

# Benjamin Marksbury Pollard

## F-105 History

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**13-Feb-67**

230

The eighth F-105 RTU Class 67FR graduated at McConnell AFB KS. The class started on 22 Sep 66 with 15 pilots and consisted of 1 Lt Col, 4 Maj, 7 Capt, and 3 1Lts.

They named themselves "The Untouchables".

The class deployed 16 F-105s for conventional weapons delivery training to George AFB CA between 13 Jan - 3 Feb 67 with the 560 TFS. The squadron commander was Lt Col Louis D. Braun, Jr. One of the students, Maj Francis P. Walsh, was the 100th pilot to enter the RTU program since it started in Jan 66. Student Lt Col Harry W. Schurr was awarded the Top Gun and Outstanding Pilot plaques.

The graduates were:

Lt Col Harry W. Schurr	Capt Robert D. Reese
Maj Robert T. Cavanaugh	Capt William J. Schaff
Maj Ward Kent Dodge	Capt Francis T. Torikai
Maj Benjamin M. Pollard	Capt Konrad Wigand "Konnie" Trautman
Maj Francis P. "Frenchy" Walsh	1Lt John William Bischoff
Capt Aquilla Friend Britt	1Lt Neil F. Blake
Capt Douglas G. Glime	1Lt John W. Ronemus
Capt Frank R. Jenkins	

Three of the pilots received Wild Weasel training at Nellis AFB, NV before reporting to South East Asia. They were Lt Col Schurr assigned to the 469 TFS, and Maj Cavanaugh and Capt Schaff who were both assigned to the 357 TFS.

Born in France, "Maj Frank P. 'Frenchy' Walsh ... saw his home in France destroyed three times during World War II bombing raids." (Sawdee Flyer, Feb 23, 1968)

Unfortunately, these guys were hardly "untouchable". Within 8 months of graduation, five of the 15 graduates were lost. Two were killed in SEA and three others become POWs, one of whom died in prison.

*23 TFW History, Jul - Dec 66, USAF microfilm MO554.*

**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

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Capt David Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt

The program was originally called "Project Northscope", then "Operation Commando Probe" and finally "Commando Nail". Initial crews, however, referred to the program as "Ryan's Raiders".

Capt Lawrence E. Huggins and Capt Paul W. Hanson from Yokota's 35 TFS were two of the instructor pilots picked to train the initial Ryan's Raider crews at Yokota. Other instructor pilots came from the 80 TFS. Larry Huggins recalled, "PACAF directed the program to be started at Yokota [which] made sense since the other [PACAF F-105] unit was at Kadena and could not fly local TA/CM [Terrain Avoidance/Contour Mapping] sorties of any length. Wing Intel was involved before the 35th and 80th squadrons ... Maj Ken Furth, Ops Officer from the 35th was ops OIC.

"I was one of [the] pilots selected to 'set up and teach a night bombing program for SEA in the F-105F'. ... Don Heliger (80th), Nick Donelson (35th), Pete Pitman (35th), and Dave Burney (80th) were the other IPs. ... We were all IPs and were the guys with the best radar bomb scores. Our primary mission at the time was SIOP. Three or four F-105Fs from the 80th and 35th were locally modified with what became known as the Yokota Mod, and we flew them using the TA/CM mods through the local mountains ending up on our bombing target in Tokyo Bay (R-112). ... The Yokota mod birds were restricted from nuc alert since the radar mods had been done at Yokota by our radar techs. These F's were transferred to Korat right after the program ended at Yokota and still had the no nuc restriction carried in their 781s when we flew them at Korat a year later."

The aircraft were modified "... specifically for a night/all-weather radar bombing mission. ... The aircraft chosen for the mission ... had [already] been modified for ... Wild Weasel III ... with ER-142 and APR25/26 RHAW equipment. In addition ... the ... aircraft had their R-14A radars modified to allow an expanded scope picture and a faster sector sweep. ... (giving) a much greater duration to the radar return, resulting in a finer target definition on the scope. Additionally, the ... pilot's weapons release switch was wired in parallel to a rear cockpit weapons release switch ... ." The ER-142 radar warning receiver was located in the rear cockpit in the space normally used by the vertical tape altimeter and the airspeed indicator.

At Korat, the aircraft were repainted in an all-around camouflage scheme with tan and green replacing the gray on the bottom of the planes. The colors were applied to the wings and fuel tanks as well.

"The training program was designed to give the rear seat pilot maximum exposure to radar bombing techniques. After a ten-hour refresher course on the R-14A radar, the toss bomb computer (TBC), and radar interpretation techniques, the crews were given twelve flights within a short twenty hours flying time. Each sortie was planned as a radar navigation exercise with simulated bomb runs along the route. The missions were planned at medium altitudes between 10,000 to 15,000 feet above the terrain. The simulated targets were industrial complexes and other prominent cultural radar returns used by Yokota based pilots training for nuclear delivery. The program was indorsed by PACAF with one significant exception -- training missions at the medium altitudes were to be changed to low profiles at 500 to 2,000 feet." (Ryan's Raiders Corona Harvest Report, pgs 4 - 5.)

Major Ben M. Pollard was the senior officer appointed to the program. He had completed F-105 pilot training at McConnell AFB, Kansas, on 13 February 1967 in RTU Class 67FR, followed by jungle survival school at Clark AB in the Philippines. He was told to report to Yokota instead of Korat. "In the first briefing [I] was told, 'The Navy is over North Vietnam in the deep packages ... V and VI at night with the A-6, and the Air Force had no airplane that could do it. Politically, the Air Force was looking bad, and therefore, three-fingered Jack Ryan, (the PACAF) commander, ... 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!"

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The first training class consisted of five crews who initially operated as a provisional squadron under Maj Pollard as the senior officer. Capt Larry Huggins and Capt Paul Hanson were initially classroom instructors at Yokota. "Paul and I did not fly with any of these first class guys; we were making strip maps and teaching academics. We started flying after these guys left for Korat."

Maj Pollard continued, "We flew down to Kadena, Okinawa, to check out on bombing accuracy. I was flying [in the rear seat] with Don Heiliger. ... We got there, and they wanted us to immediately go out on this bombing range and check the accuracy of this new radar. ... We got a briefing, and we took off ... in a four-ship, ... two from Ryan's Raiders and two from Okinawa to lead us around the range and area. ... We dropped about three bombs, and then the weather just went to nothing. ... Lightning, pouring down rain ... . We floundered around, broke up into singles and finally got on the ground.

"... We flew three missions the next day. We were doing a little bit better. We were dropping ... 700-foot bombs. We had more ... right to left accuracy than with the normal bombing system, but all of our worst fears in terms of the terrain avoidance system ... we were still having.

"Then we flew back to Yokota and continued our training."

"The initial reliability of the radars was so poor on the heretofore unused systems that very little actual low level radar navigation or bombing was accomplished. In fact, some of the training had to be completed in Korea when bad weather over Japan prevented VFR flying. However, the first four crews were certified to have achieved sufficient radar bombing proficiency to deploy, on schedule, in late April." (Ryan's Raiders Corona Harvest Report, pgs 5 - 6.)

*WarbirdTECH Vol 18 Republic F-105 Thunderchief, pg 46 & 388 TFW history Apr - Dec 67, USAF microfilm NO 583 frame 1617 & Air Force Academy Oral Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard, 5 Nov 92, pgs 13 -15 & Larry Huggins, e-mails 13 and 15 Dec 2004.*

### 22-Apr-67

926

The Ryan's Raiders crews, led by Maj Ben Pollard, in F-105F training at Yokota AB, Japan, were alerted for deployment to Korat RTAFB, Thailand. Ben Pollard recalled, "... in late April, ... we got the word that we were going south. ... We were going to go to war and there was no warning."

"We flew down to Kadena that next morning ... before we jumped off to Thailand." The crews remained at Kadena overnight.

"The next morning (24 April 1967) we had four flyable airplanes. We had eight Ryan's Raiders aircraft, but only four of them were ready to go, and so four aircraft leaped out the next morning to fly with a tanker across from Okinawa to Korat. ... We were out about ... an hour or two. Number three or number four airplane got a hydraulic leak in their flight control system -- you always flew as pairs over the water -- so ... both of those airplanes turned back, and the other two of us pressed on. We flew on in, flew just south of the DMZ over Da Nang and let down and landed in Korat. We got there about dark."

The four dual-pilot crews were:

Capt Donald Lester Heiliger with Maj Benjamin Marksbury Pollard

Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan

Capt Peter Potter Pitman with Capt Robert Allan Stewart

Capt David Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt

*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,

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Capt Nicholas J. Donelson with Capt David W. Forgan,  
Capt Peter P. Pitman with Capt Robert A. Stewart,  
Capt Dave Burney with Capt Aquilla Friend Britt.

The four modified F-105Fs that they flew from Yokota were: 63-8269, 63-8312, 63-8345, and 63-8269.

The front seat pilots had been instructor pilots from the 35 TFS and 80 TFS at Yokota. Two of the IPs from the 35th, Capt Paul W. Hansen and Capt Lawrence E. Huggins, remained at Yokota. Larry Huggins explained why. "Paul Hansen did not deploy since he had already flown 100 missions over the north. I was not allowed to deploy because I had just finished revising the 5th AF SIOP target set and had a 'special' TS clearance." (Larry Huggins, e-mail 15 Dec 04.)

The rear seat pilots were recent graduates from McConnell's F-105 RTU. Captains Stewart and Forgan had graduated from F-105 RTU class 67ER on 6 January 1967. Maj Pollard and Capt Britt had graduated from F-105 RTU class 67FR on 13 February 1967.

Eleven other Ryan's Raider aircrew members arrived in May 1967. Four of these crews were:

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

The group was initially assigned to the 34 TFS under the command of Lt Col Alan G. Nelson, but later operated as a provisional unit within the 13 TFS commanded by Lt Col Gerald F. "Jerry" Fitzgerald. On 1 June 1967, it was integrated as a separate operation of the 13 TFS when Lt Col Jim McInerney took over the squadron. The Ryan's Raiders were guided by Maj Ralph Kuster from the 469 TFS. Jim McInerney explained Maj Kuster's role: "... He was [388 TFW Commander] Colonel Chairsell's 'helper' having served under him at Spang."

Maj Frank L. Yow, Jr., the 388 TFW Weapons Officer, also helped the Raiders. "Maj Ralph Kuster and I worked with them and helped plan the missions although I disagreed with the way they were doing it."

"Because of changes in mission and compromise, the name of the project was changed from the original Project Northscope to Operation Commando Probe to Operation Commando Nail."

Before they had left Yokota, Capt Donelson recalled, "The crews called it Ryan's Raiders and created a special patch showing an F-105F with a golden screw through the rear cockpit. This represented the dissatisfaction of the pilots that had to occupy the rear cockpit." (Nicholas J. Donelson in *River Rats Vol III*, pgs 52 - 53.)

The 388 TFW history for the period October - December 1967 described the technical and operational problems encountered by the Raiders. "Several difficulties, some of which are not yet resolved, have complicated the operation of the Raiders. Chief among these was the challenge of electronics. Modifications were made to the R-14 radar. An expanded scope now provides an improved presentation. A fast sweep in the center of the scope allows the operation to have a fast constant 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*

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*to Bauke Jan Douma.*

**26-Apr-67**

5118

In a secret message to CINCPACAF (General Ryan), Hq 5th Air Force defined the daily reports that they would submit on the progress of crew training for the F-105F "Radar Level Bombing Training" under project "North Scope". The message reflected General Ryan's interest in the details of this program.

The crews were training at Yokota and Kadena and the message identified the "integrated crews" (all pilots) that had formed to date at each location.

At the 41 Air Division, Yokota:

Crew Alpha - Heiliger/Pollard  
Crew Bravo - Donelson/Forgan  
Crew Charlie - Burney/Britt  
Crew Delta - Pitman/Stewart

Crew Golf - Rehm/Markwood  
Crew Hotel - Bogert/Annapu  
Crew India - Koelm/Esser  
Crew Juliett - Henry/Wright

The message reported that "Crews Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta have deployed to Korat" (where they were assigned to the 34 TFS).

At the 18 TFW, Kadena:

Crew Echo - Beresik/Reece (Reece was identified as a Radar Navigator)  
Crew Foxtrot - Fullam/Scheer

The message listed the flying experience of the crews training at Kadena.

	Total Time	F-105 Time	Out Country Missions
Maj Eugene P. Beresik	3189:10	555:40	0
Capt H. M. Reece	3534:30	18:50	0
Maj Wayne E. Fullam	3398	1133	19
Capt Roger P. Scheer	2263	1250	14

The message provided detailed results of each training sortie in radar-modified North Scope F-105Fs by the crews at Kadena. For example, on 18 April 1967, the crew of Beresik/Reece flew two daylight sorties each at 2000 feet and 500 knots on land range R-178 using the plane's timer and Toss Bomb Computer (TBC) on each sortie. They had made two timer drops and four TBC drops of BDU-33 practice bombs. Their CEA for the timer drops on sortie 1 was 195' and on sortie 2 was 275'. The CEAs for their TBC drops were 982' and 862' for their first and second sortie, respectively.

On 20 April 1967, the crew of Fullam/Scheer made one sortie under the same conditions flying six TBC drops of BDU-33/Bs. Their CEA was 930'.

*5AF/CC TWX 261015Z Apr 67 to CINCPACAF in PACAF DO Read File for 25 - 26 April 67, AFHRA Call # K717.312, IRIS # 00518453.*

**26-Apr-67**

71

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

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second crew was the Ron Ferry in RP-1.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 04-May-67

3813

On 4 May 1967, four more Ryan's Raiders crews arrived at Korat from training at Yokota. They flew in with the second set of four modified F-105Fs and were the second group of dual-pilot crews since the initial contingent of four crews arrived at Korat on 24 April 1967. The crews who were initially assigned to the 34 TFS 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 four front seat pilots were TDY from Kadena. Capt Rehm, Capt Bogert, and Lt Koelm were TDY from the 12 TFS. Capt Henry was from the 67 TFS. This was Lt Koelm's fifth TDY combat tour to SEA, and the third to the 388 TFW at Korat.

George Bogert told about his Ryan's Raider assignment. "I was 'volunteered' due to my 710 hours in the back seat of a 101B prior to Pilot Training. There is a reason the Raider Patch has a screw through the center of the airplane! Don Aunapu was a B-52 AC with a lot of experience in the R-14A radar and a terrific back seater. The missions were designed to keep the NVA awake at night and not a lot more. The Iron Hand support was designed as our radio relay, not to attack SAMs. I will reference another night strike, unknown date. Target was the Yen Bay Airfield. I don't know any crew that used the TA mode for an attack, everybody flew MEAs. We dropped off the tanker about 11:00 pm and descended to about 10,000 feet through Laos. The bad guys would light fires on the mountain tops after we passed to announce our arrival. We swung north to almost DNP, then straight southeast along the river. We got intermediate fire can cuts so they knew we were coming. The 105-F was like a Cadillac on a freeway at 100 miles an hour, just kept rolling. Never used burner, no lights. At about 15 miles, Don had the airfield centered and we used the TBC for a low toss of six 750s across the airfield. I'll never forget watching them hit as we rolled away and ducked for the river. It was also the first time they used search lights, which became a regular event. If we had gone straight across the target, you wouldn't be getting this e-mail. Our Iron Hand support was quite impressed. Another time we were chased out by a MIG well above us, he must have been their squadron commander. It was an interesting few months and enough night time to last me for a long time." (George Bogert, e-mail Saturday, April 21, 2012.)

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Don Henry described his Ryan's Raider experience. " ... We got much of our information thru Ben Pollard who was the tacit leader at Yokota due to seniority. ...The original Raiders flew exclusively at night and both commanders had primary day jobs. We didn't see them much and they didn't fly our night mission. We saw much more of the Wing Commander, Colonel Chairsell, who seemed to always drop by the planning room in the middle of the night to talk to us and attend many of our briefings. He also spent hours -- literally hours -- talking to our crews."

*388 TFW history, Apr Dec 67, Vol II, 13 TFS history, 1 Apr - 31 July, microfilm NO584, frames 0044 - 0045 & Don Henry, e-mail, 16 Oct 2004.*

### 15-May-67

F-105F 624429 34 TFS 388 TFW Korat Hit by AAA during a Ryan's Raider mission while en route to the Kep RR yard. Crashed in RP-6A, North Vietnam. 21-24N 106-30E Capt Donald Lester Heiliger 34 TFS pilot ejected. POW. Released 18 Feb 73. Maj Benjamin Marksbury Pollard 34 TFS rear seat pilot ejected on his 42nd mission. POW. Released 4 Mar 73. Call sign: "Kaiser 01". This was the second Ryan's Raider loss.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 01-Jun-67

927

After the loss of their initial leader, Maj Ben M. Pollard on 15 May 1967, Maj Ralph L. Kuster, from the 469 TFS, led the Ryan's Raiders unit in the 13 TFS in the 388 TFW at Korat RTAFB, Thailand.

Capt Don Henry was one of the Ryan's Raider pilots transferred to the 13 TFS. "Ralph was attached to the Raiders to be an ops/tactics officer and bridge the day/night gap. Kuster continued to fly D day missions but also flew one, maybe two, night Raider missions, I believe. However, his contribution was short-lived. On a day mission, 3 June 67, Ralph shot down a MiG and his plate became full of other duties and he gradually phased out of the Raider operation."

*388 TFW History, Microfilm NO583 & Don Henry, e-mail, 12 November 2004.*

### 09-May-69

410

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.

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## F-105 History

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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 .*

#### 01-Oct-75

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Former POW Col Ben M. Pollard, a Ryan's Raider pilot who had been shot down in his F-105F on 15 May 1967, was the forty-ninth F-105 pilot to begin re-qualification flight training when he flew his T-38 "Champagne Flight" at Randolph AFB TX. His call sign was "Freedom 145". He received a follow-on assignment as the Director of Military Instruction at the USAF Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

*"Home With Honor", Commemorative book by the 560th Flying Training Squadron, July, 1976, Pg 108.*