

Peter Potter Pitman

F-105 History

07-Sep-65

4568

2Lt David W. Poynor, a student pilot from Nellis flew into the ground and died during a simulated strafing pass in F-105F 63-8270. The line up for the flight was:

Name	Position	Aircraft	Number
Capt Richard E. Doucette	Lead	F-105B	57-5819
Capt Peter Potter Pitman	#2	F-105F	63-8353
2Lt David W. Poynor	#3	F-105F	63-8270
Capt Roger L. Counts	#4	F-105F	62-8263

AF Form 711 USAF Accident Incident/ Report dated 21 Sept 65 signed by Col William H. Nelson, President.

07-Sep-65

F-105F 638270 4523 CCTS 4520 CCTW Nellis AFB Operational loss. Pilot flew into the ground during simulated strafing pass. Crashed 10 miles southeast of Lathrop Wells, Nevada. 2Lt David W. Poynor 4523 CCTS pilot died. Rear seat was empty. Call sign: "Hornet Banana 1". "A Nellis Air Force Base pilot, 2nd Lt. David W. Poynor, 25, of Enid, Okla., was killed at 9:17 a.m. Monday when the F-105 Thunderchief he was flying crashed approximately 10 miles southeast of Lathrop Wells. A student officer assigned to the 4523 Combat Crew Training Squadron at Nellis, Lt. Poynor was engaged in a routine training mission at the time of the accident. ... "

History of Flight

Captain Richard A. Doucette, the instructor pilot and leader of 'Hornet Banana' flight, began his briefing at 0655 PDTG, 7 Sep 65, for a conventional weapons air to ground mission on Nellis AFB Range #4. The flight line up was as follows:

Name	Position	Aircraft	Number
Capt R. A. Doucette	Lead	F-105B	57-5819
Capt P. P Pitman	#2	F-105F	63-8353
2Lt D. W. Poynor	#3	F-105F	63-8270
Capt R. L. Counts	#4	F-105F	62-8263

"The flight was scheduled to depart Nellis at 0850 PDT, fly in the local training area for approximately 30 minutes and then enter the range to practice skip bomb, rockets, dive bomb and strafe until all ordnance was expended or minimum fuel was reached. Aircraft configuration included full internal fuel, bomb bay and two, 450 gallon external wing tanks with fuel, an MN-1A bomb dispenser with six practice bombs, an MA-3 rocket launcher with two, 2.75 inch inert head rockets mounted on each outboard wing station, and a full load of 20 MM ammunition. Gross weight at takeoff for the F-105F aircraft was 46,800 pounds.

"The briefing covered all normal operating procedures for an air to ground mission and additionally, Captain Doucette briefed that the flight would perform simulated road reconnaissance, and a simulated strafing pass, prior to entering the range. This portion of the briefing included aircraft positioning with emphasis that each flight member was to fly higher than the leader and position so as to be free to maneuver. After sighting a simulated target, the flight was to go into loose trail formation and in turn make a simulated attack. A special note was made that all pullouts would be made high.

"Aircraft numbers were called in by maintenance early, so Capt Pitman and Lt Poynor left the Operations Building 30 minutes prior to the start engine time of 0825 PDT. Normal preflight, start and taxi occurred and after a short delay in the pre-takeoff inspection area, takeoff was at 0900 PDT.

"After joinup, the flight completed the 'after takeoff' checks and climbed on a westerly course to 12,000 feet MSL. In the climb, Lt Poynor called that he was placing his fuel selector switch in the 'external tank' position and the leader acknowledged. Captain Doucette then spread the flight out and descended to what he estimated to be 500 feet AGL, and continued west for approximately five minutes. He then called for trail formation and began a climbing 180 degree

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turn to the right.

"While flying easterly he identified a small hill as the target, made a climb to 3,000 feet above ground level and rolled in. His airspeed was 425 knots calibrated airspeed at pullup and approximately 300 knots when he rolled in. He estimated his dive angle to be 20 degrees and the recovery altitude to be 1,000 feet above the ground. He reminded the flight that their gross weight was heavy and told them to make their recoveries high.

"He made this call twice and then called that he was pulling off the target to the right. Captain Pitman, Banana Two, followed the leader into the simulated maneuver. After rolling in, he noticed that he was overshooting the target. He tightened his turn but eased off when the aircraft began to buffet. After continuing the dive momentarily, he decreased power and started to recover by applying back pressure to a point just inside the buffet area. Captain Counts, Banana Four, followed Banana Three in the climb and noticed that he had to reduce power to keep from overrunning him. He saw number three roll into a dive of 20 to 25 degrees for a simulated pass.

"After looking away momentarily to check his altimeter, which was reading 5600 to 5800 feet, he noticed number three still descending but starting his recovery. Number three continued down until the aircraft struck the ground still in a high rate of descent, level pitch attitude and slightly left wing low. There was no apparent attempt to eject. The accident occurred at approximately 0917 PDT. Banana Four called lead and told him that number three hit the ground, and Captain Doucette called for the flight to guard channel to report the emergency. He had difficulty contacting Nellis tower, so 'Cobra Bison Dart' acted as a high cap and relayed transmissions between 'Hornet Banana' and Nellis tower. A USAF T-39B, 'Pile Driver 873' flying out of Nellis AFB was dispatched to the accident scene to relieve the cap aircraft and vector the rescue helicopter to the crash site. Captain Doucette told Banana Two and Four to return to Nellis and land after burning their fuel load down to landing weight. After the T-39 arrived in the area, Capt Doucette departed and returned to Nellis and landed. The T-39 pilot vectored the rescue helicopter to the crash site. The medical personnel on board the helicopter verified that the pilot received fatal injuries."

Las Vegas Review-Journal, Wednesday, Sep 8, 1965, pg 13 & AF Form 711 USAF Accident Incident/ Report dated 21 Sept 65 signed by Col William H. Nelson, President.

02-Nov-65

6226

Nine pilots in F-105 Class 66-C graduated from the 4520 CCTW at Nellis AFB, NV. The class began on 14 May 1965 and was assigned to the 4523 CCTS commanded by Maj Lloyd C. Smith. Capt Buddie R. Reinbold, Capt Richard A. Doucette, and Capt Capt Roger L. Counts were three of the Nellis instructor pilots for this class.

On 7 Sep 1965, one of the students, 2Lt David W. Poyner, was killed in the crash of his aircraft, F-105F 63-8270.

The graduates were:

Capt Peter Potter Pitman
1Lt Roger A. Ayres
1Lt William W. Koelm
1Lt Stephen Whitman Diamond
1Lt James Edwin Ray
1Lt Robert B. Middleton
1Lt James M. Kroyer
1Lt Kenneth J. Kerkering
1Lt Phillip J. Kelley

Capt Pitman was next assigned to the 35 TFS. He was later one of the original Ryan's Raider pilots in the 34 TFS. He was KIA on 12 May 1967.

1Lt Koelm had entered F-105 upgrade as a 2nd Lieutenant directly from undergraduate pilot training at Williams AFB, AZ. His next assignment was to the 12 TFS, 18 TFW, Kadena AB, Okinawa, arriving there on 6 January 1966.

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1Lt Ayres was next assigned to the 354 TFS.

1Lt Diamond was assigned to the 354 TFS. He was KIA on 19 July 1966.

1Lt Ray was next assigned to the 469 TFS. He was shot down on 8 May 1966 and became a POW.

1Lt Kelley had graduated from UPT Class 65-G at Moody AFB, GA. His next assignment was to the 35 TFS, 6441 TFW, Yokota AB, Japan. He was one of the original pilots selected to form the 34 TFS. He was shot down and rescued on 15 June 1966.

Bill Koelm, AF Form 11 Officer Military Record and AF Form 475 Training Report, dated 22 Nov 65, signed by Capt Buddie R. Reinbold.

12-Aug-66

4322

Following "Buckskin" flight by five minutes, a second flight of three F-105Ds from the 354 TFS also attacked the La Danh POL storage facility. Each of the three planes carried two 3,000-pound bombs and a centerline fuel tank. The flight lead was Maj Homer D. Villarreal. Number 2 was Capt Peter P. Pitman who was TDY to the 354 TFS from the 35 TFS at Yokota. Number 3 was Capt Norman L. Wells. (Number 4 had air aborted prior to reaching the target.)

After hearing of Capt Allinson, "Buckskin 1", being shot down, they flew to a tanker to refuel "so they would be available for RESCAP if needed." The three pilots in Maj Villarreal's flight joined up with "Buckskin" flight and Capt Wells accompanied "Buckskin 2" back to Takhli. Maj Villarreal and Capt Pitman joined "Buckskin 3" and "Buckskin 4" for the RESCAP with Maj Villarreal and Capt Pitman flying high cover at 10 - 15,000 feet while the two from Buckskin flight flew low at 5,000 feet looking for Capt Allinson.

The 355 TFW history told the story differently. On 12 August 1967, "...another flight of 354 TFS pilots, led by Maj Homer Villarreal, diverted to fly RESCAP for Captain Allinson. While orbiting in the area, a flight of MiG-17s jumped them. In the melee that ensued, two MiGs began drawing lead on Captain Pitman, a member of Major Villarreal's flight. Captain Norm Wells, flying element lead, immediately flew in between the two MiGs. This action forced the MiGs to disengage from Captain Pitman. Although Captain Wells was in a position to fire on the lead MiG, he had to take evasive action because the second MiG was in a position to track him. The MiGs disengaged and immediately flew for safety; the 354th pilots could not follow due to fuel considerations."

The history of the Tactical Fighter Weapons Center described another version of this event. "Schlitz flight, two F-105s, had completed a strike on their target (Thai Nguyen area) and were outbound across the Red River when they were diverted to Rescap for Buckskin lead. As Schlitz commenced Rescap orbit at 15,000 ft MSL, they observed two bogies in distant trail behind two other F-105s on rescap (Buckskin 3 & 4) at 5,000 ft. Schlitz flight alerted Buckskin 3 & 4, who began a left turn. Schlitz closed on the bogies, and identified them as MiG-17s. The MiGs continued the attack on Buckskin 3 & 4, completing a high-deflection gun attack in which Buckskin 4 took a 37-mm hit in his left wing. As the MiGs overshot Buckskin flight, Schlitz 1 & 2 closed to gun range and fired 1,207 rounds of 20-mm. Schlitz claimed a hit on lead MiG's left wing. When the MiGs realized that they were under attack, they broke, dove for acceleration, and lit AB to disengage. The MiGs were silver, had no external tanks or missiles, and fired cannon only. Engagement altitude was from 7,000 ft to 700 ft AGL." (History of the USAF Tactical Fighter Weapons Center, 1 Sep - 31 Dec 1966, Vol I, AFHRA Call # K417.0735, IRIS # 00503560, pg 6.)

Red Baron I Report, Event II-32, pgs 121 - 123 & 355 TFW History, Jan - Jun 66, USAF microfilm NO461.

31-Aug-66

1027

The 355 TFW history included a list of eleven 354 TFS pilots arriving and departing Takhli in August 1966.

The arrivals were:

Lt Col Donald Henry Asire

Maj Gordon Mickelson

Capt Lawrence G. Hoppe (TDY from the 12 TFS). He arrived at Takhli on 20 August 1966. On 31 August, he flew

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his 8th 0-1 combat mission, which lasted 2 hours 20 minutes, half flown in weather.
Capt Malcolm B. Robertson (TDY from the 12 TFS)
Capt Dennis Kevin Duff
1Lt Lowell Stein

Departing pilots were:
Capt Gary Johnson
Capt Peter Potter Pitman
Capt Richard E. Steere
1Lt Leonard C. "Lucky" Ekman
1Lt George W. Hamlin IV

355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm NO462 & Larry Hoppe AF Form 5, Pilot Individual Flight Record.

30-Nov-66

1031

The 355 TFW history included a list of 354 TFS pilots and EWOs arriving and departing Takhli in November 1966.

The 11 pilots and 2 EWOs arriving in November were:

Maj Stan Burklund
Maj Kenneth D. Furth
Maj Jack W. "Shakey" Hunt
Maj Larry William Biediger
Capt Rodney B. Beckman (TDY)
Capt Peter Potter Pitman (TDY)
Capt Giles W. Gainer (TDY)
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson (TDY)
Capt Charles Watson Couch
Capt David Everson
Capt William Eugene Everson
Capt Jose David Luna (EWO)
1Lt Claude Silva (EWO)

The 5 officers leaving the 354 TFS in November 1966 were:

Capt Bob Spielman
Capt Robert E. Marts (EWO with 64 hours in the F-105F)
Capt Ben Ulrich (TDY departing)
Capt Robert L. "Bob The Wedge" Keller (TDY 100-mission pilot)
Capt Victor Vizcarra (TDY) returned home to the 80 TFS at Yokota

355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm NO462.

31-Dec-66

1032

The 355 TFW history included a list of the sixteen 354 TFS pilots arriving and departing Takhli in December 1966.

The 9 pilots and 1 EWO arriving were:

Lt Col Eugene O. Conley
Maj John A. Bobel, Jr.
Maj Robert C. Hammerle
Maj Everett M. "Ed" Sutton
Maj Frederick Gregory "Ted" Tolman
Capt Arnold G. Dolejsi (Wild Weasel pilot)

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Capt Paul Lewis Chesley (WW EWO)
1Lt Robert Archie Abbott
1Lt Paul Sheehy
1Lt Robert Larry Weskamp

The six pilots departing the 354 TFS in December 1966 were:

Maj Kenneth D. Furth (TDY)
Maj Stan Burklund
Capt Rodney B. Beckman (TDY)
Capt Giles W. Gainer (TDY)
Capt Peter Potter Pitman (TDY)
Capt Nicholas J. Donelson (TDY)

355 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm NO462.

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 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

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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, ... 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.

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"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

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.

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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 point 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 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

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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 # K717.312, IRIS # 00518453.

12-May-67

4814

Today's Air Force strikes were against targets approved on 4 May 1967 for Rolling Thunder 56. The flights encountered MiGs and AAA. Two U.S. aircraft were lost and one MiG-17 was shot down.

The 355 TFW launched 12 sorties against the Nguyen Khe storage area (JCS 51) at location 21-10-11N and 105-51-34E. During this strike, AAA downed one F-105D as it pulled off the target. Maj Earl W. Grenzebach the leader of "Advent" flight from the 357 TFS was MIA.

The 388 TFW's target was the Ha Dong Army Barracks (JCS 31) at 20-58-51N and 105-47-42E. Twelve F-105s in the attack encountered MiG-17s and a MiG-17 shot down an F-4C that had provided MIGCAP for the strike force. "Dagger 04", the F-4C from the 366 TFW at Da Nang flown by Col Norman C. Gaddis and his WSO 1Lt James M. Jefferson, had returned from post-strike refueling to fly rescap for Maj Grenzebach. The plane's left afterburner was not working and Col Gaddis had become separated from his element lead. A MiG-17 fired 37-mm cannon fire into the F-4C from less than 1000 feet and "the entire aft section of the airplane burst into flames." (RB I Vol III pg 248) Both crewmen ejected. Col Gaddis was captured and Lt Jefferson was killed.

A large strike force from the 355 TFW also attacked "... a target near Phuc Yen airfield." (RB III pg 251) "Crossbow 01", Capt Jacques A. Suzanne one of the strike pilots from the 333 TFS, shot down one of the four MiG-17s that his flight encountered. (Phuc Yen airfield's location is 21-13-15N and 105-48-32E.)

Peter Potter Pitman

F-105 History

That night, an F-105F Ryan's Raider from the 388 TFW was lost on a strike against the Ron Ferry in RP-1. This was the first loss by this special radar-bombing group assigned to the 34 TFS. The dual-pilot crew of "Crow 01", Capt Peter P. Pitman and Capt Robert A. Stewart, were both KIA.

Red Baron I events III-220 through III-225, pp 244 - 253 & CNA Loss/Damage Database, pg F22, loss 588 and pg G22, losses 589 and 590.

12-May-67

F-105F 638269 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Lost during a night Ryan's Raider mission from unknown causes near the Ron Ferry complex in RP-1. Fireball seen at possible crash site in RP-1, North Vietnam. 17-46N 106-35E Capt Peter Potter Pitman 34 TFS Ryan's Raider pilot was KIA. Capt Robert Allan Stewart 34 TFS rear seat Ryan's Raider pilot was MIA then KIA. Call sign: "Crow 01". This was the first loss of a Ryan's Raiders aircraft. "Crow, an F-105F, was flying a Northscope mission on Art 1594, the Ron Ferry Complex. The last known radar position was 18-20N and 105-25E. The estimated TOT for CROW was 2030H with an ETA at Korat RTAFB of 2150H. At 2025H, a flight of F-4Cs observed a large fireball type explosion in the vicinity of 17-46N and 106-35E. This is the only available information that could possible correlate to CROW flight." (7 AF WAIS for period 5 - 11 May 67, K740.3072, IRIS 1015458, pg 30.)

Capt Peter P. Pitman and Maj Robert A. Stewart, call sign Crow 01, were on a radar strike mission to Ron Ferry Complex ... in North Vietnam. The flight took off from Korat at 18:30 and was declared missing at 20:50.

"Major Stewart and Captain Pitman were on a single plane, North Scope Strike mission over North Vietnam when they failed to return to home base (Korat RTAFB) at ETA, 12/2050L May 67. Their aircraft rendezvoused with a tanker and was not experiencing any mechanical trouble at that time. The last radio contact with them was just after tanker rendezvous at approximately 1856 hours. Radar contact at that point and time was normal, however, due to terrain and planned altitude. Since no other flights were in the area at that time, electronic search was not conducted. On 13 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. The area at the point and time of last known position of the aircraft was mountainous and sparsely populated." ("PACAF Intelligence Index of USAF Personnel MIA/PW in Southeast Asia", pp 3-072 and 3-073, AFHRA Call # K717.6031-3.)

The leader of the Ryan's Raiders group, Maj Ben M. Pollard, described the loss. "About ... 10 days after we started flying, I lost my first airplane. They were attacking Ron Ferry, and someone up that night ... saw a flash (in the) Ron Ferry area. We never knew for sure what happened. I think most people felt that their terrain avoidance failed them. Anyway, something happened; they probably flew into a mountain, or they could have been shot down. We just didn't know."

1Lt Don Henry was another Ryan's Raider pilot from the 34 TFS who had arrived at Korat on 4 May. "On 12 May, 1967, I was on my 5th Raiders mission going to roughly the same area as Captains Pitman and Stewart. After they were lost, I flew a second time that night, right down their route and over their target, but we didn't see or hear anything. Don't think we will ever know what happened." (Don Henry, E-mail, 16 Oct 2004.)

"Crow 01 departed Korat at 1830 on a single ship North Scope mission; last radio contact was at 1856 after refueling; last radar contact was at 1908; ETA to Korat was 2050. ... A visual and electronic search was conducted the morning of May 13, with negative results. A subsequent search of declassified records in 2001 revealed that about the time Crow 01 should have been in the target area, a Navy aircrew reported a "fireball" in the air. In 1975, two N. Vietnamese men were interviewed. They saw a "fireball" in the air, and watched the aircraft explode upon ground impact. A ground search was conducted, but only a few aircraft parts were recovered. The official result was "Inconclusive". (Colonel Bill Carey (USAF, Ret) e-mail to CASBAR@HOME.EASE.LSOFT.COM, Friday, October 15, 2004 11:48 AM)

Capt Pitman was born 15 February 1938 in Atlanta, Georgia. He was declared dead on 9 January 1975. His body was not recovered. He was a 1960 graduate of Georgia Tech with a degree in industrial management. "The Georgia Tech community joined Atlanta veterans and businessmen May 25, 1995, to dedicate a memorial in honor of Maj. Peter P.

Peter Potter Pitman

F-105 History

Pittman [sic], an Air Force pilot who was killed in action over North Vietnam on May 12, 1967" He left a wife, an infant son, and an unborn daughter. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial Wall on panel 19E line 99. (<http://gtalumni.org/Publications/magazine/sum95/vets.html>.) He had accumulated 551.2 flying hours in the F-105.

Capt Stewart was born 14 November 1931. He was born in and entered the service from Washington DC. He graduated first in his class of 479 cadets at West Point in June 1956 and chose the Air Force as his career. After flying F-102s, he taught Mechanical Engineering at the Air Force Academy. He was declared dead on 3 April 1978. His body was not recovered. His name appears on the Vietnam Memorial Wall on panel 19E line 101. He had accumulated 164 flying hours in the F-105.

U.S. Navy CNA Loss/Damage Data Base & U.S. Air Force Academy Oral History Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92.

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.

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 Gibbs 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-Buffer. 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

Peter Potter Pitman F-105 History

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
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 .