

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

15-Jun-65 25-Aug-65

535

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

This rotation ended the 44th's second combat deployment during which "... the 44th flew a record of 813 combat sorties. During their sixty-day stay, they amassed 1768 hours, averaging about twenty-five combat sorties per pilots. The results of their strikes, as shown by BDA and strike photography, was almost without exception more successful than planners had expected. Continued success became increasingly difficult, with the onset of the monsoon season.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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second combat period.

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

30-Jun-65

4394

At the end of June 1965, the following officers were assigned to the 12 TFS, 18 TFW . The squadron was on TDY to Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

Lt Col Charles W. Reed, Commander
Lt Col Robert L. Fair, Operations Officer
Maj Paul S. Cleland, Jr., Asst. Operations Officer
Capt Robert B. Purcell, Weapons Officer

Capt Charles R. Copin, Flight Commander, INDIA Flight. Other members were:
Capt Vernon E. Frank
Capt Thomas E. Boatman
Capt George A. Bogert
Capt Matthew J. Kelch, Jr.
Capt Samuel E. Waters, Jr.
1Lt John C. Morrissey

Capt Dana B. Cromack, Flight Commander, JULIETT Flight. Other members were:
Capt Allen L. Anderson
Capt Robert N. Daughtrey
Capt Charles M. Yeokum
Capt Wesley G. Cary, Jr.
Capt Robert M. Crane
1Lt Charles C. Large

Maj Ralph H. Bowersox, Flight Commander, KILO Flight. Other members were:
Capt Donald F. Smith
Capt Raymond V. Moss
Capt John H. Busbee
1Lt James R. Hostetter
1Lt James K. Sandin

Maj William J. Hosmer, Flight Commander, LIMA Flight. Other flight members were:
Capt Don I. Williamson
Capt John C. Jones
1Lt Frank J. Tullo
1Lt Charles G. Hofelich

Three other pilots not assigned to flights were:
Capt Pike G. Grubbs
Capt Anatole Semenov, Jr.
Capt John F. Rehm

The squadron was authorized 36 officers and had 34 assigned with 5 airmen authorized and assigned.

History of the 12th Tactical Fighter Squadron, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 65, pgs 1 and 10.

06-Aug-65

4432

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Under Rolling Thunder mission 26-C-1, a flight of four F-105s from the 12 TFS, on TDY at Korat from the 18 TFW, struck a military area and flew armed recce in North Vietnam in the area of 18-15N and 105-43E. The four pilots of "Oak" flight were:

Oak 01 - Capt Allen L. Anderson
Oak 02 - Capt Dana B. Cromack
Oak 03 - Capt Robert M. Crane
Oak 04 - Capt Charles M. Yeokum

The flight dropped 24 750-pound bombs, fired 4 pods of 2.75" rockets, and strafed with 1,800 rounds of 20-mm HEI. Oak 01 bombed the military area while the other three pilots dropped on a railroad bridge. One span of the bridge was destroyed making the bridge unusable. The entire flight strafed and rocketed the military area, "... destroying eight buildings and causing serious damage to four others." The flight encountered moderate small arms fire.

12 TFS History, 1 July - 31 Dec 1965, pg 40.

31-Dec-65

4404

At the end of December 1965, the 12 TFS at the 18 TFW, Kadena AB, Okinawa, had 30 pilots assigned. They, and the numbers of combat missions flown to date, were:

Lt Col Charles W. Reed, Commander 31 missions
Lt Col Robert L. Fair, Operations Officer 50 missions
Capt Dana B. Cromack., Asst. Operations Officer 52 missions
Capt Pike G. Grubbs, Weapons Officer 14 missions

Maj Paul M. Kunichika, Flight Commander, INDIA Flight, 65 missions. Other members were:
Capt Vernon E. Frank 57 missions
Capt Thomas E. Boatman 39 missions
Capt George A. Bogert 28 missions
Capt Samuel E. Waters, Jr. 52 missions
Capt John C. Morrissey 51 missions

Maj Robert T. Campbell, Flight Commander, JULIETT Flight, 3 missions. Other members were:
Capt Allen L. Anderson 33 missions
Capt Wesley G. Cary, Jr. 36 missions
Capt Robert M. Crane 47 missions
1Lt Charles C. Large 42 missions
1Lt Vernon V. Sisney

Maj Ralph H. Bowersox, Flight Commander, KILO Flight, 58 missions. Other members were:
Capt Charles R. Copin 51 missions
Capt Samuel Chapman "Max" Maxwell
Capt Raymond V. Moss 54 missions
Capt John H. Busbee 46 missions
Capt James R. Hostetter 57 missions
1Lt William W. Koelm

Capt Eddie J. Doerschlen, Flight Commander, LIMA Flight. Other flight members were:
Capt Anatole Semenov, Jr. 24 missions
Capt John C. Jones 46 missions
Capt John F. Rehm
1Lt Charles G. Hofelich 40 missions

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Two pilots were attached to the squadron for flying:
Capt Donald F. Smith 52 missions
Capt Rezk M. Mohamed

The squadron was authorized 36 officers and had 34 assigned with two pilots attached. They had 5 airmen authorized and assigned.

12 TFS History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1965, pgs 1 and 13.

01-Mar-66

4526

The history of the 12 TFS for the period 1 Jan - 30 June 1966, prepared by squadron historian Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, reported that two F-105 pilots in the 12 TFS, Capt James F. Street and Capt Robert M. Crane, returned to "civilian life".

However, Capt Crane didn't leave the Air Force. In 1967, he transferred to the 34 TFS and continued to fly combat missions over North Vietnam. He flew his 100th mission in January 1968.

12 TFS History, 1 Jan - 30 Jun 66, pg 2, AFHRA call # K-SQ-FI-12-HI, IRIS # 419690.

21-Sep-67

6563

In a published order, Maj George G. Clausen, 34 TFS commander, designated 29 squadron pilots as Combat Ready in the F-105. The same pilots were listed in a separate order as qualified to be Flight/Element Leaders in F-105s. The pilots were:

Maj Almer L. Barner, Jr.	Capt Douglas A. Beyer
Maj Charles E. Bishop	Capt Robert M. Crane
Maj William M. Blakeslee	Capt Hugh W. Davis
Maj George G. Clausen	Capt Nicholas J. Donelson
Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.	Capt Robert M. Elliot
Maj David C. Dickson, Jr.	Capt George W. Hamlin IV
Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.	Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe
Maj Roderick G. Giffin	Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver
Maj David D. Igelman	Capt Irving R. LeVine
Maj William J. L. King	Capt Robert L. Martin
Maj Kenneth W. Mays	Capt Robert B. Middleton
Maj Donald E. Odell	Capt Sam P. Morgan
Maj Dwight E. Sullivan	Capt Harry G. Paddon III
Maj James L. Taylor	1Lt Lee E. Hollingsworth
Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky	

34 TFS Special Orders 45 and 46 dated 21 September 1967 provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010.

07-Oct-67

1303

The 388 TFW struck the Kep railroad yard and the Cu Van POL storage area in North Vietnam.

The Kep Railroad yards were targets BE 616-01371, BE 616-01931, and BE 616-01932 (ART 1270) on the Northeast rail line (RR 2) at coordinates 21-24-48N and 106-17-36E in RP-6A.

Maj Wayne E. Fullam, "Pistol 01" from the 469 TFS was shot down on the Kep rail yard strike. He was KIA. Also downed on the Kep mission was the Wild Weasel crew of Capt Joseph C. Howard and EWO Capt George L. Shamblee, "Warhawk 01" from the 44 TFS. Both were rescued but had broken legs.

The Cu Van POL storage area was target BE 616-01747 at coordinates 21-37-40N and 105-43-47E.

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The wing's F-105s hit the Cu Van POL complex "... leaving it in flames with smoke billowing more than 5,000 feet in the air." Maj Donald W. Revers from the 34 TFS was mission commander. A 388 TFW press release described the mission. "'Today was a relatively easy mission. I feel that we really did a good job on this one. I feel the force did a tremendous job.' This is how the mission commander, Major Donald W. Revers, 34th TFS, described the attack against the Cu Van petroleum products storage area in North Vietnam by F-105 Thunderchiefs of the 388 TFW.

"He went on to say, 'Upon egress into the target, we had numerous MiG warnings, which posed no immediate threat to the strike force. The weather was a prime factor today. On ingress into the target, we were on top of an overcast until about four minutes of the target. After breaking through the undercast, the visibility was down to a couple of miles. Consequently target acquisition was very poor. I didn't notice too much anti-aircraft activity as I rolled into the target. As my bombs exploded on the target I noticed numerous secondary explosions and fireballs coming out of the target area. As I egressed from the target area, I had a chance to look back and noticed black, billowing smoke coming out of the petroleum area. The column was raising to about 1000 feet and there were numerous fire balls in the area. This is the first time this target has been hit. On egress from the target, we had little SAM activity. We observed one launching and explode quite a ways from the target area. It did not affect the force in general.'

"Major George G. Clausen, commander of the 34th TFS, was also on the mission against the petroleum storage area. 'On our way up today, we were quite a bit hampered by weather. The visibility was rather poor and most of our route was undercast. However, we were able to acquire the target and roll into it. We were the lead flight in and the bombs observed as we pulled off looked like they had several secondary explosions and had done quite a bit of damage. The other flights following us confirmed this and reported other numerous secondary explosions. I think all-in-all today we had a real good mission. The defenses were actually very light today. This is something that has been unusual in the past. Normally we have been met by intense anti-aircraft fire. However, today was a relatively easy mission. We saw numerous fireballs and dense black and grey smoke pouring out of the target after coming off. We also noted some possibility in the distance of some SAMs being launched. However, they were not launched against our force. They were observed bursting some distance away. The smoke was probably as high as 1500 feet above the target area. It's difficult to say how large the fireballs were especially at the speed coming off the target and looking back. However, I'd say the fireballs were 3 - 400 feet in diameter. I feel that this is one that we've really done a good job on.' " (388 TFW pilot interviews, undated draft, via e-mail from Don Revers, 30 March 2010)

Maj Revers was awarded the Silver Star. "Major Donald W. Revers distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force over North Vietnam on 7 October 1967. On that date, Major Revers was the force commander of twenty-four aircraft ordered to strike a heavily defended storage facility located seven miles northwest of Thai Nguyen. In spite of hostile aircraft, severe weather conditions, and intense anti-aircraft fire, Major Revers led his force through a highly successful attack and destroyed the storage facility. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Major Revers has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Award Citation via e-mail 30 March 2010.)

Another pilot on the Cu Van strike was Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS. It was his 18th combat mission and 9th mission into Route Pack 6. His target was 16 nautical miles from Hanoi. (20 Apr 09 letter from Carolyn Dickson giving annotation on cigar band undated but with "CU Wan" note.)

Maj Raymond W. Vissotzky from the 34 TFS received a DFC for the mission he flew today. "The President of the United States of America ... takes pleasure in presenting a Third Bronze Oak Leaf

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Cluster in lieu of a Fourth 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 7 October 1967. On that date, Major Vissotzky was a member of a twenty aircraft strike force, ordered to strike a high priority military target. Despite intense anti-aircraft fire and numerous surface-to-air missiles, Major Vissotzky dropped his ordnance with unerring accuracy which resulted in destruction on the target area. 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>)

"Congratulations were received by the 388 TFW from Gen. William Momyer [7 Air Force Commander] for a highly successful strike ... on the Cu Van POL products storage area in North Vietnam. 'I wish to add my own note of congratulations for the outstanding success in the execution of this mission,' wrote General Momyer. 'The professional manner in which the mission was carried out reflects outstandingly on the skill of all involved. Pass my 'well done' to all.' "

Maj Aquilla F. Britt from the 469 TFS was awarded an Air Medal (19 OLC) for meritorious achievement for a mission he flew on this day. "... Major Britt led a flight of four aircraft assigned to strike a high priority military target. Major Britt placed his bombs directly on the target area, causing an immediate secondary explosion and fire. ..." (Citation to Accompany the Award of the Air Medal (Nineteenth Oak Leaf Cluster) (Posthumous) to Aquilla F. Britt provided by his son Bryan Britt.)

Five days after arriving at Korat and joining the 34 TFS, Capt Jacob C. Shuler flew his first combat mission in F-105D 62-4269. He was number 2 in the two-ship "Cleveland" flight led by Capt Vernon D. Ellis, Capt Shuler's RTU classmate, who flew 61-0132. They took off at 15:25 against the target at location 17-42N and 105-46E in RP-1. "Flew to Channel 77 and turned toward target, which was the Mu Gia Pass just across border from Laos. Many BANDIT calls on guard channel from up North and hear that someone is down. Advised by Cricket that target is IFR and turned over to Bromo for a join up with Waco Flight for a Combat Sky Spot. We had just joined up at release point and all of us dropped 6 x 750#, two with 24-hr TDs. Return to field is routine and I finally caught up with the A/C. Before entering traffic, Vern has me practice some pod formation and 'roll-ins' as #2. Learned a lot! Pattern smooth and felt good. Problems [with] APR 25 malfunction and excess moisture from air conditioner. Found out later that Joe Howard (my UPT Classmate, Class 64-D, Webb AFB), leading Iron Hand flight, was hit by MiG-21s (6) and punched out over water near Da Nang. He was hit over 'the Wart'. The gaggle pressed on in and the mission commander Maj Fullam is hit by 85 over target and punched out over Little Thud Ridge. Two other birds are on ground at Da Nang with battle damage. They were part of Iron Hand flight." The mission lasted 1.7 hours. The flight's spare was Capt Robert M. Crane in 60-0512. (Jake Shuler's combat mission spreadsheet and "Mission #1 Narrative" via e-mail 28 July 2010.)

Also today, Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., flying with the 34 TFS, flew his first combat mission as "Hartford 02". He dropped bombs in the Barrel Roll region of Northern Laos. "Troop artillery concentration. 100% in target area." He then flew a weather recce into RP-3.

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1756 & 388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1697 & Rufus Dye, Mission History log.

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 fragged against a natural river ford in Laos just

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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."

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.

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

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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 Udmn." 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.

07-Nov-67

3467

Today's surveillance photography on the Hanoi railroad and highway bridge (JCS 13) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) showed the bridge was now serviceable. The gap at the north end had been closed and all spans were back in place.

Air Force planes bombed two other targets along the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2). They hit the Lang Giai railroad siding (BE 616-G0778) at 21-43-53N and 106-39-59E. There was no BDA. "At the Lang Giai Railroad Yard four rail interdictions, eight damaged freight cars and a large secondary explosion were noted by Korat-based crews after a strike by 12 F-105s. The flak suppression flight reported damage to four AAA sites." (7 Air Force Weekly Air Intelligence Summary (WAIS), 67-46 dated 11 Nov 67, for week of 3 - 9 Nov 1967, pg 4.)

After F-105s bombed the Lang Giai railroad yard (BE 616-00081) 30 miles north of Kep at 21-41-48N and 106-39-59E, BDA photos indicated the yard was still serviceable and no new rail cars had been damaged or destroyed.

The flight lineup from the 388 TFW was:

"Waco" Iron Hand. Refueled from Tan Anchor 22

"Pistol". Refueled from Tan Anchor 20

"Hatchet". Refueled from Tan Anchor 23

"Vegas". Refueled from Tan Anchor 21

"Garage". Refueled from Tan Anchor 24

One F-105D from Korat was lost to AAA on the strike and the pilot, "Pistol 02", Maj William C. Diehl, Jr., 469 TFS, was captured. He later died as a POW.

1Lt Earl J. Henderson, also from the 469th, flew his 36th combat mission on this strike against the Lang Giai rail yard.

"Target: Rail line in the northeast buffer zone.

"Armament: 6x750#

"Clear and a million. Could see 30 miles into China. Very light flak right before roll in but second guy in got it. He bailed out one minute later. Too deep to rescue. 37/57 extremely heavy on egress. Not much of a day off."

"Waco", the Ironhand flight from the 388 TFW supported today's strikes. They left Korat at 05:20.

"Waco" flight's lineup was:

#1 - Capt Richard W. Arnold and EWO Capt James F. Bartsch from the 44 TFS flying F-105F 63-8306

#2 - Capt Fred R. Nelson from the 44 TFS flying F-105D 60-0428

#3 - Maj Oscar Moise Dardeau, Jr. and EWO Capt Edward William "Tiny" Lehnhoff, Jr., 44 TFS,

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flying F-105F 63-8347

#4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler, 34 TFS, flying F-105D 62-4359 on his 17th combat mission

Spare - Capt Robert M. Crane, 34 TFS, in F-105D 62-4242

The locations of "Waco" flight's targets were:

Primary - 21-42N and 106-40E (Near the Lang Giai railroad yard)

Secondary - 21-12N and 105-52E

Tertiary - 17-23N and 106-36E

Jake Shuler recalled this mission. "This was my second Iron Hand mission and my sixth mission to RP-6. The Pistol Strike Force struck the northeast railroad about 10 miles southwest of Lang Son. This was the furthest north I had been, not that far from China." (Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet, mission card, and mission narrative via e-mail 11 Jan 2011.)

Capt Irving E. LeVine from the 34 TFS received a Distinguished Flying Cross (2nd OLC) for the mission he flew this day. "Captain Irving E. LeVine distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot over North Vietnam on 7 November 1967. On that date, Capt LeVine was personally responsible for suppressing numerous antiaircraft gun positions in support of a fighter bomber force attacking a heavily defended military target in North Vietnam. His unwavering determination and complete disregard for personal safety in penetrating formidable defenses and then returning to the target area in an effort to effect the rescue of a downed pilot, exemplify the highest degree of professional airmanship. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain LeVine reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (Citation provided by Irv Levine in letter received 16 April 2010.)

Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 1 - 15 November 1967 & Earl Henderson, combat diary.

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,

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F-105 History

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.

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.

"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 overshot us because they caused us no more grief.

"When we were about 20 miles from the target (using the Doppler navigation system for reference)

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

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 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.

17-Nov-67

6985

"Bad weather over North Vietnam finally broke recently and pilots of the 388 TFW took advantage of clear skies to launch an attack on the Bac Mai airfield south of Hanoi.

"The Thunderchief pilots dodged MiGs, surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and heavy flak to strike the main base support area, including underground command post and personnel bunkers, a communications site, and flak sites around the airfield. All pilots reported good results.

"Maj Lawrence R. Klinestiver [34 TFS], 38, Albuquerque, N.M., led a flight of F-105s that went after the flak sites with bombs and air-to-ground missiles.

"We had MiGs hampering us all the way in, but a flight of F-4s was working with us and when the MiGs started to close in, we lit the afterburners, took the ole 'Chief down and separated from the attackers. We weren't bothered at all on the way in.'

"Well planned, well managed and almost perfectly executed,' said Maj James R. Bassett [44 TFS], 32, Dennison, Tex. He led his flight against the command post bunker and termed his roll-in and run-in on the target as, 'picture perfect; just like on the practice ranges back in the States. I also saw numerous bombs from the flights ahead striking the target.'

Pilots reported a number of SAMs launched at the strike force and Bassett also reported seeing two MiG-21s waiting to 'bounce' his flight as he approached the target.

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

"However, our timing was perfect and when we broke off and dove toward the target, they overshot, and we were in and out before they could get reorganized."

"Maj James E. Daniel, Jr. [34 TFS Ops Officer], 37, Fort Worth, Tex., who led his flight against the communication site on the southeast end of the runway was the last flight in and reported extremely heavy flak of all calibers. He reported bombs going right through the roofs of a personnel area on hits from another flight.

"The last man in Daniel's flight, Capt Douglas A. Beyer [34 TFS], 33, Seguin, Tex., saw the comm site completely engulfed in smoke and debris as he pulled out and also observed some bombs causing a cut in the airfield runway.

"The 388th TFW's SAM suppression flight was led by Capt Robert E. Dorrrough, Jr. [44 TFS], 29, Dallas, and they reported damaging two fire control sites and one SAM site.

"Other pilots taking part in the mission against Bac Mai included: Capt Robert M. Elliot, 38, Newberry Springs, Calif., Major Spence H. Armstrong, 33, Columbia, Tenn., Capt Robert M. Crane, 29, Duarte, Calif., Maj Donald W. Hodge, 38, Panama City, Fla., Capt Raymond W. Vissotzky, 38, Stoughton, Mass. [all from the 34 TFS], Maj Stanley H. Horn, 41, Madison, Wisc., Maj James D. Murray, Jr., 34, Bayonne, N.J., Capt Hal P. Henning, 27, Contoocook, N.H. [all three from the 469 TFS] and Lt Col Robert A. 'Red' Evans [44 TFS commander], 45, Rangeley, Maine."

Hq 7th Air Force News release 11-67-515, pp 1 - 3.

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

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:

- #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

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

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.

09-Dec-67

6945

"F-105 Thunderchief pilots from the 388 TFW dropped 750-pound bombs on a truck park, 37 miles northwest of Dong Hoi, Dec 9." (Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 11, Friday, Dec 15, 1967, pg 1.)

Under Rolling Thunder RT56A-220, four pilots from the 469 TFS struck a road segment in North Vietnam at location 17-25N and 105-43-30E. They were:

Lt Col William N. Reed flying F-105D 58-1172. His gun camera film showed a missile being fired.
Capt John H. Schaub flying F-105D 60-0458
Lt James L. Karg, Navy exchange officer, flying F-105D 62-4269
Maj Robert F. Grubb flying F-105D 60-0428

Also three pilots from the 34 TFS struck a target NW of Dien Bien Phu at 21-31-16N and 102-54-47E. They were:

Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner flying F-105D 60-0488
Capt Robert M. Crane flying F-105D 62-4387
Capt Robert M. Elliot flying F-105D 60-0445

National Archives combat camera archive control Number NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649C.

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:

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.

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

#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 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

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

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.

18-Dec-67

485

For the fourth time, the 355 TFW and 388 TFW bombed the Paul Doumer Bridge (JCS 12) in Hanoi, North Vietnam. The raid was the most devastating attack yet with eight of nineteen spans dropped and credited to the 388 TFW. The raid also destroyed three SAM sites and one 100-mm AAA site. The mission commander was Capt Vernon D. Ellis, 34 TFS, from the 388 TFW.

Korat's weekly newspaper, the Sawadee Flyer, described the 388th's bombing efforts. "Pilots of the 388 TFW here took full advantage of a break in the nearly month-long spell of bad weather over North Vietnam to blast four major targets in five days of successive bombing strikes in the Hanoi area.

"The recent strikes were highlighted by the complete devastation of the strategically important Hanoi highway railroad (Paul Doumer) bridge, located just 1.7 miles from the center of Hanoi. The mile-long structure, which connects the country's northeast railway bringing in supplies from the northern industrial area for resupply of NVN regulars and guerrillas operating in South Vietnam, 'won't be of much use to them for a long time,' according to Capt Vernon D. Ellis, 28, Yuma, Ariz., who led Monday's raid against the bridge.

"Capt Ellis assigned to the Wing's 34 TFS, praised the dedication and skill of Wing pilots as they flew through some of the heaviest anti-aircraft fire and highest concentration of surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) of the war.

"Later post-strike photos showed that seven spans of the bridge were completely destroyed and at least three others heavily damaged.

"Strike forces of the 388th had first struck the Doumer bridge on Dec. 14 and followed the next day

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

with a strike on the Canal des Rapides bridge, five miles northeast of the capital and servicing the same line as the Doumer bridge.

"The next day [19 Dec 67], Wing pilots struck the Yen Vien railyard, the largest in North Vietnam, catching 41 pieces of rolling stock in the yard, cutting rail lines and destroying numerous support and repair buildings.

"Sunday [20 Dec 67], the Thunderchiefs went back to the often-hit Kep airfield northwest of Hanoi, cratering the runway and taxiways and strafing and bombing aircraft revetment areas.

"Wing SAM-suppression and destruction flights reported good results protecting the strike force from missiles and neutralizing enemy ground defenses.

"A 388th SAM suppression and destruction flight reported damaging one site 12 miles south-southeast of the city, when bombs went across the site and into the radar equipment.

"One 100-mm anti-aircraft artillery site, the largest known type in use by the North Vietnamese, was destroyed, five miles east of Hanoi.

"On the Canal des Rapides bridge raid, again using 3,000-pound bombs, 388 TFW pilots, flying through heavy SAM barrages to reach the target, hit both approaches and the center swing span, which opens to allow travel on the canal.

"One missile was seen to detonate on the ground near the Red River, five miles southeast of Hanoi. At least two of eight SAM sites located around the city were damaged.

"An 85-mm anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) site north of the bridge was also destroyed.

"Enemy AAA fire and SAM launches over the city were heavy. Pilots reported receiving 37- and 57-mm fire from boats and barges located on the Red River in addition to the normal firing from stationary emplacements.

"Two SAMs arched over and impacted on the ground, six miles southeast of the city, while two other SAMs were observed to collide in mid-air, 14 miles east of Hanoi, resulting in a brilliant orange flash." (Sawadee Flyer, Vol I, No. 12, Friday, Dec 22, 1967, pg 4.)

"In a letter to Colonel Giraudo (355 TFW commander), General Momyer praised the pilots for their skill and professionalism in the successful strike on this important target." (355 TFW history, Oct 67 - Mar 68, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1572.)

Twenty F-105s were in the strike force. Two of the pilots in the third flight were Capt Gene I. Basel from the 354 TFS flying F-105D 62-4385 on his 54th combat mission, and his wingman Capt Kenneth D. Thaete. The planes each carried two 3,000-pound bombs. They dodged SAMs fired from Phuc Yen and dropped their bombs on the bridge in a shallow 20-degree dive. While entering his bomb run, Capt Basel's plane, "Terrible Tina" exhibited the flight control problem that had plagued the plane for several months. "The nose swung around and the wings dipped back and forth in an awkward 'Dutch Roll. ... I finally stomped both rudder pedals hard, just stood up on them, locking the controls, and she settled down."

One F-105D, 62-4367, from the 355 TFW was severely damaged when its ordnance wouldn't release. The hung ordnance resulted in damage to the bottom of the fuselage and aft section, to the skin, access doors, formers, ribs, and left hand fairings under the stabilizer. (355 TFW History, Oct - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1037.)

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

Capt Harold E. Forman was a pilot from the 357 TFS, 355 TFW, on this mission. He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross. (Greg Forman (son), e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 8 July 2002).

Capt Cecil G. Prentis from the 333 TFS also received a DFC (First Oak Leaf Cluster) for his extraordinary achievement on this mission. "... Major [then Captain] Prentis was a member of a flight committed against one of the most heavily fortified bridges in the Red River delta. Major Prentis, despite MiG threats, heavy antiaircraft fire, and multiple surface-to-air missiles, delivered his ordnance precisely on target." (Cecil G. Prentis DFC citation (1st OLC))

A Wild Weasel crew from the 333 TFS at Takhli also flew on the strike. Capt Malcolm D. Winter was the pilot with EWO Maj Frank N. Moyer. In his diary and combat log, Maj Moyer described the mission, his 64th. "Up at 0200 for an early brief. We were executed primary but delayed 4 hours, so back to write the folks and get 1 1/2 hours more sleep. ... Went 'downtown' (to Hanoi) with Mal Winter, who had become more or less my regular pilot until the end of his tour in January. Bit of a White Knuckler; we had MiGs 17 and 21s + SAMs but no one got hurt. That's what counts!"

Maj Francis J. Byrne from the 469 TFS, 388 TFW, received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his participation in this strike. "I was Green Sixteen, the last one down. (#4 of the last flight down the pipe). Destroyed many spans of bridge. Lots of AAA 42 SAMs, 4 MiGs." He flew F-105D 61-0086. (Francis J. Byrne, letter to Ron Thurlow, 22 Sep 2001.)

The day after the raid, Capt Robert M. Crane, 29, Duarte, CA, from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, flew over the bridge in an F-105 with a strike camera. His photos showed that "... the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th spans and half of the 5th span were damaged. It was estimated that it would take 2 1/2 to 3 months to repair the damage enough to handle traffic. In fact, it was not until 14 April 1968, when a 2800-foot rail bridge (pontoon type), 4.5 nautical miles southeast of the Doumer Bridge, was completed, that rail traffic again flowed across the Red River by other than ferry."

"... The Doumer Bridge strike of December 18, 1967, was to be the last major bombing success in Hanoi for more than four years. Most of the damage was done by F-105s from the 388 TFW ... " ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 112).

In their issue on Friday 29 December 1967, Time Magazine described this strike against the Doumer Bridge and strikes against other North Vietnamese targets during a six day period. The article was titled "Change of Weather".

"North Viet Nam's major cities of Hanoi and Haiphong are normally blanketed by thick monsoonal clouds at this time of year. But for six brilliantly sunny days, the weather changed and the clouds lifted. Lifted, too, were some of the restrictions that Washington had imposed on the flight paths of U.S. fighter-bombers, enabling them to fly through the air space adjacent to China and around Hanoi. The combination sent U.S. pilots of the Air Force, the Navy and Marines pounding away day after day last week at vital transportation points throughout North Viet Nam. There was no lack of targets: under a month of cloud cover, the North had repaired much of the damage from previous raids; freight cars were everywhere on the move, truck traffic had tripled.

"Eight spans of the Paul Doumer bridge leading into Hanoi were dropped into the Red River, putting the bridge out of use for the third time. Upriver, two spans of the Canal des Rapides bridge were sent sagging into the water, and two of Haiphong's main bridges were put out of use again. Bombs ripped up the oft-repaired runways of the Kep, Phuc Yen and Hoa Lac MIG bases.

"Up and down Ho Chi Minh's domain the attackers ranged, cutting rail lines and roads, taking out trains, trucks and barges, bombing missile sites and antiaircraft batteries. Even by the Jovian

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

standards of Operation Rolling Thunder, the code name for the air war against North Viet Nam, it was a spectacular performance: the most devastating six days of the air war."

388 TFW Chronology compiled by SSgt Bryon Beers, 388 TFW Historian & "Pak Six", by G. I. Basel, pgs 125 - 129 & "The Tale of Two Bridges", pg 75 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1579 and 1757 & Sawadee Flyer, 4 Oct 69.

24-Dec-67

6716

The four pilots in "Oakland" flight from the 34 TFS took off at 06:40 and refueled with Blue Anchor 14. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Irving E. LeVine flying F-105D 58-1157
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0132
- #3 - Col James L. Stewart, 388 TFW Assistant DO, flying 60-0505
- #4 - Capt Robert M. Crane flying 60-0435

The unneeded spare was 60-0462.

It was Jake Shuler's 35th combat mission. "On this mission we worked with Misty 11 who directed us to drop our bombs on a target with coordinates 17-42N and 105-46-30E, the Ho Chi Minh Trail in RP-1."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Locust 3" against guns and a troop area in the Barrel Roll region of Laos. "100%. Two gun positions silenced. Passed through RP-5 on egress." It was his 24th combat mission.

Jake Shuler 24 Dec 67 mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

02-Jan-68

6718

Two F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW formed "Plymouth" flight that took off at 14:50 for a 15:50 TOT. There was no inflight refueling. The lineup was:

- #1 - Maj James R. Bassett from the 44 TFS
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 62-4242 on his 40th combat mission.

"This mission was originally scheduled to be a four ship formation, call sign Rambler, with Bob Crane as lead and Hugh Davis as two. The Mission Data Card indicates that it was changed to a two-ship formation, call sign Plymouth ..."

The flight's primary target was in RP-1. Its secondary target was in southern Laos (SL), while its tertiary target was in northern Laos (BR).

Under 7th Air Force Special Order G-1017, dated 3 April 68, Capt Shuler was awarded an Air Medal (1st - 3rd OLC) for the period 28 Oct 67 to 2 Jan 68.

Jake Shuler mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011.

31-Jan-68

5163

Four pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat completed flying 100 missions during January 1968. They were:

- Capt Robert M. Crane
- Capt Hugh W. Davis - Flew 100th on 16 Jan 68
- Capt Sam P. Morgan
- Maj Donald W. Revers - Flew 100th on 8 Jan 68

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

It was Capt Davis' last F-105 flight. He had accumulated 381.4 hours in the airplane. His next assignment was back in the Air Defense Command. "... I went through recurrency training in the F-102 at Perrin AFB from Feb. '68 through May '68, before going to the 526th FIS at Ramstein in June '68. I flew the F-102 there until May 1970." He retired as a Lt Col on 31 January 1980 as the Deputy Director of Plans Group at Nellis AFB and settled in Boulder, Colorado. (Hugh Davis, e-mail 9 Dec 2011 & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma & Lt Col Hugh Warren Davis DD Form 214.)

The 388 TFW provided a public relations announcement on Maj Revers' 100 mission accomplishment. "Major Donald W. Revers, 37, Ironwood, Mich., has added his name to the traditional 100-mission scarf of the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron.

"The seven-foot long scarf, inscribed with the names of all squadron pilots who have completed 100 combat missions in the F-105 over North Vietnam, was draped over the Major's shoulders by Colonel Paul P. Douglas, Jr., 388th Tactical Fighter Wing Commander, following his landing at Korat Royal Thai AFB recently following his 100th mission.

"The 388th TFW pilot considers a raid in early October against the Cu Van POL (Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants) storage area the most memorable of his combat tour.

" 'From a pilot's view this was an extremely rewarding mission, since we could see the results almost immediately.'

"Continuing, the major said, 'As I acquired the target and rolled in, the flak became extremely heavy. The strike force pressed on and did a tremendous job. The area just erupted and the whole hillside seemed to be devoured in smoke and flames. Smoke rose 5,000 feet in the air.'

"The Major also participated in two of the major 'firsts' of the air war.

"In the early part of August he was on the first strike against the Doumer Bridge, 1 1/2 miles from the center of Hanoi.

" 'We were very elated with the results,' Revers commented, ' having dropped a span.'

"The first raid near the Chinese Communist border, against the Lang Son railroad yard, also proved very successful as, according to Major Revers, the 388th pilots caught about 180 railroad cars in the yard.

" ' There were numerous secondary explosions and we destroyed 75 - 80 percent of the rolling stock. It was a real pleasure to hit such a lucrative target.' "

"Although he has completed his 100 mission, Major Revers will not be going home immediately, but will assist in the 388th Tactical Operations Center." (Draft 388 TFW Korat Release 68-02-03, via e-mail 30 Mar 2010.)

Don Revers remained at Korat for another three months. "The general asked me to stay a couple of months and help him out." He worked for General Chairsell rewriting "... all fighter refueling procedures in SEA."

34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Don Revers, e-mails 30 and 31 Mar 10.

15-Feb-68

2354

(Approximate date) "At a special presentation ceremony last month at McConnell Air Force Base

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

in Kansas, 55 Thunderchief pilots were awarded special certificates by Republic for completing 100 missions over North Vietnam."

"Air Force Cross Awarded To Thunderchief Pilot -- The Air Force's highest award for heroism was recently awarded to Lieutenant Colonel Harry Schurr, a 100-mission F-105 pilot who is now stationed at McConnell Air Force Base. The decoration was presented to the pilot by Lieutenant General Albert P. Clark, vice commander of the Tactical Air Command. Lt Col Schurr was cited for extraordinary heroism while leading a strike force of 20 Thunderchiefs over North Vietnam. Although his aircraft had been heavily damaged by enemy anti-aircraft fire, Schurr successfully destroyed a key railroad and highway bridge. He is now assigned to the Kansas base as commander of the 4519th Combat Crew Training Squadron." He previously commanded the 469 TFS at Korat. He was one of three F-105 pilots and one Wild Weasel EWO, along with F-4C pilot Col Robin Olds, who received the Air Force Cross for the successful attack on Hanoi's Paul Doumer Bridge on 11 August 1967.

Capt Bruce J. Lotzbire, an F-105 instructor pilot at McConnell, was among those who received Republic Aviation's 100-mission certificates. He had flown 100 missions while assigned to the 357 TFS at Takhli between April and October 1967. He remained as an instructor pilot at McConnell until December 1971. After 33 years in the Air Force, he retired as a Major General on 1 June 1995.

Capt Howard L. Bodenhamer, also assigned to McConnell, was one of the pilots who received a certificate. He had completed 100 missions in August 1967 while flying with the 354 TFS at Takhli.

Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald, was one of the 55 pilots who received his 100-mission certificate. Previously he had commanded the 13 TFS at Korat, RTAFB, Thailand.

Capt Donald O. Austin was one of the pilots who received a 100-mission certificate. He was a former 34 TFS pilot who had flown from Korat but was now assigned to the 561 TFS as an F-105 RTU instructor pilot.

Maj Edward C. Jones, who had flown with the 34 TFS, received a 100-mission certificate.

Capt Steven J. Savonen, an instructor pilot in the 562 TFS, also received his 100-mission certificate. He had been assigned to the 469 TFS at Korat.

Capt Richard L. O'Connor was one of the pilots receiving a 100-mission certificate.

Capt Winfield Scott Harpe, and IP in the 23 TFW who had flown with the 469 TFS, received a Republic 100-mission Certificate.

Lt Col William E. Augsburg was a former 34 TFS pilot who received a 100-mission certificate.

Maj Bobby L. Martin, the first Wild Weasel pilot to have flown 100 missions, received a 100-mission certificate. He had been assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli but had flown missions with the 13 TFS from Korat.

Capt Jack A. Phillips, an IP with the 560 TFS, flew his 100th mission with the 34 TFS on 2 August 1967.

Capt Robert L. Martin, who flew his 100th with the 34 TFS, received his Republic 100-mission Certificate at McConnell.

Robert M. Crane

F-105 History

Maj Paul F. Koeltzow received his 100-mission certificate.

Capt Jackie R. Youngblood and Capt Robert M. Crane were former 34 TFS pilots who received their Republic 100-mission Certificates at McConnell.

Capt John F. Rehm was one of the pilots receiving his 100-mission certificate. He had flown as a Ryan's Raider pilot with the 34 TFS and 13 TFS.

Capt Guy H. Morgan, Jr. was an F-105 pilot who flew 100 missions as a strike pilot with the 13 TFS at Korat.

Thunderchief World Wide Report, Vol III, No 7, March, 1968 & Gen Lotzbire's biography on www.af.mil/news/biographies/lotzbire_bj.html.

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.