

Dalton L. "Lefty" Leftwich

F-105 History

11-May-67

6560

In the 4520 CCTW at Nellis AFB, NV, F-105 Class 67-E graduated 16 pilots from USAF Operational Training Course number 111506E. The class started on 14 December 1966 and was assigned to the 4526 CCTS. The pilots were TDY en route to their SEA assignments. The student pilots, their previous bases and commands, and their follow-on assignments were:

Maj James D. Gormley - Tyndall AFB FL (ADC). Assigned to the 333 TFS.
Maj Gerald C. Gustafson - Kincheloe AFB MI (ADC). Assigned to the 333 TFS.
Maj Floyd E. Heinzig - Vance AFB OK (ATC). Assigned to the 34 TFS.
Maj Dalton L. Leftwich - Eglin AFB FL (AFSC). Assigned to the 34 TFS.
Maj Dwight E. Sullivan - Topsham AFS ME (ADC). Assigned to the 34 TFS.
Maj John F. Unangst - Hancock Fld, Syracuse NY (ADC). Assigned to the 13 TFS.
Capt George F. Baird - McChord AFB WA (ADC). Assigned to the 354 TFS.
Capt Robert H. Bennett - Kirtland AFB NM (AFSC). Assigned to the 354 TFS.
Capt Hugh W. Davis - Richards-Gebaur AFB MO (ADC). Assigned to the 34 TFS.
Capt Hal P. Henning - Laredo AFB TX (ATC). Assigned to the 44 TFS.
Capt William N. Johnson - Moody AFB GA (ATC). Assigned to the 357 TFS.
Capt John H. McKillop - Reese AFB TX (ATC). Assigned to the 333 TFS.
Capt Emmett E. Ott - Selfridge AFB MI (ADC). Assigned to the 13 TFS.
Capt Harry G. Paddon III - Webb AFB TX (ATC). Assigned to the 34 TFS.
1Lt James R. Main - Moody AFB GA (ATC). Assigned to the 357 TFS.
1Lt James G. Thomas - Reese AFB TX (ATC). Assigned to the 333 TFS.

Special Orders MD-47 Hq 4520 Combat Support Group, dated 15 Dec 1966 in History of USAF TFWC, 1 Sep - 31 Dec 66, AFHRA Call # K417.0735 Vol III.

11-Aug-67

3353

Also on 11 August, Air Force planes struck five targets along the Northwest Rail Line in RP-6A.

The Hoi Thinh railroad yard (BE 616-01358) at 21-17-25N and 105-31-25E, struck previously on 28 and 29 July, was struck again on 11 August. "BDA photos of 11 August showed the yard unserviceable with 18 pieces of rolling stock in the yard. All are serviceable." Maj Gerald J. Robinson flying F-105D 60-0422 from the 469 TFS was one of the Korat pilots on this strike. His strike camera film showed his bombs hitting the target.

The Dai Loi railroad bypass bridge (BE 616-02223) at 21-15-33N and 105-41-42E, struck earlier on 1 August when BDA photos showed the bridge to be serviceable, was again struck on 11 August. BDA photos on 11 August still showed the bridge serviceable.

The Diem Xuan railroad yard (BE 616-M2360) at 21-17-20N and 105-27-54E, struck on 2 August, was struck again on 11 August. "BDA photos of 11 August showed the yard unserviceable with 5 pieces of serviceable rolling stock." Maj Dalton Leftwich from the 34 TFS at Korat was one of the pilots on this strike. He flew F-105D 61-0132.

The Ga Ngoi Hop railroad yard (BE 616-M1227) at 21-49-15N and 104-45-30E was struck for the third time in August but no BDA was available.

A rail segment on the Northwest Rail Line at 22-05-30N and 104-27-30E was struck on 11 August. "No BDA was available."

PACAF 16 August 67 Rolling Thunder briefing to CINCPAC for period 24 Jul - 13 Aug 67 & Nat'l Archives record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B.

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F-105 History

13-Oct-67

1436

On this Friday the 13th, the 388 TFW struck Kep Airfield (JCS 9.1) (616-8438) at coordinates 21-23-37N and 106-16-05E in RP-6A, North Vietnam. They also attacked the Dap Cau highway bridge.

A draft news release from the 388 TFW described the mission against Kep. "Things went pretty good. It was just one of those lucky days.' This was the assessment of a 388 TFW strike against the Kep MiG airfield, North Vietnam, given by Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, 34 TFS. Capt Hoppe was the mission commander for the October 13 attack." It was his 75th counter and he flew for 3.6 hours. "He went on to describe the mission. 'The target was a runway. It was difficult to find it going in because it was all overcast. For a minute, I thought I was going to have to abort the run and take the force out, but just as we got to the target, it was just on the edge of the clouds. The cloud buildup made it difficult to find the target but it made it hard for those 85-mm gunners to find us. They didn't start firing until we rolled in. There was quite a bit of flak coming down the slide. You could see the ringing off on the ground and the flak coming up. It was going off pretty much around us. The bombs looked good. They were hitting on the runway. When we got together again coming off, the flak subsided considerably. I didn't see any secondaries but I did see bombs hitting on the runway. There were a few MiG calls but we were kind of ready for them this time and they didn't bother us at all.'

"Capt Steven W. Long, Jr., 469 TFS, also participated in the Kep strike. He said, 'We were coming in over a cloud bank and the target was partially hidden. We were the second flight in. We were going against nearby flak sites. However, they were under the cloud banks themselves and by the time we were diving, the 85s were going off so bad that we dropped on the airfield itself rather than going across and getting any lower. I didn't see any bombs going off myself, but the two bomber flights had good runs.'

"Flight leader, Capt Hal P. Henning, 469 TFS, described the mission. 'My particular target was the runway itself. As I rolled in, I saw the flight ahead of me already bombed and I could see their bombs going off on the runway. There was quite a lot of flak and we got out fast after bombing. I don't know, but looking back it appeared that my flight's bombs had also hit on the runway. There were a few MiG calls but none of them seemed to be in our area.'

"Another flight leader, Maj Floyd E. 'Skeet' Heinzig, 34 TFS, led his flight against gun sites near Kep Airfield. 'It was a very good mission', the major said, 'we flew it exactly as fragged. On the way in, the weather was pretty bad over the coast line of North Vietnam, pretty solid undercast. However, when we got to within one minute of the target, the airfield was wide open. We wound up with just about a perfect roll-in. I got one each 85-mm site with secondaries coming out of it. I didn't get an opportunity to see the bombs hitting on the runway. It looks like all the bombs on the gun emplacements did a real fine job.' Describing the secondary explosions, the major went on to say, 'Coming out of the 85 sites, there were plumes of orange flames trailing grey smoke coming above it. The site had definitely been firing before that by the distinctive black rings on the ground. After the fireballs and smoke coming out of it, I didn't see any more firing from that site. I didn't have any opportunity to look for any MiGs on the field as my target was to the north of the airfield.'

"Other pilots participating in the Kep strike were Maj Dalton L. 'Lefty' Leftwich, Fort Walton Beach, Fla.; Capt Lawrence R. Klinestiver, Albuquerque, NM; and Capt Douglas A. Beyer, Seguin, Tex, all of the 34 TFS. Also, Lt Col William C. Decker, Accord, Tex; Major Leslie J. Hauer, Detroit, Mich; Capt Peter B. Lane, Manasquan, NJ; Capt Robert A. Zang, Verona, Mo; Capt Russell E. Temperley, Newton Centre, Mass; and 1Lt Earl J. Henderson, Houston, Tex. [all from the 469 TFS]" (Draft News Release - 388 TFW - provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010.)

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For 1Lt Earl J. Henderson, the attack on Kep Airfield was his 28th combat mission.

"Target: Kep airfield.

"Armament: 6x750 .025

"Kep Airfield on Friday 13th. YGBSM! Overcast layer almost all the way. Split-S roll-in, 60-degree dive angle really hairy. Had pipper right on runway. Flak was really light for Kep. Tore panel loose on outboard pylon during flight."

Also today, Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. from the 34 TFS flew his 23rd combat mission into North Vietnam, his 12th to Route Pack 6. His target was the Bac Ninh railroad bridge and he encountered AAA.

388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO583 frame 1756 & 355 TFW history, microfilm NO463 frame 1566 & Carolyn Dickson, 20 Apr 09 letter giving annotation on cigar band dated 13 Oct 67 & Earl Henderson, combat diary & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.

15-Oct-67

4832

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his sixth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 6. F-105D 60-5376. Call Sign: "Vegas". Take Off: 1525. Mission Length: 2+25. Flight Lineup:

#1 - Jim King [Maj William J. King]

#2 - Me

#3 - Skeets Henzig [Maj Floyd E. Henzig]

#4 - "Lefty" Leftwich [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]

"This was my first mission that was scheduled to go into Pack VIA. Weather in the Bac Ninh railway area was forecast to be bad so 7th AF cancelled the primary and first alternate targets and put us in on targets in southern Laos with a FAC. We hit a tanker and went off Nakon Phanom [TACAN] for 103-degrees [radial]/ 83 [nautical miles] & hit a wooded area where the FAC marked it for us. We got all of our bombs right on the target but couldn't get any BDA due to the trees. The FAC said that there were V.C. down there shooting at him. We came out and got 2500# of fuel from a post-strike tanker and practiced some ECM pod formation & roll in on the way home. VFR landing."

Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 2.

16-Oct-67

1438

Thirteen days after Maj Bob Barnett from the 469 TFS was shot down on a raid against this target, F-105s from the 388 TFW bombed the Dap Cau railroad bypass bridge (BE 616-02440) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-12-40N and 107-05-27E. Reconnaissance photos on 17 October revealed the bridge was still serviceable.

The 388 TFW also bombed the nearby Dap Cau Railroad Bridge (JCS 16). Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS from Korat, flew his seventh combat mission into North Vietnam against this target.

Mission 7. F-105D 58-1152. Call Sign: "Hatchet". Take Off: 1410. Mission Length: 3+35. Flight Lineup:

Mission Commander - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying his 77th counter for 3.6 hours.

#1 - Lefty Leftwich [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]

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F-105 History

#2 - Me

#3 - Jim King [Maj William J. King]

#4 - Larry Klinestiver [Maj Larry R. Klinestiver]

"This was my first mission into Package VIA and what an eye opener. The length of the flight was one thing and the intensity of the AAA fire was the other. We went the sea route which meant we refueled out over the Gulf of Tonkin and entered NVN north of Hanoi heading due west. There were 16 strike aircraft in the gaggle plus 4 MIGCAP F-4s and 4 F-105Fs for Iron Hand (SAM suppression). I saw 2 SAM launches on the way in to the target (Dap Cau Railroad Bridge [JCS 16], 16 miles N.E. of Hanoi) and one on egress. Our flight carried CBU to suppress flak. When we rolled in, I saw many, many orange and grey flashes coming right at me. I was told later that these were 37 & 57 mm fire, but I didn't see how we could get through them unscathed but we did. I dropped when & where Lefty did. We were attacked on the way out by 4 MiGs who fired a missile ineffectively because of our turn." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 2 - 3.)

"This particular target was the Dap Cau railroad bridge 16 miles Northeast of Hanoi. We went the water route which meant that we crossed the Northern part of South Vietnam and rendezvous with the tankers out over the Gulf of Tonkin. The tankers took us up to the 19th parallel where we dropped off with a full load and headed inland just North of Haiphong. On the way in I observed my first two SA-2 launches but they were not a threat to my flight. There was a lot of flak in the air and I lost track of the target so when Left Leftwich, the flight leader, rolled into his dive I followed him down the chute and dropped my bombs a couple of counts after I saw his released. There was 57-mm and 37-mm flying by my cockpit in the dive. The red hot ingots reminded me of fireflies in the headlights of a car on a country road at night. It was hard to figure why one of those didn't hit me but it didn't. There was one more SA-2 fired as we exited and a report of some MiGs who fired missiles at us without effect. We didn't lose any aircraft and the photos showed we got some good hits on the bridge. We refueled on the way home and I logged a 3+35 flight and put a red mark on my Aussie hat back in the locker room to signify that I had flown in Pack VIA. We used blue ink marks around the hat band for non VIA missions. This was my 'baptism under fire!'" (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 10.)

Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.

18-Oct-67

1440

F-105s from the 388 TFW struck the Lang Dang railroad storage yard (BE 616-01586) on the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A at 21-38-02N and 106-35-11E in the northeast buffer zone. Pre-strike photo coverage obtained on 17 October revealed 38 pieces of rolling stock in the yard. Post-strike coverage acquired on 18 October revealed 12 pieces of rolling stock damaged or destroyed, two repair buildings were damaged, the yard was unserviceable, and all through rail lines were interdicted. The target was struck again on 23 and 24 October 1967.

A draft news release from the 388 TFW described the mission. "F-105 Thunderchiefs of the 388 TFW struck two railroad yards in the buffer zone south of Lang Son, about half way between Lang Son and Kep airfield complex.

"The mission commander, Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe, 34 TFS, said, 'The weather was clear, which was a change from the usual. It's usually cloudy and pretty overcast. Target acquisition was very simple -- you can always find a railroad. There's a whole slew of them along that northeast rail line. We rolled in on it and saw some strings of bombs going through the yards. We saw one exceedingly large secondary just off the yard. It was rather large, brilliant white flash, several hundred feet in diameter, I'd say, and a good cloud of smoke coming off of it. It wasn't POL -- there was no black smoke. It was probably munitions storage of some sort. Coming off the target, the

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reaction of flak wasn't as fast as usual. They started shooting and 37/57 was going off around everybody. They've got a lot of guns up there and they used them all today. Our flak suppression troops got some of the guns. They had 85s up there. There were quite a few sites going off. It was quite a bit slow in reacting, quite surprisingly. I think we got them a little bit by surprise. We used a little different approach this time and it seemed to work. Nobody got hit, which is nice. It seemed to be a rewarding mission. We had secondaries and good bombs. We got all our planes in and all of them out. I think it was a good mission. There was a train with about 40 cars sitting down there. We just walked our bombs through. They had apparently unloaded it already -- there weren't any secondaries. There is a few less rolling stock in North Vietnam today.

"There were a few MiG calls. They didn't press the attack on the strike force. Nobody in the strike force saw any MiGs. The calls were mostly about the MiGs being around us but quite a distance away. Our MiG CAP did a pretty good job. It was a smooth mission." It was Capt Hoppe's 78th counter. He flew for 3.3 hours.

"Also on the mission was Maj Dalton L. 'Lefty' Leftwich, 39, Fort Walton Beach, Fla. He is a member of the 34 TFS." (Draft 388 TFW News Release, undated, provided by Larry Hoppe, May 2010.)

Two pilots from the 469 TFS were on this strike. Lt Col William C. Decker flew F-105D 61-0132 and his gun camera film showed M-117s dropping and smoke on the railroad complex. Lt Col William N. Reed flew F-105D 59-1743 and his camera film also showed M-117s dropping and a small impact on the complex.

Maj Kenneth W. Mays from the 34 TFS also flew on this mission. "On October 18, 1967 I was fortunate to be a flight lead on what was thought to be a tough mission. The target was a railyard and bridge at Lang Dang just south of the Chinese Border. We headed in like we were going to Kep and then headed up the North East railway for Lang Dang railyard. All flights dropped good bombs and little to no AAA was seen until we were departing the area. Some MiGs launched from China, but they did not pursue.

"The importance of this mission was that 7th AF had planned our route to the target directly from the coast to the target, but cooler heads prevailed and we did our own planning and successfully completed the mission. Heavy damage was done to the railyard and the approach section to the bridge was dropped. I never understood why the Pentagon and 7th Air Force thought they were superior planners when we executed the missions, were familiar with the area, and knew for the most part where the threats were. On missions that we did the planning for at Korat, a higher level of success was achieved and fewer aircraft were lost." (Col Ken Mays, USAF (Ret), unpublished memoir, "Tour At Korat -- July 67 to Feb 68", dated 15 Dec 2003.)

Four other pilots from the 34 TFS in "Crossbow" flight also attacked this rail yard. It was Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong's eighth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 8. F-105D 61-0208. Call Sign: "Crossbow". Take Off: 1615. Mission Length: 4+00.
Flight Lineup:

- #1 - Leftwich [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]
- #2 - Klinestiver [Maj Larry R. Klinestiver]
- #3 - King [Maj William J. King]
- #4 - Me

"This was a water route mission against the Lon Dong Railroad Siding. It is on the N.E. railroad about 20 miles from Red China. Our flight was the rear flight and I was the rear man. The weather was perfectly clear and we picked the target up about 15 miles out. There was moderate 37- & 57-

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mm flak thrown up at us as the lead flight went in. The flak suppression flight laid their CBU's in pretty close and the flak diminished considerably. I released at 10,000' with a good sight picture. All of the bombs ahead of me were in the target area. No MiGs or flak on the way out." (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 3.)

Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & 388 TFW history, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO463 frame 1756 & Nat'l Archives camera record NWDNM(m)-342-USA-42649B & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.

19-Oct-67

4833

Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong, 34 TFS, 388 TFW from Korat, flew his ninth combat mission into North Vietnam.

Mission 9. F-105D 60-0462. Call Sign: "Vegas". Take Off: 0600. Mission Length: 3+45. Flight Lineup:

#1 - King [Maj William J. King]

#2 - Me

#3 - Lefty [Maj Dalton L. Leftwich]

#4 - Klinestiver [Maj Larry R. Klinestiver]

"This was a water route mission against the Bac Le Railroad Yard on the northeast railroad between Hanoi & China (midpoint). Approaching Pack I, we started picking up an undercast cloud deck. Out over the water refueling we were in and out of the weather. Regrouping and turning inbound into NVN, the weather was solid undercast up to about 15,000 feet. The Iron Hand flight went inland about 30 miles and reported all undercast towards the target. The F-4 flight came in from the northwest and confirmed this report, so we made a sweeping left turn dangerously close to Haiphong and came back over the water. We dropped our bombs in Pack I with a Sky Spot control & landed. Uneventful but it was officially a Pack VI mission and a counter."

1Lt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, also attempted to fly into a target in RP-6 but was turned away by weather. Instead, he flew his 29th combat mission into Laos.

"Target: Troops in trenches in southern Laos.

"Armament: 4xCBU-24s 1 CBU-29.

"Originally scheduled Pack VI. Weather aborted just past wart. Refueled and worked with FAC. Dropped CBU's on troop area then strafed down road (530 rounds). FAC said 5 KIA and 5 probable KIA. Very easy mission but long. Almost ran out of gas."

Two pilots from the 34 TFS formed "Hartford" flight that took off at 14:30. The flight lineup was:

#1 - Maj James E. Daniel, Jr.

#2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 60-0518 on his 6th combat mission.

The planned targets were:

Primary: 19-30N and 103-59E where they were to meet FACs Firefly 15 and 16.

Secondary: 21-04N and 102-36E where they were to meet FACs Firefly 17 and 18.

Both targets were in Laos.

"We each had three tanks and two 500# bombs. Our mission was primarily to work with "Wager A", a MISQ site up north just being tested [Lima Site 85]. We refueled behind OA 67 and I did a little better than the last time with three tanks. We dropped off and had quite a communications problem at first and had to orbit a while. Finally we got "Wager A", us, "Cabana" (an RF-4C taking

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pictures of the hits) and Fireflies 15, 16 (O-1s who were spotting the hits. Comments from the FAC: 'Has he dropped yet - is that it over there on the hill?' I then took the lead and we went for the second target. We never could raise Firefly 17 & 18 but I got permission from "Wager A" to go ahead and drop. As soon as I dropped, I rolled to the right and saw Firefly 17 & 18 flying away from the target. Dropped at 20M, 350 CAS, and 323-degree heading. Saw the bombs hit long. Coming back, we did a little trail acro after I finally figured out what a porpoise meant."

The mission lasted 2.7 hours.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr. from the 388 TFW was another pilot who diverted today due to weather. He flew as "Crossbow 02" in a flight whose original target was in RP-6A. Instead, he dropped in southern Laos, the Ban Laboy complex. "Divert due WX/No BDA - WX". It was his 7th combat mission.

Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 3 - 4 & Earl Henderson, combat diary & Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

22-Oct-67

4335

In a mission designated RT56A-172, F-105 pilots from the 388 TFW struck the Cau Dau railroad segment on the Northeast Rail line in RP-6A, North Vietnam. The target was located at 21-35N and 106-00E.

Three pilots on this mission from the 469 TFS and their F-105Ds were:

Capt Russell E. Temperley flying 60-0428

Maj Roger P. Scheer flying 61-0208

1Lt Earl J. Henderson flying 61-0134 (Note: His combat diary has no mission this day.)

Lt Col Richard F. B. Gimmi, Jr., flying with the 469 TFS, flew his 115th and last combat mission during his one-year assignment as the director of the 388 TFW command post. (Dick Gimmi, phone message, 10 Nov 09)

Maj Kenneth W. Mays from the 34 TFS flew F-105D 62-4359 on this mission.

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., 34 TFS, flew as "Warhawk 2" attacking a road segment in RP-6A. "Road cut." It was his 8th combat mission.

Four other pilots from the 34 TFS made up "Vegas" flight. Flying as "Vegas 2" was Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong on his 10th combat mission to North Vietnam. Take Off: 1440. Mission Length: 3+05. The flight line up was:

#1 - Maj William J. King

#2 - Maj Armstrong flying 61-0132

#3 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich flying 61-0219

#4 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver flying 61-0220

Mission Commander - Col John Peter "Sky" Flynn, 388 TFW Vice Commander (POW 27 Oct 67).

Maj Armstrong describe this mission in his combat log. "Mission was alternate target at Dau Ca, 15 miles east of Thai Nguyen. We went the land route which was the first land route for me. We dropped off the tankers and entered NVN on a northeasterly heading then turned east and finally south to hit the target which was roughly 40 miles due north of Hanoi. There were considerable MiG calls both going in and retracing our path out but no one actually saw MiGs. No SAMs were sighted either. There was considerable 37/57-mm fire rolling in on the target but no one got hit.

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Larry Klinestiver saw some 85-mm burst but no one else saw it. Col Flynn was mission commander and he's not sure the rail yard we bombed was the right one. I had no idea as I was looking for MiGs all of the time."

NARA Record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B, "Air Strike Films, Vietnam" & Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 4 & Rufus Dye Mission History log

23-Oct-67

3436

Air Force planes bombed three targets along the Northeast Rail Line (RR 2) in RP-6A.

Struck earlier on 18 October, the Lang Dang railroad storage yard (BE 616-01586) at 21-38-02N and 106-35-11E in the northeast buffer zone was struck again on 23 and 24 October.

Air Force planes also struck the Lang Nac railroad spur (BE 616-03745) at 21-40-40N and 106-36-42E. Pilots estimated the northern and central parts of the spur were cut.

The third target was the Thanh Moi railroad yard (BE 616-01398) at 21-35-57N and 106-32-17E. The 388 TFW last struck this target on 6 October 1967. "Olympia" flight from the 34 TFS attacked the yard. The flight took off at 05:55. Their lineup was:

- #1 - Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe flying F-105D 60-0512 as mission commander on his 80th mission.
- #2 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying his 8th combat mission in 61-0162.
- #3 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich flying 62-4359
- #4 - Maj James L. Taylor flying 59-1743.
- Spare - Maj William M. Blakeslee in 62-4248

It was Capt Shuler's first mission to RP-6 and it did not go well for him. "When I arrived at the aircraft, the crew chief advised that cartridge start was inoperative so engine start would be by air cart. I had never done an air cart start in the Thud. I signaled for air and at about 10% RPM brought the throttle forward instantly realizing that I should have hit the ignition button first (the fire from the cartridge provides ignition of the fuel). The result was a loud boom, illumination of the flight line around spot 16, and burning fuel dripping from the tail of aircraft 61-0162. I asked the crew chief if I should shut it down to which he responded 'No sir, I think you are suppose to keep it running.' About that time the Line Chief came running towards the aircraft giving the speedbrake signal and gesturing for me to move the throttle back and forth. When the fire was out I was cleared to go.

"... During the join-up after takeoff, I misjudged my rate of closure on lead ... and had to slide under and beyond him then sheepishly back in to position delaying three & four's join-up. Not a good start to my first trip to Route Pack 6.

"After dropping off the tanker and greening up, I decided to check the 'cage' button in case we jumped any MiGs during target area egress. Stupidly I depressed the 'pickle' button instead and dropped my bombs. ... Reluctantly, I keyed the mic button and said something to the effect, 'Olympia Lead, Olympia 2, I just had an ordinance release'. After checking to see that my bombs hadn't blown any Navy ships out of the water, Larry asked me to show him my belly and when I did he said, 'Yep, you're clean -- tag along'. Feeling totally useless, we pressed on to the target. I thought about hosing off a few seconds of 20 mm going down the chute but figured with the way the mission was going for me, I'd end up shooting Larry down, so I refrained from a 60° strafing pass.

"While post-strike refueling over the Gulf, Larry noticed that I still had one bomb on the MER. After leaving the tanker he asked me to drop the bomb safe but several attempts failed to release it. So the next option was to jettison the ... rack. Lefty Leftwich, flying as Olympia #3, suggested that I

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zoom up to reduce airspeed before jettisoning the rack. After checking below again, I zoomed and hit the Jettison External Stores button and the ... rack separated from the aircraft."

He had one more screw-up to endure. "After landing, I followed Larry to our parking spots, he was in Spot 15 and I was in Spot 16. ... Still fuming about my horrible performance and not focused on the simple task at hand, parking the aircraft, I failed to realize that we were coming in to the parking area from the east and that the spot numbers were descending. ... Before I could say 'not again', I passed Spot 16 and had to make a misery lap around the parking area. Red faced again, I shut down the engine without incident -- the only thing I did right the entire mission."

He logged 3.7 hours for the flight.

BDA photos from 24 October revealed the yard was unserviceable and nine rail cars were damaged or destroyed. (Report to CINCPAC)

Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967 & Jake Shuler mission spreadsheet and "8th Mission Narrative" via e-mails 27 May and 28 July 2010 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5.

24-Oct-67

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After President Johnson had approved it as a target on 18 October 1967, coordinated Air Force and Navy strikes against Phuc Yen MiG airfield (JCS 6) commenced on the afternoon of 24 October followed by combined re-strikes on 25 October. The airfield was hit by bombs and CBUs. Post-strike photos showed that 5 MiG-21s and 5 MiG-17s parked in Area H were either damaged or destroyed, and that two MiG-17s in Area G were destroyed. (Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967)

On Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday, 24 and 25 October, F-105s from the 388 TFW from Korat and the 355 TFW from Takhli struck Phuc Yen for the first time. The airfield (BE 616-8520) was located 18 miles northwest of Haiphong at coordinates 21-13-15N and 105-48-32E in RP-6A, North Vietnam. The US launched a total of 64 sorties against the airfield.

"... USAF bombs made several craters in the airfield runway and taxi areas. Also during the strike, a MiG-17 was downed by an F-4 crew assigned to the 8 TFW." (Chronology)

The Air Force Times newspaper gave an overview of the Phuc Yen airfield strike. "For the first time in the airwar over North Vietnam, F-4 crews and F-105 pilots recently attacked Phuc Yen airfield, 18 miles northwest of Hanoi.

"The tactical fighter-bomber pilots thundered in through SAMs, heavy flak and MiGs to bomb the 9170-foot runway and parking revetments on the east and west end of the main runway. Another 31 revetted hardstands three miles north of the airfield and the taxiway joining them to the air strip were also hit.

"The strike pilots from the 8 TFW, 355 TFW and 388 TFW reported all bombs on target and the mission highly successful as they rendered the sprawling MiG interceptor base unserviceable and downed a MiG-21 in the process.

"Thunderchief pilots from the 355th TFW led the massive armada in on the installation.

" 'A new target is a great feeling, especially since I was in the first flight in and put the first holes in the MiG haven,' said Capt James G. Thomas, one of the 355th pilots [from the 333 TFS].

"Capt Cal W. Tax [also from the 333 TFS] reported, 'I wanted to make sure so I went in low. In

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fact, I was so low I heard and felt my bombs exploding -- it was just beautiful.'

"Another 355th F-105 pilot commenting on the mission was Capt James L. Aldrich [333 TFS], who said, 'It was a sensational mission. We hit an untouched target and turned it into a mural of huge fireballs and towering smoke.'

"The F-4 crews from the 8 TFW were the second wave of AF fighters to hit the airfield.

" 'Strings of bombs impacted in trail straight down the eastern third of the runway, causing multiple craters' reported Maj Arley W. McRae who led one of the F-4 flights in. Another string of bombs cratered the middle third of the runway.

"Leading the 8 TFW strike force was Maj Carl F. Funk, who said, 'We rolled in inverted and dove to the target. We completely demolished it.'

" 'From my position, it looked like all our bombs were right on the money', said Capt Paul W. Showalter, one of the Wolf Pack pilots. 'Phuc Yen airfield is now out of commission,' he concluded.

"While Phantom crews were unloading their ordnance over the target, other 8th TFW crews were keeping enemy MiGs busy.

" 'It was absolutely great, ' said a smiling, elated Maj William L. Kirk, a Phantom aircraft commander and now a double-MiG killer, as he described his latest MiG-21 kill.

"Flying combat air patrol (MIG-CAP) for strike fighter pilots, Kirk caught the enemy aircraft as it attacked the bomb-laden aircraft.

" 'They came at us from behind and I turned my flight around and had a good old knock-down, drag-out rat-race with him for almost 10 minutes. I ran him down and got him with the gun,' said the veteran of more than 30 missions into the heavily-defended Hanoi area.

"Kirk's weapon was the 20-mm cannon, a pod-mounted Gatling gun, which hangs under the belly of the F-4.

" 'This kill wasn't quite the same as my first one last May 13,' said Kirk. 'That one was a MiG-17 and there was only one pass. I got him with my air-to-air missile. This time it was a good, old-fashioned dog-fight and we fought him for a long time.'

"The rear seat pilot in Kirk's F-4 was 1Lt Theodore R. Bongartz. 'It was my 91st mission,' said the excited Lieutenant. 'I've been waiting since my first flight to get a MiG and it was quite a thrill.'

"Bongartz exclaimed, 'After we shot him down, we made a pass around him and saw the MiG pilot under the canopy of his parachute. We waggled our wings at him and came on home.'

"As the Phantom crews completed their runs on the military installation, Thunderchief pilots from the 388 TFW took their turn at hitting the target.

" 'There were a lot of MiGs up there preceding our strikes,' said Maj Clyde Falls, Jr., a 388th TFW pilot [from the 34 TFS]. 'However, by the time we got there they were all gone. I suppose most of them were low on fuel and were probably looking for a place to land. It's a cinch they couldn't land at Phuc Yen.'

"Maj Donald W. Windrath [from the 13 TFS] estimated that his flight destroyed or damaged three

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SAM sites which threatened the strike force.

"The aerial reconnaissance following the strike revealed four MiG-21s, four MkG-17s and one MiG-15 were destroyed or damaged by the fighter-bomber pilots. The runway was damaged beyond use and fireballs 280 feet in diameter erupted near the west parking ramp while another huge secondary explosion engulfed the entire western half of the northeast revetments." (Air Force Times newspaper article, Nov 15, 1967, pg 22)

"This highly successful raid left smoking ruins of much of the airfield support complex and large craters in the runway. 354 TFS pilots [from Takhli] were present in the flak-filled skys over Phuc Yen on both ... days." Pilots from the 357 TFS also flew this mission. (355 TFW history, Microfilm NO463, frame 1565).

Four flights of 355 TFW F-105Ds attacked Phuc Yen. "Scotch" and "Wildcat" flights began their attack at 0815Z, followed by "Marlin" and "Wolf" at 0816Z, and "Bison" at 0817Z.

The flights encountered AAA from the east tip of the runway, and two sites 1,100 feet southeast of the runway's center crossover. The AAA sites were firing 85-mm in rings. All flights experienced light to moderate, increasingly accurate, barrages of 37/57-mm AAA bursting between 6,000 to 8,000 feet. The last strike flights also reported moderate, inaccurate, 85-mm bursting between 8,000 and 12,000 feet.

The six M-118s and six M-117s dropped by "Wildcat" flight impacted directly on aircraft revetments, providing a huge secondary explosion that engulfed the entire western half of the revetted area and leaving the eastern half in flames belching black smoke up to 4,000 feet. While coming off the target at 0817Z, when the flight was at 3,000 feet, "Wildcat" flight saw a SAM detonate at 9,000 feet. Approximately 30 seconds later, the flight saw a second missile detonating at 20,000 feet at coordinates 21-26N and 105-43E. The flight was then at 2,000 feet. At approximately 0819Z, the flight saw a third SAM detonating at 8,000 feet, at 21-35N and 105-43E. The flight was at 7,000 feet at 21-35N and 105-35E. Pilots couldn't determine the sites that launched the missiles. All SAM detonations were orange in color.

"Marlin" left their target area covered with smoke and estimated their twenty-four MK-117s hit directly on the target.

"Wolf 2" had AC power failure on ingress 20 nautical miles short of the target and, accompanied by "Wolf 3", diverted to Udorn. "Wolf Lead" and "Wolf 4" expended twelve M-117s that resulted in explosions across the central portion of the airfield.

"Bison flight's two MK-118s hit directly on the runway at the junction of the western taxiway crossover. Their eighteen M-117s cratered adjacent sections of the western center of the runway. On egress, at approximately 0819Z, "Bison" flight saw a SAM launch from the vicinity of missile site VN 120. The missile appeared to go straight up and detonate at approximately 25,000 feet. This missile also detonated with an orange cloud. (355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI ??? OPREP-4/??? in USAF microfilm NO463, frames 1389 and 1585.)

Capt Malcolm D. Winter of the 354 TFS from Takhli led "Bison" flight. He flew F-105D 59-1731 on his 56th combat mission. Other members of this flight were Capt Edward P. Larson, and Capt Gary S. Olin. "Big one today - Phuc Yen. We went Green Anchor. 1430 launch for my flight. ... Fergie (Maj Alonzo L. Ferguson) was lead, Larson, Me, Olin. But, Fergie crumped so I took the flight. We had a good roll in & out (with) bombs on target - the NW end, last taxiway exit. The F-4's shot down a MiG-21 inbound while our Iron Hands - Bruce Stocks, Moyer - got a SAM site. I saw the missile's orange cloud about 2 miles off my left wing on egress. It went to 25 miles or so &

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exploded." (Combat mission log of Mal Winter transcribed by his son, Mike Winter.)

"On October 24, two MiG-21s had taken off against the first wave of attackers -- Air Force F-105s and F-4s from Thailand. As the MiGs were attempting to get behind the attacking force, an F-4 escort used a twenty-millimeter cannon to shoot one down." ("To Hanoi and Back", pg 90). The F-4D from the 433 TFS, 8 TFW, at Ubon was flown by Maj William L. Kirk and his WSO 1Lt Theodore R. Bongartz.

Maj James D. Gormley from the 333 TFS at Takhli was one of the 355 TFW pilots on the mission. "Phuc Yen airfield had been off limits ever since the bombing began. Whenever we flew a mission near Hanoi, we would go right over Phuc Yen. We could look down at 'MiG Haven' and see the planes coming at us. It gave us a futile feeling not to be able to bomb them in their sanctuary. ... (When the strike was approved), ... every pilot in the wing wanted to go, ... and I was proud to be one who got a chance. Everything went as we had been briefed. We rolled in through heavy defenses but destroyed the target and got every bird back home safely." (Takhli Times, 29 Mar 68, reporting Maj Gormley's comments after his 100th mission.)

"... A wing of F-4s from Ubon held third place in the attack stream (to be followed later by Navy attackers), second place being taken by the F-105s from the 388th Wing ... and our 355th TFW leading the parade. Our 333rd TFS led our wing ... " (Frank Moyer, letter to Ron Thurlow, 21 Sept. 2001).

"The Iron Hand flight estimated it destroyed three SAM sites which had threatened the force." Leading the Iron Hand flight from Takhli was 354 TFS pilot Maj Bruce D. Stocks with EWO Maj Frank N. Moyer from the 333 TFS. Also flying an Iron Hand mission from Korat, were Maj James Mirehouse with EWO Capt Albert L. Michael from the 44 TFS.

It was Maj Moyer's 45th combat mission as an F-105F EWO. In his diary entry for the day he wrote, "THE BIG ONE! After all our waiting and frustration, the 355 TFW led forces of F-4s from Ubon and F-105s from Korat against the Phuc Yen MiG airfield, and our 333 TFS had the Force Commander + 3 of the five strike flights + Iron Hand flight - which Bruce and I led! How about them potatoes!

"Perfect weather except for clouds on Thud Ridge. Our Weaseling was good, too, despite AC power problems that left our Doppler nav system inoperative. Practically perfect bombing put 18 bomb craters in the runway, destroyed or damaged several parked MiGs, and wiped out four flak sites. Had two valid SAM launches, but our warning call kept all planes out of missile range. Bruce saw blast smoke from one launch, so we went into the flat country and bombed the site, thus earning our SAM Slayer patches. Score for the day: 1 runway, 5 SAM sites, and the F-4s got a MiG-21. What a day!" Maj Moyer and Maj Stocks were awarded the Silver Star for the mission. (Combat diary of Frank N. Moyer.)

F-105s from the 388 TFW were third in the attack stream. They dropped their bombs on the MiG parking revetments.

"Olympia" flight from the 34 TFS was the first from Korat to attack the airfield. Take Off: 1405. Mission Length: 3+10. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich who was also Korat's Mission Commander
- #2 - Capt Hugh W. Davis
- #3 - Maj Floyd E. Henzig
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0124.

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It was Maj Armstrong's 11th combat mission into North Vietnam. "Today was the big one, Phuc Yen! This airfield is the major airfield in NVN and had previously been off limits. Today our wing, Takhli, the F-4s from Ubon, and I think the Navy all zeroed in on Phuc Yen Airfield. We went in of course the land route. Lefty was also mission commander so that meant our flight was the first of 20 F-105s to bomb the field. The F-4 MiGCAP drew about 8 SAMs as they preceded us in to the target. There was quite a bit of 85-mm flak as we rolled in and as we pulled off plus some 37/57-mm. At least 2 aircraft got hit though they didn't know it until they got home. We dropped CBUs and as I pulled off, I could see a number of secondary explosions. We picked up several more volleys of 85-mm flak as we came too close to Yen Bay going out. (Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 4.)

Armstrong commented further on this mission in his memoir. "This was their primary MiG-21 base just Northwest of Hanoi. Up to this point it had been off limits for attack. We never did strike the civil airfield (Gia Lam) outside Hanoi although it was widely known that MiGs sometimes used it. LBJ and McNamara had this dumb idea that we would gradually increase the targets we were willing to strike and this was the way to get the North Vietnamese to sue for peace. Our wing came in first using the land route and dropped CBU's along the flight line to hit the MiGs in their revetments. Takhli rolled in just behind us with 3,000# bombs to destroy the runway. The F-4C's followed them with bombs and maybe even the Navy got in on this historic attack. I think we surprised them and did some considerable damage. There were no U.S. losses. No SA-2s were fired and the 85-mm flak was spotty. I was written up for a Silver Star on this mission but it was downgraded to a Distinguished Flying Cross. This was the first of three Silver Star downgrades -- so I never got one although most Thud pilots did." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter in unpublished manuscript titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968", pg 11.)

"The 388 TFW pilots were fragged against the revetted aircraft parking areas. They encountered heavy AAA, SAMs and MiGs. Force commander, Maj Dalton L. Leftwich, 34 TFS, said, 'we caused secondary explosions in the target area.' A flight leader, Lt Col Harry W. Schurr, 469 TFS commander, saw many secondaries. He described them as 'the type you would expect from aircraft.' Later ... BDA from the raid gave three MiGs destroyed and four damaged, and extensive damage to the runway." Maj Leftwich received the First Oak Leaf Cluster to the Silver Star for his actions during the mission. (388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO583, frame 1577.)

Two pilots in the flak suppression flights from Korat, both from the 34 TFS, were Lt Col Robert W. Smith, flying F-105D 61-0068, and Maj Floyd E. Henzig ["Olympia 3"] in F-105D 61-0152. They dropped CBUs on the airfield at coordinates 21-13-07N 105-48-22E. Also from the 34 TFS was Capt Douglas A. Beyer in F-105D 62-4356. (NARA Record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B, "Air Strike Films, Vietnam")

Maj Kenneth W. Mays, also from the 34 TFS, flew in this raid. "I was most pleased to be a flight lead on the first attack on Phuc Yen. As expected we received a lot of fireworks. Without exception every pilot put good bombs on the target and numerous MiGs were destroyed on the ground (I have several photos). I came back from this mission with 151 holes in my acft and have a collection of Russian metal that the crew chief picked from my acft." (Col Ken Mays, USAF (Ret), unpublished memoir, "Tour At Korat -- July 67 to Feb 68", dated 15 Dec 2003.)

1Lt Earl J. Henderson, 469 TFS, was another pilot from Korat on the first Phuc Yen strike. It was his 31st combat mission into North Vietnam.

"Target: Phuc Yen airfield.

"Armament: 4xCBU-24s 1 CBU-29

"First-time target. Went in with bad pod. Flak wasn't too bad but thought I got hit coming off

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target. 70 airplanes total hit target. Did really good work. Many big secondary explosions and fire. Several MiGs destroyed. Waited long time for this!"

Lt Henderson received the Distinguished Flying Cross (3rd OLC) for this mission. "...Captain Henderson was a member of a flight of four F-105 Thunderchiefs assigned to deliver ordnance against the most heavily defended airfield in North Vietnam. Flying through almost continuous surface-to-air missiles and some of the heaviest antiaircraft fire of the conflict, he delivered his ordnance precisely on his assigned target causing extensive damage to the airfield complex. ..." (Earl Henderson, combat diary and award citation.)

Maj Francis P. Walsh from the 44 TFS was another Korat pilot who dropped 750-pound bombs on the nearby Lang Dang railroad complex at coordinates 21-38-03N 106-35-11E. He flew F-105D 61-0219. (NARA Record NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B, "Air Strike Films, Vietnam")

388 TFW History, Apr - Dec 1967, USAF microfilm NO583 frame 1577 & Chronology of Seventh Air Force 1 July 1967 - 30 June 1968, pg 5 & River Rats Album I, pgs 118 and 120.

28-Oct-67

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For the second day in a row, F-105s struck the Hanoi railroad and highway bridge, in RP-6A, North Vietnam. As they did on Friday, "F-105s of the 355 TFW teamed (again on Saturday) with F-105s of the 388 TFW in a combined effort to insure success on the Canal des Rapides Bridge (JCS 13) near Hanoi, North Vietnam. The 388th went ahead of the 355th by mere seconds, its entire force laden with flak suppression ordnance (CBUs). This cleared the way for an unhampered bomb run by the 355th." (355 TFW Outstanding Achievements.)

North Vietnamese SAM sites countered the attack by barrage firing more than 10 SAMs "... using track-on-jam tactics." ("The -ology War: Technology and Ideology in the Vietnamese Defense of Hanoi", 1967, Merle L. Pribbenow II, in The Journal of Military History, Jan 2003, pg 194.)

Post-strike coverage on 28 October disclosed that one span was destroyed, one span dropped into the canal, and a third span was damaged. F-105s from the 355 TFW had destroyed the bypass bridge on 22 August and it still was unserviceable. (Rolling Thunder Status and Analysis Report to CINCPAC for the period 16 - 31 October 1967.)

Beginning at 0050Z, four flights of 355 TFW F-105Ds attacked the bridge. Fifteen planes, four F-105Ds in each of "Shark", "Marlin, and "Wolf" flights, and three F-105Ds in "Cheetah" flight, dropped a total of 30 M-118s on the bridge.

The flights saw impacts near the center of the bridge and also on the southwest end of the bridge with black smoke coming from some of the impacts.

The F-105s encountered heavy AAA and numerous SAMs. However, the pilots acknowledged that excellent CBU flak site coverage provided by the 388 TFW decreased AAA response noticeably from yesterday's strike on the same target. The majority of flak came from south of Hanoi and the Gia Lam airfield. The first flight on the target noticed no flak until pull-off and egress where they encountered moderate, accurate 37/57-mm AAA.

The following flights received heavy, accurate barrage, predominately 85-mm from roll-in through pull-off, and primarily moderate to heavy 37/57-mm bursting at aircraft altitudes of 7,000 to 8,000 feet on egress south of Hanoi. The last flight on the target started receiving 85-mm AAA five nautical miles on ingress to the target but it did not become intense until roll-in. The flak continued through pull-off. Numerous 37-mm AAA sites fired along the east-west road.

Seven SAMs were launched during the flights' ingress from 20-44N and 106-20E to the target while

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the F-105s were at 10,000 to 12,000 feet altitude and heading 344 degrees. Pilots could not see the SAMs until they were within 2,000 to 3,000 feet of them due to heavy haze in the area. The flights saw one SAM from L-17 (VN 003) pass approximately 2,000 feet below them. Thirty seconds later, the force saw two SAMs from the vicinity of L-27 (VN 159) or L-5 (VN 19) and four from the area of L-9 (VN 14). The SAMs from L-27 or L-5 passed 2,000 feet below the force. The four from L-9 passed through the force. Three of these SAMs were seen to detonate in the vicinity of 20-45N and 105-56E, at 14,000 to 17,000 feet. Detonations were one mile behind the flights. On egress, at least two SAMs were seen launching from L-5 (VN 19). These two SAMs detonated at approximately 300 feet in the vicinity of 21-07N and 105-52E. All missiles appeared to be unguided.

At 0050Z, while pulling off the target at 6,000 feet, heading 060 degrees, 550 knots, 37/57-mm AAA hit "Shark Lead", the force commander, Lt Col Thomas H. Kirk, Jr., the 357 TFS Commander flying F-105D 61-0169. The AAA punched a three by four foot hole in the aft fuselage and the engine became engulfed in flame. The hit blew off part of the panel behind the cockpit. The cockpit was smoking when the pilot ejected at approximately 20-50N and 105-47E. The aircraft impacted at approximately 20-50N and 105-46E. The pilot had a good chute and beeper but no voice contact made. (355 TFW JOPREP JIFFY DOI ??? OPREP-4/1?? in USAF microfilm NO463, frame 1393.)

Lt Col Kirk became a POW and was awarded the Air Force Cross. Maj James E. Light, 357 TFS operations officer, replaced Lt Col Kirk as commander of the 357 TFS.

Other 357 TFS pilots flying against the bridge who received the Silver Star were Capt Francis T. Torikai, Capt George A. Miklos, Lt Col Obadiah A. Dugan (1 OLC), and Maj Robert T. Cavanagh.

An F-105D pilot also from the 357 TFS at Takhli was Capt Ronald A. Venturini, Shark 4, flying 61-0109. His gun camera footage showed strafing of the bridge at coordinates 21-04-35N 105-54-43E.

F-105D pilots from the 469 TFS at Korat hitting the same target coordinates were Maj Robert M. Clark in 61-0055 and Navy exchange officer Lt James Karg flying 60-0458. Other 469 TFS pilots who struck the bridge at coordinates 21-04-55N 105-54-46E were Capt Steven W. Long, Jr. in 62-4283, Maj Eugene D. Main flying 62-4359, Capt Hal P. Henning in 59-1750, and Maj Roger P. Scheer in 61-0219.

Maj Dalton L. Leftwich from the 34 TFS at Korat flew F-105D 62-4248.

Three other F-105D pilots from the 34 TFS in "Crossbow" flight also struck the bridge. The flight took off at 0605 and the mission lasted 3 hours 5 minutes. The flight line up was:

- #1 - Capt Sam P. Morgan in 62-4270
- #2 - Maj David C. Dickson, Jr. in 59-1760, on his 29th combat mission
- #3 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong in 60-0488
- #4 - Maj Larry R. Klinestiver who aborted on tanker for fuel problems.

This was Maj Armstrong's 14th combat mission into North Vietnam. "This was the hairiest of them all so far. The target was the railroad bridge over the Canal des Rapides [JCS 13], downtown Hanoi. Korat was to put 16 birds in to drop CBU's for flak suppression and Takhli was to come in and put 3000# bombs on the bridge. We approached Hanoi from due south, 35 bombs. We started getting SAMs fired at us from the time that we were 4 minutes out until we had dropped and back to the same point. Our flight of three had to evade 7 missiles ourselves. The last four were fired at us in volley and came over and ahead of us by less than 500'. The 85-mm, & 37/57-mm

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coming up from the target was heavy. The film showed that we put our CBU's on the target. L/C Kirk [Lt Col Thomas Henry Kirk, POW], the Takhli mission commander, was shot down coming off the target & bailed out right in the area. My mouth was dry from all of the action until we were clear of North Vietnam. Nobody else got knocked down." (Maj Spence M. Armstrong, combat mission log for period 5 Oct 67 - 14 Apr 68, pp 5 - 6.)

"Our wing and Takhli were both going to hit the Canal Des Rapides railroad bridge just outside of Hanoi. We were to go in first again and again carry CBU's for defense suppression and Takhli carried 3,000# bombs to knock down the bridge supports which were so hard to hit. We all flew the land route then turned Eastward to come up the East side of the Red River. On the way in our flight of three (one guy had aborted and there was not a spare available) ducked 7 SA-2s. The last one passed in front of me close enough that I thought I could see its flight control fins move.

"... We carried jamming pods which transmitted on the same frequency as the SA-2 tracking radars. We could put enough static on their scopes that they couldn't pick out the returns from our aircraft. We had some faith in the pods but sometimes one couldn't be sure so we tried to keep them in sight to see if they were guiding on us. If there were no clouds, we could easily see the swirl of dust as the SA-2 lifted off. Shortly afterwards the booster would fall off and the SA-2 would then be propelled only by a small sustainer motor which emitted a nice flame. If you could see that the missile had a profile, then it wasn't a danger to you. However, if it looked like a 'burning bowling ball' then it was wise to 'take it down'. This called for a firm forward push on the stick, pulling some negative g's, with the wings level. Keeping the wings level was important because the pods radiated in a conical downward pattern and banking would uncover their radar scopes. If the missile was guiding on you it would turn downward and you could then do a rapid pull up and outmaneuver it because of the speed it was traveling it couldn't adjust in time. If it wasn't, you eased up on the stick and let your aircraft climb back to the original altitude.

"So by the time I had done this 7 times, most of them I didn't personally see because my area of responsibility was to the East, I was exhausted. When the time came to roll in on our target, my mouth tasted like it was filled with cotton. The Takhli guys hit the bridge but their mission commander, Lt. Col. Tom Kirk, was shot down and captured.

"Besides the abort in our flight, there were several others to the result that there were other three ship flights between us and Takhli which was close behind. Before we got into the target area, I noticed a lone F-105D trying to join up with us and then visiting other three ship flights when we didn't look familiar. When we got back to Korat and had the mass debriefing, which we held after every Pack VIA mission, I asked if anyone else had noticed this lone F-105D? A voice spoke up: 'It was me. I was taking a leak and I lost my flight'. This was Francois 'Frenchy' Walsh [Maj Francis "Frank" P. Walsh, 44 TFS, flying an F-105D as #2 in a 4-ship Iron Hand flight]. He had been a C-141 pilot and was barely adequate in the F-105. He was born in France of a French mother and an American father. He came to America, as he liked to say, to avoid being drafted by the French and sent to Vietnam. Everybody got a laugh out of this since Frenchy was quite a character if not a good pilot. He would frequently lose the rest of his flight and have to egress by himself. He was lucky he wasn't picked off by an alert MiG." (Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968" in unpublished memoir, pp 11 - 12.)

355 TFW Report on Outstanding Achievements, 1 Mar 67 - 29 Feb 68, in USAF microfilm NO462 & National Archives camera records, control #s NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42649B & NWDNM(m)-342-USAF-42718A

30-Oct-67

4834

The four pilots in "Hornet" flight from the 34 TFS at Korat, attacked an alternate target in northern Laos under FAC control. The flight took off at 1440 and the mission lasted for 2 hours 40 minutes. The flight lineup was:

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- #1 - Lt Col Robert W. Smith
- #2 - Capt Robert M. Crane
- #3 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich
- #4 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 61-0068.

This was Major Armstrong's 15th mission into North Vietnam. "The weather was bad in Pack VIA where we were ... to go on primary so we launched on our second alternate. L/C Smith was Mission Commander of the force on only his 17th mission and briefed a good mission. Unfortunately for him, when we went to our 2nd alternate target, we went as flights of 4 aircraft and there was no mission commander. We were sent to a FAC in Northern Laos, just south of Dien Bien Phu. He had some 37-mm guns down there he wanted knocked out. Just before we got ready to bomb, Lefty lost his radio and I had to bring him back home. Fortunately we had swung into Pack V going in so it was a counter."

Lt Col Rufus Dye, Jr., also from the 34 TFS, flew his 10th mission into northern Laos as "Locust 02" against a ford complex. "Abort - ordnance release malfunction - jettisoned Urdorn." He then flew an armed recce in RP-3. "No significant sightings."

Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pg 6 & Rufus Dye Mission History log.

31-Oct-67

4835

The four pilots in "Locust" flight from the 34 TFS at Korat, attacked a target in the Barrell Roll region of northern Laos under control of an A-1E FAC. The flight took off at 13:55 and the mission lasted for 2 hours 20 minutes. The flight lineup was:

- #1 - Maj Spence M. "Sam" Armstrong flying F-105D 62-4269.
- #2 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich
- #3 - Navy Lt James L. Karg, USN Exchange Officer
- #4 - Maj George G. Clausen, 34 TFS commander

This was Maj Armstrong's 16th combat mission into North Vietnam. "I got to lead this one since we were going 'Knight Watch' up into northern Laos. The weather was bad in Pack VI was the reason. We refueled and they had me contact an A-1E FAC up about 80 miles south of Dien Bien Phu. He marked our area in the valley where he said there were 37-mm guns. We put our CBUs in there and got 3 large secondary explosions. They shot some at the other 3 guys as they pulled off. Then we went to make an armed reconnaissance of Rt #7, Vietnam, to make it a counter. My radio went out just before getting into the landing pattern."

"On mission # 16, I got to be the flight leader. Mission commanders and flight leaders were picked upon their demonstrated ability to make decisions in flight while flying their own aircraft. Seniority and time at Korat was purely a secondary factor. Bob Smith had already been singled out as a future mission commander. On this mission the target was in Northern Laos about 80 miles South of Dien Bien Phu. An A-1E FAC marked an area where some 37-mm guns had been firing on him. We were carrying CBU's which was providential for this type of target. They fired on us but we got three large secondary explosions so we must have hit their ammo cache. We had already gotten a counter as we swung through Pack V on the approach to the target."

After this mission, Maj Armstrong went on R&R to Japan between 1 and 7 November 1967.

Maj Sam Armstrong's 100 mission combat log, pp 6 - 7 & Lt Gen Sam Armstrong, chapter titled, "Southeast Asia October 1967 - May 1968" in unpublished memoir, pg 12.

01-Nov-67

6710

At 06:35, the 34 TFS, 388 TFW, launched "Crossbow" flight. The lineup was:

Dalton L. "Lefty" Leftwich

F-105 History

- #1 - Maj Dalton L. Leftwich flying 62-4269
- #2 - Capt Carl William Lasiter flying 62-4242
- #3 - Maj Almer L. "Buddy" Barner, Jr. flying 61-0208
- #4 - Capt Jacob C. Shuler flying 62-4221 on his 14th combat mission.

Their targets were:

Primary: Ch 97 280/57
Secondary: 19-20N and 103-50E
Tertiary: 20-10N and 104-15E

The mission lasted 2.6 hours.

Jake Shuler combat mission spreadsheet.

31-Dec-67

5162

Five pilots assigned to the 34 TFS at Korat completed flying 100 missions during December 1967. They were:

Maj George G. Clausen - Squadron Commander. Flew his 100th on 27 December 1967.
Maj Dalton L. Leftwich
1Lt David B. Waldrop III
Maj Floyd E. Heinzig
Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe

Maj Clausen was reassigned to the F-111A program at Nellis AFB, NV.

34 TFS web site on 2 April 2007 at <http://s88204154.onlinehome.us.34tfs/scarf.htm> & George Clausen, phone interview, 5 April 2010.

30-Jun-68

2592

(Approximate date). "Thirty-six Thunderchief pilots honored -- for the completion of 100 missions in the F-105 fighter-bomber over North Vietnam. Thirty-six pilots were honored with recognition certificates this month during a ceremony at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. The recipients were: Lt Cols Reddock and Carl W. McKenzie; Maj. Barner, Leftwich, J. G. McGukin, J. H. Bobel, Jr., W. Fredlund, David C. Dickson, Jr., H. Wilson, W. Bazzell, J. Hildebrand, Alonzo L. Ferguson, J. Light, John R. Whaley, A. Lenski, R. S. Beale, Irwin, Donahue, Huntley, R. C. Fontaine, Maj Malcolm D. Winter, Robinson, and Mitchell; and Capt. W. F. Bryant, T. G. Cline, P. H. Walker, W. Grieger, H. G. Paddon, C. Jewett, R. Venturini, J. Wright, Earl J. Henderson, V. Ellis, D. Tucker, Beyer, and Dentino."

Thunderchief Worldwide Report Vol III No 10 June 1968.

10-Mar-11

6783

Date: Sat, 12 Mar 2011 14:35:45 -0500
From: Joe Richardson <joerr@INSIGHTBB.COM>
Subject: Lt Col Dalton L. "Lefty" Leftwich, USAF-Ret (RIP)

On March 10, 2011 John Hope <RRVARiverRats@aol.com> sends:

I was informed today by one of his daughters that Lefty took his final flight West on 9 January, 2011. His daughter said he had Alzheimer's and did not recognize her, but got a smile when she read him names of his River Rat friends. She had escorted him to the last SAT reunion.

SHADOW

Dalton L. "Lefty" Leftwich

F-105 History

RATNET Digest - 5 Mar 2011 to 12 Mar 2011 (#2011-12)