

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

12-Apr-66

3648

For the second day in a row, B-52s from Guam struck North Vietnam, "... with the greatest bombing raid since World War II, closing the Mu Gia Pass. The B-52s dropped nearly 1.4 million pounds of 1,000 and 750-pound bombs. Recce reports stated that 'Route 15 through Mu Gia is definitely closed by a massive landslide.'"

Later in the day, four pilots from the 333 TFS in "Plymouth" flight had an ineffectual mission against a target in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 62-4234 on his 86th combat mission (68 counters)

Cushenberry: "Well, finally got airborne and got a counter but it sure wasn't worth a damn. ... We had an armed recce in Mu Gia where the B-52s dropped this morning. I think this is their furthest north. Anyway, we had a probe & drogue and #2 had a hard time. We were real short on fuel when we got off the target and the weather was very bad. We got under and pressed on from there but a couple of flights in front said it was bad. We got almost there but couldn't so turned around and brought all our stuff home. 2+40. 2 CBU's, 3-750s."

Seventh Air Force Chronology 1 July 65 - 30 June 1966 CHECO 66-0044 & Tony Cushenberry combat diary.

14-Apr-66

858

"Captain Calvin T. Broadaway, (from the 333 TFS at Takhli) leading four F-105 Thunderchiefs on a bombing mission north of the 17th parallel, knocked out his primary target (a bridge and four buildings) before proceeding south on road 'recce' operations. Sighting a truck convoy, the flight completely demolished 26 trucks. Captain Broadaway took a hit in the left stabilator slab, but accomplished an inflight refueling and returned to home station."

Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry, 333 TFS, flew two missions into North Vietnam. The lineup for his first mission was:

- #1 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 87th mission (69 counters)
- #2 - Maj Harry D. Sultz, Jr.
- #3 - Capt Donald J. Mattasolio
- #4 - 1Lt Jerry C. Smith

"Boy I really beat them today. I sniveled a morning ride as number 3 and wound up leading when Maj Leaf aborted. ... We went on a no-counter right around the corner from Mu Gia Pass but it was solid so we pressed on to our 1st alternate 40 miles away in the DRV. Really turned one on them legally. 2+40. 5-750s. P.S. Smitty got lost on take off."

The lineup for "Packard" flight on Cushenberry's second mission of the day was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0105 on his 88th mission (70 counters)
- #4 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #5 - Capt Donald M. Ware (Camera)

"Went with my flight on another counter. ... Our target was a storage tunnel that used to be a railroad tunnel but the bridge had been bombed out. It was upstream from Mu Gia and in NVN proper. Our bombing was good but number 2 was short. It was his 3rd mission. We were pleased. Cal Broadaway [Capt Calvin T. Broadaway] had his stabilator shot half off in the pass. 2+20. 5-750s."

Republic's Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol. 1 No. 9, May 1, 1966 & Tony Cushenberry's combat diary.

15-Apr-66

1692

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F-105 History

"Nash" flight from the 333 TFS, 355 TFW, was one of the five strike flights fragged for the Bac Giang Bridge (JCS 18.23) 30 miles northeast of Hanoi, North Vietnam. The F-105D pilots were:

- #1 - Maj. John M. Lowery
- #2 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying his 83rd combat mission (67 counters)
- #3 - Capt George W. Acree II flying 62-4239 on his 82nd combat mission (67 counters)
- #4 - Capt John Cole

After a 10:30 briefing for a 14:00 takeoff, the flight was diverted to an alternate target due to thunderstorms over their primary. They each dropped five 750-pound bombs cutting a rail line near Cao Nung on the Red River railroad.

Gobble: "This was a JCS to a railroad bridge 16 NM south of Kep Airfield. As we went, the weather got worse and the mission commander called the strike off. We went to the Red River and dropped on a railroad bridge there but missed. I strafed some railroad cars. On the way in, I accidentally dropped my bombs while making a Doppler fix." He logged 3 hours and 10 minutes for this mission. (The date was 16 Apr 66 in Gobble's Diary.)

Acree: "Wx - bad. Flak - light." He logged 3 hours and 15 minutes.

Four pilots from the 333 TFS in "Plymouth" flight bombed a target in Laos and another in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 62-4360 on his 89th combat mission (71 counters)

Cushenberry: "Our target today was a barracks and storage area in north Laos. We went way up next to the DRV in Area Bravo. The thunderstorms were terrific all over the place. ... Don went for his rug. We bombed our target and I was the only one that hit it squarely. I'm serious, I was. We then went recce and into the DRV. Dave and I shot some trucks on a road and this gave us a counter. It's kinda cheating but a full colonel showed us the way several days ago so my conscience doesn't bother me. They took Mu Gia away so if they want to play that way, so can we.

"Col Young [333rd squadron commander] is 2 days overdue due to no ride and we are all laughing up our sleeves. 2+25. 5-750."

F-105D Combat diaries of Capt. George W. Acree II, Capt Robert D. Gobble, and Tony Cushenberry.

16-Apr-66

7022

Four pilots from the 333 TFS in "Volvo" flight bombed a target in Laos then strafed trucks in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 90th combat mission (72 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald M. Ware

Cushenberry: "Our target again was a no-counter just east of Ban Ban. The whole of Laos was a huge thunderstorm so we had to divert way north and come in from there. There were, as usual, several flights ginning around in the area waiting to get in. The overcast was 10,000 feet and rain and everything. We really were playing their game. We finally got to drop our bombs and left to recce Route 7. We reced into DRV and found two trucks so we strafed them and from this got a counter. We lost #2 off the trucks and also 4. We finally got back together at just short of Udorn. Our FAC was Butterfly 88, an A-1E. He was wrong! ... 2+10. 5-750s."

Tony Cushenberry combat diary.

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F-105 History

17-Apr-66

1693

Five pilots from the 333 TFS in "Ford" flight bombed a target in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 62-4313 on his 91st combat mission (73 counters)
- #5 - Capt Donald M. Ware flying camera chase

Cushenberry: "We went way north today to a railroad bridge in the Red River valley. The weather was good everywhere but in the valley so we had to just cut the railroad itself. We did manage to do that anyway. Dave was carrying CBU-24s so couldn't drop them since we didn't find the target. We all returned home but him and he had to land at Udorn since no tankers were available. ... 2+45. 5-750s. Dave got hit real bad today but made it home O.K."

The four F-105D pilots from the 333 TFS in "Dodge" flight were:

- #1 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt flying F-105D 62-4405 on his 86th combat mission (74 counters)
- #2 - 1Lt Fred A. Wilson
- #3 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 62-4234 on his 83rd combat mission (68 counters)
- #4 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying his 84th combat mission (68 counters).

After a 10:35 briefing, the flight headed for an armed reconnaissance along Route 7 from Ban Ban, Laos, east across the border of North Vietnam. However, en route, the flight was diverted from this point target in Laos to look for 50 trucks reported along Route 7 in North Vietnam. The flight could not find the trucks so they cut the road near their primary target.

A 37-mm AAA shell hit the left drop tank of Capt Mahrt's plane. With his flight, he landed successfully back at Takhli after the 2-hour mission.

Mahrt: "Today was my day. I led a flight to BR around Ban Ban. We were looking for 50 trucks. I took a hit in left drop tank, left leading edge flap, trailing edge flap, P1 accumulator, main gear door, fuselage, wing and vertical stabilizer. I was indeed in God's hand. I went in and dropped my bombs on road. Geo really helped me. When I put gear down, I started loosing utility pressure. Many, many holes."

Acree: "Heavy flak and AW."

Gobble: "We were to hit a military area at Ban Ban along Route 7 but were diverted to look for some reported trucks on Route 7. We were looking when Mahrt took a hit in the left drop (tank). George got with him and Fred latched on to me. Fred and I made a road cut and then caught up with them. Marty was hit mostly in the left drop but pieces got his wing, LE and TE flaps, fuselage and tail."

"While on the way to the primary target, Mahrt's flight was diverted to perform a road recce where 50 supply trucks had been spotted. Capt Mahrt located the truck convoy within 20 minutes and bombed the road in front of the convoy, cutting it up, leaving huge craters, and forcing the convoy to a halt. As his flight of F-105s came around for a second pass, they encountered heavy 37-mm antiaircraft fire, and Mahrt took a hit in the left fuel tank, but continued on and accomplished a direct strafing spray by holding his finger on the gun trigger and working his rudder back and forth. The F-105 took 51 holes in the wing tank and left wing. After checking for aircraft controllability, Capt Mahrt streaked for home with the entire flight intact."

F-105D 62-4405 was temporarily repaired for a flight to the depot at Taiwan where it took 1030 labor hours to repair before it was returned to the 333 TFS at Takhli. A little over a year later, the plane was shot down by 37-mm AAA on 3 May 1967.

Combat diaries of Capt Martin H. Mahrt, Capt. George W. Acree II, Capt Robert D. Gobble, and Tony

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F-105 History

Cushenberry & Thunderchief Worldwide Report, Vol I, No 10, June 1966.

19-Apr-66

1705

Four pilots from the 333 TFS in "Ford" flight bombed a target in North Vietnam then flew RESCAP for 1Lt Lee A. Adams. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 92nd combat mission (74 counters)

Cushenberry: "Was scheduled for a Cricket mission with Gombay 30. We had just made contact with him when we got a call over Guard channel and recognized Jim Sharp's voice [Capt James C. Sharp] saying his number 4 man was down. We diverted immediately and went to help RESCAP. We cut a road in NVN immediately with our bombs and as Sharp and Maj Leaf's flights reached bingo [Maj Howard W. Leaf], Jim showed Dave where the aircraft had hit. We circled the area for about 20 minutes but nothing. Jim had already called off the SAR because Straub [Capt Robert J. Straubinger], his #3 had been right behind and he said there was no chance, so we stayed as long as we could and left. Found out on return it was Lee Adams. A damn nice guy. A loss to us all. It appears he just didn't make his pullout but one never knows. 2+40. 5-750s."

The four 333 TFS pilots of "Olds" flight briefed at 10:50 for a mission against Mu Gia Pass in North Vietnam. They were:

- #1 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt on his 87th combat mission (75 counters)
- #2 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 61-0042 on his 85th combat mission (70 counters)
- #3 - Maj. John M. Lowery
- #4 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying his 86th combat mission (70 counters).

The strike cut a road and strafed trucks.

Mahrt: "Flew what started to be a pathfinder then went visual in Mu Gia Pass. Lowery and Bob hit a bridge. I hit the road and so did Geo. Then we made three strafe passes on trucks and on the second pass got one heavy barrage of 37-mm flak. We had to leave for another flight waiting."

Acree: "Wx - scattered. Flak - moderate. Lee Adams went in. Strafe run Dong Hoi. No chute." Capt Acree logged a 2-hour-and-35-minute mission

Gobble: "We broke off a Pathfinder and bombed Mu Gia Pass VFR. We hit the road and then found some trucks to strafe. During our second pass we got quite a bit of flak but no one was hit. Lee Adams went in today in the DRV. By all indications, it appears he flew into the ground on a strafing pass." Capt Gobble logged 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry, Capt Martin H. Mahrt, Capt. George W. Acree II and Capt Robert D. Gobble.

22-Apr-66

1708

The 10:00 briefing for "Nash" flight ("Olds" flight per Gobble's Diary) was for a JCS-directed target that was cancelled just before takeoff. The pilots from the 333 TFS were:

- #1 - Lt. Col. James A. Young, 333 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt on his 90th combat mission (77 counters)
- #3 - Maj. John M. Lowery
- #4 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 62-4387 on his 89th combat mission (73 counters)
- #5 - Capt Robert D. Gobble #5 flying camera chase on his 89th combat mission (72 counters)

"The flight went to a railroad area near Phu Tho, North Vietnam, where each strike pilot strafed the area and dropped

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six 750-pound bombs cutting the tracks. They returned to Takhli after flying for 2 hours and 30 minutes.

Mahrt: . "Today I am scheduled near Hanoi. Am quite worried and pray to Mary to protect me. So near to returning! Will finish this tonight. I sure miss Colleen. Love you darling. ... We were taxiing out when they cancelled the JCS and sent us on alternate which was Phu Tho. Weather was good and we got all the way with no maps or 21As so didn't know exactly what to bomb. We hit the railroad and exited. I missed. A hard target to get to and I missed because of wind."

Acree: "No flak. Wx good." He fired 241 rounds of 20-mm ammunition.

Gobble: "This was going to be a real big one but as we got to the end of the runway, it was cancelled and we went to our alternate which was the railroad at Phu Tho. We got in and out O.K. but the flight behind us got shot up and Korat lost a bird in the area due to a missile. ["Fir 03". Capt Charles G. Boyd, 421 TFS, POW] I was camera and got shots of the bombs missing the railroad."

Four pilots in a flight from the 333 TFS bombed a target in Laos then strafed trucks North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 94th combat mission (75 counters)

Cushenberry: "Went on a Barrel Roll mission east of Ban Ban today and dropped our bombs with a FAC. We hit right where he wanted them and he was pleased. ... We then went to recce sorta against the rules into the Navy's area along Route 7. We shot at a couple of trucks so got a counter. Guess we should feel guilty but for some strange reason I don't. Return was normal. 2+15. 5-750s, 139 rounds."

F-105D Combat Diaries of Capt. George W. Acree II, Capt Martin H. Mahrt, and Capt Robert D. Gobble.

23-Apr-66

1824

Four pilots in "Buick" flight from the 333 TFS bombed a target in RP-1, North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 95th combat mission (76 counters)

Cushenberry: "Went to a small bridge just north of Dong Hoi this morning. No flak or anything and the visibility & weather were excellent. I hit about 40' long and cratered the road real good. No one in two flights hit the bridge. We were only carrying three 750-pound bombs each. Damn what a waste of time and money. ... Ware aborted. We didn't see anything to shoot at. Don H. sure shaped up today and flew a good airplane. Had a talk with him last night and he finally got the message. 2+35. 3-750s."

Four other F-105Ds from the 333 TFS each dropped five 750-pound bombs on a target in Laos. The flight lead was Capt Martin H. Mahrt flying his 91st combat mission (77 counters). Capt Robert D. Gobble was #4 flying his 90th combat mission (72 counters).

Mahrt: "Flew a no-counter today. I led and we went up to a supply area near Sam Neua. We worked with Firefly 13 and 14 in A-1Es. They gave us two separate areas and said that all bombs were on target. Someone from Korat was down north of Hanoi and we just about were flying top cover for Crown. Had to post-strike refuel."

Gobble: "We went to 'B' area and worked with a FAC. We dropped bombs on what was supposed to be (a) storage and ammo area. We hit it but didn't see anything, really. We left there because we thought we were needed on a RESCAP but weren't." The rescap was probably for the two pilots from the 421 TFS who were shot down during the

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F-105 History

388 TFW's attack on the Bac Giang Bridge.

Combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry, Capt Martin H. Mahrt, and Capt Robert D. Gobble.

24-Apr-66

1709

Four pilots in a flight from the 333 TFS bombed a target in North Vietnam then strafed a truck in Laos. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 96th combat mission (77 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald M. Ware

Cushenberry: "Went after a bridge in NVN today. It was a road bridge south of Dong Hoi, pretty close to the DMZ. We tore up both ends of it but the bridge itself was left standing. Not in good shape, though. All the bombs were right on the money. We left there and then called Cricket Control and he sent us into Steel Tiger area for a FAC. The Gombay FAC had a 6-by truck spotted and we strafed hell out of it. He said we got it good. Return was normal. ... Dave is on a special mission now and isn't flying with us for a few days. 2+40. 3-750s, 377 rounds."

After their 12:20 briefing, the four pilots in "Buick" flight joined a FAC in northern Laos to hit a battalion of troops near Sam Neua airfield. The pilots flying with the 333 TFS were:

- #1 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt on his 92nd combat mission 77 counters)
- #2 - 1Lt Fred A. Wilson
- #3 - Col William H. Holt, 355 TFW Vice Commander
- #4 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 62-4387 on his 90th combat mission (73 counters)

Each pilot dropped five 750-pound bombs on the target. The FAC reported 75% of the bombs hit the target area. The flight returned to Takhli after the 2-hour-10-minute mission.

Mahrt: "Another damn no-counter. Col. Holt flew #3 and I lead. We worked with Firefly 13 around Sam Neua. Had 10,000 broken and five miles visibility but I decided to hit anyway. Myself and Geo hit and Wilson and Holt missed. He was happy with the mission, though, and that's all that matters when he flies with me. Korat lost two more on the JCS."

Acree: "No flak."

Combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry, Capt Martin H. Mahrt and Capt. George W. Acree II.

25-Apr-66

1710

Following their 11:30 briefing, "Honda" flight took off at 13:30 and joined a FAC near Ban Ban in northern Laos. The pilots from the 333 TFS were:

- #1 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt on his 93rd combat mission (73 counters)
- #2 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 62-4327 on his 91st combat mission (73 counters)
- #3 - Capt Robert D. Gobble also flying his 91st combat mission (72 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald L. Heiliger

Under FAC control, each pilot dropped five 750-pound bombs on the target and then flew armed reconnaissance along Route 7 into North Vietnam. They found no further targets and returned to Takhli.

Mahrt: "Another one for the great society. Balls. We worked with Firefly and got 100% bombs on target. Near Ban Ban. No one shot at me today. Then we reced Route 7 into DRV trying to make it a counter but couldn't find anything to shoot at. So we had to log a no-counter."

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Acree: "No flak. All bombs on target." He logged 2 hours and 20 minutes.

Gobble: "We went to the Ban Ban area and dropped in a wooded area marked by the FAC. We reced Route 7 but didn't see anything." He flew for 2 hours and 35 minutes.

Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry, 333 TFS, did not get to fly. "Was scheduled for a morning spare and an afternoon primary. I didn't get off on the spare and the PM was cancelled for a damn local training mission for the new guys. Guess I should not hate them but I do.

"I sniveled another spare in the PM with Feneley's flight [Capt Francis James Feneley]. We were given a camera mission but for the first time in history, the spare didn't go. They sent three birds with three 750s each plus a fourth with two camera pods. The spare who normally goes in this case could not because of a BOMB SHORTAGE!!!"

Combat diaries of Capt Martin H. Mahrt, Capt George W. Acree II, Capt Robert D. Gobble, and Tony Cushenberry.

27-Apr-66

1826

Capt. Robert D. Gobble from the 333 TFS led "Sunbeam" flight on a bombing mission to North Vietnam. He was on his 92nd combat mission (73 counters). Capt Martin H. Mahrt was also in the flight for his 95th combat mission (79 counters). The flight took off at 06:50 with each plane carrying five 750-pound bombs. They landed after flying for 2 hours and 35 minutes.

Gobble: "We were going to (the) Barrel Roll (area of Laos) but the weather got bad around (TACAN Channel) 79 so I diverted to Package One where our alternate was. I decided we didn't have enough fuel to get to the alternate so we bombed Mu Gia Pass and then came home."

Mahrt: "We were scheduled for no-counter but thanks to a hell of a big thunderstorm we had to go to Mu Gia Pass and hit the road again. It made it a counter for us. We reced again but saw nothing to shoot. The squadron has a JCS this afternoon. Hope all return and that they bomb hell out of it. On Korat's JCS they only lost four aircraft total. F-4Cs from Udorn got a MiG-21 yesterday. They got the glory now."

Four pilots in "Renault" flight from the 333 TFS bombed a target in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0173 on his 98th combat mission (79 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger

Cushenberry: "Wasn't even scheduled for the AM mission so at least got to sleep in. The PM mission is a real booger. The railroad yard way up north of Hanoi. We made it through start engines today before cancelling. Everyone was sorta nervous. We went on our alternate over about two miles from Dong Hoi. It was a truck park. Jack didn't see it so I rolled in first as number 3. Had real good bombs on target. We all put our bombs in but Ware and he hit the road beside the target. He got a little confused. ... 2+40. 6-750s."

Combat diaries of Capt Robert D. Gobble, Capt Martin H. Mahrt, and Tony Cushenberry

29-Apr-66

1729

The 333 TFS, 355 TFW, flew an early morning mission into Laos. After briefing at 03:40, "Mercury" flight took off at 05:50 and joined with a FAC to strike a truck park in the Ban Ban area of Laos. Each plane carried five 750-pound bombs and strafed the target with 20-mm ammunition. They started two fires in the truck park. As the flight left the target, the FAC reported four flak sites destroyed and over 300 enemy killed. However, during a strafing pass, #2 was hit in the aft section by 37-mm AAA. He landed at Udorn with an overheat warning light. The rest of the flight recovered at Takhli.

The four 333 TFS pilots in "Mercury" flight were:

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- #1 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt flying his 96th combat mission (79 counters),
- #2 - 1Lt William W. Koelm on TDY from the 12 TFS, Kadena AB, Okinawa
- #3 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying his 94th combat mission (74 counters)
- #4 - Capt George W. Acree II in F-105D 61-0156 also on his 94th combat mission (75 counters).

The pilots logged 2 hours 35 minutes of flying time.

Mahrt: "Flew a no count today. #2 was Bill Koelm and he took a hit and had over heat light on so took him to Udorn. The squadron went on a JCS (in the afternoon) and did great. Lost Lt. Bill Bruch on the mission. Went in with his aircraft. Cush finished 100 total today also. (Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry). Bruch was a fine young lad. No one hit the steel plant."

Gobble: "This was in Barrel Roll up by Ban Ban. We heard the flight in front of us and they were drawing fire. We had the FAC mark the target, a truck park, and we rolled in and bombed the area. We came back around to strafe and I was in position so I came in first. Marty's element was next and as #2 (Bill Koelm) was coming off he was hit in the aft section and had an overheat light. He got back to Udorn O.K. and the other 3 of us came on home. On my strafing pass I could see tracers to both sides of me and I called that they were firing. Later results: 4 flak sites destroyed and over 300 KIA. Bill Bruch went in today after being hit on a JCS to the [Thai Nguyen] rail yard north of Hanoi."

Acree: "Good mission. Flak - heavy 37 mm and AW." He fired 641 rounds from his gun.

Later in the morning, "... the 355 TFW launched three flights of F-105s plus a camera ship against ... the Thai Nguyen Railroad Yards (JCS 21.11 30 miles north of Hanoi in RP-6A, North Vietnam). Each aircraft except the camera 'bird' carried six 750-pound general-purpose bombs. The aircraft encountered heavy flak and indications of SAM activity were picked up on their radar. However, the flak did not appear to be radar controlled and was primarily of 85-mm with some 37/57-mm. All bombs were within the target and the railroad yards were cratered in several places and many railroad cars were damaged or destroyed within the yards. There was one loss taken on this mission." (355 TFW History, Jan - Jun 66, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 1103.)

"Air Force analysts believed that the destruction of the yard would hamper shipments from the North's only nearby steel mill (JCS 76) -- which remained off limits to the fighter-bombers. As usual, the North Vietnamese quickly began to repair the damage, assisted by a period of poor flying weather that prevented immediate restrikes." ("Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 256.)

The 333 TFS, 355 TFW, launched three flights of F-105s from Takhli to strike the Thai Nguyen Railroad Yards (JCS 21.11) in North Vietnam. Each plane carried five 750-pound bombs. The raid destroyed marshaling yards with 48 confirmed craters out of 60 bombs dropped. The flight lineups were:

"Nash"

- #1 - Lt Col James A. Young, 333 TFS Commander and Mission Commander.
- #2 - Capt Gerald W. Brantley
- #3 - Col William H. Nelson, 355 TFW Vice Commander
- #4 - Capt John E. Whipple
- #5 - Capt Donald J. Mattasolio, camera chase

"Dodge"

- #1 - Capt Francis James Feneley
- #2 - 1Lt Donald William Bruch, Jr.
- #3 - Capt Calvin T. Broadway
- #4 - Capt James E. Bayles

During his roll-in (at 08:09Z), 1Lt Bruch was hit by 85-mm AAA and his plane crashed. No one saw him eject and he was not recovered. Within five weeks, two other members of this flight would be shot down and one killed.

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F-105 History

"Volvo"

#1 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 59-1765 on his 100th combat mission (81 counters)

#2 - 1Lt Fred A. Wilson

#3 - Capt Vincent P. Roy

#4 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 60-0460 on his 95th combat mission (76 counters) on his second mission of the day.

The flight briefed at 10:30. The original "Volvo 3" and "Volvo 4" aborted and the spares, Capt Roy and Capt Acree, took their places. Over the target, Capt Acree strafed a flak site with 336 rounds of 20-mm ammunition before his gun jammed. The flight recovered back at Takhli after flying for 2 hours 50 minutes.

Cushenberry: "Well we finally went on the big one. ... Heiliger aborted so Roy moved in, then Jack aborted and Acree (Dodge Spare) filled in since we had briefed jointly. I wound up leading, Wilson 2, Roy 3, Acree 4. ...We refueled in Green Anchor extend. We dropped off at 3 mile intervals and went to the Black River, then Red, then straight east to north of the target. Then we turned south to the railroad yard. The mission was a blazing success. All bombs on target but mine and they didn't come off. I have a tape of all the conversation. We lost Bill Bruch. He was hit and went in with aircraft. We were lucky as they were really shooting. I will remember this one. 2+50. 6-750s."

Acree: "1/Lt Bruch shot down - no chute. Flak - very heavy - everything. 2 MiGs shot down by F-4Cs. White Anchor 34 tanker good."

Before the day ended, a total of six U.S. planes and their pilots were lost in combat over Laos and North Vietnam. In addition to Lt Bruch, the Air Force lost an RF-101C that was flying toward the Thai Nguyen rail yard to take bomb-damage photos following the F-105 strike. Afterwards, a MiG-17 shot down an A-1E while it was flying rescap for the downed reconnaissance pilot. Also, the Marines lost an A-4E from Chu Lai on a strafing mission in Laos. Finally, the Navy lost two planes: an F-8E that crashed off the coast of North Vietnam and an A-1H that was downed by small arms fire in Laos. (CNA Loss/Damage Database)

The downed A-1E pilot was Capt Leo Sydney Boston from the 602 ACS. He was flying RESCAP for the RF-101 pilot, Maj Albert Edward Runyan, who became a POW. Capt Boston's remains were recovered.

Combat diaries of Capt Martin H. Mahrt, Capt. George W. Acree II, Capt Robert D. Gobble, and Tony Cushenberry

05-May-66

2114

Four pilots in "Kaiser" flight from the 333 TFS bombed a target in RP-1, North Vietnam. The lineup was:

#1 - Capt David B. Hatcher

#2 - Capt Donald M. Ware

#3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0168 on his 101st combat mission (82 counters) the day after he returned from his 5th R&R.

#4 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger

Cushenberry: "Was spare today but Jack Swaney [Capt Walter J. Swaney] is snake bit and aborted again. ... Our target was the ferry and ford over on the coast. We have been there before. We found it and hit it good but Don Heiliger had aileron control loss and jettisoned his in the target area. He almost had to jump out but managed to recover even though pretty low. We returned and got a couple of trucks along the road. They shot back a bit. 2+10. 2-3000#."

Capt Martin H. Mahrt remained at Takhli for the first day of his fifth R&R during his combat tour. "This is the first day of my R&R. I sunbathed and got some work done at the Squadron. I had to get some frames made for the pictures of the cockpit. The rest of the flight went to the beach south of Bangkok. I decided to stay here and save money. I went to 17:00 Mass."

F-105D combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry and Capt Martin H. Mahrt

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

06-May-66

2115

Five pilots in "Mercury" flight from the 333 TFS bombed a target in RP-1, North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 60-0502 on his 102nd combat mission (83 counters)
- #3 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #4 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #5 - Capt Donald M. Ware (camera)

"Things are getting bad. We lose at least two flights a day for CNX. They are supposed to get worse because we don't have any bombs. Morale is bad. ... We hit another bridge over on the coast. Same story; a very close miss on these targets is as good as a mile. Mine & Jack's were about 40' off. Dave was very close & hit one end. Heiliger lost the target and bombed another one. I had a start with a thumping noise like I had taken a hit. Don't know what it turned out. Return was uneventful. 2+20. 2-3000#."

Capt Martin H. Mahrt from the 333 TFS flew during the second day of his fifth R&R at Takhli. It was his 101st combat mission (79 counters). "Last night Jerry Brantley (Capt Gerald W. Brantley) said he didn't want this top cover mission so I volunteered for it. So they let me fly once. It was a no-counter and I got 3 hours flying time. The C-130 lost an engine and had to come home. I then sunbathed a little more then went to a movie but it didn't work. Got caught in a thunderstorm and couldn't get back."

F-105D combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry and Capt Martin H. Mahrt

08-May-66

2117

As "Hudson 01", Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry led a two-ship into Laos and NVN on his 103rd combat mission (84 counters). His wingman was Capt Donald Lester Heiliger.

"They started splitting us in twos today. I was supposed to lead the whole thing but then we got busted up. I wound up leading the first element. Don Heiliger was my wingman. We refueled up in White Anchor. The other half was cancelled. We only had two rocket pods each. Our original was to armed recce over on 1A along the coast. All that was cancelled and we went to Bravo area. We recced for about 20 minutes then, when the FAC didn't show, we went into NVN and hit a military barracks area that had been a previous target. We destroyed five buildings and got four secondary explosions. Real good work. I am even gonna get a counter out of it. 3+00. 2-LAU-3."

Capt Martin H. Mahrt remained at Takhli for the fourth day of his fifth R&R. "Today the 354 TFS went on JCS and we have it tomorrow. I guess we must really have to lose some aircraft before they will stop hitting one target. Korat lost six F-105s on one target. This war stinks. I may go home after all for two weeks just to get out of this war for awhile. Everything that goes on irritates me so damn much."

This was the last entry in his daily combat diary that he started on 1 January 1966. Two days later, on his 102nd combat mission (80th counter), he was shot down over North Vietnam while attacking a JCS target. He was rescued but returned to the States to recover from his injuries.

F-105D combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry and Capt Martin H. Mahrt

10-May-66

1830

Five pilots in "Alpine" flight from the 333 TFS bombed JCS 44, the Ordnance Depot at Yen Bai, (JCS 44, BE 616-0146) at coordinates 21-42-32N and 104-52-58E in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 104th combat mission (85 counters)
- #3 - Capt David B. Hatcher
- #4 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #5 - Capt Donald M. Ware (camera)

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

Cushenberry: "We had a real exciting one today. Up on the Red River east of Hanoi. A munitions plant. A pretty big complex. ... We went in high and dropped on them. We were the first flight in and picked the biggest bunch of buildings. Jack hit in the edge and 3 called mine right in the middle. All our flight hit real good. Dave had VT fuzes and plastered them with them.

"The second group in was Lowery's flight. Marty Mahrt got hit off the target and went down just south of the Red River. We had already left but split up sending 3 & 4 back while Jack and I went on to the tanker. We came back and were RESCAP for about 30 minutes 'till the chopper picked him up. The Sandys were there & Marty was talking to them. In the meantime Gordon Clouser [1Lt Gordon L. Clouser, 357 TFS] was shot down south of there in Laos. Both were recovered. 4+00. 2-3000#."

"Honda" flight from the 333 TFS was also fragged against the Yen Bai Ordnance Depot. Each of the flight's four planes carried two 3,000-pound bombs. The lineup was:

#1 - Maj. John M. Lowery

#2 - Capt George W. Acree

#3 - Capt Martin H. Mahrt flying F-105D 61-0135.

#5 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying F-105D 61-0080 on his 100th combat mission (76 counters).

Gobble: "We hit the arsenal at Yen Bay. Acree aborted so we went as a flight of three. We were a little early at our last turn point just across the Red River so we did a 360 and picked up a little flak doing this. We were the second of three flights to hit the target. As Mahrt pulled off he said he had an unsafe gear and started up the Red (River) as Lowery looked him over. They found it to be a popped C/B and about this time Marty called flak off to the left. I was a little left and behind. Lowery called a right break but Mahrt went on straight. He called he had a hole in his left wing and was streaming fuel which later was found to be hydraulic fluid. Lowery stayed with him as I went to Guard to start calling Rescue. About 4 miles south of the Red River I saw the plane roll over and go in. I picked up the chute and continued high as Lowery stayed low. I cleaned off the aircraft and directed the rescue aircraft to the scene. (Capt David B.) Hatcher and his wingman came over to help because this was in a high MiG area. Lowery got down on fuel and left (for Udorn) with Hatcher's wingman. Hatcher and I stayed 'till I was down to 2500 pounds and the Sandy aircraft were almost there. I got on the tanker with 1,000 pounds of fuel and came on in to Takhli. Lowery got bounced by MiGs on the way out but I didn't see anything when I left. Marty was picked up O.K. (1Lt. Gordon L.) Clouser was shot down in Bravo Area. Broke ankle." For his actions, Capt Gobble was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

At 16:21, near Yen Bai at coordinates 21-10N and 104-30E, Maj Lowery and his wingman "... sighted two MiGs at 9 o'clock in a slow 30-degree bank as if in a pursuit curve. The MiGs closed to about one mile at 6 o'clock as (the two F-105s) descended to 3,000 feet AGL and accelerated to Mach 1.1. The MiGs were out accelerated. No attempt was made to engage the MiGs because of the low fuel state." (Red Baron report)

John Lowery recalled his mission. "As the second flight in we approached the target, Yen Bai Ordnance Depot as the first flight was departing. I was carrying 3,000 pounders with VT fuzes. They worked perfectly. After I dropped, not a gun went off in this very hot target area. (I still don't know why we didn't use VTs more often.) As pre-briefed I turned to follow the mountain range north west before re-crossing the Red River. But Marty broke left towards the river whereupon we both called him of our direction. But by that time he had already been hit in the wing and was spewing hydraulic fluid followed shortly by control surface lockup - but fortunately he was across the river in the foothills. His ejection was good with a good chute; but as he descended over a small cliff his canopy collapsed and I watched him slide down the side to the valley floor. Fortunately he was not hurt by the landing but did tear a muscle that had to be surgically corrected. I departed the area as others were arriving with 1,000 pounds of fuel. Hatcher's wingman (who was killed the next week) had less fuel. We departed together and I had pre-briefed with the tanker to stay close to the extended Orange Track. I went out low just above the tree tops and as we were entering the Black River valley I saw two MiG 17s drop out of the overcast on a 90 degree intercept. Then they began a 30-degree bank towards us which I felt certain was radar directed. I quickly decided not to take a head-on shot as if I missed we would both walk home. We went sonic and lost them, then found the tanker awaiting us at almost the DRV border. Otherwise we would have been guest at LIMA SITE 85. With my new wingman having 300 lbs and me with 500 pounds I let him take on 500 lbs

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

and then I took on the same, after which we filled up. Since neither of us had any external tanks and would be BINGO by the time we could return to the area, and since the F-4s, SANDYs and helicopter were there, we continued back to Takhli. Bobby Gobble deserved his DFC as I feel certain he was quite low on fuel by the time he made the tanker. I got the tanker crew a DFC for the AC and air medals for the rest. They were just super.

"Bobby's remembering the unsafe gear indication must be from another mission. I have no record of it."

F-105D combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry and Capt Robert D. Gobble & Red Baron Report, Rolling Thunder #1, Event II-13, pgss 59 - 60 & John Lowery e-mail 18 Mar 13.

11-May-66

7025

Four pilots in "Lincoln" flight from the 333 TFS fired AGM-12C Bullpup missiles at a bridge in Laos. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying his 105th combat mission (85 counters)

"We flew a no-counter today in Bravo east of Sam Neua on Route 65. ... Our target, if you can believe it, was a small bridge to be hit with four AGM-12Cs, an \$8200 missile. Well, I'm surprised at nothing anymore. Jack's went ballistic, Heiliger never saw the target, Ware was just short, mine was right on the money. We all agreed on this. 2+25. 1 AGM-12C.

"Marty made it back in pretty good shape. A little beat up and a sprained shoulder but so far O.K. He leaves tomorrow for Clark. Clouser broke his ankle and is there already, I think.

"More bad news. Frank Feneley [Capt Francis James Feneley] went down in the Gulf of Tonkin east of Dong Hoi today and as of now no word of him. Search called off so far. Dammit. His mission? Armed recce with 20-mm since we have nothing else. Lovely!!"

Tony Cushenberry's combat diary.

22-May-66

1741

Four pilots in "Ford" flight from the 333 TFS bombed the Thai Nguyen Railroad Yards (JCS 21.11) in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #2 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 59-1741 on his 108th combat mission (87 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger

Cushenberry: "Went back way up north to the railroad yard again today. Col Young [Lt Col James A. Young, 333 TFS Commander] was mission leader and his flight hit the rails again. Broadaway's flight [Capt Calvin T. Broadaway] and our flight hit the bridge NW of the railroad yard. ... We got lost but found the smoke from the target so bombed it. The bunch in front missed it. We think Ware hit the south end but couldn't see the rest because of the smoke and dust. They were really shooting today. We popped too far out so I had plenty of time to observe the flashes from the muzzles of 85-57-37-mm AA guns. Awesome!! No one was hit today so we were very lucky. Guess the Maker was looking after us. 2+55. 2-3000#."

After shooting reconnaissance photos for this mission, an RF-101C was nearly hit by a SAM. "... There already was some definite evidence of the increasing missile threat [to RF-101 aircraft]. Flying a single-aircraft mission, an RF-101C pilot on 22 May 1966 had photographed the Thai Nguyen railroad station, approximately 35 miles northwest of Hanoi, and had turned homeward at 4,000 feet when he saw a SAM headed toward him. He broke directly toward the flying white telephone pole, missing it by little more than 100 feet. He had not seen it launched and was so busy

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

getting out of the area that he did not see it detonate." ("The Air Force in Southeast Asia. "The RF-101 Voodoo, 1961 - 1970." AFHRA Call # 101-149, IRIS # 102-9791, pg 94.)

"Volvo" flight briefed at 07:00 for a 09:00 takeoff when they headed for a new road south of Mu Gia Pass in North Vietnam. Each F-105 pilot dropped two 3,000-pound bombs, cutting the road, then returned to Takhli after flying for 2 hours, 20 minutes. The pilots from the 333 TFS, 355 TFW, were:

- #1 - Maj. John M. Lowery
- #2 - 1Lt Fred A. Wilson
- #3 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 59-1721 on his 103rd combat mission (81 counters)
- #4 - Capt. Robert D. Gobble flying his 105th combat mission (80 counters).

Acree: "Wx - layers but OK. No flak."

Gobble: "We were going to 'Cricket' area but were sent across the line to our alternate. We hit a road segment 100 NM east of [TACAN] Channel 89 and then recced a little. They're building the new road and got the lattice work up for the canopy."

F-105D combat diaries of Tony Cushenberry, Capt. George W. Acree II, and Capt Robert D. Gobble

23-May-66

1742

F-105 pilots in the 333 TFS, 355 TFW, flew three missions into Laos.

After their 04:30 briefing, the two pilots of "Mercury" flight took off at 08:45 and joined with a FAC in the Barrel Roll region in northern Laos. The pilots were:

- #1 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 59-1818 on his 104th combat mission (81 counters)
- #2 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying his 106th combat mission (80 counters).

Under FAC control, they each dropped two 3,000-pound bombs, destroying a gun emplacement near Lima Site 36. They returned to Takhli after flying for 2 hours 30 minutes.

Acree: "Wx - good. No flak. Recovery wx - IFR. Two new (333 TFS) pilots arrived: Maj Doug Brenner, Maj Lloyd Anders."

Gobble: "We were a flight of two and diverted to L-36 area and bombed a flak site. The big mission was cancelled and it seemed that everyone was sent to the same place at the same time."

Four pilots in "Alpine" flight flew a morning mission. The lineup was:

- #1 - Lt Col James A. Young, 333 TFS Commander
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Walter J. Swaney
- #4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0156 on his 109th combat mission (87 counters)

Cushenberry: "Col Young led, Heiliger 2, Jack 3, me 4. Jack aborted. We went to Cricket but were diverted to Barrel Roll and a FAC. We had to hit the tanker two times. Finally got there and there were so damn many airplanes we had to wait. Col Young lost his radio so I took lead and we returned with ordnance. The weather was real bad and I had to drop the colonel off and make a box GCA. 3+00. Returned 2-3000#."

Four pilots in "Olds" flight flew an afternoon mission. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #2 - Capt Walter J. Swaney

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

#3 - Maj Ralph A. Ritteman

#4 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0168 on his 110th combat mission (87 counters)

Cushenberry: "Ware led this one way up to Bravo area, Jack 2, Ralph 3, me 4. We bombed some caves where they had been shooting from. The weather was overcast but good visibility. Ware was a little long, Ralph also. The FAC almost had an orgasm when my bombs hit because it was right on the money. Jack hit real good, too. FAC gave us 100% on target. 2+20. 2-3000#.

"We can't shoot now since we are out of May's 20-mm."

F-105D combat diaries of Capt. George W. Acree II, Capt Robert D. Gobble, and Tony Cushenberry

24-May-66

1743

The four F-105D pilots of "Mercury" flight ("Olds" fight per Gobble's diary) briefed at 05:25, then headed for northern Laos to join with a FAC. The 333 TFS, 355 TFW, pilots were:

#1 - Capt George W. Acree II flying F-105D 62-4394 on his 105th combat mission (81 counters)

#2 - 1Lt Fred A. Wilson

#3 - Capt Robert D. Gobble flying his 107th combat mission (80 counters)

#4 - 1Lt William W. Koelm on TDY from the 12 TFS, 18 TFW.

Under control of the FAC, they each dropped two 3,000-pound bombs on a supply area 3 miles northeast of Sam Neua airfield. The results were unknown. Afterwards, they strafed a troop concentration near Lima Site 36. The flight returned to Takhli after their 2-hour-45-minute mission.

Acree: "Wx - OK. No flak. Recovery wx - IFR rain." He fired 770 rounds of 20-mm ammunition.

Gobble: "We dropped on our primary in the Sam Neua area and were called in to strafe troops at L-36."

F-105 pilots in the 333 TFS flew two other missions into Laos. Three pilots in "Alpine" flight flew the morning mission. The lineup was:

#1 - Lt Col James A. Young, 333 TFS Commander

#2 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0168 on his 111th combat mission (87 counters)

#3 - Capt Donald M. Ware (camera)

Cushenberry: "Col Young led, me 2, Ware camera. We went to Cricket under FAC control and hit the smallest bridge in the world, 107-degrees/81 from 89. Col Young out-bombed me this time. He hit real close (15'), which is very good dive bombing. He got a piece of the bridge. Don climbed back up and followed me down. Mine were short but dead center the road so was O.K. 2+10. 2-3000#."

Four pilots in "Hudson" flight flew an afternoon mission. The lineup was:

#1 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0142 on his 112th combat mission (87 counters)

#2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger

#3 - Maj Ralph A. Ritteman

#4 - Capt Donald M. Ware

Cushenberry: "I led this one to Bravo about 5 miles east of Sam Neua, Heiliger 2, Ralph 3, Ware 4. I did real bad work. The FAC marked a hill and said hit the east and I said Rog & rolled in and bombed the west. First time I got turned around like that. Ralph air aborted for a 650 that wouldn't refuel. We were bingo when we hit the target so was rushed but still no excuse for missing the damn thing that way. 2+30. 2-3000#."

F-105D combat diaries of Capt. George W. Acree II, Capt Robert D. Gobble, and Tony Cushenberry.

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

30-May-66

7031

Four pilots in "Ford" flight from the 333 TFS flew a mission into North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Capt David B. Hatcher flying F-105D 61-0142 in which he was shot down
- #2 - Capt Donald M. Ware
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 62-4372 on his 115th combat mission (90 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger

"Well, today is a sad one for us all. ... Our target was way up on the Red River. We hit it and then turned NW up the Red for recce. Dave found a train and we each strafed it. As we turned to leave, he saw another one a little further up the River. I called bingo and he said make it 1000# lower. He went in on a pass and was hit, started burning and about 40 seconds later ejected. Good chute and beeper. We capped and then had to leave. The flak was very heavy all along the valley now. Prior to this we hit one patch that was solid.

"We went for the tanker but wound up having to go into Udorn. He has voice contact with them and they tried to get across but flak was too bad. They withdrew for the night but will try again tomorrow morning. He is to hide out and save his radio. Down 21-55N and 104-21E. We returned from Udorn 0+45. 2+20. 2-300#, 500 rounds."

Tony Cushenberry's combat diary.

31-May-66

860

"... Air Force and Navy fighter-bombers rained bombs on six dispersed (POL) sites in and around Vinh, Phuc Loi, Da Loc, Yen Duong, and Phu Qui, all located below Hanoi. These strikes and others on non-POL targets accounted for 313 sorties over North Vietnam, the largest number in one day since Rolling Thunder operations began in March 1965." ("Gradual Failure")

"Fighter bombers of the 355 TFW at Takhli and the 388 TFW at Korat flew the biggest strike to date against NVN. The target consisted of a large storage complex with both large and small warehouse type buildings in the Yen Bai storage complex located on the Lao Kay-Hanoi rail line and the Red River. The first photo interpretation readout indicated that 72 buildings were destroyed, 21 heavily damaged, and 23 slightly damaged. In addition, six 37/57-mm AAA sites and 15 to 18 85-mm sites were silenced." (Seventh Air Force Chronology 1 July 65 - 30 June 1966 CHECO 66-0044.)

"About 150 U.S. aircraft, the majority of them F-105 Thunderchiefs, attacked and destroyed the extensive Yen Bay Arsenal (JCS 44) in a low-level afternoon raid. (The target was at coordinates 21-42-32N and 104-52-58E and included the arsenal, barracks and storage areas, a supply depot, and an administrative area.) Flying at tree-top level in flights of four, Thunderchief strike pilots dropped hundreds of 750-pound conventional iron bombs and 2,000 and 3,000-pound blockbusters. Other flights of Thunderchiefs dived to smother camouflaged antiaircraft batteries with bombs as they opened fire and revealed themselves. F-4C Phantoms flew high cover for the F-105 Thunderchiefs, offering protection against possible MiG fighter interception. Remaining aircraft were jet tankers for inflight refueling and RB-66 Destroyers, converted bombers with advanced electronics equipment that jams North Vietnamese radar defenses." (Thunderchief Report, June 66)

"... Forty F-105 aircraft were launched from the 355 TFW and they expended sixty-eight 2,000-pound general purpose bombs, four 750 pound bombs and twenty-four CBU bomb dispensers. The target was essentially obliterated. A total of 70 buildings was destroyed and 45 were heavily damaged. The flights encountered heavy barrages of 37, 57, and 85-mm flak. One 355 TFW loss occurred on this mission (but the pilot was recovered)." The pilot was 1Lt Leonard C. "Lucky" Ekman from the 354 TFS flying as "Olds 02". (355 TFW history)

Col Aaron J. Bowman, 355 TFW, was the strike force commander. He led the flak-suppression "Nash" flight. He and his wingman, 1Lt Michael L. Brazelton, were the first pilots over the target areas attacking an antiaircraft gun site. After landing at Takhli, Col Bowman was greeted by Lt Gen Joseph Moore and Col Edmund B. Edwards from Hq 7 AF. (Thunderchief Report, July 66)

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

"Air Force officials told New York Times sources in Saigon that F-105 Thunderchiefs dropped a hitherto secret antipersonnel bomb [CBU-24 SADEYE] that shoots out thousands of lethal pellets. The bomb was designed for use against such targets as clusters of soldiers manning antiaircraft guns. (Thunderchief Report, June 66)

"Air Force news sources said the Yen Bay raid was the largest flown during the war, with more than twice the number of F-105s than have previously participated in a strike against a single target in the north.

"Colonel Edmund B. Edwards, 45, 7th Air Force's director of operations against North Vietnam, reported that the raid had been extensively planned and had been scheduled to take place in late May, but was delayed."

The strike force consisted of 25 flights that made up the flak suppression, strike, MIGCAP, RESCAP, and Iron Hand forces. The following table shows the attack order of each flight, the flights' call signs, Times Over Target, purpose, and flight lead (where known). Flights using call signs of automobile names were F-105s from Takhli. Those flights with tree names were F-105s from Korat. MIGCAP flights were F-4s.

Call Sign	TOT	Purpose	Flight Lead
Nash	14:30	SADEYE/Strike	Col Aaron J. Bowman - 355 TFW (4 F-105s)
Dodge	14:35	SADEYE/Strike	
Walnut	14:40	Strike	(3 F-105s)
Bamboo	14:35	Strike	
Edsel	14:50	SADEYE/Strike	Maj Howard W. Leaf - 333 TFS
Volvo	14:55	Strike	
Beech	15:00	Strike	Maj Charles W. Barnett - 421 TFS
Redwood	15:05	Strike	
Olds	15:10	Strike	Maj Kenneth G. Frank - 421 TFS
Buick	15:15	SADEYE/Strike	
Pontiac	15:20	Strike	Maj Cecil B. Juanarena - 354 TFS
Alpine	15:25	Strike	
Tulip	15:30	Strike	Maj Fred L. Tracy - 421 TFS
Locust	15:35	Strike	
Honda	15:40	Strike	Maj Robert M. Krone - 469 TFS
Ford	15:45	Strike	
Kaiser	15:50	Strike	Capt Carl S. Hicks, Jr. - 469 TFS
Cactus	15:55	Strike	
Madison	14:35	MIGCAP	
Radium	14:55	MIGCAP	
Neon	15:15	MIGCAP	
Argon	15:35	MIGCAP	
Boron	15:45	MIGCAP	
Detroit	14:35	RESCAP	
Thistle	14:40	Iron Hand (13 TFS)	

"The CBU-24/B munition, intended for use against personnel and light material type targets, was first used in SEA in April of this year. Targeting for this ordnance has generally been AAA positions and troop concentrations. The flak suppression quality of CBU-24/B was recently demonstrated during air strikes on the Yen Bay storage area located approximately 70 miles NW of Hanoi. This storage area consisted of many large storage building surrounded by a complex of smaller structures. A rail yard area was also included in the Yen Bay target complex. Several AAA sites near the storage area protected this important supply center.

"Four flights of F-105 aircraft were assigned the flak suppression tasks and the missions of three of the flights [Nash, Dodge, Edsel] are summarized below. ... A fourth flight, Buick, also attacked the flak sites but specific information is not available.

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

"Nash flight reported heavy barrage type flak from 37-mm, 57-mm, and 85-mm guns as it approached the Yen Bay target, and many AAA positions were seen in the foliage surrounding the target complex. Nash lead maneuvered to detect the largest flak concentration and initiated his dive bomb attack. Both Nash 1 and 2 released their CBU-24/B ordnance on the heaviest AAA concentration, and post-attack observations indicated all guns were silenced.

"Dodge flight reported heavy 37-mm, 57-mm, and 85-mm tracking and barrage type flak in the target area. Their CBU-24/B deliveries saturated the center and SW portion of the target area, destroying ten buildings and starting numerous intense fires.

"Edsel flight attacked AAA positions north of the storage area and saturated a large area with CBU-24/B submunition. The flight leader indicated that CBU-24/B munition was extremely successful in silencing AAA guns and also responsible for considerable target damage created by the numerous fires." (USAF Fighter Weapons School Combat Analysis Division Bulletin - 5, 14 July 66, pp 9 - 10, AFHRA Call # K417.316, IRIS # 00503559.)

Four pilots in "Volvo" flight from the 333 TFS formed one of the F-105 strike flights that bombed Yen Bay Arsenal (JCS 44) in North Vietnam. The lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Howard W. Leaf
- #2 - Capt Donald Lester Heiliger
- #3 - Capt Anthony S. Cushenberry flying F-105D 61-0105 on his 116th combat mission (91 counters)
- #4 - Capt Donald M. Ware

Cushenberry: "We finally got the big gaggle off against Yen Bay military complex. We really clobbered the place, too. Made all the headlines. Col Bowman [Col Aaron J. Bowman, 355 TFW DO] went to Saigon to be interviewed. ... Sure wish I had had CBU because I saw a bunch of flak sites that were firing south of the target area. Lucky Ekman [1Lt Leonard C. Ekman, 354 TFS] and a guy from Korat [Capt Martin William Steen, 469 TFS, KIA] were shot down on this raid. Lucky was picked up but they never found the other one. Still no news of Dave [Capt David B. Hatcher]. I don't think they even went back up there. We raised hell about it and put it in our Ops 4 so Col Holt [Col William H. Holt, 355 TFW commander] called Ben Murphy and Busick [Maj Charles P. Busick, 357 TFS] is going up with them tomorrow for a big effort to get him out. 2+55. 2-2000#."

Maj Robert M. Krone from the 469 TFS flew this mission as "Locust Lead", a strike flight. His flight's lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Robert M. Krone flying mission #99 in F-105D 62-4325
- #2 - 1Lt Peter K. Foley flying 61-0196 on his 22nd mission
- #3 - Capt George A. Ball flying 60-0429 on his 21st mission
- #4 - Capt Patrick V. Hughes flying 59-1766
- Spare 1 - 1Lt Richard H. Hackford, Jr.
- Spare 2 - 1Lt Karl Wendell Richter from the 421 TFS. (Krone's Combat Mission Data Card, 6234 TFW Form 1)

Bob Krone explained how he came to be flying a major strike on his next-to-last mission. "By 31 May I had been the CO over a month and Jimmy Jones was Ops doing the scheduling. Jimmy got me aside on the 30th to tell me that Tony Gangol was very nervous and depressed ("There Ain't No Way") and on the schedule for Yen Bay. And he didn't have an experienced replacement pilot and worried about putting a recently arrived pilot on that mission. I took the mission. I remember while air refueling on the way out thinking 'If I'm going to be shot down on my 99th mission, it might as well be Ho Chi Minh's home town.'" (Bob Krone, e-mail, 22 Apr 2009.)

Lt Col Krone was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross (3rd Oak Leaf Cluster) for this mission. "Major Robert M. Krone is awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 Pilot over North Vietnam on 31 May 1966. On that date, Major Krone was the leader of a flight of F-105's assigned to destroy an extremely vital and heavily defended military storage complex located on the main railroad line from Red China to Hanoi, North Vietnam. Despite extremely adverse conditions, reduction by half of his force due to aircraft malfunctions, intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire, and the ever-present SA-2 missile threat, he led his flight to the total destruction of his assigned target. He also directed helicopters into an area 10 miles from the target for the

Donald Lester Heiliger

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rescue of a downed pilot. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Major Krone reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force." (DFC Society Web Site, http://www.dfcsociety.org/citation_detail.asp?ID=1649)

One 469th pilot, Capt Martin William Steen, flying as "Cactus 02", was shot down and, despite a rescue attempt, was MIA. 1Lt Leonard C. "Lucky" Ekman, "Olds 02" from the 354 TFS was shot down and rescued.

"Gradual Failure: The Air War over North Vietnam: 1965 - 1966", pg 285 & Republic's Thunderchief Worldwide Report Vol. 1 No 10 June, 1966 & Vol 1 No 11, July 1966 & 355 TFW history, Jan - Jun 66, USAF microfilm NO461, frame 1104 & Cushenberry combat diary

19-Sep-66

7178

The 41 Air Division, Yokota AB, Japan, published blanket TDY orders for F-105 pilots of the 80 TFS. The orders covered TDYs to Takhli and Korat for "performing operational mission in support of 5th AF Ops Order 141-65. ... This order becomes effective 1 October 1966 and expires 31 December 1966. Trips are limited to not more than 10 trips and not more than 70 days per individual."

The names in the order were:

Lt Col William L. Janssen	1Lt Robert B. Middleton	Capt Jack W. Stover
Maj William J. McClelland	1Lt Steven L. Dongus	Capt Robert J. Straubinger
Maj Arthur S. Mearns	Capt Lester W. Sundt	Capt Donald L. Heiliger
Maj Robert P. Taylor	Capt Donald N. Orth	Capt Wilburt H. Blatter
Capt Dennis R. Fanning	Capt John J. King	Capt William T. Williams
Capt James S. Hildebrand	Capt George E. Gifford	1Lt Richard P. High
Capt David L. Hatten	Capt Melvin C. Boswell	
Capt Robert L. Keller	Capt Victor Vizcarra	
Capt William A. Becker	Capt Benjamin D. Ulrich	
1Lt Robert W. Ferrel	Capt Giles W. Gainer	

Seven other officers assigned to Yokota were also included on the orders:

Col Allen K. McDonald - Hq 6441 TFW
Col Evens G. Stephens - Hq 41 AD
Col George L. Jones - Hq 5 AF/ DO
Maj Henry Shudinis - Hq 6441 TFW
Maj James R. Arthur - Hq 6441 TFW
Capt Robert D. Reichart - Hq 6441 TFW
Capt Rodney B. Beckman - Hq 6441 TFW

41 Air Division Temporary Duty Order - Military, TB-1083, 23 Sep 66, provided by Victor Vizcarra.

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

Donald Lester Heiliger

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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. Hanson 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 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, ...

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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!"

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 Hanson 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

Donald Lester Heiliger

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

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. Four of these crews were:

Capt John F. Rehm with Capt Calvin Markwood
Capt Donald D. Henry with Capt James Wright
Capt George Bogert with Maj Donald S. Aunapu
1Lt William W. Koelm with Capt Al Esser

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 they 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 maintenance in general. Other difficulties encountered include

Donald Lester Heiliger

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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, 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 #

Donald Lester Heiliger

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K717.312, IRIS # 00518453.

26-Apr-67

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Two days after the crews arrived at Korat, the first Ryan's Raider night missions were flown over North Vietnam. The crew of Capt Don Heiliger and Maj Ben M. Pollard from the 34 TFS struck the Yen Bai railroad yards (BE 616-00338) about seventy-five miles northwest of Hanoi at coordinates 21-41-58N and 104-53-04E. The target for the second crew was the Ron Ferry in RP-1.

Wild Weasel pilot Maj Robert N. Johnson from the 13 TFS provided Iron Hand support to this night strike. (Maj Gen James E. McNerney, Jr., manuscript for article for "Aviation Illustrated" magazine, revised Feb 00).

Maj Pollard, the group's senior officer, learned of the mission from the 388 TFW commander, Col William S. Chairsell. He "... said, 'You've got a target. Your first target is 10 o'clock on Wednesday night, Package V at Yen Bai, and you are going to go down the Red River'. ... I said, 'Okay, if anybody is going to go first, it's going to be me,' so we started briefing that night. ... We were briefed that night and all day, all afternoon, all night on Tuesday."

"We got up the next morning and did our flight planning. ... We got the SAR ... briefing. In every one of our missions, the briefing was, 'There is none.' If you fly at night over North Vietnam in deep Package V and VI, there is no search and rescue. ... Our SAR briefings were really, really short."

"That night we took off (at) 8 o'clock or so and climbed out and hit the tanker, and we went up the Red River ... and ... hit Yen Bai ... at 10 o'clock, ... 50-some hours after we landed at Korat. The other airplane went out about two or three hours later and hit a target in Package I." (Pollard interview)

"The tracks provided a good radar return, but darkness inhibited bomb damage assessment, as did craters left by earlier bombing. Impressive results were not produced by these raids or those that followed against Thai Nguyen and other targets in the delta." (To Hanoi and Back)

WarbirdTECH Vol 18 Republic F-105 Thunderchief, pg 46 & Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pgs 13 -15 & "To Hanoi and Back", pgs 60 - 61.

15-May-67

F-105F 624429 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by AAA during a Ryan's Raider mission while en route to the Kep RR yard. Crashed in RP-6A, North Vietnam. 21-24N 106-30E Capt Donald Lester Heiliger 34 TFS pilot ejected. POW. Released 18 Feb 73. Call sign: "Kaiser 01". This was the second Ryan's Raider loss.

Major Ben M. Pollard and Capt Donald L. Heiliger, call sign Kaiser 1, were on a radar strike mission to the Kep RR Yards in North Vietnam. The flight took off from Korat at 09:05 and was declared missing at 21:07.

"Major Pollard and Capt Heiliger were on a single plane, North Scope Strike Mission over North Vietnam. On ingress to the target, the flight transmitted that it was encountering heavy flak. At approximately 2107 hours, the flight transmitted it had received a hit and was heading toward water. Coordinates at the time of the latter transmission were 2129N/10630E. At approximately 2112 hours a Navy aircraft, south of that position, reported hearing two different beeper signals north of his position. The signals were not heard for sufficient duration to obtain a fix on them. Since no other flights were in the area, electronic search could not be conducted. On 16 May 67, flights passing over the area en route to other targets conducted both electronic and visual search without success. An organized search and rescue operation could not be conducted due to location." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pg 3-076 and 3-077, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3.)

"The Pentagon announced Monday a U.S. Air Force jet was struck by North Vietnamese antiaircraft fire and indicated it may have crashed across the Red Chinese border. In an unsolicited statement, the Pentagon said the F-105 Thunderchief was hit during an attack Monday against military targets in the vicinity of Kep, North Vietnam. The pilot of the damaged aircraft was last heard on his radio to report he was 'heading out,' the statement said, adding that his course could have taken him near the North Vietnamese border with Red China. 'We have no word on the two-man crew,' the statement concluded. ..."

Donald Lester Heiliger

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Major Pollard in the rear seat was the ranking member of the Ryan's Raiders crews. In a 1992 interview, he described his mission. "Our target that night ... was the Kep railroad yards about 60 miles northeast of Hanoi on the Hanoi-China railroad line. It was a very important target. Our plan was to fly over Da Nang, pick up our tankers, fly north -- tremendous thunderstorms that night -- and refuel. We dropped off the tanker right at the 19th with the Weasel bird still with us. He stayed high, and then as we got close to the coast, we coasted in right on the deck. ... We had to climb to come over the coastline. There's a (restricted) buffer zone between China and Vietnam, and ... we received special permission to fly into that buffer zone because we wanted to coast in over the buffer zone and run right down the railroad valley so the SAMs couldn't get us. ...

"We came down the valley and picked up the target. Everything was going fine, and about 15 seconds out, they caught us in search lights. We were running at 1,000 feet above the ground and chose to press on -- dumb! We couldn't maneuver because we were dropping on the computer -- we couldn't do any turns; we couldn't jink; we couldn't do anything. ... We pressed on, right in the search lights. ... The whole sky lit up. They hit us about three or four seconds before bomb release. We pressed on and got the bombs off. ... The aircraft was really hurt; the forward fire warning light was on; the aft fire warning light was on. We were losing hydraulic systems, including our flight control systems. You could see fire on the airplane. So we started climbing. ... Our plan was to get out of the SAM ring and then turn east to the ocean, but the airplane ... was out of control. ... I bailed out first. ... My guess is we were transonic, somewhere about 600 KT and in the 15,000-foot altitude range

A 1997 newspaper account described what happened to Capt Heiliger, the front seat pilot. "When his plane was hit and an engine caught fire, Heiliger bailed out at more than 20,000 feet, floating to the ground in darkness at a speed of about 1,000 feet a minute. Another crew member had bailed out just ahead of him. When he hit the jungle canopy, his life support gear snagged in a tree so he cut himself free and tumbled to the ground near the Chinese border in North Vietnam. His plan was to travel slowly at night. ... The plan soon was foiled when he was surrounded by about three dozen villagers toting old rifles, knives and sticks. ... He was taken to a prison in Hanoi known to Americans as New Guy Village. ..."

During his 1992 interview, Ben Pollard described his experiences. "I got beat to a pulp during bail out, and I was unconscious half of the time coming down. ... I woke up and I was in the jungle. It was about 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night. ... Our airplane circled and crashed in China. ... I was hung up in the trees on my parachute with my feet just barely touching the ground. ... I released myself from the parachute, fell to the ground, and passed out! ...

"When I woke up the next morning, I was just in an awful shape. Blood was everywhere. ... I was also paralyzed from my waist down. ... During the ejection, my legs flailed terribly and probably pinched the nerves in my spinal column. ... I could hear a stream down below me, and I headed for it. ... I tied my legs together and started sliding down the mountain feet first. ... I was unconscious a good portion of the time. ...

"About three o'clock in the afternoon, I got into a ravine. ... Shortly, two or three Vietnamese hill peasants came by, saw me, and just ran away. ... I knew it was all over. ... They came back about 45 minutes later, ...and grabbed me and started to tie me up, and I immediately passed out because of the pain." ...

"Sometime that evening they threw me and someone else, in the back of a jeep, and I assumed it was Don Heiliger. We started driving to Hanoi on the roughest road you've ever seen. ... We finally got to Hanoi. ... They carried me on a stretcher into what I later would find out was New Guy Village in the Hanoi Hilton."

Maj Pollard had accumulated 163.5 flying hours in the F-105. Maj Heiliger had accumulated 568.6 hours. (F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & Associated Press News release, datelined Washington, 16 May 1967, & Wisconsin State Journal, Tuesday, Nov 11, 1997, & Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pgs 31 - 38

09-May-69

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The 34 TFS flew its last F-105 mission before it converted to F-4Es at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

The F-4Es were delivered on 11 May 1969 by the 40 TFS from Eglin AFB FL. The 40th changed its designation to the 34 TFS when it arrived at Korat. "...They were met with cold beer, a lei, a parade of smoke bombs, water hoses, and welcomed through most of the streets of Korat ...". The 40th designation returned to Eglin.

The final 34 TFS squadron commander with F-105s was Lt Col Harvey W. Prosser, Jr. When the squadron converted to F-4Es, he was replaced by Lt Col Joseph M. Potts. Col Prosser was reassigned to Kirtland AFB, NM where he flew the F-4 and F-104.

On 10 May 1969, Capt Clayton Bane Lyle III was one of the F-105 pilots who transferred from the 34th to the 44 TFS. (Bane Lyle, e-mail 20 Aug 2010.)

1Lt Joseph W. Widhalm, assigned to the 34 TFS in January 1969, also transferred to the 44 TFS. (Joe Widhalm, e-mail 7 May 2012)

Maj William R. McDaniel was another 34 TFS pilot who transferred to the 44th.

After flying 58 combat missions into Laos, the last one today 9 May 69, 1Lt Alan B. Reiter also transferred from the 34 TFS to the 44 TFS on 10 May. In the 44th, Lt Reiter was assigned F-105D 59-1759, which he named "Summertime Blues". "The name came from a 1958 rock song by Eddie Cochran." (Alan Reiter's AF Form 11 & e-mails 19 and 22 Feb 15.)

On 11 May 1969, the 34th distributed its F-105s to the 355 TFW at Takhli, RTAFB and to the 44 TFS, the only unit still flying F-105s at Korat. The 44 TFS possessed 23 F-105s. Its squadron commander was Lt Col Herbert L. Sherrill who had replaced Lt Col Guy J. Sherrill on 12 March 1969.

F-4E pilots of the 388 TFW called the F-105 "Thud" ("... cause that's the sound it makes when it crashes!") while Korat F-105 pilots referred to the F-4E as the "Thumb" (Two-Hole-Ugly-Mini-Bug). (388 TFW history)

Harvey Prosser commented on the attitude of the F-4 pilots. "They were not a happy bunch. I could have as many F-4 guys switch to 105s as I wanted. All the 34th young guys and the old F-4 pilot Gibs much preferred the Thud. We put up a big sign at the entrance to the O Club stating 'Tiny Tim flies F-4s'. The new F-4 guys refused to take it down and it stayed up for at least a month when the Wing Commander commanded the 34th pilots to remove it because it hurt the F-4 pilots' feelings. Also, the nickname for the F-4 at Korat at that time was Mini-Buff. Again, at the Wing Commander's order, we desisted." (Harvey Prosser, e-mail 2 Feb 10)

During the time the 34th flew F-105s, the squadron received three Outstanding Unit Awards and a Presidential Unit Citation. After it began flying F-4Es, the squadron received its fourth Outstanding Unit Award for the period 1 July 1968 to 15 September 1969 as well as the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross With Palm for the period 15 May 1966 to 29 January 1973. (James Geer, "The Republic F-105 Thunderchief Wing and Squadron Histories", Schiffer, 2002, pg 241.)

However, in its 3 years of flying the F-105, the 34 TFS paid a high price. Pilots assigned or attached to the squadron lost 39 planes to combat and accidents -- 37 "D" models and two "F" models -- enough to equip the squadron more than twice over. Thirteen squadron pilots died in combat (KIA), three more in accidents. Four pilots survived accidental crashes, ten were rescued, and 11 more became POWs, one of whom died in captivity. The following recaps each of the squadron's 39 losses, the pilots involved, and their fate:

	Date	F-105	Last Name	Fate
1.	03 Jun 66	58-1171	Pielin	Rescued
2.	15 Jun 66	62-4377	Kelley	Rescued
3.	21 Jun 66	62-4358	Sullivan	KIA
4.	30 Jun 66	62-4224	Nierste	Rescued
5.	15 Jul 66	59-1761	Hamby	Rescued

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

6.	20 Jul 66	62-4308	Lewis	KIA
7.	21 Jul 66	62-4227	Tiffin	KIA
8.	06 Aug 66	62-4315	Rutherford	Rescued
9.	17 Sep 66	61-0191	Rutherford	Rescued
10.	10 Oct 66	62-4300	Bullock	Died
11.	10 Jan 67	62-4265	Gauley	KIA
12.	19 Mar 67	61-0123	Austin	KIA
13.	05 Apr 67	62-4395	Youngblood	Survived
14.	12 May 67	63-8269 (F)	Pitman	KIA
			Stewart	KIA
15.	15 May 67	62-4429 (F)	Heiliger	POW
			Pollard	POW
16.	02 Jun 67	61-0190	Smith	POW
17.	04 Jun 67	61-0148	Kough	Rescued
18.	15 Jun 67	61-0213	Swanson	KIA
19.	17 Oct 67	61-0205	Andrews	POW
20.	17 Oct 67	62-4326	Odell	POW
21.	17 Oct 67	60-0425	Sullivan	POW
22.	27 Oct 67	62-4231	Flynn	POW
23.	28 Oct 67	62-4356	Waldrop	Survived
24.	19 Nov 67	58-1170	Vissotzky	POW
25.	04 Feb 68	60-5384	Lasiter	POW
26.	14 Feb 68	60-0418	Elliot	KIA
27.	15 Apr 68	61-0206	Metz	POW Died
28.	25 Apr 68	60-0436	Givens	Died
29.	14 May 68	61-0132	Bass	Died
30.	28 May 68	61-0194	Ingvalson	POW
31.	31 May 68	60-0409	Beresik	KIA
32.	08 Jun 68	61-0055	Light	Rescued
33.	13 Jul 68	60-0453	Confer	Survived
34.	01 Sep 68	60-0512	Thaete	Rescued
35.	17 Nov 68	61-0092	Dinan	Survived
36.	11 Feb 69	62-4256	Zukowski	KIA
37.	17 Mar 69	61-0104	Dinan	KIA
38.	29 Mar 69	62-4270	Stafford	Rescued
39.	03 Apr 69	62-4269	Christianson	KIA

388 TFW History, Apr - Jun 69, USAF microfilm NO586 .

18-Feb-73

1250

The North Vietnamese released a second group of 20 POWs "... as a goodwill gesture coinciding with the visit to the capital (Hanoi) of a U.S. delegation headed by Dr. [Henry] Kissinger." Selected by the North Vietnamese on 14 February, this group did not follow the "first in, first-out" rule and balked at being released early. However, they were ordered to leave to avoid an incident that would endanger further POW releases.

In this group of 16 Air Force and 4 Navy POWs, known as the "Kissinger 20", were three F-105 pilots, Capt Joseph S. Abbott, Jr., 1Lt James Richard Shively, and Capt Donald Lester Heiliger, and one Wild Weasel EWO, Capt Jay Roger Jensen, all shot down between 18 February and 15 May 1967.

"Honor Bound" by Stuart I. Rochester and Frederick Kiley, pgs 581 - 582.

23-Mar-16

7669

Obituary for Colonel Donald L. Heiliger (USAF Ret.)

MCFARLAND/STOUGHTON/MADISON - Colonel Donald L. Heiliger (USAF ret.), age 79, of McFarland, passed

Donald Lester Heiliger

F-105 History

away surrounded by his family on Wednesday, March 23, 2016, at Wm. S. Middleton Veterans Hospital. Don was born in Madison on Jan. 16, 1937, the son of the late James and Marjorie (Anderson) Heiliger. He was baptized and confirmed at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church.

He graduated from Madison East High School in 1954 and UW-Madison in 1958 majoring in accounting and receiving an Air Force ROTC commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force, later earning a master's degree in Latin American studies from George Washington University.

Don was a navigator and fighter pilot, flying the F-105 Thunderchief. In 1967, while piloting his 44th combat mission in the Vietnam War, he was shot down and spent five years and nine months as a Prisoner-of-War. As a prisoner at the "Hanoi Hilton", Don is fondly remembered by his fellow POWs for his love of music. After his return to freedom in 1973, Don married church organist and teacher Cheryl Kay Edwards on Dec. 22nd.

Don accepted diplomatic assignments as U.S. Air Force Attaché to Uruguay, Chile and Israel, also serving as chief of the International Affairs Division in the Pentagon. Don and family moved back to Wisconsin in 1987 after retirement. With a passion for public service, he was elected to the Dane County Board of Supervisors for 12 years and as Clerk of the Township of Dunkirk. He was appointed to the State Board of Veterans Affairs and Madison Area Technical College Board of Trustees. Faith was very important to him and in recent years, Don enjoyed serving on the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Board of Trustees and the Christian Service Board. Don was a member of Stoughton Rotary, American Legion Post No. 59, and VFW Post No. 328.

Don is survived by his loving wife, Cheryl; six children, James (Nancy) of Columbus, Ohio, Barrie (Scott) King of Dayton, Ohio, Leslie (Terry) Carroll of Columbus, Ohio, Donald Jr. (Shannon) of New York City, Daniel (fiancé, Tarah) of Madison and David (Christina) of Milwaukee; six grandchildren, Stephen, Michael, Kelsie (Sean) O'Hanlon, Samantha King, Alex King and Grayson; mother-in-law, Charlotte Edwards; and many other family and friends. Don was preceded in death by his parents; brother, James; and father-in-law, Robert Edwards.

The family thanks the wonderful staff at the VA Hospital for many years of compassionate care. Funeral services will be held at HOLY CROSS LUTHERAN CHURCH, 2670 Milwaukee St., Madison, at 11 a.m., on Monday, March 28, 2016. On Sunday, March 27, 2016, American Legion Post No. 59 will Pass and Review at GUNDERSON EAST FUNERAL HOME, 5203 Monona Dr., Madison at 4 p.m., with visitation to follow until 7 p.m. Another visitation will be held at the church from 10 a.m. until the time of the service on Monday. Burial with military honors will be after the service at Roselawn Memorial Park. If desired, memorials may be given to Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Stoughton Area Veterans Memorial Park, or Evangelical Lutheran Synod, causes close to Don's heart.

<http://www.gundersonfh.com/obituaries/obituary-listings?obId=830249#/obituaryInfo>