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In the 23 TFW, the tenth F-105 RTU class graduated at McConnell AFB KS. Class 67HRM started on 28 Nov 66 with 21 pilots. It was named "The Spartans" and consisted of 8 Maj's, 8 Capt's, and 5 1Lt's. However, two students washed back one class, two students were eliminated, and one was gained from Seymour Johnson AFB when the 4 TFW closed their F-105 RTU course. Nineteen students graduated.

The class began flying on 4 Jan 1967 and deployed 20 F-105 aircraft for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 23 Mar - 7 Apr 67 with the 562 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col James A. Young. The class was originally scheduled to graduate on 20 April 1967, however, on 29 March 1967, while the class was at George, Hq TAC extended RTU courses for an additional 15 sorties.

The students were:

Maj Franklin A. Billingsley	Capt John E. Nolan
Maj James L. Davis	Capt Russell Edwin Temperley
Maj Richard C. Fontaine	1Lt Jeffery Thomas Ellis
Maj Earl M. Freeman	1Lt Vernon D. Ellis
Maj Jack W. Hart	Maj Alan R. Iverson
Maj Robert R. Huntley	Maj Harold J. "Jim" Steinke, Jr.
Maj Myron L. Savage	Capt Lawrence P. Gould
Capt Clyde L. Falls, Jr.	Capt Jacob C. "Jake" Shuler
Capt David A. Holland	Capt Herbert W. Moore
Capt Irving E. LeVine	

Maj James L. Davis won the Top Gun award and Maj Robert R. Huntley won the Outstanding Pilot plaque. Huntley's previous assignment had been at Aviano AB, Italy, where he ran the command post in the 7227 Combat Support Group. In this job, he scheduled rotational F-100 units to the Maniago air-to-ground bombing range. Previously he had flown F-89s, F-94Bs and F-102s in ADC units.

Both Davis and Huntley left the class early since they were selected to train as Wild Weasel pilots. Huntley recalled, "My instructor pilot, Bob Pielin, told me that I needed to volunteer since I was going to Weasel school whether I volunteered or not." They attended Wild Weasel Class 67WWIII-12 that started on 9 May 1967 at Nellis AFB, NV. Both men were then assigned to the 354 TFS at Takhli. (Bob Huntley telephone interview 20 May 2010)

Capt Clyde L. Falls came from Laredo AFB, TX where he was an Academic Instructor in the 3641 Student Squadron (ATC). After F-105 training, he arrived at Korat on 6 July 1967 and was assigned to the 34 TFS.

Capt LeVine had come from assignments flying B-47s and B-52s in SAC and C-130s in MAC. After his F-105 training, he went to jungle survival school in the Phillipines; "... short course ... no Escape and Evasion." He also was assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat, where he arrived on 14 June 1967.

Capt Jeffrey T. Ellis was a T-37 IP at Laughlin AFB, Texas. He set an academic record for the RTU program with his 99.7% average for the Top Academic Award. After his F-105 training, he was assigned to the 469 TFS.

Capt Ellis and Capt Jacob C. "Jake" Shuler, another T-37 IP from the 3645 Pilot Training Squadron at Laughlin, had initially received orders to RTU Class 67-CRS at Seymour Johnson. (Shuler, then a 1st Lt, received 3646 PTW PCS Order A-1286 dated 27 Sept 1966. Ellis' order # was A-1287.) This class

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would have been the third F-105 RTU at Seymour. However, the class was cancelled when the 4 TFW was notified in September 1966 that their F-105s were to be replaced by F-4Ds. On 5 October 1966, Shuler's and Ellis' orders were amended (by HQ 3646 Plt Tng Wg SO A-1314) to send them to McConnell's RTU Class 67-GRM. They ended up joining the next class at McConnell 67-HRM.

Capt Shuler had received his wings in December 1963 in UPT Class 64-D at Webb AFB, Big Spring TX. He attended Pilot Instructor Training (PIT) at, Williams AFB AZ, , then served as a T-37 Instructor Pilot in the 3645 Pilot Training Squadron at Laughlin AFB, Del Rio, TX, from May 1964 until receiving his F-105 assignment in September 1966. After marrying on June 18th, he moved his wife into a duplex in Del Rio then to on-base housing in August. Upon receipt of his F-105 assignment, he moved his wife to St. Matthews, SC while he attend survival training at Fairchild AFB, WA, then to Wichita, KS for F-105 training at McConnell in December 1966.

While at McConnell, between 6 December 1966 and 17 April 1967, he flew 50 F-105 training sorties. After completing his F-105 upgrade, his assignment to SEA was deferred pending the birth of their child and he returned to Laughlin as a T-37 IP. Their son was born on 13 July 67 and, after moving his wife for the 6th time in 13 months, he reported to McConnell on 25 August for F-105 Category IV refresher training. This time he flew an additional seven F-105 sorties between 25 August and 7 September 1967. With 90.8 hours in the F-105, he then departed for his combat assignment to the 34 TFS.

En route to Korat, between 22 - 27 September 1967, he completed the PACAF Jungle Survival School at Clark AB, Phillipines.

23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 67, USAF microfilm MO554 & Clyde Falls AF Form 11 & Irv LeVine, letter received 16 Apr 10 & Jake Shuler, biographical sketch, via e-mail 19 May 2010, and F-105 mission spreadsheet, and e-mail 5 Jul 2010 forwarding PCS orders.

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.

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 antiaircraft 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

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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 antiaircraft 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 antiaircraft 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.)

"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

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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.

26-Oct-67

3445

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

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

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

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

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

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Armstrong, combat mission log for period 5 Oct 67 - 14 Apr 68, pg 5.)

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

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

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

The flight time was 3.2 hours. A draft award justification described the flight's mission. "Major Barner was leader of Crossbow Flight, which was one of five flights in Olympia Force. ... Olympia Force had been ordered to strike the Ha Gia Railroad Bridge located east of Ha Gia and 3 miles south of Thai Nguyen. This rail line is the major link between the huge industrial complex at Thai Nguyen and Hanoi to the south.

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

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

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

27-Oct-67

1187

On Friday morning, continuing their attacks this week on major North Vietnamese targets, F-105s from the 355 TFW and the 388 TFW struck the Canal des Rapides bridge (JCS 13) northeast of Hanoi in RP-6A, North Vietnam. It was a costly and harrowing mission, designated RT56A-177.

Three flights of F-105Ds from the 355 TFW struck the bridge and one other flight attacked flak sites protecting the bridge. Each strike aircraft carried two 3,000-pound bombs under its wings.

1Lt Crissman R. Lawrence from the 354 TFS led Takhli's force. Its line up was:

Maj Charles Edward Cappelli was "Bison Lead". "Bison 2" was Capt Gene I. Basel in F-105D 62-4284, and "Bison 4" was Maj Robert W. Kennedy flying F-105D 62-4385.

Maj Robert L. Stirm in F-105D 61-0122 led "Zebra" flight from the 333 TFS. Capt David L. Tucker was Zebra 2; Capt John C. Leech, Zebra 3; and 1Lt Cal W. Tax was Zebra 4.

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The strike force included a Wild Weasel flight from Takhli led by Capt Ralph E. "Sam" Adams (with EWO Capt Richard L. Grover?) as "Otter 1" from the 354 TFS, and an F-4D MIGCAP flight from the 8 TFW at Ubon, using call sign "Ford".

"Olympia Flight" from the 34 TFS led the attack from Korat. Its lineup was:

- 1 - Maj George G. Clausen the 34 TFS commander
- 2 - Col John P. Flynn, the 388 TFW Vice Wing Commander flying F-105D 62-4231
- 3 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis
- 4 - 1Lt David B. Waldrop III

Col Flynn was hit by a SAM while approaching the target. Maj Clausen recalled that the 388 TFW commander Col Edward B. Burdett lost his flight upon target egress and joined Olympia flight for their return to Korat.

Maj Clausen was awarded the Silver Star (1st OLC) for this mission. "Major George G. Clausen distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an F-105 pilot in Southeast Asia on 27 October 1967. On that date, Major Clausen courageously led a force of twenty F-105s and four F-4s on a mission against a vital railroad and highway bridge near Hanoi. Although a withering barrage of surface-to-air missiles and antiaircraft fire inflicted heavy losses upon his force prior to reaching the target, he continued in to complete a successful attack. Before departing, he turned back into the most hazardous area in an attempt to ascertain the location and condition of his downed wingman. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Major Clausen has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (George Clausen, phone interview, 5 April 2010 & Award citation provided by George Clausen, received 12 Apr 2010.)

Capt Lawrence Klinestiver also from the 34th flew F-105D 61-0124, and Capt William Wallace Butler from the 469 TFS flew F-105D 61-0068.

Three miles prior to the target, as the strike force came down Thud Ridge and began contending with the first of the many SAMs they encountered on this mission, Maj Kennedy's aircraft ("Bison 4" F-105D 62-4385) had the severe flight control problems that Capt Evert had experienced in the same plane two days earlier during the attack on the Doumer bridge. In his book "Pak Six", Capt Basel told what happened. His plane swapped ends "... up and down in a gigantic porpoise movement. His speed brakes popped out and the bombs and fuel tanks tore from the plane and tumbled out of sight. ... Bob broke formation, out of control, turning violently left and down to the deck." The 355 TFW OPREP described the event a bit differently reporting that "Bison 3" and "Bison 4" "... Jettisoned their four M-118s safe in a wooded area ..." because "Bison 4" was experiencing flight control problems (violent pitch oscillations). "Bison 3" escorted Maj Kennedy back to Takhli.

The North Vietnamese defended the bridge with barrages of SAMs and AAA. "At least four missile regiments engaged the attackers. Three battalions of the 236th Regiment mass-fired their missiles downing one F-105." ("The -ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in *The Journal of Military History*, Jan 2003, pg 194.)

The strike force encountered 11 SAMs while flying to the target. The SAMs were launched in pairs approximately 30 seconds apart. The missiles appeared to be accurately guided and detonated at approximately 10,000 to 12,000 feet. The force's pod formation appeared to be effective probably due to the close range and the large number of SAM sites. SAMs were fired from sites L-46, L-37, and L-44. Other probable firing sites were L-87, L-30, and L-15. In his book, Capt Basel described the SAM encounters. "The sky was fast filling up with flaming missiles. We were caught in a massive crossfire. They came through the formation from both sides, from ahead. ... The Weasels were going crazy.

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Against this attack, the most savage to date, they could do little. All their Shrikes were gone. They had killed three sites, but they could kill no longer."

The SAMs knocked one of the attacking planes out of the sky. Its pilot, Col Flynn, "Olympia 02", from the 388 TFW, was captured.

SAMs claimed a second pilot. On ingress at 0111Z, "Zebra Lead", Maj Robert L. Stirm from the 333 TFS at Takhli received a direct hit by a SAM at coordinates 21-09N and 105-54E. The QRC pods in "Zebra" flight were operational and the flight was in standard pod formation, yet the SAM, launched from site VN-009 BE 616-01087, succeeded in finding a target. The pilot was climbing to roll-in altitude and was at 12,000 feet and 410 knots. "Zebra 2" and "Zebra 3" jettisoned four M-118s armed at 21-12N and 105-30E and attempted to escort "Zebra 1" out of the area. However, Maj Stirm's aircraft went out of control and into tight unstable right turns. No one saw a chute but one crewmember thought he heard a beeper. Maj Stirm was reported as MIA and was later confirmed captured. He was released with other POWs on 14 March 1973.

The planes jinked to avoid SAMs and maneuvered for their dive bomb attacks. AAA opened up. As Capt Basel described, "The sky suddenly erupted with red explosions in and around the formation. We were now in range of the 85 millimeter guns on the outskirts of Hanoi. ... As we neared the target, the flak grew in intensity, bursting very close. ... All along the river and on the edge of the city, glaring, ugly red rings grew and faded. Flak sites spewing death into the morning sky. The sun was being blotted out by a growing cloud of smoke and debris over Hanoi."

AAA shot down one of the MIGCAP F-4Ds.

At 0111Z, flying flak suppression, the four F-105Ds in "Bear" flight dropped 12 CBU-24s, and 8 CBU-29s on AAA sites protecting the bridge. "Bear 3" noted what appeared to be two square, revetted artillery rocket sites firing four rockets at a time in quick succession and at a much faster rate than a AAA site can fire. One site was located approximately 7,000 feet northwest of Gia Lam airfield, immediately west of the rail line where the road branched east and cut across Gia Lam's runway. The other site was approximately 1,000 feet north northeast of the first site.

Reaching the bridge at 0112Z, two F-105Ds in "Bison" flight and four F-105Ds in "Shark" flight dropped 10 M-118s on the bridge followed one minute later by a single F-105D in "Zebra" flight that dropped two more of the 3,000-pound bombs. Pilots were unable to determine BDA due to extremely heavy defenses and smoke in the target area but they estimated they cut the bridge or its north approach. The flights experienced very intense accurate barrages and tracking 37/57/85-mm three minutes prior to the target, throughout their ordnance delivery, and continuing one nautical mile after egress.

Sometime during the attack, "Shark 2", F-105D 62-4347, received a four-inch by six-inch hole in the left horizontal stabilizer.

At 0114Z, when the two remaining pilots of "Bison" flight dove on the bridge and pickled their bombs, Capt Basel, "Bison 2", became separated from his flight lead. "... Basel rolled out at 3,000 feet on a southerly heading paralleling the Red River." As he turned from 200 degrees to 260 degrees, he saw two camouflaged MiG-17s moving into position behind "Bear" flight. All aircraft were at 3,000 feet in the vicinity of 20-51-30N and 105-52-00E, and heading 260 degrees. Capt Basel closed the distance between himself and the lead MiG from 3,000 feet to 2,000 feet and then fired approximately 600 rounds of 20-mm at the MiG. "I switched to dive function on the mode selector and closed to within 2,000 feet pulling lead on him. He didn't see me, and was intent on positioning for an attack on the flight ahead of me until he felt the 20-mm impacts. At that time he reversed his direction abruptly, fire belching from his tailpipe. The MiG continued rolling left to a rear inverted position until lost from sight. ... " "Bison 2" continued on with "Bison 1" and neither pilot saw the two MiGs again. "Bison 2's" gun

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camera film showed 20-mm impacts and flames coming from the MiG's aft section just forward of the exhaust. Capt Basel claimed one MiG destroyed. His mission had lasted three hours. (Aces & Aerial Victories, pg 71 & Capt Basel's individual flight record.)

The 7 AF Enemy Aircraft Claims Evaluation Board initially approved Capt Basel's claim in their release NR 11-67-185. However, on 5 December 1967, the Board withdrew their approval of the claim. "Although Captain Basel's claim for destroying a MIG-17 was initially denied because of a lack of information, it was confirmed after study of his gun camera film showed that the MIG-17 was on fire in its aft section and could not have recovered." (Fairchild Hiller memo, 6 Feb 68, quoting 7 AF letter in 388 TFW history, Jul - Dec 67 frame 1876.)

"Zebra" flight reported intercepting two 15-second oriental language transmissions over guard (OPREP cut off).

The North Vietnamese lost a MiG-17 but the Americans paid a higher price. Three aircraft were lost over the target and two F-105 pilots, Col Flynn and Maj Stirm, and the pilot in the F-4D, Capt Jon D. Black, became POWs. The F-4 GIB, 1Lt Lorenza Conner, was killed.

Today's attacks did not damage the bridge and so the F-105s returned to hit the bridge again on Saturday.

355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI 5503 OPREP-4/165 in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1392 & "Pak Six", by G. I. Basel, pgs 67 - 80 & National Archives camera shot lists, record number NWDNM(m)-342-USA-42649B & "Aces & Aerial Victories", pgs 69 - 71.

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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.

"In a letter to Colonel Giraud (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.)

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

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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 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 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.

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

19-Dec-67

4802

In the morning, the Wild Weasel crew of Capt Robert E. Dorrrough, Jr. and EWO Maj Clarence S. "Bud" Summers from the 44 TFS, 388 TFW, flew their 83rd combat mission over North Vietnam supporting Korat's strike missions against railroad targets near Hanoi.

Other crews in their Wild Weasel flight using call sign "Vegas" were:

- #2 - Capt William D. Scott, 469 TFS
- #3 - Maj Emmett E. "Ez" Ott and EWO Capt Thomas J. McGuire IV, 44 TFS
- #4 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis, 34 TFS.

"Bobbin" was the second Weasel flight from the 44 TFS led by Maj Michael S. Muskat and EWO Capt Kyle Stouder.

"Tues. Vegas Flight - They can be tougher! #83 was to the same area [as yesterday's mission], the same route [from the Gulf]. Today the visibility was much worse than yesterday - about 2 - 3 miles and haze. That meant we could not see the SAMs until they were pretty close. More were fired at us today than yesterday, and the flak was worse, too. We rolled in on a camouflaged site by the river about 14 nm SE of Hanoi. We clobbered him, but both myself and my wingman were hit by 37-mm. He in the tail, I in the nose section. So I now have a souvenir - no more, thank you.

"I was slightly injured in the right leg when we got hit, but did not have room to mention it on the diary page. It was a very hairy mission. ... Bud and I were recommended for the Air Force Cross, but it was downgraded to our 3rd Silver Star by someone up channel. ... Major Mike Muskat and Capt Kyle Stouder led another Weasel flight to split up the defenses. Our audio tape verified we had 18 SAMs fired at us, and probably more we did not see. Numbers 3 and 4 got split from us while we were dodging missiles, and we did not see them again until back at Korat. I had a very small leg injury when we got hit, and lost my radio and air-conditioning system. My wingman, Capt. Scott, also lost his radio when he got hit. With about 10 minutes of fuel left, my radio started working again, we found a tanker, and made it home! The best news was that our tactics worked, and no F-105Ds or F-4s from the strike force were shot down."

Capt Dorrrough received the Silver Star, Second Oak Leaf Cluster for this mission. His award citation, read, in part, "... Captain Dorrrough braved numerous barrages of anti-aircraft artillery fire and eighteen surface-to-air missiles while he led repeated attacks against several firing missile sites. At great personal risk, Capt Dorrrough skillfully continued this hazardous mission in support of friendly strike aircraft after receiving severe battle damage." He was also awarded the Purple Heart under 7Th Air Force Special Order G-1837, dated 20 June 1968.

"Dick Arnold [Capt Richard W. Arnold] went 'golden' today with 90."

Bob Dorrrough's combat diary and e-mail diary update and award citation.

23-Dec-67

6715

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

- #1 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis flying F-105D 62-4387
- #2 - Maj William M. Blakeslee flying 61-0072
- #3 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 58-1157
- #4 - Capt Douglas A. Beyer flying 61-0132
- Spare: Capt Irving E. LeVine in 60-0505

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

This was Capt Shuler's 34th mission. "This apparently was another Commando Club mission, target coordinates 20-25N and 104-10E, 094 degrees at 25 NM from Channel 97."

Jake Shuler 23 Dec 67 mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011.

25-Dec-67

2772

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

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

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

"Merry Christmas!

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

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

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

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

01-Jan-68

6178

Capt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, 388 TFW, flew a non-counter into Laos.

"Took off at 3:00 AM. Combat Skyspot mission."

Pilots from the 34 TFS also flew a non-counter into Laos. "Pistol" flight took off at 02:20 for a TOT of 03:00. They post-strike refueled from Blue Anchor 20. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Vernon D. Ellis flying F-105D 58-1150
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 61-0162
- #3 - Capt Hugh W. Davis flying 58-1172
- #4 - Capt Irving E. LeVine flying 60-0436.

Jake Shuler recalled, "As with Christmas Day, we were not allowed to bomb NVN on New Year's Day. According to the Mission Data Card, we attacked targets at coordinates 16-42N and 106-13E, which is in the vicinity of inactive Tchepone airfield in southern Laos, about 70 NM southwest of Dong Hoi."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Bass 3" against a road segment in the Steel Tiger region of Laos. "100%. Road cut." It was his 29th combat mission.

Earl Henderson, combat diary & Jake Shuler mission card and e-mail 11 Jan 2011. Rufus Dye Mission History log

02-Jan-68

4859

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

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

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

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

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

03-Jan-68

2229

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

This was Maj Armstrong's 46th combat mission. "The target was Kinh No railroad yard 6 miles north of Hanoi. We went in via the land route with the sun in our face. There were no clouds in the delta but the visibility was very poor with the haze and sun. We should never have continued in. We started getting MiG calls shortly after crossing the border. They closed to 15 miles and the F-4s went after them. As we came into the delta along the Red River, the MiGs stayed on our tail and the SAMs and

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Post strike photography obtained on 5 January revealed that 5 of the 7 tracks were interdicted and 3 pieces of rolling stock were destroyed or damaged." (Briefing)

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

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

04-Jan-68

3497

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

06-Jan-68

2883

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

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

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

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

"Instead of F-4s pretending to be F-105s as in Bolo, Momyer's new sweep featured thirty-four F-105s stripped of their bombs and ready to dogfight. Most of them crossed Thud Ridge at fourteen thousand feet and turned east as if intending to strike Kep airfield or the railroad bridge at Mo Trang, fifteen miles west of Kep on the line to Thai Nguyen. Not surprisingly, their ruse was soon discovered, when two pairs of MiG-21s attacked from the rear. Typical of North Vietnamese tactics since August, it was a hit-and-run attack out of the late afternoon sun. The MiGs and the strike force traded heat-seeking missiles without doing any damage, and the MiG pilots escaped to tell their controllers that the F-105s were not carrying bombs. The best opportunity for destroying an enemy aircraft that afternoon came a few minutes later, when an F-105 pilot noticed an Il-14 Crate transport several thousand feet below, headed for Hanoi. While the F-105 pilot was getting his force commander's permission to attack this gray cargo plane with a red star, it dove into the nearest cloud; the F-105 got off one burst of gunfire and missed."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vernon D. Ellis

F-105 History

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

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

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

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

"It worked just like I briefed. The radar aircraft warned me when the MiGs were 30 miles, 18 miles and finally at 7 miles. This was one more call than I expected. At the 7 mile call, I called the break. When we all came back to the original Northerly heading, there were no MiG's in sight. They had obviously been warned once we started our maneuver and stayed below the clouds and headed North for a safe

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recovery. Takhli was closer than 5 minutes behind us as were also the F-4C's. So we had a whole bunch of Air Force aircraft flying around in the same area with armed missiles and itchy trigger fingers! People were calling out bogies all over the place and thinking they might be MiG's only to discover that it was only some of our own. I soon decided that the MiGs were laying low and the situation was becoming hazardous from 'friendly fire'. So I called for my 4 flights to head home.

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

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

13-Jan-68

4864

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

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

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

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

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

29-Feb-68

5164

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

- Capt Irving E. LeVine - Flown 5 Feb 68 on his birthday.
- Capt Vernon D. Ellis
- Maj Kenneth W. Mays
- Capt Harry Guy Paddon III - Flew his 100th on 29 Feb 1968. "Good old leap year."

Capt Paddon left Korat in March 1968 and was next assigned to Moody AFB, GA as a T-38 IP.

Capt LeVine had flown 99 missions in December 1967, "... and could have gone home when my 100 were done but Ray Vissotzky [Maj Raymond Walter Vissotzky], a real, trained LSO, had been shot down [and had become a POW on 19 November 1967] and they needed someone to fill his shoes as Life Support Officer. I had 120+ parachute [jumps] but as Ray had 'penciled me in' as his assistant, the Powers That Be thought that was good enough. I said I'd stay if they let me fly my 100th Mission on my [34th] birthday ... Feb 5th 1968 and the deal was sealed."

Capt LeVine left Korat in May 1968 and was assigned to the F-111 program at Nellis AFB, NV. He

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remained at Nellis until he retired on 1 October 1972.

Also on this day, a flight of 34th pilots flew a mission over North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Melvin L. Irwin
- #2 - Capt John S. Murphy
- #3 - Maj Donald W. Hodge
- #4 - Capt Joseph S. Sechler flying his tenth mission.

Capt Sechler logged 2:55 flying hours. (Joe Sechler flight log via e-mail 28 Apr 10)

34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Harry Paddon, e-mail 31 March 2010 & Irv LeVine, letter received 16 Apr 10 & Irv LeVine, e-mail 17 Apr 10.