

Earl Johnston

F-105 History

21-Nov-66

531

Twenty pilots of Class 67BRS completed the 4 TFW's second F-105 RTU course 111506E at Seymour Johnson AFB NC. The class had begun on 15 July 1966 with 25 students. This was the final F-105 RTU class for the 4 TFW. The class was initially assigned to the 335 TFS and then to the 354 TFS after they had completed training Class 67ARS that graduated on 23 July 1966.

On 8 Nov 66, student pilot Maj Donald J. Hemmer was killed when he ejected from F-105F 63-8322.

The class' graduation speaker was Lt. Gen. A. P. Clark, Vice Commander, TAC who had been a POW in Germany during WW II.

The pilots and their SEA assignments were:

Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr. - 13 TFS	Maj Harold E. "Hal" McKinney - 13 TFS
Maj Joseph Clair Austin - 34 TFS	Maj Kenneth D. Oliver - Yokota, Ryan's Raider tng
Capt Paul A. Seymour - 354 TFS	Maj Charles B. Penney - 421 TFS
Maj Earl Johnston - 34 TFS	Maj Herbert B. Schimsk - 421 TFS
Maj Peter H. Karalus - 421 TFS	Maj Jack C. Spillers - 469 TFS
Maj Clarence J. Kough, Jr. - 34 TFS	Maj William T. "Ted" Twinting - 13 TFS
Maj Francis D. Leonard, Jr. - 13 TFS	Maj Glen R. Wilson - 13 TFS
Maj Raymond L. Loiselle - 469 TFS	Capt James F. Gunby, Jr. - 421 TFS
Maj Eugene D. Main - 13 TFS	Capt Harry Pawlik - 34 TFS
Maj Thomas H. Maus - 357 TFS	Capt Charles A. Priester - 35 TFS at Yokota

Forty-five years old, Lt Col Gimmi, with over 5,000 flying hours, was the oldest graduate of his class. Gimmi had earned his wings on 30 August 1943 and by 9 November 1944 had flown 70 combat missions over Italy as a B-25 pilot. As a major in 1956 at Bergstrom AFB, he began flying F-84Fs in SAC. In 1957 he was assigned to Osan AB, Korea, where he flew the F-86. On 19 January 1966 when he was an instructor at ACSC at Maxwell AFB, he received orders to fly F-105s in SEA.

4 TFW History, 1 Jul - 31 Dec 1966, USAF microfilm MO293 & "Airman. The Life of Richard F. B. Gimmi by Russell M. Gimmi, pp 11, 97 - 98, 225.

17-Jan-67

1090

F-105 pilots of the 421 TFS and 34 TFS, 388 TFW, struck the Thai Nguyen Railroad classification yard (JCS 21.11) at 21-33-33N and 105-51-05E. Returning pilots reported, "... 8 - 10 large sections exploded and numerous smaller explosions. CBU impacts were on flak sites northwest of target. Whole area covered with black and brown smoke. Of 14 rail lines, 1 is serviceable and 1 possibly serviceable, 12 pieces of rolling stock derailed and damaged. Repair and service area heavily damaged. Fairly accurate 37/57/85-mm also heavy barrage. Heaviest flak from northwest of the target. Saw MIGs inbound but they could not get behind the flights."

"Three of the strike flights were flown by members of the 34 TFS. The Force Commander was Maj Carl W. McKenzie [the squadron's Operations Officer] ... and the Deputy Commander was Maj William E. Augsburger Flight assignment was as follows:

"Dallas" - Maj McKenzie, Capt William W. Kennedy, Maj Augsburger, Capt Jackie R. Youngblood.

"Blackjack" - Maj Leo F. Callahan, Maj Earl Johnston, Maj Robert G. Miner, Capt John W. Swanson, Jr.

"Flapper" - Maj Homer T. Terry, 1Lt Gary G. Catren, Capt Alan J. Fick.

"Flak in the target area was described as light to moderate 37/57-MM. Bomb damage was extensive as supported by bomb damage assessment photos."

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F-105 History

Homer Terry described the mission. "We ... received orders from the White House to take out the railroad marshalling yard adjacent to the steel mill by a maximum effort of forces from Korat and Takhli; 16 aircraft each from Korat and Takhli. Korat was in first and I was leading the fourth flight. We rolled into our dive bomb runs and were off target in very quick order. I had a problem! When I pushed my bomb release button, my bombs did not release. As I started to pull off target, I ejected my entire rack. No one ever asked about the collateral damage that was inflicted on the roundhouse.

"Takhli followed close behind us. Neither base suffered an aircraft loss. Photo recon showed the marshalling yard was obliterated, but about ten days later recon photos showed the North Viets had laid several tracks back into place and the steel mill had not yet suffered any great loss of production from the actions we had taken." (Homer Terry memoir, "Destroying The Steel making Capability of NVN #2", via e-mail 27 March 2010.)

As Flapper Lead, Maj Terry was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for this mission. "Major Homer Terry distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an F-105 pilot in Southeast Asia on 17 January 1967. On that date, while attacking a high priority target, despite concentrated and accurate ground fire, continuous missile warnings and MiG warnings, he delivered his ordnance with unerring accuracy causing extensive damage to the target. ... "

Maj Raymond D. Anderson from the 421 TFS was awarded a Silver Star for galantry for flying on this mission. (7AF SO G-374 14 Mar 1967)

The F-105F Wild Weasel crew of Capt Jerry N. Hoblit and EWO Capt Thomas W. Wilson, Jr. from the 357 TFS at Takhli, were each awarded a Silver Star for supporting a mission near Hanoi on this date. They decoyed SAM sites to protect the force, bombed one site, and suppressed two others with anti-radiation missiles. (E-Mail, Tom Wilson to Ron Thurlow, 7 Jul 2003.)

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1218 & Homer Terry, letter to Ron Thurlow, undated.

18-Jan-67

1512

Four flights of F-105s from the 388 TFW "... struck the Don Muc Railroad Bridge (21-27-12N 106-14-01E). Especially significant, was the fact that the entire strike force was flown by pilots of the 34 TFS. This was the first time in the history of the 388 TFW that one of its assigned squadrons conducted a complete strike from within its own resources."

"The Force Commander was Lt Col Richard M. Heyman, Jr., and the Deputy Force Commander was Capt David E. Weaver. Flight assignment was as follows:

"Muskrat" - Lt Col Heyman, 1Lt Donald O. Austin, Capt Weaver, 1Lt Catren.

"Rip" - Maj William E. Augsburg, Maj Clarence Kough, Jr., Maj Edward C. Jones, Capt Alan J. Fick.

"Tamale" - Maj McKenzie, Capt William W. Kennedy (two members were forced to air abort).

"Cheetah" - Maj Callahan, Maj Earl Johnston, Capt John W. Swanson, Jr. (one member air aborted)."

"The flights reported heavy AAA in the target area and also 15 NM from the target during ingress and egress. Heavy 85 mm was encountered during the ingress and egress to the target. BDA photos ... substantiated pilot observations as two spans of the bridge were destroyed, leaving it in an unservicable condition."

Maj Augsburg was awarded a Silver Star for galantry for flying this mission. (7th AF SO G374 14 March 1967)

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1218 and 1219.

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F-105 History

12-Mar-67

1274

Twenty-one F-105s and four F-4Cs struck the Viet Tri Thermal Power Plant (JCS 82.17) for the first time. Pilots reported one large secondary explosion with orange fire from the generator hall/boiler house and numerous fires. The coal treatment building and the transformer yard were heavily damaged. "... We estimate it will take approximately 18 months to repair this plant." However, the plant was struck again a week later, on 19 March.

Three flights from the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, struck the Viet Tri Power Plant at coordinates 21-17-57N and 105-25-26E. Flight lineup was:

"Finch"

- #1 - Maj William E. Augsburg, mission commander
- #2 - Maj John R. Whaley
- #3 - Maj Robert W. Johnson
- #4 - Capt John W. Swanson, Jr.

"Nelson"

- #1 - Lt Col Joseph C. Austin
- #2 - Capt David C. Carter
- #3 - Maj Donald F. Fryauf
- #4 - Maj Earl Johnston.

"Possum"

- #1 - Maj William C. Eagle
- #2 - Capt Jack A. Phillips flying his 17th & 18th missions into NVN. He was awarded an Air Medal.
- #3 - Maj Harry Pawlik
- #4 - Maj James N. McClelland.

The flight was probably recycled for RESCAP.

""Finch" flight acted as flak suppression and each member had a preselected gun emplacement to attack. The two strike flights carried two 3,000-pound bombs each and were to attack the boiler room and generator hall. Gun emplacements attacked were completely neutralized and the only ground fire encountered came from a suspected hospital area north of the target."

Pilots from the 469 TFS also flew on this strike.

"Pilot BDA reported complete destruction of the target. The photo aircraft covering this strike was shot down by a surface-to-air missile while egressing the target area."

The photo aircraft, "Neptune 2", was RF-4C 65-0877 from the 11 TRS, 460 TFW, from Tan Son Nhut. Capt Edwin Riley Goodrich, Jr. was KIA and 1Lt John Walter Clark became a POW.

An attempt to rescue the downed RF-4C crew was called off. "At 12/0309Z, Neptune Two was reported down at coordinates 20-55N and 104-45E [65 miles west of Hanoi]. No report of either chute or beeper. High performance aircraft as well as A-1Es made a search of the area with negative results. At 12/0429Z, the forces were withdrawn after SAMs were launched against the jets. At this time, 7th AF directed the SAR activity on this mission be suspended." (Rescue Opening Report 2-3-19 12 Mar 67, TWX 120719Z Mar 67 from 3 ARR GP OL 2, Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, in AFHRA Folder Call # K318.2411-5, IRIS # 1017063.)

"With no BDA available another strike was scheduled and pilots reported the target destroyed before they dropped their ordnance. Film strips taken from KA-71 strike cameras verified the boiler room and generator hall 50% destroyed with the remaining portion totally gutted."

PACAF Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for the period 20 Feb - 19 Mar 1967 & 388 TFW history Jan -

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F-105 History

Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583, frame1226

30-Apr-67

3823

The 34 TFS history for the month of April 1967 reported that squadron pilots had been recently conducting harassing strikes against enemy aircraft on the ground. "Ordnance selected consists of CBU-24s and M-117 (750#) GPB with instantaneous fuzing. Cratering of runways is not the object, but rather the destruction of aircraft through use of fragmentation weapons. Results have been most satisfactory, but no official BDA has been received. Pilot reports, supported by KA-71 strike film, have shown excellent coverage of the selected targets."

The squadron history described recent tactics of North Vietnamese MiG pilots. "Enemy fighter tactics have changed from parallel run-ins and random attacks against strike flights to an enveloping or pincer type operation. As strike flights ingress to target area, enemy flights have been observed at low and high altitude traveling in the opposite directions. Few attempts to attack strike flights at this point have been initiated. When flights are beginning to egress the target area at low altitude and are required to 'jink' constantly due to flak, they usually encounter MiG-17s between 3,000 and 6,000 feet AGL. These aircraft will not hesitate to attack if they possess or can achieve the tactical advantage, but appear to act primarily as decoys. If flights of F-105s engage MiG-17s at low altitudes, it has been observed that MiG-21s will join the fight, descending from higher altitudes, and conduct slashing attacks. A few F-105s have been lost to this MiG-21 tactic recently. However, it should also be noted that several MiG-17s have been downed by F-105s while egressing. If engaging the enemy decoys one must always be aware of the possibility of being attacked by MiG-21s. Fighter sweeps and development of new defensive support (F-4C) tactics are being conducted in an effort to nullify the enemy's actions."

Squadron pilots flew 392 combat sorties during April 1967 -- 308 of them in North Vietnam and 84 in Laos.

The squadron's combat crew strength "... stood at twenty-one (21) line pilots including the commander, executive officer and operations officer. Four attached pilots, wing staff members, were also available for combat. Emphasis on continual replacement of combat crews, as they complete their tours, is almost non-existent. Four months previous the squadron appeared to be overloaded with pilots. But as pilots completed their tours no new inputs were received. Presently the squadron is comprised of a group of extremely well qualified combat pilots. Before the end of the next reporting period, two flight commanders and one element leader will complete their tour. The remaining pilots will possess forty-five to sixty-five combat missions at this time. Within two months this entire block of pilots will be at or very near completion of their combat tour. Presently, new inputs of sufficient number are no where in sight and if this personnel policy is allowed to continue this squadron will suffer a serious setback. In order to maintain a high degree of combat efficiency and effectiveness the input must at least match the outgo. During this entire campaign squadron strength has been one of either feast or famine."

Lt Col Alan G. Nelson was the squadron commander, Maj Earl Johnston the Executive Officer, and Maj Carl W. McKenzie the Operations Officer.

"Original pilots of the 34th Tactical Fighter Squadron have completed their tours. The squadron is presently composed of RTU pilots, with no previous F-105 experience, and experienced F-105 pilots from units in Germany. Pilots from RTU schools have received sufficient training, and in-unit training consists primarily of area familiarization and introduction to preferred combat tactics. Squadron policy dictates the first five combat missions will be flown in low threat areas. Purpose being to afford the new pilot an opportunity to practice against small targets, and generally prepare himself for assuming the duty of primary strike pilot in a high-threat area. Assuming a pilot experienced no difficulty during his first five missions, he is then available for any and all strike schedules. Flight scheduling is maintained as much as possible. Normal progression through the roles of wing man, element lead, and flight lead is desired and practiced. The end result is a pilot who knows and understands the problems of each position and can effectively perform in any role."

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F-105 History

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 67, Vol II, 34 TFS history, 1 Apr - 30 Apr 67, microfilm NO584, frames 0066- 0067.

24-May-67

1328

"Clear skies enabled ... F-105s from the 388 TFW to strike enemy railroad yards, sidings and bridges north of Hanoi. Thunderchiefs from the 388th concentrated on the Kep railroad yards, 38 miles northeast of Hanoi and the Thai Nguyen rail yards (JCS 21.11) (BE 616-0409), 37 miles north of the capital (at coordinates 21-33-41N and 105-51-03E). ... Smoke and debris covered the Kep complex where stacks of supplies on sidings were blown up."

"Bombs, including 3,000-pounders, were dropped on the Bac Giang railroad and highway bridge (JCS 18.23) (BE 616-0479) 29 miles northeast of Hanoi ..." at coordinates 21-16-28N and 106-11-24E that the 388 TFW had last bombed on 30 April 1967. They also struck the "... Ha Gia railroad bridge, 20 miles north of Hanoi. The Bac Giang structure took three direct hits from 3,000-pound bombs. Maj William T. Twinting [from the 13 TFS] observed the three direct hits. 'They couldn't have been placed any better if somebody had drawn a line down the center of the bridge,' the Major said."

In other 388 TFW strikes, "four large secondary explosions were set off in a North Vietnamese ... SAM site, 35 miles north-northwest of Haiphong Pilots reported their 500-pound bombs covering the site and severely damag(ing) all the launchers in the area. One of the secondaries was set off in the northern portion of the complex and three others in the southern area of the site."

Under RT54C-090, two pilots from the 388 TFW were part of the strike force that attacked the Ha Gia highway bridge (JCS 18.36) at coordinates 21-19N and 195-52E. They were Maj William S. Van Gilder from the 469 TFS flying F-105D 61-0219 and Maj Raymond F. Jauregui from the 34 TFS flying F-105D 61-0068.

Also, Maj Earl Johnston from the 34 TFS flying 61-0124 struck a target at 21-24N and 106-17E.

Maj Peter H. Karalus from the 44 TFS struck a target at 21-34N and 105-51E.

Four pilots from the 13 TFS formed "Hectic" flight, four F-105Ds each carrying six 750-pound bombs. The flight took off at 0835 and at 0940 bombed a target in RP-1 at coordinates 17-24N and 106-38E. The flight consisted of:

Hectic 1 - Major Marlin R. Blake flying 60-0530 on his 98th combat mission.

Hectic 2 - Capt David H. Coats flying 60-0512

Hectic 3 - Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr., a 388 TFW/DO staff officer, flying 61-0055

Hectic 4 - Maj Robert J. Lines flying 60-0449

Spare - Capt Kenneth J. Gurry in 62-4356

"Refueled and went to RP-1. Recce'd road then went to target and dropped. Got two secondary fires. #3 and #4 dropped early and RTB due to #4 ATM failure. Me, Dave, Gimmi, Lines."

F-105 pilots from Takhli's 333 TFS and 354 TFS bombed the Viet Tri and Tung Tu rail yards near Hanoi. They dropped CBUs to suppress flak sites and 750-pound bombs to interdict choke points. (Video, "F-105 Missions Over North Vietnam", 1967, Film Report FR-816, Produced by the Aerospace Audio Visual Service.)

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frames 1488 and 1755 & 100 Mission Log of Maj. Marlin R. Blake & NARA "Air Strike Films, Vietnam", archive control # NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-41720B.

05-Jun-67

1304

Maj Earl Johnston replaced Lt Col Alan G. Nelson as commander of the 34 TFS at the 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Lt Col Nelson's next assignment was to NATO Airsouth in Naples, Italy.

388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1728 & River Rats Album I, pg 120.

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F-105 History

30-Jun-67

5117

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

01-Jul-67

1305

Maj George G. Clausen replaced Maj Earl Johnston as commander of the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Maj Clausen had accumulated about 1,500 hours flying F-105s.

Maj Roderick G. Giffin was the squadron's Ops Officer. "Together, Rod Giffin and I had more hours in the F-105 than all the pilots in the squadron combined."

388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1728 & George Clausen, phone interview, 5 April 2010.

31-Jul-67

3824

The 34 TFS history for July 1967 did not describe specific combat missions for the month but did acknowledge that "... medium altitude run-in techniques were utilized in conjunction with QRC-160 ECM pod formation. ... Limited use was being made of the AGM-12 missile against point targets." During the month, the squadron flew 345 combat missions, 342 into North Vietnam and 3 in Laos. "A slight decrease in the intensity of enemy AAA fire was noted during the month and no MiG encounters were reported."

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F-105 History

"Combat pilot strength stood at 21 line pilots [up from 19 pilots reported in June's history].

"During the month of July, six squadron pilots completed their tour of 100 missions over North Vietnam. Those completing were: Majors Raymond F. Jauregui, Earl Johnston, James N. McClelland, John R. Whaley, and Captains Donald O. Austin and Jackie R. Youngblood. [Not listed in the unit history for completing 100 missions this month was Maj Charles E. Irwin who left Korat in early August 1967.] No losses were suffered during this month and six replacements were received during this period of time."

Maj Earl Johnston, who had been squadron commander, flew his 100th and last F-105 mission on 3 July 1967. He had accumulated 360.2 hours in the airplane.

His 100th mission was the last flight in the F-105 for Maj Jauregui. Since starting his RTU class at McConnell in June 1966, he accumulated 351 hours in the airplane.

Maj McClelland's 100th mission on 22 July was also his last in the F-105. He had accumulated 340.6 hours in the airplane.

His 100th mission on 25 July was the last F-105 flight for Maj Whaley. He had accumulated 333.8 hours in the airplane. (F-105 Pilot Flying Hour report dated 18 Nov 85 provided by the USAF Safety Center to Bauke Jan Douma.)

The incoming PCS pilots in July were: Maj Robert T. Campbell, Capt Irving E. LeVine, and Maj Clyde L. Falls, Jr.

Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, Capt Rodney A. Skoglund and 1Lt Morris R. Schulmister arrived prior to 12 July 1967 on TDY from the 18 TFW at Kadena. By the end of July 1967, Capt Hoppe had flown 9 combat missions with the 34 TFS bringing his total counters to 31. (Larry Hoppe, AF Form 5.)

The squadron commander was Maj George G. Clausen. Maj Roderick G. Giffin was the Operations Officer.

388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 34 TFS history, July 67, microfilm NO584, frame 0078 & 34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us/34tfs/scarf.htm> & Chuck Irwin e-mail 6 Apr 10.

29-Jun-10

6955

Earl Johnston, born 16 November 1924, died in Cottonwood, AZ, at age 85.

Rick Versteeg, e-mail 19 July 2011