

Kenneth T. Blank

F-105 History

30-Jun-64

5238

F-105D Operational Training Course 111506E graduated 25 pilots in Class 64-L at the 4520 CCTW, Nellis AFB, NV. The course started on 4 May 1964 and was assigned to the 4523 CCTS commanded by Maj Lloyd C. Smith. The student pilots and their home bases were:

Capt Ralph E. Adams - McConnell	Capt Russell L. Violett - McConnell
Capt Kenneth T. Blank - McConnell	Capt Robert C. Wistrand - McConnell
Capt Belvin R. Burnside, Jr. - Seymour Johnson	1Lt Burton W. Campbell - Luke
Capt John H. Busbee - Luke	1Lt Patrick S. Dotson, Jr. - Luke
Capt Gregory A. Clarke - McConnell	1Lt Charles G. Hofelich, Jr. - Luke
Capt Eddy J. Doerschlen - McConnell	1Lt Norman S. Kwist - England
Capt Eddie J. Gillard - McConnell	1Lt Charles C. Large - Luke
Capt George G. Griffith, Jr. - McConnell	1Lt Thomas G. Lockhart - Luke
Capt Robert L. Jackson - McConnell	1Lt Jon A. Reynolds - Seymour Johnson
Capt Algin T. Jarvis - 4 TFW Seymour Johnson	1Lt William F. Sauers - McConnell
Capt Virgil D. Loken - McConnell	1Lt Philip D. Shade - McConnell
Capt John S. McDonald - Brookley	1Lt Samuel E. Waters, Jr. - England
Capt Dean A. Stevenson - McConnell	

Due to the grounding of all F-105s on 14 May 1964, the students in this class were "... given Category E checkout and released to their various organizations ... on an individual basis." (pg 25)

"The training given at the end of the reporting period [30 June 1964] to the students was limited to Transition, Formation, and Instruments due to limitation on the aircraft after lifting of the grounding." (pg 31)

Special Order AA-20 dated 5 May 64 in History of 4520th Combat Crew Training Wing, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 1964, AFHRA Call # K285.54-36, IRIS # 0488620.

01-Jul-65

5564

Key personnel in the 35 TFS, 6441 TFW, Yokota AB, Japan, were:

Lt Col William R. Peters -- Commander
Maj William D. Lockwood - Operations Officer
Capt Kenneth T. Blank - Asst Operations Officer
Capt Kenneth D. Furth - Echo Flight Commander
Capt Alan K. Rutherford - Foxtrot Flight Commander
Capt Frank J. Hardy - Golf Flight Commander
Capt Warren L. Efting - Hotel Flight Commander

The squadron's attached pilots were:

Col Paul P. Douglas, Jr. - 41 AD Commander
Col Allen K. McDonald - 6441 TFW VC
Lt Col Edward D. Thomas - 5 AF Chief of Safety
Maj Henry Shudinis - 6441 TFW Ops & Training
Maj Marvin A. Wicks - 6441 TFW Flight Test Officer
Capt Robert B. Bennett - 6441 TFW Flying Safety Officer
Capt Frank A. Buchanan - 5 AF Flying Safety Officer
Capt Bernard G. Lyons - 6441 TFW Ops and Training

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The squadron's 30 line pilots were:

Capt William Baechle	Capt Jerry N. Hoblit
Capt William G. Bailey	1Lt Phillip J. Kelley
Capt Robert W. Becker	Capt Wayne R. Kimmell
Capt Orville B. Boone, Jr.	Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.
Capt Edward R. Bracken	Capt John R. Lowry
Capt James T. Brown, Jr.	Maj Bobby J. Mead
Maj Fred V. Cherry	Capt Sam P. Morgan, Jr.
Capt Thomas H. Curtis	1Lt Richard L. Pack
Capt William G. Donovan	Capt Robert R. Reed
Capt Kenneth D. Edwards	1Lt Randolph S. Reynolds III
Capt Thomas W. Gallagher, Jr.	Capt Robert W. Spielman
1Lt Richie W. Graham	Capt Richard A. Treibes
1Lt Richard E. Guild	Capt Ralph D. Watkins
Capt Carl L. Hamby	1Lt Miller F. West
Capt LeRoy Herrman	1Lt Lee B. White

35 TFS history, 1 July - 31 Dec 65, AFHRA Call # K-SQ-FI--35-HI, IRIS # 419883.

18-Apr-66

5176

The 6441 TFW selected the pilots for the squadron that became the 34 TFS to deploy to Korat. Most would come from the 36 TFS; consequently, the 36 TFS was slated to disband.

Bob Pielin from the 36 TFS, who had already flown 87 combat missions during temporary duty tours to Korat and Takhli, remembered how he helped select the pilots for the new squadron. "Fitz [Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron's Operations Officer] and I initially made out a list of 25 pilots from the Wing resources to go as 34th members. The list was bounced back from HHQ as being too overloaded in pilots with over 50 missions. They recommended 6 guys in the 0 to 20 mission category, 6 in the 21 to 40, 6 in the 41 to 60, 6 in the 61 to 80, and anyone with over 80 to go TDY." This distribution was to spread out their eventual departures from Korat as each pilot completed his 100-mission tour. Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked the list "... with some pronounced disapproval from those that were removed from the [original]. ... A 1.5 aircrew/aircraft ratio was authorized for 27 pilots plus Commander and Operations Officer. ... Bob Jones [Capt Robert H. Jones] was removed from the first list since he had his papers in to be discharged. When he found out about the 34th going PCS to Korat, he volunteered to go with [them] and get 100 missions before he got out. Red Dog [Lt Col Howard F. 'Red Dog' Hendricks the squadron commander] worked a 'deal', and he went TDY." (Bob Pielin e-mails, 23 Sep 2006 and 7 April 2007.)

The following list contains the positions and names of the initial twenty-nine pilots assigned to the 34 TFS. This is the revised list after Capt Pielin and Maj Fitzgerald reworked their original to provide a broader base of experience. One of the pilots, Gordon Walcott, annotated his copy of the printed list, dated 18 April 1966, with this comment: "This was the original 34th TFS crew roster when formed as an all-volunteer squadron from the 35 TFS, 36 TFS, and 80 TFS (Yokota AB, Japan)"

Commander - Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks who had been commander of the 36 TFS.
Operations Officer - Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald

India Flight
Flight Commander - Maj Wayne N. Whatley
Capt Robin K. Nierste

Lima Flight
Flight Commander - Capt James E. Hayes
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.

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Capt James I. Miholick
 Capt Douglas G. Lauck
 Capt Robert H. Jones
 Capt Robert R. Reed

Capt Gordon M. Walcott
 Capt Stanley S. Gunnerson
 1Lt John Bernard Sullivan III

Juliet Flight
 Flight Commander - Maj Kenneth T. Blank
 Capt Carl L. Hamby
 Capt Thomas H. Curtis
 Capt David H. Groark
 1Lt Phillip J. Kelley

Metro Flight
 Flight Commander - Capt Robert D. Pielin
 Capt Alan K. Rutherford
 Capt Ralph D. Watkins
 Capt Wayne D. Hauth
 Capt Rainford "Ray" McMaster Tiffin

Kilo Flight
 Flight Commander - Maj Jack R. Stresing
 Capt William O. Lessard
 Capt John R. Layman
 Capt Rex L. Dull
 Capt Clarence E. Fox
 1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue

E-mail from Monty Pharmer, 22 Sep 2006 forwarding letter to him from Lt Col (Ret) Gordon Walcott dated, 29 Ju 1988, which included a roster of 36 TFS pilots, dated 18 April 1966.

25-May-66

4957

On Wednesday morning, twenty F-105Ds (18 aircraft and 2 spares) now assigned to the 34 TFS left the 6441 TFW at Yokota for Kadena on the first leg of their movement to the 388 TFW at Korat. The aircraft took off in flights of four using call signs "Yule". Each flight departed Yokota at half-hour intervals beginning at 0800. The deployment's flight line-up consisted of:

Pilot	Call Sign	Acft Tail No	Yokota TO Time	Kadena Arr Time	Acft Maint Status at Kadena
Lt Col Howard F. Hendricks probs	Yule 01	62-4361	0800	0955	Tacan/Doppler
Capt Robin K. Nierste	Yule 02	62-4288	0800	0955	O/R
Capt James I. Miholick	Yule 03	62-4336	0800	0955	O/R
Capt Wayne D. Hauth	Yule 04	62-4303	0800	0955	Gnd blower inop
Maj Wayne N. Whatley	Yule 11	62-4306	0830	1025	O/R
Capt Robert H. Jones	Yule 12	62-4318	0830	1025	O/R
Capt Robert R. Reed	Yule 13	62-4308	0830	1025	Autopilot
Capt Douglas G. Lauck	Yule 14	62-4358	0830	1025	O/R
Maj Kenneth T. Blank	Yule 21	62-4370	0901	1058	O/R
Capt Thomas H. Curtis	Yule 22	62-4380	0901	1058	O/R
Capt Carl L. Hamby	Yule 23	62-4364	0901	1058	O/R
1Lt Phillip J. Kelly	Yule 24	62-4277	0901	1058	O/R
Capt Alan K. Rutherford	Yule 31	62-4270	0930	1134	Autopilot
Capt Rex L. Dull	Yule 32	62-4312	0930	1134	O/R
Capt Ralph D. Watkins	Yule 33	62-4378	0930	1134	CIN
1Lt John B. Sullivan III	Yule 34	62-4356	0930	1134	Fire Ctrl/Elec

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Capt James E. Hayes	Yule 41 62-4352	1000	1200	Fire Ctrl
Maj Jack R. Stresing	Yule 42 61-0132	1000	1200	O/R
Capt Andy Olman	Yule 43 62-4379	1000	1200	Fuel Leak
Capt Robert D. Reichardt	Yule 44 62-4354	1000	1200	O/R

(History of the 6441 TFW, 1 Apr 65 to 15 Nov 66, Supporting Documents, Mobility Control Center Log, pg 6, in AFHRA folder K-WG-6441-HI, IRIS# 0462464.)

Capt Alan K. Rutherford was one of the pilots on the deployment. "I recall so well how we formed up with 16 Thuds and midst many tears (from wives) and go get um's from the troops we launched to the war. We were going to 'kill the Cong'. We intended to overnight at Kadena, and then launch the next day with the squadron to Korat. Needless to say it got drunk and rowdy that night ...". (Al Rutherford, e-mail, 21 Sep 2006.)

Capt Douglas G. Lauck was another of the 34 TFS pilots moving to Korat. "We packed our household goods [at Yokota] and sent them along with our cars back to the States. Our wives and dependents had flights booked back to the States." (Doug Lauck, e-mail 21 Sep 2006.)

The pilots from the 34 TFS were to join with pilots from the 13 TFS at Kadena on 25 May and deploy to Korat. Unfortunately, circumstances required the 34th pilots at Kadena to return to Yokota on 26 May.

In the 13 TFS, "the squadron was cocked to move as planned on the 25th of May, but a staying order was received, delaying departure for thirty days. Rumors were rife that perhaps the move would not be made at all. Unfortunately, on the basis of the rumors and the lack of further communications, after numerous inquires to higher headquarters on the subject, many members of the new squadron cancelled proceedings to return their dependents to the United States. As a result, when the order to deploy on 23 June was received with a week's advance notice, many dependents were left to arrange their own moves. Much help was rendered by friends and Wing personnel, of course, to facilitate these peoples' departure. On 23 June, support personnel departed for Korat via C-130. Aircrews departed the following day."

388 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm NO583 frame 1742 & 44 TFS history, 1 Jan 65 - 30 June 1967, 4 - 5.

02-Jun-66

5192

(Approximate date). Six F-105 pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Yokota, flew in a C-130 to Takhli to partially satisfy a PACAF levy on 5th Air Force units to provide pilots on temporary duty to fill shortages in the F-105 squadrons in the 355 TFW at Takhli. The pilots were:

- Maj Kenneth T. Blank
- Capt Carl L. Hamby
- Capt Thomas H. Curtis
- Capt David H. Groark
- 1Lt Phillip J. Kelley
- Capt Douglas G. Lauck

In their time at Takhli, some of these pilots would fly combat missions with 355 TFW squadrons. While he was at Takhli, 1Lt Kelley flew his first (and only) combat mission with the 333 TFS. Unfortunately, he was shot down and rescued but resigned from the Air Force due to this experience.

Others on TDY at Takhli did not fly missions before they transferred to Korat. Doug Lauck

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recalled that he "... went through orientation there but did not fly any sorties." (Doug Lauck, e-mail 11 April 2007.)

The pilots stayed at Takhli until approximately 15 June 1966 when they rejoined the 34 TFS that finally arrived at Korat.

Over the next few days, other pilots assigned to the 34 TFS flew on C-130s from Yokota to Korat to join the four advance-party pilots who were already there. During this TDY, they flew combat missions with the 388 TFW's squadrons and airplanes until the 34th's F-105s could be delivered to Korat. For example, Capt Robert D. Pielin, one of the advance party pilots who arrived at Korat on 21 May 1966, flew two missions with the 421 TFS.

Capt Robert H. Jones was another 34 TFS pilot who deployed from Yokota to Korat.

Tom Curtis, e-mail 3 Apr 2007 and Bob Pielin, e-mail 1 Apr 2007.

17-Aug-66

5209

Four F-105 pilots from the 34 TFS from Korat formed "Anvil" flight that was part of a large 388 TFW strike force targeted against the Nguyen Khe POL storage area (JCS 51) in Route Pack 6 north of Hanoi. The line up for Anvil flight was:

"Anvil 01" - Maj Wayne N. Whatley

"Anvil 02" - Capt Douglas G. Lauck

"Anvil 03" - Capt Robert R. Reed

"Anvil 04" - Capt James J. Miholick

It was the 87th combat mission for Capt Lauck and he remembered it as, "... probably one of the more exciting missions I flew." The route to the target was across Laos and South Vietnam below the DMZ with refueling in the Brown Anchor track over the Gulf of Tonkin. The strike force then headed north with intentions of turning west at the "Wart on the Elephant's Ear", an island landmark below China, to approach the target from the north.

Shortly after taking on fuel from the KC-135 tankers, the four F-105Ds in Anvil flight broke off from the rest of the strike force and headed northwest dropping down into RP 3 for a high-speed low-level approach to the target from the south. As the flight crossed into North Vietnam, Anvil 4 lost his radio and aborted the mission. Anvil 3 accompanied him back to Korat while Anvil 1 and 2 continued north with their loads of six 750-pound bombs.

When the two planes entered Pack 6 using low-level terrain masking, they found clear but hazy weather allowing 5 miles visibility. As they skirted Hanoi to the east, they met heavy AAA and got warnings of SAM launches on their RHAW gear. Doug Lauck recalled, "... stuff began flying every which way." The two pilots didn't realize until later that the strike force had aborted at their turning point when they ran into thunderstorms that blocked their route to the target. The force turned south and, accompanied by EB-66s with their standoff jammers and other support aircraft, headed home. Anvil 1 and 2 became the only planes in the area and the North Vietnamese defenses, primed for a large strike force, opened up on them.

Strangely, the flak stopped just before Anvil 1 popped up to 12,000 feet, rolled in to drop his six bombs on the POL storage site, then pulled out at 3,000 feet. A minute later, as Capt Lauck pulled up from his bomb run, he spotted a silver MiG-17 with Chinese markings flying at 5,000 feet heading toward his flight lead. The MiG was firing his nose guns and Lauck could see shells bursting. He called, "Anvil 1 break -- you have a MiG closing." Maj Whatley punched off his tanks and racks, hit afterburner, and headed for the deck in a 4.5-G turn. The MiG pilot cut into

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his turn and continued to close on Anvil 1 then fired again when he was 4,000 feet away. The MiG closed to 1,500 feet still firing. Anvil 1 took it lower -- so low "he had to pull up to avoid rice paddy dikes."

Capt Lauck began chasing the MiG-17 that was still pursuing his flight lead. The three planes headed toward China and may have crossed the border during the battle. Lauck tried to set up his gun sight for air-to-air firing but didn't have time to properly reset the five cockpit switches in his F-105 to get his sight out of air-to-ground mode. He maneuvered to put the MiG in the center of his windscreen and began firing his 20-mm cannon. Anvil 1 crossed in front of the MiG and Lauck let off the trigger after firing 600 rounds. His slugs missed their target and to avoid an overshoot, he barrel rolled up and over the MiG. Both F-105 pilots turned south, went supersonic, and outran the MiG-17, which gave up the chase.

Their ordeal was not yet over since they still had to get out of North Vietnam; and Anvil 1 was running short of fuel. During his approach to the target, he had mistakenly used gas from his bomb-bay tank instead of his external tanks and, when he punched off his wing tanks, had depleted much of his remaining fuel. To make matters worse, most of the airborne tankers had left their orbits and weren't in position to hook up with the two F-105s. Calling on a discrete frequency, the two pilots finally reached a tanker willing to fly into Laos to meet them. With only 800 pounds of fuel, Anvil 1 connected with the KC-135 over the Plain of Jars in northern Laos and took on enough gas for both F-105s to land safely at Korat.

The Fighter Weapons Center history described this event this way. "Anvil flight, four F-105s, were attacking a target in the vicinity of 21-10N and 105-54E. As Anvil 1 pulled off the target, Anvil four called a MiG-17 at Anvil 1's seven o'clock position, closing at 5,000 feet AGL. Anvil 1 lit AB, jettisoned tanks, and began a 400 K, 4.5 G left turn. The MiG stayed inside the turn, closing rapidly, and firing bursts from ranges of 4,000 ft down to 1,500 ft. Anvil 1 dove to ground level and the MiG followed, still firing. During this time, Anvil 4 had come off the target, engaged AB and had closed on the engagement at 600 K plus. Anvil 4 closed on the MiG (about 65 K overtake in firing range) and began firing at 1,500 ft range. Anvil 4 had not repositioned all necessary switches and, consequently, did not have computing gunsight. Anvil 4 fired 75 rounds of 20-mm at MiG and then ceased fire because Anvil 1 had jinked into the line of his fire in front of the MiG. Anvil 1 and 4 accelerated away from the MiG and departed the area."

The two pilots later learned from reconnaissance photos that their bombs had failed to damage their POL target. However, their harrowing experience wasn't a total waste. Capt Lauck briefed other pilots in the wing on how he had simply centered the MiG in his windscreen when he didn't have time to reset his gun sight. The next day, 18 August 1966, Maj Kenneth T. Blank, also from the 34 TFS flying as "Honda 02", used the briefed technique to shoot down a MiG-17 under similar circumstances.

Doug Lauck, e-mails 11 and 14 April 2007 & Red Baron I Vol II, Event II-33 pp 125 - 126 & USAF Tactical Fighter Weapons Center Deputy For Combat Analysis Bulletin 7, AFHRA Call # K417.316 IRIS # 503560, pg 7.

18-Aug-66

461

For the second day in a row, the 388 TFW sent three F-105 strike flights, "Schlitz", "Outlaw", and "Manila", to again attack JCS target 51, the Nguyen Khe Petroleum Product Storage area at location 21-10-11N and 105-51-34E, just south of Phuc Yen Airfield and 8 nautical miles north of Hanoi. A fourth flight, "Honda", an Iron Hand flight consisting of one Wild Weasel F-105F from the 13 TFS and three F-105Ds from the 34 TFS, led the three strike flights to the target. Honda flight was to protect the strike force from SAMs. Its flight line up was:

"Honda 01" - Maj William Perry "Robbie" Robinson (WW #73) and EWO Maj Peter Tsouprake

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(WW #75).

"Honda 02" - Maj Kenneth T. Blank on his 51st combat mission over North Vietnam flying F-105D 62-4395.

"Honda 03" - Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks, the commander of the 34 TFS.

"Honda 04" - Capt David M. Groark.

Honda 01 was armed with two radar-seeking Shrike missiles, two 2.75" rocket pods, and the 20-mm Vulcan gun. Honda 02 was carrying two 450-gallon external fuel tanks, two rocket pods, and also had the 20-mm gun.

The Wild Weasel crew, Majors Robinson and Tsouprake, had earned the Air Force Cross for a mission on 5 July 1966 when they had destroyed three SAM sites and heavily damaged a fourth. On today's mission they evaded three SAMs fired at their flight and were nearly shot down by one of two MiG-17s that attacked the flight immediately after the SAM threat. Their wingman, Maj Kenneth T. Blank, shot down one of the MiG-17s during its attack on the Wild Weasel flight lead.

The Red Baron report described the flight to the target area. "The mission departed Korat, proceeded eastward, and rendezvoused with the airborne tankers at sea on a northerly course. The flight made landfall at approximately 19-22N and 105-56E at 4,500 feet, 520 knots CAS and turned westerly. The four F-105 flights were in trail at about five-minute intervals. As Honda flight approached the second checkpoint, in the vicinity of Kin Diem, a large thunderstorm blocked the desired course. After starting to circumnavigate the storm to the south, Honda 1 and Honda 2 became separated from Honda 3 and Honda 4 and the following flights caught up. The strike flights were no longer in five-minute trail but were within visual range of each other. The flights descended to the deck and proceeded northerly and passed directly over Phuc Yen. At Hoa Binh, the flight turned northeasterly to the target area, which was southeast of Thud Ridge and north of Hanoi. Honda 1 and Honda 2 climbed to about 6,000 feet maintaining 475-knots CAS as they approached the target area. There were scattered clouds with good visibility"

In an interview conducted on 14 March 1967 by the Red Baron team, Maj Robinson described his attack on a SAM site and his encounter with the MiGs. "The weather was about 7000-foot overcast ... so we couldn't get up very high. But we wanted to so that we could shoot a couple of AGM-45s into the site. As I pressed up to fire -- I fired 2 AGM-45s and told No. 2 to get ready to shoot his [rockets] -- ... this guy fired his missiles [SAMs]. The first missile was guided right toward my flight so we dodged it by diving down and pulling back up and letting him go under us. Then the other two missiles came off about 6 or 7 seconds after the first one, and they went up into the overcast. When I'd gotten rid of the first missile, I started back down. The second missile came over and went behind us. Then the flight off to my right ... called there were MiGs on my tail. I wondered what a MiG was doing in this SAM environment. We just dodged 2 missiles and why that MiG was closing in on me while I was dodging missiles, I never could figure out." The SAM site that had fired at Honda flight was VN-56 at 21-22-15N and 105-58-33E.

The Red Baron report described what happened next. The second missile "... detonated between Honda 1 and Honda 2. At this time Honda 2 was out in front of Honda 1 and a little to the right. The concussion from the blast blew out the afterburner in Honda 2. Another SAM passed over the flight and detonated. Two other SAMs were sighted but were no threat and disappeared in small clouds."

The lead in the following flight, Schlitz", called, "... 'Honda 2 you have a MiG on your tail.' Honda 2 turned hard left and saw the MiG was on Honda 1. Honda 1 was told to break left and did so as he jettisoned all remaining external ordnance and his center-line fuel tank. Honda 2 jettisoned his external fuel tanks and attempted to change his armament switches from air-to-ground mode to

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air-to-air mode. He did not obtain the use of his gunsight."

During his Red Baron interview on 4 January 1967, Maj Blank described the encounter with the MiG-17. "When I was still turning, he [Maj Robinson] started his turn, and he started yelling 'Get him off my ass'. ... I said, 'Break left'. He broke left and, as a result, he went underneath me ... and the MiG firing at him was so intense on shooting at him that he didn't see me."

"... Honda 2 broke hard left and maneuvered to a position behind the MiG at a range of 400 to 600 feet and fired his 20-mm gun. The MiG burst into flame and was observed to enter an inverted dive and impact with the ground. A second MiG passed through the flight in the opposite heading without engaging and departed the area. The encounter took place at 1528L in the vicinity of 21-20N and 105-50E."

The pilots in Schlitz flight saw the location of the SAM site that had fired at Honda flight and dropped their bombs on the site.

"Honda 1 and Honda 2 departed the area and returned to Korat. Honda 1 had received light damage from the MiG." The damage consisted of one hit in the vertical stabilizer and a glancing hit in the left wing.

Honda 2 had fired 216 rounds of 20-mm ammunition. Due to the F-105's complex switchology, Maj Blank did not have a gun sight when he shot the MiG. "Pilot experience was a predominant factor in the successful destruction of the MiG."

Two F-105Ds in "Manila" flight, the last of the four flights following Honda flight, looked for 20 minutes for the POL installation then dropped their 750-pound bombs on a bridge. They were egressing the area when they encountered three more MiG-17s. Number 2 saw a silver MiG pass the flight about 1 1/2 miles to the left and climb up into a cloud layer at 4,000 to 5,000 feet. The pilot called the MiG to his flight lead. The flight "... had not received any MiG warnings but had overheard other flights engaging MiGs and had seen the airborne fireball ... " of Maj Blank's MiG kill.

A few seconds after the first MiG went into the clouds, it dove down about 1,000 feet from number 2 in a nose-low attitude. As happened to Maj Blank, the pilot did not have time to switch over to his air-to-air gun sight so he pulled up the nose of his F-105D, pointed the pitot tube at the MiG, and pulled the trigger firing 184 rounds. He failed to score.

The first MiG "... pulled up in a barrel roll ... and was maneuvering for position on the lead F-105D. At this time, number 2 saw two more MiG-17s just pulling in on lead's tail. Number 2 warned his lead and the flight jettisoned all stores, ignited afterburner, and headed down and toward Thud Ridge." The flight lead now had all three MiGs behind him and "... could see tracers going over his canopy." The two F-105Ds "... successfully outran the MiG flight, and recovered at home base with no further incident and no aircraft damage."

Aces & Aerial Victory, pp 31 - 32 & Red Baron source records in AFHRA folder K160.043-124 18 Aug 1966 - 4 Jan 1967 & Red Baron Events II-35 and II-37, pgs 129 - 135 and 139 - 141.

30-Nov-66

5153

Six pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat completed flying 100 missions during November 1966. They were:

Capt Ralph D. Watkins
Maj Kenneth T. Blank

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Capt William O. Lessard
Capt Robin K. Nierste
Capt Edward L. Jones
Capt Duane H. Zieg

34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm>

01-Dec-66

2360

The January 1967 issue of Republic's "Thunderchief Worldwide Report" included several recent awards and decorations for F-105 pilots.

Maj Kenneth T. Blank from the 34 TFS flew his 100th mission and reported to Nellis AFB.

Maj Wayne N. Whatley, also from the 34 TFS, earned an Air Force Cross for extraordinary heroism. "Whatley, now a test pilot for the San Antonio Air Materiel Area, won the medal for leading an F-105 flight against a fuel depot in North Vietnam."

"Eleven F-105 pilots, [actually 10 pilots and one EWO] aggregating more than 2,700 combat flying hours, joined in an impressive formation flyby recently marking the end of a significant tour of duty for each. The 11 flyers were returning from their 100th combat mission over North Vietnam. Ten of the group were assigned to the same tactical fighter squadron - making the occasion an unusual first for that unit [the 13 TFS]. The organization holds the day in special regard, since a dozen 'graduates' in a month's time is unusual, and that many in a single day is an extreme rarity. On their final mission, the group flew in three separate raids then, upon completion, they regrouped for a low-level flyby over their home base [Korat]. The 100-mission pilots [and one EWO] in the flyby were:"

13 TFS

Maj Frederic C. Hiebert
1Lt Roger J. Hagstrom
Capt George H. Vipond
Capt Roger L. Counts
1Lt Jerry L. Garner
1Lt Maxie A. Hatcher, Jr.
Capt Charles H. Haberstick
1Lt Russell M. Lanning
Maj Richard D. Westcott - Wild Weasel pilot (WW# 76)
Capt Herbert L. Friesen - Wild Weasel EWO (WW # 81)

34 TFS

Capt Duane H. Zieg

"Earlier that same day, four pilots assigned to another squadron [421 TFS] under the same tactical fighter wing [388 TFW] completed their 100 missions, making a total of 15 in a single day for the unit." The pilots were:

Maj William F. Loyd, Jr.
Maj Daniel G. McIntosh
1Lt Edwin L. Harvey
Capt Harry E. Mattoon

"Seventeen F-105 pilots, ... who completed 100 missions over North Vietnam, were presented with certificates at an informal session held in Florida this month. Making the presentation was

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Doug Meadowcroft, Republic program manager." The pilots and their SEA squadrons were:

Maj Hansel W. "Turk" Turley - 13 TFS
Capt Jimmy D. Ginger - 13 TFS
Maj Douglas D. Brenner - 333 TFS
1Lt Thomas A. Gibbs - 469 TFS
Capt Robert W. Davis - 354 TFS
Capt Ralph A. Hanson - 354 TFS
Capt Cecil W. Powell - 354 TFS
Lt Col Ralph A. Ritteman - 333 TFS
Maj John J. "Jack" Gaudion - 469 TFS
Maj Frederick B. Green - 354 TFS
Lt Col Charles W. Barnett - 421 TFS
Lt Col Kenneth L. Skeen - 357 TFS

Five of the 17 pilots had flown their 100th mission while assigned to the 34 TFS:

Capt David H. Groark
Maj Jack R. Stresing
Capt James E. Hayes
Capt Allan K. Rutherford
Capt Robert R. Reed

Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol II No 5, Jan 67.

18-Jan-72

6802

Kenneth T. Blank died in an F-111 accident on 18 January 1972. He had flown his 100th mission over North Vietnam with the 34 TFS in December 1966. By the time of his last F-105 flight in June 1967, he had accumulated 672 hours in the aircraft.

Between January 1971 and August 1971, he was commander of the 55 TFS, 20 TFW, at Upper Heyford England that flew F-111s. (<http://www.afhra.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=10452>)

Kenneth Blank died with Lt Col Floyd B. Sweet in the crash of F-111E 68-0018 on 18 January 1972 while landing at RAF Leuchars, Scotland. (<http://f-111.net/memorial.htm> & http://www.ejection-history.org.uk/Aircraft_by_Type/F_111/F-111.htm)

34 TFS web site at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us/34tfs/pictures/guysa/> & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.