

# Nicholas J. Donelson

## F-105 History

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**15-Sep-66**

4930

Capt Robert G. Bradshaw, Jr. arrived at Takhli AB, Thailand, to fly combat missions with the 354 TFS. He departed Clark AB at 0405 on a C-130 after completing Jungle Survival School on 12 September and stepped off the plane at Takhli at 1215.

He was assigned to "C" flight in the 354th. The 11 pilots in this flight were:

Maj Frederick B. Green	Maj James Edward Hiteshow
1Lt Roger A. Ayres	Capt Nicholas J. Donelson (TDY from the 35 TFS Yokota)
Capt Frank A. "Buck" Buchanan	Maj Earl L. Pearce
Capt Robert G. Bradshaw, Jr.	1Lt Paul Sheehy
Capt William B. Hoelt	Maj William R. Powers
Maj Arthur Stewart Mearns	

Capt Bradshaw kept a log of his missions from Takhli.

*Log of Capt Robert G. "Bob" Bradshaw, Jr.*

**30-Nov-66**

1031

The 355 TFW history included a list of 354 TFS pilots and EWOs arriving and departing Takhli in November 1966.

The 11 pilots and 2 EWOs arriving in November were:

Maj Stan Burklund  
Maj Kenneth D. Furth  
Maj Jack W. "Shakey" Hunt  
Maj Larry William Biediger  
Capt Rodney B. Beckman (TDY)  
Capt Peter Potter Pitman (TDY)  
Capt Giles W. Gainer (TDY)  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson (TDY)  
Capt Charles Watson Couch  
Capt David Everson  
Capt William Eugene Everson  
Capt Jose David Luna (EWO)  
1Lt Claude Silva (EWO)

The 5 pilots leaving the 354 TFS in November 1966 were:

Capt Bob Spielman  
Capt Robert E. Marts  
Capt Ben Ulrich (TDY departing)  
Capt Robert L. "Bob The Wedge" Keller (TDY 100-mission pilot)  
Capt Victor Vizcarra (TDY)

*355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm NO462.*

**31-Dec-66**

1032

The 355 TFW history included a list of the sixteen 354 TFS pilots arriving and departing Takhli in December 1966.

The 9 pilots and 1 EWO arriving were:

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Lt Col Eugene O. Conley  
Maj John A. Bobel, Jr.  
Maj Robert C. Hammerle  
Maj Everett M. "Ed" Sutton  
Maj Frederick Gregory "Ted" Tolman  
Capt Arnold G. Dolejsi (Wild Weasel pilot)  
Capt Paul Lewis Chesley (WW EWO)  
1Lt Robert Archie Abbott  
1Lt Paul Sheehy  
1Lt Robert Larry Weskamp

The six pilots departing the 354 TFS in December 1966 were:

Maj Kenneth D. Furth (TDY)  
Maj Stan Burklund  
Capt Rodney B. Beckman (TDY)  
Capt Giles W. Gainer (TDY)  
Capt Peter Potter Pitman (TDY)  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson (TDY)

*355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm NO462.*

**04-Mar-67**

924

In an attempt to meet the success of the Navy's A-6 aircraft with their superior radar, HQ PACAF "tasked the 41st Air Division [41 AD] at Yokota Air Base, Japan, to develop a training program for twenty-five F-105 pilots, which would qualify them to fly all-weather combat missions in North Vietnam."

The missions would be flown by the 388 TFW from Korat, RTAFB, Thailand. Upon their arrival at Korat on 24 April 1967, the planes and crews would be assigned to the 34 TFS and then, on 1 June 1967, to the 13 TFS. Once assigned to the 13 TFS, the Ryan's Raider dual-pilot crews were replaced by Wild Weasel crews and the Ryan's Raider pilots were released to fly strike missions in F-105Ds.

Under project "Northscope", technicians of the 441 Armament and Electronics (A&E) Maintenance Squadron at Yokota began modifying four F-105F aircraft. "Within a hectic three days, the unit planners at Yokota developed a plan and initiated ground training on 7 March. The first ten students were instructor pilots assigned to the 41st [Air Division] who had previously volunteered for SEA duty. These pilots completed the training on 17 March in time to serve as the front seat pilots for eight F-105 replacement strike pilots that had been diverted from their assignments to Korat and Takhli in Thailand." ("A Special Report on 'Ryan's Raiders', by Maj Albert L. Michael for Project Corona Harvest, Jan 1970, pgs 3 - 4.)

The first four Ryan's Raider crews, all pilots, were:  
Capt Donald Lester Heiliger with Maj Benjamin Marksbury Pollard  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan  
Capt Peter Potter Pitman with Capt Robert Allan Stewart  
Capt David Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt

The program was originally called "Project Northscope", then "Operation Commando Probe" and finally "Commando Nail". Initial crews, however, referred to the program as "Ryan's Raiders".

Capt Lawrence E. Huggins and Capt Paul W. Hansen from Yokota's 35 TFS were two of the instructor pilots picked to train the initial Ryan's Raider crews at Yokota. Other instructor pilots

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came from the 80 TFS. Larry Huggins recalled, "PACAF directed the program to be started at Yokota [which] made sense since the other [PACAF F-105] unit was at Kadena and could not fly local TA/CM [Terrain Avoidance/Contour Mapping] sorties of any length. Wing Intel was involved before the 35th and 80th squadrons ... Maj Ken Furth, Ops Officer from the 35th was ops OIC.

"I was one of [the] pilots selected to 'set up and teach a night bombing program for SEA in the F-105F'. ... Don Heliger (80th), Nick Donelson (35th), Pete Pitman (35th), and Dave Burney (80th) were the other IPs. ... We were all IPs and were the guys with the best radar bomb scores. Our primary mission at the time was SIOP. Three or four F-105Fs from the 80th and 35th were locally modified with what became known as the Yokota Mod, and we flew them using the TA/CM mods through the local mountains ending up on our bombing target in Tokyo Bay (R-112). ... The Yokota mod birds were restricted from nuc alert since the radar mods had been done at Yokota by our radar techs. These F's were transferred to Korat right after the program ended at Yokota and still had the no nuc restriction carried in their 781s when we flew them at Korat a year later."

The aircraft were modified "... specifically for a night/all-weather radar bombing mission. ... The aircraft chosen for the mission ... had [already] been modified for ... Wild Weasel III ... with ER-142 and APR25/26 RHAW equipment. In addition ... the ... aircraft had their R-14A radars modified to allow an expanded scope picture and a faster sector sweep, ... (giving) a much greater duration to the radar return, resulting in a finer target definition on the scope. Additionally, the ... pilot's weapons release switch was wired in parallel to a rear cockpit weapons release switch ... ." The ER-142 radar warning receiver was located in the rear cockpit in the space normally used by the vertical tape altimeter and the airspeed indicator.

At Korat, the aircraft were repainted in an all-around camouflage scheme with tan and green replacing the gray on the bottom of the planes. The colors were applied to the wings and fuel tanks as well.

"The training program was designed to give the rear seat pilot maximum exposure to radar bombing techniques. After a ten-hour refresher course on the R-14A radar, the toss bomb computer (TBC), and radar interpretation techniques, the crews were given twelve flights within a short twenty hours flying time. Each sortie was planned as a radar navigation exercise with simulated bomb runs along the route. The missions were planned at medium altitudes between 10,000 to 15,000 feet above the terrain. The simulated targets were industrial complexes and other prominent cultural radar returns used by Yokota based pilots training for nuclear delivery. The program was indorsed by PACAF with one significant exception -- training missions at the medium altitudes were to be changed to low profiles at 500 to 2,000 feet." (Ryan's Raiders Corona Harvest Report, pgs 4 - 5.)

Major Ben M. Pollard was the senior officer appointed to the program. He had completed F-105 pilot training at McConnell AFB, Kansas, on 13 February 1967 in RTU Class 67FR, followed by jungle survival school at Clark AB in the Philippines. He was told to report to Yokota instead of Korat. "In the first briefing [I] was told, 'The Navy is over North Vietnam in the deep packages ... V and VI at night with the A-6, and the Air Force had no airplane that could do it. Politically, the Air Force was looking bad, and therefore, three-fingered Jack Ryan, (the PACAF) commander, ... said that he wanted us to do the job. He had looked into the B-58s and said we couldn't afford to lose a B-58; we couldn't afford to lose a B-52, and so we were going to have the F-105 do it at night against Package V and VI, single-ship, night, low-level, terrain-avoidance bombing ...."

The group began calling themselves Ryan's Raiders. "We started practicing these missions all over Japan ... . We couldn't hit the broad side of a barn; the terrain avoidance wouldn't work, we weren't trained for this; nobody, even in the States, would ... fly this mission, ... and we were going to go over and check it out the first time in combat!"

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The first training class consisted of five crews who initially operated as a provisional squadron under Maj Pollard as the senior officer. Capt Larry Huggins and Capt Paul Hansen were initially classroom instructors at Yokota. "Paul and I did not fly with any of these first class guys; we were making strip maps and teaching academics. We started flying after these guys left for Korat."

Maj Pollard continued, "We flew down to Kadena, Okinawa, to check out on bombing accuracy. I was flying [in the rear seat] with Don Heiliger. ... We got there, and they wanted us to immediately go out on this bombing range and check the accuracy of this new radar. ... We got a briefing, and we took off ... in a four-ship, ... two from Ryan's Raiders and two from Okinawa to lead us around the range and area. ... We dropped about three bombs, and then the weather just went to nothing. ... Lightning, pouring down rain ... . We floundered around, broke up into singles and finally got on the ground.

"... We flew three missions the next day. We were doing a little bit better. We were dropping ... 700-foot bombs. We had more ... right to left accuracy than with the normal bombing system, but all of our worst fears in terms of the terrain avoidance system ... we were still having.

"Then we flew back to Yokota and continued our training."

"The initial reliability of the radars was so poor on the heretofore unused systems that very little actual low level radar navigation or bombing was accomplished. In fact, some of the training had to be completed in Korea when bad weather over Japan prevented VFR flying. However, the first four crews were certified to have achieved sufficient radar bombing proficiency to deploy, on schedule, in late April." (Ryan's Raiders Corona Harvest Report, pgs 5 - 6.)

*WarbirdTECH Vol 18 Republic F-105 Thunderchief, pg 46 & 388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1617 & Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pgs 13 -15 & Larry Huggins, e-mails 13 and 15 Dec 2004.*

### 22-Apr-67

926

The Ryan's Raiders crews, led by Maj Ben Pollard, in F-105F training at Yokota AB, Japan, were alerted for deployment to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Ben Pollard recalled, "... in late April, ... we got the word that we were going south. ... We were going to go to war and there was no warning."

"We flew down to Kadena that next morning ... before we jumped off to Thailand." The crews remained at Kadena overnight.

"The next morning (24 April 1967) we had four flyable airplanes. We had eight Ryan's Raiders aircraft, but only four of them were ready to go, and so four aircraft leaped out the next morning to fly with a tanker across from Okinawa to Korat. ... We were out about ... an hour or two. Number three or number four airplane got a hydraulic leak in their flight control system -- you always flew as pairs over the water -- so ... both of those airplanes turned back, and the other two of us pressed on. We flew on in, flew just south of the DMZ over Da Nang and let down and landed in Korat. We got there about dark."

The four dual-pilot crews were:

Capt Donald Lester Heiliger with Maj Benjamin Marksbury Pollard  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan  
Capt Peter Potter Pitman with Capt Robert Allan Stewart  
Capt David Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt

*Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pg 18.*

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24-Apr-67

1276

The first four Ryan's Raiders crews arrived at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand. They had been training on radar bombing at Yokota since March. These first crews, all F-105 pilots, were:

Capt Donald Heiliger with Maj Ben Pollard,  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan,  
Capt Peter P. Pitman with Capt Robert A. Stewart,  
Capt Dave Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt.

The four modified F-105Fs that they flew from Yokota were: 63-8269, 63-8312, 63-8345, and 63-8269.

The front seat pilots had been instructor pilots from the 35 TFS and 80 TFS at Yokota. Two of the IPs from the 35th, Capt Paul W. Hansen and Capt Lawrence E. Huggins, remained at Yokota. Larry Huggins explained why. "Paul Hansen did not deploy since he had already flown 100 missions over the north. I was not allowed to deploy because I had just finished revising the 5th AF SIOP target set and had a 'special' TS clearance." (Larry Huggins, e-mail 15 Dec 04.)

The rear seat pilots were recent graduates from McConnell's F-105 RTU. Captains Stewart and Forgan had graduated from F-105 RTU class 67ER on 6 January 1967. Maj Pollard and Capt Britt had graduated from F-105 RTU class 67FR on 13 February 1967.

Eleven other Ryan's Raider aircrew members arrived in May 1967.

The group was initially assigned to the 34 TFS under the command of Lt Col Alan G. Nelson, but later operated as a provisional unit within the 13 TFS commanded by Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald. On 1 June 1967, it was integrated as a separate operation of the 13 TFS when Lt Col Jim McInerney took over the squadron. The Ryan's Raiders were guided by Maj Ralph Kuster from the 469 TFS. Jim McInerney explained Maj Kuster's role: "... He was [388 TFW Commander] Colonel Chairsell's 'helper' having served under him at Spang."

Maj Frank L. Yow, Jr., the 388 TFW Weapons Officer, also helped the Raiders. "Maj Ralph Kuster and I worked with them and helped plan the missions although I disagreed with the way there were doing it."

"Because of changes in mission and compromise, the name of the project was changed from the original Project Northscope to Operation Commando Probe to Operation Commando Nail."

Before they had left Yokota, Capt Donelson recalled, "The crews called it Ryan's Raiders and created a special patch showing an F-105F with a golden screw through the rear cockpit. This represented the dissatisfaction of the pilots that had to occupy the rear cockpit." (Nicholas J. Donelson in River Rats Vol III, pgs 52 - 53.)

The 388 TFW history for the period October - December 1967 described the technical and operational problems encountered by the Raiders. "Several difficulties, some of which are not yet resolved, have complicated the operation of the Raiders. Chief among these was the challenge of electronics. Modifications were made to the R-14 radar. An expanded scope now provides an improved presentation. A fast sweep in the center of the scope allows the operation to have a fast constant paint of the target. New test equipment obtained from Yokota AFB have greatly improved the terrain avoidance and contour mapping capabilities. Still to come are replacement of the rear seat scope by a Cathode Ray Tube and the addition of a radar absolute altimeter. Daily improvements reflect the success of the efforts of our Armament and Electronics Squadron and our

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maintenance in general. Other difficulties encountered include incomplete maps and charts of North Vietnam, (a problem partly resolved by radar photography of these areas), and lack of experience in Raider operations and techniques, which necessitated exchange of information with the A-6 Intruder pilots of the Bonhomme Richard. Daily crew meetings under the inspiring leadership of Major Ralph L. Kuster, his knowledge and experience in the airplane, and devotion to duty, have been most successful in advancing the Raider program." (13 TFS history, 1 Apr - 31 July 1967, USAF microfilm NO584, frames 0038 - 0040.)

*388 TFW history, Jan - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO583, frames 1449 and 1582 & Corona Harvest Chronology of Significant Airpower Events in Southeast Asia, 1954 - 1967, pg 133 & Frank Yow letter dated Sept 1, 1986 to Bauke Jan Douma.*

### 26-Apr-67

5118

In a secret message to CINCPACAF (General Ryan), Hq 5th Air Force defined the daily reports that they would submit on the progress of crew training for the F-105F "Radar Level Bombing Training" under project "North Scope". The message reflected General Ryan's interest in the details of this program.

The crews were training at Yokota and Kadena and the message identified the "integrated crews" (all pilots) that had formed to date at each location.

At the 41 Air Division, Yokota:

Crew Alpha - Heiliger/Pollard  
Crew Bravo - Donelson/Forgan  
Crew Charlie - Burney/Britt  
Crew Delta - Pitman/Stewart

Crew Golf - Rehm/Markwood  
Crew Hotel - Bogert/Annapu  
Crew India - Koelm/Esser  
Crew Juliett - Henry/Wright

The message reported that "Crews Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta have deployed to Korat" (where they were assigned to the 34 TFS).

At the 18 TFW, Kadena:

Crew Echo - Beresik/Reece (Reece was identified as a Radar Navigator)  
Crew Foxtrot - Fullam/Scheer

The message listed the flying experience of the crews training at Kadena.

	Total Time	F-105 Time	Out Country Missions
Maj Eugene P. Beresik	3189:10	555:40	0
Capt H. M. Reece	3534:30	18:50	0
Maj Wayne E. Fullam	3398	1133	19
Capt Roger P. Scheer	2263	1250	14

The message provided detailed results of each training sortie in radar-modified North Scope F-105Fs by the crews at Kadena. For example, on 18 April 1967, the crew of Beresik/Reece flew two daylight sorties each at 2000 feet and 500 knots on land range R-178 using the plane's timer and Toss Bomb Computer (TBC) on each sortie. They had made two timer drops and four TBC drops of BDU-33 practice bombs. Their CEA for the timer drops on sortie 1 was 195' and on sortie 2 was 275'. The CEAs for their TBC drops were 982' and 862' for their first and second sortie,

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respectively.

On 20 April 1967, the crew of Fullam/Scheer made one sortie under the same conditions flying six TBC drops of BDU-33/Bs. Their CEA was 930'.

*5AF/CC TWX 261015Z Apr 67 to CINCPACAF in PACAF DO Read File for 25 - 26 April 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518453.*

### 25-May-67

5133

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt Nicholas J. Donelson and Capt David W. Forgan flew a night North Scope mission in F-105F 63-8363 using call sign "Delight". They dropped six 750-pound bombs on target 195, the Dong Cuong Railroad Yard. "Normal calibration and refueling. Descended to 1000 feet AGL as we passed Channel 97. Continued to target. Drop looked good on radar. Penetrated line of thunderstorms 30 NM from target." They also encountered "... several 1 to ½ ring Firecans, all of short duration."

*388 TFW TWX 240705Z May 67 to 7 AF in PACAF DO Read File for 24 - 25 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518471.*

### 27-May-67

5135

The 34 TFS Ryan's Raider crew of Capt Nicholas J. Donelson and Capt David W. Forgan flew a night North Scope mission in F-105F 63-8353 using call sign "Simmer". Their primary was target JCS 47.13, the Tai Xuoan Ammunition Depot SE in RP 5, but they dropped six 750-pound bombs on target 1463, Mu Gia Pass. "Unable to calibrate TA/CM due to reverse video. Aborted 47.13 and made routine drop on Mu Gia Pass."

*388 TFW TWX 270323Z May 67 to 7 AF in PACAF DO Read File for 27 - 29 May 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518474.*

### 31-May-67

760

F-105s from the 388 TFW flew more hours during the month of May 1967 "... than any USAF Fighter unit has ever done". The wing flew "... 5,219 hours of which 4,950 were in combat strikes over North Vietnam. Major targets struck by the 388th during May (were) the Hoa Loc MiG Airfield, Bac Giang Railroad Highway bridge (JCS 18.23) and vital lines of communications." Col William E. Fish, Director of Materiel said, "The primary reason for this total ... figure is the work ... by our maintenance personnel on the line..."

The history of the 34 TFS reported that the squadron flew 418 combat sorties during May 1967, 402 in North Vietnam and 16 in Southern Laos, for a total of 1066:20 combat hours. "A change was noted in enemy fighter tactics. MiG-17s are now being deployed in the target area at very low altitudes (100 - 500 feet AGL) in an attempt to strike the F-105s as they pull off the target. This change in tactics was probably due to the presence of F-4C flights ingressing the target area with the strike force.

Three pilots from the 34 TFS completed their 100th combat mission over North Vietnam during May 1967. They were Maj William C. Eagle, Lt Col Robert W. Johnson, and Capt William W. Kennedy.

Lt Col Johnson's 100th mission was his last flight in the F-105. He had accumulated 352.9 hours in the airplane. (F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

The squadron had 22 line pilots that included the commander, executive officer and operations officer as well as four attached pilots from the 388 TFW staff. They gained four new pilots to offset the three losses of the pilots who completed their tours. The inputs during May 1967 were Maj George G. Clausen, Maj Robert G. Miner, Capt Robert L. Martin, and Capt Nicholas J. Donelson (a

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Ryan's Raider pilot who had arrived in April.)

*34 TFS history, 1 - 31 May 67, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 0072 & Sawadee Weekly, Saturday, June 10, 1967, pg 6 & 34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us/34tfs/scarf.htm>.*

### 30-Jun-67

5117

The 34 TFS history summarized the events that occurred in the squadron during the month of June 1967. "The 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron conducted numerous strikes in the month of June on the enemy's rail system. These critical supply routes were interdicted on numerous spots and heavy damage was inflicted on rolling stock."

The squadron flew 406 combat missions, 402 to North Vietnam and 4 in Southern Laos, for a total combat time of 1047:45 hours.

"Changes have been noted in the enemy AAA defenses. They have strengthened their gun emplacements at key points around the rail yards in an attempt to counter our repeated attacks on that system. MiGs have been reported airborne on nearly all strikes but they appear to be extremely reluctant to engage in aerial combat."

"Combat pilot strength stood at 19 line pilots including the commander and operations officer. Three attached pilots, wing staff members, were also available for combat." The acting commander was Maj Earl Johnston and the Operations Officer was Maj Carl W. McKenzie.

"During this month of June, three squadron pilots completed their tour of 100 missions over North Vietnam. Those completing were: General William S. Chairsell, Lt Col Alan G. Nelson, Major Carl W. McKenzie. ... "

Maj McKenzie's 100th mission was his last F-105 flight. He had accumulated 1194 hours in the airplane. His 100th was also the last F-105 flight for Lt Col Nelson. He had accumulated 351 hour in the airplane.

"... Four losses were suffered during the month, three in combat and one for medical reasons." The combat losses were Maj Dewey Smith, MIA due to AAA on 2 June; Maj Clarence Kough, rescued/injured due to AAA on 3 June; and Capt John W. Swanson, MIA due to AAA on 15 June. Capt Jack L. Spearman returned to the States for medical reasons.

By the time he left Korat, Capt Spearman had accumulated 789 hours flying the F-105.

Incoming pilots during June were: Maj Dwight E. Sullivan, Capt Nickolas J. Donelson (a Ryan's Raider pilot reported as having arrived in May 1967), Capt Hugh W. Davis, and Capt Harry Guy Paddon III.

*34 TFS history, 1 - 30 Jun 67, USAF microfilm NO584, frame 0075 & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.*

### 07-Jul-67

1342

F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed Kep airfield (JCS 9.1 BE 616-8438) at coordinates 21-23-37N and 106-16-05E, in RP-6A, North Vietnam.

A strike flight on this mission was from the 34 TFS. The pilots were:

Capt Jack A. Phillips flying his 84th and 85th combat missions  
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson  
Maj Charles E. Irwin  
Maj Paul F. Koeltzow



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After the strike on Kep, their flight recycled for a RESCAP. Capt Phillips logged 5 hours 5 minutes of flight time for the total mission. The RESCAP was probably for Marine A-4E pilot Maj Ralph E. Brubaker who had been shot down in the DMZ the day before. He was rescued on 7 July.

Maj Ralph L. Kuster, Jr. from the 469 TFS was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for supporting this mission. "Maj Kuster was directed to strike at numerous flak sites surrounding Kep airfield. Undaunted when surrounded by exceptionally heavy ground fire, Maj Kuster in a voluntary act of bravery, relentlessly pressed the attack and silenced the hostile guns."

For a book, Kuster described his mission. "I guess the worst mission I flew would be July 7, 1967, against Kep Airfield, only a week after my shutdown. Usually out of twenty airplanes we put into Route Pack 6, two would be Weasels and two would be flak suppression. We flew flak suppressors in a flight of two, and each airplane pretty much operated independently. We were armed with four CBUs that we could drop individually or in twos. The idea was that when you saw some batteries firing, you dropped the CBUs over the batteries and had the gunners dive into their little foxholes, and the CBUs went off as they came back out. We had a formula for the attacking formation. The goal was to get all sixteen airplanes on and off the target in twenty seconds. The goal of twenty seconds was established as the time it took a gunner to pick out an airplane; track the airplane through the dive, bomb release, and pullout; and then crank the gun back up to vertical and try to select another target. We wanted him not to have a target when he got the gun back to vertical."

"Kep airfield was on the northeast highway from Hanoi to China. Mine was one of the flak-suppression airplanes. We split up and took on the flak on the field. There were two batteries firing: one 85-mm, which consisted of six guns, and one 57-mm battery. Apparently, they got ticked off at me and decided I was going to be their target for the day. I went checking out to the south, jinking right and left, and they did their damndest to shoot me down. I flew along and thought, 'I go to the right. No, I go to the left.' Actually, I had to go left to get out of the area and into the protection of the mountains. I turned back to the left, they'll think I'd turn right, so I turned a little more left. I tried to outguess those batteries, and they were trying to outguess me. And they were winning. Boy, they were really getting close with their big rectangular barrages. Those 85s must have been firing one barrage every two seconds. The barrages would overlap, and before one rectangle ran out, they would have another rectangle up there. And they were tracking me with those barrages, back and forth across the sky, until I didn't know which way to turn. You can jink up and fly over a barrage, but you can't fly through the rectangle, because of the fragments in there. They'll tear your airplane apart. You have to kind of dive and roll, the thing I used to do with clouds."

"I finally pulled to the left -- all the time in afterburner, the 85s still tracking me -- and I headed for the other side of Thud Ridge. Then I jinked from one side of the ridge over to the other, back and forth, not to give any gunners a chance to line up on me. When I finally leveled out at altitude, getting ready to join my tanker, I was drenched in sweat. I happened to look at my right hand. There is an area where the glove ends and the sleeve of my flight suit had pulled up. The hairs on my arm were standing straight up. I brushed them down like you brush down the hairs on a dog to get them to lie down. I touched the back of my neck, just below the helmet, and my hairs were standing straight up. That was my worst mission."

The 13 TFS Wild Weasel crew of Capt Robert E. Dorrrough, Jr. and his EWO Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers flew their first combat mission supporting this strike against Kep Air Field. Capt Dorrrough recorded their experience in his diary. "Fri: Our first mission was a "White Knuckler" (W.K.) to Kep Airfield. We were supposed to keep the SAMs down, and we did. In addition, our flight struck a known SAM site with 750s and CBUs. My CBUs hit a 37-mm and scared the hell out

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of any farmers who might have been nearby. Our Check Point going into the target area was an island called the "elephant's ear". Some high 85-mm and a lot of 37- and 57-mm barrage at about 5,000 ft were around the site we struck. Maj Bill Underwood [13 TFS Wild Weasel pilot Maj William E. Underwood] hit a Firecan (85-mm) on the NE RR; Maj Lefty Frizzel [13 TFS Wild Weasel pilot Maj Frederick N. Frizzell] cut a road with 750#. After G.I.s for 7 days, Bud & I blacked out on our pull out and lost flight for awhile."

*388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Jack Phillips e-mail 18 Mar 11 & "I Always Wanted to Fly -- Hambone 02", pgs 267 and 293 - 295 & Bob Dorrough's Combat diary.*

**23-Aug-67**

455

During the attack on the Yen Vien RR Classification Yard (JCS 19), 1Lt David B. Waldrop III, "Crossbow 3" from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, shot down a MiG-17 and claimed a second MiG kill that was not credited. It was Lt Waldrop's 53rd mission over North Vietnam. He flew F-105D 61-0132 on the mission that lasted 2.9 hours. The crew chief of Lt Waldrop's F-105 was SSgt James W. Henderson.

The 388 TFW OPREP reported Waldrop's MiG encounter this way. "At 0820Z, coming off JCS 19.00, Crossbow flight noted at least three MiG-17s closing on a flight of F-105s. Crossbow Number 1 engaged one MiG and fired but damage to the MiG is unknown until gun camera film is reviewed."

"Crossbow 3 (Lt Waldrop) engaged one MiG-17 and fired. Pilot noticed hits on MiG's left wing and stopped firing and when MiG did not blow up he then closed again to less than 1,000 feet and fired again getting hits around the canopy area. Crossbow 3 followed the MiG until he impacted the ground. Crossbow 4 confirmed impact. Crossbow 4 engaged one MiG-17 and fired at him but damage to the MiG is unknown until gun camera film is reviewed. The flight engaged MiGs 4 NM NE of Phuc Yen airfield. ... MiG crashed at 21-17N and 105-50E."

Lt Waldrop described his MiG kill: "As I rolled to the right, I looked down and saw two MiG-17's. One was on the tail of an F-105 at the time. I picked up one and broke in on him. I plugged in my afterburner, picked up a little airspeed, closed in, and started hosing off my cannon at him. Shortly afterwards, some fire shot out from his wingtips and about midway across the wing and he started a slow roll over to the right. I backed off and fired again. He continued rolling right on in and blew up when he hit the ground."

"His second kill came when he jumped the other MiG and pumped rounds into the aircraft's canopy area. The enemy plane rolled over and disappeared in the clouds." On 5 December 1967, the Seventh Air Force Enemy Aircraft Claims Evaluation board denied credit for 1Lt Waldrop's first MiG.

In later ceremonies, Lt Waldrop was awarded the second cluster to the Silver Star for this mission. (7th Air Force Special Order G-2166, 4 Dec 67)

Capt Nicholas J. Donelson, one of the original Ryan's Raider pilots on TDY to the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand, from Yokota AB, Japan, was the mission commander on the strike against the railyard. He led 28 strike and 4 MiG CAP aircraft in bombing the target. During the same April 1968 ceremony at Yokota in which Lt Waldrop received his Silver Star, Capt Donelson was awarded the Air Force Cross. His citation read that Capt Donelson "... was the mission commander for a force of thirty-two aircraft attacking a heavily defended rail yard in the vicinity of Hanoi. Repeated attacks against his force by hostile aircraft destroyed two friendly aircraft, and the intense barrage of anti-aircraft fire downed a third and severely damaged a fourth. In spite of the intense opposition, Captain Donelson, at great personal risk, led his force to the target and pressed the attack, inflicting severe damage to the rail yard and destroying a large amount of rolling stock.

# Nicholas J. Donelson

## F-105 History

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... "

Donelson described the mission this way. "Robin Olds was my MiG escort and they flew two ships off each wing as we proceeded down Thud Ridge. An F-4 strike force from Ubon had joined up with us as planned and were in trail. We were around 15K ft with an overcast about 5K above us. MiGs were being called out on the Bullseye broadcast circling to the north. They popped out of the clouds at the rear of the F-4 formation and salvoed Atolls into the force. When MiGs at 6 were called out, I turned hard left and saw two F-4s in flat spins burning. Olds' flight took off in pursuit of the MiGs. (Col) John Flynn, ... Vice Commander of the 388 TFW at Korat was my #2 (on) his first Pack Six flight."

"We regrouped, pressed in and hit the target. If I remember correctly, (we) encountered MiGs coming off the target. I saw one on the tail of a 105 in a tight spiraling turn, the MiG's guns blazing. I turned hard left to roll in on the flight but two F-105s in fighting wing were fast closing on the MiG and I broke off and climbed out. It was Barry Waldrop and he got the MiG. I remember also about the same time a call from a sister flight member that called he was hit (Capt Hal P. Henning) ... . When we reviewed (the) MiG kill gun camera film, Hal had flown between the MiG and Waldrop blazing away and you could see what appeared to be a hit on the right drop tank. Hal made it back OK." (N. J. Donelson, e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 17 July 2001).

Capt Henning from the 44 TFS received a Silver Star for this mission. His flight record shows he flew an F-105D for 2.9 hours. (Hal Henning, e-mail to Ron Thurlow, 28 Jun 2001).

"As far as Lt. David B. Waldrop III and many others were concerned, he did score a double on August 23rd, 1967, but the Seventh Air Force Evaluation Board eventually disallowed his first kill. ... The kill was witnessed and confirmed by none other than Colonel Robin Olds who was flying the lead MIGCAP F-4D that mission. He stated for the record, "It was beautiful. The MIG-17 was diving toward the ground with flames coming out of his tailpipe. It wasn't the afterburner; he was on fire. There was that great, great, huge THUD right behind him with fire coming out of his nose. It looked like a shark chasing a minnow. The MIG-17 was diving straight for the ground and I saw no parachute."

"Shortly after this confrontation, Waldrop and his wingman pursued two more MIG-17's. He engaged one which resulted in significant damage to the MIG-17. The MIG exploded, rolled into an inverted position, and impacted the ground."

"The 388th TFW's Enemy Aircraft Claims Board did in fact review and validate both of Waldrop's claims for 23 August using all available data (gun camera film, wingman testimony, testimony from other witnesses including Col. Robin Olds' account and operations reports). But when the claims were processed by the Seventh Air Force Enemy Aircraft Claims Evaluation Board at a later date, the board confirmed Waldrop's second claim but denied his first. Apparently, the evidence was insufficient to warrant an award for the first encounter." (Paul Osborne, e-mail to the centuryseries Web site, Apr 18, 2000).

Maj Billy R. Givens from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, also claimed a probable kill of a MiG-17 but his claim was eventually denied.

*388 /JOPREP/OPREP-3/PINNACLE/013 & Aces & Aerial Victories, pp 65 & 66 & Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol. III, No. 1, September, 1967 & Sawadee Flyer, 20 Apr 68, pg 1 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756.*

**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

# Nicholas J. Donelson

## F-105 History

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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.*

### 31-Oct-67

5160

Capt Nicholas J. Donelson was the only pilot assigned to the 34 TFS who completed 100 combat missions during October 1967.

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

### 15-Mar-68

2355

(Approximate Date) Fairchild Republic's Thunderchief World Wide Report for April 1968 reported that, "The Air Force Cross has been awarded to Captain Nicholas J. Donelson, a member of the 35 TFS at Yokota AB, Japan, and to 1Lt Karl W. Richter, who was killed in action over North Vietnam while flying 198 combat missions as a 388 TFW pilot. Donelson, a former 388 TFW pilot, was cited for action while leading an attack against a heavily defended rail yard in North Vietnam. He is shown in the photograph receiving the award from Lt Gen. Seth J. McKee, Fifth Air Force Commander."

"Richter's parents accepted the posthumous decoration from Lt Gen Thomas S. Moorman, USAF Academy superintendent, at a formal ceremony before the entire 4,300-man cadet wing. The Lieutenant also posthumously received the Silver Star, second and third Oak Leaf Clusters to the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, and the fourteenth through twenty-first Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal and the Purple Heart."

"At a special ceremony in Colorado Springs last month a 200-mission certificate was awarded to the parents of 1Lt Karl W. Richter. ... During the same ceremony, 16 Thunderchief pilots were awarded 100-mission certificates."

"One of the Air Force's most highly decorated pilots, Lt Col Fred A. Treyz, presently an F-105 Thunderchief project officer for the Deputy Inspector General for Inspection and Safety at Norton AFB, Calif., has been awarded four Silver Stars and 20 other awards for combat flying over North Vietnam. Treyz flew 104 missions in the Thunderchief fighter-bomber. He is shown receiving the decorations from BG Frank K. Everest, Jr., Aerospace Safety director."

The 14 pilots and two EWOs receiving 100 mission certificates were:

Maj Benjamin R. Fuller III	Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers (Wild Weasel EWO)
Maj Vernon Frye	Maj William M. Milstead

# Nicholas J. Donelson

## F-105 History

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Maj Russell A. Starkman	Maj Edwin F. "Tiny" Malone
Maj Frank P. Reamer, Jr.	Capt Dennis Kevin Duff
Maj Don L. "Rock" Campbell	Capt Needham B. Jones
Maj Ralph H. Bowersox	Capt Robert G. Bradshaw, Jr.
Maj Earl L. Pearce	Capt Christopher D. Dascalos
Maj Earl E. Krug	Capt Norman L. Frith II (Wild Weasel EWO)

*Thunderchief World Wide Report, Vol III, No 8, April, 1968*