:50; their mission lasted 3.4 hours. The lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Michael S. Muskat and EWO Capt Kyle Stouder from the 44 TFS flying F-105F 63-8306
  - #2 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr., 34 TFS, flying F-105D 58-1152 on his 58th mission, his 29th into RP- 6.
  - #3 - Capt Harry N. Gainer and EWO Capt John A. Stetson from the 44 TFS flying F-105F 63-8353
  - #4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler, 34 TFS, flying F-105D 60-0449 on his 5th IH and 41st combat mission
- Spare: Capt Harry Guy Paddon III from the 34 TFS in F-105D 58-1157. (NOTE: This plane was downed in today's afternoon mission and its pilot, Col James E. Bean, the 388 TFW DO, became a POW.) (Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet, mission card, and e-mail 11 Jan 2011 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 3 Jan 68.)

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS was one of Korat's four strike flights in the ALPHA force. The flight left Korat at 0600. Its line up was:

- #1 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0072.
- #3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO
- #4 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 46th combat mission. "The target was Kinh No railroad yard 6 miles north of Hanoi. We went in via the land route with the sun in our face. There were no clouds in the delta but the visibility was very poor with the haze and sun. We should never have continued in. We started getting MiG calls shortly after crossing the border. They closed to 15 miles and the F-

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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4s went after them. As we came into the delta along the Red River, the MiGs stayed on our tail and the SAMs and flak stayed down. One MiG-17 came up along side Simmer and fired a missile at Pistol 3 but miraculously missed. Two MiG-21s fired 4 missiles at Crossbow flight. The flak (mainly 85-mm) got real heavy on the way out 'til Hoa Lac. Everybody had to jettison bombs as the MiGs plus weather caused us to not get to the target. Nobody got hit luckily." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 50 minutes. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 19.)

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong described this mission in more detail. "The next morning, 3 January, was barely clear enough over Pack VIA for Saigon to order us to go primary target which was the Kinh No railroad yard 6 miles North of Hanoi. This time I was flying #2 in the CBU flight. We flew the land route and were going to be making a right hand roll-in so my flight was north of the lead flight and I was on my lead's right wing looking to the north for MiGs. There were several MiG calls so we accelerated and raced them to the SA-2 ring as was our normal tactic hoping that the MiGs would break off short of the SA-2 ring for their own safety. Much to our surprise, they held the SA-2's and flak down this day and let the MiGs follow us right up to roll-in. A MiG-17 pulled up on my right side and fired a missile at Pistol #3. Simmer lead, Lt. Col. Red Evans [Lt Col Robert A. Evans, the 44 TFS commander], spotted the missile launch and called: 'Simmer #3 break right!' Obviously Pistol #3 didn't do anything. The next call from Red was: 'It's okay, he missed you'. Since this all took place on my blind side the first thing I saw was our #4 man, Billy Givens, roll over the top of us. He said he took a shot at the MiG but he certainly didn't hit him.

"Then two MiG-21's fired 4 missiles at our trailing flight, Crossbow, but fortunately nobody got hit. By this time the flak started coming up and the mission commander couldn't find the target due to these distractions and the morning sun glinting off the rice paddies. So we were all ordered to jettison our bombs safe and get out of there. We didn't lose any aircraft but were shook up over the audacity of the MiG pilots.

"In the mission debrief, Red Evans asked Vern Ellis [Capt Vernon D. Ellis] who was Pistol #3 that mission why he didn't break when he called him. Vern naturally replied that nobody called him to break. I verified that this was the case and played the transmissions back to Red from my tape recorder. Red then acknowledged that he had screwed up big time and that Vern was lucky the missile missed because the rest of us had let him down." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 25 - 26).

"BRAVO force was fragged against the Trung Quang Railroad Yard at 21-06N and 105-56E (TOT: 0850 - 0853H) [on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2)]. The force consisted of three strike flights (twelve F-4Ds) from Ubon, ... one F-4D flak suppression flight from Ubon; two F-4D MIGCAP flights ... from Ubon and two F-105 IRON HAND flights from Takhli." (Red Baron II, Event 82, pp 316 - 331)

The BRAVO force was attacked by MiG-17s during withdrawal. One strike F-4D and one MIGCAP F-4D from the 8 TFW at Ubon each shot down a MiG-17. The crew of the strike F-4D was Lt Col Clayton K. Squier and 1Lt Michael D. Muldoon from the 435 TFS. They shot an AIM-4 to down the MiG-17. The crew of the MIGCAP F-4D was Maj Bernard J. Bogoslofski and Capt Richard L. Husky from the 433 TFS who fired a 20-mm gun pod to hit their MiG-17. (Aces)

One of the IRON HAND flights from Takhli on the BRAVO force included the Wild Weasel crew of Capt Malcolm D. Winter and EWO Maj William H. Wheeler from the 354 TFS. They flew F-105F 63-8301 as "Barracuda 4". It was Maj Winter's 78th combat mission. "Supported 8th TFW on RR yard. 5462; about 10 miles from Hanoi on NE RR. ... 4+00, 4 refuelings."

"Post strike photography obtained on 5 January revealed that 5 of the 7 tracks were interdicted and



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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3 pieces of rolling stock were destroyed or damaged." (Briefing)

*"Aces and Aerial Victories", pgs 74 - 75 & "Clashes", pg 143 & Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 January 1968 & combat mission log of Mal Winter transcribed by his son, Mike Winter.*

**04-Jan-68**

3497

Four flights of F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Lang Son railroad and highway bridge (JCS 18) interdicting both the north and south approaches. The planes dropped 72 750-pound bombs cutting the north and south approaches.

"The flak suppression aircraft expended 12 CBU-24s, one CBU-29 and 61 M-117s on four active flak sites near the bridge. Pilots estimated all four sites were silenced." (388 TFW History)

Strike activities against the Lang Son railroad bridge complex on 4 and 5 January were partially successful. The main bridge was attacked on 4 January. "Prestrike coverage of one of the bypasses on 5 January showed 3 moveable spans adjacent to the rail lines. Post-strike coverage of the same bridge on 6 January revealed that strikes on 5 January had destroyed one of the supporting piers, thus rendering the bridge unserviceable.

"Waco" flight from the 34 TFS was one of Korat's four strike flights today. The flight left Korat at 1335. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis, Mission Commander
- #2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter, POW 4 Feb 68
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0462.
- #4 - Lt Col James B. Ross

This was Maj Armstrong's 47th combat mission. "We went to the 2nd alternate target which was the Lang Son Railroad Bridge up right close to the Chicom border. We went in via the water route. We anticipated poor visibility because of the haze we had yesterday. We also anticipated a heavy MiG reaction. We were pleasantly surprised on both counts. There wasn't a cloud in the sky from the coast inland. There was some haze but we were able to pick up the target about 15 miles out. There was some light 37/57-mm flak as we rolled in and some 85-mm when the trailing flights started down. We were a little bit shallow on our dive angle and had a strong headwind for bombing. Consequently we seemed to hit a little short of the bridge. There were many MiG calls but no engagements. Vern Ellis took a minor hit but nobody else got hit." The mission lasted for 3 hours 40 minutes. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 20.)

Having graduated from McConnell's F-105 RTU on 24 November 1967, Capt William A. Thomas, Jr. arrived at Korat and was assigned to the 34 TFS. En route, he had attended the TAC SEA Survival School (5 days) and the PACAF Jungle Survival School (5 days).

*388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0459 and 0495 & Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 January 1968 & Bill Thomas, AF Form 11.*

**05-Jan-68**

3840

F-105s from the 388 TFW, struck the Yen Bai airfield on a Commando Club mission.

Additional F-105s struck the Thai Nguyen Railyard (JCS 21.11).

Twelve other F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Lang Son railroad bridge bypass. Strike pilots dropped 72 M-117s on the 400' x 10' bridge. Post-strike BDA revealed one pier destroyed and one pier probably damaged. The approaches to the bridge remained serviceable. Flak suppression aircraft dropped 13 CBU-24s and four CBU-29s on firing flak sites. Pilots estimated four AAA sites destroyed or severely damaged.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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A successful visual attack was also made on the Kep airfield (JCS 9.1) at location 21-23-37N and 106-16-05E in RP-6A. Korat's flights attacking the airfield were: "Pistol", "Hatchet", "Simmer", and "Crossbow". "Bobbin" was the Iron Hand flight. (Jake Shuler's mission data card.)

The strike force commander was Capt Sam P. Morgan from the 34 TFS flying as "Pistol 01".

"While attempting to suppress air defenses along the ingress route, Iron Hand F-105s launched four AGM-45s at a SAM site near Hanoi. Pilots estimated they destroyed a Fansong radar and a van. At the airfield, Iron Hand aircraft expended two CBU-24s and reported heavy damage to an AAA site. They observed two secondaries near the site. The follow-on strike force, consisting of three flights of F-105Ds, struck the airfield and reported several interdictions on the southwest and center sections of the runway. The crews expended 72 750-pound bombs over the target area. One F-105 was downed by AAA fire as it was pulling off the target. Post-strike BDA revealed the runway was cratered in these areas, rendering it unserviceable and non-operational." (388 TFW history.)

Capt William E. Jones from the 469 TFS, flying as "Crossbow 03", was shot down by AAA on the mission.

Capt Robert W. Ferrel from the 44 TFS was "Bobbin 02" in the Iron Hand flight. "... I was wingman on the Iron Hand flight going to Kep airfield. Bill Jones was knocked down on that mission and we heard his beacon but never heard from him again. That strike was from the Gulf and he went down north of Haiphong. Our Iron Hand flight successfully destroyed a SAM site while evading MiGs and we were awarded a Silver Star." Ferrel had to land at Da Nang when his refueling door failed to open and he couldn't post-strike refuel. (Bob Ferrel, e-mails 14 & 15 July 2009.)

"Simmer" was Korat's third flight striking Kep Airfield. The flight from the 34 TFS left Korat at 06:00. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4248
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying mission # 60
- #4 - Capt Carl William Lasiter (POW 4 Feb 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 48th combat mission. "We had a last minute target change and went to Kep A.F. We went in the water route and had no threat from the MiGs. The visibility was good and we had no problem picking up the field on approach. They started filling the air with 85-mm bursts right in our flight path about 15 miles before we rolled in. We had to climb above the flak and consequently were high at roll-in and fast at release. I saw three strings of bombs hit as I rolled in; one on either side of the runway and one in the middle of the runway. The AAA was still heavy pulling off the target. Several aircraft took hits. Crossbow #3 [Capt William Eugene Jones, 469 TFS, KIA] was hit on pull off and had locked the slab when he lost #1 & 2 flight control pressure. He flew it for about 30 seconds that way and finally had to get out when it went into a steep spiral. He got out safely and landed on the west end of Little 'Thud' Ridge. I think rescap was possible but it was poorly handled and was finally called off." The mission lasted for 3 hours 35 minutes. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 20.)

Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission in his memoirs. "Kep was primarily at this time a MiG-17 base and had been hit before, but not recently. I was leading Simmer, the #3 flight and Sam Morgan was the mission commander. We came in from the east and started picking up 85-mm flak well before roll-in. As the 85-mm shells exploded in an orange burst before becoming the black smoke that gave flak its name many years before, Sam began a shallow climb.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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Consequently we stayed just above the burst until roll-in. We got some good hits on the airfield with our 750# bombs but the flak was very intense all the way. Several aircraft got hit. Bill Jones of the 469th, flying that morning as Crossbow #3, took a pretty bad hit and lost his #1 and #2 flight control hydraulic pressure and had to bail out close to the point where Bob Barnett [on 3 October 1967 also from the 469 TFS] landed some months earlier. I thought that rescue could have been possible but it was not attempted for some reason ... " (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 26.)

"Crossbow" was Korat's fourth flight in the attack on Kep Airfield. It's lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Robert F. Grubb from the 469 TFS flying F-105D 60-0464
- #2 - Maj David D. Igelman from the 34 TFS flying 61-0206
- #3 - Capt William E. Jones from the 469 TFS flying 61-0068
- #4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler from the 34 TFS flying 60-0511 on his 42nd mission.

The flight left Korat at 05:50 and refueled from Brown Anchor 24 at 07:00 at 16,000 feet for a TOT of 07:48.

Forty-two and a half years later, Jake Shuler recalled details of the mission. "On the morning of 5 January 1968, Dave Igelman and I were scheduled to fly with the 469th TFS, a first for me. I was pleased to see that Bob Grubb was to lead our flight. Bob had been a B-52 co-pilot with my brother [Buck Shuler] at Carswell AFB, TX. Then both were transferred to Dyess AFB, TX where they upgraded to Aircraft Commanders. Dave was to fly as Crossbow 2 and I was to fly as Crossbow 4 on Bill Jones' wing. I had never met Bill before but instantly found him to be easy going and very likeable. The Strike Force Commander was Sam Morgan, Pistol 1. The second flight was Hatchet Flight and Sam Armstrong was leading Simmer Flight, the third flight. Our flight, Crossbow, was the fourth flight of four.

"The Wing mission briefing revealed that we would be going to the primary target, Kep Airfield. Intelligence had briefed us to expect heavy AAA which turned out to be an understatement

"The Kep runway headings are 070 degrees & 250 degrees. The Strike Force final heading to the target was 283 degrees which gave us a 33-degree angle with Runway 25. Sam Morgan skillfully positioned the Strike Force just north of Kep so with a 20-degree left turn during roll-in, we would only have about a 13-degree angle with the runway. A small angle enhanced the likelihood of getting more of your string of bombs on the runway.

"Sam Morgan rolled Pistol Flight in closely followed by Hatchet Flight. Moments later, Sam Armstrong rolled in with Simmer Flight and then it was Crossbow Flight's turn. Bob and Dave rolled in immediately followed by Bill. I rolled inverted with Bill but instinctively saw that we were going to have less than a 60-degree dive angle so I held my pull for a moment. I do not know the reason for the shallow dive angle, perhaps the fact that Crossbow Flight was the back right flight and we were rolling in to the left. A shallow dive angle increases the time from roll-in to bomb release thus providing the AAA gunners more time to track you. Plus the fact that Bill and I were the 15th & 16th aircraft down the chute didn't increase our odds of remaining unscathed.

"When I rolled out in the dive, I had to sit up straight and lean forward to keep Bill in sight just below and to the left of my nose. As soon as I saw him pickle his bombs and begin his pull up and hard left turn, I took my eyes off him and put my sight mid-way down the runway, my assigned aiming point. I pickled my bombs at 7,500' and started my pull up and hard left turn to follow Bill. I did not see Bill get hit but heard his call just prior to my weapons release. I initiated my pull up and turn to our egress heading of 100 degrees, varying my backpressure in an attempt to spoil AAA tracking. I

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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did not pick Bill up visually during the turn because, unbeknownst to me, he had rolled wings level when hit and was headed approximately 134 degrees. (The direction from Kep Airfield to where Bill ejected, 106-28N and 21-12E, was a distance of 16 NM.) I had turned past him. Bob called and asked if I had Crossbow 3 in sight and I said 'negative.' To this very day, I question whether I was the wingman I should have been.

"Bob and Dave were ahead of Bill but got a visual on him after making a 360-degree turn ending up behind him. I do recall Bill's transmission indicating that he had locked the slab but had lost oil pressure. Very shortly thereafter Bob was telling Bill to 'get out'. By this time I had turned back to the right and, although I did not see the ejection, I immediately heard his beeper and picked him up in his chute. Moments later I saw the fireball when his aircraft impacted the ground. The time between Bill calling being hit and his ejection was a blur to me then and is certainly not clear in my memory now. Assuming Bill averaged a groundspeed of 550 KTS and traveled 16 NMs, the elapsed time would have been approximately 1 minute 40 seconds. As Sam Armstrong mentioned in his combat log, Bill flew the aircraft on slab lock for about 30 seconds, so he was apparently nursing the aircraft for just over a minute before engaging the slab lock configuration.

"I began circling Bill at a safe distance so as not to draw AAA in his vicinity. Due to that distance, I could not tell what kind of shape he was in. Bob tried several times to raise him on his survival radio without success. On one circle going through a northwest direction, I picked up two aircraft approaching almost head on. I leveled my wings in preparation for a head-on attack and was greatly relieved to find that they were two Thuds and not MiGs. I think [they were] an Iron Hand element. Eventually, I rejoined with Bob and Dave and we remained in the area for about 15 minutes then went to the tanker to top off and wait for a possible rescue effort, which, regrettably never materialized.

"The flight back to Korat was somber. In honor of Bill, I flew initial in the number 4 position."

*388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0459 and 0495 - 0497 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on Dave Dickson's cigar band dated 5 Jan 68 & Jake Shuler, "42nd Mission Narrative" via e-mail, 28 July 2010.*

### 06-Jan-68

2883

Three days after the 388 TFW DO, Col James Ellis Bean, was shot down by a MiG-21, and a year after the first successful MiG sweep in Operation Bolo on 2 January 1967, General Momyer at 7th Air Force directed another MiG sweep.

Forty-two F-105s and "... 16 F-4Ds were fragged for MiG sweeps in the Kep, Phuc Yen, Mo Trang, and Tung Tu areas. As part of the same mission, 12 Navy aircraft were fragged to hit coastal defense targets in the Thanh Hoa area. In support of this mission, six ... EB-66s (from the 355 TFW) provided electronic jamming support with four aircraft in the North West Laos orbit areas ... and two in the North East Gulf of Tonkin orbit area."

"On 6 January, the entire strike force of F-105s (from the 388 TFW), each aircraft armed with four AIM-9Bs went on an unsuccessful 'MiG sweep' in RP-6A. None of the flights sighted MiGs." (388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frame 0497.)

"Instead of F-4s pretending to be F-105s as in Bolo, Momyer's new sweep featured thirty-four F-105s stripped of their bombs and ready to dogfight. Most of them crossed Thud Ridge at fourteen thousand feet and turned east as if intending to strike Kep airfield or the railroad bridge at Mo Trang, fifteen miles west of Kep on the line to Thai Nguyen. Not surprisingly, their ruse was soon discovered, when two pairs of MiG-21s attacked from the rear. Typical of North Vietnamese tactics since August, it was a hit-and-run attack out of the late afternoon sun. The MiGs and the strike force traded heat-seeking missiles without doing any damage, and the MiG pilots escaped to tell

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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their controllers that the F-105s were not carrying bombs. The best opportunity for destroying an enemy aircraft that afternoon came a few minutes later, when an F-105 pilot noticed an Il-14 Crate transport several thousand feet below, headed for Hanoi. While the F-105 pilot was getting his force commander's permission to attack this gray cargo plane with a red star, it dove into the nearest cloud; the F-105 got off one burst of gunfire and missed."

General Momyer justified this unsuccessful MiG sweep by telling General Ryan, "... while he had no illusions about another Bolo, there was nothing better to do with his aircraft during the northeast monsoon."

"Momyer also indicated that he had resorted to a fighter sweep only after trying other means for defeating the MiGs. He had sent F-4 escorts ahead of the strike force by as much as a quarter of an hour; he had added a flight of them at forty thousand feet, far above the strike force; he had sent two flights below enemy radar to pop up and surprise the MiGs; he had combined a close escort with a roving flight. But the fundamental problem remained that Seventh Air Force was 'operating with less than real time information, while the enemy has this information available to him.'"

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, the 34 TFS operations officer, was the 388 TFW mission commander for this mission. He led "Waco" flight from the 34 TFS. The flight took off at 1355. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0162 on his 49th combat mission.
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #4 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. also from the 34 TFS flew in another 388 TFW flight on this MiG-sweep mission, his 61st over North Vietnam. (20 Apr 09 letter from Carolyn Dickson giving annotation on cigar band dated 6 Jan 68.)

In his combat log, Maj Armstrong told how the mission was planned and flown. "I was the Mission Commander for this strike which was flown as a MiG sweep. We had no bombs each aircraft had 2 tanks and 2 AIM-9s. Two flights of F-4s were to precede us by 5 minutes and go to Phuc Yen and Kep and get the MiGs. Takhli was to come in on roughly the same route with the same configuration 5 minutes behind. Actually the F-4s and Takhli were right along beside us. We got a call that a Blue Bandit was closing on us first at 30 miles, then 18 miles, and finally 7 miles. Then we did the break maneuver I had briefed and the MiG broke off and we couldn't see him and radar lost him. All 4 flights then went to the designated orbit areas to look for MiGs. Nobody got a shot at any unfortunately and we turned around and came home. We did prove that we could defeat a MiG attack as a strike force and still get to the target." The flight landed after flying for 3 hours 10 minutes. (Maj Armstrong's combat mission log, pg 21.)

Lt Gen Armstrong expanded on the description of the mission in his memoirs. "As the mission commander for the afternoon mission on the 6th, I was surprised when I arrived at the command post early that morning to plan what I thought was to be a standard Pack VIA mission. Instead I learned that it was to be a MiG Sweep much like the previous one. Two flights of F-4C's were to proceed first up the water route and harass the Kep and Phuc Yen Airfields. Then the Korat force would fly up the land route, followed by the Takhli force and finally a full force of F-4C's from Ubon. The frag order also specified that the lead and #3 flights in the F-105 forces would not carry bombs or jamming pods. The #2 and #4 flights would carry a full load of 750# bombs. All F-105D's would carry a pair of Sidewinder heat seeking missiles on each wing. There were to be no Weasels in this plan. If we were not successful in luring MiGs up, then we were to bomb the Thai Nyugen.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

### F-105 History

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Incidentally, the weather was forecast to be totally undercast all over Pack VIA.

"The frag order didn't make any sense to me. I complained to the chief of the command post. First, with no jamming pods, we would look very different to their radar sites. Secondly, there seemed to be no reason to carry two pods of Sidewinders at the expense of those jamming pods. Two missiles each was plenty since we still had the Gatling gun. Thirdly, by requiring the #2 and #4 flights to carry bombs, they would be unnecessarily weighted down and couldn't keep up with the rest of us much less engage the MiG's with any chance of success. The reply was that we needed to carry bombs just in case we got to the target without being intercepted. I declared that I wouldn't take the strike force into the SA-2 ring since it was undercast and we had no Weasels, pods or any Sky Spot for bombing.

"I thought that my argument was solid but it fell on faint-hearted ears. The command post chief did agree to check with 7th again with my concerns. He came back shortly with the answer that the frag order was to be flown as originally written. I told him that I wasn't going to take the strike force into the SA-2 ring no matter what they said and they could court martial me now or later. Just about then I was called to the secure phone to talk to the Takhli mission commander. Those secure phones were really poor so the conversation was difficult. I did recognize the voice on the other end as Col. Giraudo, the Takhli wing commander. His concerns were exactly the same as mine. He said he was going to order his maintenance folks to load his aircraft just the way I had wanted. But since we were 5 minutes ahead of them, we'd have already blown the mission by the time they entered the area. I said that we had asked 7th for a change and been denied. He said he was used to 'telling' 7th what he was going to do, not ask them! He told me to hand the phone to our senior officer, Col. Stewart who had only been the D.O. since Col. Bean was shot down three days earlier. I heard Col. Stewart's end of the conversation which was largely: 'yes sir, yes sir'. He hung up and told the chief of the command post to have maintenance load the aircraft just the way I wanted. And they did in short order.

"I planned and briefed the force on what we would do. We would proceed up the land route into Pack VIA anticipating that we would be intercepted by MiG-21's from Phuc Yen. Their practice was to take-off and climb out to about 25,000 feet on a course opposite to ours. The lead aircraft would key his Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) once to give their ground radar controllers their precise position. Then they would squawk their IFF one more time to get a turn in vector. When they squawked their IFF, our radar aircraft over the Gulf could also see them. Incidentally, we squawked all of the time because with our jamming pods, we lit up the radars anyhow. My plan was to wait until our radar guys called the MiG's position from its second squawk and then we would go into a 360-degree hard turn. My flight and the #3 flight would turn left and the other to the right. If we timed it just right, we would come back to our original heading just as the first MiG-21 popped up from the undercast looking for us -- only we'd be behind him in a position to fire instead of vice-versa. Usually there was a second MiG-21 about 3 miles in trail. My plan was that the last two flights would be ready for him.

"It worked just like I briefed. The radar aircraft warned me when the MiGs were 30 miles, 18 miles and finally at 7 miles. This was one more call than I expected. At the 7 mile call, I called the break. When we all came back to the original Northerly heading, there were no MiG's in sight. They had obviously been warned once we started our maneuver and stayed below the clouds and headed North for a safe recovery. Takhli was closer than 5 minutes behind us as were also the F-4C's. So we had a whole bunch of Air Force aircraft flying around in the same area with armed missiles and itchy trigger fingers! People were calling out bogies all over the place and thinking they might be MiG's only to discover that it was only some of our own. I soon decided that the MiGs were laying low and the situation was becoming hazardous from 'friendly fire'. So I called for my 4 flights to head home.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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"The MiG Sweep was unsuccessful but we did discover that we could negate a MiG attack in the future, keep our bombs, and proceed on to the target. The trick was the turn which upset their attack geometry."

*355 TFW history Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1651 & "To Hanoi and Back", pgs 96 and 97 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished manuscript, chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 27 - 28.*

**09-Jan-68**

4861

Due to a weather diversion, "Waco" flight from the 34 TFS flew a mission in northern Laos instead of North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1430. Its lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #2 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270 on his 50th mission.
- #4 - Capt Carl William Lasiter (POW 4 Feb 68)

Maj Armstrong described the mission in his 100-mission log. "Sam Morgan was Mission Commander and I was the Deputy for the primary target. However, weather was bad and we went North Star. We hit a troop concentration in middle upper Laos with an A-1E FAC. We got our bombs right on target and got 2 secondary explosions. We made a recon of Rt 7 on the way back for a counter. Cricket has changed its policy apparently on clearing people into the Packs." They returned to Korat after flying for 2 hours 20 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 21*

**10-Jan-68**

4862

For the second day, a weather diversion sent "Gator" flight from the 34 TFS into Laos instead of North Vietnam. The flight took off at 15:10. Its lineup was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1172
- #4 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.

This was Maj Armstrong's 51st combat mission. "Again the primary target was cancelled due to weather and we wound up doing North Star. We went down into southern Laos outside of Mu Gia Pass and hit a karst and tumbled it down on the road. Cricket cleared us into Pack I to let #4 drop his tanks as they wouldn't feed. I had P-2 flight control system failure on way back and had to land straight-in." The mission lasted 2 hours five minutes.

Capt Jacob C. Shuler, also from the 34 TFS, flew F-105D 60-5381 on his 46th mission into NVN. It was his final combat mission before his reassignment to Hq 7th Air Force in Saigon. Prior to his Hq assignment, he went on an R&R between 12 - 18 January and returned to Korat.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 21 & Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet.*

**12-Jan-68**

4863

After dropping their bombs under Sky Spot control, "Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS strafed a line of trucks in Mu Gia Pass. Their flight took off from Korat at 0635. The flight's line up was:

- #1 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW DO
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4242
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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It was Maj Armstrong's 52nd combat mission. "This was a divert to Cricket from the planned Pack VI strike. They joined us up with the two airborne spares for a 6-ship Combat Sky Spot on a target in the north of Mu Gia Pass. We dropped and watched the bombs impact in a wooded area with no explosions from secondaries. Jim Daniels looked down and saw some trucks in the pass. We came back and made some strafe passes on the trucks. Jim went in first and got one to burning. I came in next and set 2 or 3 afire right next to his. We damaged 4 or 5 more. We then saw some 12 more north but couldn't strike them. I fired 783 rounds." The mission lasted 3 hours.

Also under Cricket control, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Ozark 02" against a road segment in RP-2. "100%. Road cut." It was his 31st combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 21 - 22 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**13-Jan-68**

4864

"Crossbow" flight from the 34 TFS flew a FAC-controlled mission into southern Laos. The flight took off at 0725. Its line up was:

- #1 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III
- #2 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361
- #4 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.

It was Maj Armstrong's 53rd combat mission. "This was also a Cricket-assigned mission in southern Laos. Our FAC put us in on a suspected storage area and we bombed it with no noticeable results. We then came back and strafed the area and again saw no secondaries. We then went over and flew across the Package (I) to the coast but it was almost completely overcast and we couldn't see anything. Made a formation GCA landing. Otherwise it was very uneventful." The mission lasted for 2 hours 25 minutes.

Fellow 34 TFS pilot Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. also flew a mission into Route Package 1. His targets on his 65th mission were trucks near Dong Hoi.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 22 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 13 Jan 68.*

**14-Jan-68**

4865

Weather diverted "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS to a Sky Spot radar drop in RP-1. The flight took off at 1430. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Kenneth W. Mays
- #2 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #4 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer

This was Maj Armstrong's 54th combat mission. "Again a Cricket divert to Pack I. We did a Combat Sky Spot in Mu Gia Pass as weather was soaked in. Practiced some formation on way home. Nothing very spectacular." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 15 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 22.*

**15-Jan-68**

3865

F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed the Thai Nguyen iron and steel complex (JCS 76) using Commando Club radar. There was no BDA due to weather.

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS attacked the Thai Nguyen Army Barracks (JCS 60) in Route Pack 6A. The flight took off at 0630. Its flight line up was:



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4248
- #2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter (POW 4 Feb 68)
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander

This was Maj Armstrong's 55th combat mission. "I was Mission Commander again today but the weather in VI was bad so we went first alternate. Our flight, along with 8 F-4s and an Iron Hand flight, went Commando Club to Thai Nguyen Army Barracks. We went in and dropped with no MiG or SAM reaction. An easy red mark." Their mission lasted 2 hours 45 minutes.

*388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0460 and 0497 & Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 22 - 23.*

### 16-Jan-68

4866

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS used the Commando Club radar against a target in Laos. The flight took off at 1415. Its line up was:

- #1 - Capt Sam P. Morgan
- #2 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1759
- #4 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 56th combat mission. "We were originally the mission commander's flight. Due to weather, we went Commando Club instead on a target in Laos. We hit the target almost with no effort and started home when we got a call to go on a RESCAP in Pack I where 2 F-4s had gone down. We went over and picked up one beeper. Although the weather was completely undercast, we orbited just 10 miles northeast of Mu Gia Pass and finally established radio contact with 2 or 3 of the crew members on the ground. They were OK and in a non-populated area. We had to leave for low fuel and go to the tanker just as the A-1E and HH-43s started in. We refueled and came back but [there was] nothing we could do with the undercast. One A-1E got under the undercast and vectored a chopper in. We came home and as we got out of range, they still hadn't picked anybody up." Their mission lasted for 3 hours 30 minutes.

The two F-4s were in "Hanger" flight from the 480 TFS, 366 TFW out of Da Nang. They went down when a bomb on one of the planes exploded and blew them both out of the sky. The crew of the F-4C, Maj C. E. Lewis and 1Lt J. L. Kelly, were rescued. The pilot of the F-4D, Capt Scott B. Stovin was also rescued, but his back seater, 1Lt Thomas Nelson Moe, was captured and became a POW.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 23 & CNA Loss/Damage Database, USAF losses 805 and 806, pg M24.*

### 17-Jan-68

4867

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS flew his 57th combat mission. He was a ground running spare in F-105D 61-0092 and became "Goose 1" when he replaced an aircraft that air aborted. He took off at 0650 and joined Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68) who flew as "Goose 2".

"I was again super spare and sat out on the end of the runway while 22 aircraft took off with no sweat. Everybody was going to first alternate targets. Finally I gave up and taxied back in and shut down. Just then, a maintenance sergeant came running up and told me that one aircraft had experienced AC generator failure and was air aborting. I took off and joined the other spare and I replaced Carl Lasiter [Capt Carl William Lasiter, POW, 4 Feb 68] who was originally the #1 airborne spare) we did a Combat Sky Spot in Pack I. Uneventful once I got airborne." He flew for

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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2 hours 20 minutes on this mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 23*

**19-Jan-68**

4868

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS attacked a train near a village in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 0525. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361
- #2 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Capt Robert Malcolm Elliot (KIA 14 Feb 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 58th combat mission. "The target this a.m. was an army barracks 8 miles southwest of Hanoi. I was Mission Commander. I planned to drop off the tankers in the Gulf and ingress just north of Thanh Hoa going up the west side of the Red River keeping the SAMs off to our right. One Iron Hand was to go up on the east side with a MIGCAP as a diversion. As we got close to the coast, the weather, which was supposed to be clear, turned out to be almost completely overcast as far as the eye could see. We turned towards the target and continued on until about 20 miles south of the target. At that time, I could see that there was no way. I called a weather abort to the left and told everyone to pick a target in an open area southwest of our run-in course. We found a train and a convoy of trucks that we dropped on. My bombs were a bit short of the train and I didn't know if I did more than damage the cars. After expending our bombs, we came on home." Their mission lasted 3 hours 40 minutes.

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong, described this mission and its significance in much greater detail. "I was the mission commander and the target was an army barracks 8 miles Southwest of Hanoi. It was a certainty that we would encounter SA-2's as we ingressed from the Gulf. I sent the Weasels and the MiG CAP up the west side of the Red River when we dropped off the tankers with the hope that they would draw the SA-2 response first. They were equipped to deal with this threat which would allow us to get to the target without losses. This actually worked. I was also very mindful that the weather was likely to be unsuitable for dive bombing and the standard 20-degree turn weather abort was quite hazardous (it seemed to take forever to make 180-degree turn while a lucky SA-2 might come unseen through the undercast).

"Therefore, I had a very radical idea and this was what I briefed at the mission briefing. When I called: 'Weather abort, left' everyone would roll left to an inverted position, pull the throttle to idle and pull back enough on the control stick to keep the aircraft in a light burble. This would result in a minimum altitude loss maneuver. It was the functional equivalent to a 'to the rear march' in that Tail-end Charlie would briefly be the lead aircraft and the leader Tail-end Charlie. I briefed that we would then break into individual flights and the flight leaders would move into the lead positions as soon as possible.

"There were at least two problems/unknowns associated with my plan. The first was that I had never done a Split 'S' in the F-105 in any fuel/weight configuration and our configuration at this maneuver was predictably as severe as could be imagined. We were starting from about 17,000 feet so my assumption that even our weakest pilot could perform a Split 'S' from this altitude before hitting the ground. But I hadn't test flown this maneuver so I was mindful that if I had badly miscalculated, my command could result in 16 'smoking holes' in North Vietnam. The second problem which was easier to predict was what this maneuver would look like on the SA-2 radar. As long as we were in our regular formation approaching the target area, our jamming pods would obliterate their scopes. However, the moment we rolled inverted with the pods pointing straight up, the jamming would disappear from their scopes and they would see the naked radar returns from each of our aircraft. An SA-2 would guide very nicely in this situation. I was betting that our

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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maneuver would catch them by surprise. They would suddenly see our 'blips' and wonder why the 'blips' seemed to become stationary and then quickly move backwards with the resumption of jamming on their scopes.

"Meantime on the mission, as my Doppler indicated 20 miles from the target, it was evident that it was completely overcast. I'm sure that my comrades wondered why I went this far when I called the weather abort break as I had briefed. It worked just fine. Everybody was able to recover from their Split 'S' above the undercast. Some might have had some trouble completing the pull-out in the clouds using instruments. No SA-2's were observed. So far, so good. I simultaneously resumed the leadership of my flight while directing the other flights to: 'Hit targets of opportunity'. It wasn't until later that I heard that LBJ bragged that not a s--house in North Vietnam is bombed without my okay and here was Major Armstrong exercising on-the-spot direction which was inconsistent with the president's claim. Oh well!

"I headed my flight south in the hope of finding breaks in the overcast where we could find a suitable target to bomb. The clouds started to diminish the further south we went. One of my flight members called out that there was a train in a village over by the river. It took me only an instant to spot the village and train and call: 'Pistol lead is up and in'. With that I pulled up and banked left to position for a bomb run. The train was about ten cars with half of it inside the village environs and the other half sticking out. I established my 45-degree dive aiming at that part sticking out of the village. I didn't see anybody shooting at us so I released my bombs on cue and pulled out of the dive. I kicked the left rudder so I could see my bombs hit as I gained altitude. I was able to see all six of the 750# bombs impact. The first ones were short of the train. The very last one hit the edge of the track--not the train. I was upset with myself that I had missed hitting the train since this was indeed a very rare opportunity. I am not aware of a train ever being attacked this far outside of Hanoi.

"A little calculation would show that at 125 milliseconds between release of the 6 bombs at 500 knots, at 45 degrees dive angle they would impact 75 feet apart. The train was only about 8 feet wide and from a 90-degree attack angle, missing the train was not a disgrace. I didn't stop to make this calculation at this time -- I was determined to take advantage of this opportunity. I leveled off and raised the mils of depression in the sight to 20 and selected 'guns' on the armament panel. As I turned 270 degrees to make a strafing pass down the length of the train, I had a sudden thought. We had flown South far enough to be in Pack IV which was Navy territory. Consequently, this was an area that was unfamiliar to me. The train could be a trap that was used to lure aircraft into gun range. I could see that the last member of my flight had completed his bomb run and we didn't have a direct hit on the train. With my finger on the armed trigger, my better instincts took over and I banked sharply to the east and called: 'Pistol, were going feet wet' (meaning heading out to the Gulf for post strike refueling). Nobody objected and we returned safely to Korat.

"During the debriefing, I mentioned the train. I suggested that I thought that I had damaged the track enough that the train might be stuck there and the Navy should be aware of this intelligence so they could target it tomorrow. It was too late for the afternoon mission. I thought no more about this mission since I had only one more benign mission before I met Beth in Hawaii on R&R. It was only 22 years later when I was ready to retire that I matched this mission data, the tape of this mission, and the recognition that Tet 68 started 12 days later that I realized that the train I could have destroyed with my Gatling gun was probably carrying war goods for that Tet Offensive. We had no warning that Tet was coming. Otherwise, I would have risked the danger of the village defenses to strafe the train and destroy the goods that Tet would need. In retrospect, this was the mission, out of 100, that could have been the most important! This was a reflection of the failure of our intelligence system."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 23 - 24 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 33 - 35.*

# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

## F-105 History

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**21-Jan-68**

4869

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in RP 1 using Sky Spot radar. The flight took off from Korat at 0700. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361
- #2 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
- #3 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #4 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. flying his 68th combat mission.

It was Maj Armstrong's 59th combat mission. "This was another practice brief for me as Mission Commander but we went over to Pack I as the weather was bad up in Pack VI. We did a Combat Sky Spot on a target south of Mu Gia Pass but couldn't see our bombs impact due to clouds." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 15 minutes.

On his cigar band, Maj Dickson recorded the mission as against Dong Hoi in RP-1.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 24 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 21 Jan 68.*

**23-Jan-68**

4870

On the day that North Korea captured the Navy intelligence ship USS Pueblo off the coast of North Korea, "Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew a mission into North Vietnam directed by the Commando Club radar. The flight took off at 0615. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1152
- #2 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.

It was Maj Armstrong's 60th combat mission. "This was a 1st alternate target execution. I was Mission Commander and the primary and secondary targets were the same as they had been for several days. Our first alternate target was an army barracks southeast of Phu Tho in a Commando Club. The weather was marginal; several decks of clouds with the top one being at about 11,500 feet. There was one call of Blue Bandits (MiG-21s) being airborne from Phuc Yen but no contact. We went ahead and dropped on schedule. On the way out, we got a call that we had some Red Bandits (MiG-17s) at 3 miles that they were sleepers. Never saw them. Otherwise an uneventful Pack V mission." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 45 minutes.

After flying his 60th combat mission since his first on 5 October 1967, Maj Armstrong met his wife in Hawaii for R&R. He returned to Korat on 8 February 1968.

Under Combat Skyspot, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 2" against an interdiction point in RP-1. It was his 33rd combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 24 - 25 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**09-Feb-68**

4871

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in the Barrel Roll region of northern Laos. The flight took off at 1500. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #2 - Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr., 388 TFW Commander
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4359
- #4 - Capt John E. Hartman

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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This was Maj Armstrong's 61st mission, the first since his return from Hawaii after 10 days of R&R. "Weather bad in Pack VI still so we went to northern Laos to work with some A-1E FACs. A flight of 4 F-105s was in right ahead of us and started a number of fires with their CBU's. We came in behind and started some more. The target was a group of structures where some gasoline and ammo was apparently stored since the fires were definitely POL type fires. We did good work today." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 55 minutes.

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong commented on this mission. "It was a planned Pack VIA mission which wound up going single flight to Laos. This was the first time I had flown with our new wing commander, Col. P. P. Douglas. He was the division commander at Yokota so he was sorta current in the F-105D. He had been an ace in WWII in the P-47 but I quickly experienced that he was out of his element in February 1968."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 25 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 38.*

### 10-Feb-68

4872

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew a Sky Spot mission into Laos. The flight took off from Korat at 0700. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0530
- #2 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW DO
- #3 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr., 34 TFS Ops Officer
- #4 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin

This was Maj Armstrong's 62nd mission. "Weather bad in Pack VI. Our flight was diverted prior to take-off to Laos. We were instructed on the tankers to go Sky Spot over southeast of Mu Gia Pass, which we did. An easy counter." Their mission lasted 2 hours 50 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 25.*

### 11-Feb-68

4873

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew a mission to support the Marines at Khe Sanh in South Vietnam but weather diverted them to hit a target in Laos. The flight took off at 0545. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0167
- #2 - Capt John E. Hartman
- #3 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #4 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

It was Maj Armstrong's 63rd mission. "This was a Bravo frag all of the way. Our assigned target was near the besieged town of Khe Sanh in South Vietnam. The weather was clobbered there so we bombed a supply area, which was just across the Laotian border. All of the bombs were on target and were swung up through Pack I for a weather check and counter. The wingmen did a good job!" Their mission lasted for 2 hours 30 minutes.

Capt Lawrence L. Bogemann, who had arrived in the 34 TFS this month, flew his local check-out flight today. He was a KC-135 copilot in SAC and had trained at Nellis in the F-105. (Larry Bogemann, e-mail 27 April 10.)

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 25 - 26.*

### 12-Feb-68

4874

"Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS used Commando Club to hit a target in Laos. The flight took off from Korat at 0650. Its line up was:

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0161
- #2 - Capt John E. Hartman
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.

It was Maj Armstrong's 64th combat mission. "This was a 1st alternate Commando Club target in Laos. It was about 10 miles east of Sam Nuea. The tankers got fouled up on our fragged drop-off time. Consequently, we dropped off late and had to hustle to try to make up the time. When we dropped, we dropped our bombs through a 10,000 ft overcast so we couldn't see the impact. We made a weather recce of Pack III and IV near Laos for our counter." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 20 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 26.*

**13-Feb-68**

4875

The 34 TFS flew a mission into Laos that lasted for 3 hours 30 minutes. "Scuba" flight took off at 1405. Its flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4269
- #2 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #3 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.
- #4 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III

This was Maj Armstrong's 65th combat mission. "The reason this mission was so long was that the assigned #2 man (Bill Shunney) [Maj William P. Shunney] had a speed brake problem after take off and I had to take him up to Udorn to drop his bombs and escorted him back to the field since this was his first mission. I went up to the tanker, refueled and we went to a target in Laos. An O-2 FAC put us in on a storage area and we hit it fairly well although the presence of scattered clouds obscured the target at times. We then went up to Dong Hoi and made an armed recce although we couldn't see the ground."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 26.*

**14-Feb-68**

4876

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS was one of the Korat flights that struck the Canal des Rapides bridge (JCS 13) in downtown Hanoi. The flight took off at 13:55. Its line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0464
- #4 - Capt Gary G. Durkee

This was Maj Armstrong's 66th combat mission. "The target was the Hanoi Railroad & Hiway Bridge [JCS 13]. The weather was clear for the first time in several weeks. We came up the delta into the target. Col Smith inadvertently dropped his bombs crossing the coast. The visibility was restricted but we picked up the target about 20 miles out. I hit about where I aimed but the winds they gave us were wrong. Nobody hit the bridge consequently, and post-strike photography showed there were 30 cars on the bridge at the time. #2 couldn't get his bombs off and carried them out. The flak was lighter than reputed and we only saw about 6 SAMs, which weren't too close. However, Pancho #2 was hit by a SAM on the way out and went down [Capt Robert Malcolm Elliott, 34 TFS, KIA]. We went on down to Pack I in northern Mu Gia Pass and #2 got his bombs off. The rest of us made 3 strafing passes on a building along the road." Their mission lasted for 3 hours 45 minutes.

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

### F-105 History

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In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong further described this Valentine Day mission. "The weather cleared in Pack VIA so we launched against the Hanoi Railroad and Highway Bridge (alternately called the Canal des Rapides Bridge) which I hadn't bombed since 28 October. Bob Smith was the mission commander and I was flying #3 in the lead flight which meant that I was the deputy mission commander. We went the water route and dropped off on a Northwesterly heading towards Hanoi in unusually clear weather. As we neared the cost line of the Delta, I noted Bob's two 3,000# bombs drop and impact with violent explosion on the beach. I called out: 'Scuba lead, why don't you turn around and I'll take the force in'. There was absolutely no reason to risk oneself and an aircraft that had no bombs. His response was: 'Negative'. I should have expected as much from hard-headed Bob Smith. He knew that I was perfectly capable of taking the force to the target but he wasn't about to retreat.

"So Bob led us in for a run on the bridge. He made his dive bomb run as if he had bombs to drop. Post strike photography showed that there were about 30 cars on the bridge when we arrived and the locomotive was valiantly trying to back off which apparently he was able to do. I released my bombs and joined up with Bob for our egress. Our #2 man, Bill Thomas and our #4 man, Gary Durkee were nowhere to be seen so the two of us headed to the tankers. When we coasted up to the tankers, we observed that the two of them were already there. I should mention that this was the first Pack VIA mission for both of them and that probably accounts for their actions.

"I called out: 'Hey, #2, you've still got a bomb on your right wing'. Gary Durkee called: 'And you've got one on your left wing, too'. Bill apparently didn't realize that his 3,000# bombs had not released when he hit the button. He never had dropped that size bomb before and felt the quiver in the aircraft when they were blown off the pylon station. Even with this extra load, he had out run us and Gary was so mesmerized by the 6 SA-2's that we saw and the 85-mm flak which popped around us just before roll-in that he hadn't noticed the bombs on Bill's aircraft. They were justified in having adrenaline up to their eyeballs because of the enemy defenses since Capt. Bob Elliot from our squadron was hit by a SA-2 on the way out and killed.

"When we landed Bob Smith told us what happened to him on the way in. He was flying on auto-pilot as the mission commanders always did to give some stability to the many aircraft using him for guidance when the auto-pilot 'burped' and he hurriedly grabbed the control stick. In his haste he inadvertently hit the already armed bomb release system. Explanation:>>There were a dozen things that one had to do before entering North Vietnam. Maybe some pilots used a checklist but I memorized the steps since I wanted to keep my head out of the cockpit. I made up a little jingle which contained the first letter of what needed to be done and had rehearsed it enough so that it came naturally even in times of extreme stress! Some of those steps were to dump the cabin pressure so that you would not ingest fumes in case of a hit in the compressor section. You also had to verify that you had selected the correct mil setting for the attack, selected the proper ordnance on the appropriate station, gone to 100% oxygen, etc. All of this time you had to maintain your formation position and look for MiGs and SA-2's. This was not easy and the less competent/current pilots had all they could handle! Bob had already done all of this and now was concentrating on positioning the force for the attack when the auto-pilot 'burped'.<<

"Bob was now faced with two thoughts. The first was what to do with Bill's bombs. 3,000# bombs were a precious commodity so he was loathe to just drop them safe. Secondly, he was still smarting over the inadvertent loss of his bombs. So after we all took on our post strike fuel (Bob told us to take a couple thousand pounds more than every other flight was taking on board) Bob called for a FAC in Pack I. All of the other flights proceeded down the Gulf and headed back to Thailand across South Vietnam -- except the four of us. We flew into Pack I and made contact with a FAC who said that he had spotted a building at the North end of Muy Ghia Pass where some bad guys were hanging out. It was easy to see so Bob told Bill Thomas to bomb it. Bill made his run but the bombs failed to release a second time -- an obvious material malfunction. Bob then

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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told him to do it again but this time to hit the jettison button which caused the bombs to impact still attached to the pylon and thus not armed.

"This was done. Then Bob asked the FAC if he wanted us to strafe the building since we had 1,000 rounds of 20-mm ammo each. Of course the FAC said yes. So Bob made the first firing pass by flying below the heights of the pass to get the right attack dive angle. We all followed and made 3 passes each until we had fired all of our ammo. I'm sure it looked to a casual observer that we were doing a gunnery practice on a range back in the states. In fact, Muoi Ghia Pass was known to have the fiercest defenses on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Reconnaissance aircraft transited it at 600 knots and still were shot at by the flak sites situated on the hill sides. As far as any of us could tell, they never fired a shot at us while we made these vulnerable, multiple passes. We concluded that this was such an unusually bold effort that the North Vietnamese just knew it had to be a trick! From my standpoint, I had just hung my precious bottom out twice on one mission for just one counter. This was vintage Bob Smith! He had no fear of anything."

As "Scuba 02", Capt William A. "Bill" Thomas, Jr. received the Distinguished Flying Cross for Extraordinary Achievement on this mission. "... Capt Thomas was a member of the lead flight of a force of F-105 aircraft assigned the mission of destroying a key military target in the vicinity of Hanoi. Despite heavy barrages of surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft artillery fire, Captain Thomas skillfully and at great risk made a precise bomb run on the target. ..." (Award citation under Hq 7th AF SO G-1844, 24 June 68.)

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 26 - 27 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 39 - 40.*

### 15-Feb-68

4877

"Crossbow" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a road in RP 4. The four-ship took off at 0950. Its lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0161
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Capt Gary G. Durkee

This was Maj Armstrong's 67th combat mission. "We were going to an army barracks 8 miles SW of Hanoi and were on the tankers when we got word to divert to Cricket Control. Apparently, they found that the weather was clobbered when they got the satellite picture after we were airborne. Cricket was flooded and there were no FACs up so I took my flight into Route 7 and went in about 35 miles into the Package (Pack IV) and when we didn't find anything, we dropped our bombs on a road and came home." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 55 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 27*

### 16-Feb-68

4878

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew an ineffectual radar bombing mission into North Vietnam and Laos. The flight took off at 0540. Its lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0518
- #2 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #3 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #4 - Capt Lamont H. Pharmed

This was Maj Armstrong's 68th combat mission. "Today was really a farce. My flight had the radar drop in Pack V, near Phu Tho as a first alternate target since the weather was too bad for visual bombing. We got almost to drop and they lost us on radar so we went down into Laos to an



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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alternate target and tried twice to radar drop down there but again they lost us. We wound up with no fuel and no place to bomb so we dropped our bombs safe at Udorn Range and came home. 3+30 and 24 wasted bombs!"

Today was the first combat mission over North Vietnam for Capt Joseph S. Sechler, also from the 34th. His flight lineup was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler
- #3 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvalson
- #4 - Capt John S. Murphy

Capt Sechler logged 2:30 flying hours.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 27 & Joe Sechler flight log via email 28 Apr 10.*

**17-Feb-68**

4879

"Crossbow" flight from the 34 TFS dropped bombs using radar on a target in Laos. The flight took off at 0620. Its line up was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #2 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0167
- #4 - Maj William P. Shunney

It was Maj Armstrong's 69th combat mission. "This was a 1st alternate target divert to Laos for a radar drop. It was all real quick and simple. I'd take 31 more just like it." Their mission was 2 hours 20 minutes long.

Capt Joseph S. Sechler, also from the 34th, flew his second mission over North Vietnam. His flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Kenneth W. Mays
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler
- #3 - Maj William M. Blakeslee
- #4 - Capt John S. Murphy

Capt Sechler logged 2:30 flying hours.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 27 - 28 & Joe Sechler flight log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.*

**19-Feb-68**

3848

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck Phuc Yen (JCS 6) airfield using radar signals from Commando Club. "The Iron Hand flight providing support for the strike fired one Shrike at a Fansong signal located approximately one mile from Phuc Yen. Aircrews estimated some damage to the radar, which ceased to operate 70 seconds after launch."

Another 388 TFW flight, also under Commando Club control, dropped 24 MK-117s on Yen Bai airfield in RP-5. There was no BDA due to weather. Four pilots from the 34 TFS in "Scuba" flight flew this mission. The flight took off at 1355. Their line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1760
- #2 - Capt Ben J. Fuhrman
- #3 - Capt Harry Guy Paddon III
- #4 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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It was Maj Armstrong's 70th combat mission. "This was a first alternate radar drop on Yen Bay. There were no MiG calls on the way up or back. We had some 85-mm bursts out of Yen Bay as usual but it wasn't too close. All in all it was a pretty uneventful mission." Their mission lasted 3 hours. (Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 28.)

Former West Point football star, Lt Col Felix A. "Doc" Blanchard, flew his first combat mission 5 days after arriving at Korat on 14 February 1968. He was assigned as the 388 TFW Assistant Deputy Commander for Operations.

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 86th combat mission against Route 7 in RP-3 -- his target area for his last two missions.

Using the Commando Club radar, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 3" against the Ban Nakay truck park in Northern Laos. He then flew armed recce in RP-3. "No significant sightings." It was his 44th combat mission.

*388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584, frames 0462, 0504 and 0511 - 0512 & Sam Armstrong's mission log & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 19 Feb 68 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 21-Feb-68

4880

"Bass" flight from the 34 TFS bombed an underwater ford in Laos. The flight took off at 14:50. Their line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #2 - Bob Moore [???
- #3 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer
- #4 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich

This was Maj Armstrong's 71st combat mission. "This was the first flight for Bob Moore and the 5th flight for Goodrich. They did real well. We were first alternate target of course and we hit an underwater ford down in Laos near Khe Sanh. Our bombs were pretty good. Afterwards, we made an armed recce of Red Route but the weather was bad." Their mission lasted 2 hour 40 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 28.*

### 22-Feb-68

4881

"Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS flew a morning mission into Laos. They took off at 0625. Their flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0409
- #2 - Bob Moore [???
- #3 - Maj Kenneth W. Mays flying his 99th combat mission
- #4 - Lt Col Dorwyn D. Shaver

This was Maj Armstrong's 72nd mission. "We made a radar drop on a target in Laos, east of Sam Nuea. There was fog and stratus in the valley so we couldn't assess our bombs. L/C Shaver had one bomb hang up and we had to jettison the bomb and rack in Pack III. We practiced some on the way home and that was it. Pretty easy." Their mission lasted for 2 hours 30 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 28.*

### 23-Feb-68

4882

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS bombed guns south of Mu Gia Pass in Laos. They took off at 0600. Their line up was:

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-5381
- #3 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #4 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich

This was Maj Armstrong's 73rd combat mission. "I was the super spare today and was very lucky to get airborne. The original #2 man had tank feeding troubles and I took his place. We went over to Laos about 20 miles south of Mu Gia Pass and dropped on some V.C. gun positions. We got one secondary fire started. After that we went over into Pack I looking for a hole in the clouds." They flew for 2 hours 20 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 29.*

### 24-Feb-68

4883

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS took off from Korat at 0610 to bomb a causeway in RP-1. Their line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4361
- #2 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.
- #3 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #4 - Capt John E. Hartman

This was Maj Armstrong's 74th combat mission. "The original # 2 man, Bill Thomas [Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.] aborted on the ground so Buddy Barner took his place. There had been a thunderstorm the night before and there was extensive cloudiness and light rain at take-off time. We had to make individual climbs to get on top of the weather. We Sky Spotted a causeway over near Dong Hoi. Coming home, we ran into cloud tops up to 22,000 feet and made a weather penetration into the field." They flew for 2 hours 45 minutes.

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS also flew a mission to Dong Hoi in RP-1. It was his 90th combat sortie into North Vietnam.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 29 Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 24 Feb 68.*

### 26-Feb-68

4884

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS took off from Korat at 1400 and dropped their bombs near Khe Sanh, South Vietnam. Their line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen
- #2 - Capt Lawrence L. Bogemann
- #3 - Maj Douglas A. Roysdon
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0445

This was Maj Armstrong's 75th combat mission. "We were diverted because of weather from Pack VI down into South Vietnam to aid the Marines at Khe Sanh. First of all, though, we made an armed recce into Pack I and got our counter. Then we dropped around Khe Sanh using the Marine radar site. The weather was pretty heavily overcast." They flew for 3 hours 5 minutes.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 29.*

### 28-Feb-68

4885

Two pilots from the 34 TFS flew a mission into RP-1 as "Goose" flight and destroyed trucks and supplies. They took off at 0740 and returned after 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight line up was:

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4387.
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 9th mission.

It was Maj Armstrong's 76th combat mission. "L/C Smith was supposed to be "Goose" today but he couldn't fly so I took the spare slot. Strangely enough, they launched the spares as a flight and we went over to Pack I. We were working with an F-100 FAC in the southern end of Mu Gia Pass. He spotted a trench 125' long with supplies in it and we bombed and strafed it. We set the truck on fire and he estimated we destroyed 75% of the supplies and the fire was still burning when we left. The weather was pretty bad around the target and it made it difficult to acquire and strike this truck. I made 3 strafing passes and fired 770 rounds. Joe made one and fired 170.

"Later got a letter of appreciation from the F-100 FAC pilot and endorsed by his commander for the work we did."

Lt Gen Armstrong also described this mission in his memoirs. "A funny thing happened on mission # 76. I was a spare but got launched as a two-ship flight. An F-100 FAC in Pack I at the Southern end of Mu Gia Pass had a target for us. It was a trench about 125 feet long into which supplies and ammo were stored. We bombed and strafed it setting the trench on fire. It was still burning when we left. Later I got a Letter of Appreciation from the F-100 FAC and endorsed by his commander. It was one of those rare occasions where one clearly did a good job and was properly recognized for doing it."

Joe Sechler recalled "... that I did not have a sight on the combining glass and had to bomb and shoot blind. ... According to the Misty FAC, I hit the target with my bombs (pure luck). Sam put me in for an Air Medal for that and it got approved." He logged 2:20 flying hours. (Joe Sechler, flight log and e-mail 28 April 2010.)

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 29 - 30 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 41.*

### 01-Mar-68

4886

The two pilots in "Goose" flight from the 34 TFS cut a road in Laos after not finding a target in RP-1 due to weather. The flight took off at 0610 and flew for 2 hours 25 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt John E. Hartman
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0458

This was Maj Armstrong's 77th combat mission. "We were the airborne spares and I let Ed Hartman lead the flight to get some experience. We headed toward Mu Gia Pass and found the weather real bad over there. We went up to 21,000 feet and couldn't stay on top so we went on down to west of Khe Sanh and worked with a FAC and made some road cuts in Laos. We had to work beneath a low ceiling and consequently had several dud bombs."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 92nd mission to a target near Dong Hoi, RP-1, North Vietnam.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 30 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 1 Mar 68.*

### 03-Mar-68

4887

The four pilots in "Bass" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in Mu Gia Pass. They took off at 14:00 and returned after 2 hours 15 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt Lamont H. Pharmer
- #2 - Capt John S. Murphy

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0409  
#4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 12th combat mission.

This was Maj Armstrong's 78th combat mission. "We were 1st alt yesterday so I let Monty lead to get some experience. We did a Combat Sky Spot on a target north of Mu Gia Pass so it was pretty uneventful."

Also using Sky Spot radar, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Cactus 2" to bomb the Ba Nam highway segment in RP-1. It was his 47th combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 30 & Joe Sechler's mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 04-Mar-68

4888

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in the southern part of North Vietnam. They took off at 1410 and returned after 3 hours 5 minutes. Their line up was:

#1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.  
#2 - Capt John S. Murphy  
#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270  
#4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

This was Maj Armstrong's 79th combat mission. "We were first alerted that we would be going to Pack VI but were diverted before we could brief. We finally wound up going all of the way to the Gulf to refuel and coming back to drop our bombs via Combat Sky Spot in the southern extremity of North Vietnam."

Under Hillsboro control, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Gator 2" to attack troops and trenches in South Vietnam. "50%. 20 KBA. Small arms fire." He then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings." It was his 48th combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 30 - 31 Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

### 06-Mar-68

4889

The four pilots in "Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in northern Laos. They took off at 0610 and returned after 2 hours 15 minutes. Their line up was:

#1 - Maj Eugene Paul Beresik (KIA, 31 May 68)  
#2 - Capt Anthony F. Germann  
#3 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.  
#4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-5375

This was Maj Armstrong's 80th combat mission. "I was Mission Commander again today and got all of the way through the briefing. We finally executed 1st alt and had a radar drop in northern Laos near Sam Neua. I let Gene Beresik pinch hit for me and lead. It was an uneventful drop. We then made an armed recce of Rte #7 and didn't spot anything though it was partially clear."

"Crossbow" was another 34th squadron flight that went to North Vietnam. Their lineup was:

#1 - Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. flying his 49th mission.  
#2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 14th mission. He logged 2:35 flying hours.  
#3 - Maj Donald W. Hodge  
#4 - Capt Lawrence L. Bogemann

Col Dye recorded his call sign as "Crossbow 02". In his mission log, the flight was fragged for a

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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strike in the Steel Tiger (SL) region of Laos. Due to weather, the flight dropped their bombs using Sky Spot radar on the Ba Nam Highway segment in RP-1.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 31 & Joe Sechler, flight log via e-mail 28 Apr 10 & Rufus Dye, Mission History log.*

### 07-Mar-68

4890

The four pilots in "Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a target in southern Laos. They took off at 0540 and returned after 2 hours 25 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #2 - Maj William P. Shunney
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0505
- #4 - Maj Billy R. Givens (Killed in accident 25 Apr 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 81st combat mission. "We were carrying CBU's today. Bill Shunney was a spare so he had 500# bombs. We went to Steel Tiger, Laos, south of Mu Gia Pass about 30 miles and worked with a FAC. The visibility was really bad in the haze and we had a hard time seeing the ground. Our target was some suspected AAA sites along the road. We put all of our ordnance on the target but didn't get any secondary explosions. Afterwards, we crossed Pack I all the way over to the coast and back but the undercast was solid."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 31.*

### 08-Mar-68

4891

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS tried to destroy a crashed helicopter in Laos. They took off at 1425 and returned after 3 hours 5 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 59-1771
- #3 - Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.
- #4 - Maj Douglas A. Roysdon

This was Maj Armstrong's 82nd combat missions. "I swapped places with Bill Thomas when we were executed 1st alt to give him some more leading practice. We were sent over to bomb one of our helicopters that had crashed on a mountain in Laos, south of Mu Gia Pass. For some reason they wanted it knocked out. Well there was a little puffy cloud right over the hill and we had to come in very shallow to hit it and consequently none of us got a direct hit on it. We then went over to Quang Khe and found some boats in the river. We made two strafing passes apiece on these boats. Then we came home out of Pack I."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 31 - 32.*

### 09-Mar-68

4892

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS did a radar bomb drop in Laos. They took off at 1425 and returned after 2 hours 15 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #2 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich
- #3 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0219

This was Maj Armstrong's 83rd combat mission. "This was a pretty uneventful radar drop up in Laos. There was a big thunderstorm between the target and Thailand that we had to skirt. We made a recce of the 'Fish's Mouth' but it was pretty well clobbered so we came on home."

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 95th mission against a target near Quang Tri in RP-1, North Vietnam.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 31 - 32 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 9 Mar 68.*

**10-Mar-68**

4902

Two pilots from the 34 TFS who were spares for the afternoon's launch formed "Scuba" flight. They took off at 1545 and flew for 2 hours 5 minutes. The flight consisted of:

#1 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr.

#2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4248

This was Maj Armstrong's 84th combat mission. "I wasn't supposed to fly today but we had a number of aborts and I had to go out to be a ground spare and someone aborted and I was off. There was nobody else. I joined up with Buddy Barner on the tanker. He wasn't supposed to fly either. We made a radar drop up in Laos and then made a recce of the 'Fish's Mouth' in Pack III. Surprisingly enough it was clear but we didn't see anything."

Dropping by the Commando Club radar, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Bass 1" to bomb an unknown target through an undercast in the Barrel Roll region of northern Laos. He then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings." It was his 50th combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 32 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**11-Mar-68**

4903

The four pilots in "Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS were diverted to a target in Laos as a result of the North Vietnamese attack on Lima Site 85. They took off at 0715 and returned after 2 hours 55 minutes. Their line up was:

#1 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich

#2 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

#3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 58-1152

#4 - Maj Douglas A. Roysdon

This was Maj Armstrong's 85th combat mission. "We were diverted up to Lima 85 up by the North TACAN station. The bad guys were trying to storm the hill. The hill was sticking up through the clouds but we couldn't detect any enemy action. The A-1Es were working over the enemy but they wouldn't let us in on the action. Instead they put us in on an enemy gun emplacement about 10 miles away."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 96th combat mission today. (The printing on his cigar band for this and his last four missions was too faded to determine his target.)

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 32 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 11 Mar 68.*

**12-Mar-68**

4904

The four pilots in "Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a road in Laos. They took off at 0600 and returned after 2 hours 40 minutes. Their line up was:

#1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0428

#2 - Maj Ivor K. Goodrich

#3 - Maj Eugene Paul Beresik (KIA, 31 May 68)

#4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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This was Maj Armstrong's 86th combat mission. "The primary reason for my flying this a.m. was to try the new configuration of 4 x 750# bombs on the inboard stations and a centerline 650-gallon tank. This swaps 1500# of fuel for 1500# of explosive and would make our configuration more standard. It worked pretty well. The fuel flow was the same as the old configuration and the bombs came off cleanly. Our target was a road down in Laos just west of Khe Sahn, South Vietnam. We got 4 road cuts."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 32.*

**15-Mar-68**

2249

Capt Bill Harris, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, flew F-105D 61-0092 on his 43rd combat mission from Korat RTAFB, Thailand. It was a FAC-controlled mission in RP-1, North Vietnam. The F-105s dropped CBUs on trucks and encountered heavy 37-mm AAA. Sortie length was 3 hours 10 minutes.

Other F-105s from the 388 TFW dropped 24 750-pound bombs on the Pou Nam Kong interdiction point along Route 191 in northwestern North Vietnam. This route "... links China with Dien Bien Phu near the Laotian border, and can be used to transfer troops and supplies into Laos through North Vietnam. While egressing, the flight observed approximately 10 trucks along the highway and reportedly damaged or destroyed four with 20-mm cannon fire."

The F-105s strafing the trucks were in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS that left Korat at 1410 for their 3-hour mission. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvalson (POW, 28 May 68)
- #2 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 15th combat mission
- #3 - Capt William A. Thomas, Jr.
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-5381

This was Maj Armstrong's 87th combat mission. "We went as a flight of 4 to our first alternate target which was a road up in Pack V. As a matter of fact, it was in the northwestern part of Pack V, north of Dien Bien Phu. We found the road segment and dropped on it causing land slides in a few places. We then made a reconnaissance of the road and I spotted a vehicle. We went back and made 2 strafing passes apiece. We estimated that we saw 10 - 15 trucks and damaged/destroyed 4 - 5."

In his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong elaborated on this mission. "On the 15th of March, we went to an alternate target up In Pack V near the Chinese border. We were to drop our bombs above a road segment and create a slide that would close the road to re-supply from China. On the way up we passed close to Dien Bien Phu where the French had made an unsuccessful stand against the Vietnamese communists in 1954. It was a position surrounded by mountains that seemed to me on first glance that it was a poor place to make a defensive stand. History proved that so I wasn't all that clairvoyant.

"We dropped our bombs above the road for the desired effect. There was no defensive fire that we saw. I was the #4 man and as I pulled off the target, I noticed a couple of trucks just off the road in the lower valley. I called that I was turning around to strafe them and I did and set two of them on fire. The rest of the flight returned and took up the battle. The visibility was so poor that I was worried that we would run into each other as we were starting to make opposite strafing runs down the valley. So I called to knock it off and we headed home. We estimated that there were 10-15 trucks down there and that we had destroyed 4-5.

"When the Intelligence types reviewed our film, they discovered that there were closer to 75 trucks of all sorts either on that road or under the trees. It was obviously a road building crew that we had happened upon. We hadn't bombed up there in my experience so we had apparently caught them



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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unawares. When we reported this on debriefing, the next day's alternate target was back to the same place. This flight didn't see any trucks but did see quite a bit of defensive fire and one aircraft was hit but was able to recover to Korat." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 42.)

Capt Sechler, "Scuba 02", logged 2:55 flight time. "Took a small hit in water injection tank."

*Bill Harris, letter 19 March 2001 & 388 TFW history, Jan - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO 584 frame 0506 & Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 33 & Joe Sechler mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.*

**17-Mar-68**

4905

Two pilots from the 34 TFS who were airborne spares for the morning launch flew a mission as "Goose" flight into Laos. They took off at 0720 and flew for 2 hours 50 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0428
- #2 - Capt Gary G. Durkee

This was Maj Armstrong's 88th mission. "Gary Durkee and I were the airborne spares today. I put myself on as a spare because I didn't think they would take-off and it wasn't my day to fly. But they did send us off as a flight of two. We were carrying 6 CBU's apiece. We worked with an O-1 FAC in middle Laos and got one good secondary fire out of our drops. After that we went over to recce Pack I and didn't see anything although the weather was clear."

Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 100th combat mission today. (The printing on his post-mission cigar band was too faded to read his target.)

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 33 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 17 Mar 68.*

**20-Mar-68**

4906

The four pilots in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS bombed a road in RP-1. They took off at 1355 and returned after 4 hours 10 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Maj Eugene Paul Beresik (KIA, 31 May 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0409
- #4 - Capt Anthony F. Germann

This was Maj Armstrong's 89th combat mission. "We got words at the last minute today to go primary. It looked pretty good for awhile but we started running into clouds right at Tanker drop-off. It was undercast there just short of the coast and we had to weather abort about 25 miles from the target (just abeam Gia Lam Airfield) 2 miles from the heart of Hanoi. We took our bombs out and finally got to the tankers after being given the run-around for 15 minutes by the radar agency. We took our bombs over into Pack I and dropped them on a road and recovered with very little fuel after hitting a tanker in White Anchor."

Lt Gen Armstrong mentioned this mission in his memoirs. "My last Pack VIA mission was my 89th. This was a target close to Gia Lam Airfield in Hanoi and we found the weather completely undercast dropping off the tankers in the Gulf. Lt. Col. Ross was the mission commander and I was his deputy. I concurred when he called the abort and we dropped our bombs in Pack I on our own recognizance."

"Pancho" was another 34th flight on a mission to RP-6 but was diverted due to weather. Its lineup was:

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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- #1 - Maj Roger D. Ingvalson
- #2 - Maj Billy R. Givens
- #3 - Maj William P. Shunney
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 19th mission. He logged 3:50 flying time. "RP 6 (Wx about 10 mi N of Hung Yen)"

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 34 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 42 & Joe Sechler, mission log via e-mail 28 Apr 10.*

**23-Mar-68**

4907

The four pilots from the 34 TFS in "Scuba" flight bombed a target in Laos. They took off at 0625 and returned after flying for 2 hours 45 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col James B. Ross
- #2 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0161
- #4 - Capt John E. Hartman

This was Maj Armstrong's 90th combat mission. "I went 'Golden' with this mission. That means I don't go to Pack VI anymore. We were supposed to go to a target in Pack I where there had been a big buildup but it was solid undercast so we went into middle Laos and hit a vulnerable road segment. Nothing too different about that."

On his 51st combat mission, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Pancho 1" to bomb a storage area in northern Laos. He then flew armed recce in RP3. "No significant sightings."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 34 & Rufus Dye Mission History log*

**26-Mar-68      01-Apr-68**

4908

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong from the 34 TFS went on his fourth R&R. He traveled with Lt Col Robert A. "Red" Evans, commander of the 44 TFS, and Lt Col Felix A. "Doc" Blanchard, the 388 TFW Deputy Commander for Operations who flew with the 469 TFS.

"It was time to take my last R&R and I was 'golden' so this was a great occasion! I had planned this R&R with two Lt. Col. in the wing -- neither in the 34th. One was 'Red' Evans who was the commander of the weasel squadron although he flew the single seaters. The other was 'Doc' Blanchard who was the Assistant Deputy for Operations as a soon-to-be full colonel. This was the same Doc Blanchard that was an All-American running back at West Point and a Heisman Trophy winner. He was quite a large man but still quite agile -- and as I would soon see -- very funny! We decided that we would wear our 'party suits' on the aircraft. These were the colorful, pseudo flying suits that tailors in the city of Korat turned out by the dozens. They sewed our wing and squadron patches on them and other accouterments such as the American flag, Snoopy and Yankee Air Pirate. None of this was authorized but in the war zone we did it anyway. We wore these suits normally for local functions but decided that it would be okay to wear these on R&R."

The three traveled to Tainan, Taiwan via C-121. After two days in rainy weather they decided to catch a C-130 to Clark AB in the Phillipines where it was sunny. They returned to Taiwan in time to catch the C-121 returning to Korat on 1 April 1968. "Early the next morning we collected the goodies that we had purchased and made it to the C-121 just in time for take off. We were relaxing on this 1 April day when the aircraft commander called us up to the cockpit. LBJ had just made his surprising announcement that he was not going to run for re-election that Fall and that he was imposing a bombing restriction on North Vietnam -- only below the 19th parallel. They were listening to a replay of this radio announcement. It really didn't affect me since I was already

# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

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'golden' but it changed the next few months for Doc and Red."

*Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 44 - 46.*

### 01-Apr-68

4104

"On 1 April 68, Maj Roger D. Ingvalson succeeded Maj James E. Daniel as 34 TFS Operations Officer. Major Daniel completed a one year SEA tour in both the F-105 and O-1E aircraft. Major Ingvalson was an assigned flight leader in the 34 TFS prior to becoming Operations officer."

During the month of April 1968, four squadron pilots completed 100 missions over North Vietnam. They were: squadron commander Lt Col Robert W. Smith, Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, Maj Donald W. Hodge, and Maj David D. Igelman.

Maj Igelman flew his 100th on 1 April 1968. He led "Bass" flight whose lineup was:

- #1 - Maj David D. Igelman
- #2 - Capt Lamont H. Pharmer
- #3 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 26th mission into North Vietnam.

Their mission lasted 2 hours 55 minutes.

Igelman remained at Korat until mid-May. "After completing my 100, I was held for awhile by the Wing DO who thought we would be in jeopardy of returning if we didn't stay a full overseas tour of 9 months. ... During that period, I was sorta in limbo. I was given the task of devising a monthly 'Ops Report' for the 388th."

After Igelman left Korat, he was assigned to the Air Staff, Studies & Analyses in the Pentagon.

By the end of April, the squadron had 29 combat pilots authorized and 26 available. They were authorized 18 F-105Ds with 21 assigned and 18 available.

*388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 1385 - 1386 & 34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Dave Igelman, e-mail 4 Apr 10 & Joe Sechler's flight log spreadsheet.*

### 02-Apr-68

4909

The four pilots from the 34 TFS in "Bass" flight bombed a target in RP-1. They took off at 1425 and returned after flying for 2 hours 50 minutes. Their line up was:

- #1 - Maj Eugene Paul Beresik (KIA, 31 May 68)
- #2 - Maj Seymour R. Bass (died in mid-air with flight lead, 14 May 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0167
- #4 - Capt Ben J. Fuhrman

It was Maj Armstrong's 91st combat mission and the first mission after returning to Korat from his 4th R&R. "This was my first mission after the President's announcement of the 'bombing pause'. All of our flights and several flights from Takhli and F-4s were hitting a road segment up at the north end of Mu Gia Pass. The weather was clear but very hazy. We couldn't spot the FAC and when we did we couldn't see his white smoke rocket. Consequently, we stooed around for 15 minutes and finally desperately threw our bombs. The greatest danger in the area was a mid-air collision with another of our aircraft."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Locust 3" to attack a highway segment in RP-1. "100%

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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road cut." It was his 57th combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 34 - 35 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.*

**04-Apr-68**

4910

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS flew a non-counter mission into Laos. The flight took off at 0725 and returned after flying for 3 hours 10 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvalson (POW, 28 May 68)
- #2 - Maj Seymour R. Bass (died in mid-air with flight lead, 14 May 68)
- #3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW DO
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 61-0206

Maj Armstrong recorded in his logbook his second non-counter combat mission. "We were sent to an O-1 FAC down in southern Laos to cut a road. We made good passes although the visibility was less than 2 miles down low. We all hit real well and caused a dirt slide onto the road. Afterwards we swung up north and asked Cricket for clearance into Pack I. They would not clear us so we came home with a non-counter. Don't know if this has to do with LBJ's announced bombing pause."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 35.*

**06-Apr-68**

4911

"Waco" flight from the 34 TFS hit a truck park in Laos. The flight took off at 0640 and returned after flying for 3 hours. The line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt Anthony F. Germann
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 61-0167
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his 28th combat mission. He logged 3:00 hours flying time.

This was Maj Armstrong's 92nd combat mission. "I logged 2 hours of weather on this one. I was by myself in the weather from take-off to just prior to reaching the tanker. We were fragged into Pack I but were diverted by Cricket to a Nail FAC in middle Laos. We hit a suspect truck park but didn't get anything out of it. L/C Smith asked for permission into the Package but it was denied. We started to head home with a non-counter when I suggested we contact 'Hillsboro' for clearance into the DMZ so I switched over to their frequency and they approved the request so we turned around and went in for a weather recce. Then it was back through the weather to here where it was raining."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 35.*

**07-Apr-68**

4912

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS hit trucks in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1240 and returned after flying for 2 hours 20 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 61-0167
- #3 - Capt John E. Hartman
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

This was Maj Armstrong's 93rd combat mission. "We were going to a fragged target in Pack I. Cricket diverted us to a Misty (F-100) FAC at the north end of Mu Gia Pass as he had some trucks cornered. We dropped our 750# bombs in the area and I fired 36 x 2.75" rockets at the area. We then strafed some trucks on a road just south. We got one truck destroyed and 3 damaged. I fired

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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281 rounds of ammo. The weather there was clear with good visibility."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 35 - 36.*

### 08-Apr-68

755

"Thunderchief pilots from the 355 TFW struck a petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL) storage area 12 miles north-northeast of Mu Gia Pass"

"Using 750-pound bombs, 388 TFW pilots destroyed the eastern approach to a bridge 38 miles southeast of the coastal city of Dong Hoi." The pilots were in "Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS. They took off from Korat at 1240 and flew for 2 hours 50 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 60-0488
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Lt Col Robert A. "Red" Evans, 44 TFS Commander?

This was Maj Armstrong's 94th combat mission. "We were fragged to hit a bridge just north of the DMZ in Pack I. Surprisingly enough they cleared us in to hit it. We couldn't find the bridge we were supposed to hit so we hit a causeway across a river in the same location. Don Hodge hit long, I hit on the approach, and Bob Smith hit it dead center. They shot some 85-mm flak at us on the way up and some 37-mm after we dropped. It was the first time I had seen flak in Pack I. I also had a SAM launch light on for 10 seconds."

*Takhli Times, Friday, April 19, 1968 & Sawadee Flyer, Saturday, April 20 1968 & Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 36.*

### 09-Apr-68

4913

"Gator" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road in South Vietnam and some boats in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 1510 and returned after flying for 2 hours 45 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Capt Gary G. Durkee
- #2 - Maj Billy R. Givens (killed in accident 25 Apr 68)
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 60-0435
- #4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

This was Maj Armstrong's 95th combat misson. "Our target was a road in South Vietnam. We went in and dropped on it although the ceiling was about 9,000' and the visibility was poor but 3 of us hit where we were supposed to. Afterwards, we went up to Pack I and strafed some boats just north of the DMZ."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 36.*

### 10-Apr-68

4914

"Pistol" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road in South Vietnam and some long boats in North Vietnam. The flight took off at 0730 and returned after flying for 2 hours 30 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS commander
- #2 - Olin K. Everett
- #3 - Maj Roger Dean Ingvalson (POW, 28 May 68, in F-105D 61-0194)
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 61-0194

This was Maj Armstrong's 96th combat mission. "We hit a road segment in South Vietnam very close to the position we bombed yesterday. This time our hits were right on the road. Afterwards, we went up north of the DMZ and found some long boats underway south of Dong Hoi. Rog Ingvalson and myself made one strafing pass apiece on one each."

# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

## F-105 History

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*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 36 - 37.*

**11-Apr-68**

4915

"Simmer" flight from the 34 TFS hit a "Sky Spot" target in RP-1, North Vietnam. The flight took off at 0830 and returned after flying for 3 hours 10 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4270
- #2 - Moore [???
- #3 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #4 - Lt Col Nevin G. Christensen

This was Maj Armstrong's 97th combat mission. "The weather over along the coast was really rotten this morning. We were originally scheduled to work with a FAC in South Vietnam. The weather there was too bad for a visual delivery. They were going to set us up for a Sky Spot in the same area. Fortunately for us, the Sky Spot facility was pretty well stacked up with flights so I got Hillsboro to set us up with another agency for a Sky Spot just over the DMZ and got a 'counter' the only possible way."

Using Sky Spot radar, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Crossbow 3" to attack a road segment in South Vietnam. It was his 58th combat mission.

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 37 & Rufus Dye Mission History log..*

**12-Apr-68**

4916

"Hatchet" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road in southern Laos. The flight took off at 0910 and returned after flying for 2 hours 55 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 60-0436
- #3 - Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr., 388 TFW Commander
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

This was Maj Armstrong's 98th combat mission. "We bombed a road down in southern Laos southeast of Sarravane. The weather was clear but hazy. There was quite a crosswind and #1 and myself put our bombs a little to the left of the road. Don Hodge picked up the wind from our bombs and put his right on the road. Col Douglas missed by 100 yards or more. They fired about 20 rounds of 37-mm flak at us but not too close. 'Hillsboro' invited us to go recce the Pack. Smith and I let down through the clouds and got underneath at 1,000' and ran up and down the coast. The visibility was really good underneath but we couldn't see anything moving."

In commenting on his last 10 missions in his memoirs, Lt Gen Armstrong further described this mission. "On one of these flights, Bob was leading and we were cleared into Pack I for a reconnaissance. We crossed into Pack I at about 18,000 feet which was enough to get a counter. But not enough for Bob. He told the other two to hold at that altitude and signaled for me to close in on his wing. We descended through the clouds towards the Gulf of Tonkin using our radar to denote the water. We broke out under the clouds over the Gulf at about 800 feet. We then spread out and turned around towards Pack I. We ran down Route #1 at high speed. They were shooting at us and we were so low and fast that there was no way we could attack any worthwhile target. After a few minutes I joined up on his wing again and we climbed out through the clouds to rejoin the other two guys and go back to Korat. I guess the extra excitement was okay!"

Under Hillsboro control, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Waco 3" to attack a road segment in Steel Tiger. "100%. Three road cuts." He then flew armed recce in RP-1. "No significant sightings." It was his 59th combat mission.

# Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong

## F-105 History

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*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 37 & Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 47 & Rufus Dye Mission History log*

**13-Apr-68**

4917

"Scuba" flight from the 34 TFS hit a road segment in RP-1 using Sky Spot radar. The flight took off at 1245 and returned after flying for 2 hours 15 minutes. The line up was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 59-1760
- #2 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Maj Seymour R. Bass (died in mid-air with flight lead, 14 May 68)

This was Maj Armstrong's 99th combat mission. "We were fragged in on a target in Pack I. It was a road segment on Rt 1A just south of Dong Hoi. The weather was completely undercast so they set us up for a radar drop on our target. We had so much fuel that we didn't even have to post-strike refuel on the way back. A real effortless mission."

*Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pp 37 - 38.*

**14-Apr-68**

189

The 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, passed the 100,000 combat flying hour mark. This represents "... the flying equivalent of 11 years and five months, in just over two years of combat operations in SEA." The wing started flying F-105 combat missions on 8 April 1966.

"Honors to the milestone flight went to the wing's 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron. The flight [call sign "Gator"] was led by 388th TFW Commander Col. Paul P. Douglas Jr., who is assigned to the 34th TFS for flying duties, Squadron Commander Lt. Col. Robert W. Smith, 39, Albuquerque, N.M., and Maj. Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 33, Columbia, Tenn. and Donald W. Hodge, 37, Panama City, Fla." On this flight, Lt Col Smith, Maj Armstrong, and Maj Hodge each achieved their 100th mission over North Vietnam.

The 34 TFS launched "Gator" flight at 15:10. The mission lasted 3 hours. The line up was:

- #1 - Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr., 388 TFW Commander
- #2 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flyiing F-105D 60-0435
- #3 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith, 34 TFS Commander
- #4 - Maj Donald W. Hodge

Maj Armstrong recorded the events in his combat log. "This was a big occasion being the 100th mission for Bob Smith, Don Hodge, and myself and the celebration of the 100,000th combat hour for the wing. Our target was down in Laos just outside Khe Sahn. The 3 of us put our bombs right on the FAC's mark. Col Douglas didn't have a sight so consequently his bombs were way off. We had already coordinated with 7th AF to assume that our flight would be cleared into Pack I. So we buzzed through the Pack at altitude over the clouds and came back to the field for a diamond fly-by and VFR landing pattern. Unfortunately, Col Douglas taxied off the taxiway coming in and had to shut his aircraft down on the spot. It's beautiful to be finished!" (Maj Armstrong's 100-mission combat log, pg 38)

He also described this mission in his memoir. "Bob Smith, Don Hodge and I were slated to fly our 100th missions the same day. We had arrived on the same day so it was appropriate to end it the same way, same day. Normally, the person finishing would lead the flight so how would we work this out? Col. Douglas had already indicated that our last mission would represent the 100,000 combat hour for the wing and to commemorate this, he would lead the flight. Our target was in

## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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Laos just outside Khe Sahn. The weather was hazy and he couldn't find the target. My tape recorder told the story. The three of us were directing the flight!

"Col. Douglas claimed that he didn't have a sight but his bombs were well off the target so he might have been correct. He was so non-proficient in the F-105 that it could have just been a goof on his part. Because of the celebration planned upon our return, it had already been coordinated with 7th Air Force in Saigon for us to be cleared into Pack I afterwards. So we got our 100th counter effortlessly and formed up on Col. Douglas to head back to the field. Unfortunately, he couldn't find the field in the haze and we were no help because we were in tight formation.

"He asked the tower to get him a radar approach to initial. The tower replied that there was another flight on radar final. Did he want them to break out? Col. Douglas asked them to do just that and we flew down initial with this help and made the pitch-out for landing. We had briefed that we would taxi in formation back to the flight line for the celebration. I was #2 and I quickly performed my after landing checks from memory. I was taxiing on Col. Douglas and observed that he had to use his checklist to do his checks. As he took his eye off the taxi way, his left wheel rolled off into the soft mud. He was obviously stuck! We continued on around him and headed for the planned celebration. Col. Douglas joined us later from the back of a pickup truck.

"We each got the usual treatment: champagne from a hollowed-out pineapple, a Thai ornament around the neck and a squirt down from a fire truck. Then we mounted the Snoopy trailers for the parade to the club. They tossed us into the swimming pool and we managed to take a few squadron mates with us. Dripping wet, we went into the bar and each rung the bell signifying that the drinks were on us. Then we had a formal cutting of the cake to commemorate the 100,000th combat hour of the wing. Col. Douglas and the three of us did the honors. We celebrated into the wee hours!"

"... My 100th mission was on Easter Sunday, 1968. ... Normally, Bob, Don and I would be heading home after completing our 100th mission. However, in typical bureaucratic fashion, the Pentagon decided that pilots were completing their 100 missions over North Vietnam (otherwise, the tour length was one year) tours too quickly. So we had to hang around for awhile. I stayed three weeks but Bob stayed even longer. I was not required to fly any more missions and I didn't. It would have taken missions away from my comrades who were trying to finish in this now relatively benign environment." (Lt Gen USAF (Ret) Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, unpublished memoir in chapter titled "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pp 47 - 48.)

Maj Armstrong flew 283 combat hours during his tour at Korat and a total of 378.5 hours in the F-105. He arrived home on 8 May 1968 and was assigned to Edwards AFB where he became deputy commandant at the Aerospace Research Pilot School. In subsequent assignments he was base commander at Randolph Air Force Base, commander of the 80th Flying Training Wing at Sheppard AFB, Assistant Deputy for Operations of Air Training Command, DCS for R&D at Hq USAF, commander of the Military Training Center at Lackland AFB, the senior defense representative in Saudi Arabia, Vice Commander of MAC, and Vice Commander of Air Force Systems Command. He was promoted to Lt General on 28 August 1985 and retired on 1 April 1990. (USAF Biography)

After retirement, he became head of NASA's Aeronautics and Space Transportation Technology Enterprise with overall responsibility for each of NASA's four aeronautical research centers.

This was Don Hodge's last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 395.5 hours in the airplane.

Lt Col Smith last flew the F-105 on 22 April 1968 by which time he had accumulated 323.4 hours in the airplane.



## Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong F-105 History

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*388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 0685 & Korat's Sawadee Flyer, Apr 20, 1968, Pg 1 & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.*

### **27-Apr-68**

4109

Seven F-105 pilots from the 34 TFS were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for missions they flew over North Vietnam.

Under SO G-1243, those receiving the DFC were:

Maj James E. Daniel, Jr. (3rd OLC) for a mission on 20 Nov 67

Maj Harry G. Padden III (2 OLC) for a mission on 17 Nov 67

Under SO G-1244, those receiving the DFC were:

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong (1st OLC) for a mission on 16 Dec 67

Maj David D. Igelman (2nd OLC) for a mission on 14 Dec 67

Capt Douglas A. Beyer (3rd OLC) for a mission on 12 Dec 67

Capt Douglas A. Beyer (4th OLC) for a mission on 16 Dec 67

Capt Robert M. Crane (2nd OLC) for a mission on 14 Dec 67

Capt Sam P. Morgan (2nd OLC) for a mission on 14 Dec 67

On 2 Apr 68, under SO G978, Maj David D. Igelman was awarded the 1st OLC to the DFC for a mission on 31 Dec 67.

*388 TFW history, Apr- Jun 68, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 1387.*