

# Richard P. Fitzgerald

## F-105 History

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26-Aug-65      28-Oct-65

309

In a continuing series of TDY combat rotations by the three squadrons of the 6441 TFW at Yokota AB, Japan, the 36 TFS deployed for their third combat tour. Their first was to Korat in August 1964. This was their second deployment to Takhli RTAFB, Thailand, to replace the 80 TFS. The 36 TFS commander was Lt Col Howard F. "Red Dog" Hendricks.

Capt Douglas G. Lauck was one of the 36 TFS pilots on this deployment. This was his third 60-day TDY deployment with the 36th to Thailand and his second one to Takhli. During this deployment, he raised his total North Vietnam combat missions to about 48.

Other pilots on the deployment were:

Col Chester L. Van Etten, the 6441 TFW Commander  
Maj Dean A. Pogreba, the 36 TFS Operations Officer  
Capt John O. Rollins II  
Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald  
Capt Lester W. Sundt  
Capt John R. Layman  
Capt Rex L. Dull  
Capt Clarence E. Fox  
Capt Jerry L. Stamps  
Capt William A. Becker  
Maj Wayne N. Whatley  
Capt Fredrick William Shattuck, Jr.  
Capt David L. Hatten  
Capt Bernard G. Lyons  
Capt James I. Miholick  
Lt Col William L. Janssen from the 6441 TFW Staff  
Capt Michael F. McNamara from the 6441 TFW Staff  
Capt Jack R. Stresing from the 41 AD Staff

Capt Robert H. Jones  
Capt Vernon D. Hesterman  
Capt Thomas W. Sima  
Capt Onofiro J. Andrews  
Capt Roderick G. Beckett  
Capt Donnie R. Duplissey  
Capt Robert H. Schuler, Jr.  
1Lt Delbert F. Miller  
Capt Bruce G. Seeber  
Capt Paul H. Storment  
Capt Wayne D. Hauth  
Capt David S. Graben  
Capt Stanley S. Rynear  
1Lt Benjamin D. Ulrich  
1Lt Denis D. O'Donoghue

*6441 TFW History, Jul - Dec 65, USAF microfilm PO232 & Doug Lauck, e-mail 25 Sep 2006 & 441 Cmbt Spt Gp Special Order TA-424 dated 5 Aug 65.*

18-Apr-66

5176

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

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

The following list contains the positions and names of the initial twenty-nine pilots assigned to the

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

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

### India Flight

Flight Commander - Maj Wayne N. Whatley  
Capt Robin K. Nierste  
Capt James I. Miholick  
Capt Douglas G. Lauck  
Capt Robert H. Jones  
Capt Robert R. Reed

### Lima Flight

Flight Commander - Capt James E. Hayes  
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.  
Capt Gordon M. Walcott  
Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen  
1Lt John Bernard Sullivan III

### Juliet Flight

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

### Metro Flight

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

### Kilo Flight

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

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

## 21-May-66

4956

On Saturday, 21 May 1966, an advance party of the 34 TFS deployed by C-130 from Yokota AB, Japan, to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. The C-130, "Chalk 1", took off from Yokota at 0503. The group consisted of four pilots and maintenance and administrative personnel along with maintenance equipment. The four pilots were:

Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron Operations Officer  
Capt Robert D. Pielin  
Capt Stanley S. Gunnensen  
Capt Merrill R. Lewis, Jr.

Capt Lewis brought with him on the C-130 the squadron mascot, a dog he owned named "Roscoe". Roscoe was from a litter of pups originally belonging to Capt Roscoe E. "JR" Anderson from the 80 TFS who had died in an F-105D accident near Yokota on 8 September 1964.

*E-mail from Lamont Pharmer, 22 Sep 2006, with attached letter to him from Bob Pielin dated 11 July 1988..*

## 18-Jun-66

5200

Three days after their arrival at Korat, the 34 TFS flew its first combat missions. Capt Robert D. Pielin was one of the four flight leaders for these missions "... since we already had a 'local area

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checkout' ....". Pielin, who had arrived in the squadron's advance party on 21 May 1966, had flown 89 missions by the time the rest of his squadron got to Korat.

"I was in that flight with Rick Laymen [Capt John R. Layman], and two other 34th pilots (unknown names)." (Bob Pielin, e-mail 2 Apr 07.)

"My last 11 missions with the 34th were not too exciting compared to some of the previous 89. The first two days of flying, 18 and 19 June 1966, I checked out pilots that had not been in-theater during the previous six months. Their previous missions were flown TDY with their own squadrons, and things [had] changed considerably with [7th Air Force in] Saigon now running the show. Even to the ridiculous situation of fragging our ingress to and our egress from Pac #6 targets. Red Dog didn't hold us to that. We planned our own missions, and let him know our route, in case something happened. Anyway, I did.

"The 18th would be my first mission after [my] shoot-down [on 3 June 1966]. I was fragged to a Pak #1 on a typical 'suspected truck park'. I know Fitz [Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, the squadron's DO] had something to do with that, to see how 'shaky' I would be. I wasn't about to drop short of the target, so pressed in to make sure. I pressed in so far that my bombs dropped at least 1,000 feet long at 12 o'clock." (Bob Pielin, e-mails 25 Sept 2006 and 7 April 2007.)

*Bob Pielin, e-mails 25 Sept 2006, 2 April 2007, and 7 April 2007*

### 25-Jul-66

5208

[Approximate date] Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald, Operations Officer of the 34 TFS from the 388 TFW, Korat, led a flight against a target in RP-6A, North Vietnam. Capt James I. Miholick was his wingman and recalled that, "... Fitz was leading a 4-ship strike flight, and we missed the target, which we called 'Ho Chi Minh's sand and gravel works'. It was actually the Thai Nguyen POL storage area, about 25-30 miles north of Hanoi on the east side of Thud ridge. We'd hit the stupid thing for the previous 3-4 days, and there was nothing left of it but bomb craters, but we were fragged to go hit it again.

"Anyway, due to pretty bad weather, we wound up at the southern end of Thud ridge, I was on Fitz's wing in a loose fighting wing position, when he decided to head back north to see if we could find the target. We were going like a bandit on the deck to avoid the SAMs and MiGs, and probably doing about 600+ KCAS. We ... [called] this 'leaving rooster tails off the (rice) paddies' because that's what it looked like. As we turned to the left back toward the north, I was low enough to almost hit a SA-2 still on its launcher with my left wing. I remember instinctively rolling out for a moment to miss it, then cranking back to the left to try to catch everyone else. We finally climbed back up, found the target through a hole in the clouds, bombed it (again), and went home none the worse for wear."

*Jim Miholick, e-mail 4 Apr 07.*

### 31-Aug-66

5150

Five pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat, all of whom had flown missions during earlier TDYs, completed flying 100 missions during August 1966. They were:

Maj Richard P. Fitzgerald  
Capt Wayne D. Hauth  
Capt John R. Layman  
Capt Robert H. Jones  
Capt David H. Groark

On his 100th mission, Capt Groark remembered that, "I landed about 1030 and was on a flight to Bangkok and return to the States by 1200 that day." He was assigned to the Test Wing at Eglin

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AFB, Florida. "Arrived there and had orders to ARPS at Edwards. After graduation, I returned to the Eglin Test Wing. Left active duty on 1 April 1972 and flew F-100s with the Georgia Air Guard and then AC-130s at Duke Field Eglin. While at Eglin I was triple current in the F-100, F-105, and A-7. On my last day of active duty, I flew a mission in each airplane."

Capt Bob Jones "... resigned my regular commission, accepted a reserve commission, and separated from active duty on 3 September 1966. I was hired by American Airlines, and flew for the company until June 1998. During my airline career, I flew B-727, 707, 757, 767, BAC -111, L-188, DC-10 and MD-11 equipment. I joined the NJ ANG in late 1966, and flew F-105Bs with them until 1971. I transferred to the AF Reserve then and flew F-105D T-Stick II birds, F-4Es, and A-10s before retiring in 1992 as an O-7."

*34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & Dave Groark, e-mail 10 April 2010 & Bob Jones, e-mail 24 Apr 10.*

#### 22-Aug-93

6952

Richard P. Fitzgerald died.

Born: 02 Apr 1925

Died: 22 Aug 1993

He last flew the F-105 in June 1967. He had accumulated 989.5 hours in the airplane.

*Rick Versteeg, e-mail 17 July 2011 & F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.*